



# Yarra Ranges Reconciliation Framework for Action 2013 - 2023



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### **Acknowledgement of Country**

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People, as the custodians of this land. We also pay respect to all Aboriginal community Elders, past and present who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

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Yarra Ranges  
**Reconciliation Framework**  
for Action 2013 - 2023



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Cr Jim Child

## Mayor's Message

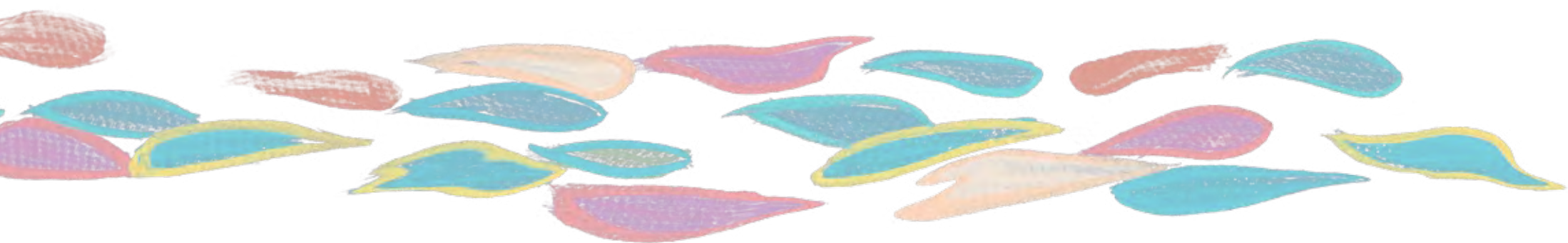
It is with pleasure that I present the Yarra Ranges Council Reconciliation Framework for Action 2013-2023. This framework outlines Council's key strategic Reconciliation directions for the next ten years. The Yarra Ranges Indigenous Advisory Committee has guided the development of Council's Reconciliation approach, based on Indigenous ways of knowing and respect, caring and sharing. This innovative and creative approach, as described by the Indigenous Advisory Committee, "captures the core values and elements of local Aboriginal culture; acknowledging and understanding the way contemporary urban Aboriginal communities see the world".

This framework builds on the Yarra Ranges Reconciliation Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2010 and demonstrates Council's continuing commitment to the process of Reconciliation. We continue to provide leadership across sectors and support to our partners in government and community organisations. Yarra Ranges is proud of its long history in Reconciliation and commitment to our Aboriginal community through Council's vision *"for a united community that recognises the special place and culture of Indigenous peoples as first Australians, values their participation and provides equal life chances for all"*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both past and present members of Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee for their commitment and passion over ten years in guiding Reconciliation in Yarra Ranges. Our Reconciliation Framework for Action sets a new benchmark for Reconciliation in local government. It is with a sense of enthusiasm and pride that I look forward to making my contribution towards *"a pathway to healing the past and moving forward toward a future of respect, caring and sharing with all cultures living in harmony"*.

**Cr Jim Child**  
Mayor





## Our Vision for Reconciliation

**Yarra Ranges Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) has defined Reconciliation as:**

*"a pathway to healing the past and moving forward toward a future of respect, caring and sharing with all cultures living in harmony".*

**Council's Reconciliation Policy includes a vision:**

*"for a united community that recognises the special place and culture of Indigenous peoples as first Australians, values their participation and provides equal life chances for all".*

Reconciliation is fundamental to healing past injustices towards Indigenous people, and is vital to community health and wellbeing.

**Yarra Ranges Council supports the rights of all Indigenous people, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People which sets out their rights to:**

- culture, identity, language, employment, health and education
- maintain and strengthen institutions, cultures and traditions
- pursue development in keeping with Indigenous needs and aspirations
- full and effective participation
- pursue Indigenous visions of economic and social development.

Our local vision is for a united community that recognises the special place and culture of Indigenous peoples as first Australians, values their participation, and provides equal life chances for all.

**Yarra Ranges has three key components that guide Council's commitment to Reconciliation. These are:**

- the Reconciliation Policy
- the Reconciliation Framework for Action
- a Background Paper outlining the partnership approach taken by the IAC and Council to achieving Reconciliation.

