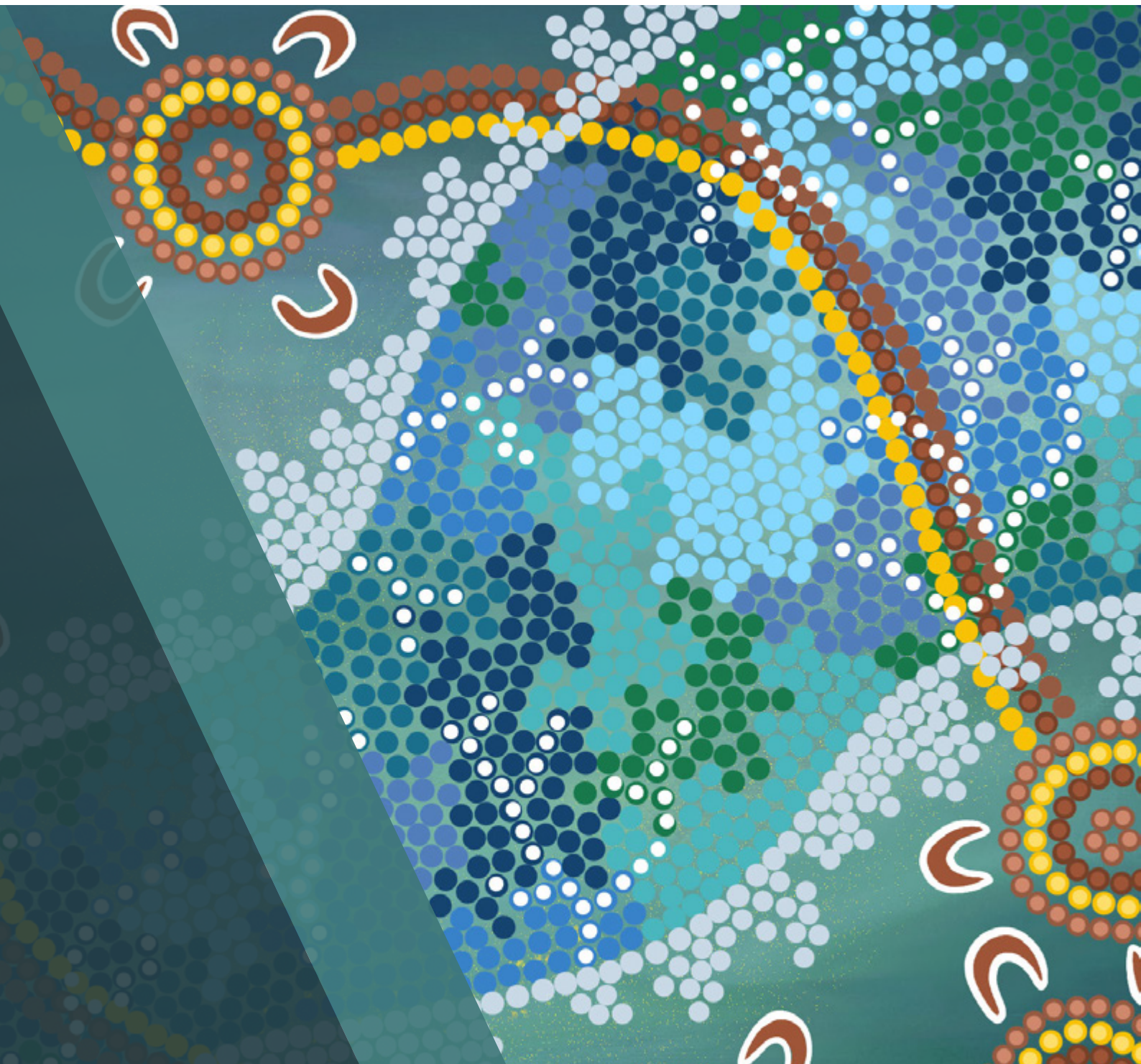


# DHELK WUKANG 2022–2026

## ABORIGINAL INCLUSION PLAN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING



**Dhelk Wukang** is Dja Dja Wurrung language, which translates as giving goodness, giving respect.

The Department of Education and Training thanks the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation for permission to use this language.

### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Department of Education and Training acknowledges and honours the Traditional Owners of Victorian lands and waters, and we pay respect to Elders past and present of all Victorian Aboriginal communities.

### Design

Mazart Communications.  
Supply Nation and Kinaway certified.

### Language used in this plan

The Department of Education and Training recognises the diversity of Aboriginal people living throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, this plan uses the term 'Aboriginal' to include all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. Koorie is maintained when it is the name of a program or title.



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**'Connection 2022'** by Kayla Clinch, a Badimaya Yamatji woman from Melbourne.

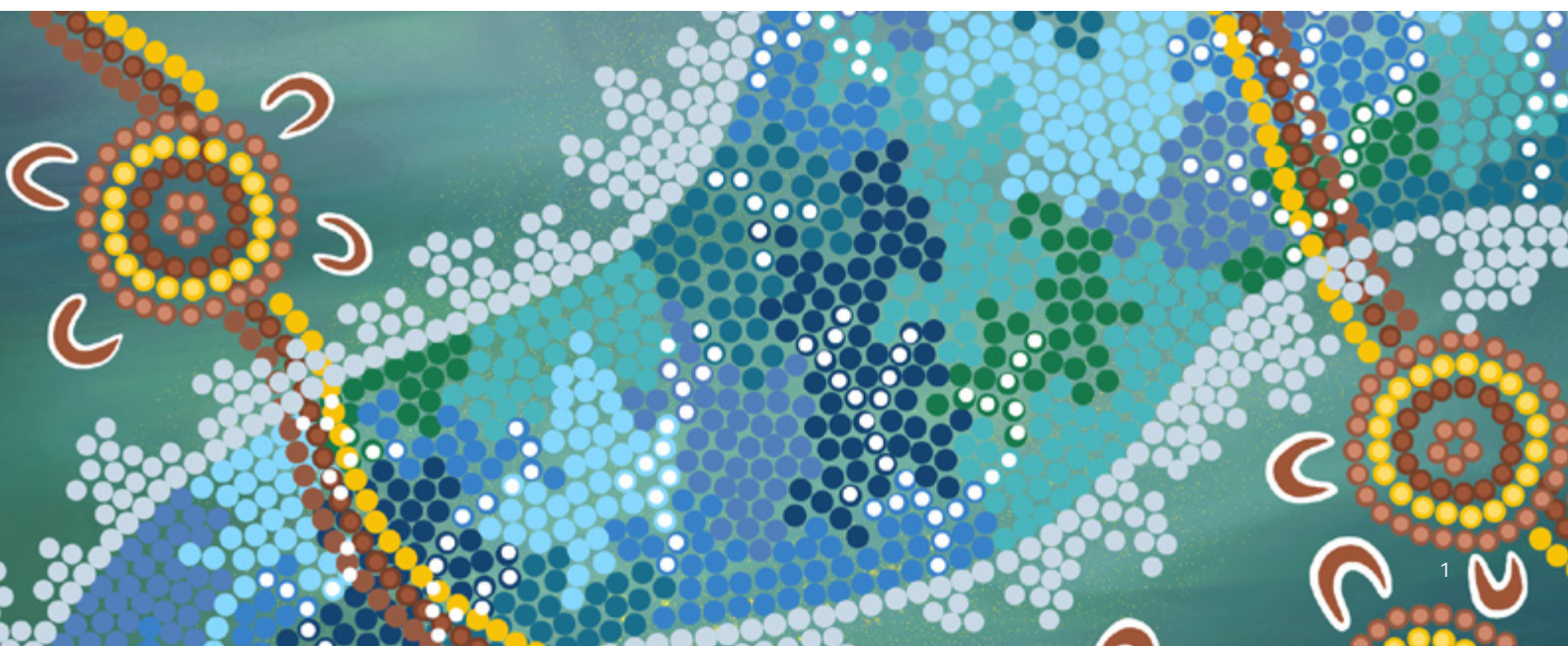
*'Connection' is an attempt to express how I view our lives centering on social connection and the cyclical flow of humans moving from gathering to gathering. The circles of dots being connected to one another by pathways is representative of social movement from one gathering to the next. Our entire lives are comprised of gatherings, we move from meeting with family to friends and back again, we move from kindergarten to school to work to our hobbies, for our whole lives. All of which are forms of social gathering*

*and connection. I particularly thought about how our social connections often centre on water and our proximity to water. When we gather, water is always present in some form or another. We meet for coffee, tea or drinks, we meet for food often prepared with water or at least washed away with water, water facilitates social connection. I wanted to express how important I feel water is and to visualise my anxieties about our waterways in this time of climate crisis.*



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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

**The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) has been the Department of Education and Training's (the department) partner in Koorie education and training for over 30 years.**

During this time, the partnership has led a number of major changes across the state education system. These changes have been driven by Aboriginal community voice with determination to improve outcomes for Koorie learners.

An important part of this work includes building positive learning environments that are welcoming, safe, inclusive and inspiring. A key enabler in *Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026* is Creating a Positive Climate for Learning and Development. We believe that these elements are essential for all students and for staff.

