



# Pupangarli Marnmarnepu 'Owning Our Future'

*Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy  
2020-2025*



Environment,  
Land, Water  
and Planning

## Pronunciation of Pupangarli Marnmarnepu

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

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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

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

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

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



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# Mirring

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

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

The piece is made up of three layers:

## Layer one -background

Mountain/stone country

Wetland

Desert

Forest/grassland

Sea country

Scars in the landscape

## Layer three

Artist stamp: Lava flow

River



## Layer two

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

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

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

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

Boy to Man

Girl to Woman

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

## EXPLANATION OF USE OF TERMS

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

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

An **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)** is incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth), *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) or *Co-operatives Act 1996* and managed by a board of Aboriginal people for the sole purpose of serving the local Aboriginal community. ACCOs serve their communities by delivering social, health and housing services (to name some of their community service and support functions).

**Caring for Country plan, Whole-of-Country plan** or **Country plan** is a plan developed by a Traditional Owner group (sometimes titled in Aboriginal language) that expresses their vision, aspirations, strategies and actions for their Country. Country Plans support Traditional Owners in communicating their rights, cultural authority or interest in Country.

**Cultural safety** refers to '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'.<sup>1</sup> For Aboriginal people working at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), as well as in our partnerships with Traditional Owners, cultural safety means creating environments, relationships and systems free from racism and discrimination so that people feel safe, valued and able to participate. In other words, cultural safety makes space for culture to live and for spiritual and belief systems to exist.

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

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

**Self-determination** is all about *choice*. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural equity, based on their own values and way of life.<sup>2</sup> That means Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination and self-governance.

**Sovereignty** is the full power and political rights of a body or group over itself. 'Victorian Traditional Owners maintain that their sovereignty has never been ceded'.<sup>3</sup>

A **Traditional Owner Corporation (TOC)** is an incorporated group that represents the interests of Traditional Owners in a particular area. A TOC may hold rights under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and/ or the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* on behalf of the Traditional Owners it represents and have other formal agreements in place.

A **Treaty** is a negotiated political agreement between a group and government that recognises the group as a distinct political community. The Victorian Government and Aboriginal Victorians are working to advance Treaty or Treaties following the passing of the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018*.<sup>4</sup> The purposes of a Treaty or Treaties in Victoria may include: the acknowledgement of rights, the initiation of a process of reconciliation between Aboriginal groups and government and reparation of historical grievances, and the establishment of certain forms of self-determination for those Aboriginal groups.<sup>5</sup>

1 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-4-cultural-safety-and-security-tools-address-lateral-violence-social-justice>

2 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1>

3 <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/researchpapers/download/36-research-papers/13861-advancingthe-treaty-process-with-aboriginal-victorians-bill-2018>

4 <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/advancing-treaty-process-aboriginal-victorians-act-2018/001>

5 <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/download/36-research-papers/13861-advancing-the-treaty-process-with-aboriginal-victorians-bill-2018>

# Secretary's FOREWORD



**Victoria is a part of the world like no other. We have everything from deserts to snowfields, living rainforests to sleeping volcanos, breathtaking coastlines to the mighty**

**Murray. And we have a unique history, some of which is written in books, most of which is written in the landscape around us and the culture and connections of Aboriginal Victorians.**

To unlock our shared future, we need to come to terms with the dispossession of Traditional Owners that occurred with colonisation – and make right what can be made right. We must also recognise where the legacy of past policy continues to influence current practice.

Our Department is committed to reconciliation and a Treaty for Victoria's First Nations people.

We understand that reconciliation begins with self-determination – working in partnership with Traditional Owners as they take control of their own destiny.

Pupangarli Marnmarnepu 'Owning Our Future' *Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025* (the Strategy) is a chance for DELWP to help the State of Victoria undertake significant reform and make peace with its colonial history – to build a better future for all. It's been developed by listening to the priorities of First Nations people about how we approach this journey.

We know that Traditional Owners want DELWP to transfer power and resources to communities. This is our accountability.

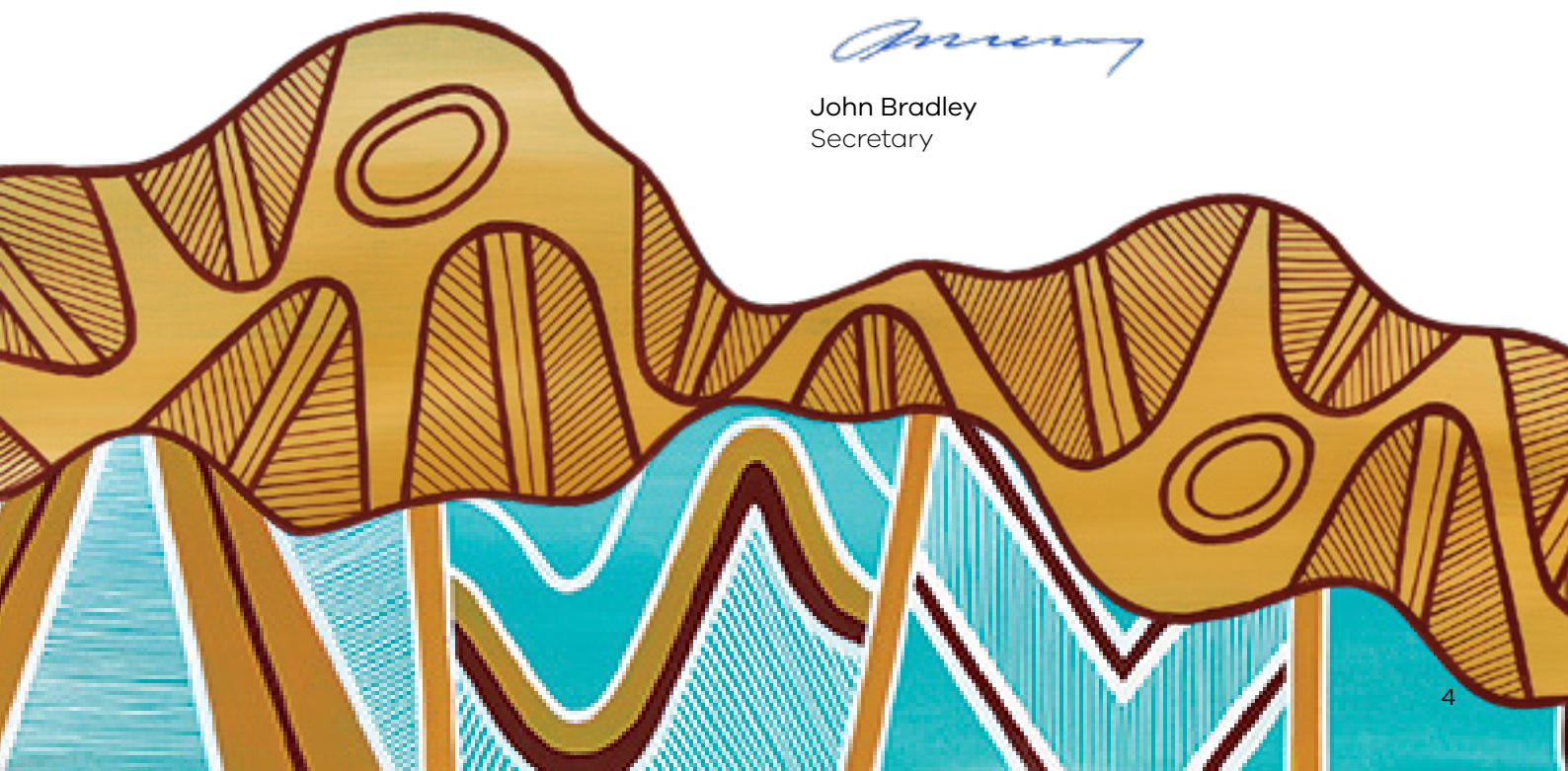
To meet our commitments, this Strategy focuses on the key domains of People, Systems, Country and Accountability. It is our plan to 'rewire' the systems and processes in our Department that create barriers to the self-determination of Aboriginal Victorians.

The work done by our Department occurs at place, on the country of Victoria's Traditional Owners and this means there are meaningful, tangible opportunities to follow *their* Country Plans, to heal country and to transfer power and resources.

This Strategy reflects our commitment to deliver real outcomes through self-determination and to be led by the voices of Aboriginal Victorians.

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Bradley'.

John Bradley  
Secretary







# Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

In 2009, Australia became a signatory to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration). The UN Declaration outlines the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world and describes self-determination as the right of Indigenous peoples to ‘freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development’.

The name of the Strategy, **Pupangarli Marnmarnepu**, means ‘**Owning Our Future**’ and embodies what it means for Traditional Owners to be self-determining.

What that means for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians is this: their future is theirs by right. Human rights cannot be given or taken away. They are inalienable.

Given Australia’s history of dispossession, the Victorian Government has an obligation – on behalf of the people of Victoria – to work in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to support their right to self-determination.

