



THE NARGNEIT BIRRANG FRAMEWORK

'To See The River' (Woiwurrung)

Aboriginal Holistic Healing
Framework for Family Violence

December 2019



VACCA
Connected by culture



ThinkPlace




**family
safety
victoria**

Purpose

Nargneit Birrang (To see the river) is for all Victorian Aboriginal people – adults, children, young people and families – who are impacted by family violence and need holistic healing; and for the Aboriginal services and communities who support them on their healing journeys.

The purpose of the *Nargneit Birrang* Framework is to guide the flexible design, funding, implementation and evaluation of Aboriginal-led holistic healing programs for family violence in Victoria, informed by the principle of self-determination.

Nargneit Birrang (pronounced 'Nar-neat Be-rang') is a Woiwurrung word meaning "To see the river".



Through self-
determination,
Aboriginal individuals,
families and
communities are
safe and thriving

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria

The following acknowledgement was developed by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum in Dhelk Dja – Safe Our Way: Strong Cultures, Strong Peoples, Strong Families (Dhelk Dja) and has been adapted for Nargneit Birrang.

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE ACKNOWLEDGED AS AUSTRALIA'S FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES AND THE CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND AND WATERWAYS UPON WHICH WE DEPEND. WE ACKNOWLEDGE VICTORIA'S ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE AND PAY RESPECT TO THEIR ELDERS PAST AND PRESENT.

Aboriginal culture is founded on a strong social, cultural and spiritual order that has sustained more than 60,000 years of existence. Victorian Aboriginal communities and peoples are culturally diverse, with rich and varied heritages and histories. Aboriginal cultural heritage and the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to culture and society is acknowledged as a source of strength and pride to enrich the whole Victorian community.

The long-standing leadership of Aboriginal communities and Elders in Victoria is recognised in preventing and responding to family violence and improving outcomes for Aboriginal people, children and families. Additionally, there is widespread acknowledgement of the devastating impacts and accumulation of trauma across generations as a result of colonisation, genocide, the violent dispossession of land, the displacement of men from their traditional roles, and the assimilation policy that resulted in the removal of children and subsequent transgenerational trauma. The invaluable contributions of all those who have paved the way and fought for the rights of Aboriginal people, including the right to self-determination and the right to live free from violence, are acknowledged.

To ensure that Aboriginal people, children, young people, families and communities thrive, the Victorian Government is committed to an enduring community-led response to end family violence against Aboriginal people, underpinned by self-determination.

Self-determination requires government to value and respect Aboriginal knowledge, systems and expertise and to transfer authority, decision making control and resources to Aboriginal people. This requires a significant cultural shift and a new way of working together. The Victorian Government acknowledges that this is the key to better outcomes for Aboriginal people and stronger, safer families and communities. Aboriginal self-determination is the foundation of *Dhelk Dja* and also the foundation of *Nargneit Birrang*.

Acknowledgement of Participants and Artists

Nargneit Birrang has been designed by and for Aboriginal communities who are living in Victoria to reflect the wisdom of Aboriginal holistic healing approaches to family violence.

For this project the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and design studio ThinkPlace, funded by Family Safety Victoria (FSV), worked in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal communities to explore concepts and methods of holistic healing and the needs of communities for both preventing and responding to family violence.

We thank each person who generously committed their time and shared their stories and knowledge about family violence and holistic healing to *Nargneit Birrang*.

The qualities of resilience, determination, purpose, direction and strength were shared and evident throughout the project.

We thank the many important voices of leadership throughout the project, which have shaped *Nargneit Birrang* – especially those from the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum and the Dhelk Dja Regional Action Groups.

The many voices of Aboriginal people and community have been captured throughout *Nargneit Birrang* as direct quotes.

We also thank Emma Bamblett for her beautiful artwork that tells the Story of the River, which has become an important metaphor for the journey of healing from family violence, along with Reanna Bono for her graphic design work in the document.

This document hopes to reflect the many and strong voices from across the State.





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THE NARGNEIT BIRRANG FRAMEWORK

Why was *Nargneit Birrang* developed?

The policy context

The *Nargneit Birrang* Framework has been developed in response to the Victorian Government's intent to develop an Aboriginal-led and co-designed statewide family violence holistic healing approach for Aboriginal communities across the State.

The Victorian Government has long recognised that Victorian Aboriginal communities have consistently led the way in the development of strategic priorities and actions to prevent and respond to family violence, and that a process that embeds self-determination is paramount to developing a uniform approach for holistic healing to support all Aboriginal people.

Nargneit Birrang was developed in acknowledgment of the persistent and disproportionate impacts of family violence on Aboriginal people and the desire to keep more Aboriginal people safe from family violence and the need to further develop Aboriginal responses to promote healing and safety.

Violence against Aboriginal people encompasses a wide range of abuse and can include physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse as well as inter and intra-group violence and lateral violence. Spiritual and cultural violence is also used against Aboriginal women and men when non-Aboriginal partners or family members exclude or isolate them from their culture or community.

Violence against Aboriginal people disproportionately impacts women and children, who undoubtedly experience violence at much higher rates than other Victorians. Aboriginal women and Aboriginal children are at a higher risk of family violence in Victoria than other women or Aboriginal men, regardless of whether they live in rural, regional or urban areas.

Family violence is perpetrated against Aboriginal people by both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people and is experienced within intimate relationships, families, extended families, kinship networks and communities. The resultant trauma and violence impacts on the whole of family regardless of whether individual members are directly impacted.

“It is not the case that Aboriginal people accept family violence. Aboriginal people are affected by family violence from colonisation. We live with it and become accustomed to it”

The project was committed to:

- find better ways to understand and express what family violence and holistic healing mean for Victorian Aboriginal communities
- draw upon Aboriginal cultural knowledge and practice to identify approaches that effectively enable healing
- develop better solutions and outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Traditionally, Government has funded time-limited Western models to address family violence and used rigid approaches to reporting and compliance. It is recognised that there is a gap between the development and piloting of culturally appropriate responses to family violence, and the long-term, sustained support required to ensure enduring change and accountability approaches.

Western approaches largely focus on the individuals who are affected by violence rather than a more inclusive approach that intervenes with the family and community. Western responses do not address the systemic impact of violence that has been perpetuated on the Aboriginal community and its legacy for individual Aboriginal people and families. Whilst all Aboriginal people have been affected by the impact of past policies and practices and current systemic issues described above, individual and family responses will differ. Holistic healing approaches need to individualise healing for individuals and families within this broader approach.

Further, Aboriginal approaches appreciate the importance of restoring and/or enhancing connection to culture, community and land as intrinsically linked to healing. Holistic healing approaches reflect this broader view and locate the individual or family healing in the context of their community and culture to build resilience and support. Western approaches largely fail to recognise the healing (or clinical) value of culture and its expressive outlets, such as art and dance, and their capacity to reduce adverse symptoms and build positive self-identity for individuals and families.

Self-determination is a complex concept. In this framework it is understood as promoting agency, voice and empowerment at both the individual and community level. Self-determination becomes the foundation for achieving holistic healing.

