



Hands Up Mallee

Yarning Group Charter

November 2024

Acknowledgement to Country

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 Hands Up Mallee initiative when they recognised that we needed to work together differently to address social, health and wellbeing equity issues in our community.

Hands Up Mallee 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. Hands Up Mallee is committed to continuous learning and improvement concerning its work to achieve positive social outcomes for the Mildura community.

Contributor Acknowledgement

Hands Up Mallee recognises the generosity of all partners and community members who share their time, words, insights, and support to work collaboratively and create change. Their contribution is essential to our work. The stories and information shared, and outcomes achieved in our journey together to create a connected community where families matter and children thrive, belong to them and the Northern Mallee.

Hands Up Mallee

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Introduction

1.1 Role of Yarning Group

The Yarning Group's main roles are:

- Culturally guide and oversee work that aims to change outcomes for the community.
- Lead and support cultural learning and connection across the Hands Up Mallee collaboration (Collaborative Governance Group, Backbone team and partners).
- Provide cultural guidance and lead decision making in key areas such as ethics, data sovereignty, communication, and engagement with Aboriginal community.
- Advocate and champion to influence systems change at local, state, and national levels.
- Actively seek input and views from a broad representation of local Aboriginal community.
- Make sure that community needs, views and wants are central to decision making.
- Support and ensure culturally safe and appropriate practices across Hands Up Mallee's work and partnerships.

1.2 Commitment to Diversity

The Yarning Group acknowledges the diversity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the importance of having a Yarning Group that is reflective of our community. This means we encourage and support involvement of youth, Elders, families, genders, and people in community with a range of life experiences and backgrounds.

1.3 How the Yarning Group Works

The Yarning Group was built alongside community through a yarning and co-design process, identifying how the group needs to feel and run for it to be safe and authentic.

What guides the Yarning Group and how it works?

- Self Determination.
- Feeling connected.
- Culture.
- Centring and hearing Aboriginal voice.
- Welcoming Elders, families, and young people to come together.
- A commitment to change systems.
- A shared aspiration of a community where everyone feels connected and included.
- Data Sovereignty.
- Being a voice for Aboriginal people and elevating that voice for change.

Membership and Group Composition

2.1 Who Can be a Member?

Membership of the Yarning Group is open to local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members aged 16 years or above.

2.2 Member Recruitment

When there is a need to recruit new members to the Yarning Group, the following process will be followed:

- The Aboriginal Social Impact Lead at Hands Up Mallee is responsible for facilitating the new membership process and will work alongside the Yarning Group members to do this.
- There will be a public communication process to advise of vacancies and the process to apply.
- A public information session will be hosted by Hands Up Mallee and Yarning Group for interested people to meet with Yarning Group and Hands Up Mallee team. This two-way way conversation is to share with potential new members what Yarning Group is and how it works, and for potential new members to share a bit about themselves and how they might contribute (like an informal interview) and understand process for applying and submit interest.
- All potential new members must submit an Expression of Interest form.
- The Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will collate Expression of Interest forms.
- Current Yarning Group members will be advised by Executive Officer or Engagement and Action team Coordinator of people who have expressed an interest in joining the Yarning Group. The current members will be given an opportunity to privately express any concerns or potential conflict of interest.
- Expressions of Interest will be considered at the next possible general meeting by Yarning Group members who will discuss and assess according to the criteria developed by the group.

- As part of the conflict-of-interest process, if anyone on the Yarning Group has a close relative/immediate family member (sibling, child, grandchild, parent, spouse/partner) nominated they will step out of the room when that person's nomination is discussed by the group.
- During the discussion process, the Executive Officer or Engagement and Action Team Coordinator will let the group know if anyone has raised concerns about being able to work with the nominee. The person who raised the concern will not be named.
- New members who have been decided on by the Yarning Group will be advised immediately and invited to meet with Aboriginal Social Impact Lead for an induction prior to next Yarning Group meeting.
- Any unsuccessful applicant will be advised in writing – this will be facilitated by Aboriginal Social Impact lead.

2.3 Induction

New members will be advised of their selection by the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead. They will induct the new member to their role on the Yarning Group by meeting with them and sharing background information, the charter and supporting their attendance at the first meeting.

2.4 Length of Term

- Membership terms are 2 or 3 years, taken from the attendance at the member's first meeting.
- Memberships terms will be staggered to ensure that not all memberships end at the same time, this will enable continuity for the Yarning Group and ensure new members are well inducted and supported to be able to progress the work of the Yarning Group.
- A member can serve a maximum of 3 consecutive terms.
- A member can resign prior to the completion of their term in writing (see resignation process).

