



# Innovate

## Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2026 – June 2028



## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters, now known as the City of Greater Dandenong. We honour their enduring connection to Country, their Cultural knowledge, and their sustainable stewardship of these lands and waterways over thousands of generations.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, recognising their vital role in preserving and protecting the sacred lands and waterways of their Ancestors, their places, Traditional Cultural practices, and stories. We also acknowledge the Bunurong Land Council as the Registered Aboriginal Party, responsible for caring for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage of this area.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we value the opportunity to learn from and work alongside Bunurong peoples, as Traditional Custodians.

# Greater Dandenong City Council's Statement of Commitment

**Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges that indigenous Australians are the first people of this land. They have survived over two centuries of persecution and neglect.**

We acknowledge and grieve for the losses of the indigenous Australian people, their land, their children, their health and their lives. We acknowledge the right of indigenous Australians to live according to their own values and customs.

The newly created City of Greater Dandenong is a diverse community of people, many of whom have immigrated from all over the world to make their home here. Others have sought refuge in this land, finding it a safe haven. They share with indigenous Australians the experience of dispossession, the loss of land, family and livelihood.

As the Council of this new City, we pledge to continue working to create a community where all may feel welcome, free and accepted.

We commit ourselves to work for the elimination of every form of racism or discrimination in our community.

We commit ourselves to respect identified Aboriginal sacred sites and special places and assist with the education of the broader community about Aboriginal heritage and culture and the facts of non-indigenous settlement in this country.

On behalf of this multicultural city, we commit ourselves to support and work with our indigenous community for the building of a truly just and free society to which we all aspire.

We honour the wisdom and strength of the aboriginal culture and spirit, to which we look in shaping the future. (Declared as a formal statement by Council 7 July 1995).



Koorie Youth Will Shake Spears dance group at the CGD and Dandenong Market 2024 NAIDOC event.

# Acknowledgements

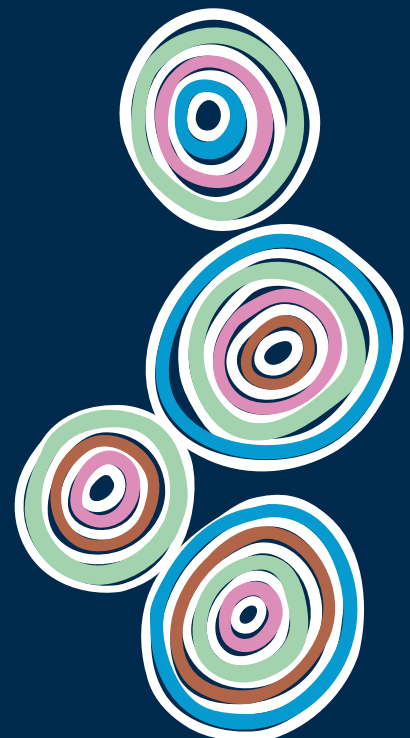
Greater Dandenong City Council would like to thank all that have been involved in the creation of Council's Third Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

We could not have created this document without the voice and partnership of many. We would like to thank the following who helped derive the content of this plan and guided us to its creation.

- Bunurong Land Council for their partnership and leadership
- Council's Internal Steering Committee
- Council's Reconciliation Working Group
- RAP Reference group members consisting of:
  - Aunty Elaine Taylor
  - Uncle Mark Brown
  - Kylie Bell
  - Jacarla Blow
  - Glenn Pellegrin
  - Sharon Blow
  - Drucilla Morgan
  - Alicia Morris

To all local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and stakeholders who engaged with our public exhibition and to all City of Greater Dandenong residents who took their time to provide us with their feedback.

To Auntie Heather Kennedy for her amazing artwork, which will be enjoyed by all as a reflection of Council's vision for this RAP.



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## About the artist

### Auntie Heather Kennedy – Coming together as one

#### About the artwork:

The artwork tells a story of connection, resilience, and the enduring relationship between community and Country. It celebrates unity and the inclusion of diverse communities and cultures coming together as one people, all sharing a common goal: Reconciliation. It includes flora and gum leaves to represent the cyclical nature of life, change, healing, and spiritual cleansing. Gum nuts symbolise regeneration, as they release their seeds even when burned—speaking to the resilience and rebirth inherent in Country, a story of ongoing growth and renewal.

Circles in the corners of the artwork represent ripples of knowledge, illustrating the ongoing transmission of wisdom and the continuation of Cultural learning across generations. Footprints throughout the piece signify people of all backgrounds walking together towards the central circle, symbolising Greater Dandenong as a meeting place — a shared space where community unites.

The artwork reflects stories of connection and unity, Elders and knowledge, relationship and Country, resilience and survival, flora and regeneration, heritage and legacy. It honours the past, embraces the present, and seeks to protect the future of these lands and communities. It is filled with vibrant colours to catch the eye.

#### About the artist:

My name is Heather Kennedy. I am a proud Aboriginal woman and Elder. I descend from my father's people. A Palawa Khani woman. My clans are Trawoolway, Pliermernier Northeast Tasmania & Bunurong Port Phillip Vic. I am Saltwater people. My Language name Metubeener Black Possum.

I am very strong in my Culture. I have been painting for well over 40 years. I have a lifelong passion for painting and creating stories. I blend contemporary design with Traditional indigenous elements. When it comes to creating art, I would say that its authentic as it's part of me I am putting on the canvas. My paintings are known for their vibrant layers and bold hues, captivating attention and bringing the stories to life. Painting is deeply personal to me, as each piece represents a part of my identity and heritage. I have always taken great pride in sharing my knowledge and Culture. Through my art, I educate and communicate with people of all ages and cultures to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of my aboriginal heritage. My art serves as bridge to pass on Cultural wisdom to future generations.



## Message from the Mayor

**The City of Greater Dandenong is proud to be home to one of Australia's most vibrant and diverse communities. For all who live, work and contribute to the City of Greater Dandenong, we walk together on the lands of the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation, whose deep knowledge, Culture and connection to Country continue to guide us.**

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Bunurong people, and pay respect to their Elders past and present.

It is with great pride that I present Greater Dandenong City Council's third RAP 2026-28.

This plan reflects our commitment to embedding reconciliation across all aspects of Council's work.

This RAP was created within a newly formed governance structure, consisting of an Internal Steering Committee, a RAP Reference Group, Bunurong Land Council, and an operational internal staff group.

In the essence of self-determination, Council ensured the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was heard and they were directly consulted in relation to matters

that affect them. We value our continued partnership and I extend my sincere thanks to all who contributed to this process.

Their voices have guided Council priorities including truth-telling, Cultural awareness and Cultural safety, and meaningful engagement. We remain committed to walking together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards a future grounded in respect, equity and shared understanding.

I invite all members of our community to join us on this journey towards a Greater Dandenong that celebrates and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Cultures, histories and knowledge.

**Mayor Cr Sophie Tan**





## Message from the CEO

**I am proud to present the Greater Dandenong City Council Innovate RAP 2026–2028. This is our third Innovate RAP, and it will guide our continued work towards reconciliation and a more inclusive future.**

The RAP is our formal commitment to strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. It provides a practical framework for how we build respectful partnerships, deepen cultural understanding, and create meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples both within our organisation and across Greater Dandenong.

The RAP is our formal commitment to strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

In October 2025, Victoria made history by passing the Statewide Treaty Bill 2025, the first legislation in Australia to enact a Treaty between the State and First Peoples. The legislation establishes three public institutions under a new authority, Gellung Warl, embedding truth-telling, Cultural recognition and structural reform into law. This new framework reflects a shift towards shared decision making and self-determination, principles that sit at the heart of reconciliation.

