

Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning



DELWP Aboriginal Staff Conference 2019 'Languages, Treaty, Truth'

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the following people who have assisted in the development of this Framework:

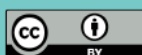
- Fifty-two of DELWP's Aboriginal Staff who were interviewed by Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and shared their experiences, concerns and aspirations regarding cultural safety within DELWP
- Staff of DELWP's Aboriginal Inclusion Support Branch (AISB) and People and Culture Division
- VACCHO's Cultural Safety team, who was commissioned to undertake a Cultural Audit and assist DELWP with the development of this Framework.

Photo credits Sarah Sheridan, Spark Health Australia and Angela Jeffery.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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NOTE: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this document may contain quotes and images of Aboriginal people who have passed.

Mirring

DELWP's Aboriginal Cultural Identity is a commissioned piece created by artist Thomas Day, a Gunditjmara, Yorta Yorta and Wemba Wemba man. The artwork was created in collaboration with Aboriginal staff to better understand the work DELWP does and the values our staff hold.

The Aboriginal Cultural Identity was rolled out across the department in 2019 and serves as a visual reminder of our ongoing commitment to working in full partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. It also represents DELWP's culturally safe and respectful environment for Aboriginal employees and visitors.

The piece is made up of three layers:

Layer one -background

Mountain/stone country

Wetland

Desert

Forest/grassland

Sea country

Scars in the landscape



Layer two

Each line across the artwork signifies our ongoing connection to country by representing the 1500 generations that is our bloodline.

The four scar trees represent the four directions of north, east, south and west with spirits peaking behind them.

This represents our ancient connection and our inherent responsibility to protect country.

The line work (straight, triangles, flowing) that drapes over the work represents the whole of the states' Aboriginal culture in reflection of various artifacts.

Layer three

Artist stamp: Lava flow

River

Boy to Man

Girl to Woman

Ceremony 'Bora grounds' and their journey in life. Lines represent the lineage.

EXPLANATION OF USE OF TERMS

Aboriginal – Throughout this Framework, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A person who is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and identifies as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. They may have connections with and/or outside of Victoria. Use of the term Indigenous is retained in the names of programs, initiatives and publication titles and, unless noted otherwise, is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.

Cultural Safety – “an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening”¹. In the context of Aboriginal people working at DELWP, and our partnerships with Traditional Owners, cultural safety refers to the environment, relationships and systems that enable individuals to feel safe, valued and able to participate in and enable their culture, spiritual and beliefs systems, free from racism and discrimination.

Lateral violence – Also known as horizontal violence or intra-racial conflict, lateral violence is a product of a complex mix of historical, cultural and social dynamics that results in a spectrum of behaviours that include gossiping, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict and physical violence. Lateral violence is not just an individual’s behaviour. It often occurs when a number of people work together to attack or undermine another individual or group. It can also be a sustained attack on individuals, families or groups.²

Traditional Owner – an Aboriginal person who has traditional connection(s) to an identified geographical area of Country.

Wellbeing – encompasses social, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual factors – all aspects of an individual’s life. In broad terms, social and emotional wellbeing is the foundation for physical and mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is a holistic concept which results from a network of relationships between individuals, family, kin and community. It also recognises the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry, and how these affect the individual.

1 Williams, R. 2008, Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2):213-214

2 Australian Human Rights Commission



" DELWP *will*
SUPPORT ABORIGINAL STAFF
AND COMMUNITIES TO
thrive. "

John Bradley

Secretary's FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce DELWP's Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework (the Framework). At DELWP, we are committed to providing a welcoming, safe, equitable and inclusive work environment for all.

We have developed this Framework to deliver on our commitment to our Aboriginal staff and to all Aboriginal people that we work with to care for Country, create economic opportunities and to maintain and restore rights related to land, water and cultural heritage.

To do this, DELWP must ensure Aboriginal people feel culturally safe when they work with us or in our workplaces through our policies, frameworks, strategies, and the way we work with each other every day. This is a commitment from all DELWP leaders on behalf of all DELWP staff.

As an organisation, we recognise and acknowledge Aboriginal culture and that Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians hold a close cultural and spiritual association to Country. We are committed to working together with Traditional Owners in the protection and management of natural resources and cultural places and, in doing so, we will embed cultural safety into our daily work.

