

KOORIE YOUTH SUMMIT 2016

IDEAS REPORT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge our incredible delegates for 2016 for their contributions. We also acknowledge the KYC Executive for leading and facilitating two days of the topic area workshops.

We would like to sincerely thank our:

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Sponsors: Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, Aboriginal Victoria (DPC), Commission for Children and Young People, and the Department of Justice and Regulation

Event partner: Kalinya Communications

Auspice: The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

KOORIE YOUTH SUMMIT 2016 IDEAS REPORT

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The report is only available in an online format. To access this report please go to the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria website: www.yacvic.org.au/policy-publications



A PLACE FOR US TO COME TOGETHER AND SHARE WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO US.

On the 20-21 May 2016 we hosted our third Koorie Youth Summit (Summit) in Preston.

One hundred and eighty Aboriginal young people gathered from all around Victoria to connect with each other, celebrate their culture, discuss important issues and gain inspiration from each other. Health and wellbeing was our theme this year and we offered four topics in the areas of: cultural strength, mental health, mentoring support and youth voice for delegates to identify the most pressing issues and work together in developing ideas to tackle each one.

After two days of intensive workshops complimented by high profile guest speakers, whole group discussions, and cultural activities, our delegates emerged with nine innovative ideas that could be adopted and adapted by the Aboriginal community sector and supported by the State Government.

These nine ideas were presented by delegates to the Minister for Youth Affairs, Hon. Jenny Mikakos, along with Aboriginal community sector leaders and government representatives, at our Summit's first Closing Forum.

The common thread connecting all the ideas is a primary need for services and for government to take a more holistic and proactive approach to improving the health and wellbeing of young people. This approach should be multi-mode, strengths-based, age-appropriate and culturally centered.

In this report you will find an overview of the event, the ideas, and the emerging themes stemming from the conversations.

The ideas and the emerging themes are for the consideration of the State Government and the Aboriginal community services sector in improving health policy impacting Aboriginal young people.

1. FIRST NATIONS FIRST STEPS

An education program for primary schools in teaching Aboriginal history and culture.

2. VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS YOUTH NETWORK

A culturally safe online platform sharing young people's knowledge and ideas.

3. YOUTH EMPOWERMENT HUB (YEH!)

An online tool providing useful information for young people that focuses on sharing skills and knowledge.

4. HEALING YOUR MOB CAMP

Outdoor camping experiences providing group support and positive bonding experiences for families.

5. JARMBI TOURING PROJECT

A pop-up, touring arts hub providing support for young people with mental health issues.

6. YEAR 9 INDIGENOUS ELECTIVE

An Aboriginal history and cultural elective introduced at year 9 for all students.

7. SAFE SPACE

A single service or service model that provides a safe space for young people at-risk.

8. KOORIE YOUTH POLICY ADVISORS

A multi-dimensional engagement and sector development model providing meaningful youth participation in policy making.

9. KOORIE MEDIA PROJECT

A media project that builds the capacity of young people to influence Aboriginal issues in the local media.



A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

ABORIGINAL

We use Aboriginal as a term which is inclusive also of Torres Strait Islander people.

DET

Department of Education and Training

DHHS

Department of Health and Human Services

KOORIE

The Koorie Youth Council uses the term Koorie in our organisation's title as inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people living in Victoria.

LATERAL VIOLENCE

Lateral violence describes the way people in positions of powerlessness, covertly or overtly direct their dissatisfaction inward toward each other.

SUMMIT

Refers to the Koorie Youth Summit.

VACSAL

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd

VAEAI

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated

VAHS

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

YOUNG/YOUTH

This report uses 'young' and 'youth' to refer to people aged between 12 and 25 years of age.

SETTING THE SCENE



ABOUT US

The Koorie Youth Council (KYC) is the representative body for Aboriginal young people in Victoria.

Established initially as the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council in 2003, our organisation provides a voice to government and community, reflecting of the views, concerns, ideas and aspirations of Aboriginal young people in Victoria.

THE SUMMIT

The Summit is an annual gathering of our state-wide network of Aboriginal young people. It is a place for our network of Aboriginal young people to come together and share what's important to them.

