NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS CONFERENCE 2022

Jointly convened by

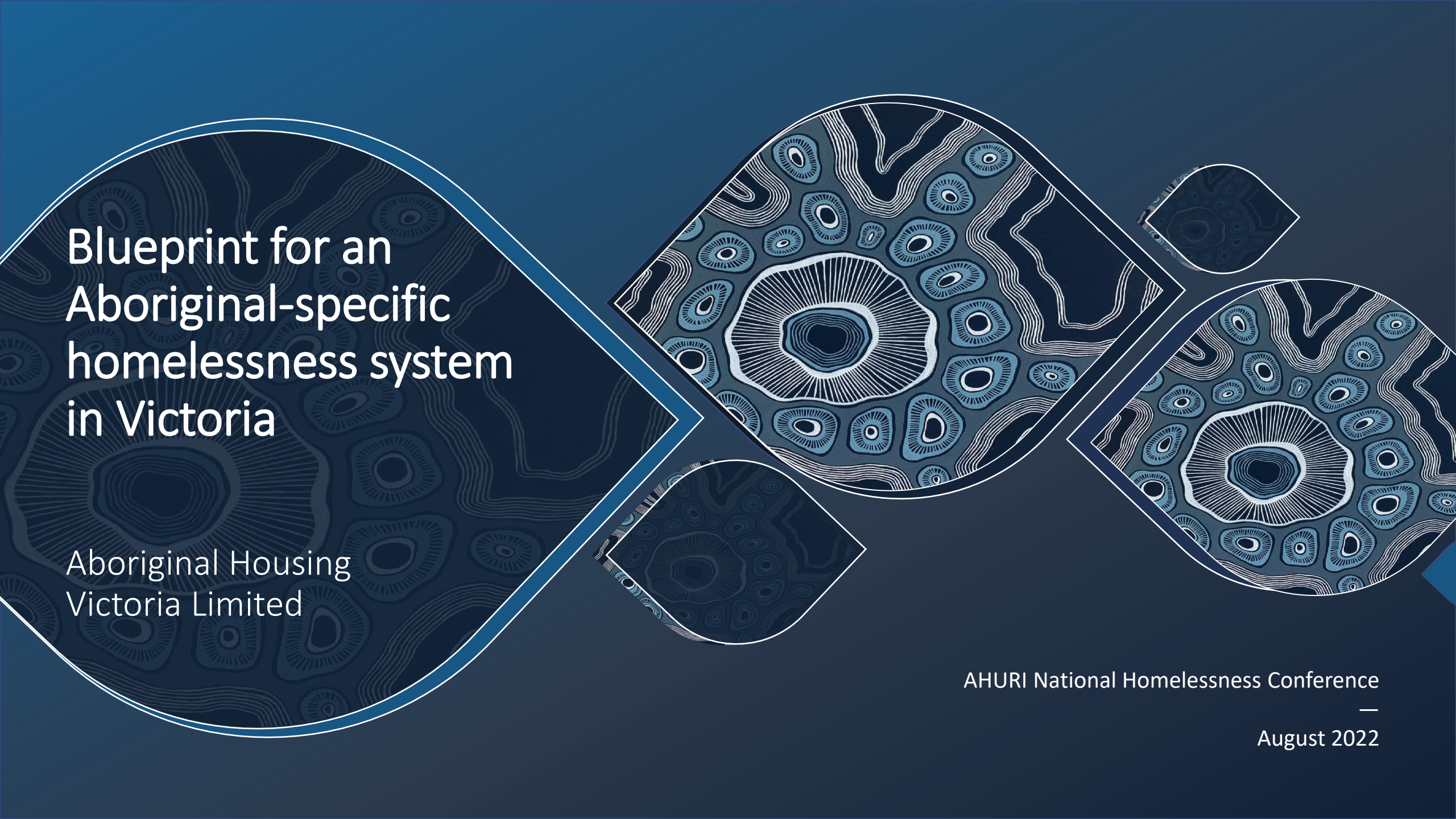AHURi

Homelessness Australia

CONCURRENT SESSION

C12 Indigenous homelessness – state and territory approaches

Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system in Victoria
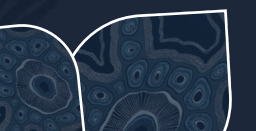
Aboriginal Housing Victoria Limited

AHURI National Homelessness Conference

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August 2022

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia.

We pay our respects to those who have cared for our land and water for 70,000+ years and continue to care for the places on which we work, live and raise our families.

Agenda

What we will talk about today:

- The Victorian Aboriginal community has called for a change in the approach to housing and homelessness.

- An important reform is underway to achieve this, including the design of an Aboriginal specific homelessness system.

## We will cover the following:

🕐 **Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort**

🕐 **The need for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system**

🕐 **Rebuilding the system from the ground up**

🕐 **Moving towards implementation**

🕐 **Questions and answers**

Aboriginal housing and homelessness in Victoria

Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort or the The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework sets out a clear vision: that every Aboriginal person has a home.

- Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort was **developed by community for community**, including a state-wide summit with over 150 participants, a community symposium and a range of other consultations.

- It outlines a **fresh approach to achieving quality housing outcomes in a generation**, enabling a shift beyond crisis management of Aboriginal housing, towards achieving housing equity and addressing the drivers of housing outcomes.

