**Vaso Elefsiniotis:** My name is Vaso Elefsiniotis, I work with VAEAI, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, and have been...for a long time now, about 10 years, and my role is as senior project officer with Aboriginal languages and curriculum. And I want to thank Zeta and the VCAA for inviting us to be part of this really interesting and exciting series of webinars. We’ve been excited about it anyway, so I hope you guys are at your end as well. And, yeah, and thank you for making the time to participate in this series.

So, today is an introduction... Keep an eye on the time. Today is an introduction to the upcoming webinars. So my focus is to talk briefly about VAEAI, to provide a historical context around the call for Aboriginal studies in pre- and in-service teacher training and vitally in the Australian and Victorian curriculums – or curricula as some people still call – and to talk about our resources that we produce at VAEAI.

And one reason... And I don’t know if it’s obvious to everyone out there. And I can’t see you, so it makes it a little bit tricky. One reason why we’re all here today as a panel is because we work together in partnership, and none of the work that we do could be as successful if we don’t work in partnerships. Zack mentioned the partnership with VAEAI in Marrung and in Aboriginal education. I’ll talk a bit about that. VACL and VAEAI partner very closely and have in the teaching of Aboriginal languages, so Fay and I have been working together for a long time. And VAEAI and the VCAA partner in terms of curriculum developments and resources that we can do to support the implementation of Aboriginal histories and cultures in the curriculum. So we do... And so the department, the VCAA – or ‘VICCA’ – VAEAI and VACL pretty much work very closely together across quite a few projects. So, um...

Peter, I’m not sure how to move these slides. I might just... My little... You might want to jump to the... This one. Yeah, thank you.

So... Where was I? So, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated... And I hope you all know about VAEAI, but many don’t. So don’t worry. You can jump on our website and have a look after the webinar or in your own time. But, if you don’t know, VAEAI is the peak state-wide Aboriginal community-controlled organisation for education and training in Victoria. We represent Victoria’s Koorie community around education and training policy and strategy at local, state and national levels. We’re also the Victorian government’s formal partner in Koorie education and the Department of Education and Training’s principal partner in the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, which Zack talked about. It’s really well worth looking into. It is a 10-year plan, and we’re very excited about the 10-year plan because it enables us to do a lot more than three- and four- year plans and... Yes, in a nutshell, really.

So a little bit of history. I thought we might just use this opportunity to go a little bit of a history trip. So, you know, as an organisation, VAEAI – and others, but I’m talking from VAEAI’s perspective – has been pushing and fighting for over 40 years for an education system that genuinely and authentically reflects and respects the prime place of Aboriginal people in this nation’s history and culture, and for the right to be actively involved in decisions that affect our communities, education and training outcomes as First Peoples... First Nations peoples. VAEAI formed over 40 years ago because of the extremely poor education outcomes for Aboriginal people, largely due to the complete lack of cultural understanding in schools. It’s time to make a change. So, it’s been a very long journey, and I’m just going to take you through...if you allow me, take you through that very long journey very quickly.

So we’re really proud of the reformation that is occurring in our education systems and in our schools right now and has been for quite a few years, particularly in recent years. So, that is Aboriginal histories and cultures and their emerging place in our education systems, our schools, our early youth services, and in vocational training and professional development. It’s taken a long time, a phenomenal 40 years at least. You can see from the start, 1975 there. It’s taken a long time. And it’s taken this long because, as we know, there have been...there’s been quite a lot of resistance and many obstacles and hurdles, and there still is.

So if we look back for a moment... Can we go the next slide, Peter? And I think I’ve, hopefully, got this right with my notes. (LAUGHS) For over 40 years, there have been calls nationally to introduce Aboriginal studies in the curriculum and in the training of pre-service and practising teachers.

Looking at teacher training first. These... These slides... One... Anyway... These two...next two slides plot some of the calls for Aboriginal teacher training focused on teaching Aboriginal students effectively.

Back in 1975... Can we go back one slide? Thank you. I thought I got that a little bit mixed up. Back in 1975, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Report to the Commonwealth recommended that all teacher trainees in Australia should study subjects relating to Aboriginal society.

In 1979, the Australian Education Council called for the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies as core units of all pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

In 1985, the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Affairs noted a strong case exists for including Aboriginal studies at the tertiary level and in particular in teacher training subjects.