There are three domains to achieving Aboriginal Cultural Safety at DELWP:

- **Leadership and Governance:** Cultural safety is embedded and visible in the way DELWP works at all sites and at all levels of the organisation.
- **Aboriginal Workforce, Support and Development:** A workplace where Aboriginal staff are supported to advance and develop as valued employees and leaders both within DELWP and the broader community.
- **Social and Emotional Wellbeing through our Environment and Behaviors:** To create a workplace that is environmentally and behaviorally respectful, welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal staff and community members.

What we learned from the Cultural Audit

A Cultural Audit of DELWP was undertaken by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) in 2018-19. This showed

us that a significant proportion of our Aboriginal staff experience racism at work. We also learned that too many non-Aboriginal staff have limited knowledge and awareness of Victorian Aboriginal cultures and peoples. The audit also revealed that our support of Aboriginal staff is inconsistent and that we need to do more to reach our target of three per cent Aboriginal employment across the Department.

We have also learned from this process and acknowledge that we need to do better in a range of areas. The Framework speaks to one of our Department's key values and behaviours – Wellbeing and Safety, where employees are encouraged to speak up and be heard, everyone takes responsibility for each other's wellbeing and safety, and to be an active role model.

This Framework will help us get there, guided by the principles of self-determination and ensuring that its implementation is Aboriginal-led and evaluated by the establishment of an Aboriginal Leadership Group. It is also imperative, through our leadership, that we have - and live - a policy of zero tolerance of racism and lateral violence in the workplace. The actions in the Framework align with other essential strategies and workplans, such as our Aboriginal Employment Plan and Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework.

What we will achieve

We have work to do to promote Cultural Safety at DELWP – and this Framework should be a catalyst for change to achieve its vision :

'Cultural safety of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians, as an underpinning principle of self-determination, is embedded in everything we do'.

While this vision cannot be realised by any one person alone, it's equally true it can *only* be realised through the commitment of each of us, recognising we are all responsible for ensuring that DELWP is inclusive and culturally safe.

I ask you to work with me, through establishing and building on relationships, reflecting on our behaviours and supporting each other to achieve this vision.

John Bradley | Secretary



Our vision

Cultural safety of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians, as an underpinning principle of self-determination, is embedded in everything we do.



Our purpose

This Framework will provide guidance and drive organisational change to ensure that Aboriginal staff, stakeholders and visitors feel culturally safe and DELWP is considered an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.

In meeting the requirements of the Victorian Government's Self-Determination Reform Framework, the Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework will assist in delivering on a key reform domain – People.

Through the implementation of this Framework, DELWP will build its cultural capacity to enable Aboriginal self-determination.

Our principles

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is Aboriginal-led, not Aboriginal consulted. Cultural safety for Aboriginal people working in DELWP must be determined by Aboriginal people

ACCOUNTABILITY

Everyone is responsible for preventing and responding to both overt and covert forms of racism to provide a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for all staff

RESPECT

Everyone must observe respect for culture, community and individuals in order for practice to become and remain culturally safe

EQUITY

Cultural safety requires reasonable adjustment to the working environment to suit individual needs, gender, religious beliefs, sexuality and other defining factors can impact on cultural safety. Aboriginal people should not be treated as one homogenous group

These principles will underpin our approach to developing a culturally-safe working environment for all DELWP staff

PARTNERSHIP

Establishing and maintaining meaningful partnerships is imperative to cultural safety. Everyone can benefit from investment in culturally-safe policies and practices

ABORIGINAL EXPERTISE

DELWP acknowledges and values that Aboriginal peoples have unique and traditional ways of viewing and connecting with the world, and draw upon that knowledge to enhance the way we work

ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP

Aboriginal people will lead the way in determining their requirements for a culturally-safe working environment and assist others in DELWP on their learning journey

Understanding CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural Awareness

focuses on raising the awareness and knowledge of the individual about the experiences of cultures different from their own.

Cultural Sensitivity

extends beyond cultural awareness and encourages self-reflection from individuals, particularly on their personal attitudes and experiences and how this may impact on how they communicate and behave with people outside of the dominant culture.

Cultural Safety

focuses on the operations of organisations and systems. It lends itself to behavioural and environmental adjustments to allow for the cultural values.