2.5 Resignation

- Resignations should be submitted in writing or verbally to the Co-chairs or Aboriginal Social Impact Lead
- Upon receiving notice of a resignation, the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will offer the member who has resigned an exit interview or conversation with one or both co-Chairs, the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead, or the Hands Up Mallee Executive Officer. This will give the member an opportunity to speak with whomever they deem appropriate and give them the chance to provide feedback, express concerns or ask questions.
- Co-Chairs notify the rest of the Yarning Group via email if a resignation is received.
- Resignation is formalised and minuted at the following meeting.
- The Yarning Group is committed to maintaining a culture of gratitude and will work together to ensure outgoing members are thanked. Current and outgoing members will be invited to annual celebrations.
- If there is a complaint or conflict that has been requested to follow up, the Conflict Resolution process will be followed (refer to the section on conflict resolution).

2.6 Conduct Expectations

Members of the Hands Up Mallee Yarning Group are representatives of community and of Hands Up Mallee. It is expected that members behave in a way that is befitting of the role, and responsibility associated with that role. It is therefore expected that members behave with integrity and respect for each other, the community, and the work they are governing.

Grounds for termination include:

- Attendance of 5 or less meetings per year. Co-chairs will speak with a member to discuss the reasons, and to provide any support that might be required. We aim to support members, but also acknowledge that a meeting quorum and consistency in attendance is important to progress our work
- Disclosure of information which is confidential.

- Serious personal misconduct, not in keeping with the ethos of Hands Up Mallee.

2.7 Conflict Resolution/Mediation

If conflict arises between members of the Yarning Group that is unable to be resolved directly or is uncomfortable for an individual, the Hands Up Mallee Executive Officer or Co-chairs can be notified.

Steps can be taken such as:

1. Resolve directly with group member.
2. Arrange a discussion with the HUM Engagement and Action Team Coordinator or Executive Officer or a Co-chair present.
4. External mediation to be arranged.

2.8 Remuneration

- In recognition of the time commitment to the Yarning Group and to assist with participation, members may choose to access a monthly honorarium payment, this is optional.
- Yarning Group members can choose to be remunerated for their involvement in the Yarning Group.
- Remuneration for ordinary members is set at \$200 per month, attendance at the general meeting for the month is required to receive remuneration.
- Remuneration for the co-chairs is set at \$300 per month, attendance at the general meeting for the month is required to receive remuneration.
- There are occasions where Yarning Group members may participate in Hands Up Mallee meetings or workshops outside of the Yarning Group monthly meeting, as representatives of the Yarning Group. The monthly payment will cover up to an additional 5 hours per month of activities outside of the monthly meeting.
- Hands Up Mallee commits to ensuring that the number of times Yarning Group members are requested to participate in activities outside of the monthly meeting is reasonable, (e.g. once per month or shared across the membership so that

the same people are not asked to contribute over and above what is reasonable).

- If a Yarning Group member has not attended the monthly meeting but does participate in an activity outside of Yarning Group as a representative of Yarning Group in that month, the member should be paid the standard community payment (\$30 per hour) up to the value of \$200 per month.
- If a Yarning Group member participates in project/co-design-based work, it is within their capacity as a Yarning Group member, and they will not be paid an additional honorarium payment for this.
- Yarning Group members will be provided with a copy of the Hands Up Mallee Community Payment policy for details on payments.

2.9 Composition of the Group

- The Yarning Group will be made up of a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 members.
- Representing the voices of local Elders, leaders, families, young people aged 16+ and community.
- All roles are identified Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander roles.
- Community members who live in the Mildura Local Government area and close neighbours (e.g. over the river).
- The Hands Up Mallee Executive Officer and Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will attend meetings but are not members of the Yarning Group.
- Hands Up Mallee Backbone team members may attend meetings on occasion and if required to discuss agenda items with Yarning Group members, they are not members of the Yarning Group.

2.10 Co-Chairs

- There will be two co-Chairs.
- Co-Chairs will be elected from the membership of the Yarning Group.
- Co-Chairs will be elected for a period of 2 years, and elections will take place at the start of each year.
- A co-Chair can hold the position for a maximum of 3 consecutive terms.

Meetings

3.1 General Meeting Frequency and Duration

- Meetings are held monthly on the first Monday of the month, in the evening.
- 10 meetings are held per year, with no meetings held during December or January.

3.2 Special Meetings

- There will be one Aboriginal Cultural Learning on Country Day each year.
- There will be one annual reflection and celebration event per year.

