

Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework

*Our Culture is in our Country,
and Our Country is our Culture*



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

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Pupangarli Marnmarnepu is Wadi Wadi and Mutti Mutti language for 'Owning Our Future'.

Mutti Mutti, Tati Tati and Wadi Wadi language is used throughout the Strategy. The Mutti Mutti, Tati Tati and Wadi Wadi Kulingi (people) are Murray River First Nations. Their Tyalingi (language) is part of the Western Kulin/Murray River languages. DELWP thanks the Mutti Mutti, Tati Tati and Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners for providing their language to name this Strategy.

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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Acknowledgement OF OUR PEOPLE

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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.

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

- 3.1.1 The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) staff who were interviewed and shared their experiences, concerns and aspirations regarding cultural safety within the Department;
- 3.1.2 The members of Traditional Owner organisations who are partnering with DELWP on the implementation of care for Country initiatives;
- 3.1.3 The staff of DELWP's Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch (ASDRB) and People and Culture Division; and
- 3.1.4 Karen Milward Consulting, who was commissioned to assist DELWP with the development of this Framework.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE ARTWORK

Mirring



DELWP's Aboriginal cultural identity is part of our focus on driving recognition and respect for Aboriginal people's rights, cultural and customary interests in DELWP's planning and management for land, water, and the built environment. Mirring is a commissioned piece created by artist Thomas Day, a Gunditjmara, Yorta Yorta and Wemba Wemba man.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TITLE

'Our culture is our Country, and our Country is our Culture,' is a statement made by Mr David Wandin (Traditional Owner) during the consultations.

EXPLANATION OF USE OF TERMS

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

Aboriginal refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They may have connections within and outside of Victoria. The use of the term Indigenous is retained in the names of programs, initiatives, and publication titles and, unless otherwise noted, is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.¹

Cultural Capability refers to the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are required to plan, support, improve and deliver services in a culturally respectful and appropriate manner. It is also how we recognise, support, value and embrace Aboriginal decision-making to enable self-determination.²

Cultural safety refers to the creation of an environment that is safe for people and where, as the Australian Human Rights Commission says, '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'.³ For Aboriginal people working at DELWP, as well as in the Department's partnerships with Traditional Owners, cultural safety means creating environments, relationships and systems free from racism and discrimination so that people feel safe, valued and able to participate. In other words, cultural safety makes space for culture to live and for spiritual and belief systems to exist.⁴

First Nations people or **First Peoples** refers to peoples or nations of people connected to an area prior to colonisation. These terms have some general acceptance but are not always a term preferred by individuals or specific groups of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the right of Aboriginal people to govern the collection, ownership and use of data about their communities, people, land and resources.

Self-determination is all about choice. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural equity, based on their own values and way of life.⁵ That means Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination and self-governance.⁶

Sovereignty is the full power and political rights of a body or group over itself. 'Victorian Traditional Owners maintain that their sovereignty has never been ceded.'⁷

Secretary's FOREWORD



I am pleased to endorse this **Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework** on behalf of the **Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)**.

DELWP wants stronger relationships with its Aboriginal members of staff, as well as the Traditional Owners it serves and partners with.

DELWP supports self-determination and Reconciliation, and wants to empower Aboriginal cultural capability.

Trust and relationships begin with understanding. It's important for us all to know more about the history, culture and beliefs of Aboriginal Australia. It's important for us to become more aware of how post-colonial Australia intersects with Aboriginal Australians. We want our actions to be guided by that knowledge and awareness.

The Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework (the Framework) will help all of our people understand the history, culture and beliefs of Aboriginal Australians.

The Framework explains the skills, knowledge and practices that employees need to perform their duties in a culturally informed way. It aligns with DELWP's vision for culturally safe and respectful environments for Aboriginal employees and visitors, and it promotes a model for developing cultural capability across DELWP.

By increasing our Aboriginal Cultural Capability, the Framework will help DELWP to better support the aspirations of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. This Framework is designed to help deliver on one of the outcomes for *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu*, that "DELWP is culturally capable and safe; recognising, supporting, valuing and embracing Aboriginal decision-making".

I commend the Framework to all DELWP staff. I encourage you to use it to build your understanding and cultural capability – which will lead to better outcomes for Victoria.

John Bradley
Secretary

1 Snook, Scott, Nitin Nohria, and Rakesh Khurana (2012), The Handbook for Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being.
2 Snook, Scott, Nitin Nohria, and Rakesh Khurana (2012), The Handbook for Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being.
3 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-4-cultural-safety-and-security-tools-address-lateral-violence-social-justice#Heading56>
4 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-4-cultural-safety-and-security-tools-address-lateral-violence-social-justice>
5 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1>
6 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-4>
7 <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/download/36-research-papers/13861-advancing-the-treaty-process-with-aboriginal-victorians-bill-2018>





INTRODUCTION

Victoria is a rich cultural landscape, crisscrossed with the tracks of spirit ancestors who walked, hopped, swam, slithered, or flew – creating landforms, rivers, and life as they travelled.

The purpose of the Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework (the Framework) is to support and encourage self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians.

Self-determination is overdue. For generations, Aboriginal Victorians have been forcibly separated from their land – unable to practice traditions such as their language and culture and care for their Country. But that cultural separation is coming to an end.

Legislative reforms are making it easier for Traditional Owners to reengage with their culture and Country through their Elders, the research of early writings and images, the examination of artefacts and the mapping of cultural heritage sites. In addition, Victoria's self-determination legislation enables Traditional Owners to readopt a holistic view of the environment and recognises that Country is a living entity – alive with ancestral spirits that must be protected.

This reengagement is welcome because the connection between Traditional Owners and their Country is deeply held. It is a spiritual connection nurtured by generations of First Nations people for millennia. That is why it is important to return Aboriginal-language names to places under Traditional Owner-custodianship and care.

The recognition of cultural landscapes by the World Heritage Convention reflects the power and importance of Aboriginal concepts of Country – and supports efforts by Traditional Owners to conserve, revitalise and renew their relationships with their cultural landscapes.

... The song lines are like arteries that carry the life force of culture through the body of Country. The song line is the song, and the song brings Country into being...

Traditional Owner

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians have cultural, legislative and self-determining decisions to make about Country. These decisions will ensure ancestral custodial responsibilities are met, and that proposed policies and programs align with the wishes of Traditional Owners and promote self-determination.

1.1 SCOPE OF THE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

This Framework came out of discussions between DELWP and Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal groups. In those discussions, the Victorian government was asked to remove barriers to effective Aboriginal-led decision making and encourage DELWP staff to form genuine, meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal groups said they wanted these partnerships to support and promote self-determination.