Cultural Competence

occurs on a continuum of education and improvement; competency can shift due to staff turnover, organisational change and due to cultural growth.

Many terms are used to describe safe spaces for Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Often the terms cultural awareness, sensitivity and competence are referenced and determined as suitable measures. The following definitions are informed from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Cultural Safety Standards, 2011:

• **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

• **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

• **CULTURAL SAFETY**

• **CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

This Framework defines cultural safety as:

An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.¹

For Aboriginal peoples, cultural safety manifests itself in practice that reflects an understanding, acceptance and respect for the importance of Aboriginal identity, culture, community and endurance.

Cultural safety is critical to the social, emotional, physical and mental health of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

For any environment, be it the workplace or a service being accessed by Aboriginal peoples, cultural safety must be at the forefront of any, and all, interactions with Aboriginal people. It must be created on a foundation of cultural awareness, cultural respect and sensitivity and it must allow for the principles of self-determination to ensure a meaningful and genuine experience.



Case Study

GIPPSLAND FIRST CUSTODIANS' NETWORK

DELWP has legislative responsibilities under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018* to manage and protect cultural heritage in state forests. The skills and knowledge required to meet its legislative responsibilities are highly specific and take time and investment to develop. To strengthen capacity and capability in managing Aboriginal cultural heritage in state forests, DELWP's Gippsland Region established a First Custodians' Network (Network).

The Network comprises 13 Aboriginal DELWP staff who share a common interest in the protection and interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage and a desire to work together to:

- support and encourage their individual growth in the field of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage management in Gippsland
- strengthen cultural knowledge, connection and practice of Aboriginal employees
- share challenges and foster ideas to improve how we develop best practice approaches to managing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on DELWP managed land.

Enhanced knowledge and understanding of known and unknown cultural heritage in Gippsland, and increased skills in undertaking cultural heritage assessment checks, site inspections, surveys and provision of advice, will enable Network members to protect and manage cultural heritage and improve DELWP Gippsland's short, medium and long-term capacity to deliver on its legislative responsibilities.

Cultural Safety

AT DELWP – THE CASE FOR CHANGE

In November 2018, DELWP commissioned VACCHO to undertake a Cultural Audit of DELWP working environments and assist with the development of an Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework.

This work involved:

- 1) DELWP-wide staff attitudinal survey developed in collaboration with DELWP to capture the following:
 - a snapshot of the perceptions and attitudes of DELWP staff towards Aboriginal people and issues at an individual level
 - an understanding of staff attitudes, beliefs, biases and knowledge regarding Aboriginal cultural safety within the workplace
 - data on the experiences of Aboriginal staff working at DELWP.
- 2) Interviews with 72 per cent of DELWP's Aboriginal staff; conducted via phone and face-to-face interviews.
- 3) Physical Assessment of 24 DELWP locations across Victoria.
- 4) Review of the following DELWP areas:
 - a) Existing Cultural Safety and Cultural Awareness Training modules
 - b) Policies and procedures specific to employment and pathways
 - c) DELWP website and social media.

Aboriginal staff identified they continue to face racism and lateral violence in the workplace, both of which impact cultural safety for all staff.

It identified only 12 per cent of Aboriginal staff interviewed felt their working environment was culturally safe, that 36 per cent had experienced

racism in the past 12 months, and, of those, over half had experienced racism on more than one occasion. Many had not (or "preferred not to say" whether they had) reported incidents. Less than half felt they would be supported if they did report racism.


Overall, non-Aboriginal staff who responded to the survey had limited levels of knowledge about discrimination and intergenerational trauma that Aboriginal peoples experience. They also had limited understanding of the importance of culture, family and connectedness to Aboriginal people. Many non-Aboriginal staff felt the working environments within DELWP are culturally safe for Aboriginal peoples and that Aboriginal cultural values and practices were respected.

The Cultural Audit also revealed a working environment within our organisation that is experienced very differently by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff. Aboriginal staff consistently commented that their cultural values and needs were not acknowledged or supported and they were often expected to be the experts on "all things Aboriginal" regardless of individual past experiences, cultural knowledge and connection to the Country on which they work.

There are various approaches that are being taken across DELWP to support culturally-safe workplaces. However, some locations are doing better than others. Through the active implementation of this Framework, we will build upon and strengthen the foundations already in place.



