



Aboriginal Homelessness: An Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector

Prepared for Council to Homeless Persons

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Cover, header and footer image:
Aarorigine (Gunaikurnai/Wurundjeri), *Clans of the Gunaikurnai*, 2021

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

The patterns on these shields are from the Gunaikurnai nation and they represent the five Gunaikurnai clans – the Brabralung, Brataualung, Brayakaulung, Krauatungalung and Tatungalung.

The Brabralung are from Central Gippsland around the Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers and around Bairnsdale and Bruthen. They are freshwater people.

The Brataualung are from South Gippsland along the coast from Cape Liptrap to the mouth of the Merriman Creek, including Wilson's Promontory. They are saltwater people.

The Brayakaulung are from around Sale and the Avon and Latrobe Rivers. They are inland freshwater people.

The Krauatungalung are from the Snowy River area down to Lakes Entrance.
Their rivers are the Cann, Brodribb, Buchan and Snowy.

The Tatungalung are from the coast near Lakes Entrance and along Ninety Mile Beach.
They are from Lake Victoria, Lake King and Raymond Island and also the little islands in the lakes.



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.

We recognise that sovereignty has never been ceded, and Aboriginal Victorians have long called for treaty. 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.

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

Statement of Commitment from the Council to Homeless Persons/ Specialist Homelessness Sector

Homelessness ends when every Aboriginal person has a home.

It is unacceptable that 17 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians need the support of specialist homelessness services. If the general population were to experience this level of homelessness it would be equivalent to one million Victorians.

We recognise that dispossession and colonisation are ongoing and are present in processes that result in increased homelessness, including over-incarceration, child removal, and housing discrimination.

We also recognise that separation and removal from traditional lands and disconnection from cultural networks has resulted in the ongoing spiritual homelessness experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

We commend the development of Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework. It is a multi-faceted strategy designed to address the unique homelessness and housing challenges faced by Aboriginal Victorians so that they achieve quality housing outcomes in a generation.

The Specialist Homelessness Sector is committed to actively engaging in the implementation of Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort.

Our contribution starts by each of us ensuring that our policies and practices are culturally safe for Aboriginal people. This means that our workplaces and services are culturally safe and that our relationships with Aboriginal people and communities ensure our organisations are welcoming, inclusive, and informed by the strength of Aboriginal people and their cultures.

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Executive Summary

The shocking levels of Aboriginal homelessness in Victoria require a broad-based systematic and multi-sectoral response with solutions that are co-designed with Aboriginal people and informed by Aboriginal culture and experiences.

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) is committed to culturally safe homelessness services that enable and enshrine self-determination. The Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) Transition Plan, 2018-22, sets three key actions:

- In alignment with the principles of self-determination determine the process for developing this goal and related actions and deliverables.
- Apply the lens of self-determination to other relevant SHS Transition Plan goals (including building a SHS workforce development strategy and develop workforce pathways).
- Build the cultural capabilities competency of mainstream SHS agencies.

Manan-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework was developed as a partnership between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community and is founded in Aboriginal community consultation and decision making. It emphasises the importance of a mainstream system that is culturally safe, where providers have culturally safe policies, procedures, and practices and where workers understand and implement these practices. The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the SHS (the SHS Framework) responds to the priorities of Manan-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort and the SHS Transition Plan. It is designed to assist specialist homelessness services achieve Aboriginal cultural safety.

The Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community's shared commitment to Self-Determination, Treaty, and Truth Telling are a compelling opportunity for justice, reconciliation and healing of past wounds. They inform, provide context for, and drive our work towards better outcomes for Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness.

The SHS Framework starts with understanding cultural safety. The "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework for the Victorian health, human and community services sector"¹ is the foundation document for cultural safety across the human services sector and is the starting point for each organisation as they embark on their journey to cultural safety.

Rich and deep consultations with Aboriginal people, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and mainstream and Aboriginal specialist homelessness service providers have informed the design of the SHS Framework.

The SHS Framework is designed to assist specialist homelessness service providers to reflect on their practices and adopt strategies and actions that will improve the way they engage with and address the homelessness needs of Aboriginal Victorians. The SHS Framework does not set competency or accreditations standards. It is designed as a tool to guide organisations as they work through the steps toward becoming culturally safe organisations. How each organisation does this and the questions they ask of themselves will vary according to their history, traditions, internal and external cultures, location, scope, and community. The SHS Framework aims to provoke thoughtful, deep, and informed thinking about what is needed to reach cultural safety and emphasises that Aboriginal people's feedback is a critical element in the continuous improvement process.

1 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework*. DHHS 2019



The following key elements of cultural safety are needed in each organisation:

- Intentionality within each organisation and across the SHS sector. This is the beginning of the process of assessing internal knowledge and understanding and building Aboriginal partnerships.
- Embedding of cultural safety in all governance and leadership practices, strategic and business planning, and internal policies and practices to achieve sustained change.
- Agreement on an explicit goal of reduced rates of Aboriginal homelessness and regular monitoring of progress and outcomes.
- Confidence to undertake cultural advocacy, as more culturally safe services develop, and networks grow.
- Continuous improvement and monitoring of progress to inform the quality cycle.
- Commitment from individuals at all levels and from the organisation as a whole, alongside ongoing productive relationships with Aboriginal people and communities.
- Definition of organisational outcomes at each stage in the change continuum and accompanying measures that indicate whether change is being achieved.

The SHS Framework provides an organisational planning framework, program logic and reflection tool that enable a systematic way of working toward cultural safety.

An overview guide to using the SHS Framework follows.



A Guide to Using The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector (the SHS Framework) is in four sections:

Section one: Self-determination and Aboriginal cultural safety introduces key concepts, policies, and directions. An understanding of Cultural Safety, Self-Determination, Treaty and Truth Telling are the starting point in the journey toward culturally safe organisations.

The history and position of Aboriginal people in Victoria provides context for a deeper understanding of the richness and diversity of Aboriginal communities and their ongoing experience of disadvantage.

Section two: Aboriginal people's experience of homelessness documents experiences of homelessness from the rich and deep point of view of Aboriginal people who have experienced homelessness and Aboriginal and mainstream homelessness service providers. The insights that these stories provide inform how organisations work through the cultural safety issues in their organisations.

Section three: the Aboriginal cultural safety framework for the specialist homelessness sector provides a guide to the steps that each organisation should take on its pathway to cultural safety. It provides a program logic and also identifies:

- the importance of embedding cultural safety in all governance and leadership practices, strategic and business planning, and internal policies and practices to achieve sustained change.
- that Aboriginal people have choice and control of where they access their services.
- the need to keep in sight the ultimate goal of reduced rates of Aboriginal homelessness and ensure that this goal is explicit in each step in the journey.
- the critical role of monitoring of progress and outcomes and continuous improvement as part of the quality cycle.

Section four: the Aboriginal cultural safety 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.

It is in three parts:

- **The Foundations for Success** – including Governance and Leadership, Workplace Policies and Practices, Aboriginal Community Partnerships and Communications and Stakeholder Relationships.
- **Culturally Safe Homelessness Services** – including Access to SHS, Identifying and planning service needs and Accommodation and Housing outcomes.
- **Partnerships and Procurement** – including Procurement, Joint Venture Developments and Shared Service Delivery.



