



# **NOONGAR MIA MIA**

**NOONGAR CULTURAL  
FRAMEWORK AND  
NOONGAR HOUSING FIRST  
PRINCIPLES**



# FOREWORD

Noongar Mia Mia believes that everyone has a right to housing, acknowledges that Aboriginal people experience very high homelessness rates, and particularly high rates of rough sleeping across major cities, regional and remote areas. Noongar Mia Mia is keen to make a difference by reducing Aboriginal homelessness and make respectful and lasting relationships with Noongar people, mainstream and NGO housing and support services.

The Noongar Cultural Framework has been developed to promote the cultural competency of the housing sector and to support the implementation of Noongar Housing First Principles in the southwest of Western Australia.

Noongar Mia Mia is confident that these documents truly reflect a process which “encompasses the cultural knowledge, understanding and experiences that are associated with a commitment to Noongar (Aboriginal) ways of thinking, working, and reflecting, incorporating specific and implicit cultural values, beliefs and priorities from which Noongar (Aboriginal) standards are derived, validated and practiced. These standards will and can vary according to the diverse range of cultural values beliefs and priorities from within local settings or specific contexts”.

Implementing this Framework and Noongar Housing First Principles will involve the whole community. I would encourage all housing providers to take this opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding, and to increase their confidence in working respectfully and effectively with Noongar people, Aboriginal people and communities.

DOYNTJ DOYNTJ KOORLINY – going along together, we can lay the foundation for reducing Aboriginal homelessness, improve Aboriginal health and ensure the well-being of all Noongar and Aboriginal people boordawan – future.

Noongar Mia Mia Chairperson  
Gordon Cole

# GLOSSARY

Noongar	English	Noongar	English
<b>Noongar</b>	Person belonging to the southwest of Western Australia, belonging to the Noongar Nation	<b>Gariwark</b>	Throwing sand in the water
<b>Mia Mia</b>	Dwelling	<b>Gnaaly</b>	Sweat from your armpits
<b>Kura</b>	Long ago, in the past	<b>Beeliar</b>	River
<b>Warra wirrin</b>	Bad spirits	<b>Waakle, Wargal, Wargle</b>	Noongar Rainbow Serpent
<b>Doyntj-Doyntj Koorliny</b>	Going along together	<b>Boorungurr</b>	Totem
<b>Boordawan</b>	Soon or in the future	<b>Ballardong</b>	Noongar language group
<b>Burdiya</b>	Boss, leader	<b>Lore</b>	Noongar cultural values and governance
<b>Koorlongka, Kurrlonggur</b>	Children / young people	<b>Bidi</b>	Path, track
<b>Boodjar</b>	Land or country	<b>Wirrinburt (spiritual homelessness)</b>	Not connected to either moort, boodjar or kaardijin, or all of them
<b>Moort</b>	Family	<b>Koorndarn</b>	Respect
<b>Kaardijin</b>	Knowledge, cultural knowledge	<b>Moortung</b>	Relations with families
<b>Whadjuk</b>	Noongar language group	<b>Wirrin</b>	Spirit / soul
<b>Koorliny</b>	Moving along	<b>Moorditj</b>	Solid / strong
<b>Nyittiny</b>	Beginning of time, cold times	<b>Kwop Daa</b>	Good talk
<b>Wanjoo</b>	Welcome	<b>Karnya</b>	Shame
<b>Nguny</b>	Me / I	<b>Koort</b>	Heart
<b>Noonook</b>	You, us	<b>Yeye</b>	Today
<b>Ngulluk</b>	Us	<b>Mila</b>	Tomorrow
<b>Koorah, Nitja, Boordawan</b>	Past, present, future		

Noongar language has been identified as a single language consisting of 14 different dialects, however, being an oral language means there are several ways to spell and pronounce Noongar (Nyoongar, Nyungar, Nyoongah, Nyugah, Nyungah, Yungar and Noonga) and other words spoken across the dialects.



## **SMOKING CEREMONY**

Noongar people have been conducting smoking ceremonies since kura – a long time ago. It is also a custom among many Aboriginal Australians. Smouldering eucalyptus leaves from the gum tree, balga grass and other native plants produce smoke and acknowledge the ancestors and pay respect to the land, waters and sea of country. The smoke is believed to have healing and cleansing properties and has the ability to ward off warra wirrin – bad spirits.

## **WELCOME TO COUNTRY**

Welcome to Country is a ceremony that formally welcomes people to the land. It is an important cultural protocol dating back to the NYITTINY – the cold times and it is deeply respected by Noongar people. A Welcome to Country is performed by a Noongar man or woman who has traditional local links to a particular place, area or region. In Perth, a Welcome to Country should be performed by a Whadjuk Noongar Elder.

## **SAND CEREMONY**

The Whadjuk Noongar say that when you are around the Beelias and other waterways, you must communicate with the Waakle/Wargle (Noongar Rainbow Serpent) before undertaking activities in the water. For example, don't swim where it's murky - that's when the Waakle is having a feed. Throw sand in to let the Waakle know the people of the land were there.

## **ABORIGINAL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Noongar Cultural Framework and Noongar Housing First Principles encompasses the cultural knowledge, understanding and experiences that are associated with a commitment to Noongar ways of thinking, working, and reflecting, incorporating specific and implicit cultural values, beliefs and priorities from which these Noongar cultural connections are derived, validated and practiced.

## **NOONGAR MIA MIA**

Noongar Mia Mia Pty Ltd (NMM) is an Aboriginal owned and managed housing company located in Perth offering a unique cultural approach to tenancy and property management for Indigenous Organisations, all levels of government and private sector, whilst simultaneously providing quality social and affordable rental accommodation exclusively for Indigenous people and their families.

We strive to provide our tenants with a quality housing service at an affordable rental price and we initiate cultural tenancy support programs to help tenants to manage their tenancy obligations, look after the properties and stay in their home. To deliver our strategic priorities, NMM develops and builds on business partnerships with Aboriginal Trusts, Indigenous corporations, community housing providers and various government agencies as well as the private housing sector.

NMM 2021 financial year organizational structure comprises of a Board of Directors, Managing Director, Operations Manager and Housing Project Officer. NMMs Financial Managements Team includes accountants based in Perth and Auditor Simon Foley.

