

# Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2018









**Cover image:** Lauren Jarrett (grandmother to Orcah), Monica McDonald (mother to Orcah) and Orcah Narroon Yarram Jarrett. **Photo:** Hollie Johnson.

## Artist statement



### Mikaela Egan

I'm a proud Muthi Muthi/Gunditjmara woman. I grew up in Mildura and have been living in Melbourne for 10 years. I'm an artist/photographer and Aboriginal health promotion officer. I have a great love for creating and capturing moments in time. I put passion and soul into all areas of my work and I love working in my community to help create healthier lives for our mob. I believe that we can truly set an example by being the change we wish to see in order to achieve better outcomes for our people. My philosophy in life is to create change and evoke healing in our own lives and communities in order to move forward and live our best possible lives with the resources that we have. As a creative I am able to express myself and my culture through different art forms and I am truly blessed to be able to openly share that with not only the Aboriginal community but all Australians.



### Hollie Johnson

I am a proud Gunai Kurnai and Monero Ngarigo woman currently living in Gippsland, Victoria. Growing up, I was fortunate enough to learn about my culture and traditions from my grandparents who I admire and respect deeply. I graduated from RMIT with a Bachelor of Arts Photography in 2016, and am currently the Program Manager for AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience) Gippsland and freelance in my spare time.

I have done work for Parks New South Wales, Yirramboi Festival through the City of Melbourne, Latrobe City Council, among others. I was the first student to study the VCE Indigenous Languages of Victoria, and I continue to practise language with hopes to study linguistics and teaching in the future. I hope to combine my knowledge and skills to start up my own business that will support up-and-coming Indigenous artists and people.

To receive the publication in an accessible format, please phone **03 9651 2148** using the National Relay Service **13 36 77** if required, or email Aboriginal Affairs Policy at **Secretariat.AA@dpc.vic.gov.au**.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may include photos, quotations and/or names of people who are deceased.

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Available at [www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalaffairsreport](http://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalaffairsreport).

## Acknowledgement

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their ongoing strength in practicing the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work, and pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

Victoria's Aboriginal communities continue to strengthen and grow with the ongoing practice of language, lore and cultural knowledge. We recognise the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this continues to enrich our society more broadly. We acknowledge the contributions of generations of Aboriginal leaders that have come before us, who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities.

We acknowledge self-determination as a human right and commit to working towards a future of equality, justice and strength.

Finally, we acknowledge that, while the majority of Aboriginal Victorians are strong in their culture and identity, there are long-lasting, far-reaching and intergenerational consequences of colonisation and dispossession. The establishment of structures and systems has specifically excluded Aboriginal people and their laws, customs, culture and traditions, leading to systemic and structural racism. We acknowledge that the impact and structures of colonisation still exist today.

## Language statement

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people living throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe Aboriginal people of Southeast Australia, we have used the term Aboriginal in this report to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who are living in Victoria.

The use of the words 'our' and 'we' throughout this document refers to the Victorian Government.

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# Message from the Premier



Far more than just a summary of facts and figures, this document reflects the everyday realities for many Aboriginal people.

It lays bare the barriers they continue to face.

Their hard-won advancements and improvements.

And the proud resilience and strength of the oldest continuous culture known to human history.

Critically, this document also reflects the progress still to be made, shining a bright light and holding governments at every level to account.

Here in Victoria, our own Government has always understood these efforts must be driven by Aboriginal people.

It's why, earlier this year, we passed Australia's first treaty legislation.

It represents years of hard work and the voices of thousands of Aboriginal Victorians who told us they wanted the responsibility and the respect to write their own story.

Because there is no more evident truth: we only achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people when that all-important work is led by Aboriginal people.

It's why we will continue to listen to, and be led by, the knowledge and expertise of Victoria's Aboriginal communities.

Now, and for the future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Dan Andrews'.

**The Hon Daniel Andrews MP**  
Premier of Victoria

# Message from the Minister

**Aboriginal people and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are working every day to lead positive change in their communities.**



The Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2018 reflects our commitment to be open and honest in reporting outcomes across Aboriginal affairs. It is an opportunity for us all to look back on how far we have come – and what we must still do together – to make sure all Aboriginal Victorians can thrive.

Led by the actions of community, Victoria has made significant improvements in Aboriginal early childhood education and maternal and child health. The gap is closing in both perinatal mortality and enrolment in four-year-old kindergarten – a significant achievement. We know that giving Aboriginal children the best start will support a lifetime of strength and opportunity.

Together, we also celebrated the passage of Australia's first-ever treaty legislation, the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018*. The Act cements the Victorian Government's commitment to treaty, and embeds self-determination through establishing in law the State's partnership with the Aboriginal Representative Body. Treaty presents an opportunity to support positive outcomes for and with Aboriginal Victorians by acknowledging the wrongs of the past and building shared goals for the future.

While there is much to be positive about, we still have a long way to go to realise the aspirations of Victoria's Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal Victorians continue to be over-represented in the child protection and justice systems, and gaps remain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes and attendance rates.

The message from this report matches what we were told by the Uluru and Redfern Statements – when programs and services are led by community they will improve the lives of Aboriginal people. I look forward to continuing to work with Aboriginal Victorians, families and communities so that every Victorian can reach their full potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Natalie Hutchins".

**The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

# Message from the Secretary

**The Victorian Government is championing Aboriginal self-determination and changing the way it works with Aboriginal people.**



The Victorian Government has continued to work with communities across the state to ensure that Aboriginal Victorians are respected and heard as the leaders and experts in policy design and program delivery in Aboriginal affairs.