That is why the Framework aims to be a practical guide to cultural capability and self-determination for DELWP staff and draws on the:

- Yoo-rrook Justice Commission;
- *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*;
- *Victorian Government Self-Determination Reform Framework*;
- *Aboriginal Cultural Capability in the Victorian Public Sector and the Commonwealth*;
- *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu 'Owning our Future' Aboriginal Self Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025*;
- *DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework*;
- Victorian Gender Equality legislation; and
- *DELWP Gender Equality Action Plan*.

The Framework is intended to be a reference for DELWP units and staff as they develop practical strategies to support cultural capability.

Supporting cultural capability is important because it makes it easier for all employees – including Aboriginal employees – to participate ethically and effectively with their colleagues and the communities they serve. In practice, what cultural capability means is that staff will be encouraged to be more aware of their own cultural values and worldviews and to imagine ways to collaborate across cultural boundaries within the Department as well as with stakeholders, partners and Traditional Owner groups.

This Framework complements other guides – such as the DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework – and can be used in conjunction with other policies – such as the Victorian Public Service Capability Framework.

The benefits of implementing this Framework include:

- Involving Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in DELWP's recruitment, orientation, and retention practices;
- Giving DELWP staff clarity about the cultural capabilities required in their roles;
- Helping managers identify career pathways for Aboriginal staff, further career choices and demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal leadership within DELWP;
- Enabling DELWP staff and Traditional Owners to work together to promote self-determination; and
- Creating a mechanism for DELWP staff to engage with Traditional Owners and facilitate effective learning and development outcomes.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Framework is to support and promote self-determination by building Aboriginal cultural capability.

The Framework explains the skills, knowledge and practices that employees need to perform their duties in a culturally informed way. It aligns with DELWP's vision for culturally safe and respectful environments for Aboriginal employees and visitors. And it promotes a model for developing cultural capability across DELWP.

Consultations with departmental staff, Aboriginal leaders in DELWP and Traditional Owners identified a set of common knowledge, skills and abilities needed to deliver effective services to the Victorian Aboriginal community, now and into the future.

The Framework is not prescriptive. Instead, it shows how to:

- make appropriate investments in developing the cultural capability of DELWP staff;
- take culturally informed approaches to day-to-day work;
- ensure policy, programs and service delivery reflect – and are appropriate to – the needs of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians;
- engage effectively with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians on relevant issues; and
- foster a workplace culture that respects and values the skills, experiences and perspectives of Traditional Owners, Aboriginal employees and Aboriginal Victorians.

1.3 WHY DELWP NEEDS ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CAPABILITY

DELWP is committed to achieving better outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

The Department is committed to Aboriginal Cultural Capability because it understands that Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians are directly or indirectly affected by almost all of DELWP's work. For instance, each of the Department's portfolios of Environment, Land, Water and Planning relate closely to Country and culture.

In addition, the Department's work has the potential to create economic opportunities for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians through the maintenance and restoration of rights related to land, water, and cultural heritage.⁸ These economic opportunities are vital as they provide Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians with the resources they need to determine the future they want. This is essential to enabling Aboriginal self-determination.

That is why DELWP staff are expected to partner with and be led by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in the development and delivery of policy, programs, and services that affect them.

With that partnership in mind, the Framework provides guidance on how to uplift cultural capability and deliver culturally responsive services that facilitate:

- **Early engagement** in the codesign of planning and decision-making processes (including changes to legislation and regulations and developing on-Country policies and programs);
- Aboriginal Victorians and Traditional Owner Corporations **input** into the development of employment strategies, learning and development programs and policies for Aboriginal Victorians, as well as the delivery of services within DELWP; and
- Traditional Owner Corporations' **co-designing** policies and programs relative to their work.

The Framework also identifies essential workforce capability requirements.

As an employer, DELWP has set targets to recruit Aboriginal employees and support sustainable jobs and business opportunities for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. It is also important that, as an employer, DELWP fosters diversity and belonging to attract the best talent from the communities it serves.

With workforce capability in mind, the Framework provides guidance for agencies and managers wanting to:

- identify skills and practices that support good outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians;
- create positive workplace culture, better leadership, quality partnerships and service excellence;
- support Aboriginal leadership aspirations within DELWP; and
- facilitate self-determination outcomes.

⁸ https://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/483946/DELWP-Aboriginal-Cultural-Safety-Framework.pdf

1.4 UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL CAPABILITY

1.4.1 THE VPS CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

The Victorian Public Service Capability Framework⁹ (VPS Capability Framework) defines the capabilities (knowledge, skills and behaviours) its workforce is required to have to achieve VPS objectives, now and into the future. The VPS Capability Framework describes the capabilities

required for performance in a role – and details five capability categories. Those capability categories are shown in Figure 1.

Each capability has four levels of proficiency (foundational, applied, accomplished and leading) that guide the VPS in workforce planning and professional development.

These proficiency levels will be used in this Framework to guide DELWP staff as they work towards cultural capability and competence.

Figure 1 | VPS Capability Framework

Personal Attributes which support effective application of five capability domains	Resilience	Flexibility and adaptability	Self-awareness
	Outcomes thinking	Working collaboratively	Promote inclusion
Meaningful outcomes Capabilities enabling identification and definition of meaningful outcomes	Strategic planning	Partnering and co-creation	Innovation and continuous improvement
	Systems thinking	Policy design and development	Future focus
Enabling delivery Capabilities enabling development and delivery of effective solutions	Critical thinking and problem solving	Project delivery	Data literacy
	Digital and technological literacy	Business and commercial acumen	Political and organisational context
Authentic Relationships Capabilities enabling building strong external relationships	Influence and persuasion	Interpersonal skills	Managing difficult conversations
	Communicate with impact	Stakeholder engagement	Customer focus
People leadership Capabilities enabling effective leadership of the public sector workforce	Managing people	Develop capability	Team management
	Lead and navigate change	Resource mobilisation	Knowledge management and business continuity
Underpinned by VPS public sector values Integrity, Human rights, Leadership, Respect, Impartiality, Responsiveness, and Accountability			

9 <https://vpvc.vic.gov.au/resources/vps-capability-framework/>

10 <https://vpvc.gov.au/html-resources/aboriginal-cultural-capability-toolkit>

1.4.2 ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CAPABILITY IN THE VPS

The VPS Commission's *Aboriginal Cultural Capability Toolkit*¹⁰ describes cultural capability as a broad term that encompasses cultural awareness, cultural safety and cultural competence.