Trauma informed Aboriginal Holistic Healing

Aboriginal holistic healing is recognised by Aboriginal people as a meaningful way to respond to trauma, intergenerational trauma (including family violence trauma) and restore wellbeing at a community, family and individual level.

Nargneit Birrang recognises that colonisation was the first act of violence, and that this trauma accumulates across generations.

As stated in *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*¹:

“Family violence is not and never has been part of Aboriginal culture. Rather, the impact of white settlement, colonisation and the violent dispossession of land, acts of cultural genocide and removal of children has displaced traditional Aboriginal roles and resulted in an accumulation of trauma across generations”.

The Healing Foundation defines intergenerational trauma as the unknowing passing on of trauma through behaviour as a result of not having an opportunity to heal. It can affect the way people think and act and overwhelm their ability to cope and engage. It can impact a person or communities for many decades and in many different ways, with common symptoms including fear and anxiety, difficulty with relationships, impulsive behaviour, feeling sad and hopeless, tired and confused.²

As a result of intergenerational trauma, children can experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. This creates a cycle of trauma, where the impact can be passed from one generation to the next.

The cumulative effects of individual, institutional and structural violence and racism over the generations have contributed to widespread poverty, disadvantage, pervasiveness of family violence and the severity of its impact on Aboriginal people today. Aboriginal children placed in care have a common history of family violence as a key contributor to their removal from families.

¹ Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2017, *Free From Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*, p.21

² The Healing Foundation, December 2018, *Glossary of healing terms: A guide to key terms related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing*

Responding to family violence in this context is complex and challenging. The lack of responsibility of broader society to reduce systemic racism and exclusion is often overlooked as a contributing factor to the levels of family violence experienced by Aboriginal communities.

These factors have played a key role in Aboriginal communities advocating for holistic healing practices as this approach delivers benefits to people experiencing trauma.

The Healing Foundation:

- describes healing as reconnecting with culture, strengthening identity, restoring safe and enduring relationships, and supporting communities to understand the impact that their experiences have had on their behavior and create change.
- recognises the power of healing in emphasising physical, psychological, and emotional safety for people seeking help, and creating opportunities for people affected by trauma to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.²

Holistic healing seeks to address underlying trauma and its impacts by taking a strengths-based, trauma-informed and whole of life approach to safety, wellbeing and empowerment. Healing needs to occur at community, family and individual levels and across a person's lifetime and across generations.

In Victoria, the Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families (2008-2018)* advocated strongly for a more holistic approach to trauma-informed healing:

“We appreciate the importance of a holistic healing approach to family violence in Indigenous communities based around family and Indigenous community strengthening, collaborative approaches, appropriate resources and flexible program and service delivery arrangements”

Cultural and trauma informed resilience and healing approaches are also recognised as a Guiding Principle to deliver on the Aboriginal 10 Year Family Violence Agreement (2018-2028) *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*.

Taking a cultural and whole of life approach to restore social emotional wellbeing, as outlined in *Balit Murrup: The Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework 2017-2027*, requires strengthening the multiple dimensions of an Aboriginal person's connections including connection to: spirit; land; culture; community; family and kinship; mind and emotions; and body.

What emerged through community co-design?

Throughout the Aboriginal-led community co-design process undertaken to develop *Nargneit Birrang*, Aboriginal people were very clear in wanting access to healing through a holistic approach that was inclusive of the following community members:

- women, children, men, families and communities experiencing or impacted by family violence, inclusive of people who might identify as LGBTIQ+ or people with a disability
- people using family violence
- healing for individuals, families and at a whole of community level.

There was also a recognition of the need to include non-Aboriginal family members given how many Aboriginal men and women are in relationships with non-Aboriginal partners. These couples may experience cultural differences and conflict in dealing with and managing cultural and communication differences, which could potentially lead to higher levels of violence.

“When you say holistic healing, it means everyone is involved”

The critical importance of self-determination; a recognition that Aboriginal people are thriving when self-determination is at the core of healing; and the connection to culture, community and country was also strongly emphasised and heard.

² The Healing Foundation, December 2018, *Glossary of healing terms: A guide to key terms related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing*

It was identified that Elders and respected community members with healing knowledge are valued, and cultural practices and activities inform healing. Being safe, including cultural safety, was seen as a pre-condition of healing.

We heard that across Victoria there exist many Aboriginal-led healing programs developed with, and in response to, localised Aboriginal community needs and priorities. There are also many Aboriginal people and their families across Victoria who are thriving. Key elements shared in common by these programs include:

- Aboriginal-led and designed
- promotion of healing and wellbeing
- cultural strength, connection to culture and/or resilience are central
- safety is central.

The co-design process revealed that the community were consistent in the key messages of:

- Self-determination is critical
- Healing takes time and all individual's healing journeys are unique
- Everyone should feel safe. While addressing trauma can be overwhelming, the healing process can help survivors develop inner strengths and lessen their fear of safety for themselves and their families
- The past impacts the present, and trauma, including intergenerational trauma, should be acknowledged and addressed as a part of holistic healing approaches
- Aboriginal holistic healing is valued and should be funded as a meaningful way to respond to family violence trauma, recognising that healing is for all people
- Aboriginal services should be prioritised in funding healing programs and resources should transfer from mainstream services to Aboriginal agencies.
- More flexible approaches to funding and Aboriginal defined measures of success are required
- Recognition that strong models of Aboriginal-led healing already exist in Victoria
- Aboriginal-led holistic healing in Victoria needs to be expanded to respond to the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people

Drawing this together, *Nargneit Birrang* seeks to establish a shared understanding across Victoria of Aboriginal holistic healing so that it can be used as a clear and consistent way to provide services and fund Aboriginal designed and led approaches for individuals, families and communities to heal from family violence.

Through the consultations of *Nargneit Birrang*, it became clear that there is a real interest in sharing knowledge across Victorian Aboriginal communities, Government and other service organisations on what culturally-appropriate tools exist, what healing approaches are most successful with Aboriginal people and what collaborations are working well for communities. It seeks to build upon and complement a range of Victorian Government strategies and frameworks (as listed in the Appendices section of this document) which further emphasise self-determination, social and emotional wellbeing, and the right to live free from violence. These strategies and frameworks are referenced throughout and have informed *Nargneit Birrang*.

What is the strategic intent of *Nargneit Birrang*?

The Framework is a strategic response to guide:

Service design, implementation and evaluation:

Aboriginal services and communities in Victoria will apply the framework to guide the design, implementation and evaluation of holistic healing approaches to family violence that support Aboriginal people in their communities in their healing journeys.

Funding guidelines, compliance, indicator measures and evaluation:

The Victorian Government – across multiple departments and agencies – will use the framework as a blue print to direct funding to Aboriginal services and communities in Victoria who demonstrate holistic healing approaches and responses to family violence, recognising self-determination as a pivotal design feature. This will require the government to adopt new funding guidelines, reconsider current compliance measures, and value Aboriginal knowledge and approaches to evaluation including definitions of what constitutes success in line with this framework.

