## THROUGH TENANT EYES:

# MEASURING THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF COMMUNITY HOUSING

### Sector Outcomes Framework | August 2019

**Community Housing**
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION *VICTORIA*

FUNDED BY

WITH

**thinkimpact**
TOWARDS A NEW PROSPERITY

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# ABOUT THE COMMUNITY HOUSING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

## Introduction

Welcome to the community housing sector Outcomes Framework, a resource to help Victorian community housing organisations to better measure the outcomes that occur for tenants as a result of having safe, secure and affordable housing.

The Victorian community housing sector, led by the Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) and with funding support from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, has been collaborating for over two years on this major initiative to transform the ability of the sector to measure and deliver tenant outcomes. This is truly a sector-initiated and led initiative that has been developed along with Victorian community housing organisations and a small number of tenants who generously contributed their time and voice.

The framework contains:

- A model of the aspects of tenants lives that are influenced by safe secure and affordable housing

- A set of measures that can be used to understand the extent to which tenants experience the intended desired states

- An accompanying survey that can be used to collect data from tenants.

Measuring outcomes using this framework helps community housing organisations to make decisions about how to design and deliver services based on the needs and experiences of tenants. It also helps community housing organisations to demonstrate their social impact. Over time, it is hoped that outcomes data can be aggregated from across the community housing sector to support shared learning and improvement, and enable the sector to tell a collective story of the benefits of community housing.

One of the desired next steps for the framework is to pilot its use with a range of community housing providers and tenants. We encourage you to use the framework and provide CHIA Vic with feedback about your experience to inform its ongoing development.

# Development of the framework

The framework has been developed to respond to needs identified by the community housing sector for:

- A set of tenant **wellbeing outcomes and measures** to enable consistent and robust measurement and aggregation across the sector to support learning and advocacy. CHIA Vic has been liaising with other community housing sector peak organisations in Australia to explore the potential for a nationally consistent data set.

- **Capacity building** of community housing organisations to be able to measure tenant outcomes and use the resulting data to inform decision making and service delivery. This has been achieved by deeply involving the sector in the development of the framework.

- A low-cost, easy-to-use and maintain, yet robust **online system** to measure the social outcomes of tenants and aggregate the data to tell a sector-wide story. It is hoped that this can be realised in future stages.

As a result of the framework:

- **Community housing tenants** will have a stronger voice in influencing how community housing is provided to them and in determining the effectiveness and impact of housing provision.

- **Community housing organisations** will have access to an approach to measure outcomes. This will provide them with a stronger understanding and capacity to respond to the needs and aspirations of their tenants.

- **The community housing sector** as a whole will have greater understanding and capability for learning and continuous improvement. A future goal is the development of a system to aggregate data so that CHIA Vic, on behalf of the sector, can tell the story about the combined impacts of the sector's efforts.

# Principles underpinning the framework

The following principles, developed by the community housing sector at the commencement of the project, have guided the development of the framework. They provide context for the purpose and contents of the framework.

