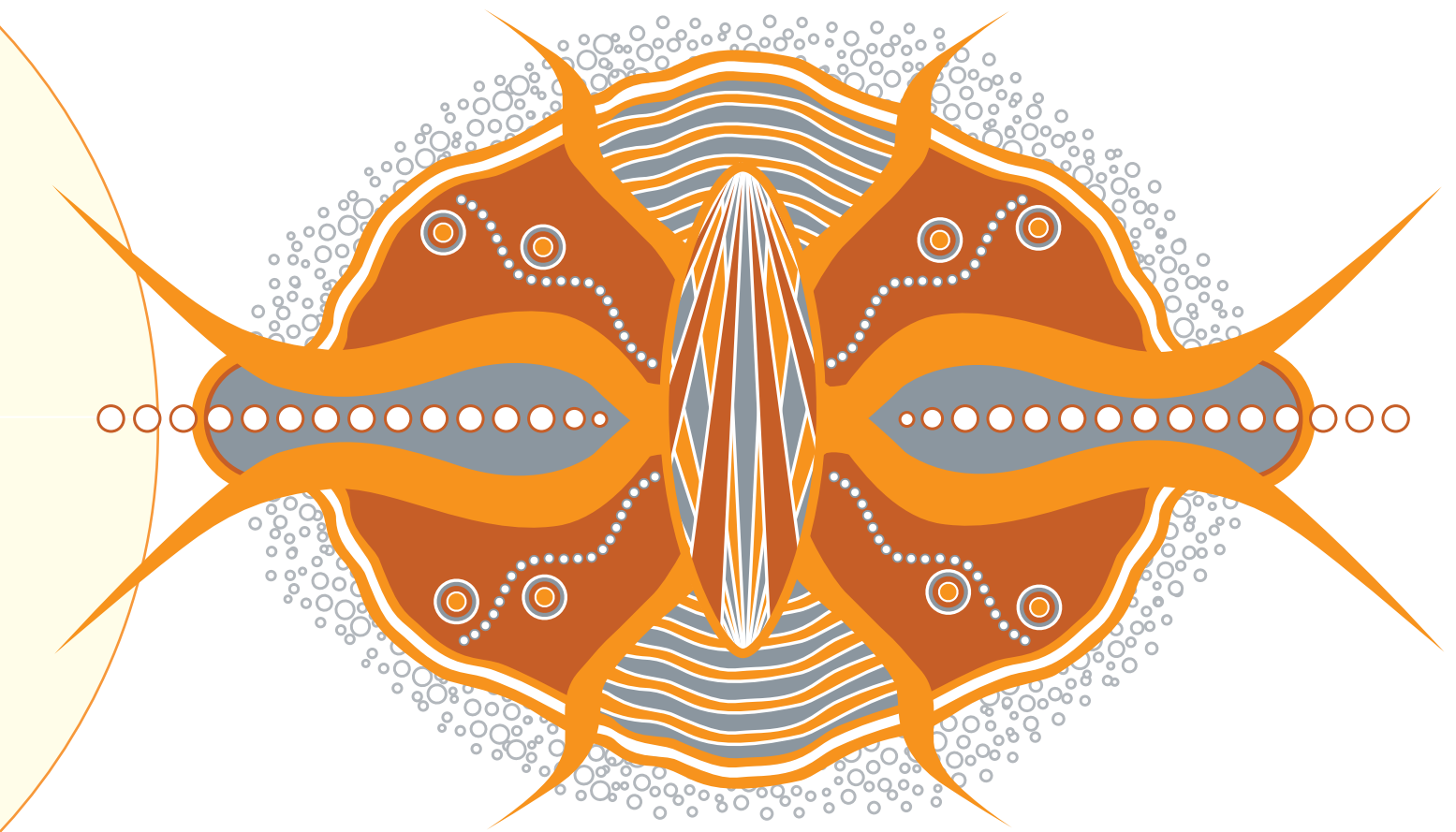
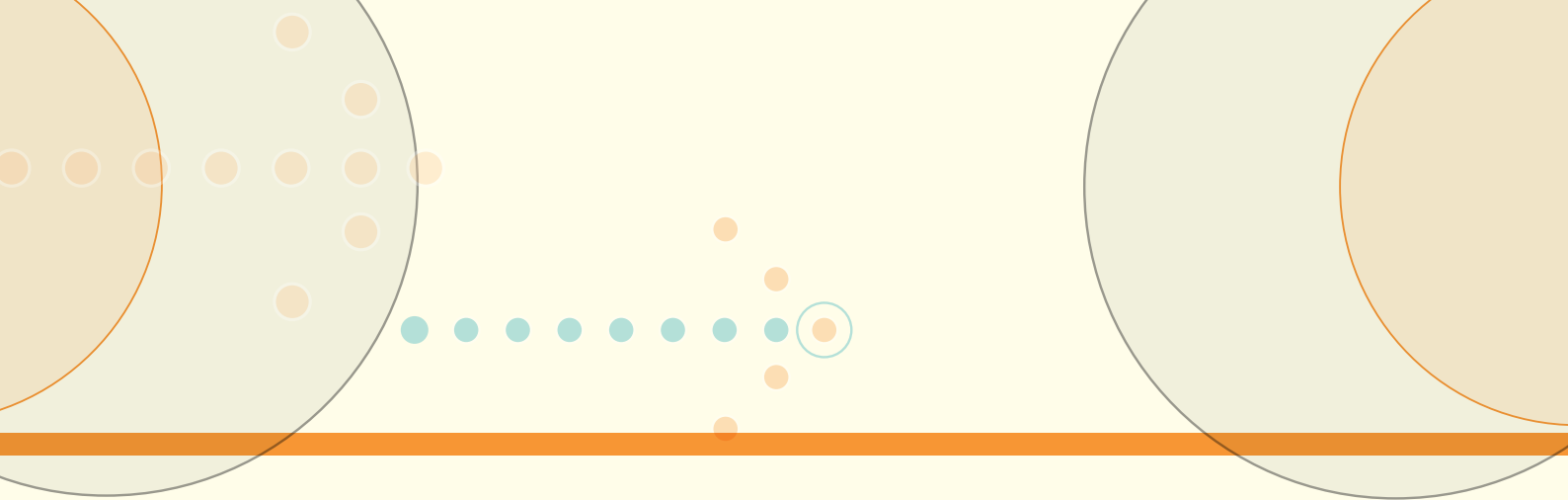


# VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ABORIGINAL INCLUSION FRAMEWORK



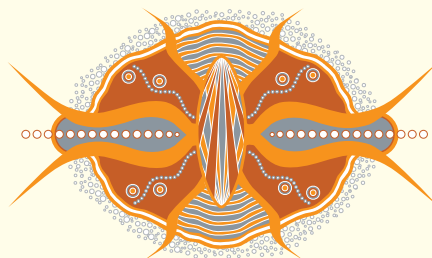


**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT  
ABORIGINAL INCLUSION FRAMEWORK**

.....

*Prepared by Aboriginal Affairs Taskforce on behalf of the Secretaries'  
Group on Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Planning  
and Community Development.*

*Throughout the Aboriginal Inclusion Framework the term Aboriginal  
refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal  
is used in preference to Indigenous; however Indigenous is retained  
when it is part of the title of a report or program.*



## FOREWORD

In a speech to mark National Close the Gap Day on 24 March 2011, the Premier Ted Baillieu outlined the Victorian Government's policy intentions in relation to Aboriginal Affairs, including confirmation of a whole of government approach to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Victorians. The Premier connected the commitments to closing the gap in health outcomes to the need to close the gap in a range of other areas, including early childhood development, education, employment and justice.

In this important speech, the Premier outlined four principles that will inform the Government's Aboriginal Affairs policy intentions and delivery:

- **Aspirations**

Every Victorian should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. A commitment to Closing the Gap in health, education and housing outcomes underpins the ability and capacity of Aboriginal Victorians to build a better future. A more prosperous and economically engaged Aboriginal community will have benefits for all Victorians.

- **Accountability**

Government has a responsibility to be accountable to all Victorians. Good policy and program delivery must be based on evidence. In turn funded organisations must be accountable for delivering services that meet the needs of their communities.

- **Engagement and Inclusiveness**

Closing the Gap can only be achieved through a partnership built on genuine engagement with

Aboriginal people across this state. This includes recognition and inclusion of local community voices and the views of Aboriginal organisations and their peak representative bodies.

- **Partnership - a whole of community approach**

Harnessing the resources and commitments of all sections in the community – government, community, business and philanthropic is essential. Aboriginal people, families, communities and organisations have a key role to inspire and drive the process.

The Premier also outlined a number of important actions taking place that will shape Aboriginal Affairs policy in the coming years. One of these key actions is the development of **Departmental Action Plans** demonstrating how access to and inclusion in mainstream services will be improved. The Aboriginal Inclusion Framework provides a useful tool to assist departments to develop their Action Plans.

The Secretaries' Group on Aboriginal Affairs will oversee the development and implementation of these Plans and they will be reported through the annual Indigenous Affairs Report tabled in Parliament each year.

I look forward to working together to achieve sustained improvements for Aboriginal Victorians.

**Andrew Tongue**

**Chair Secretaries' Group on Aboriginal Affairs**

**Secretary**

**Department of Planning and Community Development**

# 1. WHY AN ABORIGINAL INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity. Social exclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the inclusion of a person in the community. Many Aboriginal people, families and communities experience exclusion as the complex and enduring legacy of previous government approaches and policies.

