



# Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan

REMOVING BARRIERS AND CREATING  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAUNGURUNG PEOPLE  
TO LIVE ON TAUNGURUNG COUNTRY



# BACKGROUND

The Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) Strategic Plan 2021 - 2025 identifies an “On Country Housing Plan” as a priority for development.

This Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan, considers for the first time the Taungurung communities’ needs and interests in returning to Country as home, the challenges and opportunities relating to housing and the role which TLaWC should play. To our knowledge, no other Traditional Owner representative organisation has developed a housing plan of this nature before. In our experience, there is good reason for this. Housing is a complex topic infused with challenges of general housing inequity, the need for housing to provide shelter as well as a safe, appropriate and affordable foundation from which people build their lives, engage with their communities and their landscapes. When overlaid with colonial disruption to living on Country, a now disparate community with diverse historic experiences with housing and modern needs and abilities to access those, it becomes more complex still. This plan offers the first written step towards many future interactions of planning and delivery on housing initiatives for the Taungurung people.

Since 2022 TLaWC’s housing work has included the following initiatives:

1. Designing and delivering the **Bringing the Mob Back Home** Initiative – a financial contribution towards Taungurung individual’s costs associated with moving to and living on Taungurung Country.
2. Undertaking the **planning for a project to build mixed housing estates** (incorporating social housing, affordable housing and market housing), on Country and applying for funding to support the first phase to build the social housing component at two locations.
3. Investigating the concept of housing broadly in order to develop this **Biik Yilam Plan**.

In order to develop this plan TLaWC has undertaken work in three key areas:



## Taungurung-Community

Community consultation and data analysis to understand current On-Country housing needs, barriers and interests.



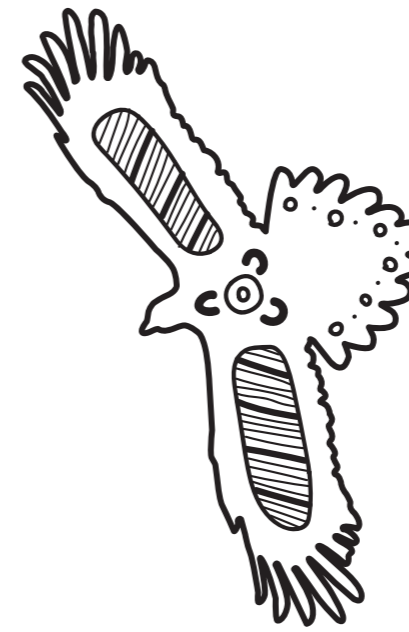
## Housing Sector

Sector research on the relevant operating models, opportunities and challenges.



## Financial

Analysis of the cost-benefit of proposed housing strategies, especially housing development options.



# CALLING COUNTRY HOME

**Taungurung people have lived on their Country for thousands of generations. The first peoples of the rivers and mountains, the Taungurung people have cared for Country and in turn Country has provided the necessary foods, fibres, medicines and shelters to live physically and spiritually healthy lives. Country has provided housing and has been home in all ways.**

When European colonisers arrived on Taungurung Country, Taungurung lives were dramatically disrupted. Despite significant and sustained resistance, dispossession through colonisation caused the physical removal of many Taungurung people from their Country. It is a legacy of these actions, layered with many subsequent barriers to returning, that most Taungurung people do not live on their Country today.

Despite colonial actions, the Taungurung maintained connection with their community, culture, families and Country. Through their great resilience, the Taungurung people

maintain a strong connection to Country whereby the living and ongoing reciprocity between people and Country remains today. Country continues to be home to the Taungurung People even though for many their day-to-day housing exists elsewhere.

TLaWC, the representative body of the Taungurung People, aims to bring voice and action to the reclamation of culture, Country and home. Supporting Taungurung People to return to live on Country, as well as to live increasingly healthy, fulfilled and connected lives are some of the key goals of TLaWC.

*Yilam* – is the Taungurung word meaning camp, hut, dwelling, house or home.

*Biik* – is the Taungurung word meaning Country. Taungurung Biik is more than land, it has bio-physical, ancestral-spiritual and social-cultural manifestations. This includes ways of knowing, being and doing as a Nation.

