

Closing the Gap

What's next for Victoria?

Have your say

VICTORIA
State
Government

Community Engagement Report

**2018 Refresh of the Victorian Aboriginal
Affairs Framework and Closing the Gap**

January – May 2018

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Community engagement report

Purpose

This Community engagement report summarises the knowledge, expertise, thoughts and feelings shared by community, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations and government as part of the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) refresh.

We have tried to represent what we have heard as accurately, comprehensively and transparently as possible.

This feedback has shaped the Concept Draft for the new VAAF. It will also be used to inform the national Closing the Gap agenda.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the more than 600 Aboriginal Victorians across the state who shared their time, expertise and personal stories on what the new Closing the Gap and VAAF agendas should look like.

We recognise this is one of many engagement processes that Aboriginal Victorians have participated in. We acknowledge the extensive community engagement that has occurred throughout generations of Aboriginal affairs policy in Victoria, as well as the expertise of Aboriginal governance bodies that advise government on key strategic directions.

“All community should have a voice, children, young people, Elders.”

Participant, Robinvale community forum

“There is a big difference between having a say and being heard, for example the Uluru Statement [from the Heart].”

Participant, Ballarat community forum

Where we have been

Statewide Discussion	In January 2018, we held a Statewide Discussion in Melbourne, where nearly 160 people from community, Aboriginal organisations and government gathered to provide advice on the future of the Closing the Gap and VAAF agendas.
Regional forums	From March to May 2018, we took this conversation to the regions. We held open community forums and one-on-one meetings in 18 communities across the Barwon South West, Grampians, Loddon Mallee, Hume and Gippsland regions. We listened to community members, Elders, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, mainstream service providers and government representatives. We held conversations in Aboriginal co-operatives, community halls, sporting clubs and health services, and over a cuppa. After each forum, we prepared a report to make sure we reflected participants' views.
Submissions and surveys	We received five written submissions and 23 online survey responses via our website, https://engage.vic.gov.au/closingthegapvic .
Presentations	We were also invited to deliver six presentations on the VAAF refresh to Aboriginal organisations and governance forums , such as the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, Improving Care for Aboriginal Patients Program workers, the Aboriginal Justice Forum and Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum.
Workshops	In June-July, we are returning to eight regional communities and Melbourne to share the Concept Draft and make sure we heard you correctly.

Metro and regional community forum locations, January – May 2018



What you told us

Community forums

Community forums were facilitated by staff from Aboriginal Affairs Policy, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). Forums consisted of DPC staff presenting on the Closing the Gap and VAAF refresh process, what Aboriginal Victorians have already told us, and how the Victorian Aboriginal community and organisations can continue to shape the VAAF.

Table discussions were held around the following questions:

- Who should set the new targets, and what should the targets be?
- How should government be held accountable?
- What does self-determination look like to you?
- What does government need to do to support self-determination?



Images clockwise from top left: Geelong community forum (Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative); Warragul community forum (Mecure Warragul); Halls Gap community forum – Halls Gap Cricket Club, Robinvale community forum (Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative)

Community forums – summary

There were diverse voices and stories shared by community members during the forums. Below are the key themes that we heard. Separate reports for each community are at **Appendix 1**.

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions about the funding, design and delivery of Aboriginal policies and programs should be made by Aboriginal communities at the local level, e.g. through ‘community cabinets’ Government engagement with Aboriginal communities must be genuine and ongoing New targets should be set by Aboriginal communities, be culturally relevant, place-based, and measured against Aboriginal standards, not non-Aboriginal standards
Aboriginal-led accountability of government	Independent, community-led oversight of government spending and outcomes should occur, such as through a Koori Ombudsman or Senate estimates committee-style process
Cultural confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There needs to be a strengths-based approach in Aboriginal affairs Connection to culture and cultural strengthening initiatives must be supported across the whole of government
Choice and cultural safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community should be able to choose where they receive services and care, regardless of whether this is an Aboriginal or mainstream service Mainstream services should be culturally-safe and Aboriginal-led
Upholding community decisions	The Uluru Statement from the Heart, including Makarrata and an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, should be accepted
Structural racism	The government should address barriers that prevent Aboriginal participation and inclusion
Funding reform	Aboriginal organisations need flexible, long-term funding
Data sovereignty	Data sovereignty and ownership of local data is critical. Holding this information and knowledge, and setting the research agenda, helps build community capability
Land rights	Management and control of land by Aboriginal people is essential, not just access
Human rights	A human rights-based approach is critical. This includes the respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of the rights of Aboriginal people
Other priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> health and wellbeing mental health alcohol and other drugs cyberbullying education employment and training economic development family violence justice and youth justice post-prison support disability aged and palliative care housing and homelessness child protection and kinship support retirement legislation LGBTIQ support community programs for women, men, young people and Elders confirmation of Aboriginal identity

Submissions

We received five written submissions from organisations and community groups:

- Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) – Victoria Branch
- Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS)
- Many Mobs Aboriginal Community Group
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) (copy of their Closing the Gap Refresh submission)
- Mission Australia.

These submissions will be made available on our website, engage.vic.gov.au/closingthegapvic.

Online surveys

There were 23 surveys completed via our website from January – June 2018. A summary of survey responses is at **Appendix 2**.

Commonwealth Closing the Gap Refresh – National Roundtables and submissions

As part of the Closing the Gap Refresh, the Commonwealth Government hosted 18 National Roundtables in partnership with the National Congress of Australia's First People. Two events were held in Victoria; Melbourne on 1 March 2018 and Echuca (Moama) on 27 February 2018.

Some Victorian individuals and organisations also provided written submissions to the Commonwealth. Organisations included the Kaiela Institute, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated. These submissions are available on the Commonwealth's website at closingthegaprefresh.pmc.gov.au/what-others-think.

“Consult with Aboriginal people, sit down with them and have a yarn, if you want to close the gap you need to address the social determinants of health.”