Noongar Mia Mia  
2 Sussex Street  
MAYLANDSWA 6051  
Telephone:08-92718711  
1800 789 562  
E: [info@noongarmiamia.com.au](mailto:info@noongarmiamia.com.au)  
<https://noongarmiamia.com.au/>

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When reproducing or sourcing this work in whole or part for study or training purposes, it is important and respectful to understand that this paper cannot be read in isolation and should be read alongside the Noongar Cultural Framework for enhanced understanding. The Noongar Housing First Principles are underpinned by the Noongar Cultural Framework.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the Noongar people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of the southwest of Western Australia and acknowledge our Noongar Elders past, present and future.

We acknowledge our Noongar Elders who are the kaartdijin - knowledge holders, teachers and burdiya's - bosses. We acknowledge Noongar koorlongka - young people who are the hope for a brighter future and who will be future leaders.

Noongar Mia Mia (NMM) acknowledges that we work and live on the boodjar - land of the Whadjuck Noongar people.

We pay our respect to the land that provide for us. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Noongar ancestors that kura koorliny - long time ago - walked and cared for the boodjar since the Nyittiny - beginning of time.

We acknowledge and say Wanjoo - welcome to all Aboriginal people who have come from their own boodjar - Country and who have now come to call Noongar boodjar - home.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to all Australians gone before us and recognise their contribution to Noongar lands - Nguny boodjar, noonook boodjar, ngulluk boodjar - my land, your land our land.

We would like to thank all contributors to the development of the Noongar Cultural Framework and Noongar First Housing Principles. Noongar Mia Mia (NMM) thank our stakeholders for supporting this process and for their contributions.

NMM extends the use of the Noongar Cultural Framework and Noongar Housing First Principles to all Aboriginal people living on Noongar boodjar.

# NOONGAR

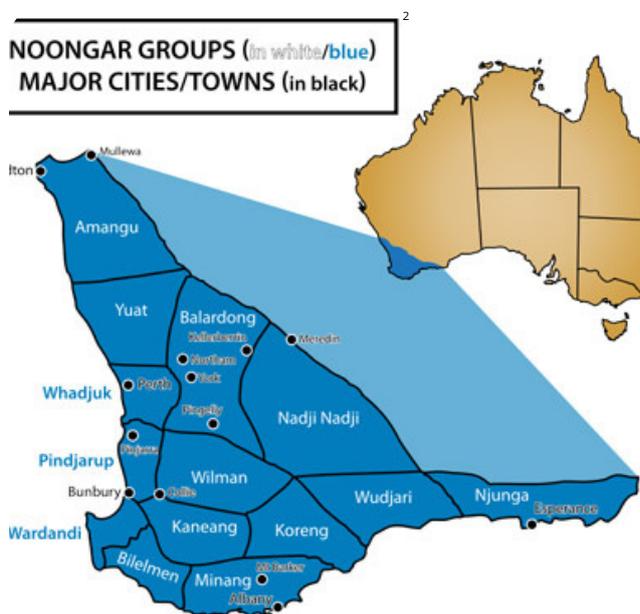
Noongar people are the traditional owners of the south-west of Western Australia and have been for over 60,000 years. Noongar have a deep knowledge and respect for country, which has been passed down by Elders.

Noongar boodja (country) extends from north of Jurien Bay, inland to north of Moora and down to the southern coast between Bremer Bay and east of Esperance. It is defined by 14 different areas with varied geography and 3 dialectal groups.

Noongar people have a profound physical and spiritual connection to country. It relates to Noongar beliefs and customs regarding creation, life and death, and spirits of the earth. Spiritual connection to country guides the way Noongar understand, navigate and use the land. It also influences cultural practices.<sup>1</sup>

Aboriginal cultures are the oldest, continuous living cultures in the world.

The Noongar Nation is the largest cultural bloc in Australia.



<sup>1</sup> Noongar History ([www.wa.gov.au](http://www.wa.gov.au))

<sup>2</sup> Whadjuk Trail Network



## SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The Noongar Housing First Principles have been developed to help Noongar Mia Mia and other housing providers and support service providers to create culturally safe environments and housing & support services for Noongar people experiencing homelessness, their families and communities. The Housing First Principles for Australia (HFPA) was used to guide the Noongar Housing First Principles (NHFP).

NHFP are grounded in the concept of DOYNTJ-DOYNTJ KOORLINY - Going Along Together - to achieve greater collective impact through meaningful partnerships and strong relationships throughout the journey from homelessness to secure, stable and culturally safe housing. Working with Noongar people requires an understanding of the importance of culture being embedded into all programs and service delivery. We reiterate that for Housing First interventions to be successful, all service providers must establish culturally safe and secure practices to recognise and respect Noongar culture as a source of great strength to the Noongar people and design & deliver services that meet the needs of “the Noongar community”,<sup>3</sup> and the expectations and rights of individuals, families and communities.



<sup>3</sup> Note: The Noongar Housing First Service is supported by an agreed set of Noongar Mia Mia Housing Standards.

In recognising the cultural rights of Noongar people, Noongar Mia Mia uses the Noongar Housing First Principles to guide engagement with Noongar and other Aboriginal people living on Noongar boodjar (land). Through its commitment to the NHFP, Noongar Mia Mia aims to:

- recognise and respect Noongar cultural rights and cultural values
- meaningfully engage with Noongar people, their Noongar cultural connections and associated rights to boodjar, moort and kaartdijin
- provide support and housing that meets the needs of Noongar families through the Noongar Cultural Framework and NHFP developed by Noongar Mia Mia.

At the heart of the SouthWest Native Title Settlement is an acknowledgment and honouring of the Noongar people as the traditional owners of this land. The Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boordahwan) (Past, Present and Future) Recognition Bill recognises:

**“The living cultural, spiritual, familial and social relationship that the Noongar people have with the Noongar lands, and the significant and unique contribution that the Noongar people have made, are making, and will continue to make, to the heritage, cultural identity, community and economy of the State”.**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Noongar Kaartdijin - Southwest Land and Sea Council

# NOONGAR CULTURAL FRAMEWORK PART ONE

## SAND CEREMONY

The Whadjuk Noongar say that when you are around the Beeliar and other waterways, you must communicate with the Waakle/Wargle (Noongar Rainbow Serpent) before undertaking activities in the water. For example, don't swim where it's murky - that's when the Waakle is having a feed. Throw sand in to let the Waakle know the people of the land were there. Some Noongar say people can get sick or drown if they didn't follow the protocol.

"Would have to throw sand in before swimming - they called it 'gariwark' or 'go tell family' to let the Waakle know who they were. It would protect them and keep them safe."

