



# **GROWING OUR WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER**

**Hands Up Mallee Reflection Report 2022-2023**



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**We acknowledge the Latji Latji as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we are. We also acknowledge their near neighbours, the Barkindji.**

**We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging and to the ancient connection they hold with their Country.**

**We acknowledge there are also other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work in and contribute to the cultural heritage of the Mildura region.**

## **About Hands up Mallee**

Established in 2015, Hands Up Mallee (HUM) is a place-based collective impact initiative in the Mildura LGA in the far northwest of Victoria. A group of local leaders began the HUM initiative when they recognised that we needed to work together differently to address social, health and well-being equity issues in our community.

HUM works in partnership with the community, local service providers, agencies and all three levels of government. The initiative takes a place-based approach to solutions for local issues centring on community voice and combining this with local data and current research to develop collective action for a better community for children, young people and their families. HUM is committed to continuous learning and improvement concerning its work to achieve positive social outcomes for the Mildura community.

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# Introduction

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Hands Up Mallee is required annually by the Department of Social Services *Stronger Places Stronger People* to conduct an independently facilitated assessment of how we are growing our way of working as a collective impact initiative for place-based change.

The facilitator uses a progress mapping tool to help map the extent of our growth. This tool allows us to assess our progress in growing the following features:

- 1. Systems Leadership**

How a systems approach combined with local leadership is working to improve outcomes across the community to shift disadvantage.

- 2. Inclusive community engagement**

How community voices and leadership are valued and included and leading in the drive to improve outcomes.

- 3. Understanding, measurement, evaluation and learning (UMEL)**

How we use data and stories to understand what is happening in the community and inform what we need to work on together. How a shared commitment to measurement, evaluation and learning together in line with the needs of our community and the learning across all Stronger Places Stronger People communities and partners is progressing.

- 4. Use of collective power for community purpose**

How a genuine interest and practice to use power and authority differently is helping everyone to play their role in the community-led change agenda.

- 5. Investment and policy for community purpose**

How a shared recognition and action is being taken across the system to help investment, policies, and accountabilities align with the community-led change agenda.

- 6. Leading and Supporting efforts for change**

How our governance and the resourcing of the work, such as a backbone team and high leverage activities, reflects the phase of collective impact, and how partners support local leaders and the backbone team to make change aligned to the community's plan.

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# How the Progress Mapping and Learning Circle Will Run

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## Progress Mapping

Hands Up Mallee is holding a series of sessions for the many diverse stakeholders (including Backbone Teams, Local Leadership Groups, Working Group members, Community members, Cultural Leaders, Government partners and other stakeholders) to share their insights into the progress of our community's collective impact practice - our 'ways of working' for place-based change.

The facilitator will draw together the insights shared across all sessions to create a Progress Mapping Report, which will inform work in the Learning Circle phase.

## Learning Circle

After the Progress Mapping Report is complete, Hands Up Mallee will hold a half-day forum called a Learning Circle. The Learning Circle is a time to work together to collectively understand and assess progress over the past 12 months and plan the high-level priority actions to advance collective impact practice over the next 12 months.

We look forward to your input in this annual reflection and learning process.

In preparation for the Progress Mapping session, please see below a summary of progress the HUM Collective has made toward the actions identified during last year's reflection and learning process.

# Our Action Plan For 2022-2023 and The Progress We Made

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## Action 1:

### Complete transition to governance structure which shifts power to community members.

The 2021 reflection and learning process identified that Hand Up Mallee's Governance structure needed to change to a community-driven model supported by agencies. Participants identified the need to place greater value on community input and knowledge, which requires centring Community as equal partners in the initiative.

Of the six key actions identified in the Action and Support plan, three are particularly relevant to a governance structure that shifts power to community members:

**Action 2:** Continue work on deepening relationships between HUM and local Aboriginal communities and people.

**Action 5:** Continually challenge ourselves to work in new ways, centring community-led change and building diverse voices into decision-making at every level of the initiative.

## Significant Growth in Action 1

In 2022, The Australian Centre For Social Innovation facilitated HUM's co-design process with community members, Aboriginal leaders, and leaders from Local Government and Not For Profit agencies to develop a fit-for-purpose governance structure.