Each year our delegates gather from around the state to connect with each other, celebrate their culture, discuss issues in their community, and share ideas aimed at making change for the future they want to see.

Our goals for the Summit are to:

- gather and connect Aboriginal young people from across the state.
- create an inspiring and empowering experience for all.
- enhance the capabilities and enthusiasm of Aboriginal young people to participate and be a voice in their communities.
- provide a platform where ideas designed to create change are heard by government and community.
- celebrate the culture, experiences and achievements of Aboriginal young people in Victoria.

OUR FOCUS THIS YEAR

In previous years the Summit has been building the energy and momentum of Aboriginal youth voice and self-empowerment through hosting a conference style event. Through introducing a theme this year, we aimed to harness our delegates' passion and energy to meaningfully influence policy that effects the lives of Aboriginal young people.

We chose health and wellbeing as our overarching theme based on findings in our *What's Important to YOUth* Consultation Report in 2015, which signaled to us that there is an overwhelming need for a more nuanced understanding of young people's health and wellbeing and how improvements might be made.

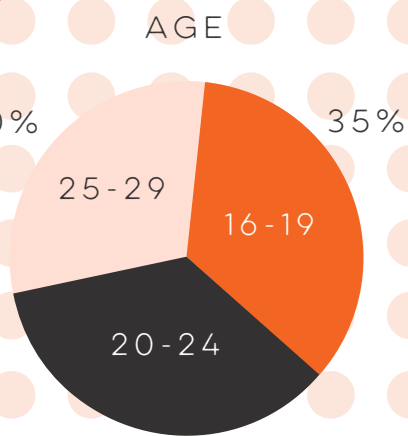
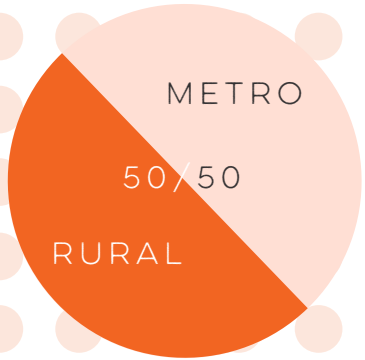
Under this banner we offered four topic areas for delegates to opt-in to:

- **Resilience in identity** – strengthening cultural identity
- **Getting help to feel OK** – improving social and emotional wellbeing
- **Connecting to someone important** – importance of mentors and role models
- **Having our voices heard** – stronger youth voice and participation

Over the two days we set each group the challenge to work together to design a set of project ideas and recommendations to present at the Closing Forum.



180 DELEGATES



21%
TRAVELLED
FURTHER THAN
300KM
TO ATTEND

4 TOPIC AREAS

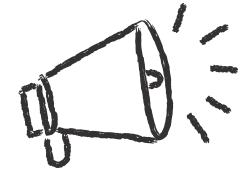
CONNECTING TO
SOMEONE IMPORTANT



RESILIENCE
IN IDENTITY



GETTING HELP
TO FEEL OK



HAVING OUR
VOICES HEARD



9 IDEAS

2

VIDEOS PRODUCED

OUR PROGRAM SPEAKERS

AUNTY DIANE KERR, WURUNDJERI ELDER

ADAM GOODES, AFL CHAMPION

MICHAEL MANSELL, LAWYER AND ACTIVIST

JASON MIFSUD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ABORIGINAL VICTORIA

KEVIN KROPINYERI, COMEDIAN AND PERFORMER

AMELIA TELFORD, SEED

CHARLEE-SUE FRAIL AND NIOKA TYSON, RECOGNISE



SESSIONS



JAMIE THOMAS WAYAPA WURRK



AUNTY WENDY BERICK
FEATHER ADORNMENTS CULTURAL WORKSHOP



REUBEN BERG ULTIMATE FRISBEE

>245,000

PEOPLE REACHED
THROUGH MEDIA

4

MAJOR MEDIA
OUTLETS

21

MEDIA MENTIONS

100%

DELEGATES SAID POST-SUMMIT
THEY FELT MOTIVATED TO
MAKE OR CONTINUE TO
MAKING AN IMPACT IN
THEIR COMMUNITY

10

FACILITATORS

NAKIA CADD

DOUGLAS BRIGGS

LUCY ROSE DOOLAN

INDI CLARKE

MEGAN SOLOMON

CIENAN MUIR

NIKAYLA BAMBLETT

DYLAN MURPHY

WILL AUSTIN

SISSY AUSTIN

CLOSING FORUM

MINISTER: HON JENNY MIKAKOS, MINISTER FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT: DPC, DHHS, DJR, DET, DEDJTR

