

Victorian Local Aboriginal Networks

(Formerly Local Indigenous Networks)

Five Year Plan 2016-2020



Aboriginal Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet wishes to thank the many Aboriginal people who have contributed to the development of this plan, including the hundreds of Local Aboriginal Network (LAN) participants. This plan represents the shared aspiration of Government and the Aboriginal community to improve outcomes and achieve self-determination for Aboriginal people, families and communities.

Throughout this document the term “Aboriginal” is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms “Koori”, “Koorie” and “Indigenous” are retained in the names of programs and initiatives, and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Our LAN Gathering

The gum leaves are a symbol of ‘Welcome’ and they remind us that we have been entrusted with the responsibility to care for all creation.

The fluid waterways represent the creeks, streams and rivers that support all life, with the abundant lush environment captured in the green hues.

The pathways of footprints honour those who walk with heart attitudes of respect, caring and sharing.

The green tones highlight the desire of our Aboriginal community to aspire to greater wholeness, vitality and health.

The campfire scene (circle) represents the Elders and community members of the Local Aboriginal Networks who gather to represent and strengthen our Indigenous community.

‘Our LAN Gathering’ Copyright © 2015. This artwork is reproduced under a licence granted to the State of Victoria by the artist, Safina Stewart, a Wuthathi and Mabuag Island woman.

WARNING

Aboriginal people are advised that this document may contain images of deceased people.

Contents

Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	5
LAN Vision: Strong Culture, Engaged People, Confident Communities	6
LAN Five Year Plan	7
Background	8
Shared LAN Principles and Operation	9
Policy Context	11
Priority Area 1: Strengthening Culture	13
Priority Area 2: Support for Young People	14
Priority Area 3: Economic Participation	16
Priority Area 4: Building a Stronger LAN	17
Priority Area 5: Community Planning and Partnerships	18
Priority Area 6: Working with Local Government	20
Partnership, Engagement and Collaboration	22
Performance Indicators and Evaluation	23
Effective Communication	23



Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities: that's what Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) are all about – and that's why it's a privilege to be presenting the first state-wide, five-year plan for the future of LANs.

These networks are about ensuring Aboriginal people have a voice – and that that voice is being heard. Across the state, LANs are building on the strengths of Aboriginal people at a local level and are key to self-determinism.

Victoria's 39 LANs have already achieved much and the Andrews Government believes that this work needs to be celebrated and respected.

Integral to the success of LANs is their inclusivity. Everyone in the Aboriginal community is invited to get involved, help shape local priorities and plan for the future.

As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I am committed to utilising this local expertise to inform decision making at the regional and state-wide level, and ensuring that Aboriginal people are at the centre of decision making.

This plan sets the direction for the Local Aboriginal Networks for the next five years. I look forward to working with you to achieve these outcomes, and more.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Natalie Hutchins'.

The Hon Natalie Hutchins

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



LAN Vision: Strong Culture, Engaged People, Confident Communities

The Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) bring Aboriginal people together at the local level to set priorities, develop community plans, improve social cohesion and empower Aboriginal Victorians to participate in civic and community life. These voluntary community networks provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal community to connect, share, learn and lead. LANs provide a critical and effective channel to engage and celebrate the diversity within the Aboriginal community.

LAN Five Year Plan

For Aboriginal people, LANs offer an inclusive, culturally affirming space that is unique. LANs empower Aboriginal communities and support self-determination. LANs also provide a valuable forum for Government to engage with Aboriginal communities and achieve priorities outlined in the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) 2013-18*.

This Five Year Plan identifies six priority areas which have been developed in partnership with the LANs, to help inform and guide Government action to ensure their future success and sustainability. They are:

- Strengthening Culture
- Economic Participation
- Support for Young People
- Building a Stronger LAN
- Community Planning and Partnerships and
- Working with Local Government.

This Plan sets out a number of actions to support each priority area. The Plan recognises the importance of all LAN participants remaining connected to their community and influencing decision making within their local area, whilst also providing opportunities to set the agenda for change and to enhance self-determination at a regional and state-wide level. As part of implementation, each LAN will review their existing community plan, which describes their vision, local priorities and aspirations.

Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) were formerly known as Local Indigenous Networks or LINs. The change of name also acknowledges that the term “Aboriginal” is broadly preferred by Victoria’s community.

The new artwork used to accompany the change of name in this document was chosen by LAN participants at their first state-wide Gathering held in April 2015.

With a growing Aboriginal population in Victoria, forecast to be 59,568 by 2020 (*Australian Bureau of Statistics-ABS*), LANs provide an opportunity to support new and emerging Aboriginal populations.

LAN participation by Aboriginal community members takes many forms. Participation may range from being kept informed of LAN activities through online and social media; to participating in external meetings as a community representative; to participating in LAN sponsored/supported projects and activities. Regardless of the type of participation, LANs play an important role in community strengthening. The ability for participants to ‘opt in’ or ‘opt out’ depending on their own needs and situation demonstrates the flexibility of LANs. As an inclusive structure, LANs are also able to respond to the diverse needs of their respective communities.

Through this Plan, innovative ways to grow and support LAN participation are investigated, including more intensive support for those communities requiring greater effort and focus, along with continued assistance to more established LANs. The Plan also identifies opportunities to broaden engagement and participation from smaller/isolated communities; including the possibility of establishing ‘satellite’ LANs.