The process to develop the *Nargneit Birrang* Framework

In order to bring together the knowledge and wisdom that exists around Aboriginal holistic healing, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and ThinkPlace (Co-design Specialist Agency) worked in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal communities between September 2017 to June 2018 to explore the needs of Aboriginal communities for both preventing, responding and bringing about healing to family violence. The project was funded by Family Safety Victoria and delivered in consultation with the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum.

From project commencement, a strong focus was placed upon taking the time to build trusted relationships and to bring people – communities, organisations and government - along on the journey together.

Nargneit Birrang was developed by drawing upon:

- existing evidence, research and Aboriginal community led models of holistic healing to address trauma, with a focus on family violence trauma; and
- Aboriginal sources of evidence, wisdom, community knowledge, stories and experiences shared by Aboriginal people, communities and services during the project consultation process.

Nargneit Birrang describes what Aboriginal holistic healing is, why healing is needed and how healing works to heal family violence and associated trauma for Aboriginal people and for non-Aboriginal family members.

This consultation and this framework recognises that Aboriginal cultures and communities across Victoria are diverse, and that healing is different for someone who experiences violence to someone who is using violence.

The project started with a literature review and field research to build upon what has come before and what has been said previously across Victorian Aboriginal communities – noting that what has been said before has not always been heard or acknowledged.

Through interviews and focus groups, the project captured ideas and knowledge from Aboriginal communities across Victoria about what healing is, why healing is needed, how healing works and what healing looks like.

In the early stages of the development of *Nargneit Birrang*, the story of the river emerged as an important place for healing that connected many Aboriginal communities across Victoria. The river narrative evolved into a way for people to reflect on holistic healing and family violence without having to draw on traumatic personal stories or memories. It created a culturally safe way to connect and talk about family violence and described a story of a healthy eco-system and rejuvenation, centered around safety, strengthened families and whole of community healing – thereby enabling deep listening that supported the co-design process.

“We agreed to travel together along the river to the billabong of healing. We built the canoe to carry all of the cultural knowledge to assist Aboriginal people lead their healing”

ThinkCamp participant

A two-day co-design ‘ThinkCamp’ forum was held with more than 70 key stakeholders from across Aboriginal communities, organisations and government to actively listen, design and commence building a common understanding of the vision for a holistic healing approach for Aboriginal communities in Victoria. Through this process, the desired outcomes that Victorian Aboriginal communities seek in their healing journeys was heard.

Subsequently, regional prototyping workshops were held with local Aboriginal communities to test and further refine a set of draft principles and service design characteristics that emerged from the rich input gathered at ThinkCamp. These were further tested at a second one-day ThinkCamp held in mid-2018.

The Nargneit Birrang Vision

Vision:

Through self-determination, Aboriginal individuals, families and communities are safe and thriving

The framework acknowledges the rights of Aboriginal people to self-determination – including at the system level the right to design and implement holistic healing programs and activities that communities know are needed and will deliver outcomes to prevent, address and bring about healing for family violence. At the individual or family level it acknowledges the rights of Aboriginal people to have agency, be empowered and have a voice in their healing journey and in the services they access.

Nargneit Birrang and its vision were developed based on extensive engagement with Victorian Aboriginal communities in 2017-18 and analysis of literature and research.

Framework Purpose:

Nargneit Birrang outlines a clear framework to address family violence impacting Aboriginal people and communities based on **six integrated principles for Aboriginal holistic healing:**

1. Self-determination is fundamental
2. Safety is a priority
3. Culture, Country and Community are embedded in healing
4. The past impacts on the present
5. Healing is trauma-informed
6. Resilience and hope make a difference

These principles were co-designed with Aboriginal communities and reflect what existing literature tells us and what people shared throughout the project consultation as being essential to Aboriginal holistic healing for family violence.

The Service Design Characteristics that accompany each Principle have been developed as a guide to describe what a Principle might look like in practice from the perspective of Aboriginal people accessing healing; Aboriginal organisations and services delivering healing; and the Victorian Government.

The Victorian Government commits to endorsing the framework and working towards an effective implementation plan to actualise the framework.

Overview of Nargneit Birrang Framework

Vision:

Through self-determination, Aboriginal individuals, families and communities are safe and thriving



Service design characteristics of Aboriginal holistic healing

<p>Charters of Indigenous rights are adhered to and promoted</p> <p>Aboriginal voice and advocacy is valued and privileged</p> <p>Aboriginal people make choices about their own healing journey</p> <p>Funding is directed to Aboriginal led holistic healing approaches</p> <p>Aboriginal defined measures of success direct holistic healing funding</p> <p>Aboriginal people design, implement and evaluate holistic healing programs</p> <p>Non-Aboriginal people will be guided in service design by Aboriginal people</p>	<p>Keeping Aboriginal children safe is paramount</p> <p>Community members have a right to feel and be safe</p> <p>People who use violence are held accountable</p> <p>Culture is vital for individuals, families and communities to heal</p> <p>A whole of family approach is applied where safe to do so</p> <p>Community, Elders and leaders play a significant role in safety</p>	<p>Aboriginal people are supported in further strengthening their personal, family and community identities, belonging and social, emotional wellbeing</p> <p>Aboriginal people are connected to their spirituality and Country</p> <p>Aboriginal Cultures, identities, heritages, languages and experiences are utilised in healing</p> <p>Aboriginal Elders and community leaders stand up against violence</p>	<p>Colonisation is seen as the first act of violence</p> <p>Grief and loss within the community is acknowledged and understood</p> <p>Recognise complex trauma within the community is linked to past policies and practices, contemporary structures and systemic racism</p> <p>Historical and intergenerational trauma impacts on the community today</p> <p>Understand an individual's story of trauma (grief, loss and other trauma) is related to the act of colonisation</p> <p>Recognise that children experience multiple traumas when living in families experiencing family violence</p>	<p>A trauma informed approach includes the revival of traditional practices and other therapeutic approaches</p> <p>Trauma approaches are evidence informed</p> <p>Victim survivors are believed and supported to understand their grief, loss and trauma</p> <p>People who use violence are supported to understand the impact of violence and supported to develop non-violent approaches</p> <p>Trauma informed responses include a child-centered approach</p> <p>Acknowledge that healing is a non-linear journey that requires flexibility in time, space, access and intensity</p> <p>Approaches to healing vary according to the individual, family and community</p> <p>Recognise trauma of staff, both through their direct experiences and through vicarious trauma</p>	<p>Aboriginal people's pride in Culture builds resilience</p> <p>Recognise and strengthen the resilience of individuals, families and communities to deal with adverse events</p> <p>Provide opportunities and choices for healing</p> <p>Are recognised as an expert in their own life and their strengths are acknowledged</p> <p>Promote and be explicit about what healthy relationships are across all types of relationships in community</p> <p>Aboriginal culture is celebrated as surviving colonisation</p>
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PRINCIPLE

#1

SELF-DETERMINATION IS FUNDAMENTAL

This principle recognises that for holistic healing to be effective it must be Aboriginal-led and promote social justice and a human rights approach.