This is the responsibility of DELWP.

This is the purpose of the Strategy.



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

### Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

In 2018, after numerous conversations between the Victorian Government and Victorian Aboriginal community, the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023* (VAAF) was refreshed and released.

The revised VAAF has three purposes:

- To drive change across the Victorian Government by addressing inequity, delivering stronger outcomes and transforming systems
- To enable Aboriginal self-determination
- To enable the Aboriginal community to hold government to account.<sup>6</sup>





It also sets out 11 guiding principles that should underpin all Victorian Government action to progress self-determination.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the 11 self-determination guiding principles inform the Strategy (see **Appendix 2**).

The VAAF's vision is that 'all Aboriginal Victorian people, families and communities are healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and living culturally rich lives'. The VAAF outlines goals across six domains to work toward this vision with the two most relevant to DELWP's work **highlighted** below:

1. Children, family and home
2. Learning and skills
3. **Opportunity and prosperity**
4. Health and wellbeing
5. Justice and safety
6. **Culture and Country**

The VAAF acknowledges that there are systemic and structural barriers to self-determination. It establishes the following priority actions that

the Victorian Government must commit to and act upon to enable self-determination:

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

**Figure 1** Self-determination enablers, *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*

### Self-Determination Reform Framework

Following the VAAF, the Victorian Government released the *Self-Determination Reform Framework* (SDRF) in 2019.

Under the SDRF, DELWP must develop a plan to enable Aboriginal self-determination in 2020. The Strategy maps out DELWP's plan to support Aboriginal self-determination.

The SDRF provides a structure and guidance for Victorian Government departments and agencies to enact the VAAF's self-determination priorities.

The SDRF includes four reform domains: People, Outcomes, Systems and Accountability.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the SDRF sets out a reporting framework to keep government accountable via the annual *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report* (VGAAR), which is tabled in the Victorian Parliament every year.

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

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

8 <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/self-determination-reform-framework>



## DELWP – from inclusion to self-determination

Since 2016, the implementation of *Munganin-Gadhaba* (DELWP's *Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2016-2020*) has helped build genuine partnerships between DELWP staff, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

These partnerships have resulted in initiatives such as: the continued implementation of Native Title and other Traditional Owner settlements; the development of a state-wide Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Strategy; the reintroduction of Aboriginal languages in land and built-environment processes; support for the return of cultural burning; the establishment of an Aboriginal water program; and the development of more community-centred partnerships that value Aboriginal perspectives and expertise.

This body of work enables DELWP to move from the 'inclusion' mindset of the previous *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018* to a focus on transformational reform to enable self-determination.

DELWP will continue to forge and strengthen partnerships to enable the self-determination of Aboriginal Victorians as a human right.

### 1.1.1 SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

This is a five-year Strategy founded on cultural authority that sets the strategic direction, outcomes and priorities for DELWP to respond to Aboriginal self-determination.

The Strategy incorporates the whole-of-government commitments set out in the VAAF and covers the four SDRF domains – People, Systems, Outcomes and Accountability. It responds to *Outcomes Reform in Victoria 2019*<sup>9</sup> by embedding Outcomes into the People, Systems and Accountability domains, and adds another domain – Country – that reflects the aspirations of Traditional Owners and DELWP's role as a land manager (see **Figure 3**).

The Strategy is guided by the many conversations and consultations DELWP undertook with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal groups across Victoria.

Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs) and Aboriginal groups told DELWP that they wanted

two things: first, for government to remove barriers to self-determination; and second, for DELWP to work in genuine partnership by transferring power back and becoming more accountable to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. The aspirations of Traditional Owners and the strategic directions DELWP should develop are already set down in the many individual Whole-of-Country plans that exist across Victoria.

The Strategy outlines broad outcomes, indicators and measures which will inform yearly priorities that will be implemented in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.



**Figure 2** DELWP strategically enables self-determination

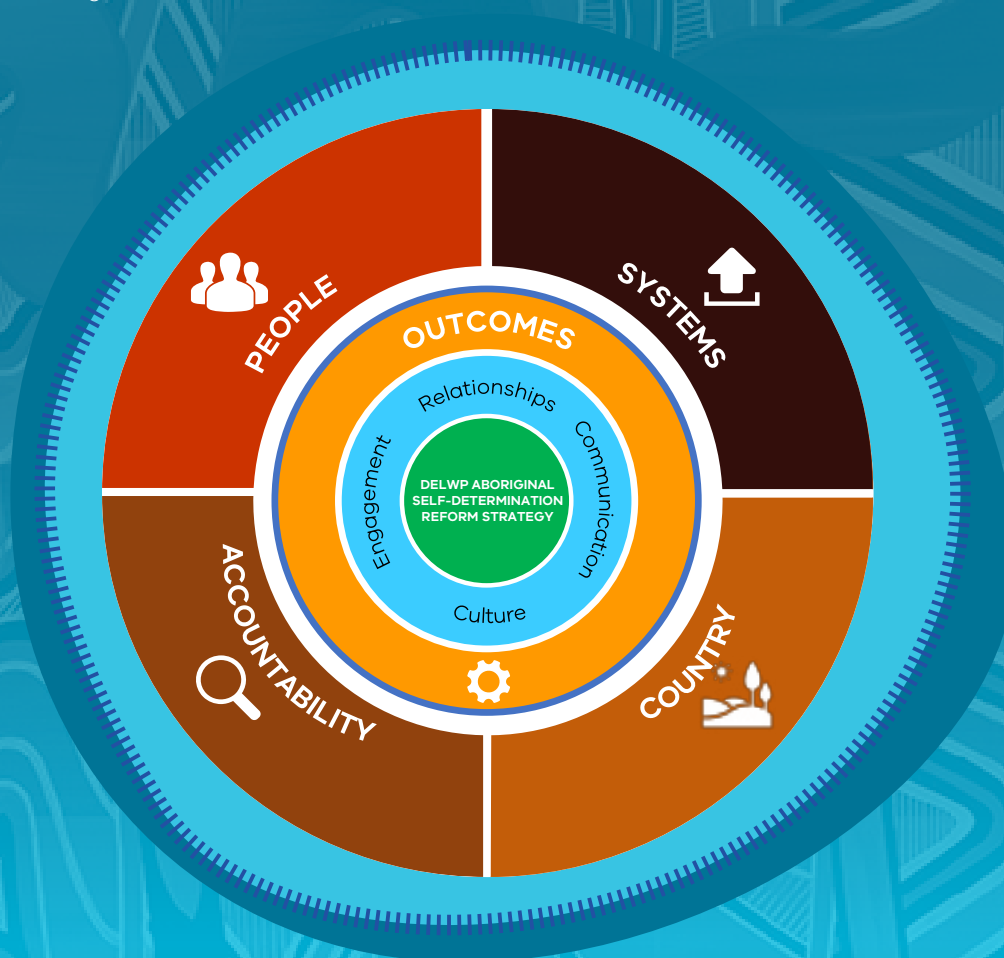
### Traditional Owner Self-Determination Plans

DELWP will work with TOCs and non-formally recognised Traditional Owner groups who wish to develop individually-tailored Traditional Owner Self-Determination Plans (TO-SD Plans) based on their goals and visions for their Country and people. TOC and Traditional Owner groups will be able to assess DELWP's implementation of actions set out in their TO-SD Plans and by the outcomes and priorities in the Strategy.

The outcomes in each domain within the Strategy have implications for DELWP agency partners. The Strategy does not limit or diminish any actions from other DELWP strategies, or partnership commitments under land management, Native Title or Recognition and Settlement Agreements across the State.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/Outcomes-reform-statement.PDF>

Figure 3 DELWP Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform model



### 1.1.2 HOW DOES THE STRATEGY RELATE TO TREATY?

The Strategy complements the work being done to advance Treaty in Victoria.

It does not limit or anticipate the impact and role that a future Treaty or Treaties may have on the Victorian Government's efforts to support self-determination.<sup>10</sup>

The Strategy's outcomes and priorities are designed to support DELWP to be ready for the negotiation of Treaty or Treaties. DELWP's view is that Treaty or Treaties will create the foundation for a new, positive relationship between the State and Aboriginal Victorians.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/self-determination-reform-framework>



### 11.3 HOW DOES THE STRATEGY RELATE TO ONE-DELWP STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2019-2023?

In 2019, DELWP updated its *One-DELWP Strategic Framework*<sup>11</sup> by committing to support the self-determination of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. DELWP outcome areas include– Climate Change, Environmental Management, Water, Energy, Land Management, Planning and Emergency Management – supported by five organisational pillars:

1. Self Determination of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians will be recognised and supported
2. Personal accountability, and a One-DELWP mindset in everything we do
3. High performance and delivery for the government
4. Collaborative leadership and a positive culture
5. Increased engagement, partnerships, and service excellence.

