



FINAL REPORT

Strengthening Cultural Safety

Fee for service co-design project

Aboriginal Strategy and Oversight
2 December 2020

Background

The Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended that the Victorian Government "require services to conduct cultural safety reviews and action plans" (recommendation 148).

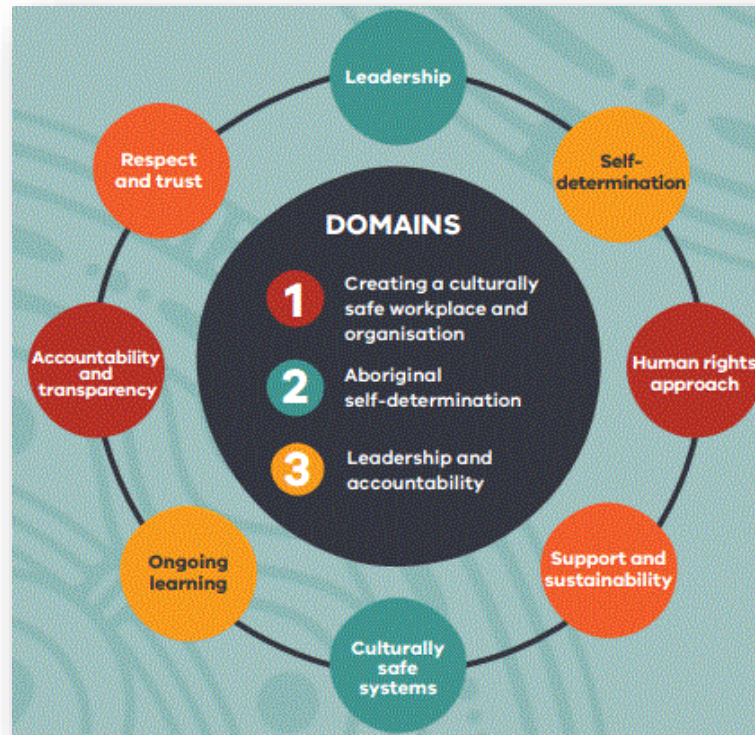
The Strengthening Cultural Safety project (the project) is committed to developing a model which is viable and feasible to support ongoing work improving cultural safety in mainstream family violence organisations and to ensure these organisations are provided with access to resources and tools to improve cultural safety beyond 2020.

Aboriginal Strategy and Oversight (ASO) was commissioned by Family Safety Victoria (FSV) to facilitate a co-design process to explore the development of a fee-for-service model. The purpose of this project was to test if a transition to a fee for service business model would be viable in assisting sustainability of the project.

Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework

Launched in April 2019, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework has been developed to assist the department and mainstream Victorian health, human and community services to create culturally safe environments, services and workplaces. The cultural safety framework is for:

- every person and every mainstream organisation to take responsibility and work together to create culturally safe services and workplaces
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and clients, who have a right to culturally safe workplaces and services.



OFFICIAL

Our approach to system design - Aboriginal Design Principles

The Aboriginal design principles reflect the Victorian Government's prioritisation of Aboriginal self-determination. The two Aboriginal design principles that guide this work are:

- 1. Aboriginal people to take ownership, carriage and responsibility for designing, delivering and evaluating policies and programs on their own terms.**
- 2. Aboriginal people to contribute to options for decision-making by Ministers, government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.**



The department acknowledges that this support must be in conjunction with the community sector and government leading the development of a Koorie-friendly environment. At no point throughout its development has ASO aimed to define Aboriginal self-determination, as Aboriginal communities are themselves to define what self-determination means to them.

Instead ASO aims to support the development of culturally appropriate and responsive mechanisms and pathways within the systems reform and transformation that will allow for progression along the continuum towards Aboriginal self-determination (as outlined in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023).