Section One: Self-Determination and Aboriginal Cultural Safety

1. Introduction

Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)

The CHP is the peak body representing organisations and individuals with an interest and commitment to ending homelessness.

The Council envisions an end to homelessness in Victoria.

CHP's vision for reconciliation

The CHP is committed to an Australia where the process of colonisation ceases, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are no longer over-represented among those experiencing homelessness.

This means that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across the country, are valued and respected.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is meaningfully achieved, so that Aboriginal people can have choice and control of where they access their services to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural interests.
- All specialist homelessness services are culturally safe.
- Structural forces that can lead to homelessness do not impact disproportionately on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) Transition Plan 2018–22

The SHS Transition Plan was developed to assist the SHS sector, both as organisations and as a workforce, to build on its strengths and prepare to deliver the contemporary suite of services, to meet growing demand and complexity, and to achieve effective outcomes.

The plan envisions a SHS sector which provides effective service responses that are flexible and innovative, culturally safe, and sensitive to people's presenting needs and goals, and that service providers work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including those with lived experience, to end homelessness.

Goal 3 is to: Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.

Key actions are to:

- In alignment with the principle of self-determination determine the process for developing this goal and related actions and deliverables.
- Apply the lens of self-determination to other relevant SHS Transition Plan goals (including Build a SHS workforce development strategy and develop workforce pathways).²

2 *The Specialist Homelessness Sector Transition Plan 2018–2022*
https://www.ehn.org.au/sector-news/specialist-homelessness-sector-shs-transition-plan_117s430

- Build the cultural capabilities of mainstream SHS agencies.

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector

Purpose

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the SHS (the SHS Framework) is specifically designed to assist specialist homelessness service providers to reflect on their practices and adopt strategies and actions that will improve the way they engage with and address the homelessness needs of Aboriginal Victorians. It does not set competency or accreditations standards. It has been designed as a tool to guide organisations as they work through the steps to become culturally safe organisations. How each organisation does this and the questions they ask of themselves will vary according to their history, traditions, internal and external cultures, location, scope, and community. The SHS Framework aims to provoke thoughtful, deep, and informed thinking about what is needed to reach cultural safety.

Lack of cultural safety is a critical barrier to retention of Aboriginal staff who work in the housing and homelessness sector. The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework provides the tools that enable continuous quality improvements through improving cultural understandings and capabilities by addressing underlying causes of unconscious biases that enable a fair and equitable sector free from racism and discrimination.

Some organisations provide both community housing and homelessness services. The CHIAVic Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework and the “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework for the Victorian health, human and community services sector” are companion documents to this Framework, enabling those organisations to undertake a consistent corporate wide approach to reviewing and reforming their homelessness and housing policies and practices. The SHS Framework is also a useful resource to support those specialist homelessness service providers undertaking Reconciliation Action Plans.

The findings and recommendations of Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, provide context for the SHS Framework and support one of its key recommendations:

The mainstream system is culturally safe, and workers understand and implement culturally safe practices; mainstream providers have culturally safe policies and practices in place.³

Creating culturally safe environments, services and workplaces for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community of Victoria will ensure the advancement of Aboriginal Self-Determination and prioritises Aboriginal voices.

Process

The SHS Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework has been guided by:

- CHP’s Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Executive Advisory Group (EAG) established to guide the development and implementation of the SHS Transition plan.
- The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework Implementation Working Group (VAHHF-IWG) that has endorsed the Framework.

³ *Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, Aboriginal Housing Victoria 2020, recommendation 5.2.1*

- The Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum, (AHHF) that includes all Aboriginal organisations providing housing and homelessness services and has provided a point of reference and consultation for the project.

The Framework is the product of a short literature review, consultations with Aboriginal people, including both those seeking homelessness and housing assistance and Aboriginal service providers, Government agencies, Peak Bodies, and mainstream specialist homelessness service providers.

Through a shared commitment to Aboriginal cultural safety, we can make a positive impact on homelessness support and housing outcomes for Aboriginal people.

2. Self-Determination, Treaty and Truth Telling

The Aboriginal community in partnership with the Victorian Government has taken historic steps toward Self-determination, Treaty and Truth Telling. The opportunity to achieve justice and reconciliation and heal the wounds of past injustices is now with us.

The shocking levels of homelessness experienced by Aboriginal people in Victoria is a gaping legacy which must be addressed.

We are committed to culturally safe homelessness services that enable and enshrine self-determination and we will enter into a journey of learning with Aboriginal people, communities, and organisations so that all of our systems and services are informed by Aboriginal culture and experiences.

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.⁴

The right of self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is in addition to the right which everyone has to freedom from discrimination (including under ICCPR articles 2.1 and 26) and 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.⁵

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

5 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 4

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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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. Self-determination also applies to how the broader community interacts and engages with Aboriginal people.

The Victorian Government's Self-Determination Reform Framework guides the Victorian Public Service to undertake systemic and structural transformation to enable Aboriginal self-determination, as committed to in the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*. All Government Departments are required to undertake actions across the domains of people, systems, outcomes and accountability in order to progress the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework's self-determination enablers, which are to:

- Prioritise culture.
- Address trauma and support healing.
- Address racism and promote cultural safety.
- Transfer power and resources to communities.⁶

These enablers also guide the SHS Framework, and pose two fundamental questions:

- How are Aboriginal choices honoured and respected?
- How are Aboriginal rights to cultural identity and practices respected and supported?⁷

Treaty⁸

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the elected voice for Aboriginal people and communities in future Treaty discussions.

For 230 years, Australia has been one of the only Commonwealth nations without a Treaty with its First Peoples. Self-determination is the cornerstone of the Victorian Government's process to develop a Treaty with Aboriginal people.

The Assembly builds on the hard work of Aboriginal leaders of the past and supports Aboriginal communities through the Treaty process. It is the voice for Aboriginal communities. The Assembly is made up of proud Aboriginal leaders. All are Victorian Traditional Owners, elected and appointed by their communities.

6 *Advancing the Victorian Treaty Process Annual Report 2019-20* p 14

7 Darren Smith CEO Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Chair Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum 2019

8 First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria website May 2021

Enshrined in law, the Assembly is helping set up 3 important steps to lead to Treaty negotiations:

- The Treaty Authority – an independent umpire through the Treaty process.
- The Treaty Negotiating Framework – which will set how Treaties can be agreed in Victoria.
- Negotiating Treaties and a Self-Determination Fund – so Aboriginal communities can be on a level playing field with government.

Yoo-rrook Justice Commission⁹

The Yoo-rrook Justice Commission is the first truth-telling body to be established in Australia. It is independent of both government and the Assembly.

Truth-telling is a process of openly sharing historical truths after periods of conflict. Truth-telling acknowledges human rights violations by promoting the voices of communities who have been victims of these violations. First Peoples in this country have been calling for a truth-telling process for generations. Building on this activism, in June 2020, the Assembly agreed that truth-telling must be a fundamental part of Treaty-making and called on the government to establish a formal truth-telling process.

The Yoo-rrook Justice Commission was formally established in May 2021 in response to this call. The mandate and form of the Commission were designed by the Assembly and the government, based on consultations with Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

Yoo-rrook will:

- **Establish an official record of the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria using First Peoples' stories.**

This will be done by inquiring into and reporting on historical systemic injustices perpetrated against First Peoples since colonisation (for example massacres, wars, and genocide) as well as ongoing systemic injustices (for example policing, child protection and welfare matters, health, invasion of privacy and exclusion from economic, social and political life).