Acknowledgment and respect of Aboriginal culture, values and practices is at the heart of successful engagement with Aboriginal people. In turn, this acknowledgement assists in addressing racism and ignorance.

Fundamental to Aboriginal inclusion is recognition that Aboriginal communities are diverse. Victorian Aboriginal communities are not all one cultural group and are not all the same. Similarities and differences in traditions and customs, ways of communicating, understandings and sensitivities exist within and across individuals and communities. The Aboriginal Inclusion Framework recognises this diversity.

The Aboriginal Inclusion Framework (the Framework) is an initiative of the Secretaries' Group on Aboriginal Affairs. It was developed after extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities emphasised the need to embed within the processes of government, inclusive, consistent and accessible services to Aboriginal people through all departments, agencies and funded service providers.

The Framework is a tool that can frame the review and reform of current practices in relation to how Departments do business with, and deliver services to Aboriginal people, families and communities, and so overcome systemic exclusion.

## 2. WHAT DID OUR RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION TELL US?

**D**uring 2009 and 2010, consultations were held across metropolitan and regional Victoria to build our understanding of how Government delivers services and resources to Aboriginal Victorians, the characteristics of the individuals, families and communities who access services, and those who do not, and more generally their needs and concerns.

Understanding the experiences of exclusion and how it impacts on the lives of Aboriginal people, their families and communities is central to improving government systems and services. If individuals, families and communities do not trust service providers or fear discrimination, their access to services will be diminished. This in turn diminishes the entitlement of Aboriginal Victorians to achieve the same opportunities and outcomes as other members of the Victorian community.

Barriers to accessing the services and resources highlighted during consultations include:

### **Racial Discrimination:**

Actual and perceived discrimination by service providers towards Aboriginal people and their families is a major barrier to accessing services.

*“During the consultations, many examples of racism were related by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people also identified that they self-exclude due to a lack of confidence in the capacity of the service provider to deliver accessible, equitable services of an acceptable standard”*

### **Language and/or Cultural barriers**

Information that is provided in ways that exclude groups and cultural barriers to accessing services may be equally significant.

*“There were concerns raised consistently regarding communication between Governments, local service providers, Aboriginal Peak Bodies and community groups. Without thorough systems of communication, the people and organisations consulted expressed feelings of isolation and exclusion from policy and program design and decisions”*

### **Lack of Trust in Organisations:**

This can include a fear or expectation of discrimination. Aboriginal people who have had negative experiences attempting to access a service, may be reluctant to engage with other services in the future, or will not seek out the assistance of a specialist organisation for help or advice. Lack of trust can be due to factors such as a limited understanding of the services available, a previous negative experiences and privacy concerns.

*“It appears as though some people have come to the conclusion that there is no one to talk to who will make an impact on their current circumstances. It was said several times that in situations of need, community members did not know who to contact or which service to approach, and so chose not to act at all”*

### **Awareness and Engagement**

A lack of awareness of and engagement with local Aboriginal communities can discourage individuals, families and communities from approaching an organisation to participate in activities or to seek assistance. Where services and resources are consistently not accessed, deep and persistent exclusion can result.

*“Many service providers had no engagement with local Aboriginal people on a professional level and the mainstream community and Aboriginal communities in the regions had almost no engagement socially, except perhaps through sport. This lack of interaction appears to cause uncertainty and unwillingness by service providers to engage with local Aboriginal communities”*

### 3. WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK?

The Aboriginal Inclusion Framework is about enabling change in the way government departments and services engage, relate to, and deliver services to Aboriginal people, families and communities. All Victorians will benefit from inclusive and respectful engagement with government systems and services. Diversity of gender, heritage, culture, ideas and age provides balance and generates innovation in all policy and programs areas.

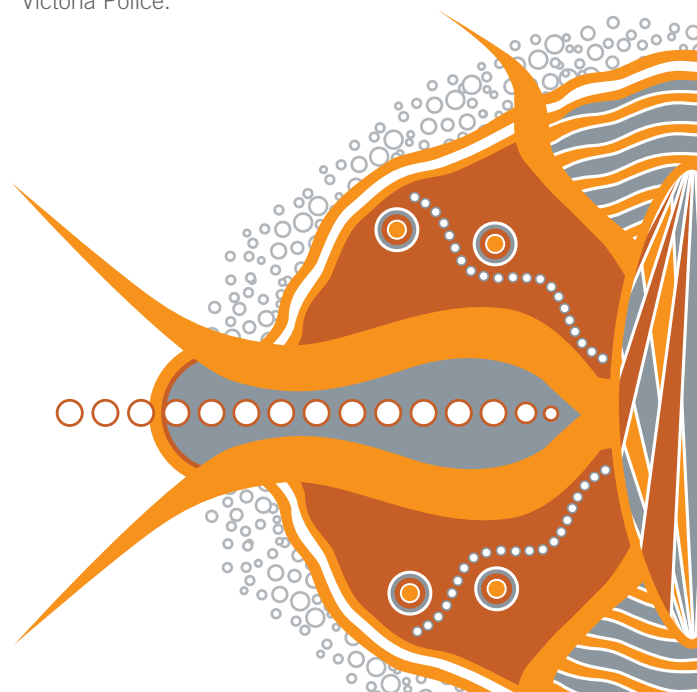
The objective of the Framework is to provide policy makers, program managers and service providers in the Victorian Government with a structure for reviewing their practice and reforming the way they engage with and address the needs of Aboriginal people.

