

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation Policy

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate a framework for the inclusion and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ('Aboriginal') people, and Aboriginal women in particular, within the operations of WHL.

This policy recognises that programs that engage with Aboriginal people, families and communities occur within a concrete historical context. The impact of colonisation and dispossession has had enduring and far-reaching impacts on these communities and Aboriginal peoples continue to experience significant economic and social injustices and inequities.

This has resulted in severe housing stress amongst Aboriginal women, who are more likely to experience complex and multiple disadvantages. This situation requires personalised and culturally safe housing access, provision and service supports.

These services need to meet the needs of various groups including older women, single mothers, victims of family violence, women who experience negative contact with the justice system, those exiting prison, and young women exiting the child protection system.

This policy is informed by a number of policy frameworks and statements. These include:

- Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework
- CHIA-Vic-Aboriginal Cultural-Safety-Framework
- Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families
- Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Framework Phase 4
- Uluru Statement from the Heart

2. Statement of Commitment

Women's Housing Ltd (WHL) is committed to the rights of Aboriginal women and children to live free from the threat of family violence and the risk of homelessness that inevitably accompanies it.

The underlying commitment of this policy is to:

- Ensure respect for the culture and values of Aboriginal people;
- Prevent direct or indirect discrimination against Aboriginal people by WHL;
- Improve the well-being and benefits for Aboriginal people by delivering services that are culturally safe ;
- Base the provision of services on the principles of self determination;
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal businesses; and
- Conduct our business and partnerships with accountability, transparency and honesty.

3. Scope

This policy applies across the organisation.

4. Essential Features of WHL Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation Policy

The key feature of this policy will be the development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan ("the RAP") in association with Reconciliation Australia.

The RAP will provide a strategic framework and action plan that will encompass the full range of WHL initiatives in relation to Aboriginal participation.

It is expected that the RAP will include (but not be confined to):

- Adoption and integration of the CHIA Vic Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework;
- Research into the level of participation by Aboriginal women within WHL services;
- Development of Aboriginal Cultural Competency and Cultural Safety across the organisation through training and engagement with relevant Aboriginal organisations;
- Formal and informal collaboration with relevant Aboriginal agencies to identify barriers to participation within WHL;
- Development of collaborative practical initiatives to improve participation and enhance the quality of WHL services for Aboriginal women;
- Development of social procurement strategies within WHL's property development program;
- Allocation of 10 % of tenancies to Aboriginal clients across all WHL properties (where possible);
- Research into Indigenous Design; and
- Strategies for improving access to the WHL IAP program by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

5. Responsibilities

The implementation of this policy will be the responsibility of the WHL Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group. The work of the RAP Group will be overseen by the Board, the CEO and the Operations Managers Group

The various responsibilities are as follows:

5.1 Board

- To be aware of the policy and its application across the organisation.
- To be culturally aware and competent in relation to Aboriginal issues as they relate to WHL.
- To be aware of government policies relating to Aboriginal people and how they relate to WHL.

5.2 CEO

- Provide advice to Board concerning the operation of this policy.
- Participate and represent WHL where appropriate at meetings with Aboriginal organisations.
- To facilitate adequate resourcing of the RAP Working Group

5.3 Operations Manager

- To facilitate Aboriginal cultural competence and cultural safety training across the organisation.
- To regularly review internal WHL processes and identify barriers to participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- To participate actively in the WHL RAP Working Group
- To engage where required with relevant Aboriginal organizations with a view to undertaking initiatives to improve the quality and quantity of participation by Aboriginal women.

5.4 Program Managers

- To be aware of this policy and to promote cultural competence and cultural safety across their areas of responsibility
- To identify barriers to participation by Aboriginal women in their program areas.

5.5 Operational Staff/Volunteers/Contractors

- To be aware of this policy and to embed culturally safe practice within work roles.