

## **Reconciliation Seminar 4: DET and VAEAI**

*Transcript from the Reconciliation Series 1 2022*

• 0:00 – 0:33

To introduce myself. I'm AJ Williams. My background's Wiradjuri and Wotjobaluk, and my family is from Dimboola, Horsham, Dubbo and the the Wellington area of New South Wales. I've been facilitating the Reconciliation series through the launch of the RAP and helping AGECS as an association achieve their reconciliation goals and the reconciliation series is part of that particular array of services that they're actually providing at the moment. But without any further ado, I'm gonna throw over to Kim and Angie Lee.

• 0:36 – 1:06

Angie Lee: Thanks, AJ. I'm Angie-Lee Bamblett, I'm the business services coordinator at VAEAI, and I'm the, I'm a proud Gerang Gerang and Ngarigo woman.

Kim: My name is Kim. I'm the early coordinator of ai and I am a proud Kerrup-Jmara woman of Southwest Victoria, in particular the Lake Condah region. So, thanks for having us tonight, guys. Taking time away to do this.

• 1:38 – 2:11

All good. Beautiful. My name is Angie-Lee and I am the business services coordinator at VAEAI. I'm just gonna talk a bit about VAEAI and what we do. So we are, VAEAI stands for Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, and we are the peak organization in career education training in the state of Victoria.

• 2:11 – 2:41

We were establishing 1976 with an aim of increasing a presence and voice of Koori people and education decision making, where, as I said, we're community controller organization, and we work for our community to build success in education in all areas from early years right through to higher education. Our main functions are providing advice to government on career education issues, monitoring education trends, and advocating for the needs of our community across the state.

• 2:42 – 3:15

We have a regional structure based on traditional networks. I'm just gonna go to the next slide. They're based on traditional networks and obviously there's way more traditional

networks than what we have up here. We've kind of split them into eight kind of area main areas. Within each region are a number of LAECGS, which are local Aboriginal education consultative groups.

- 3:16 - 3:45

And we have 32 across the state and their constituent bodies of VAEAI, they're the working arm of VAEAI, and we are the secretariat. So the staff at the organization are the secretariat and LAECGS are representative council, the working arm of it. So the LAECGS are voluntary community bodies, which play a central role in the consulting structure of VAEAI.

- 3:46 - 4:27

And, um, they were first formed as a result of parent seminars held during the 1970s by former AI um, members. And they're made up of a broad range of local community members at the local level. And they play a significant role in providing important links between career communities and educational ed institutions. Excuse me. So, um, so those groups, they are voluntary in each of those 32 areas across the state, and they're just community people that come together and provide real time information on what's going on on that ground.

- 4:27 - 4:50

And they provide that information to us. And then we, um, discuss those issues if there are any, or, and they don't have to be issues. They could be really good things that are happening in those areas, the things that really work. And we discuss that with, um, the Department of Ed. Thank you, Angie. Um, so, um, in my role as the early years coordinator of va, I'm gonna now talk more about the work that we do in the early years space.

- 4:51 - 5:26

Um, so I'm just gonna start. So, VA's early years unit covers the state of Victoria with regards to Aboriginal early childhood and education and care. We provide direct support to an advocacy for our Aboriginal community controlled organizations. We also promote and raise awareness of awareness about early childhood programs in their local communities through a range of networking opportunities facilitated or hosted by vai, which includes the Blur JERIC network community. Um, that network meeting consists of the Aboriginal programs and initiatives across the state.

• 5:26 – 5:55

We bring them together as an information sharing, a good news story, um, format for those network meetings. And we also deliver career education round tables that are delivered by our facilitators. There are four of those across the state, and they're held twice a year in each of the debt regions. These networking opportunities through established governance structures enable community involvement and ensure that the voice of the career community is communicated to government.

• 5:55 – 6:25

They also support for our children and families, um, to make sure co participation in the early years is as strong as it can be. Programs such as jic co families as first educators, and BET jic means, um, strong families. And I'm sure it's Weber, Weber language, but Jeanette, please correct me if I'm wrong. Um, and they're based in 11 locations around the state. They provide evidence based parenting programs to our families, um, in those locations.

• 6:26 – 6:51

The co preschool assistant program, which provides the direct support to our families, again, around kindergarten participation, and also supports to services around about a cultural inclusiveness within their service, but also the important part of how to engage with our families. Um, we include Aboriginal supporter playgroup in those networking opportunities, Aboriginal Best Start facilitators, which are based in six locations across the state.

• 6:54 – 7:25

And, um, what I'm gonna do now is talk a bit more about the initiatives and programs FAOs involved in. So if I skip a page, I think I have. No, I haven't. So we also, um, have the Aboriginal languages in, uh, kindergarten, um, FAOs partner with Department of Education and training in Aboriginal languages education. The Victorian government provides a number of kindergartens across, across the state to deliver a language program through a four year funded kindergarten program.

• 7:26 – 8:04

The Early Childhood Language Program, since 2018, kindergartens across the state have been funded to include an Aboriginal language in their program. And following an expression of interest process in late 2021, a number of new services are being funded until December 20th, 2022. Additional kindergartens in 2022 are working towards delivering an Aboriginal language program with our support. Bai's primary role in this program is to advise kindergartens and deal around the community protocols for including Aboriginal language education, and ensure that these protocols are being respectfully followed.

• 8:04 – 8:20

They liaise with traditional owners, mostly registered Aboriginal parties and a CGS to assist in permission and support for Aboriginal language education and support professional development opportunities for Aboriginal language teachers.

• 8:25 – 9:06

VA is also on the menu for the school readiness funding. Um, we provide considerable support supports to early childhood education and care programs across Victoria. And we welcome and appreciate the good work that services do in the EC sector. Our training sessions provide educators with knowledge, strategies and resources relating to the engagement of young children and their families. They also address how to make kindergartens culturally responsive and inclusive environments. Our training sessions are suitable for educators who work in funded kindergarten programs where there are, where there are young children, but also those services that don't have young children.

