



# Koori Employment and Career Strategy

Career focused, culturally  
inclusive employment

2017 - 2020



Justice  
and Regulation

The Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land. The department also acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

The Aboriginal Justice Forum, and the department, have agreed with the Koori Caucus that for consistency, the term Koori (Koories for plural) is the preferred term for use in the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement and all related reports, policies, programs and initiatives. In this document, Victorian Traditional Owner groups (and their representative organisations) are included in the term "Koori community".

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'Ngali Yanhagirri (We will go together)' copyright Michael Bogie.

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## Secretary's foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Department of Justice and Regulation's Koori Employment and Career Strategy 2017 - 2020.

Through this strategy, we will continue to build upon our commitment to employing, developing and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Koori) people. We recognise and respect our Koori staff and the contributions they make towards the success of the department and the broader Victorian community.

The department prides itself on our commitment towards increasing Koori employment, development and retention, and recognises the importance and value of employing Koori staff in a range of diverse positions across all grades, divisions and business units.

A cornerstone of this new strategy is our stronger effort to ensure an inclusive working environment and provide ongoing opportunities for Koori staff to develop their careers. We want our department to be known as a place that is culturally inclusive, where Koori staff feel valued.

I encourage all staff to embrace and support this strategy and to participate in its initiatives which will strengthen the department as a whole, creating a more dynamic, diverse and inclusive organisation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Greg Wilson'.

Greg Wilson  
Secretary  
Department of Justice and Regulation

# The strategy in context

## Why do we need a strong Koori workforce?

Employing a workforce that is representative of the community helps us to develop trust and stronger engagement, which ultimately helps us meet the needs of those communities.

The unique skills, knowledge and experience of Koori people add significant value in the department's program design and delivery, and is pivotal to the success of our work towards achieving positive Koori outcomes.

The Koori Employment and Career Strategy (the strategy) supports our commitment to diversity and our work towards supporting the aspirations of Koori communities through rewarding, career orientated employment.

## Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement and Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP)

This strategy is one of a number of integrated strategies that shape our engagement with the Koori community and supports two of the department's key Koori policy initiatives:

- the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA)
- the Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP) 'Yarrwul Loitjba Yapaneyepuk - Walk the Talk Together'.

The AJA has established the foundation of the department's relationship with the Koori community to improve Koori justice outcomes in Victoria by developing robust partnerships and infrastructure, and putting in place a range of Koori justice initiatives.

Two model initiatives under the AJA include the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place and the establishment of the state's Koori Court. Both initiatives are outstanding examples of the department's strong commitment to addressing the needs of the Koori community, made possible by the dedication of our Koori staff.

## Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place

The Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place was established in September 2008 at a remote Gippsland location and provides Koori men who are on a Community Correction Order with an opportunity to learn new skills and reconnect with their culture.

Wulgunggo Ngalu, which in the Gunai Kurnai language means 'which way together', runs voluntary programs in residence for Koori men to help them address their offending behaviour over a period of between three to six months.

Programs at the centre have a strong focus on education and living skills, conducted under a supportive and inclusive cultural umbrella which strengthens an individual's cultural identity.

## Koori Court

First established in Shepparton in 2002, Victoria's Koori Court now includes the County Koori Court, Magistrates' Court and Children's Court.

The objective of the Koori Court is to ensure greater participation of the Koori community in the sentencing process of Koori offenders, through active involvement of Koori Elders or Respected Persons and others such as Koori court officers.

One of the great successes of the Koori Court is the active partnerships and links created with local community organisations, mainstream service providers and justice agencies to support Koori defendants beyond the court, in addressing offending behaviours.



Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place, Near Yarram, Victoria

Koori Court, Broadmeadows



# Our commitment

The department is proud to be recognised by the Koori community as an employer of choice for Koori people. Many of our Koori staff are working in direct service delivery positions, supporting Koori people throughout the justice system.

The department remains committed to achieving a 2.5 per cent Koori workforce, however, this target forms part of our larger commitment under this strategy as we increase our focus on:

- Establishing clear and accessible employment pathways for new and existing Koori staff.
- Delivering stronger career development initiatives for Koori staff which includes building leadership and management capability.
- Continuing to ensure the workplace is culturally respectful, recognising and embracing the diversity of Koori cultures.

