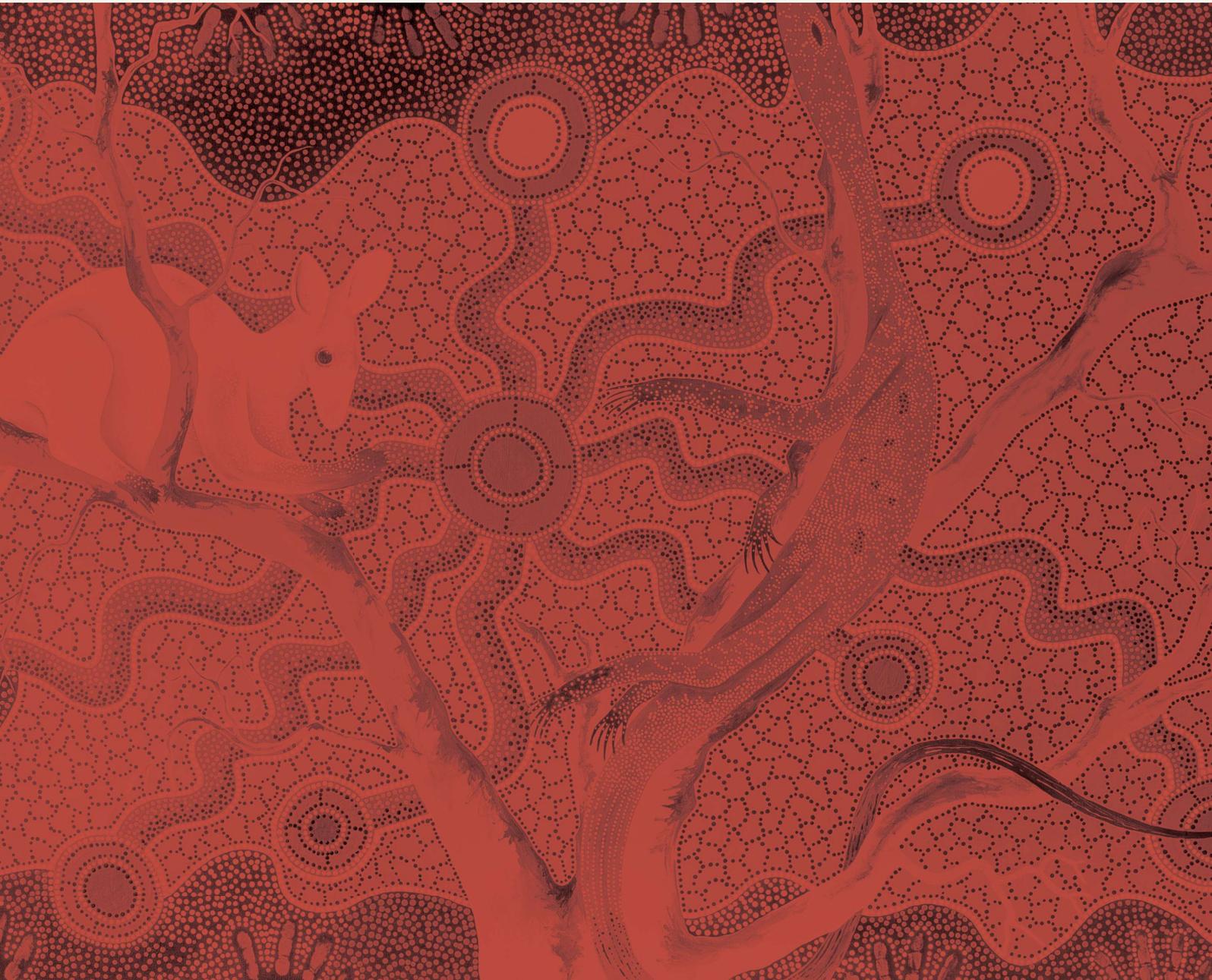




Victorian Aboriginal Education  
Association Incorporated

# KOORIE EDUCATION IN LEARN LOCALS

Best practice and protocols



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#### The Wurreker (Message Carriers)

Cover art by: Kevin J. Williams | Language Wemba Wemba | Medium: Acrylic on Canvas.

The story of the painting is about Wile the Possum and Tyuling the Goanna who are totems of learning. They reach out to all Koorie communities to carry the message of the need for Koories to gain greater knowledge. The eight circles surrounding Wile and Tyuling represent the VAEAI regions. Grey is the rock, blue is the rivers, green is the forest. The ninth circle in the centre is the VAEAI community. This is red: the heart of VAEAI where all communities have their input.



*The Koorie Education in Learn Locals: Best Practice and Protocols – A Practitioner's Guide* is supported by the Victorian Government through the ACFE Board.

#### Note on terminology used:

The term Koorie is used inclusively and refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working in Victoria. The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) use the term throughout education related documentation. It is important to be respectful of how individual students, their families and communities refer to themselves, and use this to guide language. Terms such as Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Indigenous and First Nations Peoples are also commonly used in teaching and learning resources.



We acknowledge that we do business on Aboriginal Land. We pay respect to the custodians of these lands, and to their Elders, past and present.

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

## Foreword

My work in education began in the 1970s as an Aboriginal Teacher's Aide. This was an important role for me because I was able to provide direct support to Koorie learners. I saw the impact that a supportive learning environment can have, not only for students, but also their families and communities. This was the start of my career, dedicated to improving educational outcomes and driving systemic change so that all Victorians have access to curriculum developed by Koorie people.

I have served as the President of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) since 1999. VAEAI is the peak Koorie community organisation for Education and Training in Victoria from early childhood through to higher education. We believe that education is a life-long pursuit and that you are never too old, or too young, to learn new skills.

The development of this protocols document signals the next step in an important partnership between VAEAI and the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) sector.

Learn Local providers, AMES Australia, and the Centre for Adult Education play a pivotal role in Victoria. They are not-for-profit community organisations dedicated to meeting the individual needs of learners with flexibility, in a warm and welcoming environment. Early in my career, as an Aboriginal Teacher's Aide, I saw how individualised support delivered in a local setting can be essential to a learner's success.

Learn Locals are often a first step for a young person entering post-compulsory schooling education, an adult returning to study, or for someone who has recently arrived in Australia to learn about local culture and gain new skills. I can think of no better place for Victorian learners to increase their understanding of Koorie culture, languages, history, and our many contemporary contributions.

30 years ago, I served as the VAEAI Adult Education and TAFE Specialist representative and worked on the establishment of the Minimbah Adult Education Program. This program provided Koorie people with an opportunity to take a new direction through training. I am thrilled that today, there are several Learn Locals dedicated to Koorie learners with curriculum rich in culture, designed to upskill our growing community.

Many Victorians are seeking new ways to learn about our shared history and work together to create a future in which Koorie culture is



respected and continues to be practised in daily life. However, because of the silencing of our voices in the past, many educators are unsure where to begin.