COMMUNITY: ALLIANCE ACYP, VACCA, VACCHO, VAHS, AHB VALS, VACSAL

OTHER: CCYP, LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



2 THE TOPIC
what's the Big issue?

3 DECIDING THE ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED
• have a conversation
• discuss in depth
• decide!

4 WHY DOES THIS ISSUE EXIST?
Brainstorm the factors

1 start!

METHODOLOGY

WE USED A PEER-LED, CO-DESIGN METHODOLOGY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FACILITATING THE SESSIONS.

8 END!

IDEA 1
IDEA 2
CREATE THE SOLUTION!

7
• what is it?
• what will it do?
• who will it help?
• why is it needed?
• why will it work?
etc...

6 NOW WE KNOW **WHY...**
WHAT should be done about it?

5 WHY DO THESE FACTORS EXIST?
why? why?
why? why?
why? why?



THEMES

A NUMBER OF KEY THEMES WERE APPARENT THROUGHOUT THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS AND DELEGATE PRESENTATIONS.

DISCONNECTION

Delegates indicated that feeling disconnected was a significant underlying issue for Koorie young people in multiple discussions across the Summit and this permeated through to the policy recommendations and project ideas presented. Disconnection was talked about in two main ways: disconnection from culture and disconnection from other members of the Aboriginal community.

For many Koorie young people the reality of being disconnected from culture is a significant barrier to understanding where you come from, feeling strong within yourself and taking pride in your Aboriginality. Delegates discussed the substantial difference that things like language revival, sharing of cultural knowledge and positive expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in wider Australian society could have on health and wellbeing and the combatting of young people's disconnection to their culture.

Delegates also referred to a disconnection felt between each other, as young Aboriginal people but also from the Aboriginal community more broadly. Many delegates described a feeling of not being connected to other young Koories and expressed a desire for this to change, expressing that the Summit provided them with a means to establish networks with other young blackfellas. This desire to be further connected to each other was clear within the presentations at the Summit closing forum. Delegates also expressed issue with the lack of positive role models that some young people have in their lives and a lack of connection to elders in community. Lateral violence was also emphasised as an important issue affecting young people's ability to build positive relationships and feel connected to each other and the Koorie community more broadly.

KNOWLEDGE GAP

Underlying several conversations throughout the Summit was the gap in knowledge that exists between the wider Australian population and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

A general lack of education and understanding of Australia's First Nations people and their culture has very real and negative effects on the health and wellbeing of young people. Delegates discussed that the gap in knowledge and understanding is particularly an issue in the education system, where Koorie culture is often taught inaccurately or tokenistically and not effectively embedded into the curriculum.

Further to this, this gap in knowledge is often perpetuated through misconceptions and stereotypes by mainstream Australia. Delegates discussed visual stereotypes of Aboriginality

as an issue of particular importance affecting their identity, where being questioned about their Aboriginality for "not being black enough" is particularly damaging to a young person's wellbeing. This discrimination faced by Koorie people is a very real and damaging reality of Australian society that delegates felt could be easily addressed through education.

CULTURAL SAFETY

A resounding theme expressed by delegates was the need for cultural safety to be embedded throughout all structures in society (such as schools, services, popular culture, workplaces and government). The idea of 'safe spaces' was brought up on multiple occasions, with many delegates expressing concern that there was a lack of places that young people felt they could go that provided cultural safety, where they would not be victimised or challenged for being Aboriginal or feeling as though they needed to "navigate between two worlds". This notion was heavily tied to the previous theme around knowledge gaps in wider society and the effect that such ignorance has on the health and wellbeing of the Koorie community.

