



2022

ANNUAL REPORT

A REVIEW OF THE OPERATIONS
AND ACTIONS OF 2021

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION INC.

VAEA 





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LAND

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work, we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their Cultural heritage, beliefs and continual relationship with the land and we recognise the importance of the young people, who are future leaders.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have passed away.

Artwork: Kevin J Williams & Anjee-Lee Bamblett.

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FOREWORD

Since the 1970s, VAEAI has been the voice of the Koorie community in education. We speak to government and represent all Aboriginal communities across the state of Victoria. Community input is our strength – we work from the ground up. The VAEAI committee of management is made up of Elders and emerging leaders from 30 communities.

Our Committee of Management members have always been determined to ensure that Aboriginal people enjoy the right to an education, and in particular an education that respects our unique identity as First Nations people. Our determination has led to real progress. Inclusive community-driven strategies like Marrung show how far we have come.

We must remain vigilant about future challenges. More Koorie young people are finishing year 12 and going on to university and vocational training than ever before.

We must continue to grow those numbers. We must ensure that from early childhood onwards, all education environments in Victoria promote and celebrate First Nations history and culture – and they must always do this in partnership with Koorie communities.

Never again should a Victorian student, Koorie or non-Koorie - be able to say they spent their school days learning nothing about Aboriginal History and Culture. It's a new era, one that we have fought hard for, and one that we can never take for granted. VAEAI thanks all of our committee members, for your dedication, your commitment, and your unwavering belief that every Koorie person deserves the opportunities a good education brings.



PRESIDENT

2021 saw VAEAI continue to support Koorie learners, families, and communities through the COVID-19 pandemic with a particular focus on the recovery phase and a transition to a 'new normal'.

The beginning of the COVID-19 recovery phase saw the lifting of many restrictions in Victoria, including lockdowns, which meant that early learning services, schools, and VET and higher education institutions were able to begin the transition from remote learning back to on-site learning.

This transition brought with it a number of challenges for Koorie learners, families, and communities, and presented an opportunity for VAEAI to build on the work of the Koorie Outreach Support Program (KOSP) and identify and implement targeted, place-based supports.

These supports were focussed on removing the barriers to a return to on-site learning for Koorie learners, which included:

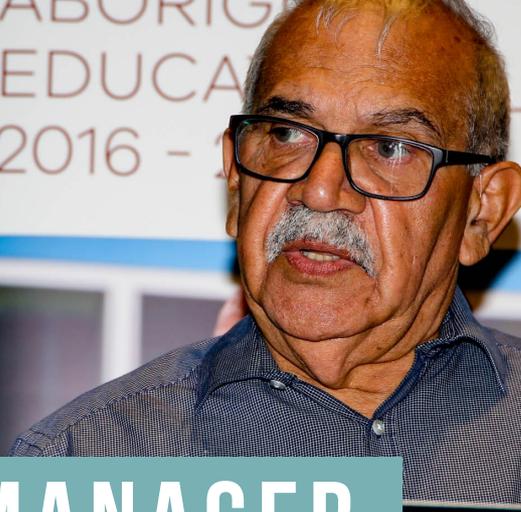
- Learner anxiety to return to their school and/or VET and higher education institutions associated with 'being behind' after disengagement or challenges with remote learning.

- Families/carers struggling to get learners to attend school.
- Ongoing access to appropriate resources and equipment.

Fundamental to the successful identification and implementation of these targeted supports was the ongoing function of the Marrung governance structure. Koorie learners, families, and communities were engaged in the decision-making process at every level through the COVID-19 recovery period through engagement in the Koorie Education Roundtables, Regional Partnership Forums, Central Governance Committee, and Ministerial Roundtable meetings held throughout 2021.

We are now 6 years into the implementation of the 10-year Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026. Through the continued implementation of this plan, VAEAI is committed to improving educational access, experiences, outcomes, and self-determination for Koorie children, young people, and families.