- The word we are discussing today addresses one of the five key focuses of the VAHHF: to **co-design an Aboriginal focused homeless system from the ground up, ensuring accessibility, providing pathways through homelessness and improving long term outcomes.**
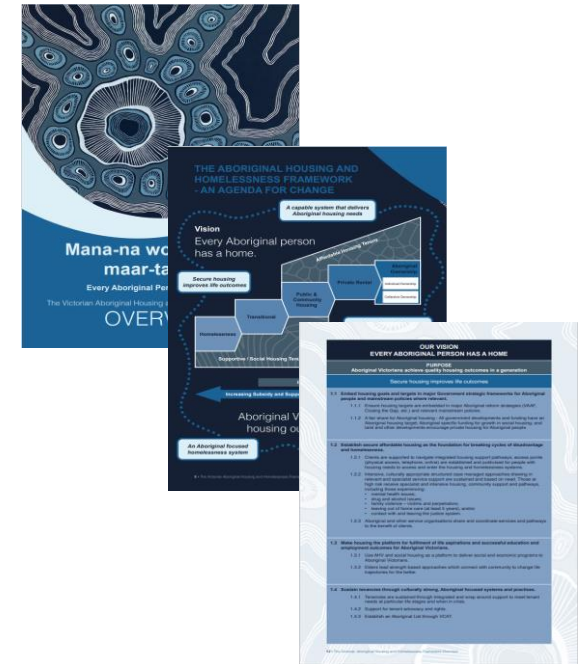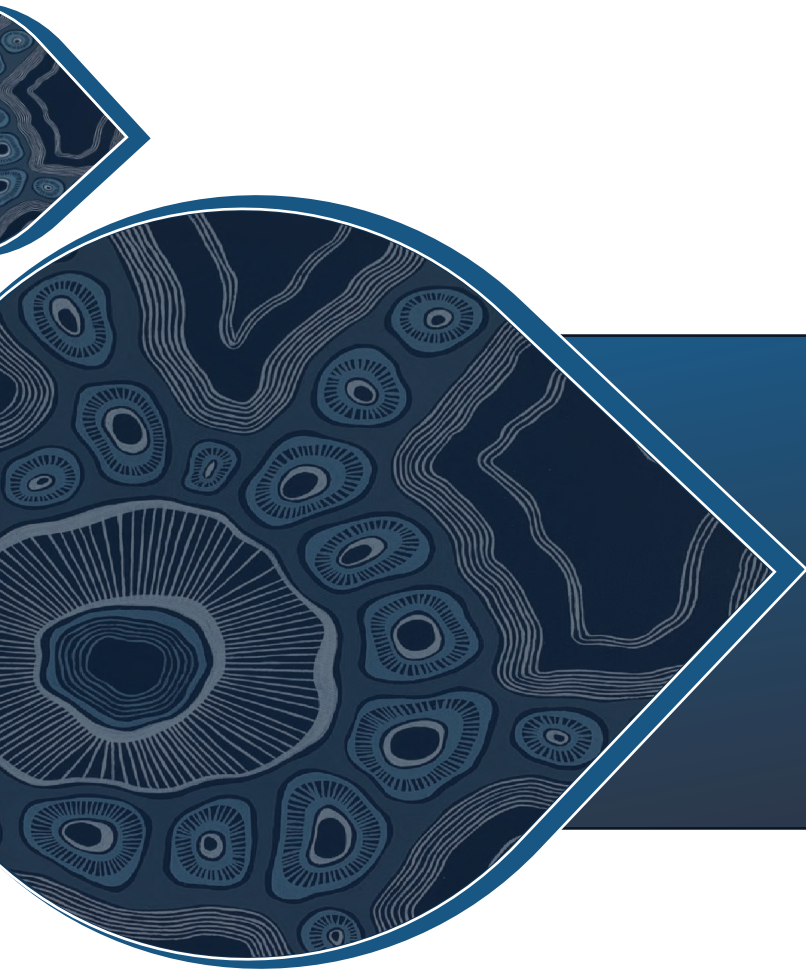
The need for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system

Aboriginal Homelessness in Victoria – key stats

Housing is a key social determinant of health, wellbeing and safety. Insecure housing and homelessness are strongly associated with poor health, wellbeing and safety outcomes, with Aboriginal people among the most likely to be homeless or living in poor housing [1]

Victoria has the
highest & fastest rising rates
of Aboriginal people accessing homeless services in Australia [2]

Aboriginal Victorians are presenting to homeless services following eviction at higher rates than other Victorians [3]

29%
of Aboriginal Victorians requiring transitional housing are directly provided it
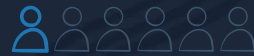
in 2018-20 more than
one in six
Aboriginal people had reason to seek specialist homeless assistance

10x
the rate of other Victorians

more than
one in five
Aboriginal Victorians are left without a basic safety net of emergency housing

22%
of Aboriginal Victorians requiring short term / emergency housing do not receive it [3]

Fewer than 6% of Aboriginal Victorians assessed as requiring long-term accommodation directly received it and **fewer than one third** either received or were referred to such housing
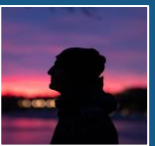
1. *Korin Korin Balit-Djak, Aboriginal health, well-being and safety strategic plan 2017-2027*
2. *AIHW, 2019*
3. *Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, Annual Report Scorecard 2021*

People accessing the system and the workers who help them

While there is no particular group in more need than others, we know that there are some groups who may require special support in the homelessness system.

