



Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation

323. Funding for homemaker schemes

That:

- a) Increased funding be made available to Aboriginal community groups for the implementation of homemaker schemes. Groups that may be appropriate to receive such funding should include women's groups, housing organisations and community councils; and
- b) Adult education providers, and particularly Aboriginal community-controlled adult education providers, be encouraged and supported to provide:
 - i. courses in homemaking and domestic budgeting; and
 - ii. courses for training Aboriginal persons as community advisers and teachers in homemaking.¹

Background²	<p>The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) promoted an 'alternative agenda' that integrated housing considerations into broader community programs, supported by block grants for greater Aboriginal autonomy. The RCIADIC highlighted the need for education on the financial burdens of house occupancy and maintenance. It was envisaged that increasing funding for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to offer homemaker schemes could assist communities to determine their own housing priorities.</p> <p>The RCIADIC advocated for Aboriginal adult education providers to be supported to provide courses covering areas such as home maintenance, financial administration and other skills that supported decision-making in relation to housing.</p>
Intent	Fund Aboriginal communities and support Aboriginal education providers to offer courses related to domestic budgeting and household management.
Responsibility	The Commonwealth Government and all state and territory governments.
Key contacts	Homes Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing; Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions; Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV); Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI).
Key action taken	
2005 Review³	<p>The Department of Human Services assessed Recommendation 323 as partially implemented.</p> <p>Department of Human Services</p>

¹ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991) vol 4, 464 ('RCIADIC').

² Ibid vol 4, 459-464 [35.1.14].

³ 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, 191-192 ('2005 Review').

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Community Care advised that funding for Family Services was allocated to five Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations throughout the State. Family Services targeted families who required assistance to provide a safe, nurturing, and stable environment for their children. Aboriginal families were prioritised for support through these services.

Family Services were voluntary and included family counselling, parenting education and in-home support. Family Services workers taught, supported, modelled and gave practical assistance in child-raising, home management and family functioning.

Between 2002 and 2003, 27 innovative projects were established, including eight Aboriginal projects to provide early intervention to prevent problem escalation and minimise the need for protective services. There was a continuing need for appropriately experienced and qualified Aboriginal staff in agencies providing Family Services.

Review Team

The Review Team noted the information provided on Family Services lacked detail on funding, access and usage by Aboriginal people.⁴

2018 Review⁵

Deloitte concluded that Recommendation 323 had been **partially implemented** by both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments through initiatives outlined below. The Victorian Government did not appear to have funded courses on homemaking skills.

Commonwealth Government

Deloitte noted relevant initiatives had been promoted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission under the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program.

The Household Organisational Management Expenses Program aided families facing tenancy or other housing issues due to personal or financial challenges.

Under the Community Development Program that began in 2015, job seekers in remote areas were encouraged to build skills and participate in activities and training aligned with community needs. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing supported Living Skills training as part of tenancy management.

The Department of Social Services allocated around \$100 million each year to the Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity for services providing emergency relief, food relief, financial counselling, and budgeting assistance for financially vulnerable individuals

Victorian Government

Deloitte outlined past Victorian Government initiatives that contributed to implementation of this recommendation. These included funding provided to Aboriginal organisations to support people to furnish their homes without falling into rental arrears; and representatives working with Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups to support community initiatives such as men's groups, homework centres, and home management support.

⁴ Ibid 191.

⁵ 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) 655-656 ('2018 Review').

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Since then

Response from the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing (Homes Victoria)⁶

Homes Victoria clarified that Recommendation 323 was outside of its portfolio responsibilities and suggested information be requested from the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. They noted that whilst Homes Victoria does not fund homemaking or domestic budgeting courses, it does have programs in place that support individuals and families to maintain their tenancies:

- The Aboriginal Tenancies at Risk Program uses an intensive case management and support model to assist Aboriginal people living in mainstream, public housing, community housing, or housing provided by Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV). Brokerage is provided to support people whose tenancies are at risk due to financial or other difficulties.
- The Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program provides support to Aboriginal people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to either maintain their existing private rental tenancy or to secure a new private rental tenancy. Outreach support is provided to households requiring additional help to establish or maintain their housing.

Response from the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industries and Regions⁷

The department acknowledged the importance of empowering Aboriginal communities, promoting self-determination and ensuring autonomy in decision-making about housing and homemaking. The department indicated their commitment to encouraging and supporting adult education providers, particularly in the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, to offer courses of relevance to this recommendation. They noted that Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Co-Operative, an adult education provider based in Warrnambool, was delivering a course called Introduction to Essential Budgeting Skills.