It is important that Koorie employees' work environment mirrors the positive, inclusive, welcoming and safe work environments expected for learners. This will ensure that they are able to be their best and offer support to students, parents, carers and community. Having high expectations for a positive workplace culture should exist right across the system and whilst we have seen positive change, we know we have more work to do.

VAEAI believe that inclusion is about creating physical and social environments that acknowledge, honour, and celebrate Aboriginal values and beliefs. Strong environments embrace and empower community voice that leads to real change in Koorie education and training. Environments where Aboriginal people are recognised as experts, that demand high expectations of relationships between people and support the needs and wellbeing of Koorie staff. Environments that work 'with' rather than 'to' or 'for' Aboriginal people and organisations and the principles of self-determination in education are truly carried out by all.

Dhelk Wukang promotes greater Aboriginal voice across the department's programs and projects, it seeks to ensure Aboriginal people are better represented at all levels and areas of the department, and that career development, progression and retention for Aboriginal staff is seen as a priority. It also commits the department to invest further in Aboriginal entrepreneurs, through engaging Aboriginal enterprises when procuring products and services.

Dhelk Wukang is everyone's business and by building a more inclusive and supportive workplace for Aboriginal people it creates the opportunity to enhance the way the department works, laying a strong foundation for everyone to contribute to improved inclusive practices across the system.

We believe the department has a pivotal role to support students and families to reach their greatest education potential, the workforce is a key driver of this work.

I challenge you to adopt this strength-based approach to this work and demonstrate your commitment to Aboriginal inclusion. In doing so you will influence the actions of those around you.

**Geraldine Atkinson**

President

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)



# SECRETARY'S FOREWORD

**I am pleased to present the department's fourth Aboriginal inclusion plan, *Dhelk Wukang 2022-2026*, and I invite all departmental staff to unite in their commitment to this framework and its delivery.**

*Dhelk Wukang* means 'giving goodness, giving respect', and I would like to give special thanks to the Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung) people for allowing us to use those words to name our plan. It perfectly encapsulates what we as a department want this plan to represent, and I encourage all departmental staff to rise to this challenge.

This plan outlines the proactive steps we will take to ensure every Department of Education and Training workplace is a safe place for Aboriginal staff, where they can feel strong in their cultural identity and know their unique knowledge and expertise is valued and respected.

It builds on the foundations of the work that has come before, but it also acknowledges that we can \and must do more – that we have a shared responsibility to create a strong environment that supports Aboriginal inclusion.

Dhelk Wukang articulates how we will create tangible, positive structural change across the whole department. It supports community-led action, aligning with the *Victorian Self-Determination Reform Framework* – a whole-of Victorian Government approach to embedding cultural safety for Aboriginal Victorians and addressing historical wrongs.

Self-determination ensures that inclusion outcomes are meaningful and sustainable, empowering Aboriginal people to lead in the design of policies and programs for Aboriginal people in education and training settings. It can only be achieved through our collective resolve to move forward respectfully.

There has been significant work undertaken by the Victorian Government and Aboriginal Victorians to progress commitments toward treaty and the establishment of the Yoorrook Justice Commission – a truth-telling process that recognises the impact of colonisation and celebrates the diversity, strength and resilience of First Peoples' cultures. Yoorrook's final report in 2026 will call on all of us as public servants, educators and citizens to respond to the voices of Aboriginal Victorians who provide evidence to the commission.

I would like to acknowledge the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) and its critical role in Aboriginal education and inclusion. I would also like to thank all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff for generously bringing their voices, lived experiences and guidance to *Dhelk Wukang*.

The key actions in this plan will be implemented with integrity, respect and in the spirit that this important plan was named.

**Jenny Atta**

Secretary

Department of Education and Training









# OUR THANKS

**Dhelk Wukang, the title of this Aboriginal inclusion plan, is Dja Dja Wurrung language and translates as giving goodness, giving respect.**

The department thanks

**Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation** for permission to use this language.

*‘The Traditional Owner Group fought to be recognised as the Traditional Owners of djandak (Country) in central Victoria. Through self-determination, Dja Dja Wurrung People achieved Registered Aboriginal Party status and signed our Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State Government on 28 March 2013. The Agreement is a means by which Dja Dja Wurrung culture, traditional practices and the unique relationship of Djaara People to djandak are recognised, strengthened, protected and promoted for the benefit of all Victorians, now and into the future.’*

Djaara  
(Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)

**Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI).** Victoria’s peak body for Koorie Education and the department’s principal partner in the *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026*, the Wurreker Strategy, Self-Determination in Education Reform and Dhelk Wukang.

**Department of Education and Training employees,** including the department’s Koorie Staff Network (KSN), and Koorie Education Workforce (KEW), who attended consultation workshops throughout Victoria and shared their lived experiences, values and aspirations for Aboriginal inclusion and self-determination.

We recognise the cultural fatigue that can accompany generous sharing of knowledge as First Nations peoples and commit that Dhelk Wukang is a call to action for all department staff to engage actively in Aboriginal inclusion.

# ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

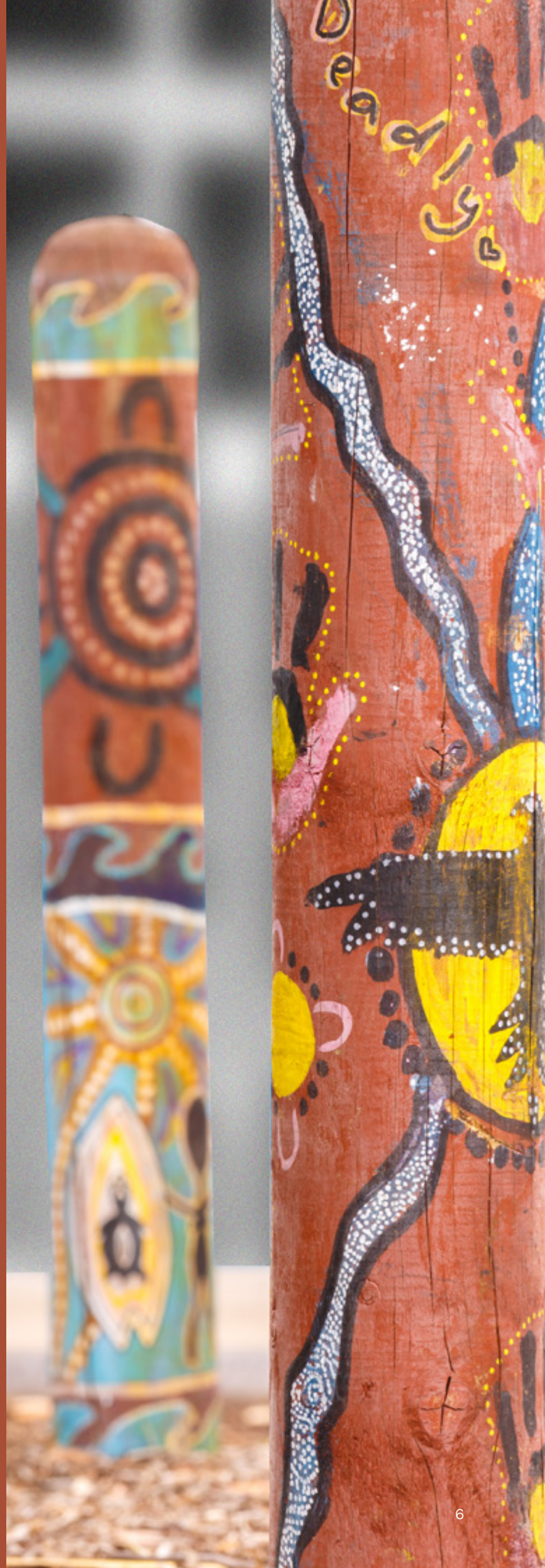
"Together we give every Victorian the best learning and development experience, making our state a smarter, fairer, more prosperous place<sup>1</sup>."

The Department of Education and Training (the department) is responsible for delivering and regulating state-wide learning and development services to approximately one-third of all Victorians across the early childhood education, school education, and training and skills sectors. We support Victorians to reach their potential, regardless of their background, postcode or circumstance, and to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to participate and thrive in a complex economy and society, as well as engage as global citizens.

The goals we set, changes we implement, systems we support and services we offer are all focused on improving outcomes and opportunities for Victorians. We are committed to supporting Victorians to build happy, healthy, rewarding lives.

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<sup>1</sup> DET Strategic Plan 2021-25.pdf ([education.vic.gov.au](https://education.vic.gov.au)) Our Vision.







## OUR VISION FOR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

The *Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2016* (Marrung) guides the strong vision of the department.<sup>2</sup>

The vision of Marrung is that:

*Victoria will be a state where the rich and thriving cultures, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victorians; where our universal systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Aboriginal people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and where every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity.*



## OBJECTIVES OF DHELK WUKANG

The vision of Dhelk Wukang developed through consultation is to ensure that the department is:

1. a culturally safe and thriving place for Aboriginal students, families, employees, volunteers, pre-service teachers, visitors and community partners
2. an organisation where Aboriginal people proudly identify as Aboriginal and feel safe to be themselves, where the expertise shared by First Nations peoples is valued and respected, and where every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life and feels strong in their cultural identity
3. an organisation committed to Aboriginal self-determination, which is fundamental to better outcomes for Aboriginal students and affirms the relationship between government and the Aboriginal community as being one of mutual respect and joint decision-making.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/aboriginal/Marrung\\_Aboriginal\\_Education\\_Plan\\_2016-2026.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/aboriginal/Marrung_Aboriginal_Education_Plan_2016-2026.pdf)

## THE JOURNEY SO FAR - KEY MILESTONES

The department has been working consistently to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal learners alongside our principal partner in Aboriginal education, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEI).