The revised *One-DELWP Strategic Framework* demonstrates the Department's commitment to self-determination. This commitment is guided by DELWP's ambition to forge partnerships with Traditional Owners and Victorian Aboriginal communities, as well as its recognition and acknowledgement of the intrinsic connection

of Traditional Owners to Country and their contribution in the management of land, water, the natural landscape and built environments.

The Strategy formalises DELWP's commitment to support self-determination. It also shows DELWP Groups how to embed self-determination in their work.

### 11.4 HOW TO USE THE STRATEGY

The Strategy will guide corporate and business planning in DELWP. It will be used in conjunction with DELWP's yearly Implementation Plan to help DELWP's Groups and Regions embed the identified priorities within annual business plan processes. Monthly and yearly reporting on these priorities will assist in tracking progress against outcomes, indicators and measures.

The outcomes, indicators and measures – which are detailed in Chapter 3 – also provide a framework against which DELWP will evaluate the Strategy's progress.

For DELWP to meet its whole-of-government commitments, many of the annual priorities build year-by-year toward self-determination. This sustained commitment to annual priorities will create a solid path toward achieving the outcomes of the Strategy.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/corporate-plan/home/one-delwp-strategic-framework-201923>

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY



### PEOPLE

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



### SYSTEMS

DELWP has transformational systems that respect Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and self-governance.



### ACCOUNTABILITY

DELWP is accountable and transparent in its efforts to transfer relevant decision-making powers and resources to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.



### COUNTRY

DELWP supports Traditional Owners' rights on Country so that their aspirations for land, water and culture are realised.

### VISION

DELWP will enable self-determination by creating an environment that understands and respects the rights and dignity of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

## 1.3 GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

### 1.3.1 WHAT IS SELF-DETERMINATION?

Aboriginal nations across Australia are the oldest living cultures in the world, and therefore the oldest governing nations in the world. Colonisation brought destruction to the Aboriginal nations and peoples and had the specific intent of excluding Aboriginal people and cultures.

Since the early 1970s, Commonwealth policies have shifted.

The first shift was to Aboriginal self-management policy, encouraging Aboriginal organisations to deliver services to Aboriginal communities.<sup>12</sup>

More recently, there has been a shift in national dialogue toward self-determination. The calls for self-determination policies stem from the leadership of Aboriginal nations across Australia, as well as international policy shifts. Self-determination is significant because it rightfully places choice back in the hands of Traditional Owners.

The Strategy – together with the VAAF and SDRF – is built on the foundation of the UN Declaration.<sup>13</sup>

The *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*<sup>14</sup> (the Charter) also provides legal rights for Aboriginal Victorians.<sup>15</sup>

However, additional action needs to be taken by government to enable economic, social and cultural equity, and Aboriginal self-determination.

Aboriginal Victorians require human rights not contained in the Charter – rights that recognise the hard work, values, systems and ways of life of generations of Aboriginal people.

12 <https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/research-and-evaluation/Research-Agenda-2018-2023-web.pdf>

13 [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

14 [https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/cohrara2006433/](https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/)

15 <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/hub/aboriginal-rights/>

Gunaikurnai community water day and site visit on Country





### 1.3.2 WHY IS SELF-DETERMINATION IMPORTANT?

Since colonisation, Australian, state and territory governments have exercised power over Aboriginal people.

The inseparable link between Country and Traditional Owners has been ignored – and the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in areas such as health, education and employment has not been closed.

This approach failed because it did not consider the fundamental importance of self-determination, self-governance and autonomy.

In other words, the best way to repair the damage is to support a transition to self-determination.

That is why the Strategy supports Traditional Owners to make decisions which affect them and commits the Government to remove barriers to, and support the realisation of, self-determination.

### 1.3.3 WHAT SHOULD DELWP DO TO ENABLE SELF-DETERMINATION?

Self-determination is all about choice.

It must be defined by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians, not government.

Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination and self-governance – and that right must be respected.

The role of DELWP is to identify and remove barriers that keep Traditional Owners in Victoria from exercising their right to self-determination. As the VAAF states, Aboriginal people know what is best for themselves, their families and communities.

The human right of self-determination – as defined in the UN Declaration – underpins the Strategy.

### 1.3.4 OUTCOMES-FOCUSED APPROACH TO ENABLE SELF-DETERMINATION

**DELWP will adopt an outcomes-focused approach that values and supports Aboriginal leadership and expertise.**

**Self-determination will be embedded in DELWP's plans, processes, actions and outcomes in the management of land, water and the built environment.**

Outcomes are used to drive change in public sectors around the world, but government funding in Aboriginal affairs previously tended to focus on outputs.

In 2019, the Victorian Government shifted towards an outcomes-based approach to policy and strategy.<sup>16</sup> This change aligns with the outcomes focus of the VAAF, the SDRF and the Strategy – marking a shift towards generational change and improved outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians<sup>17</sup> by focusing on strengths rather than shortcomings.

Self-determination is the most proactive way to drive effective and sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal people.<sup>18</sup>

The pathway (see **Figure 4**) demonstrates the four self-determination enablers that will make Aboriginal self-determination a reality.

Adopting this pathway will transform DELWP's systems and structures and, in the process, support self-determination and enable equity of outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

16 <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/Outcomes-reform-statement.PDF>





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

18 <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/self-determination-reform-framework>

Figure 4 VAAF Action Logic, Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023

Transformation of structures and systems, through government action to:

**Self-determination enablers**

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

Aboriginal Victorians are empowered to own and drive safe, relevant and accessible responses to meet their needs

Increase in Aboriginal Victorians confidently accessing systems and services that support them to thrive

1

Elimination of structural and systemic barriers experienced by Aboriginal Victorians

2

3

Aboriginal Victorians are empowered to own and drive safe, relevant and accessible responses to meet their needs

4

Increase in the safety, relevance, accessibility of universal and targeted systems and services

5

Improved outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians




























“ Adopting this pathway will transform **DELWP’s systems and structures** and, in the process, **support self-determination** and enable *equity of outcomes* for **Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.** ”

DELWP staff member



### 1.3.5 OUTCOMES

*Wungerwil weria tyalingi gundgal ja purinya kulingi*  
 "Our people speaking strong to make our country and people healthy"

OUTCOME		OUTCOME INDICATOR <i>To succeed we must...</i>	SELF-DETERMINATION ENABLERS	
PEOPLE	1. DELWP is culturally capable and safe; recognising, supporting, valuing and embracing Aboriginal decision-making.	1.1 Embed culturally safe practices to create a culturally safe workforce, enabling self-determination in DELWP systems and policies.		
		1.2 Enable Aboriginal talent-building, leadership, decision-making and evaluation.		
		1.3 Deliver opportunity and economic prosperity to address the ongoing inequity experienced by Aboriginal people.		
SYSTEMS	2. DELWP has transformational systems that respect Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and self-governance.	2.1 Champion systemic, structural and legislative change to enable self-determination.		
		2.2 Recognise and enable Indigenous Data Sovereignty.		
		2.3 Support the aspirations and participation of Aboriginal Victorians in building their wealth and strengthening their economic independence.		
		2.4 Respect the free, prior and informed consent of Traditional Owners by embedding cultural authority and processes in DELWP practices and timelines.		
COUNTRY	3. DELWP supports Traditional Owners' rights on Country so that their aspirations for land, water and culture are realised.	3.1 Recognise and implement the decisions that Traditional Owners make over cultural fire practices.		
		3.2 Recognise and implement the decisions that Traditional Owners determine over sustainable management of water resources.		
		3.3 Recognise and implement the decisions that Traditional Owners make over traditional lands and resources.		
		3.4 Celebrate and support the preservation and promotion of Aboriginal cultures and languages across Victoria.		
ACCOUNTABILITY	4. DELWP is accountable and transparent in its efforts to transfer relevant decision-making powers and resources to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.	4.1 Support Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to partner, innovate and evaluate with DELWP on progress towards self-determination.		
		4.2 Be a leader in progressing self-determination across government.		
		4.3 Ensure that policies and programs are responsive to Traditional Owner needs, priorities and aspirations.		



Prioritise culture



Address racism and promote cultural safety



Address trauma and support healing



Transfer power and resources to communities



### 1.3.6 CREATION OF THE CARING FOR COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Government's efforts to promote self-determination must be Aboriginal-led. Historically, governments have controlled evaluation and reporting. Consequently, there has been a lack of accountability. This is why Aboriginal-led mechanisms must be established to evaluate the Government's outcomes and actions and secure the legitimacy of new systems of governance.

Transferring evaluation power and adopting Aboriginal metrics will create a more equitable partnership between Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians and the Victorian Government. Currently, there is an absence of Aboriginal-led evaluation mechanisms across government.

To address this gap, DELWP will need to develop a formalised accountability mechanism in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. The first step towards achieving this will be through a new Caring for Country Partnership Forum to support a systemic change to enable self-determination. Regional partnership forums will be established, where required, to enhance partnership arrangements between Traditional Owners, Regional Directors and their senior staff.