DELWP Aboriginal Staff Conference 2019 'Languages, Treaty, Truth'



**“ I don’t leave my
Aboriginality
at the door.
I bring my whole,
proud self to work. ”**

DELWP staff member

“My manager and team were extremely supportive when I needed to attend cultural and community business”

DELWP staff member

12%

Aboriginal staff interviewed felt their working environment was culturally safe

36%

had experienced racism in the past 12 months

“It was great to see my team members involved in Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC activities. Their interest prompted great conversations and allowed us to share about our cultures”

DELWP staff member

Aboriginal staff were often expected to be the experts on

“all things
Aboriginal”



Murrie Kemp (right), Aboriginal Place Names Officer, presenting at the 2019 Aboriginal Staff Network Conference

Case Study

ASPIRATIONS FOR OUR FUTURE

Forest, Fire and Regions Administration Support Officer, Barbara Mongta, strongly believes supporting each other is an important aspect of DELWP's values.

Working in the Cann River office for more than 30 years has allowed Barbara, who is of Monero-Yuin heritage, to remain connected to her family, work on Country and support her community.

Part of the Munganin Gadhaba Aboriginal Staff Network Steering Committee since 2015, Barbara believes Aboriginal inclusion at DELWP has improved significantly in recent years and looks forward to Aboriginal Victorians having an even greater influence in land and water management.

"As a long serving staff member and as an Indigenous woman, I want to encourage the recruitment of young Indigenous women and men into the organisation and foster leadership and opportunity for my people."

Barbara Mongta

Case Study

ABORIGINAL STAFF CONFERENCE 2019 'LANGUAGES, TREATY, TRUTH'

The aim of the conference was for DELWP's Aboriginal Staff Network members to increase and strengthen their networks and undertake professional and personal development in a culturally safe and supportive environment.

Staff participated in fourteen workshops across the two-day event. These workshops focused on sharing learnings and experiences across regions, building mentoring relationships, key strategy and policy updates, workforce development and exploring the roles of treaty and self-determination within DELWP.

"This conference was fundamental in helping me build relationships with my Aboriginal peers and have contacts in mind when undergoing day-to-day business. I felt a deep connection to Country and felt culturally safe throughout the entirety of the proceedings. These conferences are a great way to recharge the battery and feel supported and grounded when returning to work."

Murrie Kemp



Barbara Mongta, Forest, Fire and Regions Administration Support Officer

Legal and policy CONTEXT

THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognises both the principle of self-determination (Article 3) and the right to culture (as articulated in Articles 11 and 31).

The UNDRIP outlines four key principles which cover all the articles within the declaration. These principles are:

- Self-determination
- Participation in decision making
- Respect for and protection of culture
- Equality and non-discrimination.

When people are working and operating within the frames of the UNDRIP, they are working in a culturally safe manner.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006 (VIC)

The Charter is a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. It requires public authorities, such as Victorian state government departments, and people delivering services on behalf of government, to act consistently with the human rights in the Charter.

Section 19 (2) of the Charter recognises that Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right, with other members of their community, to enjoy their identity and culture; to maintain and use their language; to maintain their kinship ties; and to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

Public authorities have a legal obligation under section 38 of the Charter to:

- act compatibly with Aboriginal cultural rights
- properly consider Aboriginal cultural rights when making decisions.



VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS FRAMEWORK 2018-2023

The VAAF is the Victorian Government's overarching framework for driving action and improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Recognising that self-determination is key to improved outcomes, the VAAF is underpinned by, and commits government to take action to enable, Aboriginal self-determination.

The VAAF articulates four self-determination enablers and 11 self-determination guiding principles for government action which firmly embed cultural safety.

The self-determination guiding principles are:

- human rights
- cultural integrity
- commitment
- Aboriginal expertise
- partnership
- decision-making
- empowerment
- cultural safety
- investment
- equity
- accountability.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The VAAF recognises that transformation of government structures and systems to enable self-determination is a critical first step. In response to this, and in line with the Victorian Government Public Sector Report Statement (2017), the Victorian Government Self-Determination Reform Framework sets out four reform domains to guide Government actions to enable Aboriginal self-determination:

- People
- Systems
- Outcomes
- Accountability.

The *People* domain goal is to build a "culturally safe public service workforce that understands and has the capacity to enable Aboriginal self-determination in all policies and programs."



