

# ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PLAN

2016 - 2021



dental health  
services victoria  
oral health for better health



# inspired

Behind this plan are strategies that will  
transform oral health care in Victoria

This was developed by Dental Health Services Victoria in alignment with the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan

DHSV acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work and pay respect to their Elders past, present and future.

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# Who we are



Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) was established in 1996 and is the lead public oral health agency in Victoria. We are funded by the Victorian Government to provide dental and oral health services to people all around the State.

We provide oral health services through The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne and in partnership with over 50 community dental agencies across metropolitan and regional Victoria. We also run state-wide oral health promotion programs, invest in oral health research, advise the government on oral health policy and support the education of future oral health professionals.

Our mission is 'to lead improvement in oral health for all Victorians, particularly vulnerable groups and those most in need'. We care for many different and diverse population groups, but most importantly we focus on the most vulnerable. We provide 'priority' services to people in this category with the intention that providing better access to services will help achieve and maintain better oral health.

These population groups are eligible for priority care at DHSV and Victorian public dental agencies:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Children (0-12 years) and young people
- Homeless people and people at risk of homelessness
- Pregnant women
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Registered clients of mental health and disability services, supported by a letter of recommendation from their case manager or staff of special developmental schools.

# Our Values and Behaviours



We apply the Victorian public sector values of responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights. In particular, we will apply these values and behaviours:

**Transform ourselves and our organisation** to achieve better health outcomes for the community

**Act with respect** towards every person or idea that we encounter

**Be accountable** to the people we care for and those we work with

**Embrace collaboration** with all partners that help us achieve our goals



# respect

Behind this smile is a team embracing cultural diversity and individual differences

# Introduction

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up around 3% of the population of Australia. The impact of colonisation on the First People of Australia is still felt today. There is enormous variation across people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent however they tend to be younger and more disadvantaged, often experience higher levels of poverty and lower quality of life than other Australians. They also tend to face more challenges when accessing health services, suffer more mental illness and are hospitalised more often.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have poorer oral health disease than the other Australians, with children have much higher levels of oral health disease especially for those living in remote areas. Aboriginal adults also have more than double the level of dental caries, suffer more gum disease and lose their teeth more often and at an earlier age than other Australians.

Labour force participation rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 15 to 64 have risen over time, however is still lower than the rate for non-Indigenous people. About 1 in 4 Indigenous young people aged 15–24 are unemployed which is about 3 times the rate for non-Indigenous youth.

Our work focuses on improving the oral health and general wellbeing of Victoria's most at-risk communities especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. An emphasis on improving health literacy and the awareness of the impacts of poor oral health on general health has the potential to improve the quality of life.

To achieve good health outcomes, there is a need to establish strong partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities. We acknowledged that there is a differentiated process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders access and obtain quality care at The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne is required to make the hospital experience as culturally affirming as possible.

# Caring for the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community

DHSV is committed to improving the oral and general health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We have worked to establish and improve relationships with individuals, elders and community organisations and thereby improve access to services.

As a result, we have seen a 36% increase in the number of people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who visit us at The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne since we implemented the initiatives behind our previous Aboriginal Employment Plan.



# collaboration

Behind this smile is an organisation co-designing with partners to enhance the patient experience

# Our role in closing the employment gap

We are leading the way in the employment and engagement of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. During 2013, we achieved the 1% employment target outlined by Karreeta Yirramboi (The Victorian Government's Aboriginal Employment Strategy) and have continued to build on that strong foundation work by focusing on attraction, engagement and development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

In 2015, we were recognised by the Australian Human Resources industry for excellence in indigenous employment initiatives and programs in the workplace, winning the best practice in Indigenous Employment Award.

This plan has been developed to build on our outstanding organisational achievements. We are committed to providing the appropriate resources and funding to achieve the initiatives detailed in this plan.

