



Victorian Aboriginal
Children & Young
People's Alliance

Submission to CCYP systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people living in out of home care

August 2022

The Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance thank the Commission for Children and Young People for the opportunity to project the voices of our Members and the children and families they work with.

Introduction

Aboriginal children and young people in care have more challenges with participation and success with learning, than other children. The data shows higher numbers of Aboriginal children in care in comparison to non-indigenous children and lower attendance rates and NAPLAN results for all Aboriginal children and young people. However, the data only tells part of the story. There are multiple factors that contribute to these gaps in attendance, achievement, and engagement. Understanding the experiences of Aboriginal children in care with education begins with connecting and deep listening, knowing that the story is more important than the numbers. There is still considerable work to see the vision from The Marrung; Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026¹¹ realised.

'...for the rich and thriving culture of First Nations peoples to be celebrated by all Victorians; for universal service systems to be inclusive, responsive, and respectful of Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and for every Koorie person to achieve their potential, succeed in life, and feel strong and safe in their cultural identity.'

Context

The Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance (the Alliance) is a collective voice of 15 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) across Victoria, who provide services to children and families. The Alliance represents the voices of about 50% of Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

In recognition of the additional vulnerability of children in care, the Victorian government partnered with stakeholders to develop two agreements. *'The Out of Home Care Education Commitment: Partnering Agreement'*³ and the *'Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out of Home Care'*². These agreements outline the key roles, responsibilities, and requirements to support children in care with early childhood and education, including the role of the LOOKOUT Education Centres.

The LOOKOUT Education Support Centres are set up to boost the capability of early childhood services, schools, carers, child protection practitioners and out-of-home care services to improve educational outcomes for children and young people living in out-of-home care. LOOKOUT Centre staff are based in regional offices of the Department of Education and Training (DET). The Centres are led by experienced school Principals and are staffed by multidisciplinary teams of education specialists, allied health professionals, Koorie Cultural Advisors and data and administration officers³.

The Education department funded three project positions (Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance (the Alliance), Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and the Centre for Excellence in Children and Family Welfare (CFECFW)) to work in partnership with DET including the LOOKOUT Centres to support education for children in care. The overall objective for the Alliance project is to improve educational engagement and attendance for Aboriginal children and young people in statutory out-of-home care. Through

- building the capacity & capability of ACCOs to support Aboriginal children and young people and their carers with educational engagement
- supporting the implementation of the Out-of-Home Care partnering agreements

Over the last 12 months, the Alliance Senior Project Officer (Education) met with our Members. ACCO staff have generously shared their experiences and practice wisdom in supporting learning for the children and young people that they support. This submission brings together their feedback.

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These stories were gathered from consultations with team leaders and senior staff in child and family services. In addition, a series of Education Workshops were facilitated with ACCO staff. A survey of key elements of early childhood and school supports was distributed. Specific ACCO staff feedback and comments from the survey are included in the submission *and highlighted with italics*. Minor punctuation and adjustments were made to support clarity. Themes are consistent across consultations, workshops, and survey results. More information about the consultations, workshops and surveys is included in Appendix A.

Main themes

All ACCO staff consulted understand and value consistent attendance at school and participation in early years settings. The importance of culturally responsive school settings and early childhood was emphasised throughout. Cultural concerns were highlighted as a key barrier to participation. There were some concerns expressed about responses to behaviour in childcare settings and kindergartens who were not culturally safe. However, most of the feedback related to school aged settings.

Trauma informed and responsive school and early childhood settings were highly valued, but sadly lacking in the 'on the ground' experience of ACCO staff.

Most staff are closely involved with the Student Support Group and regularly include the school in Care team meetings. Fewer case managers are involved in the development of the Individual Education Plans. Many staff had not heard about Educational Needs Analysis, Learning Mentors or Designated Teachers.

There was deep concern expressed about the number of students placed on modified programs, school responses to behaviour and supporting students who are disengaged or disengaging from learning.

There was limited awareness of the Partnering Agreement² and the Early Childhood Agreement¹. The level of knowledge and partnership with the work of the LOOKOUT centres is variable.

Staff spoke of the importance of other organisations embracing and respecting Aboriginal ways of doing and being. The cultural load of Aboriginal communities adapting to Western ways and styles of communication was highlighted. ACCOs felt they made most of the effort reaching out to other organisations.

Competing demands particularly around placement breakdown sometimes affected case manager's ability to concentrate on supporting learning. Staff reported a 'barrage of information' with challenges to sift through and focus on what is most important.

There was a strong theme throughout the consultations about the importance of relationships, both individual, school based and at the organisational level.

The specific focus on education for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care through this project position has enabled extensive consultation and deep listening, identified gaps and needs, and supported activities to begin to build the capability and capacity of case managers and carers to assist with education.

In addition, the Self Determination in Education Reform¹³ is bringing together Victorian Aboriginal communities, young people, and schools together to share and connect about self-determination for Koorie people in education through campfire conversations. The feedback from these campfire conversations helps to understand the experience of Aboriginal children and young people, parents, carers, and community in schools, including Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care. Similar themes to those identified through the consultations have been highlighted through the campfire conversations.



Outline

1. Cultural Safety
2. Early Childhood Learning
3. Working with Schools
4. Supporting Learning
5. Collaborative Practice
6. Supporting Carers
7. Impact of Covid

Recommendations:

Appendix 1. Information Sources

Appendix 2. About the Alliance

References & further information



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1. Cultural Safety

Cultural awareness and responsiveness in the kindergarten and the school setting is critical for Aboriginal children, young people, and their families. Celebration of culture that moves beyond tokenistic acknowledgement is highly valued. ACCO staff reported that schools which are culturally inclusive and supportive

- include an acknowledgement or welcome to country every week
- show high levels of knowledge and awareness of culture
- have a Reconciliation Action Plan and follow up with the work needed for reconciliation.
- acknowledge the sporting achievements of Aboriginal children
- focus on Aboriginal books during book week
- have 2-3 aides in the school, who work flexibly across the school
- will pick up students from home if they are not attending.

These schools have high attendance. Their inclusiveness draws other families and students.

What helps

- Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST)⁹ helps with some teachers.
- cultural activities embedded into daily practice
- Elders who are welcomed in the local Preschools
- schools and educators who endeavour to look through a 'Koorie Lens'
- practice that is guided by the Koorie Education Support Officers (KESO) and the community

Aboriginal boys are involved with the Clontarf Academy⁸ based in some local Secondary schools. ACCO staff spoke highly of this program. ACCO staff reported that the program is 'really positive, celebrating the student's small achievements, engaging vulnerable young people and phasing in and out as needed'. The support for the program from school staff is inconsistent e.g.

