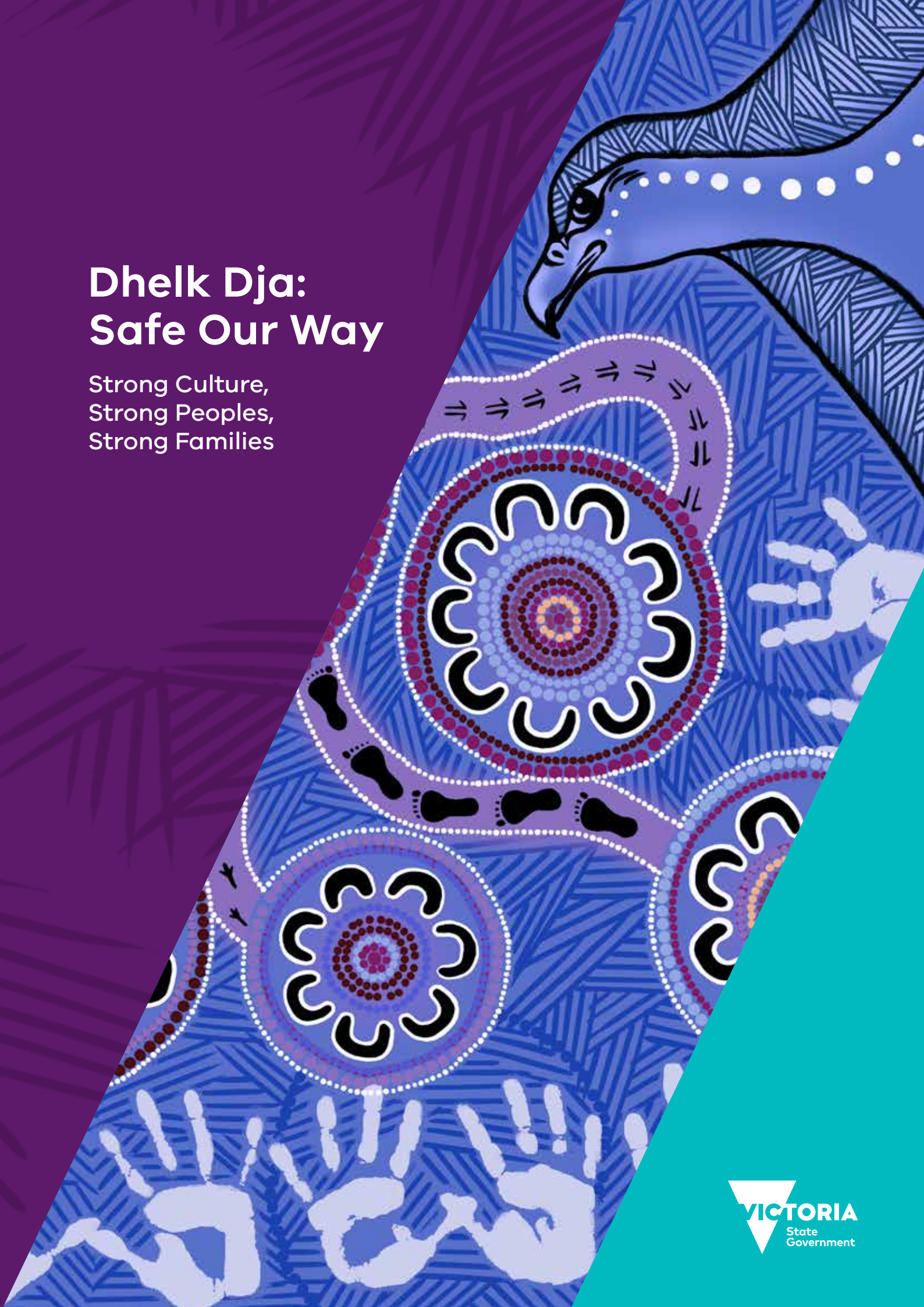


# Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way

Strong Culture,  
Strong Peoples,  
Strong Families



## **Dhelk Dja:**

# Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families

Dhelk Dja is the key Aboriginal-led Victorian Agreement that commits the signatories – Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and government – to work together and be accountable for ensuring that Aboriginal people, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and living free from family violence.

It articulates the long-term partnership and directions required at a statewide, regional and local level to ensure that Aboriginal people, families and communities are violence free, and built upon the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination.

## Dhelk Dja are the Dja Dja Wurrung words for 'good place' pronounced 'delk ja'.

The Dja Dja Wurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the lands of the central Victoria region from Mount Franklin, the towns of Creswick and Daylesford to Castlemaine, Maldon and Bendigo and to Boort in the north, Donald in the northwest. Sincere thanks to the Dja Dja Wurrung Elders and community for allowing the use of their language in the naming of this Aboriginal 10 Year Family Violence Agreement.

Aboriginal members of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum state that "*Safe Our Way* means the Victorian Aboriginal community will drive and deliver Dhelk Dja 'our way' with Aboriginal self-determination, our cultures, our approaches, our responsibility, our communities, our families."

## Artwork and Artist



Trina Dalton-Oogjes is a proud Wadawurrung/Wathaurung woman.

Trina's painting centres around the eleven community Dhelk Dja Action Groups across Victoria, leading into a central gathering/yarning circle, empowering

Aboriginal communities based on a healing and trauma informed process, to lead collaborative partnerships through a culturally safe service system.


Around the eleven community Dhelk Dja Action Groups are Aboriginal organisations/agencies, government departments and non-government agencies working together to address family violence.

Bunjil the Creator oversees to empower strength and self-determination.

Hand prints of the adults and children represent the family unit.

The kangaroo and emu footprints represent partnership moving forward (kangaroos and emus only move forward).





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Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of a title, program or quotation.

Where the term LGBTIQ+ is used it refers to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or gender diverse, queer, intersex, asexual or other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

A detailed glossary of terms is included in the Appendix.

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# Acknowledgement of Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria

**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, whilst also acknowledging the devastating impacts and accumulation of trauma across generations as a result of colonisation, genocide and the violent dispossession of land and children. 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, 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 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 - Safe Our Way: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* ('Dhelk Dja').

## Other acknowledgements

Acknowledgement and thanks go to all members of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum (formerly Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum) for their time and leadership in creating Dhelk Dja. Special thanks go to the Aboriginal members of the Partnership Forum, including Dhelk Dja Action Groups (formerly Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups) Dhelk Dja Action Group Chairpersons, Aboriginal service representatives and Aboriginal government representatives for their time, commitment and ongoing dedication in preventing and responding to family violence.

Dhelk Dja builds upon the work and strong foundations created by Aboriginal people through *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan (2008-2018)*. It also builds on the work of the former Victorian Indigenous

Family Violence Taskforce and its Final Report (2003);<sup>1</sup> the Victorian Government Response to the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce Final Report (2004);<sup>2</sup> the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy (developed in 2002); the eleven Dhelk Dja Action Groups and the Mid-term evaluation of the Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan (2015).<sup>3</sup>

Thanks also to all the Aboriginal people who contributed their ideas, stories and vision for the future at Community Conversations, Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group meetings, Aboriginal Family Violence Co-design Forums, Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group meetings and through the Aboriginal holistic healing co-design process.

The strength and richness of Aboriginal voices and experiences has shaped the directions and priorities of Dhelk Dja.



1. Department of Victorian Communities, 2003, *Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force: Final Report*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.
2. State Government of Victoria, 2004, *Victorian Government Response to the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force Final Report*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.
3. Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2015, *Mid-term Evaluation of the Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.

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# Vision

**Aboriginal people are culturally strong, safe and self-determining, with families and communities living free from violence.**

Dhelk Dja is the key Aboriginal-led Victorian Agreement that commits the signatories – Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and government – to work together and be accountable for ensuring that Aboriginal women, men, children, young people, Elders, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and living free from family violence.



# Purpose

**Dhelk Dja is built upon the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination and articulates the long-term partnership and directions required at a statewide, regional and local level to ensure that Aboriginal people, families and communities are violence free.**

It recognises the urgent need to reduce the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people, particularly women and children;<sup>4</sup> and ensure there is a strengths-based and gender-informed approach for people who experience and use violence.

Dhelk Dja also recognises that family violence is not part of Aboriginal culture and that family violence against Aboriginal people is perpetrated by both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people. Dhelk Dja recognises the importance of whole of family and whole of community approaches that are inclusive across the diversity of Aboriginal people and communities. It values the strength, knowledge and rich diversity of Aboriginal people, families and communities. It encompasses Aboriginal: people with a disability or mental health issues; LGBTIQ+ people; Elders and older people; children and young people; people in or exiting out-of-home care, prison or other institutions; people living in rural and regional areas; and families comprising Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal family members.

Dhelk Dja will be supported by a 10 year investment strategy and will guide and influence the policies, funding, programs and practices for Aboriginal services, mainstream services and government. It is an integral part of realising *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*, which is built on the foundations of *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan (2008–2018)*.

## Definition of family violence

The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force (2003) defined 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.'<sup>5</sup>

The Dhelk Dja definition of family violence also acknowledges the impact of violence by non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal partners, children, young people and extended family on spiritual and cultural rights, which manifests as exclusion or isolation from Aboriginal culture and/or community. The Dhelk Dja definition includes Elder abuse and the use of lateral violence within Aboriginal communities. It also emphasises the impact of family violence on children.

The definition also 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 for Aboriginal people and children must work across family violence services; police, the 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 substance abuse.

Dhelk Dja recognises the need to respond to all forms of family violence experienced by Aboriginal people, children, families and communities.

4. See for example, ANROWS, 2014, *Fast Facts – Indigenous Family Violence*, <<https://www.anrows.org.au/publications/fast-facts-0/indigenous-family-violence>>, viewed 23 April 2018.

5. Department of Victorian Communities, 2003, *Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force: Final Report*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.