**1.**
Understand and measure **change** experienced by tenants

**2.**
**Enable learning**, rather than comparing

**3.**
**Be accessible** to and inclusive of all types of CHOs and their existing data collection

**4.**
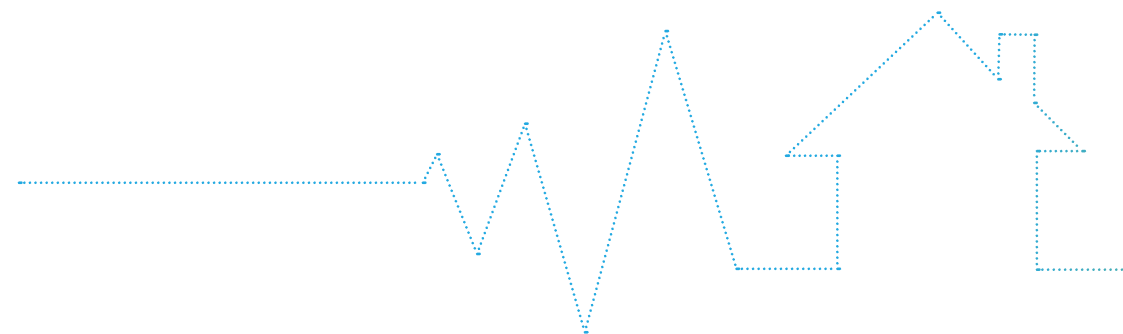**Don't overburden** tenants and the sector with measurement

**5.**
Ensure **data is accessible** to individual organisations and the sector

**6.**
**Avoid duplication** by building on existing work and collaborating with others

**7.**
Ensure it's **sector led** in order to achieve these principles.

# Interpreting the framework

The Outcomes Framework articulates the positive effects that the community housing sector seeks to enable for tenants and their families as a result of providing safe, secure and affordable housing. It provides a common understanding of the needs of tenants and the role of housing in meeting these needs. By involving tenants in the development of the framework, the sector has ensured that the framework strongly reflects the needs of tenants.

The sector can use the framework to better understand and respond to the experiences of their tenants, and to inform funders, decision makers and the wider community about the role of community housing in the lives of tenants and in strengthening our communities.

The Outcomes Framework has three components: domains, outcomes and measures.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **DOMAIN** | Domains describe the broad aspects of tenants lives that could be influenced by community housing. | **Example**<br><br>Health |
| **OUTCOMES** | Outcomes describe the desired state of wellbeing or security for tenants that housing contributes to, sometimes directly and in others indirectly. Outcomes are grouped into the relevant higher order domain. | **Example**<br><br>Tenants are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy |
| **MEASURES** | Measures are ways of knowing that a change has occurred. They provide evidence about the extent to which tenants experience the outcomes. Each outcome has corresponding measure/s. | **Example**<br><br>I am able to look after my physical health |

# The role of the framework

## What the framework provides

Measures that are widely applicable across the range of housing and the range of tenants within the community housing sector.

A core set of measures that is realistic for all community housing organisations to collect and use. Practicality and feasibility of application is of the highest importance for the framework to be used.

A picture of the self-reported state of being across the tenant population to provide guidance on key issues for further exploration.

## What the framework does not provide

All the information community housing organisations need to make business decisions about how to support tenants to achieve the desired outcomes. The framework can highlight areas where tenants are faring well and opportunities for improvement that could be further investigated.

An understanding of 'attribution', which is the reasons why tenants experience or do not experience outcomes. This includes the extent to which the experience of the tenants is attributable to the provision of housing, related services or even other intervening factors. This understanding would need to be obtained through further investigation.
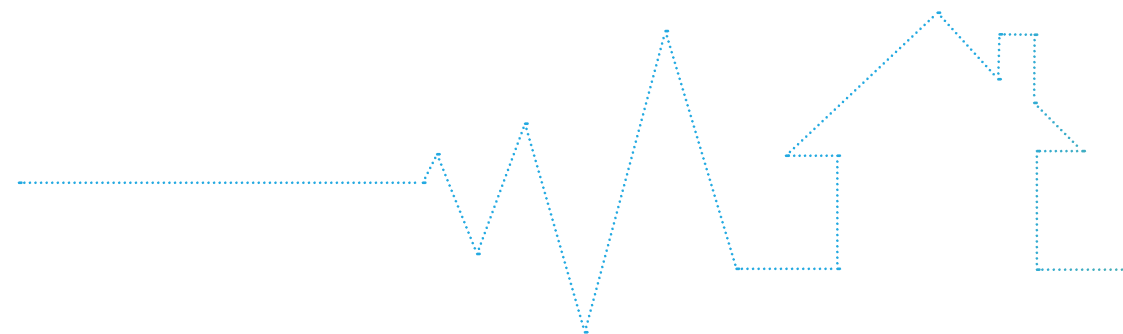
# Using the framework

## How to use the framework

This framework has been developed to provide community housing organisations with a stronger understanding and capacity to respond to the needs and aspirations of their tenants. While the first step in using the framework is to collect data from tenants relating to the measures, the most important step is to then use the data to reflect on tenants needs and current practices and make decisions about future activities.

As previously acknowledged, use of the framework will not necessarily provide all the information community housing organisations need to make these decisions. The outcomes data may highlight areas where further investigation is needed in order to fully understand the tenants needs and experiences. It may be useful to interpret the outcomes data along with data that is already available on tenants or their housing, such as age of housing, community context or other major projects/initiatives being implemented.