Background

Established from 2007 onwards, 39 LANs have been formed across Victoria, with over 2,000 Aboriginal Victorians regularly participating.

LAN participants are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who have indicated their desire to support their local community. The priorities of the LANs are determined by the interests of those participating. LAN participants are typically motivated by:

- A sense of contribution to community and society
- Wanting to be a voice for community
- Wanting to work for community
- Exploring opportunities to broaden personal and professional networks and connections and
- Helping the community to move forward and address local issues.

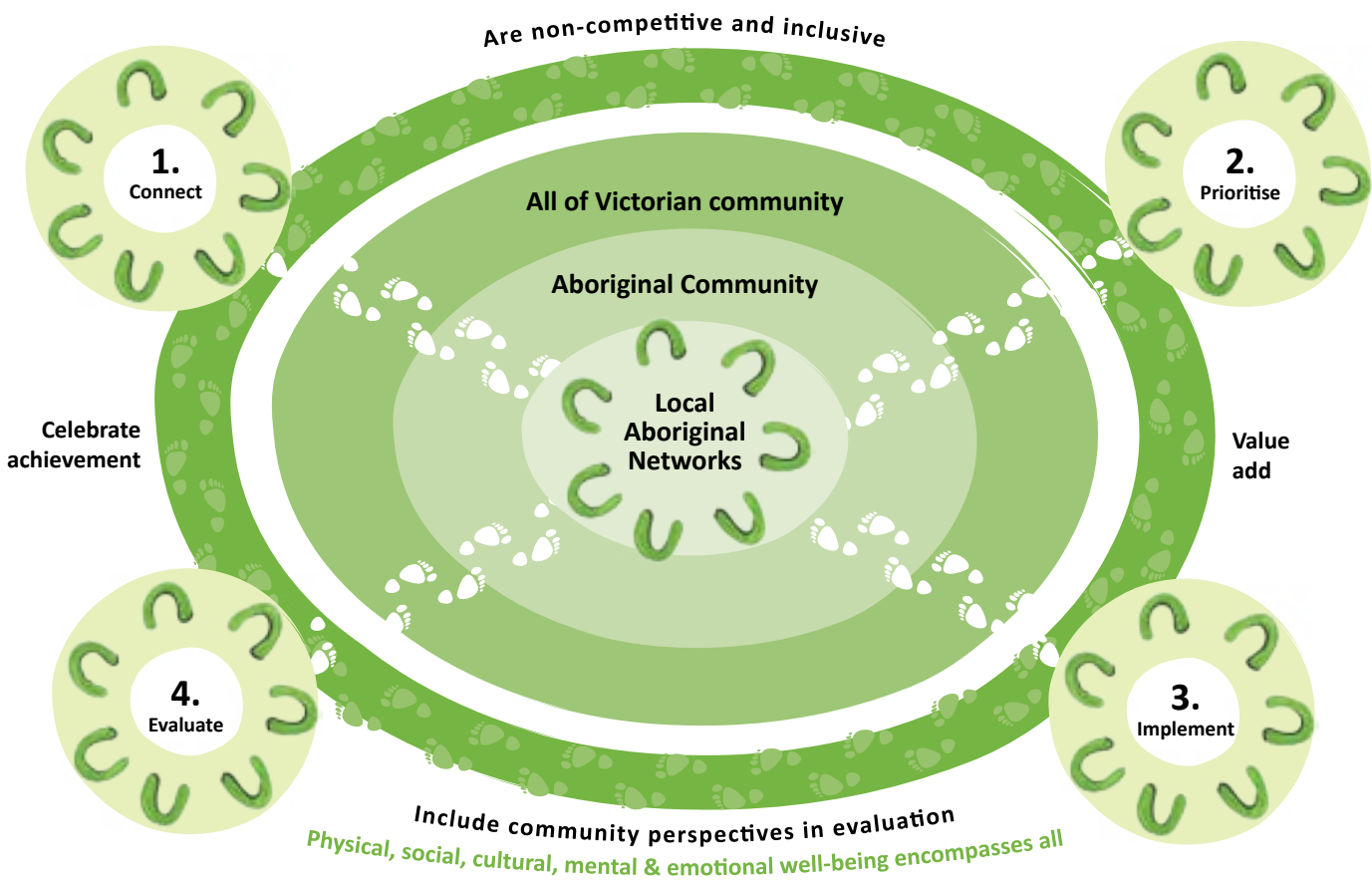
LAN participation has grown steadily since their commencement in 2007. As at 30 June 2015 there were 2,109 participants, making up approximately 6.1% of Victoria’s Aboriginal population aged over 15 years (ABS).

By promoting partnerships and collaborative action at a local level, LANs create the conditions in local communities to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. They enable Aboriginal community aspirations to be heard across all levels of government and provide opportunity for all Aboriginal Victorians to actively participate in changing their lives and communities.