Online survey respondent

“Government homogenises its approach. There's different needs for Gippsland compared to other areas.”

Participant, Gippsland community forum

Appendix 1 – Reports from community forums

Statewide discussion – Melbourne, 31 January 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Upholding community decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Uluru Statement from the Heart, including Makaratta and a constitutionally-enshrined Indigenous Voice to Parliament, should be accepted. ▪ Victoria’s path to Treaty should be recognised.
Self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community should set and deliver targets. ▪ Decision-making across policy and program funding, design, delivery and accountability should be community-led and place-based. ▪ Self-determination should be a target, as well as an approach. ▪ The approach must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal communities. ▪ Local decision-making (for example based on language or clan groups) on how resources are used within local communities, and local reporting to ensure relevance.
Aboriginal-led accountability of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater transparency of government spending and government actions is needed. ▪ Independent advising and oversight should occur, such as through the establishment of an Aboriginal Productivity Commission / Ombudsman, report to Parliament and Truth and Reconciliation Council. ▪ Key performance indicators should be set for senior government officials and ministers across whole of government. ▪ A review of the Closing the Gap Statement of Intent is needed. ▪ State and Commonwealth governments must work together.
Strengths-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current deficit-based approach and measures need to be replaced with strengths-based approaches and measures. For example, measuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quality of life and aspirations, instead of life expectancy ○ Aboriginal cultural languages and perspectives taught in schools, rather than school attendance rates ○ Aboriginal business ownership and economic participation, instead of unemployment rates ○ cultural awareness and safety of mainstream services.
Cultural confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture should be embedded across targets. ▪ Aboriginal languages, knowledge and perspectives should be taught in schools and communities. ▪ Connection to culture and cultural strengthening initiatives must be supported, for example Aboriginal gathering places.
Data sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data should be community-owned and controlled.
Sustainable resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long-term, flexible funding of Aboriginal organisations. ▪ Capacity building made available for Aboriginal organisations and communities to design, deliver and evaluate programs and services.
Structural racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broader community and organisations held accountable for structural barriers. ▪ There are many issues with the tendency to use non-Aboriginal Australians as a benchmark to measure Aboriginal social and economic outcomes. ▪ Cultural safety education and training.
Continuous and genuine dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing and representative consultation and engagement, including with traditional owner groups, peak organisations and other

	community representative structures.
Human rights based approach	▪ A human rights-based approach, including the respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of the rights of Aboriginal people.
Land rights	▪ Management and control of land by Aboriginal people is essential, not just access.

Mildura – 26 March 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-determination is about community voice; led by community, measured by community and relating to the whole community, not just Aboriginal organisations.
Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community should be able to choose where they receive services and care – whether this is an ACCHO, ACCO or mainstream service.
Cultural confidence and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection to culture and cultural strengthening initiatives must be supported in all aspects of Aboriginal affairs. Mainstream services should be culturally safe and Aboriginal-led.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACCHOs and ACCOs need flexible, long-term funding based on outcomes, not outputs. Greater partnerships are needed across community, organisations and government.
Aboriginal-led accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPC must come back and go to where community are, and support people to go to Melbourne for the next Statewide Discussion. Independent, community-led audit of government should occur, such as through a Koori Ombudsman. ACCHOs and ACCOs must be open, respond to all community voices and be about care, not just business.
Other priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healing, health (including lack of GPs), social and emotional wellbeing, education, employment, economic development, culture, family violence, justice, discrimination, disability, aged and palliative care, housing, access to land, data sovereignty

Robinvale – 27 March 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of community must have a strong voice to tell organisations and local council what they want (e.g. through an Elders group made up of a representative from each family in the community). There should be pooled funding to support community decision-making. There should be an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues with unavailability, red tape, high electricity and maintenance costs, no air conditioning, overcrowding and barriers to access due to rent arrears and family violence Aboriginal home ownership should be supported.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be no silos between Aboriginal, non-government and government agencies. Mainstream organisations must be culturally competent.
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal business and social enterprise should be supported.
Cultural confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection to culture and cultural strengthening initiatives must be supported, such as a healing centre, celebration activities and events, family history centre and community spaces / hubs.
Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are barriers within government (structural racism) and racism in the wider community that prevent Aboriginal participation and inclusion. These barriers must be removed for Aboriginal people to take control of their own lives.

Health and wellbeing

- There should be a greater focus on prevention instead of treatment.
- Mental health, drug and alcohol rehabilitation

Other priorities

- LGBTIQ support, addressing poverty, riverfront development, programs and activities for women, men and young people, post-prison support, art gallery, sports programs, foster care / kinship care, Elders' hostels, employment and training, justice and youth justice, education, NDIS access, fairer retirement legislation, sovereignty (land and water)
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Swan Hill – 28 March 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each distinct community should make its own decisions and have its own pooled resources (i.e. decisions about Swan Hill should not be made from Mildura). Aboriginal organisations need to be representative of community and respond to the views of community. We need to build on the success of community-based initiatives such as the Aboriginal Justice Forum. Aboriginal services could be centrally located and delivered through a 'community hub' that is culturally safe, well-resourced with a representative board of all families.
Supporting Aboriginal frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstream organisations need to protect the wellbeing of their Aboriginal frontline workers and pay should reflect the demands of work. Local Aboriginal workers are needed across housing, child protection, family violence. Local Aboriginal people should be able to gain employment with Aboriginal organisations.
Cultural confidence, strength and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural strengthening must be supported, such as through Aboriginal language taught in schools, celebration of Aboriginal culture and events, family tree knowledge, cultural programs. Sport can divide families, so there should be an all-Aboriginal football club to bring community together. Need culturally safe mainstream organisations and approaches, such as flexi learning.
Structural racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government and mainstream organisations need to recognise and remove the barriers to Aboriginal community accessing services (e.g. fear of child protection services, birth certificates, computer access). The non-Aboriginal community needs to recognise how racism and colonisation impact outcomes in Aboriginal affairs.
Empowering and educating community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members need to understand their rights and how to enforce them. Services should be wrap-around and whole-of-community based.
Aboriginal-led accountability of government and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government should pay compensation to a centralised Aboriginal-controlled fund if it does not meet targets. Government should support people to participate in Treaty and the Statewide Discussion. Aboriginal-funded programs should only be used by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal organisations should receive funding based on meeting outcomes.
Confirmation of Aboriginal identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions about Aboriginal identity should be made by people in community. Aboriginal positions should be designated, not just identified. The use of Statutory Declarations should cease and people should be required to obtain a Confirmation of Aboriginality for use when applying for delegated positions, education, housing and services. Aboriginal-funded programs should be run only for Aboriginal people. Mainstream and Aboriginal organisations must ask about Aboriginal identity
Other priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice and other drugs, mental health (including cyberbullying), gambling, NDIS access, school holiday programs, chronic disease