What we hear a lot at VAEAI is:

*I want to teach Koorie history and culture, but:*

*I'm not sure where to start;*

*I'm not sure who to consult;*

*I don't want to say the wrong thing and offend someone.*

And of course, these are valid concerns. They are concerns that come from a place of respect. To respond to these concerns VAEAI has developed this document, and others like it, to give you an overview of the structure of Koorie education in Victoria. It tells you about the organisations, policies, and practices that make up that structure. The document is also designed to be a practical tool that Learn Local services can use daily to embed Koorie values into their broader place-based learning objectives.

To ACFE, and all the Learn Local services, who have taken up this opportunity, I commend your efforts. This is an exciting time of change. What we do now will have a positive impact on this generation, and those in the future.

**Geraldine Atkinson**

VAEAI President

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## Commonly used acroymns

<b>ACCO</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
<b>ACFE</b>	Adult Community Further Education
<b>DE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DJSIR</b>	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
<b>IP</b>	Intellectual Property
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicators
<b>LAECG</b>	Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
<b>RAP</b>	Reconciliation Action Plan
<b>TAFE</b>	Technical and Further Education

<b>TO</b>	Traditional Owners
<b>UNDRIP</b>	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People
<b>VACCA</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
<b>VACCHO</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
<b>VAEAI</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
<b>VCAA</b>	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>WIP</b>	Wurreker Implementation Plan

# Executive Summary

This protocols document has been developed by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) in partnership with the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board as a part of the *Self Determination in Learn Local Koorie Education* initiative. The objectives of this partnership are to:



increase and retain Koorie participation through supportive and culturally inclusive learning environments;



include local Koorie histories, culture and perspectives across the curriculum of each Learn Local provider for the benefit of all students.

The intent of the VAEAI *Koorie Education in Learn Locals: Best Practice and Protocols* is to promote common understandings and ways of operating. Protocols formalise an equal partnership between communities and between cultures.

## Who we are

VAEAI is the peak Aboriginal education community-controlled organisation in Victoria. The Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) network is at the heart of VAEAI and all VAEAI operations.

The relationship between VAEAI and the Victorian State Government was formalised in 1990 with the launching of *Partnership in Education: Koorie Education Policy*. This agreement established an unprecedented partnership between the Koorie community and the Victorian Government and formed the foundation of working relationships in Aboriginal education and training.

## Our strategies and frameworks

### Wurreker

*The Wurreker Strategy: the Koorie Community and TAFE in Victoria in Equal Partnership* (2000), supports the principles of self-determination and place-based priorities.

### Yalca

*Yalca: a Partnership in Education and Training for the New Millennium, Koorie Education Policy* (2001), recognises Koorie education as the core business of all government sectors in education.

### Self-Determination Reform Framework (2018 –2023)

*The Self-Determination Reform Framework* (2018 – 2023) commits government to advancing Aboriginal self-determination through enablers; prioritising culture, addressing trauma and supporting healing, addressing racism and promoting cultural safety, transferring power and resources to communities.

### Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan (2016–2026)

*The Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan* (2016–2026) is the blueprint for creating holistic change within the Koorie education sector to improve learning outcomes. Marrung requires all services to embed Koorie aspirations and outcomes as core business, so that:

- Koorie children and learners of all ages are strong in their identity within all services;
- all Victorians understand and respect Koorie culture and history;
- services and Koorie communities work together on local, place-based approaches to improving learning outcomes;
- Koorie learners transition successfully into further education and employment;
- Koorie people have opportunities to access education at all stages of life.

*Self-determination in Learn Local Koorie Education* works towards achieving the following Marrung actions:

1. create a positive climate for learning and development where services demonstrate the highest levels of respect and inclusion and, as a result, Koorie children and learners of all ages feel strong in their identity within all services;
  2. build community engagement in learning and development so that, through partnership and collaboration, services work together with Koorie people to find innovative ways to improve outcomes in local communities;
  3. build a culture of professional leadership where success for Koorie Victorians is core business for all educational leaders;
  4. achieve excellence in teaching, learning and development at all stages so that Koorie learners transition successfully into further education and employment, and have opportunities to access education at all stages of life.
- 

## Our 10 protocols

The 10 protocols for best practice are the foundational principles, procedures and behaviour requested of the post-compulsory education sector in Victoria to demonstrate respect for Koorie communities in Victoria. Their successful delivery requires clarity and continuing dialogue. An effective partnership means:

- VAEAI, through community based consultative structures, provides strategic advice to the ACFE Board at all stages of planning, development, implementation, and review;
  - opportunities are created for ACFE staff to increase their knowledge of local Koorie culture and strengthen relationships with their local Koorie community;
  - new education and training initiatives for Koorie learners or curriculum containing Koorie content is developed with and endorsed by VAEAI;
  - strong working relationships are formed between Learn Local staff and Wurreeker Brokers;
  - ACFE staff are invited to attend relevant Koorie community meetings to hear local voices and share sector information;
  - ACFE and VAEAI work together to monitor the health of the partnership and to identify action priorities.
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## Purpose of Developing Principles and Protocols

Protocols help to establish guidelines for acting and treating each other respectfully.

Protocols formalise an equal partnership between communities and between cultures. In this sense, a protocol is an official and established code, procedure, or behaviour.

