



a fairer victoria achievements so far

Strategy Nine Building a new partnership with Indigenous Victorians

strategy nine

Building a new partnership with Indigenous Victorians

Aim

Indigenous communities in Victoria are actively working with governments to build on the strength and uniqueness of Indigenous culture and find a new way forward. A Fairer Victoria has continued to build on this effort with a range of initiatives to develop skills, support Indigenous employment and economic development, improve services, and deal with past injustices. We have a long way to go, but progress in these areas provides important building blocks for raising life expectancy and quality of life for Indigenous Victorians.

Improved services

Access to good quality services, particularly in the early years, will underpin improvements in Aboriginal wellbeing. We have:

- increased the number of Indigenous children accessing Maternal and Child Health services, from 1,665 children in 2002/03 to 2,364 children in 2006/07
- expanded the *Koori Maternity Services* program, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Controlled Health Organisation, to provide culturally appropriate care and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from pregnancy to the postnatal period. Early observations from a number of sites in the program indicate that more women are accessing antenatal care, there has been a decline in the number of pre-term births and low birth weight babies, and there are better relationships between Indigenous mothers and mainstream services
- introduced free kindergarten programs for three-year old Aboriginal children who hold concession cards
- established an *Aboriginal In Home Support* program in 5 sites to support new mothers and young children – these programs are helping new parents to get off to a good start with their children, and

- constructed a new health and community centre at the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust, in partnership with the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

Indigenous children accessing Maternal and Child Health Services



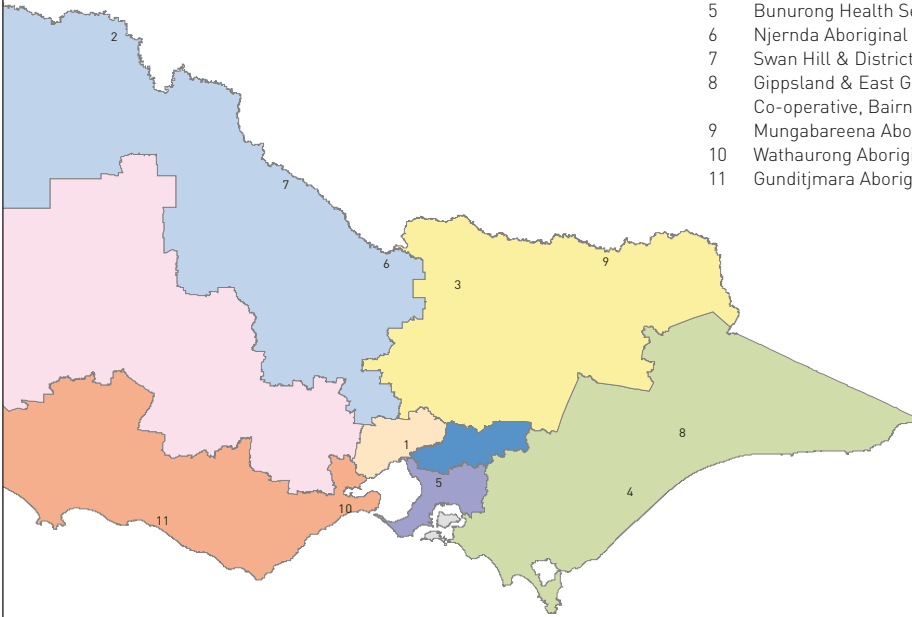
AHPACC partnerships

The Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care Partnership program (AHPACC) is developing a new model of primary health care to prevent and better manage chronic disease. Throughout 2007, the program has been set up at nine sites across Victoria and is building on local partnerships between Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Community Health Services, and other key health sector organisations such as Divisions of General Practice.

