Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018–2019
Where the term ‘Aboriginal’ is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

Where the term ‘Aboriginal organisations’ is used it refers to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. An Aboriginal organisation is one that:

- guarantees control of the body by Aboriginal people, and guarantees that the body will function under the principle of self-determination
- is initiated by and for a local Aboriginal community
- is based in a local Aboriginal community
- is governed by an Aboriginal body which is elected by the local Aboriginal community
- delivers holistic and culturally appropriate services and supports to the community that controls it.¹

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¹ Department of Health and Human Services, 2017, Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategy 2017–2027, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, p.81
Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victoria

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victoria’s Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia’s first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, work and play. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches our society more broadly. We embrace the spirit of self-determination and reconciliation, working towards equality of outcomes and ensuring an equitable voice.

Victorian Aboriginal communities and peoples are culturally diverse, with rich and varied heritages and histories both pre and post-invasion. The impacts of colonisation – while having devastating effects on the traditional life of Aboriginal Nations – have not diminished Aboriginal people’s connection to country, culture or community. Aboriginal Nations continue to strengthen and grow with the resurgence of language, lore and cultural knowledge. These rich and varied histories need to be understood and acknowledged by all Victorians, to truly understand the resilience and strength of previous generations, as well as the history of the fight for survival, justice and country that has taken place across Victoria and around Australia.

As we work together to ensure Victorian Aboriginal communities continue to thrive, the government acknowledges the invaluable contributions of generations of Aboriginal warriors that have come before us, who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities towards Aboriginal self-determination. We are now honoured to be part of that vision.
Shakara Montalto, is a proud and deadly Gunditjmara artist that was commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) to produce the artwork titled *Journey to employment and careers*.

The artwork for the *Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018-2019* represents the journey taken to reach employment and career aspirations.

The inner circle represents peoples goals. As a person identifies their goals and starts working towards achieving them, they grow and develop which is represented by the widening circles.

Sitting around the circles are those people that support a person’s journey. Their ancestors, elders, family, community, friends and colleagues. These people provide guidance and leadership that provide the footprints along the pathway.

The footprints represent the journey. The journey for each person can be the same or different. It can start at different times, take many pathways, but always continues towards the goals and aspirations the person aspires to.
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Shared responsibility for action

The Victorian Government, Aboriginal organisations and the health and human services sector will work in partnership on all aspects of workforce development design and priority setting for Aboriginal organisations.

The Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018–2019 is:

- self-determined
- targeted to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities
- driven by Aboriginal workforces, organisations and communities from evidence and learning of what works.

The plan identifies the first-year priority actions to be undertaken in 2018–2019 and will be reviewed and endorsed by the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum. There is a strong commitment to develop a longer-term plan, which reflects the priorities of the Aboriginal community, Aboriginal organisations, the health and human services sector and government.

The Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018–2019 provides the mechanism for achieving measurable progress towards five strategic elements:

1. Grow the Aboriginal workforce within Aboriginal organisations and extend the capacity and capability of the workforce to meet the needs of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

2. Meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people through increased career pathways across all areas of the health and human services sector.

3. Enable leadership development within Aboriginal workforces, organisations and communities.

4. Ensure that Aboriginal knowledge and practices drives research, workforce development and service design.

5. Ensure that education providers and Aboriginal organisations work together to meet the needs of the Aboriginal workforce.
**Vision**

A self-determining, culturally strong and sustainable Aboriginal workforce and Aboriginal organisations.

**Context**

The Aboriginal workforce is skilled, responsive and resilient. Investing in the Aboriginal workforce is an investment in the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians.\(^2\)

The Aboriginal workforce and Aboriginal organisations have a leading role in strengthening the health and human services sector to meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal Victorians. Aboriginal workers understand the needs of their communities and apply their knowledge and expertise to deliver services for Aboriginal people and all Victorians.

We know that an Aboriginal employee can make rapid gains and improve how an organisation engages with the Aboriginal community to deliver services. The Victorian Government is currently driving major system reforms, which will provide expanded service provision for Aboriginal Victorians through Aboriginal organisations.

Intense demand and competition for the Aboriginal workforce across the health and human services sector (and other industries) is providing significant opportunities for Aboriginal people, but having a major impact on attracting and retaining the Aboriginal workforce within Aboriginal organisations.

The health and human services sector is the largest employer of Aboriginal people in Victoria. It is important that Aboriginal people who choose to work in health and human services are able to:

- access career opportunities
- be valued for their knowledge and experience
- be supported within a safe environment.

Investment is required to build the capacity of the Aboriginal workforce and Aboriginal organisations in order to support Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations achieve their goals and aspirations. Supporting Aboriginal people to achieve career and education goals provides a platform for economic growth, not only for individuals, but also for the broader community. By increasing Aboriginal employment, individuals and families enjoy greater economic security and the social fabric of Aboriginal communities is improved through the provision of role models and leaders.

Aboriginal employees are central to the provision of culturally responsive services, which are proven to result in stronger outcomes for Aboriginal people.