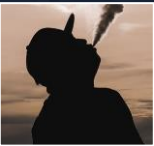| Individuals experiencing homelessness			Workers supporting individuals experiencing homelessness	
Jarrah: exiting care at 17	**Kira-Lee: pregnant with a violent partner**	**Uncle Terry: spiritually homeless**	**Archie: finding crisis housing**	**Mahlee: providing limited support**

Jarrah
Jarrah recently left his group home at 17 having spent most of his life in and out of care.

He sometimes stays with one of his brothers but he has found a group of friends on the street who have become family. Jarrah often has contact with the police for petty crimes…

Kira-Lee
Kirra-Lee is in her late teens, pregnant with her first child. She has been living with her violent partner and his family and has not been speaking with her family.

She has no ID, money or access to a phone. Her partner has been monitoring her all the time…

Uncle Terry
Uncle Terry is 62 and was placed in a boys' home aged 4. where he was abused. When he left, became involved in petty crime and has been in and out of prison throughout his adult life

Uncle Terry feels he has no connection to country or family, and a spiritual homelessness…

Archie
Jack is a 32 year old Aboriginal man who is homeless after leaving prison.

Archie assesses him and spends a hour on the phone to a local homelessness shelter only to discover there is no vacancy. He spends another two hours…

Mahlee
Mahlee assesses Kelly, a 27 year old Aboriginal woman with three children who has been evicted from her private rental property. Eventually Mahlee finds transitional housing for the family and identifies that Kelly needs help to maintain her tenancy…

Key challenges

Three in four Aboriginal Victorians presenting to specialist homelessness services over the past year had been in the system before

Housing stock

Demand outstrips supply and housing stock is not geographically aligned to demand

Cultural safety

Cultural safety needs to be embedded across the homelessness system and all organisations

System Fragmentation

Services are not coordinated and collaborative, frequently functioning in silos

Intensive, culturally appropriate case management

People need to be appropriately supported through the system(s) which are difficult to navigate

Prevention and targeting those at high risk

The system is reactive and focusses on resolving the immediate crisis

Self-Determination

The system(s) does not always support self-determination to give people choice and options

Capacity building

There is a need for appropriate capacity and capability across the system

Accessing homelessness systems

The onus is on clients knowing where the 'front door' is and they are faced with barriers when entering the system

Information and data systems

A lack of common systems makes it difficult to follow clients. Disparate systems also mean clients have to repeat information

Weak pathways out of homelessness

Re-presentation back into the system is common. Exiting the system is uncommon

Further information regarding these issues can be found in the Issues Report.
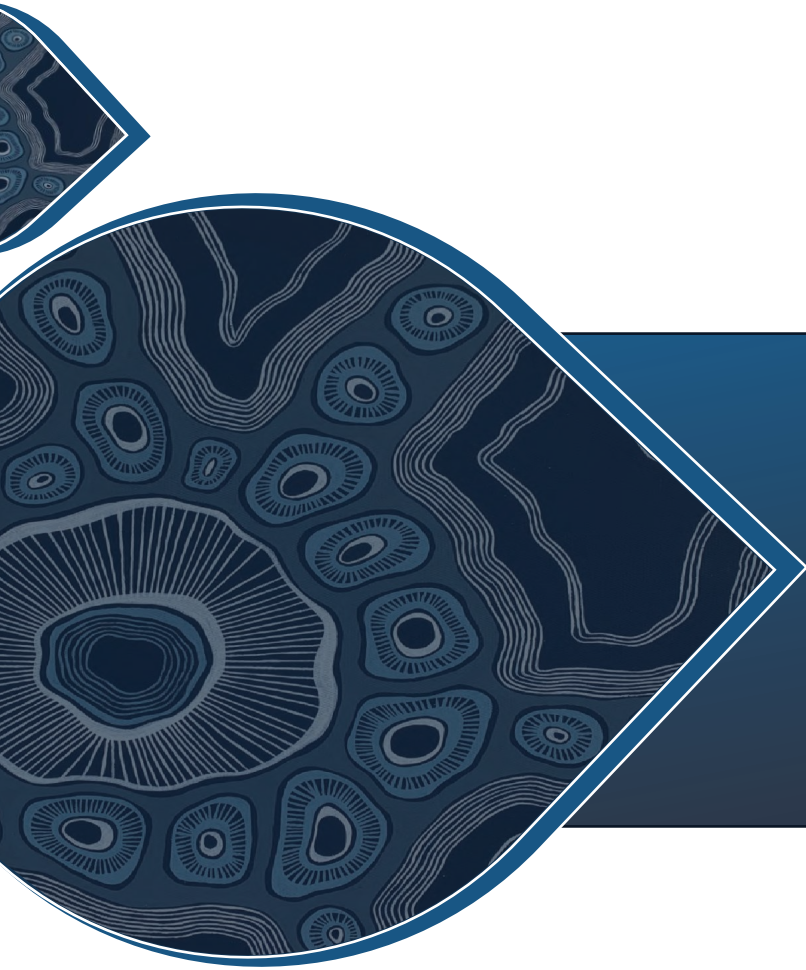
Rebuilding the system from the ground up

Framework for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system

Attempting to solve each of the current challenges separately will not move the dial on the over-representation of Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness. It requires a fresh approach, starting from a holistic or systems perspective.