## Our work so far

<p>Dental Assistant Traineeship Program</p>	<p>In August 2012, we piloted a traineeship program to pipeline Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dental Assistants into our clinical workforce and into public oral health. Since this pilot, we have created an emerging talent pipeline where alumni are employed in The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne and other public dental clinics across Victoria. These Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dental Assistants work closely with dental professionals (e.g. dentists, oral health therapists, dental hygienists) to deliver oral health care and education to their fellow community members.</p>
<p>Patient Liaison Traineeship Program</p>	<p>We expanded our traineeship opportunity to non-clinical roles in 2015. Wanting to make the hospital experience as culturally affirming as possible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, we created a new emerging talent pipeline for a Patient Liaison, a role that assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients with culturally supportive hospital access.</p> <p>We created a partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) in delivering an educational program. We also developed a partnership with MEGT Australia, endorsed by the Victorian government to implement the Victorian Training and Employment Centre (VTEC). Through these partnerships, we were able to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers with our traineeship and bring together the support necessary to prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce for long term employment.</p>
<p>Bachelor of Dentistry</p>	<p>Two dental assistant traineeship graduates expanded their career, sponsored by our organisation in a Bachelor of Dentistry. They changed the history of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, being the first Aboriginal male and female accepted in this course.</p>

## Our work so far

myRecruitment	We have developed a culturally appropriate talent attraction and acquisition toolkit that increased hiring managers' capability in recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.
Aboriginal Learner Award	One of our Aboriginal dental assistant graduate was awarded Koolin Balit's Aboriginal Learner Award (People in Health Awards) and received The Golden Lanyard Scholarship from La Trobe University
Fellowship of Indigenous Leadership	One of our Aboriginal employees won a grant under the Fellowship of Indigenous Leadership. Part of an emerging Aboriginal leadership program across Australia, she was able to access to mentoring, professional and personal development
Aboriginal Community Development Officer	We continue to strengthen our collaborative work with VACCHO. The role of 'Aboriginal Community Development Officer' was changed in 2016 with a more strategic focus on the Aboriginal Oral Health Plan 2017-2019. Co-located in VACCHO, this role is developing policy and health program development by maintaining close partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream services in the area of oral health