The Framework aspires to actively strengthen the inclusion of Aboriginal culture in the workplace and support successful Aboriginal participation in the design, implementation and assessment of policies and programs

which directly or indirectly affect people. For example, employment of more Aboriginal people and building understanding of the experience of Aboriginal clients will help us better meet the needs of those individuals, families and communities, and earn trust and respect.

The Framework forms a critical part of the implementation of *Karreeta Yirramboi - Victorian Aboriginal Public Sector Employment and Career Development Action Plan 2010–2015*, which seeks to achieve the Government's commitment under the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) National Partnership on Indigenous Economic Participation including a target of at least 1 per cent Aboriginal employment in the Victorian public sector by 2015.

*Karreeta Yirramboi* is being implemented across all Victorian Government departments and public sector agencies, including Victorian Government schools, hospitals and Victoria Police.



## 4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF APPLYING THIS FRAMEWORK AND OPERATING IN AN INCLUSIVE WAY?

**E**vidence from overseas and the private sector indicates that inclusive practices benefit organisations, and consumers alike.

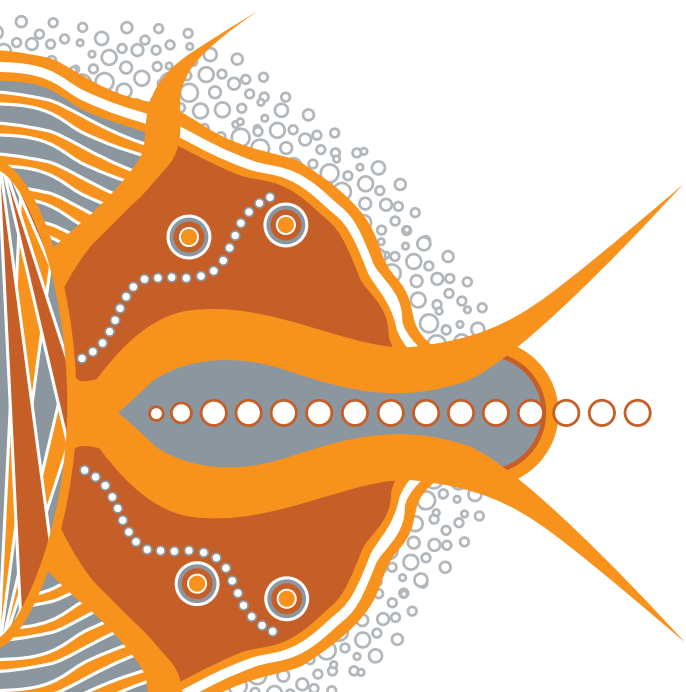
Making an explicit commitment and changing practices to work in a way which includes Aboriginal people, families and communities will ensure that better decisions can be made about policy, program and service delivery. Better designed and targeted services will lead to better outcomes. By understanding and articulating organisational functions within an inclusive framework, the needs and rights of clients and consumers is recognised and respected and the context for service delivery can become clearer.

This understanding can then flow to agencies delivering services on behalf of government through better informed funding and service agreements, accreditation processes, service standards, monitoring and evaluation.

Through the transfer of knowledge, inclusion can improve client and stakeholder relations, reduce the risk of complaints, enhance the reputation of the organisation and build transparency and accountability.

Inclusive organisations can also boost productivity as employees thrive in an environment which values diversity and does not tolerate discrimination or racism. This can enhance morale and staff loyalty, and reduce absenteeism and turnover. Employees who feel valued, and who know that their employer values their clients, are more likely to work to maximise their contribution to the organisation's knowledge and skill base.

A commitment to inclusion can improve relationships, trust and respect of Aboriginal communities as well as establish, maintain and enhance partnerships. Through genuine partnerships, departments and their agencies can be more responsive to service user needs, and genuine stakeholder engagement can occur.



## 5. THE ABORIGINAL INCLUSION MATRIX

Inclusion must address all aspects of how each department and agency functions. It is not just about service delivery. Leadership and positions of authority need to be committed to and champion inclusion. The inclusion of Aboriginal Victorians must occur throughout each department and agency, from top to bottom.