As a local government, we recognise our vital role in supporting the pathway to Treaty. As a council directly and deeply connected to our community, we have a unique opportunity to influence and promote reconciliation. We do this by creating opportunities for residents to connect with Bunurong Culture and by fostering safe, inclusive spaces for truth-telling, storytelling and Cultural celebration.

Our ongoing relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members provides a foundation from which we can continue to listen, learn, and walk alongside community as this transformative new chapter unfolds.

We invite you to explore our Innovate RAP 2026–28. My heartfelt appreciation goes to the community members and staff who have played a key role in shaping this plan and guiding our next steps towards reconciliation.

**Chief Executive Officer  
Jacqui Weatherill**

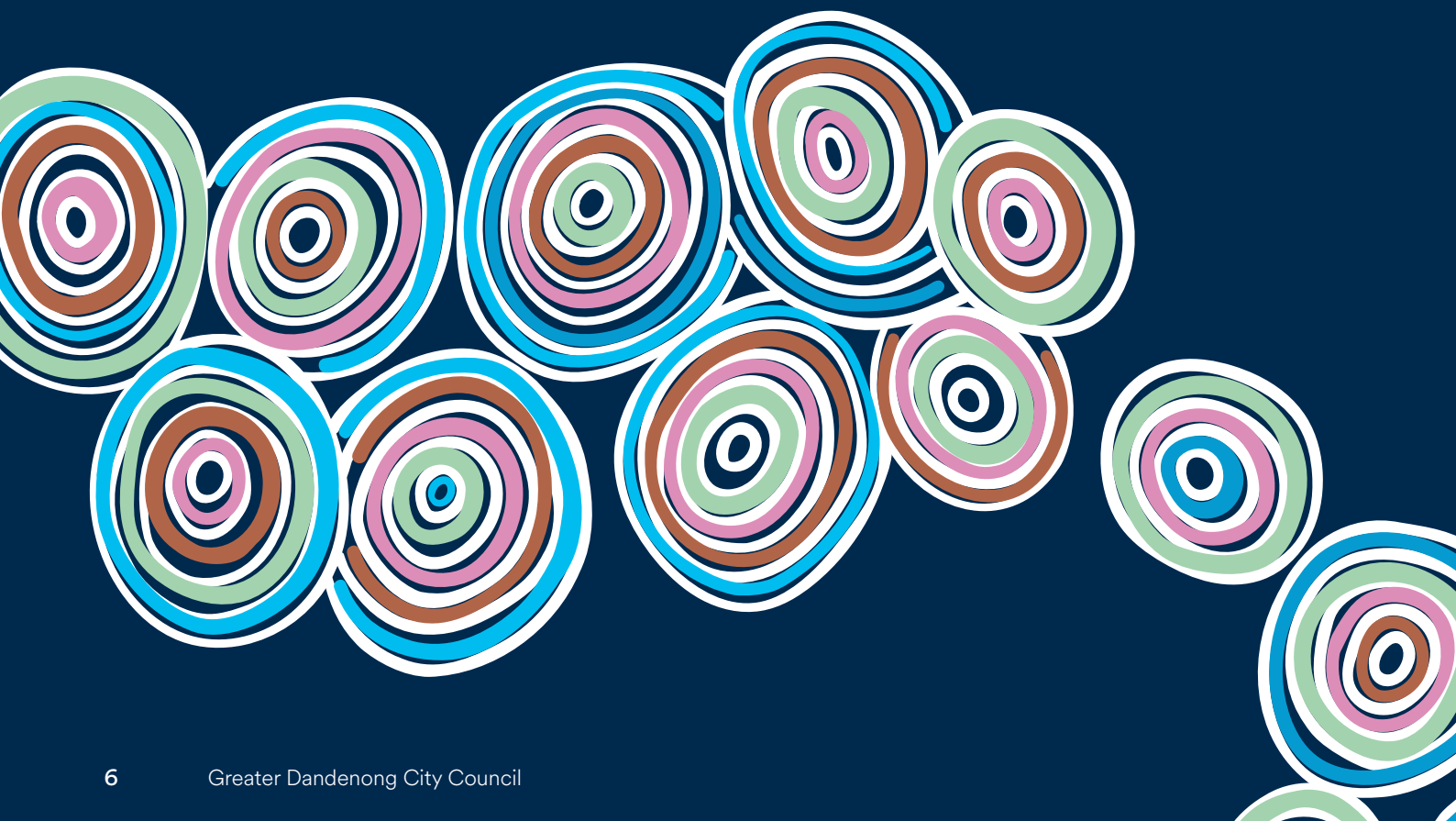
## Our Vision for Reconciliation

**“We are a safe, unified, and respectful community that values truth-telling and celebrates local Aboriginal history, Culture, and experiences. We value our continued partnerships and strive to create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead self-determining lives by listening, respecting, and working together to advance inclusive policies and practices.”**

Aboriginal Cultures are central to the municipality’s identity. We acknowledge, respect, and embrace this by collaborating with Traditional Custodians, Bunurong Land Council and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members towards a shared vision for reconciliation.

Council is committed to truth-telling and acknowledges the significant and enduring trauma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities due to colonisation and past government policies. We acknowledge the wrongdoings of the past and support healing for all community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have and will continue to be supported to fully participate in the social, economic and political fabric of the City.

We aim to create a more inclusive community for all by coming together in mutual respect and working with the whole community. We will do this work by engaging meaningfully with Traditional Custodians the Bunurong people – and wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities - to support self-determination across all Council matters and business. We will listen and learn, seeking genuine understanding of their wishes and aspirations while respectfully elevating their knowledge.



# Message from The Bunurong Land Council

**The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) represents Bunurong people's rights and interests and manages the statutory responsibilities of the Corporation. Bunurong people are once again recognised as the rightful Custodians of much of what is now known as greater Melbourne. We pay our respects to and thank our Ancestors and Elders for their words and stories of Country as passed down through the families.**

Over the last 35,000 years Bunurong people have adapted to a range of significant changes within their Country. Our stories of the Bay flooding with water, asteroid impacts near Cranbourne, Arthurs Seat once being an island, volcanic activity in the western suburbs; the great floods, fires and earthquakes all speak of such events. Around 10,000 years ago, before the Bay flooded with water, the Birrarung extended all the way out to the heads and out via a large waterfall which covered the entire area in mist. This is how the river earned its early name 'the river of mist'. This part of the river, up to the point where the river became fresh water, was the Bunurong Country.

Bunurong people were amongst the first Indigenous people in Victoria that were involved in cross-cultural entanglements with Europeans, and though reduced to just a handful of individuals by the mid-1800s, we are still here, and we continue to maintain our cultural obligations to care for the people, the flora and fauna, the lands and the waters within the Bunurong cultural landscape, which is alive with our stories.

Over 2000 generations of our people have been here before us. Archaeological excavation within our Country has already demonstrated about 30,000 years' worth of occupation. These sites can show us how our ancestors interacted with their environment and how that interaction

changed over time. We regard all evidence of our people's occupation as sacred.

All our Country is highly significant, every square inch, every rock, every leaf, every dune and every artefact. If we could attribute the cause of this blanket high significance rating of our Country to any one thing, it would be that in Melbourne especially, so much has been destroyed and lost as the city grew, and so quickly. If you lose enough of something, what little you have left becomes so much more important. Similarly, when someone passes, their earthly possessions become more important to those they are left behind.

Every part of our Country is of high significance to our people past and present.