The department identified other relevant government funded courses:

- Certificate II in General Education for Adults which includes modules on investigating Indigenous history, contributing to the health and safety of self and others, developing and using savings plans and developing and using personal budgets.
- Certificate III in General Education for Adults which includes modules on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and influence.
- Certificate II in Work Education which includes modules on developing and applying knowledge of personal finances.

As outlined in response to Recommendations 197 and 202, the department also funds courses related to accounting and bookkeeping, subsidised through the Skill First Aboriginal Access Fee Waiver. While not directly related to this recommendation, those courses have the capacity to be accessed by Aboriginal learners to support home making skills and budgeting.

⁶ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Homes Vic), 'DFFH (Homes Vic) Review of Housing Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody' (Response to AJC Request).

⁷ 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).

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Evidence of impact

Authorising documents

Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026⁸

Marrung envisions universal service systems that are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Aboriginal people at every stage of their learning or development journey, and where every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life and feels strong in their cultural identity. Marrung includes sector specific actions for building excellence in teaching, learning and development in higher education and skills.

Yuma Yirramboi: Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy⁹

This strategy seeks to create Aboriginal employment opportunities, support inclusion, wealth creation and thriving Aboriginal communities with the aim of achieving employment and economic parity within a generation.

National Skills Agreement¹⁰

This Closing the Gap initiative aims to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Vocational Education and Training sector. The Commonwealth Government will invest up to \$214 million over five years to help meet Closing the Gap skills targets, including \$36 million to establish a policy partnership with Aboriginal organisations.

Victorian Skills Plan for 2023 into 2024¹¹

This plan provides a roadmap for Victoria's training and skills needs. It encourages training providers to increase their workforce diversity to enable Aboriginal voices in decision making.

Outputs

Aboriginal enrolments in relevant courses from 2018 to November 2023:

Course Name	Module	Enrolments 2018-2023
Certificate I in Mumgu-dhal tyama-tiyt	Contribute to health and safety of self and others	23
Certificate II in General Education for Adults	Contribute to health and safety of self and others	37
	Develop and use a personal budget	26
	Investigate Indigenous history	49
Certificate III in General Education for Adults	Develop and apply knowledge of personal finances	3

⁸ Department of Education and Training (Vic), *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026* (July 2016) ('Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026').

⁹ Yuma Yirramboi Council, Skills Department of Jobs, Industry and Regions, *Yuma Yirramboi: Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy* (Strategy, 27 June 2022) ('Yuma Yirramboi').

¹⁰ 'National Skills Agreement', *Australian Government: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations* (Web Page, 18 October 2023) <<https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/national-skills-agreement>> ('National Skills Agreement').

¹¹ Victorian Skills Authority, Skills Department of Jobs, Industry and Regions (Vic), *Victorian Skills Plan for 2023 into 2024: Shared Prosperity Through Skills* (Strategy, 2023) ('Victorian Skills Plan for 2023 into 2024: Shared Prosperity Through Skills').

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Outcomes	<p>The Introduction to Essential Budgeting Skills course was developed in response to community need for more education and knowledge around financial management and budgeting identified by people engaged with Worn Gundidj. This course supports learners to develop financial management skills to enhance independence and encourage sustainable money management.</p>
Community views	<p>Djirra¹²</p> <p>Djirra noted that in their work with Aboriginal women and children, in addition to providing frontline services for safety, they also develop and deliver early intervention programs – Sisters Day Out, Young Luv and Dilly Bag, which assist women to navigate common challenges:</p> <p><i>These programs build on women’s resilience to navigate everyday stressors in life and work to break down social isolation.’</i></p> <p>Djirra stressed the need for greater investment in Aboriginal organisations and self-determined solutions.</p> <p>Aboriginal Housing Victoria¹³</p> <p>Members of the AJC Project and AHV teams met in July 2024 to discuss RCIADC recommendations related to housing. AHV noted that a broader focus on life skills might more appropriately capture the intent of this recommendation, rather than ‘homemaking’.</p> <p>Initiatives such as the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program assist Aboriginal tenants with life skills, budgeting and financial management. Expanding these initiatives is necessary to ensure they are available to all renters.</p> <p>Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated¹⁴</p> <p>VAEI commented that Recommendation 323 remains relevant, but it’s challenging to assess the relevance and necessity of specific courses. Further investigation of Aboriginal community needs around budgeting and household management related training would be useful. Additionally, VAEI suggested exploring opportunities with Adult Community and Further Education and Learn Locals for community-driven, pre-accredited courses in this area.</p>
Related recommendations	
Skills for Victoria’s Growing Economy Review¹⁵	<p>Recommendation 5.2 – Embed self-determination for local Aboriginal communities</p> <p>The Victorian Government should equip the Victorian Skills Authority to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support delivery of courses relevant to Aboriginal culture and identity, including Aboriginal languages and other skills that build Aboriginal communities’ strength.

