Chapter 5

Area for action 2: Improve literacy and numeracy

Education is fundamental to a child’s welfare and development. We are working in partnership with Indigenous communities to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all Indigenous children so that, over time, their skills will be of a standard that matches non-Indigenous students.

Action area 2 objectives:

2.1 Improve school attendance rates for Indigenous students.
2.2 Improve literacy and numeracy in years 3, 5 and 7 for Indigenous students.

Current situation

Snapshot

Attendance\(^{28}\)

In 2007:

- Average attendance rate for Indigenous primary school students was 87.3 per cent compared with 93.1 per cent for non-Indigenous primary school students.
- Average attendance rate for Indigenous secondary school students (years 7-10) was 82.2 per cent compared with 90.6 per cent for non-Indigenous secondary school students.

\(^{28}\) All attendance figures refer to Victorian Government schools.
Literacy and numeracy

In 2007:
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 3 achieving the national benchmark for reading was 86.1 per cent (national result 80.7 per cent) compared to 93.6 per cent for all Victorian year 3 students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 3 achieving the national benchmark for writing was 86.1 per cent (national result 76.6 per cent) compared to 94.1 per cent for all Victorian year 3 students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 3 achieving the national benchmark for numeracy was 88.5 per cent (national result 78.8 per cent) compared to 95.0 per cent for all Victorian year 3 students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 5 achieving the national benchmark for reading was 79.9 per cent (national result 67.6 per cent) compared to 91.4 per cent for all Victorian year 5 students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 5 achieving the national benchmark for writing was 89.6 per cent (national result 79.5 per cent) compared to 96.0 per cent for all Victorian year 5 students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 5 achieving the national benchmark for numeracy was 75.4 per cent (national result 65.5 per cent) compared to 91.5 per cent for all Victorian year 5 students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 7 achieving the national benchmark in reading was 79.9 per cent (national result 64.7 per cent) compared to 93.0 per cent for all Victorian students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 7 achieving the national benchmark in writing was 82.8 per cent (national result 74.5 per cent) compared to 94.8 per cent for all Victorian students.
- The proportion of Victorian Indigenous students in year 7 achieving the national benchmark for numeracy was 67.6 per cent (national result 46.0 per cent) while for all Victorian students it was 89.0 per cent.

NOTES Literacy and numeracy data for Victorian Indigenous students are subject to measurement error in the range of 3.0 per cent to 5.0 per cent. As such, caution should be exercised when interpreting and comparing the results. The full data set is published at http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/ANR2007Bmrks-Layout_FINAL.pdf

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has adopted a detailed set of targets to ‘Close the Gap’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. COAG recognises that improved education outcomes for Indigenous Australians are crucial to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. COAG adopted the targets of halving the current gaps in literacy and numeracy within a decade and achieving full closure within a generation. Closing the gaps in school attendance and completion rates is part of this challenge.

Victoria is well-placed to achieve the COAG targets in advance of other states.

In February 2008, the Minister for Education launched Victoria’s education strategy for Koorie students: Wannik (Learning Together, Journey to our Future) which is to be implemented from 2008-09.

Wannik was developed in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association.
### Attendance

The 2007 attendance data for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Victorian Government schools included only those schools that reported at least one Indigenous enrolment.

Although average Indigenous school attendance rates in Victoria compare well with other states and territories, there is still a significant difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendance rates.

Literacy and numeracy are key to improving outcomes, and attendance at school can improve these skills and generally improve confidence for ongoing engagement and attendance.

There is a range of strategies currently undertaken in schools that are proving effective in improving attendance. These include:
- home visits by teachers and principals
- whole-school and targeted attendance programs that include monitoring and follow-up with students and families
- parenting and parent support programs
- programs that include monitoring and follow-up with students and families
- joint programs with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

### Literacy and numeracy

Victorian Indigenous students do well in literacy and numeracy when compared with Indigenous students nationally, however there is still a gap in meeting national benchmarks when compared to non-Indigenous Victorian students.

Data collected by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) indicates that Indigenous students are coming into the Prep year of schooling less prepared than non-Indigenous students, particularly in regard to reading. However, by year 2, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students narrows markedly.

The challenge is to maintain high literacy and numeracy skills of Indigenous young people as they move through the middle years and later years of schooling.
What we are doing

Fundamental to Wannik is fostering a new culture of high expectations for Koorie students, and systemic reform across government schools to deliver the best possible education to meet these expectations.

An increased emphasis on accountability at the school, regional and system levels, strong leadership, and better engagement with Koorie parents and the community is key to the strategy.

Wannik involves:
- Reform of education for Indigenous students. Reforms include specific accountabilities of teachers, principals and other staff achieving improvement targets; delivery of cultural awareness training and professional learning packages; fostering high expectations of Indigenous students and building a culturally inclusive curriculum where students (and their parents and families) can recognise their own culture and history.
- Greater student engagement. Individual education plans will be prepared for each Indigenous student in partnership with teachers, students, their parents/care givers and Koorie support workers. Managed Individual Pathways Plans will be required for students at risk of disengaging from school and initiatives that encourage school attendance will be strengthened.
- Greater literacy and numeracy support. Accelerated support will be provided to students failing to attain expected achievement levels. More literacy specialists will be employed to work in schools with high numbers of Indigenous students.
- Support for high-achieving students. Scholarships to be available for high achievers and allocation of places to high Indigenous achievers in select entry government schools.
- An expanded and strengthened Indigenous support workforce. Additional Indigenous staff will be recruited and their integration in school activities will be improved. Individual learning plans, school-family engagement, professional development and scholarship availability will be strengthened to increase the number of available Indigenous teachers.
- Strengthened parental engagement. Increased partnerships between schools and local Indigenous communities. Staff will be required to work to minimise barriers to parental engagement with schools. Initiatives that improve parental literacy and numeracy will be developed and implemented.

Next steps

A detailed plan is currently being developed to support the implementation of Wannik.

Priority areas for implementation and development in 2009 include:
1. Improving the foundation skills of literacy and numeracy.
2. Building better youth pathways and transitions.
3. Workforce reform including the Koorie Support Workforce and Teachers.
4. Establishment of four new Koorie Pathway Schools to assist disengaged and ‘at-risk’ Koorie young people to transition into mainstream schools. The schools will focus on literacy and numeracy within a framework of Indigenous culture and identity, and will be located in Glenroy, Mildura, Swan Hill and Morwell.
5. Supporting school leadership and professional development.
6. Fostering and encouraging high-performing students.

Key initiatives include:
- employment of specialists in literacy and numeracy
- individual education plans, managed individual pathways plans and students-at-risk mapping
- employment of Youth Transitions Support Workers
- redesign of the Koorie Support Workforce
- scholarships for students and teachers
- increased involvement in national leadership programs.
Chapter 6

Area for action 3: Improve year 12 completion or equivalent qualification and develop pathways to employment

Completing year 12 can unlock greater education, training and job opportunities for school students. By working in partnership with Indigenous communities, we are providing greater support for Indigenous students to complete year 12 and gain the best start to their professional careers.

Action area 3 objectives:

3.1 Improve transition to year 10.
3.2 Increase completion of year 12 or equivalent qualifications for Indigenous students.