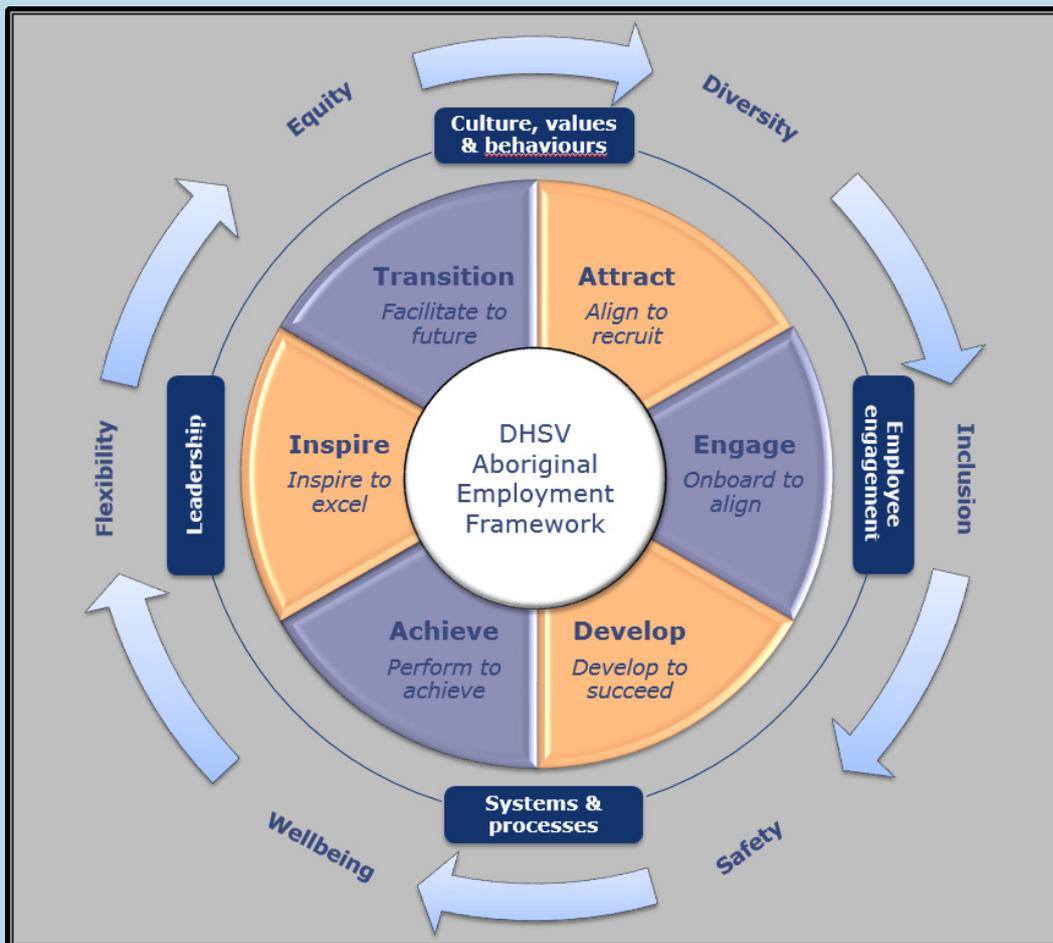
# accountable

Behind this smile is a team acting with integrity and honouring our commitments

# Be a Great Place to Work and a Great Organisation to Work With

We will continue to create and support a public dental workforce to provide high value care that delights. We will do this by implementing initiatives that will encourage the growth of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. We will create opportunities and build an environment that is safe, inclusive of and culturally responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our plan aims to ensure that our organisation has a point of difference, has the right support infrastructures and is culturally inclusive. We will position ourself as a great place to work and an oral health provider of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



# How we will achieve our objectives?

We outline the following initiatives to help us to achieve our Aboriginal employment objectives. The initiatives are divided into 3 key areas:

1. Build a culturally capable and inclusive workplace
2. Promote careers in oral health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
3. Strengthen support infrastructures and learning and development pathways

Each key initiative has a specific goal and detailed strategies and actions to achieve that goal.

Our Aboriginal Employment Plan will focus on meeting and continuing to exceed the 1% employment target.



# transform

Behind this smile is a team supporting others to develop their talent and potential

# Initiative #1

## Build a culturally inclusive organisation

Objective	Actions
<p>Adopt a cultural capability framework and strategy to inform the identification of cultural knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed to foster a culturally capable and inclusive workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a cultural capability framework and strategy through consultation with Aboriginal employees and partner organisations</li> <li>• Review policies and procedures to ensure alignment with cultural capability framework</li> <li>• Review position descriptions and related documentation to include cultural capability knowledge, skills and attributes relevant to the role</li> <li>• Develop pre-employment assessment tools to support recruitment of employees aligned with the cultural capability framework</li> </ul>
<p>Develop and implement a learning and development program to foster a culturally capable workforce and culturally safe workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement an online foundation of Aboriginal cultural awareness modules including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch online modules as part of a schedule of mandatory professional learning and development for all staff</li> <li>• Embed learning and development as a core component of the new employee onboarding process</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop and implement a mandatory cultural safety training program for managers/supervisors, clinical and non-clinical staff</li> <li>• Develop further learning and development programs as part of the cultural capability framework</li> </ul>

## Initiative #1

### Build a culturally inclusive organisation

Objective	Actions
<p>Recognise and respect Aboriginal culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include Aboriginal cultural days of significance in the annual calendar of key events and recognise these throughout the organisation</li> <li>• Improve the promotion and participation in Aboriginal cultural days by providing opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees to engage in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders days of significance</li> <li>• Encourage employees participation in Aboriginal events</li> <li>• Celebrate Aboriginal culture through artwork and imagery</li> </ul>
<p>Develop a Welcome or Acknowledgement to Country protocol to be used at events and all occasions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with VACCHO on the development of the Welcome/Acknowledgement to Country protocol</li> <li>• Obtain Executive Team and CEO endorsement</li> <li>• Utilise the Welcome/Acknowledgement to Country at all organisational events and occasions</li> </ul>

## Initiative #2

### Promote careers in oral health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Objective	Actions
Increase pathways to Aboriginal employment at all levels and across a wide range of areas in the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amend <a href="http://www.dentaljobs.com.au">www.dentaljobs.com.au</a> to include Aboriginal stories that will help increase attraction of potential Aboriginal candidates</li><li>• Develop a range of targeted recruitment initiatives that includes traineeships and cadetships</li><li>• Continue using alternative approaches to recruitment including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing relationships with community organisations specialising in Aboriginal employment</li><li>• Advertising roles in Aboriginal media</li><li>• Circulating opportunities through Aboriginal networks</li><li>• Liaising with school career advisors</li></ul></li><li>• Identify opportunities to create a Student Placement Program and work experience placements to build pathways between early education and employment in the public oral health sector</li><li>• Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal community services and training providers</li><li>• Work with Aboriginal employment service providers to promote awareness of the range of careers in public oral health and to reach out to disadvantaged Aboriginal job seekers</li></ul>

