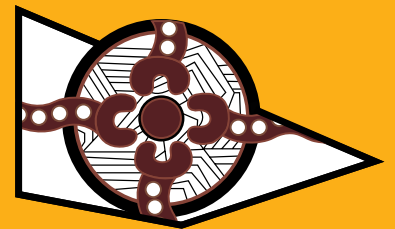


# What now? Lessons from the Australian bushfires



VACCHO  
news

Nov - Feb 2020



Image: VACCHO staff load up P2 air masks and water bottles bound for ACCOs in bushfire affected Gippsland areas.

To get your donations directly into Community go to [vaccho.org.au/donate-now](https://vaccho.org.au/donate-now)



**The challenges presented by this year's bushfires have been a huge focus for many in our Community across the past four months.**

Beyond the immediate impacts of land and property losses, mental health has been a pressing concern - with ACCOs fielding an enormous increase in demand for counselling and wellbeing support services during these recent months.

The leadership shown by the CEOs and their staff of our VACCHO Membership organisations in the affected regions, particularly in Gippsland, during this distressing time has been incredible. Our teams have risen to the occasion

to address this crisis support services alongside their many other operational duties and we all thank you.

Awareness of Aboriginal representation – both as victims of the fires and as contributors to the bush fire recovery effort - is slowly improving. We have seen positive stories emerge during the crisis - from Aboriginal fires to the fantastic support provided by Community leaders and their teams at a grassroots level. There have also been valuable conversations acknowledging the contribution our people can and do make to land management.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**



Invasion Day 2020 pictures pg 4

**Vibrant,  
healthy,  
self-  
determining  
Aboriginal  
communities**

**If you want to help  
create change in the  
Aboriginal health  
system. Come work  
with us.**

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**VACCHO newsletters are  
available to view online at  
[www.vaccho.org.au/news-media/nl](http://www.vaccho.org.au/news-media/nl)**

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Image (L-R): The Hon. Juliana Addison MP (green dress), The Hon. Michaela Settle MP, The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP, Uncle Frank Laxton, BDAC CEO Karen Heap and Uncle Rob Watts  
 Inset (bottom left): BDAC staff with Community Leaders and Government representatives

## Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative launches its new medical clinic

**Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BADAC) was excited and proud to have Premier Daniel Andrews formally open their new \$6 million medical clinic on Friday 1 November.**

The Ballarat Aboriginal community showed they know how to come together and celebrate, attending in their hundreds with barely two days' notice. BADAC had sent out text message alerts, made phone calls, did a massive mail out and Facebook alerts.

Such a fantastic turn out shows how important the clinic is to the Ballarat community, both for its culturally safe health care and for its symbolic value that Aboriginal people deserve the best.

The clinic is such an important step forward for Aboriginal health, and

for Aboriginal self-determination.

The building has been an enormous undertaking for BADAC: \$630,000 worth of concrete; \$525,000 worth of steel and metalwork; \$525,000 of ceilings and walls; \$770,000 of electrical and mechanical works. 20 B-double truckloads of contaminated soil removed. 6 boxes of Panadol, and a knee reconstruction.

The project directly employed 150 local people, including joiners, painters, carpenters, tilers, plasterers, electrical, mechanical and plumbers. It indirectly supported many others, including workers in the Ballarat window-frame factory, truck drivers and excavator operators. BADAC also used local architects and local builders, all of whom did a brilliant job.

This building will continue to be a hub for local Aboriginal employment. BADAC has Aboriginal nurses and specialists already there, and they are looking forward to the day when they welcome their first Aboriginal doctor.

This new medical clinic is a powerful symbol: that Aboriginal people create their own lives and futures. That we are proud and strong. That we need to do health our way: a holistic approach which respects that culture, land, language and family are vital to the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health of Aboriginal people.