The Caring for Country Partnership Forum will monitor DELWP's progress on the Strategy and oversee the changes in systems and processes to remove barriers. This will facilitate the transfer of power and resources to enable self-determination.

This Forum will be made up of representatives from Traditional Owner groups (formally and non-formally recognised) and the DELWP Senior Executive Team. This Forum will be co-chaired and co-governing, acting as a supervisory body until an Aboriginal-led mechanism is developed.



# Chapter 2 DOMAINS

**This chapter expands on domains People, System, Country and Accountability and provides a foundation for the Outcomes Framework (see section 3.1).**

## 2.1 PEOPLE



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

**Aboriginal people, families and communities are strong and resilient, but still experience unequal social, health and economic outcomes compared to other Victorians.**

The Charter recognises that Aboriginal people in Victoria will realise positive, life-changing outcomes when they can fulfil their distinct cultural rights and practices and define and meet their own needs and aspirations. It also requires the Victorian Government to properly consider Aboriginal rights when making decisions.<sup>19</sup>

Considerable work remains to be done to achieve those outcomes, but this much is clear: the fundamental human right of self-determination is intrinsically linked to Country and its resources. Internationally, First Nations communities have proved that the most direct path to positive social change for Aboriginal peoples is self-determination.

The Victorian Government will enable self-determination by transforming its systems and processes. This plan was outlined in the *Outcomes Reform in Victoria 2019*, informed by extensive community consultation and engagement, and detailed in the SDRF.<sup>20</sup>

However, to enable self-determination, DELWP leaders and staff must first value Aboriginal expertise and decision-making *and* understand that throughout history the State's systems, legislation and policies exist in a structure that specifically excludes and disempowers Aboriginal Victorians.

Current State systems and practices inconsistently support – and at worst, prevent – Aboriginal peoples' right to practice self-determination and connect to their culture and Country.

DELWP will identify and remove the barriers to self-determination. But this transformation can only be achieved when DELWP staff respect, value and embrace Aboriginal expertise and are culturally capable and safe in all their practices.

The need for change within DELWP's people-related processes was confirmed during the rigorous process of developing a *DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework*<sup>21</sup> (see **Figure 5**).

DELWP Aboriginal staff have shown courage in sharing their lived experiences. The next step in DELWP's leadership approach involves creating opportunities for staff to become more culturally competent so that Aboriginal staff, stakeholders and visitors feel culturally safe.<sup>22</sup>

19 [https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/cohrara2006433/](https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/)

20 <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/self-determination-reform-framework>

21 <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/cultural-safety>

22 <https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/cultural-safety>





Figure 5 Cultural auditing to develop the DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework revealed:

12%

Aboriginal staff interviewed  
felt their working environment  
was culturally safe

36%

had experienced racism  
in the past 12 months

## THE CASE FOR CHANGE

'The DELWP community have an opportunity to build their current knowledge and expertise when it comes to understanding Aboriginal cultural and community values, perspectives and responsibilities to Country.

Reflecting on DELWP's own vision- "*Thriving environments and communities,*" I believe we can all significantly contribute to this through meaningful relationship building with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. I envisage that having an Aboriginal-led approach when we care for Country and understanding things through an Aboriginal lens will demonstrate DELWP's wholehearted response to self-determination and empower and advance our service delivery and increase public satisfaction to the whole of Victoria.

Our Aboriginal communities are calling on us to learn, make the necessary changes and act. With the guidance provided through the Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch and our existing resources, we can all respond positively and appropriately – we can do this!

Dan Little – Yuin and Wiradjuri man and  
DELWP Manager

"  
I don't leave my  
Aboriginality  
at the door.  
I bring my whole,  
proud self to work. "  
DELWP staff member

After all, the knowledge and skills required to deliver on commitments for Aboriginal Victorians are central to the mission of DELWP. The stronger DELWP's partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians, the better the outcomes for all Victorians.

DELWP leaders and staff face significant policy challenges, such as climate change, sustainable resources and emergency response. These policy challenges must not be used as an excuse to ignore the fundamental human rights of Aboriginal Victorians. Instead, the deep and profound connection of Aboriginal Victorians to Country should be respectfully acknowledged as a source of wellbeing, knowledge and expertise that can help DELWP respond to the challenges it faces.

## 2.2 SYSTEMS



DELWP has transformational systems that respect Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and self-governance.

**Australia is the only Commonwealth country in the world that has not negotiated a Treaty with its Indigenous peoples.<sup>23</sup>**

This failure has continued a legacy of structural racism and unconscious bias in government systems. Colonial systems of government were designed to specifically exclude Aboriginal peoples. Recent research has found that race-neutral policies, particularly in the areas of health and education, contribute to unconscious bias and restrictions on Aboriginal people.<sup>24</sup>

Anti-discrimination law and neutral policies alone will not remove the barriers that keep Aboriginal

Victorians from fully exercising their human rights and achieving their full potential. Proactive reforms of systems and policies are required.

DELWP recognises that removing systemic barriers will shift power imbalances, enable Aboriginal self-determination and create meaningful partnerships that are more culturally matched with governance systems of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

Guided by Traditional Owners – DELWP will transform its systems to enable self-determination. This transformation will elevate DELWP's capacity to respond to and enact Traditional Owner aspirations once a Treaty or Treaties begin to be negotiated. DELWP's systems and policy reforms will be coordinated by the Aboriginal Self-Determination Policy Coordination Working Group.

The Aboriginal Self-Determination Policy Coordination Working Group provides a forum for all DELWP Groups to have a co-ordinated One-DELWP approach to key policy initiatives, such as the First Principles Review of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*<sup>25</sup> and DELWP's input into the Victorian Government's Treaty process. The Caring for Country Partnership Forum will have oversight over all DELWP priorities and actions.

**Self-determination principles guide potential reforms to public land legislation**

Self-determination principles have been a key driver in the consideration of reforms to Victoria's public land legislation by the Land Management Policy Division within the Environment and Climate Change Group. One of the purposes of the potential reforms is to reset the legislation so that it better recognises the Traditional Owners of Victoria's public land, and facilitates and does not hinder Traditional Owners' rights to manage land. There is also potential for reforms to better support cultural authority and practices.

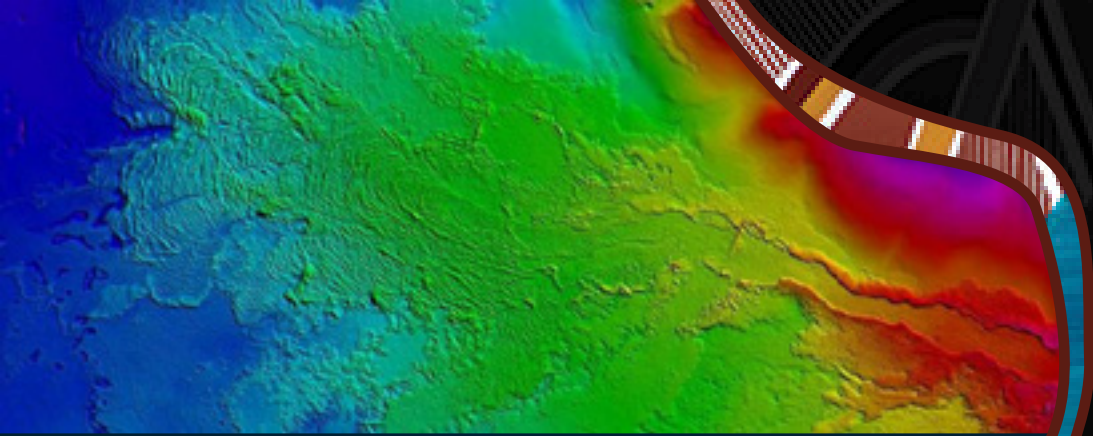
*"To progress we must actively, in every action, transform our systems and processes."*

DELWP Executive Officer

23 <https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AltLawJl/2006/32.html>  
24 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/000494410705100105>  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22032537/>

25 <https://www.premiervic.gov.au/strengthening-traditional-owner-land-rights-victoria>





Early Lidar imaging from the Budj Bim Lidar Project

## DELWP SUPPORTS INDIGENOUS DATA SOVEREIGNTY IN THE BUDJ BIM LIDAR PROJECT

The Budj Bim Lidar Project is a DELWP first in transferring data sovereignty back to Traditional Owners. Lidar is a method for measuring distances by illuminating the target with laser light and measuring the reflection with a sensor. The high resolution Lidar and imagery is intended to support the identification of ancient aquaculture and land management artefacts across the site.

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) and the DELWP Land Information and Spatial Services Branch's early engagement highlighted how spatial data could assist in safeguarding valuable and culturally important natural and man-made areas across the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape (UNESCO World Heritage Listed in July 2019).

The culturally sensitive and important geospatial data collected is currently being jointly managed by DELWP and GMTOAC. Once the transition period is over, ownership and management will be solely transferred to GMTOAC.

