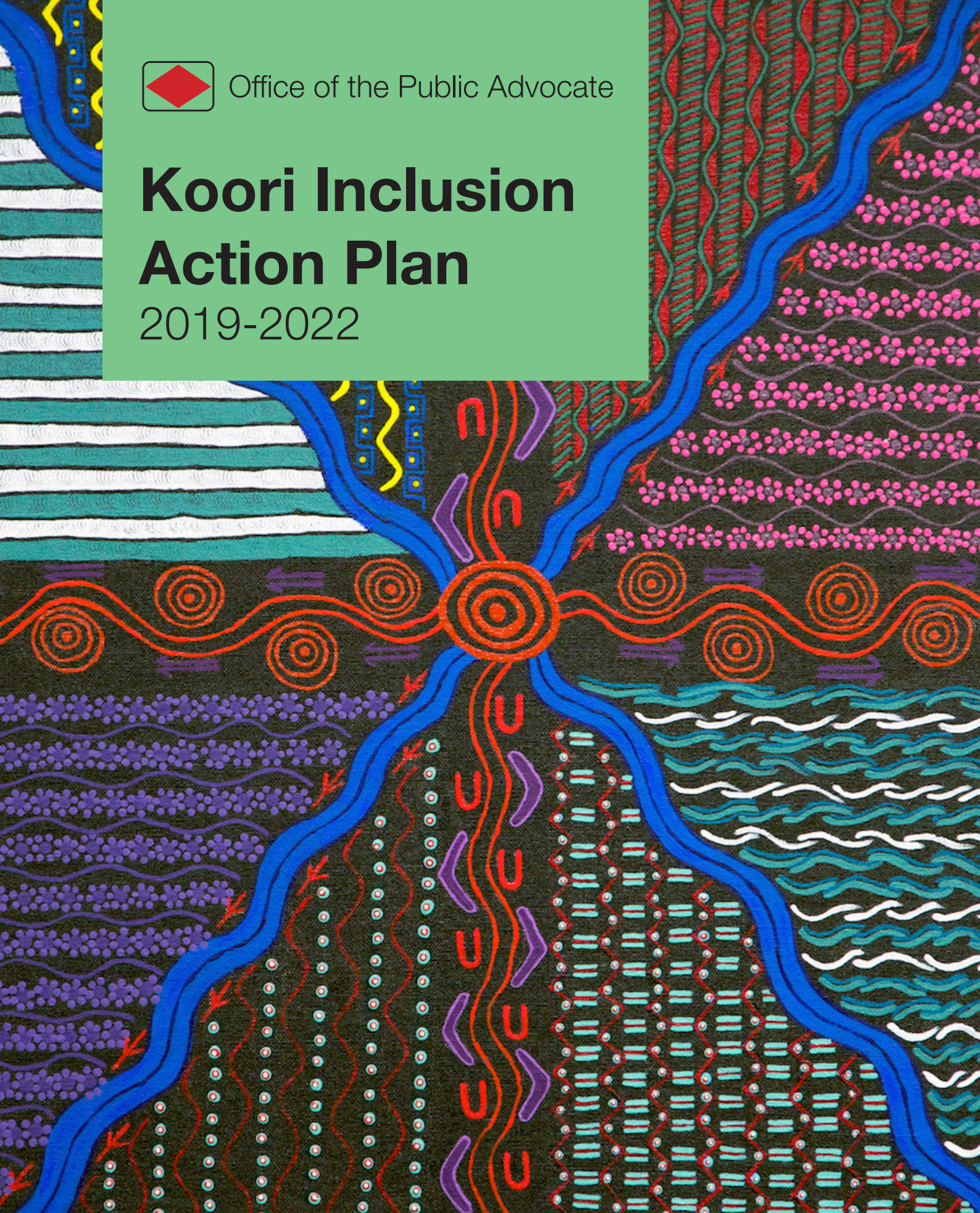


Office of the Public Advocate

Koori Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2022



Diversity Statement

The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) is a human rights organisation that promotes the diversity and inclusion of all people. This is reflected in its mission for a just and inclusive society that respects and promotes the dignity and human rights of all people. To enable that vision to be actioned, our staff and volunteers support people with disability and mental illness and promote and protect their rights. Our values of respect and compassion, integrity, rights and independence reflect and underpin our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

We respect the diverse range of life experiences, skills, abilities, cultural backgrounds and knowledge that staff, volunteers and clients bring to their interactions with us and understand that one size does not fit all. A diverse environment supports flexibility and adaptability.

We are committed to being inclusive and ensuring that everyone we interact with feels valued, respected and heard. We strive to empower all people to contribute and participate.