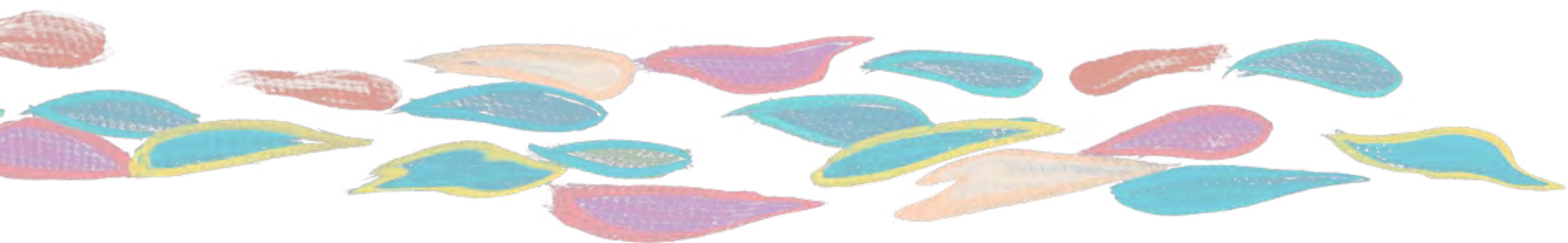
## Strategic Framework Yarra Ranges Council

The context for the policy and action plan is provided by Council's Strategic Framework. Council has identified five strategic objectives to describe what we are working towards – how we want Yarra Ranges to be in the future. The objectives take into account emerging community needs, expectations and levels of satisfaction with Council services.

The Reconciliation Framework for Action is primarily linked to the strategic objective of Active and Engaged Communities objective; however, it also has connections to the other objectives.

The Reconciliation themes for action will influence work across Council, with our commitment to Reconciliation captured in annual actions for Council departments.





## Key Policies and Plans

**The Yarra Ranges Reconciliation Framework for Action draws on a range of other Council policies and plans including the:**

- Yarra Ranges Council Plan
- Yarra Ranges Community Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)
- Yarra Ranges Council Reconciliation Policy (see appendix 1)
- Yarra Ranges Municipal Strategic Statement
- Yarra Ranges Disability Action Plan 2013-2017

**Other guiding documents in the development of the Plan included:**

- Yarra Ranges Council: Indigenous Advisory Committee Cultural Respect Protocols
- Yarra Ranges Council: Indigenous Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

## Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

All Councils have a statutory responsibility to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of their communities. Planning for health and wellbeing in Yarra Ranges includes an understanding of the determinants of health (the underlying and systemic causes of poor health) identified by the World Health Organisation. These include education, employment, housing, economic participation, transport, gender, the environment, social inclusion, violence, health literacy (the ability to understand health information) and power over decision making.

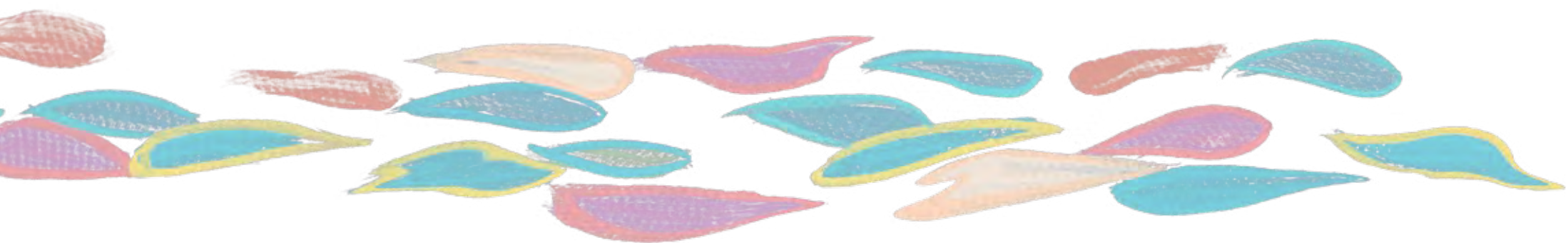
In the context of Reconciliation it is important to consider the determinants, as they point to areas for improvement and action in order to see health gains in Indigenous communities. Yarra Ranges Council regards Reconciliation as vital to community health and wellbeing.



