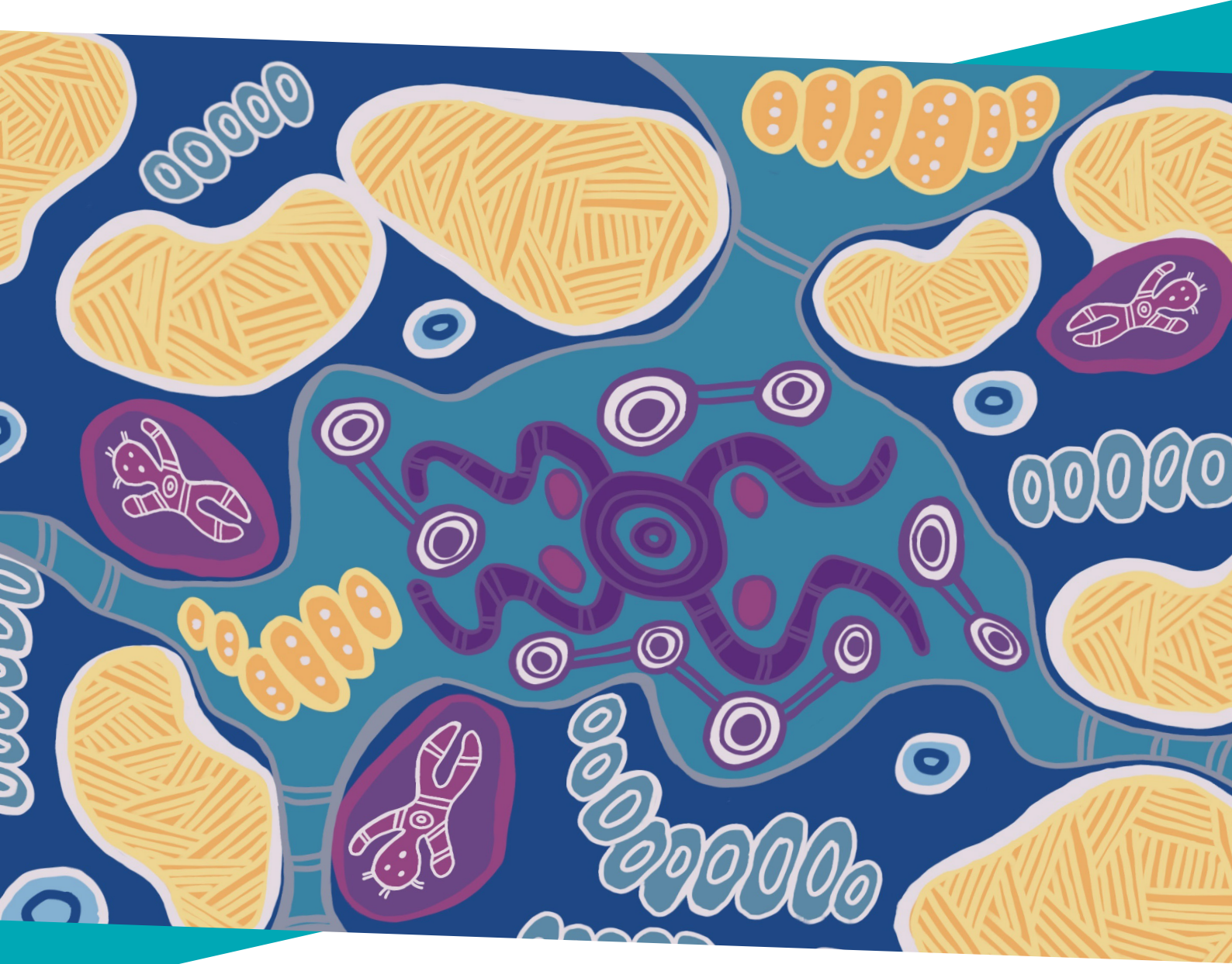


Foster Care Association of Victoria

Reconciliation Action Plan

Innovate

Annual Report July 2018 - June 2019



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

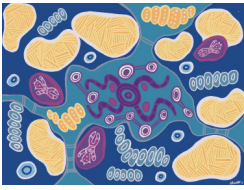
INNOVATE



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of victoria

Artwork by Emma Bamblett

Our Vision for Reconciliation



Artist: Emma Bamblett

Clan: Wemba Wemba

Title: Journey Together

Description: The purple circle in the centre of the painting represents the Foster Carer Association of Victoria (FCAV).

The lines reaching out represent the journey towards reconciliation and working together with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The purple figures around the middle section represent the FCAV staff.

The yellow lined areas represent strength. Strength towards recognising the work of foster carers and role that they play in the Victorian community.

The light blue circles connecting represent the voice of FCAV. It continues to grow and reaches out to community.

The purple circles connecting to each other with straight lines represent the Carer KaFÉ. The Carer KaFÉ offer opportunities for Kinship and Foster Carers to attend training and have opportunities to build their knowledge and grow.