The Budj Bim Lidar Project is already seeing major benefits which include:

- Greater collaboration and engagement between DELWP, Traditional Owners and other stakeholders
- Enhanced technical skills and experience in data management for GMTOAC staff
- New insights and learnings in co-designing a project with Traditional Owners for DELWP staff.

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

Aboriginal Victorian



## 2.3 COUNTRY



DELWP supports Traditional Owners' rights on Country so that their aspirations for land, water and culture are realised.

### The Victorian Government recognises that only Traditional Owners can speak for Country.

That is because Country – the water, the land and everything it encompasses – is woven into the fabric of Aboriginal lore, language, governance and wellbeing.

In other words, Country embodies culture.

It is widely accepted that management of Country strengthens individual and collective identities, and promotes self-esteem, resilience and improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, Aboriginal management of Country encompasses experiences learned over thousands of generations, and is a tested, credible and reliable source of environmental management information.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, Aboriginal access to and management of Country both enables the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples<sup>28</sup> and promotes environmental sustainability.

Everyone stands to benefit.

Under the UN Declaration, Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, waters and coastal seas. They also have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands and resources.

The UN Declaration is reflected in various rights mechanisms in Victoria and protected by the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) and the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

Traditional Owners have responsibilities – as Registered Aboriginal Parties under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* – to protect the vast array of cultural heritage woven across the Victorian landscape, on all land tenures.

Across Victoria, many Traditional Owners groups have published their Whole-of-Country plans, as a means of expressing their people's vision, aspirations, strategies and actions for Country. They support Traditional Owners in communicating about their cultural identity and rights on Country. Whole-of-Country plans are a key means of guidance for government to understand and engage with the rights and interests of Traditional Owners. DELWP will support the use and delivery of these plans.

Country is a distinct cultural right for Aboriginal peoples in the Charter. Under the Charter, Aboriginal peoples must not be denied the 'distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.'<sup>29</sup>

In 2018, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018*, Australia's first ever law towards developing a Treaty or Treaties.

Since then, the Victorian Government has reframed relationships with Aboriginal Victorians – beginning the process to enter various treaties with Aboriginal nations in Victoria. The Strategy builds on the ambitions of Australia's first-ever treaty law – reforming DELWP's systems so that they have the agility to respond to a Treaty or Treaties and transfer decision-making powers to Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owners have said they want policies and programs to be informed by their knowledge systems so that their cultural and human rights are respected and Victoria's precious ecosystems are protected.

“ Country embodies culture. ”

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

27 <https://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30058738/kingsley-developing-an-2013.pdf>

28 [https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/products/report\\_research\\_outputs/benefits-cfc\\_0.pdf](https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/products/report_research_outputs/benefits-cfc_0.pdf)

29 <https://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/human-rights/the-charter/rights-under-the-charter>



'Through my eyes I see a cultural landscape once managed with fire and when I speak my language, I begin to understand my connection to my ancestral land and my role as a Wadawurrung bagurrk (woman).

We burnt our wetlands to enrich the harvest of our weaving plants, we had advanced knowledge of using fire as a tool at the right time.'

Tammy Gilson – Wadawurrung woman and DELWP Aboriginal Inclusion Coordinator



Blair Gilson – Wadawurrung man and officer with Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation, Tammy Gilson – Wadawurrung woman and DELWP Aboriginal Inclusion Coordinator and Topsy Milera – Narungga and Ngarrindjeri woman and DELWP Administration Support Officer

“ At **DELWP** we care about Country and are in the position to **walk with** Traditional Owners to implement **traditional burn plans** to not only **heal our people** but manage the land like **my ancestors** once did. ”

Tammy Gilson – Wadawurrung woman and DELWP Aboriginal Inclusion Coordinator

'Wayn gurr dja  
Willem wiyn canboo

*Good Country  
a fire was there  
once*

Wayn gurr karrung

*It was a good place  
to camp*

Maiwan  
kimbarne wiyn  
murrup

*a long time ago  
here fire spirit*

yangarramela'

*come back*





'Djandak Wi (Country Fire) and working at DELWP gives me the opportunity to link Traditional Owners back to Country using cultural burning methods to re-stock the supermarket shelves in the landscape, and gives the real ownership of self-determination by empowering Mob to lead the burns from start to finish: why we want to burn, how we want to burn, and when we want to burn.

**My position at DELWP helps with being culturally safe throughout Cultural fire processes and this gives Mobs opportunities to manage Country the way they want.'**

Mick Bourke – Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung man and DELWP Cultural Burn Planner

Mick Bourke, at cultural burn in Boort at Woolshed swamp on Yung Balug Clan Country of the Dja Dja Wurrung



## RECOGNISING TRADITIONAL OWNERS DECISIONS OVER CULTURAL FIRE PRACTICES

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Corporation (GLaWAC) and DELWP worked together to include a cultural burn on 19 May 2020 of the Knob Reserve.

The Knob Reserve is managed by a committee of management with majority Gunaikurnai control under the Settlement Agreement with the Gunaikurnai. The Knob Reserve is a culturally significant and a traditional meeting place of families and clans of the Gunaikurnai.

GLaWAC led the burn with respectful support from DELWP staff made up of the First Custodians and Gippsland Aboriginal staff network. This allowed a culturally safe space to reconnect with each other and Country. On the day of the burn, the designated DELWP Burn Officer in Charge briefed two key GLaWAC staff who then took lead of the burn that included all of the Gunaikurnai fire crew. Some of the DELWP First Custodians are Gunaikurnai and the invitation to be included in a cultural burn on Country was especially significant.

DELWP firefighters at the burn included Reggie Baxter, respected member of the Gunaikurnai community, who took a leading role sharing knowledge of traditional fire techniques and was able to work alongside his son who works for GLaWAC. The event engendered a feeling of pride and connection and plans are already underway for future cultural burns.

Cultural burning at Knob Reserve, joint managed by Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Corporation (GLaWAC). Photographs taken by Jess Shapiro, GLaWAC





DELWP's current and ongoing priorities in this space include:

- Implementing agreements between the State and Traditional Owners
- Working in partnership with Traditional Owners
- Understanding and embedding the strategies in Whole-of-Country plans within DELWP work
- Delivering plans and strategies such as the *Water for Victoria, Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* and *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy*
- Valuing Traditional Owner expertise in climate change adaptation and mitigation programs
- Reforming systems to increase Traditional Owner-led decisions.

The Strategy further enables DELWP to celebrate Traditional Owners' connection to Country by working with individual TOC and non-formally recognised Traditional Owner groups to deliver on their Caring for Country/ individual TO-SD Plans based on their goals and vision for their Country and people.

DELWP will be assessed by the TOCs and Traditional Owner groups on its performance against the actions in Caring for Country/ individual TO-SD Plans, as well as the outcomes, goals and priorities in the strategy.



## FROM INCLUSION TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The Aboriginal Self-determination Reform Branch (formed in January 2020) provides leadership, culturally-sound advice, and strategic direction to guide and empower staff to genuinely partner and meaningfully engage with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

The Branch's primary responsibilities are to: drive the self-determination reform agenda across DELWP; build cultural capability and a culturally safe environment; and develop DELWP's Aboriginal workforce. This transition from inclusion (previous branch was the Aboriginal Inclusion Support Branch) shows DELWP's commitment to enabling self-determination.

The Branch comprises the following units:

- Aboriginal Employment and Cultural Strategy
- Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform
- Delivery Coordination and Support
- Partnerships and Engagement.

The Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch will support and assist Traditional Owners and the Senior Executive Team to hold DELWP accountable and champion systemic and structural change – supporting DELWP to be a leader in progressing self-determination across government.

Travis Lovett – Kerrupmara man of the Gunditjmara Nation and DELWP Executive, Terry Garwood – Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba and Wergaia man and DELWP Deputy Secretary, Curt Garwood, Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba and Wergaia man and DELWP Manager, and Suzie Coates – Yorta Yorta woman and DELWP Principal Policy Officer



## 2.4 ACCOUNTABILITY



**DELWP is accountable and transparent in its efforts to transfer relevant decision-making powers and resources to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.**

### **Traditional Owners have told DELWP what self-determination looks like for them.**

For Traditional Owners, self-determination is built on a relationship of trust and mutual accountability. It is not overburdened with administration and allows time for strategic longer-term goal setting.

With that in mind, DELWP will transform the way it works – shifting from being an outside decision-maker and regulator, and removing barriers for Traditional Owners. That means distributing power more equally and allowing Traditional Owners to increasingly hold DELWP to account in its portfolio responsibilities.

The VAAF requires the Government to report on its progress to enable self-determination in the annual VGAAR overseen by the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs (SLG). DELWP is currently monitoring its progress through a report shaped by the SDRF. A two-pronged approach of Aboriginal-led evaluation and government self-reporting helps to shift the focus from outputs to outcomes.

DELWP is committed to accountability.

