

# Community Creating Change

Hands Up Mallee  
2026-2029 Strategy



# Acknowledgement of Country

Hands Up Mallee acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land where we work, live, and connect with the community and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



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# Our Vision

**A connected  
community,  
where children  
and young people  
thrive, and  
families matter.**

**Our vision reflects our  
community's aspiration.**

In 2016-2017, Hands Up Mallee engaged over 1,600 community members to explore our region's passions, aspirations, concerns, and ideas.

Through these conversations, we identified a shared vision: A connected community where children and young people thrive, and families matter.

# Our Mission

## Community creating change

Real, lasting change  
begins in community.

At Hands Up Mallee, we believe local people are best placed to understand what's working, what's needed, and what matters most.

By working together with community, government and service partners, we harness local strengths, knowledge and leadership to create better outcomes for children, young people and families. It's a shared journey towards a stronger, more connected future — now and for generations to come.



# Our Why

## What we're working toward.

We've learnt from both our community and the evidence that children and young people thrive when they're doing well in ARACY's six interconnected domains of wellbeing.

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



### Healthy

Promoting good physical and mental health.



### Valued, Loved and Safe

Ensuring children feel valued in loving and secure environments.



## Material Basics

Providing access to essential material needs like food, housing, transport and other essentials.



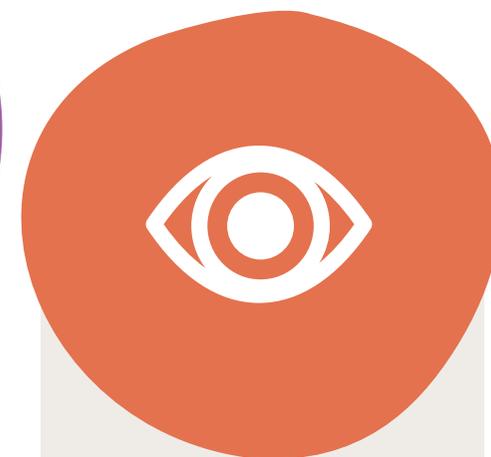
## Learning

Encouraging effective learning and development opportunities from early childhood through to adult life.



## Participating

Children and young people have a voice, are listened to and are involved in decision-making processes that affect them. They are connected with peers, family and community.