- young people participating in an off-campus reward for their attendance and participation in education were marked absent from class, rather than being recorded as an approved educational cultural activity¹⁰. A similar program for girls which was part of the school program did not have the same issues.
- a school principal wanted to ban the student's attendance at the Clontarf rewards dinner as they did not feel that the young person deserved to go.

Survey comments: supporting education

Making sure the setting is culturally appropriate and culturally safe, being honest and direct, yet supportive and caring.

The Clontarf Academy program is very helpful for helping to support and engage Aboriginal school children with education.

Strong connections with culture

Helping schools establish cultural leadership groups. This allows Aboriginal children the opportunity to take pride in their culture and an opportunity to enhance leadership skills. It also gives disengaged children something to look forward to at school.

Cultural goals incorporated into learning plan.

Barriers

Most ACCO staff spoke about culturally unsafe schools in their area. Examples of unconscious bias, racism and negative stereotyping were provided.



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- racism within staff and educational settings. Some staff felt that racism has *'got worse over the last couple of years'*
- school settings where there is no celebration or positive representation of Aboriginal culture, and no opportunity to share culture
- Aboriginal children having a negative stigma attached to them, feeling like they are *'being looked down on'*
- parents, carers and ACCO staff feeling unsafe.

There were several issues within a particular Secondary School with Aboriginal students (including Aboriginal students in care). The local ACCO held a smoking ceremony at the school to support healing. Some of the teachers in the school chose not to participate.

Cultural Safety: Case example₁

An Aboriginal student preferred to wear a cap pulled down over his eyes, as he felt safer. He was uncomfortable with making eye contact for cultural reasons and anxiety. Wearing a cap in class was against the uniform policy. The school were unwilling to be flexible in their policy and suspended the student. They were unwilling to put an in-school suspension in place. At home suspensions put pressure on the placement, which then broke down. The young person was moved off country to find another placement.

2. Early Childhood Learning

Participation in high quality Early Childhood learning supports the transition to school and provides a strong framework for achieving well at school, including better language, literacy, numeracy, cognitive and problem solving skills⁴.

Most of the respondents to the survey felt confident in supporting children to attend Early Start Kindergarten, participate in 4-year-old-kindergarten and the transition to Primary School. 26% of respondents to the survey were not sure that Carers have the practical support they need to help the children in the care to participate in kindergarten and other childhood services.

An Individual Learning and Development plan (ILP) helps to support children with their learning. Only 30% of ACCO case managers reported that most of the kindergarten children on their caseload had this plan. 23% of case managers said 'almost none' of the children had a plan.

63% of survey respondents said they were familiar with the Early Childhood Partnering Agreement. Survey respondents identified the following elements that work well to support carers and children in Early Childhood settings.

Advocating for them. There is always a challenge getting the child's enrolment form filled in by the parents if the children are on a reunification order.

All organizations working together and communicating supporting each other

Good communication & feedback. An understanding of the child's strengths and needs. An understanding of childhood trauma

Regular meetings

Early intervention

Constant contact with educators and gaining feedback



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In addition, 36% of respondents mentioned the importance of support to Carers. These responses are included in the Supporting Carers section.

Challenges highlighted in the survey in Early Years included

Pre schools not being equipped to work with children who display challenging behaviours. Pre schools thinking of the children as naughty.

Limited funding to support children who may need additional support, education settings being under resourced to provide additional support such as teachers aide or specialised support.

Poor communication. Lack of progress updates and learning plans

Finding resources

Ensuring that ILP's are done and sometimes communication barriers. Ensuring stakeholders all attend relevant meetings.

Concerns were expressed about culturally safe kindergartens, understanding the effect of trauma, and responding to behaviour in a flexible and supportive manner.

Case manager previously working as a Koorie Preschool Assistant wanted to teach all the children about Aboriginal culture including the flag. The worker was directed to teach 'the black babies' in the corner.

Early Learning & Cultural Safety Case Example,

A 4 year old Aboriginal child was initially placed in care with 7 other children. One of the children was his sister. His brother had recently moved to a different placement. He was then placed with a couple through foster care. He was the only child in the home and both adults were working. They were unsuccessful in having children of their own. The ACCO provided handout sheets and offered training. The carers said they didn't have time to do the training. The first question from the Childcare setting was 'who's going to pick up the child'. There was a daily phone call to the Caseworker for the child to be picked up from the setting due to behaviour. The child had experienced significant losses and was seeking physical contact and one to one connection. At the ACCO office, they were seeking physical contact with workers. The child needed support around boundaries. At home, the child was lectured by the carer about interrupting work.

Outcome

- The child returned to the Childcare with no repair of relationship, modelling, or coaching. The childcare staff were not willing to work with the Caseworker to explore strategies to support the child's participation at childcare. They stated that they did not have capacity to provide support needed.
- Childcare staff & LOOKOUT Early Childhood Learning Advisor (ECLA) communicated that the child needed to be picked up when behaviour escalated.
- Placement broke down as the carer could not sustain leaving work early.
- Child moved off Country.

In the new childcare centre, staff showed flexibility and a commitment to supporting the child. They supported the child at the childcare setting.

Early Learning Case example

The case example above shows that

- wrap around flexible approaches are needed
- educators (and carers) require an understanding of the impact of separation from family



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- And an understanding of trauma and attachment
- Childcare settings require a greater acceptance and understanding of children with dysregulated emotions and behaviour
- modelling, support & coaching is needed in the childcare settings

While there are still gaps and challenges with participation in Early years educational settings. Overall, ACCO staff are confident with supporting children with kindergarten, with stronger engagement and support from LOOKOUT in the early years space.

3. Working with schools

A consistent theme was the importance of trauma informed schools and kindergartens. Trauma informed understanding of the child is key to success in learning, with educators having insight into the underlying reasons that students struggle to regulate their behaviour. This insight leads to

- a different interpretation of the child's behaviour
- pro-active supports rather than reactive responses
- providing a range of creative and flexible solutions
- teachers who are trauma informed, flexible and committed with a passion and drive to support the child, and can see the child not the behaviour

An ACCO staff member commented that '*Teachers having training in trauma makes a huge difference. There are different types of trauma that can set off the student. Understanding that a child who has retreated up a tree is scared not naughty*'.