## State, Federal & International Contexts

**The Yarra Ranges Reconciliation priorities align with the following International, State and Commonwealth policies and frameworks:**

- United Nations; Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
- Commonwealth of Australia: Social Inclusion Agenda
- Council Of Australian Governments: Close the Health Gap Initiative
- Victorian Government: Aboriginal Inclusion Framework
- Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights
- Dardee Boorai: Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- Vic Health: Life is Health is Life, Health Promotion Strategy
- Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Framework
- Kameeta Yirramboi: Victorian Government Aboriginal Employment Strategy



## Indigenous Advisory Committee

The Yarra Ranges Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) was established in 2005 and is central to driving Reconciliation in Yarra Ranges. The IAC and Council have worked together to develop the Reconciliation Policy and the Reconciliation Framework for Action. The IAC has a strong commitment to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing in Yarra Ranges. It facilitates ongoing engagement and partnering between the Indigenous community and Council. It supports improving access to culturally appropriate services by raising awareness of Indigenous history, culture, needs and issues as well as recognising community strengths. The IAC acknowledges that healing needs to happen not only between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples but within the Indigenous community.

## Strengthening Culture

*'Culture is fundamental to identity - it is our past, our present and our future... We need our culture to sustain us and to keep us well. But importantly, we need culture because it tells us who we are.'*

### **Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner**

The IAC and Council recognise that strategies to create and strengthen social and economic participation need to be underpinned by a strong cultural framework and led by the Indigenous community.

The work of the IAC over many years has highlighted the importance of understanding the positive effects on Indigenous health and wellbeing of a cultural strengthening approach. The IAC has emphasised the need to recognise the contemporary culture of Indigenous people, as well as the vast history and heritage of Indigenous culture. This view is supported by IAC members' experience of cultural practice, research, and reflection on the critical role that culture has on both individual and community identity. The resilience of local Indigenous peoples, including their connections to their culture, is a strength that will be enhanced through this Plan.



# RECONCILIATION

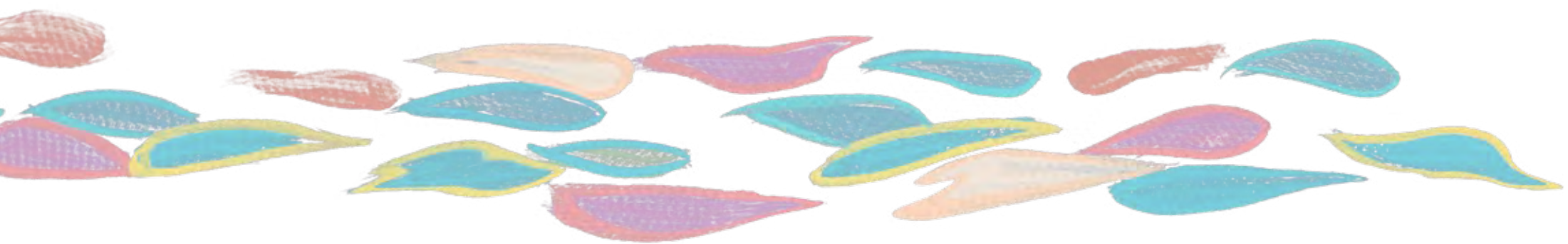
## Reconciliation Framework for Action

The Reconciliation Framework for Action outlines Council's commitment to the process of Reconciliation. It states what we will do in partnership with the IAC, community and services to advance Reconciliation and to reduce the gap in Indigenous participation. Working with the strengths of the community we will promote resilience and independence. The Framework is guided by Council's Reconciliation Policy.

The values of Respect, Caring and Sharing underpin the way that we will work to achieve the goals of the Framework. The values were developed in partnership with the IAC and local Elders.