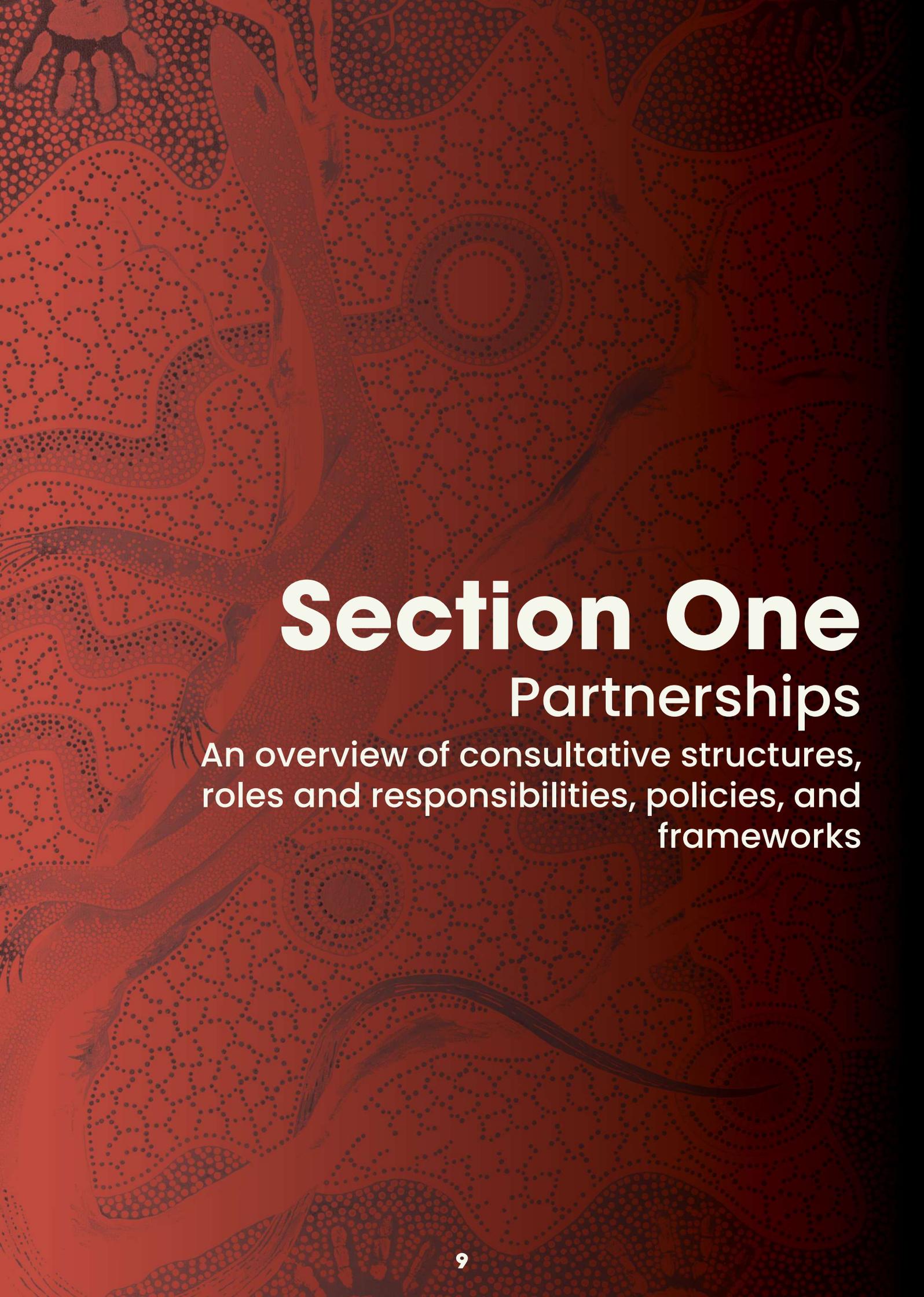
The values and protocols outlined in this document are for appropriate recognition, respect, and courtesies to be extended by education staff for Koorie people in Victoria engaged in the education and training sector – whether they are students, parents, carers, educators, or leaders.

These protocols are also intended to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from other parts of Australia, now living in Victoria. They can also be useful for members of the Koorie community who would like to become more involved with Learn Locals.

The intent of the *VAEAI Koorie Education in Learn Locals: Best Practice and Protocols* is to promote common understandings and ways of operating.

*“Protocol means following the customs and lores of the people or community you are working with; and communicating in a way which is relevant to us”  
(VAEAI member, 2007).*





# Section One

## Partnerships

An overview of consultative structures,  
roles and responsibilities, policies, and  
frameworks

## Working in partnership

A strong partnership between VAEAI and ACFE best serves the needs of all learners. The objectives of this partnership are to:



increase and retain Koorie participation through supportive and culturally inclusive learning environments;



include local Koorie histories, culture and perspectives across the curriculum of each Learn Local provider for the benefit of all students.

An effective partnership means:

- VAEAI, through community based consultative structures, provides strategic advice to the ACFE Board at all stages of planning, development, implementation, and review;
- opportunities are created for ACFE staff to increase their knowledge of local Koorie culture and strengthen relationships with their local Koorie community;
- new education and training initiatives for Koorie learners or curriculum containing Koorie content is developed with and endorsed by VAEAI;
- strong working relationships are formed between Learn Local staff and Wurreker Brokers;
- ACFE staff are invited to attend relevant Koorie community meetings to hear local voices and share sector information;
- ACFE and VAEAI work together to monitor the health of the partnership and to identify action priorities.

Partnerships require clarity and continuing dialogue. This section provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of staff members who work for VAEAI and The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) to improve outcomes for Koorie learners in the post-compulsory education sector.



*The Hon. Gayle Tierney, (Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Regional Development) speaking at the Wurreker Awards, 2023*

# Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

VAEAI was established in 1976 as a peak state advocacy and advisory body for Koorie education and training. We advocate for all Victorian Koorie communities in education matters, from early childhood through to post-compulsory education. The student is at the centre of our work.

VAEAI's philosophy is education as a life-long pursuit. This calls for the provision of connected services that integrate all sectors of the education system.

Positive outcomes in education require a cross-sectorial approach. We work collaboratively with health, housing, and employment to support the cultural, social, and emotional well-being of Koorie learners. A holistic approach leads to better outcomes in employment and economic participation.

VAEAI advocates for the development of education strategies that:

-  are culturally relevant;
-  reinforce Koorie identity;
-  are delivered in supportive learning environments.
-  Increase the awareness of the wider community about Koorie culture and educational aspirations.

## Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECGs)

LAECGs are the constituent units of VAEAI. There are 32 LAECGs. Each is deeply connected to the local community and forms a strong link between the Koorie community and educational institutions, organisations, services, and government departments.

Each LAECG is run by volunteer members who are dedicated to improving Koorie education outcomes and chaired by a knowledgeable and experienced member of the local Koorie community. This structure was designed by respected Elders and has been in place for over 40 years.

Because of our LAECG network VAEAI has been uniquely positioned to deliver positive outcomes for Koorie communities.

Local Koorie communities are best able to determine local education and training needs.

It is because of our LAECG network that VAEAI has been uniquely positioned to deliver positive outcomes in Koorie education.



## The VAEAI Secretariat

The Secretariat is the working arm of VAEAI.

Our head office is in Northcote, on the lands of the Wurundjeri People, with offices and staff in regional areas across the State of Victoria.

The work of the Secretariat is guided by the Victorian Representative Council (VRC). The VRC is made up of elected representatives from the LAECG Network. This structure ensures that the work of the Secretariat is guided by Koorie community voices from across the State.

The Secretariat has staff working in early childhood, school education, post compulsory education and training, community engagement, policy, research, and communications. A majority of VAEAI Secretariat staff are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

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## Wurreker Brokers

Wurreker Brokers play a key role in supporting LAECGs and liaising with the Koorie community. They are the main point of contact for Learn Local staff.

Wurreker Brokers are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff members employed by VAEAI. They assist LAECG chairs and members to influence and participate in strategic and policy decision making.

Wurreker Brokers work closely with their counterparts in the Department. Together they assist TAFEs to deliver on their Wurreker Implementation Plans (WIP), and support other post-compulsory education and training service providers.