# Signatories to Dhelk Dja

## Aboriginal community and Aboriginal service signatories



**Jason Kanoa**

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Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Merilyn Duff**

Chairperson, East Metropolitan  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Damien Goodall**

Co-Chairperson, East Gippsland  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Jodie Douthat**

Co-Chairperson, East Gippsland  
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Chairperson, Inner Gippsland  
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**Daphne Yarram**

Former Chair  
Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce



**Justin Homer**

Co-Chairperson, Loddon Campaspe  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



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Co-Chairperson, Loddon Campaspe  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Jacob Hunt**

Chairperson, Mallee  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Allyson Walker**

Chairperson, South Metropolitan  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Alfie Bamblett**

Co-Chairperson, North Metropolitan  
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Coordinator, Indigenous Men's  
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**Linda Bamblett**

Co-Chairperson, North Metropolitan  
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Aboriginal Justice Forum  
Representative  
  
Chief Executive Officer, Victorian  
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Association Ltd.



**Lee-Anne Clarke**

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Co-Chairperson, West Metropolitan  
Dhelk Dja Action Group



**Deidre King**

Chief Executive Officer  
Aboriginal Community Elders Services



**Antoinette Braybrook**

Chief Executive Officer  
Djirra



**Kellyanne Andy**

Chief Executive Officer  
Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal  
Women's Service Inc.



**Muriel Bamblett**

Chief Executive Officer  
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care  
Agency Co.



**Trevor Pearce**

Acting Chief Executive Officer  
Victorian Aboriginal Community  
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**Geraldine Atkinson**

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Victorian Aboriginal Education  
Association Inc.



**Wayne Muir**

Chief Executive Officer  
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

## Victorian Government signatories



**Gavin Jennings MLC**  
Special Minister of State



**Natalie Hutchins MP**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Minister for the Prevention of  
Family Violence

# Statement from Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum

Our Aboriginal communities and leaders in Victoria have been working for a long time to address the impacts of family violence and intergenerational trauma on our people. Our knowledge, our strength, and our voices must continue to be at the heart of everything we do to end family violence and the devastating impacts it has on our people, families and communities.

Self-determination is our right and the key to a better and safer future for our people. We must continue to lead and be resourced to lead a partnership approach, in which government, services and the broader Victorian community recognise our leadership ability to deliver on safety outcomes our way, as we work together to prevent and address family violence. We must in the spirit of true self-determination work to empower Aboriginal communities through sustainable investment and through the responsible transitioning of authority and decision making.

Our knowledge, resilience and leadership will continue to be the foundation of our strong and inclusive approach in Victoria. We will continue to pass information onto our children and young people, and across family, kinship networks and generations. We will be stronger, thriving and self-determining.

Our way and our approaches will benefit everyone in Victoria - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and will inform Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services. We want to ensure that our specialist expertise, wisdom, and our whole of family and whole of community approaches are adopted across the system to create a future where everyone can heal, address their trauma and live free from violence.

Our vision and strategic priorities are set out in *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*. *Dhelk Dja* has been written by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum to build on the last 10 year plan – *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities* (2008-2018).

“Safe Our Way” means that we will drive and deliver Dhelk Dja our way, with our cultures, our approaches, our communities and our families at the centre.

We also recognise that *Dhelk Dja* is everyone’s business. Everyone, all services and all parts of government in Victoria are accountable for a future in which Aboriginal people live free from family violence. Only by working together and implementing Aboriginal solutions can we end family violence our way.

Koori Caucus members

Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum



# Statement from the Special Minister of State

*Dhelk Dja*, the Dja Dja Wurrung words for *good place*, encapsulates the vision of this Aboriginal-led Agreement. It sets out the guiding principles and path to ensure that Aboriginal women, men, children, young people, Elders, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and living free from violence.

*Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*, demonstrates that Aboriginal people continue to lead the way towards ending family violence. This Agreement builds on solid foundations laid by the previous 10 year plan and reflects decades of Victorian Aboriginal community knowledge and best practice in preventing and responding to family violence.

Self-determination is at the heart of *Dhelk Dja*, marking a systemic shift in the way government partners with the Aboriginal community.

The Victorian Government is committed to Aboriginal people having a seat at the table and a voice that is heard when decisions are made on issues impacting Victoria's Aboriginal communities. We are proud to embed this principle of self-determination across government in the belief that this will achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Importantly, *Dhelk Dja* empowers Aboriginal people to determine and direct resources according to Aboriginal community need. It ensures that Aboriginal people lead in providing family violence support services, prevention programs, and other innovations that are culturally safe and underpinned by Aboriginal informed design and research.

The Agreement is a strengths-based, gender informed approach that provides the building blocks for preventing, responding to and healing from family violence.

The Agreement will have a Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan, with Aboriginal people defining the metrics of success and tracking progress using Aboriginal data.

I would like to acknowledge the richness and diversity of Aboriginal voices and experiences that contributed to *Dhelk Dja*. I thank members of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum for their time and invaluable work bringing *Dhelk Dja* to life. I also thank all members of the Dhelk Dja Action Groups and all other Aboriginal community members who contributed their stories and aspirations.

This would not have been possible without the tireless dedication of Aboriginal communities and services to bring the issue of family violence to the forefront of social and political awareness while working to reduce its impact.

I look forward to continuing in this partnership to achieve the *good place* for Victorian Aboriginal communities.

The Hon. Gavin Jennings MLC  
Special Minister of State

# Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way - Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families

## Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum

### Vision

Aboriginal people are culturally strong, safe and self-determining, with families and communities living free from violence

### Guiding Principles

- Self-determination (Community-led, self-management and leadership)
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Strengths-based
- Cultural and trauma informed resilience and healing approaches
- Safety (Cultural, physical and community)
- Accountability, transparency and honesty of all parties

### Strategic Priorities



### Dhelk Dja Action Plans

2018–2021	2021–2024	2024–2027	Year 10
3 Year Action Plan	3 Year Action Plan	3 Year Action Plan	New Agreement
Regional Action Plans	Regional Action Plans	Regional Action Plans	

### Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan

#### Self-Determination - the foundation of Dhelk Dja

Aboriginal self-determination is our most fundamental of all rights. It means exercising true freedom, full and total control of our own safety, healing, connections to land and culture, communities, futures and lives.

Aboriginal self-determination in a family violence context is a systemic shift from government and the non-Aboriginal service sector, that requires the transfer of power, control, decision making and resources to Aboriginal communities and their organisations by:

- investing in Aboriginal self-determining structures, including but not limited to the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Dhelk Dja Action Groups and Aboriginal community organisations, to lead governance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of family violence reform including policy and program development, services and initiatives for Aboriginal people
- transferring decision making for policy development and program design by prioritising funding to Aboriginal communities and their organisations
- investing in community sustainability, resourcing and capacity building to meet the requirements of the new reforms
- growing and supporting the skills and knowledge base of the Aboriginal workforce and sector to support self-determination
- ensuring that government and the service system is culturally safe, transparent and accountable
- ensuring that community have access to culturally informed, safe service provision and programs by the non-Aboriginal service sector.

# Governance and accountability

**The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum and its members are the individual and collective champions and strategic leaders for Dhelk Dja across the span of 10 years and over successive governments. Family Safety Victoria will continue to provide policy and governance leadership for the Partnership Forum and its members.**

Regular Dhelk Dja progress reports will be tabled in Parliament via the annual Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report. The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023 will include specific family violence outcomes that align with Dhelk Dja.

## The parties to Dhelk Dja as represented on the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum are:

### Victorian Aboriginal communities

The Chairpersons and Co-Chairpersons of the eleven Dhelk Dja Action Groups (formerly Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups (IFVRAGs)) and the former Chair of the Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce.

Chairpersons commit to be guided by the principles and strategic priorities of Dhelk Dja to develop Regional Action Plans that drive local and regional action. Aboriginal community representatives commit to representing the voices of Aboriginal people and communities to influence decision-making and monitoring of Dhelk Dja.

### Victorian Aboriginal services

The former Chair of the Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce and senior leaders from:

- Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES)
- Aboriginal Housing Victoria
- Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Services Inc. (EMH)
- Djirra
- Indigenous Men's Resource and Advisory Service (IMRAS)
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association (VACSAL)
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI)
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (VACCHO).

Aboriginal service members commit to be guided by the principles and strategic priorities of Dhelk Dja in their work to address family violence and to represent the voices of the Aboriginal people and families they serve.

### The Victorian Government

Senior executives from departments and agencies including:

- The Commission for Children and Young People (Aboriginal Commissioner)
- Family Safety Victoria
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Justice and Regulation
- Magistrates' Court of Victoria
- Victoria Police.

The Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is also represented.

Government members commit to be guided by the principles and strategic priorities of Dhelk Dja in their work to address family violence. Each department and agency will take action to achieve self-determination by transferring authority, decision making, control and resources to Aboriginal communities and services. Departments and agencies commit to be held accountable to actions under each Action Plan that advance the strategic priorities and will help realise the vision of Dhelk Dja.