**The Bunurong Land Council  
Aboriginal Corporation**

**Bunurong**   
**Land Council**  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



# Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

**Reconciliation Australia commends Greater Dandenong City Council on the formal endorsement of its third Innovate RAP.**

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With over 5.5 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. City of Greater Dandenong continues to be part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Council will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Council using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Council to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Council will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Council's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Greater Dandenong City Council on your third Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

**Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia**

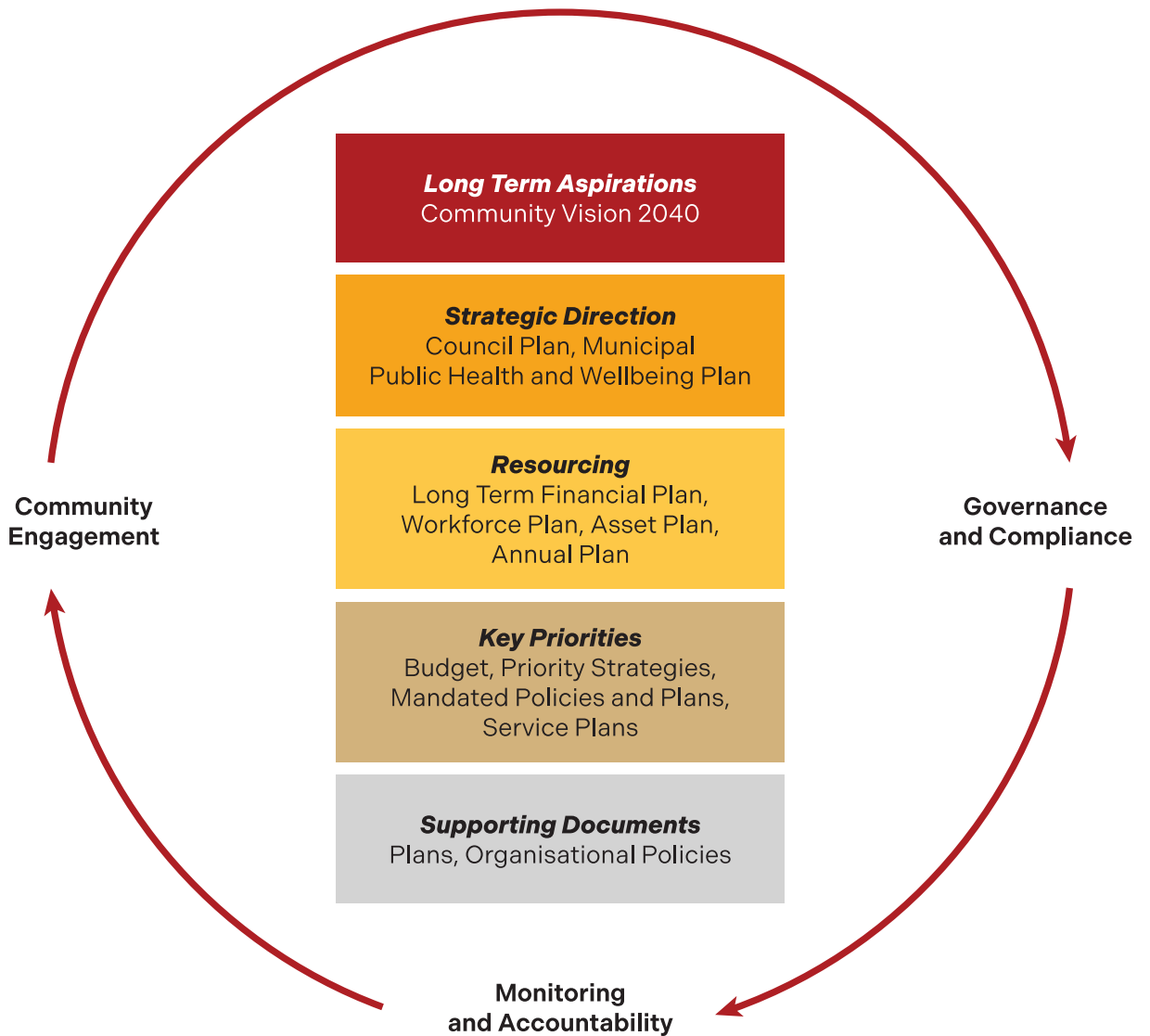




# Our Strategic Framework

Our RAP aligns with Council's Integrated Planning Framework which outlines our approach to strategic and operational planning. It considers our key priority areas and the resourcing required to effectively implement the community's

vision for our city. It also ensures effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability and community engagement processes to capture and meet the needs and aspirations of our residents and business owners.





The RAP also aligns with the Council's strategic objectives that form the Council Plan 2025–29 and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the community as expressed in the community vision and accompanying principles.



# Our Municipality

**The RAP also aligns with our strategic objectives that form the Council Plan 2025–29 and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the community as expressed in the community vision and accompanying principles.**

The city spans an area of 129 square kilometres in Melbourne’s south-east. The city is bounded by Police Road in the north, Dandenong Creek and South Gippsland Highway to the east, Thomson’s Road to the south and by Westall and Springvale Roads to the west. It includes the residential suburbs of Bangholme, Dandenong, Dandenong North, Springvale, Springvale South, Noble Park, Noble Park North, Keysborough, and Lyndhurst.

Greater Dandenong is a place where people from all cultures and nations belong, with their achievements recognised and proudly celebrated. We provide a range of services to improve quality of life for all residents. We are committed to ensuring that people have access to quality services that address the many needs of individuals and families of all ages.

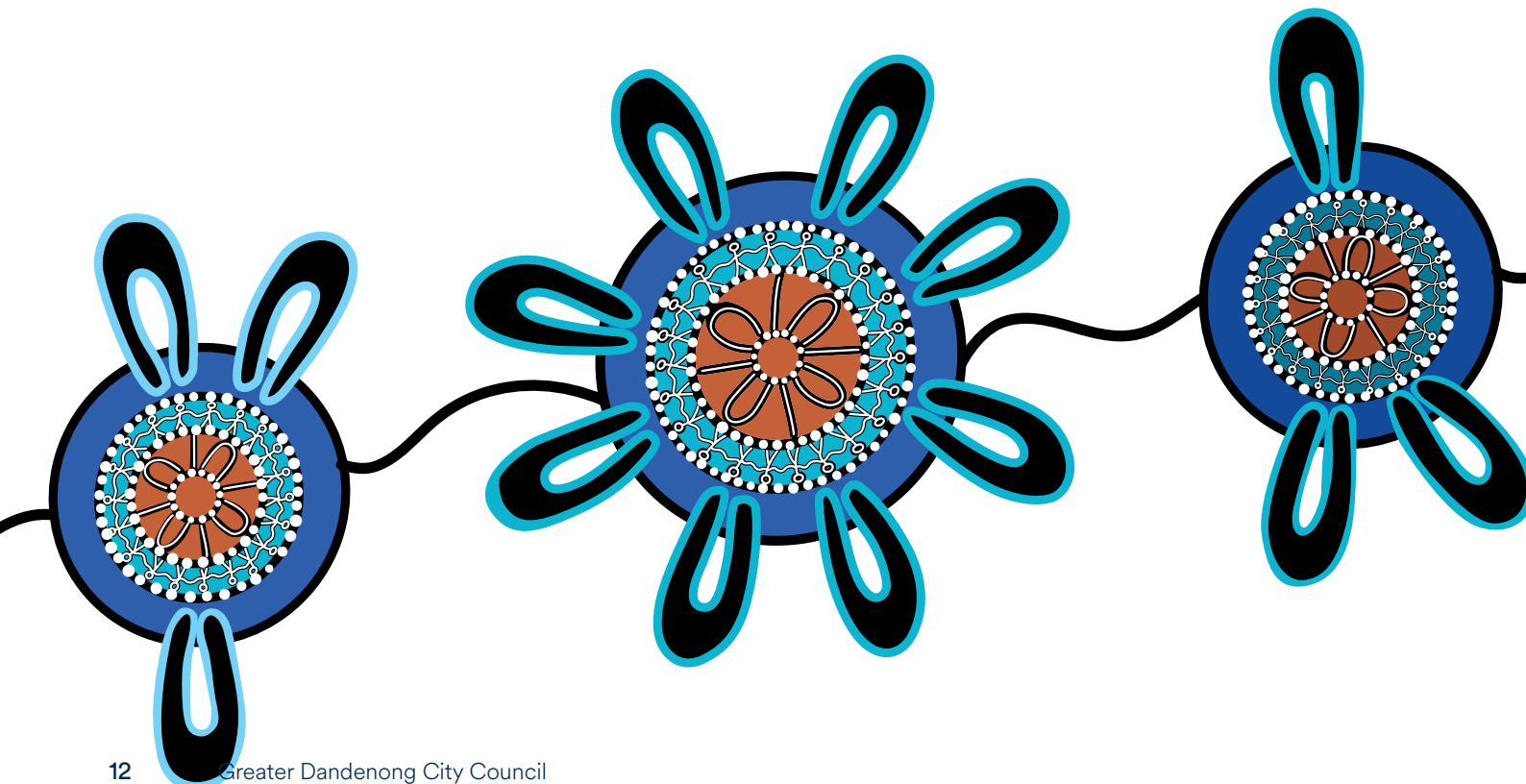
These services include:

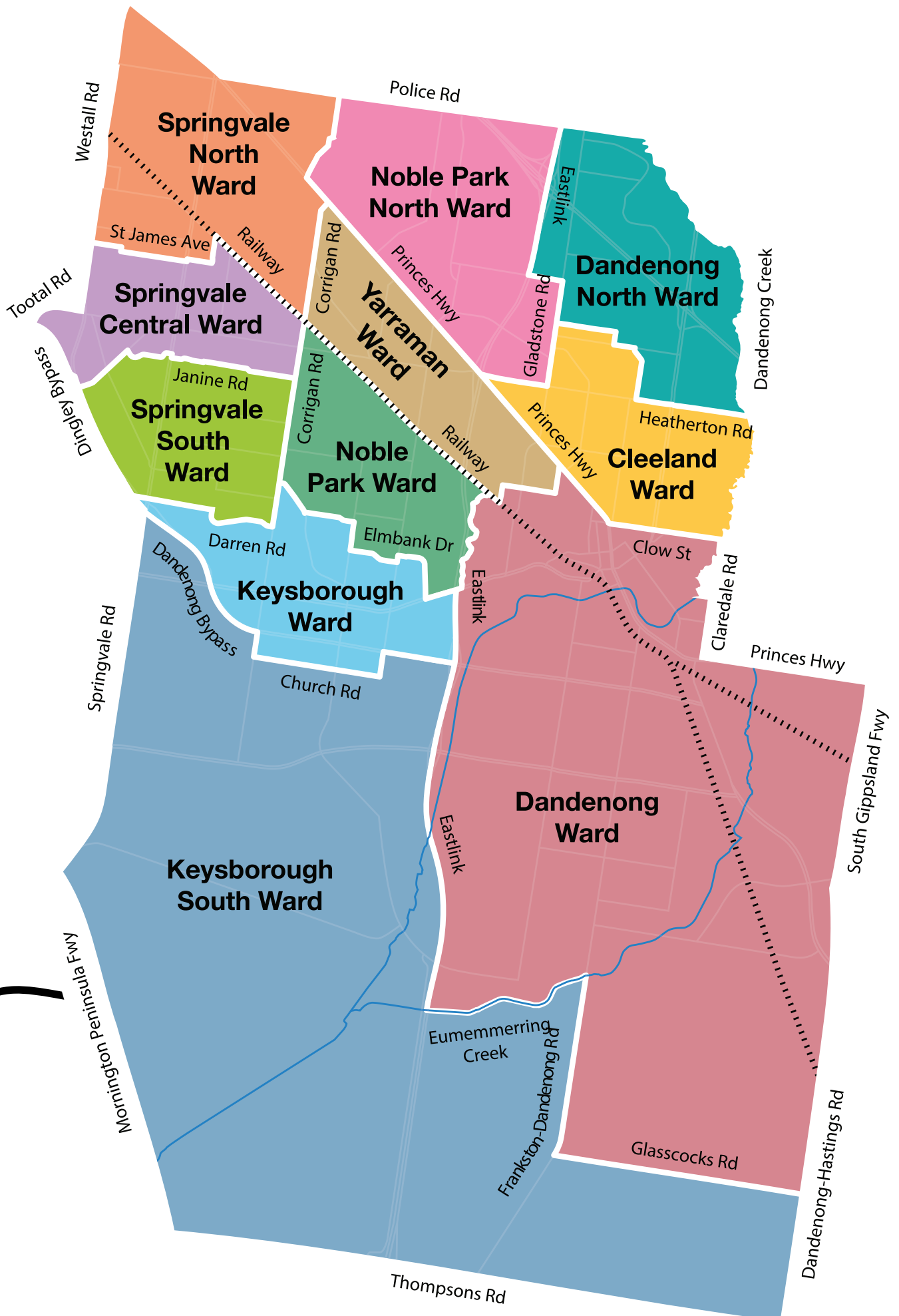
Children, Youth and Family services, Waste services, Aged care and Disability services, Environmental services, Festivals and Events, Building and Planning services, Library services, Community Grants, Sport and Recreation services.

Council has three customer service centres, located at Dandenong Civic Centre, Parkmore shopping centre and Springvale Community Hub, along with a call centre to service the needs of the community.

Council has five offices located across the municipality for its operations and staff.

938 staff are employed at Council, with one identified Aboriginal staff member. Council does not have the ability to capture such data, due to diversity and inclusivity policies that are in place.





# Our Community

## Great people

Over

**167,000**

residents from

**155**

birthplaces

**61%**

Overseas born

Over

**400**

local community  
groups and  
service clubs

## Great place

Land area of

**129.5**

square kilometres



Recognised as the capital  
of the south-east

Renowned cultural precincts



## Great times



Largest basketball and volleyball stadium in the southern hemisphere

Over  
**200**  
active sports clubs

Art events and festivals held monthly

## Great place to work

More than  
**114,000**  
local jobs

Over  
**19,000**  
registered businesses



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander profile

## Population

- 615 residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in Greater Dandenong.
- 7,076 residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander live in Greater Dandenong and its neighbouring municipalities (Casey, Frankston, Kingston, Knox and Monash).

## Education

- 42% of Australian prep. pupils who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are vulnerable in one or more domains of development<sup>1</sup> – nearly twice the corresponding proportion of 22%, among all prep. pupils.
- Nearly a third of (30%) of 20-24 year-old residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders had left school before completing year 11 – over three times the corresponding level among non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents.

## Employment

- 13% of 25-64-year-old of Greater Dandenong residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are unemployed, compared with 4% of the general population.
- Nearly half (47%) of Greater Dandenong residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children have no parent in paid employment, compared with 32% across all families with children.

## Families

- Two-thirds (66%) of couple and single-parent families with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are one-parent families – over twice the level of 28% among other families.

## Housing

- Greater Dandenong Residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are less than half as likely to own, or be purchasing, their homes (26%) as the general population (63%).
- Twenty-seven per cent of residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, rent from government or community agencies, compared with 3% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents.

