



Hands Up Mallee

Yarning Group Charter

July 2026

Acknowledgement to Country

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where we work, live and connect with community. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging and to the ancient connection they hold with their Country. We value their knowledge, wisdom and legacies that continue to guide our work towards positive social change.

About Hands Up Mallee

Hands Up Mallee is a place-based initiative in north-west Victoria, on Latji Latji Country. Established in 2015, we began as a collective impact initiative to address complex social challenges by bringing together community, services, and government. Our vision for a connected, thriving community was shaped through more than 1,600 conversations to understand what matters most.

We have since strengthened our commitment to local leadership and governance, moving towards a community-led and governed place-based model. Guided by the ARACY Nest framework, we work across six key wellbeing domains: healthy, learning, participating, material basics, valued, loved & safe, and identity & culture. By combining lived experience, local knowledge, evidence, and data, we focus on local priorities and drive systemic change for better outcomes and lasting impact.

Hands Up Mallee is proud to be one of ten Stronger Places, Stronger People sites funded by the Department of Social Services.

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

93 Pine Avenue,
Mildura VIC 3500
(03) 5021 7671

PO Box 10184,
Mildura VIC, 3502
www.handsupmallee.com



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Introduction

1.1 Role of Yarning Group

The Yarning Group's main roles are to:

- Provide cultural leadership and oversight to Hands Up Mallee.
- 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 for 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 priorities 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, all 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 yarning and co-design identifying how the group needs to feel and run, for it to be safe and authentic.

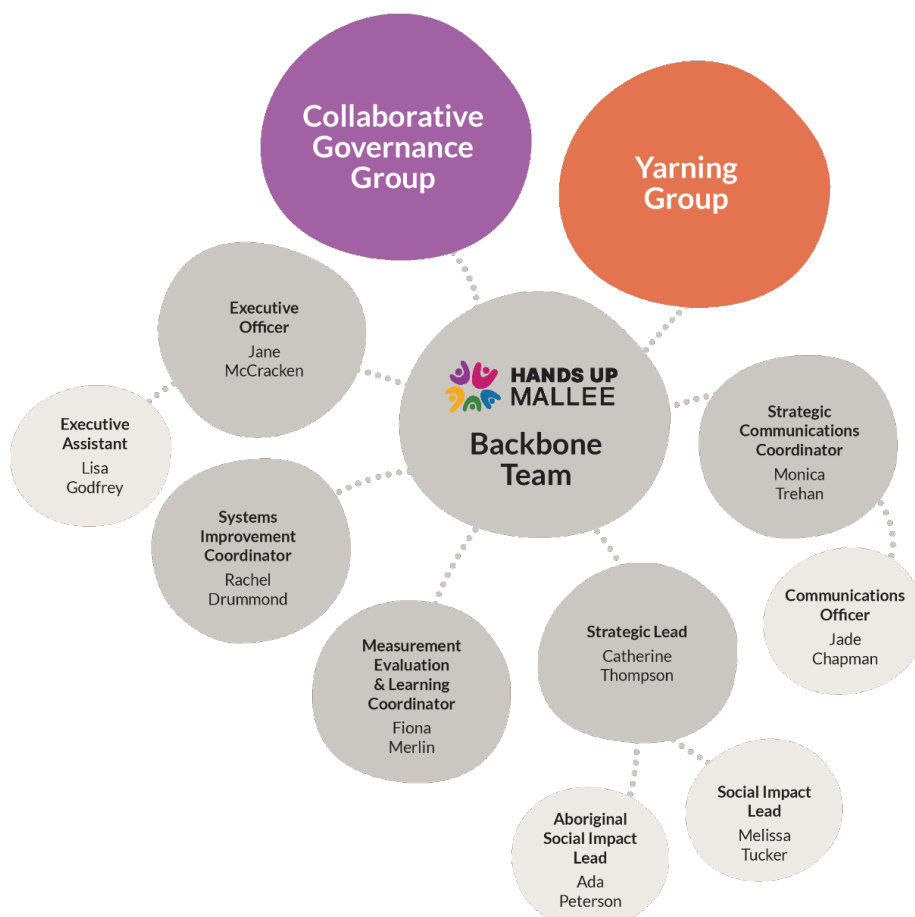
What guides the Yarning Group and how it works:

- 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.
- Being a voice for Aboriginal people and elevating that voice for change.

