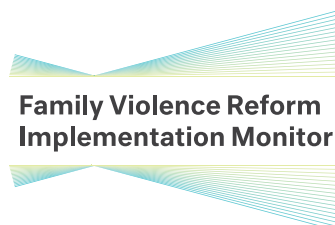


Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms

Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention

December 2022



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained up to 60,000 years of existence.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal communities includes both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence and join with our First Peoples to eliminate family violence from all communities.

Recognition of victims and survivors of family violence

We acknowledge the terrible impact of family violence on individuals, families and communities, and the strength and resilience of the children and adults who have, and are still, experiencing family violence.

We pay respects to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends. Family violence services and support

If you are concerned for your safety or that of someone else, please contact the police in your state or territory, or call Triple Zero (000) for emergency assistance.

If you have experienced family violence and need support or assistance, contact:

- > National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline
1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)
- > Safe Steps 24/7 family violence response line
1800 015 188
- > Victims of Crime helpline for men experiencing family violence
1800 819 817 (8am-11pm)
- > Rainbow Door specialist LGBTIQ+ support, advice and referral line
1800 729 367 (10am-5pm).

If you are concerned about your behaviour and its impact on your family, contact the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491 (24/7 service).

Accessibility

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This document is also available in HTML and PDF format on the [Monitor's website](#).



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Foreword

The Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus chose this topic, and it is easy to see why it was a priority, principally because it is integral to family violence practice in Aboriginal communities. Grounded in cultural strengthening, cultural expertise and education, this strengths-based approach is embodied in Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families and is embedded in the Aboriginal service system. The strategy is to intervene early to address the many causal factors that can lead to family violence. This holistic approach does not fit neatly into the mainstream structures and as such sometimes important work is unrecognised. However, as impressed on us by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, self-determination is a non-negotiable must for government; it is the foundation for all work with Aboriginal people.

This report highlights the prevention and early intervention work delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Dhelk Dja Committees, and local workforces and networks and how this is culturally unique and done differently from mainstream approaches. In shining a light on this topic, this report examines the implementation of the relevant recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence to assess whether the full potential of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to prevent and respond to family violence is being realised.

Universally, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations we consulted told us that prevention of family violence in community is grounded in healing, identity, culture, connection and strengthening families. However, there is a disconnect between this approach and mainstream practice and the funding frameworks and reporting requirements that sit around them. Because funding of programs is largely short-term and may not always include sufficient time or provision for implementation and culturally appropriate evaluation models, the outcomes cannot be demonstrated to the extent that they should be, therefore the true value is likely underestimated.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all the people who generously gave their time to share their knowledge and expertise on this topic. I trust this report reflects that we listened and heard their stories. We were expertly guided through this review by Karen Milward, a proud Yorta Yorta woman, who ensured our consultations were culturally safe; and an Aboriginal victim survivor who contributed her lived experience expertise and perspective to our monitoring. Members of the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus have also supported this review with their skillful guidance and expertise.



Jan Shuard PSM
Family Violence Reform
Implementation Monitor

There can be no doubt that Aboriginal people know best what is right for their communities and must be supported to provide the best services for their people. However, the same obligations rest with the state and mainstream services to hear the voices of Aboriginal people and provide culturally safe and appropriate prevention and early intervention efforts.

Victoria is privileged to have such an abundance of committed, competent and passionate Aboriginal people working in the family violence sector – these are the champions and strategic leaders who work tirelessly for their communities. Their individual and collective strength and willingness to go above and beyond is to be revered. Many Aboriginal people we spoke to have been involved in tackling the causes of family violence in Aboriginal communities for more than 20 years, since the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force released its report and recommendations to the Victorian Government. These are true leaders in their field, and the suggested actions in this report are based on what they see as important to improve the implementation of the Royal Commission’s recommendations to prevent and intervene early to reduce the harm of family violence.

The starting point must be to define and agree what constitutes prevention and early intervention in Victorian Aboriginal communities and what are meaningful outcomes and measures. This is for Aboriginal people to decide but they require the resources, funding and supports to do this work.

Jan Shuard PSM
Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor

Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way - Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families artwork.



Source: Family Safety Victoria. Artist, Trina Dalton-Oogjes.

Artwork and Artist

Trina Dalton-Oogjes is a proud Wadawurrung/Wathaurung woman. Trina's painting centres around the eleven community Dhelk Dja Action Groups across Victoria, leading into a central gathering/yarning circle, empowering Aboriginal communities based on a healing and trauma informed process, to lead collaborative partnerships through a culturally safe service system.

Around the eleven community Dhelk Dja Action Groups are Aboriginal organisations/agencies, government departments and non-government agencies working together to address family violence.

Bunjil the Creator oversees to empower strength and self-determination. Hand prints of the adults and children represent the family unit. The kangaroo and emu footprints represent partnership moving forward (kangaroos and emus only move forward).

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Monitoring context

About the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor

The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (the Monitor) was formally established in 2017 as an independent statutory officer after the Royal Commission into Family Violence released its report in 2016. The role is responsible for monitoring and reviewing how the government and its agencies deliver the family violence reforms as outlined in its 10-year implementation plan Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change.

On 1 August 2019 former Victorian Corrections Commissioner Jan Shuard PSM was appointed as the Monitor under section 7 of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor Act 2016. Jan took up her role on 2 October 2019, replacing Tim Cartwright APM, the inaugural Monitor.

Monitoring approach

The Monitor's 2021–2022 plan was developed through a process of consultation with government and sector stakeholders. Topics were selected that aligned areas of greatest interest and concern to sector stakeholders, with reform implementation activity outlined in the government's second Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020–2023. In determining topics, the focus was on areas where an independent perspective could add the most value to the ongoing reform effort.

Topics selected for monitoring throughout 2021 and 2022 are:

- > accurate identification of the predominant aggressor
- > family violence reform governance
- > early identification of family violence within universal services
- > primary prevention system architecture
- > Aboriginal-led primary prevention and early intervention (this report)
- > crisis response to recovery model for victim survivors
- > service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family.

In undertaking our monitoring, the following cross-cutting themes are examined across all topics:

- > intersectionality
- > children and young people
- > Aboriginal self-determination
- > priority communities such as LGBTIQ+, people with disabilities, rural and regional, criminalised women, older people and refugee and migrant communities
- > data, evaluation, outcomes and research
- > service integration.

Monitoring of the selected topics is based on information gathered through:

- > consultations with government agency staff
- > consultations with community organisations and victim survivor groups
- > site visits to service delivery organisations (where possible within COVID-19 restrictions)
- > attendance at key governance and working group meetings
- > documentation from implementation agencies, including meeting papers and records of decisions by governance bodies
- > submissions made to the Monitor in 2020 by individuals and organisations (many of these are available in full on the [Monitor's website fvrim.vic.gov.au](https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au)).

Engaging victim survivors in our monitoring

We are also actively seeking to include user experience and the voices of victim survivors in our monitoring. The office is working with established groups including the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, Berry Street's Y-Change lived experience consultants and the WEAVERs victim survivor group convened by the University of Melbourne.

Stakeholder consultation

The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor would like to thank the following stakeholders for their time in monitoring this topic:

- > Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)
- > Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service
- > Dardi Munwurro
- > Department of Education and Training
- > Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (including Family Safety Victoria)
- > Department of Justice and Community Safety
- > Department of Premier and Cabinet
- > Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus
- > Djirra
- > Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Corporation
- > Inner Gippsland and Outer Gippsland Dhelk Dja Action Group representatives
- > Koorie Youth Council
- > Mallee Dhelk Dja Action Group
- > Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place
- > Oonah Health and Community Services
- > Our Watch
- > Respect Victoria
- > Safe and Equal
- > Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- > Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- > Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd
- > Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
- > Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- > Victim Survivors' Advisory Council
- > Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative
- > Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal Healing Service

In addition to the many individuals and organisations who contributed to our monitoring, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of:

- > Karen Milward, a Yorta Yorta consultant who we engaged to support our office in undertaking this topic
- > an Aboriginal victim survivor who we engaged to ensure the victim survivor perspective was represented in our work
- > Karen's and the victim survivor's expertise and guidance were invaluable for our non-Aboriginal staff in properly hearing, understanding and reflecting the views of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and community members for this report.

Introduction

In establishing our 2021–2022 monitoring plan, we committed to including a topic focused on family violence reform progress for Victoria’s Aboriginal communities. In this report, an Aboriginal definition of family violence is used, as described on page 9. In the spirit of self-determination, we asked the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus – the Aboriginal communities’ governing body for Victoria’s family violence reform – to choose which area of the reform they wanted us to examine.

Following a process of consultation, including a survey of caucus members on a shortlist of topics, 'Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention' was selected. We received guidance from the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus in developing our key questions and monitoring approach for this topic and the caucus also contributed to informing our key findings and suggested actions.

As all stakeholders emphasised – including the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), a major provider of Aboriginal family violence services in Victoria – the principle of self-determination must underpin all prevention and early intervention activities within Aboriginal communities. VACCA more broadly recommended that our report incorporate binding principles on government around self-determination to guide this critical work and that these should be negotiated with Aboriginal family violence service providers directly. While this report does not address this specifically, the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023 outlines self-determination principles, and there is an opportunity for government to work with Aboriginal family violence service providers as part of the next iteration of the framework to strengthen its implementation.

This report examines government implementation progress in enabling Aboriginal communities to drive self-determined or 'Aboriginal-led' activities to prevent family violence in and against Victoria’s Aboriginal communities.

In looking at this topic, we set out to examine:

- > the government and non-government frameworks that guide primary prevention efforts within Aboriginal communities and how they intersect with broader frameworks across the primary prevention sector
- > coordination of effort across government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and how these organisations are supported to deliver prevention and early intervention initiatives in their communities, including the approach to funding
- > the availability of data and evaluation outcomes to Aboriginal communities and how they are being used to guide prevention and early intervention efforts
- > how government services are accountable to Aboriginal communities for delivering responses to prevent family violence in and against Aboriginal people and their families.

We acknowledge the long history of community-led effort to prevent and address family violence in Aboriginal communities in Victoria. ACCOs and community leaders have demonstrated huge commitment to working with their communities in an integrated, prevention-focused way that prioritises family and building connection with culture and identity.

In the context of enormous pressure on services and ACCOs, and at a time of considerable demand for consultation with Aboriginal communities, the assistance we received was both humbling and critical to our ability to deliver this report.

The importance of prevention and early intervention within Aboriginal communities

While family violence is an urgent issue impacting every community in Victoria, Aboriginal people continue to be disproportionately affected. In the 12 months to March 2022, just over 2,800 Aboriginal Victorians (approximately 4.3 per cent of the state's Aboriginal population³ compared with approximately 1.3 per cent of Victoria's non-Aboriginal population) were recorded by Victoria Police as victims of family violence. This likely does not reflect the true prevalence due to the hidden nature of family violence for all communities and continued reluctance, particularly among Aboriginal communities, to report matters to police.⁴

It is important to acknowledge that family violence and violence against women are not a part of Aboriginal culture, and that violence against Aboriginal people is perpetrated by both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people. It is, therefore, a problem not just for Aboriginal communities but for the whole of our society to address. It is also worth noting the many complex drivers of this violence includes not only gender inequality but also the ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism.⁵ The trauma of family violence has profound negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of those who are victims of it (see Figure 2, for example), and many of these impacts are heightened for Aboriginal people:

- > Aboriginal women and men are more likely to be hospitalised for assault injuries due to family violence than non-Aboriginal women and men respectively.
- > Aboriginal women are more likely to be killed as victims of family violence than non-Aboriginal women.
- > Family violence is the number one risk factor for disease burden among women aged 18–44 years and is higher for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal women.
- > Family violence is a key factor in the removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

While responding to violence that has occurred and working to prevent it from reoccurring is important, government also has an obligation to actively pursue the prevention of violence before it starts, as it does with a range of factors that cause harm to the population. Both prevention and response are part of a spectrum of required activity, which includes primary prevention, early intervention and response (see Figure 1 above). The criticality of prevention and early intervention for Aboriginal communities was reflected in submissions to the Royal Commission, as illustrated by the chief executive officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation:

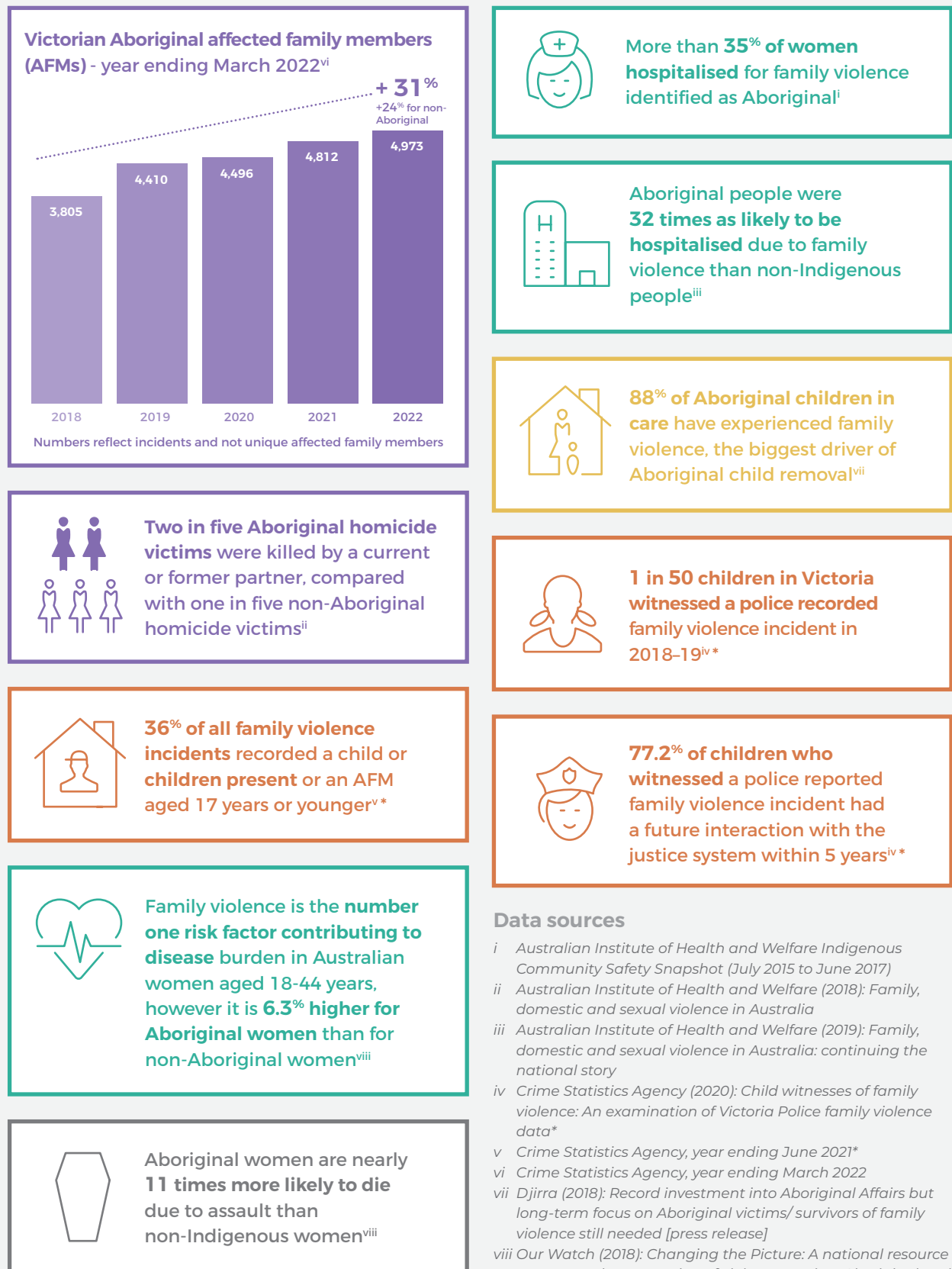
*These preventative and early intervention programs are actually the most important part, if we truly want to get violence out of our community, keep families together and give kids the best start in life that we can.*⁶

The interrelationship between family violence and broader health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people – as illustrated in Figure 2 – means that focused efforts to prevent family violence and to intervene early remain as important as ever. This is particularly true given Victoria's high rates of removal of Aboriginal children, where family violence is a key factor.

Consistent with the principles of self-determination, Aboriginal consultant Karen Milward advised that the overall approach to reducing the impact of family violence on Aboriginal communities must be Aboriginal-led and solutions-focused. The approach must be informed by the experiences and history of Aboriginal people, including children and young people, and address the family unit as a whole as part of a holistic, trauma-informed approach.

The remainder of this report examines the progress that has been made since the Royal Commission in supporting Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention efforts and identifies areas for further focus.

