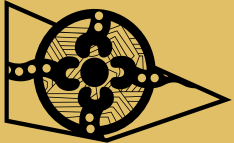




VACCHO

# Culture + Kinship Evaluation Report



VACCHO

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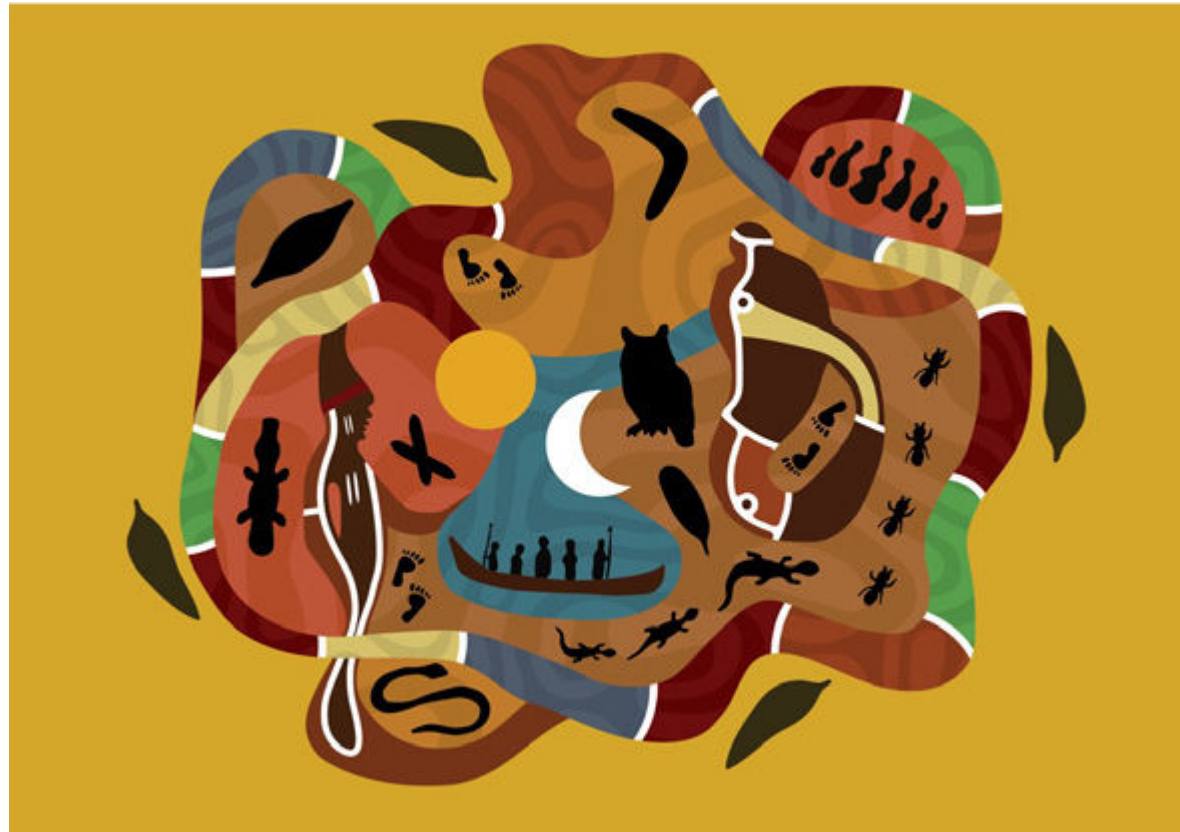
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## Artwork

Rochelle Patten Snr (Qway) | Gunnai, Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba, Dhudhuroa

“This painting is about culture and spirit. When we have connection, we have health and wealth. The river is a life force that sustains and maintains us. We are all different, yet we are the same under the moon and sun. Grandfather is the teacher of young men, in which you can see the men and boys in the canoe. Grandmother is a teacher of young women; they sit in a yarning circle to share knowledge. The owl is a symbol of wisdom. The gum leaf is a symbol of welcome and growth. The shield is a symbol of strength. The feet symbolise going back to Country for wellbeing and being guided by our Ancestors’ footprints. The animals are symbolic of Caring for Country; which is also to care for self.”



The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) acknowledges the strength of Aboriginal people across the Country and the power, resilience and knowledge that is shared as members of the world's oldest living culture.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples who have never ceded their sovereignty. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this report was written. We extend the same acknowledgement to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which data was collected for this evaluation, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who read this report.

We pay our deepest respect and gratitude to our ancestors, Elders, and leaders – past and present. They have paved the way, with strength and fortitude, for our future generation.



# Contents

Foreword from VACCHO CEO, Jill Gallagher AO .....	7
Glossary .....	8
Executive Summary .....	9
Methodology .....	9
SROI Results .....	10
Evaluation findings .....	10
Recommendations .....	12
About VACCHO .....	13

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	14
1.1 Purpose of the evaluation .....	14
1.2 This report .....	15

<b>2. Background</b> .....	16
2.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing .....	16
2.2 Culture + Kinship .....	17

<b>3. Methodology</b> .....	20
3.1 Social Return on Investment (SROI) .....	20
3.2 Aboriginal Research and Evaluation .....	21
3.2.1 Impact Yarns .....	21
3.2.2 Theory of Change workshop .....	22
3.2.3 Value Yarns .....	23
3.3 Synthesising Aboriginal Research and Evaluation with an SROI .....	24

<b>4. Program outcomes</b> .....	25
4.1 Budja Budja .....	26
4.2 Goolum Goolum .....	30
4.3 Moogji .....	34
4.4 Rumbalara .....	38
4.5 Outcomes for government stakeholders .....	42

<b>5. SROI Results</b> .....	43
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<b>6. Discussion</b> .....	45
6.1 The impact of Culture + Kinship .....	45
6.2 Culture + Kinship Theory of Change .....	46
6.3 Centrality of cultural knowledge and skills transmission .....	48
6.4 Self-determination in program design and participant agency .....	49
6.4.1 Program design .....	49
6.4.2 Participant agency .....	49
6.5 Future key considerations .....	50
First Nations leadership and self-determination .....	50
Centring Culture, Country and Community .....	51
Place-based approaches .....	51
Social capital .....	52
Long term, flexible funding to drive self-determination .....	52
Empowering evaluation through Yarning .....	53
VACCHO as an enabler of First Nations Data Sovereignty .....	53
Collecting data .....	53

<b>7. Conclusion</b> .....	54
Acknowledgements .....	55



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Social Value International certifies that the report  
**Culture + Kinship Program Evaluation**

satisfies the requirements of the assurance process.

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Awarded 29/11/2022

Signed

Mr Ben Carpenter  
 Chief Executive Officer  
 Social Value International



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## Figures

Figure 1 Culture + Kinship visual Theory of Change .....	11
Figure 2 Different forms of evaluation .....	15
Figure 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing .....	17
Figure 4 SROI calculation breakdown .....	21
Figure 5 SROI process .....	25
Figure 6 Impact Yarn indicating pride .....	28
Figure 8 Community sowing the Possum Skin Cloak .....	31
Figure 9 Young woman cutting possum skins for the cloak .....	32
Figure 10 Possum skin cloak on display at the Horsham Regional Art Gallery .....	33
Figure 12 Medicinal plants gathered from Country around the property .....	36
Figure 13 Aunty Susan with propagated Yams .....	37
Figure 15 Healthy on Country – Participant Artwork .....	39
Figure 16 Culture + Kinship Theory of Change .....	47

## Tables

Table 1 Summary of value created for each stakeholder .....	10
Table 2 Culture + Kinship funding amount and actuals spent over Stage 1 + 2 .....	20
Table 3 Moogji Bushfire Recovery Grant funding .....	20
Table 4 Phases for gathering Impact Yarns .....	22
Table 5 Summary of value created for each stakeholder .....	43
Table 6 Highest value outcomes for program participants .....	43
Table 7 Relative SROI valuations for each ACCO .....	44

# Foreword from VACCHO CEO, Jill Gallagher AO

## Ngatta

(which means hello  
in my traditional  
Gunditjmara language)



I feel incredibly proud and privileged to present the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's *Culture + Kinship* Evaluation Report.

This Report presents the findings from Think Impact and Kowa Collaboration's (Kowa) Developmental Evaluation and Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the *Culture and Kinship* program. The *Culture + Kinship* program is uniquely Community driven with a flexible funding model that empowered Communities to lead the way with their own solutions in the form of self-determined, locally-led programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Budja Budja, Goolum Goolum, Rumbalara and Moogji for their dedication and enthusiasm in embracing this ground-breaking program. Placing a strong emphasis on the cultural determinants of health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing have been pivotal to the success of the program.

The impact of restoring connection to Community, Country, and Culture, as showcased by the program, calls for a greater understanding of these indicators as protective factors for Aboriginal people. Grounding healing in Culture must be core to the way forward.

The SROI analysis showed that the *Culture + Kinship* program produced significant value for its stakeholders, returning a social value of \$8.29 for every dollar invested. It demonstrates that the provision of flexible, self-determined funds to ACCOs, delivers significant value for money.

It was inspiring to see the re-engagement and Community connection that the program delivered, have direct impacts on the wellbeing, confidence, and self-esteem of participants whilst enhancing a sense of pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture.

I am extremely optimistic that the wealth of positive outcomes outlined in this report will encourage further investment into programs and services that focus

on cultural determinants of health and provide sustainability for our Communities through flexible, long term funding.

The *Culture + Kinship* program has reinforced the undeniable fact that Aboriginal-led and localised approaches deliver the best results for Community and Aboriginal knowledge, empowerment, advocacy, and innovation are the key to healing our people.

The program shows that if there is investment in placing Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands, we will create vibrant, self-determining Communities and our Boorais will grow up to shape the future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.

Words cannot describe how proud I am of the driven and dedicated team who supported this successful program, delivering vital health and wellbeing impacts for the Community.

We must continue to be bold. We must continue to be brave.

Stay deadly and look after one another.

Jill Gallagher CEO, VACCHO.

# Glossary

The following acronyms and key terms are used in this report:

Term	Definition
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Country	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples use this term to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about lore, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity
Culture	The traditional lands, lore, languages, stories, expressions, ways of living, and identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia
Impact	The total sum or effect of change caused by an organisation, program or activity
FNDSov	First Nations Data Sovereignty. This is the right of First Nations peoples to govern the collection, ownership and application of data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, peoples, lands, and resources
OCCAAARS	Principles of FNDSov: Ownership; Control; Custodianship; Accessibility; Accountability to First Nations; Amplify the voice of the Community; Relevant and reciprocal; Sustainability self-determining
Outcome	The change that occurs for stakeholders from an activity. These can be in the short-, medium- or long-term
Output	The quantities or scale associated with an activity (e.g. the number of people who took part in a program)
SROI	Social Return on Investment. A method for measuring values not traditionally reflected in financial statements
ToC	Theory of Change. The starting point of measuring impact. It tells the story of how stakeholders are impacted by an activity, program or initiative



# Executive Summary

The *Culture + Kinship* program has been established by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To do so, *Culture + Kinship* has focused on Culture and Community as key drivers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing. As part of this, VACCHO funded four Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to develop and implement programs that focus on meaning and purpose, safety, connection, belonging and identity.