A key part of government's commitment to self-determination is building an open and ongoing engagement with the Victorian Aboriginal community. From January to July 2018, more than 600 Aboriginal Victorians across the state had their say on the future of the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework*. Government held more than 30 open community forums in Melbourne and in the Barwon South West, Grampians, Loddon Mallee, Hume and Gippsland regions.

The Secretaries Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs has also worked jointly with the Aboriginal Executive Council to advance self-determination reform across government. These are just a few of many collaborative approaches designed to ensure that a diversity of Aboriginal voices influence and lead all levels of government. Together, we can build on the success of what we have achieved this year to create enduring change and a lasting partnership with Aboriginal Victorians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Eccles'.

**Chris Eccles AO**

Chair, Secretaries Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs



# Reflecting on the journey to date



Each year, the Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report is a chance to consider how we have tracked against our commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians as measured against the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework* (VAAF). It's also an important opportunity to recognise the achievements and strengths of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

In 2008, the Victorian Government partnered with the Commonwealth Government through the Council of Australian Governments to set national targets to eliminate the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, resulting in the Closing the Gap agreement.

The current VAAF, which covers the years 2013-2018, was developed as a state-based commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. It includes additional targets and measures which are not included in Closing the Gap, such as child protection, culture, justice, economic development and connection to culture and land.

The data in this report shows that while progress has been made in some areas, including maternal and child health, and education and training, we must renew our effort across all areas in order to keep working towards genuine equality for Aboriginal Victorians.

We know that the best outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians are achieved when policies and programs are led by, and guided by the knowledge and expertise of, Aboriginal people.

It's why, over the last four years, we have continued to champion Aboriginal self-determination, and developed policies and programs that are led by the knowledge of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

This year, working in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal community, we achieved a historic milestone with Australia's first-ever treaty legislation passing the Victorian Parliament – the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* (Vic).

This year also marked the last reporting period for the current VAAF. In 2018, the Victorian Government has worked in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal communities to ensure the new VAAF is led by their needs and priorities, and that government is accountable for its progress.

Building on the momentum we have achieved to date, the Victorian Government looks forward to continuing to work with the Victorian Aboriginal community to improve outcomes for all Aboriginal people in Victoria.

**We know that the best outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians are achieved when policies and programs are led by Aboriginal people.**

## Strategic action area 1

# Maternal and early childhood health and development

Significant gains have been made in maternal and early childhood health and development, including kindergarten enrolments and infant health. However, Aboriginal children continue to be over-represented in the child protection and out-of-home care systems.

### Headline indicator 1: Improve Aboriginal infant survival and health

**Target: By 2023, close the gap in the perinatal mortality rate.**

**This target is on track.**

In 2014-16, the perinatal mortality rate was the lowest recorded for Aboriginal mothers and was on par for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers (9.0 per 1,000 births for Aboriginal mothers and 9.1 per 1,000 births for non-Aboriginal mothers).

While rates can vary significantly from year to year due to the small numbers, data since 2007-08 has shown a consistent decrease in perinatal mortality rates for babies of Aboriginal mothers, from 21.2 per 1,000 in 2007-08 to 9.0 per 1,000 in 2014-16.

Perinatal mortality rate, 2014-16

9/1,000  
BIRTHS



Babies of  
Aboriginal  
mothers

9.1/1,000  
BIRTHS



Babies of  
non-Aboriginal  
mothers

**Target: By 2023, close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal babies with a birth weight below 2,500 grams.**

**This target is on track.**

In Victoria, the rate of babies of Aboriginal mothers born with low birth weight has dropped to the lowest rate recorded, from 14.2% in 2007-08 to 9.9% in 2015-16.

Babies of Aboriginal mothers are still twice as likely to be born with low birth weight than babies of non-Aboriginal mothers, but the gap between babies of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers is narrowing.

Over this period the gap between the birth weight of babies of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers has almost halved, from 8.2 percentage points in 2007-08 to 4.9 percentage points in 2015-16.

Babies of Aboriginal mothers  
with low birth weight

14.2%

9.9%



2007-08



2015-16





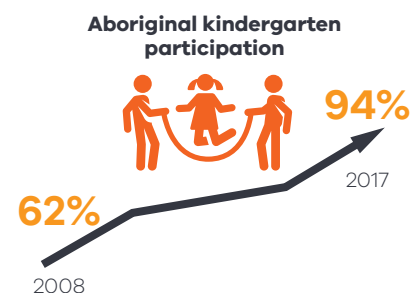
## Headline indicator 2: Increase Aboriginal kindergarten participation

**Target: By 2014, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal four-year-old children having access to a high quality kindergarten program will be closed.**

**This target is on track.**

Aboriginal participation rates in kindergarten in the year before school have increased steadily in recent years. In 2017, 94% of Aboriginal children were enrolled in kindergarten in the year before school, on par with all Victorian children (93.4%).

Between 2008 and 2017 there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Aboriginal children participating in kindergarten in the year before school, from 62% in 2008 to 94% in 2017.



## Headline indicator 3: Reduce the rate of Aboriginal child protection substantiations

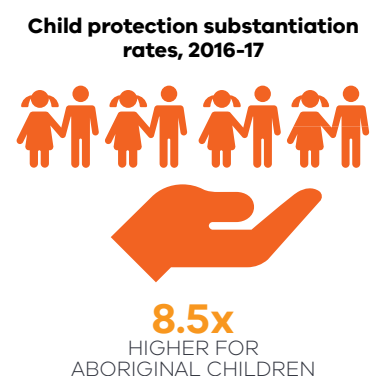
**Target: By 2023, the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child protection substantiations will be reduced by 75%.**

**This target is not on track.**

Aboriginal children and young people remain over-represented in child protection substantiations and out-of-home care.