**OUR VISION IS THAT TAUNGURUNG PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO CALL COUNTRY HOME, THAT THEY HAVE ACCESS TO HOUSING THAT SUPPORTS COMFORTABLE LIVES, AND THAT HOME OWNERSHIP BECOMES AN ACCESSIBLE AVENUE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL WEALTH TRANSFER.**

This Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan outlines a pathway to achieving this vision.

# DEFINING THE BIIK YILAM PLAN

**Housing is a broad concept that can mean many different things. At the core is an assumption of shelter-providing infrastructure to live in.**

Important in the concept is that housing meets the needs of the occupants – that it is safe, affordable, tenure is secure and appropriate. Proximity to services, employment, health, education, transport, places of cultural relevance, connected to family, Taungurung and other communities is also important, as is being located in a physical and social environment that is culturally safe.

In order to define the scope of the Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan, TLaWC has worked from a base of fundamental principles. These are concepts which TLaWC believes to be true, and which form a basis for all further thinking.

The principles which guide our housing work are:

**Living on Country provides a raft of benefits to individuals**

Living on Country enables a fundamental connection to Country and culture which supports individuals' wellbeing. Through choice or persistent barriers, not all Taungurung People wish to, or will be able to live on Country. Those people are able to build connection in other ways and are equally included in the Taungurung community and TLaWC's programs.

**Having a higher proportion of the Taungurung Community living on Country will support the Taungurung Nation as a whole**

Having more Taungurung people living on Country supports the entire Taungurung Nation by having increased touch-points for other Taungurung community members to connect with – giving them places and community to visit and stay with, it increases the community support for those living on Country, provides a greater employee and participant pool to strengthen the work of TLaWC and provides greater visibility to the broader community. Having more Taungurung people living on Country also has cultural, community, Country and economic benefits for the wider community.

**TLaWC has a role to play in housing**

While there are many service providers working across the spectrum of housing needs, the experience and needs of Taungurung people are in some ways unique. TLaWC, understanding the specific needs of the Taungurung community has a role to play in connecting people to existing services which are appropriate, as well as advocating for and delivering bespoke solutions for the benefit of the Taungurung community.

**Safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing enables people to thrive**

Living in housing which is safe, tenure secure, appropriate and affordable provides stability which supports people to build happy, healthy, self-determined, fulfilled lives.

**Housing needs amongst the Taungurung community varies and the ability for people to achieve their needs also varies.**

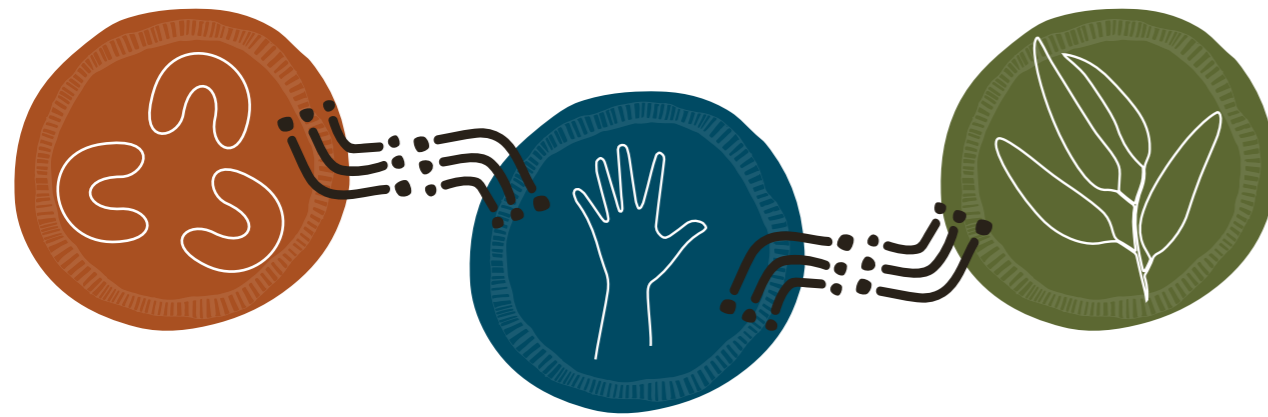
Taungurung people experience housing needs and accessibility across the full spectrum of housing experiences. This means that there are Taungurung people experiencing homelessness, living in social housing, renting, homeowners and those who own properties as investments. Present and past (including intergenerational) experiences with housing and housing systems affect people's housing needs and ability to access those needs. The ability for individuals to access housing needs is also strongly linked to access to financial resources and financial security.