## Disability and Health

- 14% of Greater Dandenong residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are living with severe or profound disability – nearly twice the corresponding rate of 7.7% among the general population.
- 21% of Greater Dandenong residents who identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have experienced mental health conditions in the previous 12 months, compared with 6% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents.

<sup>1</sup> These were physical, emotional, social, language and communication.  
Source: Australian Early Development Census 2021

# Self-determination

**We acknowledge that through reconciliation the concept of self-determination is a core aspect of all work in this space.**

The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan explains: “At its core, self-determination is about Aboriginal people being at the centre of decision-making around the issues that directly affect their lives. In practice, this means a substantive transfer of decision-making power from government to Aboriginal peoples. A policy of self-determination recognises that the ongoing impact of colonisation is still being felt today; that Aboriginal people themselves are best positioned to address issues in their communities; and that the resilience, strength and resourcefulness of Aboriginal Victorians represent an enormous opportunity to build a healthy and prosperous future.”

## Legislative and policy context

- The City of Greater Dandenong's reconciliation Strategy is informed by key legislation, policies and plans at the International, Australian, Victorian, and municipal levels. Outlined below is a brief overview of some of these key documents.

## International

- **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** - The Declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and wellbeing of the Indigenous peoples of the world. It elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples.

## Australian Government

- **The National Agreement on Closing the Gap** - The Agreement aims to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and achieve equality in life outcomes. The Agreement is between the Australian, state and territory governments, the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations. As a signatory to the National Closing the Gap Agreement, the Australian Local Government Association has developed a Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, which was released in September 2021 and outlines the role local government plays in supporting this work.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice** - The proposals for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Voice would provide a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to provide advice and input on matters that are important to improve their lives. The Australian Government undertook consultation with the community on the proposal made up of two parts: a National Voice and Local and Regional Voices, which would provide an avenue to work with all levels of government at a local level. The feedback from the consultation is being considered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design groups to further develop and refine the proposals so final recommendations can be made to the Australian Government.

# Victorian Government

- **Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018** - The Act's purpose is to protect Aboriginal Cultural heritage in Victoria. The Regulations prescribe standards and set out the circumstances in which a Cultural Heritage Management Plan should be prepared and set fees and charges
- **The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-23** - This is the Victorian Government's overarching framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians, organisations, and the wider community to drive action and improve outcomes for and with Aboriginal Victorians.
- **Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan** – The Plan provides a framework to help councils engage with Aboriginal communities and promote reconciliation. The Action Plan is being reviewed through an Aboriginal self-determination approach to enable a strong voice and engagement between Aboriginal communities and Victorian councils.
- **The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006** - Sets out the basic rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of all people in Victoria, including the right to culture for minority groups. Under s.19 (2), four distinct rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised including: the right to enjoy identity and culture; the right to maintain and use language; the right to maintain kinship ties; and the right to maintain a distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which there is a connection under traditional laws and customs.

- **Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018**

This was the first law in Australia to formally commit a government to Treaty with First Peoples.

- It established the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria as the Aboriginal Representative Body.
  - It set out the principles of self-determination, equal partnership, and good faith in Treaty negotiations.
- **Statewide Treaty Bill 2025**
    - Passed in October 2025, this is Australia's first legislation to enact a Statewide Treaty.
    - Establishes Gellung Warl, a new statutory body with three key components:
      - ◇ First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria – a democratic representative body.
      - ◇ Nginma Ngainga Wara – an accountability body aligned with Closing the Gap.
      - ◇ Nyerna Yoorrook Telkuna – a truth-telling body to embed local truth-telling and education.
    - Embeds truth-telling, Cultural recognition, and structural reform into law.
    - Treaty is framed as a binding agreement between the State and First Peoples, with mechanisms for ongoing negotiation, transparency, and reform
  - **Yoorrook Justice Commission**
    - Established in 2021 as Australia's first formal truth-telling commission.
    - Its findings and 100 recommendations (2025) are legally and morally linked to the Treaty process.

The Commission's work is embedded in the Treaty framework through Nyerna Yoorrook Telkuna, ensuring truth-telling continues at the local level.

# Challenges and Opportunities

**There is significant reform occurring across the government and community sectors, all of which impact our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This presents both challenges and opportunities for Local Governments and councils will need to be responsive and adaptive.**

As such, Council is a member of the LGPro RAP special interest group which has representatives of the 79 councils across the State. This engagement provides space to explore ongoing opportunities for partnership and collaboration to support Council's Cultural Competence to champion reconciliation within our municipality.

On 11 October 2025, Australia's first Treaty between First Peoples in Victoria and the Victorian Government was passed in the Victorian Upper House. This will reset the relationship between First Peoples and the State, and provide a mechanism for ongoing reform.

Treaty is a significant opportunity for us all to acknowledge the past, heal and move forward together, moving towards a more reconciled nation. Treaty recognises and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the experts in understanding the needs of their communities. By enabling self-determination, it supports the development of local, practical solutions that strengthen health, education and housing outcomes.

## Our reconciliation journey

Greater Dandenong City Council began its formal reconciliation journey in July 1995 with the adoption of a Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This declaration acknowledged their right to self-determination and marked a symbolic step toward reconciliation.

Council deepened its commitment in 2008, by issuing a formal apology for the historical injustices caused by past governmental policies, including the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Building on these foundations, Council launched its first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in November 2017. Replace Reconciliation Action Plan with RAP so it should be: 'Building on these foundations, Council launched its first Innovate RAP in November 2017. This two-year plan aimed to enhance understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation efforts, and foster respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's Culture and knowledge.

While implementation of some initiatives presented challenges, they were embraced as learning opportunities. Council staff demonstrated a strong willingness to adapt and ensure that actions were authentic, collaborative, and community led.

In late 2019, the Council endorsed the development of a second Innovate RAP 2021–23, with a focus on embedding reconciliation across all areas of Council operations. A significant milestone during this period was the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council's recognition of the Bunurong people as the Traditional Custodians of all land within the City of Greater Dandenong. This boundary realignment increased the responsibilities of the Bunurong Land Council, and the Council actively supported their growth and capacity building, ensuring meaningful consultation across all Council business.

# Our 2021-23 RAP Highlights

**Council has been recognised for its reconciliation work at National, State and Local Government levels illustrating best practice in the work done with both Traditional Custodians and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. Awards and other important highlights from the last RAP include:**

Winner of the 2024 National Local Government Award - Indigenous Category Wominjeka flags project.

Winner of the LG Pro 2024 Local Government Award - Indigenous Category service delivery - Balit Booboop Narrkwarren Indigenous Health Partnerships Initiative program.

Winner of the 2024 Reconciliation Victoria Maggollee Awards- Indigenous Category for the Balit Booboop Narrkwarren Indigenous Health Partnerships Initiative program.

The Waa and Bulln Fire Pit was awarded the 2023 LG Pro Award for Excellence in First Nations Community Partnership Initiative. This initiative was in partnership with the Bunurong and Wurundjeri Land Councils.

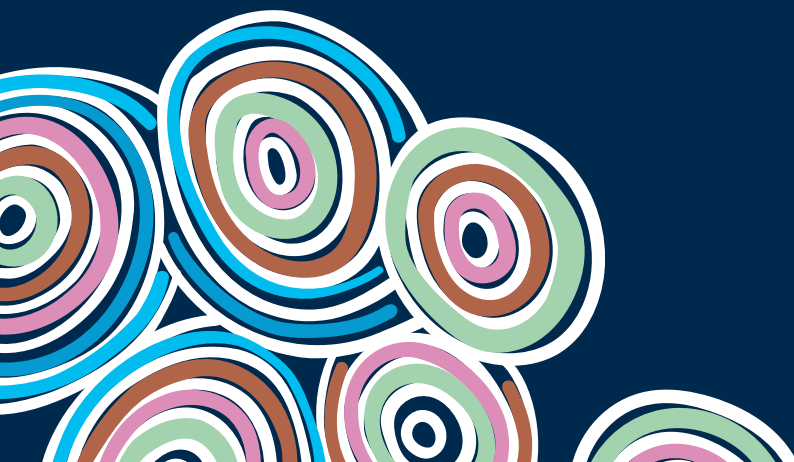
Notice of Motion endorsed by Council declaring support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in its entirety and affirming support of YES Vote for the National referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.

