

# Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021 – 2026

Pathway to Stronger  
Partnerships



Jobs,  
Precincts  
and Regions

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria, their ongoing connection to lands and waterways upon which we depend, and we pay respects to their culture and their Elders past, present, and future.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal self-determination is a human right enshrined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and we are committed to working towards social, economic, and cultural equity for Aboriginal Victorians.

We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, and we acknowledge all other people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent living in Victoria.



© The State of Victoria Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions 2020  
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence.  
To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

ISBN (Print)  
ISBN (pdf/online/MS word)

DJPR would like to acknowledge Dixon Patten, a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunnai man whose artwork appears on the cover and throughout this Strategy.

Graphic design by Mazart Communications. Supply Nation and Kinaway certified.

### Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

## Accessibility

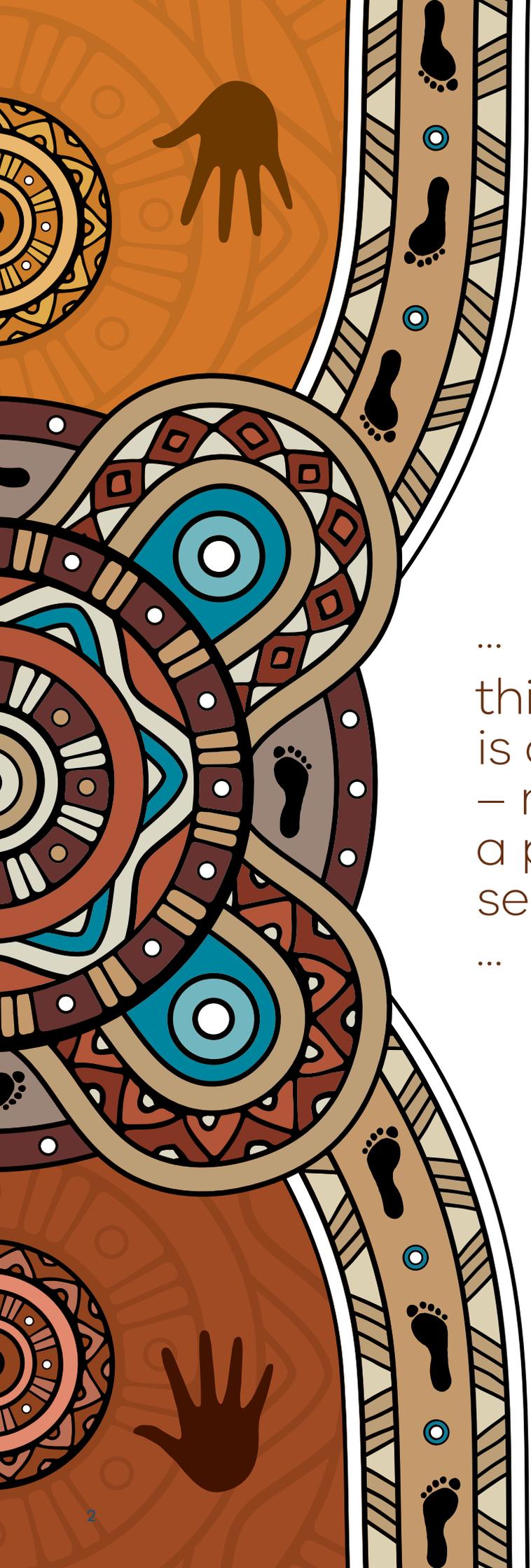
If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, telephone (03) 9651 9999 or contact us at [djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us/contact-us](http://djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us/contact-us)



# CONTENTS

Terms used in the Strategy	3
Ministerial Forewords	4
Message from the Victorian Aboriginal Steering Committee	6
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY</b>	
1.1 A roadmap towards self-determination	9
1.2 Why self-determination matters	10
1.3 Why Aboriginal Victorians and local councils must work together	10
1.4 Towards self-determination through stronger partnerships	11
1.5 Supporting the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 (VAAF)	12
1.6 How the Strategy deals with boundaries	12
<b>CHAPTER 2 THE STRATEGY</b>	
2.1 The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategic Framework	17
2.2 How to use the Strategy	18
2.3 Strategic Pillar One: Culture, Respect and Trust	21
2.4 Strategic Pillar Two: Awareness and Engagement	33
2.5 Strategic Pillar Three: Accountability and Direction	41
2.6 Strategic Pillar Four: Governance and Participation	49
2.7 Strategic Pillar Five: Economic Participation	55
2.8 Strategic Pillar Six: Health and Wellbeing	61
2.9 Strategic Pillar Seven: Resourcing and Funding	67
<b>CHAPTER 3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION</b>	72
<b>CHAPTER 4 BACKGROUND: THE STRATEGY'S WORKING ENVIRONMENT</b>	
4.1 Treaty	73
4.2 The Yoo-rrook Justice Commission	73
4.3 Closing the Gap	74
4.4 <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	74
4.5 <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i>	75
4.6 <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>	75
4.7 <i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>	75
4.8 <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>	76
4.9 <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>	76





...  
this Strategy  
is all about  
– mapping out  
a pathway to  
self-determination  
...

## TERMS USED IN THE STRATEGY

The Strategy uses **Aboriginal** to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who aren't necessarily also Traditional Owners of Victorian land.

**Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)** are incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Commonwealth), *Corporations Act 2001* (Commonwealth) or *Co-operatives Act 1996* (Victoria). Boards of Aboriginal people manage them for the sole purpose of serving the local Aboriginal community. ACCOs serve their communities by delivering social, health, and housing services, among other support and service functions.

**Aboriginal Victorians** refers to members of: Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs); Registered Aboriginal Parties; Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs); and Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) in Victoria. The term also includes any other members of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

**Country Plans developed by Traditional Owner Groups** re-affirm aspirations and describe the future of Traditional Owners of the Country. They recognise the importance of cultural heritage – significant places and landscapes, stories and language, customs and practices, and responsibilities in looking after Country. They also describe the pathways communities have determined they need to take to rebuild and prosper.

**First Nations people** or **First Peoples** refers to peoples or nations of people connected to an area before colonisation. While these terms have some general acceptance, some individuals or groups of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples may not prefer them.

**Gathering Places** are community-owned and operated places that provide opportunities for people to connect and deliver services.

**Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs)** consist of Aboriginal people working together to provide a voice for their community, promoting local partnerships and collaborative action. Aboriginal Victoria supports LANs to provide a strong foundation to build on Aboriginal people's strengths, reaffirming the role of Aboriginal culture in building resilience and fostering prosperity among Aboriginal Victorians.

**Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)** allow organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation. Based around the core pillars of relationships, respect, and opportunities, the plans provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They increase economic equity and support First Nations' self-determination, providing a foundation to move forward in self-determination towards Treaty and justice.

**Registered Aboriginal Parties.** The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Aboriginal people as the primary guardians, keepers, and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

**Self-determination** is defined under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

**Self-Determination Local Actions Plans** will be localised plans developed between local government, Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Organisations, and the Aboriginal community. These plans will be based on agreed actions and priorities. They will provide the opportunity to demonstrate progress on the path to Aboriginal self-determination.

**Traditional Owner** means the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters with unique roles in caring for Country and a deep spiritual connection to it.. The term "Traditional Owner Group" is defined in section 3 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic).

A **Traditional Owner Corporation (TOC)** is an incorporated group representing Traditional Owners' interests in a particular area. On behalf of the Traditional Owners it represents, a TOC may hold rights under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA), the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (AHA), and/or the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act), or have no formal agreements in place.

# FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**I am pleased to share with you the *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026*, a comprehensive roadmap towards Aboriginal self-determination through strategic actions for Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government.**

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of councils across Victoria who have provided their input and expertise in the finalisation of the Strategy to ensure it is a practical and visionary guidepost for future action.

This Strategy recognises the vital role local councils play working with Traditional Owners and providing services to Aboriginal Victorians. Building on the success of the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan, this practical Strategy will help Aboriginal Victorians and local governments on their journeys to self-determination.

I want to thank the Victorian Aboriginal community, for your contribution to developing the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-26. It's heartening to know how much of your effort has gone into it and your commitment to making the Strategy a success.

In particular, I would like to thank the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy Steering Committee for its leadership and direction in finalising the Strategy.

Thank you also to the local government sector, including councils and peak bodies, for their dedication and support throughout the development of this Strategy. The Strategy is the culmination of our efforts to create meaningful policies and actions to support Aboriginal self-determination.

It is a privilege to work in a Victorian Government deeply committed to self-determination, and this Strategy represents a major step forward for local governments and Aboriginal Victorians working together to achieve it.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Leane'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

**The Hon. Shaun Leane MP**  
Minister for Local Government

# FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

## **I am honoured in my role as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to endorse the *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026* (the Strategy).**

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* defines self-determination as “the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development”. Through the Treaty process, the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission, Closing the Gap initiatives, and the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (2018-2023), Victoria leads the nation on progress towards self-determination.

This Strategy adds to our ambitious, forward-looking agenda.

We know that Aboriginal Victorians’ values and ways of life are the only guide to what self-determination means. That’s why policies and programs based on First Peoples’ knowledge, expertise, and priorities are the only path to self-determination. And it’s also why Aboriginal Victorians have led the development of this Strategy.

A strong, sustainable, and well-resourced Aboriginal community is the key to delivering improved health, justice, education, and employment outcomes. It’s the only way economic, social, and cultural equity will be achieved.

Local government plays a vital role facilitating, supporting, and implementing Victoria’s ground-breaking self-determination policy reforms. The Strategy values and emphasises shared roles and responsibilities, and the need for partnerships between local government and Aboriginal Victorians based on sharing, listening, care, trust, truth-telling, and understanding.

The Strategy provides a clear framework for shared decision-making processes –

and actions – for Aboriginal Victorians working together with local government.

I thank Aboriginal Victorians for their patient work in helping develop this Strategy, and I look forward to seeing the progress towards self-determination it will bring. We know barriers to self-determination still exist, and we also know that government transformation will take time. But with Aboriginal Victorians leading the way, I believe the Strategy can help build a future in which all Aboriginal Victorians are leading thriving and culturally rich lives.



*Gabrielle Williams*

**The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

# MESSAGE FROM THE ABORIGINAL STEERING COMMITTEE

**It has been a great privilege to have overseen the development of the new *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026*.**

We know that as Aboriginal Victorians we are best placed to make decisions, design policies and programs that meet the needs of our Country, families and communities. We appreciate that this Strategy adheres to the principles and the Government's commitment to Aboriginal Self-Determination.

We would like to thank the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for their avid support throughout the process of finalising the Strategy, and for their ongoing drive and commitment in its forthcoming implementation.

We are proud to say that this Strategy has been informed by a rigorous policy development process – through which a range of stakeholders were consulted widely over the last 18 months to capture their unique voices and perspectives. This included garnering rich information from Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Organisations, Aboriginal local elected representatives, Aboriginal staff at the grassroots level, local councils, peak bodies, and State government departments.

We appreciate that different local councils are at different stages when it comes to engaging and partnering with our Traditional Owners Groups and communities but need to recognise that Victoria is on a transformative trajectory with the Treaty process, the Yoo-rrook Truth & Justice Commission, National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (2018-2023).

Local government needs to be on that same trajectory, and in partnership, we can affect real change.

We look forward to the Strategy facilitating and building stronger partnerships and relationships between the Victorian Aboriginal Community and the local government sector, which is based on the principles of Aboriginal self-determination, to achieve local place-based outcomes for Country and our communities.

## Steering Committee Members

Jason Mifsud	Raylene Harradine
Robert Buggy	Esme Bamblett
Julian Pocock	Paul Paton
Roger Fenwick	Jim O'Shea
Jill Gallagher	Diana David
Scott McCartney	Simon Flagg



Gunaikurni Elders and staff visit to Buchan



# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

## 1.1 A ROADMAP TOWARDS SELF-DETERMINATION

The Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Strategy (the Strategy) is a roadmap towards self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* defines self-determination as “the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development”.

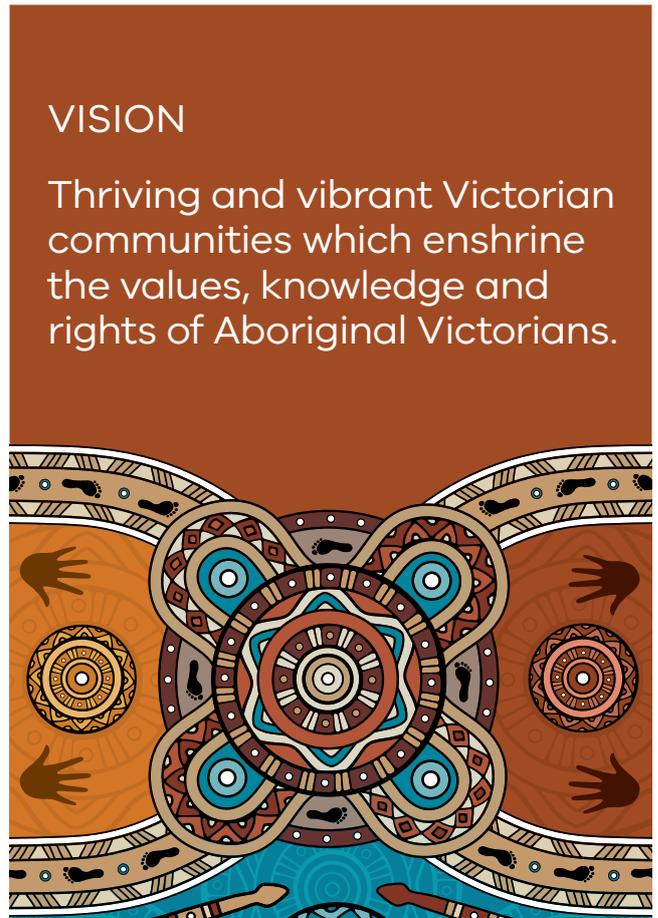
The Victorian Government knows Aboriginal Victorians are best placed to make decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities. Victoria leads the nation on progress towards self-determination, and our approach recognises that all levels of government must change the way they work and engage with Aboriginal people.