**For more information about the services BADAC offers contact them at [www.badac.net.au](http://www.badac.net.au) or call 03 5331 5344.**





# #changethedate

**Invasion Day March  
26 January 2020  
from Victorian Parliament House  
to Birrarung Marr**







# Elders acting up for aged care awareness

**VACCHO and the Victorian Committee for Aboriginal Aged Care and Disability (VCAACD) launched the 2019 Community Elder Videos on Aged Care in December last year.**

VCAACD engaged the Health Issues Centre to produce a series of eight short videos designed to assist older Aboriginal people, their carers, and aged care workers in ACCOs to navigate government and mainstream services.

The videos promote aged care services available to older Aboriginal people and raise awareness about our Elders' rights when accessing support.

The videos are led by star acting performances and script input from members of the Victorian Aboriginal Community.

On 12 December, Mantra Bell City rolled out the red carpet for 50 people from the VCAACD regional networks to attend the premiere screening, accompanied by a video story from Uncle Paul Chapman (pictured bottom right with staff from Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-op), and speeches from esteemed guests.

The event was hosted by VCAACD Chair, Lynette Bishop and began with a Welcome to Country from Traditional Owner and Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Di Kerr (Center).

Trevor Pearce, Acting CEO of VACCHO (bottom left), introduced VCAACD as an auspice of VACCHO and shared personal experiences of how hard the aged care system is to navigate for our Mob.

Jill Gallagher AO, Treaty Advancement Commissioner (bottom left), stressed the importance of culture and how it must be embedded in aged care for self-determination.

Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians (bottom left), spoke of what it means to age well, and the importance that Elders get the right to access the services they need.

Zoe Austin-Crowe, Senior Policy Advisor and Project Manager with the Health Issues Centre, introduced the videos and how they were made to give a voice to Community.

Following the success of the launch and the reception of the videos, VCAACD is developing a communication strategy to promote them and looking at producing more videos in 2020 accompanied with information pamphlets.

**The videos are available on the VACCHO website at [www.vaccho.org.au/policy-advocacy/vcaacd](http://www.vaccho.org.au/policy-advocacy/vcaacd)**

Author: Jarrod McDonald, Proud Wiradjuri man and VACCHO Policy Officer





# Koorie pride network

**At this year's Midsumma Pride March Koorie Pride Network Victoria (KPN), with the help of Boon Wurrung Elder, N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs, mob and The Merindas, was launched.**

The idea for KPN emerged from two Aboriginal gatherings - Kungahah Retreat: Brotherboys and Sistergirls Gathering (2016) and the Nanyubak Yapaneyeputj Retreat (2018).

With seed funding from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and auspicing at VACCHO, KPN was established to ensure that self-determination, connection and pride is evident in our sexuality, sex and gender diverse (SSG) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities living within Victoria.

KPN Victoria upholds the right to self-determination and celebrates its values and diversity. It does this by advocating and

supporting culturally safe inclusive practices for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identifying lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning, Sistergirl and Brotherboy (LGBTIQAS&B) living in Victoria.

The Network also works in preserving our cultural and SSG history and knowledge through storytelling with our Communities and all SSG communities.

KPN prioritises empowerment through visibility to build on social and cultural change by connecting and supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQAS&B mob living in Victoria.

**For more information on KPN go to their facebook page or contact Alli on 9411 9411.**





**The 1st KPN community meeting will be held in March 2020. Check out their FB page for details.**







# Growing the ACCO GP Workforce

Pictured, Mr Trevor Carr (Rural Workforce Agency Victoria), Roman Zwolak (Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative), Janina De Silva (VACCHO), Nicole McCartney (Department of Health), Dr Nadia Lusic (VACCHO), Kate McIntosh (Primary Health Network Alliance), Ben Trewarn (RWAV), Chris Halacas (VACCHO), Dr Claire Langdon (Department of Health), Dr Ngaree Blow (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association), Stephanie May (VACCHO).