• 9:06 – 9:34

They're important to us as well because we know more and more of our families are accessing generalist services as well as those who work in the kindergartens with no young children, which I just said, my apologies, I thought I didn't put that bit in the sessions cover, how to make your, your early childhood service, career inclusive exploration of, uh, relevant resources, Victorian Aboriginal resources and hands-on practical experiences.

• 9:36 – 10:08

Um, one thing we do with, so that's basically covered what we do with our, um, in regards to the state. VA is also fortunate enough to receive Commonwealth funding, um, which

we, um, call Korean inclusive Development. Um, these sessions are provided free to early childhood educators working within a funded kindergarten program. And we have titled Those Sessions, Korean Inclusive Practice Development.

- 10:08 - 10:43

They are, they have been developed by aboriginal educators for educators and directly relate to the Val and the Australian Professional Teachers standards 1.4 and 2.4. The sessions focus on how educators can learn culturally inclusive activities to incorporate into early childhood programs. These sessions are suitable for all early childhood educators working directly within a fund of kindergarten program, as well as foundation teachers. We also follow up after the sessions by providing yaning circles with more specific topics that have come out of the sessions.

- 0:00 - 0:00

- 10:43 - 11:22

So last year we, we ran four kindergarten yaning circles and one of those sessions as requested by the educators that were present in a session was that they wanted to know more about the aboriginal languages in kindergarten. So we delivered it a two hour session specifically on that topic. Uh, and then we delivered another session on, um, a co parent's perspective. Um, so the voice of a co parent, and that was pretty successful. So we are most likely gonna proceed with that moving forward this year. VA has been fortunate through the Commonwealth funding to have direct access to kindergartens services across the state to provide these sessions.

- 11:22 - 11:40

Um, we also, um, okay, sorry, that's the next one. So that, that's as far as the PD sessions that we deliver. We deliver eight a year, um, this year. Normally when we promote on our website or through our, um, Facebook page, they fill up within a couple of days.

- 11:40 - 12:19

So they're pretty popular, they're well known. Um, and from our end, it makes us happy that, um, services are wanting to know how to be more inclusive, but also have that engagement with our local community cause that's very important as well. And including parents of the service, um, quality parents of the service with those sessions. We also give out resources, all of the resources that they'd provide. Um, we encourage the use of Victorian Aboriginal resources and all of the resources contained within the kit that we provide to services for parti or participating are all Victorian resources created by local small businesses, individuals.

• 12:19 - 12:46

We really wanna promote and encourage that. And from Bay's end, we are about promoting what's available in Victoria for our services in Victoria. We also receive Commonwealth funding, um, in the inclusion support program. So we partner with the Victorian Inclusion Agency Consortium providing support in the delivery of an inclusion support program for aboriginal children in early childhood education and care services in Victoria.

• 12:46 - 13:24

The project includes building the capacity of mainstream E C C services to support the inclusion of Corey children and their families through development of resource tools, providing learning and mentoring support to e c staff and raising the awareness within the cur community about the EC services and their entitlement to support. Um, that's probably about it for what we do within the early years unit. Um, one thing that I haven't sort of put within my talk, um, within Victoria, we, we have multifunctional Aboriginal Childcare Services, which we, we refer to as max.

• 13:25 - 13:54

We have six of those, um, services across the state, uh, in different regions. And we also have two Aboriginal CFCs, um, Del Euro in Bansal and b Willam Thomastown. They, uh, strongly advocates and supports those services through meetings with the state and Commonwealth. They are very important. Um, Aboriginal Childcare Services, they are Aboriginal controlled and run, um, and a lot of them consist of majority of Aboriginal staff.

• 13:55 - 14:33

Um, that takes up a huge amount of my time in gathering feedback from them, especially because of the pandemic and how it's impacted them and family being able to access and they've remained open. They do an amazing job, um, supporting them, um, historically has a long history with them. Um, and we will continue to do so as well. Um, I've provided on the last slide of my, um, presentation contact details for the way our website, which has a huge amount of resources, other information about L E e cgs and a bit more information about the other areas that they also works in.

• 14:33 - 14:51

Know, I work in early years, um, but we have programs and units that cover from early years right through to higher ed and, and skills. So our website is also full of relevant material that you will all find useful. And I'm happy to share that with you, um, in an email. AJ, do you wanna wanna forward that on?

• 14:53 - 15:00

Cool. Thank you. We've got a few questions, um, thrown at us. One is, how can we access the career inclusive practice sessions?

• 15:01 - 15:25

Yeah, so the sessions that we are currently delivering at the moment, um, we didn't even get a chance to advertise 'em. Um, they're at capacity, but we've got another four sessions that we will be advertising on our Facebook page from the, uh, the second half of the year. So my suggestion is to go to the ba uh, Facebook and that's, um, got information on there about our sessions and when and where they'll be held.

• 15:27 - 15:35

Cool, thank you. And another question we've got is how, how do we access the resources that you were talking about?

• 15:35 - 15:59

Yeah. On our website. On your website, yeah. We've also got a, it's not on our website, but I'm happy to share it with you aj. We've got a career resource guide. Um, that resource

guide was developers because, um, we wanted to provide what's available in Victoria, um, and that's full of Victorian Aboriginal resources. So I'll share that link with you as well, aj, um, after this,.

• 16:00 - 16:31

And we'll, we'll add it, the guys, uh, for all the participants listening, we'll actually on the Ajas website underneath the video, you'll actually see the resources, uh, the PowerPoints are being put up. My notes that I'm doing PowerPoints of adding stuff to will be put up there as well. And the resource guide will be put up there as well. Um, so was one other question, and this is a, this is a quite an interesting question. Um, someone just asked what, how do you define a community control.

• 16:39 - 16:56

ization? So I would define it as it's aboriginal board. Um, yeah, I would say Aboriginal controlled <laugh>. Yeah. It's terms so that, yeah. Board. So we've got.

• 16:57 - 17:00

The board's been appointed by the community. Yeah. The membership.

• 17:00 - 17:18

Yeah, yeah, yeah. They are community organizations, mean community has a lot of say in those organizations and what they do. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and it's generally an aboriginal board. Um, that, um, yeah, that's a question I haven't had before. And it's like, how do you <laugh>.,

• 17:20 - 17:41

Another question someone sent me was, um, I got a few questions here. One says, how, as an early childhood educator, what do you think I, where should I start my journey on incorporating indigenous perspectives into the curriculum and into the way that I work?