Vision*

Every Aboriginal person has a home

Principles*

| Aboriginal self-determination | Rights based | Outcome driven | Transparency and accountability | Cultural safety and access | Strengths based and people centered | Capacity | Economic opportunity and innovation | Culturally safe tenancy management |

System

Service arrangements

The flow of services supporting clients from entry to exit

System management

The enablers which underpin and support management of the system

Service arrangements

The diagram below shows the flow of services from entry to exit for the Aboriginal-specific homelessness system. It is important to note that there will be integration between access and supports, which are linked with properties and that the Aboriginal-specific services will be delivered by ACCOs in this system.

The goal

Screening

Regardless of where an individual seeks support they are referred to a culturally safe entry point.

For example: ACCOs, schools, hotline, doctors, police

Open entry points

Aboriginal-specific 'front door' into the system, providing culturally safe services and addressing immediate housing needs.

The mainstream system mirrors the Aboriginal-specific approach.

Housing pathways*

Family violence shelter
Immediate accommodation for people experiencing violence

Immediate/emergency accommodation
Short term to address immediate housing needs (up to 120 days)

Transitional housing
Temporary medium term housing (up to 24 months)

Longer term housing
Longer term social and affordable housing

Exit

For individuals in short to medium housing, exit into longer-term social and affordable housing, private rental or home ownership with support

Supports
Low to high intensity support (e.g. case management) and linkages into other service systems.

Other service systems
Such as out of home care, domestic violence services, prison, mental health and so on.

* Note that pathways are not sequential or in a stepped approach; rather this is a menu of options potentially available / needed.

System management

The Aboriginal-specific homelessness system will be underpinned by key enablers or mechanisms. This covers the management of supports, providers and the workforce, as well as the management of housing stock. These cross-cutting enablers will complement and extend the existing systems.

Cultural Safety Framework

Cultural Safety Framework which ensures that all individuals have a culturally safe experience in the homelessness system, regardless of where they seek support

Cross sector collaboration

The way in which organisations across the homelessness system work together regionally and at a state level

Capacity building, resources and tools

Ensuring the mainstream is culturally safe, developing and retaining a skilled workforce and building on the footprint and capacity of the ACCOs within the homeless system and to own and manage increased levels of housing stock in the future

Stewardship, funding and monitoring

Setting the priorities of the system, funding, contracting and monitoring and evaluating outcomes

Data and information systems

Effective data and CRM system that supports a single view of the client to prevent re-telling of their story and informs effective system-wide decision making

What the future could look like for clients and the workforce

The vision for the future is an integrated housing and support system for Aboriginal Victorians experiencing or at risk of homelessness that is person-centred, culturally-safe and underpinned by self-determination.

What will be different for a client in an Aboriginal-specific system

- I am welcomed into a culturally safe space
- I connect with community and culture
- I feel people genuinely care about what happens to me
- I feel like an equal partner deciding my future and I trust the person helping me
- I only have to tell my story once
- I have someone to help me navigate the systems I need to deal with such as justice, health, OOHC
- I have access to appropriate housing in a location that works for me and my family…
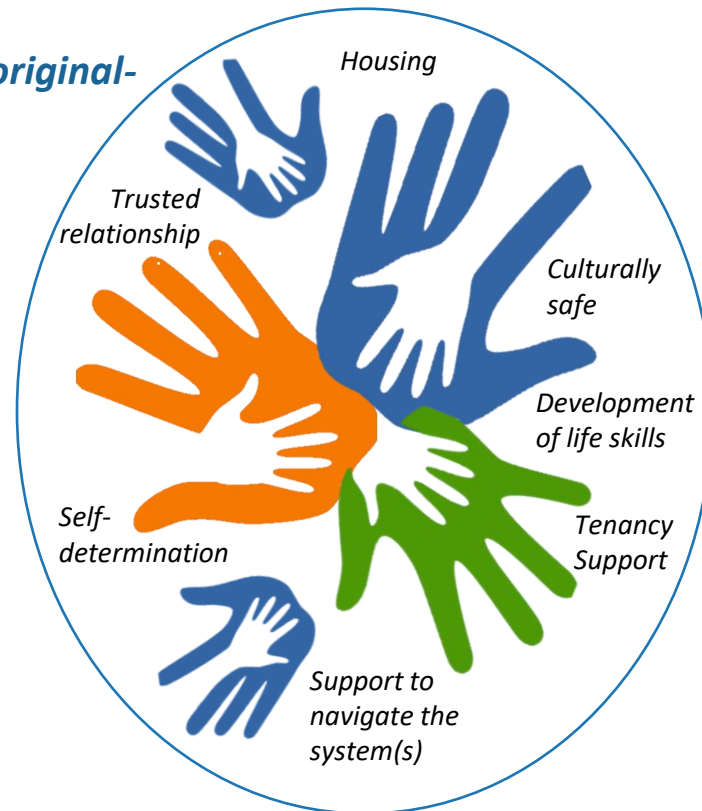
What will be different for a worker in an Aboriginal-specific system

- I can easily access information about my client
- I know how to access to a range of accommodation options
- I have an increasing number of Aboriginal owned and managed properties to place people in
- I am increasingly confident that mainstream services can provide culturally safe services
- I know who and how to access mainstream services efficiently and effectively
- I am funded to provide the level of support my client needs
- I am able to intervene early before a crisis develops…