The Yarning Group is also guided and supported by:

- [Hands Up Mallee Cultural Safety Principles](#)
- [Hands Up Mallee Data Sovereignty Principles](#)

1.4 The Yarning Group as part of overall HUM Structure



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.
- Community members who live in the Mildura Local Government (LGA) and close neighbours (e.g. over the river).

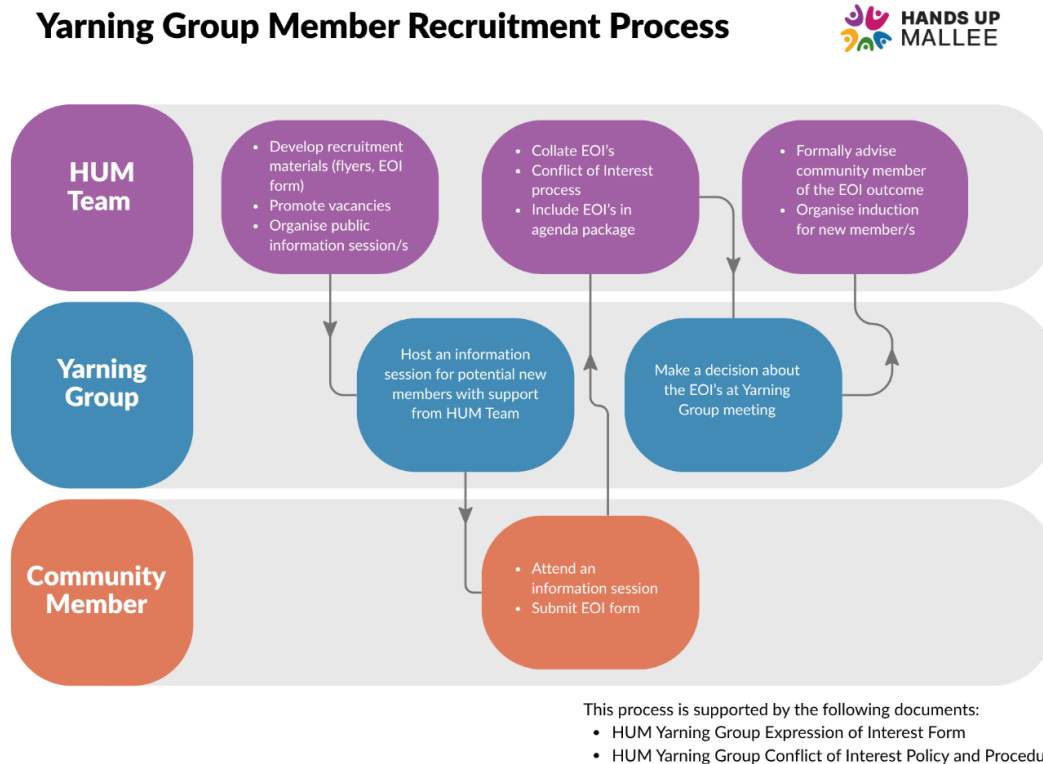
Yarning Group Members will need to have:

- A Confirmation of Aboriginality from a recognised Aboriginal organisation
- A current Working with Children Check
- A National Police Check.

Members will be supported by HUM to obtain these checks as required.

2.2 Member Recruitment

The Hands Up Mallee Aboriginal Social Impact Lead is responsible for facilitating the recruitment process and will work alongside the Yarning Group members to do this as outlined below:



The Yarning Group information sessions support a two-way conversation where prospective members can learn about the group and how it works, while current members can get to know those interested in joining. The sessions also provide support with the EOI process where needed.

2.3 Induction

- The Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will support new members through an induction process.
- This will include meeting with the new member prior to their first meeting and providing background information, including this Charter and relevant HUM policies.
- As part of the induction process new members will be required to complete paperwork for required checks and agreements.

2.4 Length of Term

- Membership terms are 3 years from commencement.
- 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.
- Members can renominate for a second term.
- A member can serve a maximum of 2 consecutive terms.
- A member can resign prior to the completion of their term in writing.