• 17:42 - 18:15



Yeah. So my suggestion to that, um, educator would be, um, to reach out to your local community. First of all, I'm not sure sure what area she's in. Um, it's not listed cuz I'm just wondering if there is a K PSA in that area. The K PSA can also assist and we don't have every, um, region. We've got 11 at the moment, um, with an additional four to come on at some point. And I think Jeanette can talk to a bit more about that. Um, but if you don't have a K psa, you can also reach out to Bai.

• 18:15 - 18:42

You can reach out to me. I'm happy to have a conversation with you and help you with that process. Process. We would also encourage, um, you know, contacting your local L A E C G, which again, you can do through me. Um, they're also, a lot of them are very involved within, um, providing advice to services. Um, so if that educator wants to reach out to me, I'm happy to have the conversation with her and assist her with that process.

• 18:42 - 18:51

Thank you. Um, last question is, how can we access the Curry Inclusive Practice? Oh, sorry, funding. How can we access the funding that you mentioned?

• 18:54 - 19:14

Uh, so the funding that I was talking about is funding that comes to ba um, okay. Can she probably be a bit more, I guess is is that in relation to the school readiness funding or what was that question in relation to?

• 19:14 - 19:36

I've got three questions about funding and this one is how can we, how can we access security inclusive practice sessions? It's that one, that one's done. How do we access the funding that's provided for? It just says for the funding. Let me, let me, um, I'll text the person back and come back to you. That one, I'll message that one. Yeah, some, some of the messages have come through private, some have gone to everybody.

• 19:37 - 20:00

Okay. Um, if it is the school readiness, um, school readiness goes to kindergartens, um, in the, in Victoria that are running a fund, a kindergarten program, if that's what she's referring to. Um, the other funding I was was speaking to is the funding that Bao receives to run those programs. Um, whether it's from State or whether it's from Commonwealth.

• 20:03 – 20:14

Cool. Thank you. And thank you both. Um, I'm just gonna throw over to Jeanette, um, partner of education and training. So coming.

• 20:15 – 20:46

<Laugh>. Hi everyone. Um, thanks so much. Um, Kim and Angel Lee, it's always tough to follow the two of you because, uh, your knowledge is deep and, uh, your passion is always prevalent. Um, I do notice that there's a question also about the language program. Um, and whether it's available in long daycare. It is actually unavailable to fund a kid about, um, in Victoria. Um, and, um, it's part of an entire language program of 120, uh, services and includes all languages, um, including Oslan and Aboriginal language.

• 20:47 – 21:11

Um, and as Kim said at the moment, there are 18 kindergartens, um, teaching Aboriginal language. Um, and it's a process, um, to work with traditional owners. Um, because as you would be aware, um, the Aboriginal languages in Victoria are being reclaimed, um, in many areas. There are 38 languages and they're not all active at the moment. So, um, yeah, just to answer that question.

• 21:11 – 21:48

So, um, I just wanted to, uh, first of all, um, I know that AJ did an acknowledgement, but I just wanna acknowledge that I'm meeting you from, um, Bunong country, um, in Meows and, um, pay my respects to, um, elders past and present here. Um, and certainly <inaudible> and the ongoing connection to the lands and waters of the Bunong people across some 3000 square kilometers, uh, from the Wey River, uh, in the West where I am, um, and right across to Wilson's Prom in the Southeast, it's quite a significant, um, area of land and water that's being cared for and managed by Aboriginal people for thousands of years.

• 21:48 – 21:59

And I'm very privileged to raise my children and family here. And I extend that respect to all First Nations people present today. Um, and to elders past and present in the countries that you are joining us from.

• 21:59 – 22:33

And if you feel like I'm popping in the chat, we joining us from, it's always interesting to understand and know what country our people are in the meeting are joining us from as well. Um, so, um, I just introduced myself and I'll put my slides up. Um, I was really privileged, um, to be asked to be involved in this. I work very, very closely with Kim, um, at va we work in partnership on the programs, um, that come out of my room, the Aboriginal Education Plan. Um, of course being a public servant, my title's really long, as AJ said, I'm the manager of participation, transition and inclusion.

• 22:34 – 22:49

Um, I have a team of, um, eight staff and we are responsible for, um, parenting programs, um, some early childhood programs, um, and, uh, school engagement programs, um, as well as the department's Aboriginal employment strategy in the department's Aboriginal inclusion plan.

• 22:50 – 23:24

So, um, we do, uh, a really broad range of work. I feel, um, really privileged to be sitting amongst all of you because I know the work that you do. Um, and I sincerely appreciate the work that you do with the children. Uh, right across Victoria, um, in, goodness me, 1986 I went to foots grade TAFE and studied Mother Craft nursing. Um, and, uh, went on to, uh, study the diploma in childcare there and teach child studies at Victoria University. I went on to, uh, do my, uh, bachelor in education, um, as well.

• 23:24 – 23:43

Um, and, um, was a university colleague assessing students for many years, particularly across the western suburbs of Melbourne. So I know I can see lots of familiar names here

from my decades of working in the early childhood field. Um, and it's really great to be part of this group cuz I think I've had about four careers since then.

• 23:43 – 24:15

Um, I've worked in mining, um, in Aboriginal employment. Um, I've worked as a CEO of a not-for-profit organization delivering training on boys education, um, bullying and anti-violence programs. Um, I worked at Lady Gary as the training manager across the state for a number of years. Um, and, um, I've joined the public service after I had my children, uh, which was, um, in, um, 2008, I was privileged to write the first reconciliation action plan of any Victorian government department at the Department of Health and Human Services.

• 24:15 – 24:46

And it came on the back of, um, Kevin Rudd's apology. Um, we'd been trying to convince the government to do it, and the apology was the hook that gave us that opportunity. So I'm really excited that you've got a reconciliation action plan and that all of you are really actively being engaged through these sessions as part of that plan. And congratulations. It's a, it's a huge step and I'm excited for the children that are in your care. Um, so now I'm gonna try and share my screen. Let's hope it works because we are WebEx nuts in the department, um, rather than, um, zoom.