And in 1991, following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, three explicit recommendations were made, blending the need for both teacher training and curriculum inclusion. Those recommendations. One – that all teacher training courses include courses which will enable student teachers to understand that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters, and to teach the curriculum which reflects those matters. Second recommendation back in 1991 – that in-service training courses for teachers be provided so that teachers may improve their skill, knowledge and understanding to teach curricula which incorporate Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters. And the third recommendation – that Aboriginal people should be involved in the training courses both at student, teacher and in service level.

Two years later, at the Yatha: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Teacher Education Conference, a statement was issued recommending that, from no later than 1996, all pre-service teacher education programs include core Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander studies for all education...teacher education students.

And in 1994, 25 years ago – 26 now – the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples recommended that, by the year 2001, employers of teaching staff should provide in-service subjects in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness to counter racism and teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students or staff.

Now, Zeta mentioned at the start about the difficulties that teachers have, and I sort of ask you to reflect on your own teacher training and think about whether you did in your own teacher training mandatory core units about Aboriginal histories and cultures, because that’s at the core of the difficulty that we know teachers are grappling with now. It’s taken a long time, but people have been asking for this for a long time. Can we change to the next slide, Peter, please?

At the turn of the century, in 1999 – I’ll keep talking and the next slide will come on – systems will require a mandatory component of Aboriginal studies as a prerequisite for employment of all teachers. That was from the Australian College of Education at the National Indigenous Education Conference.

20 years later, we’re still trying to get these recommendations heard and cemented into and across systems. So I ask again, how many of you were required to do compulsory units related to Aboriginal studies during your teacher training? And you can feel free to respond in the chat if Peter will... Peter will collect that information, I hope. But it’s... I don’t believe it’s mandatory yet, and I think that that’s at the core of some of the difficulty we have.

But what about Aboriginal studies in the curriculum? So I think we can go to the next slide, Peter. Following... No, I think I’ve mixed it. Come back one. Following VAEAI and National Aboriginal Education Council calls, in 1989, the Hobart Declaration on Schooling’s goal was to provide students with an understanding and respect of our cultural heritage, including the particular cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups. These were the COAG – Coalition of Australian Governments – national education goals for the upcoming decade.

Soon, followed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policies goal in 1990, to enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, culture and identity, and to provide all Australian students with an understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures.

Now, that was 30 years ago, yet systems, universities, schools and teachers are still struggling with this. If only the calls for specialised teacher training and the inclusion of Aboriginal studies had seriously been taken on board and invested in back then, things would surely be easier now.

So, now, if we... We’re getting a bit closer now. In 2008, the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians’ second goal was that all young Australians understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. But we’ve not yet reached our destination.

But we can see at the end of this time line that these calls are now being addressed, and have been for the last three, four, five years as they never have before, through the development of a national curriculum from 2010 with Aboriginal histories and cultures as a national cross-curricular priority. And I’ll highlight the cross-curricular priority, as Zeta did, because the idea is that Aboriginal histories and cultures are taught across every subject area.

Then in 2016, as Zack mentioned, we had the start, the development of the Marrung education 10-year plan with community partnerships at its core.

And then we had the reformation of the Victorian curriculum by 2017, from the old VELS to AusVELS, and now the relatively new Victorian curriculum E-10 or F-10, with Koorie perspectives continuing to be woven in, most recently in the arts learning area and increasingly maths and science, particularly in the Australian curriculum.

So what’s changed, what’s so different now, and how can we make it work really well? Let’s consider that for a moment as we recall how we got here. So, can we please go to the next slide, Peter? VAEAI’s philosophy has always been that Aboriginal studies is an essential part of the education of all students in Australia, and that education is a lifelong process, birth to death. Why? Because every child has the right to know the heritage of this country, and only when we do this will this nation reach its full maturity. I had to go to uni to study and study Aboriginal studies, to start learning about Aboriginal history in this country. I went through an education system here in Victoria and I can remember exactly what I learnt. And there were a handful...handful of things. So I started learning when I was at uni. What we’re doing now, the education system is being revolutionised, and from Prep...from Kinder earlier, kids are learning about Aboriginal histories and cultures, and I’m personally very, very excited to see that change over these last 30, 40 years.

So, you know, nearly a decade ago, VAEAI developed and circulated a visionary framework for embedding Koorie cultures, histories and perspectives in Victorian schools. And this came after a lot of consultation and discussion with our local education communities and Koorie educators at the time. Zack talked about the role of the Koorie education workforce and gratefully mentioned the LAECGs, our Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups. So that’s who we’re talking about when we’re talking about local communities and Koorie educators.