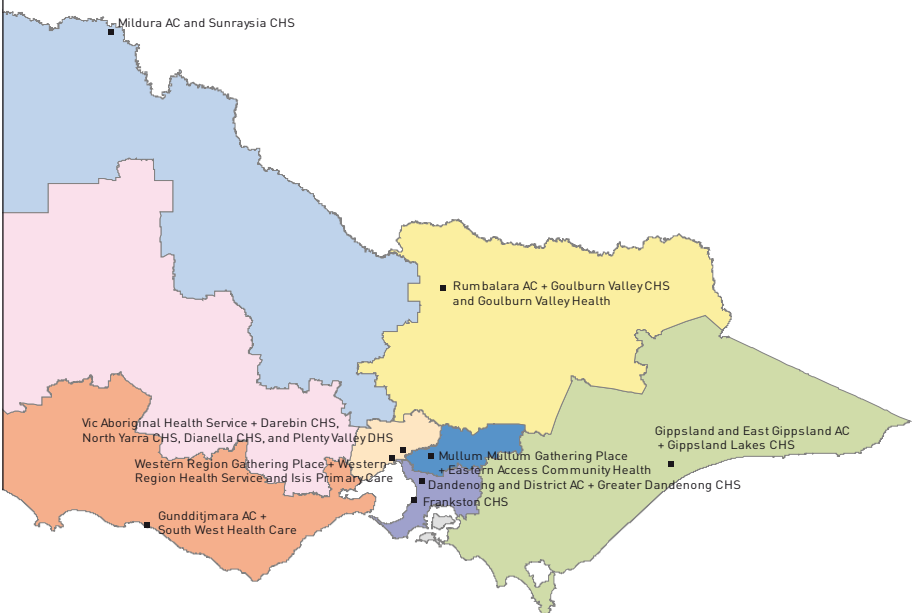
These important new health partnerships have been established in Gippsland, Loddon Mallee, Barwon, Southern, Eastern, North, West, and Hume regions. To date, 20 AHPACC workers have been employed, of whom 15 are Indigenous. Of this group, ten Indigenous and two non-Indigenous workers have completed the health promotion short course conducted by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Koori Maternity Services Sites, Victoria*

- 1 Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Fitzroy
- 2 Mildura Aboriginal Corporation
- 3 Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd, Shepparton
- 4 Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Co-operative, Sale
- 5 Bunurong Health Service, Dandenong
- 6 Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, Echuca
- 7 Swan Hill & District Aboriginal Co-operative
- 8 Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative, Bairnsdale
- 9 Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, Wodonga
- 10 Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, Geelong
- 11 Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative, Warrnambool



AHPACC partners: Community Health Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations*



*mapped by Victorian Government Departmental Boundaries

AC = Aboriginal Co-operative
CHS = Community Health Service

The AHPACC partnerships have identified ten priority areas of focus. They are diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, mental health, social connectedness, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, dental and drug and alcohol.

At a regional level, culturally appropriate services targeting these priority areas have been developed in locally unique ways. For example, the AHPACC consortium in northern metropolitan Melbourne has arranged for a physiotherapist from North Yarra Community Health Service to be based at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service one day each week, improving access to much needed physiotherapy services for the Aboriginal community. This allows easy communication and teamwork between GPs and the physiotherapist and can link Aboriginal people into mainstream or specialist services. It has also smoothed referrals between disciplines (such as podiatry, dietetics and nursing) and improved access to existing programs.

Community-based justice

The second phase of the *Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA2)* was implemented following Australia's first community-led review of Victoria's implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

AJA2 is a cross-government strategy which emphasises Koori children and youth. It brings together the Koori community, the Justice portfolio, the Department of Human Services, and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, with the aim of reducing the over-representation of the Koori community in the criminal justice system.

Under this groundbreaking agreement, we have established:

- eight new Koori Courts, including a Koori Children's Court. These courts have been successful in reducing recidivism. The two earliest Koori Courts, at Shepparton and Broadmeadows, have recidivism rates of 12.5 and 15.5 per cent respectively, which is significantly below the general recidivism rate of 29.4 per cent. They have

also achieved similar reductions in breach rates for community corrections orders and failures to appear

- six night patrols throughout the state to improve safety. Approximately 720 people were assisted by the service in the first half of 2007, and
- eight Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committee Networks in Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill, Wodonga, Geelong, Warrnambool, Heywood and Bendigo.

In addition:

- Victoria Police has expanded its two key Aboriginal liaison networks
- additional staff have been appointed to the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers program at Bairnsdale, Shepparton and the City of Yarra, and
- the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers network now includes 87 police members across the state.

Lake Tyers Renewal Project

We have been working intensively with the Lake Tyers community to improve infrastructure and services, build capacity and improve local governance arrangements. We have provided training in community governance to members of the Lake Tyers community, and Indigenous positions at the Lake Tyers Trust cover the variety of roles such as land management, health, child care and transport.

Other improvements include:

- breakfast and walking bus programs aimed at improving school attendance
- 85 people trained at the Lake Tyers Training Centre during 2006/07 in such areas as hospitality, business studies, land management, and conservation
- better facilities including new housing and fencing, a community hall, a multi-purpose sports court, and an elders' unit, and
- commencement of an employment strategy including a skills audit of residents and engagement of an employment placement worker.