Figure 2: Extent and impact of family violence for Aboriginal Communities



Data sources

- ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Indigenous Community Safety Snapshot (July 2015 to June 2017)
 - ⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018): Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia
 - ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019): Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story
 - ^{iv} Crime Statistics Agency (2020): Child witnesses of family violence: An examination of Victoria Police family violence data*
 - ^v Crime Statistics Agency, year ending June 2021*
 - ^{vi} Crime Statistics Agency, year ending March 2022
 - ^{vii} Djirra (2018): Record investment into Aboriginal Affairs but long-term focus on Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence still needed [press release]
 - ^{viii} Our Watch (2018): Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
- * not Aboriginal Victorian specific

Key findings and suggested actions

Victoria's Aboriginal communities have a long history of efforts to prevent family violence, and we have seen some excellent examples of community-led prevention and early intervention work. We heard about the unique approach to prevention in Aboriginal communities, which includes:

- > being fully integrated with early intervention and response and recovery work
- > focusing on healing through cultural strengthening, connection to Country and community and strengthening cultural identity
- > aiming at broad community health and wellbeing outcomes (of which family violence may be only one).

We also heard consistent messages about the impact of short-term funding on the ability of organisations to deliver effective and sustainable initiatives – and the flow-on impacts of this for staff and communities.

Government has invested substantially in family violence services in Aboriginal communities since the Royal Commission and has supported a wide array of community-led prevention and early intervention initiatives through grants-based funding. While much progress has been made, many of the issues raised by the Royal Commission remain and emerged as strong themes in our consultations. These themes form the section headings in this report:

1. There is a wide range of effective prevention and early intervention initiatives being led by Victorian Aboriginal communities.
2. There is a need for a more sustained approach to support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to apply frameworks and evaluate the outcomes of initiatives.
3. A continued reliance on short-term, grant-based funding is undermining prevention and early intervention efforts.
4. More culturally adapted capacity-building opportunities are needed to support the Aboriginal prevention workforce.
5. Government accountability for the delivery of initiatives to support Dhelk Dja priorities could be strengthened.

The report provides our detailed analysis and findings that directly relate to the suggested actions outlined in Figure 3. These actions are also highlighted throughout the report.

Figure 3: Proposed actions to support Victoria's Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention

ABORIGINAL PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

1. In updating the Aboriginal primary prevention framework, develop a corresponding theory of change and strategic operating framework to guide future primary prevention efforts in the Aboriginal community, and to complement work to support the broader primary prevention system architecture.

LONG-TERM FUNDING AND FUNDING REFORM

2. Commit to ongoing base funding for Aboriginal prevention and early intervention – with longer-term funding agreements with ACCOs for delivery of initiatives to provide certainty and sustainability, and that include adequate funding to support data collection, monitoring, and evaluation.
3. Prioritise cross-government funding reform that moves to single funding agreements and streamlined, outcomes-based reporting; and in the interim, ensure that funding reform work being undertaken within individual departments is coordinated and aligned.

WORKFORCE SUPPORT TO APPLY FRAMEWORKS AND EVALUATE INITIATIVES

4. Consider how to build capability within the ACCO sector to tailor and apply prevention frameworks, and support organisations to monitor and evaluate prevention and early intervention initiatives, including whether a model such as the Baitt Durn Durn Centre of Excellence would be an effective approach.

DATA TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING

5. Government to ensure that regular and up to date data is provided to support Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus to make strategic decisions about family violence prevention and early intervention priorities, including on:
 - a. family violence incidents and drivers
 - b. availability and spread of existing initiatives across regions
 - c. program delivery outputs and outcomes.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

6. In developing the next Dhelk Dja action plan, government departments and agencies commit to how they will deliver on Dhelk Dja's priority areas and ensure their accountability for the agreed actions through the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum.
7. Identify priority actions for departments and agencies to undertake to address racism and discrimination as drivers of family violence (an outstanding action from the first action plan) as part of implementing action 6 above.
8. The Department of Education and Training work with the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus to ensure that Respectful Relationships education in schools is implemented in a culturally appropriate manner and is effective for Aboriginal students, for example through the provision of additional materials or resources for schools or other mechanisms as needed.

What did the Royal Commission say and what has changed since?

The Royal Commission into Family Violence acknowledged the high rates and devastating impacts of family violence within Aboriginal communities. It also found that the:

... full potential of Aboriginal community controlled organisations to prevent and respond to family violence has not been realised.⁷

In making this finding, the Royal Commission referenced the strong policy foundations provided by the [then] Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a Safer Future for Indigenous Families and Communities 10-Year Plan 2008-2018 (the predecessor to the Dhelk Dja 10-year agreement) and the work of the Indigenous Family Violence Task Force. It also identified factors that had impeded progress including:

- > a lack of funding and short-term funding undermining efforts – particularly for prevention and early intervention
- > insufficient investment in evaluation to better target efforts
- > inadequate data collection by mainstream (i.e. non-Aboriginal-led) agencies to inform Aboriginal-led efforts
- > a need to ensure Aboriginal people can choose whether to access Aboriginal or mainstream services and to ensure ACCOs are able to support Aboriginal communities.

The Royal Commission recognised that in working to address family violence:

... it is crucial to understand family violence as emerging within the context of deep intergenerational trauma as a result of colonisation, dispossession and the destructive impact of policies and practices such as the forced removal of children. There is no doubt that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture is the foundation upon which everything else is built and that strong cultural identity and connection is key to better outcomes.⁸

The Royal Commission made several recommendations that relate to primary prevention and early intervention in Aboriginal communities.⁹ These recommendations included the need for government to:

- > implement recommendations of the mid-term evaluation of the Indigenous Family Violence 10-Year Plan, which included establishing an additional stream of ongoing funding to support family violence responses in Aboriginal communities (including the continuation of initiatives tested through the Community Initiatives Fund)
- > provide adequate funding to ACCOs for (among other things) early intervention and prevention efforts, including 'whole-of-community activities and targeted programs'
- > ensure family violence awareness and prevention campaigns reflect the diversity of the Victorian population, including Aboriginal Victorians, and are developed in close consultation with communities
- > develop a strategic approach to 'improving the lives of vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people'¹⁰ in partnership with Aboriginal communities
- > improve the collection and sharing of Aboriginal-specific data in the family violence area by government for use by Aboriginal communities, organisations and governance forums to inform responses at the local, regional and statewide levels
- > employ evaluation models that use culturally appropriate measures and methodologies, and support to ensure Aboriginal service providers have the capacity to support culturally appropriate evaluations within their organisations.

Since then, government's approach to implementing these recommendations has been set out through a considerable number of plans, strategies and commitments (see Figure 4). For example (in order of release date):

- > **Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change (2016)** commits to:
 - delivering a dedicated prevention agency
 - a statewide primary prevention strategy
 - a complementary 10-year Aboriginal family violence plan
 - strengthening the operation of the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum (now the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum).

- > **Free From Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and all Forms of Violence Against Women (2017)** acknowledges that preventing family violence against Aboriginal people and their communities requires community-led, holistic healing approaches and 'addressing the drivers of violence that lead to institutional discrimination and racism'.¹¹ The strategy is being implemented through a series of action plans, which include specific commitments for prevention efforts in Aboriginal communities:
 - **Free From Violence – First Action Plan 2018–2021** committed to a major behaviour change campaign with a specific focus on preventing family violence for Aboriginal people;¹² and supporting the development and trialling of new approaches to prevention led by Aboriginal communities, including providing funding for workforce capacity building.
 - **Free From Violence – Second Action Plan 2022–2025** reiterates a commitment to self-determination and outlines five actions aligned with Dhelk Dja (see below).

- > **Building From Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response (2017)** outlines a high-level vision of a highly skilled prevention workforce that strengthens the ability of the system to address the drivers of all forms of family violence and work at the population level. The industry plan included an immediate action to pilot 'a model of embedding primary prevention expertise to work with the LGBTI, seniors and Aboriginal sectors to build primary prevention capacity and capability'.¹³

- > **Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families Agreement 2018–2028** is the guiding strategy and principal agreement between the Victorian Government and Aboriginal communities to address family violence. The agreement sets out five strategic priorities to be progressed through three successive action plans and assessed through a monitoring, evaluation and accountability plan.¹⁴ Strategic priority 2 is Aboriginal-led prevention and outlines a vision that 'all prevention and early intervention initiatives will be led by Aboriginal communities and based on their choices and their solutions'.
 - **Dhelk Dja 3 Year Action Plan 2019–2022** is the first of the action plans and sets out two critical actions and seven supporting activities to be delivered under priority 2: Aboriginal-led prevention, including:
 - mapping Aboriginal-specific primary prevention initiatives and investment
 - showcasing successful initiatives to share best practice
 - reviewing and updating the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework (2012)
 - developing and delivering a prevention campaign and education program for Aboriginal communities
 - sustainable investment for successful Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives
 - ensuring initiatives to prevent family violence address racism and discrimination against Aboriginal people as drivers of family violence.

- > **Wungurilwil Gaggapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement (2018)** is a partnership between Aboriginal communities, government and community services organisations. It commits to a strategic approach to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people and was developed in response to recommendation 145 of the Royal Commission.
- > **Nargneit Birrang – Aboriginal Holistic Healing Framework for Family Violence (2019)** establishes a shared understanding of holistic healing for Aboriginal communities to guide the delivery and evaluation of Aboriginal-led holistic healing programs for family violence in Victoria. It was developed through an Aboriginal-led, co-design process with Aboriginal communities.

There are also several related government strategies and agreements that are not specific to family violence prevention and early intervention but relate to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, families and communities more broadly and intersect with family violence prevention activity:

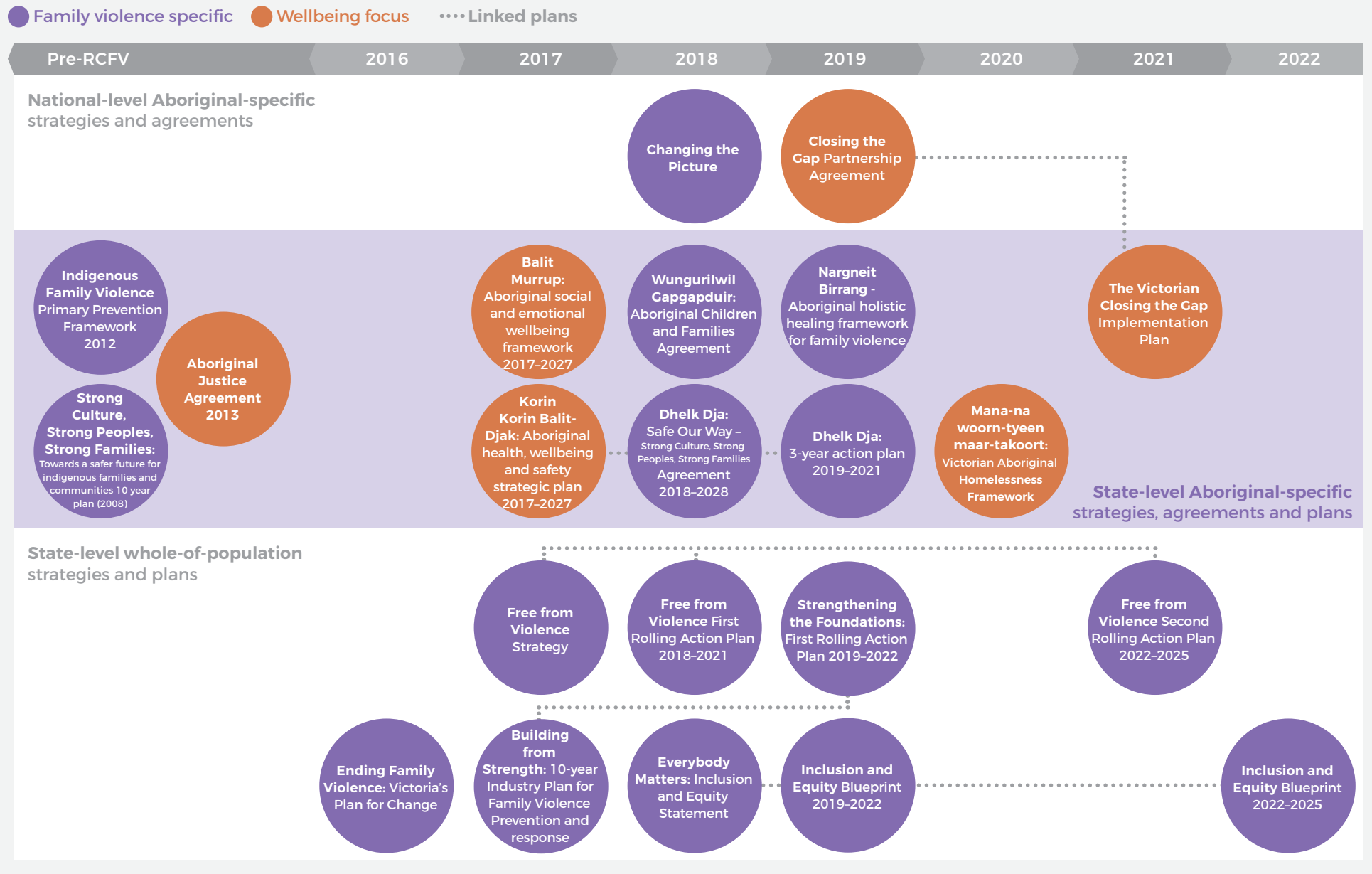
- > **Aboriginal Justice Agreement** is a long-term partnership between Aboriginal communities and the Victorian Government that seeks to improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal people. Prevention and early intervention of family violence are identified under Outcome Domain 1 of Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja (Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4) – Strong and safe Aboriginal families and communities.
- > **Balit Murrup: Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework 2017–2027** is a framework forming part of the Victorian Government's commitment to improving the social and emotional wellbeing and mental health outcomes for Aboriginal communities. In Domain 2 of the framework – Supporting resilience, healing and trauma recovery – actions relating to improving connection to community, cultural strengthening and will intersect with family violence prevention activity.
- > **Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017–2027** is an overarching framework to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians. Increasing access to Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention and support services is a priority under Guiding Principle 4 of the framework – Safe, secure and strong families and individuals.
- > **Closing the Gap Partnership Agreement (2019–2029)** is the national agreement between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations committing to action to closing the gap in life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across 17 socioeconomic areas. The Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021–23 outlines how Victoria will meet its Closing the Gap commitments, including reducing the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal women and children by at least 50 per cent.
- > **The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System interim (2019) and final reports (2021)** identified the urgent need to address mental illness in Aboriginal communities and the central role of self-determined Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing services in promoting Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing.
- > **Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort (every Aboriginal person has a home): Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework (2020)** aims to address homelessness and improve housing for Aboriginal Victorians. It recognises that those experiencing or using family violence are at a higher risk and therefore need specialist and intensive housing, community support and pathways.
- > **Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023** is the Victorian Government's overarching framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians, organisations and the wider community to drive action and improve outcomes. It commits government to reduce the incidence and impact of family violence affecting Aboriginal families (objective 3.1), with the goal being for Aboriginal families and households to thrive. It also sets out the whole-of-Victorian-Government self-determination enablers and principles and commits government to significant structural and systemic transformation.

Guiding primary prevention efforts are two specific frameworks for Aboriginal family violence prevention – one Victorian and the other national:

- > **Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework (2012)** predates the Royal Commission. The framework's development was led by the Dhelk Dja Action Groups formerly known as the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups. It identifies best practice features of primary prevention in Aboriginal communities and was designed to support prevention capacity building in Victoria. A refresh of the framework is a key commitment under the first Dhelk Dja Action Plan and Victoria's Closing the Gap implementation plan and was due for completion by December 2021. At the time of writing, the refresh of the framework was in the early stages of planning.
- > **Changing the Picture (2018)** was developed by Our Watch and provides a specific national framework to drive the prevention of violence against Aboriginal women and their children across Australia; it sits alongside the overarching Change the Story framework and resources. It includes specific actions needed to address the complex drivers of violence against Aboriginal women and their children.

A timeline of key strategies, plans and agreements is provided as Figure 4.

Figure 4: Timeline of key strategies, plans and agreements



A number of governance mechanisms have been established to guide and oversee family violence prevention and early intervention effort in Aboriginal communities in Victoria, and these are outlined in Box 1. The Dhelk Dja governance structure is presented in Figure 5.

Box 1: Governance of family violence prevention and early intervention in Aboriginal communities

The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum leads the strategic work to implement the Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families 2018-2028 agreement and subsequent rolling action plans, with the guiding principle of self-determination. Membership comprises the chairpersons of the 11 Dhelk Dja Regional Action Groups, CEOs of family violence funded ACCOs and representatives from relevant Victorian government departments.