VAEI was established in 1976 to increase the presence and voice of Aboriginal people in education decision-making. Its partnership with the Victorian Government was formalised in 1990.

### OUR PATHWAY TO ENHANCING ABORIGINAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES

1990

Partnership in Education  
- Koorie Education

2000

Wurreker Vocational  
Education Strategic Plan

2001

Yalca - a partnership  
in education and  
training for the new  
millennium. Koorie  
education policy

2008

Wannik learning together  
- journey to our future:  
education strategy for  
Koorie students

2012

The Department's first  
Aboriginal inclusion  
plan, *Wirnalung Ganai -  
our people*. The actions  
focused on building  
cultural awareness  
of employees in the  
corporate workplace  
and aligned with the  
areas of focus in the  
Victorian Aboriginal  
Inclusion Framework



The Department established the Koorie Staff Network. As one of the largest employers in Victoria, we can impact positively on the employment of Aboriginal people and provide career opportunities that are challenging, fulfilling and culturally safe

2018

2019

2020

2021

2017

The Department launched the Investing in our people strategy that emphasised building a safe and inclusive workplace, supported by the VPS Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Department's third Aboriginal inclusion plan, *Wirnalung Ganai*, had a strong focus on policy reform, organisational change, employment, and Aboriginal voice

The Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Employment Plan included a 2% public service Aboriginal employment target aligned to Barring Djinang

DET VPS People Strategy 2021-2024 supporting and developing our people to thrive

2016

2015

*Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026.* This plan was developed and is being implemented in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal community, including VAEAL, and with support from the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

The Department's second Aboriginal inclusion plan, *Wirnalung Ganai*, established key action areas that focused on systemic change, including systemic inclusion, data improvement, employment and economic participation, and community engagement

OUR FOCUS AREA'S

Connected Culture

Purposeful leadership

Enabled and Capable

Inclusive Organisation

Focus Area	Connected Culture	Purposeful leadership	Enabled and Capable	Inclusive Organisation
	Through our values-led culture, maintaining strong connections for our people across dynamic working environments.	Drawing on diverse perspectives to inform decisions, our leaders are united in striving for success through a common purpose.	Harnessing our belief that all VPS staff should realise their potential, we will ensure all our people feel safe, well and invested in.	Deepening our focus on diversity and inclusion, we will ensure all people actively participate, belong and maintain their uniqueness
Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Through the strength and foundation of our values-led culture, enabling new ways of working and embracing transformation</li> <li>2. Staying connected while embedding flexible and new ways of working to meet the needs of our world class education system</li> <li>3. Ensuring agile ways of working and cross-workforce collaboration becomes the norm, supported by enhanced systems, supports and processes</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our leaders will practice distributed leadership to empower collaborative relationships and support their teams to enact change</li> <li>2. Provide opportunities for staff with knowledge and expertise to be involved in collective decision making</li> <li>3. Continue to build our leadership strength, through fostering leadership growth and career pathways</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positioning health, safety and wellbeing as fundamental to reaching potential</li> <li>2. Building on the skills of our workforce to be high-performing, high quality public servants</li> <li>3. Embedding a whole-person approach to development to achieve Department priorities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Removing barriers and enhancing policies and processes that support equity so that people can do their best work</li> <li>2. Promoting understanding and shifting the way we do things to be more inclusive</li> <li>3. Creating a sense of belonging through frequent, positive interactions</li> </ol>
Success	Every 12 months yearly workplan actions are developed and endorsed by Culture and People Committee			
	Every 6 months progress reports are provided to Culture and People Committee			

## ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT

### Dhelk Wukang and the department's commitment to Aboriginal employment are not mutually exclusive.

Having a workforce that reflects the community it serves improves outcomes, relationships and learning. To attract Aboriginal employees, the department must have the door wide open and be active in the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples and perspectives.

Both the employment of Aboriginal people and partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities will amplify Aboriginal voices and decision-making.

Aboriginal employment commitments are captured in a range of ways in the department:

1. Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Employment Plan 2020–2026
2. The department's Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–2025
3. VPS Workforce Plan 2022–2024
4. School Workforce Planning.



## Aboriginal Employment Plan 2020–2026

The Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP) was an action of Wirralung Ganai, Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2020–2021. The plan includes 61 actions across four areas of focus and has a 2% employment target across schools and corporate workforces. The AEP is overseen by a sub-working group with a majority Aboriginal staff from the department and VAEAI.

Work towards achieving the 2% workforce target is the responsibility of all parts of the department. This plan complements other initiatives in the department to boost Aboriginal employment, such as the work to implement Barring Djinang, Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian public sector, the Gender Equality Action Plan and the department's VPS and school workforce plans.

The department is committed to the Aboriginal Employment Plan's five areas of focus:

1. Improve attraction and retention
2. Create progressive career experiences
3. Create culturally safe workplaces
4. Enhance support for Aboriginal staff
5. Oversight and strong governance.

Dhelk Wukang's governance structure has responsibility for monitoring the AEP.

## Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025

The department's Gender Equality Action Plan for 2022-25 focuses on bringing about workplace equality and ensuring an equitable and respectful workplace for all staff in government schools and our corporate workplaces. The action plan sets out the department's key focus areas to address gendered structural and cultural inequality in our workplaces. It focuses on intersectional inequality, particularly how cultural identity and other identity characteristics such as age, sexuality and disability can exacerbate workplace gender inequality.

The focus areas are:

1. Promote equality in the composition of our workforce
2. Reduce the gender pay gap
3. Ensure a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace.

## VPS Workforce Plan 2022–2024

The department's VPS Workforce Plan follows the employee life cycle to affect change. Actions are underpinned by the department's values and principles of diversity and inclusion.

Actions are focused on three areas:

1. Attract and recruit
2. Ensure an adaptable, engaged and empowered workforce
3. Build and transform capabilities and skills.

## School Workforce Planning

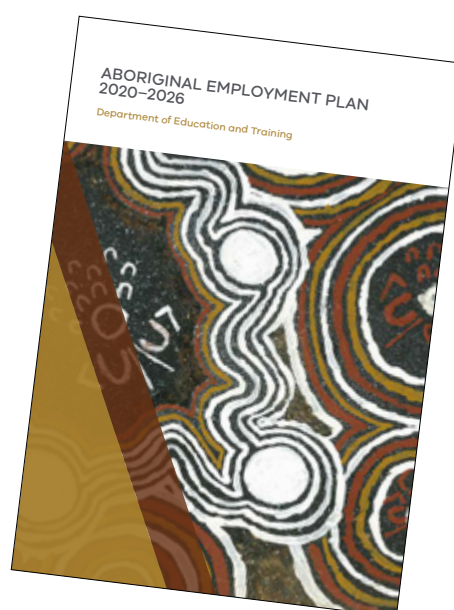
The school workforce plan is a tool to inform good decision-making and staff-management practices.

The workforce plan is one aspect of schools' planning for improvement and flows from the school strategic plan. The principal is responsible for the plan and for consulting to develop the plan. The school board has an oversight function.

A key objective of a school's workforce planning is to ensure the principles of diversity, fairness and equal opportunity are enshrined in building the school's workforce and future capability.

Diversity policies are at the core of building a modernised school workforce, in keeping with and reflecting the increasing diversity of the community, better engaging our diverse student populations, and competitively attracting and retaining the best talent in the labour market to meet current and future school skill requirements.

Schools strive to reflect the community's diversity in their workforce and ensure the workplace is free from discrimination and harassment.





# LISTENING TO STAFF AND PARTNERS

## DEVELOPING THIS PLAN

Dhelk Wukang is the department's fourth Aboriginal inclusion plan. Developing this plan included working with and through the Wirnalung Ganai (Aboriginal Inclusion) Working Group, which is chaired by the Deputy Secretary, People and Executive Services, and has membership from across the department.

Dhelk Wukang has been informed by facilitating 10 virtual consultation workshops to hear staff reflections on *Wirnalung Ganai 2019–2021*. Two of these consultations were open only to the department's Koorie Staff Network, and a number of workshops were held after school hours to enable staff to attend. Separate consultation was held with VAEAI.