Current situation

Snapshot

Schools
In 2007 the apparent retention rate for Indigenous students:
- from years 7 to 10 was 88.3 per cent (2006 91.1 per cent) compared with 98.7 per cent (2006 98.2 per cent) for all Victorian students.
- from years 10 to 12 was 56.7 per cent (2006 47.4 per cent) compared with 81.8 per cent (2006 82.1 per cent) for all Victorian students.
- In 2007 190 Indigenous students completed year 12 (up from 160 in 2006)

TAFE / VET
In 2007 there were 5,223 Indigenous students in the vocational educational and training (VET) sector, an increase of 10 per cent on the previous year.

Study outcomes for the Indigenous students were:
- module load pass rate of 62 per cent compared to 75 per cent for non-Indigenous
- failure rate of 22 per cent compared to 14 per cent for non-Indigenous
- module load completion rate of 64 per cent compared to 78 per cent for non-Indigenous.

In 2007, 44 per cent of Indigenous student enrolments were in Certificate I and II level programs, 28 per cent were in Certificate III and IV while 5 per cent were in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas.
Young people who complete year 12 or equivalent are:

- more likely to fully participate in the labour force
- more likely to experience periods of extended employment and work in more secure and higher paid employment
- less likely to face health-related problems such as stress and anxiety due to job uncertainty
- less likely to become parents at an earlier age and experience the social and economic disadvantages that are often associated with young parenting
- estimated to enjoy double the lifetime earning prospects of those who do not complete year 12.

Victoria’s comprehensive strategy for improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students, Wannik (Learning Together, Journey to our Future) confirms that:

- 16 per cent of Indigenous students leave school between years 9 and 10 compared to three per cent of non-Indigenous students
- 22 per cent of Indigenous students leave between years 10 and 11 compared to five per cent of non-Indigenous students
- 41 per cent of Indigenous students leave school between years 11 and 12, compared with 18 per cent of non-Indigenous students.

Many of these students are choosing to undertake a Vocational Education and Training (VET) or Technical and Further Education (TAFE) qualification at a TAFE institute or private training provider.

In 2007, there were 1,562 young Indigenous people (14-19 years old) participating in TAFE or VET. Eight per cent of these were undertaking the Victorian Certificate of Education or equivalent.

Learning in formal and informal settings enhances human capital, defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the knowledge, skills and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic wellbeing.

Increasing year 12 or equivalent completion rates for Indigenous students in government schools is a key objective for Wannik, as a means of closing the gap of Indigenous disadvantage.

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30 Access Economics Pty Ltd [2005] The economic benefit of increased participation in education and training p6
31 Vinson, T. [2007] Dropping of the Edge: The Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia p21

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What we are doing

General approach

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) initiatives aimed at increasing retention to year 12 or equivalent include:

- the Managed Individual Pathways Program which assists students aged 15 and above to navigate a pathway to further education and training or work
- the Student Mapping Tool which enables schools to easily identify students who have characteristics that are known to increase the risk of early school leaving and to track, monitor and evaluate interventions used to ameliorate the risks
- work experience and structured workplace learning as part of the careers program of schools
- the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) which has proved effective at encouraging students at risk of disengagement to remain at school
- re-engagement programs which are approved programs based in the community that provide the VCAL to students who wish to undertake their qualifications in an alternative setting
- online learning and teaching careers and transition resources supported by guidelines for their use with targeted groups, including Indigenous young people

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Targeted approach

Wannik was developed in partnership between DEECD and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association.

There are a number of key strategies to increase year 12 or equivalent completion rates, including expansion of the Youth Transitions and Pathways Support initiative. This includes individual education plans for each Indigenous student in partnership with teachers, students, their parents/care givers and Koorie support workers. It also involves expansion of the Managed Individual Pathways initiative to include Indigenous year 8 and 9 students and full implementation of the Student Mapping Tool into all Government primary and secondary schools with Indigenous students enrolled.

Other initiatives include:
- support for high achieving students
- reform of education for Indigenous students
- greater student engagement
- greater literacy and numeracy support
- an expanded and strengthened Indigenous support workforce
- strengthened parental engagement.

Refer to Chapter 5 for details of the above initiatives.

- the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN) initiative which supports cooperation between different providers and agencies and acts to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to support young people’s transition through school to further education, training or full-time employment. Many LLENs work closely with their local Indigenous communities.
- Regional Youth Commitments which are a framework negotiated within and between all local and regional stakeholders to link and coordinate pathway and transition support arrangements for 15 to 19 year olds
- the 24 transition support workers under the Youth Transition Support Initiative who assist disengaged young people aged 15 to 19 access a sustainable education, training or employment option
- the annual On Track survey which ensures that year 10-12 students are given the opportunity to be contacted after leaving school and assisted with further advice if they are not studying or in full-time employment
- the School Focused Youth Service that coordinates preventive and early intervention strategies for young people delivered through the 41 school community clusters.
Skills Victoria’s Wurreker strategy aims to address the training needs and aspirations of Indigenous people and involves 23 Indigenous Liaison Officers employed across TAFE campuses. Other initiatives include:
- development of an annual state Indigenous Koorie Training Plan
- Indigenous-controlled training centres
- a range of training providers for specific Indigenous training programs
- tagged funding to TAFE institutions for additional training delivery to Indigenous students.

Wurreker brokers promote links at the regional level between secondary schools, local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, Local Learning and Employment Networks, TAFE and higher education institutions.33

Next steps
Implementation of Wannik and Wurreker strategies are the immediate priorities.

**Action area 3 objective:**

3.3 Increase Indigenous participation in state-funded employment programs [note that Action area 3.3 is combined with Action area 5.1].

**Current situation**

Increasing the number of Indigenous Victorians in work, education and training is a critical precondition to addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

**Workforce participation by young Indigenous Victorians**

According to the 2006 Australian Census of Population and Housing there were 2,800 young Indigenous Victorians participating in the labour force in 2006. More than 75 per cent were in employment and over 700 were unemployed. A further 2,492 young Indigenous Victorians were not employed or looking for work. Although many may have been participating in formal education or training, a number may have been discouraged jobseekers.

The unemployment rate of young Indigenous Victorians was more than 1.5 times higher than the unemployment rate of the total Victorian Indigenous population (15.8 per cent) and their participation rate at 53.7 per cent was well below that of the total Victorian Indigenous population (56.9 per cent).

Table 6 presents the labour force statistics for young non-Indigenous people of the same age. It shows the young Indigenous unemployment rate at 24.7 per cent was 2.3 times higher than the unemployment rate of the young non-Indigenous population (10.8 per cent).

Young Indigenous Victorians are more likely to work full-time than young non-Indigenous Victorians (49.8 per cent compared with 45.5 per cent) and are more likely to be looking for full time work (67.3 per cent compared with 49.4 per cent). These statistics might reflect the fact that more young non-Indigenous Victorians combine part-time work with education and training, whereas young Indigenous Victorians are more likely to have left education and be participating in the labour market only.