Housing
Culturally safe
Development of life skills
Tenancy Support
Support to navigate the system(s)
Self-determination
Trusted relationship
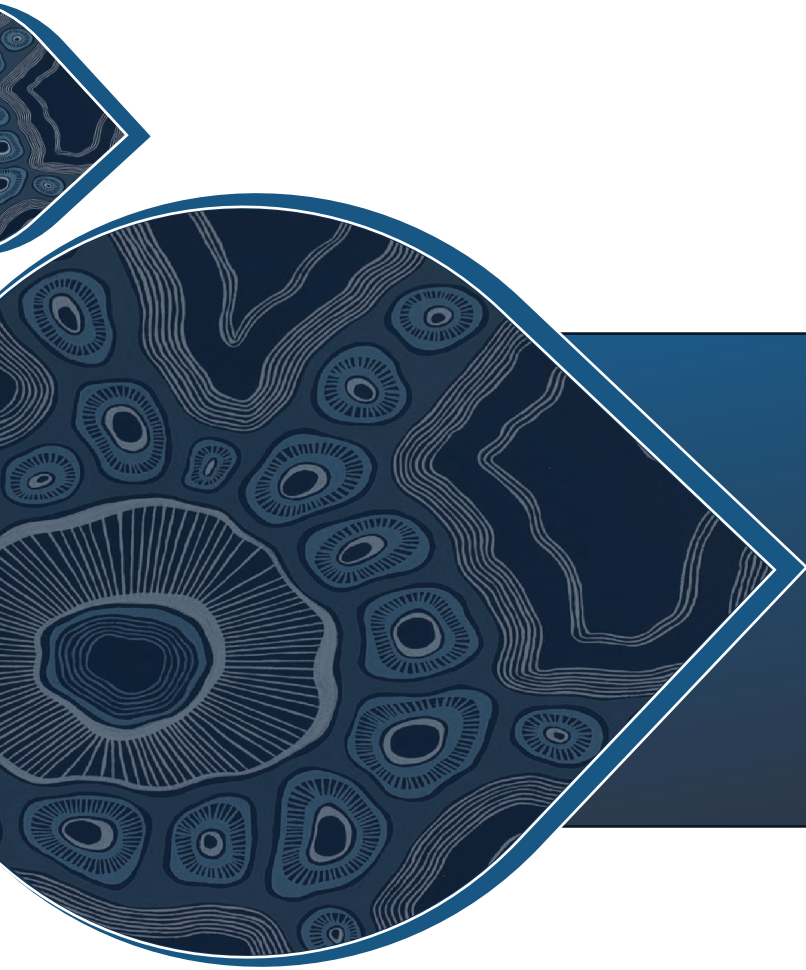
Moving towards implementation

Implementing the recommended way forward

The introduction of an Aboriginal-specific system would not be able to happen all at one. There are key dependencies with the availability of housing stock, the training of a culturally safe workforce and so on, which all take time to develop.

A phased approach may be most practical and successful in the long run, with a 'near star' guiding our immediate steps and a 'north star' setting the longer term ambition. A continued focus on learning could then help us adapt and improve along the journey.

Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3

Stage 1 will involve planning and business case development, design work and implementing the system in two regions. Other key activities will be undertaken concurrently including redesigning housing options.

Stage 2 will involve reviewing the learnings from stage 1, further detailed implementation planning, rolling out key system elements more broadly and enhancing the capacity of the sector.

Stage 3 will involve ongoing evaluation and improvement of key system elements, as well as phasing out any at scale head leasing of properties as other stable housing options will be available.

What happens next?