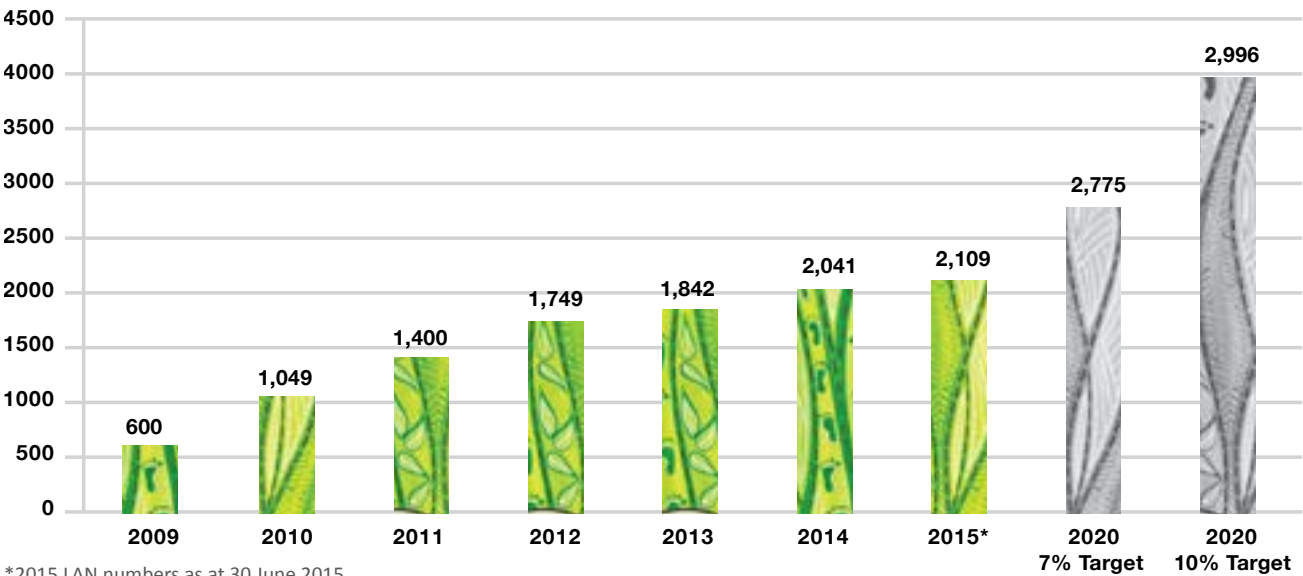
LANs provide a strong foundation to build on the strengths of Aboriginal people and reaffirm the role of Aboriginal culture in building resilience and fostering prosperity through the Victorian Aboriginal community. LANs take a place based approach which responds to the diversity of Aboriginal communities by enabling people to identify priorities and develop local solutions.

LANs exist within local Aboriginal communities, as a vibrant part of the whole community. Their purpose is to *connect, prioritise, implement and evaluate* with other local community partners and stakeholders. LANs add value to existing local organisations and structures. They work to strengthen the physical, social, cultural, mental and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people, their families and the wider community.

Purpose of LANs



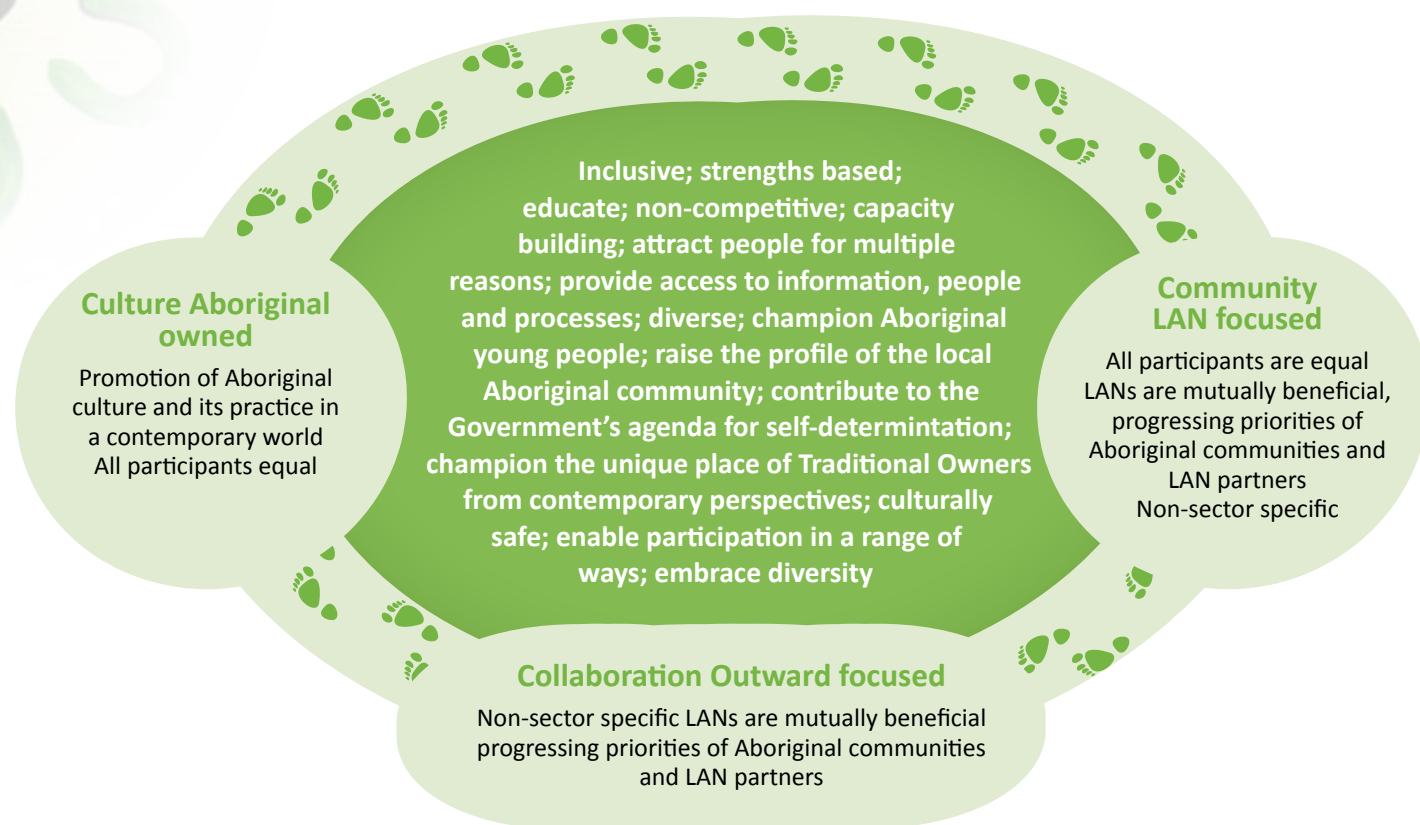
Local Aboriginal Networks Participant Numbers