2.5 Resignation

- Resignations can be given in writing or verbally to the Co-Chairs or the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead.
- When a resignation is received, the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will offer an optional exit conversation with the Co-Chairs, the Aboriginal Social Impact Lead, or the Hands Up Mallee Executive Officer. This gives the member a chance to share feedback, raise concerns, or ask questions.
- The Co-Chairs will inform the Yarning Group of the resignation by email.
- The resignation will be formally recorded at the next meeting.
- The Yarning Group values gratitude and will ensure outgoing members are thanked. Both current and former members are invited to annual celebrations.
- If any complaints or conflicts require follow-up, the conflict resolution process will be followed.

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.
- Inability to provide WWCC, Police Check or Confirmation of Aboriginality as required for membership.

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 Strategic Lead or Executive Officer or a Co-chair.
4. External mediation can be arranged.

2.8 Remuneration

- In recognition of the time commitment to the Yarning Group and to assist with participation, 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.

- The Hands Up Mallee team 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 Volunteer Honorarium Payment policy during the induction process.

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.
- The Hands Up Mallee Strategic Lead and Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will attend meetings, but they are not members of the Yarning Group.
- Hands Up Mallee Backbone team members or HUM partners 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
- The Aboriginal Social Impact Lead will facilitate the election process
- Co-Chairs will be elected for a period of two years
- Co-Chair elections will take place at the start of the year.
- A co-Chair can hold the position for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

Meetings

3.1 General Meeting Frequency and Duration

- Meetings are held monthly.
- 10 meetings are held per year, with no formal 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 Voting and Decision Making

- The Yarning Group use a General Consensus process to make decisions and records these decisions in meeting minutes as motions.
- An anonymous voting approach is also used to support decision making in areas such as voting on new members to ensure that members are safe and supported in their roles and are able to make decisions in ways that do not impact their personal relationships in community.

3.5 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 for urgent business) outside of the meeting, via email.

3.6 Meeting Flow

- Meetings are held monthly.
- Meetings run outside of business hours, usually 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 5.30pm 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 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 general 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 monthly agenda.
 - 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, Stronger Places, Stronger People partners, communities and associated leadership groups.
 - 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 1-2 weeks post the meeting.
- Maintain records of membership, apologies, attendance and a Conflict-of-Interest register.
- Lead and facilitate membership recruitment process.
- Support members through induction process.
- Adhere to any policies and procedures that apply to the Yarning Group, and make sure members understand them and how they apply.

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.

Yarning Group members are guided by a Conflict-of-Interest Policy and Process (*currently under development*).

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.

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 contributes to HUM strategic planning through the co-Chairs. It is the role of the Hands Up Mallee Backbone Team to lead and be responsible for the strategic planning process.

6.2 Evaluation

The Yarning Group has a Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan, which includes a Theory of Change and Key Evaluation Questions. These guide a structured annual reflection and evaluation process. Through this process, the following will be considered:

- What is working well
- What could be strengthened
- How the Yarning Group is contributing to community priorities
- What changes may be needed to further enable its role and impact

Findings from evaluation/s will inform any changes required to strengthen the Yarning Group's effectiveness and ensure it continues to meaningfully contribute to positive outcomes for our community.

6.3 Review of Charter

Charter is to be reviewed annually initially then every 3 years.

Version #1: Developed March 2025

First Review date: June 2026

Next Review date: June 2029

6.4 HUM Policies and Key Documents

Below is a list of key HUM documents and policies that are referenced in this Charter and apply to the work and role of the Yarning Group.

- [Hands Up Mallee Strategic Plan 2026-2029](#)
- [Hands Up Mallee Volunteer Honorarium Policy](#)
- [Hands Up Mallee Cab Voucher Policy](#)
- [Hands Up Mallee Cultural Safety Principles](#)
- [Hands up Mallee Data Sovereignty Principles](#)

Background

7.1 About Hands Up Mallee

Hands Up Mallee is a community-led place-based initiative in north-west Victoria, on Latji Latji Country. Established in 2015, we began as a collective impact initiative to address complex social challenges by bringing together community, services, and government. Our vision for a connected, thriving community was shaped through more than 1,600 conversations to understand what matters most.

We have since strengthened our commitment to local leadership and governance, moving towards a community-led and governed place-based model. Guided by the ARACY Nest framework, we work across six key wellbeing domains: healthy, learning, participating, material basics, valued, loved & safe, and identity & culture. By combining lived experience, local knowledge, evidence, and data, we focus on local priorities and drive systemic change for better outcomes and lasting impact.

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:

