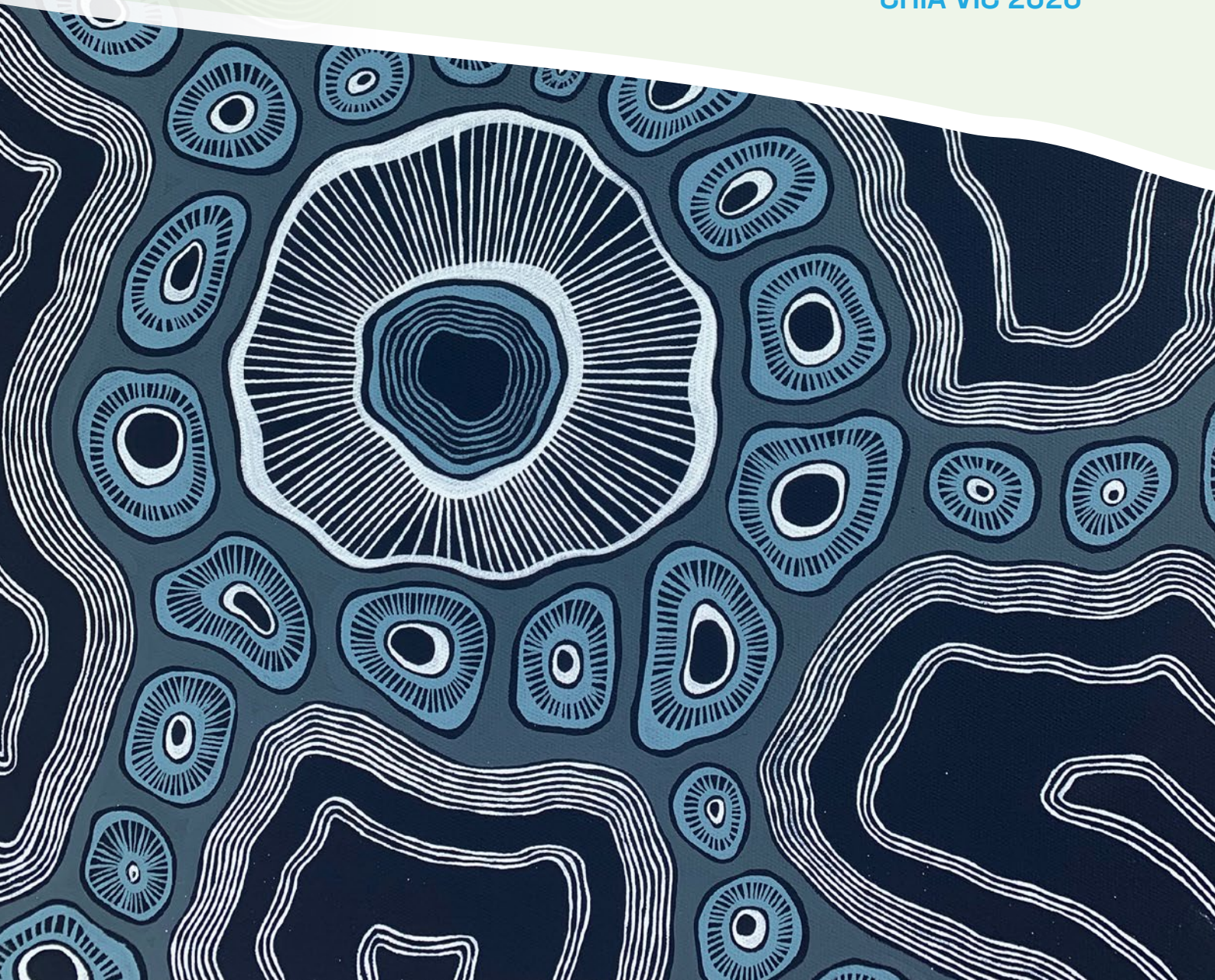




**Community Housing**  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION **VICTORIA**

# **COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK**

CHIA VIC 2020





Djirri Djirri Dance Group perform interpretive Woi wurrung dances at an Aboriginal Housing Victoria 'More Than A Landlord' community event.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We proudly acknowledge the First Peoples of Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Victorian Traditional Owners maintain that their sovereignty has never been ceded, and Aboriginal Victorians have long called for treaty. From time immemorial Victorian Traditional Owners have practised their laws, customs and languages, and nurtured Country through their spiritual, cultural, material and economic connections to land, water and resources.

Through the strength, resilience and pride of Aboriginal Victorians, their cultures, communities and economies endure and continue to grow and thrive today. We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, and the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country.<sup>1</sup>

## Cover Artwork Details

Tarryn Love, '*Peeneeyt*'.  
Translation: Strength.  
Acrylic on canvas.

The central theme of this artwork expresses the idea of various different Indigenous Nations coming together to a central meeting place to co-exist and co-operate with unity, therefore creating a strong diverse community. The large circular shape in the centre recognises all the Indigenous voices contributing to this community and represents the sovereignty and self-determination of each of those individuals.

Tarryn Love is a proud Gunditjimarra Keeray Woorrong woman from Western Victoria. Tarryn has a strong passion for culture which is heavily inspired by her family who teach her traditional stories and practices. Through her art she not only continually explores her knowledge but also revives and reinvigorates styles through her experience as a young modern Indigenous woman, while concurrently expressing her identity.

Thank you to Aboriginal Housing Victoria who supplied the cover artwork. This artwork was commissioned to commemorate the launch of the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework. The document is titled *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort: Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home* and can be accessed online at [vahhf.org.au](http://vahhf.org.au).

Please note that in this Framework 'Aboriginal' refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Images used throughout this document are courtesy of Aboriginal Housing Victoria.

1. From the *Advancing the Victorian Treaty Process Annual Report and Plan 2018-19*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian Government ©State of Victoria, August 2019



# STATEMENT OF INTENT FROM THE COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR

*"The Community Housing Sector is committed to ending the severe housing disadvantage that Aboriginal people experience in Victoria.*

*We agree it is unacceptable that 17 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians need the support of specialist homelessness services.*

*We commit to supporting implementation of the Aboriginal communities' Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort.*

*Aboriginal homelessness ends when every Aboriginal person has a home.*

*The Community Housing Sector understands and supports Aboriginal self-determination.*

*Individually and collectively, we are committed to achieving culturally safe, accessible and sustainable housing for Aboriginal people in the community housing sector that builds pathways to independence and prosperity.*

*We commit to providing culturally safe workplaces and services, and to building strong relationships with Aboriginal people and communities to ensure our organisations are welcoming and inclusive.*

*We make these commitments because we believe we play an important role supporting the Aboriginal community to end 200 years of homelessness."*

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## SECTION ONE:

# ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY

Uncle Doug is a Gunditjmara Elder, Ballarat local and proud family man.



# ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

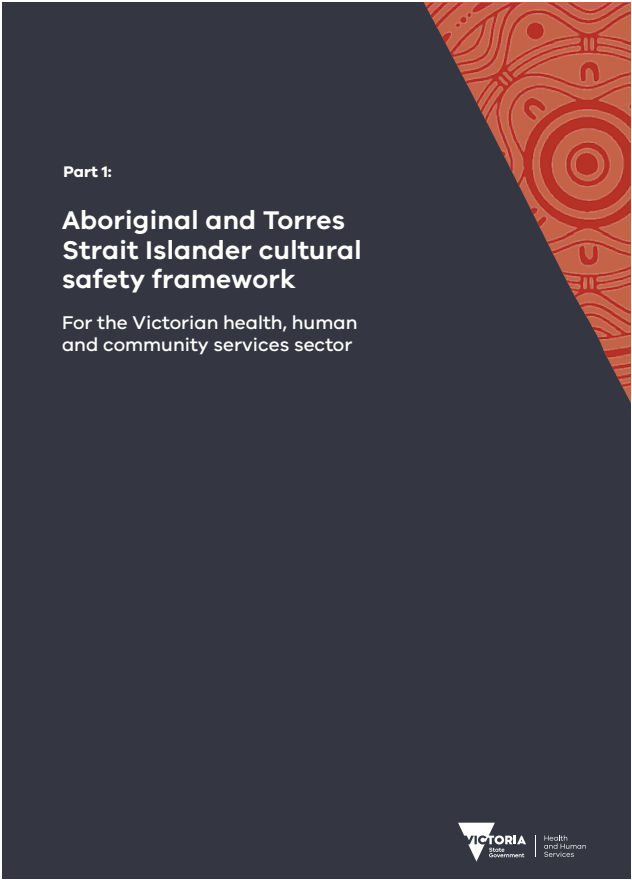
The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) initiated this project to enable community housing organisations to improve Aboriginal people's community housing outcomes by embedding Aboriginal cultural safety, accountability and monitoring into all aspects of their organisations.