Shared LAN Principles and Operation

The operation of LANs is guided by shared principles. These principles provide guidance for LANs to work successfully but also enable each LAN to reflect its unique local context. The shared LAN principles are described below under the headings of Culture, Community and Collaboration. Culture should be understood in a broad sense as ‘the way things are done’ in any setting. Culture is also understood to mean how traditional Aboriginal culture is practised in a contemporary world.

Principles of LANs



LANs meet regularly to plan and build community strengths and increase community participation, which includes social, economic, cultural, sporting and civic activities.

The LAN program objective is to:

- Provide a voice for local Aboriginal communities
- Be a mechanism to identify community aspirations through community planning
- Provide a means to work together to implement plans in partnership with a range of stakeholders (partnerships include all levels of government, business, philanthropy and the extended community) and
- Connect services and individuals to enable greater coordination of community engagement, participation, collaboration and implementation of programs.

The LANs are the largest government enabled Aboriginal network operating in Victoria

and Australia. Networks are facilitated by Aboriginal Community Development Brokers (Brokers) across the state. Brokers are employed by Aboriginal Victoria within Department of Premier and Cabinet. The role of the Broker is to facilitate LAN operations, broker partnerships between LANs and local stakeholders and support the development and implementation of community plans, which are essential to the success of the LAN program.

LANs champion a place based approach. This approach can also positively influence regional and state-wide systemic change. Through their connection with local Aboriginal communities, LANs are in a unique position to innovate and be responsive to local needs. LANs encourage positive social attitudes within their local communities, such as tolerance of diversity, positive norms that support increased community cohesion and involvement in decision making that can improve community life. Local Government is a key partner to achieve local, place based outcomes.

Policy Context

LANs, through their ability to lead positive change at a local level, play a critical role in the process of empowerment and realisation of individual and community aspirations. Solutions have greater strength and benefit when they are self-identified by a community rather than externally imposed. Self-determination is about putting Aboriginal people at the centre of decision making: *It must be for Aboriginal people and by Aboriginal people.*

This Plan is consistent with the Government's self-determination agenda and aligns with broader State and national strategies and frameworks designed to improve the lives of Aboriginal Victorians. These include:

- ◆ The *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018* (VAAF), brings together Government and Aboriginal community commitments and efforts to create a better future for and with Aboriginal Victorians. The VAAF recognises the value of engaging, and working in partnership, with local communities, Aboriginal organisations, and their representative bodies. It focuses effort and resources on six Strategic Action Areas that are central to delivering whole of life, whole of community outcomes for and with Aboriginal people over the long term. The VAAF identifies as key priorities the need to build prosperity through economic participation; protect and support vulnerable children and families; and ensure access to services that meet the needs of Aboriginal people across the State. The VAAF identifies nine principles of engagement with Aboriginal people, outlining a commitment to strengthening Aboriginal voices and ensuring government maintains 'grass roots' links. The important role of LANs in achieving the VAAF vision is acknowledged in VAAF Strategic Action Area 6 *Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities*. Through their links with local Aboriginal communities, LANs are well placed to strengthen Aboriginal culture and support Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society.
- ◆ The *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020* (VAES), delivers on a VAAF commitment to make economic participation and development a central priority in Aboriginal affairs. The vision of the VAES is to build opportunity and economic prosperity for all Aboriginal Victorians and build on the strengths of Aboriginal Victoria's long history of successful enterprise and trade as part of their own economic systems. It has three clear, integrated goals, focused on strong foundations in education and training; economic (employment and procurement) opportunities will be improved. Building inclusion is essential to closing the gap in outcomes, by contributing to short, medium and long term gains for Aboriginal Victorians.
- ◆ *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022*, sets out what the Department of Health and Human Services, together with Aboriginal communities, other parts of government, and service providers, will do to achieve the government's commitment to improve Aboriginal health. *Koolin Balit* brings together Victoria's total effort in Aboriginal health in an integrated, whole of life framework around a set of key priorities and enablers. *Koolin Balit* aims to make a significant and measurable impact on improving the length and quality of the lives of Aboriginal Victorians in this decade. It acknowledges the role of LANs in contributing to decisions about priorities and actions to close the gap in Aboriginal health outcomes.
- ◆ The *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework* requires all departments to have Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans to demonstrate how access by Aboriginal people to services and

jobs with career pathways; and enterprise through sustainable businesses. The VAES reaffirms the value of partnerships between community, private sector, and government. LANs have the ability to partner with service providers, Local Government, and other organisations to create educational and economic opportunities.