The oval shaped yellow symbols connecting represent the work that the FCAV are doing towards reconciliation and gaining their knowledge and respect for Aboriginal Culture and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Foster Care Association of Victoria's (FCAV) vision for reconciliation is a nation that acknowledges historic truths and their current impacts and where First Nations' cultures are recognised, understood and celebrated by all, as part of our community and country's identity.

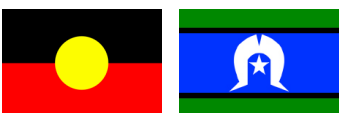
The FCAV advocates for a Child Protection system which ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are safe and connected to their family, culture and community. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination in all areas of the care of children and young people.

Our RAP

The FCAV celebrates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures and acknowledges the wrong doings of the past including the forcible removal of children and young people, some of whom told their stories in the national inquiry for the Bringing Them Home Report 1997.

As the peak body for foster carers in Victoria, our plan for reconciliation is to support all carers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people in obtaining the knowledge and resources they need to provide children in their care meaningful connections to family, community and culture.

We facilitate this through continuing and growing partnerships with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and advocating for Aboriginal children in Aboriginal care (ACAC), a new program for Aboriginal children and young people subject to a Children's Court protection order.



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Victoria and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Achievements and Successes



“It is good I won the book because now I can learn about my culture” ... event participant, 8.

Welcome to Country was conducted by Murrindindi, head man of the Wurundjeri clan (above) and he also provided a smoking ceremony, didgeridoo session and boomerang throwing session.

VACCA staff conducted a weaving session as well as activities for the children such as sand art, bead making and all had a wonderful lunch cooked by the Healesville staff which everyone enjoyed.

Of the 13 feedback forms received, 11 carers had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care, 12 said the forum expanded their cultural knowledge and 11 said the forum provided awareness of VACCA and the FCAV staff.

We are more than half way through our first (Innovate) RAP. During the last 12 months the RAP Working Group has actively monitored our Reconciliation actions; tracking progress and reporting. The FCAV has ensured a strong focus on our RAP and has demonstrated a commitment to the Plan.

There has been a focus on developing relationships and providing learning opportunities within our organisation and amongst our members.

In particular we have had great success in the collaborative co-hosting of cultural events for foster carers, staff and children, with a focus on learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures and ensuring Aboriginal children in care can remain connected to their community, culture and family.

The Carer KaFÉ (kinship and foster care education) Program hosted by the FCAV, has a commitment to ensuring learning & development adheres to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles.

Carer KaFÉ had 5% attendance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and 28% attendance of carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the past year.

Carer KaFÉ funded 15 sessions of Nikara’s Journey, VACCA’s two day workshop that provides carers of Aboriginal children with introductory knowledge and understanding to assist them in supporting the best interest of Aboriginal children who are in their care.

Events and Activities



“Thanks for providing a very pleasant opportunity for Koori kids to be together.” foster carer, participant

Our second Cultural event was in the following week we travelled to Ballarat to co-host a Cultural Experience at Lal Lal Falls, on the 2 October, 2018 with Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC).

The FCAV have co-hosted several cultural events this year. We started with a Cultural Day at Healesville Sanctuary on 29 September, 2018 with 24 carers, 34 children and 10 workers from VACCA East and the FCAV staff in attendance.

A Welcome to Country was performed by Murrindindi, head man of the Wurundjeri clan (above) and he also provided a smoking ceremony, didgeridoo session and boomerang throwing session.

VACCA staff led a basket weaving session and activities for the children including sand art and bead making.

Of the 13 feedback forms received, 11 carers had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care, 12 said the forum expanded their cultural knowledge and 11 said the forum provided awareness of VACCA and the FCAV staff.

Our second Cultural Experience was at Lal Lal Falls, on 2 October, 2018 in partnership with Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC).

Uncle Peter Lovett provided an Acknowledgement to Country,

spoke about the significance of Lal Lal falls and Bunjil the Creator, played the didgeridoo and led a walk around Lal Lal Falls. Carers enjoyed a BBQ lunch in a natural setting, basket weaving, art activities and prizes. 22 carers and 19 children attended, along with 8 staff from BADAC and 4 from the FCAV.

Of the 11 feedback forms received, 6 carers had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in their care, 10 said the forum expanded their cultural knowledge and 10 said the forum provided awareness of staff and networking opportunities.

Cultural Lunches



We hosted a Cultural Carer Lunch at Charcoal Lane on 1 March 2019.

In a small, intimate setting the lunch was designed to make carers feel appreciated as well as engaged in a cultural experience.

Aunty Eva Jo and Emma Bamblett gave wonderful insight into how it was for them growing up and understanding their connection to family and culture.

They spoke about the strength and power of culture and how carers of Aboriginal children and young people can support their connection to country, culture, community and identity. Carers were really engaged and asked many questions related to the Aboriginal children in their care.

We have been very grateful for the engagement of ACCOs and their staff providing guidance and collaborating to host these cultural events, providing carers with opportunities to learn and make connections.