Wurreker Brokers have a role in building strong and ongoing relationships between training providers, industry, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. This enables the development of strategies and programs that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of Koorie learners and aligned with industries where skills are in demand.

Wurreker Brokers work closely with Marrung Facilitators to ensure that holistic change is achieved across the compulsory and post-compulsory education sectors.

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## Marrung Facilitators

The Marrung Facilitators coordinate Marrung related activities. This includes Koorie Education Roundtables and gatherings to bring together the LAECG network with government and industry stakeholders.

Marrung Facilitators are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff members employed by VAEAI.

The work of Marrung Facilitators focuses on two-way communication, ensuring community voices are heard in government and educational institutions, and that information, actions and sector priorities are communicated to community, via the LAECG networks.

# Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR)

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) is firmly focused on driving a strong and resilient economy that benefits all Victorians – by creating more opportunities for people through jobs and skills; supporting businesses and industries to grow and prosper; and building vibrant communities and regions. To achieve this, DJSIR is committed to creating more jobs for more people, thriving places and regions, and inclusive communities.

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## Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)

The Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board is a statutory authority established by the Education and Training Reform ACT 2006. The ACFE Board's role is to plan and promote adult learning, allocate resources, develop policies, and advise the Minister for Skills and TAFE on matters related to adult education in Victoria. Through the Board, the Victorian Government provides funding to registered Learn Local providers to deliver education and training programs to a broad range of Victorians who are above compulsory school age and who are seeking to gain the educational capacity and core skills they need for study, work, and life.

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## Koorie Education Workforce (KEW)

The Koorie Education Workforce (KEW) is made up of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff members employed by The State Government.

Through a range of identified roles, the KEW support Koorie education from Early Years, Schooling and through to post-compulsory education and training. The KEW provides guidance to enhance cultural inclusion practices, and to support the engagement, attendance, wellbeing, and achievement of Koorie learners.

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## Koorie Liaison Officers (KLO)

All Victorian TAFE institutes receive funding to employ Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs) and Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSO).

KLOs are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff members employed by TAFE providers to assist Koorie students to choose their post-school pathway, support students throughout their studies, and into further education or employment. KLOs provide practical assistance on course information, liaise with staff and faculties, assist with pathway options, and access to Abstudy and tutoring.

The KLOs assist with engagement and retention strategies and work to establish effective relationships between training providers, Koorie students, local communities, service providers and industry and business partners.

They help inform Wurreker Implementation Plans (WIP) and work closely with VAEAI Wurreker Brokers.

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## Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSO)

Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSO) provide holistic, wrap-around support to Koorie students.

KSSOs are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff members employed by TAFE providers to help students achieve their study goals and education aspirations, engage in student life, and find balance for their personal wellbeing. KSSOs contribute to Aboriginal inclusion, support, and cultural safety. They are well positioned to assist community members who are seeking to re-engage with education.

## Guiding Policies, Principles and Frameworks

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### **Wurreker: The Koorie Community and TAFE in Victoria in Equal Partnership (2000)**

The objectives of the Wurreker Strategy (Wurreker) are to increase and retain Koorie participation across the post-compulsory sector through supportive and culturally inclusive learning environments.

The Wurreker Strategy remains the Victorian Government's principal policy vehicle for supporting Victoria's Koorie learners to achieve improved outcomes in vocational education and training (VET) and to support success in the transition to employment and long-term ongoing economic participation.

Wurreker supports the principles of self-determination and place-based priorities. The Wurreker Brokers and the LAECG network work closely with VET institutions to ensure Wurreker Implementation Plans meet the needs of the Koorie community and build the skills needed in industry.

Wurreker provides the framework for VAEAI to give key advice to Government and training providers on the needs of the Koorie community.

### **YALCA: A Partnership in Education and Training for the New Millennium, Koorie Education Policy (2001)**

Yalca recognises Koorie education as the core business of all government sectors in education.

Yalca acknowledges the central role of LAECGs in education and training and the need, and the opportunity, to develop and implement collaborative initiatives and strategies across government departments and agencies.

Yalca supports a life-long approach to education, placing the student at the centre of education policy and decision making.

Yalca acknowledges that local Koorie communities through the LAECG network are best able to determine local education and training needs.

Yalca sets the framework for community participation and decision making in policy, planning, resource allocation and support services.

Yalca objectives are to:

- enable active involvement of Koorie people in educational decision making;
- increase the participation of Koorie learners across education and training services;
- improve the educational outcomes for Koorie learners;
- provide a supportive and culturally relevant learning environment;
- provide all Victorian students with an understanding and respect for Koorie culture;
- increase the number of Koorie people employed within all sectors of the education and training system.

The relationship between VAEAI and the Victorian State Government was formalised in 1990 with the launch of Partnership in Education: Koorie Education Policy.

This agreement established an unprecedented partnership between the Koorie community and the Victorian Government and formed the foundation of working relationships in Aboriginal education and training.

## Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan (2016-2026)

Marrung is the blueprint for creating holistic change within the Koorie education sector and to improve learning outcomes. Marrung requires all services to embed Koorie aspirations and outcomes as core business.

Marrung encompasses Early Years, Schooling, VET and Higher Education, and places the Koorie Community at the core of its implementation.

The Marrung Vision is:

*Victoria will be a State where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victorians; where our universal service systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and where every Koorie person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity.*

Marrung was co-developed by the Department of Education (DE) with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), with input from Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Ltd (VACCSAL).

Marrung creates an opportunity for continuous improvement through ongoing consultation with the LAECG network. This means the Koorie community has input into the development and implementation of education and curriculum in Victoria.

The Marrung Priorities are:

- Koorie children and learners of all ages are strong in their identity within all services;
- all Victorians understand and respect Koorie culture and history;
- services and Koorie communities work together on local, place-based approaches to improving learning outcomes;
- Koorie learners transition successfully into further education and employment;
- Koorie people have opportunities to access education at all stages of life.

