

## COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

In partnership with the Commonwealth Government and through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the Victorian Government is working with Indigenous communities to close the gaps between Indigenous and non Indigenous Victorians.

The six COAG *Closing the Gap* goals incorporated in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement are to:

- close the life expectancy gap within a generation
- halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade
- halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians within a decade.

There are several Indigenous-specific COAG National Agreements and Partnerships signed by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments that are relevant to the achievement of the *Closing the Gap* goals. Implementation responsibility for National Agreements and Partnerships is with relevant departments and agencies.

- Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes National Partnership
- Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership
- Indigenous Economic Participation National Partnership
- National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians
- Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership

Other major national agreements have been made in the areas of education and youth transitions, affordable and social housing, workforce development, disability, health and preventative health, homelessness, and early childhood development. These agreements will also contribute to closing the gaps between Indigenous and non Indigenous Victorians.

### *Closing the Gap: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) agreed by COAG in 2008, provides an integrated framework for the task of closing the gap. It sets out the policy principles, objectives and performance indicators underpinning closing the gap and the specific steps governments are taking to meet the targets.

### *National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians*

The *National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians* is a schedule to the NIRA

More than 75% of Australia's Indigenous population live in urban and regional locations. In Victoria, there are no remote communities; about half of the Indigenous population lives in regional Victoria and half in metropolitan Melbourne. The gaps in life outcomes nationally cannot be closed unless the needs of urban and regional populations are also met.

In recognition of this, COAG endorsed an Urban and Regional Strategy for Indigenous Australians, which commits all governments to coordinate and target the funding provided under mainstream and Indigenous-specific National Partnerships and Agreements to address Indigenous disadvantage in urban and regional locations.

### *Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan*

An Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan between Victoria and the Commonwealth was agreed in 2010. The Plan outlines how the Commonwealth and Victoria will jointly implement the NIRA and the VIAF.

#### **Want to know more?**

Go to: [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au)  
Click on the link to COAG meeting outcomes, and follow the link for Issues by subject and select Indigenous issues



# PROGRESS UNDER THE VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS FRAMEWORK

Figure 4 provides a summary of progress against all indicators under the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework. It outlines four categories: indicators on track, areas of concern, areas requiring concerted attention and areas that are steady or no trend can be determined. Many aspects of progress relate to one another, and it is important to understand those links when assessing overall progress.

Changes in methodologies, the relatively small Indigenous population resulting in small numbers and the availability of data mean that it is not possible to evaluate if there has been improvement over time for some indicators. The improvement of Indigenous data is a high priority

The VIAF was established as a long term strategy designed to address Indigenous disadvantage that is intergenerational in its nature. Given the timeframe that the VIAF adopts it is important that trends are monitored over several years given there may be variability from one year to the next.

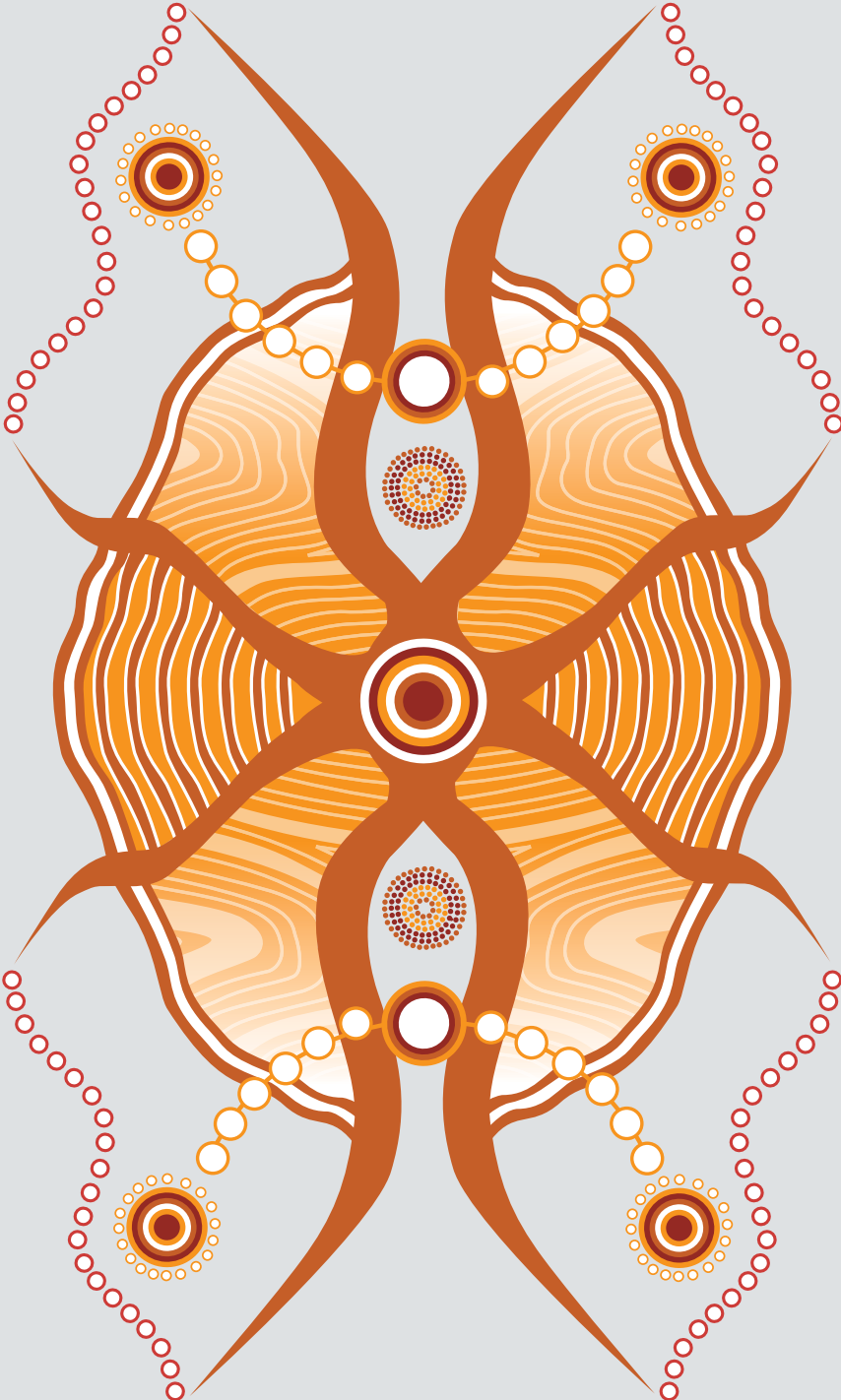
**Figure 4:** Progress against VIAF indicators

Measure of Progress	Indicator
On track	1.4 Increase Indigenous 3 year old and 4 year old kindergarten participation
	1.6 Increase the proportion of Indigenous children attending Maternal and Child Health Services at key age milestones
	2.2 Improve literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Indigenous students
	2.4 Increase completion of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications for Indigenous students
	3.2 Increase Indigenous labour force participation
	3.3 Increase workforce participation by Indigenous people in the public sector in ways which can drive improvements in the Strategic Areas for Action
	3.4 Increase the proportion of Indigenous people with access to their traditional lands
	4.2 Improve the levels of physical activity, healthy weight and healthy eating of Indigenous people
	4.4 Reduce rate of self harm among Indigenous people
	5.1 Increase participation of Indigenous people in local representative arrangements
	5.2 Increase the representation of Indigenous people on Government Boards and Committees
	5.3 Increase the proportion of board members of large Indigenous organisation having undertaken rigorous governance training
	6.1 Increase the police response to and action taken on any Indigenous family violence incident reported to them
	6.2 Reduce repeat police call outs for Indigenous family violence incidents
	6.3 Reduce the number of times Indigenous young people (aged 10-17) are processed by police
	6.4 Increase the proportion of Indigenous young people (aged 10-17) cautioned when processed by police

