

MANA-NA WOORN-TYEEN MAAR-TAKOORT

Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home




Victorian Aboriginal Housing
and Homelessness Framework

20 YEAR VISION



20-year Vision:

For a unified and vibrant Victorian Aboriginal community housing sector delivering quality services and housing equity within a generation.



Our vision is for a unified, strong, financially viable, self-determining Aboriginal housing sector that, over the next 20 years, is a significant contributor to ensuring every Aboriginal Victorian has a home. This will be achieved through providing community housing as part of a pipeline out of homelessness and towards private rental and home ownership for all Aboriginal Victorians.



GLOSSARY

- The term **Aboriginal peoples** when used in a Victorian context generally includes Torres Strait Islanders.
 - An **Aboriginal community-controlled organisation (ACCO)** is one initiated by, based in, governed by elected representatives from, and serves an Aboriginal community.
 - ACCOs are vehicles for **self-determination**. In international law, Indigenous peoples whose lands are now majority occupied by non-Indigenous people enjoy this collective right in all matters that significantly affect their social, economic, civil, political and cultural lives.
 - No Victorian Aboriginal Nation's **sovereignty** has been ceded, and this remains the basis for ongoing State **Treaty negotiations** including as vehicles for **restorative** and **reparative justice** measures intended to help repair harm from colonisation.
 - **Social housing** is rental property for which costs are subsidised to ensure they are affordable for eligible households. Social housing owned and managed by the State is **public housing**; that which is owned and run by other registered housing agencies is **community housing**. Social housing provides a **safety net** for households unable to access the private rental market.
 - **Aboriginal community housing** is that owned and managed by ACCOs, Traditional Owner Bodies and other Aboriginal organisations for Aboriginal tenants. Collectively, these ACCOs, and with the potential addition of support agencies, **form an emerging Aboriginal community housing sector**.
 - Social housing is located on a **housing needs continuum** that can also be imagined as a **pipeline**. This continuum might start with homelessness (maximal needs/support required), which leads to transitional housing, to social housing, to private rental housing, and to home ownership (minimal needs/support). This process is not necessarily linear and varies with the experience and circumstances of each individual.
 - **Affordable housing** is broadly defined as that which costs less than 30 per cent of household income. Technically, it is housing made available to very low-, low- and moderate-income households as determined by the State's *Planning and Environmental Act 1987*. Affordable housing includes social housing, rent-controlled private tenancies, and price-controlled housing for purchase.
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PURPOSE



The purpose of the Aboriginal community-housing sector's Vision is to outline the role of Aboriginal community housing organisations in delivering appropriate accommodation outcomes for Victoria's Aboriginal people over the next 20 years.

It is intended to guide the transformation of the Aboriginal community housing sector from being loosely organised, under-resourced and straining to cope with a burgeoning Aboriginal homelessness and housing crisis into a platform that advances Aboriginal self-determination and ensures every Aboriginal Victorian has a home that supports their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.



CONTEXT



In the area now corresponding to Victoria, and for at least 50,000 years prior to European settlement, every Aboriginal person had a home. Shelters – ranging from stone to temporary structures – were a part of the home concept along with wellbeing – promoting connection to place, Country, family, clan, Nation, culture, lore and economy.

After Melbourne's establishment in 1835, every Aboriginal person in Victoria would become homeless. Traditional Owner dispossession, denial of self-determination, cultural suppression, detainment on reserves, dire living conditions and child removals followed disease and frontier violence. Further to this, many non-Victorian Aboriginal people who faced similar challenges on their lands and waters were forced to move to Victoria, with both groups reporting high rates of intergenerational transmitted trauma.

Yet despite significant advances in addressing Aboriginal disadvantage in other areas, for example in health and education, a housing and homelessness crisis continues to grow as a result of colonisation's legacy of intergenerational poverty, trauma and structural racism. This crisis affects the lives of thousands of Aboriginal people and families living in Victoria in the following ways:

- Lower income, higher unemployment and less intergenerational wealth accumulation are disproportionately affecting access to affordable housing, which is causing increased reliance on already overstretched social housing and the Aboriginal community-housing sector.
- Trauma-associated family violence and breakdown, compounded by people transitioning in and out of institutional settings and a large young adult population leaving home to seek their own places to live are adding to housing supply demands.
- Most Aboriginal households in social housing in Victoria are with public housing and mainstream agencies (~2,999 and ~413 households respectively), which are often culturally unresponsive.