VULNERABILITY TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Delegates discussed issues around mental health as an underlying factor to several of the policy and project ideas presented. One group of delegates spoke specifically of research they had found that identified that struggling with cultural identity made young people more vulnerable to mental health issues. Another common theme discussed by delegates was the fear or shame around asking for support or getting help that often emerges in the Koorie community where mental health is concerned. In many instances delegates discussed cultural safety, opportunities for cultural healing and connection to important people and role models in a young person's life as proposed ways to combat this fear and shame and vulnerability to mental health issues.

POSITIVE SELF-REPRESENTATION

A subject expressed quite passionately by delegates was that of having opportunities for positive self-representation. On many occasions delegates voiced a real desire to have a seat at the table in regard to important issues that affect them and a space to challenge the negative representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the mainstream media. Koorie young people discussed social media as a powerful tool for creating change and as a means for highlighting the positive things happening in their lives and communities. Delegates highlighted the empowerment that could be possible through turning negative discourse on its head and representing their communities in the positive light that they felt their communities deserve to be represented.

RESILIENCE in IDENTITY

FIRST NATIONS FIRST STEPS

for 2020

CREATING UNITY

A POLICY for SCHOOLS, WHOLE SCHOOLS, for YEARS 5-6

To EDUCATE NON-INDIGENOUS and INDIGENOUS PEOPLE on HISTORY and CULTURE

TAILORED to fit EACH COMMUNITY

EMPOWER STUDENTS and EDUCATORS

ADDRESSING the KNOWLEDGE GAP

YOUTH SUPPORT NETWORK



FACE BOOK

ONLINE FORUM

SHARE IDEAS

CULTURAL RESOURCES

HISTORY

SAFE SPACE

OPEN to ALL BUT YOUTH FOCUS

SUPPORT to be CULTURALLY STRONG!



DISCONNECTION

- COLOURISM
- MENTAL HEALTH
- LACK of KNOWLEDGE

WE ARE ALL INDIGENOUS!



SAFE SPACE



CONNECTING to SOMEONE IMPORTANT

YEAR 9 INDIGENOUS ELECTIVE

\$400K

2 YEARS then across all STATES!

SENSE of BELONGING + CONNECTION

✓ YOUNG PEOPLE feel EMPOWERED and SAFE

✓ EMERGENCY BEDS

↓ REDUCING ADDICTION and SUICIDE

✓ JOBS and JOB SEARCH

NURTURING CONNECTION



RUN BY US!!



ARM REDUCTION

PERFORMING ARTS

FOR YOUTH UP to 25

GETTING HELP to FEEL OK

SUPPORT for:

✓ STRONG IDENTITY

✓ MENTAL HEALTH

YOUTH WHO STRUGGLE with a LACK of CULTURAL IDENTITY are MORE VULNERABLE to MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



TOURING PROJECT

ARM REDUCTION

PERFORMING ARTS



CLASSES: ✓ MINDFULNESS ✓ SELF-ESTEEM

UNITE and COMMUNICATE WELL

HEALING YOUR MOB CAMP

POSITIVE BONDING

HEALTHY GROUP SUPPORT for mental health issues

FOLLOW UP: CONTACTS to MONITOR and SUPPORT FAMILIES

HAVING OUR VOICES HEARD

KOORIE MEDIA PROJECT

SELF-REPRESENTATION

HEALTH and WELLBEING

BRING GOOD things to LIGHT (STOP FOCUSING on THE NEGATIVE)



MAINSTREAM MEDIA is HOLDING us back!!

6-18 MONTHS

focus on YOUTH and SOCIAL MEDIA



KOORIE YOUTH POLICY ADVISOR

POLICY WRITTEN by our people for our people!

12-18 MONTHS to get STARTED

ENGAGEMENT in POLICY CHANGE

LIVED EXPERIENCES GO INTO POLICY



OUR IDEAS

ALL IDEAS ARE THE WORK OF THE 2016 DELEGATES. THE KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND THANK ALL DELEGATES FOR THEIR TIME AND FOR BEING WILLING TO SHARE THEIR DEEPLY PERSONAL STORIES AND EXPERIENCES.



FIRST NATIONS FIRST STEPS

EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT HISTORY

THE IDEA

A state-wide education program set in primary schools, targeted at students in grades 5 to 6, aiming to educate students on Aboriginal history and culture.