Measure of Progress	Indicator
<b>On track</b>	6.5 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous people remanded in custody
	6.6 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous adults sentenced to prison rather than other alternatives
	6.7 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous people who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction
<b>Area of concern</b>	1.1 Reduce reported smoking in pregnancy by Indigenous mothers
	2.3 Improve transition to Year 10 for Indigenous students
	4.1 Reduce smoking rates of Indigenous people
	4.5 Reduce risky alcohol consumption among Indigenous people
<b>Requires concerted attention</b>	1.5 Reduce the rate of Indigenous child protection substantiations
<b>Steady or area where no trend can be determined</b>	1.2 Reduce the Indigenous perinatal mortality rate
	1.3 Decrease the percentage of Indigenous babies with birth weight below 2500 grams
	2.1 Improve school attendance rates for Indigenous students
	3.1 Increase the successful transition of Indigenous young people aged 18-24 years to employment and/or further education
	4.3 Reduce the rates of chronic conditions among Indigenous people

For the areas of concern, the Victorian Government recognises that a concerted effort is required by both Government and the community to improve outcomes. Current initiatives to reduce smoking rates among Indigenous Victorians (see information under Indicators 1.1 and 4.1), reforms to school education for Indigenous students (see information under Indicator 2.3) and the Koori Alcohol Action Plan 2010 – 2020 (see information under Indicator 4.5) will be monitored closely to ensure that they are resulting in lasting improvements.

# PART 2



## Strategic Area for Action 1

### Improve maternal and early childhood health and development

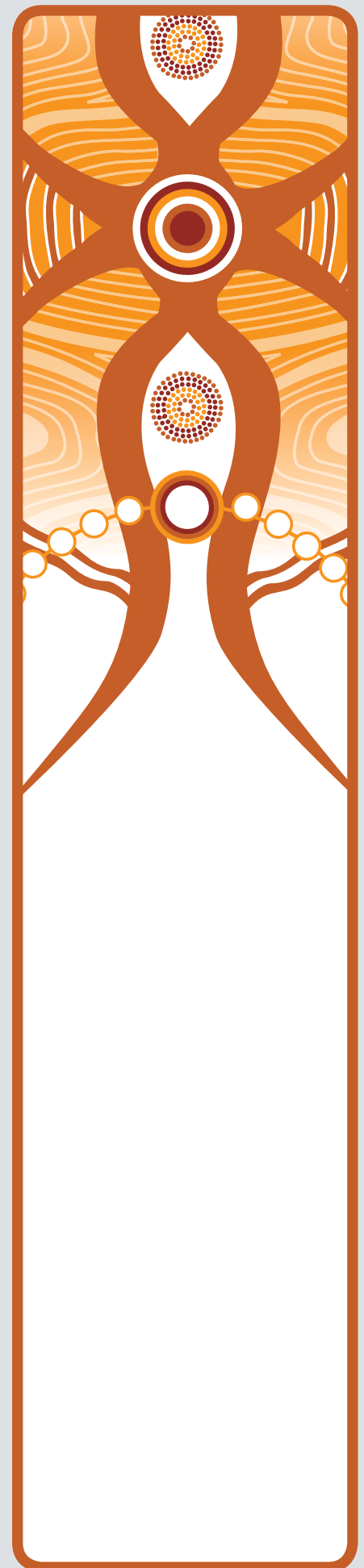
Research tells us that the early years of a child's life are the most critical for development, laying the foundations for the rest of their adult life. Smoking and alcohol use among pregnant women are severe risk factors for adverse events in pregnancy, such as low birth weight (below 2500 grams), preterm birth and perinatal death. They are also strongly associated with poor perinatal outcomes for children, including greater risk of dying during the first year of life and ill health in childhood. Smoking is also associated with increased risk of miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy.

For these reasons, the highest priority must be given to providing Indigenous children with the best possible start to life by improving maternal and child health services, including free kindergarten for 3 and 4 year old Indigenous children, and support in the home for parents of pre-school aged children.

Work is underway, with Victorian Indigenous communities, to put in place seamless services for Indigenous parents and their children under the age of five years through *Koori Maternity Services* (antenatal to postnatal), *Aboriginal Best Start* through *Maternal and Child Health Services* and *In Home Support* in areas with large numbers of Indigenous families.

Joint initiatives are being undertaken that focus on universal, early intervention and secondary service system responses to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child protection system and to better meet the needs of vulnerable children and families. These initiatives will be based on recognising the importance of connection to culture.

In 2010, the *State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria* was released, providing a comprehensive picture of what life is like for Victorian Indigenous children, young people and their families in the areas of safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing.



## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

In 2007-08, the percentage of Indigenous women admitted to hospital from one month prior to delivery who were current smokers increased to 40% from 38% in 2006-07.

In 2009 the Perinatal Morbidity Statistics System began collecting data on tobacco use in pregnancy by all mothers. This data will be available for the next Indigenous Affairs Report.

Goreen Narrkwarren  
Ngrn-toura - Healthy Family Air

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation is undertaking a three year action research project to reduce the prevalence of smoking amongst pregnant Indigenous women. A literature review to inform the project has also been undertaken. The project will involve working with three sites to develop interventions around smoking cessation.

This will include:

- training for health workers to support pregnant women to quit smoking
- creating environments within health services and communities to support women to quit smoking before and during pregnancy
- mobilising community support for smoking cessation during pregnancy.

Figure 5<sup>5</sup>:

	Indigenous women	All women
2002-03	30	10
2003-04	35	9
2004-05	39	10
2005-06	31	9
2006-07	38	9
2007-08	40	8

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

A woman who smokes before and while pregnant increases the risk of experiencing a wide range of problems including ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage and premature labour. Women who smoke are up to three times more likely to give birth to a low weight baby compared to non-smokers. Low birth weight babies are more vulnerable to infection and other health problems, such as breathing difficulties.<sup>7</sup>

### Want to know more?

Go to: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/) and select Services and support, then follow the link to Aboriginal Health

<sup>4</sup> There is currently no reliable data available for reported alcohol use in pregnancy by Indigenous mothers. Targets to reduce alcohol use in pregnancy will be developed when reliable data becomes available.

<sup>5</sup> This data relates to smoking in pregnancy among Indigenous mothers and does not include Indigenous babies who are born to non Indigenous mothers and Indigenous fathers.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset, based on the recorded Indigenous status of the mother.

<sup>7</sup> Better Health Channel – Pregnancy and Smoking, October 2007, State Government of Victoria.

Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
1.2 Reduce the Indigenous perinatal mortality rate	The Indigenous perinatal mortality rate will reduce to no more than 16 per 1000 births	17.9 (2008 data)

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

The 2008 Indigenous perinatal mortality rate increased to 17.9 per 1000 births compared with 14.3 in 2007.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 6<sup>9</sup>: Perinatal mortality (per thousand births)<sup>10</sup>

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Indigenous	16.1	13.1	14.1	14.3	17.9
Non Indigenous	7.9	8.2	7.9	8.0	7.9

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

The *Maternal Child Health Service* exists for all children from birth to school age and their families. *Maternal and Child Health Services* in 20 municipalities across Victoria are providing an outreach service to Indigenous communities and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation has also been funded to provide *Maternal and Child Health Services* for children and families who access other services from that location.

### Koori Maternity Strategy

The *Koori Maternity Strategy* aims to decrease perinatal mortality through actions such as increasing access to culturally inclusive care in the early stages of pregnancy through to the postnatal period. The program is provided through 11 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, nine in regional Victoria and two in the metropolitan area. Under the *Koori Maternity Strategy*, *Koori Maternity Services* employ Aboriginal Health Workers and midwives to increase access to antenatal care, postnatal support and hospital liaison for births.

The *Koori Maternity Strategy* also works to increase Indigenous women's knowledge, participation and satisfaction with their ante and postnatal care.

In 2009-10 *Koori Maternity Services* was expanded in three specified local government areas where there are high levels of child protection substantiations in the 0-12 month age group. The identified local government areas are Bendigo, Darebin and Mildura.

In 2009-10 *Koori Maternity Services* in Bairnsdale and Swan Hill were expanded to provide clinical and midwifery services.

### Want to know more?

Go to: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/) and select *Services and support*, then follow the link to *Aboriginal Health*

<sup>8</sup> In Victoria, the small number of Indigenous births results in statistical variability from year to year.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity.