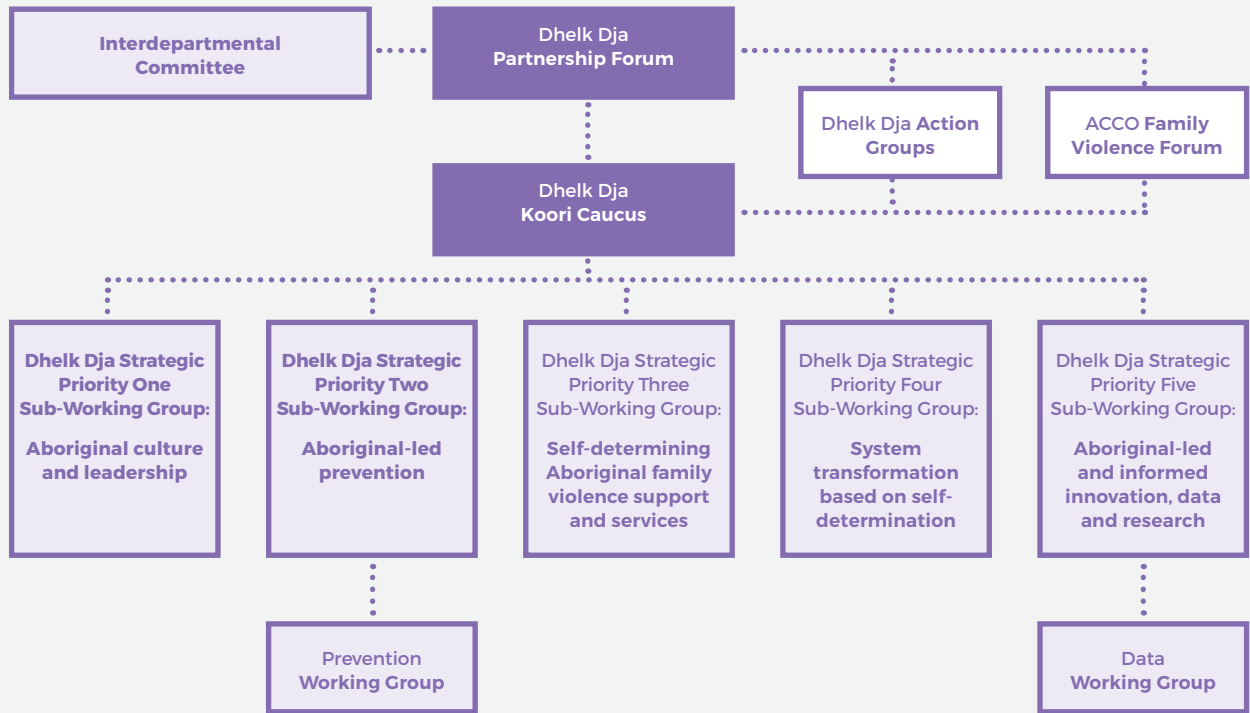
The Dhelk Dja Strategic Priority Two Sub-Working Group: Aboriginal-led Prevention is a working group of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum that leads and oversees the work under Strategic Priority Two of Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way. The group is co-led by a nominated member of the Koori Caucus and Family Safety Victoria's Aboriginal Strategy Unit. The group meets quarterly, and membership is open to any member of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum.

The ACCO Family Violence Sector Forum sits under the Dhelk Dja governance structure and is currently co-chaired by the CEO of the VACCA and the director of the Centre for Workforce Excellence Unit, Family Safety Victoria. It brings together the CEOs of all family violence funded ACCOs, Dhelk Dja regional coordinators and government representatives from Family Safety Victoria and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to ensure all family violence services and responses for Aboriginal people are developed in a culturally safe way.

The Primary Prevention Sector Reference Group supports the government's accountability for the broader family violence primary prevention reforms, under the 10-year Free from Violence strategy. This advisory group meets quarterly and provides strategic advice to the Victorian Government on any current and emerging issues for the implementation of the reforms. Membership comprises Victorian Government departments and non-government agencies whose core business includes primary prevention of family violence, including those that have specific expertise in Aboriginal self-determination.

The **Partnership Forum on Closing the Gap Implementation** is a forum being set up to partner with the government in the decision-making process surrounding the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, consistent with Victoria's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. Membership will comprise an ACCO representative from each sector that covers the National Agreement targets and action areas, Aboriginal governance forum delegates and senior departmental executives from all Victorian Government departments.

Figure 5: Dhelk Dja governance map



Source: Family Safety Victoria

1. There is a wide range of effective prevention and early intervention initiatives being led by Victorian Aboriginal communities

In our consultations, stakeholders spoke of the longstanding nature of prevention work in Aboriginal communities, much of which predates Victoria's substantial history of broader effort to prevent family violence and violence against women. Aboriginal stakeholders expressed some disappointment that this rich history of Aboriginal-led prevention hasn't always been acknowledged. This is in part because of the distinct approach in Aboriginal communities (described in Box 2), which may not always be recognised as formal family violence prevention work.

Box 2: Distinct approach to family violence primary prevention and early intervention in Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal-led family violence primary prevention and early intervention efforts differ from mainstream approaches in three main respects:

Impacts of colonisation as a key driver of family violence: While mainstream prevention models target gender equality as the primary driver for family violence, Aboriginal-led responses also strongly focus on the legacy of colonisation, combined with the impact of continuing discrimination – as reflected in Our Watch's Changing the Picture framework (see Figure 10 later). Aboriginal stakeholders spoke about some discomfort with the structured gendered analysis that underpins mainstream prevention efforts because it doesn't sit comfortably with the Aboriginal communities' inclusive view of family and culture, explaining that while this doesn't mean gender is irrelevant, it is only one element as the focus is on keeping families together.

Family violence prevention as part of a holistic approach to wellbeing: ACCOs consulted for this report explained that their central focus is on cultural strengthening, connectedness and cultural identity with family and community. This holistic approach to prevention is directed at broad community health and wellbeing outcomes, where family violence is one of a number of areas addressed, and messages on family violence are not always explicit. The focus is on healing all the factors that contribute to family violence and collectively aiming to prevent it, and as a result much of the work that occurs is not formally recognised as family violence prevention. Stakeholders also described that their approach focused much more strongly on the whole of community, including men who are using violence. Providing holistic, culturally responsive, competent and safe wraparound services is a critical approach to all prevention and early intervention work undertaken by ACCOs.

Integrated approach to family violence primary prevention, early intervention and response in Aboriginal communities: Aboriginal-led prevention efforts are often integrated with early intervention, response, and recovery. One stakeholder explained that primary prevention in the Aboriginal community cannot be easily separated, the way it is in the mainstream model, given the significant intergenerational impacts of colonisation, and the historical and ongoing experience of violence and systemic racism in the community. A whole-of-community engagement model is used to raise awareness, address drivers, identify family violence and support victim survivors while engaging with those who use violence – addressing all the factors an individual and family are experiencing. Again, the integrated approach has a strong focus on cultural healing using group and trauma work with men, women and children.

Source: Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor based on information provided through consultations

The Royal Commission recognised the strong history of Aboriginal community-led efforts to prevent and respond to family violence in Victoria. It acknowledged¹⁵ that one of the key outcomes identified in the mid-term evaluation of the Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a Safer Future for Indigenous Families and Communities 10-Year Plan 2008–2018 was the reduction in stigma associated with family violence. This had been achieved through community-led education and prevention programs over the 12 years leading up to the Royal Commission. It is clear from our consultations and the examples of community initiatives that we have seen that this work has continued strongly because it is being delivered in a wide variety of settings across the state and with different groups within communities.

There are numerous examples of excellent Aboriginal community-led prevention and early intervention initiatives to address family violence – many of which have been featured elsewhere.¹⁶ In this report we highlight six specific initiatives aligned with the primary prevention strategies for Aboriginal communities identified in the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework (see Table 1).¹⁷ While we have presented these as examples of individual prevention strategies, we note that all the initiatives sit across multiple strategies and that the strategies themselves are mutually reinforcing.

Table 1: Aboriginal-led community initiatives aligned with the six primary prevention strategies from the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework

Prevention strategy	Example community initiative*
Community information and education	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service's school education program (see Box 3)
Cultural strengthening	Dardi Munwurro's 'Aboriginal men taking responsibility and being part of the solution' project (see Box 4)
Family strengthening	Victorian Aboriginal Community Service Association Limited's Resilience Camps (see Box 5)
Raising community awareness	Mullum Mullum's Ochre Program (see Box 6)
Responding to grief and trauma	Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative's Cultural Therapeutic Support Program (previously known as the Strong Culture, Strong Family program) (see Box 7)
Self-esteem and resilience building	Djirra's Young Luv workshop (see Box 8) VACCA's Young Koorie Women's Dance Movez Project (see Box 9)

* Funded since the Royal Commission

Box 3: Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service's (VALS) school education program

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service is delivering a community education program for Aboriginal young people on developing strong and healthy relationships. The program covers topics including respecting yourself and your partner, consent and safe sex, and young people and intervention orders. To date, nine sessions have been delivered at a high school and an Aboriginal youth rehabilitation centre, with further sessions scheduled for the second half of 2022.

The workshops use a culturally informed approach to develop young people's knowledge and understanding of healthy relationships. Yarning circles, smaller break-out groups and case studies are used to prompt a nuanced discussion, not direct young people towards 'right answers'. Workshops have been designed as a series of three to five sessions at each location, to allow young people to grow more comfortable with the format, develop relationships with each other, and progressively build their understanding of healthy relationships. Sessions hosted in a rehabilitation centre have used informal formats, such as cooking classes, to create safe, non-intimidating spaces for young people to discuss and share their experiences of relationships. A survey of participants found that young people found the workshops a positive learning experience and felt more connected to other Aboriginal young people after the sessions.

A Blak Wattle analysis of the program has made recommendations for improving its effectiveness. These include improving engagement with the site (schools and centres) to tailor the design of sessions. A key recommendation is to find funding to increase the duration of the program – a four-to-five-week program is only just enough time for young people to develop trust in facilitators and begin to share more openly.

Source: Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Box 4: Dardi Munwurro's 'Aboriginal men taking responsibility and being part of the solution' project

Dardi Munwurro, in partnership with the Melbourne Storm Rugby League Club, the Collingwood Football Club and ACCOs across Victoria, created an educational program delivered by Aboriginal men for Aboriginal men. The program consisted of information sessions and conversations about preventing family violence, based on the key principles of Dardi Munwurro's healing programs: Strong Spirit and Strong Culture, Taking Responsibility and Healthy Relationships. It also formed discussions at Dardi Munwurro's annual Victorian Aboriginal Men's Gathering held in Melbourne as a culturally safe space for men across Australia to come together to discuss key issues affecting Aboriginal communities.

Approximately 12,000 people participated over the two years that it was funded, with the need to pivot to online delivery of the forums. It was accessible to all community members including women, children, young people, Elders and families. The program was evaluated in 2020-21 and the key outcomes included strengthened cultural connection and identity, increased awareness and understanding of issues and violence in communities, and increased awareness of local supports and services.

Source: Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping project and FSV and Dhelk Dja Action Group Presentation

Box 5: Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited's Resilience Camps

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited's Resilience Camps are camps designed to strengthen family relationships and culture, encourage healthy communication and build resilience among families. Seven family resilience camps, each three days in duration, were run over 2019 and 2021 across the North-Metro, West-Metro, Ballarat and Shepparton regions.

More than 70 families participated in cultural activities such as yarning circles, arts and crafts, guest speakers, games and fun family outings. One camp was dedicated to families that had children with disability. The demand for this initiative was so high that they had to cease advertising.

An evaluation of the camps was completed in 2020–21. The evaluation showed that the project contributed to strengthened family relationships, increased understanding of resilience, leadership and communicating emotions, strengthened connection to culture, and broke down gender stereotypes. Participants also reported acquiring a wider knowledge of services and support available to them. An unexpected positive outcome was the impact of families meeting young women from the Northern Territory, and the cultural exchange this offered, by sharing different experiences of different Aboriginal nations.

Source: Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping project and [FSV and Dhelk Dja Action Group Presentation](#)

Box 6: Mullum Mullum's Ochre Program

The Ochre Program, facilitated by the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (Eastern Metro), is a program of projects centred on raising community awareness of what respectful relationships are, through prevention-themed workshops and conversations. Beginning in 2019, the program provides separate sacred spaces for men and women's business where conversations are facilitated by the appropriate cultural workers from both the Mullum staff and guest speakers. The program also enables facilitators to identify any concerning circumstances and support and refer participants using violence who are contemplating behaviour change. The Ochre Program also aims to develop free from family violence ambassadors who will uphold the messaging of respect within families and communities.

Eight to 12 men and 50–65 community members participated during the first two years it was funded. A 2021 evaluation found evidence that the project contributed to a safe space, enhanced referral pathways and partnerships and that participants had increased an understanding of respectful behaviour, relationships and factors contributing to family violence. The project was given extended funding under the Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund.

Source: Family Violence Mapping Matrix and [Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place website](#)

Box 7: Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative's Cultural Therapeutic Support Program

Previously known as the Strong Culture, Strong Family program, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative's Cultural Therapeutic Support Program was a family-based primary prevention program delivered in the Grampians region from 2018 to 2020. The program consisted of a series of events and camps facilitated for approximately 250 people, with the aim of strengthening the local Aboriginal communities' connection to their land and traditional way of life. There were whole-of-family events, with separate events for men, women and children (men's business, women's business and kids' business). 'Healthy relationships' was the key focus, along with cultural connection and pride. Elders and community members were consulted during the design phase of this trauma-informed cultural healing approach to address attitudes and behaviours, and this involvement was identified as a key advantage for the program.

Source: Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping project and [FSV and Dhelk Dja Action Group Presentation](#)

Box 8: Djirra's Young Luv workshop

Djirra is an ACCO with more than 20 years' experience accompanying Aboriginal women, and their children, on their individual journeys to safety and wellbeing. Djirra delivers holistic, self-determined and culturally safe specialist family violence services and early intervention and prevention programs. Djirra also amplifies the voice of Aboriginal women through its advocacy and campaigning for system-wide change.

Young Luv is a workshop for young Aboriginal women (13–18 years old) that reinforces concepts of healthy and respectful relationships within a framework of Aboriginal culture, experiences and values. The workshops are designed and facilitated by young Aboriginal women for young Aboriginal women. The workshops are place-based and are delivered across Victoria in collaboration with local ACCOs, mainstream organisations and schools. Young Luv began in 2015 and, after a series of short-term grants, secured long-term multi-year funding through the Department of Justice and Community Safety in 2017. This sustained funding has been key to enable the program to adapt and grow in scope.

The objectives of the program are to:

- > provide a culturally safe space for young Aboriginal women to connect to culture and community
- > raise awareness around family violence, gender-based violence and unhealthy relationships
- > provide tools to identify warning signs and forms of family violence and unhealthy relationships
- > create a local support network to learn from and go to for advice and help, if needed
- > challenge misconceptions about Aboriginal women and family violence and to shift attitudes and beliefs

A key success factor of the program has been the design of culturally informed, inclusive and engaging content and resources that validate and celebrate cultural identity and deliver educational information in a positive, age-appropriate way. These resources include presentations, zines¹⁸, toolkits and two successful animation films that provide Aboriginal women with culturally specific messaging around healthy relationships and family violence. Recently, Young Luv has also moved into the digital space, designing and launching the Young Luv Instagram Campaign. This social media campaign responds to the need to engage a younger audience through different platforms and mediums that are responsive to the realities, needs and interests of young Aboriginal women (see illustration in Figure 9, later).

Whether in the workshops or through its online presence, a core element of Young Luv is to create a culturally safe space for young Aboriginal women to draw on culture as a protective factor and to be equipped with knowledge and tools and the confidence to challenge unhealthy behaviours and relationships.

There has been overwhelmingly positive feedback from young Aboriginal women attending Young Luv workshops. A recent review found 99 per cent of participants reported knowing more about types of violence and warning signs, 97 per cent reported understanding more about healthy and positive relationships and 99 per cent of participants felt better equipped to challenge unhealthy relationships

Source: Djirra

Box 9: Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency's Young Koorie Women's Dance Movez Project

The Young Koorie Women's Dance Movez Project was developed by VACCA in partnership with Indigenous Hip Hop Projects. This project was developed for young women aged 10–24 years in the Southern Metropolitan area, currently in or previously in out-of-home care, who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement from education or employment, in contact with the justice system and at risk of family violence. Indigenous Hip Hop Projects held weekly Aboriginal cultural and contemporary dance and yarning circles integrated with family violence prevention messaging, with the aim of providing the young women with knowledge and skills so they are less likely to enter violent relationships and more likely to seek help.

Around 15 young Aboriginal women participated in the project, which was given pilot funding from the Preventing the Cycle of Violence Aboriginal Fund. An informal evaluation found that the women who took part felt a strengthened cultural connection, increased knowledge of early indicators of family violence and of what makes a healthy, respectful relationship and where to get culturally safe help and supports. It also contributed to self-esteem and resilience building.