Bendigo – 23 April 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Housing and homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing is the key, because it can affect all other targets. ▪ We need a home ownership target and greater support to increase home ownership. ▪ We need community programs to reduce homelessness.
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be better engagement directly with community, through regular community meetings and forums. This is more effective than relying on organisations. ▪ We need a local, democratically elected body to negotiate with government at a local and state level. It must be truly representative of the Aboriginal community. ▪ There should be Aboriginal seats in Parliament and on the local council to increase involvement in decision making.
Place-based economic development and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be a more localised focus on economic development and employment. ▪ Targets should be set locally and be relevant to the local community, rather than for the whole state or the country. ▪ We should have local Koorie development and employment strategies to guide us in the long-term. ▪ We need to establish an economic fund to support small, community run businesses.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education needs to be focused on more than just year 12 attainment. While this is very important, we also need to be focusing on transitioning to tertiary education or relevant employment. ▪ There needs to be greater monitoring of how schools are achieving culturally safe and relevant education. This should be supported by culturally safe homework centres. ▪ KESOs should be more focused on local Aboriginal students and their families, rather than the school. Schools with less than 10 Aboriginal students are not currently engaged, and this means Aboriginal students miss out.
Community-led accountability of government and community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government should be required to provide annual reporting on progress against targets, to keep them accountable. ▪ Community services also need to be held accountable to ensure they are delivering for the local Aboriginal community. ▪ We need community-based accountability mechanisms, such as an Aboriginal-led data agency or Aboriginal Ombudsman to ensure government and community service providers are delivering for the local community.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be funding reform to better support self-determination. ▪ Funding should be long term and based on pooled, flexible funding arrangements controlled by community. This allows for place-based decision making.
Place-based and strengths-based targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We need more place-based targets that are specific to the local community. ▪ The focus should be on long term, aspirational and preventative targets, rather than reactive.
Other priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health and wellbeing need to be considered holistically and in the context of strong culture, requiring greater access to mental health, alcohol and drug services. ▪ We need community based justice responses, including diversion programs, to reduce young people in the justice system.

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- The government needs to support treaty and begin to transfer land, power and resources over to community control. This is true self-determination.
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Ballarat – 26 April 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led accountability and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government performance should not be self-assessed; government should be accountable to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal communities needs to be involved when Commonwealth and State Budget priorities are being set. ▪ Closing the Gap and VAAF governance should be at a local level, and involve local Aboriginal people. This could involve a panel with experts in the various fields.
Community-led decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a big difference between having a say and being heard, e.g. Uluru Statement. ▪ There needs to be identified positions on local boards, e.g. schools, hospitals, local councils. ▪ There needs to be open and flexible lines of communication between government and Aboriginal communities. ▪ Consultation with community needs to be listened to. It's too easy for government to ignore one Aboriginal person in the room – there needs to be strength in numbers.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Competitive funding processes and grants are problematic. The ad hoc and irregular application timeframes are often haphazard, and don't allow for a proper case to be put forward. ▪ Government funding is too often based on the 'flavour of the month'. Funding needs to be long term to ensure sustainability as governments priorities change. ▪ Aboriginal people should get a set amount, such as 10% of tax revenue, and have the flexibility to make decisions locally. This is better than grants or targeted funding for services as determined by government.
Structural racism and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unconscious bias, discrimination and racism are important factors which should be recognised. ▪ Equity and equality are different things. It is important to recognise the difference. ▪ 'White fragility' is a problem, as non-Aboriginal people are not prepared to engage when confronted with issues that affect Aboriginal people. ▪ The divisive mentality of colonisation leaves Aboriginal people stuck between two worlds. This is particularly the case for light-skinned Aboriginal people who can feel isolated by both Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people. ▪ We need to be talking about more than just flags and symbols. There needs to be substantive change. ▪ The system and the structures need to change. It doesn't matter what the targets are, as long as there are substantive systems and process changes.
Community-led, strengths-based targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targets should be set by Aboriginal communities. The community should decide what an "outcome" means, not the government. ▪ Targets should not be phrased as a deficit. Language is powerful, a "gap" measurement creates a "gap" mentality. ▪ Targets should be aspirational 'We need to go for what we want, not what we think we can get.'
Culturally-safe education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education is important, but should include Aboriginal knowledge, ways of learning, language and culture. Current methods, such as NAPLAN, are not

enough to measure education holistically.