Via teleconference not pictured Kim Faulkner (MDAS), Dr Karen Dixon and Greg McMeel (Murray City Coast GP Training), Prof Karen Dwyer (Deakin)

## Key allies met at VACCHO on 19 February 2020 to address GP workforce shortage within ACCOS across Victoria.

The GP Workforce Working Group includes members from ACCOs, Universities, rural doctors' associations, GP training organisations, the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, Primary Health Networks and State and Federal Government.

With GP shortages experienced across rural and remote Australia and a growing under supply of GPs projected by 2030, there are some significant challenges ahead.

At the meeting the group heard of strong interest from local medical students in Aboriginal health. In the National Medical Survey of doctors in training, 48% of doctors across Australia, indicated future career interest in Aboriginal health. A key question for our sector is how we translate such interest into recruitment and retention and ensure the best care is provided to our Communities.

The holistic nature of work in the ACCO sector, opportunity for longer appointment times, integrated team approach, work flexibility, competitive remuneration, opportunity for cultural immersion and learning and contained work hours are likely to be strong drawcards for many GPs.

Crucial to retention will be ensuring ACCO GPs have appropriate support on a local level to work effectively and enjoy their roles. At a State level, VACCHO is planning an inaugural ACCO GP workshop to provide tailored education on child and youth health and very importantly a forum to connect and strengthen collegiate support for GPs with ACCO GP peers. This will be held in Bendigo on 1 May 2020 to precede the Victorian Rural Health Conference.

**For more information on the GP workshop or the workforce initiatives, please contact State-wide GP Workforce Coordinator, Stephanie May on [stephaniem@vaccho.org.au](mailto:stephaniem@vaccho.org.au) or 9411 9411.**

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### Looking forward

In the immediate future, as Australia gears up for what Federal Government is calling the "new normal" of catastrophic natural disasters, we will see the introduction of new resilience measures - from insurance policies and purpose-built regional homes to full scale relocation. Many Australians households will introduce more immediate strategies such as air conditioning, air purifiers or air pollution masks.

We recognise that these measures are not always readily available to all, and VACCHO will work with our Members and governments to ensure the accessibility of resources that can help reduce any ongoing health concerns. This year's efforts have seen us provide 1000 P2 masks to affected Communities along with water bottles.

VACCHO has long been of the view that health must be looked at holistically to provide true solutions. This means not only taking stock of the physical impacts, but understanding and applying resources to the mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of our peoples.

We are in targeted conversations with State and Federal Governments, to try to get the appropriate short and long-term support and assistance to areas most in need, as identified by our Members.

### Central Bushfire Fund

In response to the many offers of support coming into our Member organisations, we have set-up a central funding mechanism for donations.

**For further details, please visit our website on [www.vaccho.org.au/donate-now/](http://www.vaccho.org.au/donate-now/)**



# Have your say in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

## VACCHO are hosting consultations in Communities across Victoria and we want you to be a part of it.

We're speaking with Communities to see how the Royal Commission can better improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

To help us do this we are creating culturally and emotionally safe spaces across Victoria so that you are able to have your say in this Royal Commission. So come and join us, speak your truth.

*More details regarding venues and times will be released via our website and social media.*

### Consultation dates

Melbourne	Tuesday 24 March
Dandenong	Monday 23 March
Geelong	Thursday 2 April
Horsham	Wednesday 1 April
Ballarat	Tuesday 7 April
Lakes Entrance	Wednesday 22 April
Morwell	Thursday 23 April
Shepparton	Wednesday 29 April
Robinvale	Thursday 7 May
Wodonga	Thursday 14 May

All consultations are staffed by Aboriginal facilitators and counsellors

If you wish to contribute to the consultation process, but do not feel comfortable contributing in a group setting or are unable to make a consultation, please contact Ruby Warber or Aidan Baginski on 03 9411 9411 or [rubyw@vaccho.org.au](mailto:rubyw@vaccho.org.au) or [abaginski@vaccho.org.au](mailto:abaginski@vaccho.org.au)





## Strength through speaking truth

**The South-West of Victoria is the traditional homeland of the Gunditjmara people. It is also home to several of VACCHO's Member services that include Gunditjmara Health Services, Winda-Mara Aboriginal Cooperative and Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service.**

It's also one of the first massacre sites recorded in Victoria. This massacre was committed against the Gunditjmara people at the hands of local whalers. These events will forever be infamously known as the 'Convincing Ground Massacre'.