Lack of cultural safety is a well-documented and critical barrier to Aboriginal people successfully accessing services, including in the housing and homelessness sectors. The Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework provides a practical tool that is designed to assist community housing organisations to reflect on their practices and adopt strategies and actions to improve the way they engage with and address the housing needs of Aboriginal Victorians. The Framework complements the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework.<sup>2</sup>

The Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework takes a 'rights based' approach, which places Aboriginal Victorians and their communities firmly at the centre of community housing policies and practices. It recognises that self-determination is at the heart of an empowering relationship with Aboriginal people and communities:

Indigenous self-determination is the fundamental right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural interests. It stems from the unique status of Indigenous peoples as First Nations peoples and is informed by the destructive experiences of colonialism; the dispossession, dislocation, attacks on culture, language and identity and racism and marginalisation. Self-determination reasserts autonomy and power to Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal institutions and individual Aboriginal people and counters the historical legacy of colonialism.

Self-determination means Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people have authority and control over decisions that directly affect their lives and the lives of future Aboriginal generations. At a fundamental level, self-determination also imparts a right for Aboriginal people to freely exercise their cultural identity, their beliefs, values and practices.



2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework, DHHS 2019

Self-determination does not only apply to Aboriginal people, it also applies to how the broader community interacts and engages with Aboriginal people.

**In the delivery of housing services that impact on Aboriginal people two fundamental questions are posed. How are Aboriginal choices honoured and respected? How are Aboriginal people's rights to their cultural identity and practices respected and supported?**

— **Darren Smith**, Chair of the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework Steering Committee and CEO of Aboriginal Housing Victoria.

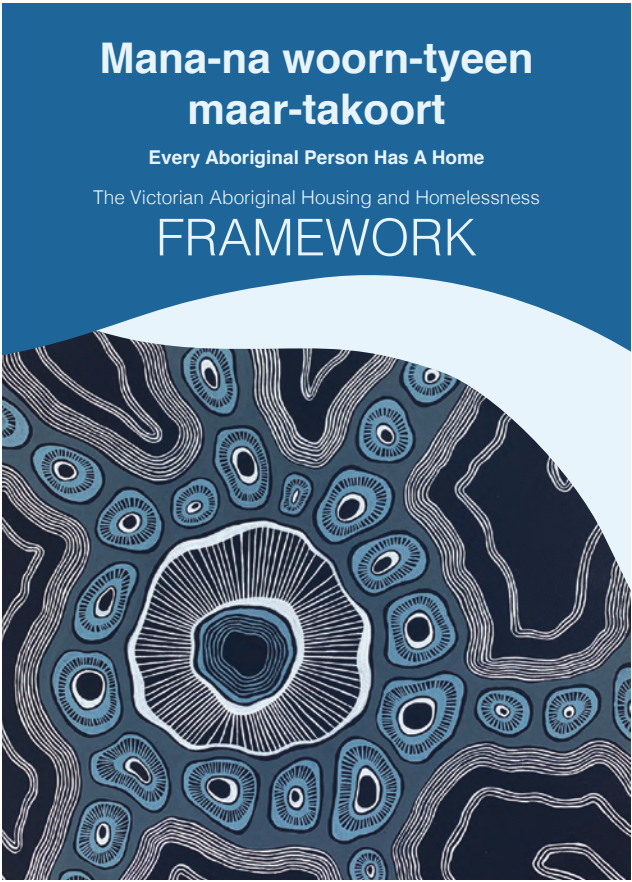
The findings and recommendations of Mana-Na Woornt-Tyeen Maar-Takoort, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, provide the context for the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework and enact one of its key recommendations:

*The mainstream system is culturally competent and workers understand and implement culturally safe practices; mainstream providers have culturally safe policies and practices in place.*<sup>3</sup>

We have developed the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework under the leadership of a steering committee chaired by Darren Smith, the CEO of Aboriginal Housing Victoria. The committee includes members from CHIA Vic, DHHS, community housing organisations and an Aboriginal person who is a current community housing tenant and has strong experience in delivering policy and programs in her community.

The Framework is the product of a literature review, consultations with Aboriginal people, including both those seeking housing assistance and current tenants, and discussions with community housing organisations.

**Through a shared commitment to Aboriginal cultural safety, the community housing sector can make a positive impact on housing outcomes for Aboriginal people.**



3. Mana-Na Woornt-Tyeen Maar-Takoort, The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, Aboriginal Housing Victoria 2020, recommendation 5.2.1

## 2. SELF-DETERMINATION AND TREATY

### SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is an 'ongoing process of choice' to ensure that Indigenous communities are able to meet their social, cultural and economic needs. The right to self-determination is based on the simple acknowledgment that Indigenous peoples are Australia's first people, as was recognised by law in the historic Mabo judgement.

The loss of the right to live according to a set of common values and beliefs, and to have that right respected by others, is at the heart of the current disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.

Without self-determination it is not possible for Indigenous Australians to fully overcome the legacy of colonisation and dispossession.<sup>4</sup>

The right of self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is in addition to the right that everyone has to freedom from discrimination (including under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Right articles 2.1 and 26) which members of all ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities have to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their religion, and use their own religion.

### TREATY

Self-determination is the cornerstone of the Victorian Government's process to develop a treaty with Aboriginal people.

Treaty is about recognising past wrongs committed against the Aboriginal community. About acknowledging the unique position of Aboriginal Victorians in this state. About official apologies and truth-telling. About a commitment to true self-determination and autonomy. Treaty is about reconciliation. This government is committed to reframing relationships with Aboriginal Victorians to one of true self-determination. A relationship where government understands that the best outcomes for Aboriginal people will come when Aboriginal people are given control and power over decisions that affect their own lives, and their communities.

Government also recognises that treaty is for all Victorians. Treaties can help to heal the past and place the present on a more just footing. But treaties are also about our collective ambitions for a future to which all can aspire. This means that all Victorians can, and should, be able to claim that they benefit from treaty.<sup>5</sup>

— Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, **Gavin Jennings MP**

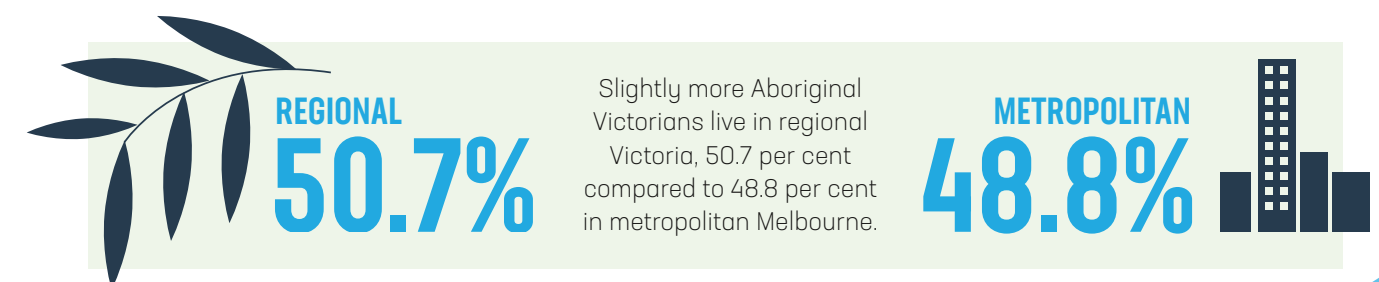
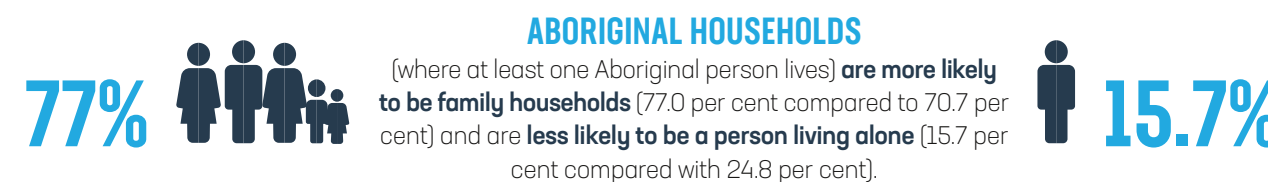
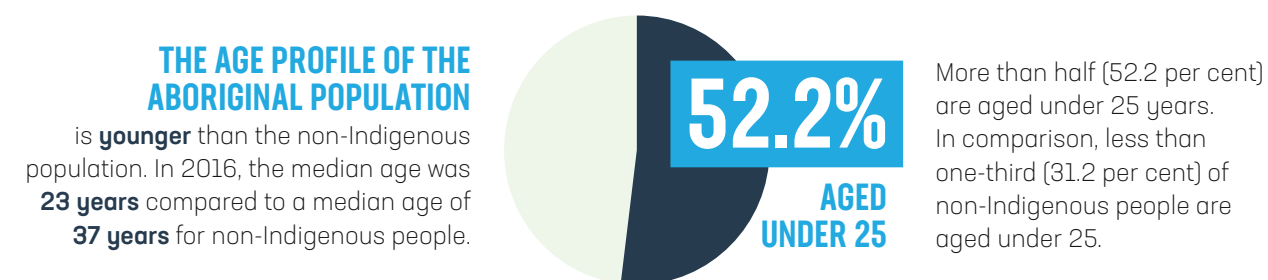
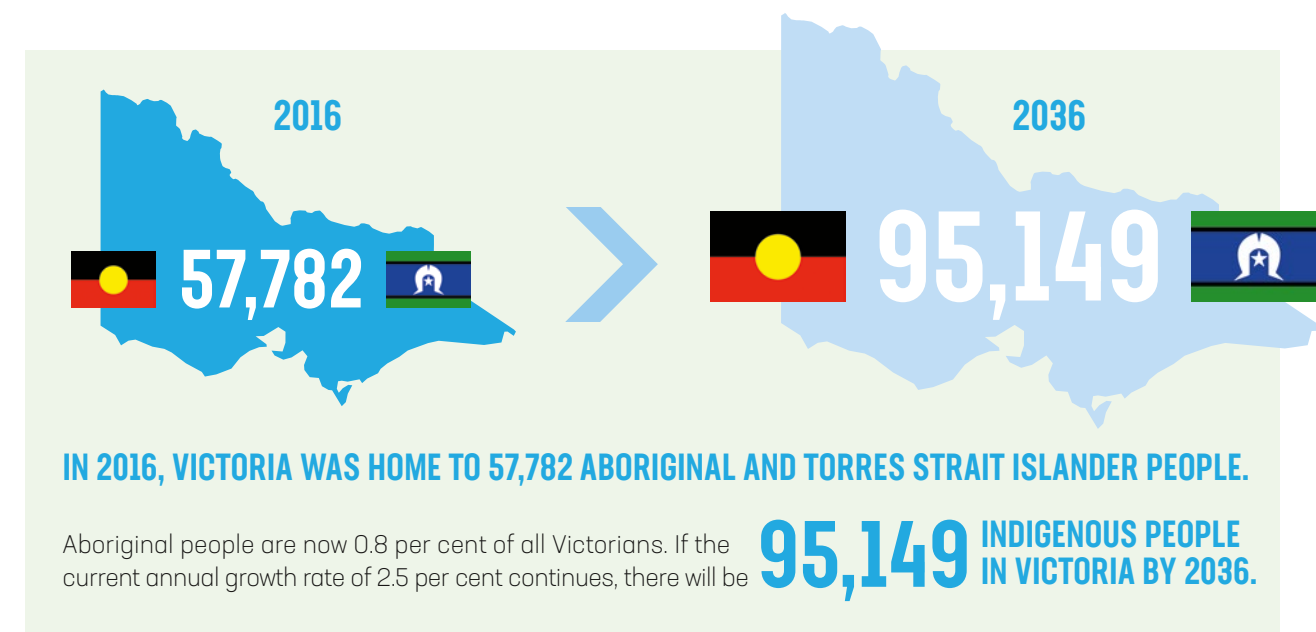
4. Social justice and human rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2003, website

