



Communique

Aboriginal Housing Victoria Board Meeting

Thursday 27 November 2020

The Board of Directors of Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) held their thirteenth Board meeting for the calendar year on Thursday 27 October 2020 via videoconference.

The Board noted the range of economic stimulus initiatives that the Victorian Government has committed to, which will support improved housing outcomes for Aboriginal people:

Victorian Government's Big Housing Build Initiative

The Government's pre-budget announcements included the \$5.3B *Big Housing Build* initiative.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, *Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort*, the Government has guaranteed that at least 10% of housing units to be built over the next four years, will be assigned to Aboriginal households.

This is a hugely significant achievement for AHV as the architect of the Framework. We anticipate that we will be working in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and mainstream providers, to deliver new housing units for Aboriginal Victorians, over the coming four years.

Aboriginal Rapid Housing Response Program

The Government has also announced that the \$35m collaborative bid for maintenance and upgrades of Aboriginal social housing, has been successful.

AHV recently engaged a project consultant, to develop a project plan focused on the design and delivery of the program. The program will deliver repairs and upgrades to some AHV properties, and to the rental properties owned and managed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across Victoria.

While the funding is very welcome, it will not be allow us to deliver upgrades to all Aboriginal social housing properties. Further information will be provided to AHV tenants as it becomes available.

COVID funding - Aboriginal Community Home Connect Program

The Department of Health and Human Services has committed \$1.06m as part of its COVID-19 economic stimulus and support response, for the Aboriginal Home Connect program, to be delivered by AHV.

Through telephone and internet contact with Aboriginal social housing households across Victoria (AHV and public housing), the Aboriginal Community Home Connect program will:

- deliver immediate support, assistance and service referral;
- support social and community connection; and
- build cultural strength and resilience that lasts beyond the pre-vaccination COVID-19 crisis.

Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP)

As part of the Government's response to *the Mana-Na Woorn-Tyeen Maar-Takoort* goal to 'Open doors to home ownership and private rental', the Victorian Government has committed over \$4m over two years, for an Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP).

The Program is based on the mainstream PRAP, which provides assistance to households who are experiencing insecure housing or homelessness, to access private rental accommodation. The Aboriginal specific program recognises that Aboriginal people face additional barriers to accessing private rental, including entrenched racism. The Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector has also confirmed that the mainstream PRAP services are not always accessible or culturally safe for Aboriginal clients.

The APRAP will include three elements:

- Aboriginal Private rental brokers who will administer brokerage funds and establish relationships with the private rental sector;
- Aboriginal Private rental assistance brokerage to provide flexible funding for costs such as rent in advance, bond, and furniture storage and removal;
- Aboriginal PRAP Plus – targeted support for people living in private rental to establish or maintain their tenancy.

An Aboriginal PRAP State-wide Coordinator position will be based at AHV.

The position will be responsible for coordinating a network for Aboriginal PRAP providers who can support one another, share learnings and contribute to continuous improvement of the program.

Aboriginal Private Rental Access Project

AHV has partnered with the Office of the Residential Tenancies Commissioner (ORTC), to undertake research into racial discrimination in the private rental market and to prepare recommendations for Government.

In addition to AHV and the ORTC, other project partners are Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) and the Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC). An experienced team of researchers from Swinburne University has been engaged to lead the research. The project is funded by the ORTC and VLA.

AHV's role in the project is to:

- engage a part-time community development worker to help establish community forums with Aboriginal housing and homeless providers and to recruit and support Aboriginal people who have experienced discrimination for interview; and
- facilitate community forums.

AHV will engage consultant and former AHV CEO, Jenny Samms to facilitate the community forums. A community engagement officer will be recruited for a period of approximately 3-4 months, to assist with collecting the case studies for the project.

If you or someone you know has experienced racism in the private rental market, and you would like to be part of this project, we'd like to hear from you. While the project has not commenced as yet, please provide your contact details to us at:

communications@ahvic.org.au

AHV COVID-19 Update

While we are now enjoying some very welcome easing of restrictions in Victoria, we understand that many people are continuing to experience higher levels of stress and hardship as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. To keep our community safe, government and community agencies are adopting a partnership approach to the crisis.

These are the 3 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 Women's 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.