The ACCOs represented in this report are:

- Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative - Delivered a series of camps for primary and secondary aged students focused on education and activities about Aboriginal Culture ('Budja Budja')
- Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative - Implemented a possum-skin workshop for local women and Elders ('Goolum Goolum').
- Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland - Purchased, and made improvements to a property, and used the property as a gathering and healing place for Community.
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative - Ran a First Nations healthy lifestyle workshop for local young adults.

Budja Budja, Goolum Goolum and Rumbalara were funded directly from a *Culture + Kinship* grant. Moogji was funded under a different funding stream that had a similar focus.

## Methodology

This report provides an approach to evaluation that aims to integrate the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. This was achieved through extensive use of Yarning, a First Nations cultural process that involves the exchange of information through storytelling. Kowa's Impact Yarn and Value Yarn processes draw on this rich cultural history as a way of conversing with Aboriginal communities about the impact of a particular program or initiative.

The Impact Yarn approach works across four key stages: Co-design; training and harvesting yarns; centring and amplifying moments; and First Nations lens and thought leadership. Through this process, First Nations Communities are encouraged to share their stories of impact, which are then verified with Elders and Community members through Value Yarns.

These methodologies are underpinned by OCCAAARS, a conceptual framework for researching, evaluating, and designing First Nations programs, initiatives and organisations based on principles of First Nations Data Sovereignty (FNDSov).

OCCAARS principles were embedded throughout our processes.

We did this by

1. handing ownership and control of the data collection to Communities
2. drawing on the Community voices during Impact Yarning and Value Yarning processes, and
3. iteratively relaying back any analysis or findings to Community for verification and validation.

By doing this, we were representing their voices in a self-determined way.

## SROI Results

This SROI analysis has shown that the *Culture + Kinship* program has produced significant value for its stakeholders, returning a social value of \$8.29 for every dollar invested.

**\$8.29 : \$1.00**

**Outcomes valuation = \$2,775,596**

**Input costs = \$335,066**

This value was experienced by three stakeholder groups – Community members, ACCOs and Government. Community members experienced the most value followed by Government. The relative value for each stakeholder is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Summary of value created for each stakeholder**

Stakeholder	Number of stakeholders	Value per stakeholder	Total Valuation after discounts	Per-cent of total
Community members	397	\$5,679	\$2,254,697	81%
Government	1	\$394,029	\$391,110	14%
ACCO	2	\$64,894	\$129,789	5%
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$2,775,596</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Evaluation findings

*The Culture + Kinship program is delivering positive outcomes.*

**Community Members** experience value through **reconnecting with Community, Culture and Country**, and in doing so, experience a range of **positive health and wellbeing outcomes**.

The *Culture + Kinship* program created opportunities for participants to explore and celebrate their Aboriginal identity in a positive and affirming context as opposed to the racism and discrimination they may have experienced elsewhere. By participating in this program, and **connecting with Culture**, they gain **more pride in their Culture, a stronger sense of identity** and the opportunity to **gain cultural knowledge and skills**. By caring for Country and working together to collectively solve problems, Community members **experience self-determination** that leads to **increased educational prospects** and **economic prosperity**. By **connecting with their Community** in a cultural context, participants experience **increased mental health** and **increased self-confidence**.

**ACCOs** experience value through gaining an opportunity to work with the Community to **create learning and sharing opportunities**. Program participants are excited to share their positive experience with their friends and family which leads to **more people in the Community knowing about their ACCO**.

**Government** experiences value as a result of Community members **making proactive health choices** and **enabling Aboriginal communities to self-determine health, wellbeing and safety**.

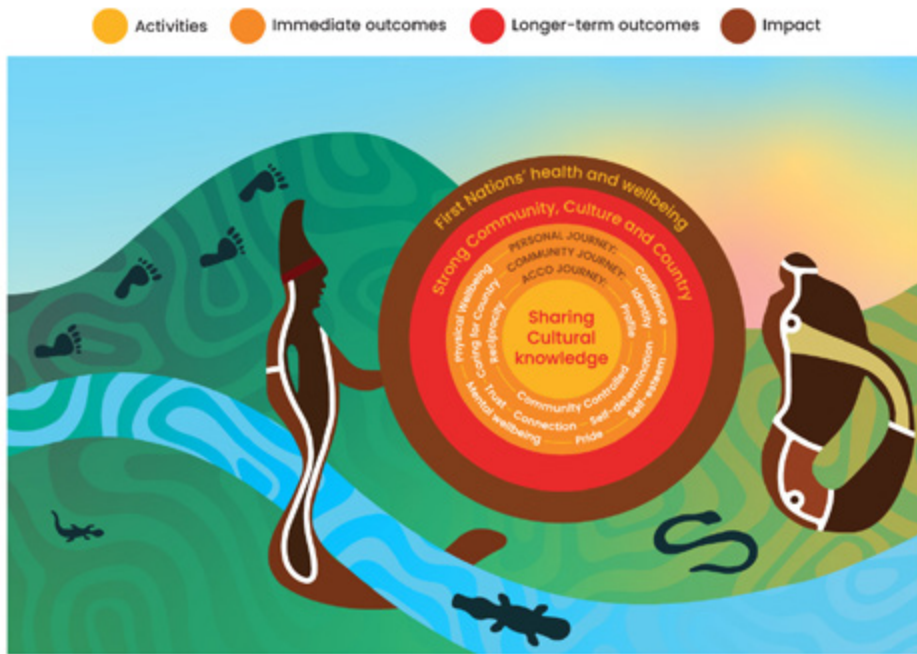


Figure 1: Culture + Kinship visual Theory of Change

## Centring Cultural knowledge and skills transmission increases positive health outcomes

The degree of focus on cultural knowledge and skills transmission varied between each program. We observed higher levels of social value being generated in programs where connecting with Culture was a core element of program design. The two programs that generated the highest SROI values, Moogji and Goolum Goolum, strongly centred Culture in their program design. The other two programs included Cultural activities to a lesser degree and, while delivering social value to their stakeholders, did so at a lower level than the other programs.

These findings indicate that future programs that centre cultural activities, or provide other activities in a cultural context, will deliver a higher level of social value and, consequently, wellbeing to their Communities.

## Self-determination in program design and delivery are key drivers in creating social value

The degree of self-determination that ACCOs had in designing the programs and the relative agency of participants were factors driving the creation of social value. Programs that were designed and delivered by facilitators with strong links to their Community were able to produce a higher level of social value. This is most likely due to designers having a deeper understanding of the Community's specific context and being able to design the program to meet their specific needs.

The two highest valued programs provided participants with a high degree of agency in carrying out their activities:

- All outcomes for Moogji flowed from ownership of the property and the ability to carry out traditional cultural stewardship activities on Country
- At Goolum Goolum, possum skin cloak workshops provided participants with a high level of independence in problem solving and task setting.

These observations provide evidence that future iterations of *Culture + Kinship* programs are likely to deliver more value to their Communities by contextualising them to meet their specific needs. Furthermore, providing participants with the agency to collectively problem solve and adapt activities to meet their needs is likely to deliver higher value outcomes.

# Recommendations

## **Aboriginal leadership and self-determination:**

*Culture + Kinship* projects must continue to be led by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and their Communities.

## **Centring Culture, Country, and Community:**

Provide meaningful opportunities for people to build sustained connections with their Culture, Community and Country in health and wellbeing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## **Place based approaches:**

Continue to support responsive, long-term and multi-sectoral place-based approaches through the *Culture + Kinship* program.

## **Social Capital:**

Prioritise projects that build social capital with Community through regular, ongoing collaboration.

## **Long-term flexible funding to drive self-determination:**

Funding agencies need to create the conditions for self-determination to occur by providing long-term and flexible funding.

## **Empowering evaluation through Yarning:**

Continue to use Impact Yarns as an evaluation tool that is empowering for Community and promotes Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

## **VACCHO as an enabler of FNDSov:**

Continue to use Impact Yarns to promote FNDSov and simplifying reporting processes for Communities.

# About VACCHO

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing in Victoria, providing leadership in Community-control and health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations. VACCHO is a centre of expertise, policy advise, training and innovation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. VACCHO advocates for the health equity and optimum holistic health of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.

We provide education, support and advocate with, and for, our 32 Member Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's) across Victoria.

Self-determination is at the heart of what we do and what we want to achieve. Our vision is for Culture, Community and Country to be embedded and respected in all healthcare settings and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have equitable health access and outcomes.

VACCHO's guiding principles draw on the importance of Culture and Kinship and embody the principles of self-determination for Aboriginal peoples. VACCHO acknowledges that Culture and Kinship are fundamental to Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing, and commits to embedding, promoting, and celebrating Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing across all their activities. VACCHO is committed to:

- doing more to leverage the health and healing benefits of Culture and Kinship.
- putting relationships first and collaborating with their partners to maximise impact.
- celebrating and embracing the diversity and authenticity of all their Community members.
- helping translate health and wellbeing evidence into practice to achieve health outcomes for the next generation.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) engaged Think Impact and Kowa Collaboration (Kowa) to evaluate its approach to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Communities – what it has called the *Culture + Kinship* program. The evaluation has two components. The first is a developmental evaluation and the second is an assured Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis. The developmental evaluation ran from February to August 2022. The SROI process built on this and ran to October 2022. This report presents the findings of the developmental evaluation and the forecast SROI.

Being a pilot initiative, the developmental evaluation was completed to:

- Identify Community-determined program outcomes experienced during the pilot phase.
- Develop a Theory of Change for the program in collaboration with ACCOs and their Communities.

**Figure 2** explains the different forms of evaluation, as a way of contextualising developmental evaluation in relation to other forms of evaluation.



The forecast SROI analysis was completed to:

1. quantify the flow-on health and wellbeing effects of centring Culture and Kinship in health prevention and promotion programs
2. demonstrate the value of ACCOs' holistic and culturally responsive model-of-care to advocate for long-term, self-determined sustainable funding for programs and initiatives like *Culture + Kinship*.
3. demonstrate the benefits of the ACCO model beyond just health, enabling VACCHO and ACCOs to expand and diversify their funding sources.