## Self-Determination Reform Framework (2018 – 2023)

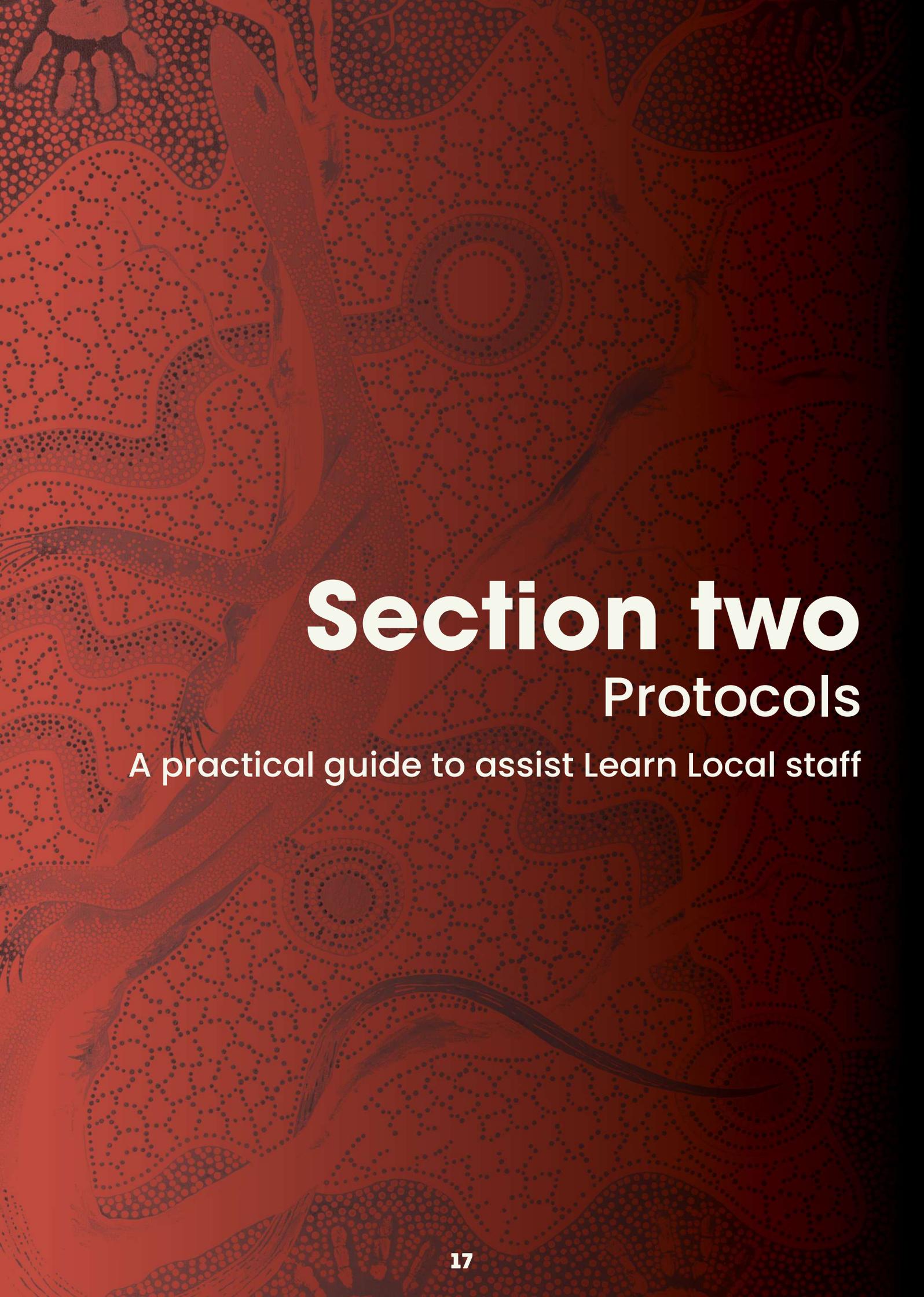
The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) is Victoria's overarching strategic framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians to drive improved outcomes across six domains:

- children, family and home;
- learning and skills;
- opportunity and prosperity;
- health and wellbeing;
- justice and safety;
- culture and country.

The VAAF commits government to advancing Aboriginal self-determination. Self Determination enablers are:

- prioritise culture;
- address trauma and support healing;
- address racism and promote cultural safety;
- transfer power and resources to communities.





# Section two

## Protocols

A practical guide to assist Learn Local staff

# Valuing Koorie Perspectives

## Protocol One

We cannot understand our place in Australia if we do not know our history.

For generations Koorie voices have been silenced at both a local and systemic level. This has created a knowledge gap in Australian society. Many learners are now seeking ways to educate themselves on Koorie history and contemporary culture.

VAEAI plays a key role in bridging the knowledge gap by providing resources, strategic advice, and access points for the education sector to build relationships with local Koorie communities. This contributes to rich, place-based learning for all students.

For Koorie learners this work is particularly critical. Being in a culturally safe and responsive environment is a prerequisite for educational achievement.

### Action 1 of the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan is to:

*create a positive climate for learning and development where services demonstrate the highest levels of respect and inclusion and, as a result, Koorie children and learners of all ages feel strong in their identity within all services.*

Each protocol is framed through the lens of the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)*;

### The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People Article 2

*Indigenous People and Individuals are free and equal to all peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.*

### The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People Article 14

- 1. Indigenous people 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.*
- 2. Indigenous individuals, particular children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.*
- 3. 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.*



Koorie Learners studying at VACSAL, a Learn Local.

## Building Relationships with the Koorie Community

### Protocol Two

Building strong working relationships with your local Koorie Community provides many benefits. Learn Locals can recruit new Koorie learners, embed local voices in curriculum, source valuable resources, connect with guest speakers and work collaboratively on events.

**Action 2 of the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan is to:**

*build community engagement in learning and development so that, through partnership and collaboration, services work together with Koorie people to find innovative ways to improve outcomes in local communities.*

VAEAI has 32 Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs) across the state of Victoria. LAECG members are community volunteers who are passionate about improving educational outcomes. They are supported by VAEAI staff members called Wurreker Brokers.

Wurreker Brokers work closely with other VAEAI staff to facilitate opportunities to bring the Koorie community together with representatives of the education sector for meetings, roundtables, and forums.

#### Developing partnerships between Learn Local services and LAECGs

1. Call VAEAI on 9481 0800 and request to speak with the Wurreker Manager.
2. VAEAI will organise for the Wurreker Broker from your region to be in touch.
3. The local Wurreker Broker will assist in making connections with your LAECG and invite you to relevant community meetings.

## Working with the Koorie Education Workforce

### Protocol Three

Most Victorian TAFE institutes have Koorie Units with dedicated Koorie staff.

This includes Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs) and Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSOs).

Koorie Liaison Officers assist with engagement and retention strategies and work to establish effective and positive relationships between training providers, Koorie students, local communities, service providers and industry and business partners.

Koorie Student Support Officers provide holistic, wrap-around support to Koorie students.

VAEAI Wurreker Brokers can assist you to build relationships with the Koorie Education Workforce.

**Action 3 of the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan is to:**

*build a culture of professional leadership where success for Koorie Victorians is core business for all educational leaders.*

KLOs and KSSOs play a vital role in supporting Koorie students. They understand their educational aspirations and needs. They can assist Learn Locals to identify and engage Koorie learners who will benefit from pre-accredited training.

#### Developing partnerships between Learn Local providers and The Koorie Education Workforce

1. Identify TAFEs in your region.
2. Work with a VAEAI Wurreker Broker to make connections with KLOs and KSSOs.
3. Invite the KLOs and KSSOs to visit your Learn Local.
4. Work with KSSOs to identify disengaged Koorie learners who would benefit most from pre-accredited training.
5. Coordinate with the KLOs, KSSOs, and the Wurreker Brokers to ensure Koorie learners in pre-accredited training have wrap around support during their educational journey.

