



Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into the supply of homes in regional Victoria

4 April, 2025

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AHV acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People as
the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and
extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
peoples here today.

This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Yoorrook Justice Commission Testimony

“[To] The First Nations communities families and people who ache for homes they have lost or have had taken, who long for the homes they have never had or who live in substandard homes when they are available. I apologise...For being denied the right to be on and connect to and care for Country, to have the homes that you deserve. For the enduring disadvantage that you bear that was never of your doing.”

**Hon. Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Housing
24 June 2024**

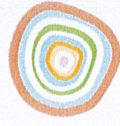
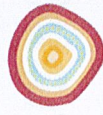
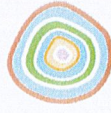
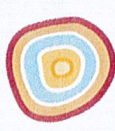
Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum

Mana-na woom-tyeen maar-takoort is implemented and governed by a membership of 38 Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, Aboriginal trusts and traditional owner groups through the Aboriginal Housing and Homeless Forum (AHHF).

Aboriginal Housing Victoria provides secretariat support to the group in concert with the Victorian State Government and is the lead agency for Aboriginal housing and homelessness policy and advocacy in Victoria.

AHHF members help design the means actioning elements of *Mana-na woom-tyeen maar-takoort* that have been identified as requiring immediate action in a way that provides the most benefit to the communities that members serve.

The Victorian State Government is a key partner in overseeing implementation of *Mana-na woom-tyeen maar-takoort* by seeking feedback on policy decisions that relate to Aboriginal housing and homelessness, assisting with strategic planning, helping to co-design and implement policy and providing technical expertise to policy development. This includes on programs such as the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program, Victorian Aboriginal Homebuyer Fund Project and Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific Homelessness System in Victoria.

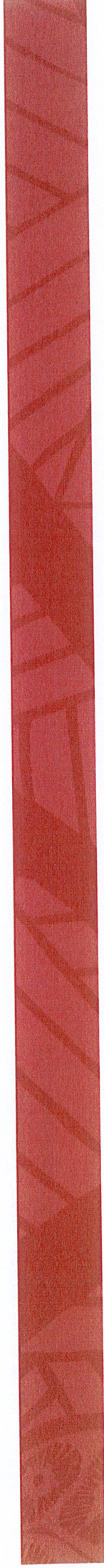


Aboriginal homelessness crisis in Victoria

Nearly 1 in 5 Aboriginal Victorians accessed specialist homelessness services in 2023/24, including 1 in 4 Aboriginal women. If this same rate was reflected in the broader population, over 1.35 million Victorians would be accessing specialist homelessness services.

Causes of the crisis

- Housing market failure including increasing cost of housing and failure of building supply to keep pace with population growth
- Historical dispossession, exclusion, disadvantage and poverty
- Lack of intergenerational wealth
- Rapid Aboriginal population growth
- Over reliance on a broken safety net of homelessness services and social housing
- Racism





Victorian Aboriginal Housing
and Homelessness Framework

What is *Mana-na woorrn-tyeen maar-takooort*?

Mana-na woorrn-tyeen maar-takooort: the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework ('Framework') was released in 2020 in response to the overwhelming and persistent challenges of homelessness and housing insecurity faced by many Aboriginal Victorians. Through a self-determined and community-led approach, the Framework was developed to reflect the objectives, needs and priorities of the Victorian Aboriginal community across the housing and homelessness system. While government partners have participated in the process of development by providing guidance and advice, *Mana-na woorrn-tyeen maar-takooort* remains a strong, self-determined, and community led response.





Vision: Every Aboriginal Person Has A Home

Purpose: Aboriginal Victorians achieve quality housing outcomes within a generation

Aboriginal Housing

Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort

Every Aboriginal Person Has A Home

The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness

FRAMEWORK

5 Key Objectives

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



Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort:

What progress and influence have we made?