What helps

- a wholistic understanding of learning and learning styles
- taking each child as an individual
- school staff who understand the impact of what is happening in the home setting e.g. asking has something happened this morning.
- working to engage the family/carer and/or parent in the school and kindergarten program
- starting early with the little ones and thinking how to engage the carers/parents
- breakfast club
- engaging tutoring
- having the Aboriginal Liaison worker present in the school. She was there to support them with any issues that they had

One school made sure that the child knew all the safe people, teachers, and peers. This student now regularly attends school. They previously had low attendance, now their attendance is above 90%. They are doing well emotionally but still struggling with learning. They have increasing self-confidence with learning. Case example: Working with schools-What helps ¹

A young person was responding to sensory triggers. They were set off by sounds, which triggered physical violence. The student was suspended frequently. The teacher reached out to the parent/carer. They came up with a joint plan to manage the stressors. A space outside the classroom worked well for calm down time. Case example: Working with schools-What helps ²



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In some areas, Catholic Education is *'doing it better'* than State Schools.

Barriers

The following barriers and challenges were identified by ACCO staff. An overarching theme was summarised by one survey response *'schools and pre schools not being able to support children with challenging behaviour'*

School and teacher attitudes

- schools who place children in the too hard basket. Preconceptions about the child leading to bias against the child e.g. 'naughty kid'
- not taking the time to understand the context for the child/young person. When students are disengaged with their learning, their behaviour at school can be disruptive.
- older generation teachers who are not interested in building relationships with the students
- expectations that Aboriginal children won't succeed. These attitudes contribute to children leaving school, with a large number dropping out at Year 8-9.

Student attitudes

- being a target of bullying and racism

Internal beliefs and experience of being in care

- some students feel shame about being in out of home care
- feeling different, having different experiences of family to other students

School and Childcare responses to dysregulated behaviour

- inflexible school responses to aggressive behaviour and/or students clashing with other children in the class. Schools are not recognising the impact of trauma and unwilling to change how they approach children with traumatic experiences and loss.
- behaviour is preventing some students from doing well. ACCO staff would like to see a more positive approach to behaviour rather than behaviour management focusing on the negatives.

Transport to school e.g. *'Transport-children walking 5km+ to school/ parents do not have a car/ support workers do not have capacity for transport'*

- in regional areas, there are limited school options if the local school is not culturally safe or supportive. Round trip travel times may be up to 80-100 minutes.
- fees for bus transport to a private school (if that is the best option). Principals stating that the student is not at risk (and entitled to a fee waiver) because they are being supported by their local ACCO.
- some carers do not drive.
- transport when the child is attending a Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program with reduced hours or placed on a modified program. The bus system is limited and not always running during the day.

Uniform costs & policies

- inflexible uniform policies e.g., students being sent home for wearing black trousers that are not quite the right shade of black
- carers struggling to find the money for uniforms. Limited/insufficient options for ACCOs to provide funding. Accessing brokerage funding through child protection is an additional demand on already stretched case managers.



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Costs & access to funding

- State School Relief fund is difficult to access, with too many hoops to jump through
- Carer payment is not enough to cover all the costs. It is difficult to get evidence for a higher carer payment that reflects the needs of the child. There are significant differences between the number of kinship carers on the base level Carer payment in comparison to foster carers. Most Aboriginal children are in a kinship care placement.⁷

4. Supporting Learning

The consultations with ACCO staff highlighted strengths and challenges.

- staff spoke of the importance of having strong Aboriginal connections and extended family support to enable success in learning
- school curriculum is very one size fits all. Everyone is expected to learn in the same way of the person next to you. Each child learns differently. And at a different pace and level. e.g., visual, active learning or through hearing & listening. For many children, their trauma affects their learning. Other children are hands on learners.
- Aboriginal students drop out because their learning needs are not accommodated. E.g., teaching is happening at a grade 6 level – when they are learning at a Grade 2.

Student Support Groups (SSG) or Parent Support Group (PSG) in Catholic Education

The SSG brings together the people who are supporting the student. It is a school led process. Not all schools are holding a SSG every term as mandated by the partnership agreement. Most case managers are actively involved in the SSG. They are sometimes the team member who is driving this process. Attendance of the KESO (Koorie Education Support Officer) at the first SSG (as recommended in the partnering agreement) is inconsistent.

70% of survey respondents participate in SSGs/PSGs for 'almost all' of the children/young people on their caseload. 91% of respondents feel confident in participating in the SSG, demonstrating the commitment of ACCO case workers to working collaboratively to support education.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Learning Plan (ILP) in Catholic Education

This plan guides the educational planning to help the child or young person reach their potential. A good IEP reflects the unique learning needs. The partnering agreement mandates an IEP for all children in out of home care.

There is mixed practice in the development of IEPs from schools. Many carers, students and case managers are not involved in the development of the IEP. Fewer case managers are confident in participating in IEPs in comparison to SSGs (84% vs 91%). It can be difficult for case managers to obtain a copy of the IEP from the school. The carer is not always given a copy of the IEP. Other staff said that the IEP and SSG work well most of the time to support learning.

Issues identified with IEPs include

- lack of collaboration, e.g., IEPs developed outside of the student support group and brought along for the carer and student to accept.
- generic IEPs rather than specific and individual to the student
- IEPs that focus on negatives and do not support change
- lack of review and updating
- IEPs that are not culturally appropriate. Some case managers will send these back to the school.



This student attended school regularly but was uncomfortable with participating in the formal meetings. They did not want to attend the meeting to contribute to the IEP process. The IEP was not completed by the school, because 'the student voice' was not heard. There was no problem solving or commitment to hearing the student voice in other ways. IEP case example

High quality IEPs have the following elements

- personalised goals that are specific, measurable, and achievable. They match the child's starting points and their speed of learning. It is important not to set the goal too high e.g. improving by one reading level. Achieving the goal supports the young person's self-esteem.
- focusing on the goal for this term.
- cultural strategies and goals included in the IEP
- strategies, timeframes and supports from the school
- broken down into steps required. This helps the carer's understanding and helps to identify responsibility for areas/tasks.
- clear allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and accountability
- sharing responsibility for tasks
- regular review and collaboration, especially around realistic and specific goals that have not been achieved. Considering what needs to be amended to support completion.