Cultural capability is not achieved after one training session or at a single endpoint. It is like a muscle that is built up over time through continuous and consistent application. This constant learning and re-learning allows staff to develop and improve their skills, knowledge and abilities to make them more culturally capable at work and in their engagements with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

1.4.2.1 Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is like peripheral vision. It's about being aware of and sensitive to difference. It's about taking the time to find out how people want to be treated, rather than treating them the way you'd want to be treated. It's about being open to and respectful of a diversity of people, cultures, languages, religions, dress and communication styles.

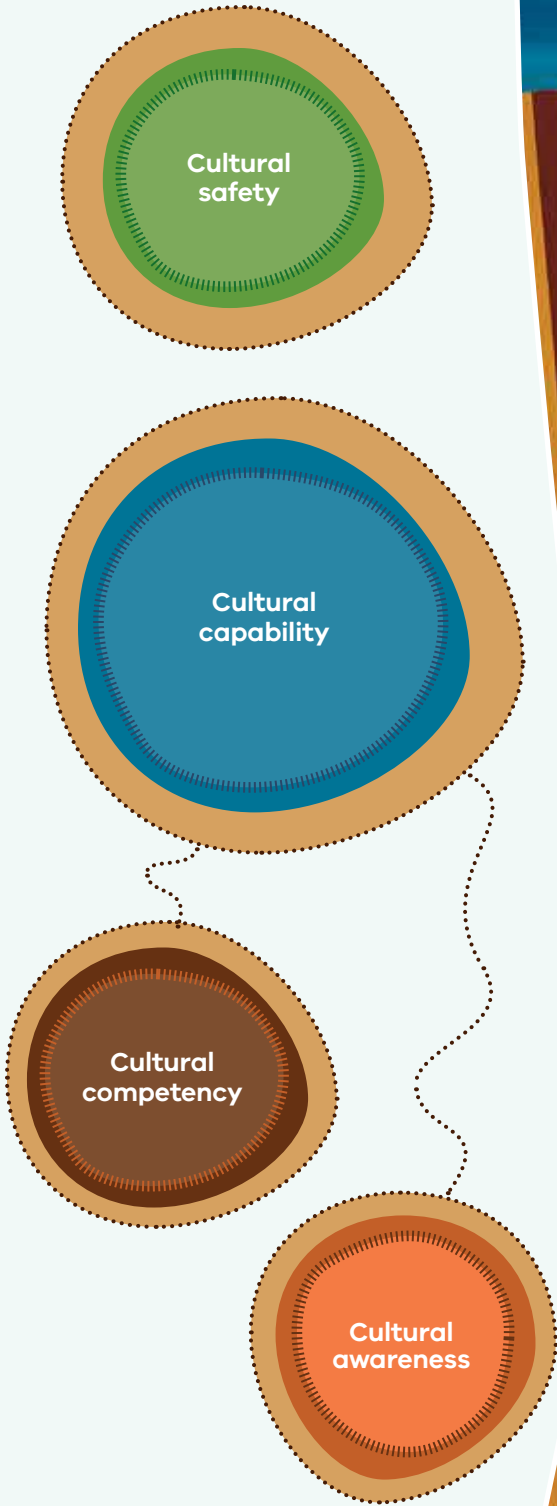
1.4.2.2 Cultural Safety

Everyone wants to feel safe. For Aboriginal people, cultural safety is about more than feeling safe from physical attack – it's about being in an environment where their identity and experience is not challenged or denied. Therefore, individuals, organisations and systems need to be aware of how their own culture and values affect Aboriginal people and create an environment where everyone is treated in a culturally respectful manner.

The measures of a culturally safe workplace are:

- That cultural safety is an organisational value that is acknowledged with local Aboriginal communities;
- That policies and procedures are reviewed and refreshed based on Aboriginal staff and community feedback and aligned with the VAAF and self-determination principles;
- That local Aboriginal communities and the organisation negotiate strategic approaches, goals, and outcomes; and
- That the organisation has systems to determine current proficiency and capability levels and identify a learning or development plan based on its learning needs.

Figure 2 | VPS Aboriginal Cultural Capability



1.4.2.3 Cultural Competency

Cultural competency relates to the behaviours, attitudes and policies that allow people to work effectively in cross-cultural environments. It's important to understand that cultural competency is not static. It can change as people and circumstances change.

DELWP is committed to providing quality services in partnership with Traditional Owners and recognises that Aboriginal self-determination and the provision of culturally competent services are fundamental to this commitment.

DELWP is also committed to ensuring all of its people understand their responsibility in creating a safe and respectful workplace.

1.4.3 COMMONWEALTH FRAMEWORK

The Commonwealth's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework*¹¹ (Commonwealth Framework) identifies three domains of cultural capability: Knowing, Being, Doing.

