# Current Programs and Funding Supports

Since the launch of Marrung there has been unprecedented investment in Aboriginal education initiatives, totalling $74.9 million of new investment as well as $16 million of ongoing funding. This is in addition to universal programs and funding which are also accessed by Koorie learners.

Funded Marrung actions align with the VAAF’s self-determination enablers and guiding principles, and all actions included in Marrung were determined in partnership with our Aboriginal community partners. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) have also been funded to deliver a number of Marrung initiatives. The following outlines the range of dedicated Koorie supports available to Koorie learners in Victorian Government schools, as well as key universal programs.

### Current Koorie-specific programs and initiatives delivered by the Department of Education and Training:

* *Koorie Families as First Educators* supporting improved learning and development outcomes for Koorie children in the early years. Delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, educators work with families to strengthen parenting skills, confidence and support networks.
* *Community Understanding and Safety Training* for all Victorian government school staff. Delivered in partnership with VAEAI’s Local Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group Chairs, this training builds the capacity of schools to be culturally inclusive, to embed local Aboriginal perspectives, cultures and histories in the school curriculum, and better support their Koorie students. To date, approximately 1000 of 1700 schools have undertaken this training.
* *Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program* providing additional support for Koorie students in Prep – Year 6 who are not achieving at expected levels in literacy and numeracy.
* *Koorie Academy of Excellence*, in four locations across Victoria, to assist Koorie students to remain engaged in education, connect to their culture, complete and excel in their secondary schooling, and pursue their desired tertiary pathway.
* *Koorie Education Children’s Court Liaison Officers*, supporting Koorie children and young people who appear before the Children’s and Children’s Koori Courts in selected locations to remain engaged, or re-engage, with education.
* *Koorie Team around the Learner*, assisting 20 schools with high numbers of Koorie students to better coordinate service delivery and enhance support for Koorie students.
* *Aboriginal Languages Program Training Initiative*, the Certificate III in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language was delivered in 2019 and the Certificate IV was delivered in 2020 to the first cohort of Victorian Aboriginal language speakers. From 2019, 30 kindergartens across Victoria, including 7 Aboriginal kindergartens, commenced delivery of an Aboriginal language program.
* *Professional Practice Leader in Koorie Literacy and Numeracy*, providing advice to schools regarding strategies to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Koorie students.
* *Koorie English* resources, a kit of resources to assist teachers to understand Koorie English better so that they can better support Koorie students.
* *Koorie Engagement Support Officer Program*, where area-based professionals who are members of the local Aboriginal community provide advice to schools about culturally inclusive learning environments, and the co-ordination of services to facilitate improved engagement of Koorie children and young people.

### Current key universal programs and initiatives of the Department of Education and Training:

* *Equity and Catch-up Funding*, providing targeted funding for students who enter secondary school and are at risk of educational failure. Secondary students who did not meet the national minimum standards in Year 5 Literacy and Numeracy in NAPLAN will attract the catch-up funding, allowing secondary schools to invest in proven interventions such as one-on-one numeracy support.
* *Education Justice Initiative*, helping young people aged 10 to 17 reconnect and remain engaged with education and training while they are involved in the criminal justice system.
* *Mental Health supports*, including the Mental Health Toolkit and the Schools Mental Health Fund and Menu, where schools are able to purchase from an evidence-based list of endorsed programs, staff and other supports that are used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students.
* *Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)*, assisting schools to meet the needs of eligible students with disability and high needs who attend Victorian Government schools, with funding used differently by each school depending on the individual needs of their students.
* *Tutor Learning Initiative*, designed to support students whose learning has been disrupted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools must only use their funding to engage tutors to provide targeted teaching to students identified as needing support.
* *LOOKOUT centres*, boosting the capacity of schools, carers, child protection practitioners and out-of-home care services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people living in out-of-home care.
* *Navigator program*, supporting disengaged young people to return to education and learning. Navigator works with young people, their families and support networks to address issues underlying disengagement and help them re-engage with their education. Navigator is delivered by contracted community service organisations who work closely with local schools and DET area teams.

While these supports continue to grow, we acknowledge that not all programs and services reach or are appropriate for all students, with some being offered only in specific locations or to specific cohorts of students. Following the principle of continuous improvement, all can be strengthened by better incorporation of the self-determination enablers and by more formalised Aboriginal-led decision-making processes. In addition, there has been a particular emphasis in delivering services and support aimed at vulnerable and disadvantaged Koorie learners and addressing issues of equity. While this is an important focus, the need for initiatives to support the delivery of excellence are equally valid.

### Wirnalung Ganai: Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2019-2021

The Department is also implementing Wirnalung Ganai: Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2019-2021 (Wirnalung Ganai). This commits the Department to being:

* A culturally safe place for Aboriginal employees, potential employees, volunteers, visitors, community partners, learners and families
* An organisation where Aboriginal people, without fear of retribution or questioning, proudly identify as Aboriginal and feel safe to be themselves, and where expertise shared by First Nations Peoples is valued and respected
* An organisation committed to Aboriginal self-determination, which is fundamental to better outcomes for Aboriginal learners, and affirms the relationship between government and the Aboriginal community as being one of mutual respect and joint decision-making (page 12).

Wirnalung Ganai includes the following actions to drive systemic application of self-determination principles:

* Inclusion

Aboriginal inclusion is identified as a priority in all Department group and authority Business Plans (Wirnalung Ganai action 1.1.1) and project planning templates have been updated to include strategies for engaging with Aboriginal stakeholders in project management plans. (Wirnalung Ganai action 2.1.3)

* Procurement

The Department actively works toward the Aboriginal procurement target established in Victoria’s Social Procurement Framework through policy change and the Department’s procurement portal, which provides resources to assist engagement with Aboriginal suppliers of goods and services. (Wirnalung Ganai action 3.1)

* Aboriginal Employment Plan

The Department’s Aboriginal Employment Plan 2020-2026 (AEP) aims to make the Department an employer of choice for Aboriginal staff – one that easily attracts and retains Aboriginal employees and by doing so enhances the Department’s work to benefit the community. The AEP was developed in consultation with Department staff and Aboriginal partner organisations (Wirnalung Ganai Action 4.1).

* Aboriginal Impact Statement

The development and introduction of an Aboriginal Impact Statement (Wirnalung Ganai action 2.1) will ensure time for deep listening and engagement with Aboriginal people in all stages of policy development and review. Such a statement will increase the oversight throughout the Department and seeks to ensure all policy and programs are developed with the needs, aspirations, outcomes and self-determination of Aboriginal people deliberately included from the outset. Briefing templates to the Department’s Executive Board and sub-committees will include the Aboriginal Impact Statement as a key part of final endorsement and approvals processes. It is anticipated that this will proceed to approval in December 2021 and be implemented throughout 2022.