## Alignment with other outcomes measurement

This framework seeks to establish a common approach for outcomes measurement by the community housing sector. While adoption of this framework is voluntary, we encourage community housing organisations to use it and the accompanying measurement approach as a first step towards consistent, comparable and aggregable data for the sector.

Alongside this framework, there are other developments that will influence outcomes measurement by the sector. The Victorian Government is developing frameworks that will apply to the sector, and some individual community housing organisations will have their own outcomes frameworks and approaches. This framework has sought to be consistent with and complement existing activity, to the extent possible, to reduce duplication and administrative load. For those organisations with their own frameworks or measurement approaches in place, the outcomes and measures established in this framework could replace alternative language or complement what is already in place.

# Measuring tenant outcomes

## Tenant survey

A survey is provided for community housing organisations to collect the data from tenants against each of the measures.

In most instances, rating scales are used to ask tenants to self-report their current state of being against the measures. The survey also includes housing and demographic data about tenants to understand whether and how experiences vary across different types of housing and other contextual factors.

The survey can be conducted in hard copy or built as an online survey. Community housing organisations may wish to use the survey as is or insert the outcomes measurement questions into existing tenant surveys.

## Measurement approach

In future stages of the framework rollout, it is intended that guidelines will be provided to establish consistent practices across the sector for the timing, frequency and approach for data collection. At this stage, community housing organisations are encouraged to make decisions about when and how frequently to collect outcomes data based on your existing practices, the impact on your tenants and available resources. Some community housing organisations may embed the outcomes measurement in existing annual surveys. Others may conduct a separate survey at a different time of the year.

# Taking the first steps to implementing the framework

## 1. Form an internal project team

- Involve the wellbeing or community development teams.
- Run an info session going through the Framework and its value to your organisation. You might find some champions who are inspired from this session.
- Develop a project plan with timeframes and task owners. Hold catch up meetings to talk about progress, keep the team motivated and stay aligned.

## 2. Select tenants to test the survey

- Seek to trial the survey with tenants from a specific location or building where you have recently held or plan to hold engagement programs or activities.
- Involve the relevant housing officers and housing manager.
- Promote it on your social media channels (Facebook, twitter, Instagram), on your web page or in your tenants' newsletters. Call it a pilot if that helps to communicate to tenants how it will be rolled out.

## 3. Conduct the survey

- Put your logo on the word document for printouts. You can also create an online version using survey tools such as SurveyMonkey or SurveyGizmo.
- Distribute the survey to tenants. You can post it out or share online links. Give people about 3 weeks to complete it.
- Provide clear instructions for returning it, including a return paid envelope and/or an anonymous box for people to return it. If you are holding a session you can hand paper copies or tablets around (dedicate 10 minutes before the end to give tenants time to complete and ensure that respondents are aware their surveys will not be used to identify them).
- Think about whether people need assistance to complete it and who would be best to do that (maybe not someone working directly with them like their housing officer). Could a carer or service provider running a session help?