In 2016-17, child protection substantiations for Aboriginal children were 8.5 times higher than for non-Aboriginal children. From 2007-08 to 2016-17, the number of child protection substantiations almost tripled, from 681 to 1,858 Aboriginal children.

The over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in Victoria has continued to increase, from 71.5 per 1,000 children in 2015 to 95.9 per 1,000 children in 2017. As at 2017, almost 1 in 10 Aboriginal children were in out-of-home care in Victoria.





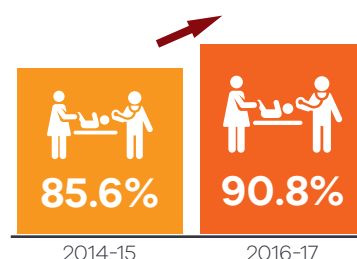
### **Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal children attending Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services at key age milestones.**

A higher number and proportion of Aboriginal children are attending key age milestone visits and the gap in attendance at MCH services at every key age milestone between Aboriginal children and all Victorian children is narrowing. However, Aboriginal children still attend key age consultations at a lower rate than all Victorian children at every key age milestone.

In 2016-17, 96.5% of all Victorian children attended their 2 Weeks Consultation, compared to 90.8% of Aboriginal children. For Aboriginal children, this was up from 85.6% attending their 2 Weeks Consultation in 2014-15.

Koori Maternity Services (KMS) deliver culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal women and babies at 14 sites across Victoria. KMS are working to ensure that more Aboriginal women and babies access maternal and child health services and are healthy and happy.

**MCH attendance rates for the 2 Weeks Consultation for Aboriginal children**

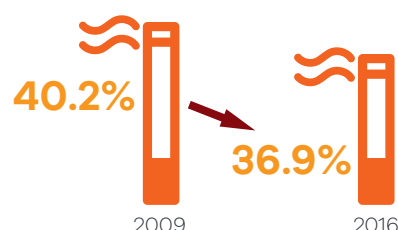


### **Measure: The rate of reported smoking use in pregnancy by the mothers of Aboriginal babies.**

In 2016, the rate of smoking during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy was 4.5 times higher for Aboriginal mothers than non-Aboriginal mothers.

The rate of smoking has reduced slightly in recent years, from 40.2% in 2009 to 36.9% in 2016.

**Rates of Aboriginal mothers smoking during pregnancy**





# Victorian Government reform

**The early years of a child's life are critical. The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal families are strong and supported, and Aboriginal children are safe, healthy and connected to their culture.**

Through the Education State reform agenda, including the *Early Childhood Reform Plan* and *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026*, the Victorian Government is working to create culturally appropriate, high quality early childhood education and maternal and child health services. This will be done in close partnership with the Victorian Government's principal partner in Aboriginal education, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) and other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

*Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement*, is a shared commitment between government, the Aboriginal community and the child and family service sector to work towards a future where all Aboriginal children and young people are safe and living in culturally rich Aboriginal families and communities.

*Wungurilwil Gapgapduir* follows the Department of Health and Human Services' release of *Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027*, which serves as a 10-year plan to work alongside Aboriginal communities towards a better and fairer future for Aboriginal people.

2018 also saw the Victorian Government continue its commitment to gradually transitioning care and care management of Aboriginal children from government and non-Aboriginal organisations to ACCOs. Implementation of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program has also continued, which involves ACCOs undertaking case planning and case management for children and young people subject to Children's Court protection orders.

These initiatives are being developed and delivered in partnerships between the Victorian Government and Victorian Aboriginal communities, including through the Aboriginal Children's Forum.

**...a future in which all  
Aboriginal children and young  
people are safe and living  
in culturally rich Aboriginal  
families and communities.**

## Strategic action area 2

# Education and training

Apparent retention rates to both Year 10 and Year 12 have increased for Aboriginal students over the past 10 years. However, persistent gaps remain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes in reading, writing and numeracy, as well as attendance rates. The progress that has been made in kindergarten participation and retention is anticipated to have positive flow-on effects for reading, writing and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal learners in coming years.

### Headline indicator 4: Improve literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9

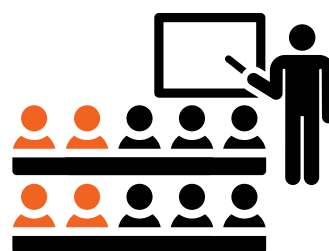
**Target: By 2018, halve the gap for Aboriginal students in reading, writing and numeracy.**

**This target is not on track.**

Despite some improvements in the proportion of Aboriginal students achieving at or above NAPLAN national minimum standards, there remains a persistent gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal attainment across all domains and at all year levels. In most domains this gap widens in the later years of school. For example, in 2017:

- 90.9% of Aboriginal students were at or above the national minimum standards in Year 3 writing, compared to 96.5% for non-Aboriginal students.
- 60.4% of Aboriginal students were at or above the national minimum standards in Year 9 writing, compared to 84.9% for non-Aboriginal students.

**NAPLAN performance for Aboriginal students, 2017**



**4/10**

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS DID NOT MEET YEAR 9 WRITING BENCHMARK

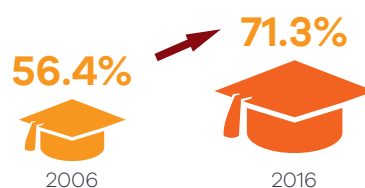
### Headline indicator 5: Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least Year 12 or equivalent

**Target: By 2020, halve the gap between the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 20-24 year olds.**

**This target is on track.**

The gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment has narrowed by more than a third with 71.3% of Aboriginal people aged 20-24 years old having attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification in 2016. This is up from 56.4% in 2006.