**Home Ownership is an avenue for wealth generation and intergenerational wealth transfer**

Home ownership is one of the key mechanisms for wealth generation and intergenerational wealth transfer in Australia. Supporting people 'along the housing spectrum' and ultimately towards home ownership can help to rectify the long-term barriers which have disabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia from wealth generation following colonial theft of land and resources.

# GOALS

The Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan has been developed in order to support three key goals of TLaWC. The actions planned to work towards the achievement of each of these goals are set out on the following pages.



## Country is Home

To increase the number of Taungurung People living on Country, enabling connection with Country, culture and increasing the Taungurung community presence on Country.

## Housing Meets People's Needs

To support Taungurung people to have access to the right housing – that is safe, secure, affordable and appropriate – to build strong and happy lives.

## Economic Security and Growth is Achievable

To grow the financial assets and security of Taungurung people as well as TLaWC in order to ensure stronger futures for individuals and the Nation as a whole.

# DELIVERING THE PLAN

The Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan has been developed as a cross-departmental initiative, particularly within TLaWC's Economic Development and Advocacy and Enablement Divisions. The delivery of the plan will also occur cross-departmentally, with areas of work being allocated to their appropriate work unit for delivery.

Implementation of initiatives detailed in this plan will be staged to align with resources, opportunities and the logical order of development, growth and delivery.

Delivering the housing outcomes for the Taungurung Community described in this plan will not be achieved through the work of TLaWC alone. TLaWC will continue to build strong partnerships for the delivery of this plan. Our membership of the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum will continue to be a significant avenue for collaborating across a wide range of housing related areas of work.

Additionally, as we begin new areas of work we will consider the opportunities to partner with those already delivering outcomes in these areas. Organisations such as Aboriginal Housing Victoria and Indigenous Business Australia have already provided significant support to TLaWC's housing program, as have many of our fellow Victorian Traditional Owner representative organisation and we will continue to build and foster these partnerships. Similarly, we will continue to collaborate with State and Local governments to advocate for and achieve outcomes.





# COUNTRY IS HOME

To increase the number of Taungurung People living on Country, enabling connection with Country, culture and increasing the Taungurung community presence on Country.

TLaWC has built key base supports for Taungurung People wanting to live on Country including providing increased and diverse employment opportunities, growing numbers of community and cultural events on Country, progressing recognition of rights and ability to access Country.

Through community engagement including surveys and interviews, we have identified that significant barriers exist for many community members who wish to return to live on Country.

These include:

- Cost of moving and living on Country
- Housing Availability
- Access to services and other needs on Taungurung Country
- Cultural Safety

TLaWC will continue to develop programs, connect with partners and advocate for change in response to each of these barriers to support Taungurung people to call Country home again.



## COUNTRY IS HOME — AREAS OF WORK

### Bringing the Mob Back Home

In order to reduce financial barriers of moving to and living on Country the Bringing the Mob Back Home program, established in 2019, will continue to provide financial payments to individuals for these purposes.

### Mapping Country

Supporting community members knowledge of where to find their needs on Country, building their knowledge of services, community and the built and natural landscape by creating resources and engagement opportunities. This will support people to decide whether and where might suit them best to move to Country.

### Creating Culturally Safe Places

Increasing cultural safety and culturally safe spaces through sharing information with the Taungurung community and working with Local Governments, with other partners and on TLaWC owned land to create culturally safe places and inclusive and welcoming communities for the benefit of Taungurung people living on, moving to, or visiting Country.

### Creating Access to Affordable Houses

TLaWC will investigate multiple avenues to support Taungurung community members to access affordable housing on Country, including through the building of housing developments inclusive of a range of housing affordability options and with priority access for Taungurung community members.



