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| **Development of Aboriginal Community Engagement and Partnership Framework** |
| Information update 2 August 2016 |

**This bulletin is the second update on the development of the Department of Health and Human Services Aboriginal Community Engagement and Partnership Framework.**

The Department of Health and Human Services (department) **Aboriginal Community Engagement and Partnership Framework (engagement framework)** is now underway. The consultants, John Prince and Nathan Leitch from Social Compass are leading the development of the engagement framework in collaboration with the Aboriginal community and the department. The engagement frameworkwill outline innovative approaches for engagement, partnership and co-design between Aboriginal communities, the department and agencies – with the aim of informing policies, programs, services to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Importantly, the engagement framework will inform the implementation and governance of the new Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan and other key strategies across the department

**Discussion Paper: Development of Aboriginal community engagement and partnership framework.**

A **Discussion Paper** outlining key themes and questions pertaining to engagement and partnerships between Aboriginal community and government can be found **click here.** The themes and questions have been informed by previous consultations as well a comprehensive literature review. The literature review aligns with what Aboriginal organisations and communities have been saying during the consultations conducted so far, and have been saying for many years.

Emerging themes include: the iterative process for engagement; need for trust and respectful relationships; understanding local contexts and communities; leadership and governance, recognising power inequalities; the need for capacity building and strengthening the skills of individuals and organisations to understand each other as a basis for collaboration and that places Aboriginal aspirations and priorities within a culturally safe practice of engagement.

The Discussion Paper outlines key themes and questions where you can provide feedback on commentary during upcoming consultations and community engagement forums.

**Upcoming consultations**

There are several opportunities for Aboriginal stakeholders (organisations, services, committees, community members and other representatives), DHHS, other agencies, and Government departments to have inform and shape the development of the engagement framework. Consultations will be undertaken through **community engagement forums, interviews, informal conversations, written and online submissions.**

1. **Open community engagement forums**

There will be six open community forums in various locations across the state from 15th August – 27th August. The aim of the forums is the seek feedback on proposed and existing approaches to engagement and partnership between government and community. You are invited to attend at a location that suits you and your community\*. The forums are open to all Aboriginal community members, representatives, agencies and other stakeholders and departmental staff**.**

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| Area | Date | Time | Venue | Location |
| Melbourne (Inner North) | 15th Aug | 1pm – 4pm | Minajalku Healing Centre | 11 Rossmoyne Street, Thornbury. |
| Mildura | 17th Aug | 11am – 2pm | Mallee District Aboriginal Service | 120 Madden Avenue, Mildura. |
| Warrnambool | 22nd Aug | 11am – 2pm | Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative | Harris Street, Warrnambool. |
| Bairnsdale | 23rd Aug | 11am – 2pm | Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place | 37/53 Dalmahoy Street, Bairnsdale. |
| Shepparton | 24th Aug | 11am – 2pm | Rumbalara Football and Netball Club | Mercury Drive, Shepparton. |
| Melbourne (Outer East) | 25th Aug | 11am – 2pm | Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place | 47 Paterson Street, Ringwood East. |

**\*FURTHER INFORMATION on the engagement forums can be found here.**

1. **Written submissions**

You can also have your say in writing. We would like to hear from the Aboriginal community, government and other agencies, services and peak/statewide bodies working with the Aboriginal community**.** You may wish to consider – though not feel limited by – the following questions. They are a guide only:

1. In what capacity are you providing a written submission ie on whose behalf are you responding?
2. How does the voice of Aboriginal people and communities find its way into government? What would the relationship between government and communities look like if it was based upon the principles of self-determination?
3. How can government best listen to the voice of community? What is the best way to capture community voices?
4. If you have been part of an advisory / references groups (e.g. VACKH, LMARG) What has worked well? What needs to change and how?

**Submissions can be emailed to** **admin@socialcompass.com**

1. **Arrange a meeting or telephone conversation**

Alternatively, you may wish to share your views by arranging a meeting with Social Compass and/or the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch (Department of Health and Human Services). See contact details below.

1. **Aboriginal youth population.**

We really want to capture the voice of young Aboriginal people – particularly given half of Victoria’s Aboriginal population is aged under 25 years. You can have a say on ways that government can listen to you (now and in the future) to better design programs, services and policies to improve health and wellbeing outcome for you and communities across Victoria. We encourage Aboriginal young people and their representative agencies to have a say. You can do this by either attending a community engagement forum, or emailing or calling Social Compass or the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch.

**Consultations so far**

Consultations have commenced with the Aboriginal agencies, community representatives, the department and other government agencies.

**Key themes emerging from the consultations include:**

* There is a need for a long term vision and framework that is resilient to changes in government/departments/personnel.
* Current engagement arrangements are complex and onerous for Aboriginal people, organisations and communities.
* There is a significant difference between consultation (where information is passed on) and engagement (a two-way people-to-people conversation).
* While communities have a tendency to be over-consulted there is too little consultation at the early stages of program / policy design.
* Everyone agrees that a process of co-design would enhance engagement arrangements but how this best takes place is still challenging to define.
* Self-determination needs to be put in practice if it is to be more meaningful; and it needs better defining.
* There is a difference between the engagement practices (past, present and future) for metropolitan versus regional Aboriginal organisations and communities.
* There are capacity strengths and gaps at the government and community levels for engagement to meet the lofty goals articulated in the literature and consultation findings.
* There is a need for clarification and agreed definitions of terminology between the department and the community,

**Whole of government and self-determination**

There is a broader Victorian government commitment to self-determination and the proposal of a treaty. In December 2015 the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced a number of new forums to ensure Aboriginal people have a stronger voice at the highest levels of government. These include the:

* Premier’s Gathering with Aboriginal leaders, focusing on high level strategic issues
* Victorian Government Ministerial Forum held with Ministers across government and Aboriginal peak and state-wide service delivery agencies.
* Aboriginal Victoria Forum with the Aboriginal community.

For further information on the broader Victorian Government work on self-determination and a treaty: <http://consult.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/Open-Meeting>

**Further information on the development of the Aboriginal Community Engagement and Partnership Framework:**

**Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch website**

* <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/engagement>

**Contact details:**

**Social Compass:**

* Dr. John Prince, email: john@socialcompass.com or phone. 0400 944403
* Mr. Nathan Leitch, email: nathan@socialcompass.com or phone 0447 349 621
* Submissions can be emailed to **admin@socialcompass.com**

**Department of Health and Human Services**

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