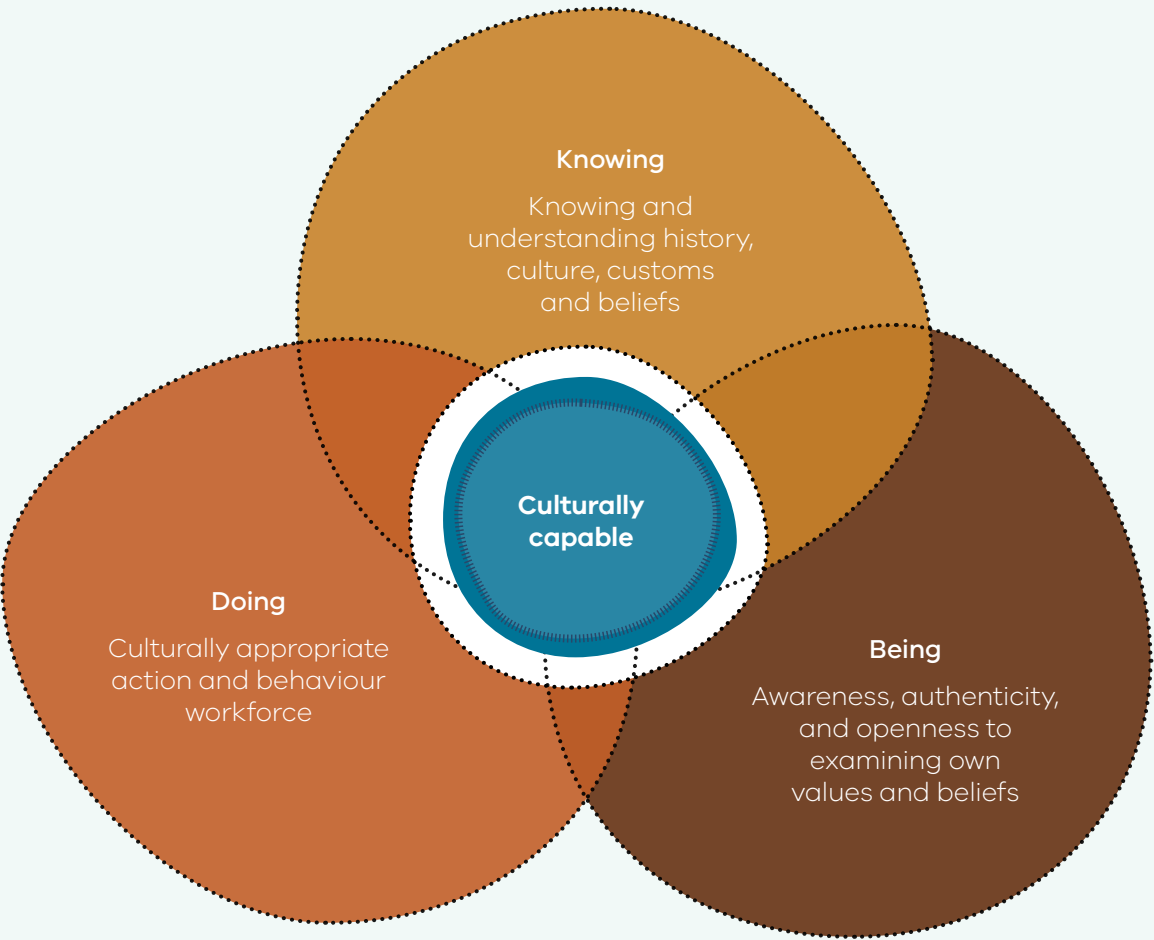
Knowing means understanding history, culture, customs, and beliefs.

Being means being aware and authentic and open to examine your own values and beliefs.

Doing means taking culturally appropriate action and behaviour.¹²

Like the VPS approach, the Commonwealth Framework finds that cultural capability requires continuous development and practice. Effective practice in all three domains contributes to an employee becoming culturally capable. The Venn diagram in Figure 3 shows how the three domains intersect.

Figure 3 | The Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Model



11 <https://legacy.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-capability-framework.pdf>

12 Snook, Scott, Nitin Nohria, and Rakesh Khurana (2012), *The Handbook for Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being*.

1.5 SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE FRAMEWORK

The *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018- 2023* (VAAF) was released to:

- Drive change across the Victorian Government by addressing inequity, delivering stronger; outcomes and transforming systems
- Enable Aboriginal self-determination; and
- Enable the Aboriginal community to hold government to account.¹³

It sets out 11 guiding principles that underpin all Victorian Government action to progress self- determination.¹⁴ It also sets out whole-of-government self-determination enablers, see Figure 4.

Figure 4 | Self-determination enablers, Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023

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

The 11 self-determination guiding principles and the self-determination enablers are embedded in this Framework. They are key to DELWP's foundational growth.

Pupangarli Marnmarnepu 'Owning Our Future' is the Aboriginal Self Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025 for DELWP.¹⁵ It sets the strategic direction, outcomes and priorities for DELWP to respond to the needs of Aboriginal self-determination. *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu*'s vision is that 'DELWP will enable self-determination by creating an environment that understands and respects the rights and dignity of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.'

It responds to the whole-of-government commitments set out in the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023* (VAAF) and covers the four domains in the *Victorian Government Self-Determination Reform Framework* – People, Systems, Outcomes and Accountability. The Strategy embeds Outcomes into the People, Systems and Accountability domains, and adds another domain that reflects the aspirations of

13 <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework-2018-2023>

14 <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework-2018-2023>

Traditional Owners and DELWP's role as a land manager – Country, see Figure 5.

The outcome for the People domain is: 'DELWP is culturally capable and safe, recognising, supporting, valuing and embracing Aboriginal decision-making.'

This outcome is key to this Framework. It is the driver behind the actions that DELWP implements to build Aboriginal cultural capability.

1.5.1 ALIGNING SELF-DETERMINATION AND CULTURAL CAPABILITY

 Prioritise Culture to make a positive impact

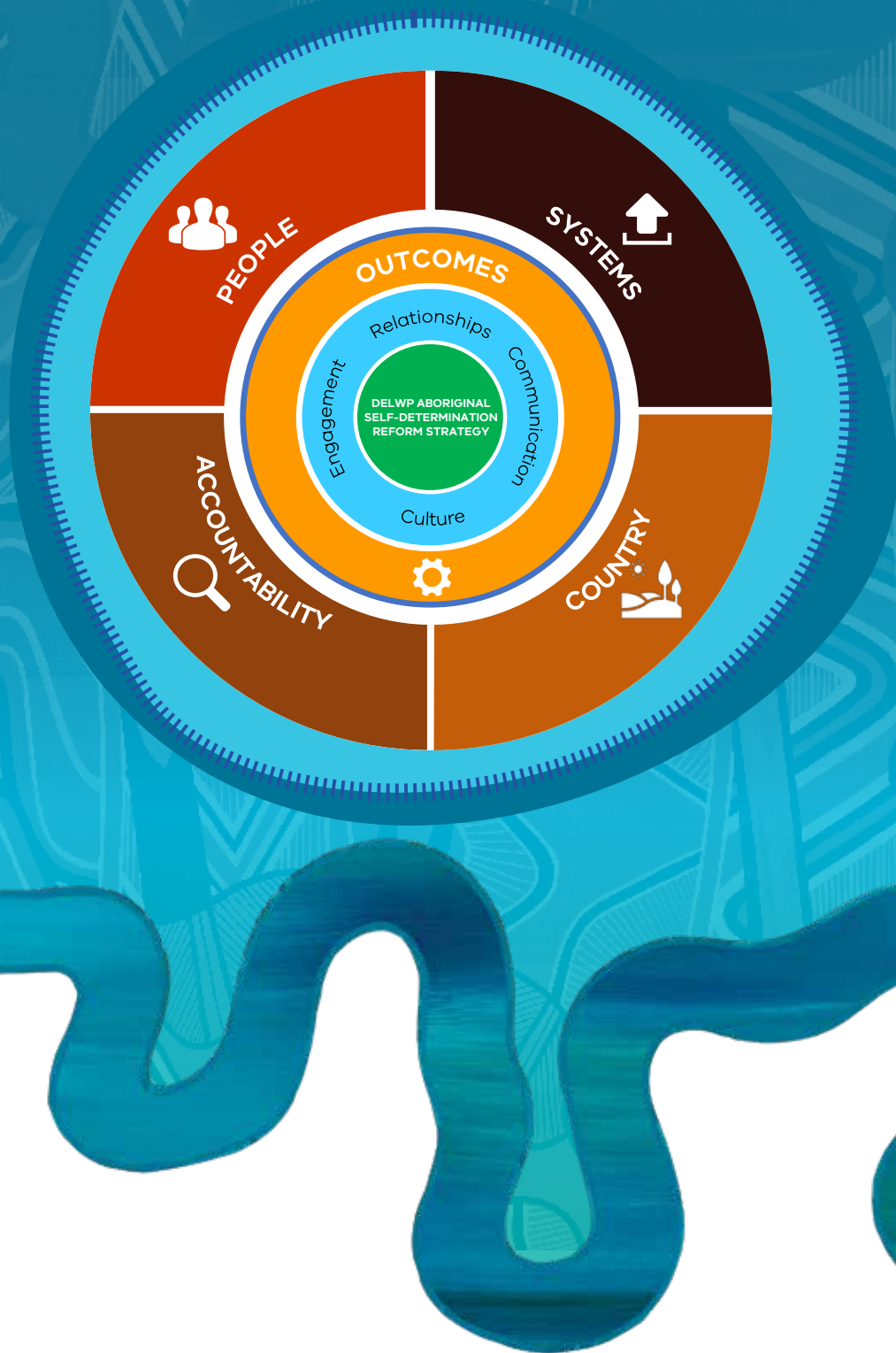
- Ensure staff are respected and acknowledged for their efforts in providing a culturally safe environment.
- Ensure recruitment and retention practices reflect the aspirations and goals in the Framework.
- Provide opportunities for workplace learning and experimentation through the provision of informal learning and knowledge sharing.
- Build high-performing teams that are accomplished in facilitating and responding to Aboriginal Victorians aspirations for self- determination.

