



EFFECTIVE DATE	November 2012
REVIEW DATE	November 2015
AUTHORS	Garry Detez, Isha Scott, Ali Wastie, Economic and Community Development
DIRECTORATE	Social and Economic Development

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Yarra Ranges Council regards 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 we open 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 Council's Indigenous Advisory Council (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.

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

Council acknowledges it has an important leadership role in achieving meaningful Reconciliation and working with community to provide social and physical infrastructure that 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
- embed consideration of Indigenous perspectives, values and issues across all aspects of Council's work to promote access, inclusion and respect
- promote and facilitate the presentation of Indigenous cultural heritage in a way that 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
- take a leadership role in education processes which enhance the organisational and community understanding and awareness of Indigenous heritage, as well as the needs of our Indigenous communities
- identify opportunities to enhance the economic participation of the Indigenous community e.g. 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 Action Plan 2013- 2023 (currently in draft)
- Reconciliation Background Paper (currently in draft)
- 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