

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is *a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY COUNCIL
INNOVATE
RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
JULY 2023 TO JULY 2025



MEET THE ARTISTS

Troy Firebrace

About the Artist

Troy is a proud Yorta Yorta man whose love for art started when he was a child. Following his love of art led Troy to study a Bachelor in Creative Arts, majoring in Fine Arts at La Trobe University, Bendigo. These studies allowed Troy to explore different artists and styles. Art mediums including clay and wood allow him to find his own artist style, concepts and motivation.

Troy's work has been displayed at Kaiela Arts Shepparton, Melbourne Museum and Dudley House Bendigo. Troy's talent and passion has been recognised worldwide and has led to commissioning of pieces from various sectors including education, government and private industries, as well as personal pieces. Troy's work is influenced by his strong Aboriginal culture and has assisted him in discovering and reflecting his true self through his art.



Description



My work comes off a key word in the Reconciliation Action Plan: Innovate demonstrated through the key elements being mirrored.

The background is traditional art marking representing the Elders in the community and the Elders of the past laying the foundation for us to build on, acknowledging the strength, resilience and sacrifice given.

The geometric shapes are the community of today, the modern and current practice of organisations, technology and practice that help build the next layer in history.

The river represents the area which we live and work on. The reflective water is all community members working together ensuring the health of the river improves, which reflects the good work when we work together as a community for a common goal.

The edge pattern is the ancient story and spirits that are flowing in the sky, the guidance of the unknown becoming known. The feeling of what is right and what is wrong during moments of decisions.

Troy Firebrace

Tammy-Lee Atkinson

About the Artist

Tammy-Lee Atkinson is a proud Yorta Yorta woman and self-taught artist. Born in Echuca, raised in Cumeragunja, Barmah and Kerang, Tammy now lives in Mooroopna. Tammy-Lee completed her Bachelor of Visual Arts at the Institute of Koorie Education at Deakin University, Geelong and is a consistent contributor to Kaiela Arts, Shepparton.

Tammy-Lee grew up admiring her grandmother's artwork from emu egg carving and feather flowers; always being surrounded by art has nurtured a natural passion for art. Painting and drawing has always been a hobby for Tammy-Lee for most of her life; being able to express herself through art has made her grounded. Art was always an escape from life for Tammy-Lee.

Her distinctive style of painting, drawing and printmaking convey a contemporary expression of her love of Culture. Tammy's artworks now grace many local offices and homes in the Region.

We would like to thank Tammy-Lee for previously developing the design for our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-2020. We commissioned Tammy-Lee this year to produce a piece of artwork to reflect our Reconciliation journey so far. Tammy-Lee also led a staff workshop as part of the Innovate RAP consultation where two pieces of artwork were produced reflecting our staff commitment to Reconciliation.



Description



'Across The Dungala' represents the movement of Yorta Yorta people coming and going from Cumeragunja. The Dungala is a big part of who I am and being able to cross and swim it gives me peace.

Tammy-Lee Atkinson



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

We, the Greater Shepparton City Council, acknowledge the Yorta Yorta Peoples of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton. We pay respect to their tribal Elders, we celebrate their continuing Culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Greater Shepparton City Council acknowledges all that have contributed to the development of our *Innovate* Reconciliation Action Plan. It is through the contribution and support of community and key partners that this valued strategic document has been developed and will now be brought to life. Special mention to the following:

- Local First Nations people
- Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation
- Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan *Innovate* Working Group
- Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan *Innovate* Project Team
- Shepparton Regional Reconciliation Group
- Reconciliation Australia
- Indigenous Employment Partners

We extend our greatest gratitude to you all.

LANGUAGE STATEMENT

The term First Nations people is used throughout this document in reference to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Greater Shepparton City Council respects the rights of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to define themselves.

Traditional Owners or Custodians of the land comprising Greater Shepparton are recognised as the Yorta Yorta people.

WARNING: *First Nations people are warned that the following information may contain images and text of deceased persons.*





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MESSAGES OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation Australia commends Greater Shepparton City Council on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

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

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

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Greater Shepparton City Council to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, Greater Shepparton City Council will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Greater Shepparton City Council is part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Greater Shepparton City Council's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

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

**Karen Mundine,
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia**



Mayor's Message

I am extremely proud to represent a region that has such strong cultural, spiritual and historical ties to First Nations people.

We, the Greater Shepparton City Council, acknowledge the Yorta Yorta Peoples of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton. We pay respect to their tribal Elders, we celebrate their continuing Culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.



Greater Shepparton is a diverse community and we are proud that many First Nations people call this region home. It is these strong ties that make it even more important for us as a Council to acknowledge and celebrate the Traditional Owners of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton, Yorta Yorta Nations.

Council is pleased to be presenting its second *Innovate* Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023-2025. This next iteration builds upon the work of our first *Reflect* RAP 2019-2020. The RAP *Innovate* outlines actions for advancing Council's vision for reconciliation. It focuses on developing and strengthening relationships, engaging staff and stakeholders in activities that promote reconciliation and developing and piloting innovative strategies to empower First Nations people.

Council are pleased with the progress and understanding achieved through the first RAP *Reflect* and we are looking forward to building on this with our second RAP *Innovate*.

Cr Shane Sali,
Mayor

CEO Message

It gives me great pleasure to present to you our second Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), *Innovate*.

I acknowledge the Yorta Yorta Peoples of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton. We pay respect to their tribal Elders, we celebrate their continuing culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.



I also acknowledge the many First Nations people who reside in Greater Shepparton and call this beautiful region home.

Council's second RAP *Innovate* 2023-2025 is the next step in our important journey towards reconciliation. I would like to thank the many community members and staff who contributed to this document by offering us their time and expertise. This Plan would not have been possible without the voices of these contributors.

In compiling our second RAP, Council spent time reflecting on the learnings and achievements from our first *Reflect* RAP 2019-2020. The first RAP involved reflecting on Council's practices to enable internal organisational changes to take a step towards reconciliation.

While these actions in the *Innovate* RAP are extremely important for us as a Council, they are only a small step. We have a long way to go on our journey and our *Innovate* RAP is one of many significant steps on this journey. The commitments outlined in the *Innovate* RAP will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of our sphere of influence and establish the best approach to move towards reconciliation.

I look forward to seeing this Plan implemented and the positive outcomes achieved from doing so.

Peter Harriott,
Chief Executive Officer

OUR CORE BUSINESS AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Greater Shepparton City Council is governed by nine elected Councillors and operates in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020. As a local government authority, Greater Shepparton City Council exercises a wide range of government functions and powers for the “peace, order and good government” of our municipality.

Greater Shepparton City Council is one of the largest regional councils in Victoria and we strive to achieve our community’s vision of a “Greater Shepparton”. As a local government authority we protect and strengthen Greater Shepparton’s economic prosperity and the health, wellbeing and safety of our residents.

We endeavour to plan and build a connected regional community which is safe, easy to navigate and provides a healthy and prosperous lifestyle, now and into the future. Our purpose is to deliver services, implement strategic initiatives and develop policies and plans that are in the best interests of our community.

We are committed to making a difference in our community and creating a Greater Shepparton that provides access to world-class educational and employment opportunities and health and wellbeing facilities.

Council is one of the region’s largest employers with approximately 850 staff in full-time, part-time and casual roles across a variety of occupations. Council currently employs 17 First Nations employees, although believes the number of First Nations staff is higher with some staff choosing not to disclose. These staff are across all directorates of council.

Greater Shepparton has the largest First Nations population in regional Victoria and values the richness of their culture and history. This richness places us in a unique position to work with local First Nations people and non-First Nations people. Our sphere of influence, as a Local Government authority, provides us with a broad platform to create and promote culturally safe services, buildings, work practices and public spaces.

DEVELOPING OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Our Vision for Reconciliation has been developed in consultation with our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group. The Working Group identified key elements they considered vital to reconciliation. At the recommendation of the Working Group, Neil Morris was engaged to

develop a Vision that reflected the elements identified. Neil worked with other members of the Working Group to ensure the Vision reflects the contribution of all First Nations People living in Greater Shepparton.

OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Our Vision for Reconciliation is to walk hand in hand, respectfully with First Nations people of Greater Shepparton to listen deeply and work towards establishing clear actions to support reconciliation within the community.