5. Message from Minister Gavin Jennings, Advancing the Treaty Process Report 2018/19

## 3. CONTEXT

### ABORIGINAL VICTORIA

The Aboriginal population is growing faster than the general Victorian population.





RICH AND DIVERSE COMMUNITIES THAT EXPERIENCE ONGOING DISADVANTAGE

Aboriginal communities are culturally rich and diverse with histories and heritages that were shaped over many thousands of years.

The years after white settlement caused massive dispossession from land, culture, language, community and family. The impact of post-colonial settlement differed across communities, families and individuals.

The compounding impact of inter-generational dispossession, loss and disadvantage flows through to the disadvantage that Aboriginal people experience to this day.

Despite this Aboriginal people have survived, maintained their identity and find strength in their culture and community connection. These strengths are the basis for the authentic engagement of Aboriginal people and communities in the design and delivery of housing policies and practices.

MANA-NA WOORN-TYEEEN MAAR-TAKOORT - THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS FRAMEWORK

As the First Australians, Aboriginal Victorians are the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which all Victorians live. It is a grim irony that the people with the greatest hereditary right to this place as their home, are also the group most likely to be homeless.<sup>6</sup>

Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort was developed by the Aboriginal community in partnership with the Victorian Government. Its starting point is that without stable housing, investments in areas such as health, education and justice will not successfully close the gap in disadvantage, nor build the wealth that leads to inter-generational housing independence. It is the strengths and potential of Aboriginal communities, individuals, families and traditional owner groups that are the foundation for change.

Inter-generational dispossession, loss and disadvantage has resulted in Aboriginal people disproportionately experiencing the adverse impacts of:

- housing market failure in Victoria
- stressors that compound the fracturing effects of major life transitions - family violence and breakdown, leaving home and transitioning in and out of institutional settings
- poverty of household material resources
- a mainstream housing and homeless assistance system that lacks cultural accreditation and is frequently experienced by Aboriginal people as a series of closed doors and waiting rooms.

17%

Seventeen per cent of Victoria’s Aboriginal population now access homelessness services, a higher rate than in other state or territory in Australia.

Rates of home ownership are lower (43 per cent compared to 68 per cent) and cost and apparent racism lock many out of the private rental market.

At the same time, the high growth rate of the population and its young age profile are driving demand for 27,000 additional Aboriginal housing units by 2036.

Unsurprisingly, Aboriginal people are far more reliant on social housing. Around one in five are on the Victorian Housing Register and a similar proportion of Aboriginal households reside in social housing (1:5 compared to 1:50 of the general population). An additional 5,085 Aboriginal social housing units will be needed by 2036 to merely ensure that the existing scale of Aboriginal housing distress does not continue to escalate.

6. Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, Aboriginal Housing Victoria 2020, p21

Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort proposes the movement of Aboriginal people across all of the housing tenures and possibly the creation of some new tenures. This movement is neither linear nor continual, but the aim is that, over time, Aboriginal people move:

- from homelessness to either transitional or more permanent social or private housing
- from social housing to secure and affordable private rental or ownership
- from housing stress to affordable housing
- from all forms of tenure to private or community-owned housing, and
- from narrow and rigid notions of traditional tenure to culturally fit tenures that combine Aboriginal community and individual home ownership.

Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort identifies cultural safety in mainstream social housing as a critical step toward achieving a fair share of social housing for Aboriginal people.



Former AHV CEO, Jenny Samms with current AHV CEO Darren Smith.

## 4. WHAT IS ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY?<sup>7</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety is defined as an environment that is safe for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience (Williams 2008).<sup>8</sup>

### CULTURAL SAFETY IS ABOUT:

Shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge.

The experience of learning together with dignity and truly listening.

Strategic and institutional reform to remove barriers to optimal health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for Aboriginal people. This includes addressing unconscious bias, racism and discrimination, and the ability to support Aboriginal self-determination.

Individuals, organisations and systems taking responsibility for ensuring their own cultural values do not negatively impact on Aboriginal peoples, including a responsibility to address their potential for unconscious bias, racism and discrimination.

Individuals, organisations and systems taking responsibility to support self-determination for Aboriginal peoples – this includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities, and is especially relevant for the design, delivery and evaluation of services for Aboriginal peoples (Phillips 2015).<sup>9</sup>

### KEY ELEMENTS OF CULTURALLY SAFE WORKPLACES AND SERVICES:

- **Knowledge and respect for self.**
- **Awareness of how one's own cultural values, knowledge, skills and attitudes are formed and affect others, including a responsibility to address unconscious bias, racism and discrimination.**
- **Knowledge of, and respect for, Aboriginal people.**
- **Knowledge of the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, communities and cultures, and the skills and attitudes required to work effectively with them.**
- **A commitment to redesigning organisations and systems to reduce racism and discrimination.**
- **Strategic and institutional reform to remove barriers to optimal health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for Aboriginal people.**
- **Cultural safety is an ongoing learning journey.**
- **An ongoing and responsive learning framework that includes the need to learn Aboriginal cultural values and unlearn unconscious bias and racism.**

7. The definitions and approach to Aboriginal Cultural Safety in the DHHS Aboriginal cultural safety framework, DHHS 2019, are used in this document.

8. Williams R 2008, Cultural Safety: what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, vol 23, no 2, pp 213-214.

9. Phillips, G 2015, Dancing with Power: Aboriginal Health, cultural safety and medical education, PhD thesis, School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University Clayton. From DHHS Aboriginal cultural safety framework.

## 5. WHAT WE LEARNT FROM ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR HOUSING EXPERIENCES

### ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

Consultations undertaken for the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework showed that Aboriginal people are far more likely to experience complex needs that stem from the ongoing post-colonial impact of dispossession and social dislocation. Housing responses must have the flexibility and capability to meet these needs.

### CHILDREN IN CARE

Housing stress can precipitate child protection interventions and be a barrier to reunification.

Kinship care creates a need for extended housing and service support, consideration of rental arrangements when household numbers increase and provision for family members with criminal convictions who may need to leave the household if there is a child under a protection order.

Eighteen-year-olds leaving care need somewhere to live. While there may be funding support available there are few housing options, particularly those that provide ongoing emotional support, education and training.

**Single mothers** who are homeless are a growing group and have obvious special housing needs.

**Extended families** often experience overcrowding and are impacted when taking in family members affected by substance abuse and related complex and challenging behaviours.