<sup>10</sup> Excludes births resulting from terminations of pregnancy for congenital anomalies or for maternal psychosocial reasons. The data provided here is not comparable with that published in the 2008-09 Indigenous Affairs Report, in which a reporting error was made relating to this indicator.

Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
1.3 Decrease the percentage of Indigenous babies with birth weight below 2500 grams	The percentage of Indigenous babies with birth weight below 2500g will decrease to 13%	15% (2008 data)

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

In 2008 the percentage of Indigenous women giving birth to babies with a birth weight below 2500 grams was 15% compared with 6.4% for non Indigenous women.

Figure 7<sup>11</sup>: Babies with birth weight below 2500 grams, by Indigenous status (%)<sup>12</sup>

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Indigenous	16.6	14.0	13.2	12.5	15.0
Non Indigenous	6.6	6.6	6.7	6.5	6.4

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

Birth weight is an indicator of the general health of a newborn baby and a key determinant of infant survival, health and development. Low birth weight is associated with an increased risk of neonatal death and various diseases in later life, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The length of the pregnancy and the growth rate of the baby during pregnancy affect the weight of the baby at birth.

### Maternal Child Health Services

*Koori Maternity Services* are offered through 11 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across Victoria with the aim of providing culturally appropriate maternity care to Indigenous women. Maternity care that is provided by *Koori Maternity Services* aims to increase participation in antenatal care, facilitate the relationship of women with the birth hospital and thereby contribute to early identification of risk factors and reduction in the numbers of low birth weight babies. (Further information regarding *Koori Maternity Services* can be found under Indicator 1.2.)

Activities undertaken in 2009-10 include:

- increased focus on health promotion strategies to more effectively convey maternity care messages and engage the community in accessing maternity care early and consistently during pregnancy
- raising awareness of *Koori Maternity Services* and the needs/optimal care of pregnant Indigenous women in mainstream health services
- supporting, through scholarships, development of cultural competence and understanding for midwives working in mainstream services which have high Indigenous populations.

### Want to know more?

Go to: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/) and select *Services and support*, then follow the link to *Aboriginal Health*

<sup>11</sup> Source: Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity.

<sup>12</sup> Data is collected according to Indigenous status of the mother. Indigenous babies with a non Indigenous mother and Indigenous father are not included in this dataset.

Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
1.4 Increase Indigenous 3 year old and 4 year old kindergarten participation	75% of Indigenous 3 year old children will be participating in funded kindergarten programs  The gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous 4 year old children participating in funded kindergarten programs will be closed	237 (3 Year Old Kindergarten – 2009 data)  731 (4 Year Old Kindergarten – 2010 data)

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

**Figure 8:** Indigenous 3 year old kindergarten participation<sup>13</sup>

	2008	2009
Number of Indigenous 3 year old children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program <sup>14</sup>	109	237
Participation rate (Experimental Estimate) <sup>15</sup>	13%	27.7%

**Figure 9:** Indigenous 4 year old kindergarten participation

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of Indigenous 4 year old children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program	465	529	504	525	579	731 <sup>16</sup>
Gap (percentage points) between Indigenous and non Indigenous 4 year old children participating in funded kindergarten programs <sup>17</sup>	26.3	26	32.8	30.4	Not available at time of reporting	Not available at time of reporting

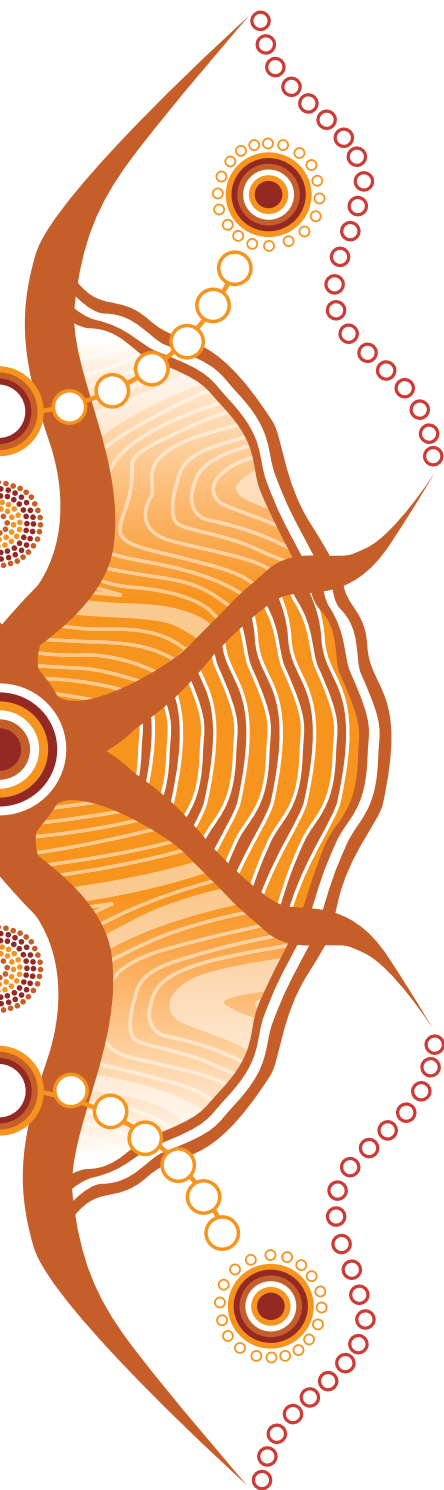
<sup>13</sup> The Early Start Initiative for 3 year olds commenced in 2008-09 so data is only available from this point. 2010 figures for three year old participation were not available at time of reporting.

<sup>14</sup> The number of Indigenous children participating in the Aboriginal Early Start program is reported in Report on Government Services (RoGS) as the enrolment of three-year-old children in kindergarten in Victoria. The RoGS figures were reported in the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Report 2008-09. A limitation of the figure in RoGS is that this data is compiled in September each year so does not include a full year's data. According to RoGS, the number of three year old children in kindergarten increased from 84 in 2008 to 197 in 2009, but based on a full year of data the number actually increased from 109 in 2008 to 237 in 2009.

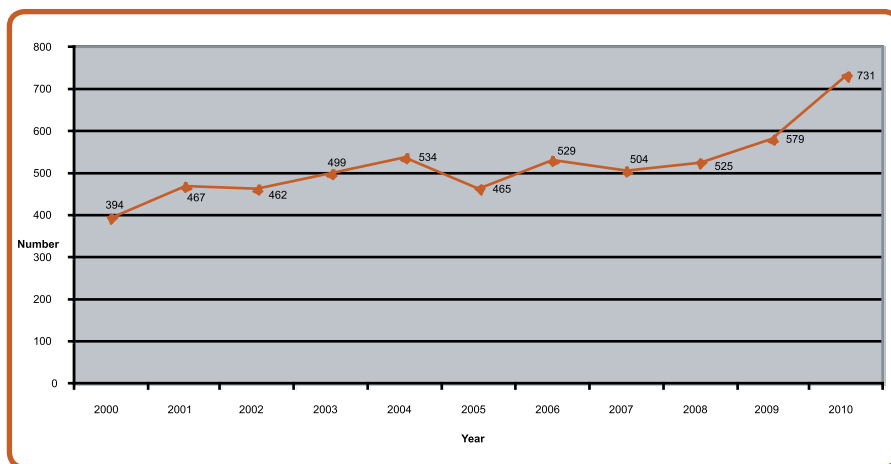
<sup>15</sup> Until now there has been no acceptable methodology for calculating this rate because there was no reliable, annual measure of Victoria's population of three-year-old Indigenous children. Therefore, there is no acceptable figure for the denominator. However the ABS recently produced experimental projections of the Indigenous population (including young children) from 2006 to 2021. These are only available at state level. Using this data as the denominator and the number of enrolments in the Aboriginal Early Start program as the numerator, an Indigenous kindergarten participation rate for three-year-olds has been calculated.

<sup>16</sup> From Confirmed Kindergarten Data Collection undertaken in April 2010 reported as at 30 June 2010.