• 24:46 – 24:47

Here we go.

• 0:00 – 0:00

• 24:57 – 24:58

Can you see my screen?

• 24:59 – 25:00

Yeah.

- 25:00 – 25:02

Is it on full screen qj, or is it on small screen?

- 25:02 – 25:13

If you go right down to the bottom, you'll see the little, um, that one, the big, the little PowerPoint opening. Yeah, there should.

- 25:13 – 25:56

Open up. Okay, great. Thank you. Thanks for persisting with my, um, technology dramas. Um, so <laugh> work. Uh, so I, um, um, look, I I, I also wanted to say one of the things that I know being a kindergarten teacher and directing a number of childcare centers over many, many years is that when you enroll a child into a kindergarten, you don't enroll a child, you actually enroll a family. And what I've learned in the years that I've worked in aboriginal education, and that's been a number of years now in Victoria for 15 years, um, is that, um, with, with Aboriginal family who's included in that family is a broad section of the community, um, kin, kin and family as well.

- 25:56 – 26:07

And so when you're thinking about engaging with, um, developing relationships with Aboriginal people in early years, you need to really think about the aboriginal family and the sense of family.

- 26:08 – 26:40

Um, this is just a bit of background cuz I think it's really interesting for people to think about, um, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Victoria. Um, and, and, and where that community is and how that community is made up. This data is a little bit old because we work on census data, and this is 2016 cents this data, but it gives you the same theme and idea and snapshot around Aboriginal Victoria. There's around 48,000 Aboriginal people living in Victoria that represent about 0.8% of the Victorian population.

- 26:40 – 27:04

And the media age of Aboriginal people is 23 for non-Aboriginal people. The median age is 37. The Aboriginal population is young and is growing. And children age zero to 14 represent 33% of the Victorian community. So that just talks to you about the really important focus of children, um, in Aboriginal communities, um, and the role that you are doing.

• 27:05 – 27:35

And in 2019, and I'm using this data because I didn't have to get permission from secretaries to share data that was published already, um, is that, but the numbers are very similar. So there's around 1600 Aboriginal children attending, four year old kindergarten out of about 80,000, um, and about 950 Aboriginal children attending three year old kinder out of about 2,500. And so you can see that, you know, that those, those children could potentially be hidden and they may or may not have chosen to identify as aboriginal in your organization.

• 27:36 – 28:00

Um, and I wanted you to just be aware about schools as well because it helps you think about the diversity and the dispersing of Aboriginal people. Um, across our universal services in 2020, there were 1,543 government schools, um, and Aboriginal students were across 1,360 of those. Sorry, I dunno what happened there. Um, I just moved it to, oh, sorry.

• 28:00 – 28:32

Yeah, thanks for that. A I can get up for you. Yeah, deadly. Thanks. I'm do, I've got too many screens going. I can't tell what I'm doing. That's all right. Thank you. You wanna jump up to the next one? Sorry. Sure. So the, the, um, the plan, uh, that, uh, we work in partnership with Vaon is called Maru, the Aboriginal Education Plan. And it was developed in 2016. Some of you may have known it's a predecessor, um, plan, uh, Wik, um, and moron is very different towanick.

• 28:32 – 29:00

I've been working in aboriginal policy, as I said in Victoria for over a decade. And I'm so excited to be working on Moron. And the reason I'm excited to work on maung is it's a strength based plan per Aboriginal people. It's not a deficit model about fixing problems,

um, and, and dealing with statutory services. So, you know, it's, it's really, um, a joy to work on something that's actually about celebrating Aboriginal people, um, aboriginal cultures and knowledge and histories.

• 29:00 – 29:39

Um, and, um, and also, you know, it's about making universal services responsive and ensuring that every Curry person can achieve their potential. And that's what the vision of Maro is about. And that vision was actually, um, worked on in partnership in co-design with the Aboriginal community, um, which makes it so much richer. Um, and it is very much about, um, all, all universal services providing, um, that responsive, inclusive, and respectful service whether you have aboriginal or don't know that you have Aboriginal people and family and children's in your services.

• 29:40 – 29:59

So it's just, just important to keep that in mind. AJ, do you wanna flip to the next slide or do you want me to do it? Uh, you're awesome. This is just really repeating what Kim's already talked about and just to, um, reiterate to you how important the strength of me is, its genuine partnership between the government and the Curry community.

• 30:00 – 30:41

In 2019, the Victorian government released the Victorian Self-Determination Reform framework. Um, and we also have the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework. And both of those actually have very strong principles about self-determination that all government departments and government funded organizations should be aware of. Um, and it's, it's not about, um, what we do, it's about how we do what we do. Those principles are really, really important. Um, and so there's the map of VA I that Kim showed you with their extensive network of consultative groups across the department and va I work with us really, really strongly is the peak organization in Curry education in Victoria and our principal partner.

• 30:42 – 31:01

But what the important work that they I do is bringing community voice to decision making, which is really important. So the next slide, thank you so much. This is out of me. So if you, you have a look in me, I've really just given it to you to see you've got it as a bit of a resource.

- 31:01 – 31:32

The first two, um, uh, rectangles on here are the work that, that they, I do with the community that Kim's already spoken about. And Angie Lee. Um, and so the local Aboriginal, um, education consultative groups exist and they're, they're the structure, uh, for bringing community voice. And they, I run career education round tables, um, in all of those areas that you saw on that map for va. Um, and, and those, um, I didn't mention earlier, Maru, there's actually a whole of life education strategy.

- 31:32 – 32:00

It covers early years schools, vocational education and adult education. Um, and VA's round tables have sessions where they bring different stakeholders from all of those parts of the education sector together at times and separately at times to have conversations and bring that voice back to share it with the department to assist us in developing responsive policies and initiatives and projects, um, and in every region.

