Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together
Koori Inclusion Action Plan
Our Commitment to Koori Inclusion .................................................................................. 1
Closing the Gap .................................................................................................................. 2
1. Partnership with Koori communities .............................................................................. 4
2. Incorporating Koori business into everyday business .................................................. 6
3. Improving Koori outcomes ............................................................................................... 8
Activating Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together ................................. 10
Celebrating Koori Culture ................................................................................................. 11
Cover Art – Hunting Kangaroos ......................................................................................... 12

The Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land. The department also acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

The Aboriginal Justice Forum, and the department, have agreed with the Koori Caucus that for consistency, the term Koori (Koories for plural) is the preferred term for use in the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement and all related reports, policies, programs and initiatives. In this document, Victorian Traditional Owner groups (and their representative organisations) are included in the term “Koori community”.

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Our commitment to Koori inclusion

I am proud to present Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together, the Department of Justice and Regulation’s new Koori Inclusion Action Plan for 2017-2020.

The department is committed to engaging with the Koori community through structures such as the Aboriginal Justice Forum, Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees.

Our engagement with the Koori community enhances the work of the justice and regulation portfolio. It brings a strong Koori guiding voice to our efforts to tackle over-representation of Koories in the criminal justice system, and more broadly it strengthens our department as a place of cultural diversity and respect.

Over the past five years, Mingu Gadhaba: Beginning Together, our first Koori Inclusion Action Plan, has led to improved access, participation and effectiveness of justice programs and services for the Victorian Koori community.

But there is always more to be done, and this new plan will take us to the next level.

Developed with the assistance of Koori Caucus, Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together, our new Koori Inclusion Action Plan, builds on a strong foundation of inclusive policies, partnerships and programs. Achievement of our goal in this plan starts with my commitment as Secretary, and that of our leadership team, to ensure we have a workforce that acknowledges, respects and celebrates Koori rights and culture, and embeds self-determination into our everyday business.

Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together demonstrates a commitment to community that we will ensure our structures, behaviours, culture and values reflect respect for the Koori community, the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we all live and work as Victorians.

Greg Wilson, Secretary

Our leadership commitment

Being accountable for our actions by sharing information and accepting feedback

Celebrating Aboriginal culture as the first culture of this nation

Empowering Koori staff and providing them with a respectful workplace for career and leadership development

Shaping our planning, decision making and service delivery through partnership with the Koori community

Prioritising and investing in staff wellbeing

Supporting economic improvement through employment and procurement

Building an inclusive and diverse workforce
Building on the Foundations

“Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together will continue to build a workforce culture that acknowledges, respects and celebrates Koori rights, heritage and culture, and embeds partnership with the Koori community in all that we do.”

Carolyn Gale
Deputy Secretary, Service Strategy Reform

In 2009, the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, through the Council of Australian Governments, committed to implementing the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. The Agreement frames the task of closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. It sets out the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance measures and benchmarks that all governments have committed to achieving.

The gap is wide and the impact of disadvantage is profound. Presently, Victorian Aboriginal people are over-represented in the criminal justice system at a rate of about 12 times that of non-Aboriginal people.

Contact with the justice system is driven by the disadvantage experienced by Koori communities, particularly in education, housing and employment. The legacy of intergenerational trauma, grief and loss can serve to further compound this disadvantage.

In response to Closing the Gap commitments, the Victorian Government released the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-18, the overarching Aboriginal policy framework for the state. It builds on the four guiding principles for Aboriginal Affairs: aspirations; accountability; engagement and inclusiveness; and a whole of community approach.

In 2012, our department launched its Koori Inclusion Action Plan - Mingu Gadhaba: Beginning Together, in accordance with the Framework.

Over the past five years, Mingu Gadhaba has demonstrated our commitment to partnership with Koori stakeholders, supported Koori employment and economic participation, and invested in organisational change to ensure Koori inclusion is a shared responsibility.

Through a series of focus groups, with participants drawn from across the department and throughout the state, and with the assistance of Koori Caucus, we have built on the foundation of Mingu Gadhaba to develop departmental commitments for a refreshed Koori Inclusion Action Plan.

Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together is built on one of the founding principles of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, that ‘human rights have a special importance for the Aboriginal people of Victoria, as descendants of Australia’s first people, with their diverse spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters’.

Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together responds to other state and Commonwealth policy frameworks including the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, Karreeta Yirramboi, Indigenous Procurement Policy and Closing the Gap targets. It forms an important component of the strategic actions to provide responsive and inclusive services in the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.
OUR VISION
A safe, resilient, just, innovative and thriving Victoria

OUR VALUES
Respect  
Serve the community  
Act with integrity  
Work together  
Make it happen

OUR GOAL
A department that is committed to Aboriginal self-determination

OUR PRINCIPLES
We acknowledge, respect and celebrate Koori rights and culture, and make the Koori voice central in all that we do, through:

**Partnership with Koori Communities**
- Our relationships are built on understanding, trust and continuous learning
- We partner with the Koori community to inform and shape our planning and decision making
- We work across government and agencies to align and integrate policies and programs

**Incorporating Koori Business into Everyday Business**
- Our leadership group actively demonstrates its commitment to Koori inclusion
- We are a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive workforce
- Koori inclusion is supported by our tools, policies and procedures
- We support Koori career and leadership development

**Improving Koori Outcomes**
- Our services are respectful and responsive to the Koori community
- We meet our commitment to improving justice outcomes for Koories
- We support Koori economic development
- We are an employer of choice
Koori Partnership

- Our relationships are built on understanding, trust and continuous learning
- We partner with the Koori community to inform and shape our planning and decision making
- We work across government and agencies to align and integrate policies and programs

We recognise that Koori voices must be included in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs that affect the Koori community. Engagement and partnership with Koori people ensures their views, experience and knowledge inform decision-making and delivery.

Through collaborative partnerships, we will deepen our understanding of how to effectively respond to the community’s needs. This will enable us to provide improved coordination of service delivery, and ultimately better outcomes for Koories in the justice system.

We will know we have been successful when:

- Our policies and programs are developed in partnership with the Koori community and consider the cultural rights of Koories under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.
- Koori stakeholders are involved in service design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.
- Reports of our progress on Koori inclusion are readily available to key stakeholders including Koori Caucus, the Secretaries’ Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs, and the Koori community, and feedback is incorporated to ensure continual improvement.
- We work together with other departments and agencies to ensure a coordinated, effective and accountable policy and program effort.
- Our statutory agencies collaboratively build their capacity to deliver a culturally inclusive and responsive justice service system.
- We work with Traditional Owner groups to recognise and enhance the exercise of their rights over their country through reaching agreements under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010.

“The department is proud of its long-standing partnership with the Victorian Koori community and the contribution of Koori Caucus is invaluable in implementing the actions of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.”

Antoinette Gentile, Director, Koori Justice Unit
**Koories building capacity to resolve disputes**

The Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria (DSCV) Aboriginal Dispute Resolution Program is working with Koori communities to build capacity to respond to lateral violence.

A team of four Aboriginal community educators is helping to prevent lateral violence by teaching mediation and conflict resolution techniques to help resolve dispute/conflict situations.

One of the team’s first tasks was to ‘walk the talk’, by creating customised cultural awareness training for the DSCV staff and mediators. This has helped DSCV to maintain its focus on providing culturally safe and sensitive services for its Aboriginal clients.

**Koori knowledge shapes the Victorian Fire Management Strategy**

Continuing to respect the value and importance of Koori knowledge and Koori connection to country, and working in partnership with the Koori community, improves fire management planning for all Victorians.

Koori people care for country and have done so for many thousands of years. They have a spiritual connection to the land, and appropriate land management requires recognition of this expertise and knowledge, and of their rights and obligations. Emergency Management Victoria is developing the Victorian Fire Management Strategy in partnership with the Koori community. The Strategy aims to reduce the impact of fire and brings together a range of agencies, organisations and communities to discuss, plan for and manage fire in both a natural and built environment.

A key component of the Strategy is the protection of Koori cultural heritage through all stages of fire management. The Strategy team has been working with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council from the very early stages of the project, and advice and recommendations have been sought on how to engage with the relevant Traditional Owner organisations to enhance the participation of Traditional Owners in fire management and protect Koori cultural heritage.

**Koori leadership shaping justice responses to family violence**

Koori Caucus is a group comprised of the Chairs of our Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and the heads of many Aboriginal Community Controlled agencies with an interest in the justice system who partner with government to improve justice outcomes for Koories.

The department works closely with Koori Caucus, particularly on the implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Although there are nine recommendations specifically directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the department is examining all 110 justice-related recommendations to determine how they might apply to the Victorian Koori community.

Our partnership with the Koori Caucus Working Group on Family Violence will ensure that the Koori community informs the implementation process, and that the approach is culturally safe and designed to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s unique needs and perspectives.
Koori Business is Every Day Business

- Our leadership group actively demonstrates its commitment to Koori inclusion
- We are a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive workforce
- Koori inclusion is supported by our tools, policies and procedures
- We support Koori careers and leadership development

Koori over-representation in the criminal justice system means that Koori business is core business for the department.

Our policies and operations will all be responsive to Koori issues, acknowledge Koori culture and celebrate the success of the department’s Koori staff.

