



Communique

Aboriginal Housing Victoria Board Meeting

Friday 28 August 2020

The Board of Directors of Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) held their tenth Board meeting for the calendar year on Friday 28 August via videoconference.

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

AHV has been advised that our joint proposal with 20 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, for the \$35 allocation to Aboriginal social housing maintenance upgrades is progressing through the Victorian Government's assessment processes. Advice on the success, or otherwise, of the bid is expected shortly.

Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework (VAHFF)

The Board noted that the initial meeting of the VAHFF Implementation Working Group was held on 30 July 2020. The Implementation Working Group includes representatives from Aboriginal community controlled organisations and senior government representatives, and is co-chaired by the Director of Housing, Ben Rimmer and AHV's CEO, Darren Smith.

At the first meeting, it was agreed to consider including Victoria's implementation of housing related elements of the recently revised *Closing the Gap*, within the scope of the Working Group's Terms of Reference.

An ambitious 2020-2021 work plan was endorsed. A key action will be the development of a resourcing strategy to implement the 20-year Framework. Work will begin shortly on a proposal to secure long-term funding from the Victorian Government to implement the Framework's recommendations.

Community engagement

As community events continue to be deferred under COVID-19 restrictions, AHV is looking to maintain engagement with our tenant community and our other stakeholders via on-line events and campaigns. AHV now has an established online presence on various social media platforms: Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook; each platform has a different target audience.

The Board noted that AHV is still finalising our proposed NAIDOC activities, to be delivered during the deferred NAIDOC week of 8-15 November 2020. It is likely to be an online event that may be supported by some limited in-person attendance. Any in-person attendance will be subject to the COVID-19 restrictions that may be in place at that time, and will only be considered if there is no risk to the health and safety of participants.

Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework

AHV has partnered with Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) to develop the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework, which aims to achieve structural and organisational change through deep understanding and awareness of Aboriginal cultural safety. It is a document tailored specifically for community housing organisations (CHOs) to help improve housing outcomes by assisting CHOs to embed Aboriginal cultural safety, accountability and monitoring into all aspects of their organisations.

The Cultural Safety Framework goes to the heart of findings and recommendations of mana-Na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort, and enacts one of its key recommendations:

The mainstream system is culturally competent and workers understand and implement culturally safe practices; mainstream providers have culturally safe policies and practices in place.

The Cultural Safety Framework was developed under the leadership of a steering committee chaired by AHV CEO, Darren Smith. The committee included members from CHIA Vic, DHHS, community housing organisations and an AHV tenant with experience in delivering policy and programs in the community.

AHV will play an ongoing role in supporting the rollout of CHIA Vic's Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework.

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, 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.