 Address trauma and support healing

- Ensure staff understand trauma and its impact on individuals, families and community groups.
- DELWP staff can create environments in which Aboriginal Victorians feel culturally, physically and emotionally safe.
- Employ culturally competent staff who acknowledge and demonstrate respect for specific cultural backgrounds.
- Help communities regain a sense of control over their daily lives and actively share power in governance, program design, implementation and evaluation.

15 https://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0038/483887/Pupangarli-Marnmarnepu-Owning-Our-Future-Aboriginal-Self-Determination-Reform-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf

Figure 5 | DELWP Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform model



... we want a One-DELWP system which is accessible, responsive, and safe for Aboriginal Victorians and Traditional Owner Corporations, and where our cultural values, strengths and differences are upheld, understood and respected...

Traditional Owner



Address racism and promote cultural safety

- Increase the Aboriginal workforce, including in leadership roles.
- Provide opportunities to the Aboriginal workforce for career development and advancement.
- Ensure the Aboriginal workforce is supported.
- Address racism, unconscious bias and discrimination in government laws, policy, practice, systems and institutions.



Transfer power and resources to communities

- Strengthen Aboriginal leadership, representation, decision-making and resource allocation/ distribution at the local, regional and state levels, recognising the needs of Aboriginal communities.

1.5.2 KEY SELF-DETERMINATION PRINCIPLES

The following principles can be used to guide the creation of an approach to Aboriginal Cultural Capability.

Aboriginal expertise

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

DELWP will embrace the value of and be guided by Aboriginal expertise. Seeking Aboriginal expertise will ensure DELWP's work appropriately and respectfully reflects Aboriginal rights, interests and knowledge.

Equity

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

The principle of equity demands that Aboriginal cultural and human rights are the pillars on which Aboriginal self-determination is built.

Accountability

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

Traditional Owners want DELWP to transfer power and resources to communities. That is what the Department will do over time and in partnership with Traditional Owners.

1.6 VALUES

DELWP is committed to value diversity, reduce cultural miscommunication, understand the dynamics of difference, and help its staff adapt to diversity, respect and value all cultures. DELWP's values have been incorporated into the Framework to ensure Aboriginal people are equally represented in policy making, administration, service delivery and community engagement.

This Framework will support all DELWP staff, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians adopt the following values:

Teamwork

We will value the cultural knowledge and expertise that is unique to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians and embrace change and new ways of knowing, being and doing.

Ownership

We will support, trust, equip and empower Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians by nurturing our relationships and work to enable the self- determination of Aboriginal Victorians.

Wellbeing and Safety

We will create an environment that is culturally safe and responsive to Aboriginal Victorians, where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of identity or needs.

Service Excellence

Our services will align with and be informed by the needs of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians and be led by their specific priorities – and be honest, transparent and timely.



FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES

Aboriginal Victorians and Traditional Owners have strong and ongoing connection with and responsibility for land, water and community.

To understand and use this knowledge, DELWP needs a workforce that can work effectively across cultures. That means:

- Acknowledging the crucial role that DELWP has in providing leadership and commitment to cultural respect;
- Recognising that effective communication is the foundation for the delivery of accessible, responsive and culturally safe services;
- Recognising that effective, culturally appropriate service delivery requires a highly skilled and capable workforce.
- Recognising the importance of the participation and engagement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians while acknowledging that meaningful and effective partnerships are built on systems that encourage and use feedback from Aboriginal people.