The Strategy’s main aim is to help local councils recognise and enable Aboriginal self-determination. It acknowledges the four enablers needed to achieve self-determination, set out in the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 (VAAF)* and the *Self-Determination Reform Framework*:

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

### VISION

Thriving and vibrant Victorian communities which enshrine the values, knowledge and rights of Aboriginal Victorians.



## 1.2 WHY SELF-DETERMINATION MATTERS

Self-determination is a fundamental human right. In the more than two centuries since colonisation, Aboriginal Victorians have strived for this right to make decisions about matters affecting their lives and communities.

Aboriginal Victorians still face many barriers to self-determination. Reconciliation can't be achieved until shared history is understood, barriers to self-determination are identified and removed, and Aboriginal people have control of decisions that affect their lives.

Aboriginal Victorians' values and ways of life guide self-determination so it's the only way to achieve economic, social, and cultural equity. It's the key to better outcomes for Aboriginal people, and to stronger, safer families and communities.

The process towards self-determination is about acknowledging more than two centuries of dispossession, discrimination, human rights violations and systemic injustices and ensuring Victoria's First Peoples are free to determine and pursue their own economic, social, and cultural development.

For that to happen, those who have power must empower those who don't have it. As part of this, Aboriginal people must be appointed to positions of authority so they can determine what actions are in their communities' best interests.

Self-determination requires systemic and generational reform. All levels of government must make significant cultural shifts in the way they think about Aboriginal leadership, as well as how they value, respect, and invest in Aboriginal knowledge, systems, and expertise. This means new legal and policy frameworks must be built to help create cultural change that shifts mindsets, actions, and behaviours.

## 1.3 WHY ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS AND LOCAL COUNCILS MUST WORK TOGETHER

First Nations people have deep and continuous connections to Country on which Aboriginal communities and local councils co-exist throughout Victoria. First Peoples also have long-standing commitments to their communities and cultures, and local councils are well-placed to work in partnership with First Peoples to improve:

- employment and economic development;
- health and wellbeing (including maternal and early childhood health);
- recognition and respect for individuals and communities;
- civic participation;
- planning;
- environmental protection;
- reconciliation;
- service delivery and access for Aboriginal people;
- governance;
- land management; and
- protection of homelands and cultural heritage.

The Victorian Government and local councils are responsible for many of the systems and structures that govern First Peoples' lives. To enable progress of and improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, the Strategy helps state and local governments identify and remove all barriers to self-determination that exist in their systems, structures, and ways of working and thinking.

## 1.4 TOWARDS SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

Self-determination is the key to effective partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils.

The Victorian Government recognises the strength and importance of current relationships between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils, and the work they're doing together to overcome barriers to self-determination. There has been progress in the past decade, but future progress isn't assured.

More action is needed now.

Relationships are strengthened when the Victorian Government and local councils genuinely and respectfully engage with and listen to Aboriginal Victorians, and when Aboriginal Victorians have leadership opportunities and pathways to self-determination.

The Strategy creates those pathways to self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians. It does this through guiding local councils and the Victorian Government towards partnerships based on:

- mutual control;
- shared power and decision making;
- fairness;
- respect; and
- trust.

The Strategy provides a clear framework that – over a five-year planning and strategy cycle – can guide shared decision-making processes and actions. It values and emphasises shared roles and responsibilities in progress towards self-determination, which requires partnerships based on sharing, listening, care, trust, truth-telling, understanding, and action.

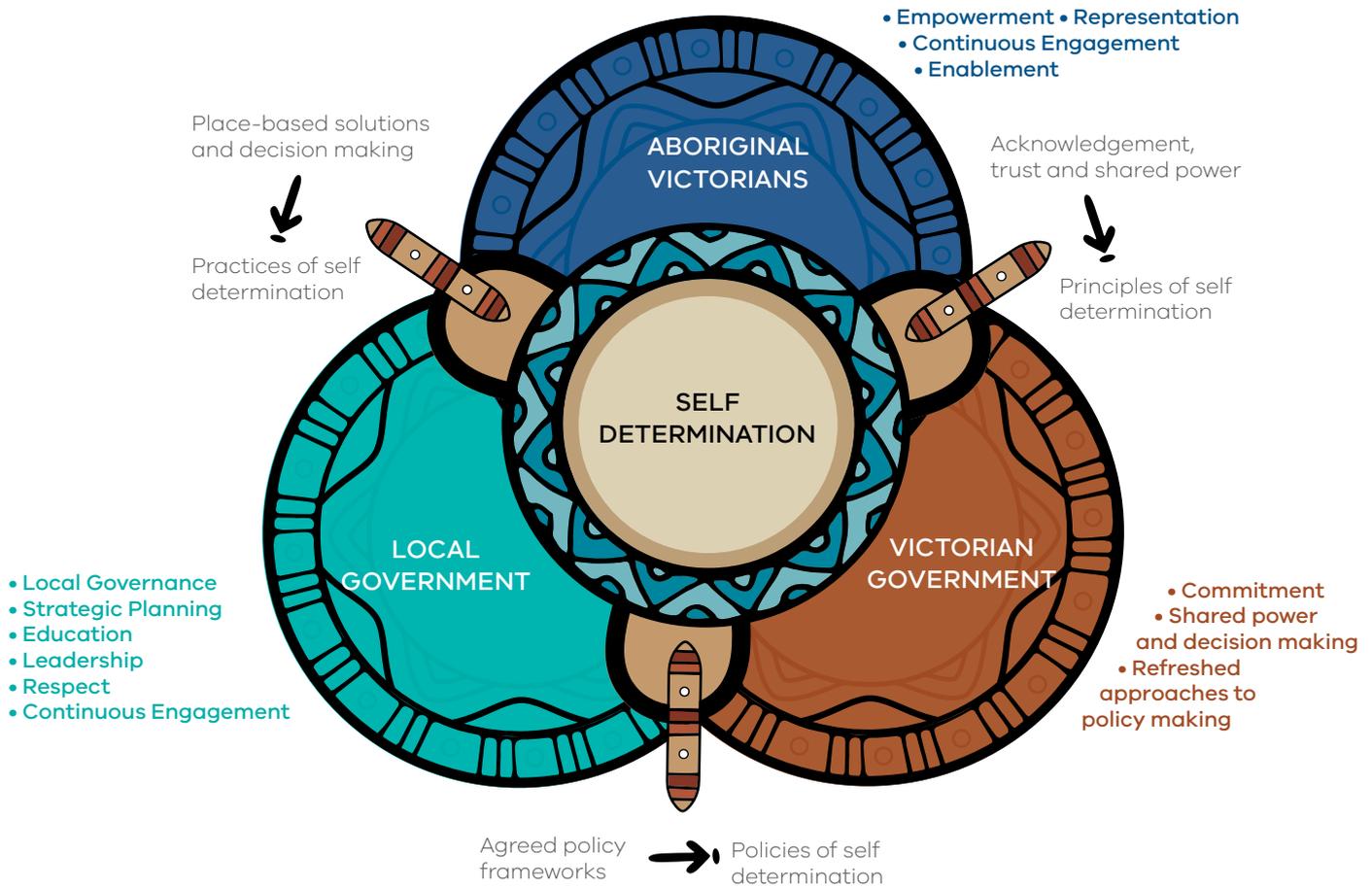


...  
For change to happen  
it's got to be in the  
way you breathe and  
blink because then it's  
just in every decision,  
every day...

Attendee at a local government forum



PROGRESSING SELF DETERMINATION TOGETHER



## 1.5 SUPPORTING THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS FRAMEWORK 2018-2023 (VAAF)

Australia is a signatory to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, but the Victorian Government takes its commitment to self-determination further through VAAF. The Strategy supports VAAF's aims, which are underpinned by VAAF's long-term commitment to self-determination. The VAAF's goals and measures set out across six domains:

1. Children, family, and home
2. Learning and skills
3. Opportunity and prosperity
4. Health and wellbeing
5. Justice and safety
6. Culture and Country

The Strategy also reflects VAAF's 11 guiding principles for self-determination. These set minimum standards for all existing and future work with Aboriginal Victorians, and guide all government work towards self-determination.

## 1.6 HOW THE STRATEGY DEALS WITH BOUNDARIES

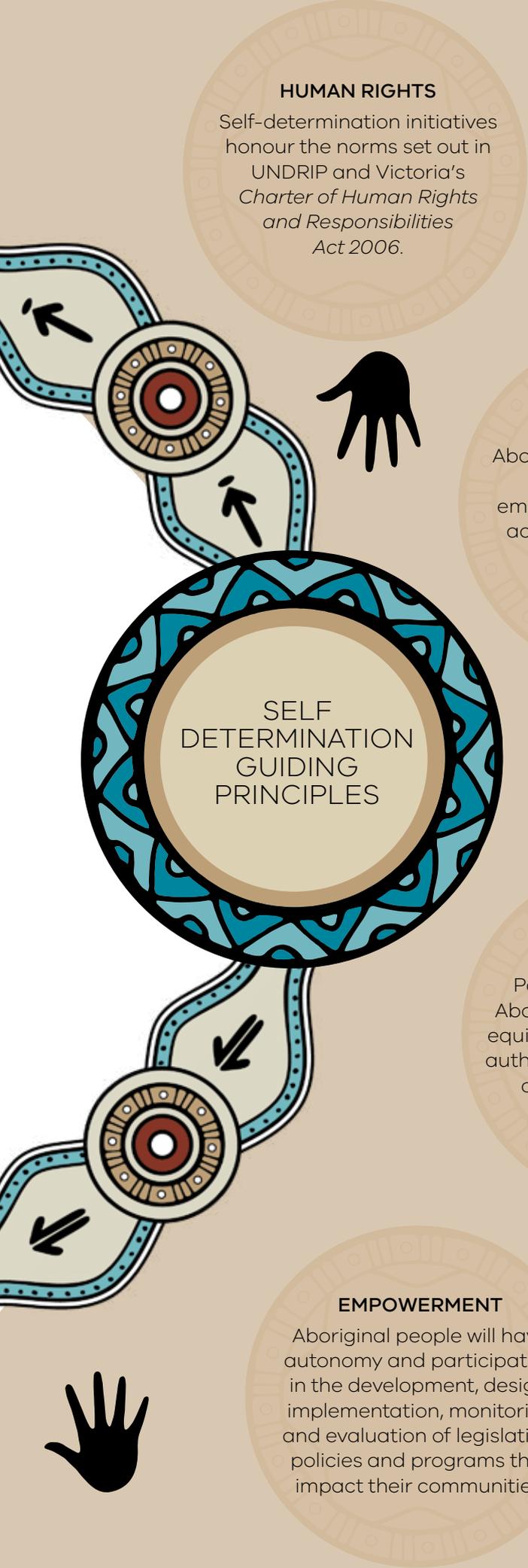
Several boundaries apply across Victoria affecting Aboriginal Victorians and local councils, including but not limited to:

- Registered Aboriginal Parties' boundaries;
- boundaries of Recognition and Settlement Agreements (RSAs) under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*;
- boundaries of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), where these are not also the boundaries of a RSA;
- community-controlled service areas;
- Gathering Place boundaries;
- Treaty voting boundaries;
- local government municipal boundaries;
- state boundaries; and
- government department boundaries.

Traditional Owner Group boundaries don't align with state borders or local government areas. Dealing with multiple jurisdictions and municipalities lengthens processes and strains resources, creating complications for Traditional Owners and councils.

To support sustainable engagement and uphold self-determination principles, the Strategy encourages a Country-based approach. This means Aboriginal Victorians determine the engagement, informed by Country boundaries rather than local council boundaries.





### HUMAN RIGHTS

Self-determination initiatives honour the norms set out in UNDRIP and Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

### CULTURAL INTEGRITY

As First Nations peoples, the rich, thriving cultures, knowledge and diverse experiences of Aboriginal people, including where they fit with family, community and society, will be recognised, valued, heard and celebrated.

### COMMITMENT

Aboriginal self-determination will be advanced and embedded through planned action that is endorsed by, and accountable to, all parties.

### ABORIGINAL EXPERTISE

Government and agencies will seek out, value and embed Aboriginal culture, knowledge, expertise and diverse perspectives in policies and practice.

### PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships will advance Aboriginal autonomy through equitable participation, shared authority and decision-making, and will be underpinned by cultural integrity.

### DECISION-MAKING

Decision-makers will respect the right to free, prior and informed consent and individual choice and will prioritise the transfer of decision-making power to Aboriginal people in areas that impact their communities.

### EMPOWERMENT

Aboriginal people will have autonomy and participation in the development, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies and programs that impact their communities.

### **CULTURAL SAFETY**

Programs and services accessed by Aboriginal people will be inclusive, respectful, responsive and relevant, and informed by culturally safe practice frameworks.

### **INVESTMENT**

Investment to support self-determination will be sustainable, flexible and appropriate to strengthen Aboriginal peoples' aspirations and participation, including around economic participation, economic independence and building wealth.

### **EQUITY**

Systemic and structural racism, discrimination and unconscious bias and other barriers to Aboriginal self-determination will be actively identified and eliminated.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

All parties responsible for delivering outcomes involving Aboriginal people will be held accountable and subject to Aboriginal-led, independent and transparent oversight.

...

'We need actionable items tailored for each organisation and local government.'

...



# CHAPTER 2 THE STRATEGY

## 2.1 THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategic Framework below forms the basis for the Strategy and the recommended actions of its seven Strategic Pillars:

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS	OUTCOMES	TO SUCCEED, WE MUST:
 <p>Culture, respect and trust</p>	<p>Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government that celebrate, understand, and embed Aboriginal cultural heritage and foster trust and respect.</p>	<p>Create and maintain broad awareness, understanding, and embedding of Aboriginal culture fostering continual reflection.</p>
		<p>Celebrate and embed Aboriginal culture, languages, and customs in local businesses.</p>
		<p>Empower Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to tackle discrimination and racism together through shared understanding, truth, respect, and care.</p>
 <p>Awareness and engagement</p>	<p>Open, proactive, and ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils that is understanding, purposeful, meaningful, thoughtful, and mutually beneficial.</p>	<p>Ensure all parties working together know how to best apply the Strategy.</p>
		<p>Share information and best practice efforts for all parties' easy access.</p>
		<p>Identify and enact regular communication and engagement opportunities between all parties.</p>
 <p>Accountability and direction</p>	<p>Clarity and genuine ownership and accountability that recognises the critical role Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government each play in progressing self-determination.</p>	<p>Recognise Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government's roles in progressing self-determination.</p>
		<p>Enshrine shared purpose and ownership between all parties, clearly defining roles and responsibilities. Embed Aboriginal perspectives and participation in local council processes.</p>
		<p>Develop a locally based, mutually agreed approach to shared reporting and accountability.</p>
 <p>Governance and participation</p>	<p>Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into the work local councils perform in creating vibrant local communities.</p>	<p>Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into local councils' work.</p>
		<p>Embed Aboriginal perspectives, goals and aspirations in local council processes.</p>
		<p>Use self-determination principles to establish shared decision-making processes.</p>

## OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS	OUTCOMES	TO SUCCEED, WE MUST:
 <p>Economic participation</p>	<p>Aboriginal people are actively participating in the state economy through employment and business ventures.</p>	Procure the services of local Aboriginal businesses.
		Increase the number of Aboriginal employees through career pathways that are diverse and inclusive, and that lead into senior positions with pay parity.
		Remunerate Aboriginal Victorians for their expertise when engaging and partnering.
 <p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians including the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, local councils, regional self-determining structures including Dhelk Dja and the Victorian Government that improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal Victorians.</p>	Design local Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and services in partnership with Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, and Aboriginal community.
		Prioritise self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening.
		Ensure the preservation of Aboriginal culture by supporting Aboriginal Elders, and empowering the next generation of proud, strong, and thriving Aboriginal people to continue their culture.
 <p>Resourcing and funding</p>	<p>Effective and sustainable funding models that support Aboriginal Victorians and local councils and enable the Strategy.</p>	<p>Establish sustainable resourcing and funding models that encourage locally led collaboration, prioritisation, and resource sharing.</p>

## 2.2 HOW TO USE THE STRATEGY

The Strategy is a practical guide towards self-determination. It will support local councils to include Aboriginal Victorians at the centre of their decision making, and foster mutual respect, trust, and goodwill.

All local councils have strategic and operational plans, and some councils have Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). The Strategy doesn't replace council plans or RAPs. Instead, the Strategy is a reference document, helping councils cross-check, progress, and evolve existing plans and RAPs. It will also help councils identify additional actions to help meet their commitments and progress towards self-determination. This may include groups of councils working together with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Organisations,

and the Aboriginal community to develop Self-Determination Local Action Plans aligned with Country boundaries, as discussed further below.

The Strategy's recommended actions are drawn from the seven Strategic Pillars:

1. Culture, Respect and Trust
2. Awareness and Engagement
3. Accountability and Direction
4. Governance and Participation
5. Economic Participation
6. Health and Wellbeing
7. Resourcing and Funding

Every Aboriginal organisation, Aboriginal community, Traditional Owner Group, and local council is distinct and diverse. They all have different cultures, operational priorities, resourcing levels, and ways of working.

That means different parts of Victoria are at different stages of progress towards self-determination. To reflect this, the Strategy's seven pillars have separate pathways with three stages that measure success: **understand**, **embrace**, and **embed**. As the diagram above shows, the pathways are also cyclical. Once parties have completed the **embed** stage, it's hoped they'll return to the **understand** stage and work through all stages again. This will deepen engagement, strengthen relationship foundations, and allow for development and monitoring of progress towards self-determination.

The pathway stages include recommended joint actions for Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government. Aboriginal Victorians and local councils can choose actions that reflect their stage on the pathway to self-determination, and are encouraged to then develop shared Self Determination Local Action Plans. Agreed priority pillars, outcomes, and pathways should form the basis for Self-Determination Local Action Plans. To maximise

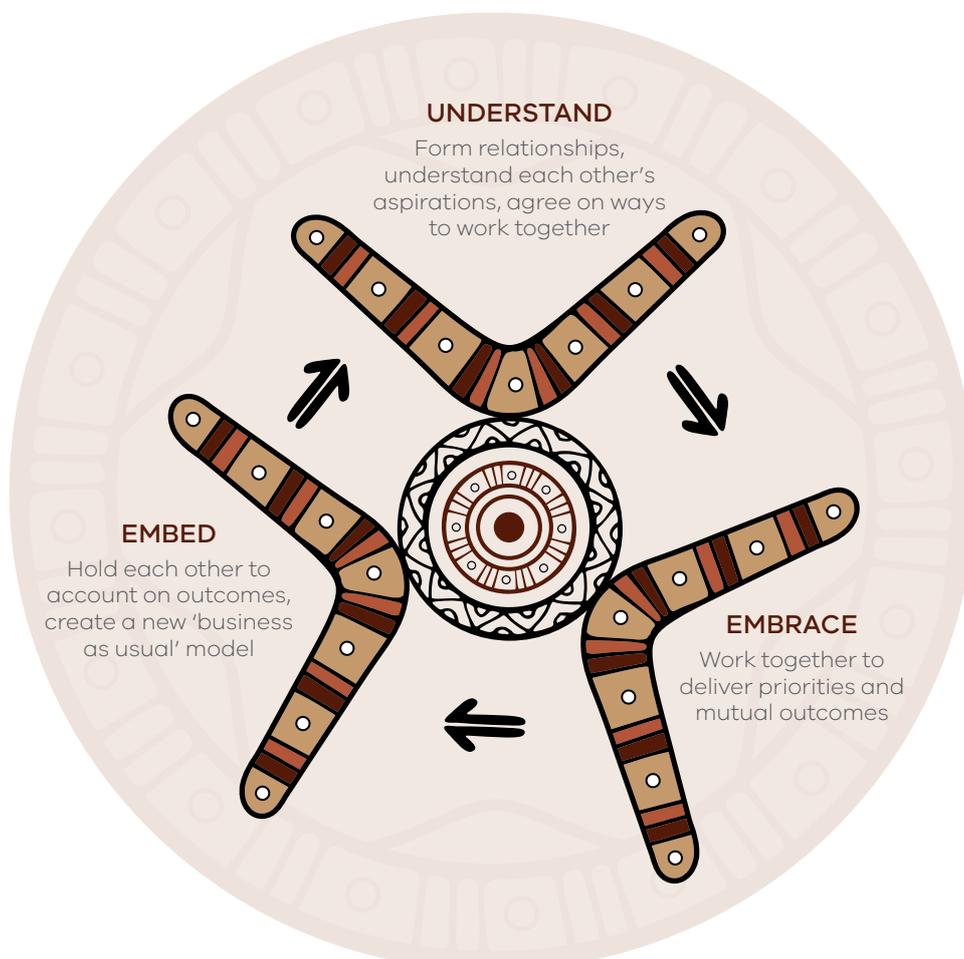
efficiency and effectiveness when developing these plans, councils should work in council groupings to align efforts with respective Traditional Owner boundaries (see 1.6 above) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) service profiles.

Aboriginal Victorians and councils are encouraged to hold regular conversations about their three-year action plan's progress and hold each other to account. The Strategy provides common ground and a framework for developing these plans and holding these conversations.

Councils should also participate in the annual surveys that will be part of the Strategy's ongoing evaluation (see 3. Monitoring and evaluation).

**'We crawled along, started to walk and now we are starting to jog.'**

Local government forum



# CULTURE, RESPECT AND TRUST



## 2.3 STRATEGIC PILLAR ONE: CULTURE, RESPECT AND TRUST

*Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government that celebrate, understand, and embed Aboriginal cultural heritage and foster trust and respect.*

*Create and maintain broad awareness, understanding, and embedding of Aboriginal culture fostering continual reflection.*

Self-determination is enabled through cultural strength – cultural strength is enabled through cultural practice, kinship ties, connection to land and country, art, song, dance, healing, spirituality, empowerment, heritage, identity (belonging) and self-determination.

Self-determination is necessary for Aboriginal Victorians to achieve social, economic, political, and cultural equity based on their cultural values and ways of life.

*The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)* (see 4.9) protects Aboriginal Victorians' cultural rights. . The most fundamental of those rights is to enjoy and express language, culture, customs, and heritage without discrimination.

That's why Aboriginal Victorians' distinct cultural identity and traditional ownership must be recognised and respected. Aboriginal Victorians must also be paid the same amount as non-Aboriginal people when providing their expertise during engagement and partnerships.

It's also why local councils must:

- build cultural integrity;
- improve cultural safety;
- understand the truth of Aboriginal Victorians' history; and
- prioritise and celebrate Aboriginal culture to earn First Peoples' respect and trust.

Culturally safe and racism-free services are those in which people feel safe, where they can freely affirm their identity, and where their needs are met. Local programs and services that Aboriginal people access must be inclusive, respectful, responsive, and relevant – and culturally safe practice frameworks must inform them.

Whether through Aboriginal organisations or mainstream services, it's vital Aboriginal Victorians can access culturally safe and culturally responsive services whenever they need them.

It is also important that local councils are culturally safe places for Aboriginal people to work. The Local Government Koorie Staff Network (the Network) is a staff-led network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff employed within the Local Government Sector. The Network provides a culturally safe forum for staff to collaborate and provide peer support. The Network is positioned as a strong advocacy voice for Aboriginal staff and can feed both challenges and opportunities back to State and Local Government.

Strategic Pillar 1 – Culture, Respect and Trust – works to enact the following Closing the Gap (see 4.3) objectives:

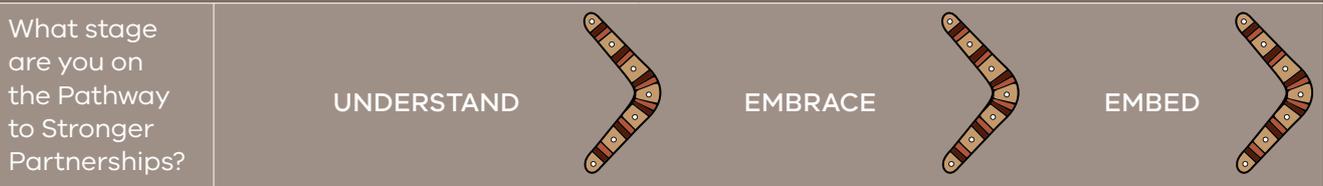
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported, and flourishing.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinct cultural, spiritual, physical, and economic relationship with their land and waters.

# CULTURE, RESPECT AND TRUST

Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government that celebrate, understand, and embed Aboriginal cultural heritage and foster trust and respect.

To succeed we must: Create and maintain broad awareness, understanding, and embedding of Aboriginal culture fostering continual reflection			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with other Traditional Owners, local Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal businesses to discuss, identify and prioritise the key elements of cultural awareness and cultural safety training.</li> <li>Engage with local councils to discuss, identify, and prioritise cultural awareness and cultural-safety training.</li> <li>Partner with councils to identify opportunities to increase understanding of Aboriginal culture and values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local councils to create local cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training programs and content across council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local councils to embed Victorian cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training into council operations – and report on progress.</li> <li>Work with local councils to deliver co-designed training programs to local communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate and coordinate local forums between Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, and local councils to enable the establishment of local cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training programs and priorities.</li> <li>Find opportunities to deliver cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training across all Victorian Government departments and agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and local councils to resource and develop content for co-designed cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training programs.</li> <li>Find ways to share and implement co-designed training programs across Victoria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using <i>Know Your Council</i>, develop reporting, compliance, and mandatory minimum requirements for local councils – supporting the state-wide delivery of co-designed cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training.</li> <li>Work with local councils and Aboriginal Victorians to rollout cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training and induction programs for all Local Government staff, ensuring awareness of Traditional Owner boundaries.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Create and maintain broad awareness, understanding, and embedding of Aboriginal culture fostering continual reflection



**LEAD**  
Local Government

**To progress to the next stage, we must:**

- Understand the difference between cultural awareness and cultural safety, as well as the role of Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal organisations, in delivering training elements.
- Conduct routine cultural safety audits in local councils.
- Engage whole council in building advocacy for cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training.
- Engage with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians, and neighbouring councils to listen to and understand the key elements required for cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training.
- Ensure a cultural safety policy and framework exist.
- Deliver cultural-awareness training to all council executive leaders and councillors.
- To increase understanding of Aboriginal culture and values in council and the local community, invite Aboriginal Victorians to council to share cultural stories.
- Support Aboriginal Staff in Council to actively participate in the Local Government Koorie Staff Network.

- Work together with Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal organisations to create local cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training programs.

- Work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations to agree on how to embed cultural-awareness and cultural-safety training in council operations – and report on progress.
- Make regular ongoing training compulsory and embed it into all inductions across council.
- Share reporting on the rollout of training with local Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, and the Victorian Government.

**To succeed we must:** Celebrate and embed Aboriginal culture, languages and customs in local council business

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise local councils on local cultural heritage, language, customs, and celebrations.</li> <li>• Work with local councils to incorporate and celebrate local Aboriginal culture, language, and customs in council business.</li> <li>• Partner with other Aboriginal organisations to determine how to best support and advise councils on embedding Aboriginal culture, languages, and customs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to develop and agree to key activities, events, customs, and symbols that must form part of cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates.</li> <li>• Work with local councils to ensure cultural protocols are put in place and explained to staff and councillors.</li> <li>• Communicate with other Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations – as well as the Victorian Government – to share the agreed approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an annual review of the agreed cultural protocols in partnership with local councils and the Victorian Government.</li> <li>• In annual reporting processes, include an assessment of how well local council has worked with the agreed protocols.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with the Victorian Government to develop a way to share state-wide the locally agreed protocols and best practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the availability of and encourage the use of resources (for example, state-wide guidelines for the use of Welcome to Country and other culturally significant practices).</li> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, and the Aboriginal community to understand what’s required to reflect and celebrate Victorian Aboriginal culture across local council operations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to embed Aboriginal culture, languages, and customs into local government business through legislative and reporting frameworks.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal Victorians to find ways (for example, through funding or grants application processes) to embed requirements for cultural heritage in funding council projects and programs.</li> <li>• Seek input from Aboriginal Victorians and local councils about how locally agreed cultural protocols could be shared state-wide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to establish state-wide measurement and reporting methods (for example, embedding cultural protocols into council plans).</li> <li>• Use Maggolee and annual reporting processes to share progress and best practice with Aboriginal Victorians and local councils.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Celebrate and embed Aboriginal culture, languages and customs in local council business

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?

UNDERSTAND



EMBRACE



EMBED



**LEAD**  
Local Government

**To progress to the next stage, we must:**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an audit and develop a baseline measure of how culture, language, and customs are recognised across council (for example, Welcome to Country, Acknowledgment of Country, and symbols and signage in council spaces).</li> <li>• To understand other existing protocols, engage with neighbouring councils that share Traditional Owner boundaries with your council.</li> <li>• Partner with Traditional Owners to develop the most appropriate protocols for building respect and trust through celebrations and the recognition of culture.</li> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners to find out who is best placed to support and advise on embedding Aboriginal culture, languages, and customs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations to develop cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates that celebrate Aboriginal culture and values.</li> <li>• Look for opportunities to use cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates in the local community.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government and local government peak bodies to find opportunities to celebrate Aboriginal culture via local government and inter-council forums and activities.</li> <li>• Celebrate Aboriginal culture and values through internal local government operations and activities (for example, Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country) using the agreed cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates,</li> <li>• Support and recognise local reconciliation initiatives.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To embed agreed cultural practices into local council operations, make them part of council plans.</li> <li>• Embed a whole-of-council approach to the application of agreed cultural protocols.</li> <li>• Show leadership by actively working with neighbouring councils to deliver measures that demonstrate to Traditional Owners and the Victorian Government how agreed protocols are applied across all council operations and activities.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|

**To succeed we must:** Empower Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to tackle discrimination and racism together through shared understanding, truth, respect and care

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal organisations to identify the key issues and obstacles (such as racism and discrimination) to creating vibrant Aboriginal communities</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government and local councils to establish safe forums for sharing experiences and truth telling about discrimination and racism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to establish priority areas to tackle discrimination and racism within the community.</li> <li>• Work with local councils to develop forums, programs, education, communications, and engagement activities that encourage respect for and knowledge of Aboriginal culture and rights, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with all Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations in partnership with local councils and the Victorian Government to develop culturally safe annual forums to review progress against identified key issues.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government and local councils to develop ways to report on tackling racism and encouraging respect for Aboriginal culture that can feed into state-wide approaches.</li> <li>• Work with local councils and the Victorian Government to develop responses to reported allegations of breaches of mandated minimum requirements.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Empower Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to tackle discrimination and racism together through shared understanding, truth, respect and care

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?

UNDERSTAND



EMBRACE



EMBED



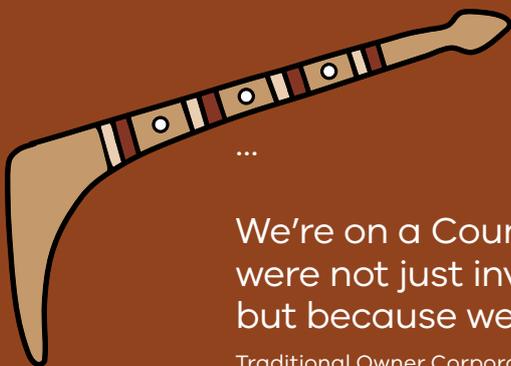
**LEAD**  
Victorian  
Government

**To progress to the next stage, we must:**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options with Aboriginal Victorians and Reconciliation Victoria to gain a state-wide understanding of key issues impacting local communities, and the obstacles (such as racism and discrimination).</li> <li>• Ensure local councils know the legal and policy framework, and understand their obligations regarding racial discrimination and self-determination.</li> <li>• Ensure Aboriginal Victorians know their rights regarding racial discrimination and self-determination.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to develop culturally safe programs, training and listening forums for all Victorian Government staff that promote the rights in the existing legal and policy framework regarding racial discrimination and the context of the Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination.</li> <li>• Identify what support is needed to facilitate local forums and local responses (such as confidential or culturally safe ways for people to share experiences).</li> <li>• Create a state-wide database of agreed local approaches and ensure they're in line with existing legislative and policy frameworks for racial discrimination and self-determination.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and enable culturally safe annual forums for Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to review progress against identified key issues.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to develop reporting mechanisms that reflect and inform state-wide approaches to tackling racism and encouraging respect for Aboriginal culture.</li> <li>• Mandate minimum requirements for all local council officers and elected officials to adhere to existing legislative and policy frameworks regarding racial discrimination and the context of the Victorian Government's commitment to progressing self-determination.</li> <li>• Develop state-wide responses to reported allegations of breaches of mandated minimum requirements.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|

**To succeed we must:** Empower Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to tackle discrimination and racism together through shared understanding, truth, respect and care

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with council 'People and Culture' teams to understand whether workplace environments are inclusive and culturally safe.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal Victorians and the Victorian Government to establish safe forums for sharing experiences and truth telling about discrimination and racism.</li> <li>• Establish who within council will be responsible for identifying and reporting on the key issues and barriers (such as racism and discrimination) to creating vibrant Aboriginal communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priority areas to tackle discrimination and racism across council and in the local community.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal Victorians to develop the mechanisms, forums, programs, education, communications, and engagement activities required to encourage respect for Aboriginal culture and rights.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government and other councils to share agreed local approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government and Aboriginal Victorians to develop appropriate reporting mechanisms that feed into state-wide approaches to tackling racism and encouraging respect for Aboriginal culture.</li> <li>• Implement measures requiring all local council officers and elected officials comply with racial discrimination and self-determination legal and policy frameworks.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal Victorians and the Victorian Government to develop responses to allegations of breaches of mandated minimum requirements.</li> </ul>



...

We're on a Council committee and we were not just invited as representatives but because we have value to offer.

Traditional Owner Corporation

...



## A NETWORK FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STAFF IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In August 2021 the Minister for Local Government wrote to all Councils indicating his support to establish a state-wide Koorie Staff Network (the Network) to provide peer support to Local Government Aboriginal staff. The Minister actively encouraged all Councils to nominate and support their Aboriginal Staff to participate in the Network.

In early September 2021, the Network held its inaugural meeting and staff provided positive feedback on the opportunity to be able to come together as a collective group to share their experiences working within the Local Government Sector.

The Network met again in early November 2021 to finalise its Terms of Reference and other key logistical elements including a network name.

The Network has decided on the name 'Koorie State-wide Local Government Advocacy Group'. A key term in the name is the word 'advocacy'. The Network is positioning itself as a strong collective voice of staff that will advocate to both State and Local Government on a range of issues, such as cultural safety, employment and career development, and the provision of local government services to Aboriginal communities, amongst others.

### SMOKING AND CLEANSING CEREMONY IN SHEPPARTON FOR LOCAL HEALING

A smoking and cleansing ceremony was held in Shepparton to publicly acknowledge the culturally significant burial site on which the council offices had been built, on the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta people.

Smoking ceremonies are an ancient custom among many Aboriginal communities. Native plants are smouldered to produce smoke that has cleansing properties to ward off bad spirits. Some Aboriginal healing practitioners also use smoking ceremonies for healing, spiritual renewal, and strength. The ceremonies are rituals of purification and unity, and Aboriginal people with specialised cultural knowledge undertake them. Given the ceremony's significance, it's usually only performed at events that local Aboriginal communities regard as appropriate.

Yorta Yorta people had for years explained the historic and cultural significance of the council site, and their distress and reluctance to enter the offices. The failure to address this issue had prevented the Yorta Yorta community from being fully integrated into their local council's daily work and decision making.

Representatives of the Yorta Yorta people led the cleansing and smoking ceremony and performed it in line with their traditional cultural practices. It began in the local Queens Gardens where the CEO welcomed everyone and acknowledged the Traditional Owners. The mayor then made brief remarks before a Yorta Yorta Elder led those gathered in a minute's silence. A Yorta Yorta Elder unveiled a plaque to be placed on the wall at the entrance of the council offices, acknowledging the site's historic and cultural significance. A representative of the Yorta Yorta Nation then began the smoking and cleansing ceremony, walking from the gardens to the council offices.

The ceremony and laying of the plaque demonstrates Greater Shepparton City Council's commitment to collaborate with Traditional Owners, acknowledge the truth of Australia's history, and build a shared future.



# AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT





## 2.4 STRATEGIC PILLAR TWO: AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

*Open, proactive, and ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils that is understanding, purposeful, meaningful, thoughtful, and mutually beneficial.*

To achieve self-determination, Aboriginal Victorians and local councils must build and sustain positive, open, and ongoing communication and engagement.

This pillar aims to build collaboration between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and those who share Traditional Owner or council boundaries, to ensure agreement about priorities and mutual decision making.

That means increasing understanding of the Strategy and supporting each other by sharing knowledge and best practices.

# AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Open, proactive, and ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils that is understanding, purposeful, meaningful, thoughtful, and mutually beneficial.

To succeed we must: Ensure all parties who work together understand how to best apply the Strategy			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the Strategy's aims and the requirements of the <i>Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</i>, and how this applies to Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians and the work of local councils, then share this knowledge with local communities.</li> <li>Find ways to work with local councils to achieve the Strategy's aims.</li> <li>Meet with local councils with boundaries that intersect with Traditional Owner boundaries to develop a mutual understanding of priorities – and focus on Country and Country-based planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work closely with local councils to develop and deliver agreed priorities and actions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review progress against the Strategy and participate in the measurement and reporting of its progress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate forums across Victoria to engage Aboriginal organisations and local councils, and explain the Strategy's aims, intent, and approach.</li> <li>Explain how the Strategy sits alongside existing council strategies and planning initiatives; complements existing legislation, policies, and reforms; and what this means for Aboriginal Victorians and local councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek regular feedback and participation from Aboriginal Victorians, including Traditional Owners, and local councils to inform progress and the delivery of support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek and review local data and feedback from Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to ensure strategic aims and priorities remain relevant.</li> <li>Track, measure, and report on progress against the Strategy's aims.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Ensure all parties who work together understand how to best apply the Strategy

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations and understand how they operate.</li> <li>• Understand how the aims of the Strategy apply to Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians and the work of local councils.</li> <li>• Promote Country-based planning within council and the wider community.</li> <li>• Within the suite of policies and plans focused on Aboriginal activity, understand where the Strategy sits and how to apply it locally.</li> <li>• Understand relevant Country-based planning and be aware of relevant Country Plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians on priority issues based on a mutual understanding of goals and priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review progress against the Strategy and participate in the measurement and reporting of its progress.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must: Share information and best practice efforts for all parties' easy access**

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek relevant local content, resources and support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to ensure they engage with the right people at the right time about the right topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate leadership through knowledge-sharing and by encouraging the use of local directories (which include key contacts as well as details about how specific groups like to operate).</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to requests for local content, resources, and support.</li> <li>• Fund or facilitate bi-annual forums across Victoria, allowing local councils, Aboriginal communities, and key stakeholders to come together for information and resource-sharing – and find out whether local forums already exist or can be established.</li> <li>• Find the best ways to share information, based on feedback from Aboriginal Victorians and local councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Maggolee resource to share best-practice examples of how local councils and Aboriginal communities, including Traditional Owners, are working collaboratively to build pathways to self-determination.</li> <li>• Ensure local councils are funded to establish a community of practice through which knowledge and ideas are shared.</li> <li>• Enhance existing digital platforms or develop new channels that give all parties easy access to data, materials, tools, and resources supporting best practice (and seek feedback from Aboriginal organisations and local councils about what content they need).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and fund the establishment of local directories.</li> <li>• Fund quarterly forums to bring together all parties to assess progress, set goals, and share knowledge.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must: Share information and best practice efforts for all parties' easy access**

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek relevant local content, resources, and support.</li> <li>• Meet regularly with Aboriginal communities, including Traditional Owners, to build ongoing, business-as-usual relationships.</li> <li>• Seek out examples of best practice from Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians, and other councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate and share your council's – and Victoria's – best practices.</li> <li>• Establish a community of practice by developing and regularly sharing case studies and examples of where council has successfully partnered with Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners, to progress self-determination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use local government forums to demonstrate leadership through knowledge-sharing and the promotion of best practice, as well as actively supporting self-determination for Traditional Owners.</li> </ul>

...

Some councils don't even know who we are, or that we exist, or what a Traditional Owner is. They need education and training.

Traditional Owner Corporation

...

### IMPROVING ABORIGINAL BUSINESS PROCUREMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local councils are major consumers in rural and regional economies. Engaging Aboriginal businesses to provide goods and services helps stimulate Aboriginal Victorians' economic development and build mutually beneficial relationships.