◆ The *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA)*, is a partnership between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community, established to achieve improved justice outcomes and increase community safety for Aboriginal Victorians. Now in its third phase, AJA aims to reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system by preventing and reducing the further progression of young Koories into the criminal justice system, maximising diversion, reducing re-offending, and reducing conflict, violence and victimisation and improving support for victims. Aboriginal community participation is a core principle of the AJA, across the design, development, delivery, and implementation of all justice policies and programs that impact on Aboriginal Victorians. This is achieved through partnership structures such as the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the network of nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) and eleven Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs), community programs, and place based partnership projects. Programs funded through the AJA support communities to deliver regional and local responses to justice related issues. LANs are one of the community forums through which RAJACs engage with community around justice related concerns.

◆ The *Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* provides for out of court settlement agreements of native title claims between the Victorian Government and Traditional Owner groups. LANs are able to disseminate general information about the Act to participants, including those who are Traditional Owners.

◆ The *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*, delivers on the VAAF Strategic Action area of achieving safer families and communities and equitable justice outcomes. It provides for a partnership approach to address Aboriginal family violence in the short, medium, and long term. The 10 Year Plan outlines the vision, objectives, and actions which guide, inform, and direct the Aboriginal community and the Victorian Government. It is the result of considerable collaborative effort and commitment by the Aboriginal Family Violence Partnership Forum. The Forum enables the Government and Aboriginal communities to address family violence together and provides community member’s access to key decision makers across Government. The Forum is made up of the Chairpersons of the 11 Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups, Chief Executive Officers or Chairs of key Aboriginal organisations, and senior representatives from Government departments. The 10 Year Plan notes the vital role that LANs can play in supporting the coordination of effort across sectors at a regional level.

◆ The *National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA)* is the Council of Australian Governments’ commitment to ‘closing the gap’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians by establishing targets across health, education, life expectancy, early childhood development, and employment. In Victoria, the VAAF provides the framework for achieving the NIRA targets and sets out Victoria’s commitment to joint effort with the Commonwealth to deliver priority outcomes.

◆ The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* is a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. It is about the relationship between government and the people it serves.

Priority Area 1: Strengthening Culture

Objective: Provide a platform for individuals, families and communities to express their cultural identity. Culture refers to Aboriginal culture in a traditional sense within a contemporary world.

Actions to support Priority Area 1:

- 1.1 Strengthen opportunities to celebrate the diverse cultures within LANs by ensuring inclusivity

1.2 Strengthen understanding of Aboriginal culture among partners of the LAN and other parts of the Victorian community

1.3 Strengthen opportunities to support and facilitate cultural connectedness
- 1.4 Facilitate LAN engagement with OAAV Cultural Strengths initiative activities

1.5 Contribute to the growing evidence base that shows a strong cultural identity increases resilience

1.6 Strengthen LAN engagement with recognised Traditional Owner organisations



Uncle Roy Alexander, Yorta Yorta, Maribyrnong LAN

As a member of the Stolen Generation, I was always searching for a connection to the Aboriginal community but wasn’t sure how to make it happen.

I first heard about the LAN through another LAN participant. She took me along to a Cultural Workshop being run in the Western suburbs of Melbourne.

I walked in the door and felt home – safe with my mob.

I’ve made many friendships and even connected to family members through LAN activities.

It has given me the confidence to volunteer in other groups like RAJAC, Reconciliation Groups and our Elders Art Group. Through my connection with the LAN and other networks I have been approached to do public speaking, sharing my personal story at Reconciliation and National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week events.

The LAN provided the opportunity for me to do an Introduction to Governance, which led to me completing my Certificate IV in Business (Governance).

The LAN has provided opportunities and connections for me, giving me a strong cultural place from which to share my life story with the whole community. Who would have thought, I’m educating people!

Photo courtesy of Megan Evans



Priority Area 2: Support for Young People

Objective: Actively engage young Aboriginal people to support: the ongoing transmission of Aboriginal culture; the growth and success of the LANs; and developing the next generation.

Actions to support Priority Area 2:

- | | |
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| 2.1 Continue to grow participation of young people and invest in youth leadership | 2.4 Support opportunities that recognise the younger profile of the Aboriginal community when engaging with partners and others |
| 2.2 Develop the capacity of young people to lead and assist in more LAN activities | 2.5 Link with the Koorie Youth Council to develop shared initiatives |
| 2.3 Promote the aspirations and priorities of young people through the LAN | |



Corina Ritchie, Yorta Yorta, Inner East LAN

I believe that it is so important to build positive empowering relationships and networks within your community. The LAN gives community a platform to do this. It allows community and community organisations to work together in a more humanistic and collaborative way. Being at the first state-wide gathering of LAN's was an empowering and educational experience.

Poor health, climate justice and social justice outcomes are issues that our community are unfairly subjected to. As a young person I see this as an opportunity to build strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to make the change we want in our future and our children's future. Connecting with and sharing young people's ideas and solutions on both climate and social justice, is just one of the practical ways I utilise the LAN.