In particular, the scale of inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians across the housing continuum (with a particularly enormous differential between people accessing homelessness services) is shocking and discussed at length in, *Mana-na woom-tyeen maar-takoort*, the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework (VAHHF).

Efforts to organise the sector for greater collective impact gained momentum in June 2018 after Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) initiated and was funded to host Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forums, which have since become the drivers of a system response to the Aboriginal housing and homelessness crisis. This was ultimately encapsulated in the 2020 Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, *Mana-na woom-tyeen maar-takoort – Every Aboriginal person has a home.*



Led by AHV and developed by and for the Aboriginal community, *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* articulates:

- **Our Vision:** Every Aboriginal person has a home.
- **Our Purpose:** Aboriginal Victorians achieve quality-housing outcomes in a generation.
- **Our Challenge:** To meet the demand for 27,000 new Aboriginal households by 2036.

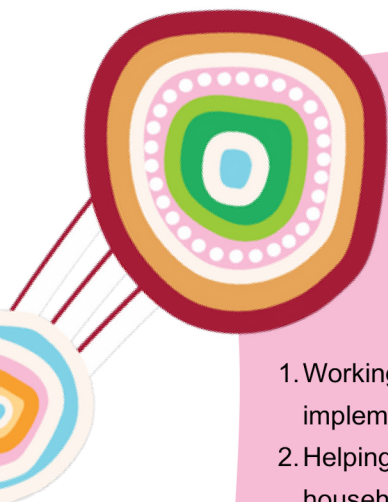
Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort provides a long-term vision and a roadmap on how to achieve these, which is headlined by five key strategic directions:

1. Secure housing improves life outcomes.
2. Building supply to meet the needs of a growing Aboriginal population.
3. Open doors to home ownership and private rental.
4. An Aboriginal-focused homelessness system.
5. A capable system that delivers Aboriginal housing needs.



Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort acknowledges a strong self-determining Aboriginal community-housing sector as one of the critical components in delivering on its implementation outcomes. It includes an overarching action to create a strong and viable Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector while at the same time acknowledging the need to build Aboriginal-focused homelessness services ‘from the ground up’ – this remains a work in progress.

The Victorian Government and Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) established a Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework Implementation Working Group (IWG) in 2020. This is underpinned by an Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum (AHHF) from which an IWG Koori Caucus is drawn. The other half of the IWG is an Action Group comprising AHV and key government agencies. The AHHF is the Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector’s governance mechanism for implementing the Framework. All Aboriginal organisations delivering housing and homelessness services are, or have been invited to be, members of the AHHF.



A SUMMARY OF THE VAHHF'S ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR AGENDA

1. Working effectively with government and otherwise providing leadership in implementing all elements of the VAHHF.
2. Helping to meet anticipated state-wide demand for 27,000 additional Aboriginal household dwellings by 2036, of which 5000 are social/community housing. This includes through Victoria’s mainstream Big Housing Build which promises \$5.3 billion of social and affordable housing (12,000 new dwellings) and that includes a focus on increasing ACCO community housing.
3. Transforming community housing into a foundation for breaking cycles of disadvantage and homelessness (including person-centred intensive, culturally appropriate, structured case management), a platform to deliver wrap-around social and economic programs, and one that also supports education and employment opportunities.
4. Transforming community housing into a pathway to housing independence that includes private rental and home ownership.
5. Otherwise shaping the sector to maximise social benefit from its housing pool through engaging continuous quality improvement cycles.
6. Working in partnership with mainstream social housing to ensure it is culturally safe for, and otherwise contributes effectively to meeting the housing needs of, Aboriginal people.





THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR

From the 1970s onwards, Aboriginal community housing was self-initiated by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and then supported by governments. Aboriginal community leaders and Elders established the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria (ABHV) in the early 1980s as the peak advocacy body for responding to the housing needs and issues of Victoria's Aboriginal communities and achieving their housing aspirations.

Today, the AHBV's successor, Aboriginal Housing Victoria, is by far the largest Aboriginal housing agency in Australia, with its ownership of more than 1560 properties. Eighteen other ACCOs hold a further 444 properties between them, while a small number of ACCOs are also funded to deliver homelessness services. Traditional Owner groups, through native title settlements, are on the rise and are providing housing to Aboriginal communities. These groups are anticipated to become a far more significant housing player as many have expressed an interest in using land and capital, which will be made available to them under Victoria's Treaty process, to provide housing to their community members, whether as community rentals or through home ownership.