Thank you all for all your continued support and hard work as we strive for greater educational and training outcomes, and to create excellent educational environments for Koorie learners, families, and communities.



GENERAL MANAGER

In 2021 VAEAI continued to play a pivotal role in supporting Koorie learners, families, and communities with the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The focus in the last 12 months shifted from identifying and implementing supports for Koorie learners undertaking remote learning to supporting Koorie learners with the transition back to on-site learning during the COVID-19 recovery phase.

The Koorie Outreach Support Program (KOSP) continued to play a fundamental role in identifying and linking Koorie learners, families, and communities with targeted support during this period.

Building on the success of the first program, the second phase of the KOSP launched on June 28th, 2021, and ran for a period of six months until its completion on 31st December 2021.

In 2021 VAEAI also embarked on the co-design of the Self-determination in Education Reform (SDER) Project with DET. VAEAI sit on the project's Collaborative Working Group which was responsible for the development of the Terms of Reference and the Project Plan. The Working Group meets fortnightly, and also convenes meetings with the CEOs of the Victorian ACCOs to

discuss the ongoing development of the project.

In line with the principles of the partnership in education and training between VAEAI and DET, a number of different community consultation mechanisms are being established to inform the development of the project.

DET are coordinating 'SDER Campfire Sessions' to be held in selected schools across the state. VAEAI are also working with a group of ACCOs to develop campfire sessions to be delivered in their regions.

The function of the Marrung governance structure will be vital to ensuring the voice of Koorie learners, families, and communities have a voice in the decision-making process throughout the project. The Koorie Education Roundtable (KER) meetings held in early 2022 will be centred around the theme of 'Self-Determination in Education Reform' (SDER).

VAEAI is committed to continuing to support Koorie learners, families, and communities to achieve academic success through the development and implementation of programs such as those listed above as well and the ongoing implementation of the actions of Marrung.

SNAPSHOT

628

Koorie students who completed a VCE, VCAL and/or a VET in Schools Certificate in government schools and institutions in 2021*.

*Due to the on-going impact of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, the VCAA and DET provided additional support to VCAL students. However, anecdotal evidence suggests a higher than usual proportion of the students enrolled in the VCAL Intermediate levels found 2021 challenging and were unable to complete learning outcomes for units. These students can re-enrol in 2022 to complete the number of units required to qualify for their VCAL certificates.

1,372

Victorian Government School campuses have undertaken Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST) to Jan 1, 2021*.

*Of 1,780 Victorian Government Schools.

100%

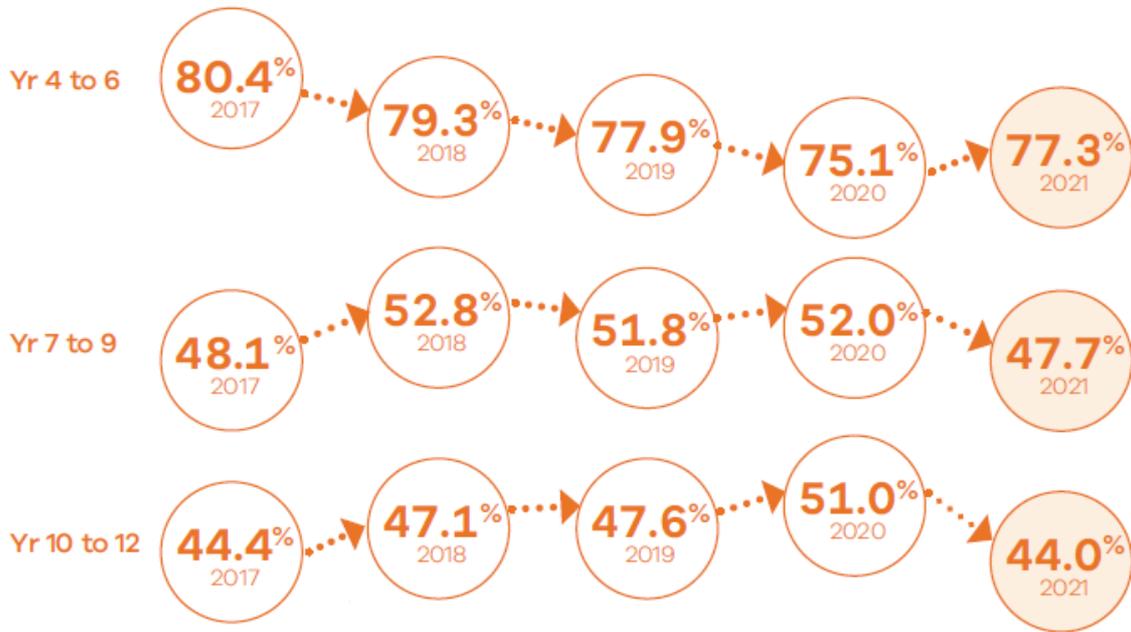
The participation* rate of Koorie children in 4-year-old kindergarten in 2021 is TBA** at the time of reporting. The rate in 2020 was 100% (1653 children).