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The Victorian Aboriginal population has a fast-growing young population. The healthcare and social assistance industry is the fastest growing industry in Victoria; expecting to have 480,000 workers by 2022. With a young Aboriginal population, there is an opportunity to:

- create a future employment pipeline to respond to government reform
- meet the service requirements of the growing community
- contribute to greater participation in delivering outcomes for communities.

There is a strong need for greater connection with the education sector, to ensure the Aboriginal workforce is provided with training that is responsive to the current complexities of service provision and meets industry needs for culturally strong workers. Forging early connections between industry and schools will further assist with building the workforce of the future, by encouraging young people to consider the breadth of careers and pathways available through the health and human services sector.

Within the Aboriginal community there is an untapped resource of Aboriginal people currently not engaged in secure employment. By valuing the knowledge and skills of this group and supporting them into employment and education and training activities, inroads can be made to reduce the current workforce shortage experienced across the sector. In turn, this will contribute towards closing the gap for Aboriginal people in relation to employment, education and health and wellbeing outcomes.

Aboriginal organisations have the highest number and proportion of Aboriginal employees within the health and human services sector.

The sector is currently faced with the challenge of a rapid workforce expansion and development in order to meet community needs and implement government reforms. Investment in organisational development and holistic workforce planning is required to support Aboriginal organisations to respond to these rapidly changing service provision demands. The provision of well-designed accessible infrastructure and up-to-date information technology builds capacity and will be a key component to support sector expansion.

The workforce within Aboriginal organisations will need to continue to grow rapidly over the next five to ten years, to lead and implement government reforms and ensure the transition of Aboriginal services can be achieved as determined and desired by the Aboriginal Community.

The Victorian Government has set a long-term commitment to supporting the Aboriginal community through 10-year strategies such as Korin Korin Balit Djak, Balit Murrup, Wungurilwil Gapgapduir, Dheik Dja and the development of an Aboriginal Family Violence Industry Strategy. In order to respond to government reforms and workforce development priorities, the health and human services sector has developed a range of strategies and plans. Workforce investment to meet community and government goals and aspirations has been identified as a priority in these plans.

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The **Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018–2019** has been designed as an immediate response to the crisis experienced by Aboriginal organisations, and to complement and build on existing activities supporting workforce development. Without investment in Aboriginal organisations, collaboration between sectors will be limited and true change in the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal workforce and in turn the Aboriginal community will not be achieved.

The Victorian Government is strongly committed to self-determination as the overarching policy and implementation driver for working with the Aboriginal community. This means that Aboriginal people are authorised and empowered to own, direct and make strategic decisions that are based on Aboriginal values and traditions.

How self-determination translates for the Aboriginal workforce and Aboriginal organisations is a journey that cannot be rushed or led by government. It is one that will be led by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations. Through the **Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018–2019**, the department, government agencies and the health and human services sector commit to being part of this journey for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations by providing the resources and supporting the Aboriginal community through the process.

The work over the next 12 months will contribute towards the achievement of the following long-term success:

- An Aboriginal community-controlled sector that is adequately resourced, an employer of choice for Aboriginal people, and leading the provision of quality health and human services to meet the health, wellbeing and aspirations of Aboriginal Victorians.
- A qualified, highly skilled and recognised Aboriginal workforce with rewarding careers at all levels in Aboriginal organisations and health and human services organisations.

Self-determination is the guiding principle of the **Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategic action plan 2018–2019**.
# Strategic elements

## Strategic element 1

Grow the Aboriginal workforce within Aboriginal organisations and extend the capacity and capability of the workforce to meet the needs of Victorian Aboriginal communities

### How success will be demonstrated

Aboriginal organisations:
- are resourced to develop and implement a workforce development sustainability plan
- have a skilled workforce that meets the needs and aspirations of their community
- are appropriately resourced to be an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Lead and partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide initial brokerage for Aboriginal organisations to meet workforce development needs that acknowledge historical funding shortages.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark wages and conditions of Aboriginal-specific roles and Aboriginal organisations workers against government and mainstream organisations.</td>
<td>Specialist consultant overseen by the Aboriginal health and human services workforce strategy working group (the Working Group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Aboriginal-specific pricing frameworks for the delivery of health and human services to ensure the cost of doing Aboriginal business is acknowledged, and Aboriginal organisations are competitive in the labour market to meet their workforce requirements.</td>
<td>Specialist consultant overseen by the Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Aboriginal organisations to develop and implement programs to support employee recruitment and retention.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Aboriginal organisations to develop and implement individual organisational workforce development sustainability plans.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish and resource Communities of Practice for Aboriginal workers to provide peer support, shared learning and implementation of best practice in support of service diversification and scaling.</td>
<td>Aboriginal organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop organisation transition strategies to assist the Aboriginal workforce to meet the introduction of mandatory qualifications (Royal Commission into Family Violence Recommendation 209).</td>
<td>Family Safety Victoria, the department and the Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Strategic element 2**

Meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people through increased career pathways across all areas of the health and human services sector

**How success will be demonstrated**

- Aboriginal people employed and retained in the health and human services sector.
- Aboriginal people are represented in all roles and professions in the health and human services sector.
- Aboriginal people determine their career pathways across the health and human services sector.
- Employers in the health and human services sector provide support and assistance for Aboriginal people to pursue their desired career development.
- Employment pathways are designed and led by Aboriginal people to grow and strengthen the workforce and service system.