**Aboriginal people aged 20-24 years old having attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification**



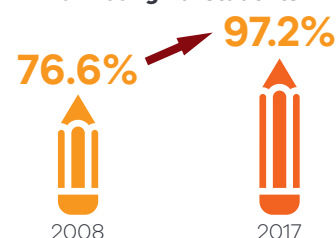




### Measure: Retention of Aboriginal students to Year 10.

The gap in Year 10 apparent retention has narrowed by 18.2 percentage points, with apparent retention rates for Aboriginal students increasing from 76.6% in 2008 to 97.2% in 2017.

#### Year 10 apparent retention rates for Aboriginal students



### Measure: School attendance rates for Aboriginal students.

While more Aboriginal students are staying in school longer, absenteeism remains a significant issue.

In 2017, the average attendance rate for Aboriginal students in Years 1–10 was 86.5% and the average for non-Aboriginal students was 92.6%. By Year 10, the gap in attendance equated to Aboriginal students receiving six months less schooling than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Absenteeism tends to increase across grade levels and is highest in Year 10 for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

#### Aboriginal school attendance, 2017

BY YEAR 10, THE GAP IN ATTENDANCE EQUATES TO  
**6 MONTHS**  
LESS SCHOOLING THAN  
NON-ABORIGINAL PEERS



### Measure: The rate of transition of Aboriginal young people aged 18-24 years to employment and/or further education.

In 2017, over a quarter of Aboriginal young people (27.7%) went on to study a Bachelor's degree at university in the year after leaving school compared to over half of non-Aboriginal school leavers (54.6%).

A further 27.7% of Aboriginal young people were in either full or part-time employment in the year after leaving school compared to 19.2% of non-Aboriginal school leavers.

A further 11.6% of Aboriginal school leavers were looking for work in 2017, compared to 4.5% of non-Aboriginal school leavers.

#### Transition of Aboriginal young people from school to employment or further education

**1 IN 4**  
ABORIGINAL SCHOOL  
LEAVERS GO ON TO  
**UNIVERSITY**



# Victorian Government reform

**In Victoria, every kid deserves every chance. Education is a critical factor in ensuring Aboriginal young people have the tools to be self-determining, including exercising choice and autonomy, and to realise their aspirations in life.**

The Victorian Government is committed to delivering excellence in outcomes and services for Aboriginal students, so that they achieve their potential, feel strong in their cultural identity, and experience educational outcomes that set them up for life.

The Victorian Government, through *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026* (Marrung), is working to ensure universal service systems in Victoria are respectful and responsive to Koorie learners and their families across early childhood, school and post-compulsory education sectors.

The development, implementation and governance of Marrung is based on the principle of self-determination. Marrung was developed in partnership with the Victorian Government's principal partner in Aboriginal education, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI).

Marrung's governance mechanisms ensure direct accountability to the Aboriginal community through VAEAI-convened Koorie Education Roundtables, Regional Partnership Forums (co-chaired by a Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Chairperson and the Department of Education and Training (DET) Regional Director) and the Central Governance Committee (co-chaired by the VAEAI President and DET Secretary).



**The Victorian Government is working to ensure universal service systems in Victoria are safe, respectful and responsive.**



## Strategic action area 3

# Economic participation

This year the Victorian Government has met its target of increasing the proportion of Aboriginal staff in the state's public service to 1%. However, Aboriginal people continue to be under-represented in the workforce and on boards and committees. Additionally, further work is required to bridge the income gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

### Headline indicator 6: Increase Aboriginal labour force participation

**Target: By 2018, halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.**

#### Results are mixed.

While unemployment rates have decreased between 2011 and 2016, Aboriginal Victorians are still under-represented in the workforce, and over-represented in unemployment statistics.

In 2016, 57.8% of Aboriginal Victorians were participating in the labour force compared to 64.5% of non-Aboriginal Victorians, and 14% of Aboriginal Victorians were unemployed compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2016, of those who were in the labour force, 50% of Aboriginal Victorians were employed full-time, compared to 57% of the total Victorian population.

Aboriginal Victorians living in regional areas are particularly vulnerable to unemployment. Just under half of Victoria's Aboriginal population live in regional areas.

In 2014-15, 24.4% of Aboriginal people living in inner regional areas of Victoria were unemployed, compared to just 6.5% of non-Aboriginal Victorians living in the same region. This means that in inner regional areas, Aboriginal people are 3.8 times more likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal people.

#### Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal people in various income bands.

Lower workforce participation, lower likelihood of being in full-time employment and higher rate of living in a regional area are drivers of the persistent income gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

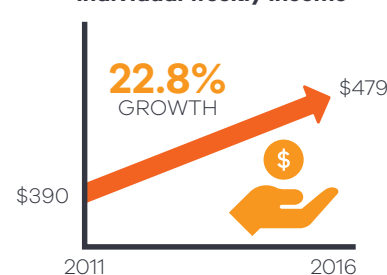
In 2016, Aboriginal Victorians earned on average \$165 less per week for individuals and \$219 less per week for households than non-Aboriginal Victorians.

However, between 2011 and 2016 the median weekly income for Aboriginal Victorians grew by 22.8%, compared with a 14.8% increase for non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Proportion of labour force employed full time, 2016



Median Aboriginal individual weekly income







## Headline indicator 7: Increase workforce participation by Aboriginal people in the public sector

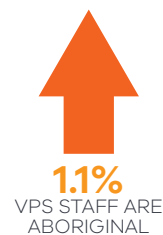
**Target: By 2018, employment of Aboriginal people in the Victorian public service will increase to 1% of total employees.**

**This target is on track.**

In 2017, Aboriginal people represented around 1.1% of the VPS workforce. The number of Aboriginal staff employed in the VPS increased by 48.4% between 2015 and 2017.