Priorities and Investments	Actions	Impact
Secure housing improves life outcomes	Budget proposal submitted to deliver Aboriginal Homes Thrive to all Aboriginal renters in public and community housing across Victoria.	Not funded
Build supply to meet needs of growing Aboriginal population \$5.3B Big Housing Build 8,200 new public and community housing dwellings over 4 years - Regional Housing Fund - Social Housing Accelerator	Application of 10% target and advancing Aboriginal housing objectives which prioritise Aboriginal ownership Application of 10% target and advancing Aboriginal housing objectives to managements transfers which may become asset transfers	Substantial progress to deliver 820 new homes owned or managed by ACCOs by 2026 389 of 420 dwellings contracted 218 of 400 management transfers transferred 130 properties to be delivered – under construction 60 of 78 properties delivered
Open doors to home ownership and private rental Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program	10 ACCOs funded across Victoria Homes Victoria to deliver home ownership support for 80 applicants	2,000+ Aboriginal private renters supported Home Ownership Support yet to commence
An Aboriginal focused homelessness system \$8.6M To fund establishment of Aboriginal entry points in Wathaurong and Ngwata 2 years \$11.6M allocated to Aboriginal homelessness reform in 2024 budget	Blueprint completed 2022 and implementation proceeding including codesign of Aboriginal homelessness steward	Aboriginal Entry Points established and functioning well. AHHF approved allocation of funds statewide – to be disbursed as of 1 July 2025
A capable system that delivers Aboriginal housing needs \$35M Aboriginal Rapid Housing Response Program	Proposal submitted by AHHF in 2020, funded by Homes Victoria and delivered June 2024 Internal funding \$380k pa VAHMF Secretariat and \$500k pa Aboriginal homelessness system steward \$3.0M in capacity building support for registration and development projects \$500k for Aboriginal homelessness workforce development	Works delivered across >2,000 Aboriginal community houses in 17 ACCOs. Governance functioning well and capacity building projects on track

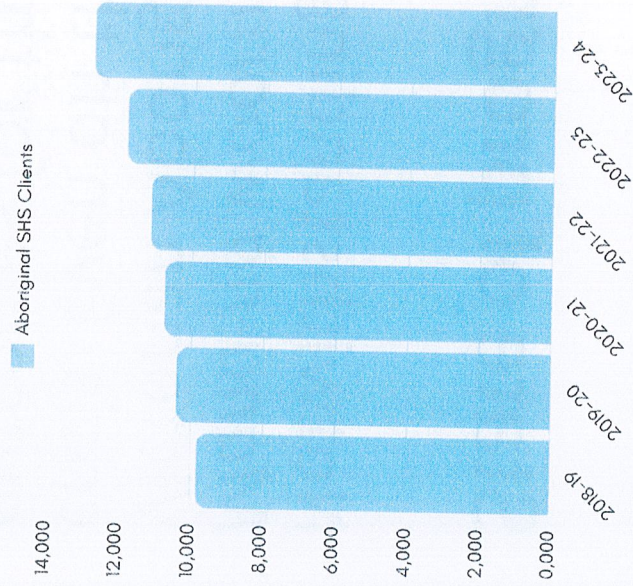
State of progress

Notwithstanding the progress made in implementing *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort*, housing for the Victorian Aboriginal community remains in a state of crisis. Even on the most optimistic assessment of outcomes for the Aboriginal community there has been little to no improvement in housing insecurity and homelessness of Aboriginal Victorians.

Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum, Supplementary Submission to
Yoorrook Justice Commission, 14 April 2024

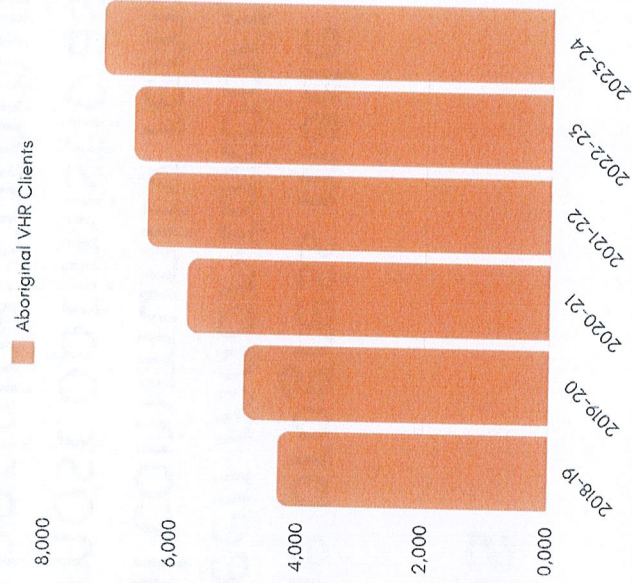
Impact

#ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ACCESSING HOMELESSNESS SERVICES



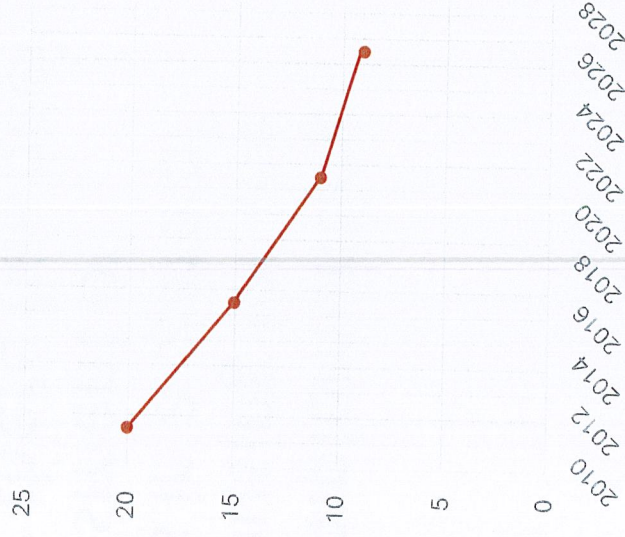
Number of Aboriginal people accessing SHS continues to increase (9,837 to 12,825 over 6y)

#ABORIGINAL VHR APPLICANTS



Number of Aboriginal applicants on the VHR continues to increase (4,324 to 7,123 over 6y)

%ABORIGINAL POPULATION IN SOCIAL HOUSING



Percent of Victorian Aboriginal Households in Social Housing 2011-2026

Where to next?

What we need

- A strong housing and homelessness safety net for Aboriginal people
- An effective Aboriginal homelessness system that supports and houses Aboriginal people
- Additional social housing supply that is available to meet the needs of Aboriginal people

Our approach

- Develop medium term strategic actions that will have a real impact and seek commitment from government to invest and deliver the actions
- Through the two key pieces of AHHF work:
 - Aboriginal Homelessness Target
 - Aboriginal Social Housing Growth Strategy/Policy

What impact are we aiming for in the medium term (10 years)

- 3,000 additional social housing units owned by Aboriginal housing providers
- Reduce Aboriginal homelessness by 10% p.a. for 10 yrs (35% of current levels in year 10)



What we want the plan to include over 10 years:

1. Secure housing improves life outcomes

Strengths based renter support that provides early intervention and prevention to renters and their families
Housing and support models for key cohorts
young Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people experiencing and using family violence, Aboriginal people involved with the criminal justice system, Aboriginal people with disabilities and experiencing mental health issues

2. Build supply to meet needs of growing Aboriginal population

Funding and support so Aboriginal housing providers can access the Housing Australia Future Fund to build 1,000 social and affordable dwellings for Aboriginal people
Funding to build at least 3,000 new Aboriginal social housing dwellings
Planning, land and procurement reforms to provide better opportunities for Aboriginal housing
Treaty to release land to build Aboriginal housing

3. Open doors to home ownership and private rental

Funding for a rent to buy pilot - \$20M for capital build and operating costs to support applicants to be replicated
Development of home ownership programs
Delivery of the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program and other support for Aboriginal private renters