# Respecting the Diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

## Protocol Four

There are over 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations. Each with a distinct culture, language, and history.

Throughout this document we use the term Koorie. We want Koorie learners to be strong in their identity and Victorians to understand and respect local perspectives.

Koorie is a contemporary term used by Aboriginal people in Victoria and some other parts of South-East Australia. There are several collective terms used in different parts of Australia. This is a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-identify which community they belong to.

The collective term Koorie is used by people from multiple Nations or Traditional Owner Groups. For example, a member of the Gunditjmara Nation from south-west Victoria and a member of the Yorta Yorta Nation from north-east Victoria may both identify as being Koorie.

### Our recommended model

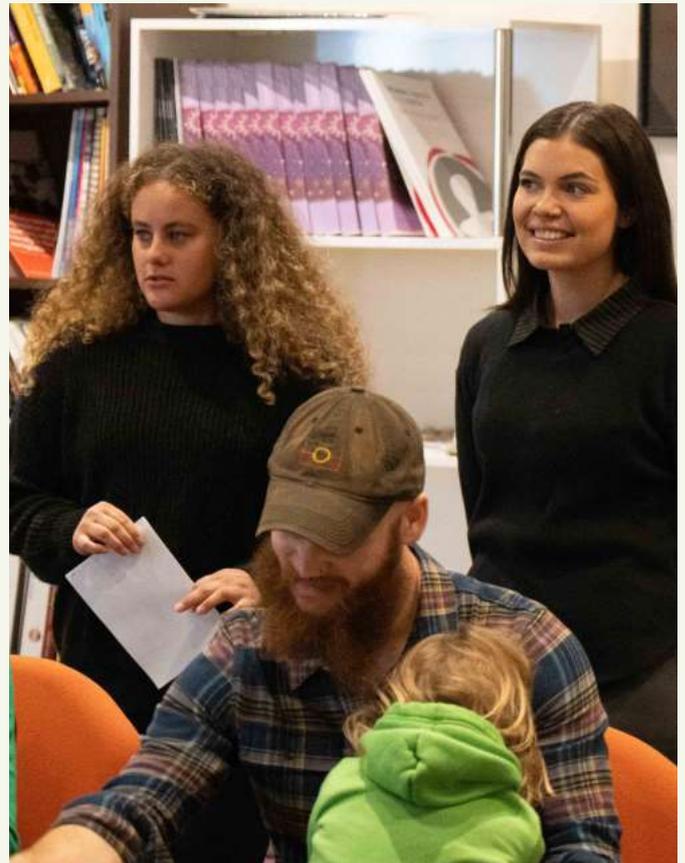
Local content should be a priority focus for Learn Locals. Our recommended model is to include resources, curriculum, content, and perspectives from:

1. the Traditional Owners of the land on which your Learn Local is located;
2. the broader regional area and Koorie community;
3. national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives;
4. international Indigenous perspectives.

It is important to recognise that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia live, work and study in Victoria.

It is necessary to appreciate and acknowledge that local content may not be representative of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled and engaged in your Learn Local.

It is best practice to identify where each teaching resource comes from, for example: "this is a creation story told by the Gunditjmara people of south-west Victoria," or "we're about to watch a dance performed by the Yolngu women from East Arnhem Land."



*Koorie Learners studying at VACSAL, a Learn Local.*



*Smoking ceremony at VACSAL.*

## Including Koorie Content

Many learners are seeking deeper connections with the place they call home, its history, culture, and the Custodians who have lived on this land for countless generations.

When introducing Koorie content it is essential that the experience of Koorie students in the classroom is considered and respected so Learn Locals are an engaging and safe space for all.

Having strong working relationships with your Wurreker Broker and Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) will help guide this process.

VAEI works across the education sector, from early years to post-compulsory training to embed local perspectives in teaching materials. The Wurreker Broker in your region can assist in keeping you up to date with the latest curriculum developments.

Local knowledge held by LAECG members can contribute a rich, context accurate curriculum for all students. New curriculum or syllabus content covering any aspect of Koorie history, culture, values, and perspectives should be co-created with and endorsed by VAEI. Check the VAEI website for local resources.

Curriculum and educational resources developed by VAEI, or by a Koorie person cannot

be appropriated and/or owned by education providers. Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) refers to the rights Indigenous people have to protect their traditional arts and culture. ICIP must be respected and acknowledged; and any other rights negotiated (such as a licensing agreement to use artwork).

### Suggestions for including Koorie content at a Learn Local

1. display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags;
2. display an Aboriginal map of Australia (available from Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies);
3. hang an Acknowledgement of Country plaque in a prominent location;
4. create a dedicated space for Koorie programs. VAEI can provide guidance in the planning and development;
5. create a dedicated outdoors space with local Koorie plants;
6. attend regular Professional Development and Training sessions to learn more about local Koorie culture.



VAEI Early Years Conference (2022).



Toorong Marnong's Koorie Big Day Out (2023).

## Teaching Koorie Learners

We envision an education system that is inclusive, responsive, and respectful of Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey.

### Action 4 of the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan is to:

*achieve excellence in teaching, learning and development at all stages so that Koorie learners transition successfully into further education and employment, and have opportunities to access education at all stages of life.*

Learn Local providers with a high number of Koorie learners are asked to work in partnership with VAEAI through their local LAECG network.

In the classroom Koorie learners may offer to share cultural knowledge and lived experiences at their own discretion. Koorie learners should never be singled out in educational setting as 'experts' on Koorie cultures, histories, and other aspects of curriculum.

Strong communities are built from strong families. This cultural belief is lived every day and means that family commitments can, at times, take priority. Family relationships for Koorie learners extend beyond the immediate family and can include Kinship care when the care of a child is provided by relatives. Koorie learners are often required to attend to cultural and community responsibilities, and this is given equal importance to other educational

## Protocol Six

experiences. Sorry Business is an important time of mourning that involves responsibilities and obligations to attend funerals and participate in other cultural events, activities, or ceremonies.

Acknowledgement of these culturally significant responsibilities should be reflected in the way attendance is recorded with allowances for cultural leave, carers leave and Sorry Business.

### Partnerships with local community

By partnering with the local community, you can enrich the experience of Koorie learners by:

1. developing appropriate teaching and learning practices based on community expertise;
2. gaining a deeper understanding of best practise approaches when supporting students who may be experiencing continued distress and trauma resulting from experiences such as forced relocation, the Stolen Generation, interactions with the justice system and struggles for Lands rights and Native Title recognition;
3. accessing community role models, VAEAI can assist in building relationships with community members prepared to share their experiences and knowledge with Koorie learners and the broader Learn Local community.



Koorie Learners studying at VACSAL, a Learn Local.