Data sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Data sovereignty is critical. Government can manipulate or generalise this information too easily. Holding this information is power, and helps build community capability.
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Seymour – 27 April 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Culturally safe education and employment support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Aboriginal history and culture should be entrenched in the curriculum and form part of the culture of each school. This could be encouraged by an award system that recognises schools who foster the inclusion of Aboriginal culture and create a sense of pride in the school community.▪ Koorie kids need to be reminded of what they can achieve. There needs to be more encouragement and support for children to continue with higher and tertiary education, e.g. targeted scholarships, online courses.▪ We need Koorie careers days, where opportunities can be communicated in one place.▪ There needs to be more opportunities for mature-age students and workers who want to up-skill or change careers.▪ There should be a Koorie community college, with a broader range of skills programs to provide both employment and cultural skills, e.g. music, art, dance.
Partnerships and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There needs to be greater co-ordination between different organisations to ensure more comprehensive coverage of the region.▪ Government needs to find better ways of engaging directly with community. With no ACCOs in the area, Seymour can feel isolated.
Accountability and funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Funding for Aboriginal services should only go to ACCOs and mainstream services that have demonstrated that they have and can deliver on outcomes for the local Aboriginal community.▪ All services, including mainstream service providers who receive Aboriginal specific funding, should be monitored to ensure they are engaging with the local community and are providing culturally safe and relevant services.▪ Longer term funding is needed▪ Need a long term commitment for programs and services that are making a positive impact to ensure their sustainability.▪ Government needs to do better to support successful programs in other areas to extend their reach to locations not currently serviced by ACCOs.▪ Some local initiatives, such as Goranwarrabul House, provide great outcomes but they are too reliant on the hard work of a few individuals. There needs to be greater support from government to ensure these initiatives can continue and expand long term.
Family support and culturally-safe services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Programs and services need to focus on building strong families and communities to prevent family breakdown, rather than simply providing 'band-aid' solutions.▪ There needs to be a holistic, community-centric approach to supporting children in out of home care. This should ensure a strong cultural connection and avoid family/kin tension.▪ Need to fund Aboriginal specific programs, to ensure it is culturally safe and relevant.▪ There are gaps in support for both victims and perpetrators of family violence. All parties need to be supported to proactively break the cycle and

foster strong, safe families.

- Cultural information, resources, support and education/training need to be made more available for non-Aboriginal workers so they can enhance their knowledge, skills and ability to work with Aboriginal clients.
- Cost of cultural education/training for workers is too expensive.
- Non-Aboriginal workers fear they will get it wrong when working with Aboriginal clients.
- There is a high number of Aboriginal kids in care; kids are placed into care with no birth certificate, Medicare card, immunisation records; carers aren't aware of cultural plans that are written up for the child and there's no consistency for cultural plans; carers don't feel included or supported; carers don't necessarily know which workers are out there to help.
- Aboriginal children should be having health checks before being placed into care or within the first days/week (sometimes they arrive with colds).

Health

- There needs to be a long term, holistic approach to health, focusing on prevention and overall quality of life.
- Wellbeing and quality of life need to be entrenched in strong culture and supportive communities.
- Health professionals do not last long, and there is a lack of Aboriginal doctors, so patients are not able to build strong relationships with the health services.
- There needs to be community programs for people with chronic illnesses, to give ongoing support as well as a constant connection to culture and community.
- Due to the high turnover of doctors Aboriginal people feel they are not able to build a patient/doctor relationship which is impacting on their health care needs.
- The patient feels like they have to start again each time their doctor leaves; and the new doctors don't always agree with the medication or treatment plan that the previous doctor administered.
- There are language barriers.
- Patients are not being identified as Aboriginal on referrals; no discussion with patient as to where the referral is going e.g. Aboriginal service or mainstream, costs, distance, transport.
- Aboriginality identity question is not always asked.

Self-determination

- Self-determination means having a choice between Aboriginal controlled and mainstream services. Some areas are not covered by ACCOs, so mainstream services need to be culturally safe.
 - Self-determination has to come from strong culture first and foremost.
 - Self-determination is both a community project and a personal journey of healing.
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Warragul – 30 April 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The government needs to provide community with the power and resources to set its own priorities. This could take the form of a Community Assembly or Cabinet. ▪ Plans and strategies for Aboriginal people need to be grassroots-based and localised. ▪ Self-determination is about community voice and control; Aboriginal community controlled organisations cannot alone represent the community.
Self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community should set the targets, and governments provide resources to meet them. ▪ Government should provide capacity building support for communities.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government needs to be accountable to communities for meeting VAAF targets. There should be financial penalties for non-compliance. These penalties could be paid into an Aboriginal controlled 'Futures Fund'.
Cultural confidence and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government must improve its cultural competence and adopt cultural safety measures. ▪ Government and government representatives need to take time to understand the complexities and dynamics of each community they are working in.
Structural racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal businesses/organisations are expected to meet different standards compared to non-Aboriginal businesses/organisations. ▪ Aboriginal people should be paid for expertise they provide to government. ▪ Government and government representatives need stronger cultural competency and greater respect for, and understanding of, Aboriginal culture and protocols.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reclamation of language or regional dialogues is not currently addressed. ▪ There is a need for improved cultural safety in health and medical providers; there is also a lack of access to health services due to availability, cost and distance.

Morwell – 1 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led decision-making & Self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal Elders and leaders (especially women) should be involved in all levels of decision-making across the system. ▪ There needs to be community control over the data and evidence that informs funding. ▪ Regional communities need to get a seat at the table at large statewide forums. ▪ There could be a community led accountability framework that agencies, government and community organisations need to comply with. ▪ More Aboriginal voices are needed in decision-making; government needs to change the dynamic. ▪ Engagement continues to be an issue; many organisations and workers contribute to consultations, but the mob who are very isolated and struggling with the issue are not at the table.
Economic development/jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be opportunities for professional development in Aboriginal community organisations, as well as resourcing from government to achieve this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment targets for Aboriginal Victorians need to ensure that the outcome is employment in meaningful work.
Cultural safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access and engagement for Aboriginal people to services needs to improve; we need to remove the 'shame factor'. ▪ Aboriginal people are expected to do all the work related to Aboriginal affairs (including in voluntary roles) in addition to their regular jobs; non-Aboriginal people need to be culturally competent and equipped to work on Aboriginal issues. ▪ Aboriginal skills and experience need to be acknowledged and understood.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are a lot of services for Aboriginal people that are not being accessed; there is also a lack of accessibility due to availability (especially in places such as Bass Coast) and due to the large geographical spread of services across the Gippsland region.
Aged care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a gap in aged care and residential health services for Aboriginal people aged 50 years and older, especially considering the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal elders. ▪ Aged care services need to be provided to Aboriginal people from a younger age.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be holistic support for Koori youth. As well as targets on schooling, Koori kids should have access to support for career pathways after high-school. Government's data collection methods need to support ways of monitoring and reporting on this information.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targets should address the social determinants of health. ▪ Drug use needs to be addressed, and especially the impact this has on economic outcomes including securing employment. ▪ Culturally responsive sexual health education programs for Aboriginal youth are needed.