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33 The Wurreker strategy for Indigenous VET brings together key community, training and employment representatives to undertake annual planning around priorities for the delivery of training that focuses on employment outcomes.
### Table 3: Workforce participation rate and unemployment rate for young Indigenous people aged 15-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15-24 years Indigenous</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>1,174</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force</td>
<td>1,550</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>2,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in labour force</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>2,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force status not stated</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006

### Table 4: Workforce participation rate and unemployment rate for young non-Indigenous people aged 15-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15-24 years Non-Indigenous</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>178,759</td>
<td>178,288</td>
<td>357,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>23,046</td>
<td>20,346</td>
<td>43,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force</td>
<td>201,805</td>
<td>198,634</td>
<td>400,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in labour force</td>
<td>112,977</td>
<td>109,568</td>
<td>222,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force status not stated</td>
<td>4,220</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>7,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006
General workforce participation by Indigenous Victorians

According to 2006 census data, the Indigenous unemployment rate was three times the non-Indigenous unemployment rate at 15.8 per cent compared with 5.3 per cent\(^{34}\), and the participation rate was also lower (56.8 per cent compared with 64.7 per cent for non-Indigenous Victorians).

The unemployment rate for Indigenous Victorians (15.8 per cent) was the third-highest rate of all states and territories and was slightly higher than for Indigenous Australians as a whole (15.6 per cent). Indigenous Victorians did have a higher participation rate than the overall rate for Indigenous Australians (56.9 per cent compared with 54.5 per cent).

Diagram 8: Victorian participation rates by age and Indigenous status - 2006

Diagram 9: Victorian age-standardised* unemployment rates - 2006

34 ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006: Data includes only those people who stated their Indigenous status and their labour force status
Where Indigenous Victorians participate in the workforce, they continue to be over-represented in occupation groups requiring relatively lower levels of skill. Should the national economy slow as part of the current global economic crisis, the most marginal participants in the labour market will be at significant risk, as demand for labour slows. The Australian Census of Population and Housing 2006 found that young Indigenous Victorians were in the lower centiles of income earners when compared with other young Victorians. Young Indigenous Victorians in the labour force in low paid/low skill positions may be particularly vulnerable to the impact of an economic downturn.

What we are doing

The Victorian Government committed $29.6 million over three years (2005-06 to 2007-08) for Workforce Participation Partnerships (WPP) to help jobseekers facing employment barriers to find real jobs in areas with skill and labour shortages.

Many projects have a place-based focus and have been developed in consultation with local employers. They have been jointly managed by local partnerships that bring together industry, local government, training providers, employment services, community organisations, unions and employers.

Indigenous jobseekers are one of the target groups of WPP. As at 30 June 2008, seven projects were funded to support Indigenous jobseekers and to date:
- 209 Indigenous people have registered with the seven projects
- 125 Indigenous jobseekers have started employment
- 66 Indigenous jobseekers have been employed for 16 weeks or more.

**Indigenous Apprenticeship Program (IAP)**

One of the key workforce participation projects for Indigenous young people is the Indigenous Apprenticeship Program. IAP works with electrical and plumbing employers to place Indigenous young people into apprenticeships. Participants receive ongoing mentoring, support and training including pre-apprenticeship training. In addition, participants are encouraged to get involved in recreation, nutrition and life-skills activities to support a whole-life approach to gaining, sustaining and progressing their careers.

To date:
- 60 Indigenous young people have registered with IAP
- 51 have started work
- 45 of these are in apprenticeships, predominantly in plumbing and electrical trades and six began as trainees or scaffolding labourers
- 76 per cent who started work are in sustainable jobs.
Youth Employment Scheme (YES)

YES offers young Victorians, aged 15 to 24, traineeships and apprenticeships in Victorian Government departments. To date, 60 young Indigenous people have benefited from the scheme.

Public Tenant Employment Program (PTEP)

The program is a state-wide initiative of the Office of Housing (Department of Human Services) to create employment and training opportunities for people in public housing. Under the program, building and maintenance contracts require private contractors to employ a percentage of public tenants as part of their staff. To date, 38 Indigenous people have been employed – one in 10 of the total.

The program has helped a small Indigenous business that now operates with support from Darebin Enterprise Centre Ltd, which is successfully employing three to four people.

A service agreement with the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust has also resulted in a series of maintenance training programs, including the establishment of a tool library and training of 19 residents. PTEP is also working with Community Housing Ltd to start providing the non-trade housing maintenance at Lake Tyers, with the aim of 25 per cent of work being provided to local people, and for external tradespeople to use local people as trades-assistants. Seven local residents have started employment through this program.

Skills and jobs for disadvantaged workers

Funded under the Moving Forward program, these initiatives focus on filling vacancies in two key industry sectors: manufacturing in western Victoria and transport and distribution in north-eastern Victoria. Disadvantaged jobseekers, including Indigenous jobseekers, access training and practical assistance to gain the skills and capabilities to secure ongoing employment.

Intrain

Intrain is a scholarship program within the Department of Human Services to assist Indigenous students studying in the areas of health and/or community services, to ultimately make the transition from education to employment. A review in 2008 of Intrain surveyed 32 recipients and found that 72 per cent were in ongoing employment, a further 22 per cent were not seeking employment as they were studying or parenting full time, and only six per cent were unemployed.

Case Study Four

“David’s story”

David Clarke is one of many young Indigenous men who have secured rewarding futures for themselves and their families.

David, 24, had to strive to achieve his dream of becoming an electrician.

Prior to joining the Victorian Government’s $29.6 million Workforce Participation Partnerships program, David worked in two jobs to provide income support for his family.

The program helps those facing employment barriers find real jobs where skills and labour are needed. Seven WPP projects target Indigenous job seekers.

Through the program, David completed pre-apprenticeship training in electro technology. Recognised as a committed worker, he was selected by Elecraft, one of Australia’s largest electrical companies, to begin a four-year apprenticeship.

David’s dedication was rewarded when he was chosen, as a second year apprentice, to join a delegation to Venezuela with the support of his employer.

So far, 45 Indigenous tradespeople have entered the workforce as part of the Indigenous Apprenticeships Program. The program works with electrical and plumbing employers to get people into jobs. As one of them, David can now look forward to another dream – owning a home.
Next steps

Bringing employment and training together with other services is helping to improve the economic and social outcomes for young Indigenous Victorians.

Building on the success of Workforce Participation Partnerships, the Government allocated $5 million for New Workforce Partnerships in 2008-09.

The Indigenous Youth Employment Program (IYEP) will provide a flexible and individually tailored approach to connecting Indigenous young people with jobs.

While the program is still being developed it will support Indigenous youth to remain in school, raising their work aspirations and building pathways between school and work. Indigenous young people will also be placed directly into employment, and supported by a joined up service delivery approach that addresses health, housing and other needs. Ongoing support will include mentoring and life skills programs to support retention and progression in employment. Importantly IYEP will also work with employers to break down barriers, address discrimination and cultural sensitivity issues and support employers to build career paths for Indigenous employees.

A project targeting Indigenous jobseekers under the Moving Forward program started in October.

Work has also begun on an Indigenous Economic Participation and Development Strategy for completion during 2008-09 with the overarching goal of halving the gap in employment outcomes in 10 years.
Chapter 7
Area for action 4 (Part 1): Prevent family violence

We are committed to working in partnership with Indigenous communities to reduce the impact and incidence of family violence.