## Languages and Respectful Communication

### Protocol Seven

There are many Koorie languages. Some are embedded in the Victorian Curriculum.

Under past government assimilation policies Koorie people were banned from speaking their language and severe punishments were enforced. Some languages were spoken in secret, and some stayed dormant.

The Koorie community has long advocated for, and worked towards, the preservation and reinvigoration of local languages.

Some Traditional Owner Groups want to focus on reteaching their own family groups their language. Some Traditional Owner Groups would like to share their language with the broader community. These views differ from community to community, and we ask that you respect this diversity of perspectives.

The Wurreker Broker or LAECG will be able to provide insight into whether Koorie language programs are available in your region.

It is common in Victoria for Koorie learners to speak among family, friends, and the community in what is known as Koorie English. Koorie English is a distinct dialect of Australian English that incorporates specific Koorie phrasing, idioms, forms of address, and humour. An example is the use of 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' in

recognition of an Elder's, or respected person's, role in the community.

VAEAI's research into the use of Koorie English for Victorian Koorie learners found that effective Code Switching is a necessary skill in many education settings. Code-switching refers to a person's ability to move back and forward between two languages or dialects depending on who they are speaking to, and in what context. Code-switching is a skill that people of multi-cultural and bi-lingual backgrounds have long recognised as necessary for success within mainstream education and employment.

Be mindful that Koorie English may seem informal. Teachers should refrain from referring to Koorie English as grammatically incorrect.

The grammatic structure of Koorie English is derived from Aboriginal languages and reflects culturally specific concepts of kinship structures, relationships to place, concepts of time and tense.

Acknowledge Koorie English as a distinct dialect and communicate the requirements of Standard Australian English for successful assessment in tests, presentations, or essays writing.

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## Respecting the Privacy of Koorie Learners

### Protocol Eight

Learn Locals may be approached by organisations or researchers to access Koorie learners and their families, to promote and engage them in various projects or include them research programs.

Individuals are free to take part in projects or programs of their choice. However, it is important to avoid situations where Koorie learners feel pressured into projects they may not otherwise choose to participate in.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been among the most researched people in the world. This has not always led to positive outcomes for their communities. A code of ethics for conducting Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander research can be found on the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) website.

It is important to redirect approaches from individuals and organisations towards the appropriate LAECG or Wurreker Broker. The VAEAI Secretariat is also able to be involved in this process where needed, on behalf of the local Koorie community.

This protocol places a buffer and screening process for unexpected approaches to Learn Local providers that may be inappropriate for Koorie families or the broader Koorie community.

## Hosting Events

Each year VAEAI releases a calendar of significant events with links to additional resources.

Be mindful that NAIDOC Week is a special time for the Koorie community with many events already taking place. We recommend acknowledging NAIDOC Week and considering, on the advice of your local community, hosting events during other times of the year.

An Acknowledgment of Country is a simple and respectful way to start a meeting or gathering. It can be done by anyone, and non-Aboriginal people are encouraged to acknowledge Country and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land.

An example of an Acknowledgement of Country: in Northcote we may say: "I'd like to Acknowledge the lands and waterways of the Wurundjeri people and pay my respects to the Elders past and present, and any Elders who are here with us today."

An official Welcome to Country can only be performed by a member of the Traditional Owner group from the Country where the event is taking place. A Welcome to Country is performed on ceremonial and other significant occasions to follow traditional protocols and show appropriate respect.



One Fire dance group at the VAEAI Wurreker Awards (2023).

## Protocol Nine

### Best practice when hosting events

1. where possible, for major events such as a graduation ceremony, seek to engage Traditional Owners to perform a Welcome to Country;
2. begin your event with an Acknowledgement of Country;
3. include Koorie performers for celebrations and major events;
4. acknowledge significant dates for the Koorie community - a calendar of events can be downloaded from the VAEAI website;
5. consult with the Wurreker Broker or LAECG around the selection of guest speakers;
6. arrange to spend time with the speaker before the event, make them feel welcome and brief them on the nature of the event/topic;
7. arrange any travel/transport requirements and discuss accessibility considerations;
8. extend an invitation for the guest to bring a family or community member with them;
9. ensure that the students and staff know the name and appropriate title for the guest speaker;
10. ensure the guest speaker is treated with respect;
11. do not tolerate inappropriate behaviour or racism, if racism does occur take immediate action;
12. discuss any fees and/or reimbursement costs with any guest speakers or performers before the event.

# Acknowledging and Addressing Racism

## Protocol Ten

Racism remains a leading reason Koorie learners disengage from education and training.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People state that:

*Indigenous People have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.*

If racism occurs at a Learn Local, address it immediately and ensure the Koorie learner is supported.

VAEAI works with Koorie students to resolve issues of racism in education settings. Our goal is to achieve an outcome in line with the wishes of the student.

Maintaining open communication with VAEAI and discussing all incidents of racism enables VAEAI to track the frequency and the types of racism occurring in different regions and to create place-based strategies to address it.

You can discuss occurrences of racism directly with VAEAI by calling the head office on 9481 0800. You can also report incidents to your local Wurreker Broker or the LAECG Chair in your region.

Learn Locals are best equipped to provide effective support for Koorie learners when they have strong working relationships with VAEAI staff, their local

LAECG, and members of the Koorie Education Workforce.

TAFE based Koorie Student Support Officers provide holistic, wrap-around support and may be able to provide additional guidance as to how to best support a Koorie student experiencing racism.

VAEAI works in partnership with the Koorie Education Workforce to provide reports of racism through appropriate government channels for investigation. All reports are raised with LAECGs Chairs so they can provide feedback to their community.

## Case Study

### Building Inclusive Schools that are connected to place

This case study illustrates the positive outcomes possible when education providers engage with VAEAI and local communities through the LAECG network. It provides an example from a different education sector (schools) of the processes involved for collaborative relationships.



*Pascoe Vale Primary School*

Building inclusive schools that are connected to place.

VAEAI has worked with the Victorian Schools Building Authority (VSBA) on government school upgrades and new buildings.

Commencing consultations at the very beginning of a project has created greater scope for meaningful inclusion and for perspectives to be embedded across all aspects of the building and landscape. This process also enhances the prospect of Aboriginal Perspectives being woven into the curriculum.

The process requires two or three meetings with each consultation including Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG), Traditional Owner/ Registered Aboriginal Party (TO/RAP) representative/s, Marrung Facilitator, School's Project Officer, VSBA Coordinator, school principal (for school upgrade projects), VSBA Project Officer, architects, and landscape architects.

During the final consultations for these projects the architects and landscape architects present their visions and plans for the schools, responding to the recommendations provide by LAECGs and TO/RAP groups in the initial meetings.