The Framework identifies six areas of action and five key areas of focus which have been developed into a matrix. Questions posed within the matrix provide a platform for departments and agencies to discuss and quantify how inclusion of Aboriginal Victorians is understood within their organisation and how the organisation can be more inclusive. The design of the Framework aims to provide direction and ideas for achieving inclusive services.

### Departmental Action Plans

The Framework is intended to be a flexible tool which will support the development of Departmental Action Plans. Departmental Action Plans may take different forms. Some agencies may for example choose to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan while others might draw together a number of strategies and policies, including Aboriginal employment and career development plans, under the umbrella of their Departmental Action Plan.

### AREAS FOR FOCUS

Five areas of focus have been identified that are fundamental to supporting the development and integration of inclusive policy, processes and practices for Aboriginal people, families and communities.

#### *Leadership and Governance*

The leadership group provides guidance for a department or agency. It establishes structures, is responsible for the behaviour, culture and values and is accountable for the achievement of an organisation's operations and goals. For successful implementation it is imperative that the capacity of leaders at all departmental and agency levels is effectively utilised.

#### *Policy Development*

Policy development provides a framework for issue identification, agency decision making, communication and service delivery. Policies provide the foundation for the agency's governance, programs and direct service delivery, and for the services it purchases. All policies must be inclusive of Aboriginal people.

#### *Programs and Services*

Programs and services should be designed and delivered in inclusive ways so that external and internal barriers to Aboriginal inclusion are eliminated.

### **Workplace Organisational Development and Change**

The workforce needs to reflect the community it services. Government departments and agencies need to build, retain and develop their Aboriginal workforce and the capacity of other stakeholders including its non Aboriginal workforce and external agencies. It is essential that all departments and agencies have capabilities and practices that promote access to and delivery of inclusive and respectful services.

### **Communications**

Pro-active communications drive reform by raising awareness, and promoting positive norms across the workforce, the general community and within Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people, families and communities should be empowered to know and express their rights by building their understanding of rights based service delivery. Access to information should be available and communicated to ensure that Aboriginal people are aware of available services, acceptable standards, and avenues for engagement, raising concerns and providing feedback.

### **AREAS FOR ACTION**

Six areas have been identified which should be considered under each area for focus.

#### **Partnership, Participation and Engagement**

Representation of, and participation and engagement with Aboriginal people ensures that their views, preferences, experience and knowledge inform decision making and delivery across the organisation.

#### **Cultural Safety, Respect and Recognition**

Individuals and systems should support the cultural identity and respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and faiths

or religions. As people from the same culture are the more likely to understand and are able to provide a culturally safe environment, the Aboriginal Inclusion Framework supports the involvement of Aboriginal people in all areas of service to protect cultural safety. This response affirms and values their worth and respects their dignity. The cultural perspective of the relevant stakeholders (clients, employees, partner organisations, communities) is at the centre of all interactions.

#### **Duty of Care**

Duty of care applies to a range of situations and can be briefly described as an obligation that any reasonable person would take when acting toward others and the public. All departments and agencies have a duty of care to clients and others who may be reasonably likely to be affected by their actions. Actions are to be made with care, attention, caution and prudence; otherwise those actions can be considered negligent.

Aboriginal people, families and communities should be treated in a way that affords them the same rights as other members of the community. All departments and agencies have a duty of care to clients and others who may be reasonably likely to be affected by their actions.

#### **Evaluation and Monitoring**

Evaluation and monitoring is the systematic collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data needed to make decisions. Rigorous evaluation builds the knowledge base to improve future policies, programs and services. Whilst ongoing monitoring ensures a high quality is maintained.



### ***Accountability, Reporting and Transparency***

Accountability is the process whereby individuals and organisations, and the individuals within them, are responsible for their decisions and actions and submit themselves to appropriate external scrutiny. It is achieved by all parties having a clear understanding of those responsibilities, and having clearly defined roles through a robust structure.

Transparency/Openness is required to ensure that stakeholders can have confidence in the decision-making processes and actions of public sector organisations, in the management of their activities, and in the individuals within them. Reporting is the method by which individuals and organisations illustrate and prove their transparency and are held accountable for their decisions and actions.

### ***Whole of Government Interaction and Interagency Collaboration***

State-wide leadership and coordination is important as issues confronting Aboriginal people cross traditional departmental boundaries. Alignment of investment, effort and policy integration with strategic priorities is necessary to achieve long term change.

## 6. PLACING ABORIGINAL INCLUSION IN A BROADER REFORM AGENDA

The Aboriginal Inclusion framework provides a mechanism for strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal Victorians, and ensuring agencies have the capability to deliver inclusive respectful services to all clients and service users.

### COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

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

#### *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) commits all governments to actions to close the gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Australians. The six COAG Closing the Gap goals incorporated in the NIRA 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 access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four years olds, including in remote communities within five years.
- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade.

- halve the gap for Indigenous students 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.

#### *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 per cent 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***

Considerable progress was achieved in the signing of an Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan between Victoria and the Commonwealth in 2010. The Plan outlines how the Commonwealth and Victoria will jointly implement the NIRA and the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework. The Plan commits to using existing consultative arrangements with Indigenous Victorians to advance reforms in Victoria.

### **COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS SERVICE DELIVERY PRINCIPLES**

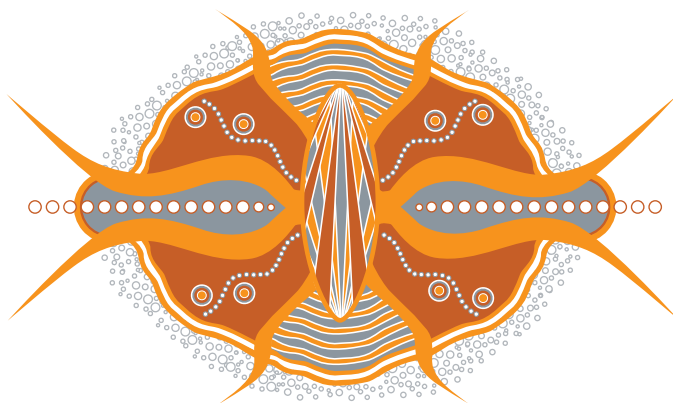
The Aboriginal Inclusion Framework will be informed by the Service Delivery Principles agreed by Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008. They are

- **Priority** – Programs and services should contribute to closing the gap by meeting targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
- **Indigenous Engagement** – Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
- **Sustainability** – Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.
- **Access** – Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.

- **Integration** – There should be collaboration between and within governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively co-ordinate programs and services.
- **Accountability** – Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

The COAG Closing the Gaps Targets also include commitments to reducing child mortality, increasing kindergarten participation, halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade, halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent by 2020 and halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians within a decade.

The importance of employment is also recognised in Karreeta Yirramboi, which seeks to achieve the government's commitment under the COAG National Partnership on Indigenous Economic Participation to ensure that Aboriginal employees make up a least per cent of the Victorian public sector by 2015.