Top tips for IEPs from ACCO staff

- appropriate goals that everyone is working towards
- consider visual cues/visual strategies
- include helpful activities e.g. sensory breaks for kids, sensory swing, rhythmic movement, meditation
- include cultural activities e.g. books by Aboriginal authors to support literacy development

Learning Mentors

The school appoints the Learning Mentor to support the student with learning, academic achievement, and wellbeing. Learning Mentors are an underutilised resource that can make a significant difference in the child's engagement in learning. Only 41% of survey respondents were aware of the role of the Learning Mentor. Many Aboriginal students did not have a learning mentor.

Educational Needs Analysis (ENA)

The ENA is a comprehensive process to understand and address a student's needs including

- social & emotional
- cultural
- educational and
- strengths

The school makes a referral to Student Support Services (SSS). The SSS collects, reviews, and analyses personal, health, and educational information from a range of sources to help understand the student's learning needs and determine the need for additional assessment, interventions, and services. 59% of survey respondents reported that they understood the processes involved in an ENA. 64% felt confident in supporting the child, family, and carer with an ENA. Previously, Student Support Services mostly provided



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support to students with disabilities. There are variable levels of knowledge of the impact of trauma on children's development, stress responses, learning and wellbeing.

There are examples of the SSS requesting a copy of the cultural support plan before they complete the ENA. The cultural plan is a deeply personal document to support the cultural identity of the Aboriginal child or young person. There are privacy and confidentiality issues with sharing the cultural plan, as it may contain stories and personal information for family and community.

Survey Response:

A LOOKOUT staff member was involved in a consultation about a particular student. They suggested the completion of the Educational Needs Analysis. There was no further follow-up. The school did not know all the steps needed to complete the ENA. The ENA was never completed, despite the student being at the school for 2 years. ENA case example

I find if you've done your homework and have sorted assessments for the young person to assist with the transition to school - having the education needs analysis done always helps with transitions as it spells out the areas the young person needs help with, maybe adjusted curriculum to their level for classes.

Designated teachers

Designated Teachers were introduced to Victorian schools as part of the LOOKOUT Centre model. The Designated Teacher is the main point of contact in Victorian schools for LOOKOUT Centres and has a key role in advocating for and supporting students in OOHC to engage with education and to meet their learning goals. Most ACCO staff are not aware of the role of the designated teacher.

What helps to support learning

Survey responses: strategies or approaches that work well to support Aboriginal children in care with education.

For the school to work with each child/family as an individual. At times we must not focus on academic goals but simple goals that support the child in attendance or school familiarisation. For the school to not judge the child as being difficult

Utilising services to help them engage that include them doing something they are interested in or providing a mentor for them that they will see on a weekly basis i.e. driving them to school

*Making sure we are up to date with the child's education plan, SSG meetings, conversation with the child
Ensuring you have a trusted and open connection with the client and their carer/s. Being able to voice the client's feelings, wants, needs when they cannot. Communicate and working with the support network i.e. KESO, Therapist, SSG*

Cultural goals incorporated into learning plan. Links with KESO, mentors

Offering positive after school incentives to children for attending school a certain amount of times per week. The amount of days depends on the child and their individual circumstances. For example, a group walk on

Country with an afternoon snack for children that have been previously disengaged but setting goals to attend school. In school cultural activities also works well, children look forward to the activity at school and attend on those days. It also strengthens their connection to culture and helps form new relationships with other Aboriginal children that attend the same school.

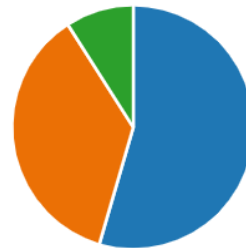


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Survey responses: School Aged

33. I feel confident in supporting children/young people to participate in education

Strongly agree	12
Agree	8
Neutral	2
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



Child and Carer voice in school processes.

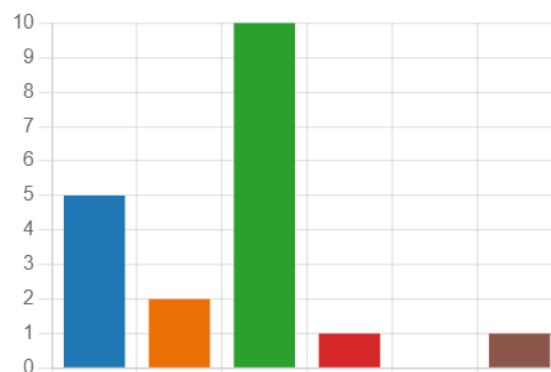
35. The child and carer voices are heard in the Student Support Group or Program Support Group.

Strongly agree	5
Agree	9
Neutral	8
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



39. The child and care voices are included in the IEP planning

Almost always	5
Usually	2
Sometimes	10
Rarely	1
Almost never	0
Unsure	1



5. Disengaged Learners

Most staff expressed concern about students who were struggling with attending school and school processes around discipline (suspensions, exclusions, and modified programs). 79% of survey respondents felt confident in supporting participation in education for children with very limited attendance. 86% of respondents were supporting or had supported school age children with less than 3 days a week attendance.

“Frequent suspensions put up a barrier for the child. They feel unwanted and like ‘they’re being suspended for every little reason’”



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Consultations with ACCO staff showed multiple examples of students being suspended or disciplined for small infractions of the rules.

An Aboriginal young person called out the answer in a cultural class, rather than putting up his hand. He was sent out of the class.

Disengaged Learners Case example₁

A student wanted to have their backpack next to him at school because they were worried about it being taken away from him. The school would not *'budge for this child'*. The student was suspended and has now stopped going to school

Disengaged Learners Case example₂

There are examples of subtle exclusionary practices e.g. limited in-class time for students with some schools using alternative programs (e.g. Clontarf) as 'a way of getting kids out of the classroom'.

The Alliance sees 'Soft suspensions or exclusions' as a concerning trend. Many of these suspensions are not recorded on the state wide mandatory school records system (CASES 21). This system records enrolments, student transitions, achievement, attendance and absences, students and family profile, health and wellbeing information, discipline, merit, behaviour, and incidents.

Soft suspension example: the student is not allowed to attend school until a meeting occurs. The school does not consider this situation to be a suspension and therefore does not document it on the system.

These practices reduce the oversight from senior educational staff outside of the school.

