

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated

Submission to

The Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools

February 2013

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1. Introduction

1.1. VAEAI: Background information

VAEAI was established in 1976 and represents the Koorie Community in relation to education policy development and strategic programming at the local, state and national levels. We support the provision of education and training that reinforces our Community's cultural identity and increases the awareness of the wider community about Koorie culture and aspirations in education and training.

VAEAI is a state-wide Koorie Community organisation consisting of eight regions. These regions are divided into 32 Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs) that provide key advice on education and training at a local level to ensure that VAEAI develops policies, strategies and programmes that reflect community need. LAECGs are voluntary bodies and membership is open to all local community members; providing the community with a forum to come together to discuss their education and training issues and aspirations.

As VAEAI has grown, our functions have been enhanced through a number of policies and strategies including:

- *Yalca: A Partnership in Education and Training for the New Millennium* (2001);
- *Wurreker: The Koorie Community and TAFE in Victoria in Equal Partnership* (2000); and
- *Wannik: Learning Together – Journey to Our Future* (2008).

In 2012, VAEAI released our *Framework for Embedding Koorie Cultures, Histories and Perspectives in Victorian Schools* (Appendix 1), which outlines four Action Areas that represent VAEAI's strategy to achieving structural and systemic change within the Victorian education sector.

2. VAEAI Response to the Terms of Reference

2.1. Evidence supporting music education in schools

The benefits of music education in schools are diverse and wide reaching. Studies by VicHealth have shown that for young people, involvement in creative activity such as music programs can improve academic achievement, school retention rates, self-esteem and reduce drug and alcohol consumption and juvenile offending.¹ This is true for Koorie students as much as it is for their non-Koorie counterparts, as the discipline of music possesses the unique ability to reach students across ethnicities, age groups and levels of academic ability. For Koorie students in particular, however, music plays an important role in connecting these young learners to their culture, their community and their history.

The importance of connecting Koorie students to culture within a school environment is of utmost importance to ensuring the engagement of Koorie learners; which is directly and positively correlated to their success in, and completion of, their schooling.

¹ VicHealth (16 March 2005). 'Link between Arts and Mental Health and Wellbeing'.

Music has historically been a key means of expression of Koorie culture, through traditional dances and songs, as well as storytelling through songlines – which is one of the key ways in which Koorie culture has been orally passed on through generations. Today, modern forms of Koorie music are similarly important aspects in contemporary Koorie culture, in particular hip-hop, rap and country and western genres in which Koorie musicians have excelled.

Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020) further notes that Koorie culture also continues to be expressed through music in opera, plays, digital storytelling and ‘songs written in language that reflect the urban, as well as the rural, and remote, experience’.²

Language is another important aspect of Koorie culture that is supported through music education. There has been much recent research examining the importance of language in sustaining culture, as well as in engaging students in education.³ These studies, based on Australian and international research, show that Aboriginal learners both young and old benefit greatly from the incorporation of Indigenous languages into their education experience. In Victoria, VAEAI is working with Koorie Communities and the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) to reclaim and revive surviving languages through school programs, language camps and music education material⁴.

The VAEAI-led pilot ‘Koorie Languages in Schools’ programs, which began in 2012, are also incorporating music as a tool in teaching Koorie language to students. Students at Thornbury Primary School, for example, are working on translating children’s songs, and are using nursery rhyme tunes to memorise Koorie words and phrases. Acknowledging and incorporating Indigenous languages in schools allows Koorie students to feel more engaged with a curriculum that is relevant to them and reflects their historical and contemporary experiences – a benefit that the majority of Australian students with European ancestry take largely for granted within the current education system⁵.

Music education with a focus on Koorie experiences is not only beneficial to Koorie students, but can be a useful tool in teaching non-Koorie students about Aboriginal history, culture and language. For example, Heywood and District Secondary College uses contemporary music in teaching students about historical events such as the Stolen Generations (Archie Roach – Took the Children Away), the Wave Hill walk off and the 1967 Referendum (Kev Carmody – From Little Things, Big Things Grow). Units and lesson plans such as this will be an important part of all schools curriculum development and lesson planning processes into the

² Victorian Government (2009). ‘*Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020)*’.

³ See:

- James, Richard, and Marcia Devlin. *Improving Indigenous outcomes and enhancing Indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian higher education*. Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council., 2012.
- Osborne, Esther, et al. "Learning through an Aboriginal language: The impact on students' English and Aboriginal language skills." *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 34.4 (2012): 200-215.
- Biddle, Nicholas, and Hannah Swee. "The Relationship between Wellbeing and Indigenous Land, Language and Culture in Australia." *Australian Geographer* 43.3 (2012): 215-232.

⁴ Victorian Government (2009). ‘*Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020)*’.

⁵ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2009). ‘Aboriginal Languages, cultures and reclamation in Victorian schools: standards P–10 and protocols’.

future, with the roll out of the Australian Curriculum requiring a cross-curriculum focus on *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures*.⁶

Teaching through music is also an excellent way to reach students across cultures in a way that is interesting and engaging for all learners. Music education is also a key tool for reaching out to disengaged or underperforming students⁷; a cohort in which Koorie students are generally overrepresented. Improving student engagement is a critical component in improving education outcomes for Koorie learners, as current lower attendance rates among Koorie children are consistent across Year 1 to Year 10 in Victorian government schools, and this is particularly marked in secondary school⁸.

However it is important to note the positive impact of music education on Koorie students who are coping well within school, as Koorie students achieving at or above state averages need to be provided with further, specialised support to ensure their talents and potentials are nurtured and that they are encouraged to achieve their education goals within a culture of high expectations.

2.2. Current provision of music education in Victoria

At present, there is a clear lack of provision of music programs in Victoria that cater for Koorie students' particular learning and cultural needs. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website provides no information about such programs being offered in Victorian government schools, and likewise the Victorian Catholic Education Office and Independent Schools Victoria resources provide no information on the existence of Koorie-targeted music programs⁹.

As a result, this area of education has largely had to be filled by external providers and community organisations at the local level. Songlines Music Aboriginal Corporation offers one of the only state-wide Koorie youth music programs in Victoria. Songlines has recognised that 'there is great demand for music programs by Koorie youth' and in response has incorporated a music program into their Koori Youth Program, which aims to 'improve the music skills, self esteem, confidence, cultural knowledge, education and social outcomes of young Aboriginal Men and Women', and achieves this by delivering projects that are

⁶ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2011). 'Cross-curriculum priorities'. Accessed: http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/cross_curriculum_priorities.html

⁷ See:

- KPMG (Prepared for DEECD, 2009). 'Education provision for young people at risk of disengaging or disengaged from school'. Accessed http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/Re-engaging_Our_Kids_KPMG_Apr2010.pdf
- McLaughlin & Pearce (2008). '**Understanding and Addressing Chronic Student Absence Behaviour, School Refusal and Truancy in Primary and Secondary Schools**'. Accessed: <http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/docs/youth-engagement-strategy.pdf>

⁸ DEECD (2010). 'The state of Victoria's children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria'.

⁹ A notable exception is the cross-sectorial Technologically Enriched Curriculum Project (TECP), which is the focus of a case study in the following section of this submission.

'focused on music and dance and the creation of performance for the community and to strengthen understanding of Indigenous culture – particularly amongst young people'¹⁰.