## 1.2 This report

This report:

- documents the *Culture + Kinship* model, including its overall Theory of Change
- describes and analyses early successes from the *Culture + Kinship* program
- describes the SROI analysis approach and the forecast SROI results
- provides learnings and recommendations for the programs ongoing success.

The report's primary audiences are VACCHO and the various Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) involved in the *Culture + Kinship* program. Secondary audiences include government organisations and other funding bodies. Tertiary audiences include those interested in learning more about valuing social impact and Aboriginal-led evaluation approaches, and ways to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Think Impact worked closely with the Kowa Collaboration to develop this report and we would like to acknowledge Kowa's innovation and thought leadership in developing the Impact Yarn approach.

The analysis and report findings are based on the Impact Yarns gathered and shared by the participating ACCOs and their Communities. VACCHO, Think Impact and Kowa Collaborations would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who contributed their knowledge and experiences through this process.

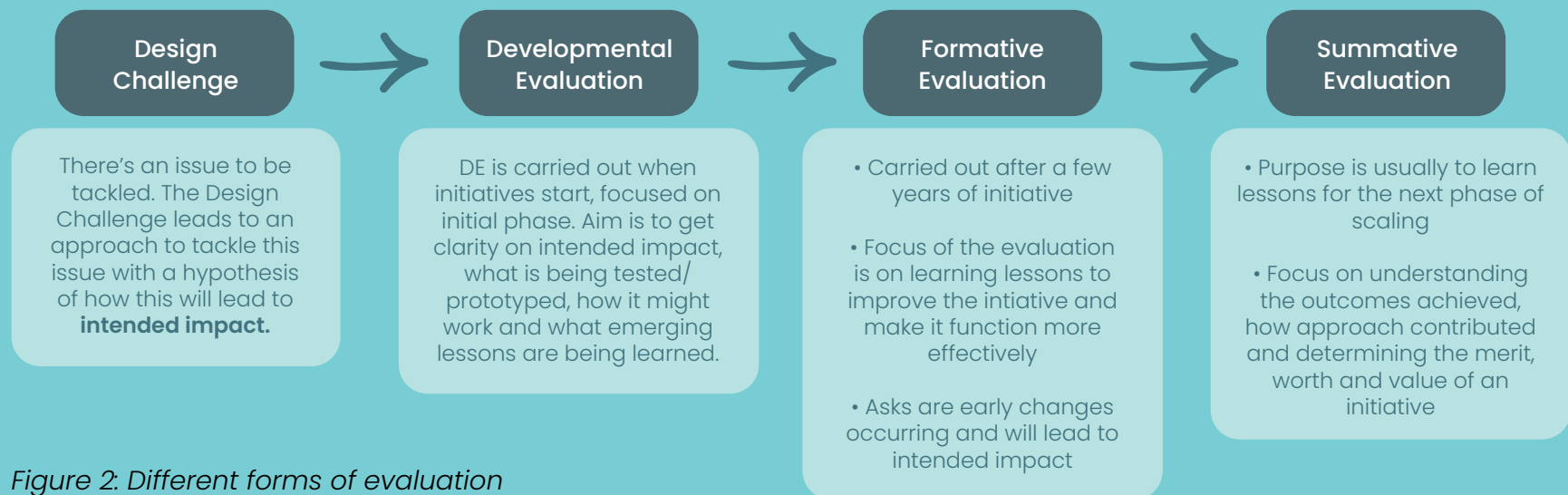


Figure 2: Different forms of evaluation

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a distinct and significant relationship with Country and Culture. This relationship is continually revisited through the linking of healthy Country to healthy people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see themselves as one part of Country and as embedded within it. This connection has been developed over thousands of years and is fundamental to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices (Burgess, 2019; Schultz, 2017; Salmon, 2019; Kingsley, 2013).

'Country' is a multi-layered concept with a wider conceptualisation than just 'land'. It includes the air, water, stories, social and cultural norms, and the interactions between human beings and species of flora and fauna (Kingsley, 2013).

This deep connection to Country is also a crucial component of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. As with Aboriginal understandings of Country, conceptualisations of health and wellbeing are multi-faceted. These conceptualisations go beyond freedom from sickness to also encompass healthy and interdependent relationships between families, Communities and Country.

It focuses on spiritual, cultural and emotional health as much as it does on physical (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council, 2003).

These connections are shown in **Figure 3**.



Figure 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing



Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience significantly poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous people. These health inequities must be seen within a broader socio-political context that includes colonisation, systemic racism, assimilation and forced removal of people from their families and lands. Indeed, ongoing colonisation and forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from Country and Community is increasingly being recognised as a factor in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing (Axelsson, Kukutai and Kippen, 2016). Likewise, research has demonstrated the ways in which maintaining connection to Country and Community can enhance health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Reconnecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to their traditional cultural practices has been associated with improvements in educational outcomes, increases in employment levels, and reductions in specific risk-taking behaviours. It has also been shown to improve exercise frequency and dietary choices (Maclean et al, 2019; Burgess, 2019; Schultz, 2017).

Despite this, there have been limited efforts to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections to Country and Community into primary health interventions (Vallesi, 2018; Kingsley, 2015; Schultz, 2017). Concepts like social and emotional wellbeing are rarely considered part of public health interventions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Schultz, 2017). Likewise, cultural elements – including connection to Country – are often ignored (Lovett, 2020).

## 2.2 Culture + Kinship

### 2.2.1 Program Overview

The *Culture + Kinship* pilot aimed to explore how connection to Community, Country and Culture plays a significant role in improving healthy behaviour and health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.

For VACCHO, *Culture + Kinship* represents an extension of primary and secondary prevention that aligns with existing health interventions, including cancer screening and smoking cessation. The pilot was therefore designed to allow ACCOs choice and flexibility in basing any program on local priorities. ACCOs were encouraged to focus on a range of different topics that encompass holistic health and wellbeing.

More specifically, this involved:

- undertaking a scoping review of literature to understand best practice in health promotion for Indigenous communities worldwide
- providing funding to ACCOs that have innovative models built around Culture and Connection
- development of a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan that helps test whether delivering health promotion programs founded on Culture and Connection improves health and wellbeing.

To achieve these aims, VACCHO funded three ACCOs to design and implement self-determined, local, and culturally driven health promotion programs. Drawing on principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination in health prevention and promotion, the programs focus on meaning and purpose, safety, connection, belonging and identity.

Each ACCO determined their project aims and objectives without any specifically agreed outcomes. This was done with the intention of changing the approach towards these kinds of programs. Rather than funders prescribing outcomes, Communities involved in the program decide how their money will be used.



## 2.2.2 ACCOs

ACCOs are organisations established for and by Aboriginal Communities as part of the movement for self-determination. They are governed by the local Aboriginal Community through their board and constitution.

ACCOs provide a range of health and social services to the surrounding Community. These services often include Aboriginal Health Practitioners and General Practitioners, allied health services, family services (e.g. kindergartens, maternal child health, etc.), and social and emotional wellbeing services. ACCOs also provide community programs, such as community gardens, arts and crafts, and justice services. These are generally for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some ACCOs also offer these services to non-Indigenous people.

The ACCOs funded under *Culture + Kinship* are:

- Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative, located on the lands of the Djab Wurrung people (near Halls Gap)
- Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative, located on the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people (near Horsham)
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, located on the lands of the Yorta Yorta people (in Mooroopna).

A fourth ACCO – Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland (located in Orbost<sup>1</sup>) – was funded under the Bushfire Recovery Grants program. It was included in the evaluation due to the similarities between that program and *Culture + Kinship*. Program descriptions are provided in **section 3**.

The ACCOs that participated in the pilot had previously been involved in a consultation process for Diabetes Victoria's Aboriginal Life! program, which focused on preventing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The consultation highlighted the need for an Aboriginal self-determined approach to health prevention, one that had a greater focus on embedding Culture and Kinship into program development and delivery.

Although all ACCOs involved in the consultation process were engaged to participate in the pilot, it was narrowed down to three ACCOs who had the capacity to build a program and deliver within the pilot phase. Each ACCO determined their own program outcomes and narrative which was based around the needs of specific cohorts of the Community (e.g. youth, Elders).

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<sup>1</sup> Moogji is located on contested land.

## 2.2.3 Funding

Budja Budja, Goolum Goolum and Rumbalara were funded directly from a *Culture + Kinship* grant. This money represented repurposed funding from the Aboriginal Life! program and underspent funds from cancer screening.

Moogji was funded under the Department of Health’s Bushfire Recovery Grants program, which had a similar degree of flexibility to support self-determined approaches. Likewise, the Bushfire Recovery Grants focused on connection to Community, Country and Culture to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

**Table 2** outlines the funded amounts for Budja Budja, Goolum Goolum and Rumbalara. Pilot funding was for six months for Stage 1 and was continued for another six months for Stage 2. This funding was not continued past 30 June 2022.

**Table 2 Culture + Kinship funding amount and actuals spent over Stage 1 + 2**

ACCO	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total	Actuals
Budja Budja	\$47,823	\$41,500	\$89,323	\$61,425
Goolum Goolum	\$66,860	\$30,000	\$96,860	\$56,860
Rumbalara	N/A	\$22,022.00	\$22,022	\$10,638

In addition to what is included in **Table 2**, Moogji received \$414,285 over two years under the Bushfire Recovery Grants program. This commenced in July 2020 and was used to purchase a range of materials and assets for Moogji’s property in Orbost (e.g. a greenhouse, statues and gardening supplies).

Moogji’s funding from VACCHO is outlined in **Table 3**.

**Table 3 Moogji Bushfire Recovery Grant funding**

ACCO	2020	2021 (this analysis)	Total
Moogji	\$207,143	\$207,143	\$414,285

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework for measuring and accounting for the broader concept of social value. It tells the story of how change is being created for the people and organisations that experience or contribute to that change. It does this by identifying and measuring social outcomes. SROI seeks to understand all types of value – social, economic and environmental – and represent this in a language widely understood by funders, investors, policy makers and decision makers.

SROI is an approach that draws on well-established methodologies in economics, accounting and social research, for example net present value and stakeholder engagement. It is underpinned by eight principles which ensure that the analysis understands the changes that take place and the additional value that has occurred through the activities being delivered. The principles are:

1. Involve stakeholders
2. Understand what changes
3. Value the things that matter
4. Only include what is material
5. Do not over claim
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result
8. Be responsive.

An SROI calculation provides an indication of cost effectiveness, by comparing the investment required to deliver the activities with the value of the outcomes experienced by all beneficiary stakeholders. Social value is calculated by placing a financial value on the quantified change using what are known as financial proxies. Financial proxies represent the value being experienced by the stakeholder in monetary terms. They are determined in accordance with the financial valuation methods approved by Social Value International.