There is a lack of collaboration around students being placed on modified attendance programs. ACCO staff reported that *'Schools are setting the agenda, deciding the level of attendance for the students (modified program), and making the plan. Children and young people being moved to a modified timetable, with no plan to increase time or plan to address changes needed to support participation'*. ACCO staff and families do not feel included in these plans. Some of the young people are placed on modified programs that are extremely limited in attendance and difficult for carers to support e.g. half an hour attendance each day. The quality of 'return to school' plans is inconsistent and often developed without collaboration with the child/young person's carer and Case manager.

Survey responses

A teenager was not engaging well at school. They 'don't fit the box'. The student was quickly moved to an amended timetable. Staff saw further decline in school attendance and engagement. The decision was made to change their program to the FLO (Flexible Learning Option). FLO didn't seem to have much structure and the young person's engagement in school 'was done'. It seemed that ACCO staff were the only ones working to make the carers and schools accountable for the young person's attendance. Disengaged Learners: case example₃

Some schools remaining punitive, so called reengagement programs that appear on the surface to be exclusionary. Being told that they don't have the capacity to deliver multiple streams of education in the one year grade.

Ongoing School refusal, carers allowing children to not attend school. Carers not using DFFH carer payments for tutoring and other school items but using for other things

Navigator Program

Navigator supports disengaged young people by working with the young person, their family and support network to address underlying issues contributing to disengagement from education and help them re-engage with their education. Navigator is delivered by contracted community service organisations that work closely with local schools and DET area teams. In each area, the program is tailored to its local community and services. The program is available to young people aged 12-17 years with attendance



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below 30%, who are enrolled or intend to enrol in a Victorian education setting (including non-government schools).

A few ACCO staff had contact with the Navigator program with different experiences reported.

Only one student has been referred (2 months ago). There has been no contact from Navigator team Leader.

Navigator program (was helpful), developing an understanding of what are the barriers inhibiting the young person.

What helps disengaged learners

Strong communication and collaboration between the team supporting the young person, with more regular meetings and discussion with all the people involved with the child.

Survey response:

I always attend meetings at the school for suspensions etc and try to put things in place to encourage the young person to attend and work with the care team to hopefully get the best outcome for the young person, so they are happy to attend school.

Persistence in building a relationship with the young person is vital. Many disengaged students have underlying learning issues or lack confidence^{1,5}. Addressing underlying learning issues is needed. Carers benefit from support with getting the child/young person to school and understanding the importance of regular school attendance.

A case manager worked in Residential Care with an Aboriginal teenager with very low reading skills (did not know the alphabet). They spoke about the importance of building a relationship of trust with the young person. *Be on their level and listen to their voice, when they say, 'I can't do this, why do I have to do that?'* Never judge and start with where they're at. Don't make assumptions about what they know. Understand that they are embarrassed that they can't read.

Persistence and routine are important. Take time, model and work alongside them, work at their pace and keep giving opportunities. e.g. the case manager started with sitting at the table and colouring in the letters of the alphabet. In the case managers words *'It was only when he started calling me Auntie, – that he started to sit and engage.'* The young person learned the alphabet and numbers and the most common 100 words. They learned to text and write simple sentences. The young person thanked her for teaching them the alphabet and still asks for help with reading more complex text.

Disengaged Learners: case example₄

6. Collaborative Practice

As previously stated, positive relationships and regular communication and collaboration between all the people who are supporting the child was valued by ACCO staff. They highlighted the following strategies.

- Open communication and strong partnerships with the family and case managers.
- Developing a positive relationship between the case manager and the school. Visiting the school and being a familiar face in the school outside of formal meetings. Sitting in the tea room and having casual conversations and connections.
- Building a relationship with the teacher and the teacher aide.
- School attendance at care team meetings. For students who are attending regularly, school attendance at a care team meeting every 3 months works well.
- Getting a briefing from the school before the care team meeting or the SSG can help.
- Accountability around agreed actions following meetings.



- Being more flexible about sharing information.

Two schools are amazing. They have strong connections with the case manager, including the wellbeing officer providing their phone number to help with communication.

Collaborative practice example¹

Some schools only allow staff to interact with the Principal or Assistant Principal or Student Support Officer, rather than supporting case managers to communicate directly with the classroom teacher.

Non-collaborative practice example

Working with the LOOKOUT Team

LOOKOUT Education Support Centres work to boost the capacity of schools, carers, practitioners & services to improve educational outcomes for children in care.

There were different experiences of working with LOOKOUT in different ACCOs and inconsistent knowledge of the role of LOOKOUT. 71% of survey respondents were familiar with the role of LOOKOUT centres. 17% did not know the LOOKOUT centre contacts in their area.

Some staff asked, '*What does LOOKOUT actually do?*'. They did not feel that the LOOKOUT staff '*know about the students*' and that's LOOKOUT's involvement was '*ticking a box*' rather than a genuine effort to support the student. Some ACCO staff reported that they felt the LOOKOUT staff member '*was on the side of the school*' and did not advocate strongly for the student. Many staff don't know when to consult LOOKOUT or what to expect.

Other ACCOs felt they had a strong relationship with LOOKOUT, and felt they were '*very helpful*'.

A family with complex needs started at a new school where they weren't used to working with students with these complexities. The school sought additional training. LOOKOUT provided the training which made all the difference to this child. Working with LOOKOUT: case example

Through consultations, it was evident that ACCO staff value

- scheduled regular contact
- LOOKOUT staff making the effort to reach out to the ACCO staff and check in with a phone call
- LOOKOUT staff attending meetings in person rather than over the screen.

One of the ACCOs reported a strong relationship and collaboration with LOOKOUT. They have a monthly meeting where they discuss 3-4 cases of students with extra needs. The level of knowledge around the partnering agreements and supports in schools in this ACCO was noticeably higher than other ACCOs. They reported that they '*learned about the partnering agreement through working closely with LOOKOUT staff who advocate strongly for the students and provide information about what schools are mandated to provide under the agreement.*'

Survey responses: What helps

Regular meetings and updates from care team members. Sharing the information simply so all can understand.

Working with people as a team, good communication

Regular care team meetings

Regular care team meetings and advice from LOOKOUT on a needs basis.