**Family violence** impacts on the housing needs of victims and perpetrators:

- Lack of alternative housing can prevent women leaving violent relationships and those leaving often need specially purposed safe and secure housing.
- Perpetrators also need to be housed.

**For those in contact with the justice system** unstable housing can precipitate offending and housing is often a condition of bail, parole and corrections orders. Rehabilitation and reintegration into the community relies on stable housing. Youth justice programs must, as a priority, link with housing.

**Older people** have special needs

- Aboriginal people age earlier, with earlier onset of acute and chronic conditions, which means they often need support earlier to live independently.
- Aboriginal families are more likely to care for Elders at home.
- Supported care that is culturally appropriate and provides options to live on Country is needed.

**Disability** is an area of high, unmet need and there is a lack of understanding of how the National Disability Insurance Scheme works.

The lack of mainstream and **specialist alcohol and other drug services** is having a very big impact on sustainable housing tenure.



WHAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TOLD US

We interviewed current community housing tenants, including people in transitional housing, and drew on their experiences of community housing organisations.

This is what they told us:<sup>10</sup>

How did you feel before applying for housing?

Many Aboriginal people told us that they are fearful of government and mainstream agencies and struggle to ask for help. A welcoming and culturally safe environment sets the tone for the ongoing relationship between the client and the community housing organisation. Trauma, grief and loss and fear of failure severely impact on people's confidence to even apply for housing. It is worse for those leaving incarceration or institutional care. Creating a positive and friendly reputation with the Aboriginal community and providing outreach services will encourage Aboriginal people to approach the housing provider for assistance.

I felt stressed out. I had been living with other people and it is very stressful and subject to their rules so applying for housing is very scary.

When approaching a mainstream organisation you don't know what to expect and it makes you nervous; 'Will I be respected when I walk in?'

I am always on high alert when I approach government agencies. It brings back memories of the stolen generations. I fear that they will take a hard-core, callous attitude.

I am really afraid that I will not be able to do the paperwork.

I feel comfortable when I apply to an Aboriginal organisation.

There is no difference in how you are treated by mainstream or Aboriginal organisations or whether the worker is an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal person, it is their attitude that matters.

How did you feel when applying for housing?

Community housing organisations can ensure the application process provides Aboriginal applicants with a positive introduction to their service. This may include having plain English application forms, ensuring that staff are supportive and trusted and that the setting is culturally safe and welcoming. Providing follow-up information and advice is also important to establish a caring relationship with the housing applicant.

I feel more comfortable approaching an Aboriginal organisation because they know the family and circumstances. I do not have to keep telling the story as they knew it already.

It can be hard to prove Aboriginality which becomes a barrier to securing housing with most Aboriginal organisations.

I never know what is happening with the waiting list. Once I was removed from it without knowing which is a very big problem.

I do not understand the Victorian Housing Register and I worry that whether I am Aboriginal makes it hard to transfer my tenancy to the mainstream.

I felt good applying because I was heading somewhere. I had made a big step forward.

It is a really a big help when you have the same contact person. You don't have to repeat your story.

10. Findings are drawn from interviews undertaken for the development of the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework, Mana-Na Woon-Tyeen Maar-Takoort the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, AHV 2020, and Measuring the Social Impact of Community Housing, Sector Outcomes Framework, CHIA Vic 2019.

11. The CHIA Vic Social Impact of Community Housing, Sector Outcomes Framework 2019 sets out domains or aspects of tenants' lives that are influenced by their housing experience. These domains were used to organise the feedback we received from Aboriginal people in this section.

Once you were housed what were the things that worked for you?

Aboriginal people aspire to safe, secure and stable housing.

However, their historical experiences and greater risk of disadvantage, particularly if combined with a precipitating life event, can tip a tenancy into crisis. When Aboriginal people talk about their housing aspirations and experiences, they consistently highlight the importance of connection to culture and community. Housing organisations that understand the context of local communities are best equipped to build the strengths-based culturally safe practices that successfully sustain tenancies.<sup>11</sup>

Safety: culturally appropriate and safe

Safe services

When the house is managed by an Aboriginal organisation you feel that they know your culture and your story. It feels safe.

An Aboriginal Housing Officer at an Aboriginal organisation is an advantage:

They are friendly and know the community and then it works.

I like an Aboriginal Housing Organisation but it is no good if communication is slack.

They understand my way of being Aboriginal.

It is important Aboriginal Housing Officers know Victoria and Victorian Aboriginal culture.

Whatever the organisation, you want to feel that there is an understanding of Aboriginal culture. This can be paintings, the flag but more importantly the attitudes and how people speak to you: 'Us as people'.

A non-Aboriginal person who is kind, understanding and respectful is fine.

Understanding my circumstances and being responsive to the need for relocation in crisis or emergency really helps.

I have been away on sorry business but my housing provider helped me find a new house.

We age earlier so need lower age limits for accommodation such as independent living units.

I feel proud that I have survived through adversity.

I know other people need help but because you are Aboriginal you find it hard. I am just trying to get over everything I've been through and try to do better.

Paying bills and doing your shopping is just another day.

Safe housing

Safety and security and establishing my Aboriginal identity made the difference. I hadn't had a birthday or Christmas celebration until the kids and I had a safe house.

I am a domestic violence victim survivor. By getting the transitional house we got out of the awful home. Now overall everyone seems a lot happier.

When the house becomes your home the generations come back, my grandchildren are doing my gardening.

Culturally safe, Aboriginal-managed Elder's care is appreciated.

It is hard for Elders to be allocated appropriate housing because they are given one bedders there is no room for a carer or family when they visit.



**Connection and participation: able to participate in a range of opportunities to enhance their lives and connect with community**

“Feeling connected to Aboriginal community organisations is important.  
My family is strongly Aboriginal. We have been able to connect with our community and establish our Aboriginal identity because we have a safe stable housing base. I have a strong relationship with my grandkids because they know I have a house that they can come to. It is the base for an extended family.  
I have not had nor felt that I had the right to ask for other support.  
I have not had any ancillary support.  
I need assistance getting set up; furniture, paying bills but once in the swing of it, it is great.”

**Stability: housing is secure and stable**

“I don't have to plan to move house all the time.  
Stability is the key issue. Will not be kicked out because a Landlord just happens to want to use the house for something else. Overdevelopment is really affecting private properties. It is the commercial focus of the private market.  
My boys at times were in trouble with the law, and because they had stable housing the Courts had the assurance they needed to release them back home.”

**The right housing: housing suits needs and aspirations**

“If everyone knows it is an Aboriginal house it becomes a target, including by local Council who are constantly on your back to clean up.  
I like a house with an Aboriginal feel.  
Housing that suits our family needs. Having a garden, kids have their own bedrooms.  
We are close to services such as kindergarten, child care and health services at the Co-op.  
Freedom to do what I want like gardening etc. Able to modify house to suit me. I feel very special.”

**Empowerment: tenants are motivated, in control, and active in improving their situation**

**Rights**

Concern about not being made aware of rights as a tenant when housed; not being supported when making a housing complaint; defects not being listed with a signed contract which can lead to legal dispute down the track

One tenant said they had self-educated themselves about rights through working at a different Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and are now more confident about self-determination, rights and culture.

**Financial wellbeing: tenants can manage their financial situation and access support when needed to support their financial wellbeing**

“Now I have been able to put down roots and I have a job and I am not thinking about money all the time.  
We are saving so much money on fuel and we now have more money as we are saving so much.”

**Health: tenants are able to manage their physical and emotional health**

“I used to have mental health issues. Now I am connected with community organisations and I feel supported and valued.”

**TENANT STORY**

Nicole Cassar sought help from Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) when she struggled to rent privately due to inconsistent employment. AHV placed Nicole in a stable home, in the Melbourne suburb of Kingsbury.

Nicole has lived in her Kingsbury home for the past 16 years, where she has raised three children of her own.

“I am absolutely grateful, the stability is amazing,” Nicole says.



Aboriginal Housing Victoria tenant and Aboriginal housing advocate, Nicole Cassar.





## SECTION TWO:

# THE COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK

Everyone has fun at an Aboriginal Housing Victoria event.



