

Media Release

The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence
Minister for Women



Friday, 5 November 2021

BOOSTING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS

The Andrews Labor Government is supporting self-determination and increasing financial autonomy for Aboriginal organisations by releasing full ownership of five more properties back to the community.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams today announced that the latest group of properties owned by Aboriginal organisations have had their first mortgages removed as part of the *First Mortgage and Community Infrastructure Program*.

These properties are:

- Aboriginal Housing Victoria's head office in Fitzroy
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative's main office, which includes their health service, in North Geelong
- Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation's office plus two other properties housing their services in Heywood.

The removal of these mortgages gives Aboriginal communities rightful control of their assets and brings the total number of properties with mortgages lifted under the program to 30.

When the program was established in 2017, there were 59 properties owned by Aboriginal organisations that were subject to a first mortgage held by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, as part of the funding agreement that allowed the organisations to initially purchase the properties.

While the organisations remain the full legal owners of these properties, a first mortgage means they could not use the capital for future growth.

The *First Mortgage and Community Infrastructure Program* allows eligible Aboriginal organisations to apply for the removal of a first mortgage if strong governance, sustainability and feasibility can be demonstrated.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative and Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation have all demonstrated the criteria for removal of the first mortgages on their properties.

For more information visit firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/first-mortgage-and-community-infrastructure-program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"Returning land titles to Aboriginal organisations hands back control to Aboriginal communities – where it belongs."

"Aboriginal organisations do incredible work for their communities and deserve the full independence, infrastructure and economic collateral they need to grow and plan for their futures."

"We are helping to strengthen the economic capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal organisations to move towards self-determination."