<sup>17</sup> The methodology calculates the number of Indigenous children enrolled in funded kindergarten in the year before school (four year olds) as a proportion of the number of Indigenous children in the population. The number of Aboriginal Indigenous children enrolled in Prep the following year is used as a proxy for the number of Indigenous children in the population, as there is no annual estimate of this cohort currently available. The proxy population data for 2009 is not yet available. The gap is the difference between the kindergarten participation rate and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation rate. The difference is expressed as percentage points.



**Figure 10:** Number of 4 year old Indigenous children enrolled in funded kindergarten in the year before school



### WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

The performance results indicate continued progress towards meeting the targets, with a significant increase in the number of Indigenous children enrolled in a kindergarten program in the year prior to school in 2010.

Participation in early childhood education helps with transition to school and is associated with increased levels of school completion and enhanced literacy and social skills.<sup>18</sup>

Actions were taken in 2009-2010 to:

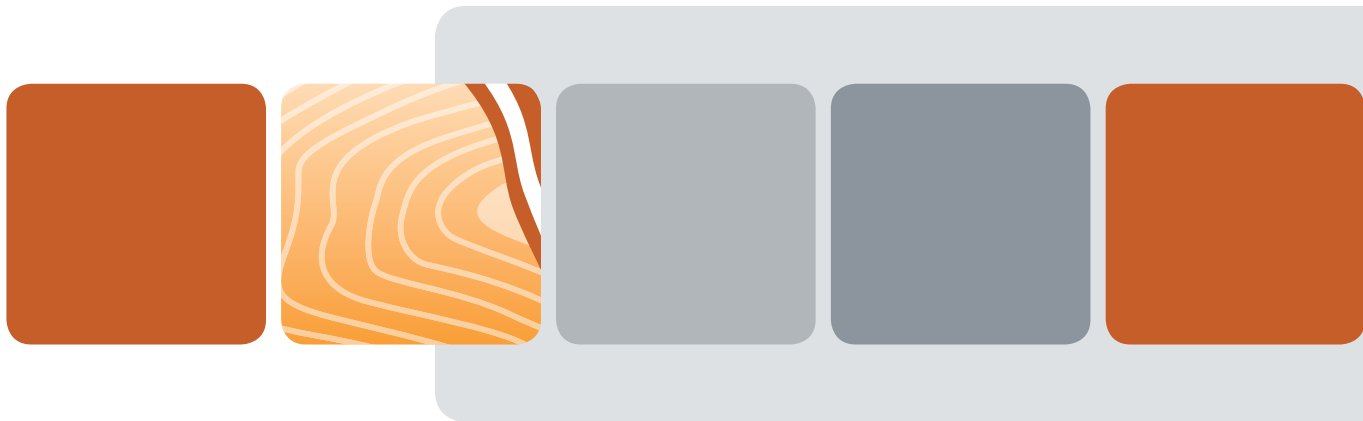
- provide for up to ten hours of free access to a kindergarten program for Indigenous three and four year old children in a variety of settings
- commence establishment of two Aboriginal Children and Family Centres in Whittlesea and Bairnsdale
- establish Aboriginal Best Start partnerships to improve early childhood health and education outcomes for Indigenous children

- employ Koorie Engagement Support Officers to ensure high level support for individual Indigenous children and families, with a particular focus on early years and school-family engagement
- provide Koorie Pre-School Assistants for Indigenous children, families and kindergartens in designated communities
- support Indigenous playgroups
- fund scholarships and incentives for Indigenous early childhood staff.

#### Want to know more?

Go to: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmangement/aboriginal/default.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2009, Page 4.25



Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
1.5 Reduce the rate of Indigenous child protection substantiations	The rate of Indigenous child protection substantiations will be reduced to 51 per 1000 children	46.9 <sup>19</sup> (2009-10 data)

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

In 2009-10, the rate of Indigenous child protection substantiations of notifications received per 1000 children aged 0-17 was 46.9<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 11<sup>21</sup>:** Rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years in substantiations of notifications by Indigenous status<sup>22</sup>

	Indigenous	Non Indigenous	All children
2004-05	63.0	5.8	6.4
2005-06	67.7	6.0	6.7
2006-07 <sup>23</sup>	56.6	5.3	5.9
2007-08	55.0	4.9	5.5
2008-09	48.3	4.8	5.4
2009-10 <sup>24</sup>	46.9	4.7	5.2

<sup>19</sup> Prior to 2009-10, rates of substantiations were calculated as the number of children aged 0-16 years in substantiations divided by the ABS estimated population of children aged 0-16 years at 31 December, multiplied by 1000. For Indigenous children, the ABS June population projections for two years were averaged to obtain a population figure for December of the relevant year. For 2009-10 onwards, rates of substantiations are calculated as the number of children in substantiations aged 0-17 years divided by the ABS estimated population of children aged 0-17 years at 31 December, multiplied by 1000.

<sup>20</sup> See previous footnote above.

<sup>21</sup> Source: Report on Government Services 2011.

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that the number of 17 year olds with substantiations is very low as Victorian child protection legislation only allows reports to be made on children aged under 17.

<sup>23</sup> Due to new service and data reporting arrangements, the Victorian child protection data for 2006-07 onwards may not be fully comparable with previous years' data.

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 19 above.

Indigenous families are diverse. Many are confident and successful and children have culturally rich and vibrant home lives, with family playing an important role in children's development, achievement and wellbeing. Many families, however, are under considerable stress compared with non Indigenous families with children. *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal Children and Young People in Victoria* confirmed that many Indigenous families are managing precariously, often experiencing repeated life stressors. In many cases, past policies such as removal of children have had devastating immediate and intergenerational effects on Indigenous families and individuals. These challenges can make it hard for some parents to care effectively for their children.

A child protection substantiation is the determination that a child or young person is 'in need of protection', following a period of investigation and information arising through that investigation. Reducing the rate of substantiations can be achieved by strengthening and supporting Indigenous families. Child abuse and neglect can be prevented by addressing disadvantage; recognising and promoting family, community and cultural strengths that protect children; and development of community-wide strategies to address specific risk factors.

The best interests of the child are paramount and where Indigenous children cannot remain safely at home, it is important that timely and culturally appropriate responses for their care and protection are provided. Victoria has a very high rate of child protection substantiations among Indigenous children compared with non Indigenous children.

While the target for reduction in Indigenous child protection substantiations for 2013 appears to have been met, changes in methodology have influenced the lowering of the 2009-10 figure, and the rate remains unacceptably high. Note also that due to the relatively small Indigenous population, a small change may have a significant impact on outcomes data.

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

Universal, specialist and targeted assistance is available to assist Indigenous families, including *Koori Maternity Services*, *Aboriginal Best Start*, *In Home Support for Aboriginal Families*, and parenting assessment and skills development programs. These services support families

to build and maintain safe and nurturing family environments and to develop their parenting capacity.

A range of diversionary and placement prevention services and programs are delivered by Indigenous organisations. The aim of the *Integrated Family Services* Indigenous program is to prevent further involvement or re-entry of Indigenous families into the child protection system, through engagement with community-based services focused on strengthening families.

Cross-government initiatives recognise the shared responsibility to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child protection system with a focus on more integrated universal, early intervention, and secondary service system responses. The Department of Human Services is leading an Indigenous child protection strategy action research project to better understand pathways and connections with and between services to reduce child protection substantiations.

Early childhood development workers are allocated to each of the *Child FIRST* sites across the state. Decisions regarding service approaches are made locally in response to local need including, in some instances, targeting Indigenous children for greater universal service engagement.

Indigenous organisations also deliver the *Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service*, *Aboriginal Family Preservation and Restoration* programs and the *Aboriginal Family Decision Making* program. The *Family Coaching* program has an Indigenous-specific component.

The delivery of culturally sensitive services by mainstream community services is integral to implementing the *Out of Home Care* reforms. These organisations have an ongoing requirement to improve their cultural competency, supported by training and assessed through registration processes. Cultural issues, historical impacts and advice on working with Indigenous children and their families are also included in the child protection workers' practice resources.