The delegates behind this idea found it essential to not only involve teachers in the education and development of this project, but all staff in a school environment—principals, teacher's aids, and administrative staff—as knowledge sharing in a culturally safe environment is dependent on the whole school's involvement.

GOAL

We would like to create a culture of empowered educators that will consequently create a generation of empowered young people.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

This initiative addresses the issues of isolation that Aboriginal students feel at school—from fellow students, teachers and the institution that does not understand their culture and reflect their identity.

GETTING IT GOING

This initiative could be co-designed with the DET, VAEAI, local councils and local community members. Each program can be tailored to fit each community dependent on local knowledge and specific requirements.

Delegates gave this a project timeline of 2020 to allow for a comprehensive and culturally appropriate training tool to be created and executed.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Delegates discussed their own experiences in education and other community based programs and while a lot of them were doing really great things around Indigenous education, a lot of the time it is isolated and not reflected across the entire system.

Incorporating education about the history and culture of First Nations people into the education systems of Canada and New Zealand has shown clear benefits.

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

Non-profit campaigner, Our Watch, recently evaluated the inclusion of Respectful Relationships Education in the Australian curriculum. Our Watch's evaluation found some key priorities in the implementation of Respectful Relationships Education, grounded in International literature, that while different in content, provide transferable learnings to a curriculum based cultural change education idea such as First Nations, First Steps. These priorities are briefly outlined below:

- A whole school approach (including families and key services) in order to achieve maximum effectiveness and sustainable change;
- Adequate expert support for teaching staff (including whole of school training about the curriculum); and
- The need for a long-term vision, approach and funding in order to create ongoing, systemic and generational change that is well coordinated and comprehensively evaluated.¹



VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS YOUTH NETWORK

CONNECTION

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

REMOVING BARRIERS

THE IDEA

An online forum, starting initially on Facebook, with development of a website in the near future, designed to foster the sharing of knowledge and ideas in a culturally safe space. This initiative could break down barriers, both physical and knowledge-based. This forum would be open to all members of the Aboriginal community, to ensure inclusion and the sharing of knowledge, with a central focus on youth issues.

GOAL

To connect young people via an online network that also fosters connection to culture.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

Often distance and accessibility is a barrier for young people to meaningfully connect with each other. An online platform addresses this issue using a mode that is familiar to young people.

GETTING IT GOING

Having an online network for young people to access will allow for personal growth through shared experiences and meetups. An online network could also establish a 'one stop shop' of important resources and information. The network could begin on Facebook, with the prospect of developing to an independent website if funding was secured to grow the project and ensure sustainability.

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

The Koorie Youth Council currently host a Facebook page that provides information for Aboriginal young people all over the state relating to jobs, events, publications, news and stories. The Victorian Indigenous Youth Network idea could influence the expansion of the KYC's social media platform to include local or regional pages and also possibly introduce online discussions forums.



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT HUB (YEH!)

CONNECTION KNOWLEDGE-SHARING REMOVING BARRIERS

THE IDEA

An online tool providing useful information for Aboriginal young people, focusing on sharing skills and knowledge. This could include: employment opportunities, mentoring or tutoring opportunities, access point information for services from mental health and wellbeing support to crisis accommodation options.

In addition, this online space would be an inclusive, empowering network that provides a safe space for young people to discuss issues of importance, free from lateral violence and connected in to the wider Aboriginal community.

An app based version of this tool would allow for easiest accessibility from any location.

GOAL

Providing a platform for young people to connect with culture and community, gain important information, build relationships and gain skills, all in a safe way.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

As discussed in the Victorian Indigenous Youth Network idea on the previous page, online platforms help overcome distance and accessibility for young people in staying connected to each other and also updated on opportunities available.

GETTING IT GOING

This project could be active within 5–6 months, allowing time to create a website and build an active network of information. Although similar information hub sites do exist, none are Aboriginal specific. Delegates expected to partner with the Koorie Youth Council and involvement from local community members to get this project up and running. It is estimated that such a project would require \$100,000 to establish, with ongoing funding in order to ensure the hub was sustainable.

“WE WANTED TO FOCUS ON OUR MOB SPECIFICALLY, BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS OUR MOB AS WELL AS WE DO!”