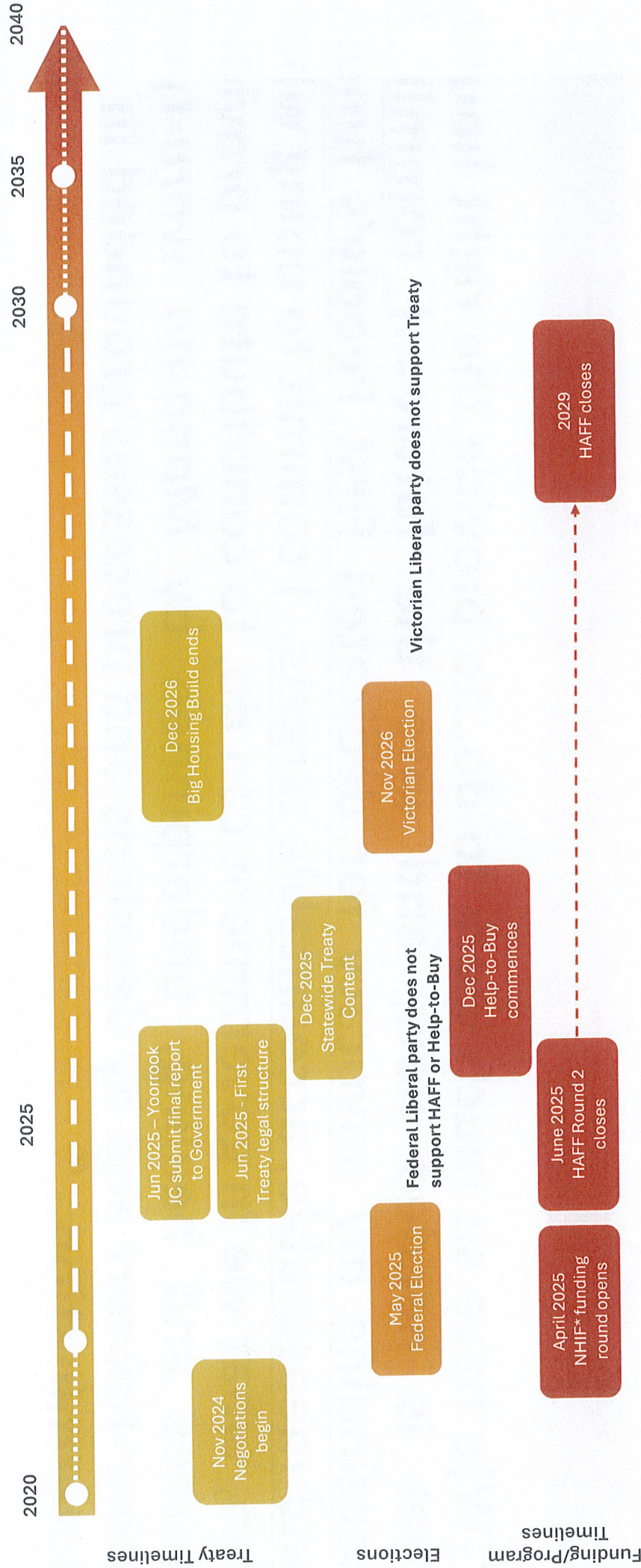
4. An Aboriginal focused homelessness system

Reduce Aboriginal homelessness by 10% p.a. for 10 yrs (35% of current levels in year 10)
A homelessness target to be accompanied by a plan to deliver on the target and an investment strategy to resource the plan
Funding and resources to reform the homelessness system including to continue to implement the Blueprint

5. A capable system that delivers Aboriginal housing needs

Funding and resources to build a strong, independent and viable Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector that operates at scale and is effective
Aboriginal cultural safety in public housing and the mainstream housing and homelessness sector

The political landscape



*National Housing Infrastructure Facility - Youth housing and crisis and transitional housing for those experiencing family violence

Yoorrook Justice Commission

“[W]e have so much work to do...to provide the right housing that is needed now, and into the future....I commit to continuing my advocacy for dedicated First People’s funding and measurable, accountable targets. I commit to doing what I can, what we in government can do, to contribute to providing homes and healing, underpinned by *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort* and by decisions and processes grounded in self-determination...”

