



VICTIMS OF
CRIME ASSISTANCE
TRIBUNAL

Dhumbumana Healing Strategy 2021-2023





Welcome to the Dhumbumana Healing Strategy 2021-2023

The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and pays respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. VOCAT acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the land where VOCAT is based.

The VOCAT Koori List was developed in response to the historical relationship between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the justice system. The VOCAT Koori List acknowledges the complexity of generational grief and trauma that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community experience and how this impacts the way these communities engage with the Tribunal. The Koori List was established to provide victims with a better opportunity to participate in the Tribunal process, to emphasise healing and to enable the Tribunal to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in a culturally sensitive way.

Building on the Koori List, we are pleased to present the Dhumbumana Healing Strategy 2021-2023 to support VOCAT in delivering services that are culturally sensitive and well regarded by the Koori community. The Dhumbumana Healing Strategy will also improve access to financial assistance.

Dhumbumana is a word derived from the language of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation which means help. Dhumbumana is culturally symbolic to the principles of VOCAT which assists victims of crime.

The Dhumbumana Healing Strategy is focused on continuous improvement within the Koori List and enhancing the Tribunal's capacity to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to assist in their journey to healing. The strategy aligns with the self-determination principles of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement 4 (Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja) and the Court Services Victoria Self-Determination Plan (Yaanadhan Manamith Yiramboi).

The strategy will enhance the Tribunal's support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and promote meaningful, targeted outreach programs to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is anticipated that by enhancing VOCAT's cultural capability to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we will be able to better plan for their future needs.

Our work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community continues to be a journey of two-way learning as we foster deeper connections with community and promote culture and healing.

We encourage feedback from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, which can be provided by email to koori@vocat.vic.gov.au

Justice Lisa Hannan
Chief Magistrate
Magistrates' Court of Victoria

Fiona Hayes
Supervising Magistrate
Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal

Dhumbumana

- ▶ The name of VOCAT's healing strategy Dhumbumana (thum-boo-mah-nah), is derived from the language of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.
- ▶ The word means help and was provided to VOCAT by the Wurundjeri Land Council.
- ▶ Dhumbumana is culturally symbolic to the principles of VOCAT which assists victims of crime.

The purpose of Dhumbumana Healing Strategy 2021-2023

Dhumbumana means help and is derived from the language of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. VOCAT will use the Dhumbumana Healing Strategy to enhance the support it provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants as well as our engagement by delivering a targeted outreach program to local communities.

This will enable the Tribunal to:

- increase awareness of VOCAT as a culturally specific financial assistance scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime
- recognise and reduce barriers to accessing VOCAT
- better understand how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use our services
- consider our current practices and enhance and develop them to promote cultural safety
- better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime during VOCAT hearings.

In the Dhumbumana Healing Strategy 2021-2023:

- “Koori” is used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” refers to all First People of Australia
- terms such as Koori and Aboriginal are also contained in the names of programs, initiatives, publication titles and about published data.

This approach is consistent with the self-determination principles outlined in the CSV Self-Determination Action Plan 2021-2025.

The Tribunal's approach to Dhumbumana

VOCAT is aware that providing a culturally sensitive service requires different but interlinked approaches.

These will include:

- flexible models of service delivery
- the introduction of a Cultural Support Plan
- continuous improvement of list processes and external publications
- staff and stakeholder training and capability building
- enhancing cultural safety within the Tribunal's registry, hearing and public spaces
- targeted outreach and promotion within the Koori community.

Strong relationships with stakeholders are critical in guiding and shaping these approaches.

VOCAT will use a newly designed Cultural Support Plan to capture significant cultural information for tribunal members' consideration when making an award, acknowledging that an applicant's cultural journey affects their ability to heal from the "act of violence".

The support plan will capture cultural identification information, available support services, an applicant's cultural journey to date as well as the support they need on their healing journey.

To achieve this, we will work with:

- key internal and external agencies such as the Magistrates' Court of Victoria's Koori Court Unit, Dhumba Murmuk Djerring of CSV, Koori Justice Unit (DJCS), Victoria Police and the Victims Assistance Program (VAP)
- the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (RAJACs) executive officers and Dhelk Dja Coordinators to assist in identifying culturally appropriate ways of engaging with Koori communities across Victoria
- the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to increase outreach by attending justice days and community events, and deliver VOCAT services directly to communities
- key service delivery organisations including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd and Djirra (Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service).

VOCAT will also provide trauma-informed, victim-focused cultural awareness training to all VOCAT staff to support and facilitate a greater understanding of Aboriginal self-determination.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants

VOCAT's culturally sensitive service is essential. It supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants to feel comfortable interacting with our service.

The Dhumbumana Healing Strategy 2021-2023 will strengthen our capacity to engage with Koori communities and assist in their journey to healing.

What will VOCAT do?

Provide a culturally safe and sensitive service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.

How will VOCAT do it?

- Upskill staff to improve cultural awareness and ensure Koori applicants feel safe, welcome and supported.
- Inform stakeholders about our Koori-specific services and offer them training to build local capacity and expand the reach of our service.
- Continue to help applicants directly through our Koori engagement officer, as well as introducing Cultural Support Plans and boosting the support provided to applicants during VOCAT hearings.
- Continuous improvement in the way we deal with applications made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime.
- Update our website and publications to provide information specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of VOCAT's community outreach programs.
- Mark significant Aboriginal events such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.
- Acknowledge Traditional Owner groups and Respected Elders.
- Ensure our registry, hearing and public spaces are culturally safe and display Koori flags and cultural artwork. This will include commissioning a Koori artist to procure new artwork.

Building trust and confidence in VOCAT

At VOCAT, we will continue building relationships and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. This is vital to foster meaningful engagement and collaboration as we work to provide a culturally sensitive service.

What will VOCAT do?

Work with Aboriginal stakeholders and communities. Their input will guide VOCAT's service delivery and improve access to a financial assistance service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime.

How will VOCAT do it?

- Offer targeted outreach activities to deliver our services locally and increase access. This will help us deliver a flexible service in a culturally safe environment, including the exploration of VOCAT hearings on Country.
- Engage more actively with stakeholder networks to promote and strengthen our Koori-specific services.
- Nurture existing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.



The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Contact

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