*Figures are for participation in Early Start Kindergarten/Access to Early Learning.

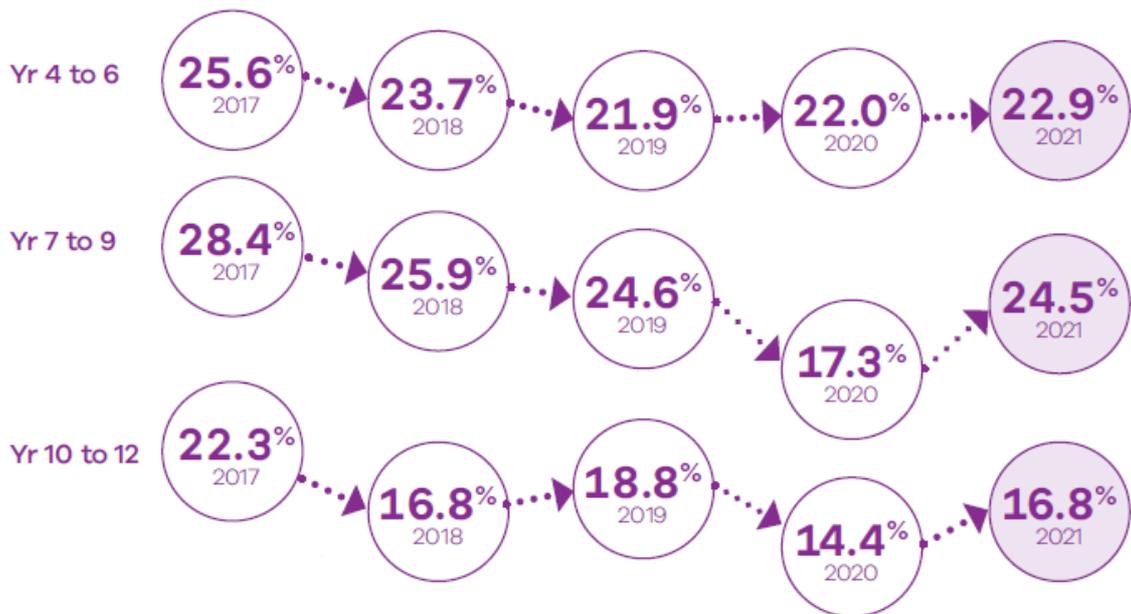
**It is expected that there will be a decrease in the participation rate for 2021 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



KOORIE STUDENTS POSITIVE RESPONSES TO SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS (ATOSS)



PROPORTION OF KOORIE STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AT SCHOOL (ATOSS)



* 2020 AtoSS system level results include students responses from schools that participated in the survey, noting that the survey was run outside of the usual survey period and under conditions not typically experienced by schools. When interpreting the results presented, readers should be aware that the data for 2020 was affected by these conditions and should be used with caution.

