

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Crime Prevention

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice

Minister for Victim Support



Thursday, 17 February 2022

WIRKARA KULPA ABORIGINAL YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGY LAUNCHED

Building on efforts to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the justice system, the Victorian Government has today unveiled Wirkara Kulpa, Victoria's first Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy.

Wirkara Kulpa has been written for and by Aboriginal children and young people to capture the aspirations and changes which they, their families and communities want to see.

It has been led by the Aboriginal Justice Caucus with contribution from members of the Aboriginal Community, including Aboriginal children and young people.

Victoria has reduced the average daily number of Aboriginal children and young people aged 10-17 under youth justice supervision by 42 per cent between 2016-17 and 2020-21 and currently has the second lowest rate in youth justice custody and supervision in Australia but there is more work to be done.

Wirkara Kulpa envisions that Aboriginal children and young people are not in the youth justice system, because they are strong in their culture, connected to families and communities, and living healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and culturally rich lives.

Wirkara Kulpa builds on the findings of the Koori Youth Justice Taskforce which examined the care of nearly 300 Aboriginal children and young people under youth justice supervision. It identifies a set of priorities which the government must work toward in close partnership with the Aboriginal community.

The priorities include diverting Aboriginal children and young people away from the youth justice system, empowering change, protecting cultural rights, increasing connection to family community and culture, supporting healing and rehabilitation, working toward Aboriginal led justice responses and creating a fair youth justice system.

A set of tangible actions have been identified for each priority to ensure there is a clear pathway to achieving genuine and lasting change. Aboriginal Justice Caucus identified several high priority initiatives for Wirkara Kulpa, which have been backed by nearly \$12 million in the 2020-21 Victorian Budget.

The Government has also today released its response to the Commission for Children and Young People's Our Youth Our Way Inquiry. For more information visit <https://www.aboriginaljustice.vic.gov.au/Aboriginal-youth-justice-strategy>

Quotes attributable to Minister for Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins

"Wirkara Kulpa puts the voices of Aboriginal children and young people at the heart of this important work – and we are listening."

"For the first time in Victoria we have a targeted Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy that creates a fairer youth justice system by capturing the aspirations and changes Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities want to see."

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"Despite the gains that have been made so far to reduce the numbers of Aboriginal young people in the justice system, there is so much more work to be done and this strategy helps guide the way."

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