From October 2022 to now, Hands Up Mallee has been trialling the implementation of the new structure, which firmly places the community at the centre of decision-making to shift power to the community.



HUM COLLECTIVE STRUCTURE

Version 1 - 22.02.2023

### *Governance Members*

Changing the governance structure is critical to ensuring that the Hands Up Mallee initiative and its partnerships are accountable to the community and that the Community Aspiration directs its actions.

## **Requirements for further growth in Action 1**

Hum and other Stronger Places Stronger People sites have been working collaboratively with forming and shaping the National Leaders Group, and Backbone Alliance Group in order to raise common needs and issues with Federal Government and to share collective learnings about this way of working.

## Action 2:

### Continue work on deepening relationships between HUM and local Aboriginal communities and people.

During the Progress Mapping and Learning Circle sessions, participants identified the need to incorporate "healing structures and ways of working" into the HUM collective's work. There was a broad acknowledgement that Aboriginal community members need to feel safe and able to engage in respectful two-way conversations for change to take place. Ways of building trust and safety include how governance works and how HUM invites Aboriginal community members to shape and be part of collective governance.

Of the six key actions identified in the Action and Support plan, three are particularly relevant to deepening relationships between HUM and local Aboriginal communities and people:

**Action 1:** Complete transition to governance structure which shifts power to community members

**Action 2:** Continue work on deepening relationships between HUM and local Aboriginal communities and people.

**Action 5:** Continually challenge ourselves to work in new ways, centring community-led change and building diverse voices into decision-making at every level of the initiative.

## Significant Growth in Action 2

In July 2022, HUM team members arranged an initial gathering of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for a yarning session. The initial session aimed to gather voices from the community and to find out if they wanted to be involved in the work that HUM was undertaking through governance and much broader ways.

The themes that emerged from the first meeting included:-

- The Relationships
- Culture
- Practice and Engagement
- Services and Systems
- Education
- Mindsets

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- Physical Environment

Participants identified the following things that need to be acknowledged and considered:

- HUM provided a space for people to lay out their frustrations and concerns
- HUM needs to hold space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to speak about shared history, i.e. history of disinvestment by services/organisations/government, broken trust, and deep frustration
- There is a tension between the community pace and timing required to bring the community together as part of the HUM initiative and the immediate needs of the Collaborative Governance group that the HUM Backbone needs to be conscious of and respectful of.
- Aboriginal ways of doing and being should be at the forefront of the engagement activities

HUM has worked with the Aboriginal community in the past year to establish the Voices Yarning Group. The first phase of the Voice Yarning group involved an open forum, with the community coming informally together to build foundations for more formal membership in the future.

A core group continued to come together monthly in a more formal arrangement for the Voice Yarning group in 2023.

Membership includes 8-10 paid community members. As the group becomes more established, members and the HUM Backbone team will develop what ongoing commitments look like and detail them in an agreement.

The Aboriginal Social Impact Lead coordinates the Voice Yarning group, supported by The HUM Executive Officer and other Backbone team members as needed.

The Backbone team undertook a cultural training day to further build our knowledge and understanding

## **Requirements for further growth in Action 2**

A movement towards formalising the membership of the Voice Yarning Group began in July – August 2023, and the structures to support the group are currently in development.

Further cultural training will be undertaken by the Governance and Backbone teams

## Action 3:

### Active engagement with Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) rhythms and storytelling for systems change.

Working together, the MEL Coordinator, MEL Team and HUM Backbone made significant progress in 2021-2022 to formalise the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Frameworks that guide HUM. However, development in this area of work is ongoing.

#### Significant Growth in Action 3

During the past year, Hands Up Mallee has:

- Finalised the nested Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Frameworks (working collaboratively with the community and partners)
- Developed and tested rhythms for reporting which engage partners from across the initiative – not just the Backbone Team.
- We further explored how storytelling for systems change can integrate with MEL.
- In November 2022, Hands Up Mallee won the national SIMNA Award for its collaborative approaches to developing our MEL Frameworks. HUM team members have also presented the framework and its development to the Clear Horizon Learning Academy
- twice.
- 
- The HUM team, drawing on learning partner guidance, have drafted an Ethics, Privacy and Safety Framework to guide our ways of gathering, using, storing and sharing information in the form of data and stories.