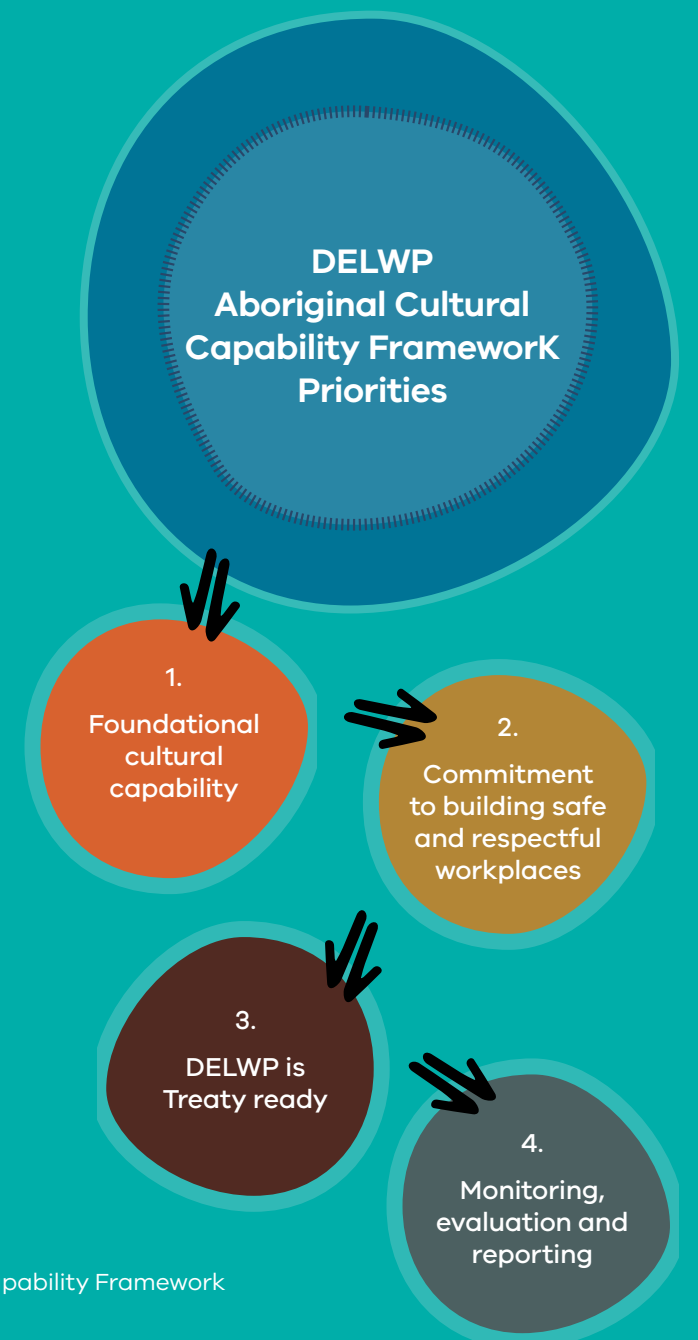


Figure 6 | Priorities of the DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework



Priorities of the DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework

1. Foundational cultural capability	Staff across DELWP have foundational knowledge, behaviour, and skills to meet DELWP commitments with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.
2. Commitment to building safe and respectful workplaces	DELWP's environments, relationships and systems are transformed to ensure Aboriginal people feel safe, valued and able to fully participate within their cultural and human rights.
3. DELWP is Treaty ready	A self-determination learning and development package is implemented across DELWP.
4. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Using monitoring, evaluation and reporting to ensure DELWP staff are building and maintaining culturally capable and safe work environments.

2.1 FOUNDATIONAL CULTURAL CAPABILITIES

Foundational capabilities are the baseline capabilities for all DELWP employees, regardless of their role, function, agency, geography or classification.

THE ESSENTIAL CULTURAL CAPABILITIES FOR DELWP EMPLOYEES ARE:	
1. Leadership and governance	DELWP staff must understand how their role can enable Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Victorians' leadership and governance aspirations.
2. On-Country cultural capabilities	On-Country work activities within DELWP have the potential to impact Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. That's why employees performing these activities need additional cultural capabilities to partner with Traditional owners and stakeholder groups.
3. Effective engagement	Employees in DELWP will achieve better outcomes if engagement, consultation and negotiation are culturally informed, facilitate self-determination and are embedded in codesigned policies and practices. Effective engagement supports high-quality interactions and communication with Aboriginal Victorians.
4. Policy development	Policy development relates to employees developing policies that may directly or indirectly impact Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. In this area, there is a need for proactive and early engagement with DELWP's Aboriginal leadership, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. In addition, codesign should be embedded in policy formulation as a principle and practice.
5. Program delivery	DELWP staff engaged in program delivery involving Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians require a base level of cultural capability – including local knowledge, insights and relationships.
6. Research	DELWP staff engaged in research projects that involve Traditional owners and Aboriginal Victorians require specific cultural capabilities – ensuring they take a culturally-informed approach to their work.
7. Monitoring and evaluation	All work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians must be monitored and evaluated. The monitoring and evaluation must be readily accessible and available to stakeholders in a usable form. This can be reported directly to Traditional Owners or via the Statewide or Regional Caring for Country Partnership Forums.

2.2 TO BUILDING SAFE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES

DELWP staff will work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal Victorians to ensure that understanding and outcomes of policies and programs are shared.

DELWP will invest in weighted recruitment practices that actively encourage the participation of Traditional Owners and DELWP’s Aboriginal staff, in line with its diversity and inclusion responsibilities.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets will be used to ensure Aboriginal staff feel culturally safe and included in deliberations of culture and Country, as well as workforce strategies.

TO BUILD SAFE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES, DELWP WILL:	
1.	Provide accessible support to Aboriginal staff that is culturally safe, welcoming and non-judgmental, family friendly and considerate of cultural responsibilities to care for Country while in the employ of DELWP.
2.	Focus on outcomes and clear measures linked to agreed outcomes and workforce related KPIs.
3.	Develop recruitment and retention strategies using an equity lens, reflecting people’s cultural requirements in workspaces and ensuring cultural safety in office, field and working from home environments.
4.	Invest in targeted recruitment practices and ensure Aboriginal staff can access appropriate professional development opportunities to achieve career goals.
5.	Develop a workplace culture and an inclusive workplace that fosters, values, respects and develops employee competence in Aboriginal Victorian culture.
6.	Clarify links with Traditional Owners in the development and delivery of orientation programs and recruitment panels.
7.	Support the Aboriginal workforce by providing opportunities for personal development, innovation and learning through coaching and mentoring programs.
8.	Recognise the skills of the Aboriginal workforce and the knowledge and relationships they hold with local communities.
9.	Increase Aboriginal workforce recruitment, training and retainment.
10.	Provide engagement and managerial support in mentoring, coaching and briefing strategies for those supervising or managing new Aboriginal recruits.

With that in mind, DELWP will focus on:

- resourcing, responding to and meeting Owner’s aspirations;
- engaging with local Aboriginal knowledge, practices, cultures and workforces; and
- at the outset, putting in place strengths-based supports to ensure that Traditional Owners can maintain cultural practices and participate in the economic and social life of their nations.

In addition, specific attention will be given to moving away from project-based leadership to systemic leadership within DELWP – enabling greater coordinated and effective engagement between DELWP and Traditional Owner corporations.