Providing more housing choices for Indigenous Victorians

Housing that is culturally appropriate, affordable and secure is crucial to enabling social and economic participation for Indigenous Victorians. We are working in partnership with the Indigenous community to deliver more housing that is appropriate to their needs.

In October 2007, the Office of Housing began transferring tenancy management of around 1,300 Aboriginal Housing properties to Aboriginal Housing Victoria – a social landlord for Aboriginal people, controlled by Aboriginal people. Existing Aboriginal tenants in public housing are now offered the opportunity to transfer their tenancies to the same organisation.

In February 2008 the Premier made available an additional \$7.5m to acquire 30 properties for Aboriginal housing across Victoria in areas of high need. This additional funding has doubled the number of homes to be acquired in 2007/08, to 60. These new homes will be managed by Aboriginal Housing Victoria.

Building social and economic participation

Working with the Rumbalara Football and Netball Club and the University of Melbourne, we have improved vocational pathways for Aboriginal people in the Shepparton area. As of June 2007, 35 of the 60 full-time students enrolled in the Academy of Sport and Health Education continue to be engaged in full-time study, and ten have moved onto employment and/or other forms of education.

We are also seeing results in Aboriginal employment, with:

- over 150 Indigenous people starting jobs through *Workforce Participation Partnerships*, and around 100 having continued in these jobs for over six months by February 2008, and
- 61 young Indigenous people employed in State Government departments and agencies over the last two years as part of the *Youth Employment Scheme*.

Through the *Aboriginal Land and Economic Development Program* we have funded a range of innovative community enterprises which have generated new jobs and training for Indigenous people. In 2007/08 the number of full and part-time jobs through the program is expected to increase to 36 (up from 18 in 2006/07), in addition to casual positions. Volunteer involvement is also increasing, expected to rise to 29 in 2007/08, up from 17 in 2006/07.

Aboriginal Land and Economic Development Program projects include:

- visitor infrastructure at the Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area and Kurtinitj property near Portland managed by Winda Mara Aboriginal Co-operative
- a combined gallery and shop front in Port Fairy for Kaawirn Kuunawaran Hissing Swan Arts, the Tarerer Gundidj Project Association and Welcome to Country Tours
- expanding Worn Gudidj's operations at Tower Hill near Warrnambool, including development of basic hospitality infrastructure and establishment of an environmental interpretation program
- a native seed bank and nursery at Robinvale, through support to the Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative
- a business development officer for Budj Bim Tours, which provides guided tours of the nationally significant Lake Condah area
- a wood haulage business with the Yorta Yorta, collecting firewood from Barmah for distribution in Melbourne, and
- an Indigenous horticulture training facility at Boundary Bend, in partnership with the Indigenous Land Corporation.

We have also redeveloped the premises of the Indigenous multimedia complex in Preston which houses the 3KND Indigenous radio station, the South Eastern Indigenous Media Association, and Songlines Aboriginal Music Association.

Dealing with the past and building new relationships

We are strengthening the capability of Indigenous organisations by simplifying our funding arrangements and providing training and support. In 2006 we established a governance training program designed specifically for board members and staff of Indigenous organisations – the first of its kind in Australia. To date, over 250 people from 70 Indigenous organisations have attended 11 three-day workshops conducted around Australia, with 60 of these completing Certificate IV in Business (Governance). A national trial (based and developed in Victoria) of the Diploma in Business (Governance) is currently underway, with 15 Indigenous students enrolled from around the country, including eight from Victoria.

Local Indigenous Networks have been established in 13 communities in the Loddon Mallee, Grampians, Gippsland, North West Metropolitan and Barwon South West regions, with 25 more to come across the State. These networks provide a basis for local communities to set their own directions and work with Government on policy and service delivery. 11 community engagement brokers have been appointed to support the networks, broker access to services, and increase social, economic and civic participation.

We have recognised Gunditjmara native title rights over almost 140,000 hectares of Crown lands and waters, acknowledging the ongoing historical connection to this pivotal economic and cultural base for the Gunditjmara people.

Stolen Generations Victoria (SGV) is the first organisation of its kind established in Australia. Established in response to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Report *Bringing Them Home*, SGV became operational in May 2006. A range of important services are being provided to raise awareness, improve access to public records and provide healing and support to stolen generations members and their families.

We have strengthened the role of Aboriginal people in managing Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage through the establishment of the Aboriginal Heritage Council. For the first time in the State's history it is Aboriginal people, through the Council, who will determine which Aboriginal group has responsibility for cultural heritage at the local level.

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