- **Make detailed recommendations about practical actions and reforms needed in Victoria.**

The Commission will determine the causes and consequences of systemic injustices and who is responsible. The Commission is expected to make detailed recommendations for changes to laws, policy and education and the types of matters to be included in future Treaties. Its first report is expected by June 2022, with a final report by June 2024.

⁹ First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria website May 2021
Yoo-rrook means 'truth' in the Wemba Wemba/Wamba Wamba language, which is spoken in the north-west region of Victoria.

3. Understanding Aboriginal Cultural Safety

Cultural safety is a fundamental human right. ... If we do not invest the time, energy and resources required to improve cultural safety our health, community and human services sector will not increase life expectancy and improve the quality of Aboriginal people's lives.¹⁰

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework for the Victorian health, human and community services sector is the foundation document for cultural safety across the human services sector. It is the starting point for the Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the SHS sector and provides key definitions and understandings of what cultural safety means in the context of human service provision.¹¹

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).¹²

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).¹³

10 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework*. DHHS 2019 p6

11 The definitions and approach to Aboriginal Cultural Safety in *Aboriginal cultural safety framework in the DHHS 2109*, are used in this document

12 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.

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

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 their 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 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 unlearn unconscious bias and racism and relearn Aboriginal cultural values.

Cultural Safety Resources:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework for the Victorian health, human and community services sector 2019

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety-framework>

The Centre for Cultural Competence Australia is a majority Indigenous owned consulting and cultural training organisation with an outcomes-based approach. It provides an on-line competence based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competence Course.

CHP has licences for this course that are available to SHS at a heavily subsidised rate.

<https://www.ccca.com.au/>

4. Aboriginal Victorians and housing and homelessness

Aboriginal communities are rich and diverse but 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 has differed across communities, families, and individuals.

The compounding impact of inter-generational dispossession, loss and disadvantage flows through into 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 homelessness policies and practices.

Aboriginal Victorians – Some Facts

In 2016 Victoria was home to 57,782 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are now 0.8 per cent of all Victorians.

The Aboriginal population is faster growing than the general Victorian population. If the current annual growth rate of 2.5 per cent continues there will be 95,149 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria by 2036.

The age profile is younger than the non-Indigenous population. In 2016 the median age was 23 years compared to a median age of 37 years for non-Indigenous people. More than half (52.2 per cent) are aged under 25 years. In comparison, less than one-third (31.2 per cent) of non-Indigenous people are aged under 25.

The gradual increase in the median age of Aboriginal Victorians can be partly attributed to improved life expectancy. The proportion of Aboriginal people over 65 years is currently considerably smaller than for non-Aboriginal people (5.3 per cent compared to 15.4 per cent). At the same time the number of Aboriginal people over 65 years is growing.

Aboriginal households (where at least one Aboriginal person lives) are more likely than other households to be family households (77.0 per cent compared to 70.7 per cent) and are less likely to be a person living alone (15.7 per cent compared with 24.8 per cent).

Slightly more Aboriginal Victorians live in regional Victoria, 50.7 per cent compared to 48.8 per cent in metropolitan Melbourne.

Seventeen per cent of Victoria's Aboriginal population now access homelessness services, a higher rate than in other Australian jurisdictions. This rate is 11.6 times higher than for non-Indigenous Victorians. Once Aboriginal people access SHS's their outcomes are roughly equivalent to the general community.

Rates of home ownership are lower (43 per cent compared to 68 per cent). Cost, apparent racism and unfamiliarity with rental practices also 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 a projected demand for 27,000 more homes for Aboriginal households 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.¹⁴

Mana-na woorn-tyeen 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.¹⁵

Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort was developed by the Aboriginal community in partnership with the Victorian Government to address the housing disadvantage experienced by far too many Aboriginal Victorians.

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

- Housing market failure.
- Stressors which 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.

Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort unambiguously states 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. The foundations for change are built on the strengths and potential of Aboriginal communities, individuals, families, and traditional owner groups.

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.
- From narrow and rigid notions of traditional tenure to culturally fit tenures which combine Aboriginal community and individual home ownership.

¹⁴ *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework*, Aboriginal Housing Victoria 2020

¹⁵ *Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort* p21

Closing the Gap refresh and housing and homelessness targets

The Victorian Government in partnership with the community launched *Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort* in February 2020. The Framework is the first of its kind in Victoria and sets out a blueprint to improve Aboriginal housing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians by 2031. It guides Victoria's plans to deliver on the refreshed *National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2021*.

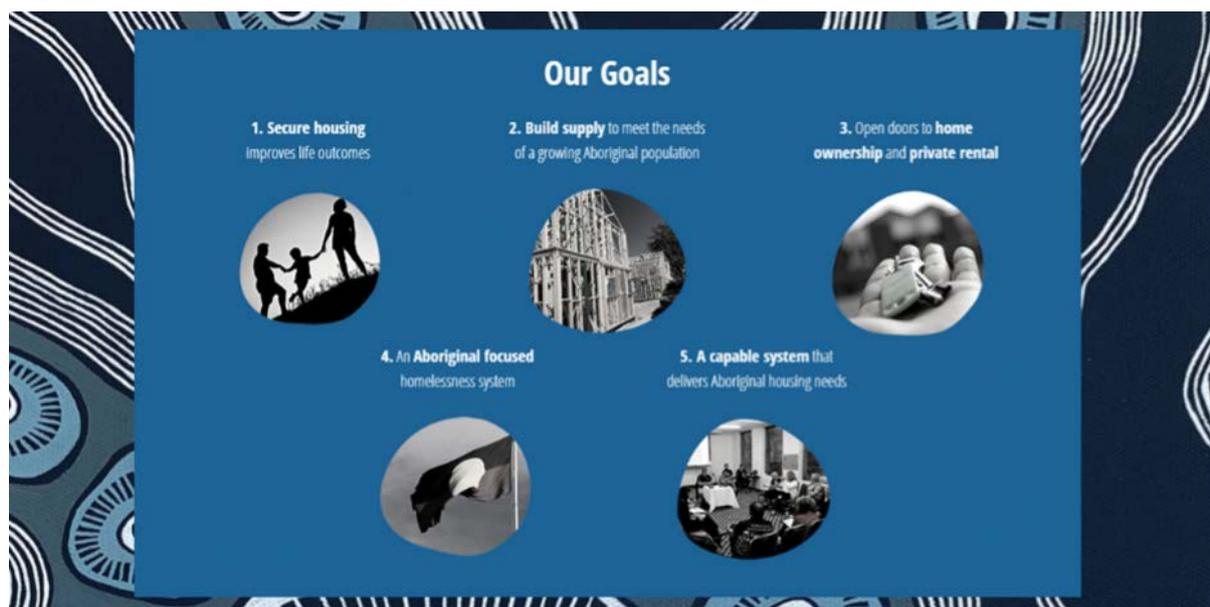
The Closing the Gap refresh now includes housing among its 16 key national socio-economic targets to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The targets in the refreshed strategy work across education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and languages.

The housing target is based on the outcome that 'People can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need', and states that by 2031, 88 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing. Victoria's reported rate is 87.6 per cent, and the target has likely been met in more recent times. However, there is more work to be done if Victoria's Aboriginal housing objectives are to be met.