Action area 4 objectives

4.1 Increase in police responding to and taking action on any Indigenous family violence incident reported to them.
4.2 Reduce repeat police call outs for Indigenous family violence incidents.35

Strategic Area for Action 4 has been divided into two parts: (a) family violence and (b) improving justice outcomes. This chapter deals with family violence while chapter eight covers reducing over-representation in the criminal justice system.

Current situation

Violence is a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Victorian victims, particularly women.36

Snapshot

- Family violence against Indigenous women may be up to 40 times the rate for non-Indigenous women.
- Indigenous women are 28 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of an assault than non-Indigenous women.
- Family violence is present in 64 per cent of Child Protection cases where Indigenous children are involved
- Indigenous children are around 10 times more likely to be in need of protection from harm – usually as a result of emotional abuse or neglect.37
- Indigenous men are eight times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of an assault than non-Indigenous men.

35 Paradoxically, if these objectives are achieved it is expected that a short-term increase in Indigenous family violence incidents recorded and responded to by police. Rather than suggesting that the rate of family violence in Indigenous communities is increasing, this will show that more Indigenous victims are prepared to report their experiences and that police are more likely to take action when receiving such reports.

36 The Health Costs of Violence, VicHealth 2004
37 Department of Human Services 2006, State of Victoria’s Children Report 2006. DHS
Recent consultations with Indigenous communities confirmed high levels of:
- partner abuse
- elder abuse (physical, psychological and financial)
- youth abuse (including assaults involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people)
- assaults between extended families as a consequence of drug and alcohol misuse
- large numbers of Indigenous people presenting at courts on assault charges
- sexual abuse
- child abuse and neglect.

Although data is limited it is estimated that incidences of family violence against Indigenous women are significantly higher than in the general population, and may be up to 40 times the rate for non-Indigenous women.\(^\text{38}\) Although the impact on Indigenous women is not well known, it is accepted that in the broader Victorian population family violence is the leading preventable cause of death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-45.\(^\text{39}\)

The community and government also recognise that family violence has devastating consequences for Indigenous men who (national data suggests) are eight times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of an assault than non-Indigenous men. Indigenous women are 28 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be hospitalised as a result of an assault.\(^\text{40}\)

Family violence is the single biggest risk factor for substantiations of Indigenous child abuse in Victoria.

Family violence undermines aspirations for children, families and communities to learn, develop, be healthy and fulfil their potential.

The approach to reduce and prevent family violence in Indigenous communities is a partnership with government led by Victorian Indigenous leaders. These leaders recognise that to maintain social norms and mutual respect, which lie at the heart of Indigenous culture, behaviours that normalise or sanction violence against vulnerable members of their community are not acceptable. Victoria’s Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce Report (2003) was unambiguous in stating “safety and security of victims of violence is the number one priority”.\(^\text{41}\)

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\(^{38}\) The Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey indicates that the family violence victimisation rate may be 40 times the rate for non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women accounted for 15 per cent of homicide victims in 2002-03. See Dr Kerry Carrington & Janet Phillips/ Parliamentary Library, Domestic Violence in Australia, September 2006.

\(^{39}\) VicHealth and Department of Human Services, The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence, June 2004


Police re-attend subsequent family violence incidents involving Indigenous people at rates 20 per cent higher than re-attendance at other family violence incidents.

What we are doing

The focus of community and government effort has been on developing a longer-term vision and plan to prevent and reduce the impact of family violence in Indigenous communities. This work has been led by the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum over a number of years and has involved a significant commitment from senior government representatives and Indigenous community leadership through the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups and Indigenous service providers. The priority over the past year has been finalising the development of the Ten Year Plan for the Prevention of Family Violence, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families – Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities.

The Ten Year Plan was endorsed and signed off by 24 senior Indigenous and government leaders and enjoys broad support from the community and service providers. The plan has eight objectives and is supported by a set of strategies and actions. These are:

- **Cultural Safety.** Making Victoria a safer place for all Indigenous Victorians. This involves developing a culturally-inclusive curriculum to enhance understanding of Indigenous history and culture, developing a related professional learning package for teachers and engaging with educational institutions to promote stronger understanding of Indigenous culture in course material for professionals who deal with family violence.

- **Healthy families.** Promoting a safe and healthy start to life for Indigenous children. This involves increasing support to Indigenous parents, strengthening programs that increase parenting capacity and developing strategies to better integrate family services and specialist family violence services.

- **Education, awareness, prevention.** The first strategy involves developing an Indigenous-specific prevention framework and continuing to support the development of local and regional action groups within the community. The second involves improving the capacity of local and regional groups to implement local prevention programs.

- **Safety for victims.** The first strategy involves improving access to the service system for Indigenous victims of family violence. The second involves strengthening the justice system to better respond to victims of family violence.

- **Accountability.** There are two strategies for increasing the accountability of perpetrators of family violence within Indigenous communities. The first involves developing, through the justice system, a range of support services for Indigenous people affected by family violence. The second involves coordinated responses to Indigenous people who use violence (includes behavioural change programs in a variety of settings).
- **Healing.** Increase opportunities for healing for victims and perpetrators. The first strategy involves access to therapeutic programs for victims. The second involves building capacity to better coordinate service responses to family violence.

- **Service capability.** Increase the cultural competence of the service system by improving cultural competency, cross-service linkages and education and training tools.

- **Research and evaluation.** Using research and evaluation to improve the effectiveness and quality of service responses. This involves several strategies to improve data collection, sharing of good practice and to test the effectiveness of all strategies within the Ten Year Plan.

The Ten Year Plan builds on and integrates with the broader Victorian response to family violence and the response developed under the Indigenous Family Violence Strategy.

Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups have been supported with training and skills development so that they are able to fulfil their leadership role in raising awareness of, and preventing, family violence in Indigenous communities.

Annual grants under the Community Initiative Fund support the implementation of community-based projects that raise awareness of family violence. In 2006-07, 33 local projects were funded.

**Healing and Time Out services**

The Victorian Government provides approximately $1.6 million a year for Indigenous Healing and Time Out services. These services take account of the trauma of inherited grief and loss in healing victims but also serve as a key component of addressing the violent behaviours of perpetrators. Four Indigenous Healing Services will provide a holistic approach to addressing family violence in Indigenous communities.42

Four Indigenous Time Out services will provide support for Indigenous men who use violence against family members and assist them to access services to help them manage their violent behaviour.43

To assist in the healing process the Victims Support Agency has worked to improve access for Indigenous victims of crime to services and entitlements through the Indigenous Victims Support Program.

To improve the accountability of men who use violence, funding has been provided to Swinburne University and No To Violence to develop a training program for Indigenous community workers to engage Indigenous men.

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42 The Healing services are based in Loddon Mallee South, East Gippsland, North and West Metropolitan and Eastern Metropolitan Regions.

43 The Time Out services are in Loddon Mallee North, Hume, East Gippsland and North and West Metropolitan Regions.
Improving the system response to family violence

Reducing Indigenous family violence in the long-term requires that incidents are responded to and appropriate and effective action is taken.

