Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: another step towards thriving Aboriginal families

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The Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement has been embraced by the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People’s Alliance (VACYP Alliance) and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Heath Organisation (VACCHO).

VACYP Acting Chairperson Karen Heap says the agreement brings the Alliance and VACCHO closer to realising their collective ambition to celebrate safe, resilient and culturally confident Aboriginal children and young people.

“Our vision since forming in 2014 has been for Aboriginal children and young people to have every opportunity to thrive and be raised safely in Aboriginal families and communities,” Ms Heap said.

“Roughly one in five Aboriginal children are in Out of Home Care, and unfortunately a quarter of these will end in the justice system if we don’t do anything. We must work towards change.

“Wungurilwil Gapgapduir is part of that change. It’s a shared agreement that embraces the intensive work done with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and is true testament to the Victorian Government’s commitment to Aboriginal communities’ achieving the crucial state of self-determination.

“Our vision for this agreement is to continue challenging the sector to take greater responsibility for Aboriginal children and young people, while embedding connection to culture.

“Research is now supporting what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have always known: Aboriginal culture and identity is a protective factor and a source of resilience and strength for Aboriginal children, families and communities. We want Aboriginal children to celebrate and feel proud of their heritage and culture, and to stay connected to their land and families.

“The entire Victorian child and family services sector now recognises connection to culture and Country as a lifeline to a better future, and that can only have a positive impact.”

VACCHO CEO Ian Hamm said the Wungurilwil Gapgapduir outlined a collective responsibility in further developing a strong service system for Aboriginal families.

“We need to create service models based on the social determinants of health to strengthen Aboriginal families and build resilient communities at local, regional and state wide levels,” Mr Hamm said.

“We all have a serious responsibility to ensure Government and key stakeholders hear the voice of not only Aboriginal children and young people, but the inclusion of local Aboriginal communities in policy, program design and delivery to improve safety and wellbeing for the most vulnerable Koori children and families.

“Aboriginal children in Aboriginal care began the journey of returning our children back home, and as a result we’ve seen the growth of Aboriginal services being delivered by Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

Ms Heap and Mr Hamm are both available for interview. Please contact Rebecca Thorpe on rebeccat@vaccho.org.au or 0418 350 844.