Housing stability is the foundation for people realising their life aspirations and is fundamental to addressing Aboriginal socio-economic disadvantage. Victoria's Closing the Gap implementation plan sets out a targeted set of actions and outcomes to be achieved to address the housing needs of Aboriginal Victorians.

A collective approach between government and the Aboriginal community is needed to ensure that Victoria's Closing the Gap implementation plan has identified the key priorities and approaches required to achieve desired housing outcomes.

With the launch of the *Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort* came the establishment of a robust governance structure to oversee implementation. Three forums – Aboriginal Housing and Homeless Forum (AHHF), Implementation Action Group, and the Implementation Working Group, co-chaired between Aboriginal Housing Victoria's CEO and Homes Victoria's CEO – enable Homes Victoria to make decisions in partnership with the community.



Section Two:

What Aboriginal People Told Us About Homelessness

Aboriginal people are far more likely to experience complex intersectional needs which stem from the ongoing impact of post-colonial dispossession, cultural loss, and social dislocation.

Intersectionality is an “intersectional oppression that arises out of the combination of various oppressions which, together, produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone.”¹⁶ The social exclusion, social profiling, historic stigma, and prejudice that homeless people experience is often concentrated and intensified for Aboriginal people and is overlaid by a level of spiritual homelessness which is a result of dispossession from land, culture, and community.

Spiritual homelessness has been described as “separation from traditional land, and from family and kinship networks, and involves a crisis of personal identity wherein a person’s understanding or knowledge of how they relate to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused or lacking.”¹⁷ Homeless Aboriginal people will often congregate together because this is how they re-establish cultural connection and security.

Aboriginal homelessness responses require an understanding of how historical trauma, Aboriginal culture and other inter-related factors impact on the Aboriginal experience of homelessness.

1. Many Aboriginal people experience particular housing vulnerabilities¹⁸

Consultations and research undertaken when developing Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort highlighted that many Aboriginal people experience particular needs that impact on homelessness and housing services.

Children in care

- Housing stress and homelessness often precipitate child protection interventions and are a barrier to reunification.
- Kinship care creates the 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.
- 18-year-olds leaving care need somewhere to live. While there may be funding support available there are few housing options, particularly options that provide ongoing emotional support, education, and training.

16 Mary Eaton, *Patently Confused: Complex Inequality and Canada v. Mossop*, 1 REV. CONST. STUD. 203, 229 (1994).

17 *Why are special services needed to address Indigenous homelessness?* Paul Memmott, Christina Birdsall-Jones and Kelly Greenop June 2011, p47

18 Consultations and research undertaken for Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort p22

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

Extended families are a cultural strength but caring for family often leads to overcrowding and household challenges particularly when family members affected by substance abuse and related complex and challenging behaviours are taken in.

Family violence impacts on housing needs of victims and perpetrators:

- Lack of alternative housing can prevent women leaving violent relationships and some leaving 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 rely on stable housing. Youth justice programs must as a priority link with housing.

Older people have special needs:

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

Disability is a high area of 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 major impact on levels of homelessness and lack of sustainable housing tenure.

2. What we learnt from consultations

As we developed the SHS Framework we consulted extensively with and heard from Aboriginal people, providers, and communities and from mainstream SHS providers. Their rich and deep experiences have informed the development of this Framework.

What Aboriginal people and communities told us about Aboriginal homelessness

- Spiritual homelessness is overlaid by the very real recent past and present experience of physical homelessness.
 - *“To be homeless is an awful feeling and so is overcrowding. You become hypervigilant. It raises cortisol and repeated questioning feels judgemental.”*
 - *“Overtelling of the story feels like a form of control. It is just like being referred to the police.”*
- Place, housing, and homelessness magnify the effect of inter-generational trauma and dispossession.

- Existing and historical trauma particularly for those who have been under child protection orders compound colonisation and mean Aboriginal people might act out when they front up to what they feel are culturally unsafe mainstream services. At worst this can result in them being banned from services.
 - *"We reach the end of the line".*
 - *"I may as well act as the person you think I am."*
- People often feel *'booted out of their communities'*. Some are from out of town, others local. Large families with many children result in overcrowded houses and someone has to move out to make space. If there are foster children and grandchildren, household members with a conviction generally have to move out. Often it is teenage males who are first to leave. Very few have anywhere to go.
- Child protection is the start of the road to homelessness for far too many Aboriginal people. First being taken early from their mothers and then released from child protection without a home. Some end up in boarding houses which are not suitable for already vulnerable young people.
 - All too often *"Drugs and the drug industry relieve the pain and become the new family."*
 - Child protection also carefully watches homeless families and the impact on children, creating fear and building on intergenerational trauma.
- Young people *"are hollowed out and exhausted by life"* but they might only be 21 years old. They need time and space to reconnect and *'breathe again'*. There are few social housing options suitable and available for young people.
- Male homelessness is significantly under-reported.
 - *"There is nowhere for men to go, they know they won't get assistance and they go and find somewhere else to stay or sleep rather than muck around with endless referrals."*
- Family violence creates housing stress for perpetrators and victims. It is exceedingly difficult to find suitable housing for women and children and most transitional housing is not suitable for family groupings. Without housing for perpetrators, they are likely to be back on the streets and are unable to rehabilitate.
- Mainstream homelessness providers are sometimes the first choice particularly when people feel shame and dislocation from their own communities and services.
- Long-term homelessness requires more than a housing outcome. At the point of contact, some who are without a home long term, do not wish to be or are not ready to be housed permanently and need a longer period of engagement as well as immediate support through emergency relief. Mental health problems are both caused by and can be a product of long-term homelessness. Co-morbidities and intersectional issues particularly mental health, intellectual disability, and drugs create a vicious cycle of accumulating support needs.

What we heard about Aboriginal culturally safety in Specialist Homelessness Services

“Dignity and respect are at the heart of a trusting service relationship.”

First contact with a SHS provider:

- 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 SHS provider. Trauma, grief and loss, and fear of failure severely impact on people’s confidence to even seek accommodation and housing. It is worse for those coming from incarceration or institutional care. A positive and friendly reputation with the Aboriginal community and outreach services will encourage Aboriginal people to approach the SHS agency for assistance
 - *“When you approach a mainstream organisation, you feel scared, you don’t know what to expect when you walk in the door. It brings back memories of the stolen generations”.*
 - *“I am always on high alert when I approach mainstream agencies”.*
 - *“I am afraid I won’t be able to do the paperwork”*
 - *“I don’t have my Certificate of Aboriginality”.*
- However, once a mainstream agency establishes a respectful, friendly, welcoming reputation amongst Aboriginal people and the word spreads, that organisation will often be actively sought out by Aboriginal people without a home.
- 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”*
- Choice is very important. An Aboriginal organisation is not always the first choice for Aboriginal people. This may be because of:
 - Shame, family connections and family differences.
 - A feeling of a need for anonymity in community.
 - Being ‘off-country’ and feeling discomfort with local mob.
 - A perceived or real suspension of service due to difficult behaviour.
 - *“A non-Aboriginal person who is kind, understanding and respectful is fine”*
- Providing a respectful welcoming service:
 - *“People must be given the time and trust must be built. It is then the client will tell you their story when they are ready.”*
 - It helps to ask about strengths and resilience and seek out what is good.
 - Avoid asking personal questions in public at the front counter. People feel shame.
 - For some a confined room, a desk and computer are bureaucratic and claustrophobic. Be willing to move into an open space or talk outside if it works better.
 - Phone contact often does not work. Personal contact establishes the trusting relationship.
 - Launching into questions and form filling before trust is built is counterproductive.
 - *“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”*