A new target of 2% Aboriginal staff in the VPS by 2022 was set in 2017 under *Barring Djinang*, the five-year Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian public sector. Significant effort will be required to meet this new target by 2022.

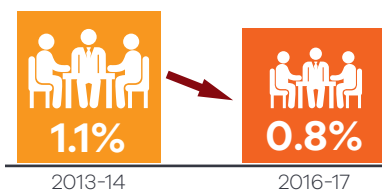
Aboriginal people employed in the VPS, 2017



**Measure: The representation of Aboriginal people on boards and committees.**

The proportion of Aboriginal Victorians represented on government boards and committees has decreased over the last four years from 1.1% in 2013-14, to 0.8% in 2016-17.

Aboriginal representation on government boards and committees



**Supporting procurement from Aboriginal businesses.**

The Victorian Government set a target of 1% of government procurement from small-to-medium enterprises to be from Victorian Aboriginal businesses. The target is to be achieved by 2019-20.

Formal reporting against the target is currently unavailable, but will occur in 2019.

As an early indicator, from July 2017 to May 2018, the Victorian Government engaged in contracts with 59 Victorian Aboriginal businesses, identified by DEDJTR and Supply Nation, to the value of \$17.7 million.<sup>1</sup>

Government procurement from Aboriginal businesses



<sup>1</sup> Reporting periods across departments varied, though generally adhered to this date range.

# Victorian Government reform

**Aboriginal economic participation is a vital foundation for self-determination. The Victorian Government is committed to removing barriers to economic participation and working in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians as they advance their economic success.**

The Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board (the Board) was established in June 2016 to create jobs and opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians and Aboriginal Victorian businesses. It was a key commitment under the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020*.

In the spirit of self-determination, the Board brings together Aboriginal community members, businesses, the corporate sector, and government to drive the delivery of the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy*.

Through *Tharamba Bugheen: Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-2021*, the Victorian Government is partnering with Aboriginal businesses to ensure business support is accessible, improve the visibility and networks of Aboriginal businesses, and strengthen entrepreneurial culture and business experience. *Tharamba Bugheen* also established a 1% government procurement target from Aboriginal businesses, to be reported on from 2019-20.

The *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy* and *Tharamba Bugheen* are delivered in partnership with:

- **Kinaway – the Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce**
- **the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations**
- **the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board**
- **the Aboriginal business sector and broader private sector.**

## Strategic action area 4

# Health, housing and wellbeing

Although there have been some improvements, recent statistics indicate that there is still a lot of work to be done to close the gap in health, housing and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

### Headline indicator 8: Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

**Target: By 2031, close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians that report their health status as 'excellent' or 'very good'.**

**This target is not on track.**

The proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who report their health status as 'excellent' or 'very good' continues to decline.

In 2014-15, 40.2% of Aboriginal Victorians reported their health as 'excellent' or 'very good', compared to 47.8% in 2007-08.

For non-Aboriginal Victorians there was a similar decline. 53.6% reported their health as 'excellent' or 'very good' in 2014-15, down from 60.1% in 2007-08.



**Target: By 2031, close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults reporting 'high' or 'very high' levels of psychological distress.**

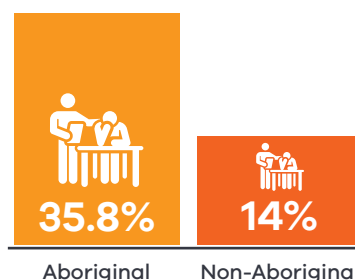
**This target is not on track.**

Aboriginal Victorians continue to be at a higher risk of psychological distress, compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2014-15, Aboriginal Victorians were two and a half times more likely to report 'high' or 'very high' levels of psychological distress than non-Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2014-15, 35.8% of Aboriginal Victorians and 14% of non-Aboriginal Victorians reported 'high' or 'very high' levels of psychological distress.

Rate of reported psychological distress, 2014-15





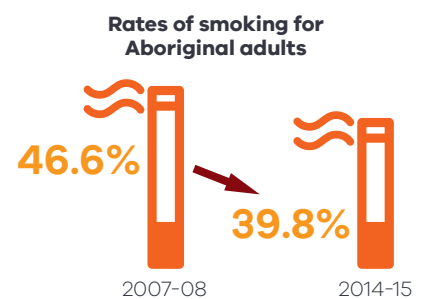


**Target: By 2023, the proportion of Aboriginal adults who are current smokers will reduce by 21%.**

**This target is on track.**

The rate of smoking for Aboriginal Victorians has decreased by 17% from 46.6% in 2007-08 to 39.8% in 2014-15.

In 2014-15, just 14% of non-Aboriginal Victorians smoked. This equates to Aboriginal Victorians smoking at almost three times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.



**Measure: The rate of self-harm among Aboriginal Victorians.**

In 2016-17, Aboriginal Victorians presented to hospital emergency departments with self-harm-related injuries at a rate of 6.2 people per 1,000. This equates to a presentation rate of more than four times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

**Rates of hospital presentations for self-harm, 2016-17**

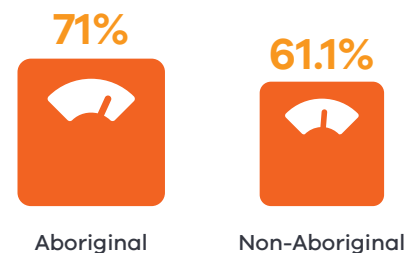


**Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal adults who are obese.**

71% of adult Aboriginal Victorians are overweight and/or obese, compared to 61.1% of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Obesity increases the risks of other health conditions, including coronary heart disease and diabetes, two of the biggest direct contributors to the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

**Proportion of adults who are overweight or obese, 2011-13**





### Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who are homeless.