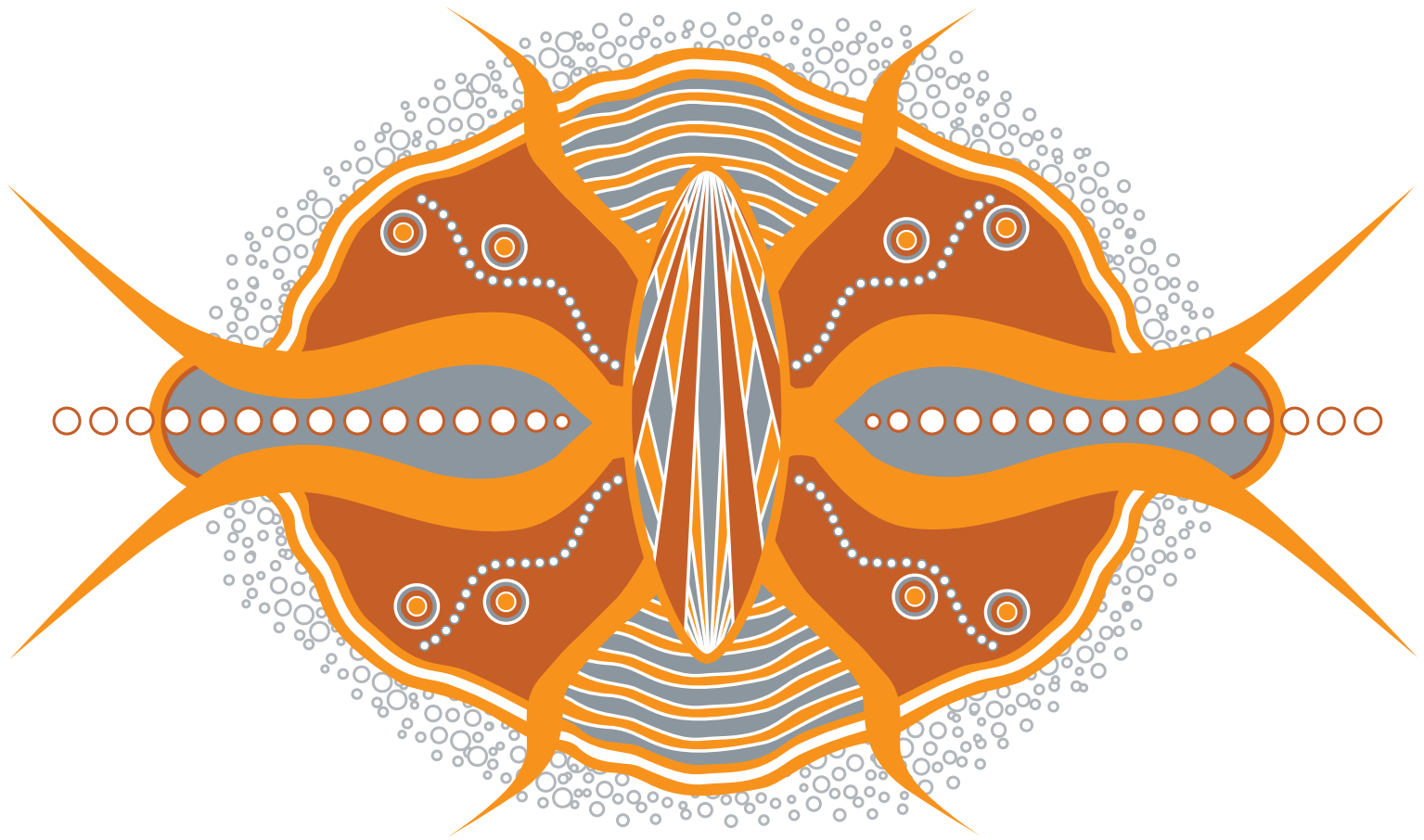
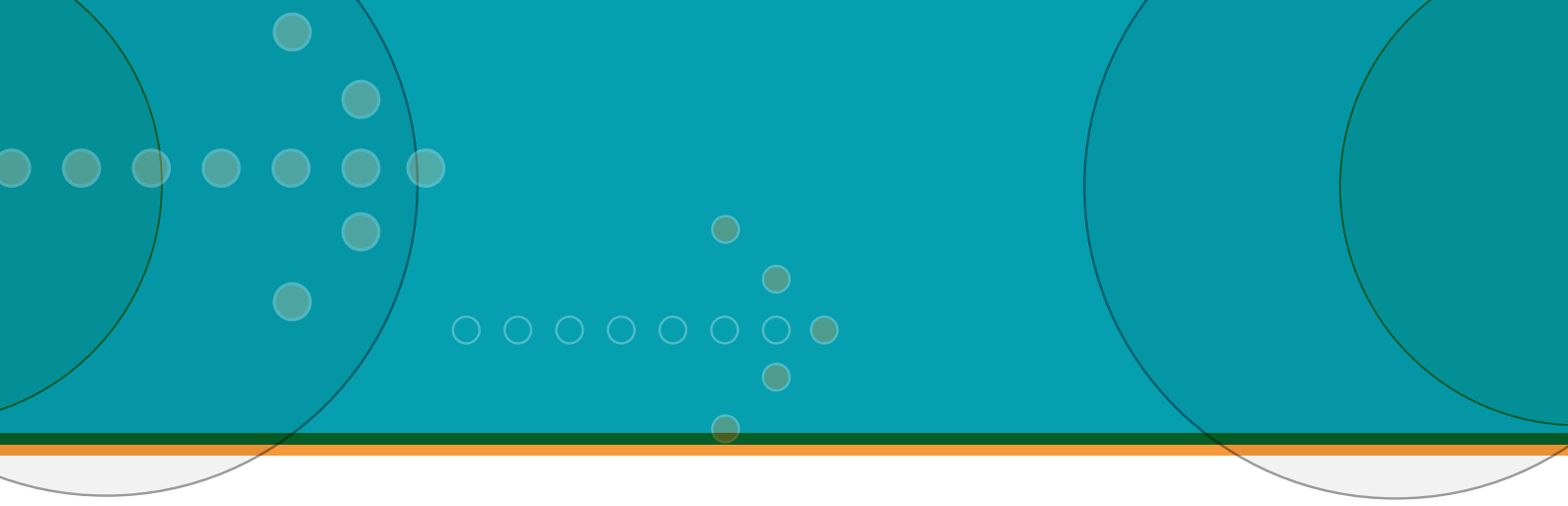
## VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS FRAMEWORK

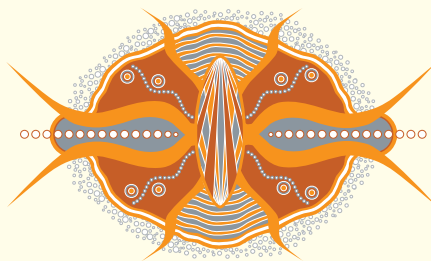
The Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF) aligns and concentrates government and community effort in the foundation areas of maternal health, early childhood development, education and economic development. It also recognises that action in these areas needs to be accompanied by action to improve outcomes in health, family violence, justice and individual and community capacity.