Initial Assessment Planning

- Both ACCOs and mainstream agencies who work well with Aboriginal people emphasise the need to develop a trusting relationship before identifying and providing services, establishing personal goals, and presenting problem solving responses.
 - *"This is who we are and what we can offer – how can we build a productive relationship that works?"* (ACCO)
- Trauma informed practice is required. ACCOs say they don't need to pinpoint the trauma, they 'just know'.
 - *"We trust everyone like family".*
 - Ngwala told the story of an Aboriginal woman off the streets who had never had stable housing; Ngwala implicitly knew what had happened.
 - *"Just understand the solid bank of trauma."*
- Don't assume that everyone is immediately seeking permanent housing. Some who are chronically homeless will need a longer period of sensitive engagement in relation to permanent housing. They may fear permanent housing will break their bonds with their street community.

Establishing service needs

- It helps to find an avenue early on to establish whether cultural support and cultural connection are wanted or needed or whether there are existing links to Aboriginal services, and to community support people.
- For some support and housing services the client may need a Certificate of Aboriginality. Be sensitive when asking if they have this and if not, whether it is practical for them to obtain one. Be very careful to not appear to be questioning identity.
- A humane, relational, and non-transactional approach opens up discussion on personal goals and is likely to lead to better outcomes. Privilege individual experience. Once a trusting relationship has been built, personal goals and support needs can be identified and a service plan prepared. Start from a point of *"how do we get through this together?"*
- Aboriginal people who need accommodation, like most other people without a home are feeling that they are at the end of the road. The endless churn of service referrals wears people out, accentuates their feelings of failure and is retraumatising.
 - *"I just want somewhere to sleep but now you are digging down into my private life".*
- Successful outcomes often require work with the whole family, particularly with rough sleepers.
- Advocacy is often needed to access those services which present barriers; support is sometimes needed for a year or up to 3 years, recognising client independence takes time and there will be minor setbacks.
- *"Elders are the lost generation in terms of support."* They need support to understand aged care packages and ancillary Elder support.
- Culturally safe flexible wrap around services are very important. A 'mutual obligation approach' can be very alienating. A trusting relationship and progress through provision of primary needs are the pre-requisite to a gradual establishment of mutual obligation.

Transition to housing

- Many Aboriginal people seeking housing assistance are reliant on their SHS provider helping them through their Victorian Housing Register application. Without this assistance they may never register for long term housing.
- Enhanced outreach services – in home case management, supported housing particularly at the very high-risk stage when they first move into housing is critical.
- *“Do not dump people in accommodation.”*
- A number of SHS providers referred to how terrifying it can be for homeless people when they move into a house, coming from being used to street noise.
- *“The quiet hits you and plays with your mind.”*
- Budgeting, navigating public transport, running a household all require skills and combined health and housing responses are generally needed.

A respectful and productive relationship between ACCOs and mainstream

It is evident that a homelessness service system that is effective for Aboriginal people requires a mix of ACCOs and mainstream providers. The importance of choice was mentioned over and over again as was the cultural connection that ACCOs provide.

- *“ACCOs know community and family. ACCO workers work with the individual and seek long term housing. Housing provides stability and positions families and children for school and work, broader life skills and the role of grandparents. Better outcomes. Family and community connection is the core.”* VACCA
- *“When they come to us it is often because they are alienated from their own families, communities and services”. We are the provider of last resort”* Mainstream SHS.”

The mainstream agencies interviewed for this project were aware that ACCOs provide the necessary cultural connection and long-term community support. They were keen to make that connection.

However, many ACCOs are already stretched and not resourced to provide this support. Brokerage funds generally sit with mainstream providers and only a few ACCOs have intensive support packages.

ACCOs and mainstream providers can each see different aspects of Aboriginal homelessness. The relationship between ACCOs and mainstream providers is important. Where the relationship works well there are undoubted benefits for the client.

Connection and Participation are important and ACCOs can provide that connection

- 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.”*



Section Three: The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector

1. Our Objective

To achieve culturally safe, accessible and sustainable specialist homelessness support services for Aboriginal Victorians that provide pathways to long term and sustainable housing outcomes.

2. Principles

The Framework is underpinned by a set of guiding principles that are consistent with the Principles in Mana-na Woorn-tyeen maar-takoort, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homeless Framework.

- **Aboriginal self-determination** – mainstream homeless service 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 well designed and delivered services that lead to housing outcomes.
- **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 shifts from tenuous and marginal housing to housing security.
- **Transparency and accountability** – the housing and homelessness system is accountable to the Aboriginal community through transparent, disaggregated public reporting of outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- **Cultural safety and access** – Aboriginal people can access a system which is responsive to their housing and homelessness 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 connected outcomes that break the cycle of disadvantage.
- **Reciprocity** – 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 are taken to contribute to development of local Aboriginal enterprises associated with land and culture; build commercial opportunities; and deliver greater wealth to the community.



3. Achieving our Objective

Cultural safety is an ongoing learning journey

Key features:

Intentionality within each organisation and across the SHS sector is a critical first step. It is the beginning of the process of assessing internal knowledge and understanding and building Aboriginal partnerships.

Cultural safety must be embedded in all governance and leadership practices, strategic and business planning, and internal policies and practices to achieve sustained change.

The ultimate goal of reduced rates of Aboriginal homelessness must be explicit in each step in the journey and progress and outcomes must be regularly monitored.

As more culturally safe services develop, the network of organisations that confidently undertake cultural advocacy will grow, strengthening sector wide and organisational outcomes.