Aboriginal people are thriving when self-determination is at the core of healing and there is a connection to culture, Country and community. Self-determination supports the building of strong communities. It empowers everyone to influence and contribute to Aboriginal designed and led tailored solutions and successful outcomes.

Aboriginal people have the right to lead and have a voice at all levels of decision-making. This includes:

- Leading on the design and delivery of healing approaches
- Being supported to make choices about accessing and participating in healing
- Determining measures of success and methods of reporting on outcomes
- Being funded to develop an Aboriginal evidence base of holistic healing.

Service design characteristics

Upholding and affirming the right to self-determination is an obligation under a number of international law and human rights frameworks including the United Nations Charter, the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Self-determination is critical and evidence at a national and international level highlights that only Aboriginal-led and designed approaches result in sustainable, effective change and positive outcomes. It enables Aboriginal voices to be heard, and recognises that these voices must be at the center of decision-making.

The following characteristics underpin self-determination in the context of designing and funding holistic healing approaches.

- Charters of Indigenous rights are adhered to and promoted
- Aboriginal voice and advocacy is valued and privileged
- Aboriginal people make choices about their own healing journey
- Funding is directed to Aboriginal led holistic healing approaches
- Services enable feedback on design and service users experiences of the holistic healing programs Aboriginal people participate in
- Aboriginal defined measures of success direct holistic healing funding
- Aboriginal people design, implement and evaluate holistic healing programs
- Non-Aboriginal people will be guided in service design by Aboriginal people



What does this look like in practice for?

Aboriginal people who need healing:


- Have a voice in their own journey, and their cultural rights are upheld and respected
- Are empowered to make their own choices about how best to undertake their healing journey
- Are recognised as experts in their own journey and their strengths are acknowledged

Aboriginal organisations and communities:

- Are empowered to design and lead healing programs that best suit specific community needs
- Inform priorities and determine measures of success and methods of reporting that reflect Aboriginal understandings of social emotional determinants
- Have strong governance arrangements to support effective program delivery and project management
- Implement Aboriginal evaluation approaches that promote holistic healing best practice, and supports knowledge transfer and development
- Lead strong partnerships and service collaboration
- Lead development of holistic healing programs where diversity is reflected in the designing and best suit their community and specific community needs, such as for LGBTQIA+ community members

Government:

- Prioritises funding to Aboriginal communities and organisations for the development and design of holistic healing approaches for Aboriginal people
- Transfers resources from mainstream providers to Aboriginal services to ensure holistic healing is embedded in all activities
- Ensures holistic healing approaches are guided by and align with Aboriginal ways of working to enable enduring, long-term change
- Core funding includes capacity to resource evaluations to develop an evidence base of effective holistic healing approaches
- Ensures Aboriginal organisations are resourced to provide cultural competency training in holistic healing programs to mainstream services in Aboriginal holistic healing
- Ensures reporting requirements reflect Aboriginal understandings of social and cultural determinants of Aboriginal people



“When the community identifies the problem and then develops the program – that is when you have good outcomes”

Research participant

PRINCIPLE

#2

SAFETY IS A PRIORITY

It is critical that holistic healing approaches ensure the safety of all Aboriginal people – adults and children – that they seek to support. The healing journey is facilitated when safety (personal, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural) has been assured, risk assessments have been completed, and healing/safety plans are in place; and when those who use violence are held accountable and supported to change their behaviour.

Aboriginal people have a right to cultural safety. The spaces and places where services are delivered must be culturally responsive and respectful to ensure that all individuals and families can be supported to thrive – physically, psychologically and emotionally. Strengths-based approaches that value Aboriginal knowledge and expertise must be applied across all healing spaces.

When services are culturally unsafe, communities identify their experiences as being dismissed and feel defeated. They feel vulnerable, experience shame and find it stressful to deal with multiple service agencies. These issues and gaps must be addressed and eliminated for safety to ensue and for effective healing to occur.

Throughout the co-design process, we also heard about the critical role that Elders, workers and community leaders play in ensuring the safety of people on a healing journey and providing leadership that violence is not acceptable within the community.

Service design characteristics

It is widely recognised that healing can only occur when people are supported in safe spaces, where they can share their stories and take steps towards strengthening their physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural health and wellbeing.

The following characteristics underpin safety in the context of designing holistic healing approaches:

- Program design ensures community members have a right to feel and be safe
- Keeping children safe is paramount
- Ensure immediate safety and basic needs are met for all victims including men, women, children and young people
- Community members have a right to feel and be safe
- Connect whole of family to role models and guides for support
- People who use violence are held accountable
- Culture is vital for individuals, families and communities to heal
- A whole of family approach is applied where safe to do so
- Elders, workers and community leaders play a significant role in safety

What does this look like in practice for?

Aboriginal people who need healing are provided with:

- Support to know how and where to seek help if they feel unsafe.
- Access to culturally safe, informed support that reflects Aboriginal cultural strengths, values and traditional wisdom
- Safe places to meet, yarn, share knowledge and culture.
- Access to whole of family holistic approaches and responses that provide an improved understanding of the causes and effects of violence
- Environments in which children feel physically and emotionally safe
- Strong role models and mentors
- Understanding what constitutes safety and what is acceptable behaviour
- Access to group-based activities that enhance safety and are led by strong guides and role models
- People who use violence are safe in their healing journey, in acknowledgment that they are also often victims of violence

Aboriginal organisations and communities:

- Recognise the unique safety considerations for children to enable them to thrive physically and emotionally are understood and their safety is seen as paramount
- Ensure immediate safety and basic needs are met for all victims including men, women, children and young people
- Support people who use violence to take responsibility and are accountable for their actions, and have access to culturally appropriate interventions and resources that provide understanding of the impact of family violence, including on children
- Provide access to culturally safe, informed support that reflects Aboriginal cultural strengths, values and traditional wisdom and improves understandings of family violence and its impact on all family members
- Design programs and evaluations that demonstrate the importance of taking seriously the safety needs of communities
- Conduct risk assessments and develop safety and healing plans for Aboriginal people experiencing family violence preferably on first contact, to address immediate risks and ensure emotional wellbeing and safety
- Design and delivers culturally embedded programs that are holistic, and family focussed when safe to do so
- Support Elders and community leaders to teach children and young people about respectful Aboriginal relationships
- Support Aboriginal workforce to build and share knowledge of the impact of family violence and healing approaches, including through peer support opportunities and activities that address vicarious trauma.
- Provide non-Aboriginal workforce with cultural competence training and cultural mentoring to enable effective holistic practices

- Provide Aboriginal people including children and young people with safe places to meet, yarn, share knowledge and culture and feel and be safe.
- Provide Aboriginal people including children and young people with access to a range of intervention approaches including group-based and cultural activities that enhance safety including after-hours responses

Government:

- Ensure that all funded holistic healing initiatives demonstrate effective approaches for keeping victims safe, ensuring people who use violence are accountable for their actions and include approaches to promote cultural safety
- Recognise that healing practices take time, and need to be diverse and flexible to allow individuals, families and communities to create their own outcomes and ensure safety along the journey for support
- Support Aboriginal workforce to build and share knowledge of the impact of family violence and healing approaches, including through peer support opportunities and activities that address vicarious trauma.
- Fund and create opportunities for the Aboriginal workforce to build knowledge and resilience

“Cultural safety is when you are with people you trust; you have empathy; they understand where you have come from; [you are] not in a threatening environment; [there are] no fixed attitudes or values, [people] don’t apply their standards on you; [it is] where they can relate”

Research participant

“Healing can’t happen if you don’t feel safe... that is why we go on Country. There is no need for fences, no cars going past. It is the safest place in the world for me. There is no danger for my kid”

Research participant

PRINCIPLE

#3

CULTURE, COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY ARE EMBEDDED IN HEALING

Through the development of *Nargneit Birrang*, we heard that connection to Aboriginal culture, Country and community is intrinsic to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

Culture underpins family violence holistic healing for Aboriginal communities. Knowledge of culture is recognised to be valuable and powerful. It includes knowledge about spirituality, stories, values, beliefs, cultural laws and customs.

Aboriginal culture heals by empowering people (individuals, families and communities) to recognise and understand their cultural identity. Culture provides a set of values and behaviours and standards that guide how the world is seen.

“We just feel culture is the foundation. For us, we are talking about taking care of pain in an Aboriginal way.”

ThinkCamp participant

“It’s acknowledging that not everyone is from [this] country and it’s important what that then means - when I want Healing I have to go home [to country]. I can be welcomed and safe here in Victoria but if I want healing then I go back to my country”

Research participant

Connectedness to country is a further vital element for successful healing. We heard that holistic healing practices should be shaped by and strengthen Aboriginal people’s connections with their country to promote wholeness and wellness. Healing requires safe spaces to be available on traditional lands, where possible, in acknowledgment that healing cannot always occur within traditional clinical practice settings.

The collective knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal communities is also important for holistic healing. Elders and other respected community members provide valuable healing guidance and mentoring, delivering appropriate community-led approaches and solutions. Where safe to do so, people should be encouraged and supported to come back into community for healing.

Through holistic healing approaches that are informed by Aboriginal culture and strongly connected to Country and community, we will build stronger, more resilient individuals, families and communities.

“Something as small as a smoking ceremony can have a huge impact for people who have not grown up in culture - it brings the men and women together; everyone wrapping their arms around each other, supporting each other and getting back to country”

ThinkCamp participant

“Something intangible happens in those healing circles that can only happen in an Aboriginal group and only Aboriginal people can understand [it].”

Research participant



Service design characteristics

Aboriginal culture, country and community is vital in preventing and responding to violence and keeping Aboriginal people safe. Holistic healing approaches that are grounded in the strengths and interconnections between culture, country and community result in better outcomes for Aboriginal people. The following characteristics underpin the embedding of culture, country and community in the context of designing holistic healing approaches:

- Aboriginal people are supported in further strengthening their personal, family and community identities and belonging
- Aboriginal people are connected to their spirituality and country
- Healing journeys are enabled to happen both on and off country
- Aboriginal cultures, identities, heritages, languages, beliefs, customs and experiences are utilised in healing
- Aboriginal Elders and community leaders are guides and mentors

What does this look like in practice for?

Aboriginal people who need healing are provided with:

- Support to learn about their cultural connections and connect to Country, including for children and young people
- Culturally safe spaces, such as yarning circles, to share stories and connect to culture, Country and community
- Support to find cultural connections and strengthen cultural knowledge
- Support to attend cultural events that provide opportunities for people to come together for positive purposes
- Support to make a return to country trip both financially and emotionally possible

Aboriginal organisations and communities:

- Understand the importance of connection to land, community and culture, and that it is a core component of healing
- Lead holistic healing approaches that connect Aboriginal people to land, community and culture
- Link Aboriginal people to Aboriginal cultural knowledge, heritages, languages and experiences
- Combine therapeutic modalities with Aboriginal cultural practices, including art and music
- Utilise Aboriginal Elders and community members to support cultural strengthening and healing
- Support Aboriginal people to return back to country

Government:

- Ensures that all funded holistic healing initiatives include approaches that connect individuals and families to culture, country and/or community
- Supports places where Aboriginal people can access culturally appropriate supports and services, and access Aboriginal-led approaches to healing

PRINCIPLE
#4

THE PAST IMPACTS ON THE PRESENT

Holistic healing approaches should adopt a strengths-based approach that is informed by an understanding of the impact of past policies, practices and intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal people, families and communities today, recognising colonisation as the first act of violence.

Healing approaches should acknowledge the strength and survival of Aboriginal culture.

Importantly, healing approaches need to be trauma-informed and understand intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal people and communities today for resilient and hopeful futures to be actualised.

It is acknowledged that there is a gendered element to family violence for Aboriginal people, but family violence also sits within the violence of colonisation and its ongoing legacy, including the displacement of men from their traditional roles and the forced removal of children. A higher proportion of Aboriginal people in Victoria have been directly impacted by the Stolen Generations than any other State or Territory. It is also acknowledged that this past policy has had a transgenerational impact on the children of the Stolen Generations, some of whom were adopted out to non-Aboriginal families.

The grief and trauma resulting from child removal policies are profound, and Aboriginal children continue to be removed from families at disproportionate rates because of exposure to family violence.

To be effective, holistic healing approaches need to be sensitive to and informed by the impacts of trauma on individual, family and community wellbeing. This includes recognising trauma may have accumulated over time and across generations.

An understanding of an individual's story of trauma is critical to the healing journey, and is interwoven with the stories of that person's family and community.

Victim survivors, including children, need to have their stories heard and acknowledged so that they can commence or continue their healing journeys.

People who use violence need to be supported in recognising their role in creating trauma and provided with assistance to change their behaviour and heal. Also people that use violence need to be made aware of how their behaviour contributes to an ongoing cycle of trauma and violence.

"I was going to start from where I was born. But I realised that it starts before the womb. I've been through periods of my life where I wasn't the best father or partner. I had the opportunity to change. But many don't...constantly being told how to do, what to do and when to do, and I don't want that for my grandchildren. I want...to have courage and be a part of the solution"

ThinkCamp participant

"To undo generations of trauma takes a long time"

ThinkCamp participant

"I remember my daughter asking me for a family tree for a school project and I couldn't tell her because I don't know my family"

Research participant

Service design characteristics

- Aboriginal culture is celebrated as surviving colonisation as the first act of violence
- Grief and loss within the community is acknowledged and understood
- Recognise that complex trauma within the community is linked to past policies and practices and contemporary structures and systemic racism
- Recognise that historical and intergenerational trauma accumulates and impacts on the community today
- Understand an individual's story of trauma (grief, loss and other traumas)
- Recognise that children experience multiple traumas when living in families experiencing family violence
- Recognise the impacts of direct and vicarious trauma experiences for staff
- Understand that experiences of grief and loss is pervasive in the daily lives of Aboriginal people

What does this look like in practice for?