3.3 Meeting Location

Meetings will be held at the Hands Up Mallee Office, 93 Pine Avenue, Mildura, unless otherwise stated.

3.4 Quorum at General Meetings

- A simple majority of current membership is considered a quorum.
- No decision making can occur if a quorum is not present.
- If there is no quorum at the meeting, decision making can be facilitated (if required on urgent business) outside of the meeting, via email.

3.5 Meeting Flow

- Meetings are held monthly on the first Monday of the month, in the evening from 5.30-7.30pm.
- Meeting dates can be changed in the event of a public holiday or other major event.
- Agenda and meetings papers are sent a minimum of one week prior to the meeting.

- Members are encouraged to gather at 6.00pm – 6.30pm to settle into the space and greet each other and share a meal.
- Meetings are in person; this is important to build trust and relationships
- Virtual attendance can be made possible if required, due to extenuating circumstances.
- Members are unable to be a permanent virtual attendee.

Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Role of General/All Members

- Prepare for meetings by reading the agenda and any meeting papers and seek clarification from Aboriginal Social Impact Lead or other Yarning Group members if needed.
- Stay connected with and committed to, the Yarning Group throughout their term.
- Meaningfully contribute to decision making.
- Advocate for Hands Up Mallee's work in the broader community, and at state and national levels.
- Represent Hands Up Mallee in activities outside of standard meetings.

4.2 Role of Co-Chairs

- The co-Chairs act as important links between the Yarning Group and the Hands Up Mallee Backbone Team.
- The co-Chairs are responsible for the leadership of the Yarning Group including:
 - Facilitating the meetings.
 - Working with the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead to develop the agenda for each month.
 - Acting as a point of contact for the other Yarning Group members; receiving suggestions and hearing concerns.
 - In consultation with or by invitation from the Hands Up Mallee Executive Officer, acting as a spokesperson for the initiative when required, this may include (but is not limited to) the media, Federal and State Government Ministers, Senior bureaucrats, the Board Chairs of other Stronger Places, Stronger People initiatives, ChangeFest 2024 and the Stronger Places, Stronger People National Leadership Group.
 - Facilitating open and constructive communication amongst Yarning Group members and encouraging their contribution during meetings.

4.3 Role of HUM Aboriginal Social Impact Lead

- Prepare and distribute Yarning Group Agenda Packages monthly in consultation with the Co-Chairs and Backbone team.
- Present information and arrange background information as required to facilitate Yarning Group understanding to be informed appropriately to make decisions.
- Minute meetings and provide minutes to the Yarning Group members within 2-3 weeks post the meeting.
- Maintain list of apologies and attendance records.
- Lead membership recruitment process.

Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Privacy

5.1 Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest is about transparency. Transparency in decision making is important for good process, and it is important to maintain the trust of community in Hands Up Mallee.

A conflict arises if a Yarning Group member or a member of their immediate family or the organisation they work or volunteer for, stands to benefit from the decision they are involved in making on behalf of Hands Up Mallee.

Members must declare any perceived or actual conflict of interest prior to the meeting, if they recognise a conflict arising on the agenda. They can be involved in discussions about the topic but will be asked not to be involved in or able to influence the decision making. This will be clearly recorded in the minutes.

Examples of a conflict of interest:

- Discussion or decision in relation to a project, organisation, or community group that a Yarning Group member is a part of.
- Discussion or decision regarding funding that impacts a Yarning Group Member

It is best to declare a conflict, even if you are not sure about it. The rest of the group is then in a position to decide whether you should be involved in making the decision or not.

5.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the duty of an individual to refrain from sharing confidential information with others. Hands Up Mallee Yarning Group members will at times be privy to confidential information including community data, funding, service data, and

service agreements. It is expected that this will not be shared or discussed beyond the HUM Yarning Group. If Yarning Group members share confidential information in relation to Hands Up Mallee or our partners, this is grounds for removal from the Yarning Group.

5.3 Privacy

At times Hands Up Mallee Yarning Group members will also have access to sensitive information about people or communities. This might be information about a staff member, or it might be data about a part of community. It is expected that this information is treated confidentially, and it is used in a way that directly relates to why the information was collected.

Breaching privacy expectations is grounds for removal from the Yarning Group.

Strategy, Evaluation and Review

6.1 Strategy

An organisation's strategy describes how it will create value. In the case of Hands Up Mallee, our strategy must create value for our community. The community is the primary stakeholder in Hands Up Mallee, and the Yarning Group members are representatives of the Community.