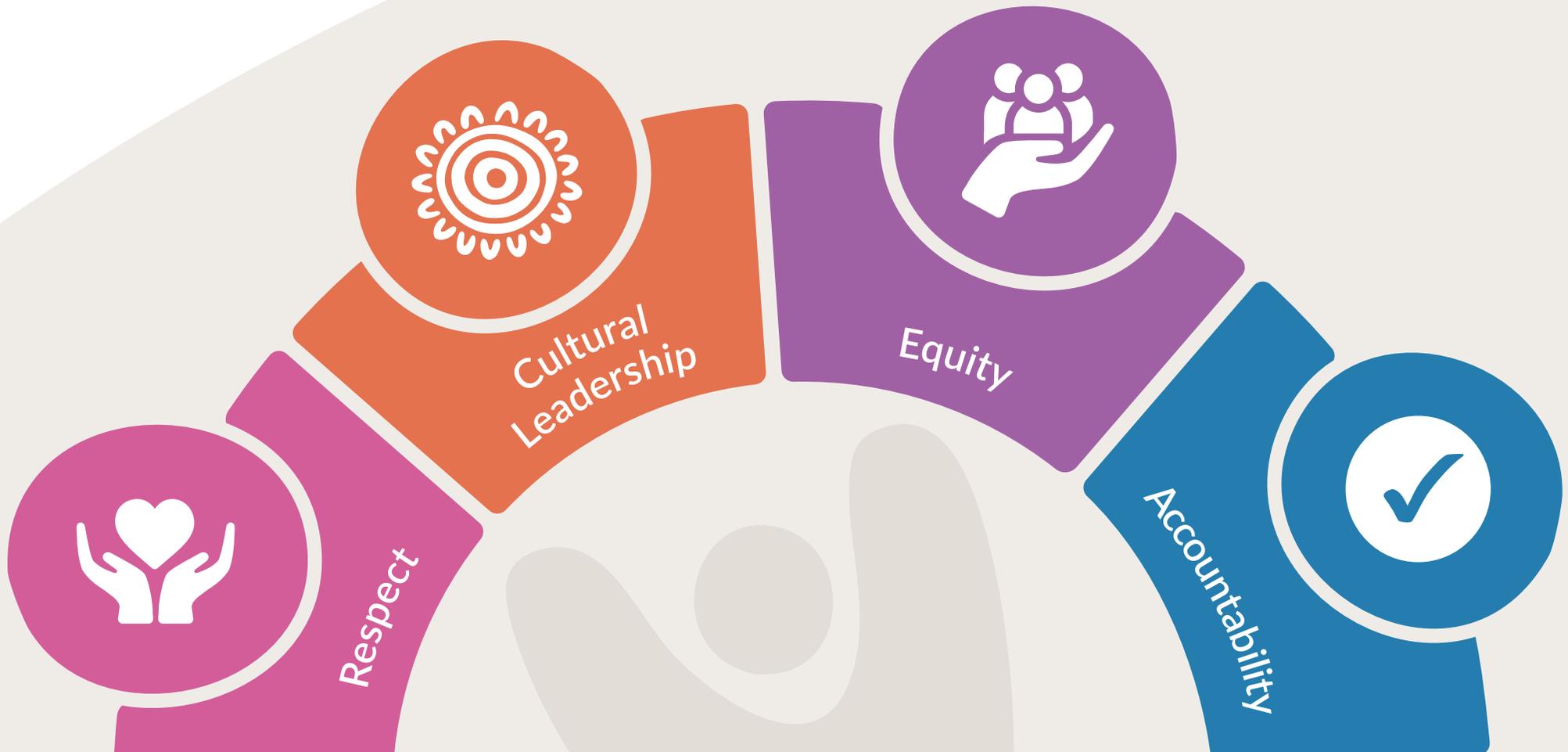


## Positive Sense of Identity and Culture

Supporting a strong sense of self and belonging, including cultural identity and values.

# Our Principles

Our principles provide the foundation for our ways of working.



## Respect

We earn respect by valuing dignity, diverse voices, trust, and self-determination.

We build relationships and create inclusive environments where every person's worth is recognised.

## Equity

We focus on fairness, access and opportunity. We share power to ensure those who are most impacted can influence and lead change.

## Cultural Leadership

We value and are guided by the leadership, knowledge, wisdom, and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, embracing their holistic care for land, water and community for the benefit of all.

## Accountability

We hold ourselves, each other, and systems of power accountable. We are committed to reshaping these systems, so they are more responsive to community priorities.