OPA's Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2019-2022 sets out how, over the next four years, we

will demonstrate our commitment to supporting our staff, volunteers and clients in an inclusive way. The framework consists of five plans that seek to address the barriers that prevent some people who may face multiple disadvantages from accessing our services or contributing to the organisation as staff or volunteers.

These plans are our *Cultural Diversity Plan*, *Disability Action Plan*, *Koori Inclusion Action Plan*, *LGBTIQ Inclusion Plan*, and *Gender Equity Plan*.

Each plan contains four key strategies to facilitate a common focus and direction.

These strategies are systemic inclusion, data and service improvement, employment and economic participation, and community engagement and partnerships.

We strive to be a 'best practice' organisation by creating a welcoming and inclusive culture. The strategies, goals and actions outlined in this framework ensure that OPA's work and culture is inclusive of all members of the Victorian community that it serves, in line with its human rights vision.

Reconciliation Statement

OPA's vision is of a just and inclusive society that values, respects, protects and promotes the dignity and human rights of all people. Our mission is to uphold the rights and interests of people with disability and work to eliminate abuse, neglect and exploitation.

OPA acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture. We pay our respects to their ancestors, elders and communities, who are the custodians of the land on which we work. OPA acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and for whom we provide a service.

OPA recognises the importance of family and kinship networks for Aboriginal people. We acknowledge the impact of colonisation on family and kinship networks and the continued fragmentation that this entails. In undertaking our roles as advocate and as adult guardian of last resort for people with disability, in our provision of advice and education and in the operation of our volunteer programs that promote and protect the rights of people with disability, OPA respects kinship ties within Aboriginal communities.

We commit to developing a better understanding of the diverse experiences, priorities and needs of Aboriginal people with disability, their families and carers.

OPA recognises the importance of connection to country for Aboriginal people and their continuing spiritual connection to land. We acknowledge the impact of colonisation and dispossession of land that has contributed to Aboriginal people experiencing disadvantage across all measures of wellbeing. OPA commits to providing a welcoming, culturally responsive service that responds to the needs of Aboriginal people with disability, their families and carers. We commit to developing relationships with Aboriginal-controlled organisations with a view to making our services more responsive and sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal peoples.

This vision of reconciliation will be achieved through a plan of action. The plan is monitored by the OPA Koori Inclusion Action Plan Committee. Progress against the aims of this plan are reviewed annually.

Message from the Public Advocate



I am delighted to welcome you to OPA's *Koori Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2022*, the third such plan for our office.

One of the most pleasing aspects of preparing this plan, has been the opportunity to reflect on the tangible outcomes

from the previous KIAP 2017-2019, particularly the development and release of an Aboriginal practice guide for all staff providing services to Aboriginal people and their communities in Victoria.

The guide, *Walk With Me, Talk With Me*, provides information about Aboriginal history and culture and how best to work in collaboration and partnership with Aboriginal communities in Victoria. It also helps staff become more culturally aware and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people and communities.

The guide had significant input from Aboriginal people and communities: we engaged Deaf Indigenous Community Consultancy founder, Jody Barney, and Aboriginal consultant Tracey Evans. Feedback was sought from the Aboriginal Community Elders Service, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, and Balit Narrum, which provides a Koori perspective to the disability sector. Some of the information was drawn from *Working with Aboriginal People and Communities – A Practice Resource*, published by the NSW Department of Community Services in 2009.

The guide reflects our desire to embed a conscientiousness of Aboriginal people and culture in all aspects of our work.

OPA's first KIAP, launched in July 2015, was developed as part of the Department of Justice's Koori Inclusion Action Plan; *Mingu Gadhaba: Beginning Together*. Mingu Gadhaba identified several areas where action was needed to improve connections and service delivery to Koori communities in Victoria: systemic inclusion, data and service improvement, employment and economic participation, and community engagement and partnerships.

KIAP 2019-2021 continues to build on this work, with measurable actions to strengthen the inclusion of Koori communities and culture in the work of the office.

Thank you to all staff, especially OPA's KIAP committee, for their work in developing the plan.

While the word 'Koori' is used throughout this plan, my office acknowledges that some members of the community may identify with other names, such as the traditional names of their people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or Indigenous Australian. It is our intention that this plan and its outcomes are inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, just as my office will continue to strive to be.