## Initiative #2

### Promote careers in oral health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Objective	Actions
Expand the range of Aboriginal employment opportunities within DHSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to support employment opportunities as a dental assistant in public oral health through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Certificate III in Dental Assisting Traineeship program</li><li>• Continue to support employment opportunities as a patient liaison officer in public oral health through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Certificate III in Primary Healthcare</li><li>• Enhance career pathway and employment opportunities for Aboriginal dental assistants in public oral health through the introduction of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Oral Health Educator role</li><li>• Create opportunities to support traineeships/cadetships for employment related to Corporate functions of public oral health organisations including Finance, Human Resources and ICT</li></ul>
Develop a scholarship fund for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates to undertake tertiary studies as oral health practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to provide scholarship support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates to undertake studies in Bachelor of Dentistry or Bachelor of Oral Health Therapy</li><li>• Expand scholarship program to include the specialist streams in the Certificate IV in Dental Assisting</li></ul>
Continue to use culturally inclusive talent attraction and acquisition processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilise specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment toolkit on all selection and assessment processes</li><li>• Continue to include Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander representation on recruitment and assessment processes</li><li>• Constantly review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander myRecruitment toolkit to ensure this remains culturally inclusive</li><li>• Provide information sessions and guidance to potential applicants on the talent acquisition process for roles that are identified for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li></ul>

## Initiative #3

### Strengthen support infrastructures and learning and development pathways

Objective	Actions
Ensure DHSV's policies, procedures and operational practices contribute to the retention of Aboriginal staff in public oral health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review onboarding to ensure it incorporates DHSV's commitment to Aboriginal outcomes, Fostering a Respectful Workplace Policy and the DHSV Code of Conduct</li><li>• Aboriginal staff receive appropriate onboarding including intensive guided support for new employees and their managers during their 1st 90 days</li><li>• Implement a workplace buddy process for new Aboriginal employees</li><li>• Provide employment support and mentoring to Aboriginal employees</li><li>• Develop flexible work arrangements to allow Aboriginal employees to meet their work, family and/or community obligations</li><li>• Have Aboriginal representation on key DHSV committees</li></ul>
Extend professional development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regularly review learning and development programs in terms of suitability and accessibility for Aboriginal employees</li><li>• Provide all Aboriginal employees with a career development plan under myDevelopment</li><li>• Provide opportunities for secondments, higher duties, job rotation and participation on on-the-job training</li><li>• Provide support for Aboriginal staff to undertake further formal studies</li><li>• Have Aboriginal representation in leadership development programs</li></ul>

## Initiative #3

### Strengthen support infrastructures and learning and development pathways

Objective	Actions
Provide a supportive work environment for all Aboriginal employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish an internal mentoring program specifically designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal employees</li><li>• Implement a training program for all nominated internal mentors</li><li>• Partner mentors with new Aboriginal employees on the first day of employment</li><li>• Investigate external Aboriginal mentoring programs (e.g. Aboriginal Youth Mentoring Program To Keep Young People Connected)</li></ul>
Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal community services and training providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to work with MEGT and AFL SportsReady on the talent acquisition process</li><li>• Utilise VACCHO for appropriate education and traineeships</li></ul>
Ensure Aboriginal employment pathway strategies are effective, meaningful, strategic and sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure a whole of organisation approach to Aboriginal Employment with ongoing commitment from the Executive team and Senior Management</li><li>• Adequately and effectively resource the Aboriginal Employment plan to ensure success and sustainability</li><li>• Ensure HR practices are supportive to the recruitment, development and retention of Aboriginal people</li></ul>

# REFERENCE MATERIAL

## Appendix 1: Reserving employment positions for Aboriginal people

# APPENDIX 1:

## Reserving employment positions for Aboriginal people

### Using 'special measures' in the Equal Opportunity Act

Advertising and reserving positions for Aboriginal people is a significant and effective way of attracting Aboriginal applicants and increasing recruitment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Since the introduction of the new Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (the Act) in August 2011, employers are no longer required to seek an anti-discrimination exemption to advertise and reserve a position for Aboriginal candidates through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

The special measures provision<sup>1</sup> in the Act has made the process of reserving positions for Aboriginal people simpler. This has also been confirmed in a recent matter that went to VCAT in the Human Rights Division within the Anti-Discrimination List.<sup>2</sup> A special measure is not an exemption to the Act because the activity undertaken

through the special measure is deemed not to be discriminatory. Special measures allow employers to impose reasonable restrictions on eligibility criteria on the basis that the measure is 'promoting or realising substantive equality for members of a group with a particular attribute'.<sup>3</sup>