Aboriginal people who need healing are provided with:

- Time and culturally safe spaces and places to heal the past and present
- Opportunities to tell their stories to identify and respond to underlying or unresolved trauma
- Opportunities to reflect on past practices and policies, and how these have impacted on Aboriginal families today
- Opportunities to yarn about the past, and pass on knowledge and learning from generation to generation
- Tools to heal from trauma and rebuild a sense of wellbeing, control and empowerment
- Referrals to Aboriginal services with an understanding of the impact of the past on Aboriginal people today



Aboriginal organisations and communities:

- Provide culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal people
- Develop programs that are trauma-informed, address the impacts of trauma including intergenerational trauma on individual, family and community wellbeing, and which break the cycle of violence
- Support sharing of stories to recognise and respond to the cycle of violence and address trauma
- Listen to and acknowledge an individual's story of trauma, including the stories of children
- Combine the western therapeutic modalities and Aboriginal modalities to better support Aboriginal people
- Strengthen Aboriginal workforce to build and share knowledge of trauma, family violence and healing approaches, including through peer support opportunities.
- Implement trauma informed healing practices for their staff, and provide opportunities for training and recognise formal and informal knowledge
- Work holistically with Aboriginal people and their families
- Use best available evidence from research and wisdom within the community to design service approaches

Government:

- Fund healing approaches that are trauma informed and promote community wellbeing
- Recognise that healing practices take time and provide funding and reporting flexibility
- Recognise the importance of traditional and contemporary cultural practices in healing from family violence, and fund these practices
- Support compliance requirements that are aligned with holistic healing approaches
- Transfer funding to Aboriginal services and organisations



HEALING IS TRAUMA-INFORMED

Aboriginal holistic healing approaches to family violence will be sensitive to the trauma and impact of family violence on individuals and families as well as the accumulated trauma experienced by Aboriginal people and communities as a result of colonisation.

Trauma-informed approaches allow individuals and families to better understand the impact of multiple causes of trauma and distress, including unresolved or accumulated trauma, on their current circumstances, and support holistic healing and recovery.

Healing can be applied to multiple facets of individual, family and community life.

Approaches to address trauma will build on the strength of Aboriginal families and communities and encompass Aboriginal concepts of social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing. Cultural knowledge, cultural identity and cultural strengths need to be drawn upon to address healing needs, and to build whole-of-person and whole-of family resilience.

“We need long term management to address trauma”

Research participant

A whole-of-person and whole-of-family approach to restoring social and emotional health and wellbeing will support choice and build on strengths including by strengthening connections to: spirit; land; culture; community; family and kinship; mind and emotions; and body.

It is also acknowledged that an appropriately skilled workforce is required to deliver quality trauma-informed approaches, and that ongoing trauma-related workforce training and support is important.

“Healing involves the application of existing cultural knowledge to address trauma and post-generational trauma using traditional and contemporary practices” ThinkCamp participant

“Healing is one of the most common ways of understanding Aboriginal peoples’ experience of recovery from trauma and other mental health and social and emotional wellbeing difficulties, including unresolved grief and loss”

ThinkCamp participant

“We need to be looking at trauma informed services, especially for children”

Research participant

Service design characteristics

Evidence highlights that overcoming trauma is more likely when approaches are informed by Aboriginal culture. Such approaches empower and support individuals and communities to heal and recover.³ The following characteristics underpin trauma-informed approaches in the context of designing holistic healing approaches:

- A trauma-informed approach includes the revival of traditional practices, other therapeutic approaches and draw upon cultural knowledge
- Restore spiritual balance to achieve psychological and physical wellbeing
- Trauma-informed responses include child-centred approaches
- People are empowered to identify their own problems and take control of their own healing
- Trauma approaches are evidence-based
- Approaches to healing vary according to the individual, family and community
- Healing is a non-linear journey that requires flexibility in time, space, access and intensity
- Victim survivors are believed and supported to understand their grief, loss and trauma

What does this look like in practice for?

Aboriginal people who need healing are provided with:

- Whole-of-family holistic healing to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma of violence
- With community-led, culturally appropriate trauma-informed interventions from skilled staff
- Are provided with the space and time to heal from trauma
- Support to understand the impact of past policies and practices of intergenerational trauma, and its impact in relation to their experience of grief, loss and trauma

Aboriginal organisations and communities

- Build a strong knowledge base to understand trauma and its impact on individuals (including children), families and communities
- Utilise community wisdom in designing holistic healing approaches
- Deliver Aboriginal-specific trauma and recovery holistic healing practices in culturally safe spaces
- Support the emotional wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal people at all times
- Value their Aboriginal staff for their personal community knowledge, and build a trauma-informed skill base
- Utilise respected Elders, community members, Traditional Owners and emerging leaders who hold healing knowledge to support holistic, trauma-informed healing
- Implement healing practices for their staff, and ensure they receive ongoing support and trauma-related training

Government

- Ensure that all funded holistic healing initiatives utilise trauma-informed approaches that are appropriately tailored for the individual and/or family
- Ensure that funding includes capacity to deliver flexible trauma responses based on individuals and community needs

³ Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, *Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian children*, Resource Sheet no. 21, July 2013



RESILIENCE AND HOPE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Effective healing should build individual and collective resilience and offer hope. Through the building of resilience, individuals learn how to cope in times of adversity, including by developing healthy, supportive relationships and by connecting to Aboriginal culture and community.

Resilience supports people on their healing journeys from prevention through to crisis and long-term recovery. When resilience is centered on Aboriginal culture, it helps to shape and enhance traditions, beliefs and familial relationships which are necessary factors for healing.

Effective holistic healing approaches should enhance the individual and collective ability to cope with stress and overcome adversity. By building resilience in this way, people are empowered to be in control of their own lives. They will be equipped with the tools to create their own positive outcomes. Healing practices that focus on strengthening the resilience of individuals, families and communities are key to ensuring positive impacts are long-term.

“A healthy community [is where] many hands and people are holding the person up. Community is standing together and holds everyone up. We have a collective strengths-based approach tailored to each person and the whole family”

ThinkCamp participant

“Recognise the history of how and why services, organisations and people have been successful – so much good has already been done”

ThinkCamp participant

“Everyone needs to come together instead of kicking you down, because then you need to get back up – as black fellas that’s not what we do to each other”

Research participant

“It’s someone you can lean on and not put you down, and can walk beside you ‘til you’re strong enough to walk on your own”

ThinkCamp participant



Service design characteristics

As First Nation peoples, resilience is already deeply embedded in Victorian Aboriginal communities. Holistic healing approaches must further build upon this strength to ensure that resilience is cultivated within individuals and families who are experiencing family violence.

The following characteristics underpin the embedding of resilience in the context of designing holistic healing approaches:

- Aboriginal people's pride in culture builds resilience
- Recognise and strengthen the resilience of individuals, families and communities to deal with adverse events
- Provide opportunities and choices for healing
- Promote and be explicit about what healthy relationships are across all types of relationships in community

What does this look like in practice for?