# HOUSING MEETS PEOPLE'S NEEDS

To support Taungurung people to have access to the right housing – that is safe, secure, affordable and appropriate – to build strong and happy lives.

Access to housing which meets occupants' needs – which is safe, secure, affordable and appropriate – leads to improved health and employment outcomes, a greater sense of safety, independence and social connectedness. Access to appropriate housing in Australia by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continues to be an area of disadvantage.

People within the Taungurung community currently occupy all segments of the housing spectrum, from experiencing homelessness to social housing, rental and home ownership.

TLaWC aspires to a future where Taungurung people have safe, secure and affordable homes regardless of where they live. Initiatives designed to ensure housing needs are met which TLaWC will focus on for the duration of this plan are designed to best leverage housing support services which already exist, advocate for improvements to housing systems and develop programs to support Taungurung-specific needs where gaps exist. A particular focus on social and affordable housing aims to support those Taungurung community members in greatest need, or where greatest impact can be made, in this early phase of the TLaWC housing program.

## HOUSING MEETS PEOPLE'S NEEDS — AREAS OF WORK

<b>Existing Programs Connections</b>	TLaWC will build and maintain relationships with key service providers in order to understand existing programs and support available to the Taungurung community. TLaWC will support Taungurung community members to link to existing opportunities including through the development of resources, information sessions and supported engagement.
<b>Advocating for Taungurung Needs through the AHHF</b>	TLaWC is a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum. TLaWC will continue to use this forum to advocate for the housing needs of the Taungurung Community.
<b>Filling gaps</b>	TLaWC will continue to grow our understanding of the housing needs of the Taungurung Community and develop innovative solutions where mainstream services fail to meet the Taungurung community's needs, particularly relating to social and affordable housing, and home ownership.
<b>Social Housing Provider</b>	TLaWC will pursue opportunities to become a provider of social housing on Taungurung Country in order to increase availability and cultural appropriateness of this housing class for the Taungurung community.



# ECONOMIC SECURITY AND GROWTH IS ACHIEVABLE

To grow the financial assets and security of Taungurung people as well as TLaWC in order to ensure stronger futures for individuals and the Nation as a whole.

This pillar includes areas of work which will increase access to housing ownership in order to grow the financial security of Taungurung individuals. It also includes initiatives to support the growth and diversification of TLaWC's assets.

TLaWC aims to support Taungurung individuals to grow their own wealth through home ownership, including developing affordable pathways to home ownership. Home ownership is a key avenue for wealth creation in Australia, as well as intergenerational wealth transfer. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under-represented in home ownership.

TLaWC will connect to, augment and develop services which enable affordable home ownership pathways suitable for the Taungurung community in order to reduce barriers to Taungurung individuals and families owning their own home.

Additionally, TLaWC, as the representative of the Taungurung Nation, aims to increase the organisation's financial security, including its diversity of asset classes and income sources, in order to build a financially strong organisation. This will ensure that TLaWC can continue to support the needs of the Taungurung Community for an extended period into the future.

## ECONOMIC SECURITY AND GROWTH IS ACHIEVABLE — AREAS OF WORK

### Financial Literacy and Support Service Connection

TLaWC will link Taungurung Community members to existing financial services, including financial literacy education and finance support services as well as develop Taungurung-specific options where the needs arise.

### Bringing the Mob Back Home

The Bringing the Mob Back Home program includes added incentive to community members utilising funds for home purchase. This program will continue to support community members purchasing a home on Country.

### Mixed-Affordability Housing Developments

By leveraging TLaWC's ability to negotiate land transfers, financial resources and expertise, the organisation is well placed to develop land and build housing. Housing developments would provide a range of affordable rental and ownership models for Taungurung community members to access. They would also enable TLaWC to build organisational assets and receive income through rent and sales to the broader market for TLaWC reinvestment.

### Acquire Other Housing Stock

TLaWC will pursue other opportunities to acquire existing housing including the transfer of government-owned surplus housing and in partnership with other housing projects to be utilised for the benefit of the Taungurung community as well as TLaWC's operational needs.