Hon. Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Housing
24 June 2024

Cohorts or clients needing housing and support

- People experiencing homelessness – rough sleepers
- People experiencing family violence and people using family violence
- People with disabilities
- Young people, particularly young people exiting child protection and youth justice
- People involved with the criminal justice system, exiting goal or on bail
- Elders in need of livable housing and pathways to aged care
- People requiring support to manage their mental health



Façade @ Sheil Street

Aboriginal housing need in Regional Victoria

According to the 2021 ABS Census there are:

- 66,000 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Victorians
- 50% of Aboriginal Victorian population are under 25 years
- Nearly half of all the Victorian Aboriginal communities live in regional areas – making regional housing supply a critical area of investment and focus.

Based on Victorian Housing Register (VHR) data, **66% of Aboriginal Victorian social housing need is in regional Victoria.**

Housing need, by cohort, in the order of most to least, is*:

- Single parent (predominantly female)
- Single person (predominantly male)
- Young people
- Elderly single
- Group household (predominantly female)
- Couple with children
- Couple with no children
- Elderly couple

Regional Aboriginal Population Distribution

Local Government Area (LGA)	DFFH Division	Population Centers and Major Suburbs	Aboriginal Population (Individuals, Place of Enumeration, 2021 ABS)	2021-2041 Aboriginal Population Growth Rate (AHV Population Projection Report, June 2023, based on 2021 ABS)
1. Greater Geelong	Barwon	Geelong, Corio, Lara, Ocean Grove, Drysdale	3,395	2.30%
2. Greater Bendigo	Loddon	Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat, Eaglehawk, Heathcote	2,611	2.30%
3. Greater Shepparton	Goulburn	Shepparton, Mooroopna, Tatura,	2,554	2.40%
4. Mildura	Mallee	Mildura	2,488	1.90%
5. Ballarat	Central Highlands	Ballarat	1,982	4.50%
6. East Gippsland	Outer Gippsland	Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Mallacoota, Lake Tyers	1,653	1.30%
7. Latrobe (Vic)	Inner Gippsland	Morwell, Traralgon, Moe, Churchill	1,527	1.90%
8. Wodonga	Ovens Murray	Wodonga	1,420	2.70%
9. Campaspe	Loddon	Echuca, Kyabram, Rochester	1,123	2.20%
10. Mitchell	Goulburn	Seymour, Wallan, Broadford, Kilmore.	1,030	2.40%

Homelessness Data

Current Local Area Service Network (LASN) data shows

- 60% of Aboriginal Victorian Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) clients come from regional areas (n. 7396)
- When seeking short term or emergency accommodation Statewide 69.32% received support, whilst the least supported was Central Highlands 38.72%
- When seeking medium term/transitional housing Statewide 25.91% received support, whilst only 3.66% were supported in Central Grampians-Wimmera
- When seeking long term housing Statewide 11.11% of Aboriginal Victorians received support, whilst in Central Highlands only 0.77% received services.

LASNs Performance Results		Victoria	Barwon	Central Grampian s-Wimmera	Central Highlands	East Gippsland	Loddon	Mallee	Shepparton and Seymour	South West	Wangaratta and Wodonga	West Gippsland
Aboriginal clients												
% of clients needing short term or emergency accommodation that were provided with the service		69.32	71.30	55.95	38.72	50.26	78.06	57.24	59.64	62.71	72.39	42.04
% of clients needing medium term/transitional housing that were provided with the service		25.91	26.77	3.66	19.28	45.66	43.61	10.06	31.19	75.86	11.38	41.85
% of clients needing long term housing that were provided with the service		11.11	9.97	2.41	0.77	5.97	5.98	11.19	5.43	3.45	2.74	2.17