### **The Reconciliation Framework for Action:**

- recognises Council's role in advocating for its community and working with its partners, community and other levels of government, to achieve the benefits of Reconciliation.
- reflects Council's specific roles and responsibilities
- seeks to achieve incremental change in areas within its control and to influence change through leadership and community development activities
- includes work which will be undertaken across the many roles of Council and provides accountability through measurable actions
- seeks to improve equal access to civil society, and to economic and social participation
- provides a platform to raise awareness broadly in the community, and to promote the positive contribution of Indigenous people and culture in Yarra Ranges
- acknowledges the importance of working with key stakeholders and partners. For example, through networking, facilitation, better coordination, and collaboration
- acknowledges the centrality of Indigenous self determination and control in healing and Reconciliation.



## Annual Action Planning

Over the life of the Reconciliation Framework for Action, specific actions will be developed each year to outline how we will work to achieve our Reconciliation goals. The annual actions will describe tangible outcomes for the Yarra Ranges community.

Implementation of the annual actions will depend on the participation of a range of internal and external partners. For example service areas within Council, government departments, local service providers, Indigenous organisations and agencies. The annual actions will identify shared goals with our partners and how we will achieve these goals.

The annual actions will also articulate indicators of success (desired outcomes) and identify who will lead each action. Both Council and the IAC will receive annual reports on progress.

### Themes for Action

Council and the IAC have developed key themes for annual planning which will build the foundation for ongoing work towards Reconciliation. Advocacy is noted as a key component and role across the themes outlined in the adjoining chart:



A D V O C A C Y





## Reconciliation Policy

### 1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

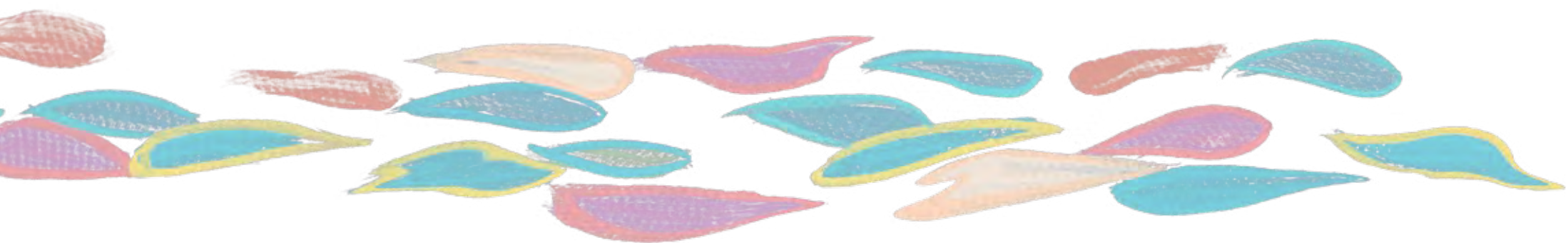
Yarra Ranges Council recognises Reconciliation as vital to community health and wellbeing. Council is committed to strengthening Reconciliation through supporting Indigenous communities and cultural development. Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) has determined our local definition of Reconciliation to be:

*"A pathway in healing the past and moving forward toward a future of respect, caring and sharing with all cultures living in harmony".*

In accordance with the practice and principles of cultural respect, Council opens every occasion of significance with an Acknowledgement of Country and Indigenous Community Elders. The opening greeting used at Council was developed and approved by the IAC, as follows:

#### **Acknowledgement of Country and Our Community Elders**

*We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People, as the Custodians of this land. We also pay respect to all Aboriginal community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.*



## **2. COUNCIL'S VISION FOR RECONCILIATION**

Council supports the rights of all Indigenous People as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Our local vision is for a united community that recognises the special place and culture of Indigenous peoples as first Australians, values their participation, and provides equal life chances for all.