Our Design Approach

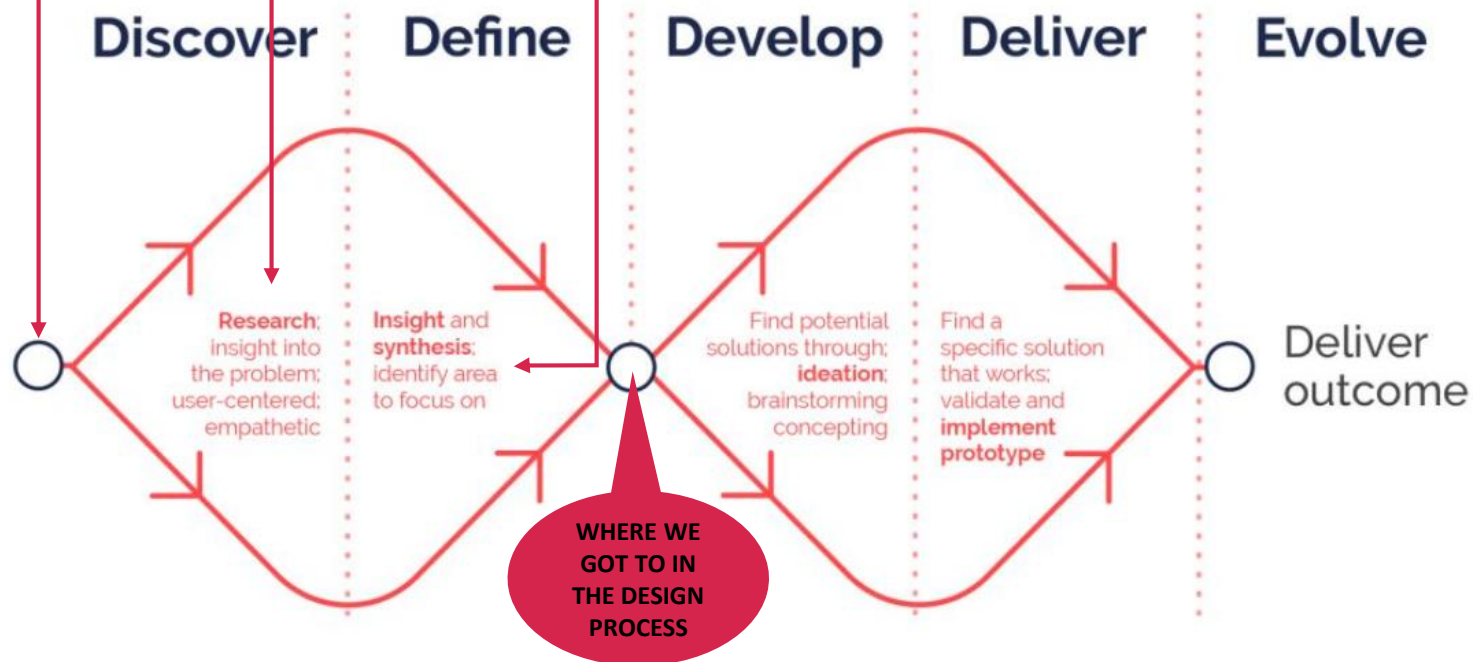
The objective of the project was to co-design a business model for the provision of fee-for-service cultural safety services to mainstream organisations. The project team mapped key stakeholders to build out the fee for service model through a five-stage co-design process.

Shortly after the commencement of the co-design workshops, it became apparent during the **DISCOVER** stage that a fee for service model would not be viable or sustainable at this time.

Following the initial workshop findings, it was decided to stop the co-design process. From the research, a number of key insights, findings and recommendations have been developed from the **DEFINE** stage.

The design challenge:

How might we create a sustainable fee-for-service model to strengthen cultural safety in family violence organisations?



What we did and who we spoke with

4 subject matter expert interviews:



- Sue Anne Hunter, State-wide Principal Practitioner at VACCA
- Janine Godwin-Thompson, Cultural Safety Consultant and previous SNAIC employee
- Sheena Watts, Executive Manager of programs at AFL Sportsready
- Sean Callanan, previously Director of Arts & Humanities, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

5 two-hour co-design workshops



1 design question



A total of **30** key themes

1 Family Violence Initiatives Manager



1 State-Wide Coordinator

1 session with eight ACCO CEOs and two Aboriginal Engagement Managers

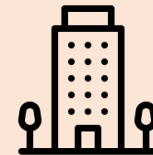


2 co-design sessions with the Cultural Safety Advisors



12+ new ideas

22 participants representing **14** mainstream organisations



15 Cultural Safety Advisors



The impact of the Strengthening Cultural Safety Project



Creating partnerships with Aboriginal communities

The project has created meaningful partnerships. Mainstream organisations have used the opportunity to work with key community leaders, access cultural knowledge and build their cultural competency. Without the Cultural Safety Advisors mainstream organisations would not have had the opportunity to create such strong partnerships with local Aboriginal communities.