### What we heard through the consultation:

1. The purpose of *Wirnalung Ganai 2019–2021* was reaffirmed, and was proposed to inform *Dhelk Wukang 2022–2026*
2. Celebrating achievements is important – Capture the success of *Wirnalung Ganai* through storytelling in *Dhelk Wukang*
3. Enhance the importance of yarning, ask questions of each other
4. Keep the momentum on actions completed. If embedded in practice, strive for continuous improvement and monitor
5. Consider in the implementation how regional impact and engagement can be strengthened
6. Consider how teachers can be supported (released) to engage in opportunities for professional networking and development fully
7. Don't lose the obligation and role of leadership in Aboriginal inclusion in *Dhelk Wukang*
8. Align with the *Victorian Self-Determination Framework (2019)* domains and enablers, capturing action (the 'what') and the enablers (the 'how')
9. Consider how actions are implemented with a focus on relationships and places to create sustainability and productivity
10. Developing a monitoring framework is important (to ensure) accountability and quality in schools and corporate environments. How can we measure the impact?
11. How we connect with existing obligations is important to embedding inclusion, such as human resource policy and procedure, FISO and wellbeing
12. The principles of self-determination are important, and the one that needs to be added as we progress towards treaty is truth-telling
13. Make some connection to *Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026* within actions
14. The plan needs to remain agile to respond to change, innovations and Aboriginal community voice.

## SCOPE OF THIS PLAN

This plan will encompass the department's corporate and school environments to align with the AEP. It consolidates foundational actions that have established policy, program, relationships, capability development and engagement from previous inclusion plans. It strengthens sustainable processes to embed Aboriginal inclusion every day and support self-determination.

Equality, inclusion and human rights are the foundation of *Dhelk Wukang*, and it draws on the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*<sup>3</sup> and the *United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*.<sup>4</sup>

Actions will complement the *Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026*, which encourages schools to focus on a positive climate for learning, community engagement and a culture of professional leadership to achieve better student outcomes.

This plan is flexible and agile. A complementary implementation plan will ensure the department can respond to changes that arise from initiatives and outcomes such as the Yoorrook Justice Commission and Self-Determination in Education Reform.



3 The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities | Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

4 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | United Nations For Indigenous Peoples

# A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The framework for delivering our vision for Aboriginal inclusion will use the 4 key focus areas and enablers of the *Victorian Self-Determination Framework (SDRF)* (2009)<sup>5</sup> to tailor actions, and the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, 2018–2023 (VAAF)* self-determination enablers, to design how actions will be met.

Aboriginal inclusion is only achieved when the perspectives of Aboriginal people guide action. Allies are responsible for implementing action in a way that demonstrates respect and value for Aboriginal people and protocols. The SDRF and the VAAF have captured the voice of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

The actions in this plan align with the SDRF focus areas (the what), the SDRF enablers guide the design by understanding the intended impact of the action (the why) and the VAAF principles of self-determination will guide the process of implementing the action (the how) and be key in reflecting on the success of the action during review.





Some actions are being carried forward from Wirnalong Ganai to maintain momentum and impact. Actions from previous plans now embedded in everyday practice will be acknowledged through the stories in this plan and the Aboriginal Inclusion every day section.

The Dhelk Wukang Working Group will monitor actions in this plan and how the principles of self-determination were applied to achieving it.

## SDRF focus areas (*the what*)



## SDRF enablers (*the why*)

-  Prioritise culture
-  Address trauma and support healing
-  Address racism and promote cultural safety
-  Transfer power and resources to communities

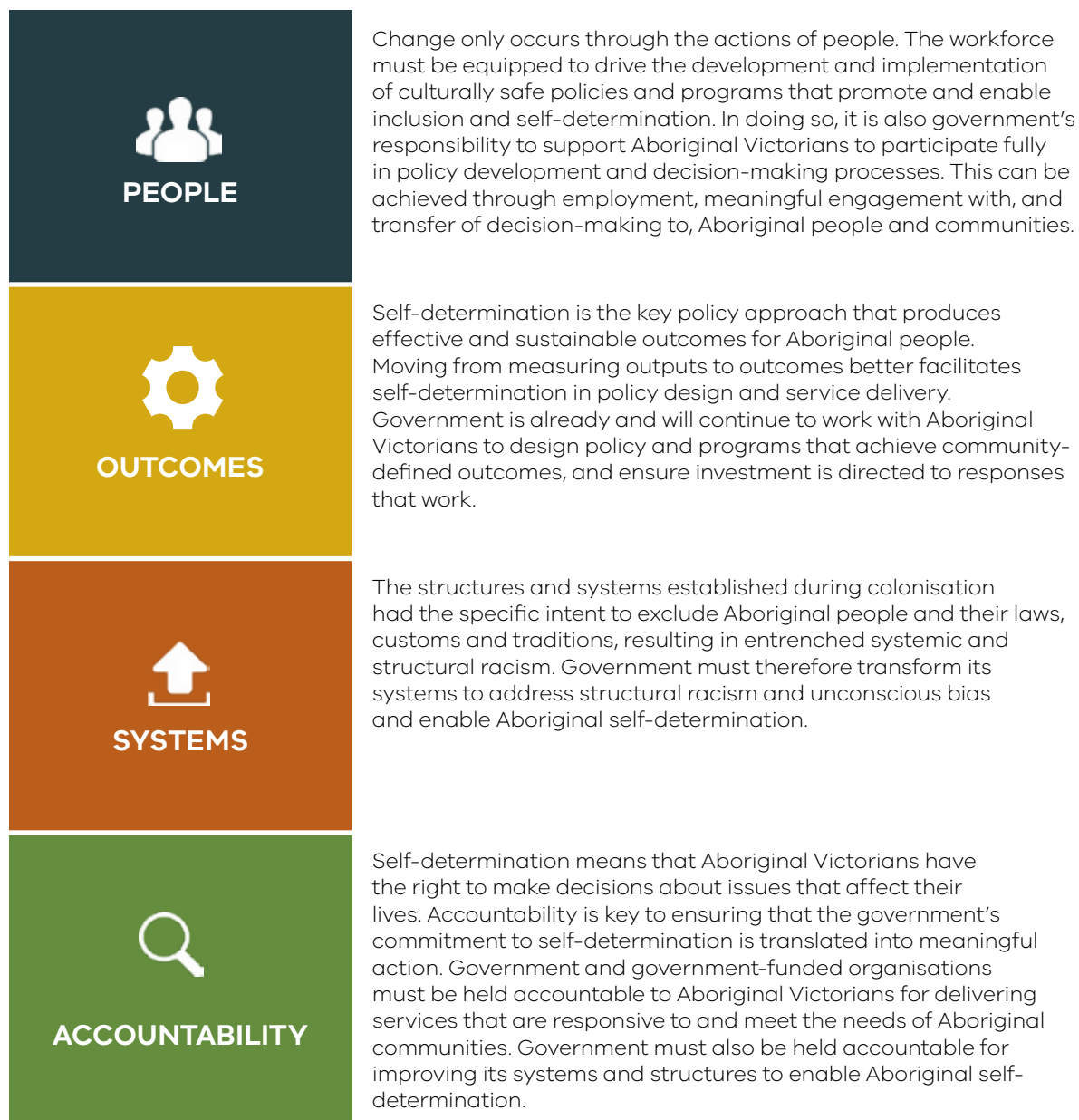
## VAAF self-determination guiding principles and truth-telling (*the how*):

- Human rights
- Cultural integrity
- Commitment
- Aboriginal expertise
- Partnership
- Investment
- Decision-making
- Empowerment
- Cultural safety
- Equity

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-09/Self-Determination-Reform-Framework-August-2019.PDF>



## Focus areas aligned to the Victorian Self-Determination Reform Framework<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Permission has been provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Victoria) to reproduce images and concepts from the SDRF 2019.

## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS | PEOPLE

### GOAL

Our goal is to build a culturally safe corporate and government school workforce that understands and has the capability to enable Aboriginal inclusion and support self-determination in all policies and programs.

### APPROACH

To achieve this goal, the department will:

1. build the capability of the workforce to have a common understanding of Aboriginal inclusion and self-determination, including the enablers and guiding principles, allowing government to advance its commitment to Aboriginal self-determination
2. build the skills of the workforce to engage with Victorian Aboriginal communities effectively
3. build the skills of the workforce to embed the self-determination enablers and guiding principles in policies and programs and ensure this is part of core business
4. contribute to ensuring the VPS/GTS is a culturally safe employer and an employer of choice for Aboriginal Victorians.



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- 1.1. Support and develop the Aboriginal workforce, increase the number of Aboriginal staff and create a culturally safe environment
- 1.2. Develop a suite of self-paced or facilitated professional development options for schools to deliver
- 1.3. Focus on career development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- 1.4. Continue the Yan Ngitj ambassador program for corporate staff and expand to staff in schools
- 1.5. Establish the Koorie Teachers Network (KTN)
- 1.6. Increase engagement between executives and Aboriginal staff

## OUR PLANS IN ACTION

### Yan Ngitj – walking together

Yan Ngitj ambassadors promote Aboriginal inclusion and the department's plan to help build and strengthen positive relationships department-wide through place-based activity and communication.

Yan Ngitj, meaning 'to walk together' in Wadda Wurrung language, was named with support from Wadda Wurrung Elder and department Koorie Education Support Officer Aunty Judy Dalton-Walsh.

The Yan Ngitj ambassadors include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff from department groups, authorities and regions. They support culturally safe and inclusive workplaces by promoting across the board, responsibility for Aboriginal cultural safety and respect for our shared history and Aboriginal cultures.