### Want to know more?

Go to:

[www.cyf.vic.gov.au/](http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/) and follow the link to *Child protection and family services*

[www.cyf.vic.gov.au/indigenous-initiatives](http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/indigenous-initiatives)

[www.vacca.org](http://www.vacca.org)

Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision: *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009*

[www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)

Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report 2008* Indicator 2.15 Child Protection

Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*

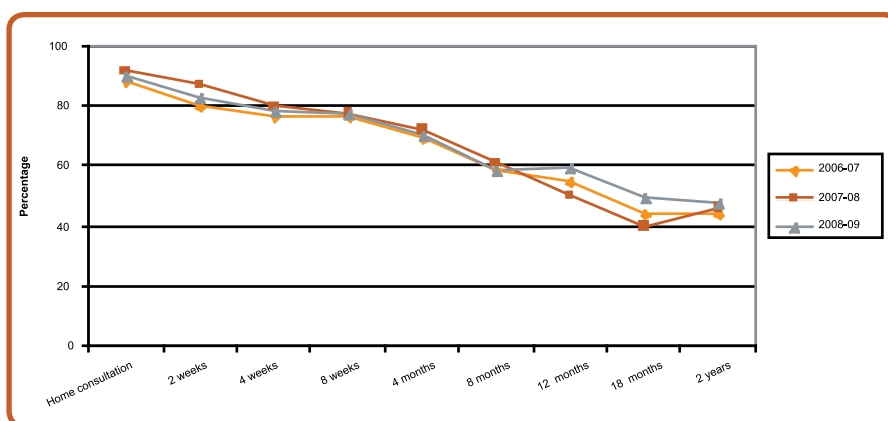
Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
1.6 Increase the proportion of Indigenous children attending Maternal and Child Health Services at key age milestones	The gap in participation at Maternal and Child Health Services key age and stage visits, between Indigenous and non Indigenous children will be at least halved	Positive improvements in participation at key stages at 12 months and beyond  2008-09 data shows variance in gaps at different age intervals

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

**Figure 12<sup>25</sup>:** Maternal and Child Health Service Participation – at key age and stage visits<sup>26</sup>

	Consultation	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Gap between All and Indigenous (percentage point)	Home Visit	9.8	7.6	9.2
	2 Weeks	15.1	9.7	13.2
	4 Weeks	17.1	15.2	16.7
	8 Weeks	17.1	17.7	17.5
	4 Months	22.1	20.3	21.4
	8 Months	25.2	23.8	25.2
	12 Months	24	31.2	21.9
	18 Months	25.1	31.5	22
	2 Years	20.7	22.1	20.2
	3.5 Years	20.4	19.8	18.7

**Figure 13:** 2006 to 2009 Indigenous Maternal and Child Health services at key ages and stages



<sup>25</sup> Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Annual Report and Data Collection. Publically available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/matchchildhealth/annualdata/archive.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Participation is calculated on children enrolled in the *Maternal and Child Health Service* and not as a proportion of the overall population. Universal participation (All) includes Indigenous children in the calculation of participation. Indigenous participation rates for 2006-07 have been updated from figures published in the 2007-08 Indigenous Affairs Report. All data is reported as financial year and the gap is reported as the difference in percentage points.



## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

In 2008-09, the percentage of Indigenous children accessing the *Maternal and Child Health Service* at key 'age and stage' consultations was lower than for non Indigenous children. However, there are some positive trends emerging, with participation rates generally higher than 2006-07 for the 12 month visit onwards. Similarly, the gap between Indigenous children and all children accessing *Maternal and Child Health Services* in 2008-09 has decreased for Maternal and Child Health Service visits at 12 months and later.

The *Maternal and Child Health Service* exists for all children from birth to school age and their families. *Maternal and Child Health Services* in 20 municipalities across Victoria are providing an outreach service to Indigenous communities and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation has also been funded to provide *Maternal and Child Health Services* for children and families.

Participation in the *Maternal and Child Health Service* is further promoted through targeted Indigenous programs, including the *Koori Maternity Services* program, the *In Home Support* program and the *Home Based Learning* program. *Best Start* aims to improve outcomes for children and their families. Over a third of the *Best Start* sites have prioritised an 'increase in participation in the *Maternal and Child Health Service*' as one of their indicators in their action plans. All partnerships are required to give priority to engagement with Indigenous communities and organisations in their area.

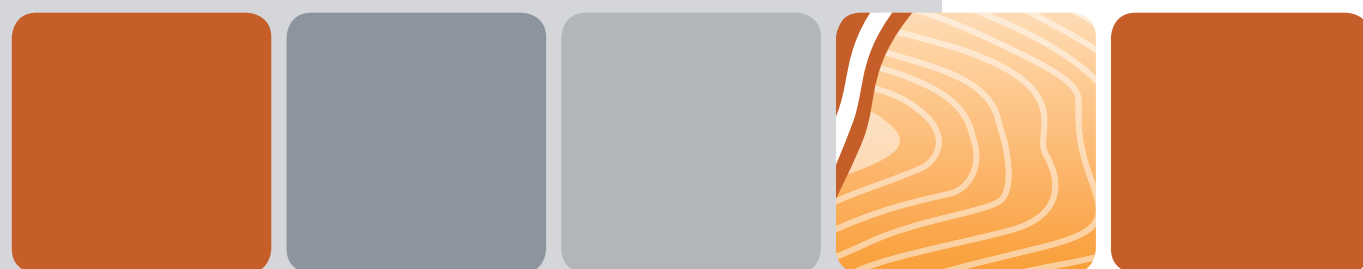
Supported playgroups in 26 municipalities have also become an effective way of supporting priority target population groups, including Indigenous children and their families, to access services.

### Want to know more?

Go to:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/maternitycare/progs.htm#koori>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/mchnurses>



## Strategic Area for Action 2

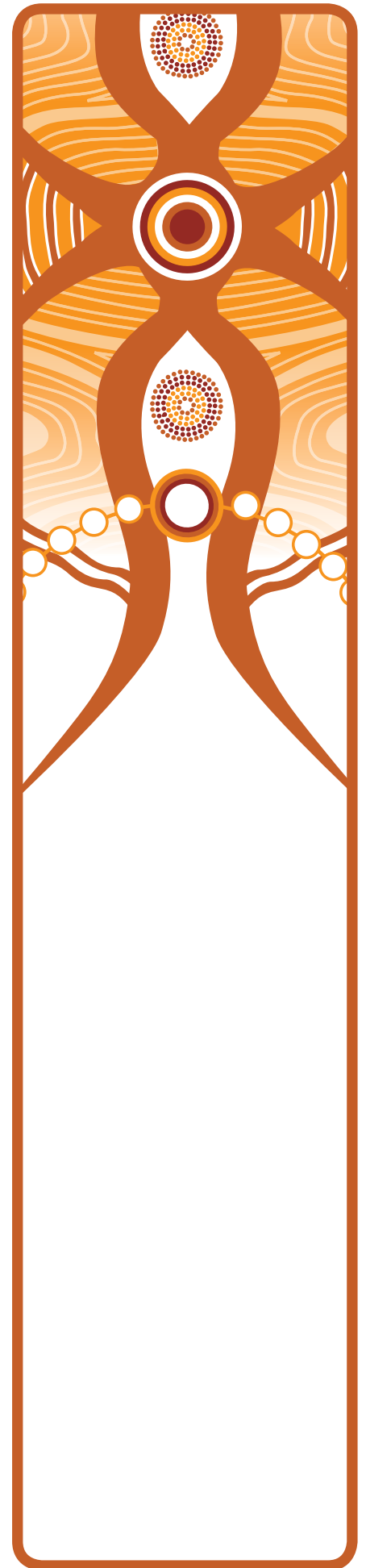
### Improve education outcomes

Education is essential to breaking the cycle of disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous Victorians. The reforms in school education for Indigenous students are making a significant contribution to closing the gaps in outcomes between Indigenous and non Indigenous students in Victoria. The reforms build on improvements in early childhood engagement and service provision, which provide a solid base for Indigenous children entering primary school.

Many Indigenous children now have Individual Learning Plans and workforce reform is contributing to greater opportunities for Indigenous teachers and support officers who work with Indigenous students in government schools.