Indigital is another community-based initiative, set up with the support of VAEAI, delivering music education to Koorie students, focusing on developing contemporary music skills involving the use of online music software and digital storytelling. *Indigital* aims to build confidence of the Koorie community 'to seek further employment, education.... and to tell their Story and empower them with knowledge and skills which they can take back to their respective communities and peers'¹¹. In 2012 *Indigital* ran eight workshops, for both students and the wider communities, including after school programs, school holiday programs and programs for disengaged Koorie students.

The Koorie Heritage Trust resource list, the *Indigenous Perspectives 'Tuckerbag'*, provides a list of resources to assist schools in incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum¹². Whilst the 'Tuckerbag' includes several resources that are available online to assist schools in incorporating Aboriginal music education into their curriculum, the majority of these resources are not Victorian-based, and are heavily focused on traditional musical instruments without a clear delineation of the different histories of traditional instruments from different regions of Australia¹³.

There is therefore a great need for a more coordinated approach to music education programs with a focus on Koorie cultures and histories in Victorian schools. There is much evidence for the potential benefits of music education to Koorie students, and such programs can be expected to play an important role in improving education outcomes and working towards achieving National 'Close the Gap' targets for the Koorie Community in Victoria.

2.3. Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools

The provision of music education with a focus on traditional and contemporary Koorie cultures and experiences is an area that has to date been significantly overlooked in Victorian schools. The importance of providing music programs with such a focus has been described above, highlighting the cultural, historical and ultimately academic benefits to Koorie students. Moreover, Koorie-focused music programs can contribute to the curriculum requirements of the Australian Curriculum, which has already begun to be implemented in Victorian schools, which calls for a 'cross-curriculum focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures'¹⁴. The use of music to teach both Koorie and non-Koorie students can be seen as a key tool to ensure student engagement across year levels and learning abilities.

¹⁰ Songlines Music Aboriginal Corporation (2013). Accessed: <http://www.songlines.net.au/what-we-do/index.cfm?loadref=38>

¹¹ <http://www.indigital.org.au/program/index.html>

¹² Koorie Heritage Trust (2012). 'Indigenous Perspectives 'Tuckerbag': A comprehensive Australian Curriculum resource companion'.

¹³ See: - Aboriginal Art Online (2000). Accessed: <http://www.aboriginalartonline.com/culture/amusic2.php>
- Aboriginal Art. Accessed: <http://www.aboriginalart.com.au/didgeridoo/instruments.html>

¹⁴ ACARA (2012). 'Cross-curriculum Priorities'. Accessed: http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/cross_curriculum_priorities.html

Koorie-focused music programs should incorporate both traditional and contemporary aspects of Koorie music, from the stories offered through the sounds of the didgeridoo through to contemporary blues and roots, hip-hop and country and western tunes. The DEECD document entitled 'Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten' outlines the following framework for the incorporation of Koorie music into the curriculum:

D Music	
1	Are a wide variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musical CDS and tapes available?
2	Does the music include contemporary music from Indigenous well-known artists?
3	Are local community people and Elders invited to share music with the children?
4	Are there Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander instruments, such as clap sticks?
5	Is a local male person invited to play the didgeridoo?
6	Is a variety of music provided in different situations and settings?
7	Is there encouragement for children to enjoy music and the rhythm of CDS and tapes?

Source: DEECD (2005). 'Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten'

Music education should involve both practice and theory, and should draw on individuals from the Koorie Community to provide their knowledge and expertise. In doing so, this also provides an avenue for greater engagement between the school and local Koorie Communities, which is key to improving Koorie student engagement and outcomes in education.

3. Case Study: Technologically Enriched Curriculum Project (TECP)

The Technology Enriched Curriculum Project (TECP) is a place based project that has been implemented across selected schools in the Healesville, Ballarat and Echuca areas. The TECP involves state, independent and Catholic schools, and similarly has cross-sectoral support from VAEAI, the Catholic Education Office, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and Independent Schools Victoria. The focus of this project is the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) with middle years (Years 5-8) Koorie students to significantly improve literacy outcomes, attendance, student engagement and their overall learning experience.

A key aspect of the program to date has been to familiarise students with iPad music apps to enable them to write their own stories and songs, and finally to produce their own music. This has involved students developing their storytelling and writing skills, which Project Manager noted 'proved to be an important aspect of the students improving their literacy skills, as they not only wanted to write their stories but they wanted to make sure they wrote them well'. In addition, there has been a very strong cultural aspect to this music education experience, as students were required to research information about their ancestors – such

as how they lived and connected to country – to produce digital story books and write songs about their cultural heritage. Many students with previously poor school attendance rates have been highly engaged by the TECP experience, which has had a positive effect not only on their attendance but their overall school education experience.

The TECP addresses the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (2010 – 2014)* reform areas of Literacy, Engagement and Connections and Quality Teaching and Attendance, and also supports the Plan's emphasis upon the importance of the recognition of students' culture and identity.

4. Summary of VAEAI Submission Key Points

- Music education is an important element of the school curriculum, offering a wide array of potential benefits to students in the areas of academic achievement, student engagement and school retention, as well as other health and wellbeing outcomes.
- These benefits are highly relevant to Koorie students in Victoria, who as a cohort remain behind their non-Koorie counterparts in each of these areas, which ultimately impacts negatively on their education and employment outcomes.
- Moreover, music plays an important role in Koorie histories and both traditional and contemporary culture. Music is therefore an important medium for Koorie students to connect with language and culture and to learn about their ancestors.
- Currently, the provision of music education targeted at Koorie students is lacking in Victorian schools. This is despite a high interest in music programs by Koorie students.
- The Australian Curriculum requires that schools implement a cross-curriculum focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The provision of Koorie-focused music education can help schools to meet this requirement.
- The incorporation of Koorie-focused music education programs in Victorian schools must necessarily involve the participation of the local Koorie Community, and will provide important opportunities for collaboration and relationship building between schools and the Koorie Community.

Framework for Embedding Koorie Cultures, Histories and Perspectives in Victorian Schools

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Cultures, Histories and Perspectives in Victorian Schools

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Framework for Embedding Koorie Cultures, Histories and Perspectives in Victorian Schools

Executive Summary

The *Framework for Embedding Koorie Cultures, Histories and Perspectives in Victorian Schools* (the Framework) is the result of ongoing research and consultation by VAEAI since early 2010. The Framework is an extension and formalisation of a position paper developed by VAEAI entitled *Koorie/Aboriginal Studies and Education*, which was completed in July 2010. The position paper was informed by a Cultural Knowledge Reference Group, chaired by the VAEAI Vice-President and comprised of VAEAI committee members, specialist representatives and other professionals in the education and training sector. The position paper has been widely circulated and discussed with a range of stakeholders including Koorie Community, government and university representatives.

The Framework represents the next step in the development and operationalisation of the position paper, which outlined a four-point strategy to achieving structural and systemic change within the Victorian education sector. This Framework provides recommendations for the processes involved in achieving the four-point strategy, which represent important steps towards embedding Koorie cultures, histories and perspectives in Victorian schools. The four strategies are:

1. Piloting an enhanced pre-service teacher training programme;
2. Providing professional learning for all education staff;
3. Embedding Aboriginal Studies across the curriculum; and
4. Bolstering Community based learning for Koorie students.¹⁵

Each of the strategies, or Action Areas, have discrete aims and objectives, yet are fundamentally interlinked and contribute to the ultimate aim of achieving structural and systemic change in the Victorian education sector so as to better the educational outcomes of Koorie students, to close the Gap in educational outcomes, and to create a first class educational environment for all students.