## 4. Analyse the results

- Allocate time to enter the data from hard copies. You can use Excel to do some analysis. If you have an online survey collection tool you can manually enter the results from hard copies and it will do the analysis for you. This will work well if some of your surveys are online and some are submitted in print.
- Have a workshop with the team to reflect on the results and think about what it tells you. Extend it out to a 'learning lunch' if you need more staff involved next time. How did tenants find it? What more do you need to know? What are the next steps? How can you roll this out to another program or group of tenants? What story could you tell when you compare results?
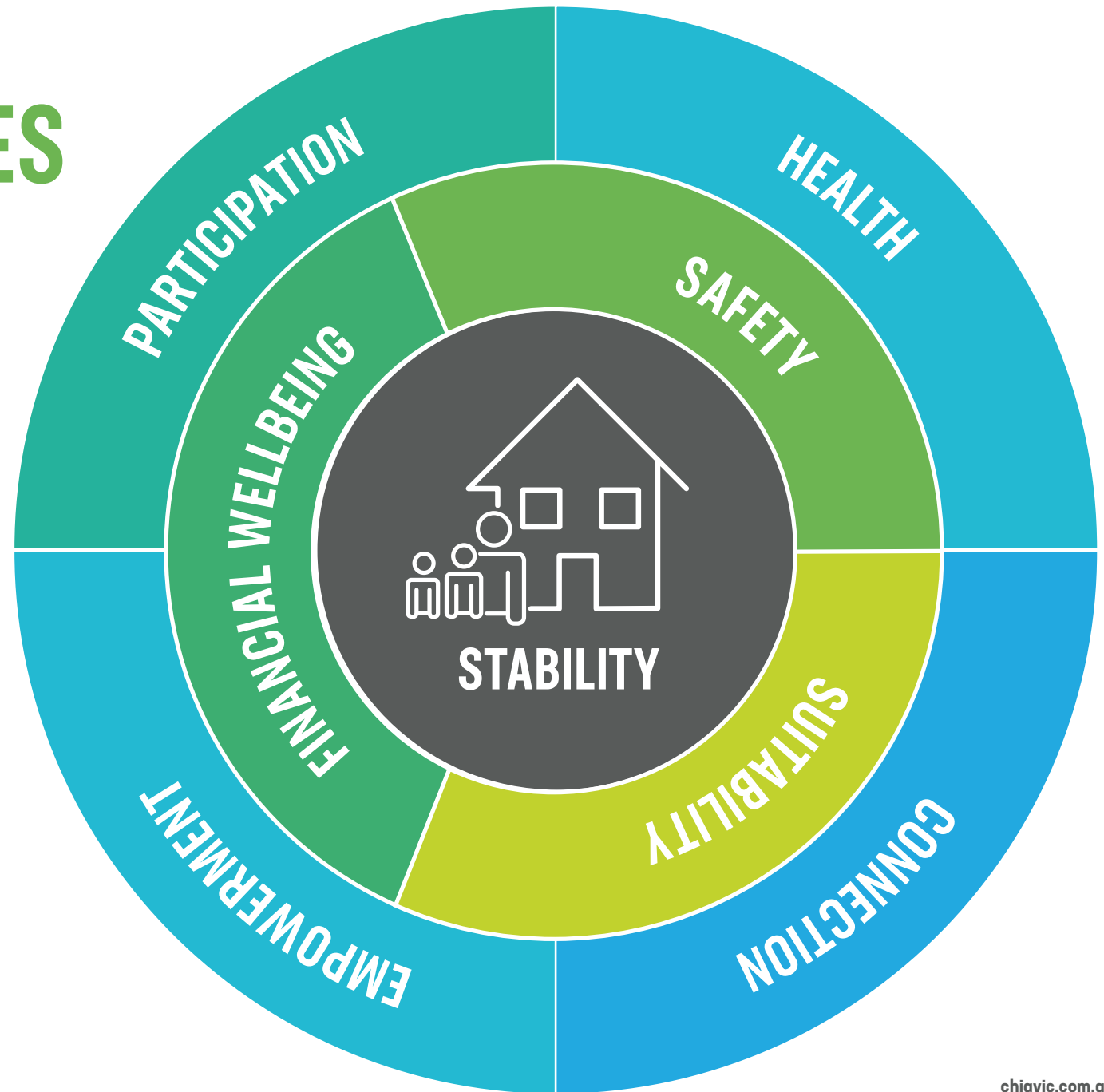
## 5. Get involved in the CHIA Victoria Outcomes team

- Share your experiences. Provide feedback. Meet up and be a member of CHIA Vic's social outcomes community of practice. Learn from others and pool resources to ensure you can communicate with your Board, stakeholders, staff and most importantly your tenants about the impact of your organisation's work.

# INTRODUCING THE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

The framework consists of 8 domains or aspects of tenants' lives that are influenced by safe, secure and affordable housing.



PARTICIPATION

HEALTH

SAFETY

FINANCIAL WELLBEING

STABILITY

SUITABILITY

EMPOWERMENT

CONNECTION

- **Stability**: Tenants have secure housing that they are able to maintain

- **Financial wellbeing**: Tenants can manage their financial situation and access support when needed to support their financial wellbeing

- **Suitability**: Tenants have access to housing that is suitable to their needs and aspirations

- **Safety**: Tenants feel safe in their home and community

- **Health**: Tenants are able to manage their physical and emotional health

- **Participation**: Tenants are able to participate in a range of opportunities to enhance their lives and contribute to society and the economy

- **Connection**: Tenants have strong personal relationships, community connections and cultural fulfilment

- **Empowerment**: Tenants are motivated, in control, and active in improving their situation

Stability is an almost universal benefit at the core of the framework. It is the platform upon which tenants are able to attain the other benefits in their lives included in the framework.