One of DELWP's organisational pillars is the commitment that the *'Self-determination of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians will be recognised and supported.'* As a response, DELWP will report on all relevant priorities across the eight Groups of its organisation.

In addition, the Caring for Country Partnership Forum will monitor DELWP's progress against the Strategy and oversee the systemic changes that are necessary to enable meaningful self-determination. This is an important step towards an Aboriginal-led mechanism that will evaluate DELWP's performance and hold the Department to account.





## Chapter 3 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

**DELWP will broaden its approach to monitoring, evaluation and reporting by measuring outcomes rather than just outputs and activities.**

By measuring outcomes via qualitative and quantitative data, DELWP will focus on what is achieved for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. The type of data collected will be drawn from key evaluation questions that DELWP will continuously ask and answer as it progresses on its journey to enable self-determination. This approach is essential as capturing, monitoring and evaluating data will constantly show DELWP what is working and where improvements need to be made to better support Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

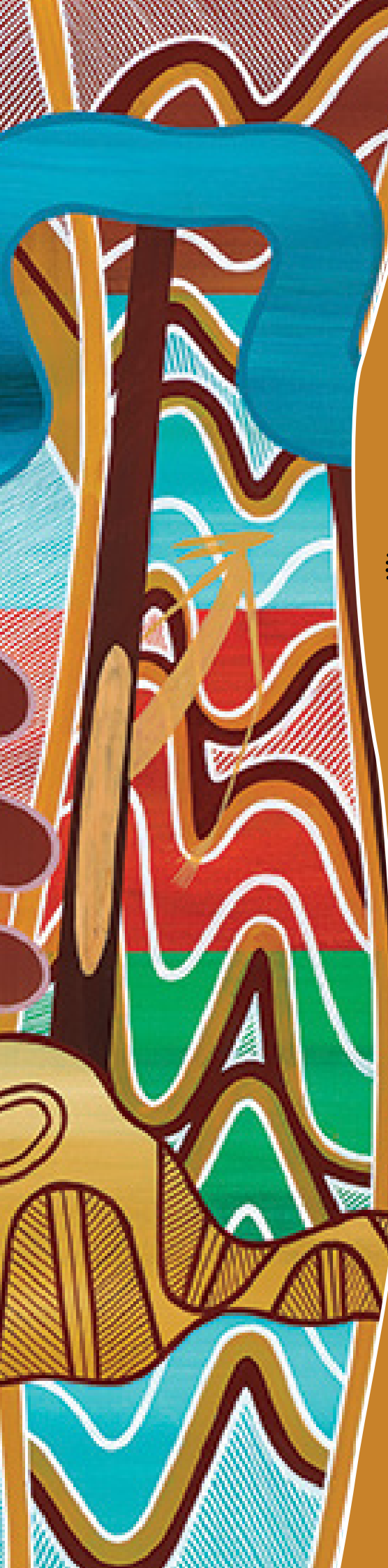
The data will be open, transparent and meaningful, and shared with Aboriginal Victorians at local and regional levels. The reason to share data can be summed up in one word: accountability. To fully support self-determination DELWP must be open with and accountable to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

TO-SD Plans will be an avenue for this data to be captured in an Aboriginal-led annual monitoring and evaluation process. A new Caring for Country Partnership Forum will be created. This Forum will include representatives from all Traditional Owner groups (formally and non-formally recognised) and the DELWP Senior Executive Team. It will support DELWP Groups to enable and actively champion the delivery of self-determination.

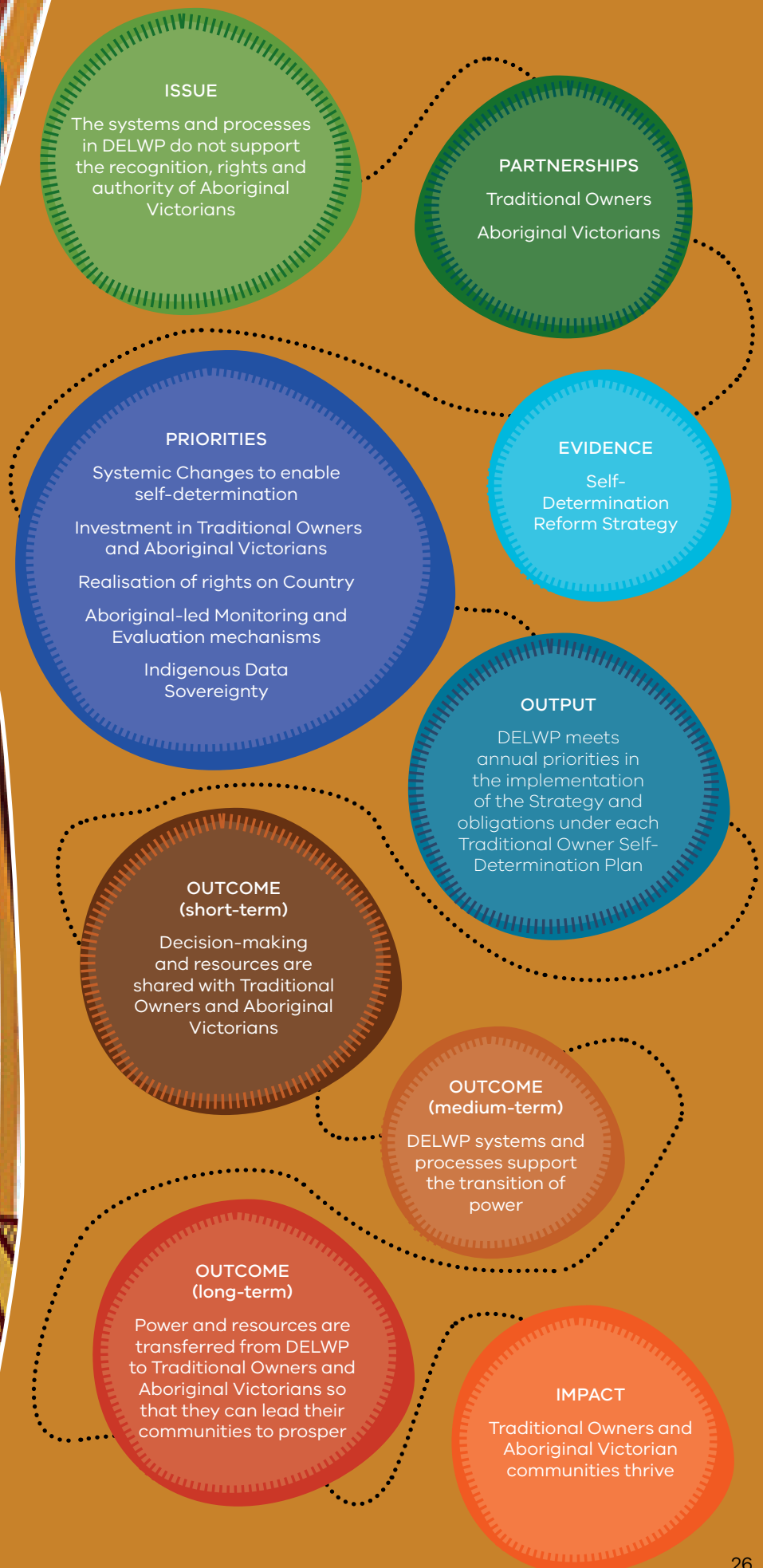
Guided by an annual implementation plan (which will be set against the outcomes in the Strategy) DELWP's eight Groups will have priorities written into their annual business plans. These will be informed by and reported to the Caring for Country Partnership Forum through monthly, quarterly and annual reporting to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC).

Importantly, Traditional Owners will be resourced to carry out the monitoring and evaluation required to hold DELWP to account. In the interests of transparency, all reporting will be accessible to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. After all, when community is adequately resourced, access to data will strengthen Aboriginal advocacy, sector planning and decision-making.

“ ...to fully support self-determination  
**DELWP** must be open with and accountable to  
Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians... ”



## Self-determination Reform Strategy Outcome Pathways Model





## OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

In the following Outcomes Framework, the outcome measures that are *italicised* are aligned to existing systems and processes to gather evidence and data. This allows DELWP's progress against these outcome measures to be properly monitored and evaluated.

Outcome measures that are **not** italicised do not have existing systems in place to collect the required data and evidence to monitor and meet progress toward self-determination.

This is because this Strategy is proposing an innovative approach to enable self-determination, with a focus placed on outcomes rather than outputs.

As such, support and resources will be required to establish the necessary processes so that the vital information in these outcome measures can be collected, monitored and evaluated.

Wadawurrung eel trap at celebration of Water and Culture at Dog Rocks.  
Photograph taken by Kirsten Lee, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority





### 3.1 OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

An **Outcome** is a statement that describes a desired end state for individuals and communities.

An **Outcome Indicator** is the nature and direction of change needed to achieve an outcome.

An **Outcome Measure** quantifies the size, amount or degree of change required. It provides evidence that enables evaluation of whether the outcome indicators are being achieved.