The first strategy involves the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units by a pilot university. The aim of these units is to address the current lack of pre-service teacher training in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and perspectives. Given that all Victorian teachers are likely to encounter Koorie¹⁶ students and families during their careers, it is important to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to provide high quality teaching to both

¹⁵ VAEAI Position paper on Koorie/Aboriginal Education and Studies, 2010.

¹⁶ Throughout this paper the term *Koorie* is used inclusively to refer to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

Koorie learners, and non-Aboriginal learners about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The suggested process would involve VAEAI assisting in the development of criteria or guidelines for the unit's structure and delivery, to be taken on by the university in developing the units. VAEAI would then provide advice regarding the administering of a pilot unit/s at the university, and the subsequent evaluation of the pilot, which would then inform the development of Aboriginal and Islander Studies units to be rolled out more broadly across the state.

Like the pre-service teacher training, the second strategy also aims to improve the knowledge and skills of currently practising teachers, as well as non-teaching and departmental staff in the education sector. This strategy necessitates the development of professional learning packages for all education employees, which would again involve VAEAI assisting in the development of criteria for the structure and delivery of the PD training. These would be provided to DEECD which would conduct a regional tender for training providers. VAEAI would be involved in determining the tender and selection process, and would then oversee the delivery of the training at pilot school and department sites. Again, VAEAI would facilitate an evaluation of the pilots in order to finalise the PD training programme for broader deployment across the state.

The third strategy seeks to ensure there is adequate resource support for the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and studies in Victorian schools; and to develop a strategic framework for the application of Aboriginal studies and perspectives, which is respectful to Community, flexible in design, includes guidelines, protocols, suggestions and advice on working with local Koorie Community members, and provides links to culturally appropriate resources and teaching tools. The framework will emphasise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across the nation and the unique nature of local Koorie knowledge.

The fourth and final strategy in this framework is the development and implementation of a summer school-type Community Cultural education programme to be run outside of school hours. The aim of this strategy is to enhance Koorie student learning by providing an additional strong Koorie Community-based cultural education programme to complement school-based learning. Such a programme would help to improve educational outcomes through the development of a strong sense of belonging, identity and positive self-esteem.

VAEAI sees this Framework as a valuable tool in actioning the four areas outlined above. Additionally, the Framework can be seen as the foundation for valuable research and data collection that would result from the recommended pilot programmes run in schools.

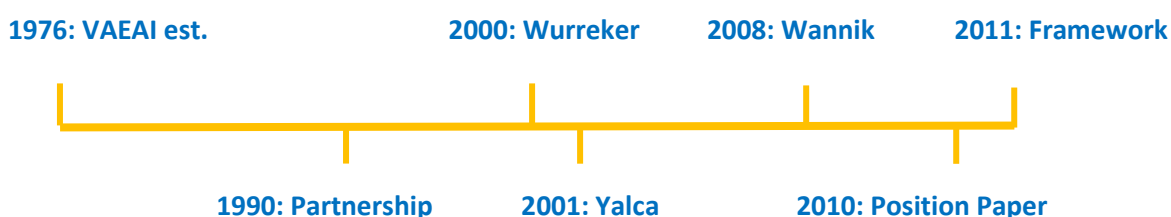
Foreword

Every child has the right to know the heritage of this country. It is only when this right is upheld, that our Nation will reach its full maturity.

Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians cannot be achieved and maintained without the effective teaching of Aboriginal studies and perspectives to all Australian students.

At the state level, the Victorian Government has committed to working in partnership with Koorie parents and Communities to create an education system that respects, recognises and celebrates cultural identity, through practice and curriculum, to ensure a culturally inclusive education system for *all* Victorian students¹⁷.

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI), established in 1976, is the peak body for Koorie education in the state of Victoria and as such holds a key systemic partnership role in all aspects of Koorie education. This partnership was formalised in 1990 in *Partnership in Education: Koorie Education Policy* and more recently in 2001 in *Yalca: A Partnership in Education and Training for the New Millennium*. In 2000, we formalised an equal partnership with the vocational education and training sector in Victoria through the *Wurreker* strategy. In 2008, the *Wannik* strategy was launched, which promotes the establishment of a new approach - ensuring every Koorie child receives a first class education.



As part of this partnership, and aligned with the broader systemic and workforce changes currently being undertaken, we continue to drive for reforms in a number of key areas of Koorie education, where our extensive Community networks, and Koorie education expertise can particularly enhance outcomes. Primarily these reforms involve bolstering the capacity of classroom teachers and wider education staff to be more embracing of Koorie learners and the Koorie Community. It also involves

¹⁷ 'Wannik: Learning Together – Journey to Our Future', *Education Strategy for Koorie Students*, Victoria 2008.

enhancing the education system to better inform all students about Koorie peoples and to support the Koorie Community in the education of Koorie learners, by Koorie people, for Koorie people. To advance these reforms, we have undertaken a number of activities.

In early 2010, we established a Cultural Knowledge Reference Group, chaired by the VAEAI Vice-President and comprising VAEAI Committee of Management members, specialist representatives and other accomplished Koorie professionals to advise on the development of strategic interventions. In July 2010, we completed a Position Paper on *Koorie/Aboriginal Studies and Education*, at the heart of which was a four-point strategy that has formed the basis of this framework:

- Piloting an enhanced pre-service teacher training programme;
- Providing professional learning for all education staff;
- Embedding Aboriginal Studies across the curriculum; and
- Bolstering Community based learning for Koorie students.

This framework now goes one step further to operationalise the four-point strategy outlined in the position paper, by providing a comprehensive outline of proposed courses of action to achieve the goals set out in the position paper.

Aim

The aim of this framework is to achieve structural and systemic change within the Victorian education sector through embedding Koorie culture, history and perspectives across our schools. This aim will be achieved by targeting four key action areas:

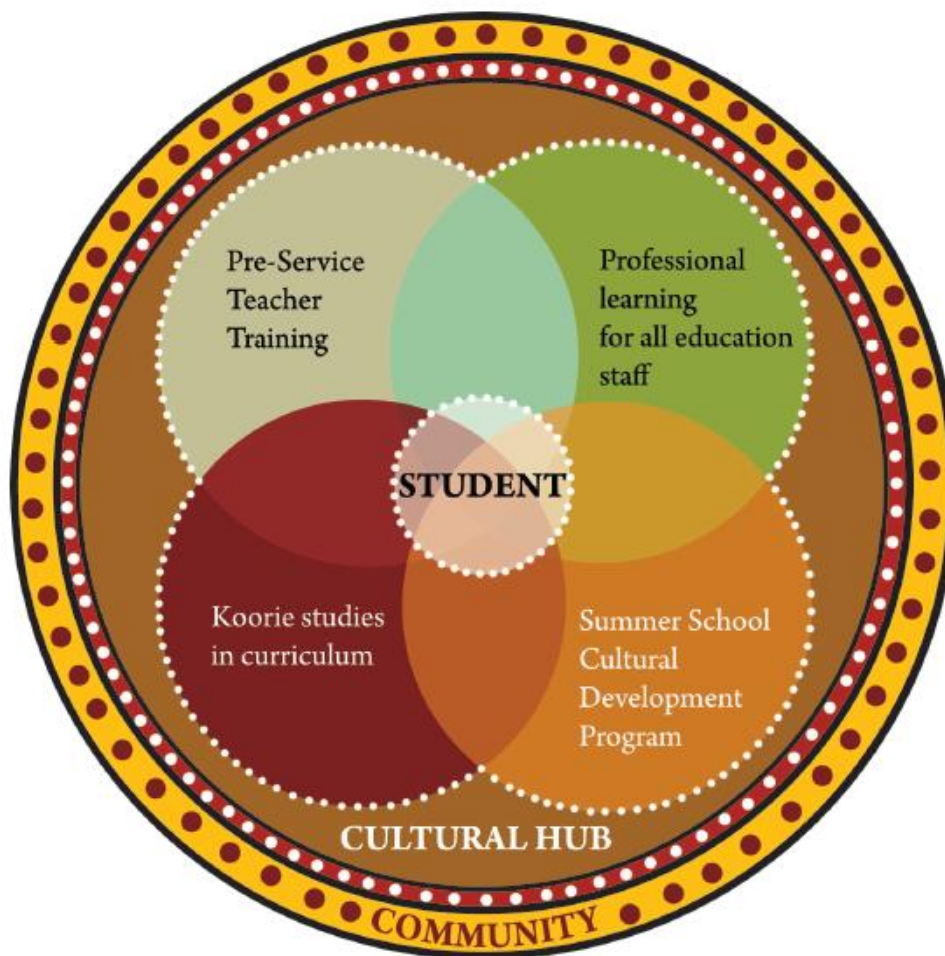
- Pre-service teacher training
- Professional learning for current education staff
- Aboriginal/Koorie studies in the classroom
- Community Cultural Education programmes

While all four areas are clearly distinguishable with defined objectives, they are also closely linked in their shared aim of embedding Koorie culture, history and perspectives into the Victorian education sector. Therefore, this framework further provides a proposal for a shared 'Cultural Hub' model that can provide resources and supports for each Action Area.

The Cultural Hub is a physical space located within a school, such as a classroom or stand alone building, that provides a learning space for classes and training, houses cultural resources such as books, articles, recordings, DVD's, artefacts and artworks, and is welcoming to Community

members. The Cultural Hub is at the centre of the school's cultural education practice and actively engages the Koorie Community as cultural mentors and a resource for local knowledge.

The Cultural Hub can act as a *classroom* for teaching Aboriginal studies curriculum units to all students, an *off-campus study area* for pre-service teachers undertaking Aboriginal studies units at their university or higher education institution, a *training centre* for the provision of professional learning to all education staff, and as a *summer school* for Community Cultural education programmes for Koorie students. A visual representation of the Cultural Hub model is provided below.



The Cultural Hub concept has been developed by VAEAI in consultation with various stakeholders including DEECD and five schools that are potential pilot sites for this framework.

Objectives

In achieving this framework's aim of embedding Koorie culture, history and perspectives into Victorian schools through a Cultural Hub model, the following objectives have been identified:

- To work with a University to develop a framework for the pre-service training of teachers at university and other higher education institutions, incorporating mandatory and elective Aboriginal Studies units.
- To work with DEECD in developing a training package for professional development of all education employees, both school-based and department-based.
- To work with the VCAA to develop a curriculum for the teaching of Aboriginal Studies in the classroom
- To pilot a Community-based, 'Summer School' Community Cultural Education Programme for Koorie students and Community members.

Developing the Cultural Hub sites at the pilot schools will require further consultation with the schools to identify potential locations and required support.

Background

The Position Paper on *Koorie/Aboriginal Studies and Education* developed by VAEAI in 2010 forms the basis of this framework. The four point strategy developed in the Position Paper focuses on:

- Piloting an enhanced pre-service teacher training programme;
- Providing professional learning for all education staff;
- Embedding Aboriginal Studies across the curriculum; and
- Bolstering Community based learning for Koorie students.

The Position Paper was widely circulated, and its content was discussed with a range of stakeholders in the Koorie Community, government and university sectors. Valuable feedback and input was provided by DEECD central and regional offices, the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, relevant Ministers' offices, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA), the Victorian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the Chairwoman - Deans of Education, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the VAEAI Committee of Management.

Based on these consultations, VAEAI began drafting an operational strategy for Koorie Education and Aboriginal Studies in October 2010. The draft briefly outlined the context for the operational framework, the steps that would be taken to develop strategic frameworks across the four identified priorities, and the resources required to meet these objectives.

This framework now goes one step further to formalise and expand on the operational strategy. This framework provides a comprehensive outline of proposed courses of action in achieving the goals

set out by the position paper, which are here referred to as *Action Areas*. The aims, objectives and steps involved in actioning each area are outlined in this framework and should be understood as recommendations to schools and the wider education sector in addressing the four Action Areas.

Implementation

VAEI is now in a position to implement this four-point strategy, with the support of DEECD, schools, the VCAA and the Victorian Koorie Community, which we believe will holistically develop a schooling system that is more inclusive of Koorie learners, Communities and knowledges.

The recommended steps or processes through which each Action Area may be achieved are provided below.

Action Area 1: Pre-service teacher training

Background

Since the 1970s, Australia's National Aboriginal Education Consultative Body (NAEC) has been calling on teacher education institutions to incorporate Aboriginal Studies into the teacher education curriculum. In 2002 the Australian Education Union (AEU) recommended that:

- all teachers employed in the education sector in Australia complete a minimum number of Indigenous Studies subjects (including cultural awareness, teaching and learning, and language numeracy and literacy) as a requirement for their employment into the teaching profession; and
- that all undergraduate and post-graduate teacher education programmes build into their course frameworks significant and assessable mandatory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units.

(Australian Education Union, 2002)

VAEI supports these recommendations, as teachers with a greater level of education in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and perspectives are much better placed to impact positively on Koorie students, while improving the cultural knowledge of all students. In order to fill the current gap in teachers' knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and perspectives, VAEI highly recommends that all pre-service teachers must undertake both mandatory and elective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units as a part of their studies to qualify as teachers.

The need to better prepare teachers for working with Koorie students and families has been similarly identified by the Victorian Governments' *Wannik* strategy, which supports the development of a comprehensive pre-service training programme in partnership with universities and the Koorie Community.

Aim

- Provide pre-service teachers with a comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, and particularly Victorian Koorie peoples.

- Improve the capacity of teachers entering the schools system to understand the particular needs of Koorie learners in their classrooms and therefore be better able to provide them with a first class education.
- Ensure non-Aboriginal students are taught about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and perspectives in an informed way that contributes to increased acceptance and decreased racism in Australian society.

Objectives

- Establish a VAEAI working group of Community members with extensive knowledge in Koorie education to advise on the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units for pre-service teachers and professional learning packages for all education staff.
- With the support of the Koorie Community, the working group to develop recommendations for a comprehensive criteria to be addressed and included in the development of the units.
- The pilot university, with the support of VAEAI, to develop study units based on the criteria.
- The pilot university, with the support of VAEAI, to implement the study units.
- VAEAI, DEECD and the pilot university to hold an evaluation session with all pre-service teachers involved in the pilot in order to gather comprehensive feedback on the delivery and effectiveness of the units.
- VAEAI to assist in finalising the structure of the units, based on information gathered from the evaluations and learnings throughout the pilot process, for distribution at the state level.