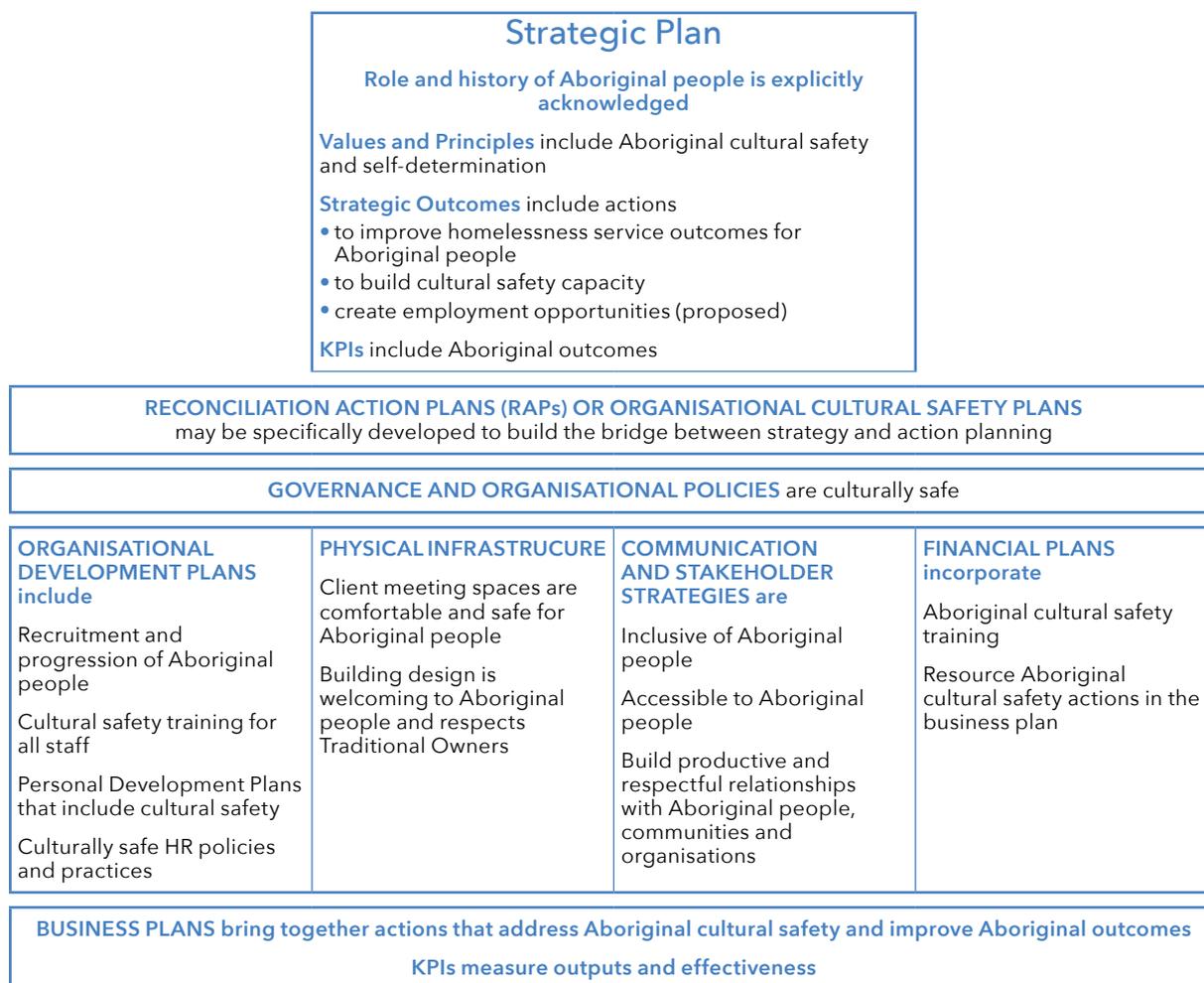
Program logic

The following program logic sets out a way of understanding the steps toward cultural safety:

TOWARDS CULTURALLY SAFE SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES					
Specialist homelessness sector	Culturally informed people create a culturally aware and sensitive organisation	Ensuring culturally safe policies, programs and processes	Resulting in short to medium term practice outcomes	Benefiting the SHS provider, the homelessness sector, aboriginal people and community	Leading to long term outcomes
<p>Specialist Homelessness Service Providers</p> <p>Homelessness and housing services</p> <p>People and Programs</p> <p>Partnerships</p>	<p>Self reflection, learning and equality are explicitly valued, creating intentionality in the organisation.</p> <p>Leaders, managers and staff are culturally aware</p> <p>Cultural safety training and awareness is undertaken</p> <p>Practice is culturally sensitive and informed by culturally safety</p> <p>Understanding is deepened through upskilling and ongoing relationships</p> <p>Aboriginal people and organisations participate in the organisation's journey to cultural safety</p> <p>A friendly organisation welcomes Aboriginal people</p> <p>Organisation and community partnerships are formed and developed</p>	<p>Organisational foundations provide the authorising environment and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and leadership • Workplace policies and practices • Engaging partnerships with Aboriginal community • Transparency and accountability • Aboriginal staff are integral to the organisation and feel safe in their work environment <p>Homelessness solutions are underpinned by culturally safe and appropriate policies and practices and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming and culturally friendly environment that encourages Aboriginal people to present for initial assessment • Culturally appropriate communications and client relationships provide for deep cultural understanding of housing and other needs • Support is culturally appropriate connects with community as appropriate • Relationships are respectful, trusting, and non-judgemental • Trauma informed strengths-based practice • Transition to ongoing housing is supported by customised tenancy support <p>Partnerships and Procurement support Aboriginal capacity and advance self-determination and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement • Joint Venture developments • Shared service delivery • Community partnerships 	<p>More Aboriginal people access SHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal people confidently and willingly access services • Aboriginal people on the street recommend services <p>Organisational strategies, policies and practices are culturally safe</p> <p>Housing outcomes are sustained</p> <p>Aboriginal people have more housing and life options</p> <p>New community partnerships are formed</p> <p>Links with ACCOs strengthen cultural connection for homeless people and for SHS Providers.</p> <p>All levels of the organisation know how to confidently engage with Aboriginal people</p> <p>Aboriginal knowledge, customs and ways strengthen the whole organisation</p>	<p>Increase in safe, stable and sustained housing and life outcomes</p> <p>Housing is a platform for improved life outcomes, improving social and economic outcomes</p> <p>The SHS is a trusted access point for Aboriginal people</p> <p>Partnerships and procurement build Aboriginal capacity</p> <p>Statewide services and policies to end homelessness are strengthened</p> <p>Funding and investment grow</p>	<p>Culturally safe, accessible and sustainable housing contributes to reduced homelessness</p> <p>Pathways are built to a prosperous self-determining Aboriginal community</p>

Cultural safety in the planning hierarchy

To drive organisational change cultural safety must be embedded in all parts of the planning hierarchy. An example follows:



Continuous Improvement and Monitoring Progress

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

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the SHS is designed to generate ongoing discussion and analysis of present practice and drive continuous improvement. Aboriginal people's feedback is a critical 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.

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 Reflection Tool by checking each domain against the focus areas and the actions within each cell of the Reflection Tool.

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

Step 6 – Identify and sequence priority actions:

- Ensure commitment from the Board and leadership group. This is the authorising environment.
- Ensure all policies are culturally safe.
- Put a high priority on the client 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.



Section Four: The 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: Culturally safe homelessness services – Successful service outcomes are dependent on culturally safe policies and practices

Domains:

- i. Access to SHS
- ii. Identifying and planning service needs
- iii. Accommodation and Housing outcomes

PART THREE: Partnerships and Procurement – Opportunities for shared learning and stronger relationships build the skills of the partner organisations. Respect and support for self-determination is fundamental.