*Walcom Ngarwa Secondary College*



*Pascoe Vale Primary School*

## Some of the Aboriginal Perspectives that have been considered for inclusion in these projects are:



### Structural

- wayfinding along pathways using animal footprints, plant images or language;
- introducing curved walls and surfaces to create a welcoming and less institutionalised feel;
- use of earthy brick colours and timber where possible;
- creating outdoor learning spaces and incorporating meeting circles to form part of the landscape;
- use of sustainable materials throughout the buildings where possible.



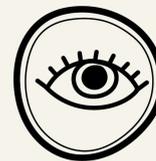
### Cultural

- integrating local and individual stories relevant to each separate school space;
- creating learning opportunities throughout the spaces through language and stories so that Aboriginal perspectives may be woven into the curriculum;
- connecting to Country;
- nominate walls, screens or spaces for potential inclusion of artwork/s by local artists;
- removable fire pits for smoking ceremonies.



### Environmental

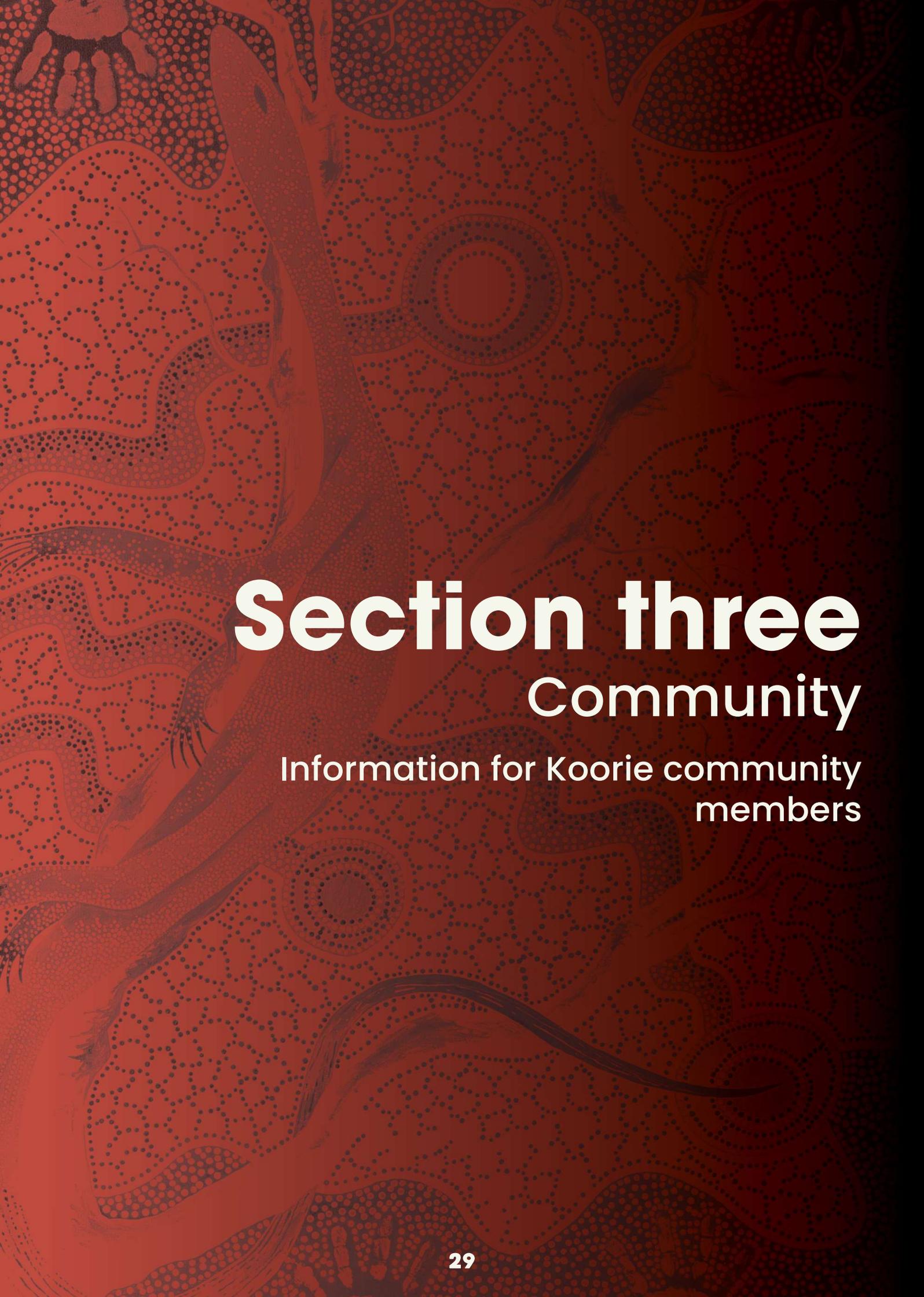
- incorporating Indigenous plants in the garden including edible plants with the potential for use in school lessons (e.g. cooking, science, art, basket weaving etc.);
- providing explanations of significant flora and fauna and how they were/are traditionally used;
- decals of artworks or images of native flora and fauna on glass doors and windows inside the building.



### Acknowledgement

- signage in local language;
- Welcome stones and Acknowledgement plaques at the front of the buildings.





# Section three

## Community

Information for Koorie community  
members

## Learn Locals for Koorie learners and community

Learn Locals offer inclusive, accessible, and flexible pre-accredited training programs.

There are thousands of short courses available right across Victoria. Courses that can help you return to study, improve your digital, reading, writing and maths skills, get a job, change careers, or learn something new.

With around 240 Learn Local providers across Victoria, you can access training in your community, close to where you live or work.

There are several Koorie Learn Local providers with courses designed specifically for the needs of our community.

Courses include Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training, Services Introduction to Community Development and other pre-accredited courses that will provide a solid understanding of the Community Services sector, and the skills and knowledge required to work in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The knowledge learned in pre-accredited courses can be built upon with Certificates and Diplomas.

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) is the peak state-wide Koorie education organisation. We have

partnered with Learn Locals to ensure that courses and learning environments meet the needs of Koorie learners.

At the heart of the VAEAI structure are the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs). There are 32 LAECGs across Victoria. They are made up of Koorie community volunteers who are passionate about improving educational outcomes. Our Elders established this structure over 40 years ago to ensure local people have a strong voice on local matters.

If you have ideas or concerns about Learn Locals in your region, you are welcome to attend community meetings.

If you are passionate about Koorie education, you can join your local LAECG and have a direct voice into Government to steer the future direction of Koorie education.

If you are a Koorie organisation and would like to discuss becoming a Learn Local provider, we can connect you with the right people at the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board to discuss eligibility.

**Call VAEAI on 9481 0800 and request to speak with the Wurreker Manager.**



*Koorie Learner studying at VACSAL, a Learn Local.*



*Koorie Learners studying at VACSAL, a Learn Local.*





Victorian Aboriginal Education  
Association Incorporated

## Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc

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