



## Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation

### 301. Funding agreements under the AEDP

*That the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments consider the desirability of entering into specific agreements (as, for example, are currently established under the Aboriginal Education Policy) for funding under the Commonwealth's AEDP which set out agreed objectives, strategies and outcomes.<sup>1</sup>*

<b>Background<sup>2</sup></b>	<p>The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) found that Aboriginal economic development programs lacked coordination between state/territory governments and Commonwealth agencies, with state approaches often being ad hoc.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) was introduced as a comprehensive set of employment and training initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities in employment and income between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.</p> <p>The Commission noted that stronger state involvement in planning AEDP programs at state and regional levels would have improved coordination and information sharing. However, states were not fully engaged due to limited awareness of programs, unclear responsibilities, past ad hoc approaches, and the relatively new planning framework.</p> <p>The RCIADIC recommended greater state participation in community planning to ensure more coordinated and targeted use of resources, tailored to the education, training, and employment needs of individual Aboriginal communities.</p>
<b>Intent</b>	That the Victorian government consider coordinating strategies and objectives for Aboriginal employment with other governments.
<b>Responsibility</b>	The Commonwealth Government and all state and territory governments.
<b>Key contact</b>	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).
<b>Key action taken</b>	
<b>2005 Review<sup>3</sup></b>	<p>Recommendation 301 was considered a Commonwealth-led responsibility, however some government departments provided information on action taken in line with the recommendation's intent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment programs and services administered by the Department of Victorian Communities assisted individuals from disadvantaged groups to secure and retain employment and increased the skills of the workforce in line with industry requirements.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991) vol 5, 136 ('RCIADIC').

<sup>2</sup> Ibid vol 4, 376-377.

<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal Justice Forum (Vic), Department of Justice (Vic), *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Review Report, October 2005) vol 1, 156, 162-164 ('2005 Review').

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indigenous Employment Coordinators worked collaboratively with Aboriginal community agencies, employment service providers and state government agencies to ensure participation and better retention in employment programs and initiatives.</li><li>• The Indigenous Employment Initiative in the City of Greater Shepparton placed 100 Aboriginal unemployed people into permanent employment over a three-year period. Over 60 Shepparton employers committed to providing employment opportunities over this time. This initiative showed strong collaboration between state, Commonwealth and local governments and Aboriginal community organisations, working together to build partnerships and best practice to improve Aboriginal participation in economic, social and political life.</li></ul>
<b>2018 Review<sup>4</sup></b>	<p>Deloitte concluded that both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments had <b>fully implemented</b> Recommendation 301.</p> <p><b>Commonwealth Government</b></p> <p>The Commonwealth's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy was replaced by the Indigenous Employment Policy in 1999, later renamed the Indigenous Employment Program. The Indigenous Opportunities Policy was developed to strengthen procurement policies to increase Aboriginal employment and business opportunities. The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation aimed to increase Aboriginal employment, particularly in the public sector. Although this agreement ended in 2013, its goals continue through the Council of Australian Governments's Aboriginal economic development agenda and the Indigenous Procurement Policy.</p> <p><b>Victorian Government</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government supported the aims of the AEDP to increase the employment and economic opportunities of Aboriginal people.</p>
<b>Since then</b>	<p>The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions were asked about implementation of this recommendation and provided the following response:</p> <p><b>Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions<sup>5</sup></b></p> <p><u>First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership</u></p> <p>Victoria participates in the recently established First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership (FNVEP). The FNVEP comprises Aboriginal representatives from all states and territories with skills and experience relevant to the tourism industry. It supports greater Aboriginal participation and economic opportunities and aims to respectfully embed Aboriginal culture within the tourism industry.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Report, August 2018) 625-626 ('2018 Review').

<sup>5</sup> Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (Vic), 'Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Review of Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody' (Response to AJC Request) 21.