Health services seeking to use the special measures provision in the Act must define the purpose of the special measure (as it relates specifically to their respective work environment) and what the substantive equality it is seeking to promote or realise is. A special measure must satisfy the following criteria<sup>4</sup>:

- Undertaken in good faith for achieving the purpose

In this context the purpose is to promote and realise equitable representation of Aboriginal people within the public sector workforce, within the health sector workforce and within the workforce of the individual health service. It is, however, possible for a special measure to have more than one purpose as long as one of its purposes is aimed toward promoting or realising substantive equality for Aboriginal people.<sup>5</sup>

- Reasonably likely to achieve the purpose

It must be reasonably likely that by only considering Aboriginal applicants for a particular position the organisation will be able to achieve equitable Aboriginal representation in its workforce.

- A proportionate means of achieving the purpose

The number of positions within an organisation that are reserved for Aboriginal applicants should not exceed the target of achieving equitable Aboriginal representation within the workforce. In some cases, an organisation's target for achieving equitable Aboriginal representation may be greater than the one per cent target generally provided in Karreeta Yirramboi.

- Justified because the members of the group have a particular need for advancement or assistance Aboriginal people are under-represented in the Victorian public health sector workforce. State Services Authority workforce data collected in November 2010 showed that Aboriginal people make up only 0.1 per cent of the public health sector workforce,<sup>6</sup> despite accounting for 0.54 per cent of Victoria's working-age population.<sup>7</sup> Public health is the largest employer in the public sector, accounting for 38 per cent of the public sector workforce, however, only accommodating 11 per cent of the Aboriginal public sector workforce.<sup>8</sup>

# APPENDIX 1:

## Using a special measure

A special measure is not considered discrimination and does not require an exemption under the Act. However, in the event that a special measure is challenged as being discriminatory (for example, by a non-Aboriginal person who is ineligible to apply for a position by reason of the special measure), the burden falls to the employer to prove the validity of the special measure.

Although there are no specific documentation requirements for implementing special measures, the following actions are advisable:

- Develop an Aboriginal employment plan that explicitly states the reason for increasing Aboriginal employment (the purpose) and details the targets and timelines

Under Karreeta Yirramboi all public sector employers (including health services) with more than 500 staff are required to develop an Aboriginal employment plan; smaller health services are encouraged to do the same. Karreeta Yirramboi sets an Aboriginal employment target of one per cent and this can be cited to provide further validity to the special measure.

- Cite section 12 of the Equal Opportunity Act whenever describing or undertaking activity relating to the special measure

The following text should be included in Aboriginal employment plans, employment advertisements, strategy documents and any other material where activity related to the special measures is referenced: 'This action/activity constitutes a special measure under section 12 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.'

- Monitor targets

Once a special measure has succeeded in achieving the promotion or realisation of substantive equality, it is no longer a special measure and it must cease.<sup>9</sup> Special measures are not intended to set up separate rights permanently for different groups of people. This means that if a health service sets out to employ a specific

number of Aboriginal people and uses the special measures provision to reserve positions, once that target has been reached the health service will need to consider whether the purpose of the special measure has been achieved.

Once this has occurred, the organisation may no longer reserve positions for Aboriginal people. Organisations should establish a review date to determine if the stated purpose of a special measure continues to be relevant, particularly if there is a change in business requirements or a change in the structure of the organisation.

- Seek an exemption from VCAT for all activity that falls outside of the special measures provision Reserving positions for Aboriginal applicants for purposes other than promoting or realising substantive equality does not constitute a special measure. For example, if a health service seeks to employ an Aboriginal person solely because specific Aboriginal cultural attributes are desirable in a particular position, an exemption must be obtained from VCAT for the activity not to be deemed discriminatory.

For more information about whether a special measure applies, seek advice from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission on 1300 292 153.

Prepared by the Workforce, Leadership and Development Branch, August 2012

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1 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) s. 12.

2 Cumberagunja Housing & Development Aboriginal Corporation (Anti-Discrimination Exemption) [2011] VCAT 2237.

3 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) s. 12(3).

4 Ibid.

5 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) s. 12(4)(b).

6 State Services Authority, 2011, Indigenous employment: Victorian public sector, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 3. 7 Department of Planning and Community Development, 2010, Karreeta Yirramboi, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 2.

8 State Services Authority, 2011, Indigenous employment: Victorian public sector, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 3.

9 Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) s. 12(7).



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