## NOONGAR KAARTDIJIN

Get the gnaaly or sweat from your armpits and rub your hands together, then pick up some wet sand and then throw it in the water. The sand has your scent so when the Waakle smells this he knows who you are when you are near the water. This ceremony is symbolic of the Waakle giving you protection and keep you safe and in return you are acknowledging<sup>4</sup> that you will do no harm to the water and will care for it.

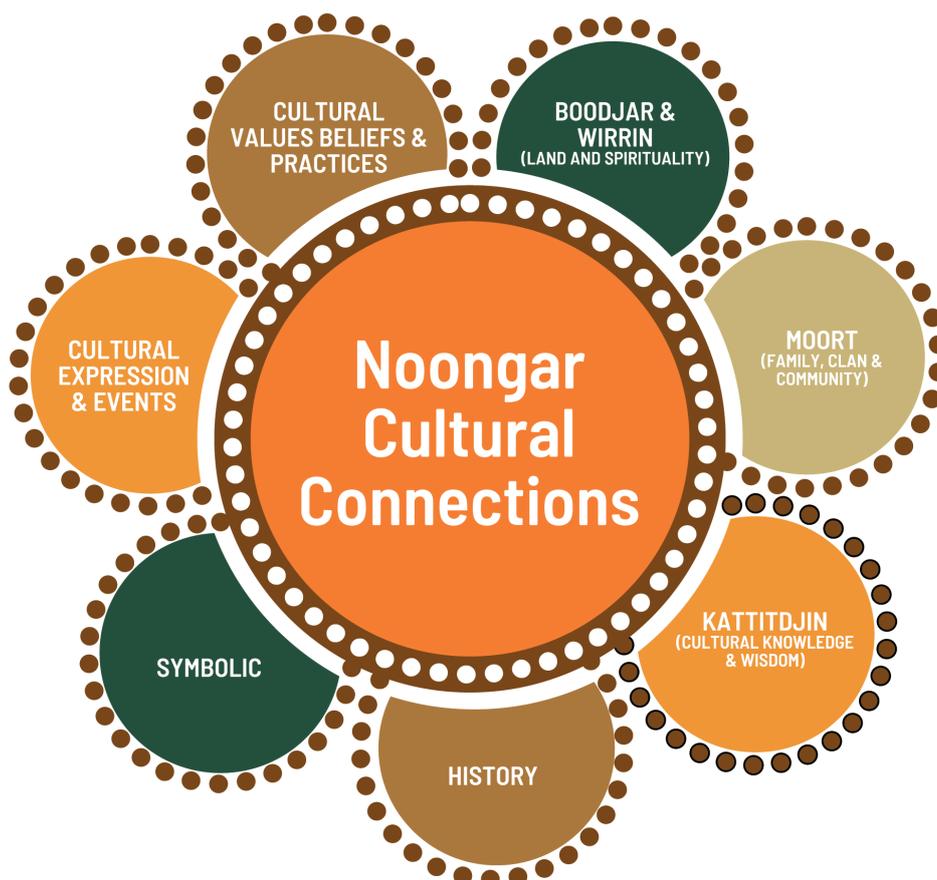


<sup>5</sup> Doolan Leisha Eatts

# INTRODUCTION

## NOONGAR CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

For Noongar people, culture is the foundation upon which everything else is built, underpinning all aspects of life including connections to boodjar (land or country), moort (family and community) and kaartdijin (cultural knowledge and wisdom) through the expression of traditional and contemporary forms of cultural expression such as cultural practices, Noongar language, smoking ceremonies, cultural events, storytelling, dance, music and art. These cultural values and cultural connections are shown within the following diagram:



Important cultural values common to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities include survival and protection of cultures, languages and identities

# LORE

Noongar lore has been practised by Noongar people since the beginning of time.



## THE CREATION TIME

Artwork by Noongar artist Reuben Ugle, Ballardong.

The Wargle, Noongar Rainbow Serpent and the Bennell Boorungurr (Koya - totem)

Lore determines the cultural values of the Noongar nation and connects the people to boodjar, moort and kaartdijin (land, family and cultural knowledge). Like all Aboriginal cultures, Noongar people pass cultural knowledge down through stories (Dreaming), art, song and dance.

Noongar lore is linked to kinship and mutual obligation, sharing and reciprocity. Therefore, all Noongar people are connected to a home, are connected to others through the Noongar kinship system and have the right to access kaartdijin (cultural knowledge).

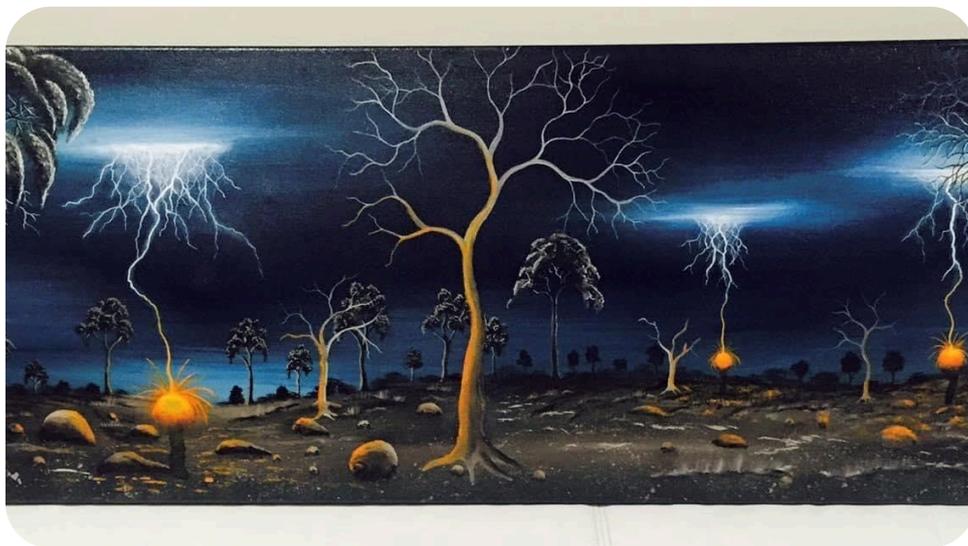
# BOODJAR

Southwest of Western Australia (Noongar Land)

Noongar people have lived in the Southwest of Western Australia since time immemorial. From Whadjuk boodjar - Perth region, all the way down to Minang boodjar – Albany region (land or country), there is archaeological evidence that confirms that the Noongar people have lived on the boodjar since the Nyittingy – the beginning of time (some caves at Devil's Lair in the hills near Margaret River showing human habitation from 47,000 years ago).

The Noongar people share an ancient body of lore/law and customs which prescribes rights and obligations in relation to all aspects of the society and landscape.