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### Evidence of impact

<b>Authorising documents</b>	<b>Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions<sup>6</sup></b> <u>THRIVE 2030</u> THRIVE 2030 is the Australian Government’s national strategy for the long-term sustainable growth of the visitor economy. THRIVE 2030 identifies the need to grow unique and high-quality products, including Aboriginal experiences, as a policy priority. <u>Experience Victoria 2033</u> Experience Victoria 2033, the Victorian Government’s 10-year strategy to grow the visitor economy aligns with this objective. The DJSIR actively works with Austrade and the National Indigenous Australians Agency to advocate for the interests of Victorian operators and influence policy making and program delivery.
<b>Outputs</b>	None identified.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Yoorrook for Transformation<sup>7</sup></b> While the State has made some efforts to address economic inequity for Aboriginal people in Victoria, current policies have made limited progress to address the intergenerational, systemic and intersecting forms of injustice that Aboriginal people experience. This underscores the need for more effective and sustainable solutions. Only self-determination will provide the whole-of-system approach needed to increase economic prosperity for Aboriginal people. Policies promoting Aboriginal people’s economic self-determination can also address gaps in current public policy frameworks aimed at reducing disadvantage and deliver important benefits to the government and taxpayers. Necessary steps include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• investing in Aboriginal employment</li><li>• improving intergenerational wealth</li><li>• addressing racism, cultural safety and cultural load in workplaces</li><li>• improving procurement models</li><li>• bolstering other supports for Aboriginal businesses and cultural enterprises.</li></ul> Establishing a permanent dedicated fund for Aboriginal people’s capital raising and investment would significantly advance economic self-determination and prosperity. This should be negotiated through treaty processes.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Yoorrook Justice Commission, *Yoorrook for Transformation: Third Interim Report* (Summary Report, 2025) 52 ('Yoorrook for Transformation - Summary Report').

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### Community views

#### Kinaway Chamber of Commerce<sup>8</sup>

*The framing and building of economic opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians must flow from the understanding that there is a significant debt on the balance sheet of our nation where reconciliation and unity depend on this debt being settled.*

### Related recommendations

#### Yoorrook for Transformation<sup>9</sup>

##### Recommendation 91

The Victorian Government must:

- a) Revise the implementation timeline and proposed goals of the Yuma Yirramboi Strategy, including developing a publicly accessible monitoring and accountability plan for the strategy.
- b) Incentivise major corporations in Victoria's private sector to embed more Aboriginal businesses in supply chains.
- c) Change procurement monitoring and targets from number of contracts to total dollars spent to accurately reflect investment.
- d) Develop, resource and implement an Indigenous Preferred Procurement Program.

##### Recommendation 92

The Victorian Government must assist recruitment, development, and retention of Aboriginal peoples in the workplace by:

- a) Amending the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)* to include an obligation on employers and employees to take steps to ensure cultural safety and capability in Victorian workplaces.
- b) Creating a pipeline of Aboriginal talent for identified industries with skills shortages, including bolstering access to education and vocational training for Aboriginal people to prepare them for high-value employment sectors.
- c) Monitoring and ensuring proper pay and conditions against defined targets for Aboriginal people in the public sector.
- d) Monitoring and ensuring proper remuneration for the cultural load borne by Aboriginal people in the workplace.
- e) Ensure the private sector develops recruitment, development, mentoring and retention strategies for Aboriginal people and support the private sector in developing such strategies.

##### Recommendation 93

The Victorian Government must take steps to ensure increased Aboriginal representation on both company and government boards through improved accountability and transparency measures, including requirements to publicly disclose board diversity and report annually on Aboriginal representation.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 42.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 81.

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### 2005 Review<sup>10</sup>

### Recommendation 5

That the Department for Victorian Communities:

- a) expand the Indigenous Employment Initiative in Shepparton to other areas across the State and report whether the target of providing 100 employment opportunities over a three-year period has been achieved (Recommendation 301);
- o) provide a report to the Aboriginal Justice Forum on (a)-(n).

That the Victorian Government continue to implement and monitor Recommendation 301 through any monitoring process established as a consequence of this Review.

### Assessment summary<sup>11</sup>

Recommendation 301 was considered no longer relevant as the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy no longer exists. Any future policies must embed self-determination within development and implementation to ensure that Aboriginal community needs are addressed.

## Bibliography

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, Online, 22 August 2025)

Aboriginal Justice Forum (Vic), Department of Justice (Vic), *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Review Report, October 2005)

Meeting with Caucus, Aboriginal Justice (Project Team, Online, 21 October 2025)

Deloitte Access Economics, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Report, August 2018)

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (Vic), 'Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Review of Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody' (Response to AJC Request, 2024)

*Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Final Report, 1991)

Yoorrook Justice Commission, *Yoorrook for Transformation: Third Interim Report* (Summary Report, 2025)

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<sup>10</sup> 2005 Review, vol 1, 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, Online, 22 August 2025) ('Working Group Meeting (22 August 2025)'); Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, Online, 21 October 2025) ('Aboriginal Justice Caucus Meeting (21 October 2025)').