* Data for 2020 may serve as a useful point in time reflection of students' experiences for participating schools, the data at system level is not to be used for determining targets or be compared with other years.



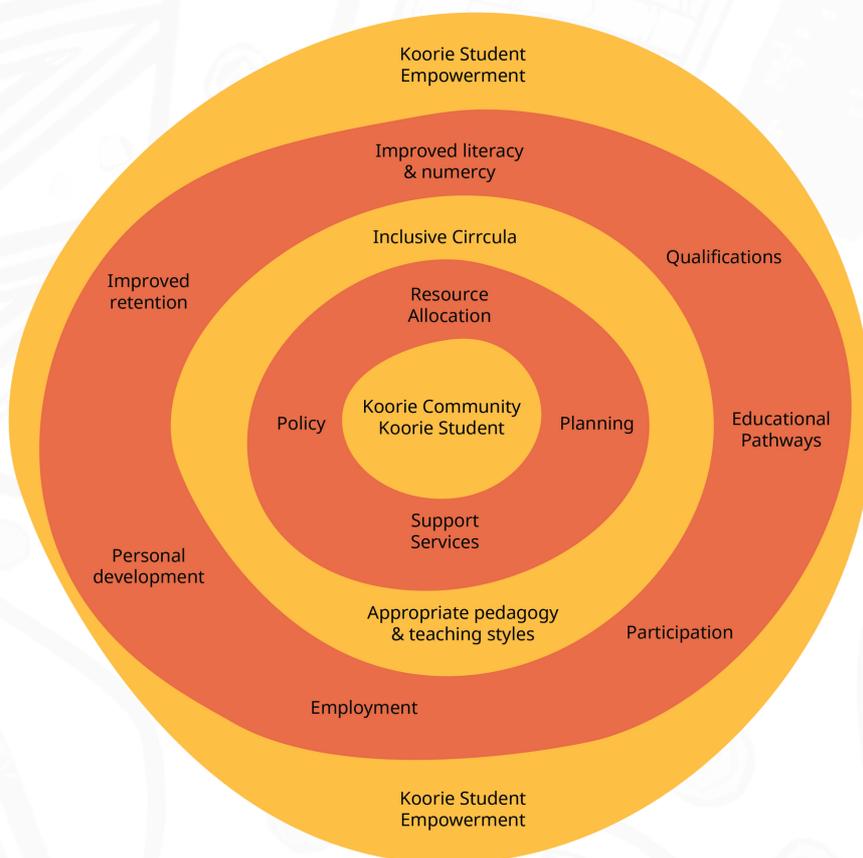
OUR VISION

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, or VAEAI, is the peak state-wide Aboriginal community-controlled organisation for education and training in Victoria. We work for our community to build success in education and training.

As an organisation, we have been pushing and fighting for a holistic education system that genuinely and authentically reflects and respects our prime place in this nation's history and culture. We want our rights to be actively involved in decisions that affect our communities' education and training outcomes as First Nations Peoples

We formed over 40 years ago because of the extremely poor education outcomes for our Koorie communities, due to the complete lack of cultural understandings in schools, to make a change.

Koorie communities needed and still need structural and systemic change, to better the educational outcomes of Koorie students, their educational outcomes, and to create a first-class educational environment for all students.