We will know we have been successful when:

- We show leadership, model acceptable behaviours and always challenge inappropriate behaviours to ensure racism is never tolerated in our workplace.
- We acknowledge and recognise the importance of incorporating a Koori perspective into our daily decision making including planning, policy, research and project development.
- Our programs and services are accessible to and inclusive of the needs of the Koori community.
- Our data collection builds a stronger understanding of Koori service requirements in all justice programs.
- Koori cultural awareness training is an expectation for all staff and a deeper understanding of cultural respect in action is apparent across the department.
- Respect for Koori culture is a normal part of our work through our business and performance planning processes.
- Through our Koori and Employment and Career Strategy, we recruit well and support Koori staff to develop skills and build good careers.
- Koori staff are well represented in leadership positions.
- Koori culture and heritage is recognised, celebrated and promoted throughout the year.

“Building better practices that embrace diversity creates a respectful workplace where the individual differences of all staff are valued. In turn, it fosters a culture where everyone feels safe.”

Miya Chiba, Executive Director, People and Culture
Merinda Dryden was born and raised in Shepparton and is a proud Yorta Yorta woman. Merinda is a Koori Youth Employment Scheme graduate.

**Koori Employment and Career Strategy**

The department is committed to increasing and developing its Koori workforce and prides itself on its achievements in increasing Koori employment across all divisions and business units.

The department’s new Koori Employment and Career Strategy 2017-20 is a key strategy to support cultural inclusion.

Initiatives of the Strategy include the:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Scheme
- Koori Tertiary Scholarships Program
- Youth Employment Scheme traineeships
- Aboriginal Undergraduate Cadetship Program.

**Koori Staff Networks**

The department’s Koori Staff Networks – which include state-wide, youth focused and regional networks – promote peer support, professional and personal development and provide opportunities for Koori staff to network with each other. The annual Koori Staff Network conference is an important professional development forum that provides the opportunity for Koori staff to discuss issues that affect their jobs and their roles within the Koori community.

The department also has a Koori Mentoring Program option for all Koori staff. This program matches Koori staff with internal or external mentors, enabling Koori staff to establish a structured partnership and focus on career development. The feedback from Koori staff and their mentors has been positive, as the program has enabled a stronger understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultural perspectives and workplace issues.

Some mentoring relationships endure for years. Merinda Dryden applied for a Youth Employment Scheme traineeship with the department after completing Year 12 at Fitzroy High School. Merinda had always been interested in justice and the opportunity to work for the department has provided a great opportunity to gain exposure and experience in human resources.

Merinda Dryden was born and raised in Shepparton and is a proud Yorta Yorta woman. Merinda is a Koori Youth Employment Scheme graduate.
Improving Koori Outcomes

- Our services are respectful and responsive to the Koori community
- We meet our commitment to improving justice outcomes for Koories
- We support Koori economic development
- We are an employer of choice for Koori people

We will ensure that Koori outcomes are a shared responsibility through the implementation of the principles in this plan.

We will provide opportunities for economic participation and development, helping to build economic independence through our business and employment practices.

We will know we have been successful when:

- We engage meaningfully with the Koori community and our workforce to lead and drive better outcomes for Koories.
- We support Koori organisations to partner with justice agencies in the provision of justice-related services and programs.
- Our business decisions support the Koori community and facilitate Koori jobs and business growth.
- We help build capability and capacity in community organisations.
- We increase Koori membership on justice-related boards, committees and tribunals that make decisions impacting on the Koori community.
- We are identified as an employer of choice for the Koori community.
- Our built environment recognises and celebrates Koori culture and provides safe spaces for the Koori community and staff.
- We use Supply Nation’s network and resources to support engagement of Koori businesses and Aboriginal economic development and meet the department’s procurement targets for engagement of Koori suppliers.

The key to any of the work that we undertake and changes that we make to improve our procurement processes and make them more inclusive, is to ensure that we open up and maintain a dialogue with Koori suppliers.”

Phil Chalkley, Chief Procurement Officer
Improving Koori Outcomes

Antoinette Gentile is a proud Yorta Yorta woman

Case studies

Koori Justice Unit

Antoinette Gentile has worked in a number of roles to seek to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

In September 2016, Antoinette was appointed as the Director of the Koori Justice Unit (KJU).

KJU coordinates the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of many of the department’s Koori programs through the Koori Inclusion Action Plan and the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Established in 1999, the KJU sits within the Service Strategy Reform division of the department, and acts on behalf of the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the peak body overseeing the implementation of the Agreement.

The KJU is a primary point of contact for the Justice portfolio with the Victorian Koori community, working closely with business units and regional offices to improve the accessibility of justice services and justice outcomes for Koories.

Koori service development and delivery – targeted procurement

The department understands that improved Koori outcomes are most successfully achieved when services are developed and delivered by the Koori community. This is one practical element of self-determination. Through the journey of the successive Aboriginal Justice Agreements, the department has demonstrated a long standing commitment to making this happen. The Koori community shape services and Koori organisations then deliver these services. This commitment will continue.