Strategies for action

To achieve the objectives of this strategy, five steps are proposed and outlined below.

1. Establishing the working group

The first step in this process would be to establish a working group whose purpose is to provide ongoing guidance and advice throughout the following stages.

The working group should consist of Community members with extensive knowledge in Koorie education to advise on the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units for pre-service teachers.

2. Developing the criteria

The key step in this process is to compile a comprehensive set of criteria that would guide the development and adoption of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units for pre-services teachers. VAEAI would lead the development of the criteria, in consultation with the Koorie Community via existing networks, a VAEAI Committee of Management (COM) Working Group, and representatives from the pilot university. VAEAI has previously undertaken consultation with Koorie Community members around these strategies, and this would also largely inform the criteria development process.

The criteria would outline a recommended content and structure for the units, including potential areas that should be excluded. The criteria would also include preferred methods of delivery, and strongly suggest the use of school Cultural Hubs¹⁸ as a possible off-campus study location for the unit delivery. The Cultural Hubs could provide valuable resources for the pre-service teacher training, as well as potential access to local Koorie Community members.

3. Creating the training programme

VAEAI, by drawing on the expertise of Koorie education specialists and through consultation with local Communities, would be best placed to select a pilot university. The pilot site could then develop the content of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units, with the support and guidance of VAEAI.

The tender process suggested to be undertaken by DEECD in *Action Area 2* of this framework, could contribute to the list of training providers VAEAI recommend to the university.

VAEAI's role in this process would largely be to provide guidance, support and an overseeing role, given that the pilot university would deliver the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units. VAEAI could provide support and facilitate communication between the pilot university and Koorie Community as required.

4. Conducting the pilot

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units developed with VAEAI's support would then be piloted at that university. The training could also offer an off-campus study component, to be

¹⁸ As mentioned in the Foreword to this Framework, the Cultural Hub is a physical space located within a school, such as a classroom or stand alone building, that provides a learning space for classes and training, and houses cultural resources such as books, articles, recordings, DVD's, artefacts and artworks. The Cultural Hub is at the centre of the school's cultural education practice and actively engages the Koorie community as cultural mentors and a resource for local knowledge.

undertaken at a Cultural Hub with local Koorie Community involvement offering local Koorie perspectives.

The programme should endeavour to challenge pre-service teachers to acknowledge the role of their own culture in dictating their beliefs and perspectives at the same time as learning about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of Australia, particularly that in their local area. VAEAI would offer support and guidance during the pilot implementation.

5. Evaluation and feedback

Following the pilot, an initial evaluation and feedback session could be held at the university, with all participating pre-service teachers.

VAEAI could engage an external facilitator with knowledge of the Koorie education sector and experience in cross-cultural facilitation. VAEAI's role in this process could be to assist in developing key questions and topic areas for discussion with the pilot university. VAEAI representatives would be present at the evaluation session as observers.

The intent of this session would be to gather detailed information on the benefits (or not) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units, and to provide participants with an opportunity to privately reflect on their learnings and experience, and to provide comments, criticisms and suggestions for improvements. Participants could also be asked to complete an online, anonymous survey in order to contribute anything further that they wish to in a de-identified setting. VAEAI would develop the survey questions and provide access through [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

VAEAI would then collect and collate all survey data and evaluation feedback, and develop a comprehensive evaluation report to be presented to the university, participating pre-service teachers and the VAEAI Committee of Management.

Ideally, VAEAI would recommend follow up interviews with these pilot participants, once in the profession. A longitudinal study would examine the effectiveness of this strategy and seek to establish how prepared teachers were through these units of study, to teach both Koorie students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and studies as required by a more culturally inclusive curriculum. This longitudinal study could occur at intervals – possibly after the first year of teaching and then after 5 years of teaching, for example.

6. Finalising the training programme

The evaluation report would guide the final step in this process, which would see the pilot Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units for pre-service teachers redrafted into a framework model that is suitable for broader adoption and implementation across the state.

VAEAI would work with universities and other tertiary education providers, pre-service teachers and Koorie Communities to develop the finalised framework model which, taking into account local protocols, would then be available for adoption across the state.

Action Area 2: Professional learning for all education staff

Background

In Victoria, the Koorie student population is widely dispersed, with almost 80% of government schools having at least one Koorie student enrolled¹⁹. Given this high dispersal rate, it can be expected that at some time in their professional career most of Victoria's 40,000 registered teachers will have direct contact with Koorie students²⁰.

In addition, the proposed Australian Curriculum will require that all subjects, at all year levels incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curricula perspectives. As such, there is a need to ensure that all in-service teachers are equipped with the knowledge to apply the curriculum, its content, and know how to appropriately teach it.

VAEI believes that Professional Development through cross-cultural training should be offered to *all* education staff, including principals, existing and returning teachers, reception and student support officers and Departmental and Regional Office employees. This is essential to supporting a quality teaching workforce, fostering reconciliation and combating racism.

There is a significant body of research in Australia that considers the effectiveness of professional development trainings with a cross-cultural focus²¹. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-cultural training should encompass learnings relating to both one's own culture and the multiple forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander *cultures* from both historic and contemporary perspectives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-cultural trainings should engender both individual behavioural change and change at the systemic level, which comes as a result of challenging one's own cultural preconceptions and assumed knowledges.

¹⁹ Summary Statistics for Victorian Schools, DEECD 2012

²⁰ Summary Statistics for Victorian Schools, DEECD 2010

²¹ See:

Black JS. (1990) '[Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review and a theoretical framework for future research](#)' Academy of Management Review.

Bean R. (2008) 'Cross-cultural training and workplace performance / Robert Bean' NCVER.

Downing R. & Kowal E. (2011) 'A postcolonial analysis of Indigenous cultural awareness training for health workers' Health Sociology Review.

Downing R., Kowal E. & Paradies Y. (2011) 'Indigenous cultural training for health workers in Australia' International Journal for Quality in Health Care.

Aim

The aims of this area are to:

- Improve the capacity of Victorian education staff to teach all students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and in particular Koorie culture, histories and perspectives.
- Ensure teachers have a better understanding of the particular needs of Koorie learners.
- Provide effective and accurate professional development opportunities to all education staff.

These aims would be achieved by facilitating the development and implementation of a series of professional learning packages to be delivered to all DEECD employees; both school-based (teaching and non-teaching staff) and department-based (regional and head office) staff. The professional learning packages would provide participants with a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, specifically Koorie peoples, through tailored cross-cultural training with a local focus.

Objectives

- Establish a VAEAI working group of Community members with extensive knowledge in Koorie education to advise on the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies units for pre-service teachers and professional learning packages for all education staff.
- With the support of the Koorie Community, the working group to develop recommendations for a comprehensive criteria to be addressed and included in the professional learning packages.
- The working group, in partnership with DEECD, to implement a regional tender process to obtain local training providers, individuals or organisations.
- The working group to advise on the development of the learning packages based on the criteria.
- The selected training provider, with the support of VAEAI, to pilot the learning packages at the school and department level.
- VAEAI and DEECD to hold an evaluation session with all pilot participants in order to gather comprehensive feedback on the delivery and effectiveness of the units.
- VAEAI to assist in finalising the structure of the learning packages, based on information gathered from the evaluations and learnings throughout the pilot process, for distribution at the state level.