The value of the outcomes represents ‘additional value’ that would not have occurred in the absence of the activities being analysed. Value is deducted where outcomes would have happened anyway (deadweight), are attributable to other actors (attribution), or have displaced other outcomes (displacement).

The values calculated, although expressed in monetary terms, do not equate to a financial return. The values represent the size of the value and the relative scale of different outcomes, so that economic, environmental, and social outcomes can be understood using a common unit of measurement.

A breakdown of the SROI calculation is depicted in **Figure 4**. The definitions of these terms are provided in the glossary at the start of the report.

$$\text{SROI} = \frac{\text{Total present value of outcomes}}{\text{Total investment in activities}}$$

Where:

Present value of an outcome =  $\text{Number of stakeholders} \times \text{outcomes incidence} \times \text{financial proxy} \times \text{benefit period} - [\text{deadweight, attribution, displacement}] \times \text{discount rate}$

Outcomes incidence = the degree of change reported by stakeholders

Figure 4: SROI calculation breakdown

## 3.2 Aboriginal Research and Evaluation

Aboriginal research paradigms emerge from a fundamental understanding that knowledge is relational and shared. Like Aboriginal understanding of Country, it is holistic in its approach, highly contextualised and recognises nuances and difference between people and groups. In contrast, positivist Western research paradigms reduce phenomena to their constituent elements, seek to understand mechanisms and aim at establishing general claims to truth. The main technique used to uphold an Aboriginal research paradigm was done through Yarning. Yarning is an Australian First Nations' cultural process that involves the exchange of information through storytelling. It is a fundamental aspect of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Yarning draws on this rich cultural history as a way of conversing with Aboriginal communities about the impact of a particular program or initiative.

There were two forms of Yarning undertaken in this evaluation: Impact Yarns and Value Yarns. These methodologies are described in more detail below in **sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.3**.

### 3.2.1 Impact Yarns

The Impact Yarn process works through four key phases (Kowa 2021). All phases were overseen by Kowa. These are highlighted in **Table 4**.

**Table 4 Phases for gathering Impact Yarns**

<b>Phase 1</b>	Co-design	Diverse Community members are engaged in co-design and training to develop methodology for harvesting yarns.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Training and harvesting yarns	Yarns are collected and prepared for sharing by making them concise and accessible to the whole Community.
<b>Phase 3</b>	Centring and amplifying moments	Diverse Community members review all the yarns and select which were most impactful and why.
<b>Phase 4</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens and thought leadership	Collection of most impactful yarns are interrogated to understand what the findings mean.

A stakeholder mapping exercise was completed as part of Phase 1. Different stakeholders for the Impact Yarns were identified, as was the best approach to engaging with them.

Not all ACCOs were able to work through all four phases. However, there were still several opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander thought leadership, including sense-making by Elders, a Theory of Change workshop and further consultation as part of the SROI analysis.

The Impact Yarns approach is supported by the OCCAAARS framework (Trudgett et al., 2022). This is a conceptual framework for researching, evaluating and designing First Nations programs, initiatives and organisations. It is based on principles of First Nations' Data Sovereignty (FNDSov). Importantly, it recommends eight principles to support FNDSov:

1. Ownership
2. Control
3. Custodianship
4. Accessibility
5. Accountability to First Nations
6. Amplify the voice of Community
7. Relevant and reciprocal
8. Sustainability self-determining.

Finally, Yarns can be in any form, including rich media like video, artwork, stories, or songs. This allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to respond in ways meaningful to them and recognises Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. This approach was also useful to gather feedback from the young children who participated in the Budja Budja Youth Connection camps who may have faced barriers participating in formal interview processes.

### 3.2.2 Theory of Change workshop

A Theory of Change workshop was held on 9 June 2022 with stakeholders from VACCHO and the ACCOs involved in the *Culture + Kinship* program. The workshop was a reflective process focused on the stories of change for each ACCO's program. More specifically, ACCOs were prompted to reflect on their experience of the *Culture + Kinship* program, and on the Impact Yarns they had gathered with their Community, with reference to the following questions:

- what were some of the challenges or complexities in your Community that your *Culture + Kinship* program was designed to address?
- what were the most important things to have happened in the program?
- what changes have you noticed that occurred?

Responses from individual ACCOs to these questions were captured on post-it notes and placed on a template broken up into three components: beginning, middle and end. These templates were then used to develop a Theory of Change (ToC) for *Culture + Kinship*. A version of this is included in **section 6.2**.

### 3.2.3 Value Yarns

To ensure that the process of establishing impact and gathering the information required to calculate the SROI was aligned with FNDSov principles, a Value Yarn process was designed drawing on elements the Impact Yarn methodology.

The approach needed to align with principles of FNDSov and Aboriginal research paradigms so that they provide First Nations stakeholders with sufficient ownership and control over important decisions regarding value.

Furthermore, the long history of dispossession and appropriation of Aboriginal Country and Culture in Australia raises ethical questions for non-Indigenous analysts attempting to put a value on things that are central to Aboriginal life. Therefore, a culturally appropriate process needed to be developed.

Drawing on the design by Kowa and in consultation with VACCHO stakeholders, a Value Yarn process was developed that maintained community ownership and control of the process and worked to amplify the voice of the Community. Each ACCO was provided with the resources to determine the relative values of the outcomes themselves, on Country.

We utilised an anchor and weighting approach that involved Community at each part of the process of determining the overall and relative value of each outcome. Think Impact staff travelled to each ACCO in turn to support Community members interpret the results of the process and make sure that sufficient data was collected to determine appropriate discount factors. More specifically, this involved data collection on Country, which consisted of a voting system that allowed program participants to assign a relative value to each of the outcomes that were developed during the ToC workshops, and several Value Yarn workshops. This allowed ACCOs to deliberate options for a financial proxy for one or more of the key outcomes using a revealed preference methodology.



### 3.3 Synthesising Aboriginal Research and Evaluation with an SROI

With reference to the concepts and methodologies outlined in the previous section, the typical SROI process was modified to better incorporate Aboriginal ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. Figure 5 provides a visual overview of the steps taken.

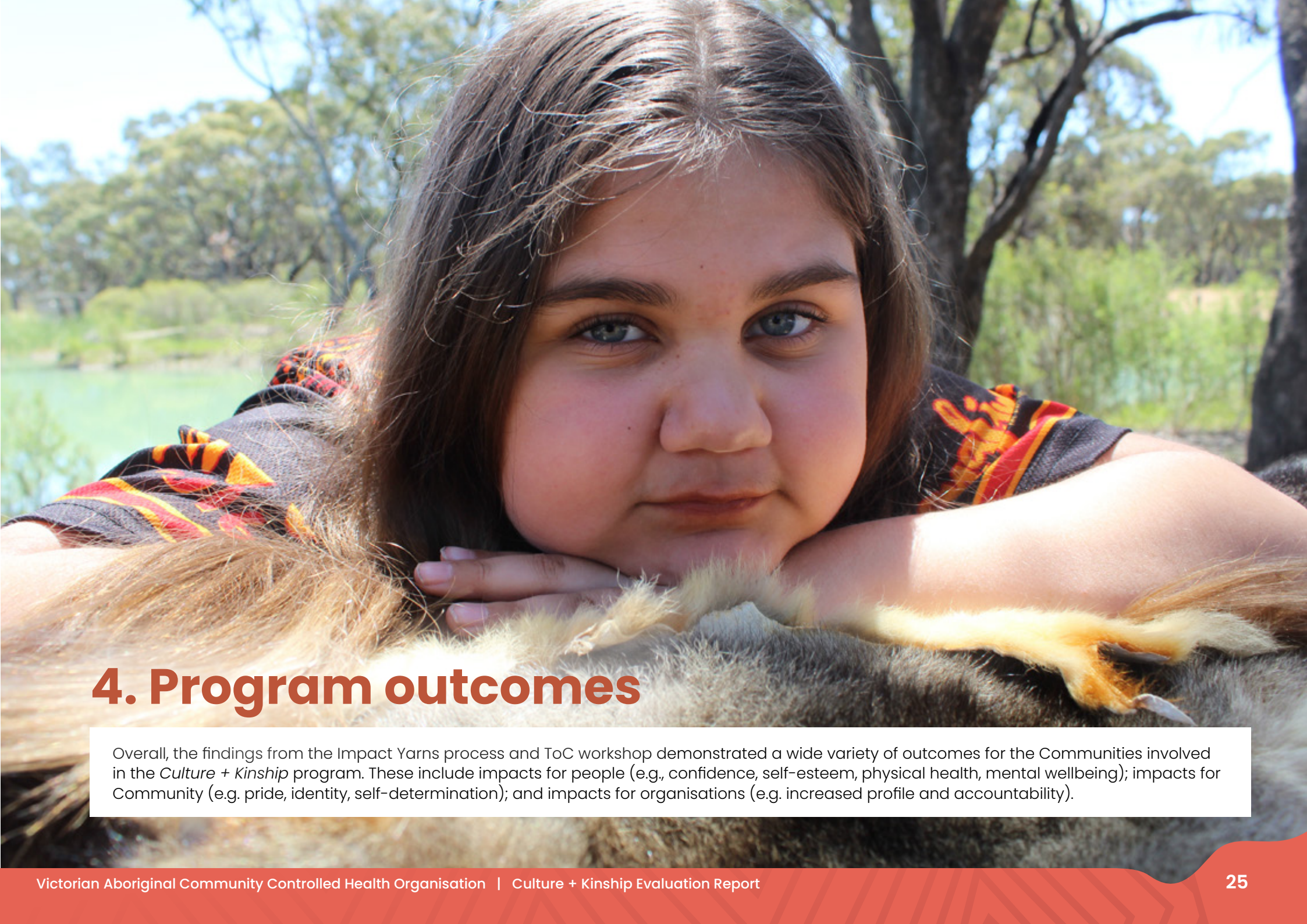
#### Standard SROI stages

#### This project's stages

1. Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders	1. Immersion
2. Mapping outcomes	2. Impact Yarns
3. Evidencing and valuing outcomes	
4. Establishing impact	3. Value Yarns
5. Calculating the SROI	
6. Verifying results	4. Verifying results
7. Reporting, using and embedding	5. Reporting, using and embedding
Assurance	Assurance

Figure 5: SROI process





## 4. Program outcomes

Overall, the findings from the Impact Yarns process and ToC workshop demonstrated a wide variety of outcomes for the Communities involved in the *Culture + Kinship* program. These include impacts for people (e.g. confidence, self-esteem, physical health, mental wellbeing); impacts for Community (e.g. pride, identity, self-determination); and impacts for organisations (e.g. increased profile and accountability).

## 4.1 Budja Budja

### 4.1.1 Program description

The team at Budja Budja had identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the Community as having fractured relationships with Kin, Country and other youth groups. The idea for Gariwerd Youth Connections was to bring the children together through camps and have them reconnect on Country and participate in cultural activities.