# How We Govern

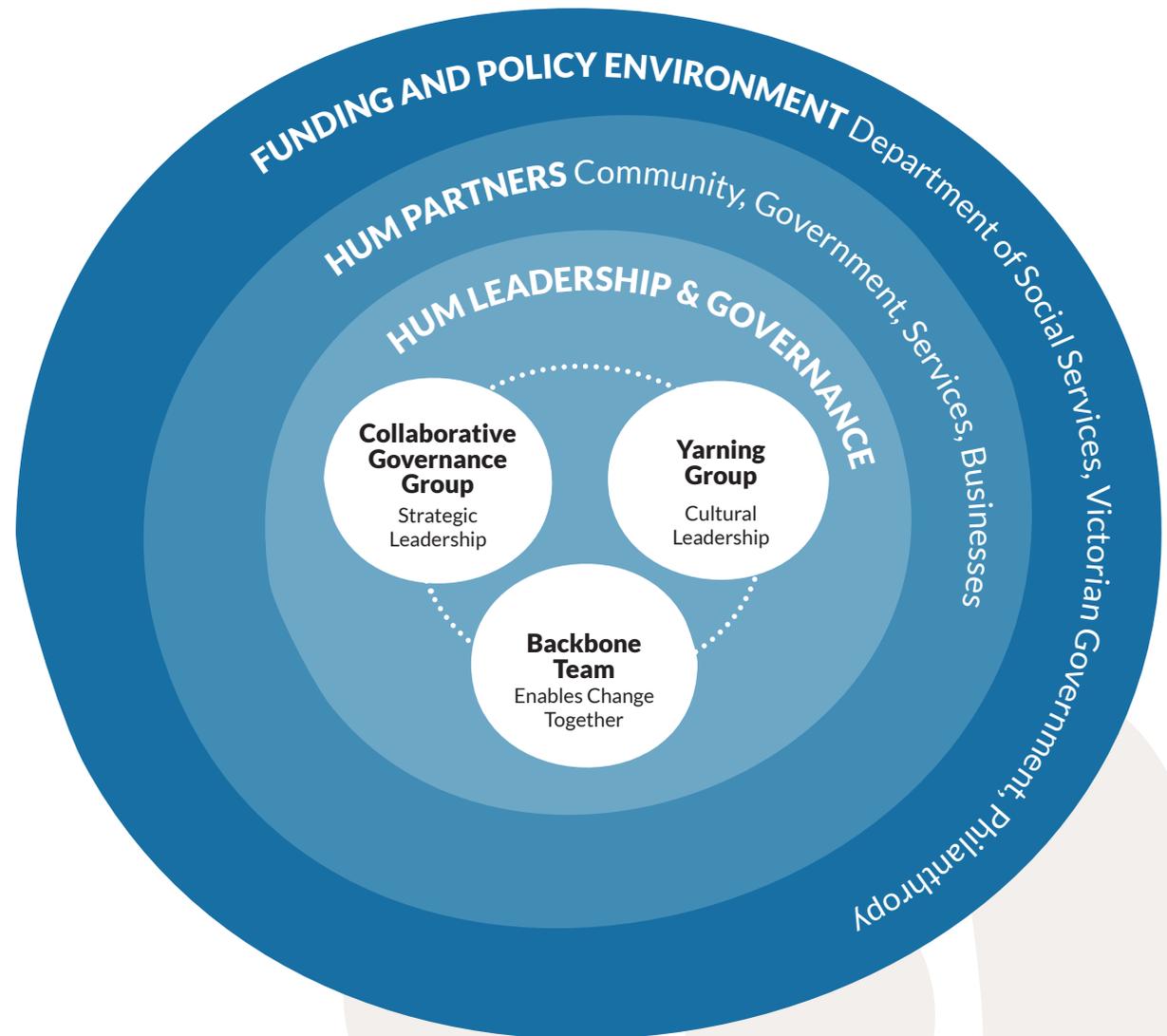
Transparent and locally led governance with a focus on place-based change.