Aboriginal Victorians are nearly five times more likely than non-Aboriginal Victorians to be homeless.

Although Aboriginal Victorians are disproportionately represented among the number of Victorians who are currently experiencing homelessness, there have been some positive trends since 2006.

In 2016, Aboriginal Victorians experienced homelessness at a rate of 16.4 people per 1,000, compared to 21.2 people per 1,000 people in 2006. This represents a 22.6% reduction in the rate of Aboriginal Victorians experiencing homelessness.

### Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal people with a disability receiving disability services.

In 2016-17, Aboriginal Victorians made up 2.1% of people receiving disability services, an increase from 1.5% in 2012-13.

### Measure: The rate of harmful alcohol consumption among Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2016-17, Aboriginal Victorians presented to hospital emergency departments for alcohol-related injuries at a rate of 12.2 people per 1,000, compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians who presented at a rate of 2.4 people per 1,000.

This puts the rate of Aboriginal Victorians presenting at emergency departments for alcohol-related injuries at five times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians. While rates have fluctuated since 2007-08, this is an increase from 2015-16 when Aboriginal Victorians presented to hospital emergency departments at a rate of 10.2 people per 1,000.

#### Rates of homelessness, 2016

ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS ARE  
**5x MORE LIKELY**  
TO BE HOMELESS



#### Proportion of people receiving disability services who are Aboriginal

1.5%



2012-13

2.1%



2016-17

#### Presentations to emergency department for alcohol-related injuries, 2016-17



**5x HIGHER**  
FOR ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS

# Victorian Government reform

**The Victorian Government puts Aboriginal connection to culture and community at the forefront of its understanding of Aboriginal health and wellbeing.**

*Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027*, adopts an approach based on cultural and social determinants of health and is guided by the principle of self-determination.

*Korin Korin Balit-Djak* contains five domains, complete with strategic directions and actions, one of which is a commitment to ensuring 'safe, secure and strong families and individuals'. The domain specifically addresses the need to advance self-determination in Aboriginal housing and homelessness. It does so by resourcing the Koori Community Housing Forum to support organisations with housing stock to share expertise in managing Aboriginal housing for Victoria. *Korin Korin Balit-Djak* also includes a focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal people with a disability, aiming to ensure all Aboriginal Victorians with a disability have access to the culturally appropriate supports they need.

*Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework 2017-2027* provides a self-determination and culturally based approach to improving mental health outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. The framework aligns with a holistic and interconnected Aboriginal view of health which embraces social, emotional, physical, cultural and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing.

In June 2018, the transfer of 1,448 properties from the Department of Health and Human Services to Aboriginal Housing Victoria was completed. This advances self-determination as homes are now owned and managed by an Aboriginal organisation for the benefit of Aboriginal people and communities.

The Victorian Government acknowledges the work of community partners to improve health outcomes and meet the health needs of Aboriginal Victorians, including:

- **the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation**
- **the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum**
- **Aboriginal community organisations.**



## Strategic action area 5

# Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes

The number of family incidents<sup>2</sup> with an Aboriginal affected family member<sup>3</sup> or other party<sup>4</sup> has begun to decline in recent years. However, Aboriginal Victorians still face unequal outcomes within the justice system, and are over-represented in both the adult and youth justice systems.

### Headline indicator 9: Reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence

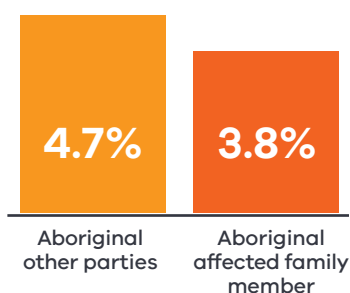
#### Measure: The rate of reporting (Family Incident Reporting) of Aboriginal family violence to police.

Aboriginal Victorians remain over-represented in family incident reports (FIRs) as both affected family members and other parties.<sup>5</sup> In the last five years, the total number of family incidents by other parties in Victoria increased from 63,127 in 2013 to 75,062 in 2017.

Despite making up less than 1% of the Victorian population, in 2017 Aboriginal people accounted for 4.7% (3,531 incidents) of other parties and 3.8% (2,852 incidents) of affected family members in FIRs.

Increases in the number of FIRs may not necessarily indicate an increased prevalence of family violence. There have been significant efforts in recent years by Victoria Police and the wider justice system to encourage the reporting of family violence.

Family incident reports, 2017



### Headline indicator 10: Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision

#### Target: By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth justice supervision.

This target is not on track.

Aboriginal children and young people are 14 times more likely than non-Aboriginal young people to be under youth justice supervision. The average daily number of Aboriginal children and young people aged 10-17 years under youth justice supervision (community based and detention) has decreased in recent years from 148 in 2011-12 to 132 in 2016-17.

Youth under justice supervision, 2016-17



- 2 **Family incident:** A family incident is an incident attended by Victoria Police where a Victoria Police Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report (also known as an L17 form) was completed and recorded on LEAP.
- 3 **Affected Family Member:** An 'affected family member' is the individual who is deemed to be affected by events occurring during the family incident. Due to the high proportion of missing/not stated/unknown, Aboriginal affected family member data are not considered sufficiently reliable for general use.
- 4 **Other Party:** The other individual involved in a family incident is referred to as the 'other party'. The other party could be a current partner, former partner or a family member.
- 5 Aboriginal status data are derived using the most frequent recorded status of an offender as recorded by Victoria Police, and may not represent the Aboriginal status recorded by police at the time of the incident.