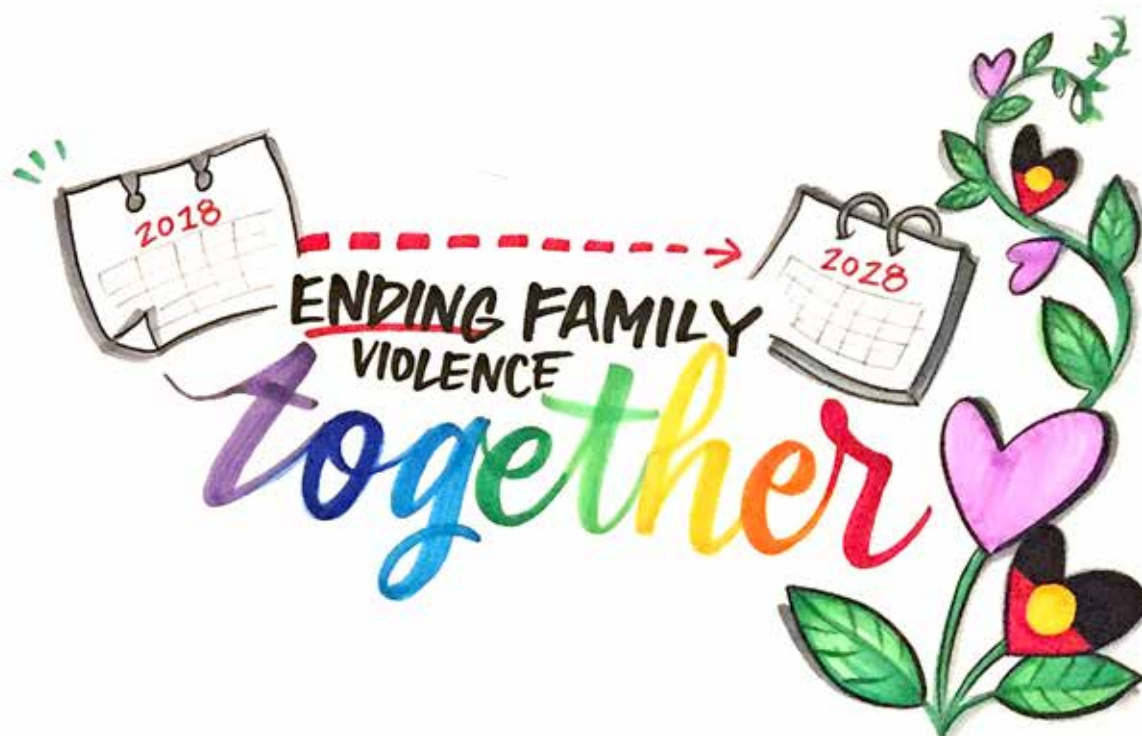


## Action Plans and Regional Action Plans

Actions and investments to bring Dhelk Dja to life over 10 years will be detailed in a series of Action Plans and a 10 year investment strategy to sustain outcomes. The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum will lead the development and governance of these Action Plans and will partner as appropriate with a broad range of stakeholders and services to activate a whole of community and whole of service system response to reduce family violence and deliver better safety outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria. Mainstream service providers will be critical partners in taking action and being accountable for delivering culturally safe and responsive services. Government will ensure that funding and service agreements support self-determination, cultural safety and the strategic priorities of Dhelk Dja. Mechanisms for this include the Victorian Department of Health and

Human Services policy and funding guidelines 2018, which includes the 'Supporting self-determination – prioritisation of funding for Aboriginal organisations' policy.<sup>6</sup> The actions and investments for the first three years of Dhelk Dja will be detailed in the first Action Plan (2018–2021) to be developed by the Partnership Forum in 2018–2019. Subsequent Action Plans will be developed for 2021–2024 and 2024–2027.

The Action Plans will also inform the development of Regional Action Plans by the eleven Dhelk Dja Action Groups representing Aboriginal communities across Victoria. These Regional Action Plans are the key place-based mechanism to drive local and regional action and partnerships between Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services, government, mainstream services and the broader community to prevent and address family violence. The Regional Action Plans will both complement and inform Dhelk Dja and its Action Plans.



6. Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria, 2018, *Policy and funding guidelines for Health and Human Services*, < <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/policy-and-funding-guidelines-health-and-human-services>>, viewed 21 March 2018.

# Dhelk Dja Action Groups

Dhelk Dja Action Groups are place-based, Aboriginal community-led groups that drive local action to prevent and address family violence through a partnership approach.



## Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan

The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum will also have strategic leadership and responsibility for the development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan that will identify outcomes, measures and indicators and enable the monitoring of progress and responsibilities against:

- Dhelk Dja: the overarching 10 Year Agreement.
- The Action Plans and Regional Action Plans.
- Implementation of Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations including Recommendation 144 - progress against recommendations of the Mid-term evaluation (2015) of the *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan (2008-2018): Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*.
- Commitments in the *Family Violence Rolling Action Plan 2017-2020*.

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan will identify outcomes and use quantitative and qualitative data and measures to track progress against outcomes. It will hold signatories to account and track the transfer of decision making, control and resources to Aboriginal communities and services. The Plan will be based on Aboriginal defined measures of self-determination and cultural safety across the service system.

Development of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan will commence in 2018-2019 and will be aligned to an overarching Aboriginal-led Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety research and evaluation framework that connects the Aboriginal research and evaluation agenda across the health and human services sector. It will also be aligned with the whole of Victorian Government's Family Violence Outcomes Framework and the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, which includes specific measures on family violence under the goals of: 'Aboriginal families and households thrive'; and 'Aboriginal Victorians feel safe and connected'.

Central to the Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety research and evaluation framework is the development of Aboriginal defined measures of success, the development of a suite of cultural determinants of health, wellbeing and safety and the identification of research priorities of Victorian Aboriginal communities. Another focus is on workforce development to ensure Aboriginal communities and organisations are well equipped to undertake monitoring and evaluation activities, so that Aboriginal knowledge and cultural expertise is prioritised in program planning and delivery, and recognised as legitimate evidence in research and evaluation practice.

# Aboriginal Leadership - Strong Foundations

Aboriginal communities and services in Victoria have demonstrated long-standing leadership to prevent and address family violence impacting Aboriginal people. Significant achievements over the last 10 years include the work and leadership of the former Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce, the platform created by *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan (2008–2018)* and the leadership of Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups (IFVRAGs).

Aboriginal communities and services have led the way in the development of innovative place-based community prevention initiatives aligned to the *Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework 2012*, which supports primary prevention capacity building, effective sustainable activities, and ownership and leadership within Aboriginal communities. Strong specialist family violence

and legal expertise has been developed through the creation of strong Aboriginal services and organisations with the capability and expertise to work with: Aboriginal women, people, children and families who are experiencing family violence; vulnerable children and families; and people who use violence.

## A journey of leadership

### 2002–2003

- Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce (Victoria)

### 2003

- Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce Final Report to government
- Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups established
- Community Initiative Fund (CIF) commenced

### 2014

- Taskforce 1000
- Orana Gunyah established (Morwell)

### 2013

- Koori Police Protocols launched
- Koori Family Violence Courts established
- Aboriginal Justice Agreement Three
- Development of an Aboriginal Common Risk Assessment Framework

### 2012

- Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework developed
- Meminar Nganng Gimba established (Mildura)

### 2015

- Aboriginal Children's Forum established
- Mid-term evaluation of Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan (2008–2018) released

### 2016

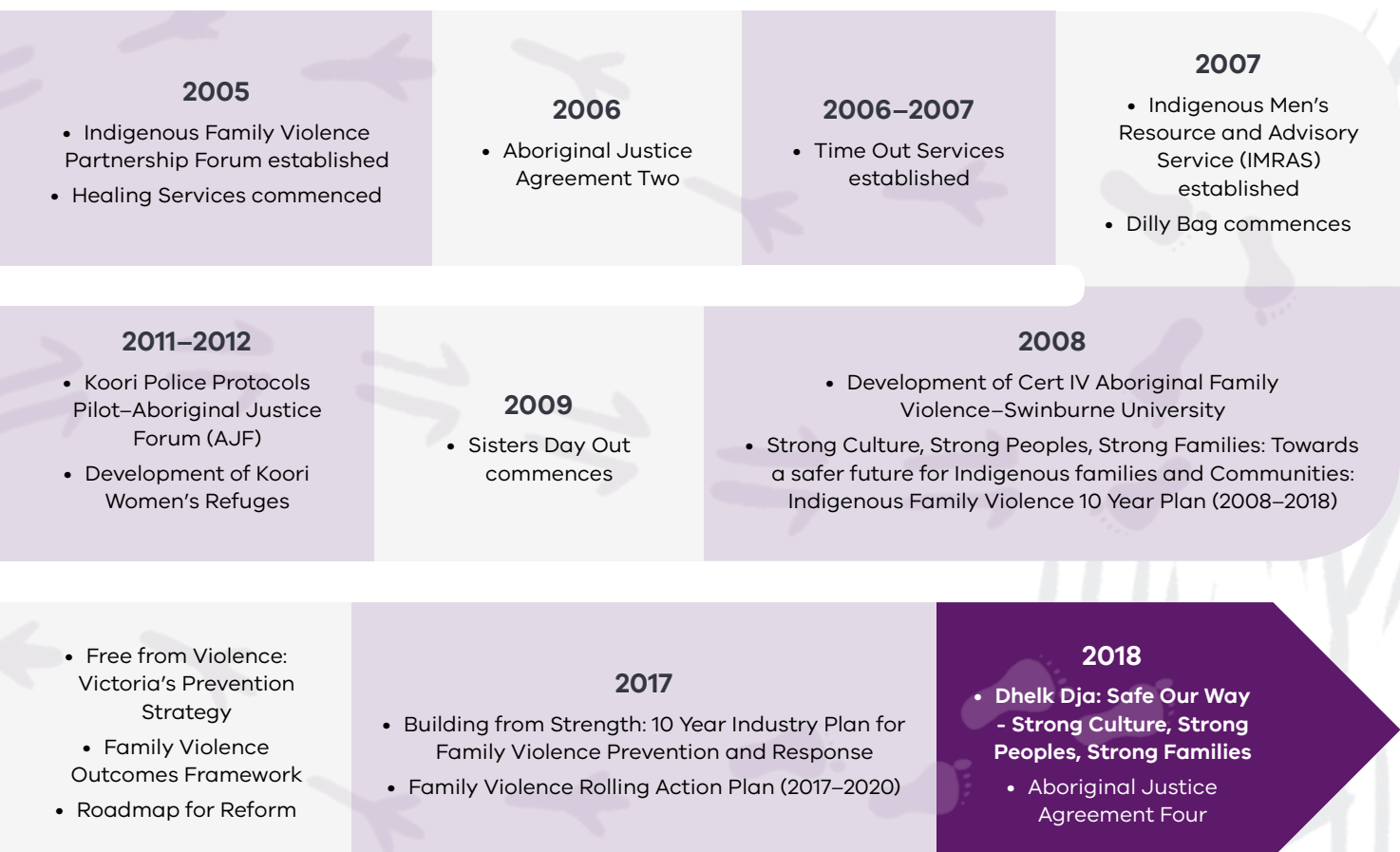
- Royal Commission into Family Violence Report
- Aboriginal Family Violence Co-Design Forum established

- Korin Korin Balit Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan
- Review of Healing and Timeout services

- Always was, always will be Koori children
- Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change (2016–2026)

Strong governance and engagement structures have been built through Aboriginal community-led partnerships and the establishment of whole-of-Victorian-government and regional networks, including the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and the eleven IFVRAGs. These Aboriginal structures to address family violence have driven an Aboriginal community-led approach and influenced broader family violence policy and reforms. They are the first of their kind in Australia and are leading work at a national and international level. These structures have enabled government and its agencies, to strengthen their understanding and responses to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people experiencing or using family violence.