Strategies for action

To achieve the objectives of this strategy, five steps are proposed and outlined below.

1. Establishing the working group

The first step in this process would be to establish a working group whose purpose is to provide ongoing guidance and advice throughout the following stages.

The working group should consist of Community members with extensive knowledge in Koorie education to advise on the development of professional learning packages for all education staff.

2. Developing the criteria

The first step in this process would be to compile a comprehensive set of criteria that would direct the development and implementation of the professional learning packages. VAEAI, in consultation with the Victorian Koorie Community, and guided by an identified working group, would advise on the development of the criteria.

The criteria would recommend content and delivery methods for the professional learning packages. The training involved in the professional learning packages could be conducted over several days and involve both theoretical and practical experiences. The training should challenge participants to acknowledge the role of their own culture in Australian society at the same time as learning about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of Australia, particularly those in their local area.

3. The tender process

Once the criteria were developed, the working group and DEECD would be asked to put out a regional call for tenders from cultural training providers in the local areas selected by VAEAI as pilot sites (see potential pilot schools listed under Step 5 below). The tender process would be open to all accredited cultural training providers in these areas, including individuals and organisations.

Cultural training providers would be provided with the criteria and asked to outline draft professional learning packages for both school-based and department-based training for DEECD staff that align with and address the criteria. VAEAI would work in partnership with DEECD to select appropriate training providers.

The cultural training providers successful in the tender process would then be asked to fully develop the professional learning packages, ready for implementation at the pilot sites. The professional learning packages would need to incorporate a series of training (training program) for both school-based and department-based DEECD employees.

4. The development of the learning package

The development of the professional learning package would be undertaken by the successful tenderers, in partnership with the working group, and guided by the criteria. This partnership will ensure that the content and delivery of the learning package is informed by experienced training providers, knowledgeable Community members and other representatives from the education sector.

The learning package should be developed within an agreed upon, reasonable timeframe so that the pilot process may commence.

5. Conducting the pilots

The successful tenders would be asked to deliver their professional learning packages at each of the pilot sites.

The professional learning packages would be delivered at pilot school-based sites and one pilot department-based site. Potential school pilot sites have been identified by VAEAI and are:

- Thornbury Primary School, Melbourne
- Swan Hill Primary School
- Gowrie Street Primary School, Shepparton
- Mildura Primary School
- Lakes Entrance Secondary College

VAEAI has had initial conversations with these schools and each has indicated an interest in the project. The potential pilot school sites incorporate metropolitan and regional areas at both primary and secondary levels. Additionally, the DEECD head office in Melbourne would could be the preferred department-based pilot site.

6. Evaluation and feedback

Following the implementation of the professional learning packages, an evaluation and feedback session would be held at each of the pilot sites. External facilitators would be sourced by VAEAI to conduct these sessions, and the role of VAEAI would be to develop key questions and topic areas for discussion. VAEAI representatives would be present at the evaluation sessions as observers to collect feedback data.

The intent of these sessions would be to gather detailed information on the trainings and experiences provided by the professional learning packages, and to provide participants with an

opportunity to reflect openly and honestly on their experience, and to provide comments, criticisms and suggestions.

Participants would also be asked to complete an online, anonymous survey so that they may contribute anything further they wish to, in a de-identified setting. VAEAI could develop the survey questions and provide access through www.SurveyMonkey.com.

VAEAI would then collect and collate all survey data and evaluation session feedback, and develop a comprehensive evaluation report for each area to be presented to the cultural training providers the VAEAI Committee of Management, and the DEECD

7. Finalising the professional learning packages

The evaluation reports would guide the final step in this process, which would see the professional learning packages redrafted into a model form that is suitable for broader implementation across the state.

VAEAI would work with local Koorie Communities, DEECD, cultural training providers and schools to develop the finalised professional learning packages and local protocols, which would then be tendered out to be utilised across all regions.

Area 3: Aboriginal Perspectives and the Curriculum

“The right of Indigenous peoples to education includes the right to provide and receive education through their traditional methods of teaching and learning, and the right to integrate their own perspectives, cultures, beliefs, values and languages in mainstream education systems and institutions. The right to education for Indigenous peoples is a holistic concept incorporating mental, physical, spiritual, cultural and environmental dimensions.”

United Nations Expert Mechanism Advice No. 1 (2009) On the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Education

Aim

To ensure there is adequate resource support for the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and studies in Victorian schools; and to develop a strategic framework for the application of Aboriginal studies and perspectives, which is respectful to Community, flexible in design, includes guidelines, protocols, suggestions and advice on working with local Koorie Community members, and provides links to culturally appropriate resources and teaching tools.

The framework will emphasise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across the nation and the unique nature of local Koorie knowledge.

Background

Improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal people is a major priority, both nationally and within Victoria. For Koorie students providing Aboriginal perspectives within the curriculum is fundamental to strengthening identity and self-esteem. A strong sense of identity and good self-image has a direct positive impact on educational outcomes.

The Victorian Government, through the *Wannik* strategy, has committed to developing a culturally inclusive curriculum within Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) by working with VAEAI and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). Additionally, from a national perspective, the Australian Curriculum requires teachers to implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the entire curriculum and throughout all year levels. While the Australian Curriculum is a nationally designed framework, teachers are expected to apply local

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledge, relative to their geographical position, across all learning areas. In order to do this, Victorian teachers need to access culturally appropriate, quality resources, be sensitive to Koorie Community protocols and engage and involve the local Koorie Community in assisting and supporting their teaching. This is essential in the teaching of both Koorie and non-Aboriginal students.

Given systemic education reforms at the State level through the Wannik strategy, and curriculum reforms at both State and National levels, teachers are seeking culturally appropriate and relevant resources, guidance and support.

VAEI's philosophy on cultural training and education is based on a model which focuses at the local level first, followed by regional, state, national and international perspectives. Furthermore while we strongly support the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum – we also take the position that Aboriginal Studies should be taught as a separately identified subject. The application of Aboriginal perspectives and local Koorie knowledge in the curriculum, and the teaching of Aboriginal Studies necessitate that Aboriginal history, cultures, books, stories, art and knowledge of the land need to be taught to all Australian children, in a culturally inclusive environment.

However, as succinctly noted by Purdie et al: "For many non-Indigenous educators the prospect of the National Curriculum with its demand for embedded Indigenous perspectives is extremely daunting. Most teachers own education at school or university seldom included integrated First People's knowledge or perspectives, and few have arrived in the classroom with the experience of any social relationship with Indigenous neighbours or communities. Like most other Australians, teachers generally know about Aboriginal culture from a popular press that seems driven to offer a diet of sensationalised or simplistic Eurocentric accounts of problems and issues that paint Aboriginal people in a stereotypical... light ... The challenge to embed Aboriginal cultural content ... requires participating schools, team leaders, Aboriginal knowledge-holders and communities, and teachers from both cultures to ask and respond to the hard questions."²²

²² Purdie, Nola (2011) Two way teaching and Learning: toward culturally reflective and relevant education, ACER Press,

Objectives

- Establish a VAEAI working group of industry experts to advise on the development of methodologies to effectively embed Koorie perspectives into the Victorian curriculum and to develop a Community Summer School Program (see Area 4:Community Cultural Education).
- With the support of the Koorie Community, the working group to conduct an audit of relevant state and national databases to determine what materials are currently available to support the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and stand alone Aboriginal studies units.
- The working group to map relevant resources against state and national Curricula and identify gaps and needs.
- VAEAI to work with VCAA to embed Koorie perspectives in the Victorian Curriculum.
- To develop local methodologies to engage the Koorie Community in the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and studies, including access to local Koorie Community knowledge for the effective teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and studies.