Source: *Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping project* and **FSV and Dhelk Dja Action Group Presentation**

Government efforts to support Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention

Prior to the Royal Commission, government support for family violence prevention and early intervention efforts in Aboriginal communities was provided primarily through grants under the Community Initiatives Fund (at the time of the Royal Commission grants consisted of \$59,000 per year for each Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group) and under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (for example, Koori Community Safety Grants). Since then, there have been concerted efforts by government to strengthen support for Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention initiatives in the family violence area, including:

- > Aboriginal-led prevention as one of five priority areas under the **Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families Agreement 2018–2028** and establishment of the Aboriginal-led prevention working group (Dhelk Dja Strategic Priority Two Sub-Working Group) to progress delivery of relevant initiatives in the first Dhelk Dja action plan, including consideration of prevention funding priorities.
- > An increase in the **Community Initiatives Fund** (administered by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing) to \$100,000 per region per year, with funding allocations determined by each Dhelk Dja Action Group based on applications from local Aboriginal community groups and organisations and the priorities in their communities. For the 2022–23 funding round, the allocation was increased to \$200,000.
- > Creation of the **Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund 2018–2021** (administered initially by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and transferred to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing), which provides \$3.2 million for 14 initiatives led by 13 Aboriginal organisations. Funding was provided to trial, test and evaluate new and innovative primary prevention initiatives for Aboriginal people and their communities under the Free From Violence First Action Plan.
- > Creation of the **Preventing the Cycle of Violence Aboriginal Fund 2018–2020** (administered by Family Safety Victoria), which provides \$2.7 million over two years to 11 Aboriginal-led organisations and community groups. Funding was targeted at family violence prevention and early intervention projects that 'aimed to build respectful, culturally rich, strong and healthy relationships for Aboriginal children, families and Elders'.¹⁹

- > Establishment of the **Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund** (administered by Family Safety Victoria in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing), which provided a total of \$18.2 million over two years (2021–22 and 2022–23) for eligible Aboriginal organisations and community groups to deliver tailored responses for victim survivors and people who use violence. This was made up of an initial allocation of \$14.2 million in March 2021 to 46 projects across four streams: frontline family violence services; holistic healing; preventing the cycle of violence; and workforce capability. A further \$4 million was allocated in May 2022 to 34 projects across three further priority areas identified by the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus: Aboriginal frontline family violence services; working with male victims of family violence; and preventing the cycle of violence – strengthening Aboriginal families. Across the two funding allocations, 16 prevention and early intervention projects were funded (representing 29 per cent of all projects through the fund).
- > Under the **Aboriginal Justice Agreement** (administered by the Department of Justice and Community Safety), longer term funding has been secured for a range of prevention initiatives delivered by Djirra and Dardi Munwurro, including the Koori Women’s Place. The department has also consolidated its funding agreements with Aboriginal-led organisations so they have a single agreement covering all initiatives they are funded to deliver, with streamlined reporting requirements.

The increased funding and additional funding streams for prevention and early intervention have supported a wide range of projects across different communities, settings and cohorts, and have also enabled multi-year funding for some initiatives (two years under the Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund and three to four years under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement) more recently. There has also been a range of activity to evaluate initiatives and build evaluation capacity, which is discussed later in this report. A further recent key piece of work is mapping of Aboriginal-led prevention activities that will allow clearer analysis of the coverage and gaps in prevention programming to date.

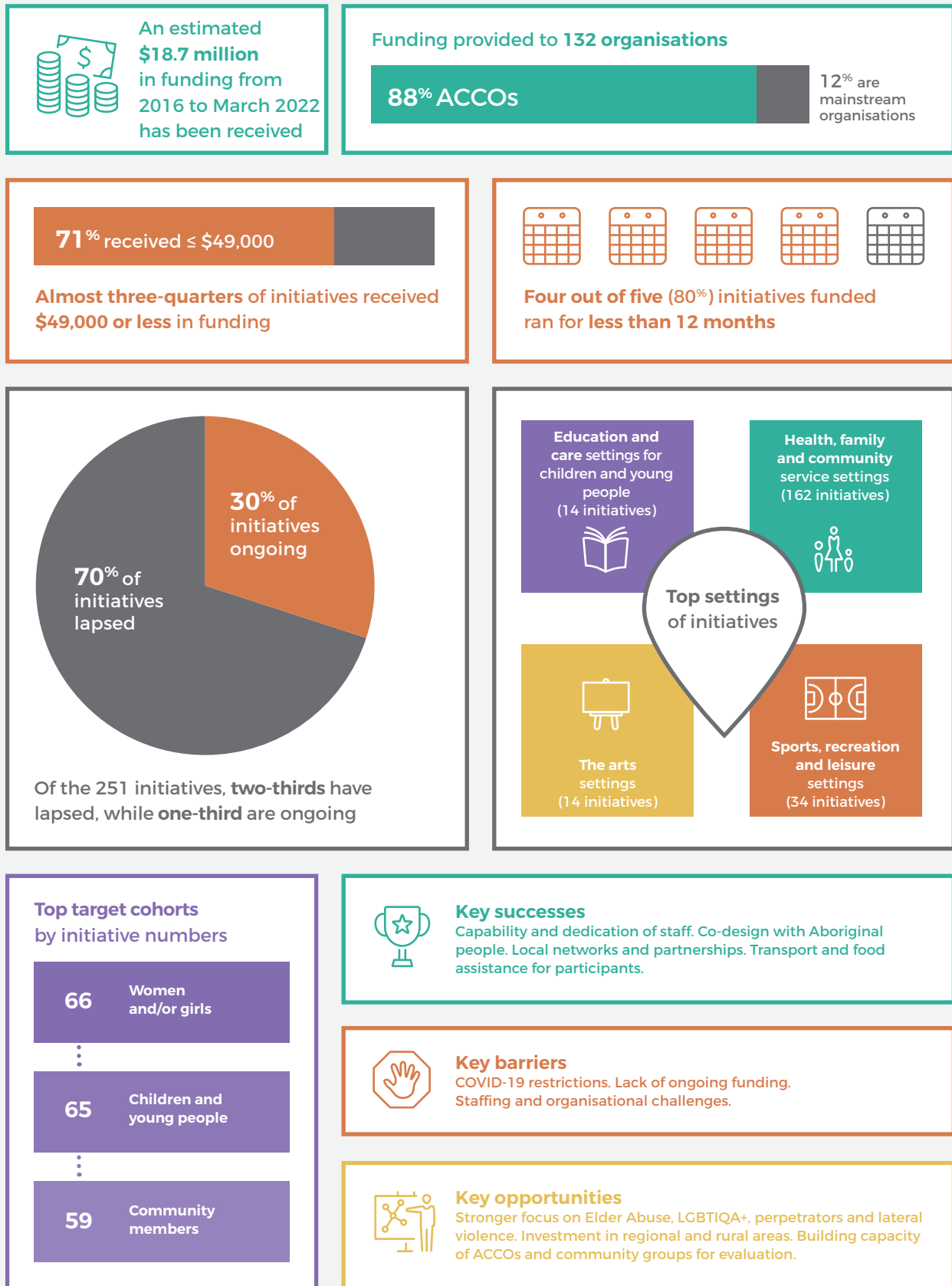
Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping Project 2021–2022

Fulfilling a commitment under Dhelk Dja Action Plan Strategic Priority Two, Respect Victoria (in partnership with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing’s Office for Family Violence and Coordination and Family Safety Victoria) commissioned a comprehensive mapping of Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives delivered from 2016 to March 2021. This work was intended to provide the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum with a strategic overview of primary and secondary prevention activity and investment, to identify gaps and opportunities for effective prevention initiatives in Aboriginal communities and to contribute to establishing a roadmap for future investment. Deliverables of the project included a mapping report and database of prevention initiatives. We understand that the database is intended to be updated over time to provide Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus with a live resource.

The prevention mapping report notes that the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Education and Training did not contribute to the project and therefore there are likely other relevant initiatives – such as the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service’s school education program outlined in Box 3 above – that are not included. To ensure a complete picture to support the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus in its strategic oversight of family violence prevention, relevant initiatives funded by other areas of government should be included in the database. Key findings from the project are captured in Figure 6.

Figure 6 also shows that more than 250 initiatives have been implemented between 2016 and 2021, with estimated funding of \$18.7 million,²⁰ the majority of which were funded under the Community Initiatives Fund (199 of the 251 initiatives). At the time of conducting the mapping in March 2022, one-third of the initiatives were still operating while two-thirds had finished.

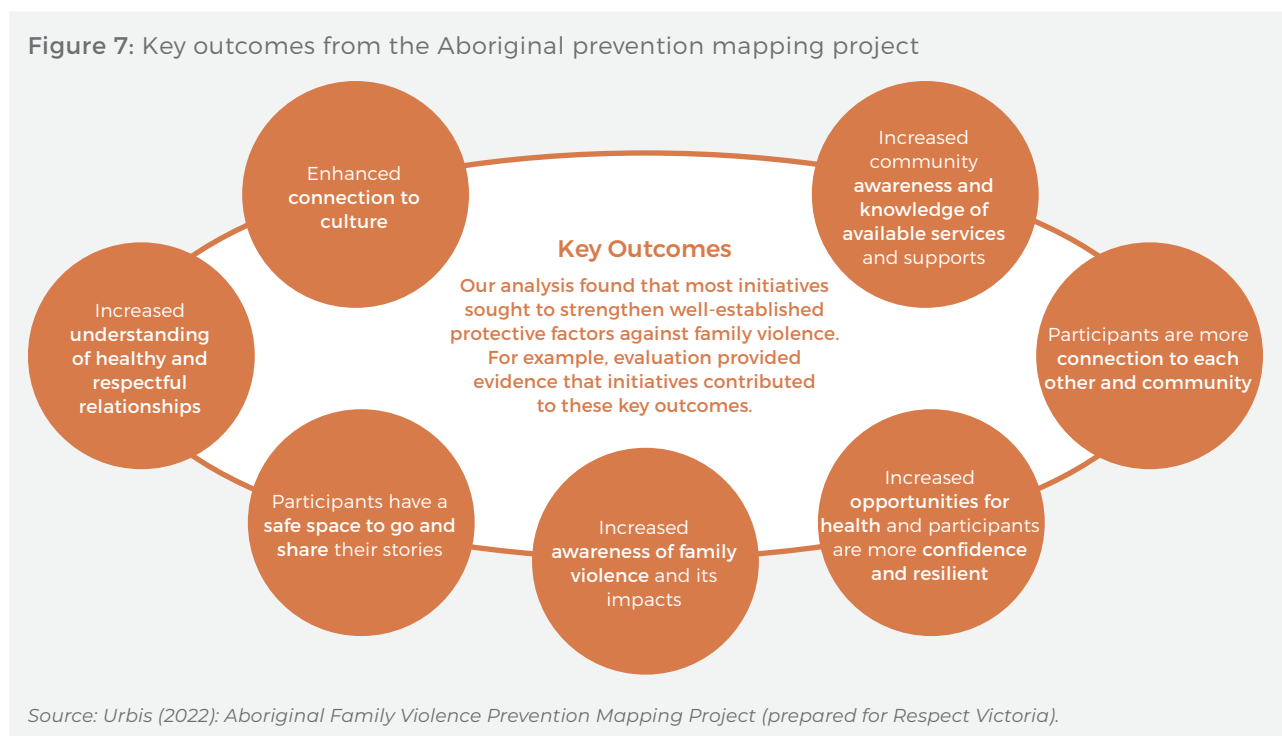
Figure 6: Key findings from the Aboriginal prevention mapping project



Source: Prepared by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor based on findings from the Urbis (2022): Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping Project Final Report.

One positive development supporting government’s commitment to self-determination is that Aboriginal prevention funding is now directed only to Aboriginal-led organisations. As the mapping report found, previous grants had been available to mainstream organisations. Between 2016 and 2022, 12 per cent of organisations funded for Aboriginal prevention projects were mainstream organisations – mostly in the earlier years.

The prevention mapping project identified that 35 of the 251 initiatives (14 per cent) had conducted evaluation activities and that these evaluations provided evidence of common outcomes (see Figure 7).



This work occurred in a challenging context for the family violence prevention sector as a whole in recent years. As Respect Victoria’s 2018–2021 progress report to the Victorian Parliament notes, reports of family violence increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹ Our stakeholder consultations revealed that this surge led to organisations shifting their focus and resources towards more urgent responses to people experiencing or at risk of family violence rather than primary prevention. Pandemic-related restrictions also limited the ability of organisations to deliver face-to-face prevention activities and to engage with communities, although the prevention mapping report identified that many organisations found innovative ways of continuing to engage with communities, including through moving to online or hybrid delivery.

The prevention mapping report also identified a number of challenges and opportunities in progressing prevention work within Aboriginal communities, including:

- > inadequate funding for prevention relative to the size of the problem and a need to address short-term funding and burdensome reporting requirements
- > the need for a stronger focus on some cohorts and forms of violence, in particular elder abuse, violence affecting the LGBTQI+ community, and lateral violence
- > building the capacity of organisations to monitor and evaluate their projects and ensuring that data sovereignty principles are upheld
- > increasing opportunities to celebrate success and achievements in Aboriginal prevention of family violence through strengths-based approaches that facilitate continuous improvement and learning.

Features of good practice

Based on our consultations and analysis provided in a range of other reports,²² several features of best practice in Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention initiatives being delivered in the community emerged. These include:

- > **Multi-layered outreach:** Delivery of broader community programs that are pathways to more targeted, intensive programs where participants need more in-depth support. For example, Djirra runs the broadly accessible Young Luv program, which educates young women on healthy relationships (see Box 8, earlier), and women from this program with greater needs can then access more intensive services such as the Dilly Bag program and the Koori Women's Place. Similarly, Dardi Munwurro runs its Men's Gathering events (see Figure 8) and Brother to Brother line, which can act as a referral pathway through to their other programs, as needed.

Figure 8: Dardi Munwurro's statewide men's gathering event



Source: Flyer and photograph supplied by Dardi Munwurro

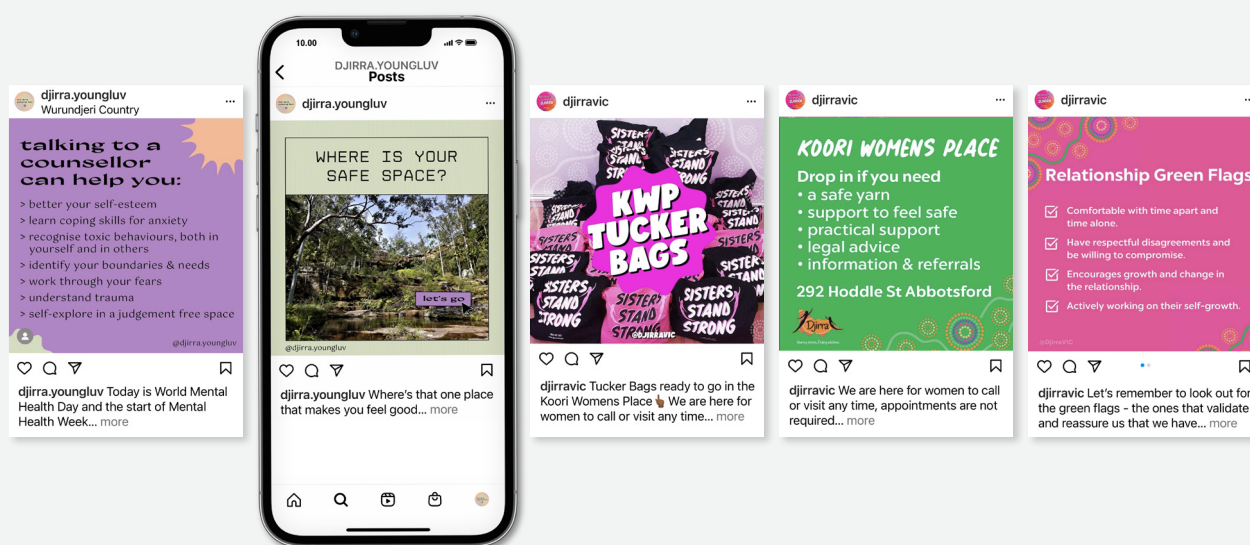
- > **Community-driven design and participation:** Involving local communities, particularly Elders, in identifying needs, and designing and implementing activities is critical to their success. For example, in the evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, program implementation staff identified the involvement of Elders as a key success factor for activities. One stated:

They have times where they [Elders] really lead the camp, the cultural activities, and the conversations with young people ... For me, as someone who's not Indigenous, I'm able to step out and go this actually isn't a conversation for me – Aunty, can you step in and have this conversation? And they're really available to be able to be there for the young people and what they need, and facilitate the cultural activities as well.²³

Another stakeholder noted that involving Elders enormously strengthens their work, with Elders acting as ‘navigators’ for young men, and also helps with modelling respect for Elders within the community. Other programs focused on using female Elders to guide women’s groups, such as the Deep Healing through Cultural Strengthening – Women’s Project implemented by Oonah Health & Community Services Aboriginal Corporation. The project brought together female Aboriginal victim survivors to journey through a process of deep healing with the support of Aboriginal Elders and a professional counsellor experienced in working with Aboriginal communities.

- > **On-Country program delivery:** Activities such as resilience camps and cultural bush walks provide an opportunity to focus on positive change by taking participants out of their regular environment and on to Country to enhance building a strong connection with culture and community. Examples include Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation’s Tracks to Stronger Communities project, which aimed to nurture identity by engaging youth to walk on Country alongside Elders and other community members, and VACCA’s Safe and Strong project, which delivered cultural camps to Aboriginal teenagers living in out-of-home care to support their connection to culture and ability to recognise signs of unhealthy relationships.
- > **Attendance support:** Providing transport and food assistance to participants and other culturally relevant incentives (for example, tickets to attend a Melbourne Storm game as part of Dardi Munwurro’s statewide men’s gathering – see Figure 8 above) helps to enable attendance at family violence prevention events.
- > **Engaging and relevant messaging:** Using culturally relevant messaging for family violence prevention initiatives (for example, ‘Men’s Gathering’ in Figure 8 above and ‘drop in if you need a safe yarn’ in Figure 9 below), with a particular focus on ‘cultural strengthening’ rather than ‘preventing family violence’ can send a positive and inviting message to potential participants. Projects also used modes of messaging that resonated with the audience and popular channels to reach audiences – for example, Djirra’s social media campaigns, which appeal to young people. Other projects harnessed Aboriginal community radio listeners in combination with social media, such as 3KnD Kool ‘N’ Deadly’s Standing Strong Together project, which worked with a team of Aboriginal community members to deliver a one-hour weekly radio and online program with the goal of supporting, educating, informing and changing community attitudes towards family violence.