Dhelk Dja builds on these strong foundations and the progress made through *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan (2008–2018)*. *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* was the first of its kind in documenting a whole of government response to family violence in Aboriginal communities that was Aboriginal-led. It paved the way for additional funding, policies and programs in primary prevention, early childhood education, maternal child health, police, justice and court responses, perpetrator interventions and therapeutic responses for victims of family violence. Its emphasis on healing and a family-centred holistic approach was an example of leading practice and has led to the development of community-driven holistic healing and therapeutic responses.



# Self-Determination – the foundation of Dhelk Dja

**Dhelk Dja articulates a vision for a future where Aboriginal people live free from family violence. Dhelk Dja is built upon the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination. Aboriginal self-determination informs every aspect of Dhelk Dja and will be critical to its success.**

## Self-determination definition within a family violence context

Drawing upon existing definitions of self-determination, the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum has developed the following self-determination definition to underpin and inform every aspect of Dhelk Dja.

Aboriginal self-determination is our most fundamental of all rights. It means exercising true freedom, full and total control of our own safety, healing, connections to land and culture, communities, futures and lives.

Aboriginal self-determination in a family violence context is a systemic shift from government and the non-Aboriginal service sector, that requires the transfer of power, control, decision making and resources to Aboriginal communities and their organisations by:

- investing in Aboriginal self-determining structures, including but not limited to the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Dhelk Dja Action Groups and Aboriginal community organisations, to lead governance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of family violence reform including policy and program development, services and initiatives for Aboriginal people
- transferring decision making for policy development and program design by prioritising funding to Aboriginal communities and their organisations
- investing in community sustainability, resourcing and capacity building to meet the requirements of the new reforms
- growing and supporting the skills and knowledge base of the Aboriginal workforce and sector to support self-determination
- ensuring that government and the service system is culturally safe, transparent and accountable and
- ensuring that community have access to culturally informed, safe service provision and programs by the non-Aboriginal service sector.

'Australian and international evidence demonstrates that self-determination is the only policy approach that has produced effective and sustainable outcomes for Indigenous peoples.'

Self-Determination: Background Concepts, Behrendt, Jorgensen & Vivian 2016).

As a fundamental human right, self-determination is based on the notion of people having control over their own destiny, including their social, economic, and cultural future and political systems. Since invasion, Aboriginal people have always asserted and fought for their right to self-determination. Victorian Aboriginal communities have been at the forefront of the national conversation on Aboriginal Affairs, leading the way in demonstrating sustainable self-determination approaches. Aboriginal communities must and will continue to lead the way on self-determination.

This is because:

- Aboriginal people want to exercise their right to self-determination
- affirming Indigenous people's right to self-determination is an obligation under international law and human rights frameworks, including the United Nations Charter, UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2008) and
- evidence shows that self-determination works as it recognises that Aboriginal people hold the knowledge and expertise as to what is best for themselves, their families and their communities.



## The Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination

The Victorian Government recognises that self-determination is the foundation for better outcomes. Across government, Aboriginal experiences and voices must be at the centre of decision-making to deliver better policies and programs that reflect community needs and aspirations.

*'At the moment, our definition of leadership is giving Aboriginal Victorians a seat at our table. But real leadership is about making it their table, too. Our effort must have heart and it must have ears. It must be for Aboriginal people and by Aboriginal people.'*

**The Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria,  
Closing the Gap Event, Parliament House,  
18 March 2015**

The Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet is working to support Aboriginal self-determination across the Victorian Government. Work is underway to develop a framework that embeds Aboriginal self-determination as a foundational element of government policy development, program and service delivery frameworks in Victoria.

This approach will build on current efforts within the community and across government departments to drive self-determination, while also working to remove the barriers and change the practices that have previously stood in its way.

Self-determination is the key for Aboriginal communities and their organisations, government and specialist family violence, child and family services, to realise better outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria built upon a future that is free from family violence. Self-determination is the foundation of Dhelk Dja.

# Victorian Government leadership

Dhelk Dja aligns with and builds upon the strong foundations created by Victorian Aboriginal communities and services who have been at the forefront of family violence reforms in Victoria and nationally. Dhelk Dja also builds upon the key Victorian policies and strategies focused on self-determination and improving the quality of life for Aboriginal people, their families and their communities and reforming the family violence and broader service system.

A joined up and whole of system view for family violence prevention and response is critical to success. The cycle of family violence cuts across services, systems and policies and brings Aboriginal people, children and families into contact with many parts of the service system, including family violence services; police, justice system and the courts; housing and homelessness system; children and family services; child protection and out-of-home care system; and health, mental health and human services. The role of Elders, communities, education settings and workplaces must be activated to support whole of family and whole of community prevention approaches that can break the cycle of violence.

The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum is the key mechanism for ensuring all parties take a whole of system view and connect across different elements of the service system to realise the vision of Dhelk Dja.

Dhelk Dja has been developed in recognition of:

- building on and sustaining the strong foundations created through long-term Aboriginal leadership to prevent and address family violence in Victoria
- continuing to take a whole of system view and connecting work across the breadth of family violence prevention and response reform underway in Victoria
- connecting work and effort between Dhelk Dja and other Victorian Aboriginal policy frameworks and agreements and broader social service reform in Victoria.

Key Victorian strategies, policies and frameworks are outlined in Appendix 1.





**Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework  
Self-determination and Treaty**

# Vision

**Dhelk Dja articulates a vision for the future where Aboriginal people are culturally stronger, safer and self-determining, with families and communities living free from violence. It recognises that Aboriginal-led and designed strategies, supported by government, sector and system transformation, are required to reduce the significantly higher levels of family violence experienced by Aboriginal people, and the disproportionate impact of this violence on Aboriginal women and children.**

The vision for Dhelk Dja builds upon and reinforces the vision from *Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change* which was built on the foundations of *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples and Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan (2008–2018)*. It sets out a shared vision of a future where:

**All Victorians are safe, thriving and live free from family violence**



## Inclusive approach

Family violence has a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people, particularly women and children; and responses need to ensure there is a strength-based and gender-informed approach for people who experience and use violence. Aboriginal people's experience of family violence is compounded by other factors deeply rooted in the impacts of invasion and violent dispossession of land, culture and children, with trauma accumulating across generations. It is important to have appropriate responses to address the impact of family violence on all Aboriginal people, including children, women and men.

The policies, social norms, structures and systems of today continue to create social conditions that result in some having power and privilege and others experiencing discrimination, racism and oppression. This shapes the ways in which people experience inequality, disadvantage and violence.

Aboriginal people also experience intersectional forms of inequality and discrimination relating to culture, gender identity, sexuality, ability, spirituality, age and class. Intersectional discrimination creates additional barriers to accessing services and compounds experiences of exclusion, power imbalance, control and violence.

Dhelk Dja is premised on an inclusive and strengths-based approach. A strengths-based, gender-informed approach recognises and respects the strengths of an individual and the knowledge gained through lived experience and works to build upon these strengths to address challenges.

# Guiding Principles

Six guiding principles have been developed to outline the way in which the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum will work together to implement Dhelk Dja and realise the vision for a future free from violence:

- **Self-determination**
- **Collaboration and partnerships**
- **Strengths-based**
- **Cultural and trauma informed resilience and healing approaches**
- **Safety**
- **Accountability, transparency and honesty of all parties**

# Self-determination

## Community-led, self-management and leadership

**True self-determination means that Aboriginal people and communities are at the centre of the campaign to rid our communities of family violence. It ensures active community involvement and ownership. Self-determination in service delivery recognises that Aboriginal people have the right understanding and knowledge of local community needs, priorities and aspirations to deliver culturally appropriate solutions.**

Self-determination for Aboriginal people experiencing family violence means having access to community-led information and options. It means being supported and empowered to make informed choices about their future. Individuals, including young people, Elders and families need to be connected to information and supports to make informed choices that promote their safety, wellbeing and healing. The right to safety in all relationships must be emphasised, through community-led education and the sharing of knowledge about what respect and safety looks like.

Wrap-around supports to walk survivors through the whole process will enable the individual to determine what steps and supports are required to feel they have control.

Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group,  
18 October 2017

Self-determination means Aboriginal designed, developed and delivered programs and approaches that hold to account people who use violence. For people who use violence this means understanding personal responsibilities, consequences on the family and knowing what supports are available.

Both Aboriginal community and the government acknowledge that self-determination is the foundation for better outcomes for Aboriginal people. Strong foundations have always been built on strong community voices and community-led approaches that reflect the diversity within Aboriginal communities across Victoria. Self-determination must be valued as a strength, with Aboriginal people represented on family violence reform and decision making structures at local, regional and statewide levels.

Local issues require local solutions.

Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group  
Workshop, 28 November 2017

Government support of self-determination requires a systemic shift in authority, decision-making and resources. This will take time, significant effort and resources. Progress and achievements toward self-determination should be celebrated along the way, balanced by the need for clear timeframes and accountability of all parties to achieve real outcomes.

Approaches to Aboriginal leadership must be Aboriginal owned and defined, not constrained by Western definitions.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

# Collaboration and partnerships

**Sustainable partnerships are most effective when they are Aboriginal community-led and built on transparency, respect and accountability. However, the need for the broader community to understand and be part of the change is essential. Equally, government and all services must be held accountable for delivering equitable and responsive outcomes for all Aboriginal people.**

Dhelk Dja recognises that to be inclusive means valuing whole of family and whole of community approaches and that our work will be more enduring and responsive if everyone works together. To create a more holistic and responsive system we need collaborative processes that enable services to work together, instead of in silos. Building the best possible outcomes requires true collaboration and respectful partnerships across communities, government and the sector, at regional and statewide levels.

