

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position	Team Leader
Reports to	Program Manager
Direct Reports	3-5 Case Managers
Status	Full time (38 hrs pw)
Location	Based at the Preston office

BACKGROUND

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is the largest organisation of its kind in Australia. VACCA is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation that supports and advocates for the Aboriginal community. Our strength lies with our people. Our team is committed to the organisation's vision and values; advocates for our children and other vulnerable community members; and shows respect for, observance and compliance with Aboriginal cultural protocols, practice and ceremony. Our Aboriginality is what distinguishes us from mainstream services and what enables us to deliver the positive outcomes we achieve for our people.

VACCA employs over 600 staff and delivers more than 70 programs across the state. VACCA's experience and expertise in the delivery of therapeutic interventions are underpinned by culture, connection, and healing. VACCA designs, develops and delivers programs with self-determination and an understanding that the intergenerational trauma experienced by our community requires intergenerational and community healing.

Central to VACCA's work is the importance of connection to family, community and culture as essential to Aboriginal children's safety, stability and ensuring that they have an ongoing sense of belonging. As Victoria's largest Aboriginal child welfare agency, VACCA will play a key role in the process of transitioning the care and case management of Aboriginal children from government and non-Aboriginal organisations to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations following the recent decision of the Victorian Government.

VACCA is implementing cultural therapeutic ways which is an agency wide framework that underpins our work with the community, our clients and staff.

OUR VISION

Aboriginal self-determination - Live, Experience and Be.

OUR PURPOSE

Supporting culturally strong, safe and thriving Aboriginal communities

PROGRAM AREA

In an Australian first, after decades of advocacy and lobbying from Aboriginal communities, in 2017 the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) began taking on the authorisation of Aboriginal children and their siblings, under Section 18 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA). Thus allowing for all decision making in relation to the care, case planning and case management to be done by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. The program is known state-wide as Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC).

VACCA's Nugel program has been at the forefront, transforming the business of protecting children so as to truly meet the best interests of Aboriginal children today and for generations to come. Nugel, which means "belong" in Woiwurrung, offers a new model of child protection practice that involves Aboriginal organisations working in partnership with Aboriginal families. Nugel believes that Aboriginal children "belong," and have a sacred place at the centre of Aboriginal communities – they have an inviolable right to be seen; to be heard; to be nurtured; and to be safe. They have the right to know who they are, where they come from and where they belong. Nugel understand that the best way to achieve this is to wrap our service response around the family and community as a whole in order to restore circles of care that have been a part of the Aboriginal Way of protecting children since the times of the ancestors.

Although the implementation of section 18 CYFA is recognised as a historically significant move towards self-determination, the authorisations under section 18 are limited to children already subject to Child Protection Orders. This has excluded the ability for Aboriginal organisations to intervene earlier to slow the rates of Aboriginal families entering further into the child protection and out of home care system.

Aboriginal organisations have continued to advocate to take on a role with children and families at their first contact with Child Protection, before there is an Order in place. Hoping to stem the flow of Aboriginal children into statutory systems by providing a cultural response to children and their families.

The 2020-21 Victorian State Budget provided funding to develop and pilot an Aboriginal organisation's response to child protection reports about the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people.

This new approach will aim to deliver culturally informed investigation of child protection reports and offer culturally appropriate support for families, with the aim of strengthening Aboriginal families and reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in child protection and care.

Two pilots will be established: one at VACCA and the other at Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative. The organisations will hold decision making responsibility under the CYFA.

VACCA's pilot will be integrated into the existing Nugel program, giving valuable experience and support to the new team, aiming to provide a positive experience for families in the program. VACCA are committed to implementing systems that promote relational practice and minimise the number of professionals involved in the life of a child.

POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Program Manager-Nugel, the Team Leaders oversee a team of Case Managers who will work with a mixed case load of authorised children as well as conducting investigations into child protection reports. The Team Leaders will hold day to day oversight of the operations of the pilot program, including the oversight of all investigations. The Team Leader will work actively with Aboriginal children and families, Government and sector partners to reduce the over representation of Aboriginal children involved with Child Protection, strive for better outcomes for children and to build capacity in families.