So, the framework for embedding Koorie cultures, histories and perspectives in Victorian schools outlined a four-point strategy to achieving structural and systemic change within the Victorian education sector. Peter, would you mind going to the next slide? Because I can’t remember if I actually put the slide in.

No, it’s come out. That’s alright. What I’ll do is I’ll get you to have a look at... If you’re interested in the in that framework, it’s on VAEAI’s website. And we will just – keeping in mind with time – look at some of the resources that we’re producing at VAEAI and have been pretty much since...since just before the Victorian curriculum came in in 2017.

But if I can just mention the framework, it was developed around the 4...4-point attack, and the first one was about pre-service and in-service teacher training, which I’ve talked about so far in this presentation. The other one was for... The second point was for professional development, for in-service teachers and for all school staff, including reception. And many of you would be in schools that have gone through the CAST training, Community Awareness and Safety Training. I just think...because we’ve changed the terminology a little bit about that. So it’s Community Awareness and Safety Training. And that’s part of the idea that was sort of thought about about 12 years ago when we developed this framework, just to prepare teachers and schools a lot better for teaching Aboriginal kids and Torres Strait Islander kids, and also teaching about Aboriginal histories and cultures.

And I noticed Zeta, at the start, talked about the division between history and culture. And I remember Lois Peeler, who was the LAECG in Healesville years ago. And I remember that when she was talking to a group of students. And for her, there was no issue. She said, you know, as the person that Zeta referenced, it’s not the role of you as teach...for non-Aboriginal teachers to be teaching culture. However, it is your role to teach about history. Aboriginal history is Australia’s history, and Australia’s history includes Aboriginal history. That’s my history, and that’s what I want my kids to learn. And that’s...that’s what...that’s... If it helps to think about things, then teaching about Aboriginal history is a lot easier to do. Teaching about Aboriginal culture, that’s where you’re encouraged to link in with your LAECGs to build your relationship with your local Aboriginal community, Koorie community, and also with the...your parent community, your Koorie parents in your schools, so that you can bring in that expertise to teach about culture.

As teachers, it’s your role to.... We believe it’s your role to enable that learning to happen in the best way that you can. So there is no expectation that you’d be experts in Aboriginal culture. There is maybe no expectation that you be experts in history, Australian history. But, certainly, we can all teach about Australian history, including Aboriginal, the impact that this history has had on Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

So now, jump... That was a little bit...my rave about all of that before our resources. So if you jump on our website and... I don’t know if I...I don’t think that I can do this online, Peter, can I, jump to them? But if you jump...if you go onto our website, right up at the top tab, you’ll see Resources. And if you click on to that, you will see Koorie Education Resources. And this is... These are sort of... VAEAI make quite a few different resources, but these are the ones that are particular to do with curriculum and teaching of Aboriginal histories and cultures. So can we jump to the next slide, please, Peter?

The main one, if you’re not aware of it, this is the Koorie Education Calendar, and it is prepared every year and updated. What the... And it’s probably the first resource that we made. The idea behind it. What we... Let me put it this way – what we knew was that it was easy for teachers to Google information and to find lots of information around Aboriginal people in Central Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, whatever was available. Now, VAEAI proposes – and the Department supports this, and the VCAA – a model that talks about focusing, when it comes to teaching Aboriginal perspectives, looking...starting with the local and then moving out – local, regional, state-wide, national, international Indigenous perspectives. So, there’s so much information about Aboriginal people in other states, but also living a more traditional lifestyle. So what we wanted to do with the start of these resources, and started with the calendar, was to really focus it on Victorian perspectives.

So, it’s updated every year. It’s framed around... The calendar is framed around significant dates, but it’s not intended to be only used with those dates. It’s a framework for how to think about things and maybe how to prioritise some...some of your learning. The... As I said, the calendar’s updated every year, because so many links disappear or change. And we aim to have each of the pictures hyperlinked to a resource that’s out there. So, basically, in my role, I do desktop research and try and highlight Aboriginal achieve...Victorian Aboriginal achievements, people, heroes, significant dates, significant events, and Victorian-focused resources. Next slide, please, Peter.

So, we also...and then, from the calendar, developed this idea of putting out a regular bulletin, and the bulletin...we mostly aim to get it out every couple of months. If you...when you...later on if you don’t receive it through the mailing list... And I’ll talk about that soon, but if you don’t receive it through the mailing list, you can jump online and have a look at the latest one, which was for August-September. This slide here should just show some pictures from last year’s last bulletin.

What’s different about the bulletin and the calendar is the bulletin expands on information in the calendar and is more current during the year. It’s also... And this is where it seems to be very valuable, and certainly from the feedback that I get, it’s linked to curriculum, to the Victorian curriculum.