The Hands Up Mallee Yarning Group is expected to make considered input into strategic development. It is the role of the Hands Up Mallee Backbone Team to lead and be responsible for the strategic planning process.

6.2 Evaluation

We are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of the work of Hands Up Mallee and see the evaluation of the Yarning Group as part of this overarching commitment to making a positive impact for our community. The Yarning Group will continue to develop a Theory of Change and Key Evaluation Questions which will formalise our annual reflection and evaluation process. The evaluation of the Yarning Group will be used to inform any adaptations to the Yarning Group that might be needed to further strengthen and enable the Yarning Group's role and impact.

6.3 Review of Charter

Charter is to be reviewed six months from adoption and then annually.

Version #: March 2025

First Review date: September 2025

Background

7.1 About Hands Up Mallee

Established in 2015, Hands Up Mallee is a place-based, community-led, social change initiative. Hands Up Mallee operates in the Mildura Local Government Area in the far north-west of Victoria. Hands Up Mallee began when a group of local leaders recognised that we needed to work together differently so all children, young people and families in our community have the opportunity to thrive.

Hands Up Mallee works in partnership with community members, local service providers, agencies and all three levels of government. The initiative takes a place-based approach to solution for local issues, centring community voice and combining this with data and current research to develop collective action for a better community for children, young people and their families. Hands Up Mallee is committed to continuous learning, adaption and learning in service of the local community.

7.2 Type of Organisation

Hands Up Mallee is a formal, multi-year partnership between Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) and Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS). Hands Up Mallee is not a legal entity in its own right. MRCC and SCHS are signatories to a partnership document, with legal oversight, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each organisation in relation to Hands Up Mallee. Briefly the roles of each organisation are as follows:

Mildura Rural City Council

- Funder holder.
- Signatory to grant and other legal agreements.
- Financial management, oversight, and acquittals.
- Procurement and third-party contractor agreements.

Sunraysia Community Health Services

- Employing auspice agency.
- Human Resource management and payroll.
- Information Technology systems and management.
- Fleet car access.

7.3 Why have this Organisational Structure?

Operating under a formal partnership model has several benefits for Hands Up Mallee and our community. These include:

- Hands Up Mallee Collaborative Governance Group Members do not have the risk or liability associated with being a director of other not-for-profit company structures (such as an Incorporated Association or a Company Limited by Guarantee).
- The Hands Up Mallee Backbone Team benefits from having access to highly developed corporate management systems and skilled personnel for financial management and procurement.
- The shared partnership between two organisations (MRCC and SCHS) means Hands Up Mallee is not a member of either organisation, this enables the Collaborative Governance Group to fulfill the role of guiding strategic direction while corporate and HR functions are taken care of by the auspice organisations.
- MRCC provides corporate services in-kind to Hands Up Mallee, this means more funding is available to go directly to community-based work, but we are still able to provide a rigorous financial reporting back to funders.

7.4 How does Hands Up Mallee work?

Hands Up Mallee does not work in direct service provision. Instead, Hands Up Mallee is focussed on shifting population level outcomes for community through:

- Testing, trialling, and scaling pilot projects alongside partners.

- Looking at, and acting on, what is holding back change or holding unhelpful conditions in place.
- Making sure the community and other partners have what they need to make strong decisions, including the right data and understanding of the funding landscape.
- Fostering the conditions for collaboration and partnership between community, service providers and government to change outcomes for community.
- Using co-design practices and processes to involve community in designing solutions.
- Measuring, Evaluating and Learning from our work, and sharing this information out broadly to improve how we work towards change.
- Centring the cultural leadership of Aboriginal people in our work – and acknowledging that this needs to be considered and valued in all aspects of our work.
- Prioritising the involvement of young people in decision making
- Developing and valuing relationships – because the work of change is relational.
- Developing and applying practices of shared decision making which give community members greater input into decisions which impact them.
- Working to shift systems through changing: policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics and mental models.

7.5 Hands Up Mallee Outcomes

Hands Up Mallee developed our Community Aspiration of “a connected community, where families matter, and children thrive” after holding over 1600 conversations with community members. Further information about the community conversation process and key themes can be found here [What our community has said — Hands Up Mallee](#).