The camps focused on improving health and wellbeing of the youth and providing space for the children to reconnect to Country and Culture through various activities such as cultural dance, art, storytelling, ceremony and sport.

Budja Budja delivered four camps during November and December 2021. This included three day camps for children aged 5–11 years and one overnight camp for children aged 12–17. Over 50 young people participated in the camp.

Budja Budja also worked in partnership with the local schools and a Koori Wellbeing Worker. The purpose of this was to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families build Community, share cultural knowledge, and strengthen relationships and Kinships to create stronger, healthier pathways for youth.





## 4.1.2 Program outcomes

Budja Budja's Impact Yarns took the following forms:

- paintings and drawings from the camp participants
- photos and videos of people at the camp
- notes from conversations with Aboriginal Elders.

There were two main outcomes reported for individuals involved in this program: learning about important aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and cultural pride. Budja Budja also reported increases in the profile of its organisation.



## Cultural pride

Those involved in the Impact Yarn process agreed that the camps were a positive and meaningful experience for the young people. It was also pointed out that the camps are an important way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to re-engage with and learn more about their Culture. This was stated succinctly by one camp participant:

“  
I love my Culture and I feel it's important  
for kids to learn it while they are young.  
– Camp participant

Some of the reported outcomes that emerged through these yarns include feelings of pride and a deeper connection to Community and Culture. As one camp participant stated:

*“The thing I'm taking away from this camp is reconnection with Culture”*  
– Camp participant

Participants also expressed their increased pride that they feel in being Aboriginal. Several participants expressed this through the phrase ‘be proud, no shame, respect’. An example of this is included in **Figure 6**. Conversations with ACCO employees provided more insight into the value to the Community of bringing young Aboriginal people together in a cultural context:

*‘I think that these workshops are essential for the Community. There is a sense that connection is lacking in the Community of Gariwerd. There are very few Elders on this Country ... Learning and Culture have not been shared with young people due to this shortage and it is very much appreciated when Elders can come and speak with our youth’*  
– ACCO Employee



Figure 6: Impact Yarn indicating pride

## Cultural knowledge

Several camp participants also reported learning new things. For these young people, this learning process was connected directly to increased feelings of pride about their Culture. This was described by one participant as follows:

“  
Learning all this [cultural  
knowledge] makes me feel proud  
– Camp participant

Some camp participants reported that learning more about Aboriginal instruments (e.g. didgeridoos) and weapons (e.g. boomerangs) was particularly meaningful, as they were previously unaware of the techniques and practices involved for these important Aboriginal cultural artefacts.

*“The didgeridoo was the coolest thing only because I don’t know how to play it and don’t really know people who know how to play it.”*

– Camp participant

*“What I liked about the cultural session was how he explained the weapons.”*

– Camp participant

For other participants learning more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and languages was significant:

*“I learned that Aboriginal culture is the oldest living Culture in the world”*

– Camp participant

*“I also learned that there are hundreds of Aboriginal languages in Australia”*

– Camp participant



Figure 7: Gariwerd Youth Connections

Cross-cultural learning was also reported for non-Indigenous people in the area. More specifically, staff of the campsite facilities were reportedly unaware that membership in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is defined through Kinship ties rather than skin colour. It was suggested by stakeholders that the Gariwerd Youth Connections camp raised awareness of this fact in staff members, who support operations of the campsite.

The campsite reportedly also wanted to learn from Budja Budja how they could incorporate insights and lessons from Budja Budja’s camps into their mainstream programs and make those programs more culturally safe.

Finally, non-Indigenous relatives of camp participants were reported to have participated in the Gariwerd Youth Connection camps as some siblings were Aboriginal and some were not. This suggests strong support in the Community and of the wide program scope and further highlights how ACCOs act as a hub that supports a wider Community.

### *Increased organisational profile*

At the ToC workshop, Budja Budja reported seeing increases in the number of local families engaging with other services after participating in the camps. This included referrals from the ACCO to services such as the Dental Van and Food Bank.



## 4.2 Goolum Goolum

### 4.2.1 Program description

The team at Goolum Goolum wanted to connect young families to Elders in surrounding Communities and participate in a cultural activity, taught by Elders. Goolum Goolum had identified that many young mothers in the Community were not connected through Kin, and the Community was not identifying upcoming Elders to support cultural and Kin knowledge and practices.

To do this, Goolum Goolum designed and delivered a Culture and Connection workshop. The workshop focused on gathering and connecting through art and cultural practices to design and create a possum skin cloak for each Community in Horsham and Stawell.

Held on a weekly basis, young mothers and pregnant women gathered to learn how to make possum skin cloaks from their female Elders. Every Community has a different way of making possum skin cloaks and the process is represented in detail. Each group member burnt their story into a skin to represent their journey and cultural knowledge. The cloaks will be used for Community events and ceremonial events by future female Community leaders.

The workshops ran with two groups – one in Horsham and the other in Stawell. The groups continue to meet fortnightly. Approximately 15 women were involved in workshops across the two sites.

### 4.2.1 Program outcomes

Goolum Goolum's Impact Yarns were represented through:

- photos of the possum skin workshop
- videos interviewing workshop participants.

The photos included images of people working on, and the materials used to make, the possum skin cloak. In the videos, workshop participants were asked several questions and their answers were recorded. The videos start with some factual or descriptive information about the participant and their involvement with Goolum Goolum, before moving to a more detailed discussion about the workshop and the impact it had on participants.

Eleven people contributed to the Impact Yarn process from the Goolum Goolum workshop. There were three main reported outcomes from this workshop: connection to Community; improvements in mental health; and learning more about Culture. As with Budja Budja, Goolum Goolum also reported impacts for the organisation itself. The finished possum skin cloak is included in **Figure 10**.

### *Community connections*

All interviewees who participated in the Impact Yarns reported increases in Community connections as being a core outcome of their involvement in the possum skin workshops. People felt real value in spending time with their family and the wider Community. This was closely related to the ability to have a yarn and relax with other people in the workshop. Participants also reported that spending time with other women was an important way in which the workshop enriched their life.



Figure 8: Community sewing the Possum Skin Cloak

“  
*The workshop is cultural connection and being with other women.*  
– Workshop participant  
”

These connections were particularly significant given the isolation experienced due to COVID-19 and the resultant lockdowns. For some participants, the workshops represented a ‘stepping stone’ to reconnecting with the people around them.

*“The workshops are a stepping stone to doing things again”*  
– Workshop participant

## Mental wellbeing

Improvements in mental wellbeing was also a reported impact of the workshop. People again referred to the COVID-19 lockdowns as being particularly detrimental to their mental health.

As one workshop participant described it, if the workshops didn't happen:

“

*“People would be stuck at home in their own little world. That’s where all the depression and mental health things, that is where it starts”*

– Workshop participant

”

Getting out of the house and being with other people was therefore considered both an important protective factor against deteriorating mental health and a way through which people could recover and heal from the pandemic.



Figure 9: Young woman cutting possum skins for the cloak



## Cultural knowledge

The final theme to emerge from the Impact Yarns was learning more about Aboriginal culture. Almost everyone interviewed reported that they had never been involved in making a possum skin cloak before. Several people reported that a key outcome was learning this skill and being able to share that knowledge with others. This was particularly pertinent given there had been a loss of this kind of knowledge in the Community for some time. For one workshop participant, “seeing people smile and talk about their Culture and different experiences” – sharing of Culture – was closely connected to feelings of pride or joy. Or, as another participant explained it:

“*To see everyone connecting together through something so culturally important... we don't see enough of this kind of thing*”  
– Workshop participant

## Increased organisational profile

Goolum Goolum highlighted that since the possum skin coat workshop, several women had accessed at least four other woman-focused services run by the ACCO. Goolum Goolum's profile also increased through winning the Cultural Heritage Award at the Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Communities Awards. The cloak was exhibited in the Regional Gallery at the Horsham Town Hall.



Figure 10: Possum skin cloak on display at the Horsham Regional Art Gallery



## 4.3 Moogji

### 4.3.1 Program description

After the devastating bushfires in the Snowy Mountains surrounding Orbost, Moogji was one of six Aboriginal organisations to receive bushfire recovery funding. As part of this funding, Aboriginal Culture, and healing as a pillar, was recognised as a key element of recovery. This ran concurrently with a focus on the built environment, the natural environment, the economy and wellbeing. This funding provided Moogji and the Community an opportunity to create a healing property on Country for Mob – particularly those affected by the bushfires.

Moogji purchased approximately 50 acres in the Snowy Mountain region outside of Orbost and Cann River. The property was what the Community needed to build health, wellbeing and story. The vision for the healing property, as determined by the Community, is to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in fire-affected areas in Victoria are supported to flourish through the practice of cultural knowledge systems that inform their physical, mental and spiritual health.

On Country, Community are growing native trees, local bush tucker and medicinal plants (all propagated through the onsite nursery). Native yam was one of few plants to survive the fires and so lines the property. A cultural trail, local Aboriginal sculptures and a dance circle have all been built on the property in the past year. These are all part of the united vision of the Community, which is to build a foundational healing and growing place for all Community to benefit.

### 4.3.1 Program outcomes

Moogji's Impact Yarns were represented through notes from conversations with several Elders in Community, as well as a series of photos of the ways in which the property has been developed (see **Figure 11**).

Five people participated in the Moogji Impact Yarns. The property was reported as having a direct impact on Community connections; caring for Country; mental wellbeing; and opportunities for self-determination.

## Community connections

Participants in Moogji's Impact Yarn process reported that the property provided a focal point for Community. This was considered to play a central role in sustaining a healthy and generative Community. It was also considered vital in nurturing the bonds between Community members. As one interviewee described it:

*If we didn't have the piece of land, things would have fallen apart. You see Community coming together here instead of going into town.*

– Elder

Related to this point, interviewees reported that local Community members were returning to Country and reconnecting with each other:

*"We're seeing cousins come here to spend time on Country and connect with one another. It's starting to be more than work, they're hanging around, more like a Community. The other native title Mob, they have come out to see what's going on here"*

– Elder

Finally, Moogji staff reported that non-Indigenous school groups were coming to the property to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and community, and to learn what is happening on the property.



Figure 11: Growing seeds and native plants on Moogji's property

## Caring for Country

The Impact Yarn process produced several examples of Community's increased ability to care for Country and care for self through working and gathering on the property. Spending time on Country was reported to create a sense of safety for Community.

First, Community members were able to collect local seeds and store them in containers in the hothouse. These were sorted in trays and sprouted before being cared for in the open air. These plants were then sold to the bushfire regeneration program. The yam seedlings are of particular significance – the Community were able to save them from the bushfires, propagate and plant them near the property border for protection.