Other initiatives include scholarships for VCE students, Managed Individual Pathways plans for Year 8 to Year 12 Indigenous students and individual assistance to students through an Indigenous tutorial program. Five Clontarf Sport and three Dance Academies have been established, and more government schools across Victoria are including Indigenous culture as a respected part of school learning.

The reforms in school education for Indigenous students must be based on an uncompromising focus on accountability at the school, region and system level for improving education outcomes for each and every Indigenous student in Victoria.



Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
2.1 Improve school attendance rates for Indigenous students	<p>There will be no gap in attendance for Years Prep - 6 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students</p> <p>There will be no gap in attendance for Years 7 - 10 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students</p>	<p>Yrs Prep - 6 Attendance gap: 5.3 percentage points (2009 data)</p> <p>Yrs 7 - 10 Attendance gap: 9.2 percentage points (2009 data)</p>

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

Figure 14: Government schools attendance gaps between Indigenous and non Indigenous students<sup>27</sup>

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2013 Target gap
Gap in attendance for Prep to Year 6 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.3	0
Gap in attendance for Years 7-10 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students	9.5	8.7	8.2	9.2	0

Figure 15: Average attendance rate for Primary School students in government schools

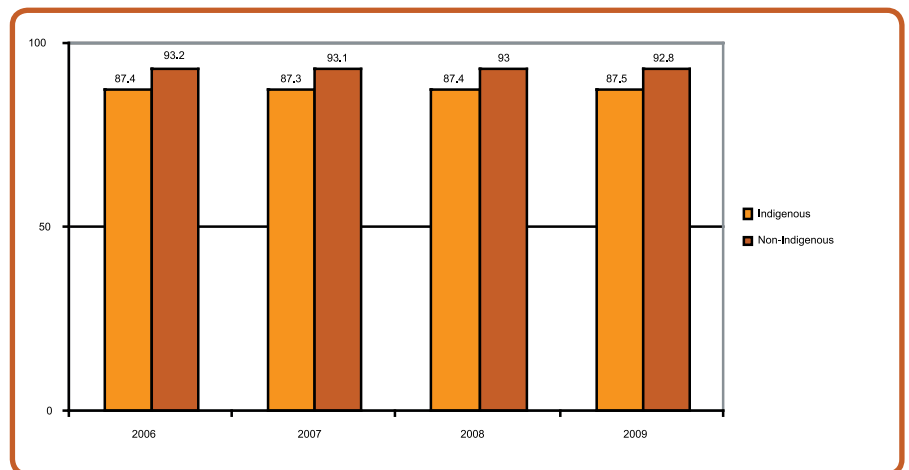
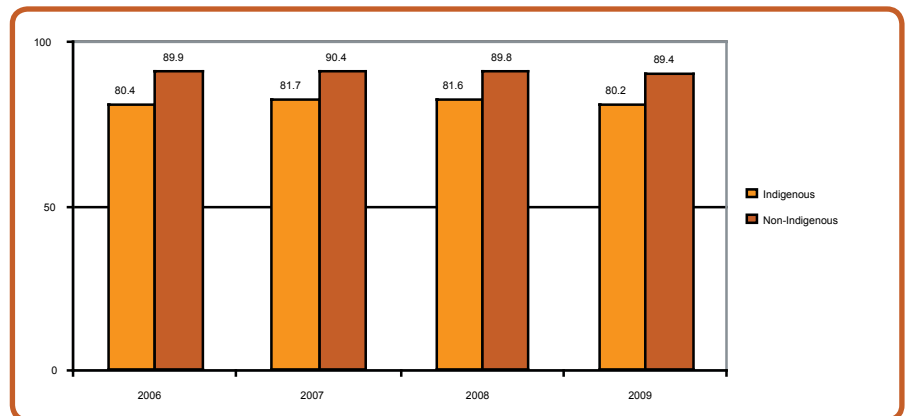


Figure 16: Average attendance rate for Secondary School students in government schools



<sup>27</sup> The attendance rate data for Indigenous and non Indigenous students in Victorian Government schools relates only to those schools that reported at least one Indigenous enrolment. Average attendance rates are based on complete-year data, and consequently, may differ from that reported previously.

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

New Student Engagement Policy Guidelines were released in March 2009 and continue to be implemented across Victoria. The Policy outlines a school community's shared expectations in the areas of student engagement, attendance and behaviour.

Each school's policy supports the rights, and articulates the expectations of every member of the school community to engage in and promote a safe and inclusive educational environment. The policy builds the school's capacity to respond to student circumstances, in cases where a student begins to disengage from their learning, regular attendance is not consistent or positive behaviours are not demonstrated. The *Student Engagement Policy* enables schools to outline a series of processes, actions and consequences developed in consultation with the school community.

Student engagement and wellbeing is one of the three key student outcomes that schools are accountable for and school and Indigenous community partnership agreements have been piloted in a number of schools.

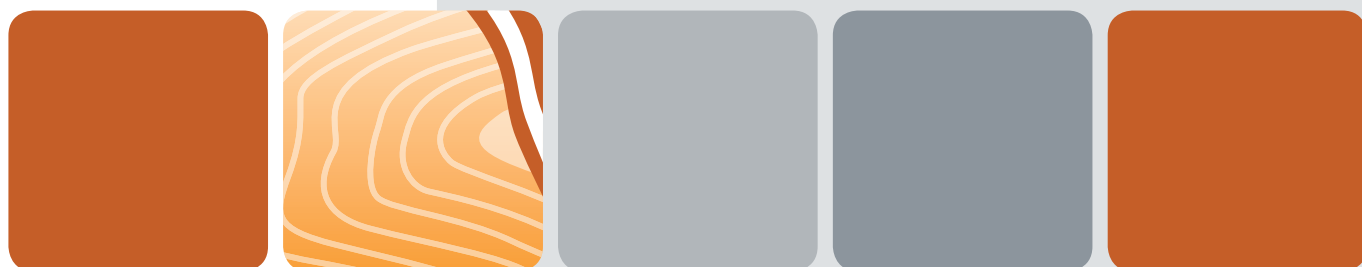
The reforms in school education for Indigenous students which commenced in February 2008,

include a number of actions targeted at improving student engagement and, in turn, improving attendance rates. These initiatives include:

- the expansion of the Managed Individual Pathways initiative into Years 8 and 9 for Indigenous students at risk of disengaging from school
- supporting regions, networks and schools to work in partnership with community to develop effective engagement programs such as the Clontarf Football Academies in Mildura, Swan Hill, Robinvale, Bairnsdale and Warrnambool and three Dance Academies in Mooroopna, Ballarat and Eaglehawk
- reforming the Koorie Education Workforce with 27 new positions created and all existing staff offered the opportunity to upgrade their skills and level of employment. The Koorie Education Workforce now focuses on engagement with families, communities and schools.

### Want to know more?

Go to <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/wannik/default.htm>



Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
<p><b>2.2</b> Improve literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Indigenous students</p>	<p>For Year 3 Reading, the gap in the percentage of students in bands 1 or 2 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students will be reduced by 75%</p> <p>For Year 5 Numeracy, the gap in the percentage of students in bands 3 (or below) or 4 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students will be reduced by 75%</p> <p>For Years 3, 5 and 7 Reading and Numeracy, the percentage of Indigenous students in the top two bands will increase by 10%</p> <p>For Year 9 Reading and Numeracy, the percentage of Indigenous students in the top two bands will double</p>	<p>2009 NAPLAN data show apparent overall improvement across all targets, except for the target of increasing Year 3 Indigenous students in the top two bands for numeracy, where the apparent performance has not improved</p>

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

**Figure 17:** Year 3 reading – percentage of students in bands 1 and 2, by Indigenous status <sup>28</sup>

	2008	2009	2013 Target gap
Indigenous	28.1	24.3	-
Non Indigenous	9.9	8.9	-
Apparent gap 2008-09	18.2	15.4	4.5

*Target: For Year 3 reading, the gap in the percentage of students in bands 1 and 2 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students will be reduced by 75% by 2013*

<sup>28</sup> **Range of gap Year 3 Reading:** Because of the statistical uncertainty and volatility of these data at the required level of disaggregation, the percentage of students in the relevant bands needs to be considered as a range. For ease of reporting, the midpoint of the confidence interval is being used, however, error of up to 4.0 percentage points applies to the Indigenous data. This means that the percentage of Indigenous students in the relevant performance bands could be up to 4.0 percentage points larger or smaller than reported.