- 32:00 – 32:35

Um, and so the department is made up of four regions and 17 areas. Um, and there are regional partnership forums which are co-chaired, um, by debt and va. Um, and, um, the ag and regional staff attend those. Um, and so there's, there's a, a cascading effect of the central maroon plan to each of the regions to develop place based, um, initiatives and projects within their region. We also have a central governance committee. The central governance committee is chaired by our secretary and the president of aar, Geraldine Atkinson.

- 32:35 – 32:58

Um, and it includes other, um, aboriginal community controlled organizations such as vaca, um, which I'm sure you're familiar with. And I don't need to unpack the acronym va, which is a health organization. Um, it also includes fel, which is the community services



organization, the Kuri Youth Council. Um, and of course, um, lots of debt, people running around taking notes and, and preparing papers and briefings.

• 32:59 - 33:32

Um, the Education State Board is the governance structure of the Department of Education and training, and that's made up of our secretary and all of our deputy secretaries, regional directors, and the CEO of the Victorian, um, um, I always get that wrong, the vcaa and I can't even think of it cuz we use acronyms too much. Um, and, and once a year we actually hold an annual ministerial round table in partnership with VAAI as well. Um, and, um, all three ministers, um, for the Department of Education and Training attend that.

• 33:32 - 33:59

We have, um, minister Melino for Education. We have Minister STT for early childhood education. Um, and we have Minister Tierney for, um, training and higher education. And all three of those ministers come together to meet with and talk with community, which is really, really important when we're talking about a whole of life education strategy and how all of those parts of education work together, which is really, really important. So the next slide, thank you.

• 34:01 - 34:45

I won't go right through this slide. The important part, um, it's all important, but the really important part is the orange. Um, and these are the outcomes we want from, we wanna create a positive climate for learning and development. We want community engagement in learning and development, and we want a culture of professional leadership. And so I guess what I say about me is it's a statewide strategy. We've got regions developing place-based initiatives to that, but what's gonna take it to work is every single one of you, every single practitioner, every single director, every single cluster manager actually sitting and saying, well, how can I embed these principles of me wrong in the work that I do in our organization, in our organizational policies?

• 34:46 - 34:56

Um, and reflect on that and having conversations at staff meetings about those three things and how you might do those in your organization is a great place to start when you're thinking about policy.

• 34:57 – 35:39

I was the boring teacher at TAFE that did all the stuff on ethics and, um, planning and, um, you know, management. So I'm the boring one that does policy. So, uh, if you ever wanna yam with me about that, please feel free to connect my my numbers on the end of this. Um, so the next slide really just talks about the, the, the, um, the whole of Victorian government. Uh, we have the education state reform, which is the big, uh, reform for education in Victoria. But the wonderful thing about the education state reform is that it coincided, um, with, and it strengthened the commitment by the Victorian government to Aboriginal led decision making, um, or self-determination.

• 35:39 – 35:49

Um, and it's such an exciting time in Victoria. Um, I mentioned to you that, you know, I I I was lamenting in the Department of Health and numerous services in 2017.

• 35:49 – 36:23

How can I get a wrap happening and was, um, you know, needed, um, Kevin Rudd to do the apology to give me that hook. We're at, we're at another really, really important turning place in Victoria where aboriginal community, uh, treaty, um, is being advanced. The assembly has been established for treaty, um, and, um, community consultation has commenced, um, through the assembly. The other really, really important piece of work and I think important for you to be aware of as as managers and carers is the Euch Justice Commission.

• 36:24 – 36:49

The Euch Justice Commission was, um, officially launched about two weeks ago, and the commission is, is actually a Royal Commission. Um, the interim report will come down in June this year, and then there'll be a final report coming down. And it will have really strong and solid recommendations for all government departments, um, including the way that we fund and provide services, um, to Aboriginal people in Victoria.

- 36:49 – 37:26

It will be both powerful and sad because like the bringing them Home report, which some of you might be familiar with, which was, um, an inquiry into out of home care and the stolen generations. Um, people are sharing very, very personal stories. And it is not an old history. It is a very recent history. You will meet many, many Aboriginal people whose experiences in education were not a good experience, and they might be expressing some of that trauma that they experienced and, and, and lived during their time, um, in education.

- 37:26 – 37:47

Um, and they may have stories of, um, actually being taken from the institution where they'd gone to learn and never saw their families again. And lots of those stories will come out. So I tell you that just to make you aware that families in your service over the next couple of months may be sharing some of those stories, um, with the commission.

- 37:47 – 38:24

Um, and it will bring up some, some things for them that they might need to work through. And so just to be empathetic and aware that that's happening is important to you. Um, and, and so I've just got a picture of some of the other things and, and really my point here is that we have a holistic approach, um, to Aboriginal, um, education. And we work very closely with all of the other departments. The Department of Justice has the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and an Aboriginal Justice Forum. We work really closely with the Department of Families Fairness and Housing, who has, uh, one Girl Gap, gap du, um, which is the Children and Families Agreement.

- 38:24 – 38:37

And they hold the Aboriginal Children's Forum, which is a focus on aboriginal children in out of home care. I'm sure that you are familiar that of, of the children in out of Home care in Victoria, 25% of those children are aboriginal.

- 38:37 – 39:14

And I know that Vacca is going to be talking to you, um, at one of your next catch up. So it'll be great for you to hear from Muriel about trauma informed practice and the work that Vacca does. Um, in relation to children out of home care. Um, I worked with the Commission for Children and Young people, um, and worked with Andrew Jacko, the commissioner for Aboriginal Children before coming to education. Um, and we conducted the Task Force 1000, um, which was looking at the cases of 1000 Aboriginal children in out of home care. Um, and the other strategy that's a really important one in Victoria is the DEL strategy, which is the family violence strategy.

• 39:15 - 39:48

Because what we found of those 25% of children in out of home care was that 90% of those children were there as a result of family violence. Um, and that's something to be really aware of as a service provider, working really closely with families and children. And I don't tell you that to kind of, you know, get all spooky and, and, and, and, you know, concern you about your job. It's just about being professional and aware of the complexities that some aboriginal families who may be attending your service may be experiencing. And not all aboriginal families experience this, but too higher proportion do.

• 39:48 - 39:52

So just wanted to, um, raise that. So the next slide,.