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

Some comparable online platforms in the youth space are sites like Minus 18's website which is full of information, resources and an online forum for LGBTI young people. The Victorian Government's Youth Central Website provides information and resources to young people aged 12–25 on topics such as how to get a job, study options, moving out of home, travelling, managing money, knowing your rights and much more.²

HEALING YOUR MOB CAMP

NATURE SUPPORT HEALING

THE IDEA

An outdoor camping experience providing group support and positive bonding experiences for young people and their families. This initiative would provide families with a retreat where they are engaged in Aboriginal culture and learn skills to tackle and approach life and its challenges.

These camps would work from a harm minimisation framework, engaging different services to provide a collective approach, including counselling services for mental health support, alternative therapies, and mindfulness and self-esteem classes. Gender-specific services, cultural mentors and cultural skill classes, such as storytelling, hunting or hiking could also be included, all in a space where families are away from their usual environment and outdoors connecting with country.

The camps could also have a follow up component embedded where families are further supported by services in the following months, as required. Cultural healing would also have a particular focus for members of community that have not had an opportunity to connect with elders, especially in their youth.

GOAL

To build stronger, more united families with easier access to services.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

Young people don't exist in a vacuum. They are a part an interdependent familial and community structure where healing and support needs to occur in the broader context.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Although the expenditure of engaging so many preventative services at one time may be high and require significant funding, when it is compared to the entire combined cost of health care services and the social cost to families and communities where preventative measures are not taken, the cost of these camps is far less overall. Based on research by the delegates in this group, the cost of a five day camp is roughly \$800 per person based on other similar camp models.

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (FVPLS) Victoria regularly runs a one day workshop, Sisters Day Out, that brings Aboriginal women together for a day of pampering and relaxation in a culturally safe, non-threatening environment, while providing access to legal and support services and information related to family violence. Evaluation of this workshop and other similar programs found that participants recorded an immediate increase in confidence, knowledge and feelings of empowerment, as well as medium and longer term benefits such as significant changes to their lifestyle and living arrangements after attending the workshop.³



'JARMBI' TOURING PROJECT

CREATIVE ARTS | MENTAL HEALTH | DISCONNECTION

THE IDEA

Jarmbi is an initiative that provides support for young people experiencing mental health issues by using a culturally safe, pop-up creative arts touring hub. It would focus on providing young people with information ranging from harm minimisation, health and wellbeing, participation in creative arts, to career pathways –and any program that will help young people come together and express themselves. It could also include a mentoring component, similar to the Big Brother, Big Sister model.

GOAL

To increase positive mental health outcomes for young people through providing creative outlets, and other components, while building the resilience of young people along the way.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

Jarmbi innovatively addresses the issue of accessibility to mental health support for young people that includes geographical access, and also through navigation of perception issues of mental health in community.

GETTING IT GOING

Ideally this project would be implemented within 12 months, allowing time to write grants for funding, meeting with all required parties and create a structure for the program. Jarmbi would require support from schools, Regional Arts Victoria, performing arts centres and local community members. Jarmbi's pop up touring project would begin as a pilot, accessing areas around Victoria lacking existing access to services and social or cultural opportunities, with the hope of more permanent community hubs in all regions across the state.

“THE NEED FOR JARMBI IS RELATED TO A DISCONNECT ATTRIBUTED TO MENTAL ILLNESS. DISCONNECT FROM OUR CULTURE, OUR PEOPLE AND HAVING A LOST SENSE OF IDENTITY. WE BELIEVE THIS WILL BE HELPED THROUGH JARMBI.”

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

Vic Health have published widely on the connection between health and wellbeing and the arts. The significance of the arts to Aboriginal culture and its link to health and wellbeing is well documented. Culture and identity can be fostered through involvement in creative activity, whether through traditional or more contemporary forms. As well as building social connections and new skills, involvement in community arts based initiatives can improve physical and mental wellbeing.⁴



YEAR 9 INDIGENOUS ELECTIVE

CONNECTION TO COUNTRY ADDRESSING IGNORANCE KNOWLEDGE GAP

THE IDEA

An elective provided to students at year 9 for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. This elective will deliver education on Aboriginal culture and history aiming to foster a sense of belonging and connection, while also addressing the issue of ignorance in education.