**Figure 18:** Year 5 numeracy – percentage in bands 3 (or below) and band 4, by Indigenous status<sup>29</sup>

	2008	2009	2013 Target gap
Indigenous	40.8	31.4	-
Non Indigenous	16.2	12.4	-
Apparent gap 2008-09	24.6	19	6.2

*Target: For Year 5 Numeracy, the gap in the percentage of students in bands 3 (or below) or 4 between Indigenous and non Indigenous students will be reduced by 75% by 2013*

**Figure 19:** Percentage of Indigenous students in top two bands<sup>30</sup>

	2008	2009	2013 Target
Year 3 Reading	23.1	23.5	25.4
Year 5 Reading	12.8	14.5	14.1
Year 7 Reading	5.5	7.6	6.1
Year 3 Numeracy	21.0	17.7	23.1
Year 5 Numeracy	7.1	8.4	7.8
Year 7 Numeracy	6.6	6.7	7.3

*Target: The percentage of Indigenous students in the top two bands will increase by 10% by 2013*

**Figure 20:** Year 9 reading and numeracy – percentage of Indigenous students in top two bands<sup>31</sup>

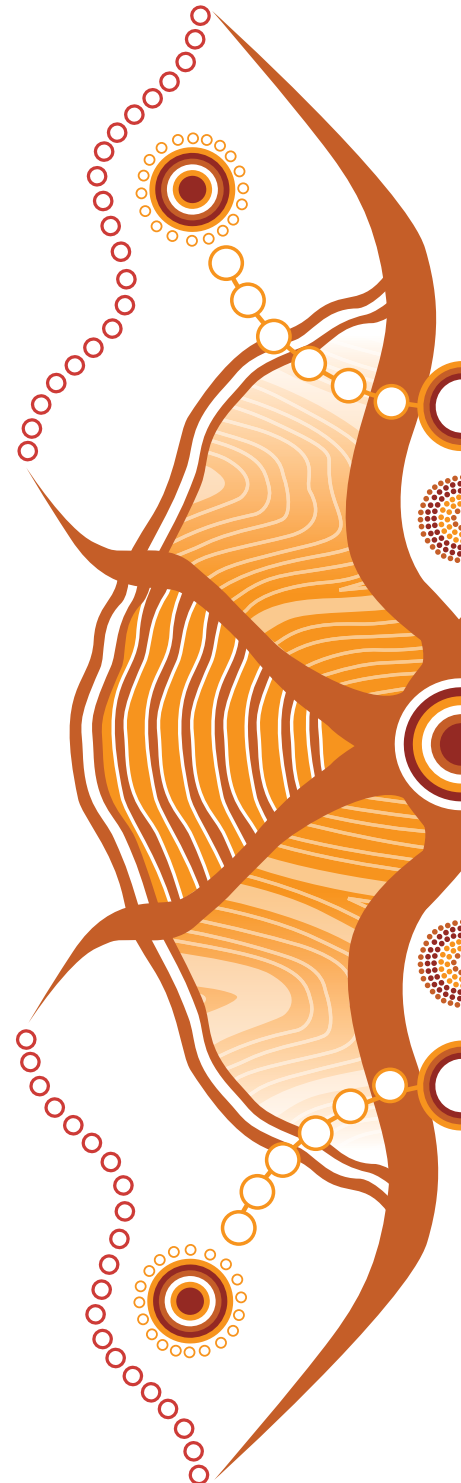
	2008	2009	2013 Target
Year 9 Reading	4.4	5.0	8.8
Year 9 Numeracy	4.3	5.1	8.6

*Target: For Year 9 Reading and Year 9 Numeracy, the percentage of Indigenous students in the top two bands will double by 2013*

<sup>29</sup> **Range of gap Year 5 Numeracy:** Because of the statistical uncertainty and volatility of these data at the required level of disaggregation, the percentage of students in the relevant bands needs to be considered as a range. For ease of reporting, the midpoint of the confidence interval is being used, however, error of up to 5.0 percentage points applies to the Indigenous data. This means that the percentage of Indigenous students in the relevant performance bands could be up to 5.0 percentage points larger or smaller than reported.

<sup>30</sup> Because of the statistical uncertainty and volatility of these data at the required level of disaggregation, the percentage of students in the relevant bands needs to be considered as a range. For ease of reporting, the midpoint of the confidence interval is being used, however error in excess of 4.0 percentage points applies to these data sets. This means that the percentage of students in the relevant performance bands could be 4.0 - 5.0 percentage points larger or smaller than reported.

<sup>31</sup> Because of the statistical uncertainty and volatility of these data at the required level of disaggregation, the percentage of students in the relevant performance bands needs to be considered as a range. For ease of reporting, the midpoint of the confidence interval is being used, however error of up to 4.0 percentage points applies to these data. This means that the percentage of students in the relevant performance bands could be up to 4.0 percentage points larger or smaller than reported.



## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

A new Indigenous tutorial program was established in 2010. The scheme is designed specifically to close the gaps in literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students in Years 2-10.

In particular, assistance has been widened to include students who are not at the expected standard in English or Mathematics, not just those who are performing below the national minimum standard. This means that more than 45% of Indigenous students in Years 2-10 are now receiving tutorial assistance compared to less than 10% under the former scheme.

The program has put in place the structures to ensure a personalised learning loop for each student, to ensure that the tutoring is geared to individual needs, and that the classroom teacher is both aware of, and links with, the progress made.

More than 40% of Indigenous students in Victoria have also benefitted from the funds made available through the Council of Australian Governments' Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreement incorporating the Low Social Economic Schools, Literacy and Numeracy and Teacher Quality National Partnerships. There are clear targets in this agreement focused on improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students.

### *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)*

The scale for each year level is divided into ten bands to cover the full range of student achievement in the tests. The bands map the increasing complexity of the skills assessed by NAPLAN. Six of the bands are utilised for reporting student performance at each Year level. The Year 3 report shows Bands 1 to 6, the Year 5 report shows Bands 3 to 8, the Year 7 report shows Bands 4 to 9, and the Year 9 report shows Bands 5 to 10.

For each year level, a minimum standard is defined and located on the common underlying scale.

The minimum standards are as follows:

- Year 3: Band 2
- Year 5: Band 4
- Year 7: Band 5
- Year 9: Band 6

These standards represent increasingly challenging skills and require increasingly higher scores on the NAPLAN scale.

### **Want to know more?**

Go to: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/wannik/programsand reforms/tutorialprogram.htm#H2N1007B>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/litnum/>

Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
2.3 Improve transition to Year 10 for Indigenous students	95% of Indigenous students will commence Year 10	Years 7-10 retention rate: 80.4 (2009 data)

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE

**Figure 21<sup>32</sup>:** Apparent retention rates for students in Year 7 to 10, by Indigenous status<sup>33</sup>

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Indigenous students	81.2	91.1	88.3	82.2	80.4
Non Indigenous students	98.1	98.3	98.8	99	100.2

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

### Managed Individual Pathways

The *Managed Individual Pathways* initiative provides all students 15 years and over in government schools with individual pathway plans as a means to continue education, training or full-time employment.

*Managed Individual Pathways* plans aim to help young people to:

- make a smooth transition from compulsory schooling to further education, training and employment
- develop skills to manage their pathways throughout their working lives
- develop knowledge, understanding and experience of opportunities in education, training and employment.

*Managed Individual Pathways* has been extended to all Indigenous students in Years 8 and 9. Additional support is provided to students who are at risk of disengaging or not making a successful transition to further education, training or secure employment. Students participating in youth pathways programs in TAFE or Adult and Community Education also have pathways plans.

<sup>32</sup> Data source: ABS Schools Australia (cat. no. 4221.0) collection.