Sale – 2 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Cultural confidence, strength and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many non-Aboriginal Australians do not understand the impacts of intergenerational trauma and how this impacts Aboriginal Victorians across a range of domains. ▪ There is a need for government to provide resources for Elder training to support Elders in their role in a contemporary context.
Data sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be a better breakdown of government data by region; this will improve the understanding of Aboriginal community needs and where to channel policy development and reinvestment.
Health and housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overcrowding needs to be addressed; this impacts emotional and social wellbeing. ▪ There needs to be a focus on psycho-cultural, psychosocial as well as psychological distress. ▪ There needs to be an improved recognition of, and response to racism, and its effect on health and wellbeing. ▪ Drug use, and its harmful impacts, needs to be addressed. ▪ There are an increasing number of grandparents taking care of Aboriginal children who have their own health issues and may need further support in their carer roles. ▪ There is currently no funding for foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Economic development/jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal representation on boards needs to include representation on private boards. ▪ We need to build capacity for Aboriginal organisations, and build Aboriginal leadership. ▪ Without financial and governance support, economic participation does not happen. ▪ There is a need to better address procurement rates for Aboriginal organisations.
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are different coursework standards across states and territories (e.g. Aboriginal health practitioner standards) which makes it difficult for skills to be transferable. ▪ Numeracy and literacy needs to be designed for Aboriginal children and be culturally responsive. ▪ Education needs to address individualised learning and include Aboriginal ways of learning.
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A lot of young Aboriginal men are missing strong Aboriginal male role models. ▪ There needs to be a focus on community based prevention for diverting people away from the justice system.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We need to move away from deficit based targets.

Lakes Entrance – 3 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community needs the power to set its own priorities and own its own data. ▪ Community-led decision making does not exist in the far east of Gippsland; Aboriginal community controlled organisations cannot alone speak for community. ▪ Government reaches an agreement before the decision gets circulated to the Aboriginal community. ▪ There needs to be consensus with Aboriginal people speaking as clans. ▪ Localised plans need to be representative of grassroots, and be developed and led by community. ▪ Government departments should report back to community on how they are supporting localised plans. This would provide an opportunity to channel some of the resources to the community. ▪ Local plans should have input from each family that live in that community. ▪ Community does not currently have the resources to negotiate with government. ▪ Decision-making needs to be clan-based. This approach needs to be tried.
Self-Determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government has not earned the right to use the word self-determination. Government's perception of the word is different to community's. ▪ 'Self-determination belongs to us, and it is our obligation and responsibility to voice to government what self-determination may or may not be for our family and communities.' ▪ Government needs to acknowledge the difference between what it can offer and what self-determination actually looks like on the ground. ▪ Government needs to enable Aboriginal families and communities the ability to control and manage self-determination. ▪ We need to do away with government's current approach to funding

	<p>according to geographical boundaries. Self-determination is not connected to any of this - we need to eliminate those boundaries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘Self-determination makes you feel like you should be happy, safe and content to live where you want. It means you and your mob have access to services and are treated equitably. If you feel okay, then that is a starting point to have a healthy, stable life that provides a foundation for your children and your grandchildren to have the same.’
<p>Community programs and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government homogenises its approach for all Aboriginal Victorians; there are different needs in Gippsland compared to other areas. ▪ There is a distinct disparity of incomes and opportunities within Aboriginal communities in far east Gippsland, creating “haves and have nots”, and unequal access to employment, housing and enterprise opportunities. ▪ There is inequity in the funding of programs and services across Gippsland; many of the smaller Aboriginal organisations in far east Gippsland are not commensurately funded. As a result, many Aboriginal organisations within the same region are competing with each other for funding.
<p>Cultural Safety and accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The word “Indigenous” is used too much when we should be talking about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. There should instead be a focus on “community, family and empowerment”. ▪ It feels like government performs a tick-in-the-box-exercise when addressing Aboriginal affairs; they need to have a greater respect for culture and improve the way they meaningfully engage with Aboriginal people. ▪ When government funds or delivers programs and services to east Gippsland, the community is not consulted. Furthermore, there is no transparency, accountability or reporting back to community. ▪ There are many different Aboriginal families and country connections throughout far east Gippsland. Government needs to recognise the different needs and priorities Aboriginal people across Gippsland and avoid the exclusion of any Aboriginal communities.
<p>Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholarships for Aboriginal students need to be for all universities, not just local universities. ▪ Engagement of children, families and Elders in the education sector is a challenge; more local funding and community led programs are needed to improve educational outcomes. ▪ Many Aboriginal communities in far east Gippsland (including Cann River) have been overlooked for educational funding and support for many years.
<p>Land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lore of the land is missing from Native Title. Native Title addresses property law but not cultural law. ▪ Government needs to recognise other Aboriginal communities that do not necessarily fit within a recognised Registered Aboriginal Party or Native Title group e.g. Cann River. ▪ Whoever comes to Gippsland needs to understand how to look after the land; this is the Lore of the land. Wherever you are from you need to have Traditional Custodian education and awareness. ▪ Aboriginal families and communities in far east Gippsland are not consulted or engaged by government on matters relating to land or land management.