Strong spiritual beliefs govern Noongar worldviews, mythical creatures, stories and obligations are associated with many geographical features of the landscape.



MY THREE SONS

Artwork by Noongar artist Reuben Ugle, Ballardong Noongar.

Connectlon to moort and boodja. The three suns represent his three kurlonggur (children)

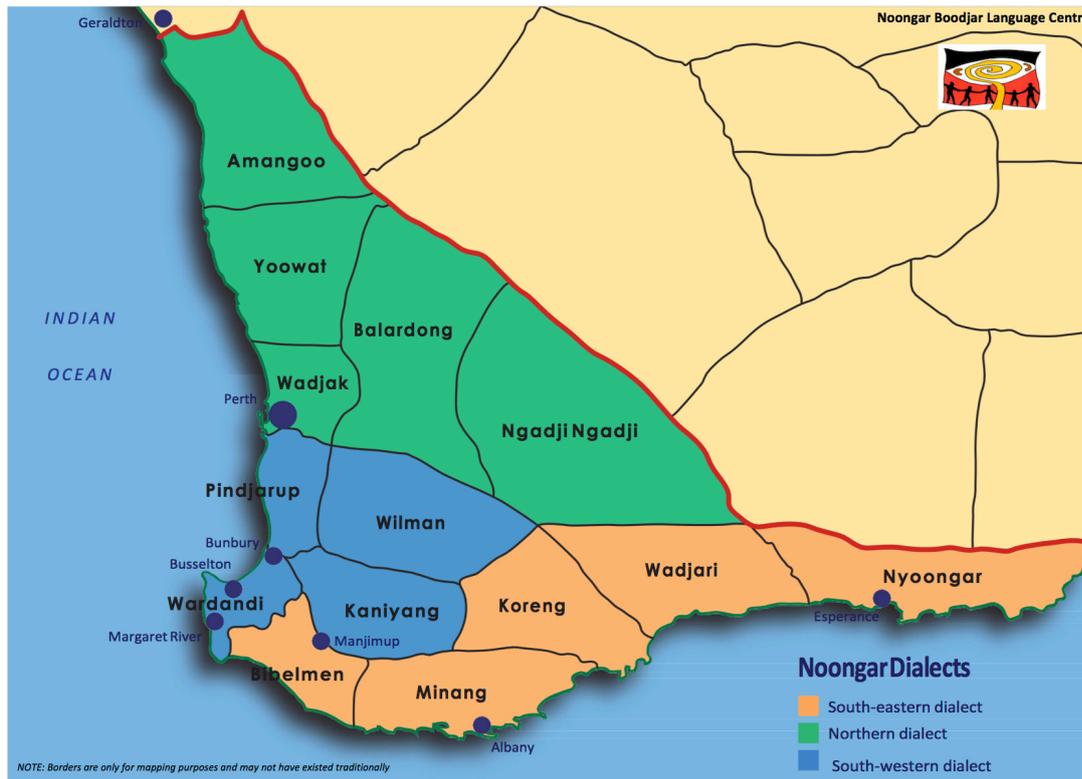
Noongar people have a deep spiritual connection with their boodja which is central to their spiritual identity. This connection remains despite many Noongar people no longer living on their land. Noongar people describe the land as sustaining and comforting, and being intrinsic to their health, relationships, culture and identity.

The Noongar people are made up of fourteen language groups, each correlating with different geographic areas and ecological distinctions. The Noongar language groups are:

## NOONGAR LANGUAGE GROUPS



# NOONGAR LANGUAGE MAPS



## SMOKING CEREMONY

Noongar people have been conducting smoking ceremonies since kura – a long time ago. It is also a custom among many Aboriginal Australians.

Smouldering eucalyptus leaves from the gum tree, balga grass and other native plants produce smoke and acknowledge the ancestors and pay respect to the land, waters and sea of country.

The smoke has healing and cleansing properties and has the ability to ward off warra wirrin – bad spirits.



# SPIRITUALITY

Noongar spirituality lies in the belief of a cultural landscape and the connection between the human and spiritual realms (SWALSC 2019). Spirituality is expressed through many avenues such as paintings, storytelling, music and dance. These avenues offer a way of connecting through nature, paying respect to ancestral creators, and showing the close relationship the Noongar people have with the spiritual beings associated with the land. The Noongar people's spiritual connection relates to their beliefs and customs of creation, life, death and spirits of the earth. This spiritual connection not only guides the way of understanding, navigating and how to use the land but also influences cultural practices.



# CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

The Noongar people's cultural connection to boodjar is thousands of years old and connects everything across the vast landscape with meaning and purpose. Connection to country is the Noongar people's spiritual and physical care for the environment and for their places of significance. It is the belief that everything is connected, the past, the present, the people, the land, the sea and all of its plants and animals; it is holistic and all-encompassing.

A Noongar person's boodja links them to their moort (family) and their bidis (paths). Noongar people may feel deeply connected to certain boodjar because it's where their roots are and their family has historically lived. To leave it involuntarily would be a form of spiritual homelessness.