Our reconciliation work is guided by the principles of self-determination, equality and justice as tools to provide First Nations people with leadership opportunities to continue ongoing healing and growth as a community to achieve meaningful reconciliation.

We acknowledge achieving meaningful reconciliation is a long-term process and will be achieved through strong relationships, respect, opportunities and good governance both now and into the future. First Nations people provide vital knowledge to lead the community in ways to inspire a better future through recognition of cultural connection and understanding of this land.

Through working closely with supporting leadership of First Nations custodians, we will continue to work towards a community that grows and recognises, respects and understands the contribution of all First Nations people within the region as key to our reconciliation journey.

The rich history of the Traditional Custodians of the area that now comprises Greater Shepparton is both powerful and strong and we recognise this land is unceded sovereignty. This history demonstrates ways of living respectfully on woka (country). History demonstrates that the Traditional Custodians have always put the health and prosperity of Country and community central to all aspects of living within this culturally rich landscape that we are fortunate to call home today.

We continue to value and support culturally appropriate processes and ways for current and future generations of our diverse communities within the region to be guided by local First Nations people.

Through our reconciliation actions we commit to fulfilling every possible outcome for our community to walk on a galnya dana (good path) on Yorta Yorta Country.



This image is from the Greater Shepparton Sorry Day Event held in Monash Park. This event is held on an annual basis by Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group.

TRUTH TELLING

Community consultation identified the need for acknowledgement and Truth Telling of history, with a local context, was essential to working towards reconciliation. We thank Mulana Kaalinya Education Program for their contribution in providing the Truth Telling for our RAP: *Innovate*.

The Oldest Living Culture

Aboriginal society is known to be the oldest living culture on the planet, but just how old is now the question. Carbon dating has long suggested that we are a culture of approximately 45,000+ years of age. However more recent studies in Victoria and New South Wales have identified three different sites where that figure is now suggested to be 120,000 years of age.

Our Ancestors have lived on this land for many thousands of years, raising generation after generation of children, fathers, mothers, Elders and Leaders, and for the most part, living a life of freedom, self-sufficiency, caring for their land, and practicing their culture and traditions.

Those traditions include traditional healing, medicines, and foods, having respect for their Ancestral lands, caring for our clan/family, supporting our tribe and community, and only ever taking what they needed from the land, to feed their family, clan and tribe.

Colonisation and its impact

From the time Captain Cook arrived in 1770 and then Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788, Aboriginal life and culture has been significantly ruptured and has spiralled Aboriginal Australia to the point where, according to the United Nations, we now have the worst life expectancy on the planet. In this 'the lucky country' this fact is hard to comprehend.

Even so, our Aboriginal people continue to strive for a life filled with hope, community, culture, family, safety, security - and to be culturally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically well.

Regardless of the impact of colonisation, our rich culture continues today in many forms, and at varying levels depending on the experiences of Aboriginal people and communities across the nation. Ours is a Living Culture.

Mission Life

Here on Yorta Yorta country our first mission was Maloga Mission established near Barmah in 1874 by Daniel Mathews, a Cornish missionary. This was a place of safe-haven with our people coming and going as they pleased and still able to practice their culture including language, corroboree and healing methods. This mission was different to the others in NSW and Victoria, where Aboriginal people were forcefully placed and oppressed.

Nevertheless in 1888, with the promise of farm blocks that they could farm for themselves, our people moved from Maloga to Cummeragunga Mission, just around the river bend at Barmah. The Governor of NSW made a promise of farm blocks for each man/family, if they agreed to never return to Maloga Mission nor mix with Daniel Mathews who they believed, had been empowering them too much e.g., through education and cultural freedom.

The promise of land was so great, that they decided to move regardless of the restrictions placed on them. When they arrived at Cummeragunga they spent much of their time,

working for the mission manager, or clearing their land by hand in their private time. The land they had been allocated was virtual forest. Once they cleared the land, they started growing food, crops and had cows and a dairy; they started trading their food and wares with others on the mission via Auntie Maggie Nelson's Cummeragunga shop. Life was good.

However, farmers in the district were getting jealous, watching the land being 'wasted on the blacks', and started complaining to the authorities.

In 1907 the Cummeragunga Manager Mr Harris advised the Aboriginal men that their farms were now to be turned over to the Aborigines Protection Board; needless to say, our men and their families were left devastated. They were told that they could work for wages now or leave the mission, but after years of successfully working the land, this was little recompense.

Two Aboriginal missions were based on Yorta Yorta country being Maloga and Cummeragunga Mission - both near Barmah. An Aboriginal reserve was situated at Lake Moodemere near Corowa.

1939 The Cummeragunga Walk-off

After years of mistreatment, stolen children, little rations, the loss of farm blocks, breaches of trust, lack of acknowledgement in citizenship and other oppressive acts and policies of the day, the people of Cummeragunga rose-up and walked off the mission to 'freedom', as outlined in Chapter 15 of *Dharmalan Dana*, Nelson and Nelson (2014).

They moved over the river to the town of Barmah in Victoria and six months later, the majority moved to the Flats (opposite what is now Kidstown) between Shepparton and Mooroopna; some moved to Echuca; and others moved back to their own tribal lands in NSW.

Those who settled on the Flats sought work in the fruit and vegetable industry (picking, packing, and canneries) and were always busily employed. Orchardists/Growers would arrive along the causeway every morning to pick up the Aboriginal workers who they knew were reliable and solid workers.

In 1954, Queen Elizabeth II visited this area. With the City Councils [at the time] embarrassed by her possibly observing the Aboriginal people living on the Flats, hessian bag was hung across the causeway from Shepparton to Mooroopna in an attempt to hide them. Following her visit, there was a push for housing for Aboriginal people and this led to Rumbalara housing being opened in 1957 and our people started relocating to the site.

But life wasn't easy at Rumbalara as they again had a caretaker, who controlled who could come and go, whether family could stay overnight, and were closely monitored. Housing was very small, and had no running water, toilets, or heating.

1967 Referendum

It wasn't until 1967 and a long fight for our rights by Aboriginal Leaders, that the federal government held a Referendum to amend the Australian Constitution in relation to Aboriginal people being counted as citizens of Australia and as part of the census of the nation.

The referendum sought to alter the following constitution wording as noted in bold italic:-

51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: -
...(xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.

127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted.

90.77% of the vote agreed to the change with Aboriginal people then being counted in the census, and that we be included as citizens of Australia.

This meant, we were finally to be recognised and counted as citizens of Australia/human beings after 197 years since first contact. This contrasted an era of being excluded from the collective and treated as animals.

Assimilation and Isolation

In the aftermath of the 1967 referendum, whilst Australia voted to include Aboriginal people in the citizenship and census, little else changed. We then saw Aboriginal people around the nation starting to rise up and demonstrate in the streets seeking better conditions for Aboriginal Australians including land rights, employment, education, health and housing.

In the 1970's Aboriginal families living at Rumbalara started to move into housing across Shepparton and Mooroopna and this meant they finally had equitable housing. However, it also meant that after living together, side by side, from pre-colonisation, to missions, to the Flats and on to Rumbalara – they were now moving into a more socially isolated housing arrangement where families were spread across the area, and now living side by side with non-Aboriginal families.

For some, this was a positive move where they were able to live and work in the broader community; for others, they faced racism and marginalisation, depending on the attitudes of neighbours, schools, teachers, or employers they might come into contact with. Many struggled with social isolation which even today underpins many problems for Elders and families.

United Nations

Internationally, it is clear that other Indigenous groups who lived through colonisation and its impact, are very similar in their experience. The United Nations (UN) has taken significant steps to make nations more accountable for their treatment of Indigenous people across the planet. See the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2006) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007. The Howard Government (Australian Liberal Party) voted against this declaration in 2007. The Rudd government (Australian Labour Party) voted to support it in 2009; but this can be reversed by any government any time.

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

Yorta Yorta Country extends from Shepparton/ Mooroopna and includes Benalla, Wangaratta, Euroa, Rutherglen, Yarrawonga, Corowa, Echuca, Kyabram, Nathalia, Rushworth, and over Murray River to just south of Deniliquin and Jerilderie.