It should feel like services are collaborating and working together to meet your needs – looking at the whole picture – not forgetting the client and community – that is why we are here.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, San Remo 6 March 2018

It's the responsibility of the broader community to understand and change.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, Caroline Springs 5-6 December 2017

Genuine partnerships take time, effort and resources to establish and maintain but will deliver greater outcomes than if parties were to work on their own. Partnership approaches also create opportunities for innovation and sharing of best practice.

Everyone has a view, but it is how we work together that is important.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, San Remo 6 March 2018

Partnerships are required at local, regional, statewide and national levels to drive the responses set out in the Action Plans and cascading Regional Action Plans of Dhelk Dja. Partnerships within and across Aboriginal communities and services, including at the local and regional level, will support better outcomes, as will collaborative approaches with government and the broader family violence service sector and system.



# Strengths-based

**Dhelk Dja adopts a strengths-based approach that values the strengths of Aboriginal individuals and the collective strengths of Aboriginal knowledge, systems and expertise. It recognises the critical importance of Aboriginal culture and cultural strengthening as a protective factor against violence.**

Aboriginal people are strong, adaptive, resilient and resourceful. Connection to land, culture and community are key strengths. Aboriginal Elders will continue to pass information and knowledge onto children and young people, and across family, kinship networks and generations. This knowledge will continue to drive a strong community-led approach.

Aboriginal people, communities and families are diverse, with varied languages, histories and experiences. This diversity is a strength to be drawn upon in creating inclusive services so all people and all families can experience a future free from violence. Initiatives need to recognise and build upon existing strengths of individuals, parents and families, women and men, boys and girls and be inclusive of the diversity of and within Aboriginal communities, including Elders, young people, people who identify as LGBTIQ+, people with a disability and people living across Victoria.

A strengths-based guiding principle acknowledges Aboriginal people's ability to be adaptable, resilient and resourceful which are protective factors.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, Caroline Springs 5-6 December 2017

The closer the power is to the community, the better the system response and outcome.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, San Remo 6 March 2018

Dhelk Dja builds upon the strong foundations of Aboriginal community-led programs, services and policies that reflect decades of work, leadership and the passing on of knowledge to prevent and respond to family violence in Victoria. These foundations create an opportunity for solutions generated by Aboriginal Elders, people, communities and services to be adopted in the wider community and service system, creating a better service response for everyone.

Successes need to be celebrated no matter how small.

Aboriginal Family Violence Co-design Forum, 17 April 2018

A strengths-based approach seeks to evaluate, reflect on what is and is not working and adapt, changing direction if needed. This will be critical for Dhelk Dja, but also for community initiatives and services that prevent and respond to family violence.

# Cultural and trauma informed resilience and healing approaches

**The disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people is deeply rooted in the intergenerational traumas endured as a result of invasion and the violent dispossession of land, culture and children.**

Gendered traumas including physical violence, psychological and sexual abuse have affected generations of Aboriginal people as direct consequences of invasion. The disproportionate and compounding impact of family violence on Aboriginal women and children today reflects that family violence is also deeply gendered in nature.

Dhelk Dja acknowledges that the best way to reduce the incidence and intergenerational impacts of family violence on Aboriginal children, young people, women, men, Elders, families and communities is to draw upon cultural knowledge, strengths, resilience and resources by using an Aboriginal-led, culture and trauma informed approach to healing and safety. This approach is reinforced by the Warawarni-gu Guma (Healing Together) Statement delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates at the ANROWS Second National Conference on Violence Against Women (2018).

Culture and trauma informed practice provides a framework to use a whole of family resilience and healing approach. A whole of family approach works to address the individual and collective needs of children and people experiencing family violence, whilst supporting people who use violence to take control of their healing and accountability journey.

**We need to invest in community cultural knowledge – build back this knowledge for the stolen generation and those removed from their families.**

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

A cultural based practice recognises the diversity of experience of Aboriginal individuals and needs to be flexible and adapt for people who do not have a strong cultural base. It also recognises the diverse make up of families and needs to be adaptive for family members who are not Aboriginal.

**For children who witness or experience violence, we need to understand trauma and how to provide support at key points in children's lives.**

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

A culture based practice and healing approach recognises the critical place of cultural identity. Continued effort is required to build upon protective factors such as connection to community, culture and Country. This must be reflected across the whole system and be community-led, building upon and leveraging existing work including *Balit Marrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework*, existing Aboriginal healing and time-out services and emerging holistic healing approaches.

Teaching and sharing of learnings about whole of family healing approaches and the healing of children should be supported to build the capacity of practitioners and the workforce to improve responses.

**We need to share stories, understand pain and heal the whole person. You can't address the use of violence in isolation.**

Aboriginal Family Violence Co-design Forum,  
17 April 2018

# Safety

## Physical, community and cultural safety

### Physical and community safety

Dhelk Dja recognises that family violence prevention is everyone's business and responsibility. To create families and communities that are safe and free from violence, safety across all relationships, community settings and the entire service system is required. Whole of community responses will send an unequivocal message that family violence is not acceptable in any community and that everyone has the right to psychological and emotional wellbeing and safety. The right to safety and a future free from violence is critically important for Aboriginal children and young people as the future generation and owners of culture and leadership.

Addressing the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people and children includes recognising and addressing all forms of family violence. This includes violence by non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal partners, children, young people and extended family on spiritual and cultural rights which manifests as exclusion or isolation from Aboriginal culture and/or community. It also includes Elder abuse and the use of lateral violence within Aboriginal communities. Addressing this impact of family violence means addressing all aspects of wellbeing – physical, emotional, psychological, cultural and spiritual.

Family violence response services and their workforces need to have the specialist knowledge, expertise, training and capacity to ensure that individuals, children and families are appropriately supported, with a paramount focus on reducing risk and promoting safety and wellbeing. Continued support for Aboriginal organisations with the family violence expertise to work with children and people experiencing family violence, as well as Aboriginal organisations working with people who use violence, will be critical to keep Aboriginal children, people and communities safe.

Aboriginal women and children can be alienated from community. Sometimes this is as a result of violence and controlling behaviour by a perpetrator, sometimes this alienation pre-dates the family violence and is one of the reasons a person may be more vulnerable to abuse.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum  
Member, 2018

The right to safety in all relationships must be emphasised, through education and sharing of knowledge about what respect and safety look like. Respectful relationships work with young girls and boys, women and men is required to support healthy relationships and to educate about the cycle of violence, power and control. The psychological and emotional wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people is critical, so they are supported to thrive, as future leaders and owners of cultural knowledge.





## Cultural safety

The right to cultural safety in daily relationships and community life, service and education settings and workplaces is critical. Safe systems and structures, built on access, equity and inclusion need to be in place, with Aboriginal and mainstream services accountable for providing Aboriginal Victorians with culturally safe, appropriate and sensitive responses.

By adapting a strengths-based approach the system will support Aboriginal people to thrive through the prosperity of their relationships, jobs and economic, social and cultural opportunities. This emphasis will eliminate a deficit approach and create a future built on the inherent strengths and solution focus of Aboriginal communities.

Cultural safety is an environment, which is safe for people where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and experience. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together with dignity and true listening. Cultural safety is about creating and maintaining an environment where all people are treated in a culturally respectful manner.

Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group  
Workshop, 28 November 2017

Cultural, physical and community safety means no racism, discrimination or cultural stereotyping and a zero tolerance to violence. A strengths-based approach is working towards a future in which all Australians have knowledge of and are proud of Aboriginal culture. This will mean all Aboriginal people are safe to identify as Aboriginal. Visible acknowledgements of Aboriginal culture, teaching Aboriginal history, acknowledging the past and truth telling are also critically important.

A culturally safe environment is required to have a different conversation.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
Caroline Springs 5-6 December 2017



# Accountability, transparency and honesty of all parties

Dhelk Dja is the lead Victorian agreement describing the work required to ensure that all Aboriginal people in Victoria live free from family violence. Realising the vision of Dhelk Dja will require everyone – Aboriginal communities and services, government and the broader service sector – to understand and accept their responsibility to work together, leverage resources and be part of the change, underpinned by a strengths based approach. All parties need to be transparent and accountable and have the capacity to reflect, respond and rise to challenges, but also to acknowledge and celebrate success.

We want to be empowered to advocate as individuals, families and communities.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
Caroline Springs 5-6 December 2017

Culturally relevant collection, ownership and application of data<sup>7</sup> will be supported at all levels – across communities, government, services and the sector. This will enable effective monitoring and ensure accountability of all parties; and will inform strategies and approaches to improve program and service planning and delivery. Clear mechanisms need to be in place to measure and understand the impact of effort and investment on the lives, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, families and communities. The development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan for Dhelk Dja, in partnership with the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, will ensure that mechanisms are in place to track progress and outcomes against Dhelk Dja and its Action Plans, including Regional Action Plans.

To end family violence, accountability also needs to happen at a community, individual and systems level. It is clear that family violence prevention and the right to safety is everyone's responsibility. Aboriginal communities have also voiced the need to hold Aboriginal people who use violence accountable for their violence and behaviours. Education, supports and accountability need to be in place across the system, so that people who use violence can understand the devastating impacts of their behaviour, and accept responsibility for the safety of their family, and for their own healing and accountability journey.

More qualitative data will show the true story of communities and enable us to be authors of our own destiny.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

People who use violence are accountable to community. Government and sector also play an accountability role.

Aboriginal Family Violence Co-design Forum,  
17 April 2018

7. See definition of Aboriginal Data Sovereignty in Glossary, Appendix 2.

# Strategic Priorities

**Dhelk Dja sets out five strategic priorities to ensure that individuals, families and Aboriginal communities are culturally strong and self-determining, safe, thriving and living free from family violence:**

**One: Aboriginal culture and leadership**

**Two: Aboriginal-led prevention**

**Three: Self-determining Aboriginal family violence support and services**

**Four: System transformation based on self-determination**

**Five: Aboriginal-led and informed innovation, data and research**

These priorities were developed, refined and endorsed by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, drawing upon the input and voices of Aboriginal communities and services more broadly. Specific actions and accountabilities under each strategic priority will be developed by the Partnership Forum and outlined in each Action Plan and Regional Action Plan. Measures to track progress and outcomes against each strategic priority will be designed through the development of the Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan.