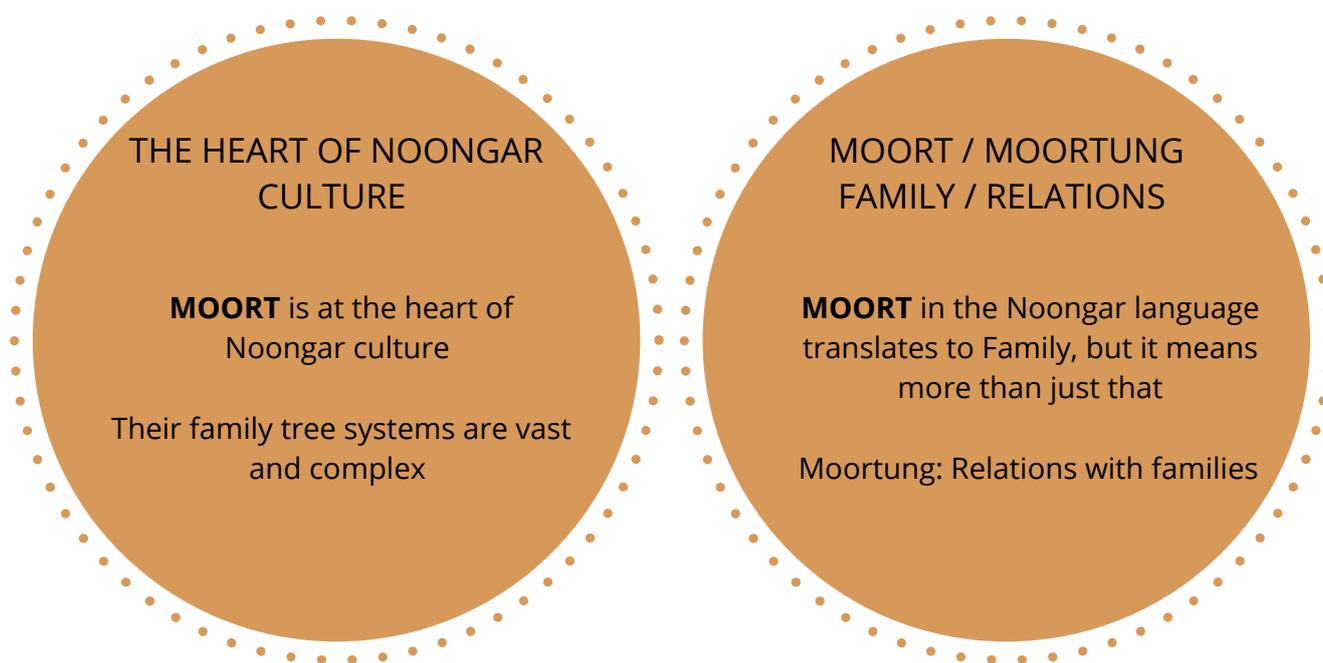
<sup>6</sup> Victorian Public Sector Commission

# MOORT

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

Noongar people are connected to their boodjar through their moort. Noongar stories (kaartdijin – cultural knowledge) about their boodjar are passed down from generation to generation. Connection to boodjar, moort and kaartdijin is symbolic of strengthening Noongar lore, keeping the people and their personal wirrin “strong”, creating healthy families and ensuring cultural continuity.

Noongar people acknowledge that families are the greatest supports for each other. Knowing your family and where you come from forms an essential part of one’s identity.



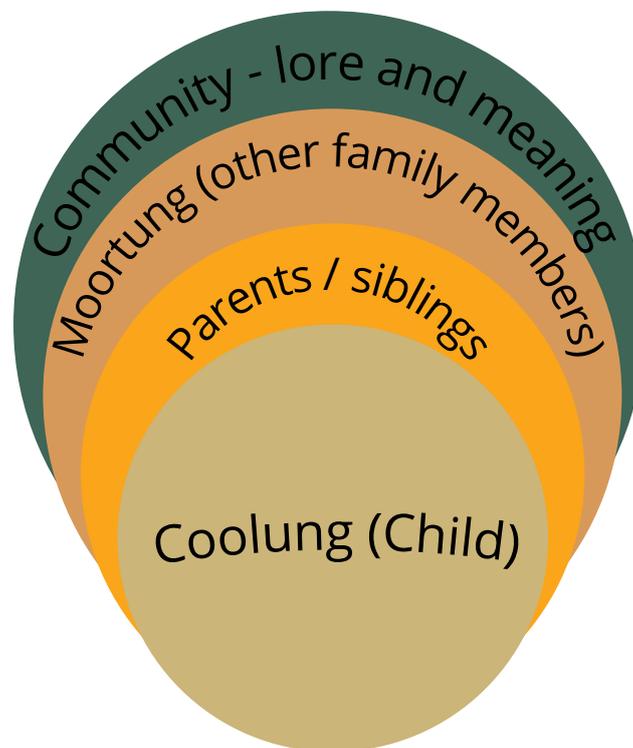
"I can tell you without a doubt that our people live in over-crowded conditions because it goes against Aboriginal culture to turn away your family. What we have, we share. That is our cultural norm."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Dan Laws, Aboriginal Homelessness Network Coordinator, Ngwala Willumbong Ltd Parity – Vol 129-08pdf

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTING

The parenting role places great importance on letting the child know who they are in relation to their family, their kin, their people, their environment and the living spirits of their ancestors and land. These relationships help to define a child's identity by defining how they are connected to everything in life.

Noongar families are different from the Western 'nuclear family'. Although they tend to be large, Noongar families are close-knit and a Noongar person might have more than one mother and father, and more brothers and sisters than just biological siblings. They may refer to non-biological brothers and sisters as "cousin brother" and "cousin sister". One of the key aspects of moort or family relationships is Koorndarn (respect) for kin, obligations, what we owe to each other, reciprocity.



Noongar kids understand that these are the people who are important in their life, who will support them, and on whom they can rely; they are family. These relationships are maintained through involvement in community. Sharing is a strongly promoted value, and there is a strong obligation to share if others are in need. The intrinsic value of family, and one's obligations to the family and community, are more important than material gain.



Websdale, Hansen and Pickett Noongar moort representing four generations  
Photo: Courtesy of Tina Pickett

## **KAARTDIJIN**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE**

The Noongar people refer to kaartdijin as knowledge; or more specifically, cultural knowledge.

"Aboriginal cultural knowledge can be defined as: ... accumulated knowledge which encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the sustainable use of natural resources, and relationships between people, which are reflected in language, narratives, social organisation, values, beliefs, and cultural laws and customs..."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Andrews G, Daylight C, Hunt J. et al 2006, Aboriginal cultural heritage landscape mapping of coastal NSW, prepared for the Comprehensive Coastal Assessment by the NSW Department of Natural Resources, Sydney, NSW

Noongar cultural knowledge connects the people to the boodjar, moort and everything in the landscape. As this knowledge is passed on through the oral tradition, Noongar people begin to understand the importance and significance of their ancestor's country through the stories they are told, particularly by their moort. They learn about the significance of sites and the stories associated with them, and so from a very early age they understand the lore of the land, everything that it embodies and the importance of preserving the relationship to the land.

Noongar stories tell us of these cultural places and the landscapes that 'house' these stories. Protection of these places and landscapes is key to the long-term survival of these stories. It is important to acknowledge that different family or clan groups will have specific details and aspects or areas of cultural knowledge about a place, and it may be an individual family member or clan group that hold and maintain this element of cultural knowledge. It is the right of the cultural knowledge holder to share some of the general features or elements about the place/landscape. It is also unlikely that the complete story is held by one family or clan group; each group can hold parts of the story.

Noongar people often defer to particular individuals or family groups as being the knowledge-holders of particular sets of cultural knowledge about specific places or the environment. Where this knowledge cannot be passed on to the next generation, it may be lost.