This is the current map highlighting Yorta Yorta Nation as the Traditional Owners of this area. This map has been approved by First Nations Legal and Research Services (Previously known as Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV)) who determine through a lengthy process, who are the traditional owners or who is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for specific tribal lands.

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation's core business includes land management, environmental management, cultural heritage, family group support, Elders business and more.



This image is from the Greater Shepparton Illuminate Festival.

CELEBRATING OUR REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2019-2020

The Greater Shepparton *Reflect* RAP 2019-2020, provided the strategic framework to build our organisation's capacity to advance reconciliation and develop collaborative relationships with First Nations people and the broader community. The *Reflect* RAP has helped to create multiple achievements and outputs. Some of which include:

- Council is an active member of the **Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group** which help support First Nations community by providing advocacy, events and raising awareness on important issues. The group includes both First Nations and non-First Nations community members.
- **Council partners** with the group to deliver a variety of activities and initiatives, including an annual Apology Day Breakfast, activities for National Reconciliation Week, acknowledgement of Sorry Day and support for the Wulumbarra Day of Mourning Dawn Service.
- Council is proud to be a signatory to the **Algabonyah Employment Agreement**, which detailed Council's commitment to ensure Council had 2% First Nations people employment by 2020. This was achieved in July 2020 and new target of 5% was set to be worked towards the lifespan of the plan (and beyond).

- **Healing the Spirit Training** – 109 employees have attended between July 2019 and August 2022, with another five sessions booked for the next 12 months. Additional to this, two community Healing of the Spirit sessions were provided as part of NAIDOC week celebrations (2022). These sessions were fully booked and attended by representatives from community groups, organisations and individuals.
- **Closing the Gap** – E learning Module – 73 employees have completed this online learning course over the implementation period of our RAP *Reflect*.

The key learnings and challenges from the Greater Shepparton *Reflect* RAP 2019-2020 that have informed the consultation and development of our *Innovate* RAP include:

- The importance of maintaining and developing strong working relationships with both First Nations people and non-First Nations controlled organisations, individuals and the wider community. Relationships are the key to continuing our reconciliation journey and ensuring our work is responding to community needs and expectations.
- The COVID 19 pandemic and the October 2022 flood event has had a significant impact on our key reconciliation partner's ability to focus on tasks outside of their business as usual. We recognise, respect and value the core work of our key reconciliation partners is to support their communities. We will continue to building strong working relationships with our key partners to support their vital work and build reconciliation.



Case Study 1 - Smoking and cleansing ceremony in Shepparton for local healing

Case study: Smoking and cleansing ceremony in Shepparton for local healing

Reference – Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy – 2021-2026

A smoking and cleansing ceremony was held in Shepparton to publicly acknowledge the culturally significant burial site on which the council offices had been built, on the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta people.

Smoking ceremonies are an ancient custom among many Aboriginal communities. Native plants are smouldered to produce smoke that has cleansing properties to ward off bad spirits. Some Aboriginal healing practitioners also use smoking ceremonies for healing, spiritual renewal and strength. The ceremonies are rituals of purification and unity and Aboriginal People with specialised cultural knowledge undertake them. Given the ceremony's significance, it's usually only performed at events that local Aboriginal communities regard as appropriate.

Yorta Yorta People had for years explained the historic and cultural significance of the Council site, and their distress and reluctance to enter the offices. The failure to address this issue had prevented the Yorta Yorta community from being fully integrated into their local Council's daily work and decision making.

Representatives of the Yorta Yorta People led the cleansing and smoking ceremony and performed it in line with their traditional cultural practices. It began in the local Queens Gardens where the CEO welcomed everyone and acknowledged the Traditional Owners. The Mayor then made brief remarks before a Yorta Yorta Elder led those gathered in a minute's silence. A Yorta Yorta Elder unveiled a plaque to be placed on the wall at the entrance of the council offices, acknowledging the site's historic and cultural significance. A representative of the Yorta Yorta Nation then began the smoking and cleansing ceremony, walking from the gardens to the Council offices.

The ceremony and laying of the plaque demonstrates Greater Shepparton City Council's commitment to collaborate with Traditional Owners, acknowledge the truth of Australia's history and build a shared future.



This image is from the Smoking Ceremony - Council Offices.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS:

The RAP Framework

There are four RAP types an organisation can develop - Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate. Each type of RAP is designed to suit an organisation at different stages of their reconciliation journey and organisations can repeat the same type of RAP if appropriate.

Reconciliation Australia provides organisations with templates, advice and support to develop their RAP framework. Reconciliation Australia provides a final endorsement of an organisation's RAP.

Our RAP is an *Innovate* RAP. An *Innovate* RAP focuses on developing and strengthening relationships with First Nations people, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and developing and piloting innovative strategies to empower First Nations people.

Our *Innovate* RAP will run for a period of two years and contains specific actions to meet the objectives set out by Reconciliation Australia.

Development of our Reconciliation Action Plan *Innovate*

Greater Shepparton has the largest First Nations population in regional Victoria and values the richness of their culture and history. The *Innovate* RAP provides a strategic framework to recognise, support and work with local First Nations people on opportunities and pathways as part of our reconciliation journey.

RAP Leadership

Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group

The Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group is chaired by the Director Community at Greater Shepparton City Council and supported by Council's Aboriginal Engagement Officer. The purpose of the Group was to inform the development of the *Innovate* RAP 2023-2025 through collaboration, communication and positive relationships. Of the 20 Working Group members, 10 of these members identify as First Nations People.

The Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group comprises of the following members:

External Partners:

| Organisation | Position |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative | Rumbalara Board Member |
| Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group | Co-Convenors |
| Bangerang Culture Centre | Executive Officer |
| Kaiela Arts | Chief Executive Officer |
| Wulumbarra | Aboriginal Officers |
| Ethnic Council of Shepparton & District | Manager |
| Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE | Coordinator – Koorie Unit |
| Greater Shepparton Secondary College | Senior Koorie Education Advisor |
| Sandhurst Catholic Education | Senior Aboriginal Education Officer |
| Hume Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee | Chairperson |
| Victoria Police | Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer |

Internal Staff:

| Position | Department |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Director | Community – RAP Working Group Champion |
| Manager | Community Wellbeing |
| Aboriginal Engagement Officer | Community Wellbeing |
| Team Leader | Community Wellbeing |
| Coordinator | Active Living |
| Investment Facilitation Coordinator | Economic Development |
| Team Leader – Visitor Economy | Economic Development |
| Coordinator | Family and Children's Services |
| Team Leader | Landscaping and Native Open Space |

A special thanks to Robynne Nelson, Mulana Kaalinya for her support, advice and content in the development of the Truth Telling section of our Innovate RAP. Robynne has encouraged and sought consultation into our Innovate RAP from community participants at her Healing the Spirit Cultural Awareness Program throughout 2021 and 2022.



This image is of Neil Morris of Still Here Arts & Culture.

Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan Innovate Project Team

The Project Team met throughout 2021, with the Chief Executive Officer as the RAP Champion. This Group was internally lead and responsible for reviewing the Greater Shepparton *Reflect* RAP and setting the timelines and process for the development of the *Innovate* RAP.

| Position | Department |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Chief Executive Officer | Greater Shepparton City Council |
| Director | Community |
| Manager | Community Wellbeing |
| Manager | Active Living |
| Manager | Economic Development |
| Team Leader | Community Wellbeing |
| Team Leader | Economic Development |
| Team Leader | Marketing and Communications |
| Aboriginal Engagement Officer | Community Wellbeing |
| Project Officer | River Care Connect |
| Coordinator | Community Development |

Consultation with Traditional Owner Group Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

On the 10 November 2020, the Greater Shepparton City Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the recognised Traditional Owner Group, Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC). This relationship had been long desired by both parties to recognise the importance of the Yorta Yorta People, to help facilitate the ongoing process and support of reconciliation and First Nations people self-determination within Greater Shepparton.

We are committed to continuously improving the development and enriching of the relationship between Council and YYNAC. We do this through a deep understanding and respect of the priorities of YYNAC. We recognise the significant work of YYNAC to support community through the COVID-19 pandemic, October 2022 Flood Event and land and heritage management which have been key priorities. We appreciate and thank the participation that Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation has had thus far throughout this Reconciliation Action Plan Process.