## Other key deliverables completed and achievements Cultural Recognition:

- Council erected Acknowledgement plaques across all main Council buildings with a statement endorsed by Bunurong Land Council.
- Building on these foundations, Council launched its first Innovate RAP in November 2017.
- Over 68 ceremonial Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies held during the last RAP.

## Community Engagement:

- Annual Reconciliation Week events held (300+ attendees),
- National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) NAIDOC grant partnership with Bunurong Land Council and wider community
- Providing for community led NAIDOC Week celebrations and Blak Market.
- Council partnered with Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), Multicultural Communities of Victoria and Nairm Maa Djambana, in holding a National Referendum YES Campaign forum.



### Health & Wellbeing:

- Mums and Bubs Antenatal Yarning Circle program rolled out with Nairm Maa Djambana and Dandenong and District Aborigines Cooperative (DDACL) across two Local Government Areas (LGAs).
- Community engagement partnership with Quit Victoria and Aboriginal health services, in delivery of smoking cessation initiatives.
- Creation of Children's Acknowledgment films.

### Youth & Sports:

- 2023 Inaugural Koorie Statewide Junior Basketball Carnival held at Dandenong Stadium in partnership with Bunurong Sports Association.
- Statewide Koorie Senior Netball/Football Carnival (5,000+ participants) delivered in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL) held at Tatterson Park and Springers Leisure Centre.

### Arts & Culture:

- Link Road, Noble Park formally renamed and Gazetted to Muderra Way.
- Muderra Way art project.
- Wominjeka Flag project.
- Railway Parade Public Arts project.
- Exhibitions e.g., WILAM BIIK with 3,200+ attendees.
- Performances by Aboriginal creatives, Kutcha Edwards and the Sapphires at the Drum Theatre.

### Caring for Country and Environmental Collaboration:

- Contracting of the Bunurong Bushlands Ranger team, twice a week to support two-way capacity building and creation of urban forests.
- Sponsorship of eight local Aboriginal young men, to attend the Dardimunwurro Cultural exchange program for youth.



BLCAC member James Brown at the CGD and Dandenong Market 2024 NAIDOC event.

# Balit Booboop Narrkwarren

**The Balit Booboop Narrkwarren training is an adaptation of Baby Makes Three, an evidence-based health program.**

The adapted program was developed by healthAbility in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and mainstream health organisations with Aboriginal specific roles. Balit Booboop Narrkwarren is a health promotion model to support Aboriginal families to have respectful, Culturally rich relationships with a particular focus on supporting families when a new bub arrives.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations staff and staff in Aboriginal-specific roles in mainstream organisations completed two days of training to become BBN Champions. This embedded key messages from the Balit Booboop Narrkwarren into the activities, programs and approaches of many organisations across the south-east and Bunurong country



# BALIT BOOBOOP NARRKWARREN

## champion yarn

**UNCLE LIONEL**  
VIDAKI MEDITATION...  
SITTING STILL IN NATURE  
WE HAVE 2 EARS AND ONLY ONE MOUTH...  
WATCH NATURE...  
CONNECT to the POSITIVE ENERGY OF NATURE...

**UNCLE SHANE**  
CARVING OUT A BETTER WAY FOR THE FUTURE  
CONTINUING THE SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO LAND...  
WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

COME FROM THE HEART SPACE

**BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES**

**BUNURONG ON COUNTRY**

**YARNS**

THE RASHER FOR ALL OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION

GROUND-CREATING FOUNDATIONAL PROGRAM

**TOOLKIT LAUNCH**

**AUNTY DEB**

**STARTING THE CONVERSATIONS!**

MUMS CAN BE STRONG!  
DADS CAN BE GENTLE

TACKLING GENDER STEREOTYPES

GIVING VOICE

MUMS CAN DADS CAN POSTERS

SHIRLEEN

"DANGEROUS" WOMEN'S FAMILY SAFETY GROUP

LONG-TERM PLACE-BASED

healthAbility

© SHARAL KELLETT

# Development of our RAP

The priorities outlined in Council's Third Innovate RAP are the result of an intensive community consultation process, an examination of municipal data, legislative requirements and Council's ongoing commitment to reconciliation. With Self-determination the underpinning framework, it was important for Council that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community were directly consulted in relation to matters that affect them and that their voices were forefront to decision making.

The consultation process was split into two phases:

1. A deliberative consultation with the Bunurong land Council, as Traditional Custodians and the RAP Reference Group as representatives of the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
2. A broader municipal wide engagement providing socialisation of the draft RAP and an opportunity for feedback.

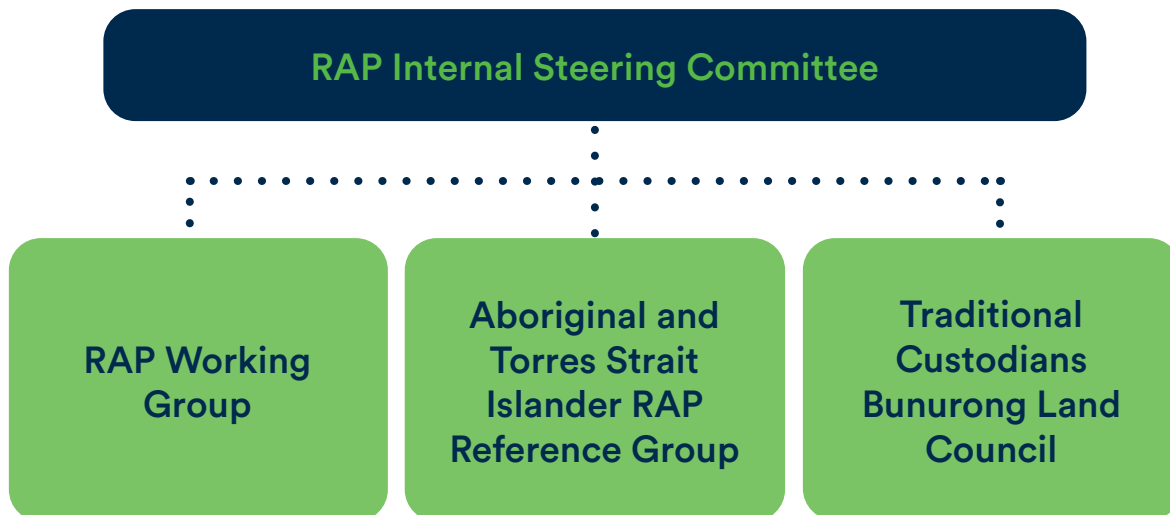
Key themes identified from the deliberative consultation were: Truth-telling, Cultural safety & Cultural Awareness, and Communication & Engagement.

These key themes have been used to influence the priorities reflected in this plan and the projects to be undertaken each year.



# RAP Governance

Council’s endorsement of its third RAP was supported by a strengthened governance framework to guide its development and implementation. Two key additions to this framework include the formation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander RAP Reference Group and the establishment of an Internal RAP Steering Committee.