On January 26th 2020, the Gunditjmara people came together with the wider community (including members of Glenelg Shire) and local ACCOs to pay homage to Gunditjmara ancestors killed during the 'Convincing Ground Massacre'. This homage was a way of reclaiming this space, and telling the true history of local history.

The event this year was organised

by myself - Christopher Saunders, a proud Gunditjmara man and VACCHO Cultural Safety Facilitator, to create an opportunity for the true history of his peoples to be told, and that the wider community could come together with local Aboriginal communities to present a united force for reconciliation and remembrance on a day of such complex emotions.

This year's event saw a rise in attendance with 80 + people standing in solidarity with the Gunditjmara people at the site of the 'Convincing Ground' massacre.

The day started with the CEO of the Gunditj Mirring Corporation, Damien Bell deliver a Welcome to Country on behalf of the local Mob. The day continued in solemn silence with a smoking ceremony and the lighting of a Community made wooden sculpture.

The event ended at Wally's Ramp beach on Gunditjmara country with attendees invited to share stories with one another about,

speaking about what they were feeling and reflect on the day. One Community member said that the event felt so safe she felt comfortable enough to let her Boorais participate in the day, this was a huge win.

I truly believe that the support and numbers on the day were only possible with help from the local ACCOs that helped spread the word through their networks.

The event received praise from Community and Glenelg Shire Council Mayor Cr Anita Rank who expressed her thanks that such an event was able to happen and even asked for the event to be held again to help educate the wider community on local history.

**For more information on this event contact your nearest Gunditjmara ACCO or Glenelg Shire Council.**

Author: Christopher Saunders, Proud Gunditjmara man and VACCHO Cultural Safety Facilitator





## SEWB State-Wide Gathering

Tuesday 12 – Thursday 14 November 2020

Mildura



## KMS Women's Business Forum

Tuesday 15 – Thursday 17 October 2019

Warrnambool

Image: Leanne Adams

Out and about  
Follow us on





# VACCHO

## Board Members

**Karen Heap:** Chairperson

**Kelli Bartlett**

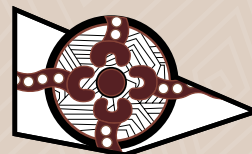
**Michael Bell**

**Joe Day**

**John Gorton**

**Michael Graham**

**Suzie Squires**



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**STORIES | IDEAS | FEEDBACK**  
**Don't forget this is your newsletter and we need your stories and ideas.**

If you would like to give us story ideas or comment on our newsletter please call Cisco from our Communications Team on 03 9411 9411 or email him on [ciscof@vaccho.org.au](mailto:ciscof@vaccho.org.au).

## VACCHO Members

- Aboriginal Community Elders Services
- Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service
- Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative
- Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative
- Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service
- Bubup Wilam for Early Learning Aboriginal Child and Family Centre
- Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative
- Cumeragunja Housing and Development Aboriginal Corporation (Viney Morgan AMS)
- Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-operative
- Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service
- Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative
- Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative
- Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative
- Kirrae Health Service Inc.
- Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation
- Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service
- Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association
- Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport & Recreation Co-operative
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services
  - » Kerang Aboriginal Community Centre
  - » Swan Hill and District Aboriginal Co-operative
- Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland Inc.
- Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation
- Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative
- Ngwala Willumbong Cooperative
- Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
- Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation
- Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
  - » Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health Services
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
- Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation
- Weenthunga Health Network Inc

**Note** » Auspiced

VACCHO News November - February 2020

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