



Ministerial and community signatories to the AJA3 at its launch on 13 March 2013.

How can I be involved?

You can support the AJA3 by:

- getting in touch with your RAJAC to find out more about their work in your community
- participating in and promoting community forums and other RAJAC activities
- raising awareness by displaying this brochure at your workplace or local community organisation.

Who can I contact for more information?

Place label with RAJAC Executive Officer, Chairperson or Department of Justice Regional Office details here

Koori Justice Unit

Tel: 8684 1766

Email: koori.justice@justice.vic.gov.au

Visit www.justice.vic.gov.au

Kurnai Shield © Ms Eileen Harrison, a Kurnai Woman from Gippsland. 'The markings on this shield represent our people and our country.'



Understanding the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA)

A partnership between the Victorian Government and Koori Community



In 2013, the Victorian Government and the Koori community signed the third phase of the AJA (AJA3). The evaluation also found that more work was needed to tackle the complex and intergenerational issues, and that this was best achieved by continuing the AJA into a third phase.

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In 2012, an independent evaluation established that the AJA2 significantly improved justice outcomes for Koories in Victoria, and that the partnership structures have set a strong foundation for current achievements. There were lower numbers of Aboriginal people in prison, fewer offenders and fewer offences committed than expected (based on 2001-06 trends).

Each phase of the AJA builds on the one before it. The second AJA (2006 to 2012) focused on preventing the progression of young Koories into the system, reducing re-offending, and changing the justice system to be more responsive and inclusive in its approach to Koories. It has a strongly place-based approach, and strengthens community justice responses to address issues locally.

The first AJA was the Victorian Government's direct response to the 1997 National Ministerial Summit, which reviewed the implementation of recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The AJA1 ran from 2000 to 2006 and laid the foundation for improved Koori justice outcomes in Victoria by developing robust partnerships and infrastructure, and putting in place a range of new Koori justice initiatives.

What is the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement and how did it begin?

How has the AJA evolved over time?

What is the AJA trying to achieve?

- preventing and reducing the further progression of young Koories into the criminal justice system
- maximising diversion particularly for Koori women
- reducing re-offending across the justice system
- reducing conflict, violence and victimisation and improving support for victims
- addressing issues which drive contact with the justice system such as alcohol and drugs, mental health issues, unstable housing and unemployment
- continuing to strengthen the Koori community-government partnership in addressing Koori justice
- building on cultural strength within the Koori community as a foundation for lasting change, and
- continuing a place-based approach, strengthening community justice responses and improving community safety at the local level.

What is the AJA3?

AJA3 continues the work to improve Koori justice outcomes and reduce over-representation in the criminal justice system. It also has an increased focus on improving the safety of Koori families and communities, to be achieved through:

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework sets — for the first time in Australia — a generational target for closing the gap in justice outcomes, which for AJA3 is:

By 2031, to close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth and adult justice supervision.

AJA3 is the third phase of a long-term change strategy to be rolled out in stages over a generation until the gap is closed. There are 82 actions that form the basis of the AJA3 Action Plan, to be implemented over a five-year period from 2013 to 2018.

AJA3 at a glance

Target: By 2031, to close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth and adult justice supervision.

Vision

To have a Koori community, as part of the broader Victorian community, living free from racism and discrimination, enjoying the same access to human, civil and legal rights, and experiencing the same justice outcomes through a justice system free of inequalities.