There is an annual Expression of Interest process through which the Yan Ngitj network garners a high level of staff interest and engagement. Currently, 55 people have volunteered to be Yan Ngitj, and they voluntarily take on this role in addition to performing their everyday job. Building the number of Yan Ngitj ambassadors is an ongoing process.

*"For me, being a Yan Ngitj is one step I am taking to pay the rent! I have had the pleasure and honour of living, working and playing predominately on the lands of the Boon Wurrung/Bunurong people and I feel it is my duty to honour those Traditional Owners. I also work in the International Education Division and being a Yan Ngitj has allowed me to remind people that cross-cultural awareness can – and should – start right here at home!"* Siobhán Marsh

*"Being a Yan Ngitj allows me to positively influence and so not just passively say, 'well, what are they doing for NAIDOC Week?' but to reframe that as 'what are we doing for NAIDOC Week?' I can add my voice to these conversations, or raise questions at the right time and with the right people in my workspace. That's been fruitful. Regular get-togethers offer opportunities to ask questions and share activities and learnings...so that our Koorie colleagues aren't always doing the heavy lifting."* Peter Fisher

### Koorie Staff Network

Established in 2018, the Koorie Staff Network (KSN) is a peer-led network that connects and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across the department, including in corporate, schools and TAFEs. The KSN promotes Aboriginal inclusion and contributes to the department's culturally safe work environment.

The KSN started with 50 people and has grown to include approximately 200 people today. It provides collegiate and professional networking for Koorie staff and contributes to those staff members feeling valued and respected.

Members meet regularly online for check-ins and face-to-face twice a year. Subgroups within the KSN have been established for women's and men's business. A study group connects members who are juggling full-time work and part-time study. Small working groups are formed as needed to ensure self-determination and decision-making in identifying and organising activities and professional development for the KSN.

Increasingly, the KSN is an important vehicle in making available the expertise of its members to provide insight and input into decision-making and policy or program design. KSN members, regardless of their position in the department's hierarchy, have been asked to be part of sub-committees and panels discussing issues as diverse as family violence reform programs and LGBTIQ+ school resources to workforce and early childhood inclusion planning.

About 25 KSN members have also undertaken Merit Protection Board training to assist in selection panels for recruitment to ensure selection panels are culturally safe for Aboriginal applicants.

The KSN also plans to increase its number of trained Workplace Contact Officers who can be contacted if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers have concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying or family violence impacting their work.

## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS | SYSTEMS

### GOAL

Our goal is to transform government systems and structures to enable Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and strategic service provision by embedding the self-determination enablers.

### APPROACH

To achieve this goal, the department will:

1. ensure that effective engagement mechanisms exist across the department to support a self-determination-based approach to working with Aboriginal Victorians
2. ensure the department demonstrates an understanding of the ongoing structural impact of colonisation, racism and unconscious bias
3. address racism, discrimination and unconscious bias in policy, practice, systems and institutions
4. recognise and remove the barriers to the Aboriginal community accessing services and participating fully in social and economic activity.



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- 2.1. Identify Aboriginal inclusion as a priority in all department groups, regions, areas, divisions and authority business plans
- 2.2. Prioritise Aboriginal inclusion in executive and employee Performance and Development Plans (PDPs) to build understanding and drive behaviours
- 2.3. Support the enhancement of VPS and GTS induction practices to improve new starter experiences for corporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
- 2.4. Raise awareness about structural racism and ways to address structural racism
- 2.5. Respond to emerging developments in Aboriginal affairs across the Victorian Government, including the Yoorrook Justice Commission reports and findings as they relate to Dhelk Wukang
- 2.6. Provide consistent guidance regarding acknowledging Traditional Owners, arranging Welcome to Country and using Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian flags and artwork/images.

## OUR PLANS IN ACTION

### Embedding Aboriginal culture in new school builds

The Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) worked with the support of VAEI to engage with the local Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners to provide advice regarding appropriate recognition for all new school builds and significant renovations of Aboriginal cultures and perspectives.

VAEI supports meetings with the VSBA to progress planning. VAEI has established a process for consultations with the VSBA, including the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) representative for the region and Traditional Owner representative/s over several meetings.

To support self-determination, the agenda includes time for community consultation, where the Koorie community (LAECGs + and Traditional Owners) can privately discuss their thoughts on inclusion at the school before presenting their recommendations in the meeting.

Following the initial meeting, a list of recommendations is collated and sent to the VSBA. They may include design aspects, landscaping, naming and recognition of Country, cultural inclusion at the school, including student input and embedding cultural perspectives in the curriculum.

During several consultations, discussions have focused on embedding the cultural inclusion aspects into the curriculum. For example, labelling plants in language and highlighting the uses and benefits of plaques in the landscape may be included in lessons in the classroom.

The consultation process aims to be inclusive and includes the LAECG, Marrung facilitator, VAEI schools' project officer, VAEI-VSBA coordinator, Traditional Owner representative/s, VSBA officers, architects and school representatives. The department Koorie education workforce may be asked to attend meetings.

LAECGs have reported how important and beneficial it is to have Traditional Owners included in these meetings. This provides an opportunity for the community to join in developing and working towards implementing recommendations for cultural inclusion in the new school buildings and upgrades.

LAECGs have also reported the positive benefits of including student voice during consultations, at school visits, or via suggestions from students through school representatives. The LAECGs regularly comment on the importance of remembering that it is the students' school and that cultural inclusion measures are vital for encouraging a sense of belonging among First Nations students.

In addition to school builds, the pipeline for new schools includes establishing a Regional Advisory Group to plan for naming the school and employing a principal to commence planning for the school's opening. The terms of reference were revised in 2021 to include the membership of a local Aboriginal community member. VAEI has provided support to the community and a process to identify a representative. The department's area Koorie Education Coordinator also supports the representative.

This process is now embedded into the school pipeline. Aboriginal people are at the centre of decision-making, which will positively impact access and engagement with education.

'Through the DET Aboriginal Inclusion Plan, Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs) are collaborating with Traditional Owners and the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) to ensure Aboriginal perspectives are embedded in the setting of any new Victorian schools or current school upgrades. This work is vital in creating welcoming educational spaces for Koorie students, their families and the community. By creating inclusive spaces, Aboriginal perspectives will be at the forefront of the minds of educators and can be woven into the curriculum.'

Lionel Bamblett, General Manager, VAEI

## Embedding Aboriginal culture in corporate workspaces

The department's Working Places Strategy and Design branch's purpose is 'designing and championing modern, well-maintained and sustainable workplaces to enable all DET people to feel safe and included so that we can perform at our best'.

Work is underway to adapt and change office fit-out environments to ensure safe and inclusive workplaces, where diversity is valued, and inclusive practices are the standard way of doing things. The department believes workplaces have a significant role in supporting inclusion.

Building upon actions included in the Wirnalung Ganai 2019-2021 Aboriginal Inclusion Plan, such as ensuring the three national flags are displayed in the department's corporate offices and board rooms, the department's corporate office policy and guidelines include how workspaces can recognise Aboriginal culture. There is also a process for staff to be involved in research and consultation to name identified meeting rooms using Aboriginal language or after Elders who have made a significant contribution to the community. Dhelk Wukang will continue to focus on representing Victorian Aboriginal people, histories and cultures in corporate spaces in partnership with the local Aboriginal community and VAEAI.

A total of 23 meeting rooms had already undergone this process, including the Gariwerd and Pyreness rooms in Ballarat, Buloke meeting room in Horsham and Moondani meeting room in Keilor. To improve knowledge of the name and its significance, new or updated signage and plaques were installed in the offices.

Through the expression of interest process in 2020, an additional 13 room names were approved, and areas have been supported with signage. To share the significance of the name with staff and Aboriginal community, some events to launch the room names are being held in 2022, including the Nguwul Gabra room in Shepparton and the Aunty Vera Briggs room in Moe.

Continued conversations with Aboriginal staff, the department's Koorie Staff Network, local Aboriginal communities, Traditional Owners and VAEAI will enhance corporate workspaces for everyone who works and visits our corporate workspaces.







# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS | OUTCOMES



## GOAL

Our goal is to adopt an outcomes-focused approach that will enable flexibility and Aboriginal leadership in government's efforts to embed the self-determination enablers.

## APPROACH

To achieve this goal, the department will:

1. actively support the development of Aboriginal community-defined outcomes, rather than output and measures that reflect community aspirations
2. improve the quality of Aboriginal data to enable current challenges to be clearly defined and work with Aboriginal Victorians to develop effective solutions
3. overcome silos and fragmentation and instead collaborate based on the achievement of key shared outcomes and lessons learned from unsuccessful strategies
4. continue to move away from deficit-based approaches to Aboriginal education and inclusion, focusing instead on a strength-based approach.



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- 3.1. Prioritise the monitoring of Aboriginal inclusion across the department
- 3.2. Increase knowledge and understanding of terms such as 'self-determination' and 'cultural safety'
- 3.3. Showcase Aboriginal staff and their achievements
- 3.4. Consider the impact of budget bids on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- 3.5. Engage with and learn from strength-based approaches from across the Victorian Government

## OUR PLANS IN ACTION

### Dhauwurd Wurrung language program takes off in Portland

The commencement of a new Dhauwurd Wurrung language program across 8 schools in the Portland area is an example of local-level partnership and self-determination in language teaching.

