



VACCA

Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

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

Presenters: SueAnne Hunter
and Shantai Croisdale



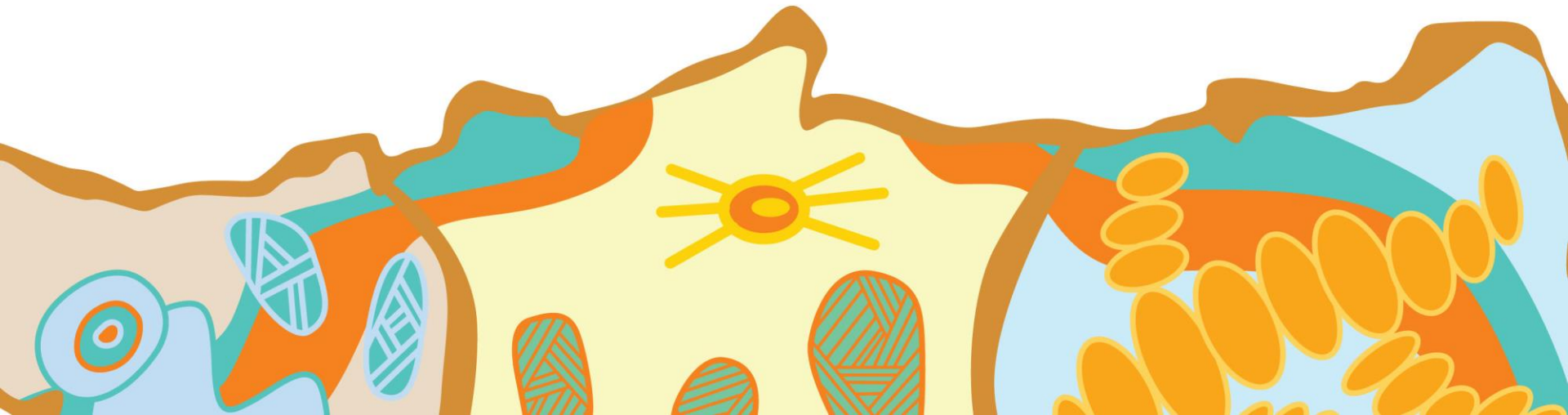


VACCA

Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways









Definition

Cultural Therapeutic Ways is a whole of agency approach to guide VACCA's practice of healing for Aboriginal children, young people, families, Community members and Carers who come into contact with our services, as well as creating a safe and supportive workplace for staff. **It is the intersection of cultural practice with trauma and self-determination theories.**

The core premise is informed by an understanding of the trauma held by Aboriginal families as a result of ongoing processes of colonisation. It is based upon Human Rights and United Nations Conventions, Victorian Legislation, organisational practice and strengths.



The Aim

The aim of Cultural Therapeutic Ways is to integrate Aboriginal culture and healing practices with trauma theories ***to guide an approach that is:***

- healing (trauma informed based on neurological care);
- protective (providing safe spaces and safe relationships); and
- connective (to culture).

This approach will support the way that VACCA's work is practised throughout the organisation, embedding consistency and quality to service delivery.



Organisational Outcomes

Aboriginal self-determination – Live, Experience and Be

This means a commitment to the following outcomes:

- VACCA clients understand and are empowered to exercise their rights – and discharge their associated obligations – as First People
- Culture is embedded in VACCA clients as a resource to draw on for strength, resilience and healing
- VACCA clients are safe – and feel safe – and are supported to make safe lifestyle decisions through family and community relationships
- VACCA improves the physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of its clients.

VACCA Board of Directors and the VACCA Leadership Group, 2017



Theoretical Underpinnings

Cultural Therapeutic Ways has two key theoretical underpinnings:

Self-determination theory is a cluster of practices that supports:

- Engagement and relationship building
- Information provision
- Self -management, choice and decision making and problem solving
- Participation, having a say, leadership and advocacy
- Agency and the experience of self-determination in both an individual and collective sense



Theoretical Underpinnings

The theories of trauma are based on the connections between neurobiology, attachment and resilience.

A trauma informed approach involves understanding, recognising and responding to the effects of all types of trauma and celebrating the strength and resilience of Aboriginal people through role models and healing stories



Culture, Self-determination and Trauma

As one of the most sacred expressions of South- Eastern Australian Aboriginal peoples, possum skin cloaks represent vessels for the body and spirit, connecting people with Country, Community, pride, dignity and respect. The cloak symbolises VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways in the way that it wraps services and community together to provide healing, protection and connection in two key ways:

- Culture provides a heritage which validates and legitimises connections to land, family and kinship lines and therefore provides identity ensuring that Aboriginal people and communities experience belonging, hold hope and build resilience; and
- Cultural observances affirm human dignity and provide comfort and spiritual nourishment. Safe spaces are created for people to interact and learn, to communicate non-verbally and process their emotions where positive change is made possible, and healing begins.



The Yinga Project

The centrepiece of the project is the formal integration of the Cultural Therapeutic Ways into all organisational processes and practices, supported by:

- a rigorous evaluation framework that ensures that VACCA produces evidence informed programs delivered within culturally appropriate ways.
- a new case management system (CS-Net), which houses data and allows each program to track efficacy within context appropriate frameworks.



Building Evidence

- Government focus on evidence based models -EBM
- EBM were not designed for Aboriginal people and do not align with the importance and relevance of cultural connections
- Cultural appropriateness and ethics of evaluations
- Lack of evidence of Aboriginal programs
- Need to build evidence of existing Aboriginal programs



Evaluation Framework

VACCA's Evaluation Framework is the mechanism through which VACCA will measure the outcomes of the different programs that VACCA delivers. The design is based on a program cycle of four intersecting stages— planning, implementation, evaluation, adaptation – that produce evidence informed practice that combines three core concepts that underscore the importance of context and consultation as enshrined in the CTW: practice wisdom, client preference and best research.



Aims of the evaluation framework

To document VACCA's evidence base of cultural practice and improve VACCA's services by informing program design and program outcomes that are culturally appropriate by:

- Establishing an Aboriginal evidence base of programs for the Aboriginal Community including identification of common elements
- Developing ethical research and evaluation processes and protocols, ensuring that unintended consequences, both positive and negative are captured
- Measuring progress against specific outcomes, building practice informed by evidence of what works, for whom and how
- Driving continuous learning, improvement and consistency for the delivery of services to VACCA's children, families, adults and communities; and
- Linking to Government reforms and key strategies as led by VACCA.



Implementation

Successful implementation requires a whole of organisation approach:

- Commitment at organisational, leadership, program and practice levels and resourcing of the project
- Realignment of program and practice responses in line with the culture, trauma and self-determination
- An exploration of what Cultural Therapeutic Ways requirements are at the practice and program level through co-design with staff
- Training for staff including practice reflection
- Policy and procedures that underpin cultural therapeutic practice
- Program manuals, Practice Tools and Guides
- Involvement of Aboriginal children, young people, families, Carers and Community members in measuring outcomes
- Reflection, monitoring and evaluation.



Questions?

sueanneh@vacca.org

shantaic@vacca.org