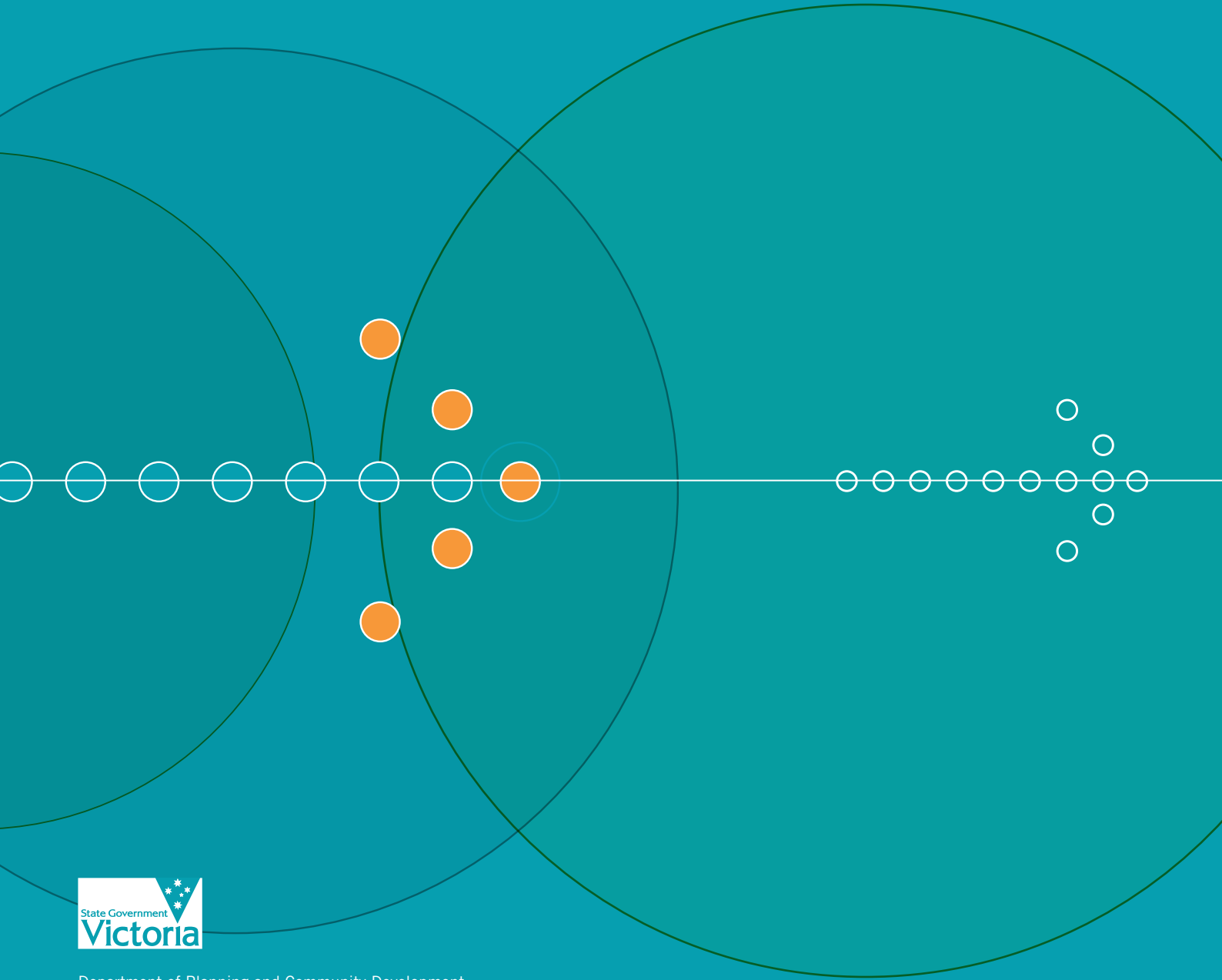
Achieving the outcomes in the VIAF will require an approach that builds human capacity, autonomy and economic independence. This approach can help bring about change to improve the lives of Aboriginal Victorians and create strong and prosperous Aboriginal communities. These changes will require:

- Recognition by governments and the broader community of the strengths and contribution of Aboriginal communities.
- Raised expectations of what Aboriginal Victorians can achieve and the standard of service that Aboriginal Victorians are entitled to.
- A stronger focus on education, employment and economic development.

The Premier has committed to reviewing the VIAF specifically looking at whether aspects need strengthening.







Department of Planning and Community Development  
1 Spring Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000  
Telephone (03) 9208 3799  
November 2011

© Copyright State Government of Victoria 2011

No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Printed by Finsbury Green

Designed by Vanzella Graphic Design Pty Ltd

Printed on minimum 50% recycled paper

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, please telephone 03 9208 3745

This publication is also published in PDF and Word formats on [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/aboriginaltaskforce](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/aboriginaltaskforce)