Second, the paths that flow around the front of the property tell a local story. For example, a path was created on the property to represent the beginning of a Torres Strait Island headdress. This linked to a separate (raised) area that will eventually be a water feature and sitting area within a representation of a whale. The whale story holds deep cultural significance to the local Community.

Finally, a local artist built statues on the property. These were created from parts of machinery that were used to fight the fires. The statues reflect the impact of the fires on both the Country and its people. This property creates a sense of Community and Country healing together.

The strong bonds that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country were embodied in the property:

*“This property gives us belonging. It’s like a light at the end of the tunnel saying that we’re nearly there. If this wasn’t here, there would be souls displaced. Our home is not just our roof, it’s the land and water, that’s our home”* – Elder

The Impact Yarns provided evidence of how this self-determination is being manifested on the property through the collection and cultivation of traditional food and medicinal plants which are collected from Country around the property and propagated from seed on site.

## Mental wellbeing

Interviewees also drew a direct connection between Country – in the form of the property – and Community’s mental wellbeing.

*“This property is what was needed for us to create our own wellbeing within our own Community”*

– Elder

Related to this were reported improvements in the self-esteem and confidence of Community members.

*“In the teams we have working here, we’re seeing more confidence and self-esteem. They are talking in a way they haven’t before. They have realised how important they are to us”*

– Elder



Figure 12: Medicinal plants gathered from Country around the property.

Finally, the property was reported as having a direct impact on the mood, disposition and behaviour of Community members when there.

*“You see some of our team who were angry when they started, now they’re getting around happy from connecting with Country, connecting with one another on Country”*

– Elder

## Opportunities for self-determination

Self-determination here is understood as relating to the economic freedom of the Community. Interviewees linked the property to the economic development of the Community, which included the direct employment of Community members:

*“Having this property, we can become an economic force in this community... we have gone from a little garden shed to a \$100,000 hothouse”*

– Elder

*“We have 70% Aboriginal workforce, and if they’re not black fellas some have married into the Aboriginal community here. There’s 37 employed here, we have more blackfellas working here than anyone else in town”*

– Elder

Economic prosperity was also related to the educational prospects of young people in the Community, particularly where education can be aligned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ways of Knowing. Interviewees explained that:

*“I see this property as providing education to the next generation, not the Western model but in the Traditional sense, allowing our kids to grow up with a place where they can come to connect with Country and learn without being dictated to”*

– Community member

Or, as another Community member explained:

*“For me this property means education, it’s our connections, it’s healing here”*

– Community member



Figure 13: Aunty Susan with propagated Yams

## 4.4 Rumbalara

### 4.4.1 Program description

The team at Rumbalara had been wanting to re-engage with youth through a cultural program for several years. COVID-19 negatively impacted many young people's social and emotional wellbeing and social awareness. It also resulted in isolation and disconnection from Community and peers. *Culture + Kinship* provided support to initiate and implement the Ngalmin Yapaneyepuk program for young people.

The program focused on re-engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and young adults in the Community, and improving

their social, emotional health and wellbeing. It did this by strengthening participants' connection to Culture and Kinship through a series of workshops that followed a healthy eating and active living program outline (HEAL Program).

Each workshop focused on different areas of healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing, and movement/exercise. The program was delivered through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens, weaving in cultural activities, traditional cooking and games delivered by Wanyara.

The program was also designed to encourage improved engagement with both Elders in the Community and the ACCO to support the participants in improving health seeking behaviours.





Figure 15: Healthy on Country – Participant Artwork

#### 4.4.2 Program outcomes

Rumbalara’s Impact Yarns were represented through:

- photos of people participating in the workshops
- artworks done by participants during the workshops (see **Figure 15**)
- interview notes.

The photos included images of people exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paintings and sculpture and participating in the various workshops (including a graduation ceremony). The interview notes asked participants to reflect on their experience of the workshop, focusing on what they thought worked and what improvements they would like to see made in the future.

Six people contributed to the Impact Yarning process from Rumbalara. There were three main reported outcomes from this workshop:

- connection to Community;
- learning more about Culture; and
- learning more about healthy lifestyle choices.

Some evidence was also reported for self-determination.

#### Connection to Community

For several participants, the workshops gave them an opportunity to meet other members of the Community and reconnect socially. One participant described the value of the workshop as being:

*“Getting out of the house and meeting new people”*  
– Workshop participant

Or as another described it:

*“Getting involved in activities in the community”*  
– Workshop participant

Other participants linked Community connections directly to their mental wellbeing:

*“A chance to get out of my head and do something creative with company”*  
– Workshop participant

*“I would like to keep going because I enjoy having something to do with the day and be out of the house. It’s good for my mental health to be part of the program”*  
– Workshop participant

## Learning about Culture

The other main reported benefit from Rumbalara's workshops was learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. This was closely related to connecting with Country and reported by several stakeholders:

*"... reconnecting with Culture and Country has been really important"*

– ACCO staff member

*"I liked getting involved in the Culture"*

– Workshop participant

*"I get motivation out of the program to socialise more and learn about my Culture"*

– Workshop participant

This was typically related to the arts activities in the program:

*"The art was good, and the cultural activities were good"*

– Workshop participant

*"It was good to do some artwork and cultural stuff"*

– Workshop participant

## Healthy lifestyle choices

A small number of stakeholders reported that a key benefit of the program was learning more about different lifestyle options that would support their physical wellbeing.

*"I think those involved (staff and Community) have learned about healthy choices"*

– ACCO staff member

*"My Fitbit makes me want to do exercise and get my steps in"*

– Workshop participant

*"[The workshops have provided] good information about Healthy Choice and how to cook a healthy meal"*

– ACCO staff member







### *Increased organisational profile*

Rumbalara staff reported that the *Culture + Kinship* program facilitated increased connections with other services offered at Rumbalara and by other providers in Shepparton. Through the program, Rumbalara staff reported receiving referrals from or making referrals to medical services, education and training opportunities, early years services, holiday programs, justice services, and alcohol and other drugs support services.

As an example, one participant reportedly felt encouraged by her participation in the workshop to enrol in the Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE). ASHE is a Melbourne University initiative that uses sports to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertake education and training in a culturally appropriate environment.

## 4.5 Outcomes for government stakeholders

Through a conversation with stakeholders from the Victorian Department of Health, a number of outcomes were identified. These were then cross-referenced against relevant government documents provided by VACCHO to determine the policy outcomes most relevant to *Culture + Kinship*. The most important outcomes identified for government are detailed below.

### *Government is able to meet the policy outcome of 'Victorians can act to protect and promote health'.*

The *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework 2016* outlines the Victorian State Government's priority objectives for improving public health and wellbeing in Victoria. A key outcome in the framework is 'Victorians act to protect and promote health' which includes indicators to increase healthy eating, reduce obesity rates and decrease levels of smoking and harmful alcohol and drug use.

However, government stakeholders expressed concern that many of the strategies that are currently being deployed to address this outcome are not sufficiently focussed on encouraging health seeking behaviour:

*'We've had all these disease-focussed investments and we were missing something important about health seeking behaviour and health literacy'*  
– DH Employee

The high level of engagement for most of the programs, as well as an increase in participants and Community members engaging with the ACCOs is evidence that *Culture + Kinship* is effectively helping to meet this policy objective by encouraging health seeking behaviour.

### *Government is able to meet the priority focus of 'Aboriginal Communities self-determine health, wellbeing and safety'.*

*Korin Korin Balit-Djak 2017* provides an overarching framework for the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians between 2017 and 2027. A core principle underpinning all domains of the framework is an acknowledgement that enabling Aboriginal self-determination is vital to improve its health, wellbeing and safety outcomes. Further, the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework calls for self-determination for Aboriginal Communities.

However, there is a conflict between the principles of self-determination and the often highly restrictive and controlled funding systems and processes within government bodies:

*'We have very fixed ways of funding in the department [that] limits our ability to think outside the box'*  
– DH Employee

*'We've had a commitment to self-determination [but] we have struggled to find ways to enact that'*  
– DH Employee

By putting the design and delivery of the *Culture + Kinship* program in the hands of each ACCO and their Communities without restrictions on how the funding was used has assisted DH in its objectives towards Aboriginal self-determination that is supported by appropriate funding models.

# 5. SROI Results

This SROI analysis has shown that the *Culture + Kinship* program has produced significant value for its stakeholders, returning a social value of \$8.29 for every dollar invested.

*Culture + Kinship* creates value for three stakeholder groups: **Community members**, **Government** and **ACCOS**. A summary of the valuation by stakeholder group is shown in **Table 5**.

- **Community members** experience **81 percent** of the total social value – the greatest social value of all stakeholder groups. The majority of Community members’ value comes from outcomes relating to **mental health (26 percent)**, **connection to Community (21 percent)** and **connection to Country (16 percent)**.
- **Government** experiences **14 percent** of the total social value. The majority of Government’s value comes from **meeting the policy outcome of ‘Victorians can act to protect and promote health’ (65 per cent)**.
- **ACCOS** experience **five percent** of the total social value. The majority of ACCOS’ value comes from **creating sharing and learning opportunities with the Community (75 percent)**.

**\$8.29 : \$1.00**

**Outcomes valuation = \$2,775,596**

**Input costs = \$335,066**

**Table 5 Summary of value created for each stakeholder**

Stakeholder	Number of stakeholders	Value per stakeholder	Total Valuation after discounts	Percent of total
<b>Community</b>	397	\$5,679	\$2,254,697	81%
<b>Government</b>	1	\$394,029	\$391,110	14%
<b>ACCO</b>	2	\$64,894	\$129,789	5%
<b>Total</b>			\$2,775,596	100%

The most significant outcomes for Community members are shown in **Table 6**.

**Table 6 Highest value outcomes for program participants**

Outcome	Social Value	Percent of total value
Increased mental health	\$592,000	21%
Increased Community connection	\$453,000	16%
Increased self-determination	\$415,000	15%
Increased ability to care for Country	\$377,000	14%

It should be noted that the lingering effects of the Covid-19 lockdowns may have had an impact on the high valuations for mental health and Community connection outcomes. It is possible participants overvalued these outcomes as they were coming from a lower than usual baseline of social connectational and mental health. As such, it is possible that future *Culture + Kinship* programs may not produce such high valuations for these outcomes.

While all programs delivered positive social value, underlying the overall SROI figure of **\$8.29** was a significant amount of variation in the relative value return for each ACCO as shown in **Table 7**.