Procurement and Community Development staff from the City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Shire Council, and Mount Alexander Council pioneered a regional collaborative project to develop their Aboriginal Procurement strategies. The project aims to help the three councils better understand the barriers that Aboriginal businesses across central Victoria face, and progress their organisational commitments under the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA).

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal consultants from specialist procurement agency ArcBlue were engaged to lead the project and coordinate decision making between councils and Dja Dja Wurrung. The project challenged and improved internal systems and processes, along with attitudes towards Aboriginal businesses, creating meaningful, long-lasting change in the sector.

The project has led to greater understanding of how to improve Aboriginal procurement levels and processes across the three councils. It has also led to a stronger commitment to Aboriginal procurement at senior levels of the City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Shire Council, and Mount Alexander Council.

**To succeed we must: Identify and enact regular communication and engagement opportunities between all parties**

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?			
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help local councils develop information and communication plans that increase community awareness of Aboriginal culture, languages, and customs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly communicate any progress made towards achieving the Strategy and progressing self-determination – when this is done, the wider community will see self-determination’s benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local government to incorporate Aboriginal culture, languages, customs and values into council plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find opportunities to highlight and support Country-based communications activity that demonstrates the value of this approach and celebrates progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all communication campaigns about Aboriginal-centred events (such as NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week) are directed to the wider community.</li> <li>• Regularly communicate the progress made towards achieving the Strategy and progressing self-determination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and implement regular regional communication campaigns that support Country-based communications activities while also supporting state-wide campaigns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with Aboriginal communities to develop information and communication plans that increase community awareness of Aboriginal culture, languages, and customs that TOCs provide and authorise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly communicate any progress made towards achieving the Strategy and progressing self-determination – when this is done, the wider community will see self-determination’s benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate Aboriginal culture, languages, customs, and values into council plans, and allocate funding to ensure those plans are developed with TOCs – and actioned.</li> </ul>

**ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND DIRECTION**





## 2.5 STRATEGIC PILLAR THREE: ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIRECTION

*Clarity and genuine ownership and accountability that recognises the critical role Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government play in progressing self-determination.*

Aboriginal Victorians can only achieve self-determination if they're empowered, and clear frameworks drive decisions and actions. Progress is achieved when all parties are clear about their responsibilities and empowered to work together.

This pillar's purpose is to help Aboriginal Victorians and local councils achieve self-determination through working individually and together across cultural and municipal boundaries.

# ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIRECTION

Clarity and genuine ownership and accountability that recognises the critical role Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government each play in progressing self-determination.

To succeed we must:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government's roles in progressing self-determination</li> <li>Enshrine shared purpose and ownership between all parties – clearly defining roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out what connections and relationships must be established to identify shared purpose and ownership.</li> <li>Clearly communicate to local councils what the following do: TOCs, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and any other relevant Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>Work with local councils to identify key personnel and establish a local, shared stakeholder database.</li> <li>Understand local council planning cycles and reporting requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local councils to outline Country Plans and how they link with local Aboriginal Strategic Statements as part of the council's Municipal Strategic Statement.</li> <li>Provide enough funding and resources to develop local Aboriginal Strategic Statements, and agree to timelines for their development, implementation, and review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate a local Aboriginal Strategic Statement that forms part of the council's Municipal Strategic Statement.</li> <li>Work with local council to establish annual, joint strategic-planning cycles that embed Traditional Owner Groups' Country Plans into council plans.</li> <li>Work with local council and the Victorian Government to establish regular reviews of strategic-planning approaches.</li> <li>Work with the Victorian Government to set mandatory requirements for local government (such as annual reporting requirements or a Local Government Performance Reporting Framework).</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:**

- Recognise Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government’s roles in progressing self-determination
- Enshrine shared purpose and ownership between all parties – clearly defining roles and responsibilities

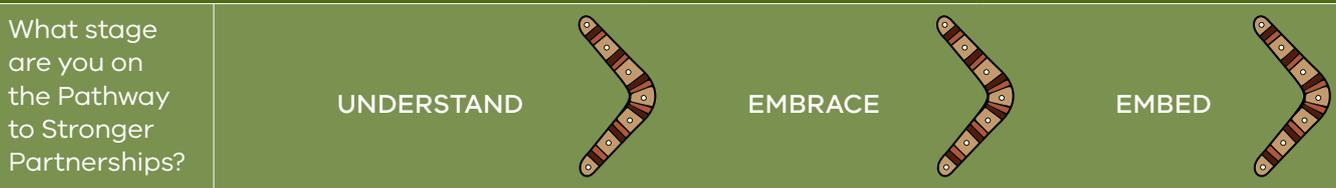
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with all Aboriginal communities and local councils to create a state-wide stakeholder and relationship management database, noting the ways parties have agreed to work together.</li> <li>• Urge local councils to find out the remits, roles and responsibilities of Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Work with local government peak bodies to develop baseline data about how much engagement there’s been between councils and Traditional Owners with shared boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and support Traditional Owner Corporations, local Aboriginal organisations, and local councils to establish relevant strategic-planning forums and processes.</li> <li>• Use Maggolee to regularly circulate state-wide best-practice examples of shared purpose and accountability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with TOCs, Aboriginal organisations, and local councils to build agreed strategic-planning processes into mandatory requirements for local government (such as annual reporting requirements or a Local Government Performance Reporting Framework).</li> <li>• Use existing local government networks and forums to share state-wide progress towards embedding Aboriginal strategic priorities into council plans.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal communities and local councils to continuously review and report on their efforts to progress agreed activities in the Strategy.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:**

- Recognise Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government’s roles in progressing self-determination
- Enshrine shared purpose and ownership between all parties – clearly defining roles and responsibilities

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key personnel across council to lead initiatives responding to the Strategy.</li> <li>• Find out if there’s any lack of awareness or confusion about the remit of Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations – and work with Aboriginal communities to resolve misunderstandings.</li> <li>• Communicate key local council planning cycles and reporting requirements to Aboriginal organisations to increase understanding of roles and accountabilities.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal communities including Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations, and neighbouring councils to establish shared ways of working that don’t place the burden of delivery on Aboriginal organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with neighbouring councils and Aboriginal communities, such as Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations when developing strategic planning documents.</li> <li>• Agree to a shared purpose with Aboriginal communities ahead of detailed policy and business planning.</li> <li>• Assign a function of council with accountability for the development of agreed cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates – then incorporate these into your council’s way of working.</li> <li>• Assign champions from across council to build understanding and advocate for the Strategy.</li> <li>• Convene a forum with council champions, neighbouring councils, and key Aboriginal representatives to establish relationships based on shared Traditional Owner boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed an agreed Aboriginal Strategic Statement into the Municipal Strategic Statement.</li> <li>• Collaborate with Aboriginal organisations to establish regular, joint strategic-planning cycles that embed Country Plans into council plans.</li> <li>• Embed agreed shared purpose and ownership into the Council Charter – and incorporate a local Aboriginal Strategic Statement.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government to agree to mandatory requirements for local councils (such as annual reporting requirements or a Local Government Performance Reporting Framework).</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Develop a locally-based, mutually-agreed approach to shared reporting and accountability



**LEAD**  
Aboriginal Victorians

**To progress to the next stage, we must:**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide input into a shared priorities framework, defining mutual accountability as including partners, employers, procurers/suppliers, planners, leaders, and custodians.</li> <li>• Establish Country-based ways of working and engage with local councils that intersect with Traditional Owner boundaries, streamlining engagement practices and boosting accountability.</li> <li>• Contribute to a Country-based stakeholder and relationship management database shared with local government.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with all TOCs and Registered Aboriginal Parties' members about the Strategy and the best ways of working across local councils with shared boundaries.</li> <li>• Work with local councils to monitor the application of the engagement framework.</li> <li>• Enhance and regularly update the Country-based stakeholder and relationship management database.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop internal performance measures and key-performance indicators (KPIs) for all TOC members, based on agreed activities from the Strategy.</li> <li>• Work with local councils and the Victorian Government to develop reporting measures that track all parties' performances based on agreed roles and responsibilities from the Strategy.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|

**To succeed we must: Develop a locally-based, mutually-agreed approach to shared reporting and accountability**

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and support for the development of the shared priorities framework, which defines shared accountability as partners, employers, procurers/ suppliers, planners, leaders, and custodians.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a new reporting framework for local government, which includes compliance with training, updated business planning criteria, and mandatory inclusions in Municipal Strategic Statements and council plans.</li> <li>• As appropriate, integrate the Strategy into existing Victorian Government awards to acknowledge and celebrate work that promotes self-determination.</li> <li>• Facilitate regular forums with local councils and Aboriginal communities to check progress against the Strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop internal performance measures for all Victorian Government teams working with local councils on the agreed activities from the Strategy.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal communities including Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations and local councils to develop reporting measures that track all parties' performances based on agreed roles and responsibilities from the Strategy.</li> <li>• Develop mechanisms for the Victorian Government to report progress against this and other associated strategies and initiatives at a federal level.</li> <li>• Measure and publish state-wide progress against the Strategy on Maggolee and the First Peoples-State Relations (DPC) website.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must: Develop a locally-based, mutually-agreed approach to shared reporting and accountability**

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a council framework that formalises shared priorities between Traditional Owner and Aboriginal organisations, defining mutual accountability as including partners, employers, procurers/suppliers, planners, leaders, and custodians.</li> <li>• Develop Country-based approaches; connect with neighbouring councils and Traditional Owners; establish an engagement framework and ways of working that share information among councils that intersect with Traditional Owner boundaries; streamline engagement practices; and boost accountability.</li> <li>• Contribute to the Country-based stakeholder and relationship management database shared with Traditional Owners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish internal mechanisms for council project leads to track and report progress against the Strategy.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government and Traditional Owners to track the use of the Country-based stakeholder and relationship management database.</li> <li>• Integrate the Strategy into existing local government awards to acknowledge and celebrate work that promotes self-determination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop performance KPIs for all local council officers and executive leadership based on agreed activities from the Strategy.</li> <li>• Work with Aboriginal organisations and the Victorian Government to develop reporting measures that track all parties' performances based on agreed roles and responsibilities from the Strategy.</li> <li>• Council CEOs and mayors to engage with Traditional Owner and Aboriginal communities, and present progress to other local councils at shared forums and events.</li> </ul>

# GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION





## 2.6 STRATEGIC PILLAR FOUR: GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

*Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into the work local councils perform in creating vibrant local communities.*

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians are leaders, authorities, and participants in the social, cultural, political, and economic fabric of culturally safe and vibrant local communities. With the same aim of creating vibrant local communities, local councils are leaders, employers, procurers, service providers, and planners.

It's clear Aboriginal Victorians and local councils will gain from collaboration. Working together, they can improve social, health and wellbeing and economic benefits for local communities.

Partnerships between Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and local councils should include agreed shared priorities and plans created on behalf of their communities. Collaborative governance and genuine participation will build close and trusting relationships.

There is a range of ways Aboriginal Victorians and local councils can work together productively. These include holding regular conversations and consultations, and establishing formal mechanisms to embed Aboriginal voices in all levels of local council decision making.

# GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into the critical work local councils perform in creating vibrant local communities.

<b>To succeed we must:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into local councils' work.</li> <li>Embed Aboriginal perspectives and participation in local council processes</li> </ul>			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians  <b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify shared borders with other Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, and local councils.</li> <li>Identify parts of local council with which to build relationships.</li> <li>Identify high-performing Aboriginal candidates as potential council recruits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a Country-based approach to planning, based on Traditional Owner boundaries.</li> <li>Partner with local councils to support their recruitment and retention strategies for Aboriginal candidates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local councils at a Country-based level to establish sustainable ways of working.</li> <li>Provide Aboriginal council employees with peer support.</li> <li>Support Aboriginal people in council leadership positions with mentoring and coaching.</li> </ul>
<b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government  <b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share maps that show how council and Traditional Owner boundaries intersect.</li> <li>Provide learning resources and training for Aboriginal organisations to help develop their internal skills and capabilities.</li> <li>Create an Institute of Public Administration of Australia network for Aboriginal staff working in local government and associated public sector organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and communicate the benefits of self-determined Country-based planning approaches and initiatives.</li> <li>Provide learning resources and training to share strategies for Aboriginal recruitment and retention, and best practice for senior-level recruitment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a professional development program for high-potential and high-performing Aboriginal council employees.</li> <li>Develop and deliver mentoring and networking programs that provide professional support to Aboriginal council employees and Aboriginal people in council leadership positions.</li> <li>Monitor and report on the levels of Aboriginal employment in local councils.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:**

- Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights are embedded into local councils' work.
- Embed Aboriginal perspectives and participation in local council processes

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify shared borders with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, and other local councils.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to share resources with councils that intersect with the same Traditional Owner groups, streamlining collaboration with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Seek advice from Aboriginal communities including Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations about best ways to tap into their skills and expertise.</li> <li>• Find ways to use existing data and insights to understand council's levels of Aboriginal employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a Country-based approach to planning, based on Traditional Owner boundaries.</li> <li>• Provide development pathways for existing and new Aboriginal employees, with thorough onboarding processes, regular feedback, and training, mentoring and peer support.</li> <li>• Partner with Aboriginal communities to develop a recruitment pipeline for council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners at a Country-based level to establish sustainable ways of working.</li> <li>• Ensure relevant Aboriginal organisations are involved in formal council planning processes, from early discussions through to sign off.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate pathways for Aboriginal youth through traineeships and cadetships.</li> <li>• Ensure Aboriginal employees are in council leadership positions.</li> <li>• Implement, monitor, and report on council Aboriginal recruitment strategies, focussing on recruitment, retention rates, and development pathways. Include specific recruitment targets.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Use self-determination principles to establish shared decision-making processes

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the start of projects and programs that support mutually-agreed priorities, clearly communicate to councils how you can partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use culture, networks, skills, and knowledge to influence council processes and decision making.</li> <li>Explore new ways of working with councils, including decision-making processes that reflect Aboriginal cultural values and practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of agreed processes with local councils, get involved early in the development of council plans.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly communicate expectations that Aboriginal organisations and local councils will work in partnership on community and council business, including their legal requirements to engage with Traditional Owners as outlined in <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> (Vic).</li> <li>Explore training for Victorian Government staff that lifts awareness and understanding of the self-determination process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require the early involvement of Aboriginal communities in the development of council plans, projects, and programs.</li> <li>Celebrate (in events such as the HART Awards) and widely share Victorian examples of self-determination in practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With First Peoples-State Relations in DPC, create formal tracking and accountability mechanisms to monitor progress towards self-determination.</li> <li>Report clearly to Aboriginal Victorians and local government about progress made towards self-determination.</li> </ul>

**CASE STUDY**

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN WORKING GROUPS IN HUME

A Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RWG) is a RAP's governing body. It's responsible for a RAP'S development, implementation, and reporting phases. A working group develops a RAP, then ensures council delivers on its commitments. RWGs are a practical and effective way to progress reconciliation between First Nations people and council, and to improve relationships between council and the wider community.