Echuca – 22 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-led programs work best. Government should be listening to ACCOs and building upon their programs that work. Sporting programs are a great incentive for kids to stay in school and out of trouble.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACCOs should decide how to get to spend their money.

Halls Gap – 22 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Government accountability and alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional boundaries vary between local government and various state government departments. These should be better aligned to allow more effective working relationships between government and organisations. All levels of government should work together and be consistent in their approach to Aboriginal affairs and targets, and strategies to work towards these. As the level of government closest to the community, local government should be better resourced to provide services. It could be helpful to have a Minister whose only portfolio is Aboriginal Affairs so that they are able to solely focus on this area. Senior government managers should have KPIs for achieving VAAF targets.
Aboriginal leadership and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community should set targets for the new VAAF. If the community sets targets, they should also be sufficiently resourced to monitor the targets. An independent, ongoing Aboriginal role such as an ombudsman or a commissioner could be appropriately funded to oversee progress against targets.
Employment and jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment opportunity is a critical area that should be measured in the new VAAF. More Aboriginal positions are needed in the region – for example, more Aboriginal health workers in hospitals and community health centres – so that Aboriginal expertise is available to all communities. It is critical that educational attainment, such as VCE, VCAL and higher education, leads to adequate employment. It is important that staff working with the Aboriginal community are receiving high quality training – this should be invested in.
Improving services in the regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be a locally-based approach to setting targets in each region. Those living in the regions often face significant costs for attaining qualifications and training (e.g. travel to Melbourne) and this is a barrier. These should be offered regionally. Transport and getting around can be a barrier for many things such as employment when opportunities are not available locally.
Funding and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bipartisan approach to funding is necessary for Aboriginal Victorians to truly pursue self-determination. Funding from government should move away from grants and towards more sustainable funding streams. Community and local government need to be properly resourced to monitor targets and provide services.

Shepparton – 23 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led, place-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community should be involved in decision-making from the start. Community should control the data and funding. Decision-making needs to include <u>all</u> Aboriginal people, not just organisations.
Culturally-safe education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are barriers to post-study employment, such as racism. We have to measure pathways other than Year 12 attainment – such as measuring 16-18 year olds leaving school to see what pathway they take. Economic factors play a part in school attendance and feelings of safety e.g. not being able to send them to school with lunch or not being able to afford to go on the excursion. Culture is an important factor in education. All staff should have Aboriginal awareness and culture training. Aboriginal culture and history shouldn't just be taught, but celebrated.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding should be less restrictive and more transparent regarding decision-making. We need to fund what is working.
Aboriginal-led, place-based accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be an independent, place-based ombudsman with cultural understanding or Aboriginal committee to hold government accountable. Targets should be based on the community's aspirations, not just non-Aboriginal parity measures such as Year 12 attainment.
Data sovereignty and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regions cannot access the data they need to identify problem areas or solutions. There should be regional reporting, not just statewide reporting. Reporting should not just reflect parity with non-Aboriginal Victorians, but also report on people exceeding and excelling e.g. those who are in the top percentiles for NAPLAN.

Horsham – 23 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to provide support to eliminate racism from the workplace. It is sometimes difficult for individuals to speak up, and racism can be subtle rather than overt. We should focus on changing environments and attitudes rather than expecting Aboriginal people to change – for example, representation on boards often doesn't change the attitudes or practices of the board because Aboriginal members have no capacity to make any cultural changes; instead they are expected to conform. Racism can impact on Aboriginal people's health. Bullying and racism can be a big problem at school and must be addressed.
Importance of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are sometimes reluctant to teach Aboriginal languages and culture to all students, but this is very important. Education is critical to self-determination, and education outcomes must be improved. There should be more Koorie support in education and more Koorie teachers who have received high quality training. There should be targets around reading, writing and numeracy. Elders should be involved in providing cultural education.

Aboriginal leadership and accountability of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal people are the ones who should set targets. There should be outcomes and penalties for government for not achieving targets, and data transparency so that Aboriginal people are able to properly hold government accountable. We should see more Aboriginal representation in senior positions in organisations and politics, from local councils all the way up to Prime Minister. An Aboriginal Advisory Committee could be an effective way of holding government accountable for targets – this is the practice for Horsham Rural City Council. An independent Aboriginal commissioner could hold government accountable.
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to stop expecting Aboriginal people to share their knowledge and culture for free. Aboriginal organisations are like any other business – they should receive a reasonable fee for service. People should be able to make money from their traditional and cultural practices. There should be targets around employment.
Targeting regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local services, such as the university, are not responsive to the needs of the region and should have input from local communities, rather than being run out of Melbourne. All areas of regional Victoria should be included, not simply the big regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.
Funding and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Owner groups and other community organisations should be properly funded to provide services to the community. Delivery of adequate funding and resources for Aboriginal Victorians should be handed over to the Aboriginal community – this is critical for self-determination. Funding shouldn't be provided to organisations for such narrow and specific purposes – there should be more flexibility for Aboriginal people to achieve outcomes in ways they determine

Wodonga – 24 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Community-led decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer of power needs to come with infrastructure support. There should be an open, inclusive community committee or cabinet that is representative of the community to make decisions on funding allocation. A community plan developed through an open and inclusive process could be a good way to pursue community aspirations: all local families could sign the joint community plan outlining the community's aspirations as a means to reach consensus. Government should be building on plans that local ACCOs already have that are effective and working. Government needs to streamline community engagement forums to prevent people from getting 'engagement fatigue'. For community to be empowered to make decisions together, government should support services to address trauma and healing.
Community-led accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government needs to ensure that any accountability mechanism is Aboriginal-led and that data is disaggregated at the local level so that community is able to plan and hold local services accountable.
Community-led targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets are seen as "unachievable" by community because the government is making them without proper consultation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets need to be set by community and place-based, rather than universal. The targets should be clear and accessible to community.
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There needs to be investment into building and maintaining a bigger Aboriginal workforce. There needs to be cultural understanding and awareness for all workers in the child protection system. The quality of cultural support plans is poor. There are concerns around Section 18 reforms. More investment into early intervention and prevention is needed. Government should be doing more on family re-engagement so that communities are not so disconnected.
Other priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal housing, lowering the retirement age, access to services, addressing trauma, sustainable funding, subsidised TAFE courses for Aboriginal health workers