While the domains are listed separately, there are many inter-dependencies between them. For example, financial wellbeing is an important determinant of whether tenants can fulfil their role in maintaining the stability of their housing. As another example, feelings of safety influence the ability of tenants to participate in society and the economy.

# Summary of outcomes

## Stability
- Housing is affordable
- Housing options are secure
- Housing situations are sustained

## Financial Wellbeing
- Tenants are able to manage their financial situation

## Suitability
- Housing meets the needs and preferences of tenants

## Safety
- Feeling safe at home
- Feeling safe in the community

## Health
- Feeling physically, mentally and emotionally healthy

## Participation
- Participation in employment
- Participation in learning or volunteering

## Connection
- Healthy functioning families
- Feeling connected to the community
- Feeling connected to culture

## Empowerment
- Personal resilience and control
- Feeling motivated and hopeful for the future

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# The voices of tenants

## Stability

It is the relief of knowing we have stable housing now and we feel a lot more secure about the future.

Stability and safety. Having a place where there is freedom to do what I need to do in order to recover and move on.

## Financial Wellbeing

Being able to provide financially for my child.

I am not wasting money. I save money.

Now I have been able to put down roots and I have a job and I am not thinking about money all the time.

## Suitability

Having a garden, kids have their own bedrooms.

Having a space where kids can come and visit.

Having a 3 bedroom home so our son could have space of his own made a big difference in his life.

## Safety

Freedom. Having a home I now have security. Do not have to live in fear. I never told my ex where I live.

With rough sleeping, I had to worry about the environment, where I could sleep that night.

## Health

Health is good. We have a home now. I cook for us all.

My health has improved so much as having my own house has given me time to heal both physically and mentally.

## Participation

I am studying and working.

My kids are doing more activities and I am at TAFE. We didn't have this opportunity in our previous location.

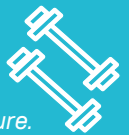Housing is a base for stable schooling for the kids.

## Connection

Children are involved in sports, they are thriving at school. The family is back together.

Establishing my Aboriginal identity.

I can be socially active for the first time in a long time. You can't socialise living in a motel.

## Empowerment

Feel able to plan for the future.

I feel more independent and self reliant.

The biggest change in me is my confidence, my self love and respect.

Now that I am back on my feet I give back to the people in need.

## Stability

Tenants have secure housing that they are able to maintain.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES* |
|---|---|
| Housing is affordable | I feel my rent is affordable |
| Housing options are secure | I feel my housing situation is secure |
| Housing situations are sustained | I am confident I can manage my rental obligations |

*Measures that relate to children living with tenants are designated in a different colour.
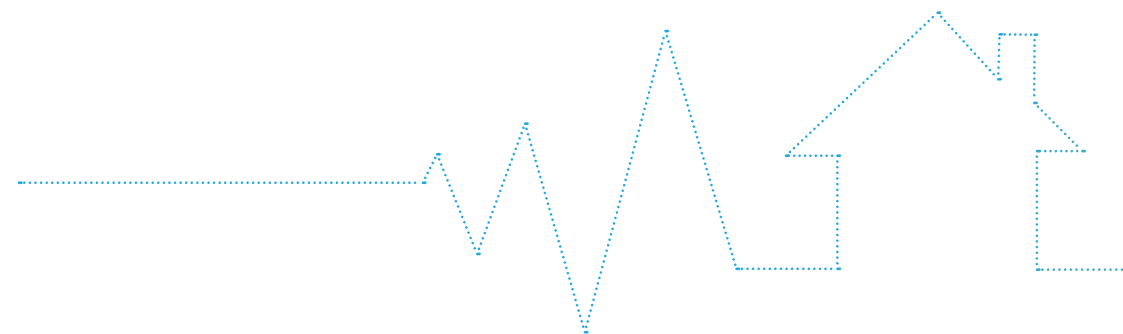
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## Financial Wellbeing

Tenants can manage their financial situation and access support when needed to support their financial wellbeing.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
|---|---|
| Tenants are able to manage their financial situation | Select the statement that most reflects your situation:<br><br>▪ I am regularly meeting my financial obligations and have some money left over to save if I want to<br><br>▪ I am neither increasing my debt nor saving<br><br>▪ I am getting more into debt |
| | I know where to go if I need help with situations involving money |

# DOMAIN

## Suitability

Tenants have access to housing that is suitable to their needs and aspirations.