# Priority One: Aboriginal culture and leadership

**Aboriginal people are the custodians of over 60,000 years of culture, knowledge and stories that must be heard and protected, and continue to be guided by the wisdom and expertise of Elders and the emerging voices of the younger generation and new leaders.**

Aboriginal communities, services and the government will continue to invest in and strengthen Aboriginal culture as a protective factor against violence, through a strong and stable platform of cultural capacity and a continuous stream of new leadership and positive role models. Learnings will continue to be passed to the next generations, so that children and young people are strong and healthy in body, mind, spirit and culture. So that they are inspired and empowered, and can themselves be inspirational.

Everyone, not just Aboriginal people, services and communities, has a role to play in ending the devastating impact of family violence on Aboriginal Victorians. We need to activate a whole of Victorian community and whole of service system response to remove systemic barriers to seeking help and end the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people and children, with Aboriginal people leading the conversation.

Aboriginal communities, services and the government will support inclusion, two-way learning, engagement and responsibility, where Aboriginal voices lead decision-making at all levels. Aboriginal practices and holistic approaches must be valued and embedded in the broader service system to benefit the wider Victorian community.

### **Self-determination in this priority is:**

- Aboriginal voices will be prioritised in decision-making on budget investment, funding and resources, and determining and measuring outcomes
  - Investing in Aboriginal controlled structures, including but not limited to the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Dhelk Dja Action Groups and Aboriginal community organisations, to lead governance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of family violence reform including policy and program development, services and initiatives for Aboriginal people
  - Investing in community sustainability, resourcing and capacity building to meet the requirements of the new reforms
  - Local Aboriginal communities and leaders driving local solutions and innovation for their communities
  - Investing in current young leaders as examples and positive role models and mentors for the next generation
  - Government, communities and services will influence the media to portray the positive work, contributions and outcomes in Aboriginal communities
  - Protecting Aboriginal cultural and intellectual property.
- 

### **Over the next 10 Years:**

- The voices and cultural ways of Aboriginal people will be respected
- Government will invest sustainably in Aboriginal controlled structures and capacity
- Government will invest in Aboriginal community-led governance and leadership to drive policy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation across the breadth of the service system, including family violence, housing, health, education, child protection and justice agencies, courts and access to legal services.

## Priority Two: Aboriginal-led prevention

**Aboriginal people are leading work to prevent family violence within their communities, as evidenced through the establishment and long standing leadership of the Dhelk Dja Action Groups. They know the community, and have expertise and understanding around the preventive, therapeutic and protective factors that work to prevent family violence. Prevention must be grounded in cultural strengthening, cultural expertise and education that is Aboriginal community-led and driven.**

All prevention and early intervention initiatives will be led by Aboriginal communities and based on their choices and their solutions. This recognises that a one size fits all approach does not work, and that solutions reside within local communities when they are provided the right support.

Initiatives will work across all types of prevention – primary prevention, secondary prevention (early intervention) and tertiary prevention (response) – and will be underpinned by culture, cultural strengthening, healing and strengthening protective factors. Aboriginal people will be leading decision-making around how prevention initiatives are funded, and how outcomes and success are measured. The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum will work closely with Victoria's prevention agency, Respect Victoria, to inform these decisions.

Solutions exist within communities (with the right support). We need local solutions for local problems.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

Education, including prevention initiatives in schools, is critical to strengthen and influence future generations. Aboriginal Elders, women, men and young people will be supported to take up leadership and education roles to open up conversations about respectful relationships and positive parenting, influence attitude and behaviour change, and foster culture and resilience across the generations.

We need to build an understanding of culture as a protective factor.

Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group,  
5 February 2018

The Aboriginal workforce, including community Dhelk Dja Action Groups, will be supported to build specialist and sustainable capability in prevention and to realise their cultural knowledge and wisdom through community designed and led solutions. To understand and build on what works, Aboriginal-led evaluation will be prioritised to gather data and strengthen the evidence base around family violence prevention and the impact of cultural strengthening. This evidence will inform and guide mainstream prevention agencies in their efforts to prevent family violence before it starts. The government will invest in training and education for prevention workforces to build capacity within the Aboriginal context, but also to strengthen the capacity of non-Aboriginal workers and prevention agencies to know what works for Aboriginal people and communities.

### **Self-determination in this priority is:**

- Investing in education and prevention initiatives to promote healthy and respectful relationships across genders and the generations
  - Investing in education initiatives for Aboriginal children and young people so that they understand their rights and do not accept or tolerate controlling or violent behaviours
  - Prioritising sustainable funding for Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives, recognising that prevention solutions reside within community
  - Building the individual and collective capacity of Dhelk Dja Action Groups and Aboriginal community members, through equitable and sustainable funding and support
  - Local communities and empowered leaders and young people making their own decisions about healthy and respectful relationships
  - Investing in Aboriginal-led evaluation of prevention initiatives using Aboriginal defined measures of success.
- 

### **Over the next 10 Years:**

- Aboriginal people and communities will be safe to express their cultural identity
- More Aboriginal Elders, men and women will be champions, role models and leaders promoting everyone's right to safety and wellbeing
- Government will invest sustainably in holistic, culturally appropriate, Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives that take a whole of family and whole of community approach and share pride in Aboriginal culture and history
- Victorian communities will have zero tolerance for family violence, racism and discrimination
- The signatories will build a strong evidence base to understand the positive impact of an Aboriginal community-led prevention approach
- The impact of family violence on Aboriginal communities will reduce.

# Priority Three:

## Self-determining Aboriginal family violence support and services

**Consistent with self-determination, the service system needs to be transformed so that Aboriginal services with the required specialisation and expertise are resourced to lead the way as the primary providers of family violence services for Aboriginal people who experience family violence and who use family violence.**

This approach needs to be underpinned by a paramount focus on safety. Services need to intervene early to prevent harm and wrap-around a person, child or family to provide a response from crisis to healing, addressing all of their safety and wellbeing needs, including housing and legal needs. Services will support the person, child or family, providing holistic support and tools but not directing them or their choices. Aboriginal people will have access to information and exercise their right of choice. This will be complemented by Aboriginal-led healing, therapeutic support and accountability for people who use violence, so they take responsibility for their behaviour.

People are guided on their own healing journey, with one person helping to carry the load and the story, so you don't need to retell it.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

Aboriginal-led healing, trauma based and therapeutic services for children, adolescents, adults and families who experience violence and people who use violence will be prioritised for investment by government, with Aboriginal people involved in funding and investment decisions. Safety and healing for people, children and families experiencing family violence is paramount, including a focus on children and a line of sight for children and young people who do not live at home. Services will have funding flexibility to respond to the needs of older people and Elders, children, people who identify as LGBTIQ+, people with a disability, as

well as non-Aboriginal parents and family members and non-Aboriginal people who use violence against Aboriginal women and children.

The Aboriginal workforce and the Aboriginal-led service sector will be strengthened so that it is connected and collaborative and has the specialisation, expertise, capacity, resources and tools required to provide appropriate and specialist services to Aboriginal people, children and families. This will include strengthening connections between the Aboriginal workforce and broader workforce reforms across family violence and social services. Through a family violence Aboriginal industry strategy, Aboriginal services in Victoria will be supported and resourced to plan and build capacity and connections within and across Aboriginal family violence services, legal and housing services, healing and time-out services, gathering places and refuges.

Workforce training, cultural and clinical supervision, reflective practice and support will be strengthened for Aboriginal workers to build capacity and expertise, and to heal and address vicarious trauma. Government will invest in strategies to grow and sustain the Aboriginal family violence workforce to meet current and future service demands. Broader Aboriginal workforce issues, including retention, pay parity, workforce development and pathways, will be addressed at a whole of health and human services workforce level, through the Aboriginal Health and Human Services Workforce Strategy.

We need new approaches to service models and practices that respond to Aboriginal diversity including blended families, Elders, LGBTIQ+, disabilities.

Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group,  
5 February 2018



### Self-determination in this priority is:

- Prioritising adequate and sustainable funding for Aboriginal-led family violence services with the specialisation and expertise to increase the safety, healing and wellbeing of victims, children, young people and families
- Investing in long-term, culturally informed, therapeutic support and healing for Aboriginal children and their families, and healing for people who use violence
- Transferring decision-making for policy development and program design to Aboriginal communities, with Aboriginal people leading funding and investment decisions
- Growing and supporting the expertise, skills and knowledge base of the Aboriginal workforce and sector as the specialist providers of culturally safe family violence services for Aboriginal people
- Implementing an Aboriginal designed and led strategy to strengthen and build the capacity, specialisation and infrastructure of the Aboriginal family violence workforce and sector
- Supporting the wellbeing of the Aboriginal workforce and addressing vicarious trauma in a culturally safe environment
- Using Aboriginal defined measures of success to monitor and evaluate progress.

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### Over the next 10 Years:

- Aboriginal family violence services will ensure Aboriginal people exercise their rights and responsibilities and have support when necessary to navigate the system and make informed choices
- Government will transform the system, with Aboriginal services resourced as the primary providers of healing and family violence services for Aboriginal children and people who experience family violence, and people who use family violence
- The signatories will sustain a strong Aboriginal designed and led healing model providing holistic, culture and trauma informed support to Aboriginal Victorians
- Government will fund and enable services to support a person's healing journey, with long-term therapeutic support, rather than individual episodes of support
- Government will grow, strengthen, upskill and resource the Aboriginal workforce and service system through Aboriginal designed and led employment pathways.

We need to reimagine the service system as a connected, collaborative, Aboriginal working space.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

## Priority Four: System transformation based on self-determination principles

**A joined up and whole of system approach to family violence prevention and response will better meet the needs of Aboriginal people and families. It will help to break the cycle of family violence, which cuts across services.**

Family violence brings Aboriginal people, children and families into contact with many parts of the service system, including family violence services; police, justice system and the courts; housing and homelessness system; children and family services; child protection and out-of-home care system; and health, mental health and human services. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services need to work together to bring about this change.