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Care Team Meetings

Regular focus on education in care team meetings can help to support success in learning. However, many teachers are only able to stay for a short period of time due to competing demands. In addition, some carers saw a difference in the way they and the child/young person were treated after the teacher attended a full care team meeting and heard additional information about the child. It negatively affected the school's perception of the student and their family. There are various practices with including education staff in care team meetings, such as

- invite the teacher in for a specific amount of time, so they don't hear information that may negatively affect their view of the child/young person.
- start the meeting with a case manager overview and then schedule the education team update, so that the school staff member has the key information when they can't attend the whole meeting.
- scheduling at least one care team meeting a term that suits the teacher's availability
- ask for a written update if the teacher is not able to attend the care team meeting.
- flexibility about who attends from the school e.g. well-being, support staff, Assistant Principal.
- schedule care team meetings 3-4 months ahead and flag with school staff
- reminder about care team meetings the day before.

7. Supporting Carers

It is important that schools include carers of Aboriginal children in supporting the student with education. Usually, carers are invited to school based meetings and attend these meetings. However, many schools do not make accommodations for carers with low literacy and/or limited access to technology. They provide all communication through their online Compass system or via emails. Some carers don't have an email address and have no or very limited access to the internet. In most schools, all notes to family are sent via email. ACCO staff provided the following information and recommendations about supporting and communicating with Carers

- face to face is usually best
- case manager practice has shifted to more texts and emails. Many carers prefer text or email and will ignore calls. Sending emails and then following up with a phone call is helpful (provided the carer has consistent internet access and is comfortable with technology).
- frequent reminders to carers about key meetings are important
- although some carers are comfortable with text or emails, ACCO staff considered that paper based communication from schools continues to be needed.
- respectful listening from educators "*sometimes school staff don't listen to the Carer because they 'don't use the 'right words'*"
- ensure information is provided in a variety of ways, including face to face, paper based communication, phone calls, email, and text
- communicate positive information more frequently than highlighting problems
- work with the case manager to support carer communication and engagement

Carers may not be comfortable with parent/teacher events or information evenings for a range of reasons e.g. negative experiences of their own schooling. It is important that other options are explored to support information sharing, while keeping carers informed about these meetings, even though they may not attend. Case managers support carers in their interactions with schools by

- reminding them that there is a meeting.
- chatting with the carer before the meeting, about what they think is important and how to support them in the meeting.
- debriefing with the carer after the meeting.



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It is important for schools to engage and connect with carers using a range of low key and culturally sensitive approaches that understand the impact of intergenerational trauma, including possible negative experiences of education. Communication between the school and the case manager/ACCO worker can support building relationships with carers. Many ACCO staff reported that key information was difficult for carers to find.

- funding for specific needs can be difficult to access. Clear information about the funding that may be available is also difficult to find.
- many carers don't find out about available supports

Carers can lose friendships and other connections. Older kinship carers can struggle with not living the retirement life they wanted. Carers connecting with each other is important. These connections can be fostered through organic connections where carers meet each other e.g. through dropping children to camps for Aboriginal children in out of home care. The carers have got to know each other and continued to connect. Schools may be able to create similar opportunities.

Practice example: Group email to all carers in the same area with information about events (with permission to share from carers). This initiative has helped to build connections between Carers.

'A Carer support group would be amazing. This could be a place for Carers to gather, network, do training and learn about other supports. It would be great for them to have a place to talk to people in the same position. This type of group is not currently available. It needs funding for staff to facilitate and organisational supports.'

ACCO staff feedback re Carers

There was concern about some carers lacking the skills to support the child or young person to attend school. There can be confusion around the extent of the carer's authority and providing permission e.g. carers signing enrolment documents without involving the care team. This is particularly the case with Kinship carers.

Survey responses:

Carers being encouraged and taught through training and conversations how they can support the children better and how they budget better to do this and what is required of them with carer payments

Providing guidance and keeping carers up to date with changes, supports they can access and allowing carers to have a voice on the care provided.

Strong relationships between carers and the Early Childhood centre.

More support for the carers.

Finding as many resources as possible to assist carers

Carers that don't have sufficient training or unwilling to attend training to provide adequate support for children's learning and development

Transport options for carers

To get carer's trust as to allow them to let you help with the young person's issues that arise.

Funding and consistency in supports for carers and facilitators

There is a need for appropriate support for Carers around

- understanding and responding to behaviour that is driven by trauma
- supporting the child or young person to attend school, especially for disengaged learners



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There is no specific funding for ACCOs to support carers. Individual ACCOs have limited resourcing and capacity to develop programs, practice models and resources to support carers, particularly Kinship Carers. Aboriginal models and resources that are regional and place based are needed.

8. Impact of COVID

The impact of COVID has been felt deeply by the community. One ACCO staff member commented that *'some of the kids will never get over it.'* Most children/young people and their carers found online learning and learning from home difficult. Including

- difficulties with the home environment for learning
- parents/carers who were not confident and struggled to support their children with learning. Parents/carers 'go crazy, stressed out, isolated'. It was hard for carers to see where the children were up to with their learning. Some grandparent Kinship Carers felt guilty for not supporting their grandchildren effectively.
- children *'scraping through'* and spending time online or *'whatever'* rather than participating in schoolwork
- access to the internet and laptops. Funding for laptops was difficult to access. An example was provided where the application was submitted in November and the iPad did not arrive until March of the following year. It was also reported that some children kids didn't get laptops for weeks or months.

A small number of students thrived and did better with learning from home. They've tended to struggle with the return to face to face learning.

The impact on some families was very negative. The children were returned to the care of Mum during one of the lockdowns. They went home, but with the periods of isolation, there was limited contact and difficulties re-engaging at school. The children are still not going to school (early 2022)

Covid Impact Case Example₁

One child did better because she didn't have the distraction of peers. Her grades have gone down now she's back at school. She would prefer to learn at home.

Covid Impact Case Example₂

The response from schools to supporting Aboriginal children in care during COVID lockdowns was inconsistent.

- Some schools emphasised academic performance rather than focusing on the student's well-being.
- Eligible at-risk/vulnerable students who were not supported through on-site learning, including Aboriginal children, additional needs (e.g. ADHD) and out-of-home care.
- In some areas, schools provided a full day of schooling for children for essential workers, but only allowed vulnerable children to attend for half the day (involved with Child Protective Services, Indigenous and/or in out-of-home care).
- In other areas, most of the children in care attended school as part of the 'at risk cohort'

Some ACCO staff reported that the support around on-line learning was 'adequate' with resources sent to families. However, there were significant social and emotional well-being concerns and impacts such as social development and normal teen experiences.