Webinars

“Thankyou. Very informative.” foster carer, participant

On 27 November 2019 we held a webinar ‘Connecting to Culture’ in partnership with VACCA. Aunty Eva Jo Edwards, a proud Boonwurrung, Mutti Mutti and Yorta Yorta woman and a survivor of the Stolen Generation, shared her story with us about the impact of being removed from her family when she was just 5 years old.

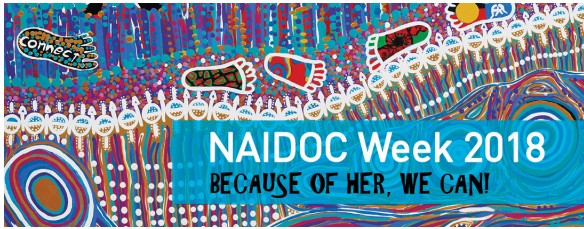
Emma Bamblett, a proud Wemba Wemba woman from Echuca, is an artist and the State wide Coordinator of Aboriginal Culture at VACCA. Emma showcased the Cultural information portal – Deadly Story and other resources to support the connection of children and young people to their culture.

On the 27 June 2019 we held a second webinar on Cultural Support Plans, funded by Carer KaFÉ. Emma Bamblett talked about Cultural Support Plans which are essential for Aboriginal children in care. Carers learnt about what is involved in creating a Cultural Plan, who is involved, encouraging connection to community, culture and family and learning about how to access cultural events.

During regional visits, ACCOs have been delighted to hear these webinars and are linking their carers into these resources.



Relationships



The FCAV was pleased to celebrate NAIDOC Week in July 2018 and National Reconciliation Week in May 2019 with our members and other carers around the state.

DEADLY STORY

The FCAV is a proud supporter and contributor to 'Deadly Story' the new website dedicated to cultural information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with a care experience, their carers and communities. A comprehensive resource... Check out the FCAV page on the portal:

www.deadlystory.com/page/culture/articles/foster-care-association-victoria

During the last year the FCAV has continued to develop relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

Initially, there was significant work done in developing trusting relationships. We invited VACCA staff to join our RAP Working Group meetings, attend cultural events and a Walk on Country experience led by our Board Member and Wurundjeri man, Daryl Sloan.

It was through spending time together, information sharing that we were able to develop a meaningful and significant relationship.

Through that process the FCAV's staff has been able to ask questions and gain greater knowledge and insight into culturally specific issues. This needs to continue to be done sensitively in appropriate forums. As an example, we are mindful to bring food to significant meetings and agency visits in an attempt to join and connect with staff.

The FCAV continues to visit ACCOs across Victoria, to develop relationships and seek information to ensure we can support carers of Aboriginal children, co- host cultural events and adhere to cultural safety.

We have heard that ACCOs in regional areas continue to struggle with finding a pool of foster carers. We will focus support and advocate for resourcing regional communities.

Team members have been flexible, adaptable and trusting of the process particularly given the high demands on the ACCOs and staff.

There have been beautiful exchanges and personal and painful stories in some of the collaborative pieces. The events have provided carers with an opportunity to ask the questions they have never felt confident to ask. The Aboriginal Elders shared information and advice for carers in relation to cultural specific messages to provide the children in their care. It is important to continue to inform staff and carers using all forms of media so that information exchange is embedded into the FCAV's culture.

The FCAV is a proud supporter and contributor to 'Deadly Story' the new website portal dedicated to cultural information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with a care experience, their carers and communities. A comprehensive resource...

Check out the portal: www.deadlystory.com

Lessons Learned



Over the last 12 months there have been many lessons and learnings as we navigate our own cultural competence as an organisation, as individuals within an organisation and with partnerships with key agencies.

Reviewing the content and appropriateness of our own learning activities. Gauging where generational or personal trauma might be triggered when hosting events to ensure cultural safety.

We need to increase our data collection in relation to carers who are, or care for children and young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander.

Familiarising ourselves with what is our own learning as an organisation as opposed to a "support activity for ACCOs"

Ensuring we use language that acknowledges the FCAV as part of mainstream culture and our aim to become a conduit between mainstream and ACCOs in the sector, particularly in relation to Transition work.

It is important to work at the same pace and engage with the community in order to hear their particular needs or issues rather than make assumptions or assessments from our mainstream cultural perspective.

Moving Forward



Moving forward for the next stage of the RAP we aim to build on this 12 months of learning to increase our organisational awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture, history and our relationships based on respect and learning with ACCOs.

Carer KaFÉ recently had 2 new training topics approved which are specifically for Aboriginal carers, these will be co-designed and co-facilitated with ACCOs in the coming year.

There is a commitment to engage current and new employees in continuous cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.

The FCAV has implemented an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2019–21, developed to support our Reconciliation Action Plan.

We have enhanced our systems, policies and procedures to strengthen employment opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, with a view to a safe, inclusive and diverse workplace.

We are in the process of developing an identified position on the FCAV team to support Aboriginal carers and carers of Aboriginal children who seek assistance from the FCAV's Carer Information and Support Service (CISS).

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