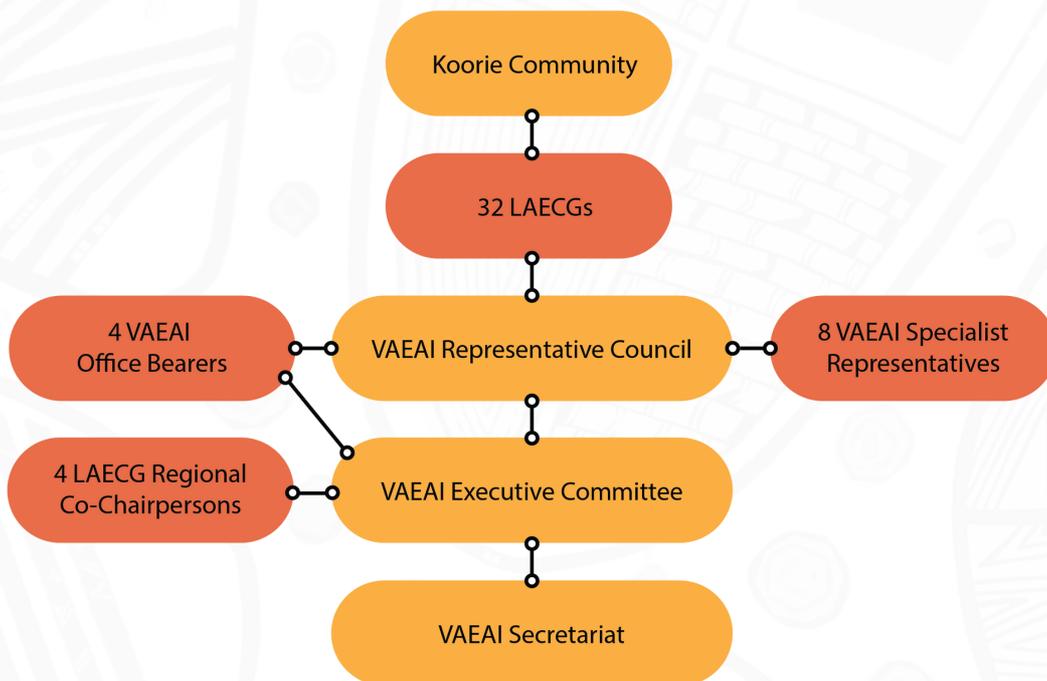
OUR STRUCTURE

VAEAI is a state-wide Koorie Community organisation, consisting of eight regions that are divided on the basis of traditional networks, with a number of Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECG's) within each region.

The advisory arrangements are embedded in local communities through the LAECG's, which are constituent units of VAEAI and each is a representative on the state-wide VAEAI Representative Council (VRC).

The VAEAI Secretariat is the working arm of VAEAI and the organisation's central coordinating function guided by the VRC.

The Secretariat has staff working in early childhood, school education, post compulsory education and training, community engagement and policy





OUR LEADERSHIP

The Executive Committee provides a wealth of experience, inspiration and guidance and is established by Clause 45 of the VAEAI Constitution, which lists the Office Bearer roles that are elected at each Annual General Meeting, and also four additional representatives.



GERALDINE ATKINSON

President

A Bangerang/Wiradjuri woman, Geraldine Atkinson has devoted her career to expanding the possibilities available for Koorie people through education. Geraldine has been the president of VAEAI since 1998.



MARK ROSE

Vice-President

A Gunditjmara man from Western Victoria with a thirty plus year career in education who has contributed to a variety of educational settings within the state, nationally & internationally.



KEITH RANDALL

Treasurer

A Yaegl, Bundjalung & Gumbainggir man from North east NSW. Keith has lived in Victoria for over 20 years and has a big passion for youth, Aboriginal education and Aboriginal justice. Keith has been a member of VAEAI for over 9 years.



LINDA BAMBLETT

Secretary

A Bangerang/Wiradjuri woman, Linda has had a longstanding involvement in Victorian Aboriginal Affairs, particularly in education, justice and community services. She has contributed to Koorie education at the state-wide and national settings, and has been a long standing member of VAEAI

SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVES

The VAEAI Representative Council (VRC), established by Clause 37 of the VAEAI Constitution, is the major consultative making body of the organisation, formulating priorities for policies, strategies and programs for Koorie education and training in Victoria, across all educational sectors. Within the VRC, our Specialist Representatives oversee areas of expertise to ensure that community is heard and represented across the structure.