AS A RESULT, WE AIM TO SEE PROGRESS TOWARDS:

- DELWP becoming a first-choice employer of Aboriginal people through the implementation of career pathways, talent pipelines and active engagement of Traditional owners in the recruitment and retention of staff.
- DELWP staff accessing culturally appropriate support that responds to their strengths and needs.
- DELWP implementing an annual intake of Aboriginal Graduates and Interns.
- DELWP promoting the use of special-measure provisions for bulk-recruitment processes.
- A culturally strong and engaged workforce.
- Ensuring new employees complete departmental orientation and participate in local on-Country briefings relevant to where they will be working.
- Ensuring DELWP’s workforce and partner services have the capacity to facilitate Aboriginal ownership of solutions and actions.
- Scoping innovative workforce opportunities such as secondment programs, scholarships, staff awards for work with Traditional Owner Corporations and shadowing arrangements.
- Leveraging opportunities for career advancement, executive leadership roles and external learning and development opportunities to promote gender equity for Aboriginal people.
- Implementing buddy systems, cultural coaching and other workplace pilots and initiatives.
- Traditional Owner involvement in recruitment and retention of the local Aboriginal workforce.
- Trialling systemic integration of career planning, talent pipelines and communication strategies highlighting success and achievement of the Aboriginal workforce.

2.3 DELWP IS TREATY READY

Cultural capability and Treaty are connected. They are connected because cultural capability enables the self-determination of Aboriginal Victorians and self-determination is a prerequisite to Treaty.

That’s why DELWP wants to enable and empower people, communities, organisations, Traditional Owners and businesses involving Aboriginal Victorians to make decisions on issues that affect them. For that to happen, DELWP staff need to understand how their work can contribute toward self-determination – and ensure Traditional Owners are engaged in the provision of culturally safe solutions to care for Country and their future.

TO BECOME TREATY-READY, DELWP WILL:
1. Define the contribution of each position within DELWP to realise the full potential of Traditional Owner and Aboriginal staff leadership and governance arrangements.
2. Identify and support the intergenerational roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal staff to maintain and practice culture from within the workplace and in partnerships with Traditional Owners.
3. Ensure pathways, training and mentoring opportunities are in place for Aboriginal staff in DELWP to be effective executive-level employees.
4. Ensure gender equity is prominent in DELWP, and that Aboriginal staff receive equal pay, leadership and governance opportunities – and ensure that Aboriginal people can determine the public, private and gendered domains of their cultural knowledge, cultural engagement protocols and cultural identities.
5. Ensure the early and active engagement of Aboriginal Victorians in determining the qualities and characteristics of DELWP workforce strategies, partnerships and priorities in regional and state-based strategies.
6. Ensure that DELWP staff understand and appreciate the proceedings of the Yoo-rook Justice Commission, to better inform awareness of Traditional Owner priorities and aspirations.
7. Support Traditional Owners in the early engagement, co-design and submission writing process on amendments to legislation across local and state governments.
8. Ensure that Traditional Owners and DELWP collaborate on whole-of-landscape approaches to conserving biodiversity – thereby strengthening the resilience of native landscapes against climate change and helping Aboriginal Victorians thrive and prosper.

To be Treaty-ready, DELWP staff must:

- Understand the work of the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission, legislative frameworks, strategic plans and Traditional Owner plans relevant to communities in Victoria;
- Advocate for the relevance and importance of Aboriginal Victorian culture, heritage, values and protocols; and
- Acquire the knowledge and experience needed to support the outcomes that Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians want.

AS A RESULT, WE AIM TO SEE PROGRESS TOWARDS:

- Aboriginal Victorians connecting to their community, Country and culture.
- The identification of clear roles and responsibilities for DELWP staff on the leadership and governance arrangements of Aboriginal Victorians.
- A workforce that is culturally engaged and competent, understanding the roles and contributions of multiple generations of Traditional Owner groups to care for Country.
- Changes in practices and resource allocation, with a focus on early engagement of Traditional Owners (including the co-design of workforce development strategies, education, training and opportunity creation).
- Aboriginal staff being in equitable senior executive roles in central and regional offices, and holding leadership positions on key strategies and initiatives.
- DELWP narratives about Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians are framed in strengths-based language and reflected in service-delivery systems that are premised on skills and capacities rather than deficit and need.



2.4 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

DELWP will work with Aboriginal Victorians and Traditional Owners to measure the usefulness of the cultural capabilities.

Progress will be measured against the vision and aims outlined in DELWP strategies, as well as the insights and expectations of executives, advisors and stakeholders.

DELWP is committed to ensuring evidence informs best practice and is specific to the requirements of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians within each region.

The Framework aims to build strong relationships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians that are all about to enabling and empowering Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to live the lives they want in a healthy, revitalised Country.

In *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu*, the outcome for the People Domain is

“DELWP is culturally capable and safe; recognising, supporting, valuing and embracing Aboriginal decision-making”.

AS SUCH, INDICATORS AND MEASURES OF OUR SUCCESS WILL INCLUDE:
Traditional Owner and Aboriginal community satisfaction in DELWP staff cultural capability.
An increase in the number of Aboriginal staff who feel culturally safe at work.
An increase in workforce-related systems and processes that embed the principles from the Framework.
DELWP Aboriginal staff satisfaction at career development opportunities.
An increase in workplace arrangements between DELWP and Traditional Owner Corporations.
Impact of developing and delivering strategies and interventions that work (such as cultural awareness and cultural safety training, learning and development activities, evaluation of Traditional Owner engagement).
An increase in DELWP learning and development programs and guidance refencing self-determination as a human right.
An increase in learning and development programs and guidance referencing the cultural rights of Traditional Owners and making positive references to Aboriginal culture in Victoria.
Knowledge translation, including positive media stories and referenced in policy and program development.
A commitment to sharing the journey with others in the DELWP network through key messages, social media campaigns, updates and positive news stories.

This Framework will be reviewed annually to ensure our work reflects what is going well and what can be improved in real time.





APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

DELWP will support the application of this Framework by providing good-practice advice, strategies and resources to staff.

The advice, strategies and resources will give DELWP staff the cultural capacity to engage and partner with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians, and stakeholders. The success of the Framework will be found in the outcomes of those partnerships – such as case studies and workforce initiatives, and the application of processes that support the employment of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. The evaluation of these strategies will ensure continuous quality improvement.

3.1 DELWP LEADERSHIP

DELWP Executives, managers and the staff in the People and Culture Division can use the Framework to develop their cultural capabilities as well as champion initiatives that build the cultural capability of all employees.

Mechanisms that can develop cultural capability across the workforce include DELWP’s corporate plan and strategic documents, including *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu*, Capability Frameworks, Traditional Owner Self-Determination Plans and on-Country activities. More targeted policy documents may consist of workplace Diversity and Inclusion Plans, Aboriginal Employment Strategies, human resource strategies, learning and development plans, and governance and accountability strategies.