So I really encourage you, if you’re not already on my mailing list, to send me an email. My email will be up at the end of this presentation, but it’s easy to remember – it’s [vaso@vaeai.org.au](mailto:vaso@vaeai.org.au) – and I can add you to the bulletin.

This particular edition, the last edition for this... Our most recent edition focused on Science Week, for instance, and Literacy Week, coming up this week that we’re in now. So, yeah, I encourage you to have a look and...and be aware that really what I’m doing is, or what we’re doing is, desktop research to see what’s available out there. There is so much that’s available. But you guys as teachers, you’re so busy. So the idea was to try and make it a little bit easier and bring all that information in together. Do you want to jump to the next slide, Peter?

So, the next development on from... So, we started with the calendar, then we had the bulletins, and then this idea of some briefs and features, just easy...easy grabs, or focused grabs. So, for instance, one that seemed to be really popular... Because we were getting questions like, “Can kids paint dots?” Dots not being a Victorian traditional art form. So we created a bit of a feature called “But can they paint dots?” So, that should answer some of the context behind it. And...and just for a very quick answer, yes, you can, but you need to do it in context, and that context is explained in that feature. So I think my time is nearly, nearly coming up... Or has it already passed? Can we go one more slide?

We also promote new resources in the bulletins and the features. So not only what’s in the calendar, but what...what’s come up since the most recent update. In this slide in front of you is Mungo Explorer, when it was launched last year, which is really, really exciting. And if you don’t know about Mungo Explorer, please go and look it up, Google it. It’s...it’s an amazing teaching resource, really, based on the work of Jim Bowler, and put together by his daughter, Jenny Bowler. And it’s...it’s...it’s a love work, really, I’d have to say, a passion work, because it brings everything together, and particularly current traditional owner involvement in Mungo. Next slide, please, Peter.

I think that’s nearly pretty much at the end of this presentation for the introduction. We did talk a bit... Zack mentioned Marrung and the commitment to growing Aboriginal languages in education. We have currently 18 kinders part of a funded Aboriginal Languages program through...through funding from the Victorian government. That’s 18 kinders across the state.

We have 14 to 20 schools teaching about Aboriginal languages, and why there are two numbers there is a mix between a formal LOTE and language and culture sessions, so...and that expands the numbers. 14 is...as a formal LOTE. And we have vocational education and training. We’ve been piloting and delivering Certificate III in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language that was piloted over the last couple of years with the Victorian School of Languages, and those graduates are now...most of those graduates are now doing the Certificate IV in Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language, and that’s being delivered by Swinburne TAFE.

So the kinders and schools are really looking at this cohort of students across the state to teach about Koorie languages, Aboriginal languages, and they’re really being... Can’t think of the world, really. But they they’re just being really picked... (LAUGHS) ‘Headhunted’ was the word I was looking for. So... Do I have another slide, Peter, or did we... Close it off there? That’s it. Alright.

So I’m going to pass on to Fay Muir, Aunty Fay Muir, from VACL – Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. And I hope you’ve enjoyed our presentation so far.

**Peter Fisher:** Fay, you just need to unmute yourself to speak.

**Aunty Fay Muir:** Ah. That’s it. Got it. Thank you. Hi, everyone. My name’s Fay Stewart-Muir, a Boonwurrung-Wamba Wamba woman. And it’s really great to be here today to talk to you about Aboriginal languages. But first of all, I’d like to pay my respects and acknowledge the traditional owners – we’re all on different lands – and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I work with the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. I’m a language specialist and a cultural educator. So I go out into the schools and take language out to the schools, and early childhood, and teach the kids out there. VACL is the peak body for Victorian Aboriginal languages, which there are 44 different languages in Victoria. A lot of them are different. Some might have words that you know from one area to the other, but most of them are... Especially in the Central Kulin, which is around the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Djab Wurrung, Woiwurrung and Boon Wurrung, we have language that is similar, or words that are similar.

We work closely with VAEAI and VCAA. And with getting Aboriginal languages into schools, into the curriculum, which has been a long process, working... As Vaso said, I’ve been working with her for over 10 years, and we’ve been working on this together. And it looks as though things are really cracking along now, which is great, especially in the F-10 for schools.