In late 2019, principals from 8 schools in far southwest Victoria, led by Bundarra Primary School, saw an opportunity to link the extensive Aboriginal cultural activities already in place within their schools with a local language curriculum.

The schools have employed a Language Support Officer since Term 1, 2021. Their role is to deliver the language and culture curriculum and support principals and staff in participating schools to respectfully and appropriately build Dhauwurd Wurrung language and culture elements into broader school programs.

The program has gone from strength to strength, and the Dhauwurd Wurrung language has become embedded across a cluster of schools in the Portland area.

Stephanie Carter was one of the principals involved in the project from its beginning.

*"We had previously been teaching Indonesian but didn't feel connected to that language and began to ask what was the purpose of our children learning Indonesian. As a group of principals and being rural, we also had trouble finding Indonesian teachers. We then thought, 'wouldn't it be amazing if we could teach our local language?'"*

*"Originally, we taught the language for an hour a week and teachers were supported by Auntie Delsie, our first Language Support Officer, predominantly around pronunciation. Since returning to school last year, we have tried to embed language in our everyday teaching, rather than it being a standalone subject."*

*"For the past 12 months, we have been part of the Teaching Partners Initiative, which the department runs to improve reading outcomes. Through that initiative, we had teaching partners for a day a week in school who supported our Junior School teachers in finding opportunities to embed perspectives and language in literacy. We're now looking at expanding that to our Senior School."*

*"Cross-checking with the curriculum, we use texts with Aboriginal perspectives and languages embedded in them. We utilise language in our morning circles. We do an Acknowledgement of Country every morning and greetings in language. We find opportunities every day, as often as possible, to use the language and make it meaningful and relevant."*

*"The teachers are enthusiastic and on board with this program, and our students absolutely love it. For their reports at the end of the semester, each student provides a comment, and quite a number of them write about learning language, having Auntie Delsie in their classroom, and how much they have learned from her."*

In partnership with VAEAI, Traditional Owners and local communities, the department continues to support and grow language programs in Victorian government schools.

### Secretary's Marrung Awards

The Secretary's Marrung Awards stem from the department's Aboriginal Employment Plan 2019–2026 and recognise and celebrate good practice in Aboriginal education and inclusion. Open to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees, the awards highlight practices, projects and innovations that promote self-determination and inclusion.

Award categories reflect the key priorities and principles of Marrung: Positive Climate for Learning, Community Engagement, Professional Leadership, Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Development. The Aboriginal Community Leadership Award is for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

The inaugural awards in June 2022 recognised schools, teachers, department staff and projects that exemplify self-determination and Aboriginal inclusion in action.

Marjorie Pickford, a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) winner of the inaugural Aboriginal Community Leadership award, has played a key role in supporting Sebastopol Primary School to include Indigenous education in its learning program. She has routinely mentored the Indigenous culture teacher and principal.





Marjorie is a long-standing community member of the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative and became a KESO in 1996. She has brought cultural expertise, reciprocal respect and cohesion to the Sebastopol Primary School community in her professional development role and through educational workshops, student support groups and professional practice teams.

Marjorie ensures Individual Educational Plans for students are meaningful by addressing the Aboriginal identity of students as individuals, community members and learners. She has infinite care for First Nations children while supporting all children to build an understanding of the intergenerational trauma, history and experiences of many First Nations families. Marjorie has worked with the school to create a community where First Nations students and their families can self-identify, share and learn more about their culture safely and respectfully.

Thornbury Primary School, winner of the inaugural Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Development award, has been engaged in an Action Plan informed by a Theory of Change for many years to improve

Aboriginal students' engagement and learning outcomes. The improvement plan has inspired a shift toward a more culturally responsive teaching approach, creating a socially and intellectual safe space for the school's 'Deadly Learners'. Along with a comprehensive professional development program, the school has established productive relationships with local organisations, other schools and Monash University.

A key indicator of the efficacy of the school action plan is the increased school attendance for Aboriginal students and more active participation in the tasks. There has been an increase in families attending student support groups and a notable success from Term 1 to Term 4 student work samples. NAPLAN data also show improvement in reading and writing growth from Year 3 to Year 5 in the top two bands. The school has fostered relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Yappera Children's Service Co-Operative Limited, deepened its understanding of the VAEI Protocols and utilised the knowledge and skills of a Language and Culture Teacher, other organisations and allied health professionals who visit the school weekly.





## Self-determination in education reform

Government action to enable self-determination must acknowledge that Aboriginal Victorians hold the knowledge and expertise about what is best for themselves, their families and communities.

As part of this action, the 2021/22 Victorian State Budget provided \$3.7 million over two years to fund an intensive, state-wide consultation and codesign process to develop reform options that progress Aboriginal self-determination across Victoria's education system.

The aim is to identify opportunities for schools to formally partner with Aboriginal communities and organisations to overcome barriers to engagement and learning and accelerate excellence in Aboriginal education outcomes.

Consultation to strengthen self-determination is happening via several avenues, including campfire conversations run by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Traditional Owner groups and area-based workshops with Aboriginal students and young people.

A key element of the department's focus on self-determination has seen schools hosting campfire conversations as part of the consultation process.

As of late June 2022, 80 schools across Victoria had hosted campfire conversations, discussing themes including racism, cultural awareness and sensitivity in teaching, student pathways, barriers and opportunities to empower Aboriginal students with disability, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard in schools, establishing Aboriginal advisory groups and learning about, and on, Country.

CUST training





## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS | ACCOUNTABILITY



### GOAL

Our goal is to establish transparent accountability of government and government-funded organisations that ensure policies and programs are responsive to Aboriginal needs, priorities and aspirations and that departmental action in Aboriginal affairs is consistent with the self-determination enablers and guiding principles.

### APPROACH

To achieve this goal, the department will:

1. ensure Victorian Aboriginal communities are supported to hold government and government-funded organisations accountable
2. increase integrity, transparency and accessibility of government data on Aboriginal outcomes
3. move towards measuring community-defined outcomes – what we are achieving for and with Aboriginal Victorians – and robustly evaluate investment and programs against these outcomes.



## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- 4.1. Ensure sufficient time and space is available for deep listening and engagement in all stages of policy development within the department
- 4.2. Continue to support the Koorie Education Workforce (KEW) in building the capacity of universal systems to respond to Aboriginal needs
- 4.3. Increase Aboriginal voice in school review processes through the accredited Challenge Partner program
- 4.4. Deliver on the Victorian Government's Aboriginal procurement target, as outlined in Victoria's Social Procurement Framework 2018
- 4.5. Recognise Aboriginal cultures in all new buildings and significant upgrades in corporate and school facilities

## OUR PLANS IN ACTION

### Social procurement – creating opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal businesses

Victoria's Social Procurement Framework establishes 10 objectives supporting government agencies' social procurement. These include 'Opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people' and 'Sustainable Victorian social enterprise and Aboriginal business sectors'.

There is a 1% Aboriginal Business Procurement Target for the Victorian Government. In 2020–21, the department figure was 1.31%, which equates to 33 Aboriginal businesses being engaged by the department and a total direct spend of around \$444,000. These objectives are aligned with Yuma Yirramboi, the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy 2022.

Procuring from these businesses has deepened the department's understanding of Aboriginal culture and history, and delivered exemplary services and/or goods in areas as diverse as consultation, strategic planning, media, construction, cultural services, publications, design, evaluation and professional development services.

The department's Social Procurement Strategy in 2022 will move beyond the 1% Aboriginal Business Procurement Target towards looking at how engagement with established and emerging Aboriginal businesses can be incorporated into best-practice procurement planning.

Consultant Karen Milward has been working with the department to develop key strategies and facilitate codesign in the skills and training sector and early childhood education, while marketing and creative agency Little Rocket has provided design and media services to the department to enable the sharing of stories and enhanced communication.



*"The ability for the team to work on meaningful campaign work that makes a difference with community has been incredibly significant. Little Rocket has been able to employ new First Nations staff, provide artwork opportunities to over a dozen artists, utilise Aboriginal printers, musicians and photographers, and actively support other First Nations creatives in Victoria and the Northern Territory." John Burgess, Owner, Little Rocket*



The department has also supported emerging businesses, including Emmy Bell, who produced artwork to complement the Yan Ngitj inclusion program.

*"I love my art; it allows me to express and connect with culture and Country. To have my art chosen and used for a purpose within government is like a big warm hug from my Aunty – it demonstrates understanding, commitment and the important work towards self-determination for me and my community." Emmy Bell, Artist*

## Partnership: Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan governance

Launched in 2016, Marrung is the department's 10-year integrated strategy for delivering excellence in services and outcomes for Aboriginal learners in the early childhood education, schools and higher education and training sectors.

Marrung was developed in partnership with the Aboriginal community, with leadership from the department's principal partner in Aboriginal education, VAEAI. The codesigned vision is for Victoria to be a state where all Victorians celebrate the rich and thriving culture of First Nations people; where universal service systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and where every Koorie person achieves their potential, succeeds in life and feels strong and safe in their cultural identity.