### **NOONGAR ELDERS**

Noongar Elders pass on knowledge about Noongar lore and culture. Noongar people seek wisdom from their Elders. Noongar Elders transmit kaartdijin through many generations, which in turn is practiced through lore.



Photo of Muriel Bowie, credit: Kathryn Bowie, with permission by Muriel Bowie

## RESPECT FOR ELDERS

From a very young age, children are told about their relationships and links to others and are taught to show respect to their Elders. In Noongar communities, Elders play a vital leadership role.<sup>9</sup> An Elder is an identified and respected man or woman within the community who has the trust, knowledge and understanding of their culture and permission to speak about it.

They are often recognised as being able to provide advice, offer support and share wisdom in a confidential way with other members of the community, particularly younger members.

Some Elders are referred to as Aunty or Uncle, but you should only use these titles when given permission to do so - simply asking is the best way to find out if you can do so or not.

## CULTURAL IDENTITY

Unwritten knowledge, beliefs, rules and customs have been passed from generation to generation and are central to Noongar identity and practice. Cultural identity is important for people's sense of self and how they relate to others. A strong cultural identity can contribute to people's overall wellbeing. Just as importantly, Noongar people maintain their cultural identity through boodjar, moort and kaartdijin.



Josh Moody, Noongar - Leticia Eades, Noongar – Mathew Foley, Noongar Nyikina -Michael Hansen, Yuat/Whadjuk Noongar, Leonie Pickett

<sup>9</sup> Aboriginal Culture and History - Aboriginal Cultural Capability Toolkit - VPSC

## WIRPIN

Wirrin is your spirit or your soul and relates both to spirituality/religion and wellbeing. It encompasses your sense of identity and culture, individual and cultural strength and pride, social and emotional wellbeing, and spirituality.



Moorditj cultural identity and cultural pride equals a “strong wirrin”

## KOORNDARN

Respect is key to developing trust and relationships. Noongar people use the word Koorndarn to ensure that people are practising cultural norms of respect. For instance, a Noongar person might respond to a situation where they feel disrespected and say “You need to have some koorndarn” or to tell you off “You have got no koorndarn” or “where is your koorndarn” (in other words, “where is your respect”).



Being respected is a basic human right. This concept refers to the ability to value and honour another person, both in his or her words and actions, even if we do not approve of, understand, or share everything he or she does. Respect involves accepting the other person, as a person, rather than trying to change them. Respecting another person involves not judging them negatively by their attitudes, behaviours or thoughts, or expecting them to be someone they are not.

## KWOP DAA

Historically, Noongar people's interaction with service providers has been filled with false promises and no follow-through; consultation for consultation's sake, which seems to lead nowhere; opinions solicited and then ignored. This has led understandably to mistrust of mainstream people and systems. Engaging in kwop daa (good talk) means speaking openly and honestly and listening to people, involving them, being honest and reliable, and not making promises you can't keep.

## KAARNYA

A sense of feeling shame, shyness, humiliation or embarrassment. Service providers must take care not to embarrass a person by making them feel kaarnya (shame), or to do or say something that makes them feel like they have no wirrin (spirit), causing them to feel ashamed, shy, humiliated or embarrassed. Instead, service providers should take a stance that nothing is too hard – no blame, and no shame! – and instead focus on building a relationship of respect, rapport, trust, and collaboration.



"Indigenous people report experiences of vulnerability, humiliation and shame in dealings with public housing around issues such as rent arrears, and previous debts and difficulties in managing their housing"

## KOORT

Literally, "heart"; by extension, love, kindness, compassion, protecting others, caring, sharing, kindness and concern, motherly love, obligations to one other.

# NOONGAR HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES PART TWO

## WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Welcome to Country is a ceremony that formally welcomes people to the land. It is an important cultural protocol dating back to the Nyittingy – the cold times and it is deeply respected by Noongar people. A Welcome to Country is performed by a Noongar man or woman who has traditional local links to a particular place, area or region.

The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council state: "The act of getting a representative who has traditional local links is an acknowledgement of respect for traditional owners. It is respect for people, respect for rights and a respect for country. The land, waterways and cultural significant sites are still very important to Noongar people. It is an acknowledgement of the past and provides a safe passage for visitors and a mark of respect."

It is appropriate to incorporate a Welcome to Country into major events such as conferences, forums, commemorations, festivals and launches. It is customary for the Welcome to be performed at the beginning of the event." Some of the common characteristics for a Welcome to Country might include: Noongar language, dance, music, clapping sticks, didgeridoo, dancers in traditional dress, young grandchildren.