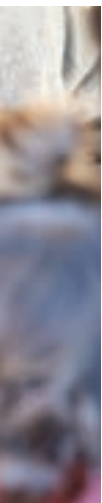


## *How will we report to our community on the plan?*

Every three months, Council will update its progress against this plan’s priorities via its Quarterly Performance Report. This is presented at a Council meeting and is available on the Council’s website for our community to read. Council will also hold half yearly yarning circles to meet with the Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and stakeholders, to hear their experiences and aspirations on the continued development of the plan and

implementation. In doing so, Council will be transparent in supporting the building of trust within our local Aboriginal community and enabling self-determination by providing a space to hear their voices in relation to matters that directly impact them.

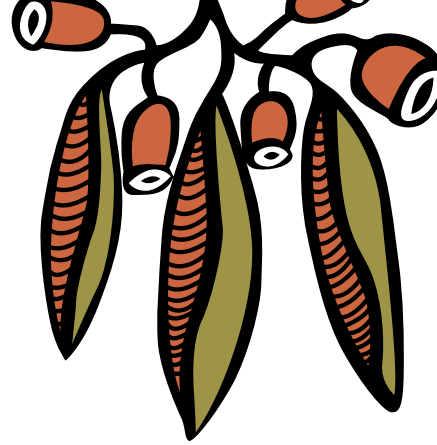
Every year Council is required to report on the progress of our Reconciliation Action Plan, to Reconciliation Australia. Reconciliation Australia are an independent not-for profit organisation, the lead body for reconciliation in Australia.



Far left: Uncle Mark Brown Bunurong Elder.  
Top and bottom left: CGD and Dandenong Market 2025 NAIDOC event.



Koorie Youth Will Shake Spears dance group 2024 CGD and Dandenong Market NAIDOC event.



# Reconciliation Australia RAP Framework

Our RAP is based on Reconciliation Australia's framework and provided advice.

According to Reconciliation Australia's vision, a reconciled Australia is based on progressing five key dimensions: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

## 1. Race Relations:

Positive two-way relationships built on trust and respect exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians throughout society.

## 2. Equality and Equity:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians participate equally and equitably in all areas of life and the distinctive individual and collective rights and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are universally recognized and respected.

## 3. Institutional Integrity:

Political, business, and community institutions actively support all dimensions of reconciliation.

## 4. Unity:

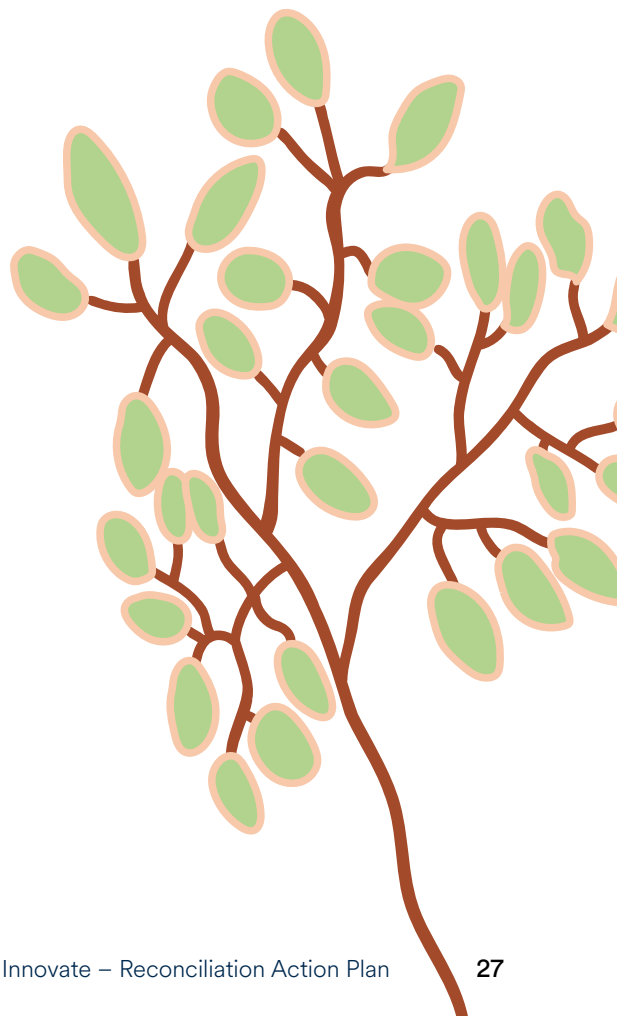
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights are a valued and recognized part of a shared national identity and, as a result, there is national unity.

## 5. Historical Acceptance:

There is widespread acceptance of our nation's history and agreement that the wrongs of the past will never be repeated — there is truth, justice, healing and historical acceptance.

The RAP gives Council a strategic and structured approach to progress on its reconciliation journey. This is done both internally and externally through building respectful relationships and meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The RAP framework provided by Reconciliation Australia has four RAP types: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate, each RAP type assisting in contributing to the reconciliation movement. RAPs deliver tangible and substantive benefits for First Nations peoples and increase cultural safety in the workplace.






# Relationships

**Council deeply values the relationships we hold with our communities, recognising that these connections are fundamental to our growth and success.**

We are dedicated to strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non Indigenous Australians. This includes fostering meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations and enhancing consultation and communication across all community groups.

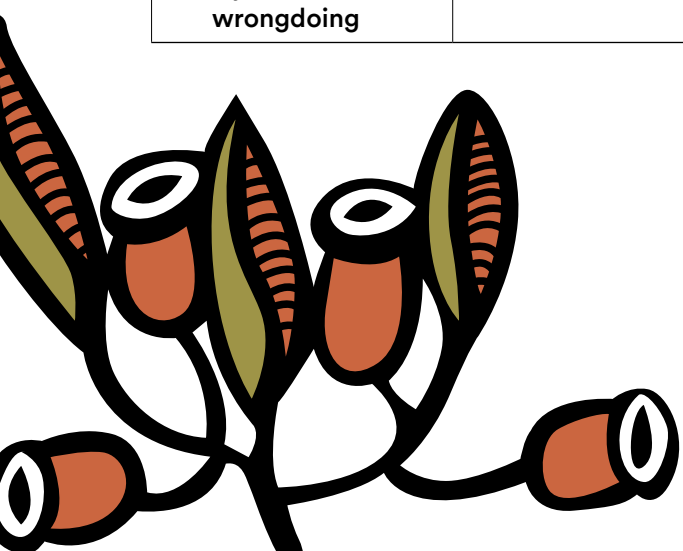
Council acknowledges that relationships built on mutual respect and trust empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to lead self-determined lives. We commit to acting with honesty and integrity, and to confronting racism and discrimination in all aspects of our work.