**To succeed we must:** Use self-determination principles to establish shared decision-making processes

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to understand self-determination principles by meeting with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations, and by accessing Victorian Government resources, including understanding councils' statutory obligations to consult/negotiate with Traditional Owners under the NTA, the TOS Act and/or AHA.</li> <li>• Involve Aboriginal communities early in the development of council plans, projects, and programs.</li> <li>• Understand how Aboriginal communities can partner and engage from the start of projects and programs that support mutually agreed priorities, noting councils' statutory obligations to consult/negotiate with Traditional Owners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities to apply self-determination principles to council business and activities.</li> <li>• Explore new ways of working with Aboriginal communities that create greater mutual decision making and reflect Aboriginal cultural values and practices.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for Aboriginal users of local council services to provide feedback for continuous quality improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalise new ways of working that embed Aboriginal organisations as partners in council decision making and reflect Aboriginal cultural values and practices.</li> <li>• Ensure key Aboriginal representatives such as Traditional Owners sign-off council plans annually.</li> </ul>

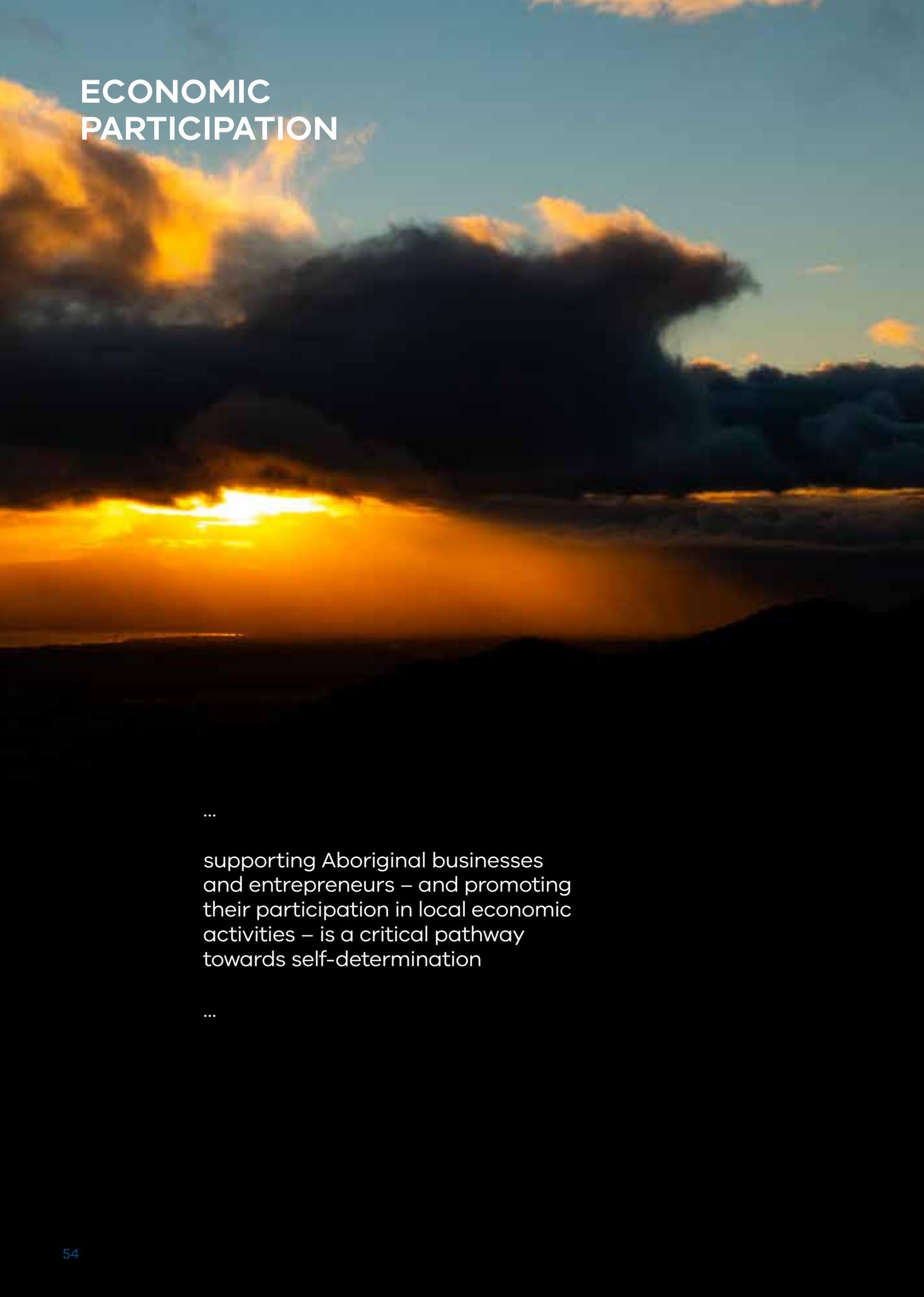
The City of Hume established a RWG, made up of community members from Indigenous backgrounds. Through monthly meetings with council officers, the RWG aims to raise awareness of First Nations' culture and ensure it's prioritised in council projects and initiatives.

Through building stronger community relationships, the RWG has quickly become instrumental in influencing council practices and priorities.

This has been reflected through:

- more events sharing First Nations' culture;
- the inclusion of the Aboriginal community in the design of all council events;
- more requests from council staff to increase their understanding of First Nations' culture;
- more enquiries about collaborating with the First Nations peoples of Hume City on projects and procurements; and
- adapting council processes to better reflect the Aboriginal community's preferences.

# ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION



...

supporting Aboriginal businesses  
and entrepreneurs – and promoting  
their participation in local economic  
activities – is a critical pathway  
towards self-determination

...



## 2.7 STRATEGIC PILLAR FIVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

*Aboriginal people are actively participating in the state economy through employment and business ventures.*

Local government can provide a range of important services and strategies to increase Aboriginal Victorians' economic participation. This includes councils' roles as:

- employers;
- economic planners;
- service providers;
- planning authorities; and
- asset managers.

Economic participation and self-determination are interdependent. Supporting Aboriginal businesses and entrepreneurs – and promoting their participation in local economic activities – is a critical pathway towards self-determination. Through education, training, traineeships, and cadetships, supporting Aboriginal businesses and entrepreneurs also helps address historic marginalisation of Aboriginal people from active and equitable participation in local economies.

Aboriginal economic participation encompasses a broad range of activities. These involve individuals, families, and communities using their skills, knowledge, and assets to achieve economic independence based on their cultural values and ways of life.

Local councils must recognise Aboriginal people are active economic participants who have a right to full consideration in councils' efforts to foster and grow strong and sustainable local economies. That's why local councils must develop stronger policies and pathways that ensure Aboriginal businesses and communities are integral participants in their local economies.

Strategic Pillar Five – Economic Participation – works towards the following Closing the Gap (see 4.3) objectives:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth engaged in employment or education.
- Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

# ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Aboriginal people are actively participating in the state economy through employment and business ventures.

<b>To succeed we must:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procure the services of local Aboriginal businesses</li> <li>• Increase the number of Aboriginal employees through career pathways that are diverse and inclusive, and that lead into senior positions with pay parity</li> <li>• Remunerate Aboriginal Victorians for their expertise when engaging and partnering</li> </ul>			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians  <b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to identify key personnel and programs available to support Aboriginal economic development and participation, including business support and the creation of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.</li> <li>• Clearly communicate the role and interests of TOCs, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations and businesses in their local economies.</li> <li>• Find out what connections and relationships must be established to better link local economic development planning and initiatives and local business with the interests of Aboriginal communities, including Aboriginal community members, organisations, and businesses.</li> <li>• Find council procurement opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to identify opportunities for shared action to grow Aboriginal participation in local economies.</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to increase the role of Aboriginal community members, organisations, and businesses in meeting local economic and employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Advise councils on the development of a sustainable procurement strategy to support Aboriginal businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to establish ways to drive improved economic participation and employment outcomes and monitor council performance in increasing support.</li> <li>• Work with local councils and the Victorian Government to establish strong and clear measures of Aboriginal economic participation.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government to publicly report on Aboriginal economic participation outcomes.</li> <li>• Review the progress of council Aboriginal procurement strategies and provide feedback on areas for improvement.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:**

- Procure the services of local Aboriginal businesses
- Increase the number of Aboriginal employees through career pathways that are diverse and inclusive, and that lead into senior positions with pay parity
- Remunerate Aboriginal Victorians for their expertise when engaging and partnering

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with all Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations and local councils to create a state-wide approach to monitor local government performance in supporting Aboriginal economic participation and employment outcomes.</li> <li>• Develop a long-term procurement strategy for local councils to adopt.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and support Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and local councils to establish pilot initiatives for increasing Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal procurement programs.</li> <li>• Use Maggolee to regularly circulate state-wide best-practice examples of local government initiatives for increasing Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal procurement programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and local councils to acknowledge local government initiatives that increase Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal procurement programs.</li> <li>• Use existing local government networks and forums to advocate for the development of Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal procurement programs.</li> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and local councils to continuously review and report on their efforts to progress the increase of Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal economic participation.</li> <li>• Create formal tracking and accountability mechanisms to monitor levels of Aboriginal procurement, focussing on the number of contracts and their financial value.</li> </ul>



...

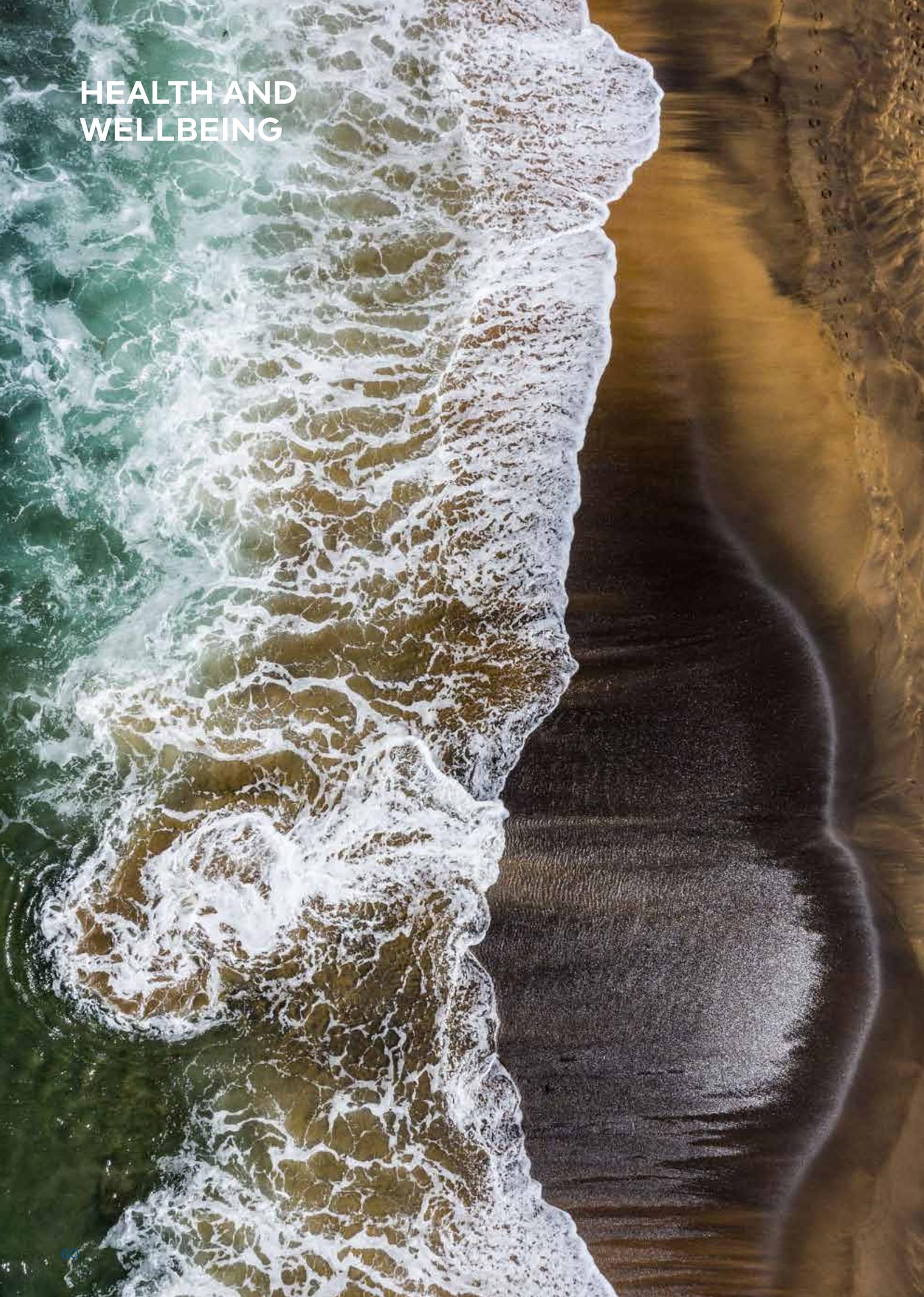
Aboriginal economic participation encompasses a broad range of activities. These involve individuals, families, and communities using their skills, knowledge, and assets to achieve economic independence based on their cultural values and ways of life

...