Prioritise culture









Address racism and promote cultural safety






















Address trauma and support healing













Transfer power and resources to communities

OUTCOME 1: DELWP is culturally capable and safe; recognising, supporting, valuing and embracing Aboriginal decision-making.			
PEOPLE	OUTCOME INDICATOR	OUTCOME MEASURES	SELF-DETERMINATION ENABLERS
	<i>To succeed we must . . .</i>		
	1.1 Embed culturally safe practices to create a culturally safe workforce, enabling self-determination in DELWP systems and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of Aboriginal staff who feel culturally safe at work.</li> <li>• Stakeholder satisfaction in DELWP staff cultural capability.</li> <li>• Increase of workforce-related systems and processes that embed the principles from the <i>DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework</i>.</li> </ul>	 
	1.2 Enable Aboriginal talent-building, leadership, decision-making and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DELWP Aboriginal staff satisfaction in career development opportunities.</li> <li>• A minimum 20 per cent of the three per cent DELWP Aboriginal employment target achieved to Victorian Public Service (VPS) level 6 roles or above.</li> </ul>	 
	1.3 Deliver opportunity and economic prosperity to address the ongoing inequity experienced by Aboriginal people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A three per cent Aboriginal workforce target at DELWP.</li> <li>• Increase in participation of Aboriginal women in targeted career programs and pathways.</li> <li>• Increase in secondments and other workplace arrangements between DELWP and TOCs.</li> <li>• Increase support to Aboriginal organisations to develop and build their workforces.</li> </ul>	 

↑ SYSTEMS	<b>OUTCOME 2: DELWP has transformational systems that respect Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and self-governance.</b>		
	<b>OUTCOME INDICATOR</b> <i>To succeed we must . . .</i>	<b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b>	<b>SELF-DETERMINATION ENABLERS</b>
	2.1 Champion systemic, structural and legislative change to enable self-determination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of Traditional Owner satisfaction with how DELWP has developed and strengthened its systems and structures to embed self-determination.</li> <li>Reduce the number of legislative and structural barriers that obstruct self-determination.</li> <li>Increase in Aboriginal cultural authority informing decisions that affect the management and control of land, water and other natural resources.</li> </ul>	   
	2.2 Recognise and enable Indigenous Data Sovereignty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations that have access to DELWP-held data collected from Aboriginal communities.</li> <li>High level of Traditional Owner satisfaction with Indigenous Data Sovereignty policies and systems.</li> <li>Increase the capacity of Traditional Owners to build their data governance and processes.</li> </ul>	 
	2.3 Support the aspirations and participation of Aboriginal Victorians in building their wealth and strengthening their economic independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of multi-year funding agreements and programs that are evaluated against Aboriginal community-defined outcomes.</li> <li>High level of Traditional Owner satisfaction with DELWP funding reforms that reflect Aboriginal cultural processes.</li> <li>Increase the number of DELWP budget bids that incorporate Traditional Owner aspirations outlined in the Caring for Country / TO-SD Plans.</li> </ul>	 
	2.4 Respect the free, prior and informed consent of Traditional Owners by embedding cultural authority and processes in DELWP practices and timelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of Traditional Owner satisfaction on changes in processes that require their consent.</li> <li>Increase the number of projects, funding cycles and procurement processes that incorporate Traditional Owner consent.</li> </ul>	

COUNTRY	OUTCOME 3: DELWP supports Traditional Owners' rights on Country so that their aspirations for land, water and culture are realised.		
	OUTCOME INDICATOR <i>To succeed we must . . .</i>	OUTCOME MEASURES	SELF-DETERMINATION ENABLERS
	3.1 Recognise and implement the decisions that Traditional Owners make over cultural fire practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increase the number of cultural burns undertaken by Traditional Owners.</i></li> <li>• Increase the number of DELWP partnership arrangements and management objectives that support fire and other management practices.</li> <li>• Traditional Owner satisfaction in policies and programs that progress self-determination in cultural fire management.</li> <li>• <i>Increase the Aboriginal workforce supporting cultural burning activities.</i></li> </ul>	  
	3.2 Recognise and implement the decisions that Traditional Owners determine over sustainable management of water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of policies and strategies reflecting Traditional Owner-led processes for the sustainable management of water resources.</li> <li>• Traditional Owner satisfaction in policies and programs that progress self-determination in water entitlements and management.</li> <li>• Increase the number of projects and initiatives where Aboriginal people are accessing water for economic development and other self-determined purposes.</li> </ul>	  
	3.3 Recognise and implement the decisions that Traditional Owners make over traditional lands and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increase native title determinations and/or Recognition and Settlement Agreements.</i></li> <li>• Increase the number of Traditional Owner groups involved in biodiversity planning and response.</li> <li>• Increase the number of Traditional Owner groups involved in climate change planning and response.</li> <li>• Traditional Owner satisfaction in policies and programs that progress self-determination in biodiversity, land management and climate change.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for Traditional Owners to invest in renewable energy.</li> </ul>	 
	3.4 Celebrate and support the preservation and promotion of Aboriginal cultures and languages across Victoria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the amount of Aboriginal culture heritage recorded on Crown Land.</li> <li>• Achieve a percentage increase in the protection of cultural heritage under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016</i>.</li> <li>• Increase departmental participation in and support of community events that celebrate Aboriginal culture, such as National Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week.</li> <li>• Increase the prevalence and extent of Aboriginal-language and culture-revitalisation programs.</li> </ul>	 



OUTCOME 4: DELWP is accountable and transparent in its efforts to transfer relevant decision-making powers and resources to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.			
ACCOUNTABILITY	OUTCOME INDICATOR	OUTCOME MEASURES	SELF-DETERMINATION ENABLERS
	<i>To succeed we must . . .</i>		
	4.1 Support Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to partner, innovate and evaluate with DELWP on progress towards self-determination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of Traditional Owner satisfaction with the establishment and progress of the Caring for Country Partnership Forum.</li> <li>Increase the number of Traditional Owner groups (formally and non-formally recognised) that are members of the Caring for Country Partnership Forum.</li> <li>High level of compliance to commitments in the Strategy via reports made to Traditional Owners and the Caring for Country Partnerships Forum.</li> </ul>	   
	4.2 Be a leader in progressing self-determination across government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of DELWP Executive (Deputy Secretaries, Executive Directors and Directors) who have self-determination actions as Key Performance Indicators in their annual performance plans.</li> <li>High number of DELWP Executive are champions of the Strategy.</li> </ul>	   
	4.3 Ensure that policies and programs are responsive to Traditional Owner needs, priorities and aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the actions and changes that respond to issues raised by the DELWP Aboriginal Leadership Group and the Caring for Country Partnerships Forum.</li> <li>High level of Traditional Owner satisfaction on DELWP's progress under each TO-SD Plan.</li> </ul>	 



Prioritise culture



Address racism and promote cultural safety



Address trauma and support healing



Transfer power and resources to communities

### 3.2 ANNUAL WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT REPORTING

Under the VAAF, DPC is required to report annually to the Victorian Parliament on the Government's efforts to enable self-determination.

Each of DELWP's Groups will be required to deliver monthly reports on their progress through reporting. Annually, each Group's actions for DELWP's reporting to DPC (to be published in the VGAAR) will be reviewed by the Caring for Country Partnerships Forum.

DELWP will compile its annual report by working with all Groups. That data will be reviewed by the Caring for Country Partnership Forum, then submitted to DPC. Reporting through this mechanism allows Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to hold DELWP to account, assess their efforts to progress the 11 self-determination guiding principles (see **Appendix 2**) and implement the broad areas for action that support the four self-determination enablers (see **Figure 4**).

Celebration of Water and Culture at Dog Rocks.  
Photograph taken by Kirsten Lee, Corangamite  
Catchment Management Authority





### 3.3 DELWP REPORTING

#### 3.3.1 ABORIGINAL-LED MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Increasingly, Traditional Owners will take the lead in holding DELWP accountable. DELWP Regions will work with individual TOCs and non-formally recognised Traditional Owner groups to develop individual TO-SD Plans. The TO-SD Plans will be tailored to each TOC or non-formally recognised Traditional Owner group based on their goals and vision for their country and people. This will enable TOCs and Traditional Owner groups to measure DELWP's performance against each action in their Plans, as well as the outcomes and priorities in the Strategy. Support will be provided to Traditional Owners to be able to undertake the reviews annually.

Findings from the reports will be reviewed in the Caring for Country Partnership Forum. Where DELWP has not met expectations, the Caring for Country Partnerships Forum is an escalation point where mechanisms and actions can be discussed and enacted to ensure DELWP keeps working together to achieve Traditional Owners' aspirations for Country, people and journeys toward self-determination.

#### 3.3.2 CORPORATE REPORTING

Through a One-DELWP approach each of DELWP's eight Groups will detail the actions they are taking to enable self-determination in their annual Group Business Plans. These actions will be guided by a yearly implementation plan developed by the DELWP Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch in consultation with DELWP's Groups and Region. They will be based upon information gained through conversations with Traditional Owners, TO-SD Plans, DELWP Regions, and the outcomes and priorities in the Strategy.