Making the known unknowns known

Mainstream organisations know that **“more work needs to be done”** and highly value the guidance provided by the project. The project was identified as an opportunity for organisations to identify the known unknowns of how to improve cultural safety as a whole organisation; from governance to everyday practice. And create culturally safe practices for the people and communities they work with.



Providing tangible guidance with tools, resources, and training

The Cultural Safety Advisors (CSAs) have developed a suite of training materials and resources to deliver and provide to organisations, including the Strengthening Cultural Safety Assessment Tool, Cultural Awareness Training package and Action Plans. Mainstream organisations have found the tools, resources, and training developed by the project invaluable.



Creating safe spaces to reflect and ask questions

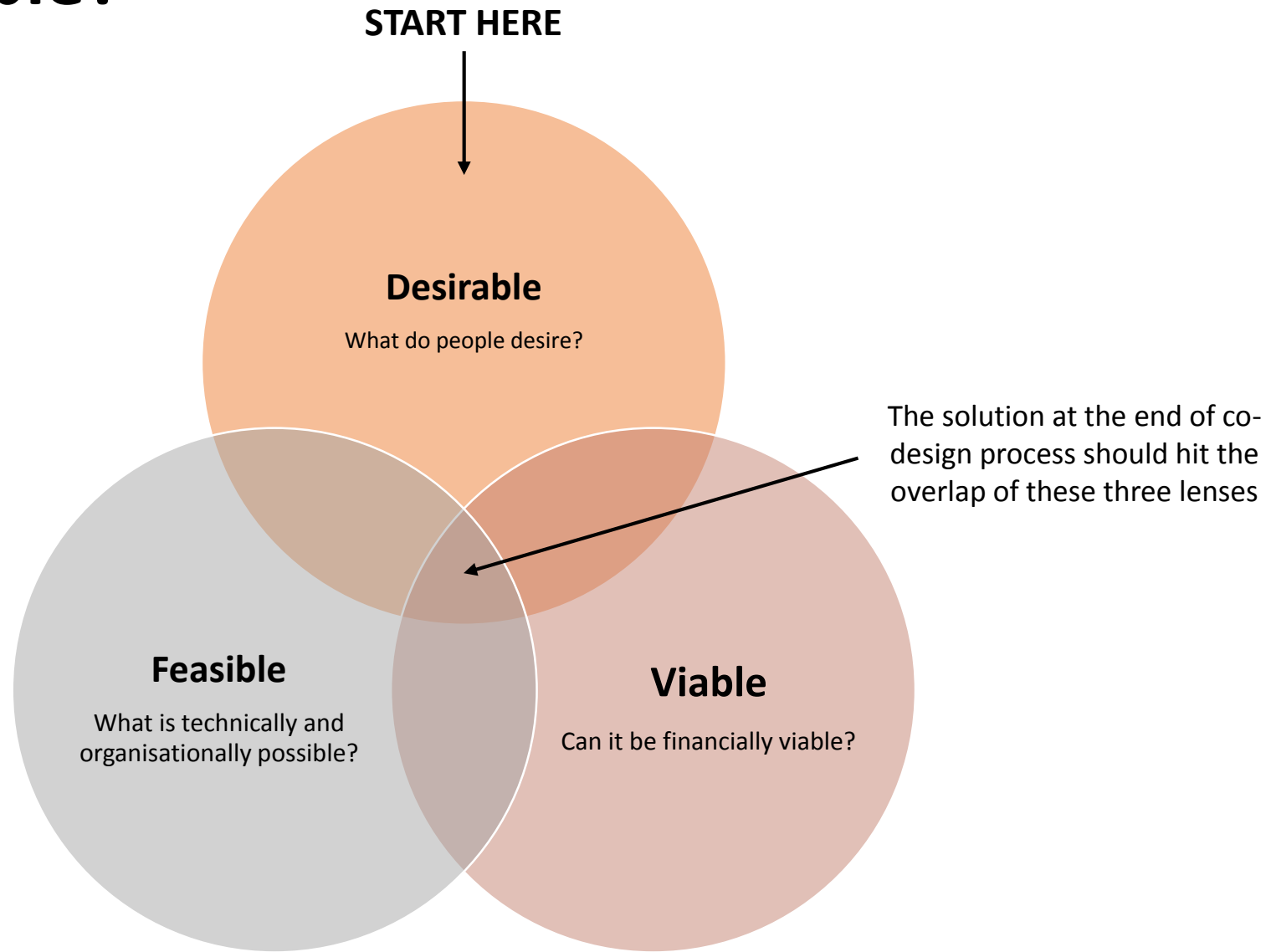
Mainstream organisations have gained immensely from the **“robust conversations”** that they have had with CSAs. The project is a **“goldmine for discussions”** and allow staff to recognise, unpack, and overcome unconscious biases in a safe space.