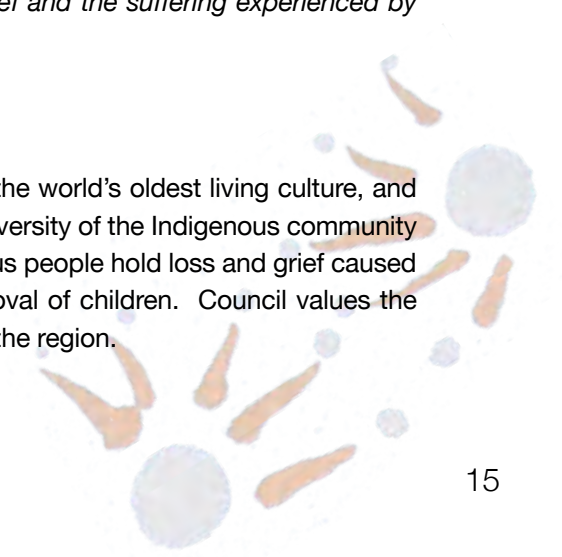
## **3. STATEMENT OF APOLOGY**

Yarra Ranges Council has worked with local community members to word an official apology to the Indigenous Community for past injustices. The acknowledgment of past injustices is considered by Council to be an important part of Reconciliation with Indigenous communities. It validates the experiences of Indigenous Australians and provides a bridge between cultures that supports collaborative efforts to address those injustices.

*Yarra Ranges Council recognises the past injustices and treatment of Aboriginal Peoples. If we are to proceed in an openhearted and responsible way to address the issues which will come before us in the future we first need to acknowledge the past. Council recognises the need to confront the policies and practices which caused the forced removal and separation of Aboriginal children from their parents and families, the effects of which continue today. Accordingly, we wish to express our deep sorrow and sincerely apologise for the pain, the grief and the suffering experienced by Aboriginal peoples as a result of past laws, government policy and actions.*

## **4. POLICY OBJECTIVES AND CONTEXT**

Council's premise in developing this policy is to formally acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as belonging to the world's oldest living culture, and as the traditional owners and custodians of the land in the municipality. The policy also recognises the unique diversity of the Indigenous community and the special place and culture of all Indigenous peoples as first Australians. Council acknowledges Indigenous people hold loss and grief caused by alienation from traditional lands, loss of lives and freedom, the suppression of culture and the forced removal of children. Council values the significant contribution made by Indigenous people and their culture to the history and present day vibrancy of the region.



# RECONCILIATION

The policy identifies the ways in which Council can promote the recognition and acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples, and their culture and heritage, and thereby work strongly towards Reconciliation. This policy continues the work of Council's 1997 Statement of Commitment.


Council acknowledges that it has an important leadership role in achieving meaningful Reconciliation and working with community to provide social and physical infrastructure which is inclusive, welcoming and pays respect to cultural identity. Council actively seeks to support Indigenous community development through building strong organisational and community relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous sector.

## 5. POLICY STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

### Yarra Ranges Council will:

- consult with local Elders to ensure recognition of the honoured place of the first Australians
- invite the advice of the Indigenous Advisory Committee on Council decisions which affect local Indigenous people
- promote and facilitate the presentation of Indigenous cultural heritage, in a way which is sensitive to and respects the dignity and protocols of the local Indigenous community
- recognise the cultural heritage of the Wurundjeri People as our shared heritage, by acknowledging sites of importance, symbols and cultural practices
- undertake and participate in programs and activities which display our ongoing commitment to Indigenous issues
- participate in education processes which enhance the organisational and community understanding and awareness of Indigenous heritage, as well as to address the needs of our Indigenous communities

