

## Aboriginal Housing Victoria

Media release

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### Community demands action on Victoria's Aboriginal housing crisis

Aboriginal people in Victoria face a higher risk of homelessness than anywhere else in the country according to a landmark framework examining the impact of the state's housing crisis on Aboriginal people.

The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, released today, shows that Aboriginal people in Victoria seek homeless assistance in the highest and fastest growing numbers in Australia and that one-in-six Aboriginal people will seek help from a housing support service this year.

Developed by the Aboriginal community with the support of the state government, the framework offers detailed and practical solutions to turn the crisis around.

"If mainstream Victoria experienced housing crisis at this rate more than one million people would be seeking homelessness assistance every year," said Darren Smith CEO of Aboriginal Housing Victoria.

"It is a shocking record for a state that prides itself on being the most progressive in Australia."

"This framework is a landmark moment in Aboriginal self-determination and policy development in Victoria."

"The framework has been driven and developed by the Victorian Aboriginal community and offers powerful insights and policy solutions that reflect community experience and knowledge and provides a 20-year agenda to fix the crisis in Aboriginal homelessness."

"It is the first time a government in Australia has funded the Aboriginal community to develop policy responses to a complex issue like this. It is a testament to the Victorian government's commitment to self-determination that they are prepared to listen to and be led by the Aboriginal community on an issue as critically important to our health and wellbeing as housing."

"The framework, for the first time, outlines the projected shortfall of affordable social housing for our people out to 2036 and provides evidence that per capita demand for homeless services is higher for Aboriginal people in our state than anywhere else in Australia."

"The challenge for the government and community is to build not just an additional 5000 social housing units needed by the Aboriginal community, but to meet the projected need for an additional 27,000 Aboriginal households by 2036."

"Rising to this challenge requires commitment and resources from government to take immediate action and sustained investment over the long term. We welcome the state government's initial funding of \$5.3 million, but we will need to see greater investment and long-term commitments if we are serious about making a difference"

"Limited adoption of the recommendations or peripheral tinkering will not solve the problems or fix the system."



“The rate of homelessness has grown by 33% in the last four years, and almost 20% of Aboriginal people in Victoria will seek housing support in 2020 with half of those seeking support under 25. It is distressing to think that an entire generation of our young people face such vulnerability to homelessness.”

“Aboriginal people have been homeless in our own country for more than 200 years and continue to be denied the opportunities that home ownership can bring. There is a movement for change and the time is right for governments to take action and right past wrongs.”

“The failure of all state and federal governments to Close the Gap means it is time to listen to our community and implement solutions which we know work. The Victorian government should be commended for working with us to find solutions to these complex issues.”

“However, the decision to devolve policy responsibility to the Aboriginal community will only be meaningful if the actions and targets proposed are adopted by the government. This includes the target to reduce Aboriginal homelessness by 10 per cent per annum until it resembles the rate of other Victorians.”

“The housing crisis is at the root of Aboriginal disadvantage. The dispossession and disempowerment it represents is ongoing, traumatic and worsening. It is a major driving factor in child removal, growing incarceration rates, youth homelessness, low educational outcomes, family violence, and poor health and mental health outcomes for Aboriginal people.”

“This framework provides a series of solutions, backed by community experience and evidence of what works. It avoids the mistakes of the past whereby governments have ceded housing policy to a market that too readily excludes aboriginal people.”

“The Victorian government has an opportunity to continue to lead by example and begin implementing these policy solutions today.”

### **Key Data**

- In 2019 17% of Aboriginal people sought homelessness assistance
- Almost half of those who sought assistance were already homeless
- Victoria has the highest and fastest growing rate of Aboriginal people seeking homeless support in Australia
- Rate of homelessness has grown by 33.6% in the past four years
- Half of those seeking support are under 25
- The number of Aboriginal households will increase by 27,000 by 2036

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