Domains:

- i. Procurement
- ii. Joint Venture Developments
- iii. Shared Service Delivery

PART ONE: The Foundations for Success

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

<p>DOMAINS: ORGANISATIONAL</p>	<p>Governance and Leadership 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 and Workplace Practices Policies provide the framework for practice, decision making, communication and service deliver and issue identification. Workplace policies build cultural safety capability and promote inclusive practices.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Community Partnerships Partnerships are respectful, inform organisational governance, policies and practices and encourage two-way learning.</p>	<p>Communications and Stakeholder Relations Communications raise awareness, promote positive norms and inclusion. Information empowers Aboriginal clients, communities and staff. Stakeholder relations are respectful and build knowledge and cultural understanding.</p>
<p>AREAS OF FOCUS</p>				
<p>Self-determination and rights Self-determination for Aboriginal peoples includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice. Rights based – 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. Strategic objectives are measurable. Strategic plans specify Aboriginal priorities, local partnerships and needs and recognise local differences. 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. Policies enable staff to construct flexible responses that recognise cultural and family obligations, to enable good housing outcomes. 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. Accessible rights-based information is available to inform people of the organisation, its services and processes. Culturally significant symbolism is agreed with the local Aboriginal community embedded in the organisation's external and internal profile.</p>
<p>Respect and Recognition 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. Traditional owners are acknowledged at Board meetings and events. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are flown. Aboriginal culture enhances the organisation.</p>	<p>All staff undertake Cultural Safety Training. Training is layered, blending learning experiences and training methods and targeting the right people at the right time. Induction processes include Cultural Safety Training and information about local Aboriginal communities, agencies and stakeholders. 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. The intellectual and cultural property of Aboriginal organisations is respected. MoUs built on self-determination, respect and recognition confirm partnerships.</p>	<p>Significant Aboriginal days and events are acknowledged and supported. Welcome to country and acknowledgement of country protocols are embedded in all communications. Communication protocols are established to support staff to work effectively with internal and external Aboriginal people and communities.</p>

<p>DOMAINS: ORGANISATIONAL</p>	<p>Governance and Leadership 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 and Workplace Practices Policies provide the framework for practice, decision making, communication and service deliver and issue identification. Workplace policies build cultural safety capability and promote inclusive practices.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Community Partnerships Partnerships are respectful, inform organisational governance, policies and practices and encourage two-way learning.</p>	<p>Communications and Stakeholder Relations Communications raise awareness, promote positive norms and inclusion. Information empowers Aboriginal clients, communities and staff. Stakeholder relations are respectful and build knowledge and cultural understanding.</p>
<p>AREAS OF FOCUS</p>				
<p>Engagement and Inclusion Engagement and inclusion of Aboriginal people improves cultural understanding, practice and builds trust leading to improved housing outcomes.</p>	<p>Aboriginal people are actively included on Boards and sub-committees. Aboriginal people are invited to and attend AGMs. The Board hears from Aboriginal people and community.</p>	<p>The senior leadership group includes Aboriginal people. The organisational structure aligns with Aboriginal outcomes defined in the strategic plan. All policy development processes ensure there is sufficient time for genuine engagement with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations. A long-term Aboriginal employment strategy is part of Organisational Development Planning and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active recruitment of Aboriginal staff, including through Aboriginal media and community networks. • Inclusion of Aboriginal people in all recruitment processes, where appropriate. • Defined and supported career plans that are culturally safe and lead to representation of Aboriginal people at all levels in the organisation. • Specific Aboriginal retention strategies. • Mentoring and support from Aboriginal people. <p>The workplace presents a friendly face to Aboriginal people. 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. Partnerships build Aboriginal capacity through sharing of knowledge and expertise.</p>	<p>Internal and external communications are welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal people. Communications plans specifically recognise Aboriginal rights, cultures and communities. Communication objectives and activities align with Aboriginal outcomes. Communication and information materials are accessible and culturally appropriate.</p>

DOMAINS: ORGANISATIONAL	Governance and Leadership 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.	Policies and Workplace Practices Policies provide the framework for practice, decision making, communication and service deliver and issue identification. Workplace policies build cultural safety capability and promote inclusive practices.	Aboriginal Community Partnerships Partnerships are respectful, inform organisational governance, policies and practices and encourage two-way learning.	Communications and Stakeholder Relations Communications raise awareness, promote positive norms and inclusion. Information empowers Aboriginal clients, communities and staff. Stakeholder relations are respectful and build knowledge and cultural understanding.
AREAS OF FOCUS				
Accountability, reporting and transparency 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 organisations structure, roles and relationships, including with stakeholders facilitate accountability and transparency.	<p>AGM and annual reporting address cultural safety and Aboriginal outcomes.</p> <p>The Board identifies Aboriginal Cultural Safety KPIs.</p> <p>An outcomes framework is developed with Aboriginal input and includes reasons why Aboriginal people are accessing services including housing barriers, their outcomes and the success factors that result in good outcomes.</p> <p>The impact and outcomes indicate where need is and what are the drivers of need.</p> <p>The Board is responsive to the local Aboriginal community for Aboriginal service delivery and takes feedback on outcomes.</p>	<p>CEO and senior management performance plans specify Aboriginal outcomes.</p> <p>Feedback loops with Aboriginal and all other staff are used to assess and improve the impact that policies and programs have on Aboriginal people and communities.</p> <p>Aboriginal people are included in evaluation design.</p> <p>All organisations learn from other change management processes that have been successful.</p> <p>All parts of the organisation and especially client facing roles constantly and consciously challenge themselves.</p> <p>Data are provided on Aboriginal employment numbers and other outcomes.</p>	<p>Sharing of data and information with community strengthens accountability and continuous improvement.</p> <p>The views of Aboriginal community and organisations on the effectiveness and cultural safety of the organisation are sought.</p>	<p>Data collections and performance reports are available to Aboriginal people, communities and organisations. Feedback is sought.</p> <p>Policies are transparent and available on the website or elsewhere, in a form accessible to Aboriginal people.</p>

PART TWO: Culturally safe homelessness services

Successful service outcomes are dependent on culturally safe policies and practices: Creating a place that is welcoming and accessible; Culturally safe practices that enable client appropriate planning of service needs and Pathways to emergency, transitional and sustainable long-term housing.

DOMAINS: POLICIES AND PROGRAMS	Access to SHS The initial contact an Aboriginal person has with SHS starts the relationship. A positive start will encourage service access and is the beginning of a genuine sharing and trustful relationship	Identifying and planning service needs A trusting and respectful relationship that encourages shared understanding of rights and obligations, support needs, and respects culture opens dialogue.	Accommodation and Housing outcomes Community engagement underpins positive housing outcomes and can assist in identifying housing sustainability issues.
AREAS OF FOCUS			
Self-determination and rights Self-determination for Aboriginal peoples includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice. Rights based – Aboriginal people have special rights under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People including the right to adequate housing.	Policies and practices are human 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 process. Aboriginal people are confidently able to identify and assert their needs	People understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities. Mutual obligation requirements are provided in plain English and are easily accessible, fully provided and explained. Culturally appropriate service charters are in place. Links to Legal and Housing Advice and Advocacy Services, particularly Aboriginal organisations are provided.	Evidence is actively sought from Aboriginal people in emergency, transitional and long-term housing regarding their tenancy issues. Aboriginal tenants are informed and re-informed of their rights. THM management practice frameworks are established.
Respect and Recognition 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.	Aboriginal sovereignty is acknowledged in all materials. Staff show respect for Aboriginal people at all stages of the process. All applicants are asked if they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Clients are 'allowed' to tell their story but are never pressured to do so.	Kinship obligations including sharing of housing resources, hosting visitors and absences due to Sorry Business are understood. There is recognition that service needs can sometimes only be established if the extended family is involved in the assessment process. Informed human resource practices are woven into all practices.	Kinship obligations including sharing resources, hosting visitors and absences due to Sorry Business are appreciated and inform policy and practice. Where these obligations may impact on sustainability of tenancies, intervention is respectful and occurs early. Aboriginal culture informs and enriches the organisation and its practices. Informed human resource practices are woven into all organisational practices.