Sissy-Amelia Austin, Gunditjmara, Ballarat LAN

I have found the LAN to be a welcoming, culturally rich network. I look forward to going along when I can. Catching up and being around community members is great! As a young person, it is a motivating and inspiring environment to be within.

Young people are too often caught in the mindset that categorises role models and leaders under the title of famous people and celebrities, when really, the true role models are right beside us. They're the ones that tirelessly come together for meetings such as the LANs. As Aboriginal young people, we are living on the shoulders of giants and these giants are our elders, our community members and our ancestors that have paved the way for us to be where we are today!

The LAN is a key element in paving the way for the generations to come. The LAN offers more than the social and community benefits. It can be a great place to get things done, like influencing organisations or getting projects happening. I have been working for a while to get things done for and alongside young people. The LAN makes this easier due to the safe, encouraging and supportive nature it informally creates.

Education comes in many forms. By coming along to LAN meetings, you learn so much simply by listening to the powerful voices in the room. I hope to see more of my generation get involved to listen, learn and have their voices heard! There are no better experts on our generation other than ourselves. We have invaluable knowledge and experience to bring to the table, let's do it together!

Photo courtesy of Christopher Saunders, young aspiring photographer.

Priority Area 3: Economic Participation

Objective: Realise opportunities that support economic prosperity for all Aboriginal Victorians.

Actions to support Priority Area 3:

- 3.1 Provide economic participation opportunities for LAN participants by working with key stakeholders, including the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, to deliver targeted employment activities

3.2 Build on work with partners to develop and implement Aboriginal employment strategies
- 3.3 Continue to support Aboriginal procurement opportunities through LAN activities

3.4 Continue to promote employment opportunities through LAN networks

3.5 Create opportunities for employment where project funding is obtained



Tyson Lovett-Murray,
Gunditjmara, Heywood LAN

We have been talking with Deakin University about harvesting seaweed for the Asian market. They are interested in the knowledge that has been with us for thousands of years as Traditional Owners. It is great to see that our cultural knowledge of the land and waters has the potential to give us an economic advantage in this competitive, contemporary market.

It is also going to lead to education pathways for those interested in tertiary qualifications, which is exciting as they have first class aquaculture facilities.

This project is important recognition for all Aboriginal people. It is great to see the LAN delivering these types of successes.



Priority Area 4: Building a Stronger LAN

Objective: Ensure the sustainability of LANs and empower the Aboriginal community’s voice to realise self-determination.

Actions to support Priority Area 4:

- 4.1 Refresh the governance and function of LANs to support good governance across Victoria while ensuring local flexibility is retained

4.2 Actively champion cultural safety (e.g. training, mediation, conflict resolution, strengthening relationships with Traditional Owners)
- 4.3 Showcase successful LAN activities

4.4 Establish a minimum growth target for LAN participation of 7% of the Victorian Aboriginal population aged over 15 years and develop supporting strategies to achieve the target



Deb Kiley (Ahmat),
Torres Strait Islander – Badu and Waiben Islands, Wangaratta (Dirrawarra) LAN

The Dirrawarra Indigenous Network is a strong network for many reasons. Personally, I think there are three main reasons; we have great people participating, we have developed strong partnerships and we have adopted many good governance practices.

We have great people with great skills involved with our network. We all bring different skills and strengths. Importantly we build the capacity of our participants, challenging each other to learn new things and have a go. We do it supportively and it has been wonderful to see the growth amongst us.

We have nurtured strong partnerships since we started. We have ‘working understandings’ with Traditional Owners, organisations like Rural City of Wangaratta, state government departments like Police, Education, Justice and Health and Human Services. Where relevant, like with an auspice, we have formalised this with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), like the one we have with Gateway Health. It gives us certainty about how we operate. This has been achieved as we work on projects together, such as the development of the Bullawah Cultural Trail along the Ovens River. You need that shared purpose to connect them in.

It’s important that the network is backed up with sound governance to get those partners on board. One of the things we have done is to have an elected Chair who stays in that role for twelve months. It works for us and it is also good for the Aboriginal community to know who is in the driver’s seat. While we are not an organisation or incorporated body we have a full complement of office bearers. It has helped us take things to another level.

Priority Area 5: Community Planning and Partnerships

Objective: Offer an inclusive and unique voice to identify the needs of Aboriginal people and inform the priorities for action in their local community.

Actions to support Priority Area 5:

- 5.1 Refresh LAN community plans (ensuring plans complement, not duplicate, existing local and regional planning processes, with stronger emphasis on evaluation, monitoring and shared outcomes with partners)

5.2 Centrally audit community plans and identify best practice, focused on mutually beneficial partnerships, for example, through the establishment of Gathering Places
- 5.3 Develop a state-wide tool kit that supports community planning and partnership management that can be tailored locally

5.4 Report emerging themes from LANs to government through existing state government mechanisms, including through the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs, to inform Victoria's Aboriginal Affairs priorities



**Raylene Harradine,
Wotjabulluck and Latje Latje, Bendigo LAN**

Since being appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative I have undertaken a number of activities, which include identifying the need to go through a restructure in order for the organisation to be sustainable. We have also identified our current community partnerships and the other agencies that may assist with our needs of the community.

One of the key partnerships has included the Bendigo LAN where they have proven themselves as an important way to connect with the Aboriginal community in our local area. Some of our joint work has seen the reinvigoration of the Bendigo Local Aboriginal

Education Consultative Committee (LAECG). The community now have a program which includes parents, students and the schools providing a shared education to our children.