The department will continue to strengthen our already strong partnership with the Koori community to build upon the success of our previous Koori Employment Strategy. With a renewed focus on cultural inclusion and career development, the department will support all Koori staff to reach their desired potential.

The department is committed to respecting and supporting the rights of the Koori community towards self-determination.

The department commits to helping the Koori community achieve long-term generational change and freely determining their political, social and economic status towards improved justice outcomes.

## **2.5% KOORI WORKFORCE**

The department remains committed to achieving a 2.5 per cent Koori workforce.

## **RESPECT**

Creating a culturally respectful and inclusive workplace, that recognises and embraces the diversity of Koori cultures.

# Building on our achievements

## Where we were at the beginning of this strategy

The former Koori Employment Strategy sought to increase employment and retention of Koori people to reach a 2.5 per cent Koori workforce by November 2015.

Over the duration of the former strategy the department made the following achievements:

- The percentage of the department's Koori workforce grew from 1.4 per cent in January 2011 to 1.95 per cent in July 2017.
- 20 Koori Youth Employment Scheme trainees were employed by the department, with 12 continuing with ongoing employment upon successful completion of their traineeship.
- 15 Koori staff completed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Scheme and were offered ongoing employment in the department.
- Five Koori tertiary scholarships were awarded to Koori students.
- 43 Koori prison officers are now employed across the state.
- In addition, our current Koori staff are working in a wide variety of positions and at various grades across the department.

## Building our cultural awareness and respect

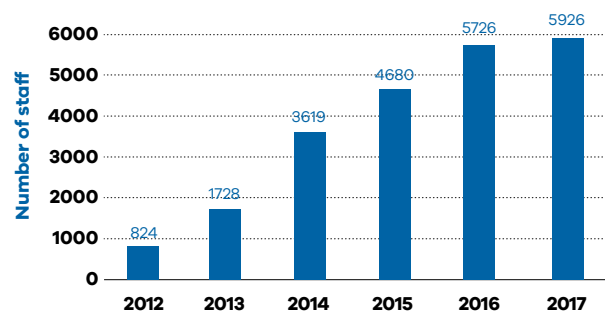
Cultural awareness and respect is the foundation of better communication and understanding between Koori and non-Koori staff.

With the additional support of the department's new Koori Cultural Respect Framework, the department will strive to provide a workplace where Koori staff feel welcome, valued for their skills and abilities, and where their culture is embraced.

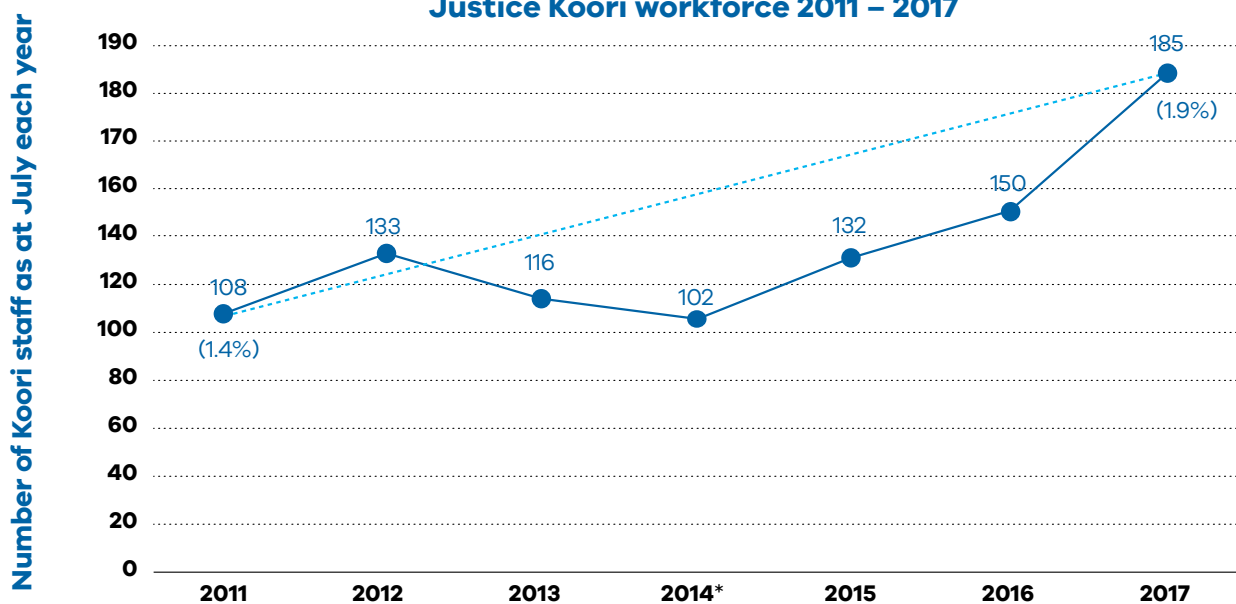
The department's highly successful Koori Cultural Awareness Training (KCAT) program, established in February 2012, has exceeded its 65 per cent staff participation target.