Making it meaningful: avoiding cultural tokenism

Mainstream organisations expressed that they feared **“tokenism”** when demonstrating respect for Aboriginal people and celebrating dates of significance. Mainstream organisations feel that participating in the project has made embedding cultural safety meaningful and authentic. This has created choice in mainstream services for Aboriginal Community members – that is, choice of services they wish to access or employment in culturally safe environments.

Is a fee-for-service model desirable, feasible, and viable?





What we discovered: Desirability

Aboriginal Self-determination and the Cultural Safety Framework

Under the Victorian Aboriginal Affair Framework (VAAF) self-determination is understood to mean "the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development". It also relates to a group of people rather than any individual.

- Cultural Safety Advisors (CSAs), and the ACCO sector, both seek a commitment from the Government to provide funding to truly embed Cultural Safety in mainstream services, with a proposed timeline of at least 5 additional years.
- The resistance to a fee for service model was strong enough that members of the ACCO sector questioned their on-going involvement if the project became a fee-for-service product.
- It was identified that asking ACCO's to approach Mainstream organisations to pay fee-for service to complete self-assessments and Action Plans without mandated requirements in Service Agreements is Culturally unsafe.
- To fundamentally change the funding model that sustains the delivery of the project without the support of ACCO sector, or the CSAs that deliver it undermines the guiding principles of self-determination as it is defined under both the VAAF and the Department of Health and Human Services' Cultural Safety Framework.

"Aboriginal staff, people and communities have meaningful leadership and decision-making roles, and are involved in designing, delivering and evaluating Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety policies, programs and initiatives."

The Department of Health and Human Services,
Cultural Safety Framework

- Co-design is one such way that the Victorian Government seeks to embed self-determination in its policies, programs, and service delivery. Co-design allows for Aboriginal voice to be not just heard, but central to decision making around the design, delivery and evaluation of Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety programs and services.
- If the proposed outcome of this co-design project is not desirable, or not supported by the Aboriginal sector, then proceeding ceases to be co-design. Continuing the process undermines the principles of self-determination and Aboriginal led decision-making.
- It would be inconsistent to proceed with a fee for service model for the delivery of strengthening cultural safety services where it is against the wishes of Aboriginal organisations and communities. A transition to fee-for-service under these circumstances would be culturally unsafe as it fails to embed self-determination as a guiding principle.



What we discovered: Feasibility

Is it possible within current organisational constraints?