• 39:52 - 39:58

Just let you know I've downloaded all those documents that can be uploaded to the Ajax.

• 39:58 - 40:38

Website. Oh, sweet. Thank you, aj. So Kim's already gone through this, so I don't need to, uh, this is, uh, the, um, early childhood initiatives out of Morro, and Kim's been through all of that, but you'll, you'll get this slide and you can reflect on it as well. So we'll just skip past that one. Ll jump onto the next. Um, and so the thing about Mero is that lots of different prongs happen. You know, it's the spoken wheel model. Mero Mero is, you know, a, um, a very, um, specific Aboriginal education plan, but there's so many things that happen that support that plan to be realized.

• 40:38 - 40:53

And of course, the velde, which I don't need to talk to any of you about, um, is a really core, um, element to early years. Um, and we are just so proud of the work that's been done and the cultural knowledge story developed by, um, Dr.

• 40:53 - 41:26

Sue Lopez and, um, Atkinson and Annette Sachs, her illustrations that actually bring, uh, the frameworks elements into that Aboriginal lens and story, um, of learning and development outcomes, practice principles and transitions. Um, so, you know, I know that you know that, but it's just really a, a, a good example of how we make something mainstream, um, have an Aboriginal perspective. And teachers always say to me, how do I get an Aboriginal perspective in my, in my activities and in my learning and in my organization?

• 41:26 - 41:48

This is a great example of how to do that. Um, school readiness funding has already been spoken about. Um, so I won't go into it. But importantly that that menu that, um, Kim and Angel Lee have mentioned that va I is, um, on the menu of evidence, a number of Aboriginal community controlled organizations are particularly into the third element around access and inclusion.

• 41:49 - 42:24

And so again, that's embedded into the school readiness training, which is absolutely fabulous. So we'll skip into the next slide, and I'm sure you all know about Curry Kids shine, but it's my job to spook it just a little. Um, and, um, I was just a bit excited because Curry Kids shine, as you know, is a campaign, uh, to promote both the importance of kinder, but in particular, um, continued access to that 15 hours of free kindergarten, uh, for, um, early start kinder. And with three year old universal kinder coming on board, we wanna keep that message strong that aboriginal children still get that 15 hours of free kindergarten.

• 42:25 - 42:40

Um, and so in this year's campaign, um, we engaged a new design by Kamara Morgan, which can see, um, down in the corner there. Um, and, uh, we are really excited to use her contemporary work as we go forward to promote the Curry Kids Shine campaign.

• 42:44 - 43:18

And I can't talk to you without talking about our amazing, um, aboriginal workforce in the Department of Education and training. We've got about 140, um, staff in our Curry education workforce, and I'm sure that you are familiar with and hopefully work alongside some of those staff. So to help you understand who they are, we have Curry Education Coordinators, and there's one of those in each of the 17 areas of our department. And the Curry Education coordinators have the Tezos, which are lovingly know, and the engagement support officers are in their teams.

• 43:18 - 43:47

Um, and so they're area based staff, um, and, um, are place based. And they provide strategic advice to teachers, to school leaders, um, and to multidisciplinary area teams. Um, and a number of the keso roles in different locations have a particular focus on the early years. And I'm sure some of you have been around as long as me and remember the PS os, the pre, the pre, uh, the preschool field offices, uh, the, the Curry ones.

• 43:47 - 44:24

I was very lucky that Annette Sax was mine when I was teaching. So, um, I was in a very fortunate space, um, and have maintained a relationship with her since then. Um, the other, um, um, staff there are four, uh, are the Curry Education Managers. Um, and I mentioned to you that we have four regions. They have a very strategic role, um, in each of the four regions, um, doing Strat strategy work. Um, but if they're just important people to know, um, and you know, Kim said to you earlier that, you know, you can reach out to the Curry Preschool assistant if there is one in your area, but the Casos is also an opportunity for you to reach out to.

• 44:24 - 44:38

Um, and on the department's website, um, you will actually find the contact details for the Curry Engagement Support officers. They're easier to keep up to date cuz there's only 17 of them and they will put you onto the Casos.

• 44:38 - 45:11

We don't put all the Casos numbers on because they changed you frequently and keeping up to date with 140 odd people's too difficult. Um, otherwise the website gets outta date. So the next slide, the next slide, breaks all my rules about everything and know about training. If it doesn't look good on a t-shirt, it doesn't look good on a slide. Way too many words. This is just for your information. Um, but I wanted you to know that we did a number of things, particularly during covid, and I know that you did, I was lucky enough to be on the panel for the Victorian early years awards for the inclusion category.

• 45:12 - 45:25

And I read so many amazing stories from services about the innovations, talk about going out of the box, adding value, doing more than they had to. And I know all the childhood people do that all the time.

• 45:26 - 46:10

And you, the, the stories that I saw and heard of the work that you were doing during covid was just outstanding. But I did wanna let you know that, um, in 2020, they were funded by ourselves and the Commonwealth, um, to, um, employ a number of, um, outreach, um, support facilitators, um, who worked, again, because Murung is whole of life, worked across the education sector with families. And they did absolutely amazing work in a very short amount of time accessing computers and donges, uh, um, students in school education, um, connecting and referring families to mental health services, to disability services, um, arranging tutoring to students that needed that tutoring.

• 46:11 - 46:24

And most importantly, providing cultural connection to those families while they were, um, working or learning from home. Um, it was a really great piece of work. Um, and, um, you know, again, thank you deeply to va.

• 46:24 - 46:56

I we're so fortunate to have them as a principal partner in our department with that wide network of ags. This work was amazing. Um, and this year our department funded outreach workers, which I'm sure you're all familiar with, um, and there were 16 kindergartens that expressed interest to have those outreach outreach workers. Um, and again, they've done some really great work in some really tough times. Um, you know, enhancing, you know, those collaborations, identifying children who are eligible for kinder enrollment and helping during that really difficult time around enrollment.

• 46:57 - 47:15

Um, and, um, you know, just keeping things ticking along. It's really, really important. It's been a really tough time. And again, I can't acknowledge you all enough as practitioners, managers, directors for the work you did, um, over this last two years. Outstanding. This is a little bit old, this starter, but it also shows you a trend.