As at July 2017 a total of 5,926 staff had completed KCAT across all divisions and business units, as well as Court Services Victoria and other relevant statutory authorities and stakeholder groups.

**Staff completing Koori Cultural Awareness Training**



**Justice Koori workforce 2011 – 2017**



\* Note: in July 2014 Court Services Victoria was established as an independent statutory body and therefore not included beyond 2014

# Koori Employment and Career Strategy 2017 - 2020

The department has consulted across divisions and regions and more broadly with the Koori community to evaluate the performance of the former employment strategy, to find out what is important to current and future staff and shape the direction for the next four years.

The department understands that we play a key role in providing employment opportunities in Victoria and through this strategy are committed to developing the careers of Victoria's growing Koori community.

The department's revised strategy will continue its strong commitment towards the employment of

Koori people in a broad range of positions across the organisation.

Under this strategy the department makes a stronger commitment towards Koori staff career development, while also implementing a range of culturally inclusive policies and programs. The strategy aims to create a culturally supportive and inclusive work environment where all Koori people are valued, acknowledged and respected.

The strategy will operate under three key action areas:

**Developing a more culturally inclusive workplace**

**Creating employment pathways**

**Building stronger careers**

## A strategic approach

This strategy will build upon the work established under the previous Koori Employment Strategy and the department's new Koori Inclusion Action Plan and Koori Cultural Respect Framework, forming a comprehensive approach to building better outcomes for Koori communities.

## A career focused, culturally inclusive employment strategy



# Action area 1: Developing a more culturally inclusive workplace

## *Embedding cultural inclusiveness into the workplace*

Cultural inclusion across the organisation is instrumental in creating a supportive, accepting and culturally inclusive workplace which continues to make our department an employer of choice for Koori people.

To keep cultural awareness relevant and up to date, the department will build upon the original KCAT program with a unique cultural awareness training e-Learn to supplement the highly successful in-class training program.

Available online across all locations, a new KCAT e-Learn will test and reinforce essential knowledge to help staff maintain cultural awareness and respect at an individual level.

To further strengthen day to day cultural awareness where it impacts most, direct managers of Koori staff will be strongly encouraged to complete the in-class KCAT program.

Under the department's KIAP and the introduction of the department's first Koori Cultural Respect Framework, we will establish a culturally inclusive and diverse workplace which both recognises and celebrates Koori culture.

### **Koori Cultural Respect Framework**

The department will empower our workforce to value and respect the cultural rights and practices of Koori people through collaboration and celebration.

Following careful consultation with the Koori community, the new Koori Cultural Respect Framework will guide the department and its staff towards creating a culturally inclusive, supportive and respectful workplace for all Koori staff and Koori clients of the department.



*"Working with Koori men at Wulgunggo Ngalu is extremely rewarding, and the use of culture is making a real difference in addressing Koori men's offending behaviour."*

#### **Shaun Braybrook**

Commenced in 2005 as the Programs Manager in the Indigenous Service and Policy Unit, Corrections Victoria.  
Currently Manager, Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place



*"I enjoy the endless opportunities available to me in my role, working with people from all walks of life, while continually learning a range of new skills."*

**Kyeema Coombs**

Commenced in 2016 as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Scheme. Currently working in the Royal Commission into Family Violence Implementation Unit as part of her graduate placement.