DELWP PEOPLE STRATEGIES

DELWP's people strategies place emphasis on living our values through a positive culture, leadership and partnership to deliver for the Victorian Government and the community. This will be achieved through five pillars of support:

- Building a positive culture
- Ensuring we have the right people with the right skills
- Developing accountable, collaborative and inclusive leaders
- Designing an agile and adaptable organisation, and
- Building a productive and flexible workforce.

DELWP's Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2020 policy outlines:

- DELWP is committed to protecting the safety and wellbeing of its people and ensuring safety is integral to how we do our work
- We actively support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our people and promote a healthy workplace by maintaining safe systems of work
- We expect and support our people to take reasonable care for their own health, safety, and wellbeing and that of their colleagues, visitors and communities affected by our work
- We are focused on an inclusive workplace where everyone's uniqueness is valued, and people feel safe to bring their whole selves to work.

The Safety and Wellbeing long-term outcomes over the next three years include:

- Strategic Outcome 1: A physical and mentally safe and inclusive workforce
- Strategic Outcome 2: Safety, wellbeing and inclusion is integral to how we work
- Strategic Outcome 3: Our legislative obligations are met and bettered
- Strategic Outcome 4: The value of wellbeing and safety is integrated and embedded across the organisation.

DELWP's Diversity and Inclusion Plan, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy and DELWP People Strategy will all play their part to align, measure and embed the Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework through the department's organisational performance.

MUNGANIN GADHABA 2016-2020 – DELWP'S ABORIGINAL INCLUSION PLAN

Munganin Gadhaba 2016-2020, meaning 'Achieve Together' in Taungurung language, is DELWP's Aboriginal Inclusion Plan. It sets our vision for working in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians across landscapes, communities and natural resources, growing liveable, sustainable and inclusive communities, and sustainable natural environments.

During 2019 and early 2020, Munganin Gadhaba will be rewritten to respond to the VAAF 2018-2023 and associated Self Determination Reform Framework.





Domains

THE CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK HAS THREE KEY DOMAINS FOR ACTION

The following three key domains will guide and enable immediate actions and longer-term outcomes to foster a culture of safety in DELWP. For details on actions and measures under these domains, refer to the Framework Implementation Action Plan.

1. LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Cultural safety is embedded and visible in the way DELWP works across all sites and at all levels of the organisation.

Strong leadership and commitment are needed to create and embed the necessary changes to ensure DELWP's working environment are truly inclusive, respectful and empowering of Aboriginal employees. The Domain 'Leadership and Governance' emphasises the need to champion Aboriginal cultural safety across all levels of the organisation and create accountability for the commitment to and nurturing of a culturally-safe environment for everyone.

2. ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE, SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

A workplace where Aboriginal staff are supported to advance and develop as valued employees and leaders both within DELWP and the broader community.

Supporting DELWP's Aboriginal staff to develop the skills they need to be their best will contribute to individuals and community self-determination in turn creating a strong, resilient workforce.

3. SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING – ENVIRONMENTAL & BEHAVIOURAL

To create a workplace that is environmentally and behaviourally respectful, welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal staff and community members.

The Aboriginal concept of social and emotional wellbeing is an inclusive term that enables elements that embrace social, emotional, physical, cultural and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. Creating a workspace that addresses these elements is vital when it is estimated people spend at least 80,000 hours in their lifetime at work.



COMMITMENTS

INDICATORS

Cultural safety is a key accountability of all DELWP employees
 DELWP's Senior Executive Team collectively 'sponsors' and is accountable for the implementation of this Framework
 The Aboriginal Leadership Group supports self-determination of cultural safety
 There will be zero tolerance of racism and lateral violence
 DELWP's governance structures are strengthened through Aboriginal staff participation

Our Aboriginal staff are culturally-safe

Establishment of Aboriginal Employee Support Programs
 Managers will promote and empower Aboriginal leadership development
 DELWP will support Aboriginal staff to connect and practice culture

Our Aboriginal staff are supported to advance and develop as employees and leaders within DELWP and the broader community

Staff are supported to address unconscious bias and equity
 Culturally appropriate physical symbols are present in all DELWP work places

DELWP is environmentally and behaviourally respectful, welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal staff and community members

