

WIRKARA KULPA

Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy 2022–2032

Wirkara Kulpa (the Strategy) is the first Aboriginal youth justice strategy in Victoria – it has been developed with the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people at its heart. It is a Strategy written for and by Aboriginal children and young people and captures the aspirations and changes Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities want to see.

It has been led by the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, under the umbrella of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and is a key initiative of *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja* (AJA4), and the *Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-2030*.

Self-determination

Aboriginal self-determination is the foundational principle that has shaped the development of *Wirkara Kulpa*.

Self-determination is doing business our way. Things work better if we implement community led solutions. If it's our vision we work towards, then our kids will grow up strong.

Our guiding principles

This Strategy is accompanied by a set of guiding principles that has informed its development and will help to achieve our vision. These principles are underpinned by, and informed by self-determination and inform all the Strategy's actions.

These principles are centred around:

- amplifying Aboriginal children and young people's voice and participation
- Aboriginal cultural values and connection
- valuing the strengths of Aboriginal children and young people
- supporting child and family centred approaches
- embedding trauma informed healing approaches
- promoting and protecting Aboriginal children and young people's rights.

You can find a full copy of the Strategy at:
<https://www.AboriginalJustice.vic.gov.au/Aboriginal-youth-justice-strategy>

Vision: Aboriginal children and young people are **not** in the youth justice system. This is because they are strong in their culture, connected to families and communities, and living healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and culturally rich lives.

Key Challenge: Close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth justice supervision by 2031.

Key Reform Direction: An Aboriginal-led youth justice system, guided by the voice of young people.

DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4	DOMAIN 5
Empowering Aboriginal children and young people, and families to uphold change	Protecting cultural rights and increasing connection to family, community and culture	Diverting young people and addressing over-representation	Working towards Aboriginal-led justice responses	Creating a fair and equitable system for Aboriginal children and young people
GOALS 1.1 My voice is always heard, and my family and I are involved in decisions about me 1.2 My strengths are recognised and built upon, and I am seen as a future leader WHAT WE WILL DO NOW • Include Aboriginal children and young people and their families in planning and decision-making • Deliver a 'trusted worker' approach for every Aboriginal child and young person in youth justice • Develop a model to amplify the voice of Aboriginal children and young people in youth justice	GOALS 2.1 My cultural rights are upheld, and I am strong in my culture and identity 2.2 I am at all times connected to my family and community; they are an important part of me WHAT WE WILL DO NOW • Explore on-country alternatives to remand to keep Aboriginal children and young people close to their families and communities • Integrate cultural support planning processes within case management so that every young person has a cultural plan; families and young people are more involved in cultural planning and there is a single plan across services • Keep families safely together by developing a new Aboriginal led culturally based and family centred therapeutic alternative to Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)	GOALS 3.1 First and foremost, I am treated as a child with care and respect 3.2 My first contact with the justice system is my last 3.3 I am never left to walk alone; I am supported to heal WHAT WE WILL DO NOW • Implement initiatives to keep 10-13 year old Aboriginal children and young people out of the youth justice system • Establish Balit Ngulu through the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to provide culturally appropriate legal services to Aboriginal children and young people • Commence Aboriginal case management review panels so that care and support addresses the strengths and needs of Aboriginal children and young people	GOALS 4.1 My community is involved in leading and building a culturally strong and safe youth justice system WHAT WE WILL DO NOW • Set up at least one Aboriginal youth justice hub to deliver community-based services that keep young people connected to family, community, and culture • Work towards greater Aboriginal self-determination through exploring the progressive transfer of responsibility for some services • Support Aboriginal organisations to care for Aboriginal children and young people and their families in contact with the youth justice system, including workforce development, capacity building and sector development	GOALS 5.1 I will be treated fairly by a system that is free from racism and discrimination, and values diversity and inclusion 5.2 I feel safe and confident accessing services provided by youth justice WHAT WE WILL DO NOW • Support Aboriginal children and young people with a disability by employing an Aboriginal specific disability advisor • Explore new models of custodial care for LGBTQI+ Aboriginal children and young people that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and effective • Engage Aboriginal leaders, community organisations and young people to design fit for purpose training programs to ensure youth justice custodial and community staff develop skills that are culturally appropriate and culturally competent

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