**To succeed we must:**

- Procure the services of local Aboriginal businesses
- Increase the number of Aboriginal employees through career pathways that are diverse and inclusive, and that lead into senior positions with pay parity
- Remunerate Aboriginal Victorians for their expertise when engaging and partnering

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key personnel across council to lead initiatives to support Aboriginal economic development and participation.</li> <li>• Identify any lack of awareness about the economic activities of Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations – and work with Aboriginal communities to improve awareness and promote opportunities.</li> <li>• Regularly communicate relevant local council services, strategies and employment opportunities with Aboriginal community members, organisations, and businesses to increase understanding of opportunities and drive improved economic participation outcomes.</li> <li>• Identify council procurement opportunities for Aboriginal businesses, including Traditional Owner suppliers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively engage with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and businesses when undertaking economic planning, reviewing business regulation policy, and developing economic development strategies and programs.</li> <li>• Agree with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations on shared purposes ahead of policy and business planning.</li> <li>• Assign a function of council with accountability for the development of agreed cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates, then put these initiatives into council’s ways of working.</li> <li>• Assign champions from across council to build understanding of and advocate for Aboriginal economic participation.</li> <li>• Convene a forum with council champions and Aboriginal organisations to establish relationships based on a shared commitment to supporting Aboriginal economic participation and driving local economic growth.</li> <li>• Partner with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations and other councils to develop a sustainable, local procurement strategy that supports Traditional Owners and Aboriginal businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with Aboriginal communities to establish ways to drive improved economic participation and employment outcomes and monitor council performance in increasing support.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government to agree to mandatory requirements for local councils to publicly report on Aboriginal economic participation outcomes.</li> <li>• Develop local procurement policies for targeting spending on Aboriginal businesses through contracts and targeted EOIs.</li> <li>• As part of annual council reporting processes, monitor and report on Aboriginal procurement plans, focussing on the number of contracts and their financial value.</li> </ul>

An aerial photograph of a beach with waves crashing onto the shore. The water is a vibrant green, and the foam is white and intricate. The sand is a mix of light and dark tones, with a large, dark, wet patch in the foreground. The text 'HEALTH AND WELLBEING' is overlaid in the top left corner.

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## 2.8 STRATEGIC PILLAR SIX: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

*Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians including the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, local councils, regional self-determining structures including Dhelk Dja and the Victorian Government that improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal Victorians.*

Local government has an important role in supporting Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing. It does this through supporting public health and community development programs in Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans. The legal responsibilities for these plans are set out in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (see 4.5).

The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum (AHWPF) is the agenda setting and decision-making body for Aboriginal Health in Victoria. The AHWPF has a number on strategic reform priorities with a focus on prevention.

To ensure local government plans and services are inclusive and respectful, it's vital Aboriginal voices are listened to and included. The more inclusive and respectful local council health and community plans and services are, the better the outcomes will be for the community. This means ensuring effective liaison between local Aboriginal-controlled health and wellbeing services and councils, and that councils draw on Aboriginal health, community leaders and Elders' expertise and knowledge when designing and delivering services. Any health and wellbeing services provided to Aboriginal people need to be culturally safe and free from racism.

Local councils must recognise that Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing is foundational for thriving Aboriginal communities, and that Aboriginal Victorians have a right to full consideration in councils' efforts to support better health and wellbeing outcomes for all their citizens.

That's why local councils must develop strong partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and communities. Those partnerships are integral to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

Strategic Pillar Six – Health and Wellbeing – works towards the following Closing the Gap (see 4.3) objectives:

That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:

- people enjoy long and healthy lives;
- people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing;
- children are born healthy and strong;
- children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education;
- children thrive in their early years;
- students achieve their full potential; and
- families and households are safe.

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians including the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, local councils, regional self-determining structures including Dhelk Dja and the Victorian Government that improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal Victorians.

<b>To succeed we must:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design local Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and services in partnership with Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, and Aboriginal community</li> <li>• Prioritise self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening</li> <li>• Ensure the preservation of Aboriginal culture by supporting Aboriginal Elders, and empowering the next generation of proud, strong, and thriving Aboriginal people to continue their culture</li> </ul>			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians  <b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out what connections and relationships must be established to identify shared purpose and ownership.</li> <li>• Clearly communicate to council these groups' roles: TOCs, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Work with local councils to identify key personnel, and establish a local, shared stakeholder database.</li> <li>• Understand local council planning cycles and reporting requirements.</li> <li>• Work with councils to promote the mutual benefits of partnering with Aboriginal communities and regional self-determining governance structures including Dhelk Dja Regional Action Groups to deliver on the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan's priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local councils to establish shared priorities and roles in developing Country plans.</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to embed Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations' priorities into local council planning processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a local Aboriginal Strategic Statement that forms part of council's Municipal Strategic Statement.</li> <li>• Work with local council to establish annual, joint strategic planning cycles that embed Traditional Owner Groups' Country plans into council plans.</li> <li>• Work with local council and the Victorian Government to establish regular reviews of strategic planning approaches.</li> <li>• Work with the Victorian Government to set mandatory requirements for local government (such as annual reporting requirements or a Local Government Performance Reporting Framework).</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:**

- Design local Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and services in partnership with Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, and Aboriginal community
- Prioritise self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening
- Ensure the preservation of Aboriginal culture by supporting Aboriginal Elders, and empowering the next generation of proud, strong, and thriving Aboriginal people to continue their culture

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with all Aboriginal organisations and local councils to create a state-wide stakeholder and relationship management database, noting the ways of working to which all parties have agreed.</li> <li>• Urge local councils to inform themselves of the remits, roles and responsibilities of Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Work with local government peak bodies to develop baseline data about how much engagement there's been between councils and Traditional Owners with shared boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and support Aboriginal organisations and local councils to establish locally relevant strategic planning forums and processes.</li> <li>• Use Maggolee to regularly circulate state-wide best-practice examples of shared purpose and accountability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Aboriginal organisations and local councils to build agreed strategic planning processes into mandatory requirements for local government (such as annual reporting requirements or a Local Government Performance Reporting Framework).</li> <li>• Use existing local government networks and forums to share state-wide progress towards embedding Aboriginal strategic priorities into council plans.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:**

- Design local Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and services in partnership with Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, and Aboriginal community
- Prioritise self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening
- Ensure the preservation of Aboriginal culture by supporting Aboriginal Elders, and empowering the next generation of proud, strong, and thriving Aboriginal people to continue their culture

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the role local government plays in partnering with Aboriginal communities in closing the gap according to the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.</li> <li>• Identify key personnel across council to lead initiatives responding to the Strategy.</li> <li>• Identify any lack of awareness or confusion about the remit of Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties, LANs, ACCOs, and other Aboriginal organisations – and work with Aboriginal organisations to resolve misunderstandings.</li> <li>• Communicate local council planning cycles and reporting requirements to Aboriginal organisations to increase understanding of roles and accountabilities.</li> <li>• Work with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, and neighbouring councils to establish shared ways of working that don't place the burden of delivery on Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Ensure the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan involves Aboriginal community members and partners with Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Identify clear actions and outcome indicators for Aboriginal communities in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan.</li> <li>• Ensure all health and wellbeing services provided to Aboriginal people are culturally safe and free from racism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with neighbouring councils and Aboriginal organisations when developing strategic planning documents.</li> <li>• Agree to a shared purpose with Aboriginal organisations ahead of policy and business planning.</li> <li>• Assign a function of council with accountability for the development of agreed cultural protocols, guidelines, tools, and templates, then make these initiatives part of council's ways of working.</li> <li>• Assign champions from across council to build understanding and advocate for this Strategy.</li> <li>• Convene a forum with council champions, neighbouring councils, and Aboriginal organisations to establish relationships based on shared Traditional Owner boundaries.</li> <li>• Continue to develop best practice case studies of local government working with Aboriginal communities to deliver shared health and wellbeing outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put an agreed Aboriginal Strategic Statement in the Municipal Strategic Statement.</li> <li>• Collaborate with Aboriginal organisations to establish regular, joint strategic planning cycles that embed Country plans into council plans.</li> <li>• Embed agreed shared purpose and ownership into the Council Charter – and incorporate a local Aboriginal Strategic Statement.</li> </ul>

...

local councils must develop strong partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and communities. Those partnerships are integral to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorian

...

# RESOURCING AND FUNDING





## 2.9 STRATEGIC PILLAR SEVEN: RESOURCING AND FUNDING

*Effective and sustainable funding models that support Aboriginal Victorians and local councils and enable the Strategy.*

Local investment must:

- help in creating, strengthening and sustaining self-determination;
- strengthen Aboriginal peoples' goals and aspirations; and
- boost Aboriginal Victorians' participation in local councils' business.

To do this, investment must be sustainable, flexible, and appropriate. Meaningful community outcomes will be achieved when operating models make long-term effective use of resources and funding, ensuring the Strategy's objectives remain a priority.

This pillar guides Aboriginal Victorians and local councils on moving towards Country-based solutions and partnership agreements, as well as better resource sharing.

# RESOURCING AND FUNDING

Effective and sustainable funding models that support Aboriginal Victorians and local councils and enable the Strategy.

<b>To succeed we must:</b> Establish sustainable resourcing and funding models that encourage locally led collaboration, prioritisation, and resource sharing			
What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<b>LEAD</b> Aboriginal Victorians  <b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find ways to achieve priorities through partnerships with councils.</li> <li>Provide feedback to councils on efficient ways of working to ensure resourcing burdens are minimised.</li> <li>Understand the limitations and inefficiencies of supporting uncoordinated and fragmented efforts in Aboriginal communities and local councils.</li> <li>Identify when to lead, partner or support initiatives with councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embrace opportunities to create more efficient and effective ways of working with other Aboriginal organisations and councils.</li> <li>Find ways to boost resources and funding, and improve community in line with progress toward Treaty(s) outcomes through partnerships with councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalise the co-ordination of activities, planning, and processes with councils.</li> <li>Reflect and communicate the value of partnerships with councils.</li> </ul>
<b>LEAD</b> Victorian Government  <b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand current resourcing commitments, priorities, and challenges for Aboriginal communities and councils.</li> <li>Understand the implications of the funding gap between Aboriginal communities and local government and the impact this has on progress towards self-determination.</li> <li>Seek feedback from Traditional Owners about Country-based economic development priorities and funded priorities listed in Country plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use incentives to encourage Aboriginal organisations and councils to partner and share resources.</li> <li>Use Maggolee to share best-practice examples of Aboriginal procurement strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align funding to support and reinforce Country-based activity based on Traditional Owner boundaries.</li> <li>Align resourcing and funding to support ongoing collaboration and partnerships between Aboriginal organisations and local councils.</li> <li>Align resourcing and investment to support joint proposals and shared accountabilities between Aboriginal communities and local councils.</li> </ul>

**To succeed we must:** Establish sustainable resourcing and funding models that encourage locally led collaboration, prioritisation, and resource sharing

What stage are you on the Pathway to Stronger Partnerships?	UNDERSTAND 	EMBRACE 	EMBED 
<p><b>LEAD</b> Local Government</p> <p><b>To progress to the next stage, we must:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek ways to achieve priorities through partnerships with Aboriginal communities.</li> <li>• Seek feedback from Aboriginal communities on efficient ways of working to ensure resourcing burdens are minimised.</li> <li>• Budget to ensure Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians' experience and expertise is valued and paid for, noting Councils' statutory obligations to consult/ negotiate with Traditional Owners under the NTA, the TOS Act and/or AHA.</li> <li>• Understand the limitations and inefficiencies of uncoordinated and fragmented efforts in Aboriginal communities and local councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embrace opportunities to create more efficient and effective ways of working with other councils and Aboriginal communities.</li> <li>• Find ways to generate greater resources, funding, and improved community outcomes through partnerships with Aboriginal organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalise the co-ordination of activities, planning, and processes with Aboriginal communities.</li> <li>• Reflect and communicate the value of partnerships with Aboriginal communities.</li> </ul>