Current capability and capacity of ACCO sector

- The transition from a value-based model to a fee for service will require ACCOs to make significant amendments to their current model of service delivery.
 - A shift to fee-for-service would require ACCOs to fundamentally redefine their purpose. ACCO's currently receive funding to provide specific programs and services. By definition, their purpose is to give, to do, to change, to instil hope and to provide services to the community. Inherently they are driven by positive outcomes for those they serve.
 - ACCOs would need to deliberately transform themselves and create a commercial mind-set and alternative business model.
 - Regarding a fee-for-service model, ACCO's are not financially equipped to employ a CSA in the hope that Mainstream Organisations might pay fee-for-service, which undermines the principles of ACCO and CSA self-determination, financial wellbeing and staff retention.
 - Organisational transformation in the domains of promotion and marketing, finance and accounting, and administration would be required. The additional work and timelines required for the transition was seen as a "huge burden" for ACCOs, without appropriate funding to achieve this.
- Skill development and capability uplift would be required for CSAs to help understand activity-based costing, calculating profit margins, and billable hours; in addition to skills in negotiating fees and services. A fee-for-service model would risk staff's safety and retention.
 - A transition to fee-for-service would only be feasible if there was an ongoing government commitment to funding the project and to ensure there are mandated requirements for Cultural Safety Standards in Service Agreements.
 - Specialist resourcing to help facilitate the transition to fee-for-service and build appropriate organisational infrastructure and program management was highlighted as a necessary step for feasibility.



What we discovered: Feasibility

Is it possible within current organisational constraints?

Role of Traditional Owners

- Some Traditional Owner groups currently provide organisations with cultural consultations to help facilitate the engagement process and build cultural safety, this is done through a fee-for-service model.
- CSAs assist mainstream family violence organisation to engage with TOs as part of the action planning process.
- Strong partnerships with TOs are fundamental to a feasible fee for service model.
- The project already works closely with and alongside the TOs of the lands that they are working and living on.
- Cultural consultations provide an avenue for stakeholders to meet with and engage in meaningful dialogue with Aboriginal Elders about planned or existing projects, developments or initiatives that occur on their lands.
- Duplication of having multiple fee-for-service models is a risk for the future feasibility of this model and for services already provided by TO's.



What we discovered: Viability

Is there a sustainable business model?

Capacity and willingness of organisations to pay

Mixed views exist within the mainstream family violence sector around the capacity for organisations to pay for cultural safety services. This is not surprising given the varied nature of organisations that deliver family violence services. Many considerations were provided during the workshops in determining the capacity and willingness of mainstream organisation to pay for cultural safety services:

- Size of the organisation.
- Geographic location – organisations in metropolitan Melbourne are more able and willing to pay for such a service compared to regional and rural service providers.
- Variable acknowledgement that Aboriginal knowledge and expertise has a value, and that value should be recognised and adequately compensated.
- Recognition that family violence service providers operate on finite resources. A fee for service model may result in service provider prioritising other training and capability uplift initiatives that do not require the organisation to pay for a service.
- If it became fee-for-service it may not be prioritised because of the existing demands of accreditation requirements for DHHS funded programs in FV, children & families, AOD, MH or Homelessness.
- Transitioning the project to a fee for service model too quickly will mean mainstream organisations are not able to prepare and plan for this change and may negatively impact mainstream organisations engagement in the program.

Monitoring and compliance framework

- CSAs and ACCOs mentioned that one of the biggest barriers to a viable fee for service model was the current mechanisms in place to monitor cultural safety and its compliance in the family violence sector.
- Cultural Safety standards need to be enforceable with measurable components of service agreements. While cultural safety is embedded in the service agreement, it is currently "non-assessable criteria".
- Organisations that receive funding should be more accountable to ensure that they are meeting their obligations to provide culturally safe environments for both service users and staff.
- Regular reporting on progress was also viewed as critical.
- There is no cultural lens applied to regulation.
- Adding an accreditation, standards and compliance element, would encourage broader level engagement and elevate & embed cultural safety on a systemic level.
- All assessment criteria, auditing and monitoring on organisational cultural safety should be Aboriginal developed and led.

Overall Findings

01

Supporting self-determination: prioritising funding to ACCOS

There is a clear view this is a transformational priority project. A long-term commitment to funding from government was considered critical to the success of the project and demonstrates the commitment to Aboriginal self-determination.

02

Government funding to support project sustainability

The proposal to transition the service to a fee for service model places the responsibility on ACCOs for project longevity and sustainability. The transition may have the unintended consequence of shifting the responsibility of providing culturally safe services and practices on to ACCOs, instead of mainstream family violence organisations.