Cultural capability indicators can inform proficiency descriptors, the expected behaviours in employment contracts and in the development of panels (inviting Traditional Owners onto staff recruitment panels, for example).

3.2 DELWP STAFF, TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS

Whenever services or programs are delivered to Aboriginal communities, the Framework can guide the assessment of the cultural capability of the involved DELWP staff.

Where DELWP is commissioning work with Aboriginal communities, the Department’s cultural capabilities will be incorporated into contracts and tender proposals – becoming an integral part of the requirements of the commissioning process.

Where Traditional Owners are developing and implementing self-determination plans, the Framework can advise DELWP staff on how to support representation, learning and development strategies for Traditional Owners in ways that realise self-determination aspirations.

3.3 STRATEGIES FOR HR PRACTITIONERS AND MANAGERS

The Framework helps Human Resources practitioners and managers identify the cultural knowledge, skills, and personal attributes needed to deliver the Department’s outcomes.

The Framework can be used to:

Recruit, assess and develop cultural capability
– ensuring Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians have a say in the content of job descriptions and recruitment and retention practices, orientation programs and cultural mentoring strategies.

Assess and develop cultural capability
– identifying, analysing and benchmarking workforce capability strengths and gaps at an individual or whole-of- department or team level, and codesigning targeted learning and development initiatives.

Improve workforce planning
– identifying workforce requirements for current and future department functions where Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians are affected.

Support mentoring and coaching
– transferring cultural understanding and skills by engaging in cultural mentoring and coaching and performance- management frameworks.

Support procurement and intellectual property
– building an understanding of the cultural implications of procurement policies and intellectual property laws and policies, including the Victorian Social Procurement Framework, Tharamba Bugheen: Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-2021, and those relevant to Aboriginal cultural heritage management and Traditional Owner self-determination.

3.4 FOUR STAGES OF LEARNING

The following model illustrates the objectives that need to be progressed to close DELWP’s culturally- competency gap and cultural-skills gap. The uptake of proficiencies and knowledge will be enhanced by the creation of forums, discussion groups, online learning, on-Country orientations and mentoring and coaching opportunities for DELWP staff.

Wherever possible, Aboriginal Victorian businesses and Traditional owner groups can be engaged to facilitate this mixed-method approach to learning and capacity development.

Figure 7 | The Conscious Competence Learning Model, Noel Burch (1970s)

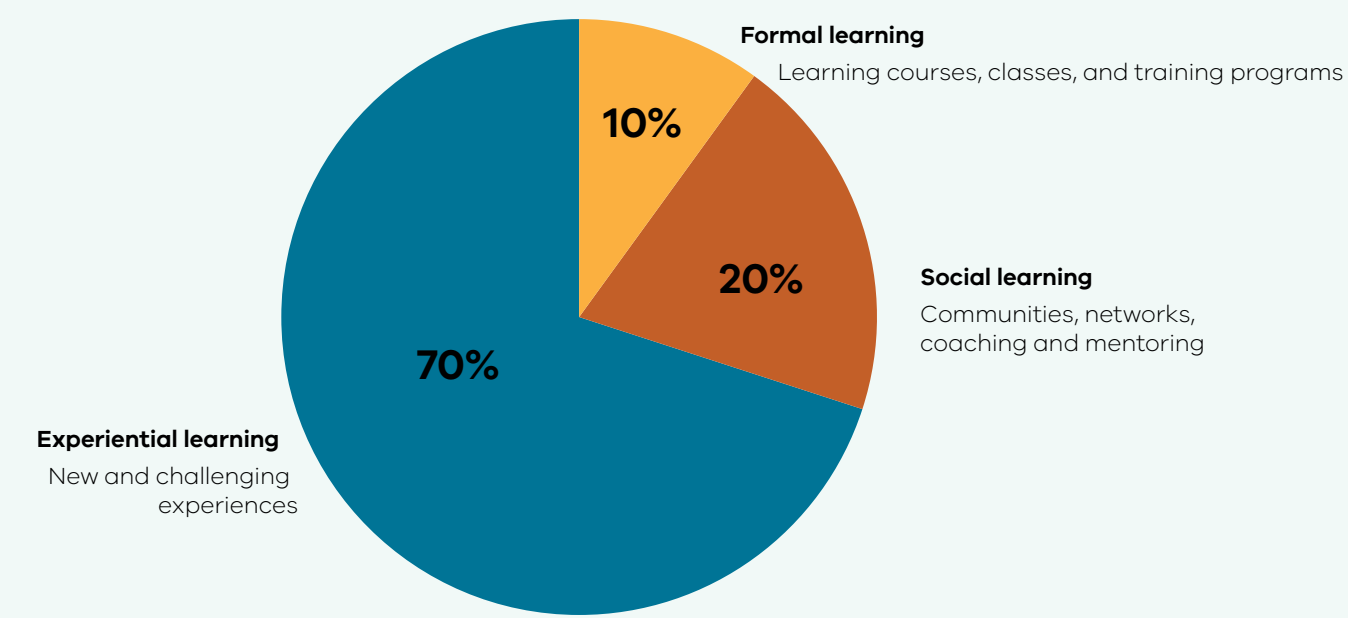


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Wherever possible, Aboriginal Victorian businesses and Traditional owner groups can be engaged to facilitate this mixed-method approach to learning and capacity development.

Figure 9: The four levels of proficiency from the VPS Capability Framework are combined with the Conscious Competence Learning Model to determine what level of cultural competency should be expected of all DELWP employees, regardless of their role, function, agency, geography or classification.

Figure 8 | 70:20:10 Model for Learning and Development
Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo, and Robert A. Eichinger (1980s)



... success of the Framework will be found in the outcomes of our partnerships.

Figure 9 | The four levels of proficiency from the VPS Capability Framework

PROFICIENCY LEVEL	STAGE OF LEARNING	CULTURAL CAPABILITY LEVEL	EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS AT THIS LEVEL
Foundational	Unconscious incompetence – Conscious incompetence	Cultural incapacity – Cultural blindness	Understand DELWP's commitments with Aboriginal people and begin to competently practice.
Applied	Conscious competence	Cultural pre-competence – Cultural competence	Can interpret and apply self-determination architecture to empower own responsibilities.
Accomplished	Conscious competence	Cultural competence	Uses self-determination architecture more regularly and broadly within own work and in team involvement.
Leading	Unconscious competence	Cultural proficiency	Advocates, leads and empowers others from Foundational level and onwards.