DEVELOPING OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Over 380 people provided input to the development of the *Innovate* RAP through the following consultation opportunities from September 2021 – October 2022;

- Shaping Greater Shepparton website
- Cultural conversations
- Internal and external workshops with staff and community
- Mulana Kaalinya - Healing the Spirit cultural awareness training workshops
- RAP consultation postcards and feedback boxes placed in First Nations and non- First Nations people controlled agencies.

A feature of our consultation was the development and distribution of a RAP postcard with two questions:

- What does Reconciliation mean to you?
- How can Council make Reconciliation matter?

Emerging themes from the community consultation have provided a foundation for the development of the Actions within this Plan. These community themes are considered essential to demonstrate the deep listening that occurred during the community consultation phases.





These community themes have been matched against the Reconciliation Australia Innovate RAP Pillars of: *Relationships, Respect, Opportunities and Governance*.

These are the core pillars to which organisations assign their RAP actions. The following descriptions inform organisations of the type of actions to place under each pillar:

Relationships: Actions on how the organisation will build, strengthen, and support relationships between the broader Australian community and local First Nations people, and relationships focused on advancing reconciliation.

Respect: Actions relating to how the organisation will support the broader understanding of and respect for all First Nations people, cultures, histories, acknowledgements and rights.

Opportunities: Actions relating to how the organisation will increase equal and equitable opportunities and participation for First Nations people.

Consultation timeline

- January – December 2021**
Meetings of Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan Innovate Project Team
- 20 September 2021 – 29 January 2022**
1st phase – Public consultation period to develop initial themes and actions
- July – October 2022**
2nd phase – Public consultation to review and refine themes and actions
- December 2022 – Reconciliation Australia granted extension**
Reconciliation Australia granted Greater Shepparton City Council an extension for the delivery of the actions in Council's Reconciliation Action Plan in light of the impacts of COVID-19.
- October 2022 – February 2023**
Meetings of Greater Shepparton Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
- March 2023 – June 2023**
Council endorsement RAP
Reconciliation Australia's RAP Final Endorsement.
RAP is published and RAP implementation commences.

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation Australia's vision of reconciliation is based and measured on five dimensions: historical acceptance; race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity and unity.

Dimension Definitions

Race Relations

All Australians understand and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non- Indigenous cultures, rights and experiences, which results in stronger relationships based on trust and respect and that are free of racism.

Equality and Equity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participate equally in a range of life opportunities and the unique rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised and upheld.

Institutional Integrity

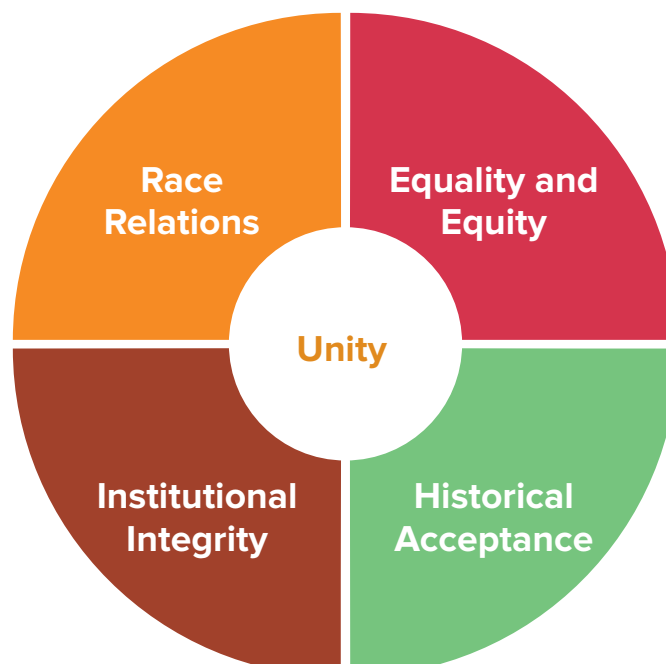
The active support of reconciliation by the nation's political, business and community structures.

Unity

An Australian society that values and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage as a proud part of a shared national identity.

Historical Acceptance

All Australians understand and accept the wrongs of the past and their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australia makes amends for past policies and practices ensures these wrongs are never repeated.



RAP EVALUATION, REVIEW AND REPORTING.

Greater Shepparton City Council is committed to supporting First Nations people led evaluation and review process of all RAP developments. Council's Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) will be invited to fulfil the role of Council's RAP Working Group. The group consists of 20 members and which include 9 First Nations people.

An Evaluation Framework will be developed in collaboration with the RWG to ensure our *Innovate* RAP is reviewed and measured against the following:

- Council's goals and strategies
- Reconciliation Australia's Five Dimensions of Reconciliation
- Council Plan themes and strategies.

Reconciliation Australia also requires Greater Shepparton City Council to report on its efforts to develop innovative strategies for advancing reconciliation in Council's workplace and across the municipality.

Key to satisfying Reconciliation Australia's *Innovate* RAP reporting requirements, Council and the RWG will work together to meet the following:

1. Complete and submit Reconciliation Australia's annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.
2. Report on RAP Progress to Council staff and senior leaders on a quarterly basis.
3. Publicly report on Council's RAP achievements, challenges and learnings annually.
4. Take part in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.
5. As per RWG terms of reference, RWG will meet on a quarterly basis to review RAP developments and provide appropriate support and guidance to assist with RAP decision-making and the implementation of the plan. Council will also work with the RWG to receive ongoing guidance on the mechanics of First Nations people led evaluation and review processes to strengthen Council's cultural capabilities and systems.



Yorta Yorta Elder, performing traditional dance.



This image is of the late Aunty Violet Harrison and late Aunty Mary James and is part of the Greater Shepparton Aboriginal Street Art Project.

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2023 TO 2025



RELATIONSHIPS

Strong, respectful and meaningful relationships between Greater Shepparton City Council and First Nations people are the foundation of this Reconciliation Action Plan. We strive to build on already established connections with the Local First Nations communities and Traditional Custodians, the Yorta Yorta Nations, and are guided by their profound knowledge in reaching reconciliation within our community together.

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations people stakeholders and organisations. | 1.1 Meet with First Nations people stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement. | September 2023 | Director – Community |
| | 1.2 Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with First Nations people stakeholders and organisations. | October 2023 | Team Leader - Diversity |
| | 1.3 Explore opportunities to work with and provide resources/support to Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation to respond to Council matters. | October 2023 | Director Community |
| | 1.4 Review the Greater Shepparton City Council and Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and establish mechanisms to embed the MOU into organisational practice. | November 2024 | Team Leader - Diversity |
| | 1.5 Investigate the establishment of a First Nations people Advisory Group to Council, with the purpose to provide advice on the transfer of power, resources and self determination to community. | February 2024 | Team Leader - Diversity Aboriginal Engagement Officer |

*Timelines indicate planned commencement date for deliverables

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW). | 2.1 RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. | 27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 2.2 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. | 27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024, 2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer, Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development |
| | 2.3 Organise at least one NRW event each year. | 27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 2.4 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website. | May 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 2.5 Support an external NRW event with key local partners. | June 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 2.6 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. | May 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| 3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence. | 3.1 Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce. | February 2024 | Manager Marketing Communications |
| | 3.2 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly. | July 2024, 2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development |
| | 3.3 Review partnership Agreement with the Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group to formalise our support of their programs and activities. | December 2023, 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 3.4 Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. | June 2023, 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 3.5 Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation. | July 2023 | Manager - Community Wellbeing |
| | 3.6 Aboriginal Engagement Officer to attend the Reconciliation Australia's National RAP Conference. | July 2023 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 3.7 Empower all members of Executive and Senior Management to be Reconciliation Champions, through linking RAP actions to Key Performance Indicators. | July 2023 | Chief Executive Officer |

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies. | 4.1 Conduct a review of People & Development policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. | March 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 4.2 Update People & Development policies to ensure anti-discrimination measures are up to date. | December 2023 | Chief Executive Officer |
| | 4.3 Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation. | July 2024 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 4.4 Engage First Nations people staff or advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy. | July 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 4.5 Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism through support of and participation in truth telling and reconciliation activities and events. | September 2024 | Manager – People and Development |



GSCC respect and acknowledges the traditions and customs of local First Nations people and their strong connection with Country and recognise the importance of their cultures and histories. Consultation with local First Nations people and communities will help to contribute extensive knowledge to our protocols and procedures and deepen the organisation's connections with community to identify and help develop more opportunities for respectful cultural awareness among all our staff, executive and Councillors.