The Victorian Government’s Integrated Family Violence Services reforms initiated a new approach to family violence in Victoria. All agencies, including human services, police and justice services are required to work together to coordinate responses at the local level. Integration is also required between a range of family violence-specific and other support services to ensure that unified and streamlined responses are provided to victims of family violence.

Improving access to services for Indigenous Victorians is one of the family violence reform priorities.

Next steps

To further strengthen the Victorian Government’s response to reduce family violence, a commitment to implement the Ten Year Plan commences with a focus in 2008-09 on:

- the development of an Indigenous Prevention Framework to complement a universal model developed by Vic Health in 2007
- funding to extend effective projects to three years that are part of the Indigenous Family Violence Community Initiatives Fund that have strong local support
- culturally appropriate programs for men to assist them to address their use of violence
- case management support for Indigenous women and children who are victims of family violence
- case management for Indigenous men who use violence to provide support and to mitigate the risks of re-offending
- workforce development to improve the skills of Indigenous workers responding to family violence and for cultural training of non-Indigenous family violence workers.

- The introduction of the new Family Violence Protection Bill to protect victims of family violence and to make perpetrators of family violence more accountable for their actions. A communications campaign to support the new legislation will highlight the unacceptability of family violence and raise awareness of new laws.

Over the coming year the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum will develop an implementation plan for the Ten Year Plan and an evaluation and monitoring framework so that the intended improvements are achieved.
Chapter 8

Area for action 4 (part 2): Improve justice outcomes

In partnership with the Indigenous community we are working to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous people in Victoria’s criminal justice system and improve access to a fair and equitable justice system.

Action area 4 objectives:

4.3 Reduce the number of times Indigenous youth are processed by police.
4.4 Increase the proportion of Indigenous people cautioned when processed by police.
4.5 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous people remanded in custody.
4.6 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous adults sentenced to prison rather than other orders.
4.7 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous adults/youth who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction.

Current situation

Snapshot

In 2007-08, Indigenous Victorians were 12 times more likely to be placed in an adult prison compared to non-Indigenous Victorians.

Source: Corrections Victoria

Indigenous youth aged 10 to 17 years are around four times more likely to be processed by police than non-Indigenous youth.

Source: Victoria Police (2001-02 - 2007-08)

The 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Royal Commission) found the over-representation of Indigenous people nationally in the custody of police, prisons and juvenile detention centres resulted in the high number of Indigenous deaths. It also found common patterns in the lives of those whose deaths were investigated. Those who died had high levels of unemployment, poor education, poor health, alcohol abuse and long histories of contact with the criminal justice system and separation from their families.

The Royal Commission concluded the extreme disadvantage of Indigenous people in Australian society had led to prolonged contact with, and subsequent over-representation at, all levels of the criminal justice system.
In 2002, Indigenous Victorians were over three times more likely to report being a victim of crime than non-Indigenous people. This further compounds the stress many Indigenous Victorians already experience through educational, economic and social disadvantage.

What we are doing

Aboriginal Justice Agreement

The Victorian Government, in partnership with the Indigenous community, is responding to over-representation in the criminal justice system through the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA). Launched in 2000, the AJA aims to reduce initial contact with the justice system, improve outcomes for Indigenous people at all stages of the system, from cautioning to post-release, and to reduce re-offending by increasing the use of diversionary options.

The AJA is also building positive participation and inclusion by the Indigenous community in the justice system and justice portfolio through a range of initiatives including in part, the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJ ACs), the Koori Recruitment and Career Development Strategy and the Koori Courts.

Under the AJA, the Aboriginal Justice Forum was established to forge and sustain partnerships at the local, regional and state levels between Indigenous communities and the justice system. The foundation of the AJA is the regional partnerships developed through the RAJ ACs. Together with the forum these partnerships have been successful in enabling the Indigenous community and the government to jointly set policy direction and monitor all AJA-related activities. The establishment of Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees since 2006-07 has built on this growing relationship by enabling local Indigenous communities to work closely with justice agencies to take joint responsibility to develop and implement local solutions to local issues.

Sustaining the success and longevity of the AJA has been very much due to its principles and protocols that were jointly developed and agreed to by the Aboriginal Justice Forum’s Koori Caucus and government. The ethos of the AJA principles and protocols is based on partnerships and inclusion, accountability and transparency.

Action area 4 objectives:

4.3 Reduce the number of times Indigenous youth are processed by police.
4.4 Increase the proportion of Indigenous people cautioned when processed by police.

Measure of Current Performance – over the period 2001-02 to 2007-08

- Indigenous youth aged 10 to 17 years are 3.8 times more likely to be processed by police for allegedly committing various offences.
- Indigenous youth aged 10 to 17 years are two times less likely to be cautioned by police when processed for allegedly committing various offences.

Source: Victoria Police
Table 5a: Number of Indigenous Victorians processed by police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-17 years</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Indigenous offenders</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>1,473</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>1,547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victoria Police

Table 5b: Proportions of youth aged 10-17 years in contact with the police who are ultimately processed by the police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous 10-17 years</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous 10-17 years</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victoria Police

Table 6: Percentage of youth aged 10-17 years in contact with the police who are cautioned by police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victoria Police

These indicators show the trend in the proportion of youth (Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous) aged 10-17 years involved in the police system.

The above statistics confirm that young Indigenous Victorians are over-represented to the extent to which they are processed by police. Persons who come into contact with police at an early age are much more likely to keep re-offending and end up in prison.
What we are doing

Preventing initial contact with the criminal justice system is fundamental to the AJA and the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Cautioning also decreases the likelihood that young people, in particular, will become entrenched in a cycle of re-offending.

The AJA Frontline Youth Initiatives Program was established to target Indigenous youth and children at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. Projects funded under Frontline are primarily community-proposed and community-based initiatives that promote healthy and pro-social lifestyles to help reduce negative contact with the justice system. Frontline is also fundamental in developing positive intervention by Indigenous communities in the justice system.

Cautioning provides an important opportunity to motivate Indigenous youth to change their behaviour and to avoid further negative contact with the criminal justice system. It also promotes greater involvement of parents and guardians, as well as police, in promoting positive policing practices.

For Indigenous youth who do come into contact with the justice system, projects have been developed to improve their access to cautioning. The AJA Cautioning Program between Victoria Police and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service is still being piloted in Mildura and the Latrobe Valley.

To date, the pilots have successfully shown that through the increased use of police cautioning practices and the greater involvement of parents and guardians, we can significantly achieve lower rates of recidivism for Indigenous youth. Only three cases of recidivism for the two pilot sites have been reported since the pilots began.

The program will be extended in 2008-09 to include the North-West Metropolitan, Hume and Loddon-Mallee communities.

Six volunteer Koori Night Patrol programs operated by Indigenous community organisations are transporting at-risk Indigenous people, particularly youth, in public places to their homes or safe places. The patrols are also assisting to reduce the likelihood of Koories coming into contact with police.