Colleen Pearce
Public Advocate



Cover artwork

Artist: Kim Kennedy Ngiyampaa
Title: *My Family*
2014
Acrylic on canvas

Artist's Statement

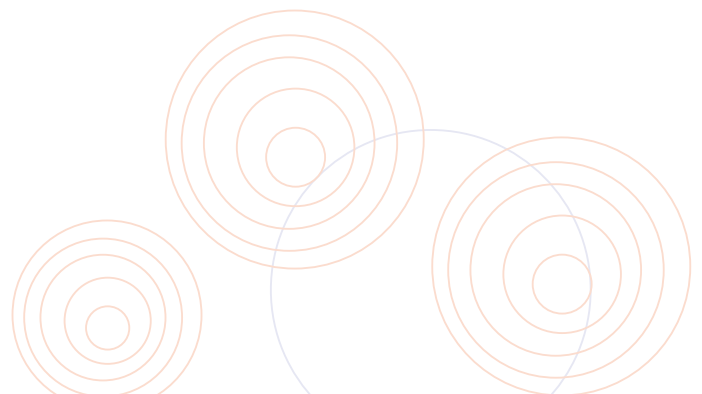
Three Rabbitohs.
One Eel.
Two Daughters who live by the ocean.
Pink flowers for my daughter.
Purple flowers for me.

The artwork was created through The Torch, a not-for-profit organisation that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria.

OPA's goal is to embrace Koori outcomes as a shared responsibility. To achieve this, the organisation will take opportunities to strengthen the inclusion of Koori culture throughout and to include Koori voices in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs that directly affect them.

Systemic Koori Inclusion

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
Internally promote the importance of the KIAP in helping to ensure OPA's roles are exercised in a manner accessible to all Victorians	The KIAP is recognised in OPA's Strategic Plan. OPA's Leadership Team recognises the completion of key KIAP actions and promotes these achievements to OPA staff. For example, through items in the All Staff email or at All Staff meetings.	Leadership Team	Ongoing
Internally promote OPA's guideline for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement	Staff acknowledge Traditional Owners and organise Welcome to Country appropriately and consistently	Communications Unit	Ongoing
Hold annual internal OPA 'Koori Film Festival'	Inclusion and understanding are promoted through the screening of a range of short films	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
KIAP Committee monitors the KIAP	KIAP Committee continues to hold monitoring and planning meetings	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
Provide staff with quick access to information about Koori organisations, Traditional Owners, and relevant Koori history to assist them in their roles	OPAnet has links to information arranged under headings	KIAP Committee Communications Unit	Ongoing
Promote the KIAP Committee and its activities to staff and volunteers	Regular two-minute updates about the work of the KIAP Committee are provided to staff at OPA's quarterly All Staff meetings	Leadership Team KIAP Committee	Ongoing
New staff learn about the KIAP as part of their orientation to OPA	New staff are aware of the KIAP and KIAP Committee via the OPA orientation program	KIAP Committee	Ongoing



Acknowledging the experience of exclusion and how it impacts on the lives of Koori people, their families and communities, is central to improving systems and services. OPA's aim is to work with the Koori community to understand the enablers and barriers to Koori access and participation in the organisation's programs and services, in order to improve service delivery and outcomes.

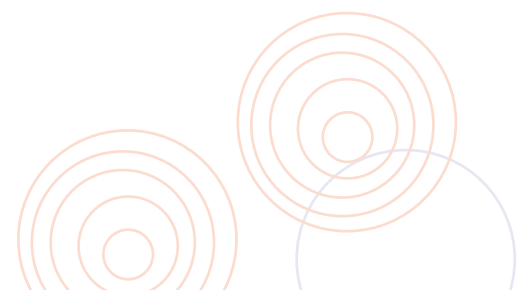
Data and Service Improvement

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
Continue the collection of data on the number of Koori people connecting with OPA in all relevant program areas, in order to inform service delivery	OPA has an increased understanding of the level of Koori participation in its programs and services. Where appropriate, OPA's Systemic Advocacy team has received feedback from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations about the involvement of OPA's Advocate Guardian Program.	KIAP Committee Leadership Team All program areas Systemic Advocacy	Ongoing
Ask the Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ)	OPA has identified at what points the SIQ should be asked in all programs to establish a consistent approach	Each team or program	2020
Self-determination principles, learnings from OPA's 'Your life, your choice' project, the <i>Walk With Me</i> , <i>Talk With Me</i> practice guideline, and data inform service improvement initiatives	OPA undertakes one project or initiative every two years that focuses on improved service delivery	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
Staff with experience working with Koori people and organisations share best practice information to assist other staff	OPA staff are aware of staff members in their team or program area that they can consult with	Program managers	Ongoing
Promote OPA's <i>Walk With Me</i> , <i>Talk With Me</i> practice guideline to OPA staff	All new staff learn about <i>Walk With Me</i> , <i>Talk With Me</i> as part of orientation	KIAP Committee Leadership Team	Ongoing
Apply a Koori lens wherever possible to research projects undertaken by OPA	Where appropriate, the Koori perspective is considered in OPA research projects and submissions	Systemic Advocacy	Ongoing
OPA provides cultural awareness training that enables OPA staff and volunteers to build upon their knowledge	OPA staff and volunteers are offered Koori cultural awareness training annually, including volunteers in regional and rural Victoria. For example, Koorie Heritage Trust training	KIAP Committee Education and Training Committee	Ongoing
OPA provides information sessions for staff to help improve service delivery	OPA holds case conferences, Issues Forums, or information sessions for staff.	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
All staff have a professional development plan goal in a diversity area	An increased number of staff undertaking unconscious bias and cultural awareness training	Leadership Team	Ongoing