Barriers to housing for Aboriginal households

- Crisis and transitional accommodation are significantly lacking in regional areas. Further, *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* highlights that safe transitional accommodation for regional students is lacking (2.3.1).
- Shortage of housing stock means vulnerable Aboriginal Victorians, especially in regional areas, are redirected to leave Country to secure housing. Impacts on health and wellbeing compounded by needing to leave community.
- Racial discrimination especially within the private rental market. The 2022 report *Excluded from the Start* report demonstrated that for Aboriginal Victorians, barriers arise at every stage of the Renter's Journey, due to prejudice, discrimination and structural disadvantage
- A worsening private rental market with low vacancy rates across the state, including regional areas, compounded by the rise of holiday rentals, has decreased the supply of housing available in a regional community, especially since COVID.*
- Mortgage unaffordability for home ownership via interest rate rises and cost of living increases affecting whole State.

OVERVIEW OF BARRIERS TO GROWTH FOR ABORIGINAL HOUSING PROVIDERS

1. Certainty and timing of funding rounds

- Currently, Governments do not provide a forward schedule of funding rounds, making it difficult for ACCOs to invest in development capacity and capability. Funding rounds are also generally announced at short notice (typically 1 to 2 months), which exacerbates the issue.

2. Access to housing growth funding

- Government funding programs are generally designed to deliver new housing at scale and are targeted to mainstream housing providers and private developers operating at scale, rather than smaller providers such as ACCOs (acknowledging that there is some reference to Aboriginal housing and Aboriginal funding rounds built into the funding approach).

3. Higher cost of Aboriginal housing

- Aboriginal housing proposals typically involve housing at low scale and density, which are generally less competitive than higher density mainstream housing proposals on value for money grounds.

4. ACCO financial capacity

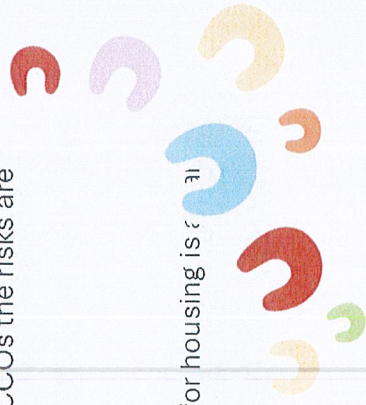
- Aboriginal housing providers are unlikely to have sufficient cash reserves or land, or be able to borrow, to provide the contributions to projects expected by Government.
- The risk that bid costs are either lost or not fully reimbursed, if funding submissions are unsuccessful, is a material concern for ACCOs wanting to participate in funding rounds.

5. Development experience

- Many ACCOs are reluctant to grow their housing supply due to their being small scale organisations that lack development experience and financial capacity. Applying for funding is far from straightforward and construction is an inherently risky activity; for inexperienced ACCOs the risks are heightened.

6. Land supply

- The inability of ACCOs to secure land suitable for housing is critical to them delivering housing projects.





Regional Planning

- Bottom-up approach – data informed
- Led by ACCOs/TOCs in the region and supported by the AHHF Sec. (Sector Dev. Team)
- Aim is to develop over 18 months, a 5-10 year Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Scope of the plan is the housing continuum – same as *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort*.
- Concentrating on housing growth and homelessness
- Developed by ACCOs to have a stronger advocacy position to engage with Homes Victoria/Area offices, mainstream housing and homelessness providers, and LGAs
- Will identify resources and supports, capacity building to develop the plan

Must demonstrate through plans

- How scale will be achieved – at least 6 ACCOs/TOCs across Victoria to have portfolios > 200 houses
- Cooperation and collaborative models of practice
- Value for money in the long term – ACCOs/TOCs are capable developers who do not require subsidies and support beyond mainstream housing providers to build houses



Thank you