

# Media Release

**The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP**

Minister for Crime Prevention

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice

Minister for Victim Support



Wednesday, 24 March 2021

## SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Andrews Labor Government is investing nearly \$12 million in culturally specific services and programs to help change the lives of Aboriginal young people and children.

The funding boost will provide essential services and support for Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the justice system.

In line with self-determination, these initiatives have been prioritised by the Aboriginal Justice Caucus.

Funding of \$3.4 million will support VALS to re-launch Balit Ngulu, a dedicated legal service for Aboriginal children and young people – directly addressing their overrepresentation in the justice system.

A further \$4.5 million will expand the Community-based Aboriginal Youth Justice Program, providing additional Koori Community-based Youth Justice workers to help more Aboriginal children and young people in the community who are at risk of offending or re-offending.

These workers will aim to strengthen Aboriginal young people's identity and culture, and work with them to build resilience and resolve challenges they face.

A focus of the initiative will be helping steer Aboriginal young women and girls away from the justice system and connect them with school, training, health and cultural supports.

This new funding will be provided to the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative, Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC), Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative, Mildura District Aboriginal Service, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, VACCA, Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative and Anglicare.

The Koorie Youth Council will also receive \$202,000 to lead an 'Amplifying the Voice of Aboriginal children and young people' initiative to ensure Aboriginal children and young people have a voice in the future of youth justice.

Victoria's youth justice reform roadmap, the *Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-30*, identified the vital role of early intervention and prevention in reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in the justice system.

In partnership with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, the *Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy* will be released later this year and builds on this important work, providing a clear pathway forward.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins

*"This funding will help strengthen the ties to community, culture and Country which are integral in supporting Aboriginal children and young people to keep their lives on track."*

*"In the true nature of self-determination, we are working with Aboriginal communities to address overrepresentation – prioritising the initiatives they have asked for and investing in communities to deliver them."*

*"Through these programs we're ensuring Aboriginal children and young people who do commit offences always have their cultural rights and family connections maintained and strengthened."*