**To develop a more culturally inclusive workplace we will:**

- Establish a Koori Cultural Respect Framework that strengthens inclusive practices and continues to ensure the workplace is accepting of Koori staff and their cultures.
- Redesign the existing KCAT program to reflect current Koori issues and policies.
- Procure the services of regional Koori organisations and individuals to strengthen local content in the KCAT program.
- Raise the awareness and use of ceremonial and NAIDOC leave entitlements for Koori staff.
- Openly promote and celebrate significant Koori dates and events more broadly across the department to encourage a shared pride in Koori culture and history.
- Develop and launch a robust anti-racism campaign that empowers department staff to take action against discriminatory behaviour and redress it when it occurs.
- Continue to support the participation and development of the department's Koori Staff Networks (KSN).
- Encourage and support Koori employees to self-identify on the JPay system.
- Strengthen the People and Culture Koori Reference Group (KRG) to actively engage in meaningful consultation with the Koori community to ensure employment programs are culturally appropriate and relevant.

- Strengthen the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to be culturally inclusive and accessible to Koori employees.
- Adapt the department's general staff induction program to be more inclusive of Koori issues, perspectives and policies.
- Develop and implement a new e-Learn module that compliments the department's KCAT in-class program.

**Regularly measuring cultural inclusion and respect**

We value the cultural and working experiences of all our Koori staff.

To ensure the department's culturally inclusive strategies are effective, feedback will be gathered through the department's annual Koori Cultural Inclusion Survey and People Matter Survey. Both confidential surveys encourage frank and honest feedback from Koori staff, which is conveyed directly back into the department's reporting and governance structure including the People and Culture Koori Reference Group, the Justice Senior Executive Group and the Koori Caucus.

In addition to regular staff feedback, the department's revised KIAP and recently developed Koori Cultural Respect Framework have established a range of specific actions which have set a new standard of cultural inclusiveness to be implemented across all divisions of the department.

# Action area 2: Creating employment pathways

There are a range of career opportunities for Koori people with diverse levels of skills and experience across the department.

With our increased collaboration with the Koori community the department will utilise targeted, Koori focused promotion and advertising, in conjunction with culturally appropriate recruitment and selection processes to increase the attraction and selection of Koori applicants across all roles.

Better integration of employment programs under this strategy will also strengthen our efforts over the long term, for example linking scholarships to graduate programs to ongoing employment.



*"I wanted to be more proactive in my work and create outcomes that make a real impact on our community."*

**Kareena Gay**

Commenced in 2012 under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Scheme.

Currently Principal Legal Policy Officer, Emergency Management Victoria.

*"I feel that every day I am working towards breaking down barriers and really improving justice outcomes for the Koori community."*

**Tom Bell**

Commenced in 2011 as an Aboriginal Support Officer in the Victims of Crime Team. Currently Deputy Director and Manager, Stakeholder Engagement, Koori Justice Unit.



**To create employment pathways we will:**

- Implement a renewed state-wide Koori recruitment and attraction campaign with a determined focus on increasing employment opportunities and supporting Koori employees.
- Promote and strengthen the department's entry-level employment programs including the Koori YES traineeship program, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Scheme.
- Ensure all recruitment panels for designated or identified roles include Koori panel members.
- Invest in a new year 11 and 12 Koori secondary school scholarship program.
- Continue to support up to four tertiary scholarships for full-time Koori students studying justice related fields.
- Develop a suite of Koori employment resources to support hiring managers in the attraction and recruitment of Koori staff.
- Develop a social media campaign targeting Koori job seekers.
- Coordinate local Koori community job information sessions (and workshops) to encourage and support Koori applicants.

## Dedicated Koori Employment Team

The Koori Employment Team (KET) was established in 2011 and is now embedded in the department's People and Culture structure. Consisting of four full time Koori staff, the focus of the KET includes key oversight of the coordination, monitoring and successful implementation of the strategy and Koori employment initiatives across the department.