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations people cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning. | 5.1 Consult local Traditional Owners and/or First Nations advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy. | November 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 5.2 Develop customised cultural awareness training program for all staff including face to face and online learning and cultural immersions. | July 2024 | Manger – People and Development |
| | 5.3 Review the cultural learning needs within our organisation to inform the ongoing improvement of our First Nations Cultural Awareness Training Strategy. | January 2024 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 5.4 Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, Councillors, Executive Leadership, and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning. | November 2023, 2024 | Manager – People and Development Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 5.5 Review, update and communicate our cultural learning strategy document to all staff. | November 2023 | Manager – People and Development Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 5.6 Promote Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride online tool to all staff. | May 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 5.7 Introduce cultural training be a mandatory part of Council induction. | December 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| 6 Increase the cultural safety of our work practices and processes for First Nations people. | 6.1 Investigate and implement initiatives to further embed First Nations cultures into Council processes including hosting meetings on Country. | November 2023, 2024, 2025 | Manager – Corporate Governance Support: Team Leader – Diversity Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 6.2 Identify and share resources for Managers and Supervisors to utilise to support staff and community throughout 'Sorry Business'. | February 2024 | Team Leader – Diversity Aboriginal Engagement Officer |

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 Demonstrate respect to First Nations people by observing cultural protocols. | 7.1 Increase the understanding and appreciation of staff and volunteers of Council of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. | July 2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 7.2 Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. | April 2024 | Team Leader - Diversity |
| | 7.3 Invite local Traditional Owners from Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year. | July 2023 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 7.4 Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of internal and external important meetings. | July 2024, 2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 7.5 Advocate for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at war memorial locations across Greater Shepparton. | December 2024 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director – Community, Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 7.6 Display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in our places of meeting. | January 2024 | Manager - Governance |
| 8 Build respect for First Nations people cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week. | 8.1 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. | July 2023, 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 8.2 Review People and Development policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week. | March 2024, 2025 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 8.3 Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff. | July 2023, 2024, 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 8.4 Consult and work with First Nations people to hold an internal and external NAIDOC Week event. | May 2024,2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 Advocate, Celebrate and recognise First Nations people dates of significance. | 9.1 Continue to support the Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group delivery of First Nations people dates of significance including Sorry Day and Apology Breakfast. | January 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 9.2 Advocate to the Australian Government to change the date of Australia Day from January 26. | July 2023, 2024, 2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 9.3 Lower the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to half-mast on 26 January at all council-owned facilities to acknowledge this date as a day of mourning for First Nations people. | January 2024, 2025 | Team Leader – Diversity Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 9.4 Continue to provide financial and in-kind support for the 'Day of Mourning Dawn Ceremony' and recognition of this event in Council communications. | January 2024, 2025 | Team Leader – Diversity Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 9.5 Continue community engagement to inform a Council decision about: a) Australia Day in 2024 and beyond b) The development of a program proposal for a day of community celebration for 2024, that is not held on 26 January, that is inclusive, reflects the full history of Australia, and is culturally respectful. | July 2023 | Team Leader – Diversity Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 9.6 Investigate the option for Council staff to choose to take January 26 as a public holiday. | August 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 9.7 Investigate and advise the use of our facilities and assets to increase community awareness of First Nations people dates of significance, e.g. flag poles, lighting up of our buildings etc. | July 2025 | Team Leader-Diversity, Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| 10 Increase Councillors awareness and understanding of First Nations cultures and local First Nations communities needs. | 10.1 All Councillors to participate in face to face cultural awareness training and cultural capability training. | May 2024 | Manager - Governance |
| | 10.2 Present topics of interest and concern to First Nations communities to Councillors for their consideration and/or action. | July 2025 | Director - Community |
| 11 Recognise, respect and protect First Nations peoples Cultural Heritage in Greater Shepparton. | 11.1 Undertake a Cultural Land Value Study to identify land of cultural significance that informs the development of, and training in a cultural heritage procedure to allow staff and community to identify and protect significant sites. | December 2023 | Director - Community |

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | 11.2 Establish a working group with both internal and external partners to explore opportunities for land transfer and cultural land management. | December 2023 | Director -Community |
| | 11.3 Continue to support the work of the Traditional Owners Caring for Country Project with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Goulburn Broken Catchment Authority. | July 2023, 2024 | Manager – Environment |
| | 11.4 Continue the work with Cussen Park Advisory Committee on grassland management in a culturally appropriate way. | July 2023, 2024 | Manager – Environment |
| | 11.5 Continue to educate staff on and support the implementation of the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation <i>Whole of Country Plan</i> . | July 2023, 2024 | Manager – Environment |
| | 11.6 Work with key First Nations people partners on the implementation of the Greater Shepparton Climate Action Plan. | July 2023 | Manager – Environment |
| | 11.7 Investigate the introduction of First Nations people memorial sites to recognise places of significance through the municipality. | December 2023 | Manager - Planning |
| | 11.8 Work with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation to create place name protocols and implement through the renaming of our parks and gardens, tracks, waterways, signage, buildings and public spaces. | July 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 11.9 Provide resources and information for community to access First Nations cultural education. | July 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer Whole of organisation |
| | 11.10 Explore options for Daish’s Paddock to be an immersive First Nations cultural experience that acknowledges and celebrates the true history of the land. | July 2025 | Director Community |
| 12 Use key Council strategies and action plans as tools to work with First Nations people artists and community/arts groups to promote and support First Nations people arts and cultures. | 12.1 Work with the GSCCS Creative Cities Coordinator to identify opportunities for collaboration with the Greater Shepparton Creative Cities Strategy to develop First Nations Artists. | August 2023, 2024 | Manager – Performing Arts |
| | 12.2 Include First Nations people cultural component in all Council festivals and events. | December 2023, 2024 | Manager – Economic Development |
| | 12.3 Develop and implement local Recovery Plans to include actions that respond to the Victorian Government State Emergency Management Plan pillar of recovery - Aboriginal Culture and Healing to help to prioritise culture, address trauma, support healing and promote cultural safety. | July 2023, 2024, 2025 | Emergency Management Coordinator Aboriginal Culture and Healing Officer |



OPPORTUNITIES

As one of the largest First Nations people populations within Regional Victoria, we are committed to continuously improving and reviewing Council plans, policies and procedures to create culturally safety and equitable opportunities. We are committed to sustaining and building relationships and partnerships with First Nations organisations to benefit local First Nations people.

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 13 Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations people recruitment, retention, and professional development. | 13.1 Build understanding of current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. | August 2023 | Team Leader - People and Workforce |
| | 13.2 Engage with First Nations staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. | February 2024 | Team Leader - People and Workforce |
| | 13.3 Continue to review and implement Councils Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and retention Employment Strategy. | July 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 13.4 Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach First Nations stakeholders. | July 2023 | Team Leader - People and Workforce |
| | 13.5 Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to First Nations participation in our workplace. | February 2024 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 13.6 Ensure that an Acknowledgement of Country is included at the commencement of all job interviews. | July 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 13.7 Include in all job advertisements, 'First Nations people are encouraged to apply.' | July 2023 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 13.8 Increase the percentage of First Nations people employed by Council to 5% and above. | July 2025 | Manager – People and Development |
| | 13.9 Support leadership opportunities for First Nations people staff by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing opportunities and support to act in higher roles. • encouraging participation in leadership development programs. • formal mentoring programs/ opportunities. | July 2023 | Manager – People and Development |

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 Increase First Nations people supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes. | 14.1 Develop and implement a First Nations procurement strategy. | July 2024 | Team Leader – Contracts and Procurement |
| | 14.2 Investigate Supply Nation membership. | July 2023 | Team Leader – Contracts and Procurement |
| | 14.3 Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods, services and expertise from First Nations businesses to staff. | October 2023 | Team Leader – Contracts and Procurement |
| | 14.4 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from First Nations businesses. | August 2023 | Team Leader – Contracts and Procurement |
| | 14.5 Develop commercial relationships with First Nations businesses. | July 2024 | Team Leader – Contracts and Procurement |
| 15 Continue to support the implementation of the Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity Plan which aims to build a thriving First Nations economy. | 15.1 Council to continue its role of a Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity Plan Champion to lead and partner on allocated initiatives focused on building a First Nations economy. | July 2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director - Community, Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 15.2 Continue to support the development of the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence. The Munarra Centre will be a centre for excellence in the areas of Education, Accommodation, Performing Arts, Healthcare and Child Care to help close the gap for First Nations people. | July 2025 | Director – Community Aboriginal Engagement Officer |



Lin Onus - The Land Within, installation view. Shepparton Art Museum, 2021. Image - Christian Capurro, courtesy Shepparton Art Museum. Works courtesy Lin Onus Estate.