The whole service system, including the specialist family violence system, must be culturally safe and deliver equitable access for everyone, including Aboriginal people, children, and extended families. This will ensure that Aboriginal people can exercise their right to access culturally safe and appropriate service options from any part of the service system. It will also support individual choice to access an Aboriginal or a non-Aboriginal service. Better connections between the Aboriginal service sector and broader services, including Aboriginal representation across system governance, will lead to more choice and better outcomes for Aboriginal people experiencing or using family violence.

Cultural knowledge, understanding of traditional lore and Aboriginal family dynamics need to be recognised and valued across the system.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

Self-determination does not mean we only have to work with our mob.

Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group,  
18 October 2017

Government will invest in Aboriginal-led approaches to ensure the broader family violence service system is culturally safe and equitable. Aboriginal people will be involved in these investment decisions. Aboriginal communities and services will be supported to strengthen their connections with broader family violence and universal services, creating a more integrated, specialist and culturally safe service system.

### **Self-determination in this priority is:**

- Ensuring that government, the whole service system and its workforces are culturally safe, transparent and accountable
  - Ensuring that Aboriginal people and children who choose to access a non-Aboriginal service will receive culturally informed and safe service provision and programs
  - Collaborating and sharing best practice across Aboriginal communities and services with broader family violence services.
- 

### **Over the next 10 Years:**

- Government will invest in strong partnerships and collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services to ensure policies, programs and the service system are responsive and not siloed
- Government will ensure strengths-based, trauma informed and culturally safe practices are built into policies and practice, and the broader family violence service system and its workforce
- Aboriginal people will be involved in decision-making around investment and resourcing, to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of our front-line Aboriginal services with family violence expertise to contribute to policy and program development, law reform and system improvement across a range of areas including police, courts and universal services.

## Priority Five: Aboriginal-led and informed innovation, data and research

**Aboriginal communities and services need meaningful access to data about family violence in their communities, and must be supported to lead research and innovation. Measures of success around Aboriginal safety and wellbeing, including mechanisms for collecting and sharing data, must be determined by Aboriginal people and communities.**

To invest in Aboriginal-led innovation and research we need to ensure that the collection, ownership and application of data is culturally relevant and driven by Aboriginal communities and services.

This is required to understand what is working and what is not working well for Aboriginal Victorians.

This work will leverage off whole of Victorian Government efforts to improve the systemic collection and integration of family violence data, including a quality and consistent approach to collecting data about Aboriginal people. It will also require a greater focus on Aboriginal defined outcomes and measures of success around safety and wellbeing.

We need qualitative and quantitative data, context, stories, outcomes, numbers and pictures of what is happening. We need to actively participate and inform how it will be used.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

Building community capacity to take a lead in research and share best practice is critical.

Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum,  
San Remo 6 March 2018

Recognising the need to work across agencies that hold existing data, including police, courts, and health and human services, government will invest in Aboriginal-led and informed approaches to strengthen data collection and analysis, and improve the way Aboriginal communities can access and use this data.

Aboriginal community, services and government will work together to invest in Aboriginal-led family violence innovation, evaluation and research, and communities of practice to showcase and celebrate evidence based approaches that improve safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal people.

Government and Aboriginal services will also work to use data in a way that shows a holistic picture of a client or family's experience over time and across multiple service systems. Dhelk Dja will be underpinned by an Aboriginal designed Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan, that is based on outcomes informed and owned by Aboriginal people, and aligned with other relevant Victorian Aboriginal-led strategies and the Family Violence Outcomes Framework.

### **Self-determination in this priority, will look like:**

- Aboriginal communities determining ethics to underpin culturally safe research processes and methodologies
  - Aboriginal communities and organisations leading or partnering in culturally safe family violence evaluation and research
  - Aboriginal communities have control over the collection, ownership and application of data about them
  - Community using its data and research findings to inform government, and drive innovation in family violence
  - Collaborating and sharing best practice and innovation across Aboriginal communities and services, government and the sector
  - Aboriginal defined measures of success and cultural determinants of health, wellbeing and safety.
- 

### **Over the next 10 Years:**

- The signatories will access and share relevant data in community-led language
- The signatories will use data and research to understand a holistic picture of client experience
- Government will implement improved and culturally safe client management systems
- Aboriginal services and communities will have access to systemic data, derived from systems that talk with each other, to inform strategic priorities, support local service provision and drive system improvements
- The signatories will develop an evidence base on what works to support Aboriginal people and communities to prevent, respond to and heal from family violence
- Government will strengthen the capacity of services and workforces to drive Aboriginal-led and informed data collection, evaluation and research.

# Going forward

Dhelk Dja articulates the long-term partnership and directions required to ensure that Aboriginal children, people, families and communities live free from violence, built upon the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination. The next step is to develop a 10 year investment strategy and a series of Action Plans that detail the actions and investments to bring Dhelk Dja to life over 10 years. The first Aboriginal designed Action Plan (2018–2021) will step out the actions required over the next three years and who will be responsible for delivering them. It will contain the specific actions, funding investments and initiatives that will be delivered in the first three years to bring the vision and strategic priorities of Dhelk Dja to life. The Action Plan will build upon existing effort and investments to improve family violence outcomes for Aboriginal people. It will also inform the development of Regional Action Plans by Dhelk Dja Action Groups.

A 10 year investment strategy and the first Action Plan (2018–2021) will be developed in 2018–2019 by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum. Further Action Plans will be released for the period 2021–2024 and 2024–2027.

Development of the Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan and the overarching *Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety research, and evaluation framework* will commence in 2018–19. The *Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety research and evaluation framework* will outline Aboriginal defined measures of success and cultural determinants of health, wellbeing and safety, and will identify research priorities for Victorian Aboriginal communities. The Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan will be aligned to this framework and will enable the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum to monitor progress and ensure accountability for actions and outcomes.



# Appendix 1

## Victoria's family violence reform context

Victorian Government responses to family violence have changed significantly over the last 10 years, and most significantly following the release of the report and recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2016 and the Victorian Government's commitment to implement all 227 recommendations. It has also created the opportunity for linking reforms across social service areas. A summary of key Victorian Government family violence reform directions and commitments are captured below. All of these strategies have a responsibility to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. The principles of self-determination and cultural safety and the voices of Aboriginal people must be reflected across key reforms and their governance structures.

### Royal Commission into Family Violence

The Royal Commission into Family Violence report acknowledged the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal people, especially women and children, and the unique barriers that Aboriginal people face to getting help. It recognised that this is inherently linked to the injustices experienced by Aboriginal people as a result of colonisation, including the dispossession of their land and culture, and the grief and intergenerational trauma associated with policies that wrongfully removed children from their families. The Royal Commission made specific mention of *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* as foundational work in family violence policy, and made nine recommendations specific to Aboriginal communities, to increase investment in targeted prevention and early intervention initiatives, as well as culturally sensitive services.

### Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change and Family Violence Rolling Action Plan (2017-2020)

*Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change* outlines how the Government will achieve the vision of a Victoria free from family violence by implementing all 227 recommendations of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. The 10 Year Plan details the outcomes of the Government's family violence reforms and the initial targets for measuring progress. The 10 Year Plan is built on the foundations of *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*. Dhelk Dja is aligned to *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*.

### Family Violence Outcomes Framework

The Victorian Government's Family Violence Outcomes Framework is a tangible tool to keep government accountable to implementing *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*. Every part of the family violence reform work links back to the outcomes framework, and measuring these outcomes will provide evidence of what works, and what doesn't, in delivering real change.

### Free from Violence: Victoria's Prevention Strategy

*Free from Violence* focuses on preventing two different but overlapping and related forms of violence - family violence and violence against women. It aims to change the social norms, structures and practices that endorse violence, and builds on a range of efforts made across Victoria to prevent family violence.

## Voices of Hope

*Voices of Hope* places the voices of victim-survivors at the heart of family violence service reform. It was the first co-design project undertaken with victim-survivors and was led by sector organisations, expert advisers, and the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council. The project explores the lived experiences of victim-survivors and draws on their collective insight to give government a deeper understanding of what's needed for people to have a better experience of the family violence service system and receive the support they need. *Voices of Hope* was incorporated into *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*.

## Family Safety Victoria

Established in July 2017, Family Safety Victoria drives key elements of Victoria's family violence strategy, with a focus on the safety and wellbeing of women, children, young people and families. Family Safety Victoria leads policy development and key reforms including:

- establishing 17 Support and Safety Hubs (The Orange Door) across Victoria – transforming services, making it easier to get help for those at risk or experiencing family violence and for families needing support for the care, development and wellbeing of their children
- enhancing existing specialised services for victims of family violence including children, so that the right assistance is available at the right time
- implementing a Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, supported by a Central Information Point (CIP) connecting perpetrator information from police, Corrections, child protection and the courts to keep victims safe
- redevelopment of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (formerly Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) to create an authorising environment across the Victorian service system to assess and manage family violence risk

- delivering *Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response* through the Centre for Workforce Excellence, to build workforce capacity and capability in partnership with the sector
- embedding equity and inclusion in family violence reforms to ensure that services are safe, responsive, culturally appropriate and accessible to all Victorians, including those from diverse communities
- leading engagement with sector, victim-survivors, Aboriginal communities, people from diverse backgrounds and the Victorian community as a whole across all reforms and initiatives we deliver.

Family Safety Victoria is a partner of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum and committed to working with Aboriginal people, communities and services.

The policy development and reforms led by Family Safety Victoria will be informed and guided by Dhelk Dja to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

## Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response

*Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response* outlines the Victorian Government's long-term vision and plan for the workforces that prevent and respond to family violence. It outlines how the Victorian Government and key stakeholders will work together to create a flexible and dynamic workforce that puts equality, safety and accountability at the core of everything they do. The Plan focuses on four key areas - a system that works together; building prevention and response capability across the system; strengthening specialist workforces; and workforce health and wellbeing.