DOMAINS: POLICIES AND PROGRAMS	Access to SHS The initial contact an Aboriginal person has with SHS starts the relationship. A positive start will encourage service access and is the beginning of a genuine sharing and trustful relationship	Identifying and planning service needs A trusting and respectful relationship that encourages shared understanding of rights and obligations, support needs, and respects culture opens dialogue.	Accommodation and Housing outcomes Community engagement underpins positive housing outcomes and can assist in identifying housing sustainability issues.
AREAS OF FOCUS			
<p>Trauma and Historically Informed Practice</p> <p>Trauma and legacies of past and present historical practices have impacted negatively on Aboriginal people and communities.</p> <p>Child removal elevates risk of emotional and mental health issues, aberrant behaviour and suicide and creates unbearable lifelong pain.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of how trauma has affected Aboriginal people's lives and impacted on their responses and reactions to service providers and their need for culturally attuned practice responses informs all practices.</p>	<p>The historical impact of past policies and its impact on contemporary experiences of Aboriginal homelessness is recognised.</p> <p>Processes and intake/ assessment forms are friendly to Aboriginal people and 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 that they struggle to ask for help.</p> <p>Cultural awareness and safety training is locally relevant, provided to all staff and effectiveness is measured.</p>	<p>Meetings are sensitive to the apprehension and fear of the Aboriginal person experiencing homelessness. Past trauma is acknowledged.</p> <p>Practice is trauma informed and partnerships with local ACCOs help inform practice. Communities of Practice might be established with Aboriginal service brokers, organisations and community leaders.</p> <p>Aboriginal people where possible have the option of engaging with an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal staff member.</p> <p>Where appropriate, neutral places are provided for interview and engagement.</p> <p>Community and social dynamics among Aboriginal families are understood and advice through Aboriginal partner organisations is sought where needed.</p> <p>Adoption of a deliberate personalised relational approach which is humane and non-transactional, leads to stronger outcomes and creates an environment to open up discussion on personal goals.</p> <p>Creative ways of explaining rights and obligations are identified.</p> <p>Information overload is avoided.</p>	<p>Early 'homeless with support' establish strong housing outcomes.</p> <p>Kinship obligations are recognised. The shame, exclusion and anger of those who do not meet cultural obligations is understood and translated through to 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 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 and resident policies are interpreted flexibly to meet individual needs.</p> <p>Good Aboriginal social landlord practices are implemented.</p>

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AREAS OF FOCUS			
Strengths Based, Person and Family Centred Practice 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 strength based practice.	Intake/assessment forms are easy to understand. There is sensitive support and understanding for the difficulties people may have in filling out forms, divulging personal information and use and access to technology. Applications can be made from culturally welcoming settings, such as the local Aboriginal Co-op. Client feedback is sought.	Aboriginal people and communities provide feedback on issues and insight into continuous improvement. People participate in an assessment of their strengths, wants, needs and risks, including strength-based assessments and planning processes. Intake assessment tools take a key relationship approach and privilege individual experience. Culturally safe case plans are developed that cover at least twelve months and preferably two years, are based on Housing First principles and where possible a case manager is assigned to continuously manage and implement the case plan with the client and their family, emphasising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and cultural connection • Health, mental health, and alcohol and other drug challenges • Family violence issues • Income and income support needs • Life coaching and learning/ employment aspirations¹⁹ • Care management framework 	The individual and family are at the centre of every decision and empowered to be genuine partners in their housing and accommodation outcome. Uniqueness of the family and individual, cultural sensitivity and partnering with Aboriginal organisations and community to support vulnerable people occurs. Assessment of support needs for tenancies occurs at start up, at crisis points and through regular home visits. Case management/support plans are strengths based. Where possible clients are empowered to determine whether they are more comfortable receiving wrap around support from Aboriginal or mainstream agencies. Early intervention occurs at the first sign of housing or residential stress. Housing is a platform for life aspirations and planning. Education, training employment opportunities are identified.
Collaborative partnerships and wrap around services Collaborative partnerships build two-way learning, inform policy and program design and facilitate culturally sensitive service support.	Policies and processes are co-designed with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations. Proposal to include a reference to <i>Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar- takoort and the Visions network</i> – <i>could we please discuss.</i>	Links to local service agencies particularly Aboriginal organisations are provided. Regular meetings are held with ACCOs to identify issues and improve service delivery.	Sustained and specialist support is provided as people transition from homelessness and transitional housing and settle into their new house to ensure long term and sustained tenancies. Service support and referral occurs particularly at points of crisis and need.

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<p>AREAS OF FOCUS</p>			
<p>Aboriginal community connection Effective engagement with community build shared respect and creates confidence for Aboriginal 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 practice eg Welcome to Country packs. Opportunities to form community connections are identified in partnership with local communities eg Gathering Places, sport clubs Communities and social dynamics among families inform longer term housing solutions. Local Aboriginal communities are consulted, and their advice sought.</p>	<p>Services are co-designed with Aboriginal clients, organisations and community. 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>

PART THREE: Building Aboriginal Capacity through 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.

DOMAINS: AREAS OF FOCUS	Procurement An organisation's procurement can be leveraged to drive demand for Aboriginal goods and services and grow the Aboriginal business sector.	Joint Venture Developments 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.	Shared Service Delivery Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations bring cultural knowledge and understanding to clients and the homelessness agency and enable homeless people to establish long term community connections.
Self-determination and rights Self-determination for Aboriginal peoples includes sharing power (decision making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are the arbiters of good practice. Rights based – Aboriginal people have special rights under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People including the right to adequate housing.	Native title, land rights, ownership, intellectual and cultural rights are recognised and respected when working with Aboriginal businesses.	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.	Native title, land rights, ownership, intellectual and cultural rights are recognised and respected when working with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.
Respect and Recognition 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.	Procurement policies are aligned with the organisation's values. The procurement process includes Aboriginal opportunities from the outset. Tenders are structured and as necessary unbundled to include smaller and start-up Aboriginal businesses. The policies of successful mainstream tenderers are Aboriginally inclusive. Unsuccessful tenderers have the opportunity to debrief. Unintentional stereotyping or bias is consciously avoided.	Joint ventures are built on and understanding of values and contributions. Due diligence between all parties takes place before agreements are made. Supply Nation and Aboriginal business directory registration is identified. Ownership of intellectual property is agreed. Aboriginal principles inform design and Aboriginal people participate in design and development of crisis, transitional and long-term housing.	The Aboriginal way of working with community and delivering services is respected and informs practice. Aboriginal solutions are heard and enabled.

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

Resources and support materials

a. Victorian Overarching Policies

- The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework
<https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework-2018-2023>
- Korin Korin Balit- Djak Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027
<https://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
<https://www.vahhf.org.au/>

b. Aboriginal Cultural Safety

- DHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework
<https://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
<http://ahcsa.org.au/app/uploads/mp/files/resources/files/gregory-phillips-ahcsa-keynote.pdf>
- The Centre for Cultural Competence on-line competence based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competence Course.
<https://www.ccca.com.au/>

c. Tools and Resources

- Supply Nation provides Australia's leading database of verified Indigenous businesses
<https://supplynation.org.au/>
- Supporting Aboriginal Businesses – Business Victoria
<https://www.business.vic.gov.au/setting-up-a-business/supporting-aboriginal-businesses-and-employment>
- Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Victoria
<https://kinaway.com.au/>

Aboriginal Homelessness: An Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector

Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

We appreciate and celebrate diversity in all its forms and believe diversity of all kinds makes communities stronger and more effective.



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