Thank you for your time today. The next steps include:
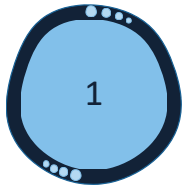
1 **Investment to date for one entry point**
The Victorian Government has committed investment into one new Aboriginal-specific entry point.
This provides a first step towards implementing the change called for my community and the sector.
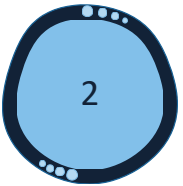
2 **Remaining investment needed for success**
While the initial investment provided a starting point, the remaining investment
into system management is critical to achieve successful change.
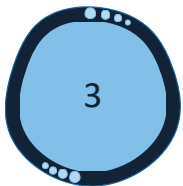
3 **More focus across governments is needed**
Aboriginal housing and homelessness remains an area that needs greater attention
and focus across all levels of government. The recent commitments from Australian
Government is welcomed and must be built on and translated into action.
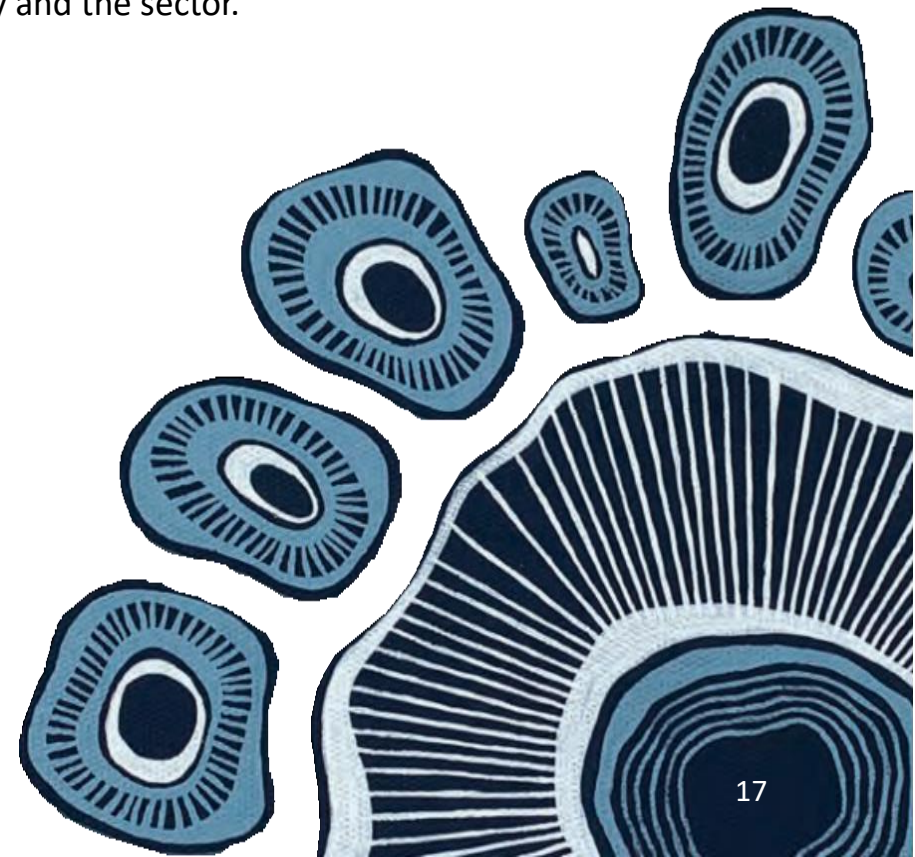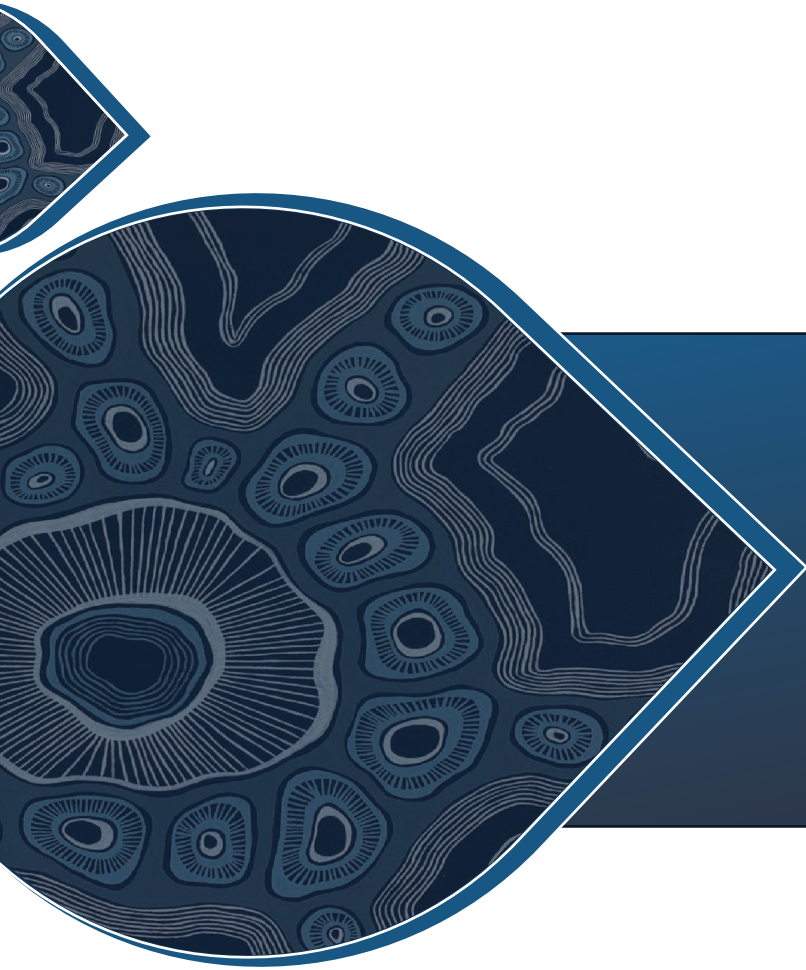
Questions and answers
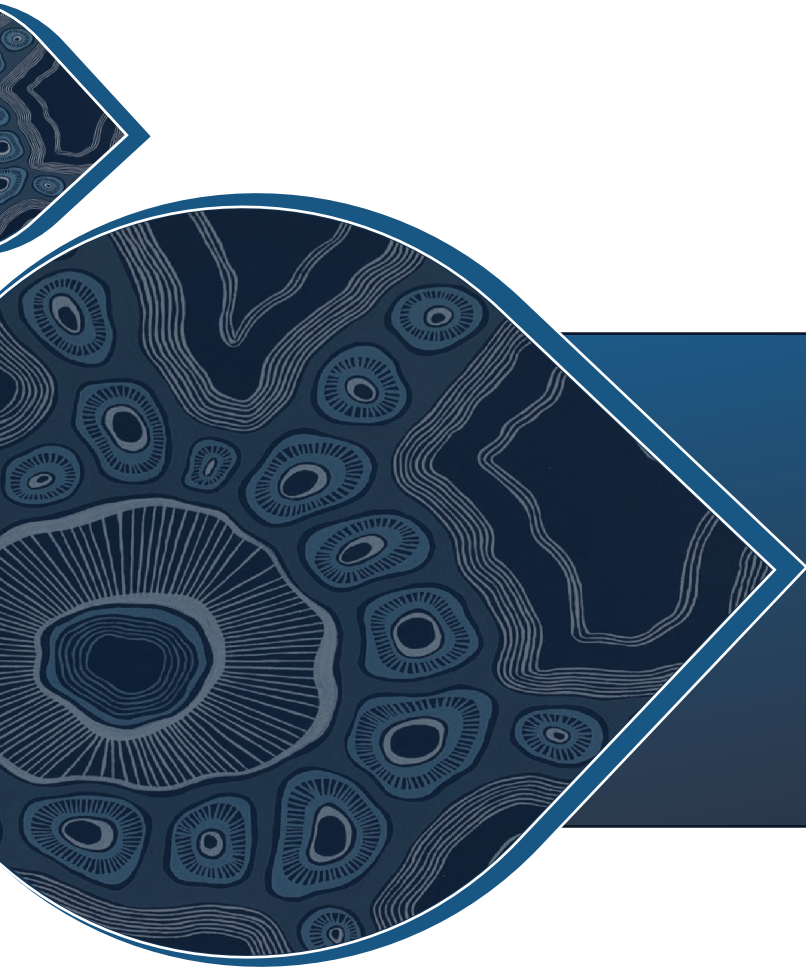
Appendix: Other potential slides