### Measure: The rate of over-representation of Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) processed by police.

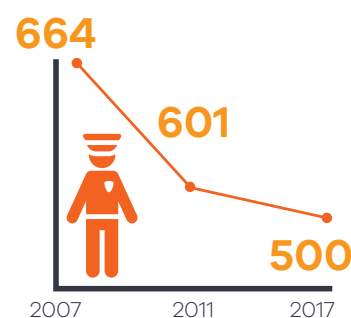
Between 2007 and 2017, the number of unique Aboriginal youth alleged offenders processed by police fell by 24.7%, from 664 to 500; the lowest number recorded in the last 10 years.

During the same period, the number of unique non-Aboriginal youth alleged offenders fell by more than half to 4,831—also the lowest number recorded in the last 10 years.

While the overall number of Aboriginal young people offending has fallen, the decline has been greater for non-Aboriginal young people.

In 2017, Aboriginal young people were over-represented in unique alleged offender statistics at a rate of 6.5 times that of non-Aboriginal young people.

Aboriginal youth alleged offenders processed by police



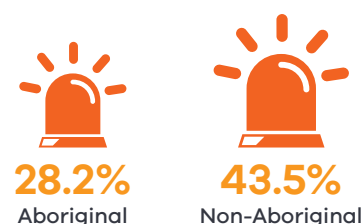
### Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal young people (aged 10-17 years) cautioned when processed by police.

Police cautioning is typically available to first time and non-serious offenders and is an important method of diversion.

In 2017, a caution or warning was issued for 28.2% of unique alleged offender incidents for Aboriginal young people aged 10-17 years, compared to 43.5% for unique non-Aboriginal alleged offender incidents.

The proportion of all young alleged offenders receiving a caution or warning has decreased from 61.3% in 2006 to 42.6% in 2017.

Rate of cautioning for unique alleged offender incidents, 2017



**Target: By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under adult justice supervision.**

**This target is not on track.**

Aboriginal adults are nearly 12 times more likely than non-Aboriginal adults to be under justice supervision.<sup>6</sup>

Between 2007-08 and 2016-17, the average daily number of Aboriginal people under justice supervision increased from 590 to 1,495.

**Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal adults under justice supervision receiving a prison sentence compared with those receiving a community corrections order.**

On an average day in 2016-17, 38.3% of Aboriginal adults under justice supervision were in prison and 61.7% were on community corrections orders (CCOs). For the non-Aboriginal population under justice supervision, 32.8% were in prison and 67.2% were on CCOs.

#### Adult justice supervision, 2016-17



ABORIGINAL ADULTS ARE  
**12x MORE LIKELY**  
THAN NON-ABORIGINAL ADULTS TO  
BE UNDER JUSTICE SUPERVISION

#### Aboriginal adults under justice supervision, 2016-17



**Headline indicator 11: Reduce the proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who return to prison within two years of release**

**Target: By 2031, close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction.**

**Results are mixed.**

Over half (53.4%) of all Aboriginal people released from prison in 2014-15 had returned within two years compared to 42.8% of non-Aboriginal prisoners.<sup>7</sup> While the Aboriginal recidivism rate has remained stable, the gap has narrowed in the last 10 years due to an increase in recidivism among non-Aboriginal prisoners.

#### Recidivism, 2016-17



**53.4%**  
OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE RELEASED  
FROM PRISON RETURN WITHIN  
**2 YEARS**

<sup>6</sup> Adults under justice supervision – the data presented refers to the daily average number of people managed by corrective services either in prison or by Community Correctional Services. Persons in prison include those under sentence and on remand, and persons managed by Community Correctional Services include those on parole, a court order (e.g. a community correction order) or a fine order.

<sup>7</sup> Adults convicted within two years of their previous conviction – the data presented refers to people released from prison after serving a sentence who have returned with a new prison sentence within two years.



# Victorian Government reform

**The Victorian Government is committed to increasing Aboriginal community control over programs across the family violence and justice systems, and is guided by principles of self-determination and cultural strengthening.**

The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) aims to minimise Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system by improving the accessibility, use and effectiveness of justice-related programs and services. The fourth stage of the AJA, *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja*, was released in 2018.

The AJA is delivered via a multi-layered structure of partnerships between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community, including:

- **the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF)**
- **the Aboriginal Justice Caucus of the AJF**
- **the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee network**
- **the Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committee network**
- **Aboriginal community organisations.**

A landmark strategy is being developed in partnership with the Aboriginal community through the AJA to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal young people in youth justice. This includes providing greater targeted supports for Aboriginal young people in custody, and early intervention initiatives to reduce their risk of entering the youth justice system. In addition, a new Aboriginal Youth Justice Taskforce led by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People is being established, which will identify opportunities to improve cultural responsiveness and effectiveness in reducing Aboriginal over-representation.

*The Aboriginal 10 Year Family Violence Agreement 2018-2028, Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* is a shared commitment between Aboriginal communities, services and government. It outlines the collective responsibility to work together to improve the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians so that they can live free from family violence. This will support the critical work of the Dhelk Dja Action Groups and the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum (formerly Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum).

The Victorian Government is also working to implement all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations at the centre of the reform process. This includes specific recommendations to strengthen family violence and healing services for Aboriginal people, and support for Aboriginal-led family violence prevention initiatives.

## Strategic action area 6

# Strong culture

The Victorian Government is dedicated to ensuring that the right processes and structures are in place to support Aboriginal Victorians as they maintain a strong connection to Country, culture and community.

