

Short overview of current strategies pursued by the Victorian Government to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care

Past policies have greatly influenced the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, and in many ways, have failed to adequately provide for their cultural needs. To address these ongoing impacts, the Victorian Government is committed to self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people. This commitment is progressed through the development and delivery of policies that bring forth the Aboriginal voice and support within Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in the child and family welfare field. Victoria's focus has been to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in child protection and care and enacting these policies.

Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) and Transitioning Aboriginal Children (TAC) to ACCOs are two key initiatives, first of their kind in Australia, that go towards achieving this commitment. ACAC and TAC collectively aim to:

- maintain Aboriginal children's cultural identity and promote connection to family, community and Country
- support Aboriginal children to return home to parents or extended families where it is safe to do so, or support the identification of culturally safe alternative care
- achieve self-determination by handing decision making and case management for vulnerable Aboriginal children from the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) to the relevant ACCO
- improve the support and decision making for Aboriginal children who have been placed on Children's Court protection orders.

The department is currently working in partnership with Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative to establish ACAC programs at these ACCOs. Additional funding has provided for expansion of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency's (VACCA) Nugee ACAC program to three teams; and Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative's Mutjang Bupuwingararak Mukman ACAC program to two teams.

An evaluation of ACAC and TAC is currently underway. Interim findings from the evaluation are very positive regarding the potential to make a substantial difference in the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care:

- ACAC and kinship component of TAC are contributing to positive outcomes and cultural empowerment for children, families and communities
- as at June 2019 45% of Aboriginal children (708 children) on contractible orders were case managed by ACCOs either through ACAC or TAC
- since 2016 the number of children contracted to an ACCO has grown by 250%
- ACAC and TAC are contributing to higher reunification rates of children with their families.

The Victorian Government's *Roadmap for Reform Strong Families, Safe Children* (the Roadmap) agenda will transform the child and family service system through reform initiatives to improve the quality and safety of community services delivered, funded and regulated by the DHHS. The Roadmap is a blueprint for reform of the child and family system towards earlier intervention and prevention, reducing child vulnerability, neglect and abuse, and supporting children and young people to reach their full potential. It prioritises Aboriginal self-determination; integrating services and community networks; and shifting culture and practice to drive better outcomes. Key reforms include:

- Roadmap Aboriginal self-determination principle
- Wungurilwil Gaggapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement (overseen by the Aboriginal Children's Forum)
- Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan
- Beyond Good Intentions Statement.

Proforma for providing data on investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child protection and family support services

Real recurrent expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services for 2018-19 (\$ and % of total expenditure) using ROGS definitions and counting rules

	(\$,000) Total expenditure	\$ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services	% of total expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services
Family Support	231,467		
Intensive family support	148,469		
Child protection	341,526		
Out-of-home care	785,808		
TOTAL	1,507,270		

Proforma for providing data on access to family support services

Children commencing intensive family support services, by Indigenous status, 2018-19 (number)

	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Number of non-indigenous children	Program name / type
Children commencing intensive family support services	1,450	10,986	-

Data source: ROGS (16A.32)

Children commencing intensive family support services, by Indigenous status, 2017-18 (number)

***Please note that this is a correction from last year. The data source has changed to ROGS**

	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Number of non-indigenous children	Program name / type
Children commencing intensive family support services	933	9,917	-

Children accessing family support services (non intensive), by Indigenous status, 2018-19 (number)

	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Number of non-indigenous children	Program name / type
Children accessing a family support service	2,377	24,248	-

Proforma for providing data on permanency and adoption

1. Children subject to a permanent care order, number and rate, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of the child, at 30 June 2019
2. Children subject to a care by secretary or family reunification order or equivalent, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of the child, at 30 June 2019
3. Children admitted to a finalised guardianship order* (or equivalent order in your jurisdiction), by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (i.e. Indigenous) status of the child, in 2018 – 2019.
4. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to a finalised guardianship order at 30 June 2019, number and % who are placed with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander carer
5. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children subject to a finalised guardianship order at 30 June 2019 number and % who are placed with a kinship carer

	Number and rate per 1000 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Number and rate per 1000 of non-Indigenous children	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative/kin at 30 June 2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with non-Indigenous relative/kin at 30 June 2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers at 30 June 2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with non-Indigenous, non-relative/kin carers at 30 June 2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in residential care at 30 June 2019
Children subject to a permanent care order or equivalent	377 15.6/1000	2766 2.0/1000	175 55%	54 17%	11 3%	77 24%	0 0%
Children subject to a care by secretary or family reunification order or equivalent	1418 58.8/1000	3521 2.5/1000	553 39%	462 33%	30 2%	227 16%	87 6%

6. Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were admitted to an adoption order during the 2018-19 year.
7. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children admitted to an adoption order, number who were adopted by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person

	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Number of non-indigenous children	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children adopted by an Indigenous person
Children adopted	12	0	0

Proforma for providing data on reconnection

1. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children admitted to care in 2018-2019, number and % places with relative/kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.

Number and rate per 1000 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children admitted to care in 2018-2019	Number and rate per 1000 of non-Indigenous children admitted to care in 2018-2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives/kin at 30 June 2019 (of the children admitted in 2018-2019)	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with non-Indigenous relatives/kin at 30 June 2019 (of the children admitted in 2018-2019)	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers at 30 June 2019 (of the children admitted in 2018-2019)	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with non-Indigenous non-relative carers at 30 June 2019 (of the children admitted in 2018-2019)	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in residential care at 30 June 2019 (of the children admitted in 2018-2019)
924 38.3/1000	3619 2.6/1000	891 96.4%	777 84.1%	41 44%	355 38.4%	105 11.4%

2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a relative/kinship placement at 30 June 2019 who moved from a non-relative/non-kinship care placement to a relative/kinship care placement during the reporting period

Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were with non-Indigenous, non-relative carer at 30 June 2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reconnected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative/kin at 30 June 2019	Number and % of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reconnected to non-Indigenous relative/kin at 30 June 2019
2,561 22.95%	1410	1058 41% of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care at 30/06/2019	31 1% of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care at 30/06/2019