Open entry points

An Aboriginal-specific ACCO entry point has been identified as an important starting point for introducing the broader system.

These entry points should enhance the service offering of existing ACCOs, supported by a 'no wrong door' approach to screening rather than a 'single point' or funnel for entry. The open entry points should include core functions for access such as:

- Relationship building and trust establishment;

- Understanding needs and aspirations, covering Intake, Assessment and Planning (IAP); and

- Rapid access to housing, including short term or interim responses (IR) and/or brokerage via the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF).

Within ACCOs, these access functions are integrated with support packages to ensure they can support their community and clients in need. There are a range of supporting functions, from low to high intensity which include:

- Outreach to identify people at risk or experiencing homelessness;

- Targeted and tailored case management; and

- Ongoing capacity and life skills development.

It is important to note that the establishment of an entry point will help to provide further clarity around demand of Aboriginal people seeking assistance, the type and quantum of support services that are needed to address their needs and the different culturally safe housing options.

What is within and outside of the entry point?

Relationship building and trust establishment

Warm referrals to other services

Open entry point

Understanding needs and aspirations

Ongoing capacity and life skill development

Rapid access to housing and interim support

Targeted and tailored case planning

Access to ACCO housing: FV shelters/ immediate/ interim/long term options

In-reach from mainstream partners

Other services (aod, mental health, OOHC, prison, health and so on)

ACCOs, mainstream specialist homelessness services

Other housing (mainstream or other ACCOs): FV shelters/ immediate/ interim

KEY

Within the entry point

Outside the entry point

20

Open entry points

The below diagram provides an outline of the proposed flow for the service model through an Aboriginal-specific entry point, as well as additional housing and support services that are required for Aboriginal clients in need. As depicted below, it is important to note that for an Aboriginal-specific system, the access functions should be integrated with support packages and linked with appropriate housing options, ensuring that ACCOs can effectively support their community and clients in need.

Relationship and trust building	Assessment and planning	Housing pathway and ongoing support*	Exit

Culturally safe and trauma informed access

Initial engagement with skilled workers based on establishing trust, relationships and empathy

Understanding needs and aspirations

Understanding individual needs, personalised goal setting (documented in an IAP) and warm referral

→ **Different housing options, including:**
- Immediate/ emergency accommodation: *Individuals in immediate need are provided rapid access to crisis or transitional accommodation, including brokerage through the HEF*
- Transitional housing: *For medium or longer term needs (up to 24 months)*
- Private rental: *Rented properties from private property managers for longer term needs*
- Social housing: *Government and ACCO owned subsidised housing for long term needs*
- Longer term housing: *Longer term social and affordable housing*

Exit

For individuals in short to medium housing, exit into longer term social housing, private rental or home ownership with ongoing support

→ **Targeted and tailored support**
- Short term or interim response (IR) for those in immediate need or crisis
- Low to high intensity culturally safe and trauma informed case management
- Social wellbeing and living skills for individuals, linking with employment and education
- Supportive check ins and support to help individuals maintain tenancies and prevent re-entry into homelessness
- Linkage into other service systems based on need

Ongoing support evolves as needs change

→ **Warm referrals to other services**

Such as specialist homelessness services, out of home care, family violence services, prison, mental health, health, alcohol and other drug services, income support

Outreach

To identify people at risk of homelessness (e.g. exiting OOHC, in insecure tenancies), prevent escalation to homelessness and to deliver supports

* Note this is not a stepped approach where people transition from each housing type, but a menu of different housing options that may be needed.

Stewardship, funding and monitoring

A devolved model of stewardship and commissioning will support the management and development of the system over time. A lead agency will work in partnership with local Aboriginal-led forums, supporting a place-based, devolved model which supports Aboriginal control and self-determination.

A devolved model of commissioning ensures system management is informed by local voices and is guided by the needs and aspirations of community. This dynamic system management approach will be informed by demand, supply, performance, changes in need and external factors such as COVID-19. This model supports self-determination by enabling government and community to work together in a relationship-based and transformational way to address individual needs holistically.