The KET lead the development and delivery of employment policy, programs and services that impact on the Koori community. Their networks with community have been critical to the successful implementation of the department's first strategy.

The KET also work closely with the Koori Cultural Training Officer, responsible for the development and delivery of the department's KCAT program.

# Action area 3: Building stronger careers

## *Creating opportunities for growth*

To enable the department's Koori staff to reach their full potential and provide truly challenging and rewarding employment, the department commits to long term, supported career development.

Recognising the highly valuable contribution of the department's Koori staff, this action area will build upon the experiences, skills and knowledge of our Koori workforce and provide individuals with the opportunity to reach their career goals.

### **Career development in action**

The department commits to build upon the existing skills of our Koori staff by providing real opportunities for growth and development which are fully supported in the work environment.

As a major extension of the department's Koori Mentoring Program, Koori staff will be able to undertake the new Career Development Program which will include internal and external training support to develop their individual career paths.

An integral component of the Career Development Program is a three way collaboration between participants, their mentors and their managers, working together to create individual career development plans and put them into practice.

A hands on practical component of the program, will be the inclusion of short-term job shadowing placements with either the participant's own mentor or another employee relevant to their individual career goals. The program will equip our Koori staff with more skills to compete for a broader range of higher level positions across the VPS as well as the community sector.

External training under the program may receive funding from the department's internal Koori scholarship program within this strategy.



*"Working at the department provides me with a really supportive Koori staff network and allows me to strengthen my ties with the local Aboriginal community."*

#### **Gabrielle Simmons**

Commenced in 2007 as a Koori YES Trainee in the Koori Justice Unit. Currently Aboriginal Parole Officer, Broadmeadows Justice Service Centre.

*"I like being that conduit between the Koori community and the department, working face to face with Koori clients, and helping them through their justice issues."*

**Patsy Doolan**

Commenced as a Koori Court Officer in Mildura in 2007. Currently Local Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, Project Officer, Loddon Mallee.



**To build stronger careers we will:**

- Create and implement a career development program that includes structured mentoring, capability development and tailored career development plans for Koori staff.
- Identify and address obstacles highlighted in the department's Koori Cultural Inclusion Survey and People Matter Survey to improve the retention of Koori staff.
- Continue the Recognition of Service Program for long term Koori staff across the department.
- Support Koori staff career opportunities through departmental and inter-agency secondments.
- Conduct in-house Koori inclusive leadership and development training.
- Provide opportunities for Koori staff to access professional development through the department's internal Koori scholarship program.
- Promote, encourage and support Koori staff to explore diverse job opportunities and career options across all areas of the department.
- Offer on-going employment on successful completion of both the graduate and YES traineeship program.
- Create work shadowing opportunities to develop skills in areas of need and interest.

**Koori Staff Networks**

One of the department's key development and retention activities will be the continuing support of the state-wide and regional Koori Staff Networks (KSN).

The regional KSN's, along with the recently established Koori Youth Network for Koori employees aged 15-25, create an active and supportive Koori staff community within the department.

A major KSN activity is the annual KSN conference, a gathering of Koori staff from across the department which includes career and cultural activities, men's and women's yarning circles, and professional development workshops held over two days.

The department proudly supports cultural inclusion of all Koori staff regardless of cultural background and knowledge. All Koori staff are encouraged to identify and join the network to learn and share in a culturally friendly and supportive environment.

# About the artist



## Michael Bogie

Michael is a proud Wiradjuri man and is an emerging Aboriginal artist. Michael grew up in the rural town of Corowa and now currently resides in Wodonga with his wife and four children.

By exploring his own Aboriginal heritage, Michael has developed a community around him through stories, music, dance and art. Through his learnings he has been able to pass on his knowledge and skills to his children. Michael enjoys painting as he finds it very therapeutic.