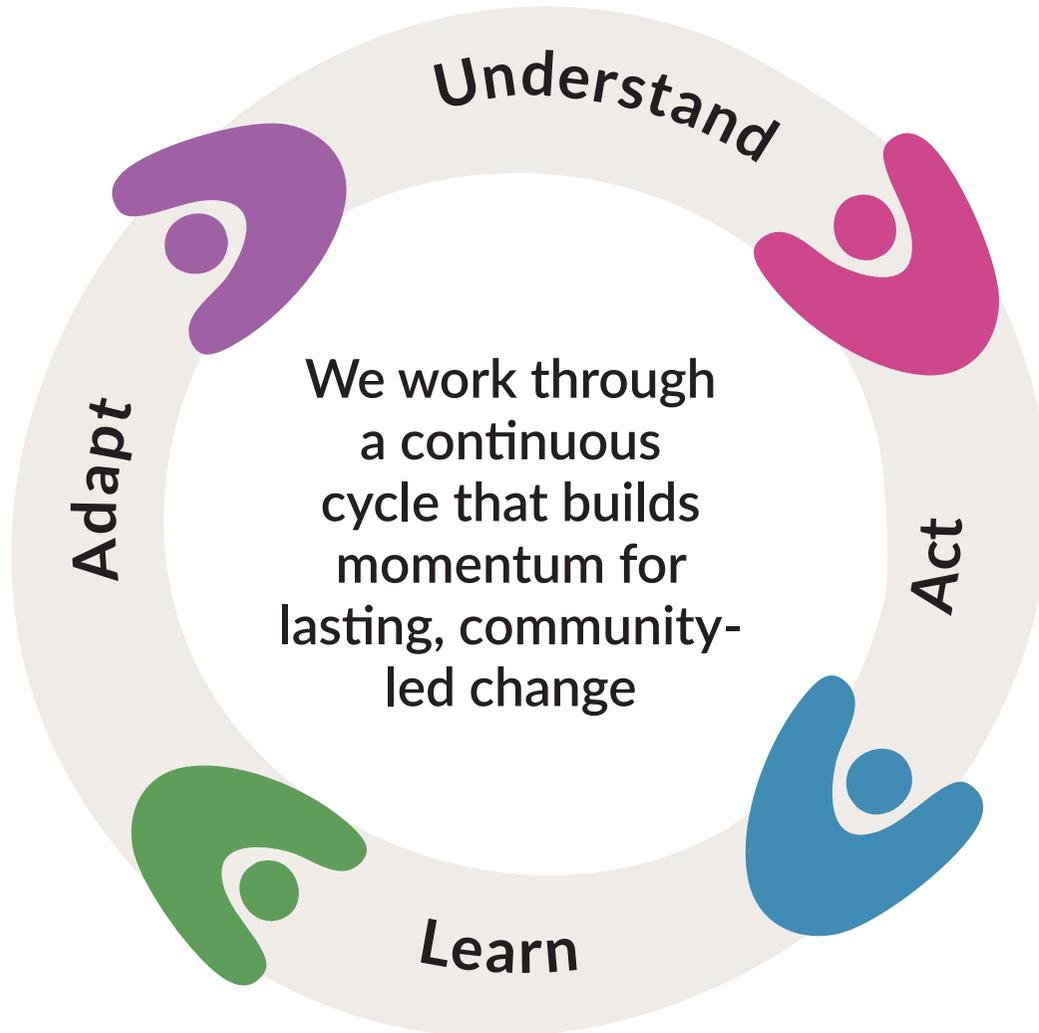
## Our governance model supports strong, community led decisions.

We centre community voices in decision-making through a unique governance structure co-designed with community. This governance model supports strong, community-led decisions and fosters authentic engagement.

We will continue to embed lived experience and local expertise in solution design and governance.



# How We Work



## Understand

- We start with community and seek their authority to act
- We listen, gather feedback, and make sense of what's happening together so we can see new opportunities for action
- We champion use of data, research and stories to guide our decisions and actions

## Act

- We learn from what's happening and co-design solutions
- We bring community and partners together to take collective action
- We test and pilot ideas and innovations

## Learn

- We evaluate our practices and work
- We reflect and learn together
- We share what we've learnt to keep improving – for ourselves, for our community and for place-based change in Australia

## Adapt

- We focus on actions that have the potential to make the biggest difference
- We refine our approach based on evidence, learnings, cultural guidance and changing local contexts
- We apply our learnings to influence policies, funding, and systems – not just short-term projects



# Strategic Pillars

The strategic pillars guide the direction, scope, and focus of our work.

**01**

## Sharing power and influence

Embedding community leadership and expertise in solution design and decision-making to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

**02**

## Mutual accountability and transparency

Creating mutual accountability and transparency between community, government and services through trust, shared learning, knowledge exchange and strengthened relationships.