With the exception of Aboriginal Housing Victoria, together, these Aboriginal organisations form an emerging Aboriginal community-housing sector characterised by member organisations with small housing portfolios that are not part of the regulatory system. A key challenge for the sector is how to build both scale in housing portfolios so they are financially independent and viable, as well as housing capability so that organisations can meet registration and ongoing regulatory requirements.



GIVING VOICE TO THE SECTOR

The prime purpose of this Vision document is to articulate the role of the sector in implementing *Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort* and to be a lodestar for the Aboriginal community-housing sector over a transformative two decades. It also provides an opportunity for the sector's voice and aspirations to be heard, and to establish further common ground and sector cohesion in implementing the VAHMF.

This Vision was developed through dedicated sector group consultations, one-on-one interviews and surveys informed by papers and co-design principles, with a series of drafts then refined with sectoral representatives until the final Vision was agreed upon.

It is built on a bedrock of Aboriginal values that do not change regardless of context. These values, which underpin both this Vision and *Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort*, are as follows:

- That self-determination is a non-negotiable foundation for effective change.
- That supporting culture and respect for cultural differences are key to effective change.
- That Aboriginal people should be empowered both to participate in processes that affect them and to benefit from these processes.
- That restorative and reparative justice should inform responses to challenges resulting from colonisation and what are now recognised as genocidal-in-impact human rights violations. The ongoing Treaty and truth-telling processes in Victoria are likely vehicles for this, and should include investment in community housing.

Finally, as noted, the VAHMF intends for an Aboriginal system addressing homelessness to be developed 'from the ground up'. Although some of this Vision will inevitably overlap with that space, and while the long-term VAHMF goal remains a strong and united Aboriginal homelessness and housing sector, this Vision is not intended to guide the development of a system addressing Aboriginal homelessness.





20 Year Vision

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VISION STATEMENT

The Aboriginal community-housing sector is comprised of a diverse range of Aboriginal organisations providing community housing to their communities. First and foremost, this includes registered Aboriginal housing agencies formally providing community housing. It also includes ACCOs and Traditional Owner organisations that own housing managing it as community housing for Aboriginal Victorians.

Over the next 20 years, our aim is for Aboriginal community housing agencies to become self-determining, financially viable, independent organisations that deliver high-quality affordable housing to low-income Aboriginal Victorians. As experts in the delivery of culturally responsive tenancy and property services to the Aboriginal community, these housing agencies will be resourced to provide case management support to sustain tenancies for vulnerable families and individuals and to ensure tenants are provided with wrap-around supports when needed. They will also be resourced to provide support and assistance to tenants on their pathway to building better lives, including those who choose housing independence through private rental and home ownership.

These sophisticated organisations will be capable of meeting community housing regulatory requirements and performance standards commensurate with the level of complexity of their business activities and operational risks. They will also demonstrate high levels of governance with strong skills-based Boards and experienced executives with the requisite legal, financial, asset management, and tenancy and community housing skills.

As accomplished innovators in the delivery of housing to the Aboriginal community, these housing agencies will be able to leverage their core community housing capabilities and assets to deliver growth in housing supply for the Aboriginal community. They will also be adept at accessing funding, developing, and delivering unique community housing models that encompass individual and collective community home ownership, as well as programs that improve Aboriginal Victorians' access to private rental and individual home ownership.

Aboriginal community housing agencies aim to be responsive to the housing needs and aspirations of Victoria's Aboriginal communities. They are individually connected both to their clients and their communities, and are collectively united as powerful and effective advocates providing high quality and actionable advice on Aboriginal housing policy reform and implementation. They are also strategic in their partnerships with each other, local councils, mainstream housing and service agencies, philanthropic organisations, developers, builders and financiers – all of which bring in additional value to advance Aboriginal housing objectives and outcomes.



IMPLEMENTING THE VISION



Achieving the Aboriginal community-housing sector's Vision will require focus and sustained effort by Aboriginal sectoral members and government over the next 20 years. It will also require a joint commitment to shared values and goals, cooperation and collaboration in determining and delivering capacity building, sector-shaping strategies and actions, and resources to deliver them. Key actions, with a particular focus on leveraging future capability growth in the first five years, will be outlined in an Aboriginal Community Housing Sector Capacity Building Plan scheduled to be finalised in 2023.