One of the problems with this, though, has been we haven’t had Aboriginal teachers to take the language out, to be taught into the schools, which has been a problem, because we’ve had to have a degree to do that. And, as Vaso said, we’ve now got a cohort of teachers going through at the moment, doing their fourth year, which is fantastic. And I know that there’s a lot more that want to do it out in the community, to start... They were looking at this first cohort to see how it went. Now they’re all eager to...to do the course and be teachers themselves and go out into the schools. I know one of the problems when I was doing my teaching degree at Deakin, there was not one unit to do with Aboriginal culture or language being taught at Deakin when I went through in the 1980s.

Language is not taught separately either when we’re teaching in schools. Language and culture go together, because culture directs our language. It... (COUGHS) Sorry. It describes where we live, it describes country, it describes who we are. So language and culture go very much together, and we can’t separate it.

There are protocols for using language, so we’ve got to be...well, teachers have got to be aware of that. They need permission before they can teach a traditional language, and they need to get that from the traditional owners before that can happen.

So, they’ve got to know who the traditional owners are from where their school is situated, and get in contact with the traditional owners. One of the things, if you don’t know who your traditional owner is, you can always find out through VACL. They will put you in touch with the correct person to contact.

So, it’s really important that you do understand the language. It can’t be just looked up on – especially Victorian languages – can’t be looked up on Mr Google. And you can just use a language there in your own teaching, because that’s not the thing...not the done thing here in Victoria, or anywhere else in Australia. Language had got to be...come from the traditional owners, and the permission has to be got from the traditional owners as well.

At the moment, VACL’s website is being upgraded, so it’s offline at the moment. So I’m really sorry about that. But if you need to get in contact with...with VACL, I’ll get Peter to write up VACL’s contacts for everybody to see.

I haven’t got much more to say. It’s just to make sure that...that we are getting teachers out there but they do take time to go through the teaching. And I’m only one person, so I can’t be in too many places at once, I’m afraid. I have been trying to over the years, but it does wear you out a bit, so I hope that you all understand that language is really...really coming to the fore now, because everybody wants to teach a language from kindergarten right through nowadays, which is fantastic to see. And it’s great that it’s happening at long last, because it has been something that’s been wanted out there for a long time. And it’s very pleasing for Aboriginal people to see this is happening, with...you know, with their blessing.

But you must understand that language, some...some of the traditional owners might not want their language to be taught, because they still are looking for... I want to say that they are wanting to learn their own language first, because their languages were not...their elders were not allowed to speak their language – they had to speak English. So it’s something that is being still felt by the Aboriginal people today here in Victoria that, first of all, they want to learn their language and then pass it on to the next...to all people in the community. So I hope you understand and go with that, as well. So, thank you very much. Are you there, Zeta?

**Zeta Wilson:** Yep. Sorry. Thank you. Thank you, Aunty Fay.

**Aunty Fay Muir:** That’s OK.

**Zeta Wilson:** The day is almost finished. I’ll just wrap this up real quickly. As you can see, the coming sessions of the webinars for this program. It’s gonna be co-delivered with curriculum managers and key stakeholders from VAEAI and VACL. You’ll see the dates there start today and it ends on Thursday, 10 September. Just think of it as a paper experience about unpacking the contents of Aboriginal perspectives across the learning areas.

We’ll move on now to the next slide, just to end up. Something just to be real reflective about what we discussed, which was the overview of Aboriginal perspectives across the Victorian curriculum F-10, and the role of the key stakeholders in education. What words resonated with you today, this afternoon and what would you do differently in your current role about embedding Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum? So, here’s a question for you to think about, reflect about your current practice – what will you do differently, or identify one classroom or school action that you can put into practice.

And I’m just mindful that, yes, we have run out of time for some questions, but the questions you have posed, we’ll try and take them on board and share that throughout the views of webinars. So I would like to say thank you for participating in today’s webinar. And that’s it. Hand over to you, Craig. Oh, yep. Sorry.

**Craig Smith:** That’s alright. We are out of time. Thank you, everyone, for your participation this afternoon. Very lately, we just got news that our CEO, Stephen Gniel, is an apology for this afternoon. He had prepared a presentation. Unfortunately, due to technical issues, Stephen couldn’t get onto the session. So he just...or his office, contacted us just to give his apologies, and perhaps he may get another opportunity before the end of this program.

Anyway, we’ve got a lot to get on with, starting tomorrow. There’ll be a session run every day except Friday for the next two weeks. We look forward to you joining us again and bringing your questions and comments to the next session. So, on behalf of the VCAA, I’d just like to give my sincere thanks to all our panellists. Thank you for your presentations. And also our thanks to you for attending. And we look forward to seeing you either tomorrow or in one of the other sessions to come. Thank you and good afternoon.

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