Figure 9: Djirra’s family violence social media campaigns appealing to younger audiences



Source: Djirra Victoria Instagram accounts @djirraviv and @djirra.youngluv

Work undertaken through the Dhelk Dja and Aboriginal Justice agreements has contributed to a more strategic approach to government investment in community-led prevention and early intervention initiatives since the Royal Commission, and supported a wide array of initiatives across different settings. However, a range of issues and challenges facing organisations leading this work in their communities were raised with us during our consultations. These are consistent with themes identified in the prevention mapping report, and a number of past reports including the Royal Commission's report.

We find that there are a number of areas for further development to better support and position Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention work to achieve the aims of the Dhelk Dja Agreement and the family violence reductions committed to in the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan (2021–23). These areas are outlined in the remainder of this report.

2. There is a need for a more sustained approach to support Aboriginal organisations to apply frameworks and evaluate the outcomes of initiatives

Frameworks guiding family violence prevention and early intervention effort in Aboriginal communities

Organisations we consulted spoke about using a variety of frameworks to guide their work. These included Our Watch's Changing the Picture (see Figure 10), the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework (see Figure 11) and the Nargneit Birrang – Aboriginal Holistic Healing Framework for Family Violence. However, some stakeholders commented that these frameworks lack supporting resources and that organisations are left to work out how to apply them in practice. Certainly, Changing the Picture does not have the same practice tools and resources that accompany Change the Story. Similarly, the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework, while providing a high-level overview of the key considerations and approaches to guide primary prevention effort, does not outline the comprehensive suite of actions needed to address family violence in Aboriginal communities. It also predates the development of Changing the Picture and would benefit from greater alignment with the national framework and subsequent Victorian mainstream prevention frameworks such as the Free From Violence strategy.

A refresh of the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework is a key commitment under the first action plan of the Dhelk Dja Agreement (see also Table 2 in section 5 of this report). We agree that enhancing the strategic approach to family violence prevention in Aboriginal communities would be supported through an updated Aboriginal primary prevention framework. This will ensure there is a shared understanding across government, Aboriginal-led organisations and communities about what primary prevention is in the Aboriginal context, where the priorities are, and how this work intersects with or sits alongside mainstream prevention effort.

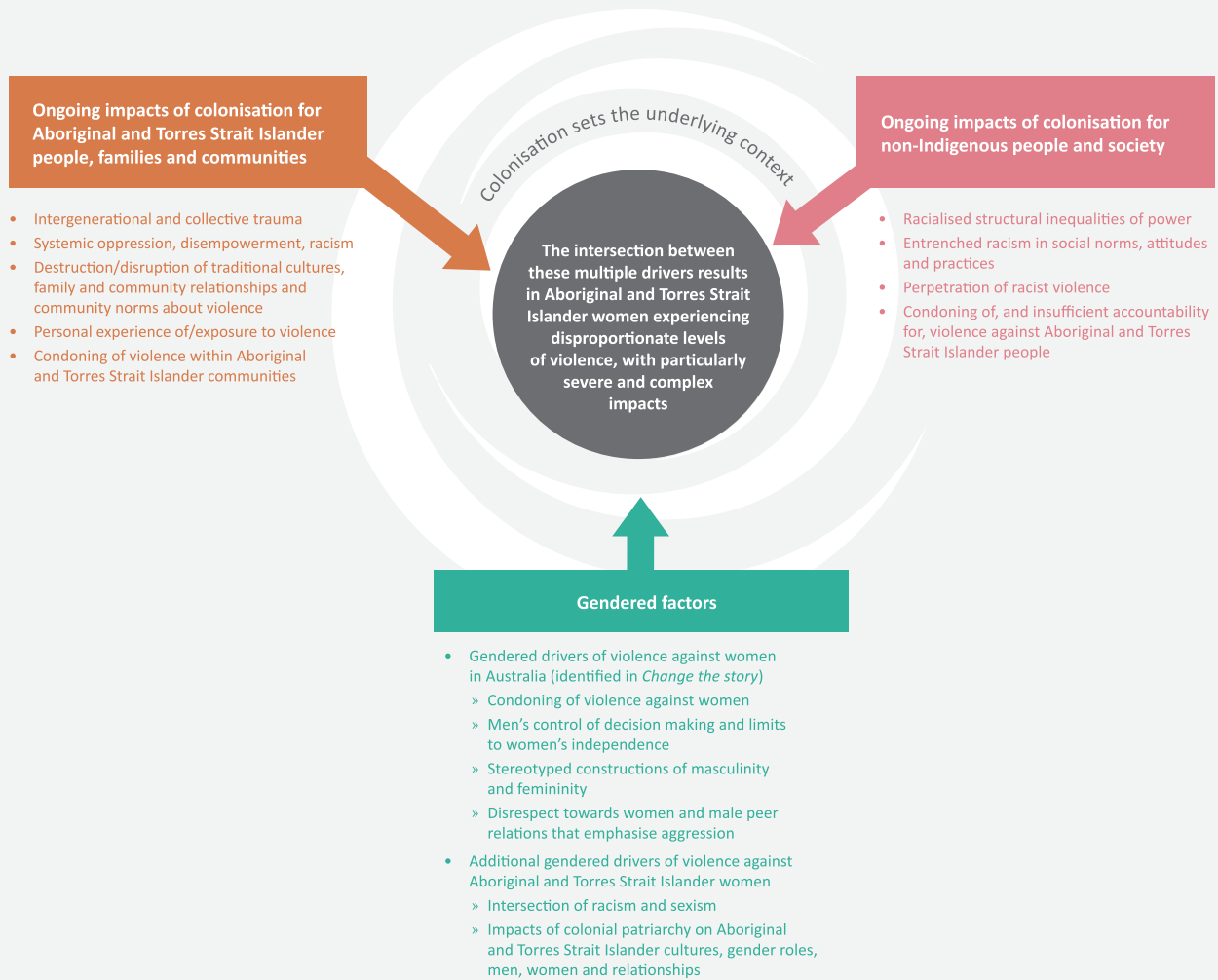
While Dhelk Dja has a Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan²⁴ that includes a high-level theory of change across the agreement's five strategic priorities and associated actions, it does not provide a detailed articulation of the different types of prevention activity needed to achieve the strategy's intended outcomes. Without outlining how outputs and activities feed into the desired outcomes, it is not user-friendly for small community organisations looking to define their program logic and how they fit into the state-level framework for preventing family violence.

Our companion report, Primary Prevention System Architecture, found the need for a clearly articulated theory of change and a strategic operating framework for the broad prevention system to give effect to the Victorian Government's Free From Violence strategy. The planned update to the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework should include a similar approach that is conducted in tandem with the mainstream work. This would provide an opportunity to develop a much clearer and more detailed operational strategy to accompany the high-level Aboriginal-specific framework, which sets out essential actions, provides a theory of change and establishes roles and responsibilities between mainstream and Aboriginal-led organisations. The theory of change will also be important for informing a future investment strategy as discussed in the next chapter.

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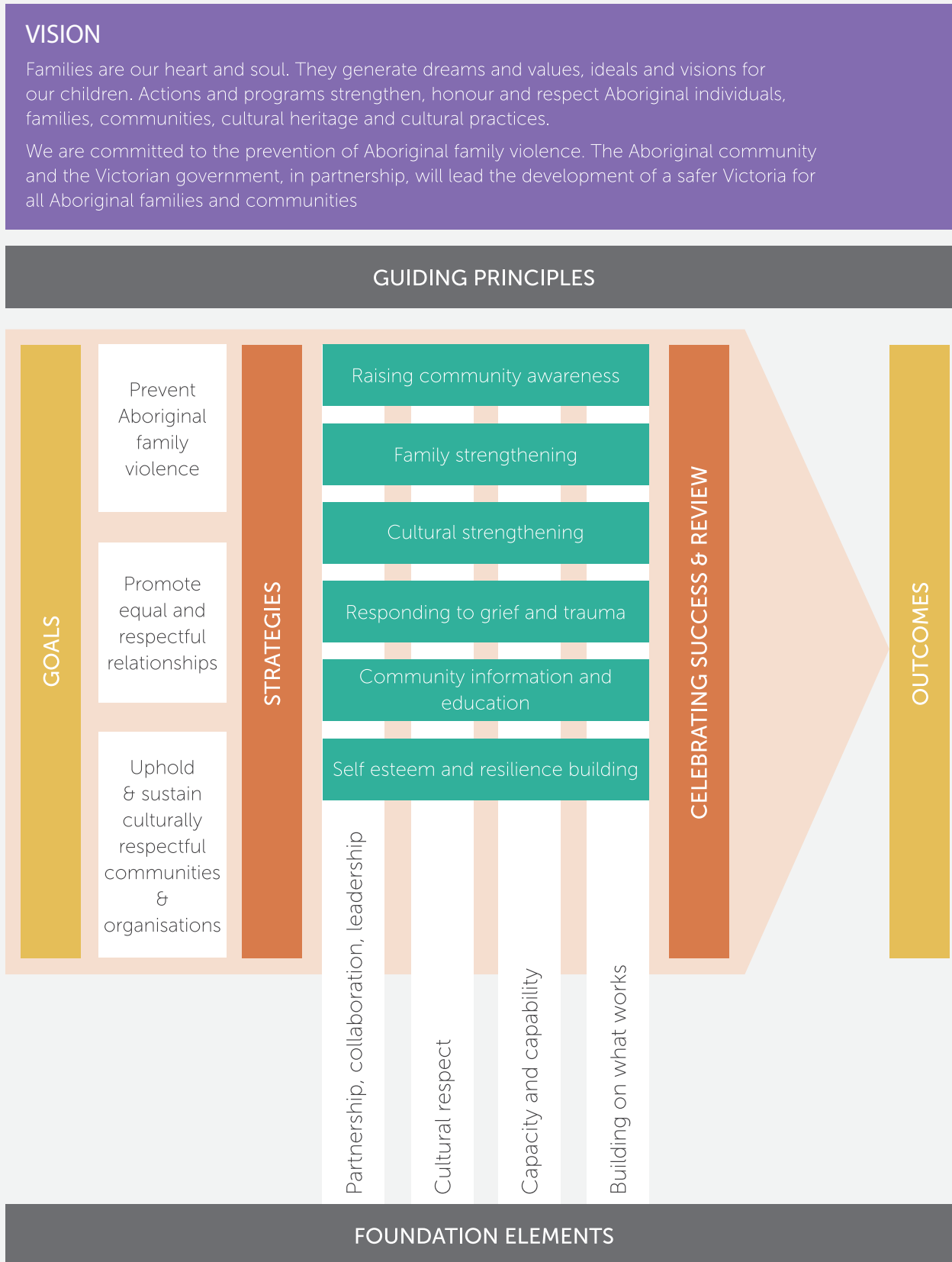
Stakeholders highlighted that the process of developing an Aboriginal prevention framework (and associated materials) needs to be led from within Aboriginal communities. We agree and note that a lead Aboriginal organisation (or group of organisations) will likely have to be funded to undertake this work on behalf of Dhelk Dja, in partnership with Respect Victoria and Family Safety Victoria. We also note that there is likely to be substantial value in engaging Our Watch in this process to utilise its expertise and ensure alignment with the national framework Changing the Picture.

Figure 10: Changing the Picture’s explanatory model of the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children



Source: Our Watch (2018): *Changing the Picture: A national Resource to Support the Prevention of Violence Against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and their Children*, p.14.

Figure 11: Framework for the prevention of Aboriginal family violence in Victoria



Source: Department of Health and Human Services (2012): Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework, p.17.

Operationalising prevention and early intervention frameworks

In our consultations, stakeholders raised that individual Aboriginal organisations often don't have the time, resourcing or specialist prevention expertise to operationalise the frameworks that exist. Prevention organisations such as Respect Victoria, Our Watch, Safe and Equal and government departments and agencies such as the Office for Prevention of Family Violence and Coordination and Family Safety Victoria (both within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing) can contribute specialist prevention expertise and provide assistance. However, stakeholders have reinforced that for efforts to be sustainable, culturally relevant and reflective of local needs, the process has to be led from within Aboriginal communities. Key elements of operationalising frameworks include:

- > designing initiatives that address the drivers identified in the framework and theory of change, and creating materials and resources to support implementation that are informed by evidence-based practice and tailored to local community needs
- > training, support and guidance for staff delivering initiatives
- > collecting and analysing data on initiatives being delivered, including undertaking program monitoring and evaluations to tailor delivery, support reporting back to funders, and contribute to the evidence base of effective approaches to inform future efforts.

The availability of data to inform efforts and evaluation capacity are two areas that were repeatedly identified during our consultations as needing further development.

Availability of data to guide efforts and support strategic investment

Access to data and data sovereignty (ownership of data and narratives around meaning) continue to be of significant concern to Aboriginal stakeholders. Inadequate data collection was identified as a key theme by the Royal Commission. The MARAM Framework²⁵ also highlights the need to strengthen data on the prevalence and experience of family violence among Aboriginal communities. Seven years on from the Royal Commission, organisations consulted indicated that better data is still needed. As the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation explained:

... members have expressed that data relating to family violence in Aboriginal communities needs to be stronger, and better reflect the wide range of experiences of victims and people who perpetuate the violence – including the prevalence of family violence committed by non-Aboriginal men towards Aboriginal women. Family violence datasets need to be broadened to include causal data and factors leading up to family violence incidents such as alcohol and other drug use so that funding can be allocated to services that address the factors that lead to family violence.

ACCOs consulted for this report repeatedly raised that they do not have visibility of family violence figures or other relevant information for their community/region. They wished to know where the family violence 'hotspots' are to support additional intervention activities in those areas. Just as importantly, they wanted to see if family violence rates were lower in certain communities where prevention initiatives have taken place to understand what is working effectively. The Crime Statistics Agency released police family violence incident data for Aboriginal people for the first time in September 2020, with a range of data available by local government area and government regions.²⁶ Some organisations have reported that the Crime Statistics Agency portal is difficult to navigate, and there is a need to bring together relevant data in an accessible way for use by Dhelk Dja members to support their strategic decisions about prevention and early intervention priorities.

Aside from the need for more in-depth data on the incidence and drivers of family violence in Aboriginal communities, the prevention mapping project highlighted that only 33 (13 per cent) of the 251 family violence prevention initiatives in Victorian Aboriginal communities collected data on participation or initiative reach. Challenges for smaller organisations in collecting and recording initiative data are further described in this and the following chapter.

Family Safety Victoria has funded a position to support Dhelk Dja members' access to data, and the data working group of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum has been developing a suite of data aligned to the strategy that will be presented to the forum at an upcoming meeting. At the time of report consultations, the Family Safety Victoria funded role had not been filled, and while dedicated capacity within government to support Dhelk Dja is important, improving the provision of data across government (see also section 5 of this report) and supporting Aboriginal organisations to collect and make use of data is also critical. In progressing work under Dhelk Dja's strategic priority 5 (Aboriginal-led and -informed innovation, data and research) consideration needs to be given to how each of these areas is delivered, including the funding requirements to develop internal data capacity within organisations.

Relates to
action 5

Within Aboriginal communities, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the peak body for Aboriginal health and wellbeing organisations, is planning to roll out a new platform to streamline and improve the quality of its members' data:

The vision is to implement a Data Lake, through the Deadly Data™ portal that will bring together data from varying environments and will supply a source of truth for advocacy on behalf of Community. The data (aggregated and de-identified) will enable VACCHO and Members to tell stories with a community lens to support better health outcomes for the community and ensure data stays in Community and remains under community control.

This appears to be an enormously promising initiative, and consideration could be given to how family violence-related data can be incorporated to improve its availability for the community.