**MIRANDA
EDWARDS**

Early Childhood



**NICOLE
BRIGGS**

Primary Schools
Education



**VERA
BRIGGS**

Secondary Schools
Education



**BOBBY
WISE-MOORE**

Catholic Schools
Education



**APRIL
CLARKE**

Independent Schools
Education



**ROBERT
SAUNDERS**

Adult and Further
Education



**VICKI
ATKINSON**

TAFE



**ESME
BAMBLETT**

Higher Education

MARRUNG

Koorie education and the partnerships in Victoria have been enhanced since the implementation of the Marrung 10-year Education Plan (2016-2026).

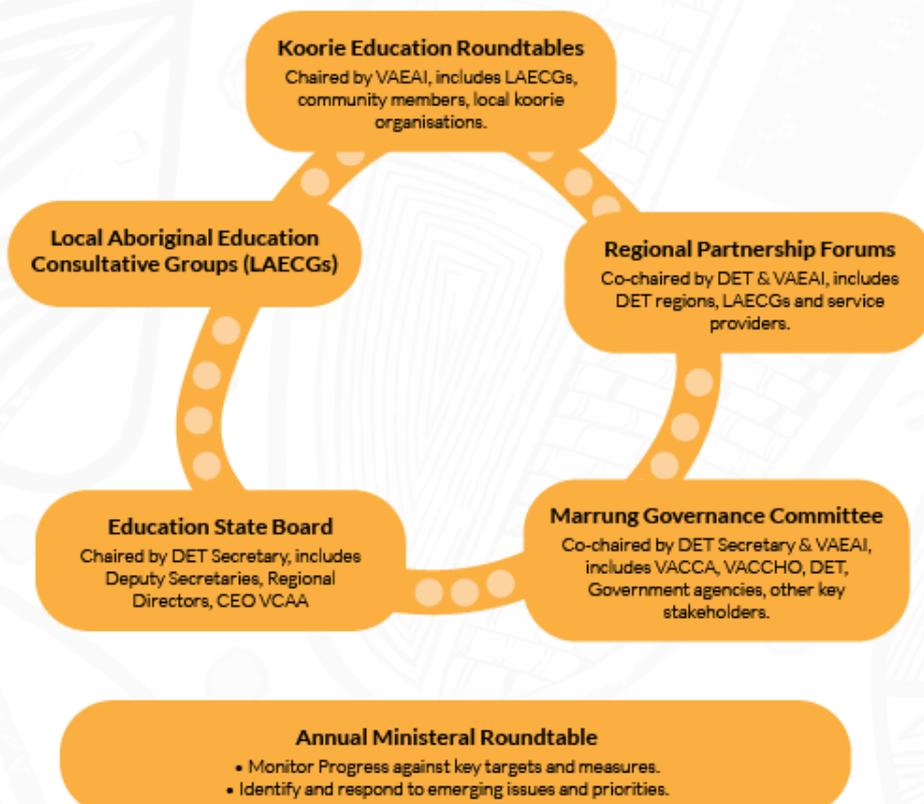
The Marrung 10-year Education Plan (2016-2026) is a strategy developed to ensure that all Koorie Victorians achieve their learning aspirations. Marrung is the Wemba Wemba word for the Murray Cypress pine tree, which represents the branches of education and knowledge. The vision of Marrung stipulates that Victoria will be a state where:

- The rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victorians.
- Our universal service systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of

Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey.

- Every Koorie person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity.

Marrung's governance is dependent on Koorie communities and stakeholders coming together at local, regional and statewide forums, to discuss education and training needs, issues and priorities for their communities, and feed into DET's education planning and delivery processes.





LAECGS

LAECG members are local Aboriginal community members who have an interest and commitment to Koorie education, and bring knowledge and experience to Koorie education issues across all sectors. Currently there are 30 LAECG's driving educational change and achievement for students and the community.