The Victoria Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO) Program is currently in place in nine local government areas. The program aims to improve relations between Indigenous communities and local police, as well as improving local police understanding of local Koori communities. The ACLO program was fully implemented in June 2008, almost two years ahead of schedule. The nine ACLO officers are based in police stations, with a coordinator and two project workers based in police headquarters.

In addition, there are now almost 100 Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALO) across the State. PALOs are sworn operational officers who work to improve community-police relations at the local level.

The Department of Human Services also implements the Koori Youth Justice Program to support Indigenous youth who are at risk or are subject to youth justice community-based and custodial orders. The program assists Koori youth so they are less likely to re-offend and breach the conditions of their order/s.

The Early School Leavers and Youth Employment Program is an intensive outreach support program that assists Indigenous young people at risk of disengaging from the education system to remain in education or supported training and transition outcomes or other options.

Next steps

Further initiatives planned include wider implementation of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services-Police Cautioning/Contact Program. The program’s expansion was endorsed at the June 2008 Aboriginal Justice Forum.
Action area 4 objectives:

4.5 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous people remanded in custody.

**Measure of Current Performance**

Over the period 2001-02 to 2007-08, Indigenous Victorians were almost 15 times more likely to be on remand compared to non-Indigenous prisoners.

Source: Corrections Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Proportion of alleged offenders on remand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corrections Victoria

These indicators show the trend in the proportion of adult offenders (Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous) on remand in the prison system.

**What we are doing**

A number of mainstream court diversionary programs are currently in place including the Court Integrated Services Program pilots in Melbourne, Sunshine and the Latrobe Valley. Aboriginal Liaison Officers provide assessment and service referral for Indigenous clients.

The aim of the Koori Youth Intensive Bail Support Program is to reduce the number of Indigenous youth detained prior to sentencing. It provides intensive outreach support to help young people comply with bail and other conditions or placed on deferred sentences.

Three positions are located in the North-West, Hume and Gippsland regions and two more are being established in Barwon South-West and the Southern Metropolitan regions of the Department of Human Services.

**Next steps**

The Court Integrated Services Program is being evaluated and information collected on Indigenous participation and program completion. The evaluation will be finalised in 2008-09.
### Action area 4 objectives:

4.6 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous adults sentenced to prison.

### Measure of Current Performance - over the period 2001-02 to 2007-08

Indigenous Victorians are currently 12 times more likely to be imprisoned than other Victorians.

Source: Corrections Victoria

### Table 8a: Over-representation rates of Indigenous Victorians in prison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corrections Victoria

The rate of Indigenous imprisonment in Victoria is less than the national average rate of 12.9, as reported by the Productivity Commission in 2007.

In 2006, Indigenous Victorians were 12 times more likely to be in prison compared to over-representation rates of 18.4 in WA, 12.3 in NSW, 12.5 in SA, 11.2 in the ACT and 12.9 in NT.

### Table 8b: Proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders in prison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
<th>05-06</th>
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<th>07-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corrections Victoria

### Table 8c: Proportion of offenders sentenced to prison rather than other orders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>02-03</th>
<th>03-04</th>
<th>04-05</th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corrections Victoria

Trends in Indigenous offender profiles indicate that Indigenous people start to offend earlier than non-Indigenous people and are therefore more likely to have extinguished community-based sentencing options by the time they reach the adult system.
What we are doing

A range of AJA-based initiatives are being progressed to reduce the number and proportion of Indigenous adults sentenced to prison, including:

- The Corrections Victoria Indigenous Community Correctional Officer Program to provide more culturally sensitive supervision of Indigenous offenders subject to community-based dispositions.

- The Koori Mentoring and Support Program is delivered by Koori community organisations and is operating in five locations. The aim of the program is to support Indigenous offenders to complete their community-based orders and minimise the likelihood that the orders will be breached.

- The Local Justice Worker Program is delivered by Koori community organisations in ten local government areas by Indigenous community organisations. The aim of the program is to improve justice outcomes for Indigenous people having dealings with Community Corrections and the Sheriff’s Office.

- Koori Courts have been established to reduce the high recidivism rate of Koori offenders by making specific Magistrate Courts more Koori-friendly and inclusive of community elders and community members. In a review of the operations of the Broadmeadows and Shepparton Koori Courts in 2005, it was found that the recidivism rate for participating offenders was substantially less than that of the general population figures for recidivism. There are currently seven adult Koori Courts and two Children’s Koori Courts.

Next steps

In 2008-09, the first County Koori Court will be opened in Morwell as a four-year pilot and will be the first of its kind in Australia. Like the Koori Courts, the County Koori Court model was designed in partnership between the Koori community and the County Court.

The Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place will also be launched near Yarram in South Gippsland in 2008-09. This will be a residential, diversionary facility for Koori men on community-based dispositions. Wulgunggo Ngalu aims to provide an intensive cultural program to assist Indigenous offenders to successfully complete their orders in a culturally appropriate environment with the support of elders and the Koori community.

Similar to the Koori Courts, success of Wulgunggo Ngalu will depend very much on the strength of the partnership between the Koori community and the justice system and adherence to the principles of the AJA.
Action area 4 objectives:

4.7 Reduce the proportion of Indigenous adults/youth who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction.

Measure of Current Performance - over the period 2001-02 to 2007-08

Indigenous Victorians are currently 20 times more likely to return to prison within two years of discharge than non-Indigenous Victorians.

Source: Corrections Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: Percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners who have returned to prison within two years of discharge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corrections Victoria

Note: *** A prisoner in Victoria is considered to be a re-offender if the prisoner returns to prison within two years after discharge. That is, a prisoner who was discharged in 2005-06 would have had to return to prison during 2007-08 to be considered a re-offender. Data for prisoners discharged in 2005-06 will not be available until later in 2008/09.

What we are doing

Transition support for adult offenders

Research shows that people who get into trouble with the law often have difficulty solving problems in their everyday lives. Corrections Victoria has developed and delivers the Koori Cognitive Skills Program specifically to assist Indigenous prisoners improve their problem solving skills.

Konnect

Konnect is a pre and post-release program that provides support to Koori men and women exiting prison and returning to community. At 8-10 weeks prior to release a Koori caseworker is engaged with the participant on the program and this support and assistance can be provided up to 12 months after release, dependent on the transitional needs of the participant. A key component of this program is the involvement of referral to Koori agencies for specialist services and cultural support.

Transition support for youth offenders

The Koori Pre and Post-Release Services Program aims to reduce the likelihood that Indigenous youth will return to custody once released. This program supports the planning required to ensure smooth transition between custody and the community. Post-release and intensive cultural support is available to Indigenous youth to help reduce the likelihood of non-compliance with post-custodial orders.

The Koori Youth Justice Program was established in 1992 and has expanded over the years to all Department of Human Services regions. In 2007-08 there were 16 community workers, three custodial workers (one in each custodial centre) and a central program adviser. The next position to be established is proposed for Wodonga.
The role of the Koori Youth Justice workers is both preventive and responsive. Clients include young people who are the subject of orders from the criminal division of the Children’s Court, young adults in the dual track system, young Indigenous people who are at risk of offending and those who have committed minor offences and received police diversion or caution.