# THE COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK

## 1. OUR OBJECTIVE

To achieve culturally safe, accessible and sustainable housing for Aboriginal people in the community housing sector that builds pathways to independence and prosperity.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

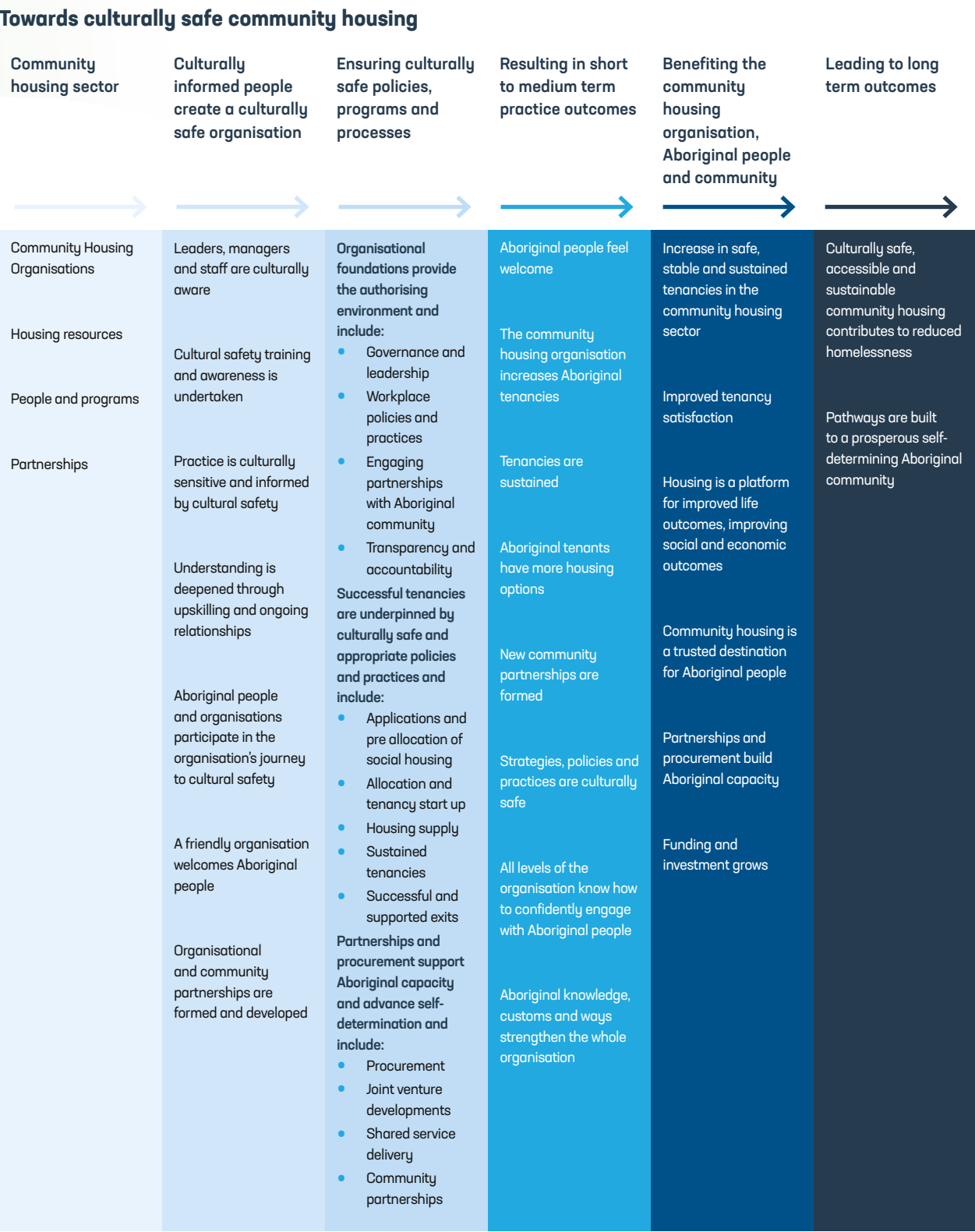
The Framework is underpinned by a set of guiding principles that are consistent with the principles in the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homeless Framework.

- Aboriginal self-determination** – mainstream community housing responses are designed and delivered with Aboriginal people and communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice.
- Rights based** – Aboriginal people have the right to adequate housing.
- Housing First** – the housing and homelessness safety net provides Aboriginal clients with dignity, respect and quality of life.
- Outcome driven** – the critical mass of Aboriginal people shift from marginal housing to home ownership.
- Transparency and accountability** – the housing and homelessness system is accountable to the Aboriginal community through transparent, disaggregated public reporting of outcomes for Aboriginal people who seek assistance and are living in community housing.
- Cultural safety and access** – Aboriginal people can access a system which is responsive to their housing needs and understands their connection to land, culture and family networks.
- Strengths based and people centred** – housing is a platform for other services, building on individuals’ community strengths to deliver people-centred outcomes that break the cycle of disadvantage.
- Opportunities are taken to build the capacity of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations** – to upskill, create critical mass for development and engage in productive partnerships with the mainstream.
- Economic opportunity and innovation** – opportunities to develop local Aboriginal enterprises associated with land and culture; build commercial opportunities; and, deliver greater wealth to the community.
- Culturally safe tenancy management** – housing and tenancy policies support and enable Aboriginal approaches to caring for family. (A culturally safe landlord is a key principle).

## 3. ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVE

Cultural safety must be embedded in each organisation’s governance and leadership practices, strategic and business planning and internal policies and practices. Progress and outcomes must be regularly monitored.

The following program logic model sets out a way of understanding the steps that are required to achieve our long-term outcomes.





4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND MONITORING PROGRESS

Improving cultural safety is an ongoing learning process. It requires commitment from individuals at all levels and from the organisation as a whole, alongside ongoing productive relationships with Aboriginal people and communities.

The Framework is designed to generate ongoing discussion, analysis of present practice and support continuous improvement. Aboriginal people’s feedback is a very important element of the continuous improvement process.

Each organisation should define the outcomes it is seeking at each stage in the change continuum and devise measures that indicate whether change is being achieved. Data should be collected and evidence generated to measure progress and embed continuous improvement.

5. GUIDE TO USING THE COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK

The Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework aims to achieve structural and organisational change through deep understanding and awareness of Aboriginal cultural safety. It does not provide cultural competency standards, nor take a mechanistic approach to either assessment or measurement of progress.

The DHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework provides a generic tool for establishing a culturally safe organisational environment.

The purpose of the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework is to provide specific tools that will support community housing organisations to improve cultural safety in their organisation. It includes **Reflection Areas** organised by **Domains** and **Focus Areas** and suggests a set of **actions** that are relevant to the community housing sector.

The change strategy each organisation adopts will be contextual and relate closely to its vision, objectives, size, location, culture and internal and external environments.

Community housing organisations will also adopt the strategic and corporate planning processes best suited to their environment. For example, some will use Reconciliation Action Plans, others might use more generic cultural safety plans or locally adapted Aboriginal Inclusion Plans.

6. CULTURAL SAFETY IN THE PLANNING HIERARCHY: AN EXAMPLE

A critically important step is embedding cultural safety in the planning hierarchy. An example follows.





## 7. GETTING STARTED

**Step 1** – Reach out to, and involve, Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

**Step 2** – Develop culturally aware staff and leaders by creating a thorough understanding of, and training in, Aboriginal cultural safety and self-determination.

**Step 3** – Identify and agree on your vision and objectives.

**Step 4** – Consider where your organisation is placed against the Reflection Areas in the matrix by checking each domain against the focus areas and the actions within each cell of the matrix.

**Step 5** – Decide how to best organise your plan of action, for example you may choose to use a Reconciliation Action Plan or a locally developed Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusion plan.

**Step 6** – Identify and sequence priority actions:

- Ensure all policies are culturally safe.
- Ensure commitment from the Board and leadership group. This is the authorising environment.
- Put a high priority on the client tenancy relationship.
- Formal partnerships and joint ventures will often come after the foundations are in place and tenancy practices are culturally safe.
- Broader advocacy and promotion of Aboriginal outcomes will rely on a culturally safe and experienced organisation with strong stakeholder relationships.

**Step 7** – Embed actions into your strategic, business and organisational plans.

**Step 8** – Monitor and review plans.



Thorne and his family at an Aboriginal Housing Victoria 'More Than A Landlord' community event.

## 8. THE COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY REFLECTION TOOL

**The Reflection Tool is designed to generate discussion and assist individuals and organisations to reflect on their levels of cultural safety, develop their learning and agree on individual and organisational actions that will achieve short, medium and long-term outcomes. These actions are not definitive and it is expected that each organisation will extend and further define actions as they move along the cultural safety continuum.**

Reflection Areas are organised in three Parts. Under each Part are Domains, Focus areas and Actions. In summary the Parts and Domains are:

### PART ONE

**The foundations for success** – a whole-of-organisation approach provides the foundation for embedding and building cultural safety across the organisation.

**Domains:**

- i. governance and leadership
- ii. workplace policies and practices
- iii. Aboriginal community partnerships
- iv. communications and stakeholder relationships.

### PART TWO

**The tenancy lifecycle** – Successful tenancies are dependent on culturally safe policies and practice at each stage of the tenancy lifecycle. Strong tenancies support Aboriginal households and reduce unplanned exits, which are likely to result in housing instability and homelessness.

- i. application and pre-allocation of social housing
- ii. allocation and tenancy start up
- iii. sustaining tenancies and emerging tenancy issues
- iv. exits.

### PART THREE

**Partnerships and procurement** – Partnerships and procurement provide opportunities for shared learning, stronger relationships and can build the skills of the business partners. Respect and support for self-determination is fundamental.

- i. procurement
- ii. joint venture developments
- iii. shared service delivery.