Strategies for Action

Following is an outline of the recommended steps:

1. Establish a working group

The first step in this process would be to establish a working group whose purpose is to provide ongoing guidance and advice throughout the following stages.

The working group should consist of Community members with extensive knowledge in Koorie education to advise on the development of methodologies to effectively embed Koorie perspectives into the Victorian curriculum.

2. Audit of relevant national and state databases

The first step in this process is to conduct an audit of state and national databases dedicated to the provision of teaching resources and learning tools. This is in order to determine what materials are currently available to support the specific teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and stand alone Aboriginal Studies units. This includes the National Digital Learning Resources Network portal Scootle - licensed as FUSE in Victoria, and managed by Education Services Australia on behalf of MCEECDYA. The National Digital Learning Resources Network contains more than 12,000 digital curriculum resources that are free for use in all Australian schools. The resources are aligned to state and territory curricula and progressively to the Australian Curriculum, as it develops. They are made

available to teachers through state and territory portals or *Scootle*, and to the tertiary sector through the eContent repository.²³

Additionally a series of consultations could be undertaken, to locate unpublished, localised or hard to find resources. Consultations would need to occur with Koorie Community educators, LAECGs Chairs and members as well as teachers in key learning areas, to identify and locate regional and local language group resources that would be available for local teachers to access in their teaching.

3. Curriculum mapping

Once the audit and consultation process is complete, a comprehensive Aboriginal Studies resources database would be developed in order to map resources against subject and year levels in both the state and national curricula, and to identify gaps where resources need to be developed or sourced. The database would provide a catalogue of local, regional, state and national resources with links to the National Digital Learning Resources Network and other relevant resource databases and websites.

Scootle (the national digital portal) is currently aligning resources to the National curriculum with search tools such as content descriptors for all year levels, and the application of specific filters such as *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures & Cross-curriculum perspectives*. Further access to the state-based FUSE will determine to what degree this is happening for Victorian teachers in relation to VELs specifically.

Further consideration will also need to be given to the types of resources available and needed, as well as the intended audience. While databases such as Scootle provide online digitised resources for schools, further consultation will also reveal other media – such as material goods (books, objects, games, clothes, cultural artifacts etc). Consideration will also need to be given to localised resources which might not be available to the general public following Koorie Community protocols and traditions. For example there may be cultural artifacts which the Community might decide are only for young Koorie men to view and learn about, but not women or non-Aboriginal people.

²³ Note that while a number of permissions have been sorted for access to Scootle by VAEAI, entry to FUSE will need to be negotiated separately. This will be necessary to conduct the audit from a Victorian perspective relative to VELs (or the proposed merged AusVELs).

4. Aboriginal Perspectives and Curriculum Development

In Victoria Aboriginal perspectives are assumed to be an integral part of the VELS Curriculum.²⁴ It is understood that the study of Aboriginal perspectives is essential for developing student understanding of Australian history, culture and identity as well as providing understandings of contemporary society. The VELS domains of Civics and Citizenship, History and Geography contain a range of references to Aboriginal content, with five interrelated themes. These are: land, culture, history, political and civil rights and Indigenous cultures today. Additionally, the VELS domains of Civics and Citizenship and History also emphasise the values that underpin a harmonious democratic society including equality, freedom, respect and understanding.²⁵

However, the ways in which Aboriginal perspectives can be embedded, what content should ideally be taught, who is best to teach and what resources are available to support this teaching are not apparent. In order to more effectively do this, some actions are recommended and outlined below:

VAEAI could establish an *Aboriginal Perspectives Curriculum Development Group* in consultation with the VCAA, and consider employing a full-time project officer with curriculum writing experience. The overall aims of the project group would be to:

- Effectively embed Aboriginal cultural content across the Victorian curriculum, and to
- Support teacher professional learning in relation to the development and delivery of Aboriginal cross-curriculum content (K-12).

Following a model proposed by Riley and Genner (2011)²⁶ key strategies could include:

- Developing curriculum focused sample units and tasks incorporating Aboriginal content and perspectives
- Identifying a number of project trial schools. Project trial schools could include schools with Koorie students as well as schools without
- Trialling and evaluating these units and tasks in project schools
- Supporting curriculum based collaboration with the local Koorie Communities

²⁴ From <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/crosscurricular/Indigenous.html>

²⁵ From <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/crosscurricular/Indigenous.html>

²⁶ Riley, L. Bemel-Gardoo: Embedding Aboriginal cultural content in the science and technology syllabus. In Purdie et al (2011) Two way Teaching and Learning: Toward culturally reflective and relevant education, pp 119-153.

- Connecting to and actively utilising local Koorie Community members and Community knowledge.
- Establishing a mechanism for further input into the proposed AusVELS.²⁷

5. Aboriginal Studies and Community engagement

In order to effectively teach Aboriginal perspectives and studies, and to incorporate localised knowledge, teachers will need to be guided in how to best work with their local Koorie Community so as to support the school's curriculum development, teaching activities and cultural programme. At the school level teachers should be engaging with Koorie cultural knowledge specialists in developing their own curriculum and units of work. There needs to be a true partnership in the learning.

The development of a set of guidelines and protocols for the application of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives at a local followed by regional, state and national levels would greatly support teachers in establishing connections and working with the Koorie Community,

These guidelines could provide information on how to approach the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives and studies following the local, regional, state national model as well as who to approach and their respective roles. Guidelines could include contacts for local LAECGs, the Koorie Education workforce, regional Cultural Centres and key Koorie organisations as well as protocols for working respectfully with Community.

²⁷ AusVELS is the Foundation to Year 10 Curriculum for Victorian government and Catholic schools for implementation from 2013. AusVELS outlines what is essential for all Victorian students to learn for F-10 and includes the Australian Curriculum F-10 for English, Mathematics, History and Science. It provides a single, coherent and comprehensive set of common achievement standards which schools use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents: <http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

Area 4: Community Cultural Education: Summer School

“Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning ...

States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.”

Article 14 Sections 1 and 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Aim

The aim of this strategy is to enhance Koorie student learning by providing an additional strong Community based cultural education programme to complement school based learning. A community lead programme will encourage positive interaction between schools and the parents/guardians of Koorie students. By creating an environment of mutual respect tools to support students with study preparation and homework can be shared and developed. Such a programme would help to improve educational outcomes by contributing to the development of a strong sense of belonging, identity and positive self-esteem.