This partnership approach is embedded through Marrung's local, regional and state-wide governance mechanisms.

Koorie Education Roundtables, Regional Partnership Forums and the Marrung Central Governance Committee provide regular opportunities for Aboriginal community members and organisations to join with the department.

Together, they monitor the implementation and progress of actions, identify achievements and barriers, and make decisions that support the shared vision of Marrung and continue its progress.

Since April 2021, the Marrung Project Control Board (PCB) has aimed to build shared accountability for Aboriginal outcomes across the department. It was endorsed by the Marrung Central Governance Committee as a decision-making body responsible for monitoring and managing initiatives that address actions in Marrung, particularly self-determination. VAEAI and department executives work alongside each other as members of the Marrung PCB.

Members commit to ensuring Aboriginal stakeholders in Marrung's actions have been respectfully engaged and that VAEAI is represented in decision-making processes. The Self-Determination Reform Framework and self-determination enablers must all be considered when making decisions and providing advice.







# MONITORING AND REPORTING

## **Dhelk Wukang – Aboriginal Inclusion Working Group**

The Working Group is chaired by the Deputy Secretary, People and Executive Services and meets quarterly. It includes representation from each group in the department (including executives responsible for the plan's deliverables), regions, schools, Aboriginal partners and the Koorie Staff Network.

The Working Group also receives quarterly reports from the Aboriginal Employment Plan Sub Working Group.

The Working Group will monitor the quality and implementation of the plan. The 'what' (actions), the 'why' (enablers) and the 'how' (principles of self-determination). An implementation plan will support the inclusion plan to be fully realised and ensure flexibility for emerging opportunities.

The Working Group will provide a progress report every 6 months to the:

- relevant sub-committee of the department Executive Board
- Marrung Project Control Board, and
- the Koorie Staff Network.



Koorie Staff Network Meeting



## Divisions, regions and schools

Divisions, regions and schools will be responsible for implementing several actions in Dhelk Wukang. In addition, regions, areas and schools will develop place-based actions and initiatives with community partners to promote Aboriginal inclusion further.

The Yan Ngitj (inclusion ambassadors), alongside the Koorie workforce and Aboriginal community partners, will provide advice, coaching and cultural expertise to enable regions to identify local actions for inclusion in their business plans.

Several regional staff are also members of the Dhelk Wukang Working Group, where actions are monitored, and innovative practices and good news stories are shared and communicated.

## Groups and authorities

Delivery of this plan is a shared responsibility. Department groups and authorities will be accountable for delivering and monitoring their specific actions.

Like regions, groups and authorities will have Yan Ngitj, Aboriginal community partners and the Koorie Outcomes Division to provide advice, coaching and cultural expertise to help identify actions specific to the work area and to include in their business plans.

## External reporting

The department will promote its actions and achievements from this plan through whole-of-government Aboriginal affairs mechanisms. Outcomes of Dhelk Wukang contribute to reporting against the Victorian Self-Determination Reform Framework along with other initiatives across the department. Outcomes will also be provided on the department's strategy page.

## Indicators of success

The plan's success is determined by whether actions are fully achieved and if the process aligns with the principles of self-determination.

The vision of Dhelk Wukang developed through consultation is to ensure that the department is:

- a culturally safe and thriving place for Aboriginal students, families, employees, volunteers, pre-service teachers, visitors and community partners
- an organisation where Aboriginal people proudly identify as Aboriginal and feel safe to be themselves, where the expertise shared by First Nations peoples is valued and respected, and where every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life and feels strong in their cultural identity
- an organisation committed to Aboriginal self-determination, which is fundamental to better outcomes for Aboriginal students and affirms the relationship between government and the Aboriginal community as being one of mutual respect and joint decision-making.

The Dhelk Wukang Working Group will identify key indicators to measure the plan's success, including employment data, responses to the annual People Matter Survey and continued engagement and dialogue with staff and Aboriginal partners to gather qualitative data.

# ABORIGINAL INCLUSION EVERY DAY IDEAS

Leaders, managers, teachers, principals and decision-makers do not need permission or a plan to be inclusive. And employees and Aboriginal partners can think beyond the organisational focus of this plan to consider how individuals can take action.

Inclusion may be new for some people, and learning isn't always comfortable. But it's important to know that making mistakes is okay, and the fear of not getting it right the first time should not result in inaction.

## **Acknowledge formally recognised Aboriginal Traditional Owners**

At team meetings, other meetings, events and gatherings, check out the interactive map at Aboriginal Victoria to learn about the Traditional Owners and understand why it's important to acknowledge them.

Look at the department's guidelines  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/welcome-to-country-and-acknowledgement-of-traditional-owners.html>

## **Positive sharing of Aboriginal inclusion**

'Appreciative inquiry' is a well-known tool to raise consciousness and change attitudes, confidence and behaviour. In stand-ups and team meetings, share positive stories about Aboriginal inclusion.

## **Planning a new project**

At the beginning of every new project ask, how can I ensure Aboriginal people are at the centre of decision-making during this project? Make this a focus of stakeholder and engagement plans.

## **Review your writing**

Look at your writing and ask, have I used a human rights and inclusion lens? Have I avoided the 'otherness' in my writing? Have I avoided referring to Aboriginal people as 'them' or 'they'? Have I recognised that 'Aboriginal' is a proper noun and ensured it is capitalised?

## **Look at your work environment**

As a team, discuss opportunities to create a more inclusive environment that recognises and celebrates Aboriginal cultures and histories – and act on these ideas.

## **Review your work plans**

Spend time thinking about what can be done to progress Aboriginal inclusion and ask what can I do in my job, team, school, unit or division? Commit to including your actions in your work plans.

## **Celebrate or commemorate significant dates**

Plan small activities or develop innovative ways to recognise these events in your work area. Keep it simple and do your research. Some examples include organising a morning tea; creating craft or art; watching a short film together; arranging a guest speaker; organising a trivia quiz at lunchtime; emailing 'fast facts' during Reconciliation Week; hosting a book club discussion of an Aboriginal author's novel; or attending a community NAIDOC march. Encourage staff to attend local Aboriginal events.

## **Identify learning in your Professional Development Plan**

Identify training and development opportunities to increase your knowledge about the community you work in and about Aboriginal cultures and histories. Everyone is at a different place on the cultural competence continuum. To read more about the cultural competence continuum and cultural safety, look at: *Building Respectful Partnerships 2010*, and *This is Forever Business 2010*, published by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.

## **Talk**

Are the conversations you have regarding work inclusive of Aboriginal people? How will you include Aboriginal perspectives? Do you have respectful relationships with Aboriginal community members, networks and organisations? Do you have effective working relationships with Aboriginal colleagues? Do you spend time in the community – perhaps meetings can be held at Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations rather than the department?

Increase the importance of yarning and ask 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions of each other and remember that the virtual world means no one is too far away anymore.

## **Recruitment**

Advertise vacancies in Aboriginal media, e.g., the Koori Mail, and circulate through the Koorie Staff Network (through the Koorie Outcomes Division). Include an Aboriginal person on your selection panel. Recognise trained Koorie staff in the KSN and email [marrung@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:marrung@education.vic.gov.au) to reach out to a panel member.



## Procurement

Have you searched for an Aboriginal organisation or enterprise to quote for a service or goods?

The Victorian Aboriginal Business Directory can help you find Aboriginal businesses in Victoria.

You will find the directory here:

<<https://directory.business.vic.gov.au/aboriginal>>

Other Aboriginal business directories include:

- Indigenous Business Direct – a directory of verified Indigenous businesses by Supply Nation. You will find this directory here: <<https://supplynation.org.au/>>
- The Kinaway Business Directory – a directory of businesses registered with the Kinaway Chamber of Commerce. You will find this directory here: <<https://kinaway.com.au/search/>>

## Aboriginal staff

Have you considered becoming a workplace contact officer, so you can be trained in policies and human rights obligations and support colleagues experiencing discrimination, bullying, racism or family violence?

Human resources: Workplace Contact Officer (WCO) Network ([education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au))

## Schools

There are many resources available including:

- VAEAI website practice notes Resources – VAEAI
- FUSE Home Page - FUSE - Department of Education & Training
- Koorie English Online Koorie English Online ([education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au))
- Reconciliation Australia Narragunnawali program Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education - Reconciliation Australia
- Bunjilaka (Melbourne Museum) resources and Professional Development School programs and resources - Bunjilaka ([museums.vic.gov.au](http://museums.vic.gov.au))
- Koorie Heritage Trust resources and Professional Development Koorie Heritage Trust - Discover Aboriginal Victoria!

## Find out more yourself

Visit the collaboration site that provides information, tools and resources to support Aboriginal inclusion:

<<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/collaboration/WDI/Pages/Koorie.aspx>>

Talk to your Koorie Education Coordinator to find out about local ACCOs, gathering places and cultural centres in your local area.