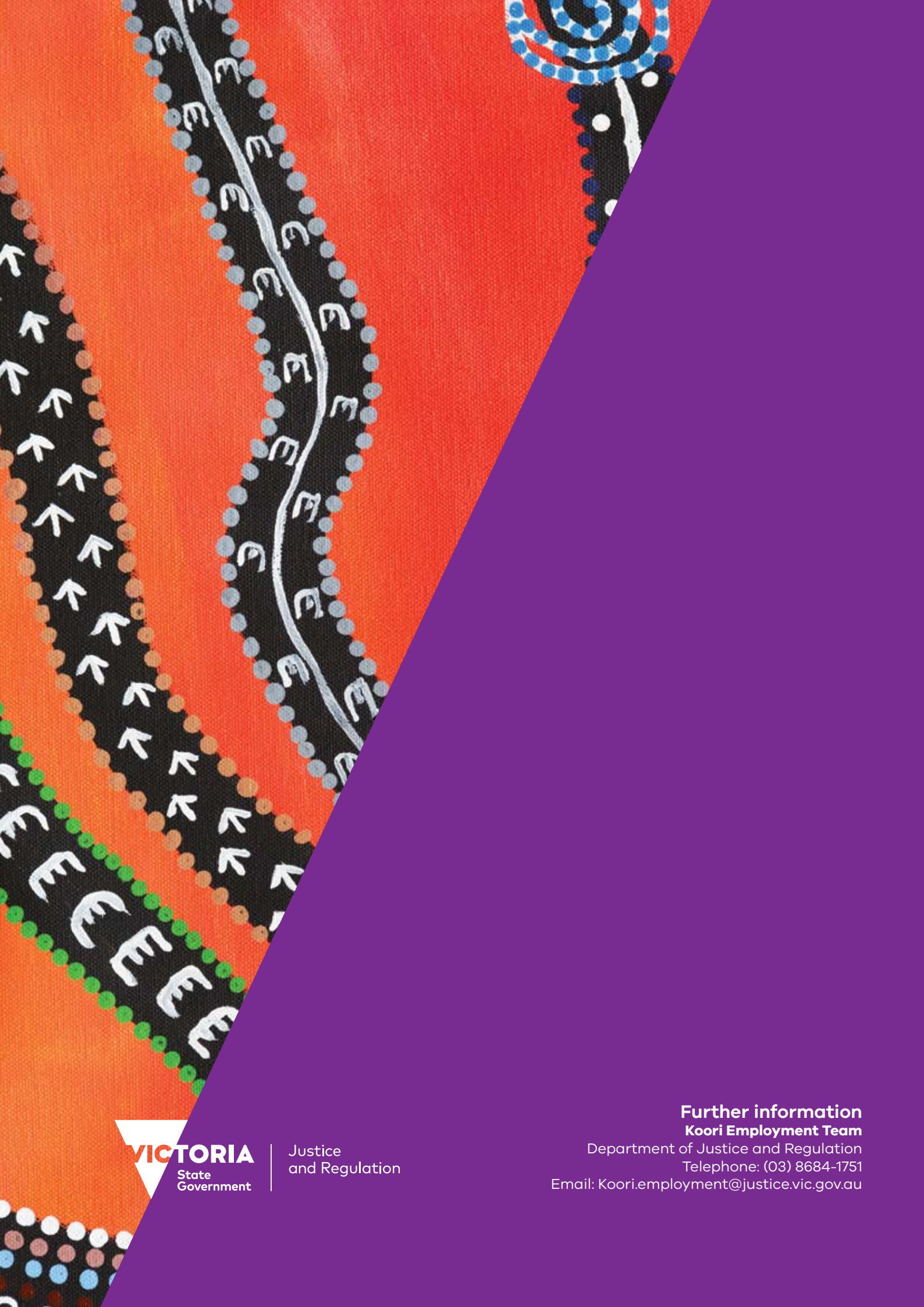
Michael joined the department in 2012 and was an original participant in the department's Koori Mentoring Program. Michael currently works as a Prison Officer at the Beechworth Correctional Centre.

## Ngali Yanhagirri (We will go together)

This painting is about people coming together from all different backgrounds to work towards a shared goal. This is represented by the different human/animal symbols traveling along their own path.

"I was able to draw inspiration from community events that my family and I have attended in my region. Even though, we as individuals are different, we should continue to work together, no matter who you are or where you come from. I believe and hope that if we as a community focus on a goal, we could achieve."





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