**Table 7 Relative SROI valuations for each ACCO**

ACCO	Social Value	Inputs	SROI
Moogji	\$1,624,733	\$207,143	\$7.84
Goolum Goolum	\$412,638	\$55,860	\$7.39
Budja Budja	\$324,107	\$61,425	\$5.28
Rumbalara	\$23,565	\$10,638	\$2.22

Examining the factors driving these variations in social value across each ACCO provides valuable insights into how future programs could be designed to maximise impact. Key elements identified as driving this variation are as follows:

- Centrality of cultural knowledge and skills transmission in the program
- Self-determination in program design and participant agency in delivery.

These factors are explored further in the discussion section.

### Sensitivity analysis

The SROI model has been developed applying the seven principles of the SROI methodology. Where professional judgment has been required, a conservative approach has been used. However, any approach requiring judgement and assumptions carries the risk of errors in the data and findings. For this reason, a sensitivity analysis has been conducted to understand the influence that any variation in these inputs would have on the SROI model. The sensitivity analysis is a key mechanism for exploring the risks and impacts of over claiming. The full results of the sensitivity analysis can be found in the full SROI report. In summary, there is potential that the ratio presented in this report is both over and underestimated. The variations explored would result in the ratio varying from \$7.57 through to \$12.49 for every \$1 invested.

# 6. Discussion

## 6.1 The impact of *Culture + Kinship*

Through *Culture + Kinship*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been able to re-connect with Community, Culture and Country. At the very core of this program is the opportunity for the funded Communities to learn more about, and participate directly in, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and creativity. The ultimate value has been the creation of culturally safe and bounded spaces in which the sharing of cultural knowledge can occur. In a sense, labels like 'workshop' or 'camp' don't really matter. Rather, what matters here is Community coming together for a yarn and to collectively experience and learn about traditional Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

As with previous research on this topic, being able to do so has demonstrated important benefits for the Communities involved. More specifically, individual participants in the program have reported improvements in their mental wellbeing, their confidence and their self-esteem. Participants have also reported increases in their sense of connection and trust with other members of the Community. In this way, *Culture + Kinship* have created opportunities for forming and fortifying relationships within the Communities involved. Finally, *Culture + Kinship* has enhanced a sense of pride about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture for the Communities involved.

There have also been reported benefits for organisations, particularly in terms of increases in the organisational profile of the various ACCOs, and an increased sense of reciprocity and accountability back to the Community. This is likely to have ongoing effects into the future, in terms of ACCOs' strength and sustainability. It also has the potential to make it easier for Community members to be connected into health and social services, creating flow-on effects for their physical health and wellbeing.

All these immediate outcomes have a fundamental significance for the longer-term outcomes and impacts that *Culture + Kinship* is aiming to achieve. Indeed, and as discussed above, the research literature on this topic demonstrates that Aboriginal understandings of 'health and wellbeing' go beyond just avoiding sickness. Instead, they encompass social, emotional, mental and cultural health as well. Fundamental to this is connection to Country, Culture and Community. In addition to the immediate outcomes (as demonstrated through the Impact Yarns), it is highly likely that ongoing maintenance of, and funding for, *Culture + Kinship* will bring about more fundamental shifts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing over a longer period of time.

## 6.2 Culture + Kinship Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) for *Culture + Kinship* was developed in collaboration with the participating ACCOs, based on the outcomes that were evidenced through the Impact Yarns, and in relation to the discussion above. All elements of the ToC have been shown as concentric circles. This is in recognition of the importance of circles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture. According to Colin Jones, Kalkadoon and Nunukul man and lecturer in Aboriginal history, circles represent many things in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Often, they represent people coming together (for instance, around a campfire) (Jones, 2013). In the context of this ToC, the concentric circles represent people coming together to connect about Community, Culture and Country.

Circles can also represent the passage of time. Typically, Western concepts of time are frequently represented in a linear form – as moving from left to right. This is more akin with typical program logic models, in which programmatic activity ‘moves’ from the left of the model to the right. The ToC for *Culture + Kinship* above has therefore been represented as circles to better align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ concepts of time as circular.

Likewise, the colours chosen also have significance for the way in which we can conceptualise the ToC for *Culture + Kinship*. Each ‘level’ of the ToC is represented as follows:

- The yellow circle is the programs activities.
- The orange circle is the immediate outcomes
- The red circle represents longer-term outcomes
- The brown circle is the impact of the program overall.

Yellow, orange and red have been chosen as representative of the colours of fire. In this sense, the circles are symbolic of a campfire as a meeting point for Community. The choice of brown is representative of the connection between Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ health and wellbeing.

Lastly, not all the outcomes in the ToC were achieved by all ACCOs. However, all ACCOs should be able to identify several elements of the ToC that are relevant to their program. The Theory of Change represents the *Culture + Kinship* program as a whole and will be used to inform future program development as the initiative is scaled to involve more

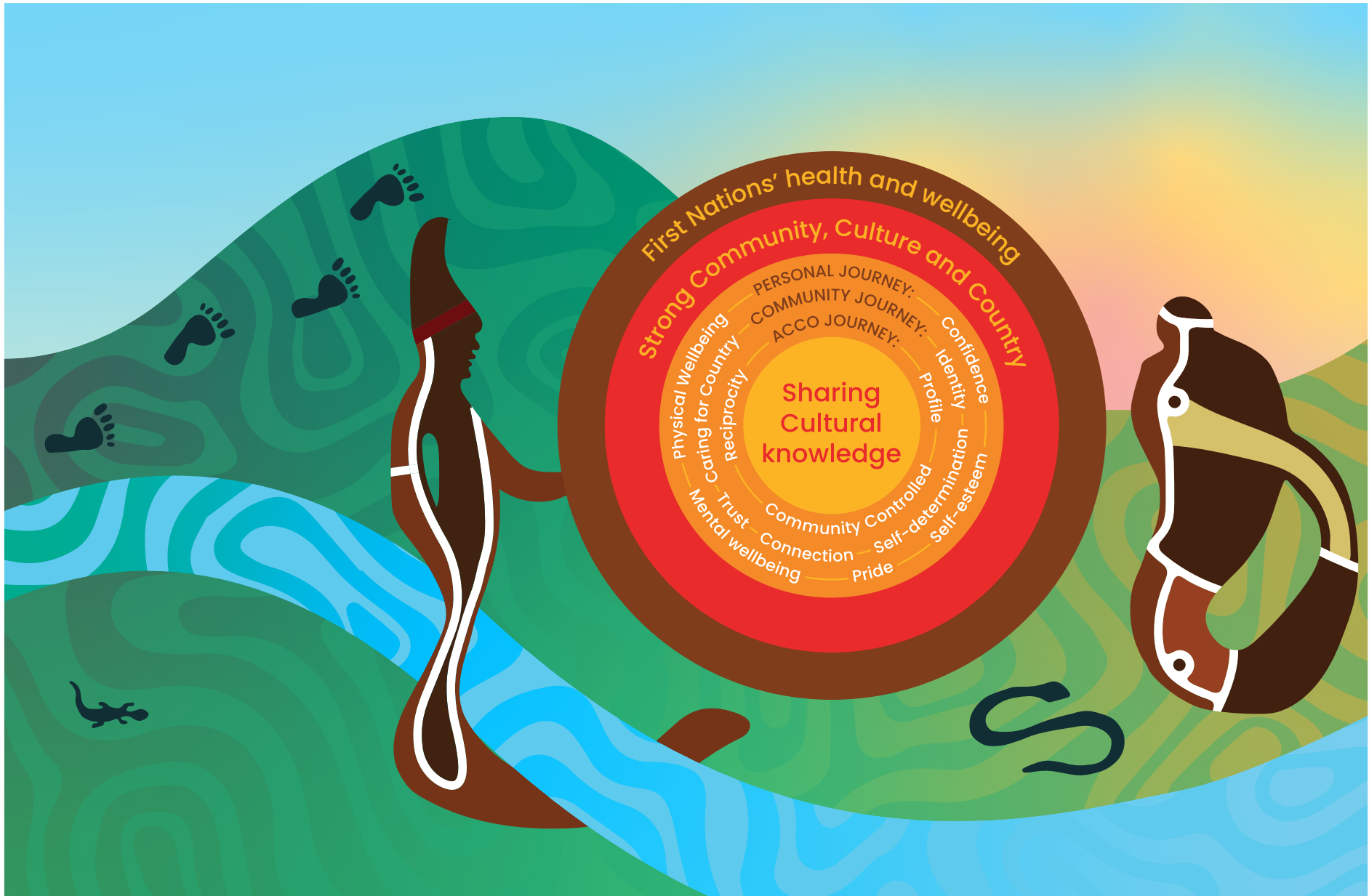


Figure 16: Culture + Kinship Theory of Change

## 6.3 Centrality of cultural knowledge and skills transmission

The degree of focus on cultural knowledge and skills transmission varied between each program. We observed higher levels of social value being generated in programs where connecting with Culture was a core element of program design.

Since the arrival of European settlers in the late-18th century, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been subject to continuing acts of extreme marginalisation. This has included dispossession, genocide and structural racism. Ongoing patterns of trauma and violence have resulted in the loss of language and Culture. It has also alienated Australian First Nations' peoples from their Country (Dudgeon et al, 2021). These acts have compromised the capacity of Aboriginal communities to connect to Country, Culture and Community – relationships that go back thousands of years.

The two programs that generated the highest SROI values, Moogji and Goolum Goolum, strongly centred Culture in their program design. Moogji's social value flowed from the ability of Community members to be able to carry out traditional cultural practices, and other activities, on their own land and on their own terms. During Impact Yarning, Moogji Elders were very clear that none of the social value would have been created without the Community members being able to carry out the core cultural activity of connecting to Country.

Likewise, the Goolum Goolum program provided women from the Community with an opportunity to build social connections in the traditional relevant context of women's cultural work and artistic expression. All program outcomes were a direct result of Community members coming together to create a cultural artifact.

The other two programs included cultural activities to a lesser degree. Budja Budja's Gariwerd Youth Connections program included several activities with a strong cultural component, such as dancing, storytelling and the production of art. However, a significant element of the program consisted of traditional Youth Camp confidence building activities like high ropes courses and archery.

Rumbalara's program did not initially include a significant component of cultural activities, instead choosing to focus primarily on health education. As result of participant feedback, cultural activities were incorporated into the program after it had commenced. At least 40 per cent of all the value for this program was a direct result of these cultural activities.

These findings indicate that future programs that centre cultural activities, or provide other activities in a cultural context, will deliver a higher level of social value and, consequently, wellbeing to their Communities.



## 6.4 Self-determination in program design and participant agency

The degree of self-determination that ACCOs had in designing the programs and the relative agency of participants were factors driving the creation of social value.

### 6.4.1 Program design

Programs that were designed and delivered by facilitators with strong links to their Community were able to produce a higher level of social value. This is most likely due to designers having a deeper understanding of the Community's specific context and being able to design the program to meet their specific needs.

