**Abstract – Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)**

**Designing and evaluating to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Communities and provide a safe and supportive workplace for staff**

The growing importance of evidence-based models highlights a lack of culturally appropriate programs for Aboriginal Communities and limited evaluations or research on Aboriginal specific programs and approaches.  Mainstream evidence-based models are frequently not appropriate for the Aboriginal community and may not provide an evidence-base of effective programs to achieve outcomes for Aboriginal people, including outcomes of specific importance to the Aboriginal community.  Mainstream evaluation approaches and methodologies are often not appropriate for the Aboriginal community and don’t always measure the outcomes that are important to Aboriginal Communities. This situation presents unique challenges for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to develop evidence informed and evidence based culturally appropriate programs for the Aboriginal Community.

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is committed to the objective of self-determination for Aboriginal Communities and Aboriginal controlled organisations, and as part of this process has begun implementing a significant process of change: The Outcomes Project. The project will ensure that VACCA’s clients are at the centre of the way that services are delivered with culture as the heart of program design and organisational development. The project brings together interrelated initiatives that formalise existing cultural practice within VACCA by providing new technical systems to design, deliver and evaluate the best services for Communities. The centrepiece is VACCA’s Cultural Therapeutic Ways, a whole of agency approach to guide VACCA’s practice of healing for Aboriginal children, young people, families, Community members and Carers, as well as creating a safe and supportive workplace for staff. This will be supported by a new evaluation framework that will make sure that VACCA produces evidence informed programs delivered within culturally appropriate ways. Each program will contribute to developing program theories and evaluation plans to support staff to implement, reflect and learn throughout the program cycle. By implementing the project, VACCA hopes to contribute to the development of an Aboriginal specific evidence base for programs and support to staff.