

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



Wednesday, 10 March 2021

ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS TO LEAD CHILD PROTECTION SUPPORT

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) will lead the response to child protection reports from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, as part of an Australian-first pilot led by the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan announced at today's Aboriginal Children's Forum in Ballarat that Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) have been selected to undertake the trial of Aboriginal led child protection investigations.

Under the \$11.6 million pilot, the Aboriginal-led teams will provide tailored and culturally minded approaches to investigations in conjunction with child protection officers.

It will aim to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care, by prioritising self-determination and facilitating Aboriginal models of care delivered by ACCOs.

The twentieth quarterly Aboriginal Children's Forum held on March 10 at Ballarat and Aboriginal District Cooperative (BADAC), was attended by ACCOs from across Victoria, elected representatives, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the children and families sector.

The Victorian Government has committed \$85.8 million over four years to continue and expand the tri-partite *Wungurilwil Gagapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement* to ensure that all Aboriginal children and young people are safe, resilient and can thrive in Aboriginal families and communities.

A further \$1.3 million will be invested to build a second BADAC Aboriginal Early Years Centre in Ballarat called Yirram Burron (morning children), to cater for the rapidly growing Aboriginal population in the Ballarat region.

It will complement BADAC's self-funded Aboriginal Early Years Centre Perridak Burron (platypus children), which helps children fully engage with education and develop pride in their culture. Perridak Burron is self-determination in action.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan

"We are proud to fund this innovative pilot to help reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care – and put Aboriginal Victorians at the centre of decision making."

"The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Bendigo Aboriginal District Cooperative (BADAC) are well placed to determine if a child is in need of protection and come into care."

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"By ensuring Aboriginal children are in Aboriginal care and continuing to transition case management to Aboriginal community organisations – we're helping kids remain connected with their community and country and supporting reunification with their families wherever possible."