Aboriginal people who need healing are provided with:

- Support and equipped with tools, resources and strategies that build resilience and positivity
- The opportunity to participate in yarning circle to support individuals and families to build resilience
- Provided with access to workshops and community events that build individual and collective resilience
- Linked with community resources that support them to be resilient and strong
- Empowered to develop positive life choices

Aboriginal organisations and communities:

- Promote the affirmation of positive cultural identity and pride in Aboriginal peoples' resilience and cultural identity as core to healing
- Facilitate culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal people to share stories of resilience with people experiencing family violence and people who use violence to change behaviours and attitudes
- Deliver flexible service options to build resilience including, for example to: conduct healing camps for young people; life skills programs; spiritual guidance workshops delivered by Elders; and initiatives that build an understanding of family violence and prevention on an ongoing basis
- Utilise both western and traditional approaches to build resilience, such as the use of ceremony
- Support their Aboriginal workforce to be safe and build their resilience to undertake family violence work

Government:

- Ensures that all funded holistic healing initiatives include approaches that build resilience across Aboriginal communities
- Promotes to the broader community, acknowledges and celebrates the resilience of Aboriginal people
- Engages the community to build on community strengths and resilience as a source of healing

Where to from here?

As stated earlier, the Framework is a strategic response to guide:

- ☒ **Service design, implementation and evaluation: Aboriginal services and communities in Victoria** will apply the framework to guide the design, implementation and evaluation of holistic healing approaches to family violence that support Aboriginal people in their communities in their journeys of healing.
- ☒ **Funding guidelines, compliance, indicator measures and evaluation: The Victorian Government** as a whole will use the framework as a blue print to direct funding to Aboriginal services and communities in Victoria who demonstrate holistic healing approaches to family violence, recognising self-determination as a pivotal design feature. This will require the government to adopt new funding guidelines, reconsider current compliance measures, value Aboriginal knowledge and approaches to evaluation including definitions of what constitutes success in line with this framework.

Summary

Nargeit Birrang has been developed to enhance effective long-term responses to Aboriginal people who have experienced - directly or indirectly - family violence, to break the cycle of violence and to promote healing and resilience within the Aboriginal community. It also outlines that healing those who use violence is critical in creating safe communities.

The framework's underlying premise is that holistic healing can only occur if it is based on self-determination at both the individual and system level. This is in recognition that individual Aboriginal people or families live within communities who, if further strengthened, can provide a natural means of healing. Connection to culture, community and land as well as other healing activities, such as group interventions and counselling, all have a place in holistic healing approaches.

This is a significant undertaking as it requires a re-conceptualisation of how we provide family violence funded services. It requires a significant shift in Government thinking about how it understands its role, what and how it funds, and who decides program success factors. It will require government to incorporate into core funding flexibility in service design, and funding to enable the Aboriginal evidence knowledge to grow in line with self-determination. It requires Aboriginal organisations to articulate their practice approach, and to show linkages between activities and expected outcomes.

A detailed work plan is required to implement the changes outlined within *Nargeit Birrang*. This needs to be developed and led by the Aboriginal community with government as an integral partner.

The aim should be to fully implement the framework within three years.

Glossary of Terms

Terms used in the *Nargneit Birrang* Vision:

Individual

In the vision, it is acknowledged that “individual” refers to women, children, men, Elders, victim, survivor, person who uses violence, LGBTIQ+ , person of disability, be a member of the stolen generations, experience (currently in the past) out of home care as a child or youth, be living off Country, be a service provider worker, non-Aboriginal (parent/extended family) of Aboriginal child, partner of an Aboriginal person, carer of Aboriginal child), encountered trauma (physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, material, financial, structural) that is trans-generational, inter-generational lateral and/or vicarious violence/trauma.

Family

“Family is the cornerstone of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, spirituality and identity. Family is often more broadly defined within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture than within white culture. Those involved in children’s lives, and helping to raise them, commonly include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews and members of the community are considered to be family...” SNAICC – Supporting carers, connection to family (2018)

Safe

Physically, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and culturally safe

Thriving

Healthy, happy, resilient, empowered, respected, strong, culturally safe, connected

Self-determination

Design with and for Aboriginal people, involve community in decision making, support for an Aboriginal workforce, people’s rights are upheld, communities are involved in flexible funding, evaluation approaches are defined

Terms defined in *Dhelk Dja* that are relevant to this document:

Cultural safety¹

Cultural safety is “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.” There are two elements to cultural safety. The first requires “environments of cultural resilience within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities”, while the second requires “cultural competency by those who engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.”

In the *Dhelk Dja* context, this means creating and maintaining private, public and community spaces where Aboriginal people feel safe, secure and supported to be themselves and to participate in Aboriginal Cultural events, and where non-Aboriginal people appreciate and celebrate the strengths of Aboriginal Culture and peoples.

Family violence²

***Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* defines family violence as ‘an issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.’**

- **Physical abuse** – assaulting or causing personal injury to a family member or threatening to do so.
- **Sexual abuse** – sexually assaulting a family member or engaging in another form of sexually coercive behaviour or threatening to engage in such behaviour.
- **Emotional abuse** – any behaviour towards another person that torments, intimidates, harasses or is offensive to the other person.
- **Social abuse** – preventing a person from making or keeping connections with the person’s family, friends or Culture, including Cultural or spiritual ceremonies or practices, or preventing the person from expressing the person’s Cultural identity.

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 Australasian Legal Information Institute, 2008, Family Violence Protection Act (VIC) 2008, <http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/view-doc/au/legis/vic/consol_act/fvpa2008283/sch2.html>, viewed 19 July 2018.

- **Spiritual abuse**³ – includes behaviour such as, but not limited to, preventing a person from practicing their own spiritual or religious beliefs or practices, forcing someone to participate in spiritual or religious activities they don't want to participate in, or forcing someone to raise their children according to spiritual beliefs they don't believe in.
- **Cultural abuse** – in the Dhelk Dja context, Cultural abuse relates closely to Cultural safety, and includes, but is not limited to, behaviour that prevents a person from acting in accordance with their cultural beliefs, forces them to act in a way that doesn't align to their Culture, or makes them feel shameful, embarrassed, or unsafe to participate in Cultural activities.
- **Psychological abuse** – see emotional.
- **Economic abuse** – behaviour that is coercive, deceptive or unreasonably controlling in a way that denies economic or financial autonomy, or by withholding the financial support necessary for meeting another's reasonable living expenses.
- **Elder abuse**⁴ – Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, usually a family member. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological and/or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect. In a Dhelk Dja context, elder abuse recognises abuse against older Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Elders.
- **Gender**⁵ is part of a person's personal and social identity. It refers to the way a person feels, presents and is recognised within the community. A person's gender may be reflected in outward social markers, including their name, outward appearance, mannerisms and dress.
- A **Gender informed** approach recognises that better outcomes and equality will be achieved if policies, programs and service delivery models are responsive to the needs of people of all genders, including women, men, non-binary, trans and gender diverse people.⁶ In a family violence context, a gender informed approach recognises that violence and trauma are shaped by gender stereotypes and inequities including gender related factors such as roles, relationships, attitudes, power imbalances and identities, and that services need to be inclusive and tailored to individual needs.⁷ Dhelk Dja acknowledges the disproportionate impacts of family violence on women and children. It also recognises that family violence prevention and response must be inclusive of the entire community, regardless of their gender identity, and in a way that acknowledges and celebrates gender diversity.
- **Holistic healing** encompasses the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of not only the individual, but the wider community thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of Community. Holistic healing in Aboriginal communities adopts a perspective that combines both cultural determinants and social determinants of health, wellbeing and safety, and acknowledges and incorporates the historical trauma present for many Aboriginal people.⁸
- **Lateral violence**¹⁰ refers to violence that is perpetrated by Aboriginal community members, against other Aboriginal community members. It includes a range of violent or harmful behaviours including, gossiping, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict and physical violence, among others.