• 47:16 - 48:00

Um, so what I wanna say is that my room's making a difference, but I'm being a bit selfish there because everything's making a difference. The things you are doing are making a difference. Best Start is making a difference. Uh, the vai um, professional development is making a difference. But what we've seen, um, and I love it, I wish Lionel, uh, baler was here. He's the general manager of ai and I love listening to him speak about this because if you look at the four year old kinder participation rates, Aboriginal children, um, and this was, uh, 2019 data, but I can tell you that 20 and 20 ones, um, the same, um, a 99% participation rate, um, and so, and non-Aboriginal children in 2019, you can see was 67%.

• 48:00 - 48:35

So what Lionel likes to say is that we've smashed the gap. Um, and, and I stole these words you can do on me, Kim. Um, but you know, the, it's really, really great to see that, um, participation rate for aboriginal children in kinder now exceeds non-Aboriginal children. And you saw on that very first slide, the percentage in comparison, um, you know, out of 80,000 children. It's outstanding. Um, and that's the work of all of you, um, as well. So I just wanted to, um, say thanks because those circles happen, um, because of the great work that everyone here does.



• 48:35 – 48:38

And that's just my contact details that you can annoy me anytime.

• 48:40 – 48:41

Thank you, Jeanette.

• 48:41 – 48:42

No worries.

• 48:43 – 48:56

Hey, I'm just gonna throw open to anybody who has any questions. We do have a question that comes in by accessing the Aboriginal language, kindergarten. How does it work? And does someone, does someone come into the kinder and teach the language?

• 48:58 – 49:01

Did you wanna answer that, Kim, or do you want me to?

• 49:03 – 49:08

Jeanette, I'm happy for you to answer it. Um, it's, it's a bit complicated, so I'd rather that you answer.

• 49:08 – 49:38

It <laugh>. No worries. So, uh, for, for the, um, languages programs in kindergartens, an expression of interest was put out to kindergartens to express interest, um, to teach a language, and a number came in Greek, Italian, et cetera, et cetera. The model, uh, for, um, most languages was that there was a bilingual teacher. The model for Aboriginal is different, um, because, um, the language can only be taught by, um, a traditional owner, um, that has learnt that language.

• 49:38 – 50:07

And there, there are not a lot, um, that, um, uh, in that position at the moment. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So, um, we had 32 kindergartens in Victoria Express interest to want to teach an aboriginal language. And we've worked with the traditional owners in those 18 and have established those programs and those traditional owners go into the kindergarten regularly, um, and, uh, work with and teach those children while the teacher and the other educators are there, and the teachers and educators.

• 50:07 – 50:46

And please, some of you might be doing this, um, speak up, um, actually then, um, you know, can embed some of those words, those songs, those stories, um, you know, across, um, the, the whole week, um, with the children. Um, so, and then the other, um, kindergartens that haven't yet commenced, there are conversations happening with traditional owners in their areas to commence some of those alongside the, um, languages in kindergarten. We've had a program, um, in our vet sector where we've been training traditional owners to learn their aboriginal language in a certificate three and to teach their language in a certificate four.

• 50:47 – 51:06

And we've been very excited that we've been able to work with the Victorian Institute of Teachers, um, that those, uh, language teachers are now, um, I'll get it wrong. What's the right language? Angie Lee, you've fix me up here, but they're exempt from, um, permission to teach, have I got the right language?

• 51:06 – 51:07

Yeah,.

• 51:07 – 51:19

Yeah. Um, and, um, can now, um, teach in schools, um, and kindergartens, um, under that permission to teach, which is fabulous. Long answer. Sorry.

• 51:19 – 51:43

Cool. The last question is just for the four speakers and, and I think it's, they said, said, Jeanette, you gave a really great briefing about what you do in your history and your history in the area of early childhood. The question is, can Angie, Lee, AJ and Kim just mention how they're involved in early childhood through your qualifications and, and other experience?

• 51:43 - 52:17

Well, well, I'll go first. Um, my experience, um, I've worked in aboriginal organizations since I was 17. Um, when it comes to early childhood, my experience comes from working within community. And, um, I don't work in the early years unit with Kim. Um, in my role at Vaai, I'm, I'm across kind of all areas, but um, I am also involved in a few Mac services across the state.

• 52:17 - 52:50

One of them, so Yara, um, which is quite well known, that's based in Thornbury. My mother-in-law was a founding member of that. And our family has been involved in Afra and I've got four boys of my own. And I have to say, within the VA structure, we have what we call, um, advisory committees within vao, we've got an early childhood subcommittee, which consists of some, uh, L A E cg, some are specialist reps, some are life members of va. They've been involved in education for over 50 years.

• 52:51 - 53:12

That early childhood subcommittee advises me. So I get, um, I've got that subcommittee to rely on in regards to advice, endorsement of resources, et cetera, et cetera. That those subcommittees within vao are a very important part of our, um, structure as well. And they guide and advise me in the early year space.

• 53:13 - 53:18

Cool. Thank you. Kim, do you need anything you wanna add that you didn't mention before?

• 53:20 - 53:22

No, I send everyone to sleep. All good. Thank.

• 53:22 - 54:00

You. <laugh>. No, cool. And just for me, um, my, I started off as a nurse, so I, I, I, um, when I was 17, 18 and 19, I finished my nursing, um, qualification as a registered nurse. I'm a maternal health nurse and a mental health nurse. My interest in early childhood goes back to like the birthing process. Um, and then I actually went off and did, um, my master's in, in social work. So I'm a mental health and credit social worker. I've worked at that show. I've worked in, um, indigenous organizations and I work across Victoria at the moment with mostly Aboriginal health services looking at, um, mental health training.

• 54:01 - 54:13

And so that's kind of my background in it as well. Um, someone just said, can we finally clarify or can we, can you clarify the strategy mentioned the family violence Delta?

• 54:16 - 54:20

I can, I'm a bit slow, so I was just googling it and I'm gonna put the link in the chat.

• 54:21 - 54:23

Yep. Cool. And I'll add it to the PowerPoint.