We have also worked together on a possum skin cloak project and an Aboriginal float for the Bendigo Easter Fair. This incorporated three programs working together for the one outcome.

Our next achievement will see Bendigo hosting the Victorian Seniors Netball and Football carnival, which is a huge outcome.

Importantly, we have both taken our relationship with the Dja Dja Wurrung, our Traditional Owners, to a whole new level. The LAN has been a safe, neutral space for us to come together, which has significantly increased what we can do with our local community.

It hasn't been hard to find out what priorities we have in common with the LAN. Working together we can achieve much more. We are going from strength to strength, which is benefiting our local Aboriginal community.

Gathering Places

Gathering Places have been identified by Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) as a community owned/operated place that provides opportunities for social connection and hosting of services. Gathering Places contribute to strong culture, engaged people and confident communities.

For nearly 10 years the Mornington Peninsula's Aboriginal community has aspired to have its own gathering place.

After researching how Gathering Places operate in other locations across Victoria, Hastings LAN, in partnership with the region's Southern Metropolitan Closing the Health Gap Committee (*Koolin Balit*), worked together to bring their goal to fruition. In March 2014 their gathering place was officially opened and named Willum Warrain, which means 'a place by the sea'.

The three other LANs in the Southern Metropolitan region (Dandenong, Urban South and Frankston) have the same aspiration.

The Dandenong LAN, supported by Casey City Council and in partnership with the *Koolin Balit* Committee has completed negotiations to take possession of a site in Doveton in January 2016 to establish their Aboriginal Gathering Place.

In 2015 the Frankston LAN supported by Frankston City Council, also in partnership with *Koolin Balit* opened a Gathering Place for the Frankston Aboriginal community.

The City of Port Phillip is working closely with the Urban South LAN, to establish a Gathering Place at the Peanut Farm Reserve in St Kilda.

The Wodonga LAN has been instrumental in the establishment and operation of their local gathering place. Other locations currently being developed or in the planning stage include Wyndham and Whittlesea.

Photo: Willum Warrain (Hastings)

Priority Area 6: Working with Local Government

Objective: Develop stronger partnerships between LANs and Local Government to realise stronger local and state-wide outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Actions to support Priority Area 6:

- 6.1 Strengthen relationships with Local Government

6.2 Identify best practice for further promotion across Local Government

6.3 Identify and implement opportunities for LANs to work in partnership and collaboration with Local Government (for example through co-location, job creation, joint initiatives, provision of strategic advice, development of Municipal Early Years Plans, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans and Reconciliation Action Plans)

6.4 Develop and support initiatives to strengthen Aboriginal participation across Local Government decision making mechanisms including with elected officials



Catherine Thompson,
Social Inclusion Officer,
Mildura Rural City Council

The opportunity for Mildura Rural City Council to work closely with the Yuranga (Mildura) LAN has greatly assisted us to build positive working relationships with the local Aboriginal community. Over the last few years Council has been focused on increasing our engagement with the community and enhancing the relationships to ensure that Aboriginal community members and representatives are actively involved and

included in decisions that affect them. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship with Council formally endorsing and recognising the Yuranga LAN Community Plan and the LAN supporting the development of Council’s Reconciliation Action Plan. Exciting work in progress includes the development of Council’s Aboriginal Employment Plan and the redevelopment of the Mildura Riverfront precinct. Council is committed to bringing understanding and respect into our relationship with community and has recently ensured that all Senior Managers of Council have undertaken cultural awareness training with local facilitators and Elders. The understanding and respect is allowing us to do great things together.



Norsiyah Mokak,
Djugun (WA), Yuranga (Mildura) LAN

I have been a committed and passionate member of the Yuranga LAN since it commenced. I am strongly involved as it is a vehicle that gives community members a voice. It allows us to participate in conversations and to be a part of decision making processes.

I was nominated to represent our LAN on the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) Aboriginal Action Committee (AAC). This was a valuable experience as it gave me an insight into the internal workings of local government. I now chair this committee.

I have been able to witness firsthand the positive changes between local government and the community, when we work together.

The best example of this would be the formal acknowledgement and acceptance of our community plan by the MRCC councillors. I believe it was the first time this has been done in the state.

We have done and continue to do brilliant things that didn’t exist before the AAC and the Yuranga Community Plan. We all know community development isn’t easy but if we stay true to ourselves and are clear about who we represent, conversations should come easily.

As all Local Governments need to hear and respond to their local community, I look forward to seeing what partnerships between LANs and Local Government achieve in the future.

Success is not achieved in isolation....true success comes from genuine relationships, mutual respect and a shared vision.

Partnership, Engagement and Collaboration

Working in partnership with Aboriginal communities ensures that the cultures, views, experience and knowledge of Aboriginal people informs decision making and drives sustainable change.