Portland – 10 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Supporting Aboriginal workers and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal organisations best understand communities' needs, and they require the resources to support community and provide services based on that need. Government must understand the added expectations, responsibilities and pressure placed on Aboriginal workers and organisations to assist community members. Workers are doing far beyond their job descriptions to achieve actual community outcomes, and these are not reflected or measured in government frameworks or evaluations. There is significantly greater accountability (through for example paperwork, KPIs and evaluations) placed on Aboriginal organisations than on mainstream organisations.
Local community strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local initiatives and services are strong, however government frameworks often instil a negative sentiment and deficit-approach which undermines staff and services. We need to build on the success of community-based initiatives. Many Aboriginal children in the area are achieving and succeeding despite the barriers and challenges, and because of the support that community and organisations provide.
Local workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be more jobs (including government jobs) available in rural communities. There is a lack of jobs in Portland as many jobs, industries and services are placed in bigger towns. This does not benefit rural communities or people on country. Workforce and career development is needed in the Portland area. There needs to be greater support for community-controlled organisations and Aboriginal businesses and employment within these. Funding, resources and jobs often do not reach Portland as often not deemed 'high-risk'.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in Aboriginal organisations is needed; money is not filtering down to Aboriginal organisations and communities because a lot of Aboriginal-specific funding goes to mainstream organisations. Therefore, reprioritisation is needed. Funding for one or two year contracts is not sustainable. Longer term,

	<p>recurrent and sustainable programs and roles are needed.</p>
Self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New targets should be set by Aboriginal community, be culturally relevant and measured against Aboriginal standards, not against non-Aboriginal standards. ▪ Community needs realistic opportunities to be involved right from the start of policy development through to implementation. ▪ Self-determination means Aboriginal organisations operating within their own parameters - not setting up the initiative or program and then expecting organisations to fit within that. ▪ Aboriginal organisations and people understand the priorities and real needs of the local community and must be trusted to deliver. ▪ For example KESOs should be within Aboriginal organisations. Putting them into schools (mainstream institutions) shows a level of mistrust and undermines KESOs' roles in connecting with community and addressing issues. ▪ Genuine and ongoing dialogue is needed between community and government.
Aboriginal leadership and accountability of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More Aboriginal Victorians should be appointed in executive and senior government positions, including as members of parliament. ▪ An Aboriginal body (for example a watch-dog or commission) is needed to review government decisions and reports, and review how government are spending money and whether outcomes are being achieved. ▪ Government needs to continually report back to community, and ensure information is filtered down through departments, to regions, organisations and institutions. ▪ The Aboriginal affairs portfolio should be a standalone portfolio so that the Minister can solely concentrate on Aboriginal affairs rather than having to also focus on other areas.
Cultural knowledge and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-Aboriginal people need to understand Aboriginal culture and perspectives. This should be taught in schools and throughout society and there should be targets around non-Aboriginal people learning culture. ▪ Mainstream organisations need to be culturally safe. ▪ Knowledge and cultural intellectual property is frequently sought and shared but is not paid for. Communities should be funded to share culture and it must be acknowledged that it costs a lot to share (for example costs of travel and time away from work).
Perspectives on the new VAAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing strategies (for example the Aboriginal Justice Forum and Korin Korin Balit-Djak) need to be reflected and aligned within the new framework. ▪ Qualitative methodology is very important to make the new VAAF more meaningful, more than just numbers and quantitative analysis. ▪ New targets should be locally or regionally-specific and based on local community needs.

Warrnambool – 8 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Barriers to education and further learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High costs for technology, transport, food, and uniforms are significant barriers to children attending school, and can bring about shame for the child and the family. We need to support the children to attend school, and also support the family. Aboriginal history, culture and language should be taught in schools to acknowledge the past, teach the importance of culture, and create a more culturally-safe school system. Further supports and opportunities are needed to assist adults' further learning, skills and training – for example certificates, qualifications and traineeships for adults. More traineeships and work experience ('learning on the job' style) programs are needed as it is difficult to get experienced qualified workers into services.
Local and regional success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is local and regional success in a lot of areas that are measured – for example school attendance– however this is not reflected in the Report or frameworks because they are measured on a state and national level. Suggest that data, measures and targets be regionally specific and reflect regional data and success.
Supporting Aboriginal organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal dollars are often given to mainstream organisations, with Aboriginal organisations receiving the leftovers. This needs to change. Need to increase the visibility of ACCOs in the community – often people don't know that they're there, what they do and how they can assist. Aboriginal organisations are not funded to do a lot of the extra work that they deal with – for example helping families in crisis after hours and on weekends.
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug abuse has a huge effect on the whole family and community. There needs to be greater supports for those needing treatment for drug abuse as well as families. Access to housing is a real challenge - Issues with unavailability, affordability and high maintenance costs.
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a very high rate of child protection issues in this area. Children in out-of-home care need greater support. Kinship care should be prioritised.
Community-led decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets or standards should be set for each community and should be measured against. community needs and based on community interpretations. ACCOs could oversee the standards. Aboriginal community needs to be at the table, and continue to stay there.
The meaning of self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering Aboriginal people to pursue their dreams and opening doors to opportunities. Meeting the needs set by the community. Having the confidence to achieve, being heard, equal opportunities and respecting Aboriginal input.
Other priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of choice – Aboriginal people should be able to choose whether they go to an Aboriginal or mainstream organisation. But mainstream organisations must be culturally-safe spaces. Data can easily be misrepresented, and often ignores all the other behind the scenes work going on. The impacts of the stolen generation are still being felt.