Evaluation of Aboriginal prevention and early intervention initiatives

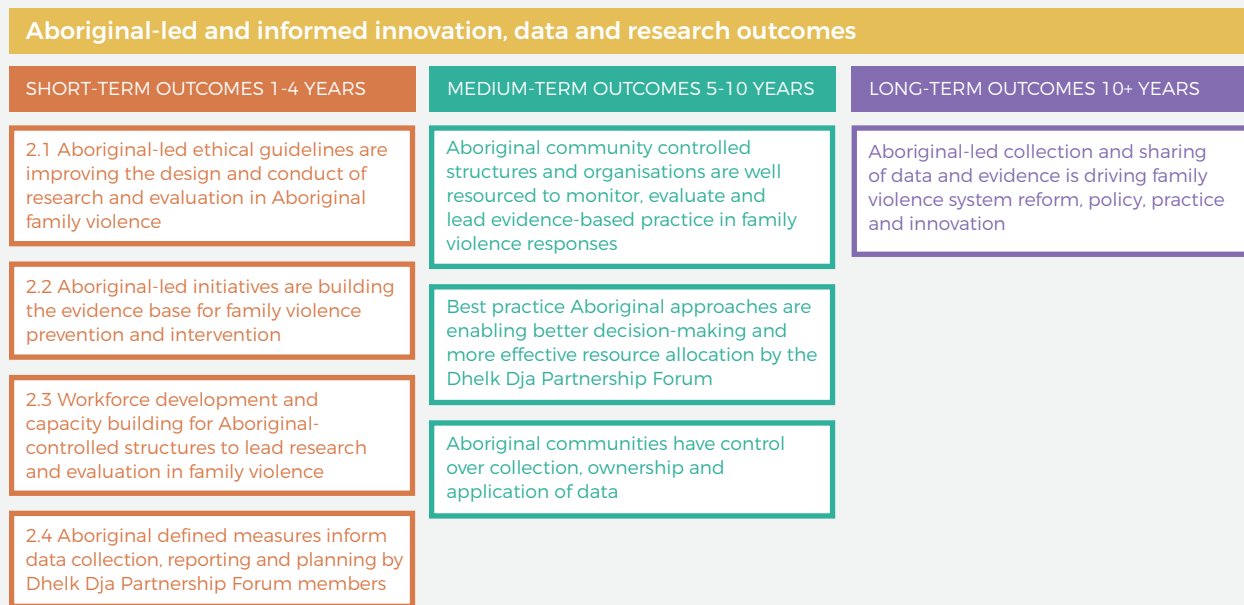
Understanding what works, what doesn't and why, and adapting programming accordingly, along with documenting and communicating achievements and lessons learned, is crucial for improving program quality and promoting better outcomes for communities.

The Royal Commission recommended that all family violence interventions in the Victorian Aboriginal community be evaluated in a culturally appropriate manner.²⁷ Government's approach to implementing this recommendation included:

- > developing the Dhelk Dja Monitoring Evaluation and Accountability Plan, which establishes outcomes for data and research (see Figure 12)
- > undertaking evaluation and capacity building with recipients of the Preventing the Cycle of Violence (PCV) Aboriginal Fund and the Community Initiatives Fund described below
- > establishing a dedicated Aboriginal data position to support the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum in accessing and interpreting family violence data.

This work builds on evaluation and capacity building for a range of Aboriginal family violence initiatives funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety under the Koori Community Safety Grants Program in 2016.

Figure 12: Dhelk Dja’s innovation, data and research outcomes



Source: Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan, p. 16. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-monitoring-evaluation-and-accountability-plan.

In the most recent efforts, Family Safety Victoria engaged evaluation company Urbis Pty Ltd in partnership with Aboriginal consultants Karen Milward and Yatu Widders-Hunt to build the capacity of ACCOs implementing programs under the PCV and Community Initiatives Fund.²⁸ This included 11 projects implemented under PCV and 22 under the Community Initiatives Fund, which ran for three years. The evaluation capacity building originally took the form of in-person workshops but shifted online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the project, the evaluation team supported ACCOs to design and deliver monitoring and evaluation activities such as designing a program logic, carrying out data collection and writing evaluation reports. An Aboriginal consultant involved in the project described how it had been successful in breaking through some of ACCOs’ initial apprehension about evaluation by demystifying technical jargon:

To get them to understand what a program logic is, we put a cultural lens on it rather than using terms such as ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’. The hardest thing is that no one explains what they are in laymen’s terms, so people were nervous about being involved in an evaluation project.

Other achievements included ‘building capacity on how to record data, not just record numbers but getting real data from participants and stakeholders’ and redesigning government evaluation templates to make them more accessible and meaningful to Aboriginal stakeholders. Participants received three rounds of feedback on their evaluation activities and reports.

While this project was valuable in building awareness of evaluation within the organisations involved, this and other past efforts have been time-limited and sporadic, and it is challenging for small community-based organisations to undertake quality monitoring and evaluation without ongoing support. Reflective of these challenges, of the 251 prevention initiatives included in the prevention mapping project, only 35 had been evaluated, which represents a missed opportunity to contribute to the evidence base of effective approaches. While some larger organisations such as Djirra, VACCA, and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation have internal monitoring and evaluation teams and are better positioned to undertake this work, many smaller organisations do not. As one Aboriginal stakeholder explained, ‘Even though you can build capacity, people just want to deliver, not evaluate’. This stakeholder

suggested that it would be more strategic to fund Aboriginal organisations to commission and manage independent external evaluations, which would reduce the risk of distracting core staff from program implementation. However, other organisations want to build evaluation capability internally.

Program implementation staff do not necessarily need to know how to write an evaluation report; however, they do need to know how to manage and use evaluations to improve outcomes for their organisations and clients. Organisations also need to 'own' the evaluation process to ensure the methodology is culturally appropriate, and that the knowledge gathered will be useful for Aboriginal communities. At the program development stage, they also need to set the foundation for the evaluability of their project by establishing a clear program logic with outcome indicators, and by collecting consistent data over the life cycle of the project. This ensures there is a vision of what success looks like for the initiative, and how to measure it. The Dhelk Dja Monitoring Evaluation and Accountability Plan is clear that delivering the outcomes presented in Figure 12 (see above) is dependent on adequate funding being provided to build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations' 'data systems, infrastructure, capacity and governance' and to 'support achievement of an evidence base for programs'.²⁹

Supporting Aboriginal organisations to apply prevention and early intervention frameworks and evaluate the outcomes of initiatives

We find that there is a need for more sustained capacity building and support for ACCOs in applying prevention and early intervention frameworks, collecting data on and monitoring implementation of initiatives and strengthening evaluation of outcomes. This needs to be undertaken within ACCOs, supported by long-term funding and a mandate to promote quality implementation and workforce development across the family violence sector in Victorian Aboriginal communities.

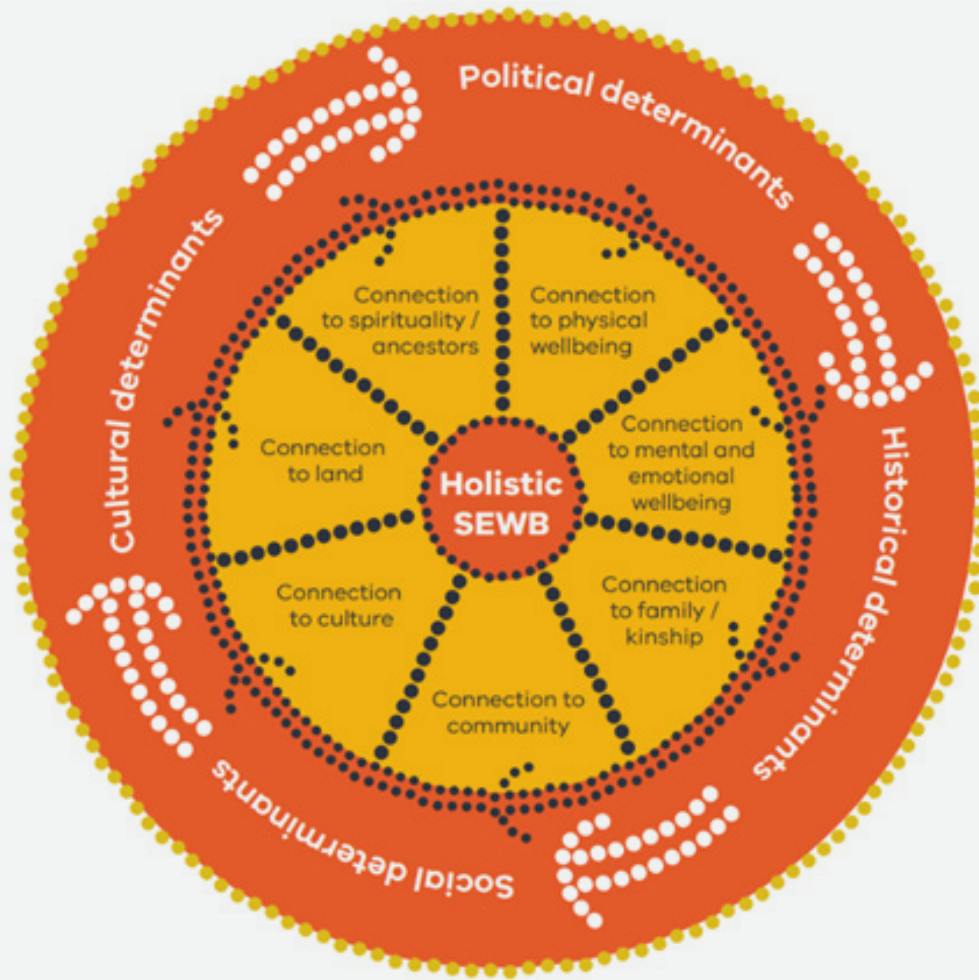
One promising development arising from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System is the Balit Durn Durn Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing. The centre is being established within the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation 'to foster innovation and improvement in social and emotional wellbeing practice, policy and research'.³⁰ This could be a useful model to better support family violence prevention and early intervention work in Victorian Aboriginal communities. Such an approach could concentrate Aboriginal-specific expertise on family violence prevention and early intervention within an ACCO to:

Relates to
action 4

- > bridge the gap between high-level frameworks and implementation on the ground through providing guidance and resources to translate and apply frameworks in developing initiatives
- > provide a link with mainstream prevention agencies such as Respect Victoria, Our Watch and Safe and Equal
- > provide guidance and support for other organisations in data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation
- > house and disseminate resources, best practice guidance and learnings throughout the sector
- > support workforce development (see also section 4) through an Aboriginal-led community of practice around prevention and early intervention work.

The Balit Durn Durn Centre uses the Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing model that emphasises the importance of building strength, resilience and connectedness in Aboriginal people and communities (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: The Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) model identifies the key Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing areas (inner circle) and the broader influences on that wellbeing (outer circle)



Source: Department of Health: *Balit Murrup – Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework 2017–2027*, p. 24. Artist: Tristian Schultz, RelativeCreative. Reference: Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart & Kelly 2013 on behalf of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association

Note. The above wheel represents holistic healing and includes protective factors that support good mental health for Aboriginal Communities. This approach is particularly important for resilience and healing, including for men's groups: Vaccho.org.au/balitdurndurncentre

While ACCOs consulted for this report felt that it was positive that there is greater focus on prevention and early intervention since the Royal Commission, they noted the multiplicity of federal and state government strategies, frameworks, plans and agreements that apply across different government portfolio areas. For example, one organisation noted that every department has an Aboriginal strategy as well as subject-specific strategies and plans. Aligning their work with these multiple frameworks is challenging and resource-intensive, particularly for smaller organisations. In addition to considering how ACCOs are best supported to implement family violence prevention-specific plans and frameworks, there also appears to be an opportunity to consider consolidating and more clearly aligning governments' Aboriginal strategies and plans under Victoria's Closing the Gap outcomes and implementation approach.

3. A continued reliance on short-term, grant-based funding is undermining prevention and early intervention efforts

Adequacy of funding for family violence work in Victorian Aboriginal communities was an area of particular focus for the Royal Commission. The Royal Commission found that the sustainability of Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention efforts were being undermined due to a lack of long-term funding:

The Commission is concerned that many positive prevention initiatives are not funded to scale, or are reliant on one-off or short-term funding. This diverts organisational effort into chasing what are relatively small amounts of funding compared to the costs of family violence to government overall. It also dilutes trust in the stated commitment the Victorian Government has made to working with Aboriginal communities to end family violence.³¹

Since the Royal Commission, there has been a substantial increase in total family violence funding (encompassing prevention, early intervention and crisis response/recovery) provided to ACCOs. Between 2017-18 and 2022-23, there has been a 10-fold increase, from approximately \$5.2 million to approximately \$52.5 million (see Figure 14), which includes new service delivery functions arising from the family violence reforms such as The Orange Door network. In 2022-23 family violence funding provided to ACCOs represented approximately 12 per cent of total family violence funding. A proportion of this funding was also ongoing rather than fixed term, noting that – as described below – this largely relates to response services rather than prevention/early intervention.

It is not possible to accurately separate out funding dedicated to prevention and early intervention activity in the figures presented in Figure 14; however, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing has confirmed that the majority is allocated to service delivery responding to family violence. Additional funding allocation for the Community Initiatives Fund and the creation of the Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund, as outlined earlier, has substantially increased grant-based funding for Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention projects – growing from \$0.65 million in 2017-18 to approximately \$4.0 million in 2022-23.³² While the increase in both overall family violence funding for ACCOs and grant funding for Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention projects is positive, we are unable to judge the sufficiency of this investment without further modelling of the investment required to address family violence within and against Aboriginal communities. However, seven years on from the Royal Commission, ACCOs still cite short-term and insufficient funding as one of the biggest challenges in their family violence work. As one stakeholder expressed:

You can have all the frameworks but if you don't have the investment, you won't make any progress – frameworks have to be operationalised.³³

Figure 14: Family violence funding provided to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations



Source: Data provided by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Notes: Total funding figures presented above relate to funding agreements between Aboriginal organisations and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing as the primary funder of family violence services in Victoria. Funding provided directly to organisations by other Victorian Government departments and agencies and the Commonwealth Government is not included in these figures. The 2017-18 figure for total family violence funding for Aboriginal-led organisations is approximate due to the distributed nature of funding at the service level across the department. Both figures exclude funding for services to Aboriginal Victorians provided by mainstream organisations.

Short-term grants continue to be the primary mechanism for funding Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention initiatives. The prevention mapping report illustrated that funding for Aboriginal-led prevention was spread over more than 100 ACCOs, with many implementing a single initiative with only a modest budget. More than two-thirds (69 per cent) of organisations were funded to implement a single prevention initiative, and for most initiatives (72 per cent) the funding awarded was less than \$50,000.³⁴ Highlighting issues with sustainability, the mapping analysis found that most initiatives (about 80 per cent) operated for 12 months or less, reflective of the Community Initiatives Fund being the main funding source because funding is limited to a maximum of 12 months.

In our consultations, the following concerns were raised regarding the current grant-based approach to funding for prevention and early intervention:

- > **Narrow scope/definition of prevention:** Much of the prevention work undertaken by Aboriginal organisations is not formally funded by government or recognised as 'family violence prevention' work, such as activities promoting connection to culture and resilience. The outcomes being sought are often broader health and wellbeing outcomes (which include but are not limited to family violence) that sit across a number of government portfolios. This integrated holistic approach doesn't fit with government's funding models. Grant funding also typically comes with set program eligibility criteria that do not necessarily accord with areas of greatest need in the community. The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Coronavirus Aboriginal Community Response and Recovery Fund was cited as a positive recent initiative because it allowed organisations to put forward proposals based on community need rather than having to fit them to inflexible funding criteria.
- > **Lack of ongoing funding for proven initiatives:** As many funding opportunities involve piloting 'new' or 'innovative' activities, organisations have commented that 'we get good at re-branding' effective initiatives to be able to continue to get funding to deliver them. This in turn detracts from the development of innovative programs because organisations need to use innovation funding to support their existing programming. It also impacts on the strategic delivery of initiatives to address community needs because initiatives can only run when funding is available.

- > **Diverting resources from funded activity:** According to stakeholders, time spent preparing grant applications to access funding diverts staff resources away from delivering the services that they are funded for. We also repeatedly heard, particularly from smaller organisations, that grant funding typically doesn't include any allocation for staffing, so implementing and overseeing initiatives must be managed with the limited number of core staff employed with base service delivery funding. However, Family Safety Victoria has confirmed that prevention grant funding can cover implementation and administration resources, suggesting there is a disconnect that needs to be addressed around how the funds can be used, and capacity building that needs to occur for grant applicants.
- > **Burdensome reporting requirements:** Stakeholders reported a substantial problem with multiple funding streams that have burdensome reporting requirements. During consultations, we were given an example of Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service having 17 different funding streams from one department to be reported against (see Box 10). This is a particular problem for small organisations that, as mentioned above, draws resources away from funded service delivery.

Box 10: The challenge of managing multiple funding streams

For the 2021–22 financial year the Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Health Service had 17 different funding streams with one government department. From these 17 activities, it had 26 different targets to report against that required using three different client management systems and multiple reporting templates. The service also had reporting requirements for its federally funded programs, funding from other government departments, philanthropic partnerships and grants under the Community Initiatives Fund. The service indicated that they knew of other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across the state managing over 30 different funding streams. This represents a huge administrative burden for a small organisation.