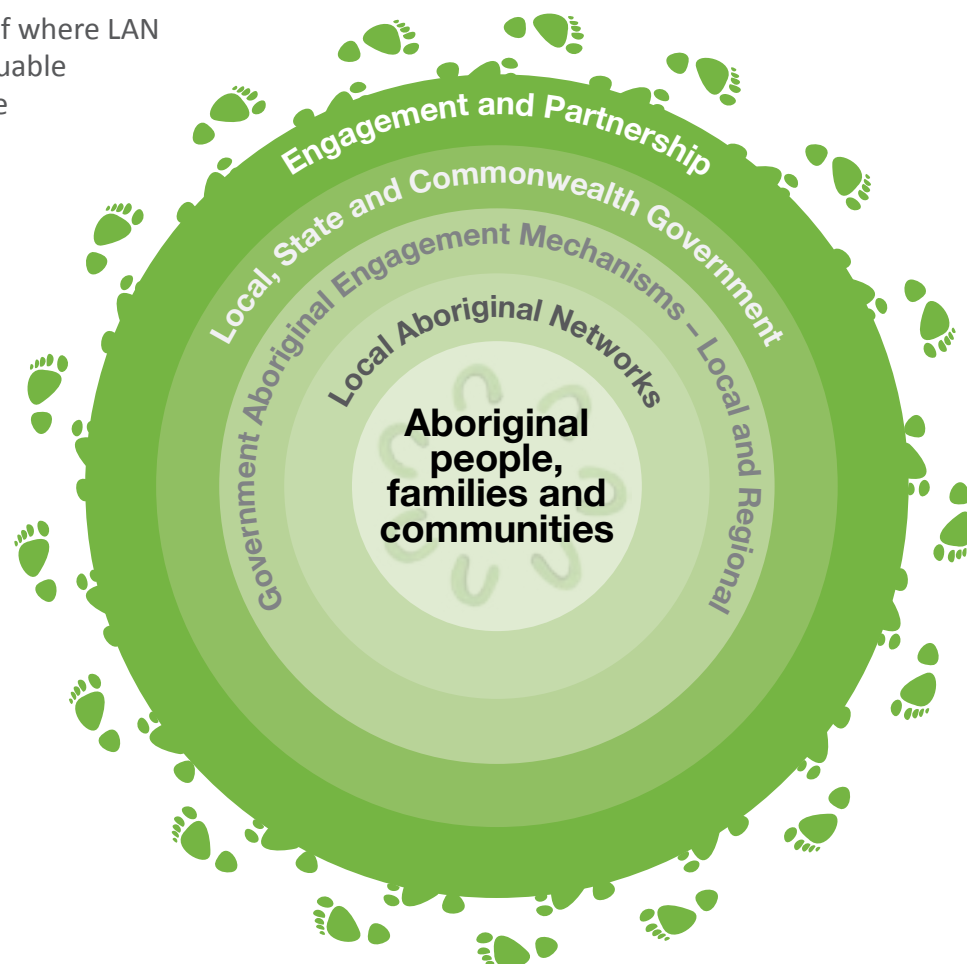
There are a range of existing partnership and engagement mechanisms that include Aboriginal communities and Victorian Government departments and agencies. They provide advice on a range of matters at a local and regional level and in setting state-wide policy directions. Effective coordination between these mechanisms and LANs provides an opportunity for joined up collaborative action and improved outcomes. In particular, LANs can provide a local community wide perspective that can help inform decisions. In this respect LANs seek to complement, not duplicate, existing engagement mechanisms.

There are many examples of where LAN participation provides a valuable contribution to the effective operation of existing state government Aboriginal advisory structures. These include Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees, Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees, Indigenous

Family Violence Regional Action Groups, and Regional Aboriginal Health Committees.

To further maximise outcomes and ensure consistency around the State, engagement between LANs and other partnership mechanisms/structures will be strengthened and formalised through capitalising on opportunities for place based collaboration.

Opportunities for strengthening partnerships with Commonwealth Government, Aboriginal organisations, representative bodies, Traditional Owner groups including Registered Aboriginal Parties, local business and philanthropic groups, will also be identified and progressed. LANs will continue to disseminate information through existing networks about matters of interest to Traditional Owners.



Performance Indicators and Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation and monitoring builds a knowledge base to continually improve actions and ensure a high quality of program is maintained.

A performance and evaluation framework will be developed to measure progress against the LAN Five Year Plan. This will include key performance indicator/s against each priority area that aligns with identified actions. Mechanisms will be investigated to capture the broader influence and impact of LANs, including those which extend beyond individual participants. Opportunities to capture age cohort participation will also be explored. Case studies of LANs will be collected throughout the five year plan to demonstrate its impact.

Monitoring of LANs against existing indicators (i.e. number of LANs, number of LAN participants, funding brokered) on a quarterly basis will continue whilst the performance and evaluation framework is being developed.

The LAN Five Year Plan will be evaluated in its final year, drawing on data collected as part of the performance and evaluation framework.

In keeping with the capacity building approach of the LANs, participants of the networks will play an important role in the evaluation and monitoring of the program.

Effective Communication

Proactive communications can drive change by raising awareness, promoting success and sharing information. Evidence has demonstrated that LAN participants are motivated and inspired when provided with opportunities to learn from each other's practice.

Strategic communication tools and platforms will be developed to create awareness of LAN activity and opportunities between participants and the broader local community.

LANs will also be supported to meet with other LANs at least once a year on a regional or sub regional basis. Opportunities for LAN gatherings across regions will also be supported. This activity will inform a gathering of LANs across the State once every two years.

Aboriginal people are amongst the greatest users of social media, most commonly using hand held devices in Victoria (*Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2014*). Locally LANs already use social media to engage, promote and celebrate. It is a cost effective communication tool, particularly beneficial when interacting with young people. Online collaboration is an area that offers future opportunities, which will be explored during the life of this Plan.



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