This elective unit would include a cultural camp to provide students with an understanding of our First Nations people's connection to country and allow all students to connect with the land.

GOAL

We hope to educate future generations about the history of Aboriginal Australians while breaking down ignorance and lack of understanding.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

As discussed in First Nations First Steps (page 12) this initiative addresses the issues of isolation that Aboriginal students feel at school by students, teachers and institutions.

GETTING IT GOING

A pilot program rolled out in four schools in different regions with varying levels of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students over two years, with the prospect of further expansion over time.

The program could be coordinated via a Board with members from all schools involved.

Partnerships would include the DET, DHHS and Aboriginal community organisations such as VAEAI, VAHS and VACSAL.

Funding support of \$400,000 to cover the costs of development, implementation and ongoing sustainability would be required. Such a program would aim to be measured through attendance rates and surveys.

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

Year 9 is well-known for being a profound year of change for young people—physically, emotionally, socially and developmentally. In 2008, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development held the Understanding Year 9 Students Forum that aimed to discuss and develop ideas around how best to engage and motivate year 9 students. As a result of this forum, many schools around the state have implemented some version of a 'year 9 experience' that differs from the traditional secondary school curriculum—ideas like City Centre excursions, outdoors camps, community and leadership development classes or even setting up separate year 9 campuses. A selection of these alternate year 9 ideas are outlined in the Forum's report. The delegate's Year 9 Indigenous Elective idea could be incorporated into this model of alternate year 9 experiences in schools, engaging students outside of traditional curriculum while connecting the culture and history of our First Nations peoples.⁵



SAFE SPACE

WELL-BEING

ACCESS TO SERVICES

CULTURAL SAFETY

THE IDEA

This initiative could be both single service (like a hostel) or a youth service model, that welcomes young Aboriginal people through providing emergency accommodation, access to support such as drug and alcohol counselling, employment pathways and other services promoting health and wellbeing.

Safe Space would work in a culturally sensitive framework, be solely run by Aboriginal communities and provide access to capacity building activities to help young people gain skills to move forward. The initiative would also have a mentoring component for young people to connect with someone important, and be engaged with the wider community.

GOAL

Our project idea hopes to provide young people with a space to be able to develop their sense of identity in a culturally safe environment, where they will not be challenged or victimised for being who they are.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

Young people needing this support are often experiencing high vulnerability and require both physical spaces, such as youth accommodation, and also a high standard and multi-disciplinary youth service model.

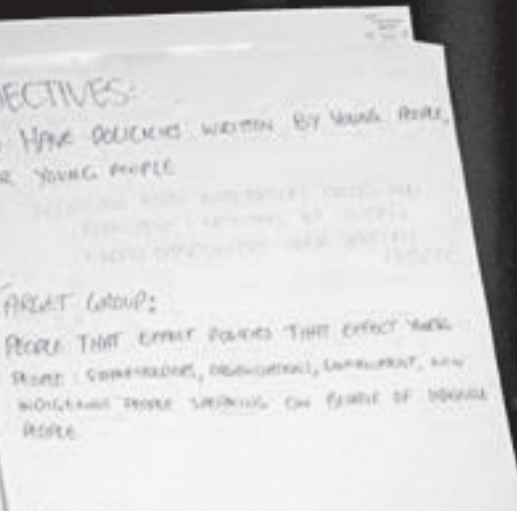
GETTING IT GOING

Delegates believe that this initiative is actionable within 18 months, allowing time to develop frameworks and build up the space. The success of this initiative, in whatever form it takes, could be measured by outcomes achieved by young people in the areas of drug and alcohol use, mental health prevalence, contact with justice system and overall health and wellbeing.

“I WANT TO GIVE THE NEXT GENERATION A CHANCE NOT TO GO IN AND OUT OF HOMES LIKE I DID.”