Source: Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service

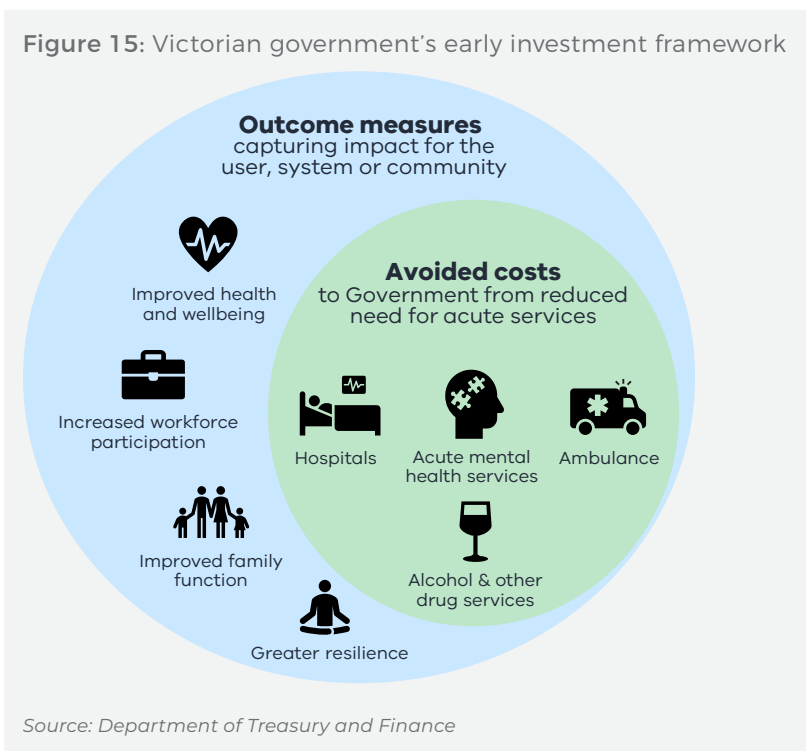
- > **Unintended negative consequences from short-term interventions:** The very nature of short-term funding means that it requires rapid implementation in a timeframe that is too brief to show real outcomes. Stakeholders reported that short-term implementation is disruptive to ACCOs, their staff and communities. Newly engaged participants become discouraged when they can no longer participate in valued activities after funding ceases, and short-term employment contracts contribute to financial and psychosocial instability for families in the community, causing social harm.
- > **Inadequate funding for data collection and evaluation:** Grant funding doesn't always include allocations to support data collection and evaluation of initiatives. Where it does, the allocation is typically limited; for example, one ACCO said the evaluation component is between \$2,000–\$5,000. This amount is insufficient to bring in independent evaluation expertise and means organisations are left having to do the work themselves without necessarily having the internal capacity to do so (particularly in smaller organisations). Building evaluation and data management capacity within ACCOs requires sustainable funding to develop staff capability and is critical for establishing an evidence base for effective initiatives and supporting strategic investment.

A reliance on short-term grants is not confined to Aboriginal-led prevention efforts. Our companion report, Primary Prevention System Architecture, identifies that much mainstream prevention funding is also short-term and grants-based. However, the Royal Commission was especially clear that there needed to be ongoing, sustainable funding for Aboriginal-led prevention efforts in the family violence sector.

As a priority the Victorian Government should ensure that early intervention and prevention programs that have the confidence of the community and have been positively evaluated receive ongoing funding so that this work can be undertaken with certainty and scaled up to the level required.³⁵

There is an urgent need to move away from grant-based funding for prevention and early intervention effort to a model of longer term funding of agreed initiatives. Stakeholders believe there is now sufficient basis to scale up successful initiatives as part of a more coherent and coordinated strategy that identifies a set of core prevention and early intervention components to be delivered within regions. A robust operational framework for Aboriginal-led prevention efforts, as recommended earlier in this report, could provide a blueprint for long-term investment in proven programs and support development of the 10-year Aboriginal investment strategy committed to under the Dhelk Dja Agreement. This approach is also consistent with the Victorian Government’s early investment framework (see Figure 15), which is designed to incentivise evidence-based investment and reinvestment in early intervention and focuses on achieving broad outcomes across multiple portfolio areas.

Figure 15: Victorian government's early investment framework



While the challenges of the current funding approach have been well-recognised, there are different views on how to best to fund prevention and early intervention activity. One stakeholder believed that family violence prevention should be closely linked to basic service provision:

Prevention work addresses the social determinants of health including (but not limited to) responding to housing concerns, inequities in education, employment, health and justice. These portfolios span across multiple departments within state government. Single funding agreements that are based on outcomes would enable Aboriginal self-determination, allowing ACCOs to respond to community need instead of being burdened with reporting requirements.³⁶

Respect Victoria, however, notes the risk that without dedicated funding, the most urgent response work can take precedence, leaving primary prevention with inadequate focus and resources. Another stakeholder suggested that funding dedicated prevention staff in ACCOs may be a solution for ensuring prevention is not overshadowed by response work. Opportunities for workforce capacity building are examined further in the next section; however, the approach to sustainable funding of prevention and early intervention initiatives needs to be considered in the context of the strategic direction established by the prevention framework and theory of change and government's early investment model. In whatever funding model is established, organisational effort to develop, implement, collect and analyse data, and monitor and evaluate initiatives needs to be provided for.

Another priority for funding reform is streamlining funding agreements between the Victorian Government and ACCOs. As highlighted above, multiple funding streams, each with their own reporting requirements, are onerous for organisations to manage administratively and take staff time and effort away from service delivery. The Department of Justice and Community Safety has taken steps to address this in its funding agreements with Aboriginal-led organisations, moving to single, multi-year funding agreements that cover multiple program and service delivery areas and include streamlined reporting.

There is also an acknowledgement within government more broadly that current funding arrangements are burdensome. The Department of Premier and Cabinet commissioned a report on Aboriginal funding reform³⁷ to identify opportunities to improve funding arrangements. We understand that in response to the report, individual departments with more substantial funding relationships with the project's participating ACCOs are to lead the trialling of new funding models. Work is currently underway within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, under the Korin Korin Balit Djak strategy, and the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, to streamline their funding agreements. While the long-term goal should continue to be for a single cross-government funding agreement for each funded organisation, as outlined in the 2019 funding reform report, as individual departments progress their respective agendas, it will be important that there is some alignment and consistency in the approach being taken. This should make use of learnings from the work already undertaken within the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Relates to
action 3

4. More culturally adapted capacity-building opportunities are needed to support the Aboriginal prevention workforce

As noted in our related report on Victoria's primary prevention system architecture, having a skilled and stable workforce is essential to family violence prevention (and early intervention) efforts.

Who makes up the Aboriginal prevention workforce?

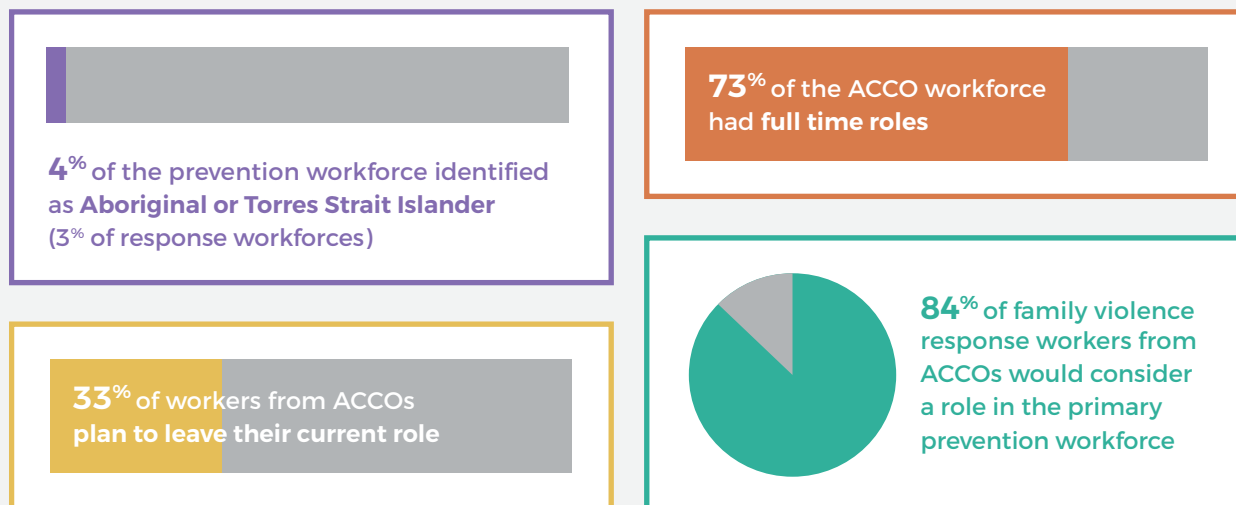
Family Safety Victoria's current Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women Capability Framework³⁸ describes the prevention workforce as consisting of two parts:

- > **prevention practitioners** – those who 'specialise in designing, implementing and monitoring actions to prevent violence against women'
- > **prevention contributors** – those who are located within specific sectors or disciplines where preventing violence against women may be a part of their role but it is not their primary focus. These practitioners include teachers, health sector staff, sports administrators, local government staff and child and family services staff.

However, many stakeholders interviewed for our report on primary prevention system architecture found it difficult to define precisely who the primary prevention workforce is, with one commenting that this could change from year to year, depending on where grants are allocated and shifting organisational priorities. The picture is even less clear for the Aboriginal prevention workforce because there is a tension between the integrated approach to prevention and response within ACCOs, and prevention as a specialised discipline within the mainstream system. ACCOs consulted for this report did not identify as having specialist prevention workers in the mainstream sense. They emphasised the criticality of cultural knowledge in developing and delivering prevention and early intervention initiatives for Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

Looking at the family violence sector overall, the 2020 family violence workforce census found that 4 per cent of the prevention workforce identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (see Figure 16) (and 3 per cent of the response workforce); however, the prevention workforce report did not differentiate between those who worked in ACCOs versus mainstream organisations.

Figure 16: Aboriginal family violence workforce



Source: Orima Research (2020): 2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence, Survey Findings Report – Specialist Family Violence Response Workforce (unpublished) and Orima Research (2020): 2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence, Survey Findings Report – Primary Prevention Workforce (unpublished)

Workforce satisfaction and challenges

Based on the 2020 workforce census,³⁹ staff morale within ACCOs appeared to be higher than in the overall workforce:

- > 83 per cent of ACCO staff reported being satisfied with their roles and working conditions (compared with 75 per cent for the overall workforce).
- > While workplace stress was high, more than two-thirds (68 per cent) of surveyed ACCO staff reported experiencing at least a moderate level of stress in their jobs; this was lower than the overall workforce average (78 per cent).
- > 33 per cent of ACCO staff reported having plans to leave their current role, compared with 40 per cent for the overall workforce. The main reasons were end of contract (with short-term contracts a reflection of short-term funding cycles), in addition to lack of career advancement opportunities and stress.
- > 84 per cent of ACCO staff surveyed for the specialist family violence response survey said that they would consider taking a role in the primary prevention workforce in future, compared with 81 per cent overall.

However, when it came to capacity building, slightly fewer ACCO workers reported having confidence in their own level of training and experience – 58 per cent of ACCO workers compared with 61 per cent for sector workers overall.

ACCOs consulted for this report repeatedly raised two particular workforce challenges:

- > recruiting and retaining skilled staff
- > the need for more psychosocial support for staff who may themselves have experienced family violence, or who may face lateral violence.

Given the widespread staff shortages being experienced in the family violence sector in Aboriginal communities, ACCOs' ability to attract and retain key staff must be central to any capacity-building efforts. Stakeholders consulted were particularly concerned by the implications of Royal Commission recommendation 209⁴⁰ (mandatory qualifications) for ACCOs in growing and retaining culturally skilled Aboriginal staff. While this recommendation relates to the response workforce, the integration between

prevention, early intervention and response in ACCOs and the centrality of culture in Aboriginal prevention efforts it is a barrier to workforce development. Our forthcoming report on the crisis response to recovery model for victim survivors further considers the impacts of this recommendation, including for Aboriginal organisations. Stakeholders also raised the difficulty of competing for staff with mainstream organisations that can offer higher salaries and longer contracts.

Capacity-building needs

Supporting Aboriginal-led prevention efforts is one of the five critical actions in the Dhelk Dja 3 Year Action Plan. We note that a range of work is currently underway to support the Aboriginal workforce in the family violence sector, including a scholarships program to support the qualification requirement of Royal Commission recommendation 209, an extended pathway to support people with cultural expertise in meeting the qualification requirement, and a graduate certificate that incorporates Aboriginal cultural safety. A (mainstream) primary prevention accredited qualification is also being developed for prevention contributors to access through the TAFE sector; however, we note that the level of demand for this course within the ACCO sector is so far unclear.

The integrated approach to prevention within the Aboriginal community raises a question of how to best build prevention capability when a specialised prevention workforce cannot be easily identified. Given the dispersed nature of the Aboriginal-led prevention workforce and the still-emerging understanding of its definition and best practices, it is challenging to identify relevant and accessible training opportunities. While ACCO staff with significant experience in working to prevent family violence in their communities clearly have culturally relevant expertise, it would be worth exploring how this knowledge can be transferred and shared across the sector more broadly. The Victorian Aboriginal prevention contributors in the family violence prevention space might like to consider the approaches in the mainstream family violence sector in relation to the prevention and intervention systems that are in place. This of course would need to be adapted to meet Aboriginal self-determination principles and practices. Equally, they need mentorship from experienced practitioners in integrated approaches to inter-generational, family and community healing. These capacity-building options also need to be accessible to those living in regional communities, some of whom may be unable to leave their community to study. As well as training, staff need access to ongoing, culturally relevant resources and guidance on best practices. As outlined earlier, a model like the Balit Durn Durn Centre could be an effective approach to translate specialist prevention expertise from the mainstream prevention sector and to provide support and build prevention and early intervention capability in the ACCO sector workforce.

Relates to
action 4

Cultural competency in mainstream organisations

It is also important to build the mainstream workforce's diversity and capacity to engage in a culturally sensitive way with Aboriginal clients who are experiencing or are witness to family violence. Respect Victoria's 2018-2021 progress report to the state parliament found that practitioners interviewed felt they had gained a good theoretical understanding of the concept of intersectionality and diverse groups (including Aboriginal people) but did not know how to apply an intersectional approach in practice.⁴¹

Numerous stakeholders raised that this is yet to occur in a concerted sustained manner, explaining that there needs to be greater mainstream obligation to work appropriately with the Aboriginal community and that running a single cultural awareness training session isn't enough – there needs to be ongoing development and commitment to culturally safe workplaces and services. Many organisations also explained that they are frequently asked to consult or undertake cultural capacity-building work by mainstream organisations but that their time and expertise is rarely paid for. We believe that mainstream organisations need to commit to further concrete actions to progress cultural capability building within their organisation as part of the next Dhelk Dja action plan.

Relates to
action 6

5. Government accountability for the delivery of initiatives to support Dhelk Dja priorities could be strengthened

The Dhelk Dja (Safe Our Way) Strong Cultures, Strong Peoples, Strong Families Agreement is the major partnership between the Victorian Government and Victoria's Aboriginal communities to address family violence. Dhelk Dja commits ACCOs and government to work together and be accountable for ensuring Aboriginal people, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and free from family violence. The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum is the governance mechanism to oversee delivery of the agreement, which occurs through the development of and reporting against three-year action plans.

Our report on reform governance found that the forum was seen by many in the family violence sector as an excellent model of dedicated, community-led governance, and identified a number of positive features of its operation. Aboriginal stakeholders consulted for this report noted that over the years there have been several changes in where family violence in Aboriginal communities sits within government, and as a consequence the responsible areas of government do not have the same steadfast relationship with communities that government does through the long-established Aboriginal Justice Forum. Certainly, our observation, having regularly attended both forums, is that government accountability to Dhelk Dja could be strengthened through applying the same strong model of government accountability to Aboriginal communities as through the Aboriginal Justice Forum. For example, justice agencies themselves report on their progress against agreed actions and service data at each forum, including efforts that have been made to support their Aboriginal workforce. This responsibility does not just sit with Family Safety Victoria but requires all government partners to take responsibility for their contribution to delivering on Dhelk Dja's priorities. In establishing the next three-year Dhelk Dja action plan, government departments and agencies need to commit to concrete actions and initiatives that address the forum's priorities, and then be directly accountable to the forum for their delivery.

Relates to
action 6

Delivering against Dhelk Dja's prevention priority

Under the current Dhelk Dja 3 Year Action Plan (2019–2022), Strategic Priority Two is Aboriginal-led prevention. This priority identifies two critical actions:

- > 2.1 Aboriginal community voices are central in new and existing family violence prevention policy, programs, practice development, education and evaluation.
- > 2.2 Support and invest sustainably in Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention initiatives, including existing successful programs and new, innovative programs.

Seven supporting activities are outlined under this strategic priority. In the final year of the action plan, four of these activities have been completed or are underway (see Table 2).