### TAUNGURUNG LAND & WATERS COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

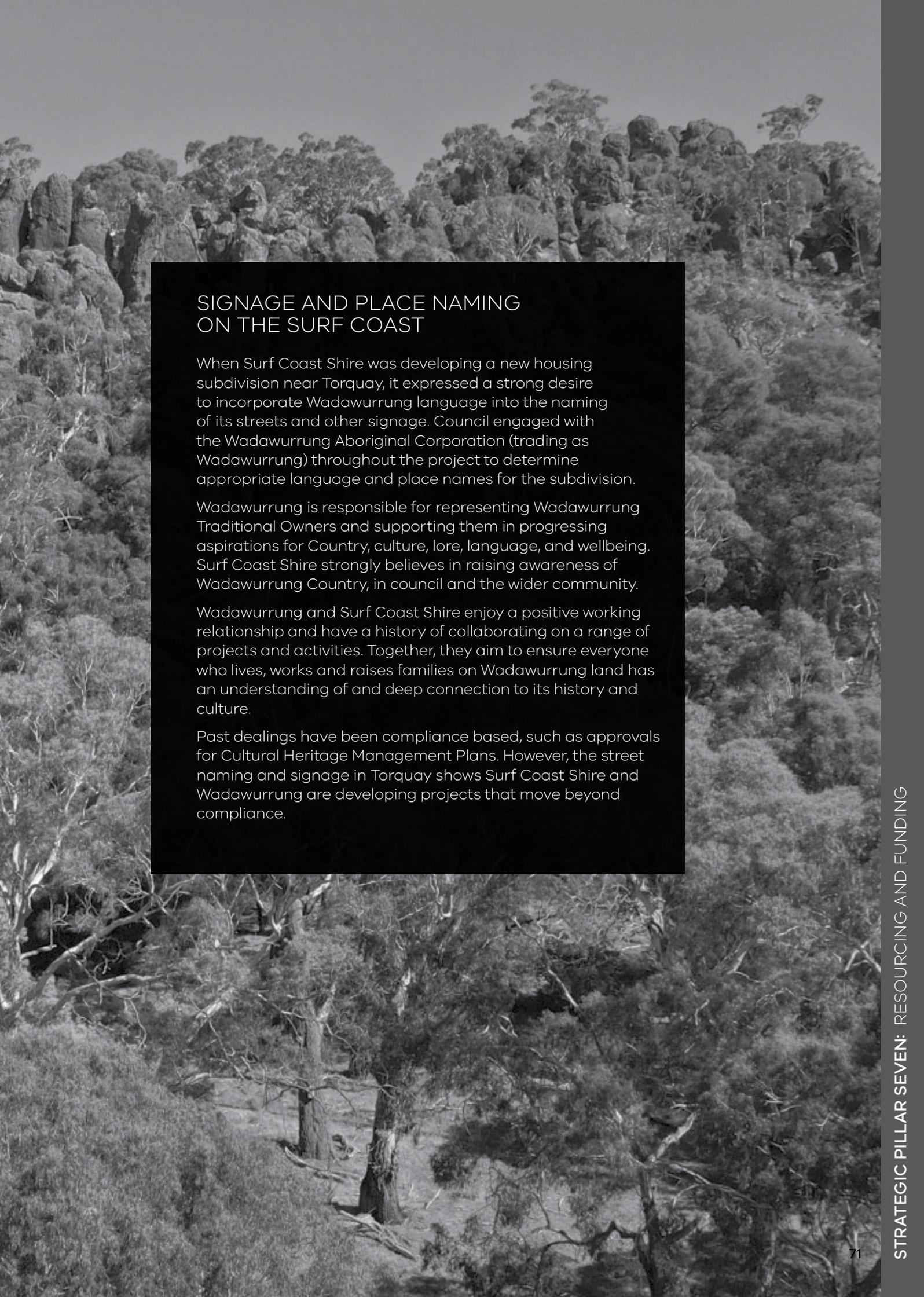
Partnership Agreements between local councils and Traditional Owners ensure both have equal decision-making responsibilities and a shared commitment to achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLAWC) and members of the Permanent Councils Forum formed a Partnership Agreement to identify shared goals and aspirations and create opportunities to work together and build internal capacity.

Partnerships such as this show how self-determination can work at local level. The collaborative decision making flowing from the partnership has helped drive real change in governance and local administration.

The partnership's shared objectives include to:

- respect Taungurung people as Traditional Owners, foster mutual respect and willingness to work as equal partners;
- comply with the RSA and Settlement Package, and work towards their correct and full implementation;
- support Taungurung economic development initiatives and opportunities;
- protect Taungurung cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) and support the development of cultural awareness;
- protect and restore the land and waters within Taungurung Country;
- support a procurement, training and employment strategy for local Taungurung people;
- provide local services in a culturally appropriate manner; and
- improve infrastructure that recognises the Taungurung people as the area's Traditional Owners.



## SIGNAGE AND PLACE NAMING ON THE SURF COAST

When Surf Coast Shire was developing a new housing subdivision near Torquay, it expressed a strong desire to incorporate Wadawurrung language into the naming of its streets and other signage. Council engaged with the Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) throughout the project to determine appropriate language and place names for the subdivision.

Wadawurrung is responsible for representing Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and supporting them in progressing aspirations for Country, culture, lore, language, and wellbeing. Surf Coast Shire strongly believes in raising awareness of Wadawurrung Country, in council and the wider community.

Wadawurrung and Surf Coast Shire enjoy a positive working relationship and have a history of collaborating on a range of projects and activities. Together, they aim to ensure everyone who lives, works and raises families on Wadawurrung land has an understanding of and deep connection to its history and culture.

Past dealings have been compliance based, such as approvals for Cultural Heritage Management Plans. However, the street naming and signage in Torquay shows Surf Coast Shire and Wadawurrung are developing projects that move beyond compliance.

# CHAPTER 3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## **The Strategy provides a roadmap to self-determination but reaching self-determination will take time.**

As the Strategy is implemented, it's vital to measure its progress and outcomes, and assess whether it's effectively helping parties deliver their priorities.

Aboriginal Victorians must lead the Strategy's monitoring and evaluation.

To support this, a governance mechanism will be established to monitor progress against the Strategy. This will include representatives from the Victorian Aboriginal community, local government, and the Victorian Government. This governance group will monitor annual progress against the Strategy's directions.

Councils and relevant Aboriginal organisations will be asked to complete an annual survey to better understand progress towards self-determination. The survey will include:

- what's working and not working;
- opportunities and challenges;
- examples of best practice;
- differences in perception; and
- the Strategy's overall effectiveness.

The simple survey will provide key insights to inform future self-determination initiatives. Formal Recognition and Settlement Agreement reviews conducted by Traditional Owner Groups are also to be considered, if available. The survey's results will inform the Strategy's 2026 review and update.

...

**Aboriginal Victorians must lead the Strategy's monitoring and evaluation.**

...



# CHAPTER 4 BACKGROUND: THE STRATEGY'S WORKING ENVIRONMENT

## **The Strategy is designed to function effectively with current Victorian laws, policies, and initiatives.**

These provide a strong foundation for how local government and Aboriginal Victorians:

- work together;
- embed self-determination; and
- strengthen relationships.

These laws, policies and initiatives promote and protect Aboriginal rights and ensure Aboriginal Victorian voices inform government policies, programs, and practices.

## 4.1 TREATY

The Victorian Government is committed to working with Victorian Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in good faith throughout the treaty process.

When reached, the treaty or treaties will be the foundation for a new relationship, based on self-determination, between all levels of government and Aboriginal Victorians.

The Strategy will help local councils prepare for Treaty. Without pre-empting the outcomes of the treaty or treaties, this Strategy provides a solid base for growth that is expected to flow from future treaty outcomes.

This Strategy allows for flexibility to evolve under any future agreements in the treaty or treaties, which may be addressed through the Strategy's regular review to ensure that, at every stage, it reflects, enables, and facilitates the outcomes of the treaty or treaties.

Phase one of Victoria's treaty process focused on establishing the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (the Assembly) in 2019 and is the sole representative of Traditional Owners and

Aboriginal Victorians that can work with the State to establish the treaty elements.

The treaty process is currently in its second phase following the formal commencement of negotiations between the Assembly and the Victorian Government on 3 August 2020. During this phase, the Assembly is working in partnership with the Victorian Government to establish the elements required to support future treaty negotiations:

- an independent Treaty Authority, to oversee and facilitate treaty negotiations;
- the Treaty negotiation framework, setting out the rules and process for treaty negotiations;
- a self-determination fund, which will provide Aboriginal Victorians with an independent financial resource and support them to have equal standing with the State in treaty negotiations.

The third and final phase of the treaty process will start once all Treaty elements are agreed and established. Phase three will involve treaty negotiations between the State and Aboriginal negotiating parties.

## 4.2 THE YOO-RROOK JUSTICE COMMISSION

In pursuing Treaty, the Victorian Government is committed to acknowledging the truth of Victoria's history, and laying foundations for new, positive relationships between the state, Aboriginal Victorians, and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Aboriginal Victorians were clear and consistent in their call for truth-telling as an essential part of the Treaty process. In particular, the First Peoples' Assembly formally called for a truth and justice process.

In May 2021 the Victorian Government established the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission as the nation's first truth-telling process.

The Commission operates independently from government with the full powers of a Royal Commission. Its work promises to bring about real change through facilitating truth-telling and healing, educating the wider Victorian community, and making reform recommendations.

In September 2021 the Assembly presented the Tyerri Yoo-rrook Report to The Commission – the report presents community informed ideas, hopes and expectations for a truth telling process – it informs The Commission's historic journey.

The Commission will deliver an interim report to the Victorian Government by 30 June 2022 and a final report by 30 June 2024.

### 4.3 CLOSING THE GAP

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which came into effect in July 2020, was developed in partnership between all governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations.

The National Agreement aims to "overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians".

To transform the way governments work, four priority reform areas underpin the Agreement:

1. Formal partnerships and shared decision making.
2. Building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.
3. Transforming government organisations.
4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level.

Local government has a responsibility under the National Agreement to actively support Closing the Gap implementation.

Victoria's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Implementation Plan were released in 2021. Victoria's Implementation Plan sets out the work Victoria will undertake from 2021 to 2023 to overcome the entrenched inequality too many Aboriginal Victorians face. It focuses on shared

decision making with the Aboriginal community, investment in Aboriginal organisations, and transforming government and mainstream organisations to deliver improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Closing the Gap Implementation Plan seeks the following outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- People enjoy long and healthy lives.
- Children are born healthy and strong.
- Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education.
- Children thrive in their early years.
- Students achieve their full potential.
- Students reach their full potential through further education pathways.
- Youth are engaged in employment or education.
- Strong economic participation and development for people and communities.
- People secure appropriate, affordable housing aligned with their priorities and needs.
- People, including young people, are not over-represented in the criminal justice system.
- Children are not over-represented in the child protection system.
- Families and households are safe.
- People enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.
- People maintain distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical, and economic relationships with their land and waters.
- Cultures and languages are strong, supported, and flourishing.

### 4.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020

New provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) recognise Traditional Owners as part of the "municipal community" and create statutory obligations on local governments to engage

Traditional Owners in strategic planning and decision making. The Act introduces a new integrated approach to strategic planning and reporting, the key elements of which are:

- community vision;
- council plan;
- four-year budget; and
- 10-year asset plan.

The above must be developed through deliberative literature reviews and engagement processes with the municipal community. Section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* supports the definition of the "municipal community", being:

- (a) people who live in the municipal district of the Council; and
- (b) people and bodies who are ratepayers of the Council; and
- (c) Traditional Owners of land in the municipal district of the Council; and
- (d) people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipal district of the Council.

#### 4.5 PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACT 2008

Local governments are legally responsible under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to work with the community, including Aboriginal people, to develop, implement, and evaluate Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

These must be consistent with Council Plans prepared under the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Municipal Strategic Statement prepared under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plans must:

- include information about municipal health status and determinants;
- identify goals and strategies for maximum health and wellbeing;
- specify measures to prevent family violence, and respond to the needs of victims of family violence;
- provide for community involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the plans, and
- specify how council will work in partnership with the Department of Health and other agencies.

Councils must review their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans annually.

#### 4.6 NATIVE TITLE ACT 1993

The *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* recognises and protects native title rights. Indigenous Australians can lodge applications seeking native title determinations. Significant amendments were made to the Act in 1998, including the introduction of a registration test and Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).

When local councils act as the delegated public land manager (such as a committee of management, a park or as manager of roads) they must consider and comply with the Act when undertaking certain activities on that land.

#### 4.7 TRADITIONAL OWNER SETTLEMENT ACT 2010

The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)* (TOS Act) allows the Victorian Government and Traditional Owner Groups to make agreements that recognise Traditional Owners' relationship to land and provide them with certain rights on Crown land.

Under the TOS Act, a settlement package can include:

- a Recognition and Settlement Agreement to recognise a Traditional Owner Group and certain Traditional Owner rights over Crown land;
- a Land Agreement, which provides for grants of land in freehold title for cultural or economic purposes, or as Aboriginal title to be jointly managed with the state;
- a Land Use Activity Agreement, which allows Traditional Owners to comment on or consent to certain activities on public land;
- a Funding Agreement to enable Traditional Owner Corporations to manage their obligations and undertake economic development activities; and
- a Natural Resource Agreement to recognise Traditional Owners' rights to take and use specific natural resources and provide input into the management of land and natural resources.

Local councils play a key role in realising the benefits of Recognition and Settlement Agreements, which have included Local Government Engagement Strategies to support self-determination. These strategies set out a role for the Victorian Government to facilitate relationships between Traditional Owner Corporations and local governments and are reviewed when Traditional Owner Corporations review their settlement agreements every five years.

Local Government Engagement Strategies also contain priority actions in partnership with appropriate people for Country (or the Traditional Owner Group if established) including:

- legislative compliance;
- Reconciliation Action Plans;
- place naming;
- signage;
- contracting;
- flag flying;
- strategic planning;
- cultural awareness and safety; and
- employment of indigenous liaison officers.

This Strategy recognises that the First Principles Review is currently underway and that the outcomes of this review may result in changes being made to the TOS Act.

#### 4.8 ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ACT 2006

*The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) and its Regulations provide for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria through:

- The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council's functions include the appointment of Registered Aboriginal Parties and advising the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in relation to the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.
- Registered Aboriginal Parties are the primary source of advice and knowledge on matters relating to Aboriginal cultural heritage in the area for which they have been appointed.
- the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register contains records of all known Aboriginal places and Aboriginal objects in Victoria.

The Act and Regulations also establish requirements for the preparation of cultural heritage management plans.

#### 4.9 CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006

Human rights are protected under *Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. The Act contains 20 rights that promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, equality, and dignity.

The Victorian Government, local councils, and other public authorities must consider how human rights are protected when creating legislation, implementing policies, or delivering services.

Self-determination initiatives honour the norms set out under the Act.