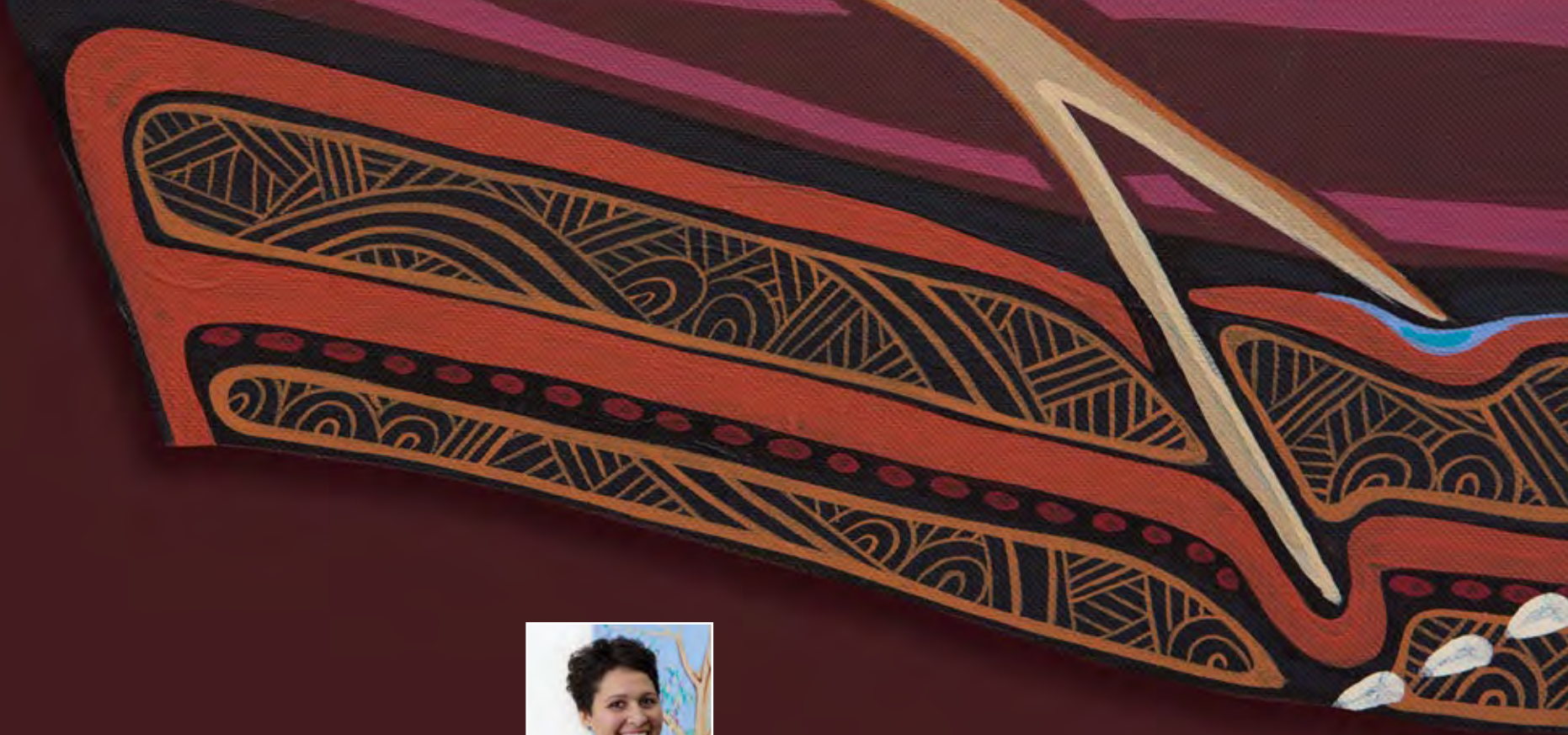


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- The page features a decorative background. At the top, there is a cluster of colorful, hand-drawn leaves in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. Below this, the main text area is overlaid on a faint, light blue background illustration of stylized human figures. These figures are depicted in a simple, line-art style, with some appearing to be in motion or dancing. The overall aesthetic is artistic and community-oriented.
- identify opportunities to enhance the economic participation of the Indigenous community. For example promoting employment opportunities and through the encouragement of local-Indigenous enterprises
  - develop appropriate partnerships between Council, and Indigenous organisations which have been established with and for Indigenous peoples
  - encourage participation and improve access to services, facilities and programs for Indigenous residents in health, employment, education and general opportunity
  - continue to formally convene the Indigenous Advisory Committee comprised of local Indigenous community members; relevant representatives of community and State organisations and services, Councillors and Council Officers
  - advocate on behalf of the Indigenous members of our community to ensure the principles and commitments of Reconciliation are upheld
  - promote and adhere to the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2008
  - develop, implement and evaluate a Reconciliation Action Plan that is informed by Indigenous Ways of Knowing and current research

## **6. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Reconciliation Framework for Action 2013-2023
- Reconciliation Background Paper
- Cultural Respect Protocols
- 1997 Statement of Commitment
- 1997 Statement of Apology
- Indigenous Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
- Council Plan
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017





*Images through out this document are from the painting by: Safina Stewart*



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