• 54:23 - 54:24

Yep.

• 0:00 - 0:00

• 54:33 - 54:34

Do you wanna say anything about it?

• 54:36 - 55:07

Um, it's, um, look, it's a strategy that, um, is, um, it used to sit within the Department of Human Services, um, and after the Family Violence Royal Commission, um, which was I think about three years ago, um, a new, um, um, statutory authority was created, family Safety Victoria, which is also now part of Department of Families Fairness and Housing, but sort of a statutory authority of its own. Um, the, um, the family violence, um, strategy has existed for over 25 years.

• 55:07 - 55:42

Uh, when I was the director of Aboriginal outcomes in dhs, I was lucky enough to look after the strategy there. Um, and, um, similar, um, to the VA structure. Um, there are, um, volunteer groups, um, spread out across the state. Um, and, um, they come together to quarterly forums, um, to look at place based approaches as well as statewide approaches, um, to, um, preventing and responding to family violence, um, you know, across Victoria. Um, and, um, the Department of Family Fairness and Housing, or now Family Safety Victoria.

• 55:43 - 56:06

Um, pay the salaries of, um, coordinators that support those consult mechanisms, um, across Victoria. Um, but I've put the link in there for the strategy. Um, you can have a look and if people have questions, you've got my email, just shoot me an email and I'll probably just refer you to the people, um, who can talk to you about those things. Cuz I know a little bit of every everything and a lot of nothing. Okay.

• 56:07 - 56:19

Um, I've just downloaded the strategy. So guys, it will be put up into the website under the, um, presentation. So I'm just gonna ask, is there any other final questions that anybody would like to throw to the panel at all?

• 56:27 - 56:31

Anything the panel would like to actually add or conclude? Angie Lee, anything?

• 56:34 - 57:10

No, I just wanna say thank you to everyone, um, for having us this evening and coming away from your children and households and all that kind of stuff. Um, and I haven't done a presentation in a while, so <laugh>, but you know, Kim does have, um, she did put up her details as well and She'll, AJ's also got her, um, her, um, information. So please feel free to contact our office at any time and we are more than happy to help anyone, um, that needs assistance with anything.

• 0:00 - 0:00

• 57:11 - 57:13

Thank you. Kim, anything you want add?

• 57:13 - 57:47

Yeah, I sort of, I just wanna mention, um, va, um, we've got a huge mandate within Victoria in regards to Aboriginal education. We are a small organization, um, but we do our best to assist wherever we can. Um, because of, um, the Commonwealth funding that's enabled me to be able to get access into services that we wouldn't normally have. And that's been really good. Um, but if you do have any questions or any queries or you need any help, um, please reach out.

• 57:47 - 57:48

Happy to help where I can.

• 57:49 - 57:53

Thank you. Thank you. And, um, Janette, anything final from you?

• 57:53 - 58:25

Yeah, look, I, um, I just wanna thank everyone for your engagement and your commitment to coming to these seminars. Um, you know, I'm a non-aboriginal person. I've worked in aboriginal policy in and out of different types of roles for about 25 years. Um, and about two years ago I left Aboriginal business because I saw self-determination, um, so strongly

that I knew that I needed to move outta the sector and move aside for aboriginal people to take important roles like the one that I'm doing now. Um, and an aboriginal elder actually spoke to me and rang me up and said, where are you and what are you doing?

• 58:26 - 58:41

And I said, look, you know, I really respect Aboriginal people. I respect self-determination and I'm working as a local connections manager and they nearly choked and so did I cause I'm not good at contracts. But, um, what they said to me was that we actually need allies.

• 58:42 - 59:15

We need strong allies, we need strong non-Aboriginal people to stand alongside us. And don't you ever feel shamed, um, or disempowered, um, to do aboriginal business as a non-Aboriginal person when you do it the right way, when you, when you, um, don't speak for, um, but walk alongside community. Um, it's really important. And what I say is that please don't be paralyzed into fear and inaction and do nothing. Um, I think that, um, you know, sometimes we need to be brave and test ourselves in doing something different.

• 59:15 - 59:35

Sometimes it's a bit uncomfortable. And I can tell you that as a non-Aboriginal person who is, you never let go of early childhood just saying, I haven't done it for 20 years, but you never lose it. Um, and, um, my details are there and if you ever wanna have a yarn with me as a non-aboriginal person about something that you're uncomfortable about, you can't talk to an aboriginal person about, please contact me.

• 59:37 - 1:00:12

Thanks guys. For those of you got your cameras on, please give a bit of a round of applause to Kim, uh, Angie Lee and Jeanette and thank you for joining us tonight. You've noticed up into the chat I've put down the future workshops that are coming up, um, in, um, next, our next one is in May with, uh, the Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency talking about VA and their role. Um, in June, we actually have Reconciliation Australia with, uh, Nicole Finlay, the, the new CEO of Reconciliation Victoria.

• 1:00:13 – 1:00:38

In uh, July we have, uh, the Casos, uh, two Casos coming in, talking about what their role is and how they can, uh, get involved with early childhood services. Seminar seven in August is with that show and the Dandenong Aboriginal co-op talking about the Curry maternity strategy and how that impacts on, um, young people and families in session.

• 1:00:38 – 1:01:09

The following session in September, we've got the grandmothers against removal who can't wait to come in and talk to you about. Um, just getting to understand that only 50% of Aboriginal kids are not living with their parents. They're actually living in out of home care. And grandparents with, um, against removal is, uh, is uh, uh, trying to make sure that, you know, families are still connected even though they disconnected from, from their peers, their family. Uh, seminar nine.

• 1:01:09 – 1:01:39

We're looking at lived experience of stolen generations and connecting home. Um, can't wait to come in and have a bit of a chat and, um, session and seminar. 10. The last one for the year will be November, which will be a bit of a review of what we've actually covered and questions and answers from you guys that will pose, um, from after Seminar nine, just posing questions that, um, I get a bit of a panel on to have a bit of a chat with you. So guys, I know we've got a little bit late over time. Thank you for hanging with us today.

• 1:01:40 – 1:01:44

Please stay safe, look after yourself and join us next time.