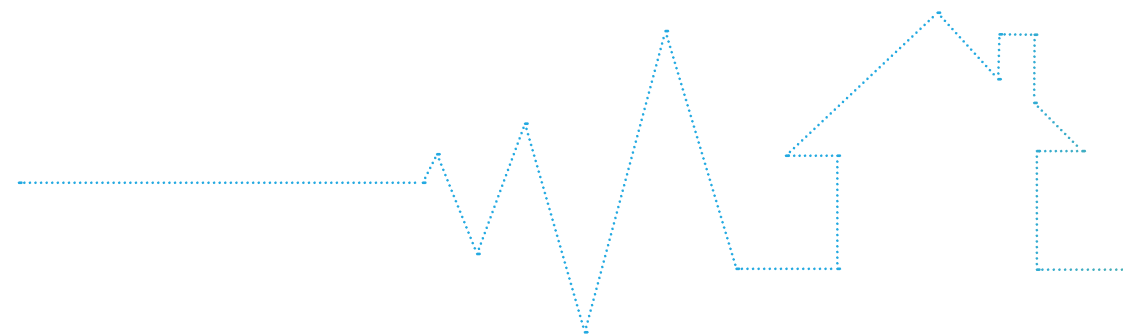| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
|---|---|
| Housing meets the needs and preferences of tenants | I have access to the services and opportunities that are important to me |
| | My home has the features I need |
| | I have a say in decisions about my housing |

## DOMAIN

| Safety | 🛡 |
|---|---|

Tenants feel safe in their home and community.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
|---|---|
| Feeling safe at home | I feel safe at home |
| | My children feel safe at home |
| Feeling safe in the community | I feel safe in the area where I live |

## Health

Tenants are able to manage their physical and emotional health.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
| --- | --- |
| Feeling physically, mentally and emotionally healthy | I am able to look after my physical health |
| | I am able to look after my emotional health |
| | My children have good physical health |
| | My children have good emotional health |

# DOMAIN

## Participation

Tenants are able to participate in a range of opportunities to enhance their lives and contribute to society and the economy.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
|---|---|
| Participation in employment | Select the statement that most reflects your situation:<br>▪ I am working and I would like to be working more hours<br>▪ I am working and I am not looking to work more hours<br>▪ I am not currently working but I'm ready for work when I find something<br>▪ I am not ready to work but am hoping to be in the future<br>▪ I am not working or looking for work |
| | Please indicate which statements apply to you (please select all that apply)<br>▪ I am participating in formal education<br>▪ I am participating in education to develop skills not related to working<br>▪ In the past 12 months, I have volunteered or provided unpaid help |
| | My children regularly attend school or early childhood education |
| | My children are developing well at school or early childhood education |

# DOMAIN

## Connection

Tenants have strong personal relationships, community connections and cultural fulfilment.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
| --- | --- |
| Healthy, functioning families | My family has the stability we need to function well |
| Feeling connected to the community | I feel comfortable in my community |
| | I have support outside of home if I need it |
| Connected to culture | I am proud of who I am |
| | I feel comfortable expressing my identity |

## Empowerment

Tenants are motivated, in control, and active in improving their situation.

| OUTCOMES | MEASURES |
| --- | --- |
| Personal resilience and control | I am able to deal with life's challenges |
| | I feel in control of my life |
| | My children are able to deal with life's challenges |
| Motivated and hopeful for the future | I feel comfortable expressing my identity |
| | I enjoy thinking about the future |
| | My children have opportunities for their future |

# Acknowledgements

This framework was made possible through the following contributions:

- CHIA Vic provided project management and governance.

- The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation provided funding for an initial scoping exercise conducted in 2018 and for the framework development in 2019.

- The working group comprising CHIA Vic, community housing organisations and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services which provided guidance.

- 52 community housing tenants contributed their time and perspective to ensure that the framework reflected the voice and experience of tenants.

- 7 community housing organisations conducted interviews with their tenants.

- Think Impact provided both paid and in-kind support since the project's inception.