³ Australian Government, 2016, Spiritual abuse, Department of Social Services, <<https://www.1800respect.org.au/violence-and-abuse/spiritual-abuse/>>, viewed 8 August 2018.

⁴ Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria, n.d., Elder abuse prevention and response, <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care/wellbeing-and-participation/preventing-elder-abuse/elder-abuse-prevention-and-response/>>, viewed 19 July 2018.

⁵ Australian Government, 2015, Australian Government guidelines on the recognition of sex and gender, <<https://www.ag.gov.au/Publications/Documents/AustralianGovernmentGuidelinesontheRecognitionofSexandGender/AustralianGovernmentGuideline-sontheRecognitionofSexandGender.pdf>>, viewed 19 July 2018.

⁶ World Health Organisation, n.d., Gender Equity and Human Rights: Gender, <<http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>>, viewed 23 July 2019.

⁷ Government of Canada, 2018, Trauma and violence-informed approaches to policy and practice, <<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html>>, viewed 23 July 2018.

⁸ State of Victoria, 2017, Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne

⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010, Social Justice Report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport10/pdf/sjr2010_full.pdf>, viewed 19 July 2018.

LGBTIQA⁺¹¹

- **Lesbian:** refers to a woman who is romantically and sexually attracted to other women.
 - **Gay:** refers to someone who is romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same gender identity as themselves. It is usually used to refer to men who are attracted to other men but may also be used by women.
 - **Bisexual:** refers to a person who is romantically and sexually attracted to individuals of their own gender and other genders.
 - **Trauma¹²:** refers to experiences of, and reactions to particularly intensive life events, including threats (real or perceived) that can overwhelm a person's ability to cope and have long-term impacts on their mental health.
A person may respond with intense fear, helplessness or horror. These can include sexual abuse (including institutional abuse), experience of violence and tragic/unexpected events and loss (including as a result of suicide, accidents, illness). For Aboriginal people this trauma is predominantly the result of colonisation and past government policies.
 - **Trauma informed¹³:** is a strengths-based service delivery approach that is grounded in an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. In the Dhelk Dja context, the acknowledgement of historical and intergenerational trauma is vital for healing. The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum acknowledges that only with true trauma-informed healing that incorporates historical trauma, can true healing take place.
 - **Strengths-based:** A strengths-based framework recognises and respects the strengths of an individual and the knowledge gained through lived experience. It works to identify the diverse strengths that individuals and communities bring to a situation and works in collaboration to foster these strengths and build upon them to address challenges.
 - **Whole of community response:** A whole of community response recognises that family violence impacts everyone in the community, and that everyone needs to be involved in efforts to prevent and respond to family violence.
 - **Whole of system response:** A whole of system response recognises that the cycle of family violence brings people into contact with many different parts of the service system, and efforts to reduce violence and improve outcomes must work across family violence services; police, justice system and the courts; housing and homelessness services; children and family services; child protection and out-of-home care; and health, mental health and human services.
 - **Trans and gender diverse:** Transgender refer to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not align with their sex assigned at birth (as opposed to cisgender: people whose gender identity is in line with the social expectations of their sex assigned at birth). Gender diverse refers to people who do not identify as a woman or a man.
 - **Intersex:** Intersex people have reproductive organs, chromosomes or other physical sex characteristics that are neither wholly female nor wholly male. Intersex is a description of biological diversity and may or may not be the identity used by an intersex person.
 - **Queer:** an umbrella term used by some people to describe non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientation.
 - **Asexual:** refers to someone who does not experience sexual attraction. They may still experience feelings of affection towards another person.
- + *other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.*

¹⁰ Department of Premier and Cabinet, State Government of Victoria, 2016, Inclusive language guide, <<https://www.vic.gov.au/equality/inclusive-language-guide.html>>, viewed 19 July 2018.

¹¹ Department of Health and Human Services, 2017, Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework 2017–2027, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.

¹² Ibid.

Referenced Literature

There are a range of Victorian Government policies, strategies and frameworks which further emphasise self-determination, social and emotional wellbeing and the right to live free from violence. These strategies and frameworks have been referenced throughout and informed *Nargneit Birrang*.



Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016 - acknowledges the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people, especially women and children, and the unique barriers that Aboriginal people face to getting help.



Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change and Family Violence Rolling Action plan (2017-2020) - sets out the plan for how the Victorian Government will achieve implementation of all 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.



Voices of Hope – explores the lived experience of victim survivors to give government a deeper understanding of what's needed for people to have a better experience of the service system and receive the support they need.



Building from Strength: 10 Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response – is a plan to create a flexible and dynamic workforce that puts equality, safety and accountability at the core of what they do.



Dhek Dja: Safe Our Way: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families – is the key Aboriginal-led strategy that commits Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and government to work together and be accountable for ensuring Aboriginal people, families and communities are violence free, and built upon the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination.



Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework - is the government's state-based outcomes framework that aims to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.



Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017-2027 - strives to realise the Victorian Government's vision for self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal people and communities.



Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework 2017-2027 - provides a forum for building stronger relationships between Aboriginal communities and the department and will involve Aboriginal communities in policy development and decision making, including resource allocation.



Balit Murrup: The Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework 2017-2027 - will improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Victorian Aboriginal people by reducing the incidence, severity and duration of mental illness, reducing suicide rates, and preventing and lessening the devastating impacts of family violence and alcohol and drug abuse.



Wungurilwil Gagapduir Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement 2018 - commits to better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people by building their connection to Culture, Country and community.



Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026 - ensuring Aboriginal people, at every stage of their learning and development journey, achieve their potential, succeed in life, and feel strong in their Cultural identity.



Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja – Aboriginal Justice Agreement – Phase 4 is a long-term partnership between the government and Aboriginal communities to work together to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes, family and community safety and reduce over representation in the Victorian criminal justice system.



Advancing the Treaty process with Aboriginal Victorians - The Victorian Government is committed to establishing a treaty process as part of government's broader commitment to self-determination. This work is about creating a new relationship between government and the Aboriginal community to achieve long-term generational change and improved outcomes.



Nargneit Birrang: Aboriginal Holistic Healing Framework for Family Violence

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