¹² Djirra, 'Written Feedback on RCIADIC Recommendations Relating to Adult Education'.

¹³ Meeting with Aboriginal Housing Victoria (Project Team, 22 July 2024) ('Meeting with AHV').

¹⁴ Written feedback on RCIADIC recommendations relating to adult school education (UNPUBLISHED) from Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated to Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Vic), 30 September 2024.

¹⁵ Jenny Macklin, Victorian State Government, *Future Skills for Victoria: Driving Collaboration and Innovation in Post-Secondary Education and Training* (Independent Review 2020) ('Future skills for Victoria').

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- Embed practical support for Aboriginal people into expanded Skills and Jobs Centres to ensure local initiatives contribute to self-determination for Aboriginal communities.

Assessment summary

Recommendation 323 intended for governments to fund Aboriginal communities and support Aboriginal education providers to offer courses relevant to household management – planning, budgeting, health and safety and related skills.

The Aboriginal Justice Caucus (AJC) determined that actions taken partly aligned with the intent of this recommendation. While the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing stated that this recommendation was outside their portfolio responsibilities, they noted the Aboriginal Tenancies at Risk and Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance programs which can support individuals and families with housing-related challenges.

The AJC found there was more information available about outputs than outcomes. The response from the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions outlined a range of relevant training modules in health and safety, budgeting and personal financial management as part of Certificates II and III in General Adult Education, but there had been a relatively small number of Aboriginal enrolments between 2018 and 2023. An Introduction to Essential Budgeting Skills course was provided by Worn Gundidj in response to local community needs.

Some aspects of Recommendation 323 were no longer considered relevant. Aboriginal Housing Victoria noted some of the language was outdated and a broader focus on household management and life skills may be more apt. The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated reflected on the challenges of assessing the relevance and necessity of specific training courses.

Assessment of Recommendation 323

Is the intent of the recommendation accurately described?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Does the action taken align with the intent of the recommendation?

0 – No action taken

1 – Action taken is of little relevance to the intent of the recommendation

2 – Action taken partially aligns with the intent of the recommendation

3 – Action taken fully aligns with the intent of the recommendation

1.5

(Score out of 3)

Is there evidence of the desired impact or outcome/s?

0 – No evidence

1 – Evidence of output rather than outcome

2 – Some evidence action contributed to outcome/s

3 – Clear link between action and impact or outcome/s

1

(Score out of 3)

How relevant is the recommendation in the current context?

0 – No relevance – refers to practices, agencies or laws that no longer exist

1 – Low – some relevance, but most aspects of the recommendation no longer apply

2 – Moderate – remains relevant, but some aspects of recommendation no longer apply

3 – High – entirely relevant to current context

2

(Score out of 3)

Does full implementation have the potential to reduce incarceration, increase safety in custody and/or progress Aboriginal self-determination?

0 – No potential to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes

1 – Low – potential to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes, but none of the three identified

2 – Moderate – potential to progress one or two of the outcomes identified

3 – High – potential to reduce incarceration AND increase safety in custody AND self-determination

1.5

(Score out of 3)

Potential actions for further work

Expand the Aboriginal Tenancies at Risk and Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Programs

Extend initiatives that support Aboriginal tenants with household and financial management skills, so they are available to more people.

Investigate community needs for training related to household management

Investigate Aboriginal community needs for training related to household management – maintenance, planning, budgeting, health and safety, financial management etc – and preferred ways to access it.

Explore opportunities for community-driven courses related to household management

Explore opportunities with Adult Community and Further Education and Learn Locals for community-driven, pre-accredited courses related to household and financial management.

Moderate priority for further work

Relevance and potential impact

		Low (0–2)	Moderate (3–4)	High (5–6)
Extent of action taken and evidence of outcomes	High (5–6)			
	Moderate (3–4)		Rec 323	
	Low (0–2)			

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