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- The new framework must be fluid, and must be constantly revisited and reported on alongside community.
 - Rates of crime re-offending are high – there needs to be greater support after involvement with the justice system.
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Geelong – 7 May 2018

Key theme	What participants said
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural confidence and teaching about Aboriginal culture within schools is lacking. ▪ A wide range of barriers and challenges exist which impact upon school attendance and performance, including uniform and technology costs, cultural safety of schools, bullying and discrimination, and inflexibility of the school system (e.g. zoning). ▪ It is important to recognise different pathways post-school, and support diverse forms and ways of further learning and skills development.
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mental health must be recognised as a major contributor to other outcomes. ▪ There must be greater provision of mental health services, plans and appointments.
Funding reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a need for longer-term and flexible funding agreements. ▪ Funding agreements with Aboriginal organisations are often inflexible and involve significantly greater accountability than for mainstream organisations. ▪ There is too much paperwork involved in funding – even for small amounts.
Regionalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targets need to be regionally-specific recognising that different communities have different priorities. ▪ Success and progress should be measured and reported at the local and regional level.
Self-determination and government accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies and programs should be Aboriginal led and determined. ▪ Community-owned, community-controlled initiatives should be better supported. ▪ Government must listen to and act upon the identified needs of communities. ▪ Aboriginal people should have their voices heard, listened to and feel empowered to act ▪ Aboriginal people should be respected as the drivers of change and within decision-making positions. ▪ Aboriginal-led decision-making and accountability of government could be through a Commissioner, an Aboriginal Ombudsman, or community cabinets. ▪ Suggestion that the Aboriginal affairs portfolio be a standalone portfolio - rather than the Minister having shared concurrent responsibilities with other portfolios.
Regular engagement and co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government needs to get community involved at the beginning of any initiative, and this must go beyond tick-box consultation and involve true co-design. ▪ Engagement with Aboriginal communities must be consistent, be welcoming of the whole community (not just organisations). ▪ There must be regular report backs on progress towards VAAF measures and targets. ▪ The VAAF measures and targets should be flexible, recognising the organic nature of communities and affairs. Suggest that the new framework be a living, flexible document. ▪ Partnership and collaboration must be genuine and honest – not tokenistic.
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great visibility, understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture,

knowledge and language is needed throughout society. This is needed through schools and education, as well as throughout community for example the naming of sites.

- A cultural lens must be applied across all government frameworks.
- The need for culturally safe spaces in all communities.

Other priorities

- The failure mentality towards Aboriginal success needs to change; drug and other substance abuse; media accountability; local government accountability.
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Appendix 2 – Online surveys summary

The online survey asked seven questions:

1. Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?
2. What should be the priority areas in Aboriginal affairs?
3. Who should set the priority areas and oversee their implementation? What should the relationship be between the Aboriginal community and government?
4. What strategies and actions are needed to progress change?
5. What do you think are the most important issues facing Aboriginal Victorians, families and communities?
6. How should government be held to account?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

As with the community forums, there was diversity in the responses, as well as common themes. Key feedback to the questions is provided below.

Priority issues

- Embed self-determination in the Closing the Gap and VAAF agendas
- Recognise culture as a strength and protective factor
- Adopt a strengths-based focus
- Recognise and address the impacts of colonisation and institutional and systemic racism
- Address issues affecting community:
 - prevention and early intervention, as well as the social determinants of health
 - racism, including institutional racism
 - justice and prison diversion
 - housing and homelessness
 - family violence
 - health and mental health, e.g. drug and alcohol, specialist services, chronic disease
 - education, employment (including culturally suitable jobs), income, economic development, cost of living, Aboriginal procurement
 - child protection, maternal and child health and family support
 - children and young people, older people e.g. residential aged care
 - Traditional owner support e.g. in cultural heritage
 - Aboriginal land rights and joint land management
 - Cultural strengthening and freedom, connection to country
 - Access to services, particularly regional areas
 - Lateral violence

Decision making and the role of Government

- Community-led, place-based decision making
 - Government to act on community consultation (e.g. Uluru Statement from the Heart)
 - An independent, resourced, statutory Aboriginal identity
 - Aboriginal-designed outcomes using Aboriginal policy innovation, built on the strengths of Aboriginal communities
 - Recognition of the diversity of Aboriginal people
 - Greater engagement and consultation with a diverse range of Aboriginal community members
 - Bi-partisan support and commitment for Aboriginal affairs
 - Government to fund and not direct Aboriginal affairs
 - Retain existing targets and add others
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Strategies and actions to progress change

- Increased, long term, flexible and outcomes-based funding
 - Community capacity and strengthening
 - Data sovereignty
 - Cultural understanding and recognition (e.g. through flags, curriculum)
 - Transfer of resources to Aboriginal communities and organisations
 - Treaty
 - Culturally safe practices and awareness
 - Reparations, e.g. land rights and compensation to Stolen Generations
 - Constitutional recognition
 - Decolonisation
 - Truth-telling
 - Addressing barriers to services
 - Heal intergenerational trauma
 - More Aboriginal jobs and upskilling of Aboriginal people
 - Aboriginal leadership development programs and transparent appointments
 - Address lateral violence and create safe Aboriginal community services
 - Land rights, management, and connection to country
 - Earlier retirement and access to super legislation
 - Fairer distribution of resources among communities
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Accountability and review mechanism

- Greater community-led, public accountability of government, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations
 - An Aboriginal council, assembly, board or complaints system made up of Aboriginal communities across the state to provide feedback to government
 - A quota for Aboriginal people in parliament as well as consideration of Aboriginal people during the tabling of bills and motions
-