GOVERNANCE

GSCC acknowledges good governance is key to building a safe, resilient and sustainable community and is key to the governance and structure on how we embed culturally appropriate processes into our systems.

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP. | 16.1 Maintain First Nations representation on the RWG. | February, May, August, December 2023, 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 16.2 Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG. | July 2023 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 16.3 Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation. | February, May, August, December 2023,2024 | Lead: Aboriginal Engagement Officer Support: RAP Working Group. |
| 17 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments. | 17.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation. | July 2023 | Team Leader – Diversity |
| | 17.2 Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments. | August 2023 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 17.3 Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. | September 2023 | Team Leader – Diversity |
| | 17.4 Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management. | July 2023 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |

| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally. | 18.1 Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. | July 2023, 2024 | Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 18.2 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire. | August 2023, 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 18.3 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. | September 2023, 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 18.4 Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly. | September, December, March, June 2023,2024,2025 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 18.5 Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually. | October 2023, 2024 | Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Corporate Services, Director Sustainable Development. |
| | 18.6 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer. | March 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| | 18.7 Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP. | March 2025 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |
| 19 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP. | 19.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. | December 2024 | Aboriginal Engagement Officer |

OUR OVERARCHING GUIDANCE

Council considered a number of key documents, strategies and policy statements to provide context and help guide the development of our *Innovate* Reconciliation Action Plan.

[Reconciliation Australia](#)

Reconciliation Australia is the lead body for reconciliation in Australia.

[Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026](#)

Pathway to Stronger Partnerships' - Yuma Yirramboi sets out a road map to greater economic participation and wealth creation for Aboriginal Victorians. Development of the Strategy was driven by us, the Koori Caucus of the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council (VAEEC), on behalf of Aboriginal Victorians.

[The Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)

The 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' called for substantive constitutional change and structural reform, and sought a Makarrata Commission

[The United Nations Declaration of Indigenous People](#)

Establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world and elaborates on existing human right standards.

[The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)

A Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. It is about the relationship between government and the people it serves.

[Victorian Government Self Determination Reform Framework](#)

In 2018, the Victorian Government refreshed the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 (VAAF) in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians through broad and inclusive engagement. The VAAF is Victoria's overarching strategic framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians to drive improved outcomes.

[Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Whole of Country Plan](#)

A document built on thousands of years of knowledge and existence in our Yorta Yorta Traditional Boundary. It reflects a long struggle to have our voice reflected in the protection of our country, our people and our culture.

[Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence \(MCRE\)](#)

The MCRE will be a state-of-the-art nationally-significant centre designed as a hub of connection and transformation for First Nations and non-First Nations people across Australia. It is intended that the MCRE complex will be run by Indigenous-led Munarra Limited, a not-for-profit entity that is a partnership of Rumbalara Football and Netball Club, the University of Melbourne and Kaiela Institute. The MCRE will provide a place and space of cultural affirmation, identity and strength with national pathways and a university campus, providing a culturally safe space for multiple education and training providers (e.g. University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and GOTAFE).

[Goulburn Murray Regional Prosperity Plan](#) – The vision of this plan is to generate a thriving and sustainable First Nations economy through a shared prosperity model that delivers an additional \$150m GRP per annum by 2036 for the Goulburn Murray Region.

[Algabonyah Employment Partnership Agreement](#)

The purpose of the agreement is to build the prosperity of the Goulburn-Murray region, with a growing inclusive community.

[Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group](#)

Supports First Nations community by providing advocacy, events and raising awareness on important issues. The group includes both First Nations and non-First Nations community members.

[Mulana Kaalinya Healing the Spirit](#) – specialises in First Nations Cultural Competency Training, programs and services to empower, inspire, engage, support and encourage all that join us on the journey.





Council has examined internal policies and procedures, as well as strategic planning documents, to ensure continuous and ongoing consideration of First Nations people across all Directorates and Council services.



CONTACT US

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Web: www.greatershepparton.com.au

Join the conversation:    

Greater Shepparton City Council is NRS friendly. If you are deaf, hearing-impaired, or speech-impaired, we ask that you call us via the National Relay Service:

TTY users: 133 677 then ask for (03) 5832 9700.

Speak & Listen users: (speech-to-speech relay) 1300 555 727 then ask for (03) 5832 9700.

Internet relay users: Connect to the National Relay Service via www.relayservice.com.au and then ask for (03) 5832 9700.

A hearing loop is also available at Council's customer service centre and Council meeting rooms.



Interpreter service available.

Please note the official **No** case can be viewed at aec.gov.au/referendums/pamphlet.htm
Both cases have been published on the AEC website pending typesetting and without amendment.

Vote Yes for a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and all Australians.

Vote Yes for unity, hope and to make a positive difference.

Voting YES is about:

Recognition

- **Recognising** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our Constitution and paying respect to 65,000 years of culture and tradition.

Listening

- **Listening** to advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about matters that affect their lives, so governments make better decisions.

Better Results

- **Making practical progress** in Indigenous health, education, employment and housing, so people have a better life.

It's a change only you can make happen.

Vote Yes to an idea that comes directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves:
Constitutional Recognition through a Voice.

What is the Voice:

The Voice will be a committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who will give advice to the Parliament and Government on issues that affect their community.

It will include Indigenous Australians from every state and territory, the Torres Strait Islands and representatives from the regions and remote communities.

Members of the Voice will be chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their local area and serve for a fixed period.

Why we need it:

There are big challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- A life expectancy 8 years shorter than non-Indigenous Australians.
- Worse rates of disease and infant mortality.
- A suicide rate twice as high.
- Fewer opportunities for education and training.

You have accessed the official **Yes** case.

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Clearly, the current approach isn't working.

To close these gaps, find solutions and plan for the future we need to listen to advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about issues affecting their lives and communities.

How the Voice will work:

The Voice is about advice.

When governments listen to people about issues that affect them, they:

- Make better decisions.
- Get better results.
- Deliver better value for money.

The Voice will give advice on key issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, from better infant health to improving services in remote areas.

Parliament and Government will still be responsible for all laws, programs and funding.

Patrick Dodson, Senator for Western Australia, Yawuru Elder:

"When people on the ground are listened to and engaged, better laws and policies are made. Advice from the Voice will make our decisions and directions more informed and more successful. Recognition in the Constitution will help heal our nation."

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THE VOICE: KEY FACTS

- Idea comes from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Recognises First Peoples in our Constitution.
- A committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Gives people a say on issues affecting them.
- Listening will mean better results – and better value for money.
- Representatives from all states and territories, the Torres Strait Islands and remote communities.
- Will include young people and a balance of men and women.
- Parliament and Government still responsible for laws, programs and funding.

KEEP READING FOR 8 MORE REASONS TO VOTE YES.

Please note the official **No** case can be viewed at aec.gov.au/referendums/pamphlet.htm
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1. This idea came directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Voting Yes means:

- Supporting an aspiration put forward by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over decades.
- Accepting a proposal backed by over 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The call for a Voice did not come from politicians.

In 2017, after many years of work and countless conversations in every part of the country, nearly 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and elders endorsed the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

Calling for recognition in the Constitution through a Voice.

Asking us to help make practical change in their lives and create better opportunities for their children.

Australians from all walks of life, all faiths and cultures, and all sides of politics have given their support to this proposal.

Now we can make it a reality.

Voting Yes is an act of unity that will bring Australians together.

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2. Constitutional recognition for concrete results.

Constitutional recognition is a powerful statement that will drive practical change.

Voting Yes means:

- Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia.
- Celebrating and sharing 65,000 years of history.
- Sending a powerful message to the world about Australia's unity.
- Making a practical difference for the future.

Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have enriched our nation with their culture and creativity, their knowledge of the land and waters, and their contribution to Australian life.

Our ancient continent is home to the world's oldest living cultures. Recognising this in our Constitution is an inspiring way to celebrate our shared history.

Voting Yes is an act of reconciliation that will deliver real results.

The form of recognition Indigenous Australians are asking us to support is a Voice. A vehicle for practical change.

Johnathan Thurston, NRL champion and coach, Gunggari man:

"Our young people deserve the chance to be their best. I work closely with schoolkids in the Yarrabah community in Queensland. I've seen the obstacles they face. Nobody understands that better than their local community. Giving them a say will mean more of our kids reach their potential. That's what the Voice is about."

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3. Ensure people have a better life.

The Voice is a vehicle to deliver real improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in:

- Life expectancy.
- Infant mortality and health.
- Education and employment.

For a long time, governments with good intentions have spent billions trying to deal with these issues.

But they haven't achieved lasting improvement because they haven't listened to people on the ground.

The current approach is broken and the Voice is our best chance to fix it.

No-one thinks the Voice will instantly solve everything - but we will finally have the right approach in place.

Here are three examples where listening to Indigenous people has delivered better outcomes.

IMAGINE THE PROGRESS AUSTRALIA COULD MAKE WITH A VOICE.

Listening Works: Better Health Services

Community-controlled Aboriginal Medical Services employ local Indigenous people.

They run clinics and visit remote areas, providing essential services like child immunisation.

In South East Queensland, the local Aboriginal Medical Service and the community worked together to hugely increase the number of annual health checks, from 550 to over 20,000 over 10 years.

Listening Works: Better Results in Education

Families and community leaders have been involved in every step of the new Dhupuma Barker school in Arnhem Land, from lesson-planning to uniforms and lunches.

Genuine partnership has driven **strong school attendance rates and better results**. The 'Dhupuma Firebirds' Robotics team recently competed in the VEX International Championships in Texas, the first team from the Northern Territory ever to qualify.

Principal Phillip Heath says:

"Listening to the community is a game-changer in regional and remote education."

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Listening Works: Indigenous Rangers

There are nearly 2,000 Indigenous Rangers working on country.

Rangers care for our environment by **working to prevent bushfires, controlling feral pests and improving the health of our rivers.**

Listening to Indigenous Rangers means sharing in 65,000 years of knowledge and connection to our land and waters.

Vote Yes for better results around Australia.

Vote Yes to help close the gap.

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4. Bring our country together.

Voting Yes means:

- Becoming reconciled with our past and moving to a better future.
- A change only you can make happen.

Australia has come a long way since our Constitution came into effect in 1901.

We now rightly celebrate Indigenous Australians and their contributions to our country.

At the 1967 referendum, 90% of Australians voted Yes to changing the Constitution, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be counted in the population in the same way as everyone else.

It was a unifying step forward.

Together we have a chance to take the next step - recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through a Voice.

Other nations with similar histories, like Canada and New Zealand, formally recognised their own First Peoples decades ago.

Experience shows there is nothing to fear - and so much to gain.

Rachel Perkins, Filmmaker from Alice Springs, Arrernte/Kalkadoon woman:

“Our people have spent decades campaigning for the opportunity of a better life. We’ve never been more determined or more united. The Voice is our best shot, let’s take it.”

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5. Save money.

When governments listen to people, they get better outcomes and use funding more effectively.

Aunty Pat Anderson AO, Co-Chair Uluru Dialogues, Alywarre woman:

"When you involve people, you make better decisions and the money you spend goes where it's needed most: to the people on the ground."

Governments from both sides have invested billions in programs that haven't fixed problems or reached communities.

A Voice will help us listen to locals and save money.

We're all better off when governments don't waste taxpayer money on things that aren't working.

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6. The time is now.

The idea of a Voice has been decades in the making. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have put in a great deal of hard work and goodwill.

Voting No means nothing will change. It means accepting we can't do better.

Don't risk more of the same:

- Worse life expectancy.
- Worse results in education and employment.
- Worse outcomes in health.

Vote Yes to break this cycle and unite our nation.

Eddie Betts, Adelaide and Carlton AFL legend, Gubrun, Wirangu/Kokatha man:

"I know the Voice won't fix everything overnight but I feel like it's the opening of a pathway to make sure we are included and respected in decision-making on issues that impact us."

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7. Practical advice that works.

The Voice will advise on practical steps to improve Indigenous health, education, employment and housing.

Putting the Voice in the Constitution gives it stability and independence, now and into the future.

This means the Voice can give frank advice, without getting caught up in short-term politics.

We can't solve all the challenges Indigenous Australians face overnight. We need action now, as well as planning for the long term.

That's why we need a Voice that can't be abolished with the stroke of a pen.

Legal experts have made it clear that the Voice will not have the power to prevent, delay or veto laws or decisions. **The Voice is about advice.**

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8. Making government work better.

Voting Yes means:

- Government getting better advice and delivering better outcomes.
- An addition to the Constitution backed by the experts.

Senior lawyers and former High Court Judges have been part of this process.

What the Legal Experts Say:

- Constitutionally and legally sound.
- Will **enhance** our system of government.
- No veto power – Parliament and Government have final sign-off.

**Robert French AC, Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia 2008-2017 and
Geoffrey Lindell, Emeritus Professor of Law, University of Adelaide:**

*“The Voice is a big idea but not a complicated one. It is low risk for a high return...
The Voice will provide a practical opportunity for First Peoples to give informed and
coherent and reliable advice to the Parliament and the Government.”*

- Joint Opinion Piece, Australian Financial Review, 4/2/2023.

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Now it's up to us.

Evonne Goolagong Cawley AC MBE, former tennis world number one, Wiradjuri woman:

"Voting Yes is a chance for all Australians to celebrate the contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made to our country and to help the next generation chase their dreams. Let's grab this moment with both hands."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have given us a once-in-a-generation chance.

We can vote Yes to be part of a great unifying moment that will bring about a better future.

We can vote Yes to:

- Do the right thing by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Give people a say on issues that affect them.
- Make a practical difference that improves lives.

Let's vote Yes for **recognition, listening** and **better results**.

Let's vote Yes to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live better lives with more opportunities for their children.

In a spirit of unity, let's vote Yes together.

REASONS TO VOTE NO – A SUMMARY

This Referendum is not simply about “recognition”. This Voice proposal goes much further.

If passed, it would represent the biggest change to our Constitution in our history.

It is legally risky, with unknown consequences. It would be divisive and permanent.

If you don’t know, vote no.

RISKY

We all want to help Indigenous Australians in disadvantaged communities. However, this Voice is not the answer and presents a real risk to our system of government.

This Voice specifically covers all areas of “Executive Government”. This means no issue is beyond its reach.

The High Court would ultimately determine its powers, not the Parliament.

It risks legal challenges, delays and dysfunctional government.

UNKNOWN

No details have been provided on how members of the Voice would be chosen or how it would operate. Australians are being asked to vote first before these details are worked out.

Australians should have details before the vote, not after.

We don’t know how it will work, we don’t know who will be on it, but we do know it will permanently divide us as Australians.

Some Voice supporters say this would just be a first step to reparations and compensation and other radical changes. So, what would come next?

DIVISIVE

Enshrining a Voice in the Constitution for only one group of Australians means permanently dividing our country.

It creates different classes of citizenship through an unknown body that has the full force of the Constitution behind it. Many Indigenous Australians do not support this.

PERMANENT

Putting a Voice in the Constitution means it’s permanent. We will be stuck with negative consequences.

TEN REASONS TO VOTE NO

1. THIS VOICE IS LEGALLY RISKY

Australia's Constitution is our most important legal document. Every word can be open to interpretation.

Australia hasn't changed its Constitution since 1977. **This would be the biggest change to our democracy in Australia's history.**

It is a leap into the unknown. This Voice has not been road tested. There is no comparable constitutional body like this anywhere in the world.

Enshrining a Voice in the Constitution means it is open to legal challenge and interpretation by the High Court.

Legal experts don't agree, and can't know for sure, how the High Court will interpret such a constitutional change.

"I would foresee a decade or more of constitutional and administrative law litigation arising out of a voice..."