Engaging Koori suppliers through inclusive procurement

Awarding government contracts to capable and competitive Koori suppliers will benefit the department and contribute to the economic development of Koori communities.

The department is making a number of improvements to the way it procures mainstream goods and services, including measuring and increasing the engagement of Koori businesses in these processes.

The Chief Procurement Officer is developing training for current and potential Koori suppliers to enable them to better demonstrate their capability, so they are well positioned to compete for government contracts. This will involve working with Koori suppliers to refine the training.

The department is also a member of Supply Nation, giving greater access to Aboriginal suppliers as well as resources to support and engage Aboriginal businesses.

The department has adopted the Victorian Government target of 1 percent of our suppliers being Indigenous organisations by 2019.
Activating Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together

This Koori Inclusion Action Plan outlines how our department will lead, behave and collaborate to improve Koori inclusion across all that we do.

To implement our Plan:

1. Department divisions and regions will develop plans to implement actions aligned to the Koori Inclusion Action Plan goals and principles and key success areas most relevant to their functions. These plans will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

2. Koori inclusion will be incorporated into the regular planning process for the department – ensuring that “Koori Business is Every Day business”.

3. The department’s Koori Inclusion Action Plan Steering Committee will oversee progress against the plans and refresh the Plan as required.

4. To ensure we are transparent and accountable about our progress, the Koori Inclusion Action Plan Steering Committee will report each year:
   - to the Justice senior executive group
   - to Koori Caucus
   - to the Aboriginal Justice Forum
   - to staff through our internal communication channels
   - to the wider community on the department’s website and through our Justice Service Centres.
Celebrating Koori Culture

13 FEBRUARY
Anniversary of the National Apology to Stolen Generations

16 MARCH
National Close the Gap Day

26 MAY
National Sorry Day

MAY
National Reconciliation Week

3 JUNE
Mabo Day

JULY
NAIDOC Week

4 AUGUST
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day

9 AUGUST
International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

13 SEPTEMBER
Anniversary of the UN declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

JULY – NAIDOC WEEK CELEBRATIONS

The department celebrates NAIDOC week every year. In 2017 the Koori Justice Unit hosted a NAIDOC celebration in Melbourne. The event included a Welcome to Country by Aunty Zeta Thomson with a special song in the Yorta-Yorta language.

Guests were treated to an amazing display of traditional dance led by The Fighting Gunditjmara dance group. The dance group shared the importance of keeping the longest living culture alive and thriving, and passing it down to the younger generation.

Attendees were taken back in history with a DVD on the life and times of the late Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls and his incredible journey from Cummeragunja Aboriginal Mission to representing Victoria in the AFL, Governor of South Australia and more.

Bobby Nicholls – Koori Caucus member and nephew of Pastor Sir Doug – spoke of his uncle’s life and the challenges he faced as well as the many opportunities he took through his career as a sporting legend.

The Koori Justice Unit in partnership with Worawa Aboriginal College held an Art Exhibition during NAIDOC week with auctions on each art work going to the highest bidder and proceeds going back to the school and students.

Dr Lois Peeler, Chairperson, Eastern RAJAC presenting her history at event during National Reconciliation Week 2017

Walk the Talk Together Koori Inclusion Action Plan
About the artist:
Bradley Brown, GunaiKurnai man
Bradley has experimented with the traditional GunaiKurnai artform of line patterns and contrasted this with other techniques such as dots and bold colours to celebrate the diversity in our human and physical landscape. This painting depicts an Aboriginal narrative about strength, hunting and gathering resources to share with the community. The footprints, arrows and circles symbolise the community unified on a journey together.

“Kangaroos are prominent figures in Aboriginal culture and art; they were hunted for food, to craft bones into hunting tools and fur for clothing. ‘Hunting Kangaroos’ depicts a story about Aboriginal men making and using traditional tools to hunt and gather Kangaroo for their community. The colours in the background represent the diverse landscape of their hunting grounds, the dots are the journey they took to find the Kangaroo and the line work, the spears they carried. This painting shows the strength and ability of the Aboriginal people and our connection to country.” Bradley Brown

About the title:
Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk – Walk the Talk Together
The title “Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk” is a Yorta Yorta phrase meaning ‘Walk The Talk Together’. We gratefully use this with the permission of the Yorta Yorta people. We acknowledge the assistance of the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

The Yorta Yorta language and GunaiKurnai art featured in this Action Plan are representations of Victorian Koori culture and reflect the sentiment of the department’s Action Plan. We embrace diversity, and walk together with the Koori community, to deliver better outcomes to the community today and into the future.