### SECTION THREE:

## COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK – REFLECTION TOOL

Tenants having fun at an Aboriginal Housing Victoria 'More Than A Landlord' community event.



# COMMUNITY HOUSING ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK – REFLECTION TOOL

## PART ONE - THE FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS:

A whole-of-organisation approach provides the foundation for embedding and building cultural safety across the organisation.

DOMAINS: Organisational	Governance and leadership	Policies and workplace practices	Aboriginal community partnerships	Communications and stakeholder relations
Areas of focus	<p>The leadership and governance groups set the tone and direction of the organisation. They establish the behaviour, culture and values and are accountable for achievement of goals and objectives.</p>	<p>Policies provide the framework for practice, decision making, communication and service deliver and issue identification.</p> <p>Workplace policies build cultural safety capability and promote inclusive practices.</p>	<p>Partnerships are respectful, inform organisational governance, policies and practices and encourage two-way learning.</p>	<p>Communications raise awareness, promote positive norms and inclusion.</p> <p>Information empowers Aboriginal clients, communities and staff.</p> <p>Stakeholder relations are respectful and build knowledge and cultural understanding.</p>
<p><b>Self-determination and rights</b></p> <p><b>Self-determination</b> for Aboriginal peoples includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice.</p> <p><b>Rights based</b> – All services should be based on human rights. Aboriginal people have special rights under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, including the right to adequate housing.</p>	<p>Aboriginal self-determination and rights are key principles underpinning the organisation's values, strategic planning, policy and program design.</p> <p>Strategic objectives are measurable.</p> <p>Strategic plans specify Aboriginal priorities, local partnerships and needs and recognise local differences.</p> <p>The Board and senior management group value and demonstrate strong commitment to self-determination and a culturally safe and inclusive organisation.</p>	<p>Policies and practices are specifically tested against human rights.</p> <p>Policies enable staff to construct flexible responses that recognise cultural and family obligations, to enable good housing outcomes.</p> <p>Staff are supported in balancing legal obligations against local and cultural difference.</p>	<p>Structures and processes are in place to include Aboriginal people, communities and organisations in high-level leadership and governance.</p>	<p>Aboriginal self-determination and rights are specifically acknowledged.</p> <p>Accessible, rights-based information is available to inform people of the organisation, its services and processes.</p> <p>Culturally significant symbolism is agreed with the local Aboriginal community and embedded in the organisation's external and internal profile.</p>

<p><b>Respect and recognition</b></p> <p>Individuals and systems should respond respectfully to people of all cultures and backgrounds in a manner that affirms their worth and dignity. The cultural perspective of the client is at the centre of all interactions.</p>	<p>Board members undertake Cultural Safety Training.</p> <p>Traditional owners are acknowledged at Board meetings and events.</p> <p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are flown.</p> <p>Aboriginal culture enhances the organisation.</p>	<p>All staff undertake Cultural Safety Training.</p> <p>Training is layered, blending learning experiences and training methods and targeting the right people at the right time.</p> <p>Induction processes include Cultural Safety Training and information about local Aboriginal communities, agencies and stakeholders.</p> <p>The challenges and obligations Aboriginal staff face in working with family and community are acknowledged and mentoring, support and alternative processes support them in their role.</p>	<p>Respectful partnerships are developed with Aboriginal organisations.</p> <p>The intellectual and cultural property of Aboriginal organisations is respected.</p> <p>MoUs built on self-determination, respect and recognition, confirm partnerships.</p>	<p>Significant Aboriginal days and events are acknowledged and supported.</p> <p>Welcome to Country and acknowledgement of Country protocols are embedded in all communications.</p> <p>Communication protocols are established to support staff to work effectively with internal and external Aboriginal people and communities.</p>
<p><b>Engagement and inclusion</b></p> <p>Engagement and inclusion of Aboriginal people improves cultural understanding and practice and builds trust, leading to improved housing outcomes.</p>	<p>Aboriginal people are actively included on Boards and sub-committees.</p> <p>Aboriginal people are invited to, and attend, AGMs.</p> <p>The Board hears from Aboriginal people and community.</p>	<p>The senior leadership group includes Aboriginal people.</p> <p>The organisational structure aligns with Aboriginal outcomes defined in the strategic plan.</p> <p>All policy development processes ensure there is sufficient time for genuine engagement with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.</p> <p><b>A long-term Aboriginal employment strategy</b> is part of Organisational Development Planning and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active recruitment of Aboriginal staff, including through Aboriginal media and community networks.</li> <li>Inclusion of Aboriginal people in all recruitment processes, where appropriate.</li> <li>Defined and supported career plans that are culturally safe and lead to representation of Aboriginal people at all levels in the organisation.</li> <li>Specific Aboriginal retention strategies.</li> <li>Mentoring and support from Aboriginal people.</li> </ul> <p>The workplace presents a friendly face to Aboriginal people.</p> <p>The organisation is a workplace of choice for Aboriginal people.</p>	<p>Partnerships with Aboriginal people, organisations and communities strengthen all levels of the organisation, particularly service delivery.</p> <p>Partnerships build Aboriginal capacity through sharing of knowledge and expertise.</p>	<p>Internal and external communications are welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Communications plans specifically recognise Aboriginal rights, cultures and communities.</p> <p>Communication objectives and activities align with Aboriginal outcomes.</p> <p>Communication and information materials are accessible and culturally appropriate.</p>



<b>Accountability, reporting and transparency.</b>  Accountability is the process by which organisations and the individuals within them are responsible for their decisions and actions and submit themselves to external scrutiny.  The organisation's structure, roles and relationships, including with stakeholders facilitate accountability and transparency.	AGM and annual reporting addresses cultural safety and Aboriginal outcomes.	CEO and senior management performance plans specify Aboriginal outcomes.	Sharing of data and information with community strengthens accountability and continuous improvement.	Data collections and performance reports are available to Aboriginal people, communities and organisations. Feedback is sought.
	The Board identifies Aboriginal Cultural Safety KPIs.	Feedback loops with Aboriginal and all other staff are used to assess and improve the impact policies and programs have on Aboriginal people and communities.	The views of Aboriginal community and organisations are sought on the effectiveness and cultural safety of the organisation.	Policies are transparent and are available on the website or elsewhere, in a form accessible to Aboriginal people.
	An outcomes framework is developed with Aboriginal input and includes reasons why Aboriginal people may not access, or are underrepresented, in applications, allocations and housing and may be over-represented in tenancy exits.	Aboriginal people are included in evaluation design.		
	The impact and outcomes indicate where need is and what are the drivers of need.	Organisations learn from other change management processes that have been successful.		
	The Board is accountable to the local Aboriginal community for Aboriginal service delivery.	Data is provided on Aboriginal employment numbers.		

## PART TWO – SUCCESSFUL TENANCIES:

Successful tenancies are dependent on culturally safe policies and practice at each stage of the tenancy lifecycle. Strong tenancies support Aboriginal households and reduce unplanned exits, which are likely to result in housing instability and homelessness.

<b>DOMAINS:</b>  <b>Policies and programs</b>  <b>Areas of focus</b>	<b>Application and pre-allocation of social housing</b>  The initial contact an Aboriginal person has with community housing starts the tenancy relationship. A positive start will encourage applications and is the beginning of a genuine sharing of provider and client information.	<b>Allocation and tenancy start up</b>  It is critical to have a trusting and respectful relationship that encourages a shared understanding of rights, obligations and support needs and that ensures that supports are in place at tenancy start up and empowers households in housing decisions.	<b>Sustaining tenancies and emerging tenancy issues</b>  The relationship between the housing officer and the tenant household enables early identification of issues.  Community engagement underpins positive tenant relationships and can assist in identifying tenancy issues.	<b>Exits</b>  Tenancies can end for positive or negative reasons. Positive pathways may be to home ownership, private rental or more suitable social housing. Tenancies that cannot be sustained require steps to prevent exits to homelessness.
<b>Self-determination and rights</b>  <b>Self-determination</b> for Aboriginal peoples includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice.  <b>Rights based</b> – Aboriginal people have special rights under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, including the right to adequate housing.	Allocation policies and practices are rights based.  Proactive processes are in place to ensure access and participation of Aboriginal people. Assertive outreach takes place.  Aboriginal people are aware of their rights at every point in the application and allocation process.	People understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities.  Tenant rights are provided in plain English and are easily accessible and explained.  Culturally appropriate tenant charters are in place.  Links to Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services, particularly Aboriginal organisations, are provided.  Housing supply and choice is facilitated through the inclusion of Aboriginal design principles in new housing developments and upgrades.	Evidence is actively sought from Aboriginal tenants regarding their tenancy issues.  Aboriginal tenants are informed and re-informed of their rights.  Tenant surveys include Aboriginal issues that impact on successful tenancies.  Tenancy management practice frameworks are established.	When breaches of tenancy agreements need to go to VCAT, tenants should be advised of possible consequences and be encouraged to attend hearings.  Referrals to tenancy support programs and legal services should be made.



Auntie Sandra is a Biripi Elder, retired nurse and avid gardener.