Each of DELWP's Groups will be required to deliver monthly reports on their progress through reporting. Annually, each Group's actions for DELWP's reporting to DPC (to be published in the VGAAR) will be reviewed by the Caring for Country Partnerships Forum.

#### 3.3.3 A ONE-DELWP APPROACH: WE ALL PLAY A PART IN ENABLING SELF-DETERMINATION

##### Senior Executive Team

Will provide leadership for Groups across DELWP, ensuring goals and actions are consistently met.

##### Aboriginal Self-Determination Policy Coordination Working Group

The Aboriginal Self-Determination Policy Coordination Working Group will assist DELWP's policy transformation and help remove barriers to enable self-determination. It provides a forum for all DELWP Groups to have a coordinated One-DELWP approach to key policy initiatives, beginning with the First Principles Review of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and DELWP input into the Victorian Government's Treaty process.

##### DELWP Regions

Regional Directors with a key geographical footprint in each of the Traditional Owner Country areas should take a lead role in partnerships for DELWP. DELWP staff should be familiar with *DELWP's Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework* and talk to the Community and Partnerships Branch in each Region.

##### Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch

The Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch has a lead role to play. The Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch is located in the Local Infrastructure Group and will support all DELWP Groups on reporting and accountability, cultural safety and engagement with Traditional Owners, policy building, Aboriginal language policy and all other Aboriginal affairs issues.

##### All DELWP Staff

All DELWP staff play a role in partnering with Traditional Owners in all DELWP business. The Traditional Owners in Victoria are some of the oldest living cultures in the world. Departmental officers have much to learn and gain from working in partnership with Traditional Owners to build a better Victoria.





Travis Lovett – Kerrupmara man of the Gunditjmara Nation and DELWP Executive wearing the DELWP Aboriginal staff possum skin cloak

### 3.4 SUPPORTING PUBLICATIONS

[DELWP Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework](#)

[DELWP's Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework](#)

[One-DELWP Strategic Framework](#)

[Outcomes Reform in Victoria](#)

[Self-Determination Reform Framework](#)

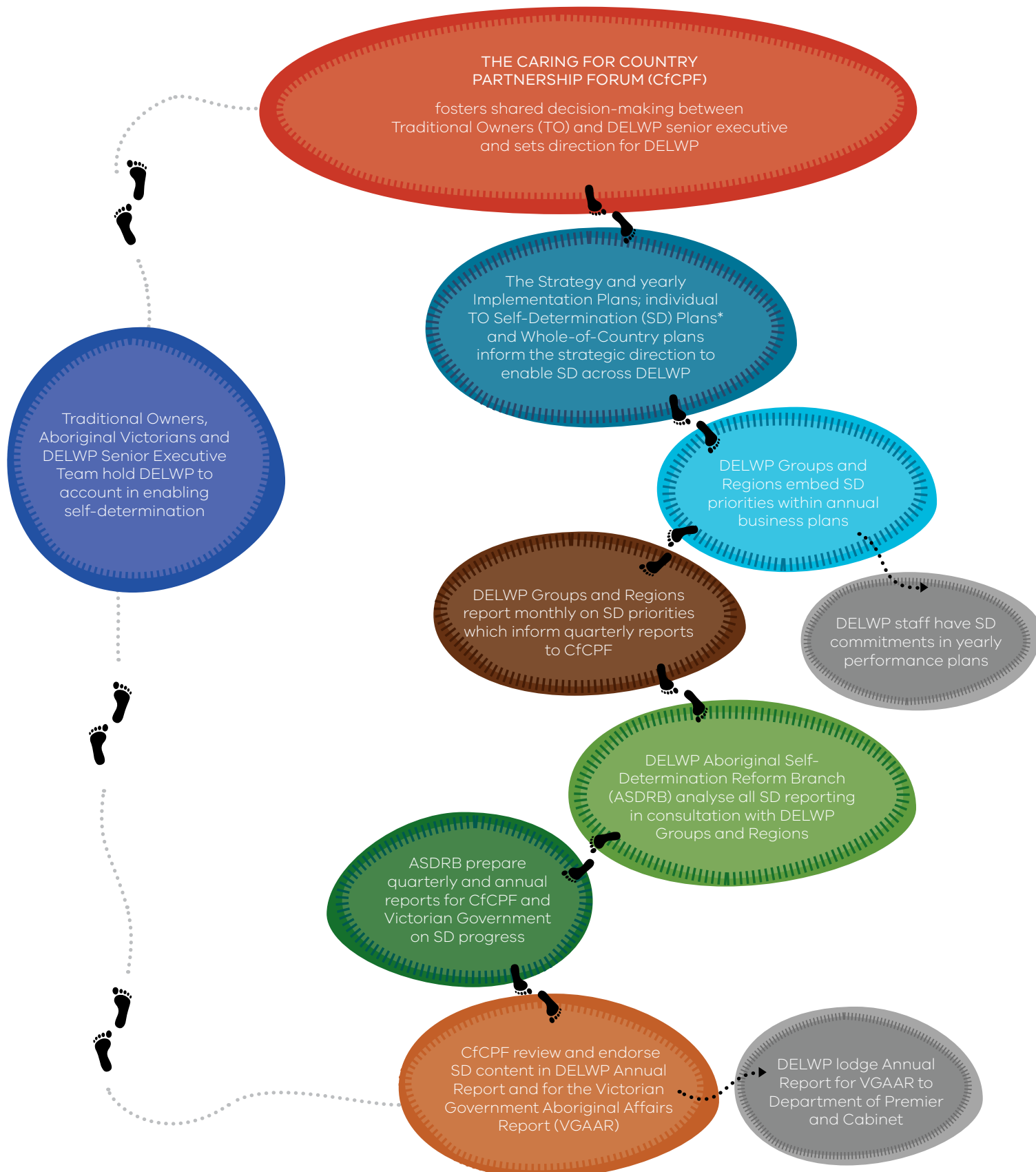
[Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework](#)

Wirgara on Ada (internal DELWP use only)

## APPENDIX 1

### ACCOUNTABILITY FLOWCHART

#### - ABORIGINAL SELF-DETERMINATION REFORM STRATEGY



\* Regional co-governance exists between Traditional Owners and Regional Directors to support individual TO-SD Plans



Aunty Hazel McDonald (Marks) and Aunty Faye Marks – Wotjobaluk Elders





## APPENDIX 2

### THE 11 SELF-DETERMINATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES<sup>30</sup>

The 11 guiding principles of Aboriginal Self-Determination were developed following extensive engagement with Aboriginal Victorians for the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023* (VAAF). These principles will underpin all action to progress Aboriginal self-determination.

**DELWP action should be consistent with the guiding principles:**

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

Self determination initiatives honour the norms set out in United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*.<sup>31</sup>

#### CULTURAL INTEGRITY

As First Nations peoples, the rich, thriving cultures, knowledge and diverse experiences of Aboriginal people, including where they fit with family, community and society, will be recognised, valued, heard and celebrated.

#### COMMITMENT

Aboriginal self determination will be advanced and embedded through planned action that is endorsed by, and accountable to, all parties.

#### ABORIGINAL EXPERTISE

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

#### INVESTMENT

Investment to support self determination will be sustainable, flexible and appropriate to strengthen Aboriginal peoples' aspirations and participation, including around economic participation, economic independence and building wealth.

#### EQUITY

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

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

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

#### PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships will advance Aboriginal autonomy through equitable participation, shared authority and decision-making, and will be underpinned by cultural integrity.

#### DECISION-MAKING

Decision-makers will respect the right to free, prior and informed consent and individual choice and will prioritise the transfer of decision-making power to Aboriginal people in areas that impact their communities.

#### EMPOWERMENT

Aboriginal people will have autonomy and participation in the development, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies and programs that impact their communities.

#### CULTURAL SAFETY

Programs and services accessed by Aboriginal people will be inclusive, respectful, responsive and relevant, and informed by culturally safe practice frameworks.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework-2018-2023>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/cohrara2006433/](https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/)

## APPENDIX 3

### TRADITIONAL OWNER CONSULTATION

DELWP would like to thank the many Victorian Traditional Owner groups and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations who have helped shape the Strategy through engagement about their aspirations, interests and rights on their Countries. Engagement with Traditional Owners has been undertaken in person and virtually due to COVID 19.

The 15 Traditional Owner groups (formally and non-formally recognised) engaged in the development of the Strategy include:

- Barapa Barapa people
- Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Duduroa Dhargal Nations Aboriginal Corporation
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation
- Tati Tati Aboriginal Corporation
- Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation
- Wemba Wemba people
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation.







Budj Bim, Great Ocean Road Region  
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“

Everyone  
has a role to play in enabling  
self-determination.

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