**Headline indicator 12:** Strengthen Aboriginal culture and support Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society

**Measure: Participation by Aboriginal people in community related arrangements and events.**

### Local Aboriginal Networks

In Victoria, Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) provide a forum to bring local Aboriginal communities together to set priorities, develop community plans and build relationships.

As of January 2018, 2,703 Aboriginal Victorians participate in LANs across Victoria, exceeding the 2017-18 target of 2,600.

Local Aboriginal Networks, 2018



**Measure: The proportion of Aboriginal people who felt that there are opportunities for them to have a real say on issues which are important to them.**

### Aboriginal-led reform strategies

During 2017-18, the Victorian Government has worked with Victorian Aboriginal communities to develop key policies and strategies to support Aboriginal self-determination. These include:

- the fourth phase of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja*, led by the Aboriginal Justice Forum
- *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement*, led by the Aboriginal Children's Forum
- the new *Aboriginal 10 Year Family Violence Agreement 2018-2028*, *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*, led by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum
- *Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027*
- *Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework 2017-2027*
- *Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework*.



## Treaty in Victoria

The treaty process has provided an opportunity for government to hear directly from the Victorian Aboriginal community on how they can best work together on an agreement that represents the interests and rights of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

Throughout 2016 and 2017, more than 7,500 Aboriginal community members across Victoria were engaged through regional community consultations and statewide forums on the treaty process.

Led by the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group, Aboriginal Victorians came together at these events to help shape the design of the Aboriginal Representative Body, which will represent the wider Victorian Aboriginal community for the purpose of establishing elements necessary to support future treaty negotiations.

In January 2018, the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission was established.

In June 2018, Australia's first-ever treaty legislation — *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* — passed the Victorian Parliament. The Act provides a roadmap for how government will work in partnership with the Aboriginal Representative Body to establish elements necessary to support future treaty negotiations.

**Up to 7,500 Aboriginal people across Victoria were engaged through regional community consultations.**



## **Measure: The rate of access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands.**

### **Traditional Owner Settlement Act**

The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act) provides the legislative framework through which the Victorian Government recognises Traditional Owners and their defined legal rights in Crown land.

There are currently four Traditional Owner groups negotiating new settlements under the TOS Act, including the Taungurung people, Gunditjmara people, Wotjobaluk people and the Eastern Maar people. Two Traditional Owner groups are also seeking recognition via native title proceedings in the Federal Court.

### **Aboriginal Heritage Act**

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* provides a legislative framework for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage and facilitating sustainable land use and development. The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (the Council) makes decisions about applications by Victorian Traditional Owner groups to be appointed as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

There are currently 11 appointed RAPs which cover 62.5% of Victoria's total land area.

In July 2017, the Council appointed the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation as a RAP for an area south east of Melbourne, including the Mornington Peninsula.

In May 2017, the Council approved in part an application from Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to be re-appointed as a RAP for a large area of Gippsland.





## **Measure: Options for all Victorians to be engaged with Aboriginal culture.**

### **Cultural protection in Victoria**

In January 2018, the Commonwealth Government submitted the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape World Heritage nomination to the World Heritage Centre. This nomination was prepared by the Victorian Government in partnership with the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and the Commonwealth Government.

There is rich evidence that the landscape, on Gunditjmara Country in the state's south-west, is of international significance for its unique aquaculture system of eel farming.

If inscribed, Budj Bim would be the first World Heritage site in Australia recognised solely for Aboriginal cultural values.

In March 2018, the World Heritage Centre formally accepted the nomination for assessment. Subject to the assessment, a recommendation will be made to the World Heritage Committee in mid-2019.

**Budj Bim would be the first World Heritage site in Australia recognised solely for Aboriginal cultural values.**

# Victorian Government reform

**Aboriginal Victorians' connection to Country, culture and community is of critical importance. Together, this connection has the power to build resilience, strengthen communities and forge a sense of identity and belonging.**

The Victorian Government is dedicated to ensuring that the right processes and structures are in place to support Aboriginal Victorians as they maintain a strong connection to Country, culture and community.

We are committed to ensuring that the Victorian treaty process proceeds in genuine partnership with Aboriginal Victorians. The Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner is currently working with Aboriginal communities across Victoria to establish an Aboriginal Representative Body (ARB). The ARB will work with government to establish the entities, rules and resource base to facilitate future treaty negotiations. Expected to be established by 1 July 2019, elected representatives to the ARB will be Traditional Owners.

We acknowledge the work of the following government partners in administering and delivering this work:

- **the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group**
- **the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council which administers the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006***
- **Department of Justice and Regulation's Native Title Unit which administers the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010***
- **Department of Premier and Cabinet's Community Programs team which delivers on the *Local Aboriginal Networks Five Year Plan 2016-2020* and supports the ongoing operation of 39 LANs across Victoria.**

**We will work towards a treaty or treaties that will address injustices and promote the fundamental rights of Aboriginal people.**

# Acronyms

<b>ACCO</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
<b>AJA</b>	Aboriginal Justice Agreement
<b>AJF</b>	Aboriginal Justice Forum
<b>ARB</b>	Aboriginal Representative Body
<b>CCO</b>	Community Corrections Order
<b>DET</b>	Department of Education and Training
<b>FIR</b>	Family Incident Report
<b>KMS</b>	Koori Maternity Service
<b>LAN</b>	Local Aboriginal Network
<b>MCH</b>	Maternal and Child Health
<b>NAPLAN</b>	National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy
<b>RAP</b>	Registered Aboriginal Party
<b>TOS Act</b>	<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>
<b>VAAF</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework
<b>VAEAI</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
<b>VPS</b>	Victorian Public Service