**03**

## Independent, influential and catalytic organisation

Creating an independent and sustainable organisation that catalyses systems change through local and national influence.

# 01 Sharing Power and Influence

## Our Aim

Embedding community leadership and expertise in solution design and decision-making to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

## Our Focus

### **Diverse voices and knowledge**

Creating space and conditions for local voices to be heard, ensuring all forms of knowledge are respected and valued.

### **Partnership with Aboriginal communities**

Working in partnership with Aboriginal communities so that their leadership and cultural authority guides the work.

### **Local solutions**

Co-designing innovative solutions with community and system stakeholders.

### **Shared decision-making**

Testing and strengthening new models for shared decision-making.

## The Change

### **Enabling everyone to use power and authority differently**

To create new patterns and ways of working.

### **Sharing of power and authority**

To create more inclusive, equitable and responsive systems

### **Supporting community-led decision-making**

Building and supporting structures and processes that enable people to understand, influence, and lead decisions about their community and place.

# 02 Mutual Accountability and Transparency

## Our Aim

Creating mutual accountability and transparency between community, government and services through trust, shared learning, knowledge exchange and strengthened relationships.



## Our Focus

### Data and evidence

Ensuring equitable access to data and evidence for better decision making and reporting.

### Mutual accountability

Building and testing accountability methods and frameworks.

### Evaluation

Building on our established Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) practices to strengthen transparency, generate evidence on what we do and how we do it, and deepen shared learning.

### Learning and improvement

Strengthening accountability to community and partners through regular reporting and open feedback loops that inform continuous improvement.

## The Change

### Transformed relationships between government and communities

Leading to improvements in structures, investment, power and agency.

### Governments, services and philanthropic partners are active in reforming policies and systems

Leading to policies, investment and funding that is strategic, diverse and aligned with local priorities and community aspirations.

# 03 Independent, Influential and Catalytic Organisation

## Our Aim

Creating an independent and sustainable organisation that catalyses systems change through local and national influence.



## Our Focus

### **Partnership**

Creating trusted partnerships across community, government and the service system.

### **Influence**

Communicating and modelling the leading edge of practice in place-based work.

### **Catalytic**

Leveraging our influence, relationships, and resources to spark, amplify and accelerate community-led impact.

### **Fit-for-purpose governance**

Strengthening transparent, inclusive and community-led governance.

### **Financial sustainability**

Stewarding the organisation towards independence and long-term sustainability.

## The Change

### **We are leading by example**

To influence meaningful systems change locally and nationally.

### **We are a trusted and resilient organisation**

With a well-resourced Backbone team and community leadership structures.

### **Our governance structure is continually strengthening and improving**

To guide, influence and enable meaningful systems change at both local and broader levels.

# Strategy Summary

## Our Vision

A connected community, where children and young people thrive, and families matter.

## Our Mission

Community  
Creating Change.



## Our Why

Children and young people thrive when they do well in ARACY's six interconnected domains of wellbeing:

- 01** Healthy
- 02** Valued Loved and Safe
- 03** Material Basics
- 04** Learning
- 05** Participating
- 06** Positive Sense of Identity and Culture



## Strategic Pillars

**01**

Sharing Power & Influence

**02**

Mutual Accountability & Transparency

**03**

Independent, Influential & Catalytic Organisation



## Our Enablers of Change

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>01</b> Authentic engagement with Aboriginal people and the wider community</p> | <p><b>04</b> Informed co-design and decision-making using data, stories and research</p>   |
| <p><b>02</b> Transparent, locally led and fit-for-purpose governance</p>             | <p><b>05</b> Work on activities that deliver high levels of impact for systemic change</p> |
| <p><b>03</b> Multi-sectoral collaboration and advocacy</p>                           | <p><b>06</b> Learning and adapting through open sharing, locally and nationally</p>        |



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