In addition, we noted that our ability to successfully engage with Community members for evaluation and validation activities was much greater when ACCO staff had established links with the Community and could leverage their social capital to encourage participation.

### 6.4.2 Participant agency

The two highest valued programs provided participants with a high degree of agency in carrying out their activities.

All outcomes for Moogji flowed from ownership of the property and the ability to carry out traditional Cultural stewardship activities on Country. Non-cultural economic activities, like horticulture, were delivered in such way that they centred Community connection, learning and healing by providing disaffected and traumatised Community members with meaningful work and opportunities to build social connections. The value of economic and educational outcomes were expressed in terms of ability of the Community to carry them out on their own terms.

The Goolum Goolum possum skin cloak workshops provided participants with a high level of independence in problem solving and task setting. The program facilitators, supported by Elders, empowered participants to problem solve in a cultural context. Building social connections as part of working on shared tasks was a major generator of value for the program.

Opportunities for participants at the Budja Budja youth camps to exercise their self-determination

were limited because of the highly structured nature of the program. However, we noted that cultural activities that involved an element of self-expression (i.e. the cultural dance and hip-hop dancing) were highly valued by participants.

Rumbalara participants demonstrated self-determination by modifying the program design to meet their needs. Their decision to incorporate more elements of cultural art creation into the program likely led to the program generating a much higher level of social value than if the program had continued as planned. The facilitators' acknowledgement of participants needs and their willingness to adapt the program to meet them was a major contributor to the positive outcomes experienced by participants.

These observations provide evidence that future iterations of *Culture + Kinship* programs are likely to deliver more value to their Communities by contextualising them to meet their specific needs. Furthermore, providing participants with the agency to collectively problem solve and adapt activities to meet their needs is likely to deliver higher value outcomes.

## 6.5 Future key considerations

Based on the outcomes of this pilot, there are several considerations that will be important for the future success of *Culture + Kinship*:

1. Aboriginal leadership and self-determination
2. Centring Culture, Country and Community
3. Place-based approaches
4. Social capital
5. Long term, flexible funding to drive self-determination
6. Empowering evaluation through Yarning
7. VACCHO as an enabler of First Nations Data Sovereignty
8. Collecting data.

### *First Nations leadership and self-determination*

The Heathy Communities project has demonstrated the necessity of First Nations Leadership in delivering health programs. More specifically, it has demonstrated how Aboriginal self-determination is a vital component in funding and designing programs that seek to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. Such an approach has allowed *Culture + Kinship* to respond directly to the Community need in a way that is targeted, considered and effective.

Given this, future *Culture + Kinship* projects must continue to be led by local First Nations leaders and their Community. This leadership should incorporate project design, delivery and decision-making. Doing so will ensure that projects can appropriately respond to their Community's specific needs.

Funding agencies should create the conditions for this to occur by providing long-term and flexible funding for these programs. This enables sustained engagement and local decision making and increases the likelihood that the full impacts of the programs can be realised.

## Centring Culture, Country and Community

The *Culture + Kinship* pilot demonstrates that initiatives that centre Culture, Country and Community can be highly effective in improving health and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations people. A focus on the spiritual, cultural and emotional health of participants can help address the underlying trauma of marginalisation and dispossession that is the root cause of much unhealthy behaviour and choices. The *Culture + Kinship* program created opportunities for participants to explore and celebrate their Aboriginal identity in a positive and affirming context as opposed to the racism and discrimination they may have experienced elsewhere. This is especially significant for younger participants who may be engaging with their Culture and Community for the first time.

The importance of connection to Country as an enabler of self-determination, as demonstrated by Moogji, is something that should be explored further in future programs. Having a space of their own where they can 'just be us and do things our way' has empowered the Moogji Community. This approach has significant potential above and beyond ensuring the ongoing wellbeing of individuals as evidenced by the comments from the Moogji Elder on the potential for using the space to engage in reconciliation with the wider local community.

Future programs should ensure that they provide participants with meaningful opportunities to build long-term connection with Culture, Country and Community. Doing so would deliver a higher level of social value and, consequently, wellbeing to their Communities.

## Place-based approaches

Future *Culture + Kinship* programs should provide opportunities for different, place-based, programs at different scales. Place-based approaches ensure that the needs of the Community are met through their direct and active engagement. Place-based approaches support Community-identified priorities, value local knowledge and build upon social and cultural connections.

*Culture + Kinship* demonstrated that ACCOs that were able to facilitate approaches that responded to the participant's specific local circumstances. Centring connection with Culture, Country and Community in their programs, they were able to deliver significant health and wellbeing outcomes to their Communities.

There is opportunity for VACCHO to explore ways to deliver other health prevention initiatives as place-based models like *Culture + Kinship*.

Effective place-based approaches are multisectoral and have a long-term focus. As such funding for *Culture + Kinship* should come from multiple arms of government and other funders, acknowledging the inputs and benefits beyond health. Doing so would create a wider financial base and more sustainable model into the future.

## *Social capital*

What is also likely to prove vital to the success of *Culture + Kinship* in the future is the creation of social capital. Indeed, there is strong support in the public health literature for the role of social capital in creating strong, lasting connections between Community members in ways that support health outcomes (Gillies, 1998). This suggests that strong Community connections are built through the creation of strong networks that engender reciprocity and trust.

Strong connections between ACCOs and their Communities have also proven to be valuable in enabling effective evaluation of the *Culture + Kinship* programs. Being able to access honest and meaningful feedback on the effectiveness of programs is essential in enabling continuous improvement and greater alignment of interventions with Community needs.

What this means is that programs and projects that facilitate coordination and regular collaboration between Community members should be given funding priority over those that may involve once-off or intermittent contact. Funding programs that allow for regular interactions are likely to be better placed to generate stronger connections and thus increase social capital in Community.

## *Long term, flexible funding to drive self-determination*

Communities need long-term and flexible funding models to realise the full benefit of health and wellbeing programs that centre Connection to Culture, Country and Community.

Long-term programs provide participants with the ability to engage with their Culture and Community on their own terms in their own time. The underlying effects of trauma and dispossession that drive unhealthy behaviours cannot be addressed in one intervention, no matter how positive. Long-term funding enables ACCOs to run programs multiple times, providing learning opportunities that can be used to better adapt their delivery to meet the needs of their Communities. Programs need to be repeated again and again to ensure that improvements are established and sustained into the future. Building a healthy community is a journey, as illustrated by footprints traversing a mountain in the overarching theory of change.

Self-determination means not having to go back and ask for funding every year. The funding model should provide sufficient funds and an appropriate structure to allow for a journey towards healing and health.

## Empowering evaluation through Yarning

This report has demonstrated that it is possible to synthesise Western and First Nations methodologies to produce an evaluation that meets the requirements of all stakeholders. Specifically, the Impact Yarning process has proven to be a highly effective approach to understand, capture and report on the outcomes and impact of the program, in a way that upholds FNDSov and centres Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. ACCO staff involved in the evaluation reported that the approach was received well by Community. This was further evidenced by the deep engagement of ACCOs and Communities throughout the process, leading to the development of a clear program Theory of Change.

The Impact Yarning methodology is sufficiently flexible to be adapted to other uses for evaluation. Value Yarns, developed for this evaluation, enabled the effective verification and valuation of outcomes while maintaining principles of FNDSov and self-determination. Opportunities to use, and adapt, Impact Yarns, and Value Yarns should continue to be explored in future, to understand the impact of *Culture + Kinship* initiatives and to support the evolution of the program.

## VACCHO as an enabler of First Nations Data Sovereignty

The *Culture + Kinship* program provides an example of how the principles of FNDSov can be applied successfully in mainstream evaluations by using the Impact Yarning methodology. Meeting the reporting requirements of mainstream evaluation processes often requires a specialised set of skills and knowledge that might not be present in all Communities. Furthermore, mainstream data reporting and data retention policies are often in conflict with the principles of FNDSov. As such, Communities may not have the capability or capacity to diversify their funding sources or may not be willing to share their data.

VACCHO should continue to use Impact Yarning as an evaluation tool for future *Culture + Kinship* programs and advocate for their use more broadly. VACCHO has an opportunity to enable greater use of Impact Yarning by ACCOs by making it easier to submit Impact Yarning material and match it to external evaluation frameworks. Providing ACCOs with a simple, centralised method of submitting Impact Yarns and other materials for evaluation would significantly reduce their reporting burden and free up resources for frontline work. Building a method for mapping Impact Yarns against mainstream evaluation frameworks would simplify the process for ACCOs.

## Collecting data

As this was a forecast SROI, we recommend collecting data against the identified participant and ACCO outcomes. This will support any future evaluative SROI and support impact management. This could include:

- Data on number of participants (program reach)
- Impact Yarns with participants to confirm the extent to which outcomes were achieved and whether there were any new outcomes
- Additional focus on the valuation of outcomes relating to connection, which we noted above, may be overvalued due to the lingering impact of COVID-19 lockdowns in Victoria.



## 7. Conclusion

*“ Being able to see and hear what the kids learnt about was great! Being able to see their faces and how happy they were, it just made me feel like the work Budja Budja is doing is more important than ever, it’s so important to teach Culture to our kids.*

*- Aboriginal Elder*

The *Culture + Kinship* program supports VACCHO’s vision for vibrant, healthy, self-determining Communities. It embodies our guiding principle to do more to leverage the health and healing benefits of Culture and Kinship.

The evaluation demonstrates that, even in the short-term, change is achievable when programs and services that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are genuinely First Nations-led. When connection to Culture, Community and Country are centred to achieve early change and impact for children and families, we can be responsive to the complex cultural determinants of health and wellbeing within Victorian Aboriginal Communities. The degree of self-determination that ACCOs had in designing the programs and the relative agency of participants were factors driving the creation of social value. Ensuring that each locally led program enabled ACCO’s to both build their profile in the Community as cultural hubs, integrate wrap around services and have a long-term focus. However, lack of adequate funding places stress on all elements of

our ACCOs. The *Culture + Kinship* evaluation demonstrates that Communities need long-term funding models to realise the full benefit of health and wellbeing programs that centre Connection to Culture, Country and Community. Long-term programs provide participants with the ability to engage with their Culture and Community on their own terms in their own time. The underlying effects of trauma and dispossession that drive unhealthy behaviours cannot be addressed in one intervention, no matter how positive. Self-determination means not having to go back and ask for funding every year. Funding agencies must create the conditions for this to occur by providing long-term and flexible funding for these programs to allow for a journey towards health and healing.

The evaluation provides significant insight into how recreating connection to Country, Culture and Community can have immediate impact on and enhance health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.





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This version has been edited down by VACCHO for publication.  
Full SROI report can be accessed at [vaccho.org.au/impact](http://vaccho.org.au/impact)

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