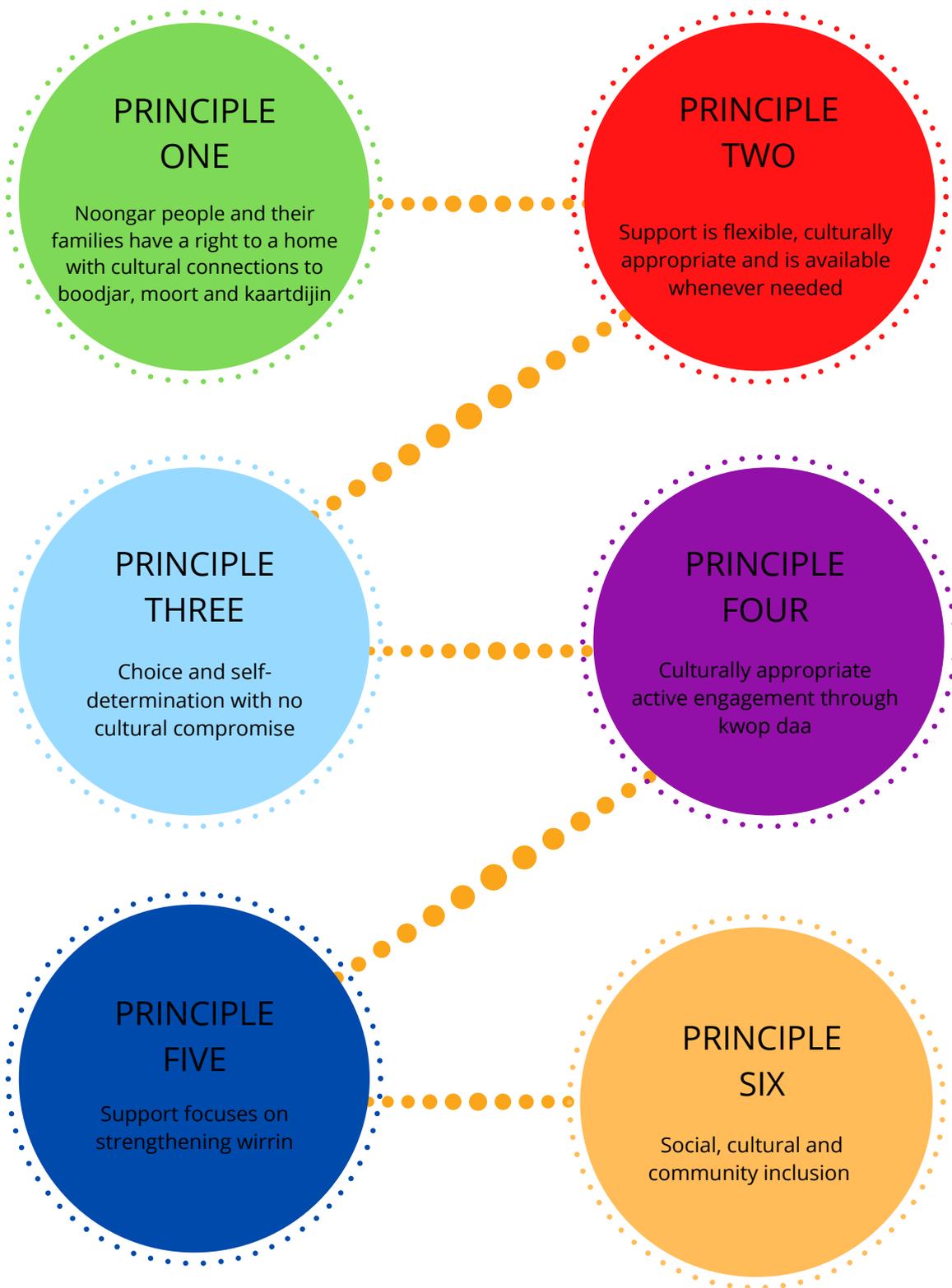
KURA  
YEYE  
MILA  
BOORDAWAN



# NOONGAR HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES

KAYYAGOORL

From the past, present, tomorrow, future and forever



## PRINCIPLE ONE

Noongar people and their families have a right to a home with cultural connections to boodjar, moort and kaartdijin

### BOODJAR – MOORT- KAARTDIJIN

Noongar people have immediate access to a permanent, self-contained home which meets their cultural and social needs.

### LOCATION

Noongar people have a right to decide on location based on their cultural and spiritual connection to boodja, moort and kaartdijin.

The location of homes must also take into account family and cultural dynamics that may impinge on Noongar families being housed in the same vicinity.

### SUITABILITY

Location, affordability, access to services and quality of property meets the specific needs of the Noongar family being housed. Considerations include safety and connection to kinship/moort community (and for Noongar people with physical disability, maximising their capacity to live independently without being separated from kin.)

Where possible, negotiate with the family to make it possible to maintain the property during their absence without undue financial stress to the family.

A home may not just be for a single person. Where other family members/kin also live in a home, they may be added to the tenancy so all the remaining family members stay housed if the lead tenant passes away or is absent.



## PRINCIPLE TWO

Support is flexible, culturally appropriate and is available whenever it is needed

### MOORT - KOORT

Continuity - Support does not have a fixed end date; people can return to or continue support outside of family for as long as needed.

Collective Well-being - Noongar families are supported holistically by their moort. The cycle of support is never ending. Caseworkers will connect them to their significant family and appropriate services for ongoing support, if the person chooses to be supported in this manner, making use of the strengths of kin as a support network

Holistic - The holistic needs of Noongar people (physical, cultural and spiritual) are supported. Support is directed by the people receiving the support, and is available across a wide variety of domains being sensitive to people's family context and cultural identity.

The person is informed of the services (both Aboriginal-led and mainstream) available to them and are given choices.

Accessibility - Noongar people are able to quickly re-engage with support without needing to undergo a new assessment or intake process.

Relationship - Support is built from an authentic relationship from the koort (heart), and it is practical, flexible, creative, respectful, compassionate and kind - responding to each unique set of circumstances as required.

Continuity - The offer of support is made not only to the primary person, but to all people living under one roof. Even if the primary person is incarcerated or leaves the home, or passes away, or if a tenancy fails, the support services will continue. The support is available to people in their new living situations including a return to homelessness or to an institutional setting where support will actively assist people secure new homes.



## PRINCIPLE THREE

### Choice and self-determination with no cultural compromise

#### BOODJAR - MOORT – WIRRIN - KOORNDARN

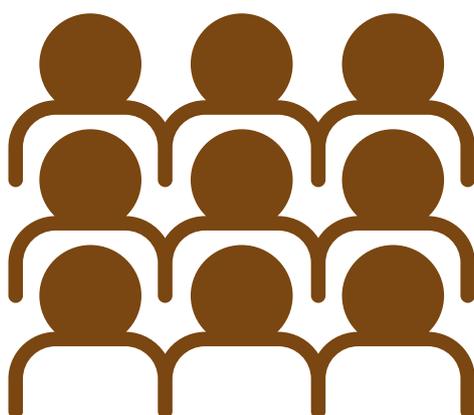
Noongar people define for themselves what makes a place a home which may include connection to particular moort, particular land or to particular families. Noongar people are given a choice of where they live and the type of housing in which they want to live according to their needs and family makeup.

Noongar people have a right to choose support that accommodate their needs which may include their extended family members.

Household – People are able to choose with whom they live, who they invite into their own home and whether visitors are able to stay, as long as they abide by the Noongar Elder Housing Standards.

Person-centred – Support acknowledges that the best way to understand and respond to the needs of Noongar people, is to listen to their views and questions, so that any planning is directly responsive to their particular cultural values, concerns and dreams. This approach respects each individual and that person's strengths rather than focusing negatively on each person's limitations.

Harm Reduction - While acknowledge the impact of alcohol and substance use on people, culture and communities, people will not be shamed or excluded from housing and support because of their use.



## PRINCIPLE FOUR

Culturally appropriate active engagement through kwop daa

### KOORT – KOORNDARN – KAARNYA – KWOP DAA

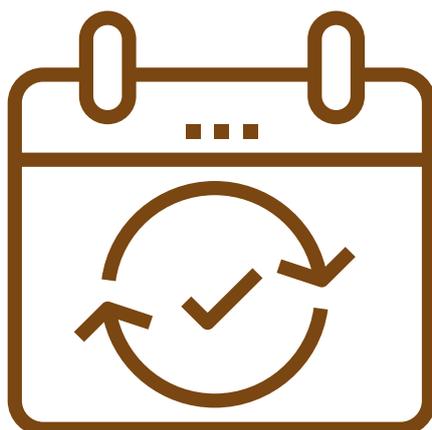
Koorndarn – The onus is on workers to show respect for the people and for their culture.