03

No appetite from ACCOs to transition

The ACCO sector do not want the project to transition to a fee for service. If this is to occur the ACCOs will not tender for and deliver the project.

04

Creating cultural safety through accountability

A current gap and challenge of the project is that mainstream family violence organisations are not currently held accountable for providing culturally safe services. There is need for improved accountability for all Government funded organisations to provide services that are culturally safe.

05

The role of accreditation and Aboriginal- led evaluation

Cultural safety needs to be regulated through compliance mechanisms. There is a desire for mainstream organisations to be accredited and a set of standard to be embedded into funding and service agreements. There is also a need for evaluation and monitoring on organisational cultural safety, this should be Aboriginal-led and have clearly defined measurable outcomes and indicators.

06

A fee for service model is against the core values and principles of ACCOs

A fee for service model could risk commercialising the project and threaten the integrity of the service provided by ACCOs.

Overall Findings

07

Supporting Aboriginal employees and Cultural Safety Advisors

The cultural load carried by CSA's and Aboriginal employees at mainstream organisations needs to be acknowledged. If staff health and wellbeing is not managed appropriately a burden can be carried into the workplace, increasing susceptibility to stress, anger and burnout.

08

Long standing change requires a long-term approach

Strengthening cultural safety requires systemic implementation. Through using a systems approach, organisation and their employees can unpack today's problems by thinking about the issues that led to them to begin with. It is important not to see issues around cultural safety in isolation of the systemic roots that has led to unsafe cultural practices.

09

Cultural safety training needs to be ongoing and tailored

One-off cultural safety training is not enough, it requires ongoing learning to both create a culturally competent workforce and increase cultural awareness. Organisations want tailored training packages that are specific to their local context.

10

Genuine and meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners

Partnership with Traditional Owners is vital to the success of the project. Mainstream organisations should have active and ongoing partnerships with the local Traditional Owners. Local Aboriginal Elders should be part of the oversight and governance of the project.

11

Cultural safety needs executive leadership

There is need for executive level buy-in for long lasting change, this includes: whole of organisation transformation, policy change and system reform. Executives need to empower employees to make cultural safety a priority.

12

Mainstream organisations have competing priorities and finite resources

Mainstream organisations highly respect the value of the service that they are receiving and would pay for the service if they could. Organisations felt there too many competing priorities and not enough resourcing and funding.

Next Steps

Further understand and address the barriers to a fee for service model for ACCOs and mainstream organisations.

- Further work is required with ACCOs to understand if a fee for service model would be viable if identified barriers were addressed and appropriate risk mitigation strategies were implemented.
- Beyond a solution of providing ongoing funding for the project OR additional funding to mainstream organisations to pay for it; the barrier of finite resourcing and mainstream organisations capacity to pay ACCOs for the project could benefit from further exploration.

Strengthen cultural safety accountability and accreditation levers in DHHS service agreements.

- There is no strong “carrot or stick” for mainstream organisations to actively engage with the project.
- Before a transition to a fee-for-service model, measurable indicators to drive accountability should be co-designed and incorporated into service agreements.
- A formal accreditation process that embeds the Cultural Safety Standards and Objectives sets the compulsory minimum standards to regulate mainstream family violence organisations should be further explored.

Explore opportunities for an Aboriginal-led independent entity to be a central oversight mechanism for the project.

- A review of the oversight and regulation of the project should be undertaken.
- A clearly defined oversight mechanism or statutory authority may provide the ACCO sector with greater confidence in the integrity of a fee for service model.
- Further work is required with Aboriginal organisations, to explore how a cultural safety watchdog would interact with existing oversight functions.



Conclusion

- A transition to a fee for service model for the Strengthening Cultural Safety project is not viable at this point in time.
- There is no clear desirability for a fee for service model from ACCOs or mainstream family violence organisations.
- A transition to a fee for service model threatens the high impact work achieved by the project and risks successful implementation of recommendation 148 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.
- There are opportunities to further strengthen the success of the existing model and broaden the scope to other sectors, beyond family violence, to drive cultural safety across the service system and advance Aboriginal self-determination and systems transformation.