Importantly, this model will allow the system to move away from a reactive crisis driven approach to an approach focused on the full continuum of care. A devolved approach will also help to ensure that holistic Aboriginal-specific service delivery can be provided to A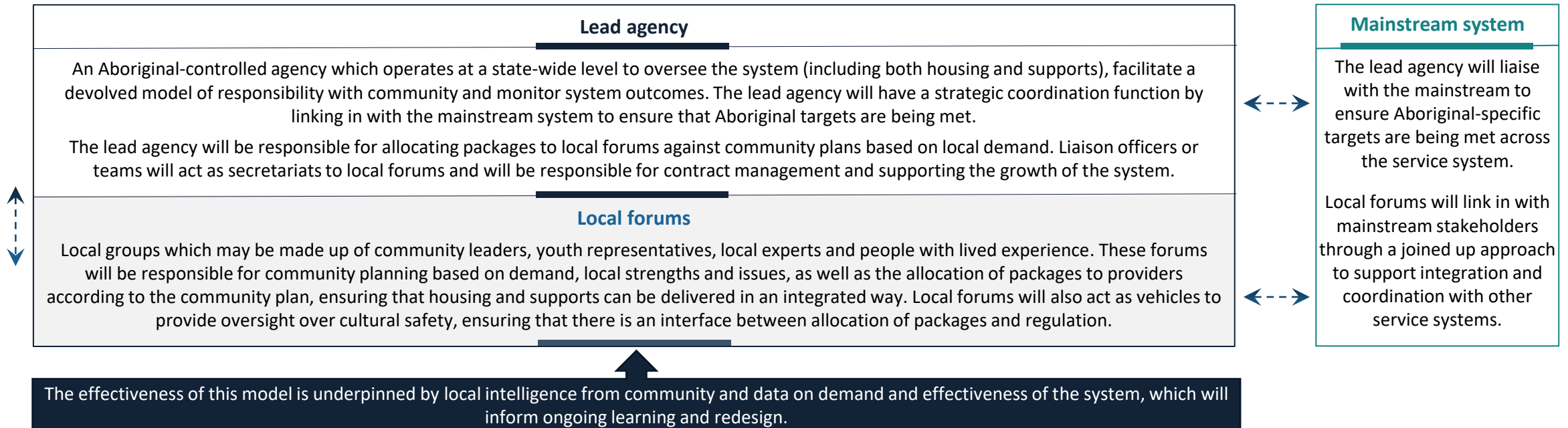boriginal Victorians experiencing homelessness, including through the integration of housing and supports. A proposed model of devolving decision making and commissioning is outlined below.

Lead agency	Mainstream system
An Aboriginal-controlled agency which operates at a state-wide level to oversee the system (including both housing and supports), facilitate a devolved model of responsibility with community and monitor system outcomes. The lead agency will have a strategic coordination function by linking in with the mainstream system to ensure that Aboriginal targets are being met. The lead agency will be responsible for allocating packages to local forums against community plans based on local demand. Liaison officers or teams will act as secretariats to local forums and will be responsible for contract management and supporting the growth of the system.	The lead agency will liaise with the mainstream to ensure Aboriginal-specific targets are being met across the service system. Local forums will link in with mainstream stakeholders through a joined up approach to support integration and coordination with other service systems.
Local forums Local groups which may be made up of community leaders, youth representatives, local experts and people with lived experience. These forums will be responsible for community planning based on demand, local strengths and issues, as well as the allocation of packages to providers according to the community plan, ensuring that housing and supports can be delivered in an integrated way. Local forums will also act as vehicles to provide oversight over cultural safety, ensuring that there is an interface between allocation of packages and regulation.	

The effectiveness of this model is underpinned by local intelligence from community and data on demand and effectiveness of the system, which will inform ongoing learning and redesign.

Stewardship, funding and monitoring

The devolved model is expected to operate through a four stage commissioning cycle, as outlined in the diagram below. It is important this approach is consistent with broader reforms across the mainstream homelessness sector (e.g. Homelessness to a Home), while also devolving key elements of system management to support Aboriginal-control and self-determination.

Planning & Policy stage

Lead agency
- Demand and supply analysis, with integrated view of housing and supports
- Co-design outcome and policy priorities, and agree on funding envelope / packages by region

Local forums
- Develop regional plan to guide local investment
- Align with local stakeholders across related sectors

System & Service Design stage

Lead agency
- Co-design system, service and housing models and cohort/region specific services
- Co-design funding model, ensuring integration of access, support packages and housing
- Assess system-wide capacity

Local forums
- Identify existing and planned services are the right ones, assess regional capacity identify gaps

Monitoring & Evaluation stage

Lead agency
- Evaluate system performance on a continuous basis
- Use data and insights to inform shared decision making on planning and policy stage

Local forums
- Assess provider performance and cultural safety on a continuous basis (supported by lead agency)
- Identify community insights to inform decision making

Procurement & Purchasing stage

Lead agency
- Establish contractual arrangements with providers
- Relationship based approach to contract and system management (supporting local forums)

Local forums
- Allocate funding / packages to providers, based on local plan, capacity and demand
- Gather community intelligence to inform system management

Diagram centre: Client

Cycle stages: 1. Planning & Policy — 2. System & Service Design — 3. Procurement & Purchasing — 4. Monitoring & Evaluation

It is important to note the interface of this commissioning cycle with oversight of the Cultural Safety Framework, relationship based approach to management and support of ACCOs.