**Next steps**

In the coming year we will continue to examine issues related to Indigenous offender health and wellbeing, with a specific focus on transition support and re-integration into the community.
Chapter 9

Area for action 5: Improve economic development, settle native title claims and address land access issues

We are working in partnership with Indigenous communities to help achieve land justice for Victoria’s Traditional Owners and access to land and natural resources for all Indigenous Victorians.

Action area 5 objectives:

5.1 Increase Indigenous participation in state-funded employment programs [see action area 3.3, chapter 6].

5.2 Increase the proportion of Indigenous people with access to their traditional lands.

Current situation

Snapshot

- The area of land covered by Indigenous Land Use Agreements and other native title outcomes in 2008 was more than 71,500 square kilometres.
- Five Registered Aboriginal Parties have been appointed by the Aboriginal Heritage Council covering about one-third of Victoria.

The Government recognises the importance of land and economic development in addressing Indigenous disadvantage. Land ownership provides an economic base, offers opportunity for social advancement, supports the ability to maintain and manage culture, and contributes to addressing other areas of Indigenous disadvantage, including health and wellbeing.

Access to traditional land strengthens Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owner cultures and enhances natural and cultural heritage resource management.

The setting of native title claims and addressing land access issues directly acknowledges the importance of ongoing cultural and social connection to land for Indigenous people.

The Victorian Government has been active in improving the environment for employment and business growth, and in community-building initiatives to promote wider economic participation of disadvantaged Victorians.

The Aboriginal Land and Economic Development Program established in 2005 has supported the development of 17 Indigenous enterprises. These have been successful in generating Indigenous training and employment.

The Koorie Business Network continues to develop the productivity and competitiveness of Victoria’s Indigenous businesses, through the Building the Economic Base Indigenous Economic Development Strategy.

This strategy aims to:

- facilitate an increase in the number of sustainable Victorian Indigenous businesses
- build skills, confidence and business acumen within Victorian Indigenous businesses
- promote awareness of Victorian Indigenous enterprises, products and services across all sectors of the Victorian community and to broader national and international markets
- drive research that builds greater understanding of Indigenous economic development.

The first strategic change indicator reflects the important role the state plays in improving employment policy and labour market outcomes for Indigenous Victorians (this indicator is addressed in Chapter 6).

44 Action area 5.1 is covered in Chapter 6 under action area 3.3
The second strategic change indicator reflects the importance of traditional land for Indigenous people, particularly for Traditional Owner groups. Obtaining ownership and management of traditional lands is a key aspiration of Traditional Owner groups. Participation in land and cultural heritage management of Country is a tangible outcome in achieving land justice.

### Registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements

The number and area of land covered by Indigenous Land Use Agreements is an important measure of access to traditional lands. These agreements are negotiated under the Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth) and may represent either a formal determination of native title or an alternative mechanism to resolve native title issues. The Agreements can formalise negotiation rights over the use and management of land for Traditional Owners.

Over the past few years there has been a significant increase in the area of land covered by Indigenous Land Use Agreements in Victoria, reflecting resolution of native title claims.

As at 30 June 2008 there were 33 registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements covering an area of 71,500 square kilometres.

### Aboriginal Lands Act

The Victorian Government was the first jurisdiction to provide statutory recognition of Indigenous communal ownership of land through the Aboriginal Lands Act 1970 (Vic). This Act provided a form of recognition of the historical familial relationships to land through a shareholding structure responsible for managing the grant of freehold title at Framlingham near Warrnambool and Lake Tyers in Gippsland. It also granted ownership of land directly to Indigenous community organisations.

### What we are doing

Over the past decade, the Victorian Government has taken specific measures to increase access to, and participation in, the management of traditional lands within the framework of resolving native title claims.

Following the litigated decision in the Yorta Yorta case that found native title did not exist, the state entered a formal cooperative management agreement with the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation. The agreement provides the group with an advisory role in the management of designated areas.

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The Victorian Government reached a mediated outcome with claimants in the Wimmera that led to recognition of native title rights in two per cent of the claim area and also established an Indigenous Land Use Agreement providing for their involvement in management of Crown land in a larger area.

A mediated outcome was also reached with Gunditjmara claimants that recognised specific native title rights in the entire claim area. As part of the settlement with the Gunditjmara people, the Victorian Government returned the Lake Condah Reserve in the state’s south-west to the Gunditjmara people in March 2008.

The Victorian Government is currently negotiating a cluster of native title claims in the state’s north-west. These comprise the four Dja Dja Wurrung claims, the Robinvale claim, the Wamba Wamba Barapa Barapa Wadi Wadi claim and the Yupagalk claim. It is also negotiating with Gunai Kurnai over their Gippsland claim.

The Victorian Government is committed to negotiating native title claims and will consider a proposal for a Victorian Native Title Settlement Framework to streamline negotiations and settlement approaches. A steering committee chaired by Professor Mick Dodson and with representatives of the Victorian Government, the Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group and Native Title Services Victoria, is expected to lodge its draft recommendations to the Government by the end of 2008.

The objectives in developing the framework are to:
- build stronger partnerships with Indigenous Victorians and resolve long-standing land grievances
- strengthen communities and cultural identity through durable and long-standing settlements
- increase economic and social opportunities.

The proposed Framework is expected to give access to similar rights and entitlements to those obtained under the native title process but via a less cumbersome process.

Access to traditional lands by Indigenous people has also been supported through partnership strategies developed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries and Parks Victoria.


The Act establishes for the first time in Victorian law a peak Indigenous body to provide expert and strategic advice on cultural heritage management to the Victorian Government. The Aboriginal Heritage Council has 11 eminent Traditional Owners with extensive experience in cultural heritage. One of the Council’s main tasks is to appoint Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs). RAPs are Aboriginal organisations that, in accordance with the Act, have responsibilities for Aboriginal cultural heritage matters over designated areas of the State.

In evaluating RAP applications the Council has to take a number of factors into account. These include relevant native title matters and links to Country.

In its first year of operation, the Council has appointed RAPs over more than one-third of Victoria. The five RAPs that were appointed all have traditional owner links to the areas for which they now have cultural heritage management decision-making responsibilities. These pertain to all land irrespective of land tenure. RAP organisations are being supported by the Victorian Government through training and establishment grants.

The Aboriginal Heritage Council’s goal is to have RAPs appointed across Victoria by May 2010.

Next steps

The Victorian Government is continuing to improve access to land and economic development opportunities for Indigenous Victorians.

The Victorian Government will consider a proposal for an alternative framework to mediate and settle outstanding native title claims across the State. As more Registered Aboriginal Parties are appointed under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, Indigenous Victorians will have more decision-making responsibilities for cultural heritage matters within traditional lands.
Chapter 10

Area for action 6: Build Indigenous capacity

We are working in partnership with Indigenous communities so they have continued and sustained access to strong economic opportunities, assistance to improve governance and employment and training activities.

Action area 6 objective:

6.1 Increase workforce participation by Indigenous people in the public sector in ways which can drive improvements in the Victorian Strategic Areas for Action.

Current situation

Snapshot

- In 2007, 0.5 per cent of Victorian public sector employees were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Most government departments have developed Indigenous-specific employment strategies, including training scholarships, aimed at increasing the participation of Indigenous people in the public sector.
- A number of departments have incorporated cultural training to improve the cultural competencies of non-Indigenous staff.