#### Requirements for further growth in Action 3

HUM will need to continue collaborating with partners and the community to grow further in measuring, evaluating and learning capabilities in our place-based change efforts. Continued collaboration will help collaborative partners to:

- Grow and align commitment and accountabilities with the community-led change agenda.
- Help inform decision-making for better outcomes for children, young people and

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- families.
- Strengthen the line of sight across all of our work.

HUM must increase its understanding of critical issues in Indigenous Data Sovereignty and cultural safety to evolve HUM's Ethics, Privacy and Safety Framework.

## Action 4:

### Review and update partnership agreements with agency partners to centre the Community Aspiration and collaboration.

The previous Progress Mapping and Learning Circle identified that further development is needed to strengthen partnerships (particularly with agencies) for collective, community-led change.

#### Significant Growth in Action 4

HUM Backbone members have begun identifying elements and considerations needed to shape Partnership Agreements and the need for tiers of commitment to meet different partners' roles in the collective.

Some elements of formal agreements have been tested in short-term collaborative projects to gain insight into what works in the context of our place.

While Hands Up Mallee has continued to develop its collaborative partnerships, it has yet to create formal Partnership Agreements to clearly outline ways of working; the outcomes sought and have mechanisms for accountability and commitment to long-term systems change.

#### Requirements for further growth in Action 4

There is much to do to develop and adopt more comprehensive and formalised Partnership Agreements between Services and Government Departments that will advance both:

##### **Systems Leadership**

How a systems approach combined with local leadership is working to improve outcomes across the community to shift disadvantage.

##### **Investment and policy for community purpose**

How a shared recognition and action is being taken across the system to help investment, policies, and accountabilities align with the community-led change agenda.

## **Action 5: Continually challenge ourselves to work in new ways, centring community-led change and building diverse voices into decision-making at every level of the initiative.**

### **Significant Growth in Action 5**

Hands Up Mallee has continued to gather broad input and work in ways that invite various community opinions and input and to ask the community into the work.

We have sought to extend our work to find those who hold wisdom in the community – people outside of traditional agency/organisational hierarchies, engage them and consult them about the next steps. Including community knowledge was fundamental in the following structures, activities and projects :

- New Collective Governance Structure.
- New Voices Yarning Group
- Evolving Mallee Community Voices.
- Youth-Led Consultation with Youth and subsequent Discovery Sessions.
- Red Cliffs Free Pool Access Co-Design Pilot.
- Red Cliffs Family Events Co-Design Pilot.
- Family Child Hub Co-design for a Family-Centred Approach.
- HomeBase Hoops – Overcoming Access Barriers to Basketball Participation.
- Fun in the Park Pilot- Reaching Families in Community Spaces.
- Youth in the Mall inquiry.
- MEL Frameworks to guide our evaluation and capture the learnings.

### **Requirements for further growth in Action 5**

We are bringing on new backbone staff and increasing their knowledge and skills in how we work and think

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## Action 6: Leverage relationships with governments for local change.

Progress Mapping and Learning Circle discussions highlighted that partners and government feel HUM needed access to leverage the power of the Stronger Places, Stronger People partnership with the government.

### Significant Growth in Action 6

In the past year, Hands Up Mallee has requested and received funding mapping from the Federal and State Governments to gather a clear picture of their investment in areas relevant to HUM's community aspiration.

HUM has tested the SPSP partnership with State and Federal funding by pursuing data requests to support planning. It participated in two Data Exchange pilots at both State and Federal levels.

HUM has contributed to planning, learning and evaluation at a National level for advancing the Stronger Places, Stronger People sites and has agreed, in partnership with Collaboration For Impact and Connected Beginnings, to be the host ChangeFest in 2024.

HUM played a significant role in developing Case Studies to provide solid evidence of process and reasoning to the government using established HUM practices. These Case Studies were essential to the successful bid to the Federal Government for five further years of funding for the *Stronger Places Stronger People* trial sites.

Jane's work in building contacts and relationships within government?

### Requirements for further growth in Action 6

The collective needs direct relationships with data custodians to access regular, current, granular data relevant to our place.

The collective needs visibility of what, how and when the state and federal governments collect data to ensure relevance, integrity and robustness so that the most appropriate data is available for decision-making.

Government support for initiatives such as comprehensive data-monitoring could support the development and evaluation of place-based change.

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