In order to reach our Community Aspiration, we work towards change in six key outcome areas which align with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest Framework:

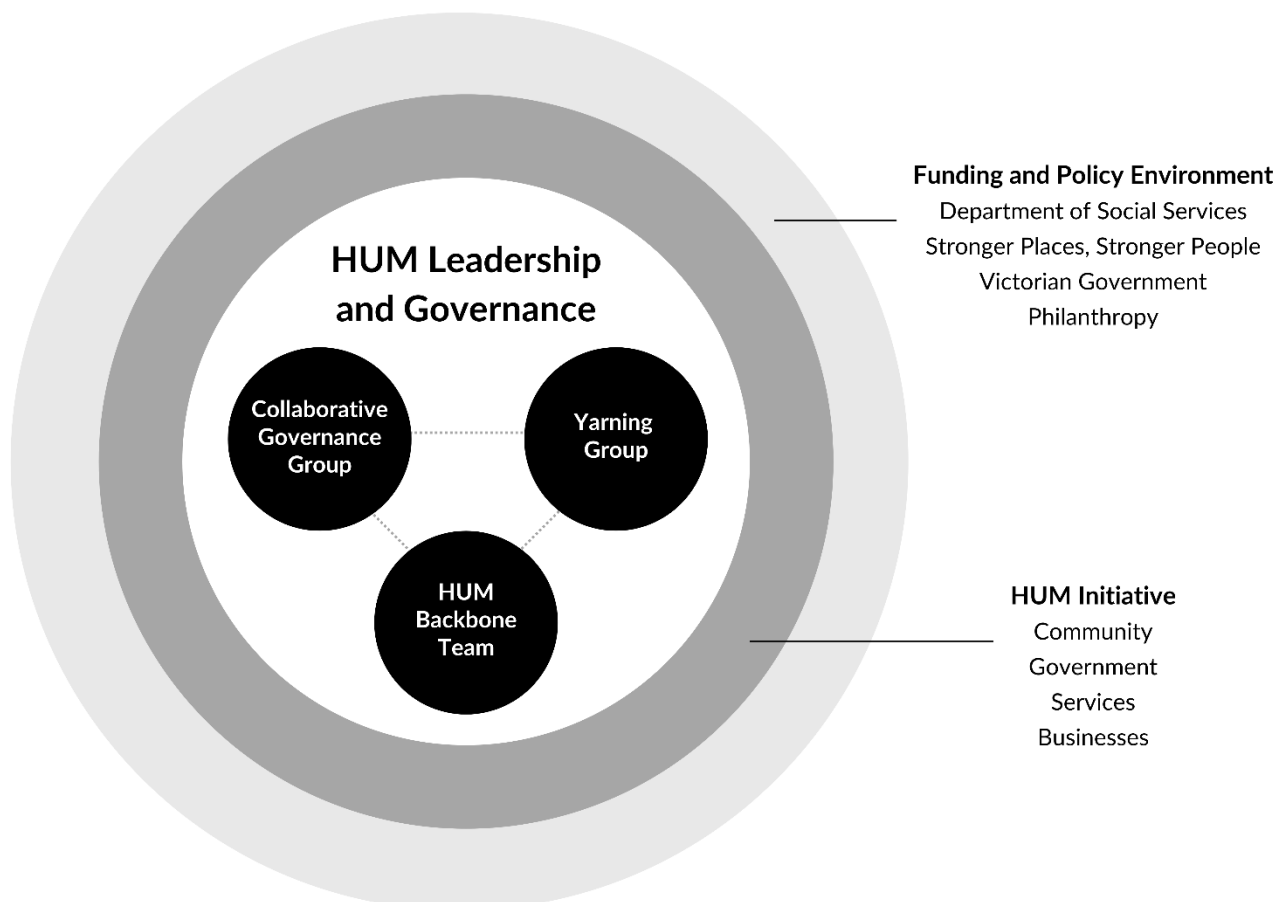
- Learning
- Valued, Loved and Safe
- Material Basics
- Healthy
- Participating
- Positive Sense of Identity and Culture

More information about how we do this work and how we measure it can be found in our and [Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework](#).

7.6 The Structure of Hands Up Mallee

Because we don't deliver services, we aren't structured like a traditional organisation.

The overarching structure of HUM is:



7.7 History

Hands Up Mallee grew out of the foundations and learnings of a number of partnership approaches to change in our community, namely the Northern Mallee Community Partnership and the Community Engagement Framework. These past approaches were governed by either Mildura Rural City Council or a collection of service provider CEOs. In 2018 Hands Up Mallee undertook a governance review, acknowledging that we need to shift to a model where community members were governing the initiative. Following this Hands Up Mallee undertook a governance co-design process alongside The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI). For the first year of operation the newly formed Collaborative Governance Group was supported by an independent facilitator and tested and continued to design a fit for purpose governance structure and practices which are reflected in this Charter. Further information and reports on the governance co-design process, early formation and development of the group and its practices can be found at [Collaborative Governance for Community-Led Change](#).