## Magistrates' Court of Victoria's (MCV) Response to Family Violence

The Magistrates' Court Family Violence Vision Statement is to create an integrated and specialist court system that is accessible and responsive to the needs of those experiencing family violence.

The purpose of the Vision Statement is to enhance the court response so that those experiencing family violence have equal access to justice responses and a safer experience and that perpetrators are held accountable for their behaviour.

In responding to the needs of Aboriginal people in Victoria, MCV has established a Koori Family Violence team to oversee Koori family violence reforms. The Koori family violence response is underpinned by the principle of self-determination and aims to provide safe, coordinated, accessible and culturally appropriate court responses for Aboriginal individuals, families and communities experiencing family violence. Future court reforms will be co-designed and implemented with key Aboriginal community and government stakeholders to ensure that court responses are responding to the needs of Aboriginal people in Victoria.

## Victorian Aboriginal strategies and frameworks

The following significant Victorian Government policy documents are underpinned by Aboriginal self-determination and share the common goal of improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Dhelk Dja has interdependencies and relationships to the objectives of these key policies and strategies and supports strong collaboration across government efforts in partnership with Aboriginal services and communities, to ensure that Aboriginal women, men, children, young people, Elders, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and living free from family violence.

As identified by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, there is a significant social and cultural need to deliver more choices for Aboriginal people through greater coordination across the service system as well as between the policies, strategies and investment that support it. The impact of family violence is strongly connected with the health, social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and children. It impacts the education, housing and justice systems and is a leading factor for children ending up in out-of-home care. Dhelk Dja is strongly linked with key Aboriginal strategies that span this cross-section of service delivery such as *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement*, *Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan* and *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja - Aboriginal Justice Agreement - Phase 4*, recognising that a coordinated whole of government approach is needed to achieve outcomes.

Through the leadership of the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Dhelk Dja reflects the need to transform the way government and Aboriginal communities and services work together to deliver tailored, culturally appropriate and safe responses and approaches that will address and respond to family violence impacting Aboriginal communities.

### **Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) 2013–2018, noting the development of the new VAAF 2018–2023**

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework is the government's state-based outcomes framework that aims to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Dhelk Dja's guiding principles and strategic priorities complement and support the VAAF's strategic action areas, particularly *Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes*. The VAAF is being refreshed in 2018 with a central focus on self-determination and ensuring that the new framework is led by and reflects the needs and aspirations of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

### **Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027**

*Korin Korin Balit-Djak* provides an overarching framework for action to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians now and over the next ten years. It strives to realise the Victorian Government's vision for self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal people and communities by prioritising: Aboriginal community leadership; Aboriginal culture and community; system reform; safe, secure and strong families and individuals, and; physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities. One of *Korin Korin Balit-Djak's* overarching priorities is *Safe, secure, strong families and individuals*; Dhelk Dja will support the realisation of this priority, specifically through the realisation of Strategic direction 4.2.2 *Increase access to Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention and support services*.

### **Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework 2017–2027**

The framework provides a forum for building stronger relationships between Aboriginal communities and the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) and will involve Aboriginal communities in policy development and decision making, including resource allocation. It supports the department's commitment to self-determination and ensures Aboriginal voices drive decisions around the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians through better partnership and joint decision-making between Aboriginal communities, government and agencies. It also provides an opportunity for the transparent monitoring of accountability of outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians and informs governance, monitoring and accountability to *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*. The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum has a role to play in the implementation of the Framework through opportunities to link with the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum and alignment of key strategies as they are implemented at a local level.

### **Balit Murrup: the Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework 2017–2027**

*Balit Murrup* has been developed as part of Victoria's 10 year mental health plan. This framework 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. People who have experienced family violence are a priority group under *Balit Murrup*. There are multiple links between the four domains of *Balit Murrup* and the Guiding Principles and Strategic Priorities of Dhelk Dja particularly regarding building an integrated service system that is supported by a culturally responsive workforce, and practice that is based on culture and trauma informed healing.

## **Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement**

*Wungurilwil Gapgapduir* is a three way agreement between Aboriginal community, community service organisations and the Victorian Government that outlines strategic directions to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home. *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir* commits to better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people by building their connection to culture, Country and community. Given the significant impact of family violence for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care, Dhelk Dja is integral to the realisation of *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir*. Dhelk Dja's guiding principles and strategic priorities complement and support the principles and objectives of *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir*, in particular *Objective 4: Capture, build and share Aboriginal knowledge, learning and evidence to drive children and family services investment and to inform practice*, which articulates the need for early intervention, treatment and recovery programs for family violence that promote safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and families.

## **Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026**

*Marrung: Aboriginal education plan 2016–2026* sets out a 10-year vision for delivering on the 'Education State' to Aboriginal Victorians. It is underpinned by the principle of Aboriginal self-determination and delivers on Victoria's commitment to 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 (for release in 2018)**

*Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja* 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. The first Aboriginal Justice Agreement was developed in response to recommendations from the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and subsequent 1997 National Ministerial Summit on Indigenous Deaths in Custody. The third phase was implemented from 2013–2018, and evaluated in 2018. *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja* is Phase 4 of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and will commence in mid-2018. One of the domains of *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja* is *Strong and safe Aboriginal families and communities*. Supporting this domain is goal *1.2 Aboriginal communities are safer*. Given the significant overlap between family violence and the justice system, Dhelk Dja is strongly aligned to and supports *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja* through the Guiding Principle: Safety (Physical; community; and cultural safety) which articulates that to create families and communities that are safe and free from violence, safety across all relationships, community settings and the entire service system is required. Dhelk Dja will align with Phase 4 of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and provide a clear and connected approach to achieving strong and safe communities.

## **Advancing the Treaty process with Aboriginal Victorians**

Aboriginal Victorians have long called for a Treaty. In June 2018, the first ever piece of treaty legislation in Australia, the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018, passed in Parliament. 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.

## Appendix 2

### Broader Victorian service reforms

A number of other significant social service reforms are taking place across the Victorian Government. These reforms have a responsibility to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people, and to centre self-determination, cultural safety and the voices of Aboriginal people. These reforms include, but are not limited to:

#### Roadmap for Reform: strong families; safe children

*Roadmap for Reform: strong families; safe children* focuses on prevention and early intervention. Creating services that are coordinated and working together to meet the needs of vulnerable families and children in Victoria.

#### Community Services Industry Plan

The Community Services Industry Plan will set a ten-year vision for the community services of the future, and take account of the economic, technological and social shifts that will impact on service delivery in the future. It aims to move the current fragmented system towards a coordinated, person-centred experience of community services and provide for a more unifying, longer-term plan to support the industry.

### Glossary of Terms

**Aboriginal data sovereignty<sup>8</sup>:** Data sovereignty refers to the management of information in a way that is consistent with the laws, practices and customs of the nation-state in which it is located. In an Aboriginal context, it describes the ability of Aboriginal peoples to practice self-rule and self-governance when it comes to data, the opening of data, and their capacity to gather and manage data for their own purposes and use. In the Dhelk Dja context, this means that Aboriginal people own and control all data that relates to them, are able to decide when and how to use it, and are able to determine the type of data used and the manner in which it is collected. Decisions about the collection and use of data related to Aboriginal people must be controlled by Aboriginal people.

**Cultural safety<sup>9</sup>:** 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.

8. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2016, *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Towards an Agenda*, Australian National University, <<http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n2140/pdf/book.pdf?referer=2140>>, viewed 19 July 2018.
9. 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.

**Family violence**<sup>10</sup>: *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.
- **Spiritual abuse**<sup>11</sup> – 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**<sup>12</sup> – 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**<sup>13</sup>: 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.

**Gender informed**: 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.

10. Australasian Legal Information Institute, 2008, *Family Violence Protection Act (VIC) 2008*, <[http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/fvpa2008283/sch2.html](http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/vic/consol_act/fvpa2008283/sch2.html)>, viewed 19 July 2018.

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

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

**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.<sup>16</sup>

**Intersectionality<sup>17</sup>:** A theoretical approach that understands the interconnected nature of social categorisations - such as Aboriginality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, colour, nationality, language, religion, ability, age, class, mental health, socioeconomic status, housing status, geographic location, medical record or criminal record - which can create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage for either an individual or group. Intersectionality in this context refers to the fact that all people hold many of the personal characteristics outlined above. The Dhek Dja Partnership Forum subscribes to the theory of intersectionality and aims to be inclusive of all people, regardless of their personal characteristics.

**Lateral violence<sup>18</sup>:** lateral violence 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.

#### **LGBTIQA+<sup>19</sup>:**

- **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.
- **Trans and gender diverse:** Transgender refers 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.

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

17. Revised from: *State of Victoria, Diversity and Intersectionality Framework*, <<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/designing-for-diversity-and-intersectionality/diversity-and-intersectionality-framework.html>>, viewed 13 September 2018.

18. 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](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport10/pdf/sjr2010_full.pdf)>, viewed 19 July 2018.

19. 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.

**Resilience<sup>20</sup>:** refers to a person's capacity to think and act in ways that help them adapt and cope with adversity without suffering from long-term, harmful consequences due to stress. Strong, supportive relationships, connection to culture and community, and participating in support programs can help. Aboriginal-led research suggests that for Aboriginal people in particular, the factors most important for resilience are family identity and culture, as well as individual spirituality and a sense of belonging.<sup>21</sup>

**Resilience approaches<sup>22</sup>:** culturally safe approaches and programs that look to build the resilience of Aboriginal people, their extended families and their community. Communities can be sources of support and resilience that promote social and emotional wellbeing when community organisation and functioning is culturally-informed and provides for cultural practice and transmission. For optimal social and emotional wellbeing in individuals and families, empowering communities to heal and to revitalise culture and cultural practices may be required.

**Trauma<sup>23</sup>:** 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 informed<sup>24</sup>:** 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.

**The following definitions have been endorsed by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum and outline how these terms should be regarded throughout this document.**

**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.

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22. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017, *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' mental health and social and emotional wellbeing 2017–2023*, Australian Government, Canberra.

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

24. Ibid.