Kwop Daa – Engage in good talk that is open and honest. While individuals and families can refuse support, staff persist without intruding and use their relationship to make ongoing and regular offers in ways that show care and respect for people and culture.

Koort – A deep understanding of people, means that support is designed to fit the individual and their moort (kin) rather than the individual being required to fit the service.

Kaarnya – Workers employ creative and imaginative approaches to ensure their work is engaging rather than blaming people for “disengaging”. Our responsibility is to re-engage without blame or shame.

Availability – Caseloads are small and support is available outside normal working hours. This allows workers to be persistent and proactive in their approach, have time to support the whole family, doing “whatever it takes” within the Noongar cultural framework, and not giving up and closing off when engagement is low.



## PRINCIPLE FIVE

Support focuses on strengthening wirrin

### WIRPIN – KAARNYA

Strengthen wirrin to recover a sense of themselves and their place in their community. Strengthens the whole family and their connection to each other, their culture and their land.

Hope – Support offers hope and actively encourages Noongar people to dream and imagine a future for themselves and allow them to make their own decisions that benefit them, their families and their culture. Towards a future focusing on gaining a sense of purpose with the prospect of enjoying a good and secure life. A healthy, stable home environment and family creates strong wirrin (spirit) for everyone.

Kaarnya - a process of trial and error involving small steps forward and backward celebrating successful experiences but also learning from experiences of pain and frustration without karnya - a sense of shame.

Strengths – Celebrating and working with people’s capacity and abilities that are quite separate from any diagnosis they may have. Work together with people towards goals, recognising their unique strengths.

Appropriate – see each person as an individual, honour culture, and recognise that individuals are all unique and valued.



## PRINCIPLE SIX

### Social, cultural and community inclusion

#### MOORT – KAARTDIJIN – WIRRIN

Belonging – Social, cultural and community inclusion is an integral part of support as it rebuilds a sense of self and connection to others, which in turn is a protective factor for people's tenancy, health and well-being, recognising that wellbeing is collective. Encourage opportunities to practice culture and reconnect with cultural knowledge and pride. Understand that belonging is not only to family, but to land.

Relationships – Support people to build friendships and relationships within their community, and where possible to reconnect with family, culture and those who are important to them. Respect cultural values and protocols.

Participation – Support people to participate in a wide range of pursuits including education, employment and volunteering opportunities as well as cultural, artistic and recreational activities.

Understand that mainstream interventions and organisations may not be fit for purpose and listen to community voices about suitable alternatives. Workers should be aware of when key cultural activities occur in the community. They should facilitate and encourage people to attend Aboriginal focused events like NAIDOC week, Sorry Day, Reconciliation week etc and link into community, to connect with culture through participating in art activities, events and community organisations, etc.

Community – Homes exist as part of a community. Support not only helps people connect to that community, but also uses strategies to build acceptance amongst neighbours of people with different experiences, lifestyles, and appearances.



# CASE STUDY ONE

## WIRRIN - Cultural driver for relocation

### Family's spiritual connection to Midland area

The family has a strong belief that the Noongar wirrin - spirits gets angry with them when they have had to leave their cultural boodja – land/area to live elsewhere.

They were given accommodation out of their cultural boodja and the tenancy failed. There was fueding with other families and they believed this was a result of the “wirrin” being karrung - angry that they had left their ancestral grounds and it was the kwop wirrin – good spirits way of calling them back to the Midland area.

The family say that when they are in Midland “everyone is happy”. They feel mentally strong and they believe that the kwop wirrin - good spirits are glad that they have come home to their rightful place in Whadjuk boodja - country.



## CASE STUDY TWO

### KOORT - Cultural driver for caring

47 year old Yamatji female from Geraldton

How long have you been homeless?

Over 5 years and sleeping rough and couch surfing.

Where have you been staying?

In and out of hotels, living on the streets and to tent city. I was at Hostel G for about 3.5 months until I got supported by a caseworker from Noongar Mia Mia to get into stable accommodation. Stay off the drugs get back on my feet medically, spiritually and holistically to deal with my issues.

How has Noongar Mia Mia helped?

Yes, it has a very intensive support compared to before Noongar Mia Mia supported me. My Noongar Mia Mia caseworker has taken me to medical appointments, setting up counselling with Wungening assisting me with Ruah and just daily tasks. I have a bad back and the support that the caseworker has given me is a god send. They visit me every day at my unit that Uniting WA has given me for 1 month and it is good as they are my only allowed visitor, and it does get lonely in the unit all alone. The caseworker has taken me to get food the bank and listens to my concerns. It is good that we have an Aboriginal worker who understands our ways and is up with our mob. I would recommend Noongar Mia Mia to all our mob as it is a valuable service that is doing something for us.



Literally "heart"; by extension, love, kindness, compassion, protecting others, caring, sharing, motherly love, obligations to one other

## CASE STUDY THREE

### BOODJAR, MOORT AND KAARTDIJIN - Cultural drivers for connection to country and knowledge of people and family

An Aboriginal man had great connections with family. He grew up near the City Farm and had all his family and extended family around him while growing up.

He has fond memories of the area. His family was moved on by government out to Bull Paddock where there were a lot of other Noongar and Aboriginal families. It was like tent city there.

After many of his family members moved on or passed away he was left an orphan at 15 years of age. He was in and out of care and then eventually moved on to find his own "home". He ended at St Bart's for homeless men. He chose to stay at St Bart's because it was built on the land where he grew up with his family before they were moved on.

He says he has a strong cultural connection to the area and feels "at home" and it stimulates his fond memories of family and reminds him of the cultural knowledge that was shared with him by family and other moort.



**Kenyak Yeye - that's enough for now**

Future research is needed on the practical application of this framework in ending Aboriginal homelessness. Moreover, the use value of the Noongar Cultural Framework and Noongar Housing First Principles as a workable approach to ending homelessness in other Aboriginal communities is yet to be considered.



# NOONGAR CULTURAL FRAMEWORK AND NOONGAR HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES

The Noongar Housing First Principles were endorsed by the Telethon Kids Institute Ngullar Coorlungar Elder co-researchers on October 20, 2021.

Author: Sandra Harben (Noongar Mia Mia)

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To find out more visit [noongarmiamia.com.au](http://noongarmiamia.com.au)