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<tr>
<td>Deliver a marketing campaign to attract Aboriginal people to the breadth of careers in health and human services, with a focus on Aboriginal organisations.</td>
<td>The department, Family Safety Victoria and the Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Develop a comprehensive statewide traineeship and scholarship strategy for the critical workforce areas for Aboriginal organisations. | The department to coordinate resources between government agencies |

| Resource Aboriginal organisations to develop employment programs that prioritise Aboriginal women, young people and long-term unemployed Aboriginal people. | The department to coordinate resources between government agencies |

| Resource Aboriginal organisations to design and deliver entry-level employment programs to build the Aboriginal workforce. This includes internships, the development of casual pools and work experience. | The department to coordinate resources between government agencies |

| Provide resources to Aboriginal organisations to meet the supervision requirements of their workforce, including placement supervision, training and backfill. | The department to coordinate resources between government agencies |

| Develop a targeted recruitment campaign for Aboriginal people to enter priority workforce roles including family violence, family support, child protection and case management. | Aboriginal organisations, Family Safety Victoria and the department |

| Design and resource strategies to support workforce health and wellbeing strategies, including debriefing and culturally appropriate counselling support and peer strategies. | Aboriginal organisations, Family Safety Victoria and the department |
**Strategic element 3**

Enable leadership development within Aboriginal workforces, organisations and communities

**How success will be demonstrated**

- There is investment in organisational and community leadership for Aboriginal people in local areas.
- Aboriginal practice, culture and leadership is embedded and valued throughout health and human services organisations.
- There is investment to support succession planning and organisation and leadership development.
- Aboriginal practice leadership is developed at all levels and is central to service design and reforms.
- Aboriginal people and organisations lead the development of responses to government reform in order to achieve the greatest outcome for the Victorian Aboriginal community.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiate local place-based conversations with Aboriginal Communities to implement local Aboriginal leadership development models.</td>
<td>Aboriginal organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund and develop an Aboriginal Leadership Network for current and future leaders, led and supported by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund organisational development managers in Aboriginal organisations to identify succession planning, leadership priorities and workforce development plans.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Aboriginal organisations to appoint Aboriginal practice leaders and embed Aboriginal practice leadership throughout organisations.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategic element 4

Ensure that Aboriginal knowledge and practices drives research, workforce development and service design

**How success will be demonstrated**

- Investment is provided to support the Aboriginal workforce to build and expand skills and undertake research and evaluation.
- Investment is provided for the Aboriginal workforce to contribute knowledge to support workforce development and service provision.
- Aboriginal culture, knowledge and practice are placed at the centre of workforce development and service design.
- Victorian Aboriginal knowledge and practice is fundamental to the evidence base.

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<tr>
<td>Fund research and data development that is led and developed by Aboriginal people to identify the number of:</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aboriginal people working in the health and human services sector across Victoria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aboriginal identified positions across health and human services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• non-Aboriginal people whose primary role is to support Aboriginal people</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• current and projected labour shortages in local areas and across Victoria.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Aboriginal organisations to lead, contribute to, and utilise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>data and research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish an agreed approach for systematic workforce data collection and forecasting to identify workforce needs and track change over time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource and support Aboriginal organisations to extend their own research and evaluation capability.</td>
<td>The department to coordinate resources between government agencies</td>
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Strategic element 5

Ensure that education providers and Aboriginal organisations work together to meet the needs of the Aboriginal workforce

How success will be demonstrated

- Education and training providers are responsive to and partner with Aboriginal organisations to deliver accredited training, which aligns to local need.
- Increased numbers of Aboriginal workers participating in accredited training.
- Aboriginal organisations and education providers are working together to co-design culturally appropriate course delivery.
- Education providers, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and local Aboriginal organisations are working together to respond to current and future Aboriginal workforce development needs, aspirations and goals at the local, regional and statewide level.
- Aboriginal workforces are built and developed through coordinated education provision and initiatives.

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<tr>
<td>Continue to fund, coordinate and leverage education provision and existing initiatives to build and sustain the Aboriginal workforce in Victoria.</td>
<td>The department and the Department of Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen engagement and partnerships between education providers and Aboriginal organisations.</td>
<td>The department, the Department of Education and Training and Aboriginal organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote existing opportunities and improve funding streams for Aboriginal organisations to partner with local education providers.</td>
<td>The department, the Department of Education and Training and Aboriginal organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop statewide and regional Aboriginal Health and Human Services Training Plans informed by local Aboriginal workforce development plans.</td>
<td>The department and the Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>