There were a range of challenges with Aboriginal children and young people returning to face to face learning, including

- hesitation from parents sending their kids back to school



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- vaccine hesitancy or delay in receiving required doses
- increase in separation anxiety from caregivers/parents for younger children through to older children
- increased anxiety being around people they don't know.
- children not wanting to leave the house for anything
- a lot of children are still struggling with attending school and social/emotional wellbeing

COVID lockdowns affected ACCOs abilities to deliver practical and social emotional wellbeing support to children and families. ACCOs did what they could for their families including dropping emergency relief on the nature strip. There was contact with the family/young people on the porch if face to face contact was needed. However, PPE was seen as a barrier to effective communication with the young person.

Some mental health/well-being support that was delivered at schools was not available during most of 2020 and 2021, as the facilitator was not able to go into schools, and home visits were not always safe/appropriate.

There were interruptions to Carers Lunches and Yarning Circles due to COVID. Some attempts were made to continue using an on-line format, however many carers have limited access and skill in using technology, so this has been much less effective.

Some programs for children were shifted to an online format. The programs went *'fairly well'* with youth. However sometimes the programs had no participants.

Overall, ACCO staff saw a huge increase in challenges for Aboriginal children in care participating in education due to COVID and lockdowns.



Recommendations

Cultural Safety:

1. Ensure all staff in schools complete the Community Understanding Safety Training (CUST), including assertive follow up with schools and staff who have not completed the training
2. Completion of cultural audits at 6- and 18-months post CUST.
3. Ensure that cultural activities are included in the IEP and are appropriately approved under educational activities.
4. Ongoing support for the implementation of actions from the self-determination in education reform. These actions can support learning and well-being for all Aboriginal students, including Aboriginal students in out-of-home care.

Working with schools

1. Whole of school trauma informed training to be sourced or developed and provided to all schools.
2. Ensure that regional Student Support Services staff are skilled in understanding the impact of trauma including supporting Aboriginal students and the role of the cultural support plan (including sharing information).
3. Development, implementation and ongoing reporting for monitoring trauma understanding in schools.
4. Ensure that training and resources to support trauma understanding specifically addresses the unique experience of trauma in Aboriginal children, families and community and is consistent with the enablers of self-determination as outlined in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (2018-2023).

Supporting learning

1. Ensuring that every Aboriginal child and young person in care has an Individual Education Plan that has been developed collaboratively with the child/young person, carer and care team and meets the highest standards on the IEP Quality Rubric tool including
 - entry skills, knowledge and abilities are assessed and outlined in enough detail to support the development of specific and measurable short term goals
 - preferred learning support and strengths are reflected in goals, teaching strategies, adjustments and supports
 - cultural activities to support learning are identified and included
 - recognises challenges and barriers and provides thoughtful suggestions to address them
 - teaching strategies, adjustments and supports are specifically tailored to the child/young person.
 - plans are included for monitoring and evaluation

Disengaged Learners

1. Development of shared practice initiatives between education, ACCOs and CSOs to provide targeted support to disengaging learners (Between 80% and 30% attendance)
2. Identification and promotion of best practice examples of partnerships between schools, community (including ACCOs) and family (including carers & extended kinship networks) to support disengaging learners
3. Increase availability of attendance data for Aboriginal children in out of home care and monitoring of modified programs.
4. Supportive and realistic return to school plans developed with the young person and carer, with the involvement of the ACCO as needed.
5. Development of and implementation for an Aboriginal Model of Practice for the Navigator program. This may include Navigator staff based in regional ACCOs. The EFT for this position could be shared across



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several smaller ACCOs. Additional weighting to funding for regional and outer regional ACCO Navigator positions to support recruitment and retention of staff.

Support to Carers

1. Review of current educational practices that disadvantage carers, with consideration for intergenerational trauma, low literacy, low access to ICT and distrust of authority e.g. all communication via email or e-platform, participants, and location of school meetings.
2. Identification of best practice examples of school engagement, partnering and support to carers would be helpful to support and inform educators around practice and organisational mindset changes needed.
3. Resource the development of an Aboriginal practice model, training and resources which assist the ACCOs to support carers, particularly kinship carers.

Access to information about educational supports and other information.

1. Targeted information on educational supports and systems for ACCO staff and carers that highlights information in an accessible, easily readable format.
2. Review the process and information about funding for camps/excursions for Aboriginal children in care, to support better access to this funding.

Sustainability and ongoing support

1. It is critically important that ACCOs continue to be supported with understanding education system and supports for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care to improve education attendance and engagement. Continuing to resource and support the Alliance Senior Project Officer (Education) or similar position ensures sustainability and targeted support and voice for ACCOs that are part of the Alliance.



Appendix A: Information Sources

Consultations

There were 24 separate consultations with 62 participants over a 10 month period. All Alliance members provided feedback. Nine ACCOs participated in a 90 min workshop: *Introduction to the Education Project*. This workshop explored participation in education for Aboriginal children and young people. Discussion questions included

- Barriers to learning
- Factors that support success in learning
- Communication and collaboration with schools and the LOOKOUT team
- Supporting carers
- The impact of Covid

Workshop prompt questions:

1. What makes schools and kindergartens feel supportive and safe?
2. What helps to supports learning?
3. What did you notice about the impact of Covid on children and young people
4. What support and/or information is helpful for Carer.
5. What supports strong collaboration

ACCO Case Manager Survey

This survey included questions about staff knowledge and confidence in supporting children and young people with a range of educational processes. There was an opportunity to comment on what was working well and challenges. The survey link was sent to ACCO Team Leaders and Managers in relevant programs for distribution to staff.

All Care Service programs were represented in the response. Most respondents worked in kinship care. Other program/roles included

- First Supports
- Better Futures
- Youth Justice
- Targeted Care Packages
- Foster Care
- Integrated family services
- Cultural Care Services
- Youth Engagement Officer

Responses were received from managers and case managers/case workers. 46% of Alliance member ACCOs were represented in the responses.



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Appendix B: About the Alliance

The Alliance plays a key role in advocacy, policy, and program development for the needs of Aboriginal children and families, particularly those in Out of Home Care (out-of-home care).