Table 2: Dhelk Dja 3 Year Action Plan: Strategic Priority Two – supporting actions and status of implementation as at August 2022

Supporting action	Responsible partners	Status of implementation
1) Map all Aboriginal-specific family violence prevention initiatives and investment across Victoria to provide Dhelk Dja with a strategic overview across both Aboriginal and mainstream prevention programs.	Respect Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (including Family Safety Victoria), Department of Justice and Community Safety and Department of Education and Training	Completed – mapping report and database of Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives delivered, noting lack of inclusion of initiatives from the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice and Community Safety.
2) Showcase successful Aboriginal community-led prevention initiatives to inform communities and share best practice.	Family Safety Victoria, Dhelk Dja Action Groups	On hold – planned showcasing paused due to COVID-19, now planned to be held in March 2023 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce report to Government
3) Support Dhelk Dja Action Groups to review and update the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework.	Family Safety Victoria, Respect Victoria, Dhelk Dja Action Groups	In progress – initial scoping work has been undertaken by Respect Victoria in collaboration with Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus
4) Seek sustainable investment for, and strengthen existing, successfully evaluated Aboriginal community-led prevention initiatives, in consultation with Dhelk Dja Action Groups at the local level.	Family Safety Victoria	In progress – evaluations of grant-funded initiatives being undertaken to inform 10 Year Investment Strategy
5) Design an Aboriginal-led family violence prevention campaign and education program, targeted for Aboriginal people and strengthen existing Aboriginal prevention campaigns.	Respect Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Family Safety Victoria and Dhelk Dja Action Groups	In progress – In 2021-22, Respect Victoria commenced initial scoping of a dedicated Aboriginal family violence prevention campaign. Following consultation and initial scoping, it was agreed that the design and delivery of this campaign will now be led by an ACCO rather than a mainstream organisation, under the revised action in the new Dhelk Dja prevention strategy.
6) Work across government to ensure programs and initiatives to prevent family violence address racism and discrimination as forms and drivers of family violence against Aboriginal people.	Respect Victoria, Family Safety Victoria and government partners	Not started - but future commitments will be informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Victorian Government Anti-Racism Taskforce established in June 2021 to advise government on development of an anti-racism strategy > Yoorrook Justice Commission (established 2021) interim report released June 2022
7) Implement the Aboriginal-led family violence prevention campaign and education program.	Respect Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Family Safety Victoria and Dhelk Dja Action Groups	In initial design phase – see action 5 above

Note: Supporting actions and responsible partners are as listed in the Dhelk Dja 3 Year Action Plan.

On supporting action 6, we are not aware of substantive actions from government that have been progressed through Dhelk Dja. A meeting in early 2022 of the Family Violence Reform Advisory Group – a governance group consisting of senior community sector and government members responsible for advising on the family violence reforms – to identify the work organisations were doing to support the achievement of the Dhelk Dja and Closing the Gap objectives was a good first step. Given the centrality of addressing discrimination as a driver of family violence against Aboriginal people, this supporting action for addressing family violence against Aboriginal people needs to be carried forward and specific concrete actions developed as part of the next Dhelk Dja action plan.

Relates to
action 7

The criticality of prevention efforts focused on children and young people

The importance of work with young people, particularly in schools, was a focus in the Royal Commission's report. Ms Jill Gallagher AO, Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, told the Commission that to:

... get violence out of our community, keep families together and give kids the best start in life that we can ... we need education. For example, we need to run programs in our local schools that teach our young men and young women about what respectful relationships are. Already, as teenagers, we see that our young men are displaying behaviours that are disrespectful and we are seeing our young women accepting that behaviour, they think that it's normal but it's ... not part of Aboriginal culture.⁴²

Changing the Picture, Our Watch's national framework for preventing violence against Aboriginal women and their children, highlights the importance of culturally safe programs addressing respectful relationships and states that these need to be developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (see Box 11).

Box 11: The importance of culturally relevant respectful relationships initiatives for preventing family violence in Aboriginal communities

Strengthen positive equal and respectful relationships between women and men, and girls and boys

Work to strengthen positive equal and respectful relationships between women and men, and girls and boys, must be designed for relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This means mainstream/universal respectful relationships initiatives (such as programs for new parents or respectful relationships education in schools) may need to be adapted or redesigned, or it may be necessary to develop new approaches.

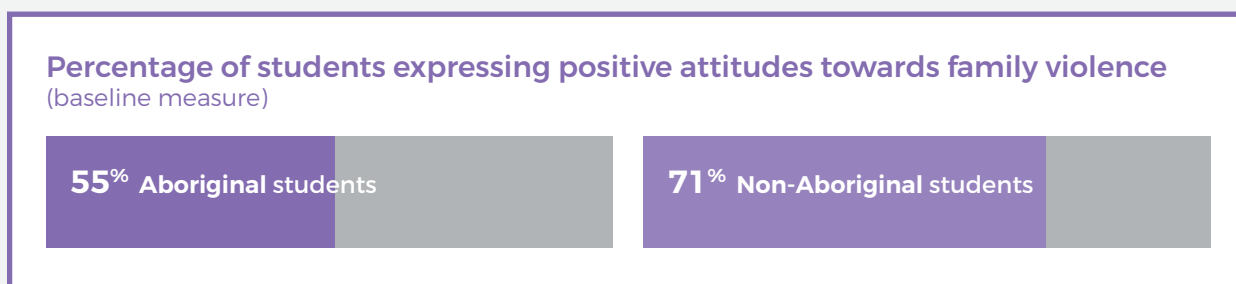
Culturally safe respectful relationships programs have been identified by Aboriginal organisations as 'a key component of preventing family violence in future generations and stopping the intergenerational transmission of trauma'.⁵⁴ Such programs need to be developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves to ensure they are culturally safe, appropriate and relevant in a given cultural or community context (such as for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, or in schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students).

Source: Our Watch, *Changing the Picture*, p. 32

Following the Royal Commission, Respectful Relationships – Victoria’s flagship prevention initiative – has been implemented in all Victorian government schools, where 2.5 per cent of students are Aboriginal,⁴³ as well as many non-government schools and early childhood education settings. However, none of the ACCOs consulted for this report had been involved in its implementation in their local areas. Many expressed concerns about its effectiveness for Aboriginal students, feeling that it was not delivered in a culturally relevant or safe way. We note that the lack of engagement of ACCOs in the development and delivery of the initiative is inconsistent with the Dhelk Dja Action Plan Critical Action 2.1 – ‘Aboriginal community voices are central in new and existing family violence prevention policy, programs, practice development, education and evaluation’, and is an example where government accountability to Aboriginal communities can be improved.

The evaluation of the initiative,⁴⁴ commissioned by the Department of Education and Training, did not focus on the effectiveness of implementation for Aboriginal students. However, data collected for the evaluation, and presented in Figure 17, highlights significant differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students’ baseline attitudes on family violence,⁴⁵ illustrating both the need for the Respectful Relationships initiative and the importance of it being delivered in a way that effectively engages and connects with Aboriginal students.

Figure 17: Baseline measure of Victorian students’ attitudes towards family violence



Note: 'Positive attitudes towards family violence' means attitudes that align with the objectives of preventing family violence.

Source: *Respectful Relationships in schools evaluation provided by the Department of Education and Training (unpublished)*.

The cultural relevance of the Respectful Relationships initiative in schools was recently raised at the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, and we understand that some discussions between the Victorian Aboriginal Educational Association Incorporated and the Department of Education and Training have occurred. The Department of Education and Training has also advised that schools will be able to use the new 'mental health menu'⁴⁶ to engage ACCOs to support students or staff. The Department of Education and Training’s Koorie engagement support officers are also included on the menu. However, it is not clear whether the support officers or ACCOs have training in the Respectful Relationships initiative, or access to any materials or guidance on how the mainstream initiative can be tailored for Aboriginal cultural relevance. We believe there is a need for the Department of Education and Training to work with the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus to develop an agreed approach to delivering the initiative in a culturally relevant, safe and effective way for Aboriginal students. This should include consideration of what additional materials, resources and training may be required to support this delivery. Also, what further cultural awareness, safety and competency training for school employees may be required to deliver this education in a culturally appropriate way for Aboriginal students within the whole-of-school model.

Relates to action 8

Glossary of relevant terms and abbreviations

Aboriginal	While acknowledging the diversity of Aboriginal people in Australia, in this document the term 'Aboriginal' has been used to refer to all people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	As defined by the national closing the gap agreement, 'an Incorporated, not-for-profit organisation that is controlled and operated by Aboriginal people, is governed by a majority Aboriginal governing body and delivers services that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal communities and people'. The types of services that ACCOs deliver includes, for example, childcare, health, legal and community services.
Aboriginal Justice Agreement	A partnership developed in 2000 between Aboriginal communities and the Victorian Government, with the intention of improving Aboriginal justice outcomes, family and community safety, and to reduce over-representation in the Victorian criminal justice system.
Aboriginal Justice Forum	A forum made up of Aboriginal community leaders and government representatives established to oversee the development, implementation and direction of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.
Community Initiatives Fund	A fund established to support projects that address the priorities identified by the 11 Dhelk Dja Regional Action Groups.
Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus	Made up of chairpersons of the 11 regional Aboriginal Dhelk Dja community action groups and key representatives of Aboriginal services, Caucus members provide statewide Aboriginal representation on the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum.
Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum	A forum made up of Aboriginal community organisations and government representatives. It was established to oversee implementation of the Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families partnership agreement and related action plans.
Dhelk Dja Regional Action Groups	Place-based, Aboriginal community-led groups that drive local action to prevent and address family violence through a partnership approach. Located in 11 areas across Victoria.
Drivers of violence against women	The social conditions that lead to violence, which often reflect underlying inequalities in social or economic power among different groups of people.**
Early intervention	Aims to change the trajectory for individuals at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence. Also known as secondary prevention.
Family violence	<p>Any violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in current or past familial relationships, including by intimate partners, family members and/or non-family carers.</p> <p>The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force (2003) defined family violence as: 'an issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.'</p>
Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework	A framework to support the identification, assessment and management of family violence risk. A range of organisations are required by law, under the <i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008</i> , to align their practices and policies with MARAM, which replaced the former common risk assessment framework or 'CRAF'. The MARAM Framework is supported by operational practice guidance and risk identification, screening and assessment tools.

Lateral violence	An inter-generational pattern of violence where members of a marginalised or oppressed group turn their anger inwards, striking out against people from their own community rather than towards the original oppressors. This cycle of abuse can come from causes such as colonialism, ongoing racism and discrimination, or intergenerational trauma.
LGBTIQ+	An inclusive initialism that refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender / gender diverse, intersex and queer people.
Mainstream	Refers to services and facilities that are available to the general population as opposed to those designed for specific cohorts or groups.
MARAM	See Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework.
Primary prevention	Whole-of-population initiatives that address the primary ('first' or 'underlying') drivers of violence against women [^] and other forms of family violence.
Respectful Relationships	A primary prevention education initiative that supports government, Catholic and independent schools and early childhood settings to promote and model respect, positive attitudes and behaviours. The Victorian Curriculum provides the basis for teaching and learning about respectful relationships and identifies the knowledge, skills and understanding for students to be able to engage in respectful relationships.
Royal Commission into Family Violence	Established in 2015, the Royal Commission was tasked with finding ways to prevent family violence, improve support for victim survivors and hold perpetrators to account. The Royal Commission provided its report, which included 227 recommendations, to the Victorian Government on 29 March 2016.
Victim survivor	A person who has experienced domestic, family or sexual violence.
Victim Survivors' Advisory Council	Formed in July 2016, the council was established to include people with lived experience of family violence in the service design of family violence reform.

** Definition from Department of Premier and Cabinet (2017): Free From Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and all Forms of Violence Against Women.

[^] Definition from Our Watch (2021): Change the Story. A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Australia (second edition).

Endnotes

- 1 Family Safety Victoria (2018): Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework: Definitions. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management-framework/definitions (accessed 3 August 2022).
- 2 Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, feedback to the Monitor, October 2022.
- 3 According to the 2021 census, 66,000 Victorians identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. See Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022): Snapshot of Australia: A Picture of the Economic, Social and Cultural Make-up of Australia on Census Night, 10 August 2021. Available at: www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/snapshot-australia/2021 (accessed 3 August 2022).
- 4 State of Victoria (2016): Royal Commission into Family Violence, Volume V, p. 28. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html. The Monitor's stakeholder consultations also supported this view.
- 5 For example, the Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians: Findings from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2017 reported that 18.8 per cent of Aboriginal adults experienced racism in the 12 months preceding the survey, that Aboriginal adults under-report racism, and that experiencing racism is associated with poorer wellbeing and physical health.
- 6 State of Victoria (2016): Royal Commission into Family Violence, Volume V, p. 28. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html.
- 7 State of Victoria (2016): Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and Recommendations, p. 33. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/Final/RCFV-Summary.pdf.
- 8 State of Victoria (2016): Royal Commission into Family Violence: Volume V, p. 48. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html.
- 9 We identified four Royal Commission recommendations that relate specifically to primary prevention and early intervention within Aboriginal communities: recommendations 142, 144, 187, 189; and seven recommendations that are broader in focus but are relevant to Aboriginal prevention and early intervention: recommendations 142, 145, 146, 147, 152, 187, 189.
- 10 State of Victoria (2016): Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and Recommendations, p. 84. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/Final/RCFV-Summary.pdf.
- 11 Department of Premier and Cabinet (2017): Free From Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and all Forms of Violence Against Women, p. 23. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence (accessed 4 August 2022).
- 12 Noting that the behaviour change campaign with a specific focus on preventing family violence for Aboriginal people has been postponed to the second action plan 2022-2025.
- 13 Family Safety Victoria (2017): Building From Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response, p. 68. Available at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/building-strength-10-year-industry-plan> (accessed 24 June 2022).
- 14 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2021): Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-monitoring-evaluation-and-accountability-plan (accessed 4 August 2022).
- 15 State of Victoria (2016): Royal Commission into Family Violence, Volume V, p. 19. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html.
- 16 For example: Royal Commission into Family Violence report; Our Watch's Changing the Picture framework; Respect Victoria's 3-Year Prevention Progress Report to Parliament; the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework; and Karabena Publishing (2021): Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018-2021 (commissioned by DFFH). Available at: www.karabenapublishing.com/evaluation-of-the-aboriginal-family-report.
- 17 A zine is a small print-run, self-published booklet made up of newly created or appropriated texts and images.
- 18 See the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework. Available at: apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2012-06/apo-nid30607.pdf.
- 19 Urbis (2021): PCV Reflections Report 2018-20 (prepared for Family Safety Victoria) (unpublished).
- 20 The first round of Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund initiatives and funding are included in the figures presented in Urbis (2022): Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping Project (prepared for Dhelk Dja Strategic Priority Two Sub-Working Group through Family Safety Victoria) but not the most recent round from May 2022.
- 21 Respect Victoria (2021): Respect Victoria Annual Report 2020-21, p. 4. Available at: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/Respect_Victoria_Annual_Report_2020-21_FINAL_NzdTnHch.pdf.
- 22 For example: Urbis (2022): Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping Project (prepared for Respect Victoria) and Karabena Publishing (2021): Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018-2021 (commissioned by DFFH).
- 23 Karabena Publishing (2021): Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018-2021 (commissioned by DFFH), p. 13.
- 24 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2021): Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan. Available at: <https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-05/DFFH-FVR-PUB-24220-DhelkDjaMEAP.pdf>.
- 25 Family Safety Victoria (2018): Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, p. 48. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources.

- 26 See 'Family Incidents by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status'. Available at: www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-aboriginal-crime-data/family-incidents-by-aboriginal-and-torres-strait.
- 27 State of Victoria (2016); Royal Commission into Family Violence, recommendation 147. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-recommendations/ensure-all-aboriginal-family-violence-interventions-are-evaluated.
- 28 Urbis (2021); PCV Reflections Report 2018-20 (prepared for Family Safety Victoria) (unpublished).
- 29 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2021); Dhelk Dja Monitoring Evaluation and Accountability Plan, p. 17. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-monitoring-evaluation-and-accountability-plan.
- 30 See 'The Balit Durn Durn Centre'. Available at: <https://www.vaccho.org.au/balitdurndurncentre>.
- 31 State of Victoria (2016); Royal Commission into Family Violence, Volume V, p. 52. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html.
- 32 2017-18 figures relate to the Community Initiatives Fund allocation, while 2022-23 figures include the Community Initiatives Fund and Preventing the Cycle of Violence stream projects under the Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund.
- 33 Monitor's 2022 consultation with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited.
- 34 Urbis (2022); Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping Project (prepared for Respect Victoria).
- 35 State of Victoria (2016); Royal Commission into Family Violence, Volume V, p. 52. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Report-Recommendations.html.
- 36 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (2022); Submission to the FVRIM (unpublished).
- 37 Social Compass Impact Co. (2019); Aboriginal Funding Reform Project, Final Report. Prepared for the Department of Premier and Cabinet (unpublished).
- 38 Family Safety Victoria (2017); Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women Capability Framework, p. 14. Available at: www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-05/Preventing-Family-Violence-and-Violence-Against-Women-Capability-Framework.pdf.
- 39 Orima Research (2020); 2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence, Survey Findings Report – Specialist Family Violence Response Workforce (unpublished) and Orima Research (2020); 2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence, Survey Findings Report – Primary Prevention Workforce (unpublished).
- 40 **Recommendation 209:** The Victorian Government include in the 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response a staged process for the introduction of mandatory qualifications for specialist family violence practitioners, so that no later than 31 December 2020 all funded services must require family violence practitioners to hold a social work or equivalent degree (implemented).
- 41 **Recommendation 209:** The Victorian Government include in the 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response a staged process for the introduction of mandatory qualifications for specialist family violence practitioners, so that no later than 31 December 2020 all funded services must require family violence practitioners to hold a social work or equivalent degree (implemented).
- 42 State of Victoria (2016); Royal Commission into Family Violence, Volume VI, p.26. Available at: rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/Final/RCFV-Vol-VI.pdf.
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- 44 A summary of the evaluation findings is available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/rr-phase-2-evaluation-summary.pdf.
- 45 A summary of the evaluation findings is available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/rr-phase-2-evaluation-summary.pdf.
- 46 See 'Schools Mental Health Menu'. Available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/mental-health-menu/Pages/Menu.aspx.

