

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



Thursday, 10 December 2020

NATION FIRST INITIATIVE FOR ABORIGINAL CHILD PROTECTION

The Andrews Labor Government is taking action to help vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected with their community and country, as more Aboriginal children in care transition to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan today attended the online Aboriginal Children's Forum, announcing \$11.6 million for an Australian first pilot program that will see Aboriginal-led teams respond to child protection reports.

Under the new program, Aboriginal-led teams will respond to child protection reports, in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, and help local families who may become involved in the child protection or care services system.

Connecting children and their families with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) early is vital in improving self-determination for Aboriginal communities as the Labor Government works to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* invests \$85.8 million over four years to continue and expand the *Wungurilwil Gaggapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement* – the first ever tripartite agreement between the Aboriginal community, child and family services sector and the Government.

This investment includes \$44.2 million to enable the innovative Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) program, which sees designated ACCOs assume legal responsibility of Aboriginal children on protection orders.

Thanks to the funding, ACAC will support a further 396 Aboriginal children to have their case planning and management undertaken by an Aboriginal organisation, with early results already showing Aboriginal children are reunified with their families faster under the landmark program.

The funding will support Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation to fully implement the program in their local communities, while assisting the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative to expand their existing work.

The Budget funding also includes \$29.9 million over four years for the Transitioning Aboriginal Children initiative, which will mean an additional 433 Aboriginal children living in the care of family members across Victoria will be case managed by an ACCO.

Victoria leads the way when it comes to placing more Aboriginal children with kin or an Aboriginal carer, at 79.1 per cent compared with the national rate of 64.3 per cent.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan

"Through this Australian first pilot we're taking action to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care and ensuring Victoria leads the way on addressing this important issue nationally."

"Victoria's Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations do a fantastic job helping kids remain connected with their community and country, and supporting reunification with their families wherever possible."

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