We also recognise the vital role of truth-telling in deepening our shared understanding of the impacts of colonisation and dispossession. Truth-telling offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the opportunity to share their histories, heritage, and Culture with the broader community, and to voice and document their experiences. It is a powerful means of imparting knowledge of thousands of years of rich histories, languages, and stories, while also serving as a form of restorative justice—acknowledging the enduring effects of dispossession and inequity.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</b>	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	Oct 2027	Coordinator Advocacy
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Jul 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Build stronger relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to support the ongoing health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth across the region.	Apr 2027 Apr 2028	Manager Community Wellbeing
	Identify and establish potential partnerships with local Aboriginal Youth Services.	Apr 2027	Manager Community Wellbeing
<b>2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</b>	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to Council staff.	Mar 2027 Mar 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	Feb 2027 Feb 2028	Organisation Development, Capability and Change Lead
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	Mar 2027 Mar 2028	Chief Executive Officer
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	Jan 2027 Jan 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2027 May 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer



Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.</b>	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of Reconciliation across our workforce.	Jan 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	May 2027 May 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	Jan 2027 Jan 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	Jan 2027 Jan 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Support community organisations and groups to develop reconciliation projects through grants.	June 2028	Team Leader Community Partnership and Volunteers
<b>4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.</b>	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Jan 2028	Employee Relations Lead
	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	Apr 2028	Employee Relations Lead
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	May 2028	Employee Relations Lead
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	May 2028	Employee Relations Lead
<b>5. Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people opportunities for deliberate sharing of histories and experiences, inclusive of injustice and wrongdoing</b>	Provide opportunities for truth-telling and community connection through community-led exhibitions, programs, and events.	Jan 2027	Manager Creative and Engaged City
	Hold public truth-telling talks and discussions to enable a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences (past and present).	Sep 2026 Sep 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer





**The City of Greater Dandenong is enriched by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Council accepts the historical impacts of colonisation and is committed to fostering a deeper understanding and respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and diversity. We will do this by undergoing Cultural learning, observing Cultural protocols, and participating in Cultural events.**

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land that we operate on, the Bunurong people. We are committed to respectful practices that demonstrate our shared community identity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, free of racism and discrimination.

Council is committed to advancing truth-telling and Treaty. We will provide opportunity for education and learning from these processes within our wider community.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through Cultural learning.</b>	Conduct a review of Cultural learning needs within our organisation.	May 2028	Organisation Development, Capability and Change Lead
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our Cultural learning strategy.	May 2028	Organisation Development, Capability and Change Lead
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	May 2028	Organisation Development, Capability and Change Lead
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers, and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured Cultural learning.	May 2028	Organisation Development, Capability and Change Lead
	Increase staff understanding of the difference between Cultural Safety and Cultural Awareness to ensure Cultural safety for staff and community across Council departments.	Jun 2027	Organisation Development, Capability and Change Lead
<b>7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.</b>	Increase staff is understanding of the purpose and significance behind Cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Jul 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Develop, implement, and communicate a Cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	Jul 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Invite a Traditional Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate Cultural protocol at (a minimum of six) significant Council events each year.	Jan 2027 Jan 2028	Coordinator Festival and Events
	Include an Acknowledgement to Country or other appropriate protocols included at the commencement of important meetings, as well as appropriate external print and digital communications of Council.	Jan 2027	Manager Strategic Engagement and Communications
	Council to explore creation of a naming policy and consider expanding opportunities of naming rights with Bunurong Land Council.	Jan 2027	Manager Creative and Engaged City
<b>8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</b>	RAP Working Group and Internal Steering Committee, to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	Jul 2026 Jul 2027	Employee Relations Lead
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	Apr 2027 Apr 2028	Employee Relations Lead
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	Apr 2027 Apr 2028	Employee Relations Lead



Above: Bunurong Elder Uncle Mark Brown at the CGD and Dandenong Market 2024 NAIDOC event.  
Below : The Koorie Youth Will Shake Spears dance group at the CGD and Dandenong Market 2024 NAIDOC event.





# Opportunities

**The Bunurong people’s deep spiritual connection to land and waters remains a source of strength and identity, despite the impacts of colonisation. This connection reminds us that caring for Country—its land, water, flora, fauna, and Cultural heritage—is not only vital for environmental health but also an opportunity to strengthen communities and livelihoods through ongoing Cultural engagement.**

The City of Greater Dandenong is enriched by the enduring Cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Their knowledge systems, experiences, and Cultural practices present opportunities to innovate, learn, and grow together. Council is committed to turning these opportunities into action by:

- **Employment and Professional Development:** Creating pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to thrive within our workforce.
- **Procurement and Partnerships:** Building mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal businesses and organisations.

- **Access and Inclusion:** Ensuring systems and processes are accessible, equitable, and Culturally safe.
- **Retention and Growth:** Supporting long-term engagement and career progression.

We believe opportunity is the foundation of inclusion. By embracing diversity and fostering environments where every voice is valued, we create spaces for innovation, collaboration, and shared success—benefiting the entire community.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, with a focus on retention and professional development.</b>	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	May 2028	Business Partnering and Talent Lead
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	May 2028	Business Partnering and Talent Lead
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	May 2028	Business Partnering and Talent Lead
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	May 2028	Business Partnering and Talent Lead
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	May 2028	Business Partnering and Talent Lead

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</b>	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy	Jan 2027	Manager Procurement
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Oct 2026	Manager Procurement
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	Jan 2027	Manager Procurement
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Jan 2027	Manager Procurement
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Apr 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Promote and facilitate opportunities for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to grow their capacity and capability to improve economic and social outcomes.	Jan 2027	Manager Business Development and Investment Business and Employment
<b>11. Implement Bunurong Cultural Land Management practices for Caring for Country</b>	Regularly attend formal BLCAC and CGD bimonthly meetings to engage with and discuss open space and other relevant projects.	May 2027	Manager Strategic and Environmental Planning
	Implement Caring for Country initiative, On Country Workshops delivered by BLCAC to 15 key staff annually from the following council areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil engineers</li> <li>• Landscape architects</li> <li>• Environmental officers</li> <li>• Urban planners</li> <li>• Waterway management staff</li> </ul>	May 2027	Manager Parks and Open Spaces
	Work in collaboration with BLCAC Bunurong Rangers and the Parks Team, with support from internal stakeholders such as Open Space Planning, to deliver a prototype Bunurong Forest Garden within a Council managed reserve and a plan to manage its ongoing care and maintenance.	May 2027 May 2028	Coordinator Conservation
	In collaboration with Bunurong Rangers, explore opportunity to implement the Bunurong Forest Garden prototype within further open spaces across the municipality.	May 2028	Manager Parks and Open Space
	Explore the opportunity for a contribution to an overarching regional Bunurong Traditional Custodian Caring for Country Fund to enable and continue to support the ongoing capacity building partnership of Council and Bunurong Caring for Country Land Management practices.	May 2028	Manager Strategic and Environmental Planning



# Governance

**Council will regularly monitor the progress of our RAP, ensuring accountability to our communities and using tracking tools to strengthen our commitment to reconciliation. We will embed reconciliation priorities and RAP deliverables into Council's strategic direction and core documents.**

Our leadership will drive meaningful action, setting a path toward best practice. This approach will help embed reconciliation into all aspects of Council's work, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander voices are central to decision-making and championing self-determination across the organisation.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>12. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.</b>	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	May 2027	Internal Steering Committee Chair
	Maintain and review the Terms of Reference for the Internal Steering Committee and RAP Reference Group.	May 2027	Internal Steering Committee Chair
	RAP reference Group and Internal Steering Committee meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	Mar, Jun, Sep, Dec 2027, 2028	Internal Steering Committee Chair
<b>13. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.</b>	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Nov 2027	Internal Steering Committee Chair
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2027	Internal Steering Committee Chair
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Sep 2027	Internal Steering Committee Chair
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	Jul 2026	Internal Steering Committee Chair
<b>14. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally.</b>	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, ensuring we receive all important RAP correspondence.	Jul 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link to access the online RAP Impact measurement questionnaire	Aug 2026 Aug 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact measurement questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	Sep 2026 Sep 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	Sep, Dec 2026, Mar, Jun, Sep, Dec 2027, Mar, Jun 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings, annually.	Jul 2027	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer	Feb 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
	Submit a Traffic Light Report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	Jun 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer
<b>15. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</b>	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Jan 2028	RAP Advocacy Officer

BLCAC and Koorie Youth Will Shake Spears member, Eric Edwards at the CGD and Dandenong Market 2024 NAIDOC event.



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