The Government recognises that having skilled Indigenous people in the public sector helps increase awareness and understanding of key Indigenous issues. The Government has continued to focus on increasing workforce participation by Indigenous people in the public sector. In 2007-08, 0.5 per cent of Victorian public sector employees self-identified as Indigenous people.

Current performance

0.5 per cent of Victorian public sector employees are Indigenous people.
What we are doing

Most government departments have continued to target employment information to Indigenous communities, incorporated cultural awareness programs into their corporate training calendars and provided scholarships or cadetship programs.

Next steps

The Premier has asked the State Services Authority (SSA) to lead the development of a strategy to increase workforce participation of Indigenous people in the public sector.

This follows the expiry of the previous strategy (Wur-cum barra 2002–2005) and the Council of Australian Governments’ (COAGs) commitment to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over the next decade.

In developing the strategy, the SSA will assess pathways, barriers and enablers to employment; consult extensively with internal and external stakeholders; examine links to other sectors; and develop a performance monitoring framework.

The final strategy will be provided to the Premier by 30 June 2009.

Over the next year, departments will continue to build on current progress and develop policies and structures that will help maintain and increase the workforce participation by Indigenous people in the public sector. Examples of new departmental activity include:

- The development of an induction process for new Indigenous staff to the Department of Human Services. The process will be developed in consultation with Indigenous staff and their managers. It will help new Indigenous staff connect with relevant people, solve problems and help them and their managers understand and deal with some of the challenges they might face.

- The development of a Recruit Traineeship/Mentoring Program by Victoria Police to recruit and retain Indigenous police applicants. This will be developed in partnership with the community with an option of entry being via unsworn members.

- Supporting Traditional Owners and Indigenous people to be involved in land and resource management by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. This will include developing and supporting their capacity to participate. Importantly, Indigenous community aspirations will be incorporated into department programs and services.
Action area 6 objectives:

6.2 Increase the proportion of board members of large Indigenous organisations ($1 million plus funds per annum) having undertaken rigorous governance training.

6.3 Increase the proportion of Indigenous cooperatives and other organisations meeting statutory obligations.

Current situation

Snapshot

In the three years to 31 May 2008:
- 91 per cent of Indigenous Incorporated Associations and 87 per cent of Indigenous cooperatives in Victoria were compliant with reporting requirements
- 77 per cent of all incorporated (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and 58 per cent of all cooperatives (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in Victoria were compliant with reporting requirements.

Since the Governance Training Program was initiated in March 2006:
- 341 representatives from a range of Indigenous organisations have participated in the program
- of these, 56 per cent are board members and 39 per cent are from large Indigenous organisations.

The Government acknowledges the important role played by the Indigenous community in the creation of active, confident and resilient communities. The Indigenous community is a critical partner in delivering many of the services that contribute to overarching goals and improved outcomes set out by the COAG and the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF).

The shared goal for all Victorians is to close the gap in life expectancy. The sector influences outcomes in two ways: as a service provider and by participating in shaping policy and future directions in Indigenous affairs in Victoria. Given these important roles, building the capacity of Indigenous organisations is identified in both the VIAF and COAG priorities as critical to achieving better outcomes and in boosting effectiveness of investments in Indigenous affairs.

In the community sector, regulation is a tool used by government to support organisations and to build trust and confidence in the community sector and facilitate its contribution to the Victorian community.

Measure of Current Performance

- More than 93 per cent of Indigenous Incorporated Associations are compliant with legislated reporting requirements.
- More than 94 per cent of Indigenous cooperatives are compliant with legislated reporting requirements.
What we are doing

Continuing to build Indigenous leadership and governance capacity

As there are more than 2000 Indigenous community organisations across Australia including close to 200 in Victoria, many providing a wide range of human and essential services to the Indigenous community, the importance of ensuring organisations are well-governed is a crucial factor in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

The Governance Training Program is the Government’s key capacity-building initiative that has been operating successfully since 2006. The program aims to build the management and governance capacity of Indigenous community organisations.

During 2007-08 the program was expanded by funding the development and piloting of a Diploma of Business (Governance) - comprising five one-week training blocks held over an eight-month period. The first Diploma course was completed in May 2008 and the course is now available for use nationally as part of the suite of training targeted to build the capacity of Indigenous organisations.

Positioning Aboriginal services for the future

This project has involved all departments that fund or regulate Aboriginal organisations in Victoria, as well as representatives of Indigenous peak bodies. It began with the premise that improving the life expectancy, quality of life and health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people was critically dependent on the best possible services being delivered by strong Indigenous community organisations into the future.

The resulting Joint Agency Futures Plan provides a framework to focus joint efforts in strengthening organisations, prioritising action, monitoring progress and reporting on outcomes.

The key areas for action are:
1. Strengthening management, governance and culture
2. Improving business and management systems
3. Workforce development
4. Improving evidence base, Indigenous community organisations’ accountability and outcomes
5. Strengthening partnerships and working together
6. Reducing red tape.

Reducing the administrative burden

Led by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), major reforms are underway in the arrangements for funding Aboriginal organisations to reduce the administrative burden and build relationships between Aboriginal organisations and government. This recognises that many Aboriginal organisations, despite being relatively small, deliver a complex array of services on behalf of governments.

Single funding agreements with Aboriginal organisations for all the funding they receive is the ultimate goal. To support this, all funding agencies are using standard terms and conditions in all agreements with Aboriginal organisations.

DPCD is also investigating better options for funded Aboriginal organisations to provide common community accountability documents.

Regulatory reform

The Government wants to minimise red tape for community organisations. Consumer Affairs Victoria has released a discussion paper to identify options for a more ‘enabling’ framework of regulation which is appropriate for both large and small community organisations. Working with the Commonwealth’s Office for Registered Indigenous Corporations, the aim is to manage risk, provide community accountability, transparency and adequate protections for Indigenous community organisations of all sizes.
Next steps

High priority has been given to:

- expanding the Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Governance Training
- establishing a team of professional advisors with an understanding of the sector who can provide governance advice, diagnostic services, business support, systems development and program planning for targeted Indigenous community organisations
- developing an Aboriginal Workforce Strategy
- providing Indigenous organisations with regular and reliable data about their communities to better inform future actions
- developing a statewide plan to support the roll-out and further development of cultural competencies for the health and community services sector
- developing Department of Human Services guidelines for the funding of Indigenous community organisations to ensure a quality and sustainable service.

The Indigenous Leadership and Capacity Building Strategy

The Strategy will establish links with other Victorian Government initiatives including the Wannik strategy and the new Office for the Community Sector. By also working with the Commonwealth the Strategy will complement work being considered under the COAG arrangements.

The whole-of-government strategy will identify existing and planned initiatives within each of the departments, identify opportunities for linking initiatives and identify new initiatives.

Stronger community organisations

The Stronger Communities Action Plan sets out a number of actions aimed at reducing the regulatory burden and building the capacity of community organisations. The plan can be accessed at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au. We will work to ensure that Indigenous organisations participate in, and benefit from these efforts.