The Local Aboriginal Consultative Groups are an integral part of VAEAI's operations and a key element in the implementation of Marrung.

Consultation with all of the regions across Victoria ensures that the voices of the community are heard.



WHAT WE DO

The VAEAI Executive Committee provides a wealth of experience, inspiration and guidance and is established by Clause 45 of the VAEAI Constitution, which lists the Office Bearer roles that are elected at each Annual General Meeting, and also four additional representatives.



ADVOCACY

We advocate for our community by representing their views at the local, state, regional and national level.



ADVICE

VAEAI advises governments and the education system of ways to improve the outcomes and education experiences of Koorie students. We regularly advise our community of important issues and opportunities in Koorie education.



POLICY & MONITORING

VAEAI monitors current issues and trends in education and training. Our community provides perspectives and real time updates about what is happening in Koorie education.



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Celebrating successes in Koorie education and training, also serves as a way of informing our community about the opportunities available.



2022 KOORIE OUTREACH SUPPORT PROGRAM

The second phase of the KOSP launched on June 28th, 2021, and ran for a period of six months until its completion on 31st December 2021.

Snapshot of Participants:

- 102 Learners and their families were supported, 55F / 47M.
- Learners were located across all DET regions – NE (12), NW (33), SE (25), SW (32)
- Learners were comprised of Early Years (3), Primary (63), Secondary (33), Adult Learners (3)
- 28 Learners were living in Out of Home Care (OoHC)

Highlights of the Program:

- 986 hours of tutoring were funded with 1,004 tutoring sessions attended by participants
- 70% of Parent / Carers reported being more confident in their ability to independently source and connect to supports they need.
- 94% of Learners reported an improvement in Learning Levels
- 94% of Learners reported an improvement in their Levels of Health and Well-being
- Learning Advisors worked with the Learner, Parent/Carer, and School to create a learning Plan (similar to an IEP). This was updated regularly as learner's progressed through the program. At programs end, a copy of the Learning Plan was provided to the learner's school to continue support for the learner.
- 57% of Learners reported an improvement in school attendance
- 88% of Learners reported an improvement in school engagement and learning

Waitlist:

KOSPV2 reached capacity in early August 2021. As participant engagement in the program remained high at 98% ongoing referrals into the program were placed onto a waitlist. 43 Learners on the waitlist were offered alternative assistance via tutoring and referrals to DET for support.



KOSP CASE STUDY

Case study: KOSP Supporting School Engagement

A male learner in Year 9 was referred to the program by his KESO. During intake into KOSP, the learner's mother described his engagement with school as being "absolutely terrible". He had attended less than 20% of school in the past year. He had failed Year 7 and Year 8 and was set to fail Year 9 too.

Through the KOSP program, the learner attended 28 hours of tutoring. At the beginning of these sessions, the learner had not completed any English during the school term. However, during the tutoring sessions, the tutor described him as very engaged and motivated. They had sessions which were scheduled for 30 minutes long lasting for 1.5 hours. During tutoring, the learner caught up on all his English work for the term.

The school held three Student Support Group (SSG) meetings to encourage the learner to feel more comfortable at school. During these sessions the Learning Advisor was able to share the learner's interests and passions (acting, costumes, and drawing), so that the school could identify an appropriate teacher to act as a mentor at the school. By term four, the learner was attending school three days per week and had attended the entire final week of school. The school, and the mother expressed gratitude to KOSP for supporting this outcome.

The learner's mother also wanted support connecting the learner with social opportunities, to keep him engaged during the school holidays. In response to this, the Learning Advisor connected the learner with a First Nations Cosplayer who is a member for the creative community, IndigiNerd. The Cosplayer provided the family free tickets to see the new Spiderman movie which was attended by members of the IndigiNerd company and an actor in the film.



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