<p><b>Respect and recognition</b></p> <p>Individuals and systems should respond respectfully to people of all cultures and backgrounds in a manner that affirms their worth and dignity. The cultural perspective of the client is at the centre of all interactions.</p>	<p>Aboriginal sovereignty is acknowledged in all materials.</p> <p>Staff show respect for Aboriginal people at all stages of the process.</p> <p>All applicants are asked if they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.</p>	<p>Kinship obligations including sharing of housing resources, hosting visitors and absences due to Sorry Business are understood and accommodated in policies and practices.</p> <p>Advice is provided at the start of tenancy on when these obligations may impact on rent settings and when the landlord needs to be informed of changes in occupancy or absences.</p>	<p>Kinship obligations including sharing resources, hosting visitors and absences due to Sorry Business are appreciated and inform policy and practice.</p> <p>Where these obligations may impact on sustainability of tenancies, intervention is respectful and occurs early.</p> <p>Aboriginal culture informs and enriches the organisation and its practices.</p> <p>Informed human resource practices are woven into tenancy management practices.</p>	<p>Tenant feedback is sought post tenancy.</p>
<p><b>Trauma and historically informed practice</b></p> <p>Trauma and legacies of past and present practices have impacted negatively on Aboriginal people and communities. Knowledge of how trauma has affected Aboriginal people's lives impacts on their responses and reactions to service providers and their need for culturally attuned practice responses.</p>	<p>The impact of past policies is recognised when Aboriginal people are seeking housing.</p> <p>Application processes and forms are friendly to Aboriginal people and are understanding of Aboriginal community, cultural and family issues.</p> <p>Aboriginal staff or culturally competent non-Aboriginal staff help to engage with hard-to-reach people.</p> <p>All practices are understanding of, and address, the fear many Aboriginal people feel when approaching mainstream agencies and the fact they can struggle to ask for help.</p> <p>Cultural awareness and safety training is locally relevant, provided to all staff and its effectiveness is measured.</p>	<p>Tenants are fully informed of their obligations.</p> <p>Tenancy start up meetings are sensitive to the apprehension and fear of the tenant. Past trauma is acknowledged.</p> <p>The basics of renting are explained.</p> <p>Aboriginal people, where possible, have the choice of engaging with an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal staff member.</p> <p>Where appropriate, neutral places are provided for tenancy start up.</p> <p>Community and social dynamics among Aboriginal families are understood and advice through Aboriginal partner organisations is sought where needed.</p> <p>Creative ways of explaining rights and obligations are identified.</p> <p>Information overload is avoided.</p>	<p>Early home visits establish strong tenancies.</p> <p>Kinship obligations are recognised. The shame, exclusion and anger of those who do not meet cultural obligations is understood and translated through policies and practices.</p> <p>Shame is understood as a reaction to difficulties coping with tenancy and property damage.</p> <p>The cumulative impact of complex and multiple disadvantage is understood and support is provided either directly and/or in partnership with mainstream or Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>Staff learn from each other about what works.</p> <p>Tenancy policies are interpreted flexibly to meet individual needs.</p> <p>The organisation is a good Aboriginal social landlord.</p>	<p>Family circumstances are considered when planning evictions.</p> <p>Culturally sensitive ways are provided for tenants to resolve issues before eviction or to give them an opportunity to address factors such as arrears, which may impact on future rentals.</p>

<p><b>Strengths based, person and family centred practice</b></p> <p>Practice focuses on strengths and actively promotes client and family choice. Identifying what will work and how it will work well for the client is the starting point for strengths-based practice.</p>	<p>Application forms are easy to understand.</p> <p>Applications can be made from culturally welcoming settings, such as the local Aboriginal Co-op.</p> <p>Client feedback is sought.</p>	<p>Aboriginal people and communities provide feedback on issues and insight into continuous improvement.</p> <p>People participate in an assessment of their strengths, wants, needs and risks, including strength-based assessment planning processes at tenancy commencement.</p>	<p>The individual and family are at the centre of every decision and are empowered to be genuine partners in their housing outcome.</p> <p>Cultural sensitivity and the uniqueness of the family and individual are key to understanding the support that vulnerable Aboriginal families require. Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and communities strengthen the quality of support provided to Aboriginal tenants and their families.</p> <p>Assessment of support needs for tenancies occurs at start up, at crisis points and through regular home visits.</p> <p>Strengths-based case management/support plans are used where there are high-level needs.</p> <p>Housing officers work with clients to assess whether they are more comfortable receiving wrap around support from Aboriginal or mainstream agencies.</p> <p>Early intervention occurs at the first sign of problems, for example, rental arrears.</p>	<p>Where evictions are planned, a plan of eviction is provided including referral advice.</p> <p>Processes and resources are available to support tenants with the means to transition to private rental or ownership.</p>
<p><b>Collaborative partnerships and wrap around services</b></p> <p>Collaborative partnerships build two-way learning, inform policy and program design and facilitate culturally sensitive service support.</p>	<p>Policies and processes are co-designed with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.</p>	<p>Links to local service agencies, particularly Aboriginal organisations are provided.</p> <p>Service support is arranged at tenancy start up.</p> <p>Regular meetings are held with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to identify issues and improve service delivery.</p>	<p>Housing assistance is linked with human services, on a person and family-centred basis.</p> <p>Service support and referral occurs at points of crisis and need.</p> <p>Housing is a base for pathways that result in improved life outcomes.</p>	<p>When tenancies cannot be saved, tenants are linked to local services and community organisations.</p>



<p>Aboriginal community connection</p> <p>Effective engagement with community builds shared respect and creates confidence for Aboriginal people wishing to access housing services.</p>	<p>The diversity in Aboriginal communities, people and groups and local culture is understood and respected.</p>	<p>Traditional owners are acknowledged and their cultural practices enhance tenancy start up, for example in welcome packs.</p> <p>Opportunities to form community connections are identified in partnership with local communities, for example, Gathering Places and sport clubs.</p> <p>Communities and social dynamics among families inform allocations. Local Aboriginal communities are consulted and their advice sought.</p>	<p>Services are co-designed with Aboriginal clients, organisations and community.</p> <p>Culturally sensitive ways of identifying and dealing with tenants causing nuisance or disturbance are in place. This may include Elders or local communities providing forewarning of problems, advice on causes and culturally sensitive ways of addressing the problem.</p>	<p>Tenants are provided with connection to community agencies on exit.</p>
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Auntie Violet is a Wathaurung Elder, Ballarat local and active community volunteer.

PART THREE – BUILDING ABORIGINAL CAPACITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

AND PROCUREMENT:

Partnerships and procurement provide opportunities for shared learning and stronger relationships and can build the skills of the business partners. Respect and support for self-determination is fundamental.

DOMAINS:	Procurement	Joint venture developments	Shared service delivery
<b>Areas of focus</b>	<p>An organisation's procurement can be leveraged to drive demand for Aboriginal goods and services and grow the Aboriginal business sector.</p>	<p>Where both parties have similar goals and values, joint ventures can realise the inherent strengths and resources of both parties. Housing supply can be leveraged through joint ventures.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations bring cultural knowledge and understanding to clients and the community housing organisation and enable community housing tenants to establish long term community connections.</p>
<b>Self-determination and rights</b> <p><b>Self-determination</b> for Aboriginal peoples includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice.</p> <p><b>Rights based</b> - Aboriginal people have special rights under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People including the right to adequate housing.</p>	<p>Native title, land rights, ownership, intellectual and cultural rights are recognised and respected when working with Aboriginal businesses.</p>	<p>Native title, land rights, ownership, intellectual and cultural rights are recognised and respected when working with Aboriginal people and where housing developments occur on Aboriginal land.</p>	<p>Native title, land rights, ownership, intellectual and cultural rights are recognised and respected when working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.</p>
<b>Respect and recognition</b> <p>Individuals and systems should respond respectfully to people of all cultures and backgrounds in a manner that affirms their worth and dignity. The cultural perspective of the client is at the centre of all interactions.</p>	<p>Procurement policies are aligned with the organisation's values.</p> <p>The procurement process includes Aboriginal opportunities from the outset.</p> <p>Tenders are structured and, as necessary, unbundled to include smaller and start-up Aboriginal businesses.</p> <p>The policies of successful mainstream tenderers are Aboriginally inclusive.</p> <p>Unsuccessful tenderers have the opportunity to debrief.</p> <p>Unintentional stereotyping or bias is consciously avoided.</p>	<p>Joint ventures are built on an understanding of values and contributions.</p> <p>Due diligence between all parties takes place before agreements are made.</p> <p>Supply Nation and Aboriginal business directory registration is identified.</p> <p>Ownership of intellectual property is agreed.</p> <p>Where housing is to be developed, Aboriginal principles inform design and Aboriginal people participate in design and development.</p>	<p>The Aboriginal way of working with community and delivering services is respected and informs practice.</p> <p>Aboriginal solutions are heard and enabled.</p>