Key to transforming the way child protection is delivered, is implementing Nugal's unique practice approach which is based on Cultural Therapeutic Ways; a whole of agency approach that places culture at the centre and integrates this with theories of self-determination and trauma. The Team Leader is central to ensuring that this approach is delivered by staff they manage.

The position will also actively contribute to the development of internal and state-wide policies, procedures and protocols relating to the pilot and the Nugal program.

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

- Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, the values that underpin VACCA' vision and purpose and the capacity to take a leadership role in championing these internally and externally.
- Demonstrated awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal societies and cultures, and commitment to continually build knowledge of such, along with a high level of awareness of the key issues which impact upon Aboriginal communities.
- Understanding of and ability to oversee investigations into reports of harm including interviewing parties involved.
- Ability to make decisions in high pressure contexts, clearly able to communicate rationale for decisions.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and direct complex casework with children who have experienced trauma and may present with challenging behaviours, including using culturally safe therapeutic approaches to heal and build resilience.
- Ability to lead and mentor staff in their understanding of child development, attachment and trauma as they relate to Aboriginal children.
- Ability to support staff in all aspects of court related work, including preparation of applications and court reports, court attendance and giving evidence
- A proven ability to develop, manage and lead a team in quality casework practice, with a demonstrated capacity to:
 - work successfully with Aboriginal children, young people and their families
 - assess and manage risk for highly vulnerable children and families
 - develop innovative strategies and make decisions in the best interest of the child
 - effectively manage conflict
 - engage and negotiate with key stakeholders

- assess staff competencies and needs and provide reflective supervision
- critically review service data and outcomes
- ensure program objectives and service targets are met
- Ability to monitor continuous quality improvement and report on compliance with standards.
- Highly developed organisational abilities, interpersonal and communication skills including the capacity to negotiate and work effectively with a range of individuals and agencies so that program objectives are achieved.
- Demonstrated resilience, managing self-care in high pressure environments and ability to support and lead and develop staff in this context. Particularly in the context of work with families where there is abuse and neglect.
- High level written and computer skills with the ability to prepare and review reports (including court reports) and maintain client records to a high standard.
- Ability to work flexible hours and participate in an on-call roster.

EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE

Mandatory:

- A recognised Social Work degree or a similar welfare or behavioural related degree which includes:
 - a. a primary focus on child development, human behaviour, family dynamics and/or impacts of trauma and preferably
 - b. a practical component such as counselling or case work practice.
 or
- A recognised Diploma of Community Services work or similar qualification, which is studied over a minimum of two academic years of full-time study (or part-time equivalent) and includes:
 - c. a primary focus on child development, human behaviour, family dynamics and/or impacts of trauma
 - d. supervised fieldwork placements (ideally completed within the child and family welfare sector) and at least one unit in case management, case work practice or counselling.
- Minimum of 3 years' experience working in the child, youth and family's sector will be highly valued.

*If you don't meet these requirements but strongly believe and are able to demonstrate you have the knowledge and capacity to fulfill this role, please contact us

Desired:

- Experience in managing teams will be an asset.
- Aboriginal applicants are encouraged to apply.

REQUIREMENTS

- You must have and continue to hold a full Victorian Driver's Licence, a current employment Working with Children Check card and a National Police Check.
- Current COVID-19 vaccination (minimum one dose, prior to commencement)

POSITION ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Team Leader will provide supervision and leadership to a team of Case Managers, ensuring that all practice requirements are met. This includes investigation, assessment and action needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in the program, in addition to developing case plans that meet that long term needs of the child. Ensuring at all times staff practice in culturally safe ways in line with VACCA's cultural therapeutic ways. In addition, they may be required to carry a small caseload.

MANAGEMENT

- Provision of high quality supervision of Case Managers.
- Ensure Aboriginal culture is embedded in all aspects of the program.
- Ensure awareness and compliance (self and staff) to relevant legislation, policy and procedure.
- Chair and facilitate as necessary any meetings (team meetings, care team meetings, inter and intra agency meetings)
- Data collection and monitoring of case manager's compliance with standards and legislation. Timely reporting of this information as requested.
- Actively participate in the development and implementation of the pilot program.

