



ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA

Communique Aboriginal Housing Victoria Board Meeting Friday 26 June 2020

The Board of Directors of Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) held their sixth Board meeting for the calendar year on Friday 26 June via videoconference.

Victorian Government *Building Works* COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Package

The State Government's \$498m *Building Works* economic stimulus package, includes \$35m specifically earmarked for maintenance and upgrades to Aboriginal social.

AHV has been working in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations (ACCOs), Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal Trusts that landed a works proposal that reflects Aboriginal needs and priorities across Victoria, through the sharing of our collective strengths and knowledge.

By working together we avoided the need for smaller Aboriginal organisations to have to compete with each other, or with larger mainstream organisations, for a share of the funding.

The AHV Board recognised the strong spirit of cooperation and good will amongst all of the 21 Aboriginal organisations involved in the bid. Despite the very challenging timeframes, the organisations came together to deliver a coordinated bid, in line with the available budget allocation.

The Board noted that work on the technical component of the proposal is progressing and we are on track to deliver this piece by the due date.

We will develop a communication strategy for our tenants once we have more details about the success of our bid, and the maintenance and improvement projects that will be rolled out for AHV properties.

Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework

The Board noted that work has commenced to implement the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework.

The Framework is already increasing awareness of Aboriginal housing issues. The Victorian Government referred to the Framework when announcing the \$35m Aboriginal housing upgrade fund, as part of the recently announced social housing stimulus package.

Projects to be undertaken as part of the Framework implementation include:

- an Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program expected to start this year and to run for two years;
- extending funding for the existing More Than a Landlord Program;
- completing the financial analysis of the housing stocks of Aboriginal community organisations other than AHV;
- Investigating racial discrimination against Aboriginal people in the private rental market, in partnership with the Residential Tenancies Commissioner.

The Implementation Working Group is meeting regularly and is chaired in the short-term by the Director of Housing in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Aboriginal housing and homelessness providers are represented on the working group, together with government representatives from DHHS, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Department of Treasury and Finance. The transition to a co-chair arrangement by a Respected Aboriginal person and the Minister for Housing is planned within the next 18 months.

Welcome kits for new tenants

The Board noted that AHV has now worked through the backlog of Welcome Kits for new tenants, and has implemented new processes to order and deliver Welcome Kits, going forward.

If you (or someone you know) started a tenancy with AHV in the last 12 months, and haven't received a Welcome Kit, please contact your Housing Officer to request a kit.

AHV Covid-19 Update

We understand that many people are experiencing higher levels of stress and hardship as a result of the COVID 19 crisis. To keep our community safe, health and other agencies are looking at a partnership approach to the crisis.

There are three points of contact we strongly recommend for access to health updates and services:

- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) coronavirus updates: this should be your first point of reference for government-issued updates related to the outbreak. Visit <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus> or call 1800 675 398 (available 24/7). Please leave 000 (triple zero) for emergencies only.
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS): VAHS is available for a range of services, including if you are suffering from stress or anxiety related to the outbreak. You can follow them on Facebook page for the latest updates <https://www.facebook.com/victorianaboriginalhealthservice/> or give them a call on (03) 9403 3300.
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO): please visit their website to learn more about VACCHO's response: <https://www.vaccho.org.au/about-us/covid19/>

Keep strong and stay connected. If you need support, there is support out there:

- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service **03 9403 3300**
- Djirra Aboriginal womens well-being helpline **1800 105 303**
- Dardi Munwurro Aboriginal men's well-being helpline **1800 435 799**
- Safe Steps family violence support **1800 015 188**
- Beyond Blue **1300 22 46 36**
- Lifeline **131 114**
- Kids Helpline **1800 551 800**
- In a medical emergency call **000**

Remember to practice good hygiene and regularly wash your hands to stop the spread. Please visit our website <https://ahvic.org.au/communications-and-resources/coronavirus> for the most current information from us and for a list of support services.