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

While similar services to Safe Space exist, there are currently minimal support services operating in Victoria to service the specific needs of Aboriginal young people. Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Hostel provides access to accommodation and support services for young Aboriginal men aged 15–19 who have had contact with the juvenile justice system or who are experiencing homelessness, while Margaret Tucker Hostel provides safe accommodation and service provision to young Aboriginal women aged 15–18. Frontyard Youth Services is a relevant example of a model of service delivery to draw on. A service model such as Safe Space could be rolled out to provide localised support right across the state, integrating services to address the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of young Aboriginal people aged 12–25, embedded within a culturally safe framework.⁶



KOORIE YOUTH POLICY ADVISORS

POLICY GENUINE ENGAGEMENT YOUTH VOICE

THE IDEA

Social policy written for young Aboriginal people, by young Aboriginal people! This idea was formed on a common belief that young people's voices need to be heard on a broader level. Koorie Youth Policy Advisors would ensure lived experiences by young people are heard and applied into policy development, giving young people genuine participation in policy change. The delegates in this group discussed many reasons why their voices weren't being heard and collectively decided that current policies and programs for Aboriginal young people were simply not meeting their needs. In order for this to change we need to revolutionise the platforms available and policies specific to young people's issues.

GOAL

To create a state wide platform of opportunities to have influence in policies, programs and service roll-out relating to Aboriginal young people.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

Aboriginal people under the age of 25 make up close to 60% of the population. This means the bulk of policy and programs developed for Aboriginal people must reflect the needs of Aboriginal young people as the majority age cohort.

GETTING IT GOING

Government should fund for Koorie Youth Policy Advisor positions in organisations and government departments as a matter of priority. Driving broader reform in this area is the importance of having young Aboriginal representatives on boards of organisations that drive policy directions across the service sector in Victoria. The timeline estimate for implementing this structure is 12–18 months, using engagement in policy change and positive outcomes in Aboriginal communities as measures of the project's success.

“LET US TAP INTO THE KNOWLEDGE THAT OUR ELDERS HAVE PASSED ON TO US.”

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

The KYC is the key advocacy body in Victoria for Aboriginal youth policy. The KYC recognises the need for local organisations and other bodies to better understand, prioritise and address young people's issues. The KYC's youth-led structure provides a great model for young people's participation in influencing policy. Social policy as an employment path has not traditionally been seen as an area of interest for young people, however the delegate's idea for Koorie Youth Policy Advisors shows that interest exists in this area and that young people have a desire to be involved and have genuine input in social policy.



KOORIE MEDIA PROJECT

MEDIA SELF-REPRESENTATION INFLUENCE

THE IDEA

A media project that gives Aboriginal young people the space to share the positive aspects of their lives and communities through media representation, balancing out the continually negative focus around Indigenous issues in mainstream media. The Koorie Media Project is important in order to liberate and acknowledge the voices of Aboriginal people and create positive foundations for young Aboriginal people. Ideally, this would start a productive, informed and inclusive conversation that Aboriginal young people can be a part of.

GOAL

To provide young Aboriginal people with opportunities for positive self-representation around issues of importance that affect their lives.

WHY IT'S NEEDED

Negative perceptions of Aboriginal people in the media leads to feelings of low self-worth of Aboriginal young people.

GETTING IT GOING

The Koorie Media Project could be ready for implementation within 6–18 months. Establishing a Board of Directors would help provide validity to this project and support from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities would help to make this project sustainable. Surveys and polls would provide feedback around how effectively the project is meeting the needs of Aboriginal self-representation.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The delegates contributing to this project idea found a statistic through Creative Spirits, an online Aboriginal information site that states 74% of Indigenous people believe that the media is misused and that the majority of reported media about Indigenous Australians is negatively represented. The Koorie Media Project aims to change this statistic around completely.

OTHER WORK IN THIS SPACE

There is a significant amount of research that emphasises that Aboriginal Australians are overwhelmingly represented in news media as problematic and a source of societal risk. The media's role in influencing the policy making process is also well documented.⁷ While Aboriginal media publications, radio stations and creative arts media outlets do exist, there are not currently any youth specific Aboriginal news media opportunities that allow Aboriginal young people an opportunity for self-representation.

CONCLUSION

We, the KYC, warmly welcome the ideas presented by our incredible delegates at the Summit this year. These ideas offer new perspectives and approaches for improving the health and wellbeing of Koorie young people today.

Through advocacy by us, and our supporters, we are confident that key stakeholders in the space—particularly the State Government, the Aboriginal community services sector and community groups—will embrace and adopt these ideas and learnings from our delegates.



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