The Department of Justice and Community Safety has a strong Koori Employment Strategy and a demonstrated ability to attract, retain and grow Koori employees. It is important that OPA use this foundation to consider how the organisation can contribute to Koori economic participation and development.

Koori Employment & Economic Participation

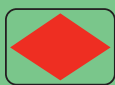
What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
OPA strongly commits to encouraging and increasing Koori employment	<p>OPA position descriptions include a statement encouraging applications from Koori people.</p> <p>There are opportunities for Koori workers and students to experience the OPA work environment. For example, through a student placement, or hot desking exchange arrangement with a Koori organisation.</p> <p>OPA has used internal data to identify potential benefits to the organisation of a Koori-specific position at OPA.</p>	Corporate Services	Ongoing
Advertise positions using Koori-specific avenues	<p>OPA utilises existing networks to promote employment opportunities at OPA, such as Koori Mail and Ethical Jobs.</p> <p>OPA has identified and uses other networks, such as email networks, that are effective pathways to promote employment, volunteer and student placement opportunities at OPA.</p>	Corporate Services	Ongoing
OPA strongly commits to encouraging and increasing the number of Koori volunteers	<p>OPA volunteer position descriptions include a statement encouraging applications from Koori people.</p> <p>OPA engages with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to share information and increase awareness of OPA's volunteer programs.</p>	<p>Safeguarding and Inclusion Volunteer Program</p> <p>KIAP Committee</p>	Ongoing
OPA supports Koori economic participation through established procurement opportunities for Koori business in both Koori-focussed activities and non Koori-focussed activities	<p>The Victorian Indigenous Business Directory is promoted throughout OPA and made available on OPAnet.</p> <p>Koori catering services are used where possible.</p>	<p>Communications Unit</p> <p>All program areas</p>	Ongoing



OPA's goal is to achieve a partnership built on genuine engagement with and respect for Koori people across Victoria. Meaningful engagement and the development of collaborative partnerships will bring a greater understanding of the needs of the community and allow us to respond appropriately.

Community Engagement & Partnerships

What will we do?	What will success look like?	Responsibility	Timeline
OPA has stronger relationships with key local and state-wide Koori organisations, elders, respected community members and the wider Koori community	Relationships with Koori organisations and respected Koori community members are developed and maintained. For example, VACCHO, Rumbalara, BADAC, BDAC, First Peoples' Health and Wellbeing. Where appropriate, Memoranda of Understanding are developed with identified Koori organisations. Where possible, Advocate Guardians travelling to Mildura allow extra time to engage with local Koori organisations.	KIAP Committee Leadership Team	Ongoing
Explore opportunities for information sharing	OPA initiates at least two targeted information-sharing meetings with Koori organisations annually. For example, at the OPA Volunteer Conference, or information sharing about the ITP program	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
OPA ensures there is a session at each annual Australian Guardianship and Administration Council (AGAC) Conference focused on best practice	OPA collaborates with other AGAC members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to deliver these sessions	Leadership Team	Ongoing
Opportunities are explored for resource sharing and collaboration	OPA has explored opportunities for hot desks or resource sharing with at least one rural or regional Koori organisation. OPA has engaged with VCAT to explore possibilities for innovative initiatives.	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
Recognise and participate in significant Indigenous events	OPA participates in events or recognises significant dates such as NAIDOC week, Sorry Day, Mabo Day, and the Anniversary of the National Apology	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
OPA maintains and builds on its relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)	VALS has access to OPA key contact people, and OPA participates in relevant community events organised by VALS	Education and Engagement Officer	Ongoing
OPA maintains and builds upon its relationship with Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES)	ACES has access to OPA key contact people, and OPA participates in relevant community events organised by ACES. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place.	KIAP Committee	Ongoing
Participate in Ballit Narrum, a network of organisations focusing on Koori disability issues in the NDIS context	OPA contributes to raising and highlighting NDIS issues relevant to Koori people, including people not eligible for NDIS	Systemic Advocacy	Ongoing



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