<sup>33</sup> The apparent rate of retention is defined as the number of full-time school students in a designated level/year of education as a percentage of their respective cohort group, which is at the commencement of their secondary schooling at Year 7.



### School Focused Youth Service

The *School Focused Youth Service* is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Human Services. The focus of the initiative is the coordination of preventative and early intervention strategies for young people, to be delivered through school and community clusters. There have been 41 school community clusters established across Victoria to ensure that services are coordinated and responsive to the needs of young people.

### Local Learning and Employment Networks

*Local Learning and Employment Networks* bring together education providers, industry, community organisations, individuals and government to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people in Victoria. There is a statewide network of 31 *Local Learning and Employment Networks* which was established in 2001-02. They focus on young people aged 15-19, with a particular emphasis on those at risk of not completing Year 12 or equivalent.

### Regional Youth Commitments

*Regional Youth Commitments* are negotiated within and between all local and regional stakeholders to link and coordinate pathway and transitions support arrangements for 15-19 year olds. They operate within Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regions with sub-regional implementation coordinated by *Local Learning and Employment Networks*. *Regional Youth Commitments* seek to ensure that there is continuous support for a young person to remain in or re-enter education and training and attain a minimum of Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

#### Want to know more?

Go to: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/mips/default.htm>

Strategic Change Indicator	2013 Target	Current Indigenous Data
<p><b>2.4</b> Increase completion of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications for Indigenous students</p>	<p>By 2020, the gap for Year 12 completion or equivalent between Indigenous and non Indigenous young people will be at least halved<sup>34</sup></p>	<p>The number of Indigenous students completing Year 12 or equivalent as part of their senior secondary program was 255 in 2009* #. Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2009.</p> <p>The number of Indigenous people who completed Year 12 or equivalent in the VET sector was 374 in 2009** #. Of these, 119 were aged 19 or below. Source: Skills Victoria, 2009.</p>

\* Certificate completions include VCE certificates, VCAL certificates at Intermediate or Senior level, or a VET certificate through VET in Schools as part of the senior secondary program. VCAA data has been checked for duplications.

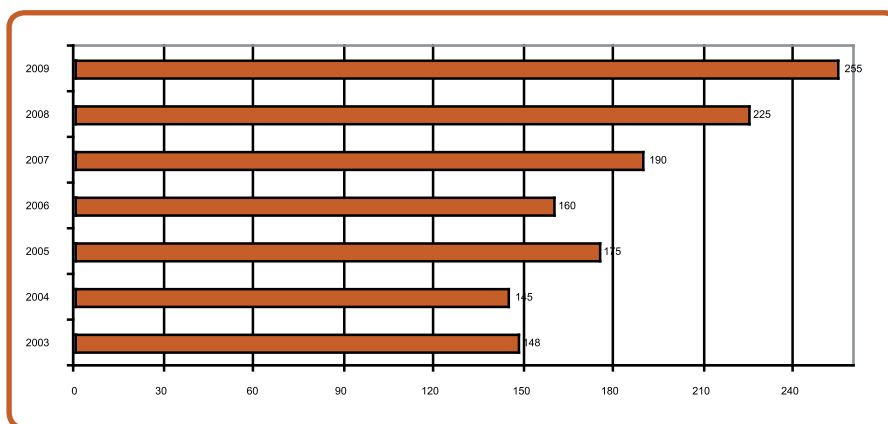
\*\* Certificate completions include all certificates attained in the VET sector (TAFEs, Adult Community Education Providers and private providers). This includes VET Certificates at Level II and above, as well as VET in School, VCE and VCAL certificates reported in the VET sector. Duplications have not been removed.

# The VCAA and Skills Victoria data provided contain duplications across sources.

## MEASURE OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE<sup>35</sup>

### School sector

**Figure 22<sup>36</sup>:** Number of Indigenous students who completed Year 12 or equivalent in the school sector, 2009<sup>37</sup>



<sup>34</sup> Note this target has a 2020 timeline to ensure alignment with the Council of Australia Governments target.

<sup>35</sup> The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) (school sector) and Skills Victoria (VET sector) data provided contain duplications across sources.

<sup>36</sup> Source: VCAA APS database as at 15/01/2010. Note: These figures include all certificates attained within the Schools Sector, which are largely VCE certificates. Certificate completion of VCAL at Intermediate or Senior level and VET certificates attained in the Schools Sector i.e. VET in Schools Certificates (regardless of level) are also included. The figure does not include certificates attained in the non school (VET) Sector. The figures include all Indigenous students who attained a certificate in the schools sector in a given year. Year 12 or equivalent attainment is usually reported for specific age groups; including at age 19 and 20-24. The figures have not been checked for duplicate records. When calculating Year 12 or equivalent attainment, all certificates should be distinct or unique. That is, a student certificate should be excluded from the count if this student has previously received a Year 12 or equivalent certificate, either in previous years or in the same year.

<sup>37</sup> Certificate completions include VCE certificates, VCAL certificates at Intermediate or Senior level, or a VET certificate through VET in Schools as part of the senior secondary program. VCAA data has been checked for duplications.

## Vocational Education and Training sector

In 2009:

- the total number of Indigenous people who completed Year 12 or equivalent in the Vocational Education and Training sector (including TAFEs, Adult Community Education Providers and private providers) was 37438
- the subset of this group who completed Year 12 or equivalent up to the age of 19 was 119.

## WHAT ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN?

During the 2009-10 year, programs to improve school education for Indigenous students continued, with the exception of the *Youth Transitions Support Initiative* which has been incorporated into the *Youth Connections* program described below.

The Council of Australian Governments' National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, covering the period to 31 December 2013, came into effect on 2 July 2009. The Partnership, a joint initiative of the Australian and State and Territory Governments, aims to increase participation of young people in education and training, increase attainment levels and improve successful transitions from school. Halving the achievement gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous young people by 2020 is included in its targets.

Several programs under this National Partnership specifically support Indigenous young people.

- *Local Learning and Employment Networks* have an expanded role in improving community and business engagement with education and training providers. Many *Local Learning and Employment Networks* incorporate specific goals in their strategic plans to improve outcomes for Indigenous young people.

- *Youth Connections* (delivered by the Commonwealth Government, in collaboration with the Victorian Government) provides case management and support for at risk young people to remain engaged in, or reconnect with, education and training. Providers place a special focus on assisting Indigenous young people where required.
- Workplace Learning Coordinators have been appointed statewide to facilitate workplace-based learning experiences for students. All providers have a requirement to increase the number of Indigenous young people undertaking workplace learning placements.
- Koorie Transitions Coordinators across all Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Regions will develop relationships with Indigenous young people and their families to increase the number who remain in education or training, improve aspirations to succeed at school, and support strong post-school pathways.
- A careers mentoring pilot is being established to trial assistance for young people in Years 7 and 8 from three targeted groups, including Indigenous young people.

### Want to know more?

Go to: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/nationalpartnerships/youth.htm>

<sup>38</sup> Certificate completions include all certificates attained in the VET sector (TAFEs, Adult Community Education Providers and private providers). This includes VET Certificates at Level II and above, as well as VET in School, VCE and VCAL certificates reported in the VET sector. Duplications have not been removed.

## Strategic Area for Action 3

### Improve economic development, settle native title claims and address land access issues

Indigenous Victorians, their families and their communities are not employed by or operating businesses and enterprises at the same rate as non Indigenous Victorians. This significantly affects the health and wellbeing of families by limiting their economic independence and subsequent life choices. It entrenches inequalities between Indigenous and non Indigenous Victorians.

Improved outcomes in Indigenous education and early childhood development are needed if young Indigenous Victorians are to achieve employment and to be financially independent throughout life. Strong pathways to further education and employment are needed to ensure positive gains in education translate into lifelong opportunities in the workforce.

The diverse talents, resilience and strong dynamic culture of Indigenous Victorians underpin their potential to benefit from and contribute to Victoria's economy. Realising this potential requires more Indigenous Victorians to be employed in the public and private sectors, more successful and commercially viable Indigenous businesses, and ensuring that there are economic benefits arising from increased access to land.