OVERSEE THE INVESTIGATION INTO REPORTS OF HARM

- With support from senior staff, lead and oversee investigations into reports of harm received by child protection about Aboriginal children and young people, ensuring that all investigations are completed to highest standards and in line with procedural timelines.
- Conduct outreach visits to family homes as needed,
- Coach staff to use high quality investigation and interview skills.
- Support assessments as to the need for protection.
- Ensure recommendations and assessments are provided to decision makers urgently in line with procedures.

ENGAGEMENT AND WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

- Lead and mentor staff in using engagement skills to establish and maintain effective working relationships with children, young people, their families and carers.
- Have a sound knowledge and ability to coach staff in understanding child development and the impact that abuse and trauma can have.

- Have a sound knowledge of the ongoing impact of past policies and practices relating to Aboriginal families.
- Lead staff in a way that promotes creativity and the use of a variety of tools and resources to ensure that children and young people understand their rights and actively participate in decisions made about their future.
- Foster connections for children and young people with wider family and community networks.
- Where a child or young person is found to be in need of protection. Oversee Case Managers to engage the family on a voluntary basis to address the concerns with children, families and community to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing.
- In line with the Children Youth and Families Act (2005) and VACCA policy and guidelines – work alongside children and families to:
 - Identify risks and safety concerns
 - Develop, implement and review case and cultural plans to attend to children's safety and wellbeing needs – drawing upon cultural and healing practices as well as family decision making as part of this process.
- Where the child or young person's safety and wellbeing is unable to be ensured through voluntary engagement with the family, ensure all action needed is taken to protect the child or young person. This may include making protection applications, and any other work associated with the application including giving of evidence, preparation of court reports, presenting information and recommendations on decisions and actions in the best interests of the child.
- Ensure all client records and files are up to date and that the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) is used for recording, analysing and reviewing client information.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND CASE PLANNING

- Oversee case management and case planning, pursuant to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and VACCA specific requirements.
- Demonstrate best practice in culturally appropriate assessments, case planning and case management, including court work, in accordance with the program requirements and VACCA program manuals.
- Support staff to understand and follow policy in managing serious/complex case issues, critical incidents, worker safety issues and quality of care concerns.
- Prepare and review, high quality court reports, present information and make recommendations to the Children's Court and other relevant courts and tribunal processes on decisions and actions in the best interests of the child.
- Represent children, young people, families and VACCA in the Victorian Children's Court. Representation may include giving evidence to the court under cross examination.
- Develop and review case plans for children in the program, including managing family decision making processes and participating in family decision making meetings, as required.
- Understand and incorporate cultural and healing approaches, within casework and case planning procedures and practice.
- Ensure all client records and files are up to date and that the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) is used for recording, analysing and reviewing client information.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

- Actively build strong partnerships with all VACCA programs and the Aboriginal community, to streamline service delivery and effectiveness for children and families.
- Work collaboratively with VACCAs In House Legal Service
- Provide information on the program initiatives to a range of external stakeholders including all DFFH divisions, Aboriginal organisations and community service providers.
- Able to provide information to Aboriginal children, families, carers and other VACCA staff about the practices and processes of program initiatives.
- Work collaboratively with children, their families, carers, and key service providers to deliver improved outcomes to Aboriginal children, families and carers.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

- Ensure compliance with the OH&S Act and VACCA policies.
- Contribute positively and proactively to team and organisation wide OH&S activities.

QUALITY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Ensure compliance with legislation, contract and policy requirements in your work in order to meet the organisation's audit, contract and registration obligations.
- Proactively apply your specialist knowledge in the review and maintenance of HR policies, systems and processes.
- Continue the development of a culturally strong and positive working environment using a continuous improvement approach.

OTHER

- Generate general and specific communication to stakeholders via effective and timely use of Staff Bulletin, intranet, forums and other opportunities as they arise.
- Participate proactively in team project initiatives.
- Support other team members in periods of high demand and during periods of absence.
- Undertake other duties as directed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We are committed to Aboriginal self-determination and supporting strong, safe, thriving Aboriginal communities and aim to ensure every individual is treated with dignity, honouring all cultural backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities and spiritual beliefs.

VACCA is a child-safe organisation and is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people with zero tolerance for child abuse. All successful applicants will be required to undertake a National Police Record Check and Working with Children Check prior to commencement of employment and periodically following commencement.

VACCA is an equal opportunity employer and has a smoke-free workplace policy.