Alliance Members

South Western Victoria Region	Area: Central Highlands		
	Member	Contact	Care Services
	Ballarat & District Aboriginal Cooperative: BADAC www.badac.net.au	106-108 Armstrong St, Nth Ballarat, 3550	Kinship Care, First Support, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (Pre-Authorised), Better Futures, Leaving Care, Cultural Planning, Targeted Care Packages
	Area: Barwon		
	Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative www.wathaurong.org.au/	62 Morgan St, North Geelong, 3215	Kinship Care, First Supports, Therapeutic Home Based Care, Foster Care & Foster Care Recruitment, Better Futures, Cultural Planning, Targeted Care Packages.
	Area: Wimmera South West		
	Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative www.goolumgoolum.org.au	43 Hamilton St, Horsham, 3400	Kinship Care, First Supports, Cultural Leadership Program, Better Futures, Cultural Planning
	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative www.gunditjmara.org.au	135 Kepler St, Warrnambool, 3280	Kinship Care, First Supports, Better Futures, Cultural Planning, Targeted Care Packages.
Winda-Mara Aboriginal Cooperation www.windamara.com.au	21 Scott St, Heywood, 3304	Kinship Care, First Supports, Kinship Care Recruitment, Kinship Care After Hours, Therapeutic Home Based Care	
	107 Thompson St, Hamilton, 3300		
Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly & Community Health Service https://www.dwech.com.au/	18 Wellington Rd, Portland, 3305	Targeted Care Packages	
Area: Loddon Campaspe			
North Western Victoria Region	Bendigo & District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC) www.bdac.com.au	119 Prouses St, Nth Bendigo, 3550	Kinship Care, Kinship Re-Unification, First Supports, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care, Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (ACSASS), Leaving Care, Cultural Planning, Targeted Care Packages, Placement Support
	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation www.njernda.com.au	103-109 Hare St, Echuca, 3564	Kinship Care, Foster Care & Foster Care Recruitment, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (Pre-Authorisation), Better Futures, Cultural Planning, Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (ACSASS), Targeted Care Packages, Placement Support
	Area: Mallee		
Member	Contact	Care Services,	
Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) www.mdas.org.au	70 Nyah Rd, Swan Hill, 3585.	Kinship Care, Kinship Re-unification, First Supports, Kinship Care After Hours, Foster Care & Foster Care Recruitment, Cultural Planning, Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (ACSASS), Targeted Care Packages, Placement Support	
	120 Madden Ave. PO Box 5134 Mildura VIC 3502.		
Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative (MVAC) www.mvac.org.au	87 Letje Rd, Robinvale, 3549.	Kinship Care	



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South Eastern Victoria Region	Area: Southern Melbourne		
	Member	Contact	Care Services
	DDAC: Dandenong & District Aborigines Cooperative www.facebook.com/DDACLBHS/	62 Stud Rd, Dandenong.	Targeted Care Packages
	Area: Outer Gippsland		
South Eastern Victoria Region	Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation www.ramahyuck.org	104 Raymond St, Sale, 3850	Kinship Care, Therapeutic Home Based Care
	Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative www.gegac.org.au	37-53 Dalmahoy St, Bairnsdale, 3875	Kinship Care, Kinship Re-Unification, First Supports, Kinship Care After Hours, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (Pre- Authorised), Therapeutic Home Based Care, Foster Care & Foster Care Recruitment, Cultural Planning, Targeted Care Packages,
	Area: Goulburn		
North Eastern Victoria Region	Member	Contact	Care Services
	Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative https://rumbalara.org.au	20 Rumbalara Rd, Mooroopna, 3629 03 5820 0000	Kinship Care, Therapeutic Home Based Care, Foster Care, Foster Care Recruitment, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (Pre-Authorised), Better Futures, Home Stretch, Cultural Planning, Targeted Care Packages, Placement Support
	Area: Ovens Murray		
Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation https://mungabareena.org.au	21 Hovell St, Wodonga, 3690 p. (02) 6024 7599	Aboriginal Cultural Planning	



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6. State of Victoria: Department of Education and Training, (2019) *Koorie Cultural Inclusion-Practice Notes* [Koorie-Cultural-Inclusion-consolidated-Practice-Notes.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Koorie-Cultural-Inclusion-consolidated-Practice-Notes.pdf)
7. Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2022) *Kinship Care: June 2022, Independent Assurance Report to Parliament. 2021-22:20* [Kinship Care | Victorian Auditor-General's Office](https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/Kinship-Care-Victorian-Auditor-General-s-Office)
8. Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (2018-2023) [VAAF FINAL.pdf \(firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/VAAF-FINAL.pdf)

Other information

9. **Clontarf Program:** The Clontarf foundation 'exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem, and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. The Clontarf Academies are staffed by full-time mentors and are designed to foster positive learning and personal growth for the young men in the programme. [Clontarf Foundation - Charitable not-for-profit for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men](https://www.clontarf.org.au/)
10. **Community Understanding Safety Training (CUST):** This training was developed in partnership between VAEAI (Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.) and DET. It is designed as an introduction to ongoing learning and engagement with Aboriginal perspectives throughout the curriculum through meaningful collaboration between local Aboriginal communities and schools. [Mental Health Menu \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Mental-Health-Menu)
11. **Cultural Absences (including Sorry Business):** The School Attendance Policy allows some cultural activities to be recognised under the 'educational' absence category e.g. attending a cultural event and/or ceremony. These absences need to be planned and agreed for with school and be linked to learning. Families are encouraged to let the school know when there is sorry business. [Attendance and missing school | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/Attendance-and-missing-school)



12. **Marrung Education Plan (2016-2026):** The Marrung Education Plan was developed with the community during 2015-16, with the intent to realise the 'Education State' for Aboriginal learner. This 10 year plan is integrated across the early childhood, school and higher education and skills sector. The key system enablers are a positive climate for learning and development, community engagement in learning and development and a culture of professional leadership. [Marrung | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/marrung-education-plan)
13. **Self Determination in Education Reform:** This reform is a key element of the Marrung Education Plan. DET has embarked on an 18 month state wide consultation and co-design process to develop a shared understanding of self-determination to guide engagement and reform (starting in October 2021). The consultation process has included Campfire conversations in schools (100 schools nominated), with ACCOs and Traditional Owner Groups, Aboriginal students, other DET area level input (including the Koorie Education Workforce and Koorie Education Roundtables. Self-determination enablers of prioritising culture, addressing trauma and supporting healing, addressing racism and promoting cultural safety and transferring power and resources to communities are considered throughout the process. [Aboriginal Self-Determination in Education | Engage Victoria](#)