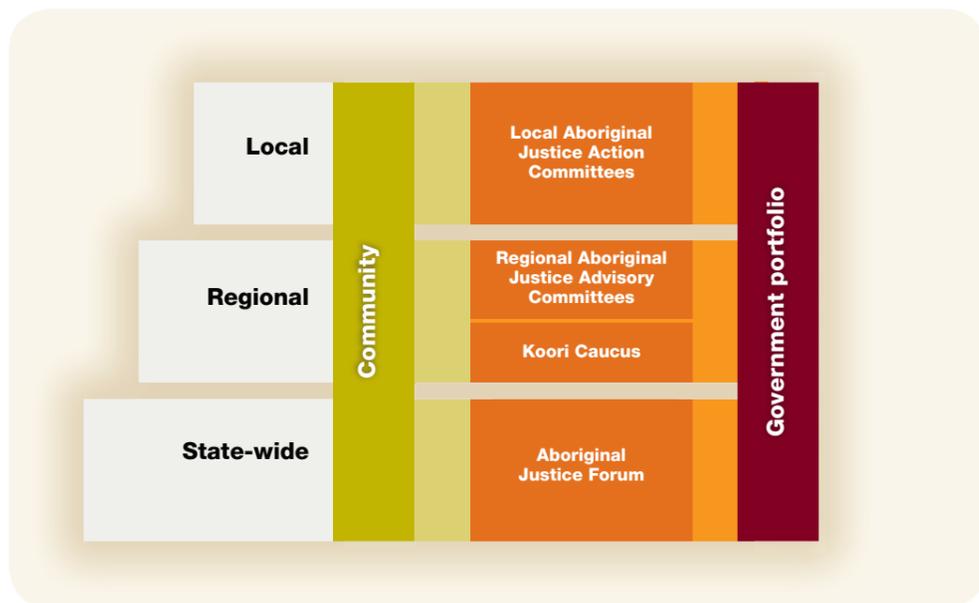
Aim

To minimise Koori over-representation in the criminal justice system by improving accessibility, utilisation and efficacy of justice-related programs and services, in partnership with the Koori community.



Partnership structures of the AJA

The partnership structures of the AJA bring together Koori community and Victorian Government stakeholders across local, regional and state-wide levels.



The **Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF)** is the peak body for overseeing the development, implementation and monitoring of the AJA. It brings together senior representatives of the Victorian Government and members of the Koori community, and meets three times a year in metropolitan and regional locations throughout Victoria.

The **Koori Caucus** comprises the Koori community members of the AJF. The Koori Caucus meets six weeks prior to and the day before each AJF to shape the agenda, discuss key issues of interest and concern, share ideas and solve problems.

The nine **Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs)** bring together key Koori community members and justice agencies in each region. The RAJACs are crucial to the delivery of the AJA on the ground through the development of regional justice plans. An elected Koori Chairperson leads each of the nine RAJACs and represents it on the AJF.

The **Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs)** bring together local Koori community members and justice representatives in selected locations experiencing poor justice outcomes. The LAJACs develop and guide responses to local justice issues, with representation at the AJF through the RAJACs.

What are the principles guiding AJA3?

All signatories to the AJA3 have agreed to:

1. Acknowledge diversity and the strength of connection by Koories to culture, family and country.
2. Acknowledge the impacts of dispossession.
3. Respect and honour the strength and resilience of Koori families.
4. Agree that Koories are entitled to equitable justice outcomes.
5. Be honest, transparent and accountable.
6. Ensure that arrest and imprisonment are sanctions of last resort.
7. Strengthen community justice responses.
8. Support partnerships built on genuine engagement and inclusion.
9. Coordinate a whole of government approach.
10. Strive for best practice.
11. Ensure that services meet the needs of Koories.

Examples of AJA programs and initiatives

Prevention and early intervention Frontline Youth Initiatives and Community Initiative Grant Programs Koori Early School Leaver Program and Youth Employment Service Koori Youth Justice Workers	Diversion: Police Victoria Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers Koori Youth Cautioning Program Aboriginal Community Justice Panels	Sentencing Koori Liaison Officers County Koori Court Magistrates Koori Courts Children's Koori Courts
Reducing conflict, violence and victimisation Koori Community Safety Grants Koori mediation model Koori Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal Koori Victims Support Strategy	Diversion: Court Koori Youth Intensive Bail Support program Court diversion and support programs	Custodial Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers Koori justice mental health strategy Cultural strengthening programs Koori KONNECT program (transitional support)
	Diversion: Fines Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officers Infringement Management and Enforcement Services and Koori Strategy	Non-custodial Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place Indigenous Community Corrections Officers Koori Offender Support and Mentoring Program Local Justice Workers
Responsive and inclusive services Mingu Gadhaba: Beginning Together Koori Inclusion Action Plan Koori Employment Strategy 2011-2015		
Stronger safer communities Community Safety Plans Place-based initiatives		