Contact a Koorie education coordinator - Victorian Government ([www.vic.gov.au](http://www.vic.gov.au))

Research and grow your knowledge about initiatives and key players in Aboriginal affairs at the local and state-wide levels by taking a look at some of the links below:

- Reconciliation: <<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>> and <<http://www.reconciliation.vic.gov.au/>>
- Frequently asked questions: <<https://deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au/>>
- Education: <<http://www.vaeai.org.au/>> and <[https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/alcv/resources\\_langteams\\_teachers.aspx](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/alcv/resources_langteams_teachers.aspx)>
- Aboriginal languages: <<http://vaclang.org.au/>>
- Victorian Aboriginal cultures and histories: <<https://museums.vic.gov.au/bunjilaka>> and <<http://korieheritagetrust.com.au/>>
- School programs and resources - Melbourne Museum ([museums.vic.gov.au](http://museums.vic.gov.au))
- State-wide organisations:  
Child and Family Services <<https://www.vacca.org/>>  
Health and wellbeing (including ACCOs throughout Victoria) <<http://vaccho.org.au/>>  
Community Services <<http://www.vacsal.org.au/>>
- Treaty commission
- Yoo-rrook Justice Commission

# SIGNIFICANT DATES

Many significant dates on the Aboriginal calendar are an important part of Australia's shared history and are for all Australians to commemorate and/or celebrate. All department staff are encouraged to organise events in their local workplaces to acknowledge these dates.

Look out for events in your local community and join in.



Survival Day



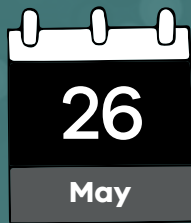
National Apology  
to the Stolen  
Generations



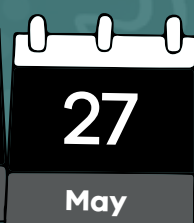
United Nations  
International Day  
Against Racial  
Discrimination



National  
Close the  
Gap Day



National  
Sorry Day



Anniversary  
of the 1967  
Referendum



National  
Reconciliation  
Week



Mabo Day



NAIDOC  
Week



National  
Aboriginal  
and Torres  
Strait Islander  
Children's Day



United Nation's  
International Day  
of the World's  
Indigenous Peoples



Indigenous  
Literacy Day



Anniversary of the  
UN Declaration  
on the Rights  
of Indigenous  
Peoples



### **26 January – Survival Day**

Many Aboriginal Australians choose to mark Australia Day by acknowledging the survival of their cultural heritage following the invasion of Australia by Europeans.

### **13 February – National Apology to the Stolen Generations**

This day marks the anniversary of the formal apology made on 13 February 2008 by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on behalf of the Federal Government and the Parliament of Australia, to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and in particular to the Stolen Generations.

### **21 March – United Nations International Day Against Racial Discrimination**

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on the day the police in South Africa opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid (1960). The UN states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and wellbeing of their societies. It emphasises that any doctrine of racial superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous and must be rejected.

### **24 March – National Close the Gap Day**

National Close the Gap Day is an annual event originally held to raise awareness of the poorer health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal people. It now provides a platform to raise awareness in other key areas, including education, employment and justice.

### **26 May – National Sorry Day**

This day is especially significant for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families, communities and cultural identity to assimilate. Past government policies of forced removal remained in place until the early 1970s. The children who were taken from their families are known as the Stolen Generations.

National Sorry Day marks the anniversary of the tabling in parliament on 26 May 1997 of the *Bringing them Home* report. The report is the result of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

### **27 May – Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum**

In a 1967 Referendum, more than 90% of Australians voted to remove clauses from the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The Referendum also gave the Federal Government the power to make laws on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### **27 May to 3 June – National Reconciliation Week**

Established in 1996, National Reconciliation Week offers people across Australia the opportunity to focus on reconciliation and to hear about the cultures and histories of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is a time to reflect on achievements so far – and the things that must still be done to achieve reconciliation.

### **3 June – Mabo Day**

On this day in 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered a landmark decision that recognised the traditional rights of the Meriam people to their Mer (Murray) Island in the Torres Strait.

Six of the seven judges upheld the claim and ruled that, when European settlement occurred, the lands of this continent were not *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one) and that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of (most of) the lands of the Murray Islands'.

The High Court recognised that Indigenous peoples had lived in Australia for thousands of years and enjoyed rights to their land according to their own laws and customs. They had been dispossessed of their lands piece by piece as the colony grew and that very dispossession underwrote the development of Australia into a nation. The judgments inserted the legal doctrine of native title into Australian law.

The decision took almost 10 years to reach from when the plaintiffs, including Eddie Koiki Mabo, began their legal claim for ownership of their lands on Mer Island.

### **First week of July – NAIDOC Week**

National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week is held annually in the first full week of July. It celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the first Australians and the oldest surviving culture in the world. At the end of the week, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's contributions and achievements are recognised through the annual National NAIDOC Week Awards Ceremony.

### **4 August – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day**

Children's Day, and the week leading up to it, is a time to celebrate the strengths and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It provides an opportunity for all Australians to show their support for Aboriginal children, as well as learn about the crucial impact that community, culture and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.

### **9 August – United Nations International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples has been observed annually since 1974. It promotes and protects the rights of the world's Indigenous people and recognises the achievements and contributions that Indigenous people make to improve world issues, such as environmental protection.

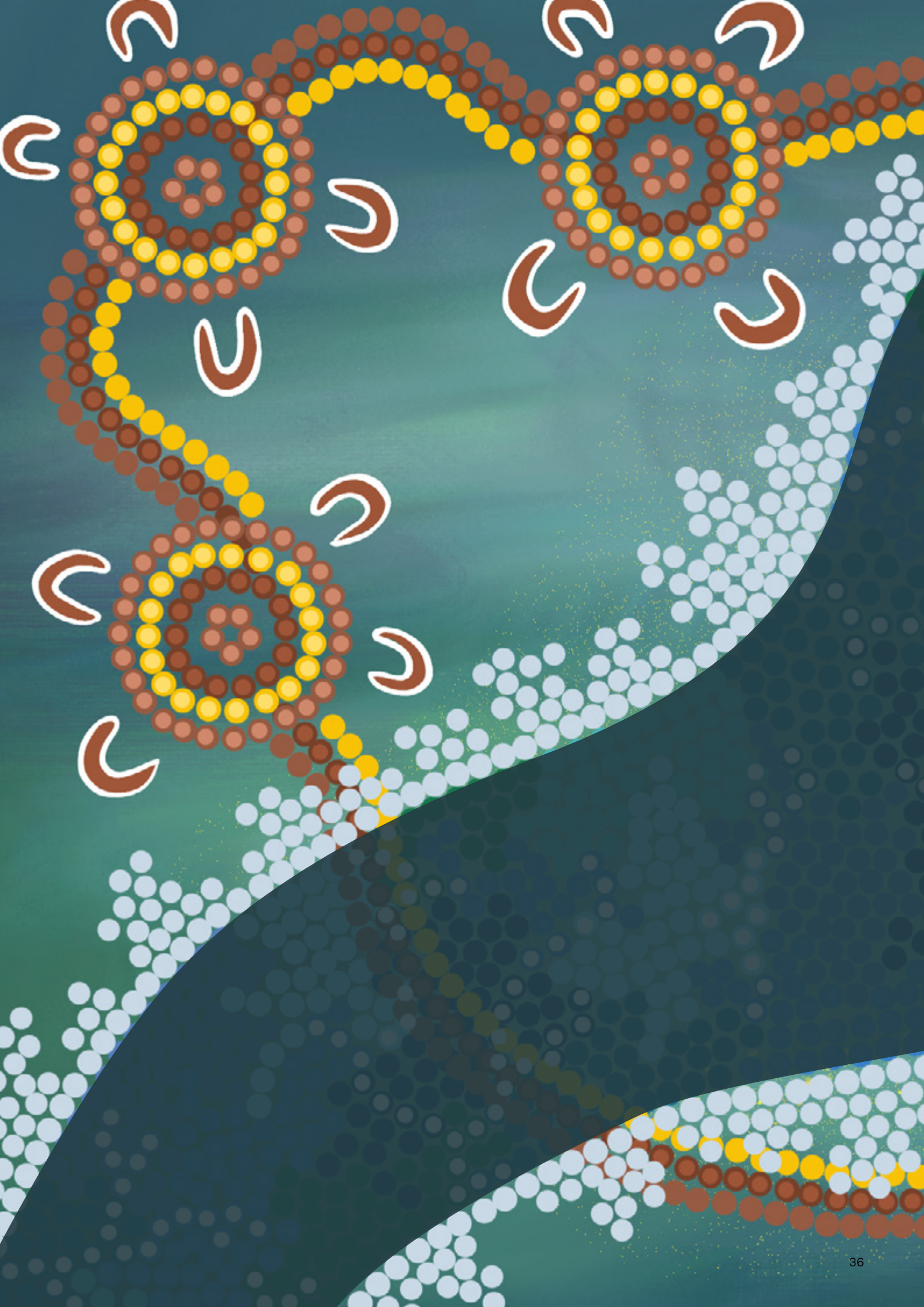
### **7 September – Indigenous Literacy Day**

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation provides resources for parents, families, early years services and schools to inspire celebrating stories and language. They have tips and ideas about getting engaged through book swaps, community libraries and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island authors and storytellers.

### **13 September – Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007.









# DHELK WUKANG

*giving goodness, giving respect*

Dja Dja Wurrung language