Background

In its goal to promote equity and excellence in schooling, *The Melbourne Declaration* states that all Australian governments and school sectors “must ensure that schools build on the local cultural knowledge and experience of Indigenous students as a foundation for learning, and work in partnership with local communities on all aspects of the schooling process, including to promote high expectations for the learning outcomes of Indigenous students.”²⁸

In 2010, VAEAI undertook a series of consultations to discuss the concept of a summer school cultural programme. A number of Koorie parents had voiced concern that their children were being taken out of mainstream school classes to attend cultural programmes with other Koorie students, while their fellow students remained in class for mainstream lessons. While these activities were educational, enjoyable and led to good bonding with fellow students and strengthening self esteem, parents were concerned that their children were missing out on vital school activities. They wanted both for their children – a good solid education at school and strong cultural activities and learning for their children. As a result of these discussions, the concept of a summer school was floated – a programme offering a Community driven complementary cultural programme for Koorie students.

VAEAI took up the issue, and further discussions occurred with LAECGs in regional Victoria and in particular in places such as Gippsland with a strong language base and an existing cultural education programme – the Bataluk Trail.²⁹ Educational personnel from Woolum Bellum Pathways School, Central Gippsland TAFE and the Gippsland Regional Office were also consulted about the possibility of developing and trialling a Summer School programme.

Since then, a number of schools have shown a keen interest in developing a school-based Community Cultural Hub and supporting such a programme from their school. Many schools are working to implement Wannik strategies by developing school Community partnerships, a more culturally inclusive curriculum and considering offering Language, Culture and Reclamation (Aboriginal LOTE) to all students. They are aware that the National Curriculum will further require their teachers to teach Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum, and agree that the development of a Community cultural hub would support not only the delivery of a cultural programme to all students, but also a summer school programme specifically for Koorie students in the region.

The school Community partnerships in the process and the subsequent engagement of both Community and students with the school can only lead to improved educational outcomes. Furthermore, as resources would be produced for and by the summer school programme, they would also be used in the Aboriginal perspectives or studies units in the local schools.

Objectives

- VAEAI to identify schools as potential Summer School locations

²⁹²⁹ Based on Gunai/Kurnai cultural information and developed by Gippsland based Koorie teacher Lynette Solomon.

- The schools, with support of VAEAI, to develop a strong pilot Community Cultural Program
- The schools, with support of VAEAI, to implement the Summer School Cultural Program
- VAEAI and the pilot schools to hold an evaluation session with stakeholders in order to gather comprehensive feedback on the delivery and effectiveness of the units.
- VAEAI to assist in development of a formal 'best-practice' model, based on information gathered from the evaluations and learnings throughout the pilot process, for distribution at the state level.
- Expand delivery of the programme to a wider selection of schools.

Strategies for Action

1. Establish a working group

The first step in this process would be to establish a working group whose purpose is to provide ongoing guidance and advice throughout the following stages.

The working group should consist of Community members with extensive knowledge in Koorie education to advise on the development of a Community Summer School programme.

2. Identify Pilot Locations

Ideally, the Summer School pilot would be trialled in a region with:

- a stronger language base
- a core group of community members able to teach Koorie students
- a Cultural Studies programme already developed (such as the *Batalak Trail* in Gippsland), and
- existing institutional and departmental support.

Given however the diversity and distinctiveness of local Koorie Communities in Victoria, the varying levels of language reclamation and available resources and the high level of interest, we propose that a series of trials occur so that a number of learnings can be gleaned from the various trials and inevitably, a flexible model developed. Depending on the availability of resources and cultural knowledge holders, some programmes may have a stronger local language focus while others a stronger focus in diverse cultural forms of expression and learning, depending on the needs and available cultural expertise of the local Koorie Community.

This strategy necessitates a strong school Community partnership and a good working relationship with local Koorie Community members and in particular the parents/guardians of Koorie students. As the proposed programme would be delivered outside of ordinary school hours but most likely

from a school premise, it requires a strong commitment from both the local Koorie Community and the school itself.

While a number of schools have indicated interest in establishing a Community Cultural Hub and supporting an out-of-school hours Summer School-type cultural programme,³⁰ further consultation would need to occur with local Koorie Communities to identify strong pilot locations based on the availability of cultural expertise, existing resources, and a supportive school community. This consultation would ideally occur with LAECGs and other interested Koorie Community members, the Victorian Corporation for Languages (VACL) which supports local language reclamation activities across the State, traditional owner groups and relevant local Koorie Community organisations. Further consultation would also occur with parents and students in order to also establish both a demand and support for the programme.

3. Develop a strong Community Cultural Programme

Once the pilot schools are determined, support would need to be given to developing a Community-based cultural education programme. Ideally this programme would be open to all Koorie students in the region and be open-aged so as to include extended family members.

In order to develop such a programme, the following steps are recommended:

- To work closely with local Koorie Communities and relevant organisations to develop a Community cultural programme model to be trialled – a local cultural knowledge education working group could be established to facilitate this process.
- Examine local, interstate and international examples of successful Community-based cultural learning for possible models.
- Identify local Koorie Community resources that may be appropriate for inclusion in the programme, and
- Work with local and regional schooling systems to identify how to best bolster the Community's programme.

4. Implementing the Programme

As an initial point of focus for the implementation of a Koorie Community Cultural education programme, some key questions need to be considered. The following questions could provide a focus for initial planning. While these questions are based on the *Bemel-Gardoo* method for

³⁰ Initial interest from Thornbury Primary School and schools in Mildura, Swan Hill, Lakes Entrance and Shepparton.

embedding cultural content in the school syllabus³¹, they could also apply to the planning of a Community based cultural programme:

- What areas of cultural knowledge will be explored?
- Who in the local Koorie Community has the specialist knowledge to share with students?
- How will the specialist be supported to attend the programme (e.g. transport, lesson planning)?
- What will be suitable recompense for the person's time, knowledge and involvement?
- How can other Koorie people and organisations be engaged to assist?
- What protocols need to be considered?

Assistance and support would need to be provided to Communities, in the implementation of the programme. Further assistance and support would also need to be provided to schools who are interested in implementing the programme.

5. Evaluation and Feedback

An evaluation and feedback session would be held at each of the pilot sites after the programme has been implemented and operating for an agreed upon 'trial' period. External facilitators would be sourced by VAEAI to conduct these sessions, and the role of VAEAI would be to develop key questions and topic areas for discussion. VAEAI representatives would be present at the evaluation sessions as observers, to collect feedback data.

The intent of these sessions would be to gather detailed information on the pilot programmes, and to provide participating teachers, students and family members with an opportunity to reflect openly and honestly on their experience to date, and to provide comments, criticisms and suggestions.

Participants in the evaluation process would also be asked to complete an anonymous online survey so that they may contribute anything further they wish to, in a de-identified setting. VAEAI could develop the survey questions and provide access through www.SurveyMonkey.com.

VAEAI would then collect and collate all survey data and evaluation session feedback, and develop a comprehensive evaluation report for each area, to be presented to the VAEAI Committee of Management and DEECD.

³¹ Riley, L. Bemel-Gardoo: Embedding Aboriginal cultural content in the science and technology syllabus. In Purdie et al (2011) Two way Teaching and Learning: Toward culturally reflective and relevant education, pp 119-153.

6. Develop Formal 'Best-Practice' Model

- Evaluate pilot programmes through a formal evaluation procedure comprising of observation, discussions and participants feedback.
- Work with Community, students and schools to develop a model that would be broadly applicable.

7. Expand Delivery

- Use the formal model as a guide to implementing the programme in an expanded set of locations
-