<p><b>Collaborative partnerships</b></p> <p>Collaborative partnerships build two-way learning and inform partnerships and ventures.</p>	<p>Two-way learning is valued.</p> <p>Innovative outcome focussed tenders enable the participation of Aboriginal businesses.</p> <p>Procurement writers partner to maximise community benefit.</p> <p>Supplier panels encourage and enable participation by Aboriginal businesses.</p> <p>Aboriginal supplier databases are utilised.</p> <p>Aboriginal businesses are actively sought out and encouraged to tender.</p>	<p>Two-way learning is valued.</p> <p>Ways of partnering and structuring joint ventures, governance and project management are devised to deliver effective outcomes. Benefits flow back to the community, whilst preserving culture and rights to land.</p> <p>The joint venture structure is agreed early and is clear on whether incorporated or unincorporated and subcontracting arrangements are specified.</p> <p>Management structures have significant Aboriginal representation.</p>	<p>Two-way learning is valued.</p> <p>Partnerships start from a basis of strengths on both sides.</p> <p>Aboriginal people are involved in the design and delivery of services and the service partnership.</p> <p>The multiple accountabilities of Aboriginal organisations, and the priority of supporting family and community is understood.</p>
<p><b>Building capability</b></p> <p>All partnerships and ventures identify opportunities to build the capabilities of the Aboriginal partner.</p>	<p>Where appropriate, Aboriginal businesses are supported by developing supplier capability, recruiting, pre-employment and on-the-job training and mentoring.</p> <p>Adapt the Victorian Industry Participation Policy to develop an Aboriginal procurement policy.</p>	<p>Joint ventures provide a vehicle for smaller Indigenous businesses to enter the market.</p> <p>Benefits flow back to the community, which may include financial, relationship and network building, skills development, and better services.</p>	<p>Partnership are structured to share skills and build a sustainable Aboriginal community controlled sector.</p> <p>Exit strategies and timelines are defined and include building local capability and employment and/or recognise where an ongoing and enduring partnership is appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Aboriginal community connection</b></p> <p>Effective engagement with community builds shared respect and creates Aboriginal confidence in the mainstream organisation.</p>	<p>Networking between Aboriginal businesses and the organisation occurs regularly.</p> <p>Direct purchasing actively uses Aboriginal businesses.</p> <p>Procurement with mainstream organisations is used to leverage other opportunities for Aboriginal people, for example, internal training and employment quotas and scholarships.</p>	<p>Aboriginal community connection opportunities are identified, for example, support for sporting clubs and cultural groups.</p>	<p>Local knowledge and community-based collaborative decision making ensures local needs are met.</p> <p>Opportunities to connect clients with Aboriginal community are taken.</p> <p>Through the partnering agency, the wisdom and voices of Elders are heard and support client services and community connection.</p>

# 1. RESOURCES AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

## a. Victorian overarching policies

- The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework [aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework-2018-2023](http://aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework-2018-2023)
- Korin Korin Balit- Djak Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027 [www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/korin-korin-balit-djak](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/korin-korin-balit-djak)
- Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, Aboriginal Housing Victoria 2020 [vahhf.org.au](http://vahhf.org.au)

## b. Aboriginal cultural safety

- DHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework [www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety)
- Greg Phillips: Aboriginal Health Cultural Safety and Medical Education 2017 [ahcsa.org.au/app/uploads/mp/files/resources/files/gregory-phillips-ahcsa-keynote.pdf](http://ahcsa.org.au/app/uploads/mp/files/resources/files/gregory-phillips-ahcsa-keynote.pdf)

## c. Tools and resources

- Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Design Principles, Jefa Greenaway 2016 [ahvic.org.au/cms\\_uploads/docs/ahv-design-principles-summary.pdf](http://ahvic.org.au/cms_uploads/docs/ahv-design-principles-summary.pdf)
- Supply Nation provides Australia's leading database of verified Indigenous businesses [supplynation.org.au](http://supplynation.org.au)
- Supporting Aboriginal Businesses - Business Victoria [business.vic.gov.au/setting-up-a-business/supporting-aboriginal-businesses-and-employment](http://business.vic.gov.au/setting-up-a-business/supporting-aboriginal-businesses-and-employment)
- Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Victoria [kinaway.com.au](http://kinaway.com.au)

## d. Aboriginal consultants

Contact CHIA Vic for a list of culturally-experienced consultants who can assist community housing organisations as they develop their Aboriginal Cultural Safety Frameworks.



## 2. CASE STUDIES

### VINCENTCARE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

**VincentCare provides services and programs for people who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness and disadvantage.**

VincentCare values diversity and has spent the past few years building its commitment and capability to deliver inclusive services. In 2017, VincentCare embarked on the development of its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), *Reflect*, in collaboration with staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisers from The Long Walk. The RAP was conditionally endorsed in April 2019 and formally endorsed in August 2019. The plan is for the period April 2019 – April 2020. The focus of the RAP is:

- relationships
- respect
- opportunities.



As VincentCare developed its RAP, the focus was on:

- Acknowledging the urgent need for change.
- Understanding and acknowledging our role in the ongoing injustices perpetuated against First Nations Peoples.
- Listening to and learning from First Nations Peoples.
- Identifying opportunities for employment.
- Developing an understanding of the mutual benefits of two-way learning, including procurement practices from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.
- Connecting with Aboriginal communities at their gathering places.
- Following through with what we said we would do.
- A commitment to building relationships and understanding.

#### Learnings and challenges:

- Timing – learning it will take time.
- Expecting Aboriginal people to represent all peoples, balancing the demands on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Right balance within the agency – how to get guidance, direction and learning, especially if no Aboriginal people are employed within the organisation.
- Commitment is essential.
- Budget – ensuring this is available for cultural awareness training.
- Getting staff comfortable with asking questions in a culturally safe way.
- Creating an environment that is culturally safe.
- Education is critical.

### ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA

**Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) is the largest non-government Aboriginal housing organisation in Australia. We are an independent Aboriginal community organisation that provides culturally safe, affordable and secure housing to 4,000 low income Aboriginal Victorians in 1,556 housing units across the state.**

AHV is a proud Aboriginal Community Organisation:

- proud of the history and culture of the Aboriginal peoples of Victoria
- proud of the Aboriginal people of Victoria who we serve, and
- proud of our unique identity and heritage.

Through the provision of secure housing by an Aboriginal landlord, AHV helps strengthen Aboriginal communities and cultural ties and aims to maintain and sustain tenancies to break the cycle of disadvantage and poverty. Tenants and residents are at the heart of our business and, as a leading Aboriginal housing provider, our priority is to deliver culturally safe services to our community.

As an Aboriginal organisation we cannot simply assume that all of our practices are culturally safe. We must strive to continually improve what we do and how we work with our people.

The Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework is a tool that supports us to systematically ask ourselves whether our organisation and our services are culturally safe. We have employed an Aboriginal Cultural Wellbeing Officer whose first task will be to work through the Framework, talk to our staff, our community, our partners and, most importantly, our residents to understand and improve the cultural safety of our organisation.

We will document the actions we need to take and over what timeframe to ensure that all aspects of our organisation are culturally safe, and actively build the cultural strength of our clients, our people and our communities.



### 3. SELF-DETERMINATION – A REFLECTION

#### Self-determination is dependent on the collective just as much as the individual.

To align oneself with a set of values and traits so inherent and ancient they have easily sustained the oldest living culture on the planet. Fairness and humility, paired with our innate innovativeness and ingenuity, are arguably the greatest contributors in our incredibly complex understanding of sustainability and respect. Each individual's role in what is our custom - the preservation of Country, balance and lore. Through a level of cooperation unheard of today, and an emphasis on fair trade and knowledge sharing, each nation throughout the country, with their own unique creation stories and distinct responsibilities, not only existed but thrived for more than 60,000 years. Moreover, with waterways, trees, birds and animals as our creators and life force, it almost certainly guaranteed humility was at the heart of all our interactions and relationships with Mother Nature and the individual.

With these values as the cornerstone of our culture, and our inherent innovation and resilience, we can use them as drivers in our every stride toward self-determination. Pooling our assets, investing in and supporting small and larger Aboriginal businesses, will move us to being competitive and open up avenues to create our own Aboriginal economy. Self-funding programs designed by us for us. Scholarships, investing heavily in educational programs so no Aboriginal child is left at a disadvantage. Creating employment opportunities and career pathways that lead to higher levels of competency, leading to higher levels of understanding that competency is constitutive to transfer of power. A succession plan for the Aboriginal community. Bringing some much-needed relief to Aboriginal Victorian communities facing, at times, uncertain futures.

With a newfound competency and autonomy in all our affairs and a tried and tested value system that can be expanded on ad infinitum, we begin to see our Aboriginality as an advantage, not the disadvantage so often juxtaposed with Aboriginal.

— Dean Mitakiki Meagher-Wanganeen







**Community Housing**  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION **VICTORIA**

Level 1/128 Exhibition Street, Melbourne 3000 T: 03 9654 6077 W: [chiavic.com.au](http://chiavic.com.au)



**CHIA Victoria acknowledges the  
support of the Victorian Government**