

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Crime Prevention

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice

Minister for Victim Support



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SUPPORTING YOUNG ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS TO THRIVE

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring young First Nations Victorians are supported to stay out of the youth justice system and live fulfilling lives, guided by *Wirkara Kulpa* – Victoria’s first ever Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy which was launched today in a youth friendly version.

The strategy is bolstered by almost \$3 million in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* to deliver Aboriginal Youth Justice Hubs for young Victorians at risk of engaging with the youth justice system. This builds on the \$11.8 million investment in implementing the strategy in the *Victorian Budget 2020-21*.

Wirkara Kulpa was written for and by Aboriginal young people and aims to make sure they’re not part of 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.

The youth-friendly version ensures young Aboriginal Victorians can access and engage with this important work.

Led by the Aboriginal community, the Hubs will provide a range of services, from early intervention and diversion through to complex needs in an accessible space where children and young people can engage in social and recreational activities.

The Hubs are an important step in realising a youth justice system that empowers the Aboriginal community and builds on their capacity to provide coordinated therapeutic and holistic supports and services to heal and nurture their children and young people.

The design and delivery of the model, including locations, will reflect a genuine partnership with the Aboriginal community through transfer of resources and empowered Aboriginal-led decision making.

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 builds on the findings of the Koori Youth Justice Taskforce and the ‘Our Youth, Our Way’ Inquiry 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 is working towards in close partnership with the Aboriginal community.

The priorities include diverting Aboriginal children and young people away from the youth justice system, protecting cultural rights, increasing connection to family community and culture and supporting healing and rehabilitation.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins

“The youth-friendly version of Wirkara Kulpa is an important step towards a future where Aboriginal children and young people are not part of the youth justice system, because they’re connected to culture, supported and thriving.”

“The Hubs will provide a range of tailored services for young Aboriginal Victorians to receive the care and engagement they need to stay on the right track and lead fulfilling lives.”