*(Jan Callinan AC KC, former High Court Judge)*¹

This opens a legal can of worms.

2. THERE ARE NO DETAILS

This is a big decision. However, **the Government won't reveal key details before the vote.**

We don't know how it will help disadvantaged communities and close the gap.

We don't know how many members this Voice would have.

We don't know if they would be elected or chosen, or how this would occur.

We don't know how it would make representations or be held accountable.

These details would only be worked through after Australians have voted.

According to the Yes campaign, it "*doesn't make sense*" to have details before the vote:

"It doesn't make any sense to do that detailed consultation until we have the support of the Australian people to change the constitution."

(Yes23 Brochure)

¹ The Australian, 17/12/2022

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This is the wrong way around.

You wouldn't buy a house without inspecting it or a car without test driving it.

Yet you are being asked to vote to change our Constitution without details.

Australians shouldn't be asked to sign a blank cheque.

“How can Australians possibly agree to something where we don't know the detail?”
(Senator Kerryanne Liddle, Shadow Minister for Child Protection and the Prevention of Family Violence and Arernte woman)

3. IT DIVIDES US

Enshrining in our Constitution a body for only one group of Australians means permanently dividing Australians. Many Indigenous Australians do not agree with this.

“**This Voice will not unite us, it will divide us by race.**”
(Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians and Warlpiri woman)

This goes against a key principle of our democratic system, that all Australians are equal before the law.

“The inclusion of the proposed s 129 would mean that we become a nation where, whenever we or our ancestors first came to this country, we are not all equal.”
*(David Jackson AM KC, former Federal Court Judge)*²

Our Constitution belongs to all Australians. Our Parliament is there to represent all Australians. It now includes a record 11 Indigenous Members and Senators.

Our national anthem was recently changed to reflect the fact we are “one and free”.

By contrast, this Voice would permanently divide Australians, in law and spirit.

“We're all Australians. And that's the way it should end up. It shouldn't be divided by this so-called Voice which is going to split this country right down the centre.”
(Ian Conway, Central Arernte Senior Custodian)

4. IT WON'T HELP INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

We all want to help Indigenous Australians in disadvantaged communities, to close the gap and achieve reconciliation.

However, more bureaucracy is not the answer.

² Parliamentary Inquiry Submission, 11/04/2023

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There are currently hundreds of Indigenous representative bodies at all levels of government, along with the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which has 1,400 staff.

A centralised Voice risks overlooking the needs of regional and remote communities.

“A national voice cannot speak for country.”

(Nyunggai Warren Mundine AO, Australians for Unity board member and Bundjalung man)

Right now, many voices are crying out for help in tackling devastating social problems in some remote communities. What’s needed is action.

“What we need in Canberra is ears, not a Voice.”

(Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians and Warlpiri woman)

5. NO ISSUE IS BEYOND ITS SCOPE

This Voice model isn’t just to the Parliament, it goes much further – to all areas of “Executive Government”. **That includes all government departments, agencies and other bodies (like the Reserve Bank).**

Decisions in relation to the economy, national security, infrastructure, health, education and more, would all be within its scope.

In the words of a member of the Government’s Referendum Working Group:

“The voice will be able to speak to all parts of the government, including the cabinet, ministers, public servants, and independent statutory offices and agencies – such as the Reserve Bank...It can’t shut the voice up.”

*(Professors Megan Davis and Gabrielle Appleby)*³

In the words of a constitutional law professor who supports the Voice:

“I think it’s fatally flawed because what it does is retain the full range of review of executive action. This means the Voice can comment on everything from submarines to parking tickets...We will have regular judicial interventions.”

*(Professor Greg Craven AO)*⁴

Many legal experts have expressed concern about its scope, however their concerns have simply been overlooked.

³ The Australian, 1/4/2023

⁴ Daily Mail, 24/3/2023

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6. IT RISKS DELAYS AND DYSFUNCTION

The Australian Parliament deals with hundreds of pieces of legislation a year.

This Voice's scope goes beyond Parliament, covering departments, agencies and all areas of "Executive Government".

How would the Voice handle this?

If the Voice is not satisfied with the way it has been consulted, or a decision that is made, it could appeal to the courts. How long would this take?

Many legal experts have warned this would cause considerable delays in decision making.

"The Voice will almost certainly become a lightning rod for protracted debate about a vast array of current issues. Nearly every matter of current concern on the national agenda will be seen as having an Indigenous component of some kind."

*(Nicholas Hasluck AM KC, former WA Supreme Court Judge)*⁵

The risk of legal appeals and delays means a risk of dysfunctional government.

That is not good for Australia.

7. IT OPENS THE DOOR FOR ACTIVISTS

The legal uncertainty and the absence of details raises the question: what comes next?

Some Voice supporters are upfront in saying this Voice will be a first step to reparations and compensation and other radical changes.

"This is the first step, it's a vital step and it puts all the explanation behind it. 'Pay the Rent' for example, how do we do that in a way that is transparent and that actually sees reparations and compensation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people...?"

*(Thomas Mayo, Referendum Working Group)*⁶

The Uluru Statement from the Heart says a Voice is a first step, before a treaty and truth telling.

By definition, a treaty is an agreement between governments, not between one group of citizens and its government.

A member of the Government's Referendum Working Group has described "truth" as "leverage" to lead to "the abolishment of the old colonial institutions".

⁵ Parliamentary Inquiry Submission, 16/4/2023

⁶ SEARCH Foundation speech, 12/2/2020

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“It is a way to further what we need for our people in any negotiations for treaties and for other things like legislation, reform and abolishment of the institutions, the old colonial institutions that harm us.”

*(Thomas Mayo, Referendum Working Group)*⁷

Already, many activists are campaigning to **abolish Australia Day, change our flag and other institutions and symbols** important to Australians.

“It’s always been #abolishAustraliaDay, changing the date is a cop out.”

*(Teela Reid, Referendum Engagement Group)*⁸

If there is a constitutionally enshrined Voice, these calls would grow louder.

“Australians need to understand that the Voice will be used to support the demands for recognition of coexisting sovereignty, a Makarrata commission designed to produce a treaty and monetary compensation, and a rewriting of Australian history...

The potential for great irremediable harm to Australian society means the voice should never be incorporated into the Australian constitution...”

*(Terence Cole AO RFD KC, former NSW Supreme Court Judge)*⁹

8. IT WILL BE COSTLY AND BUREAUCRATIC

We don’t know how much additional funding would be allocated to this Voice.

That’s another detail that would only be determined after the referendum.

There are currently hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies at all levels of government.

This year, the Government has allocated \$4.3 billion for the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which has 1,400 staff.

This Agency’s website and corporate plan says: “We... ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a say in the decisions that affect them.”

There is no suggestion this Voice will replace any of these. It will operate as one bureaucracy among many.

⁷ SEARCH Foundation speech, 12/2/2020

⁸ Twitter, 24/1/2023

⁹ Spectator Australia, 6/4/2023; Parliamentary Inquiry Submission, 19/4/2023

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9. THIS VOICE WILL BE PERMANENT

This Voice is not a trial or pilot program. It will not be in legislation that can be reversed.
Once it is in the Constitution it won't be undone.
Once the High Court makes an interpretation, Parliament can't overrule it.
We will be stuck with the negative consequences forever.

10. THERE ARE BETTER WAYS FORWARD

This referendum is not about simply recognising Indigenous Australians in the Constitution.
That can be achieved without tying it to a risky, unknown and permanent Voice.
Recognition has the widespread support of Australians. However, this Voice proposal is the problem.
There are many Australians who oppose a Voice on principle.
Others might be willing to consider a less risky Voice option, but the Government has not given you this choice.
When previous changes to the Constitution have been proposed, there has been a Constitutional Convention to properly consider options and details.
No such process happened here. This process was rushed and heavy-handed.
This approach isn't unifying, or effective. It's divisive.

THIS DECISION IS YOURS

This is a very important decision. Unfortunately, the legitimate questions and concerns of many Australians have been dismissed.
Fortunately, this referendum won't be decided by politicians, corporations or celebrities.
It will be decided by every Australian. It affects every Australian.
If you don't know, vote no.

MORE INFORMATION

For information and updates go to:

- www.riskyvoice.com
- www.oneandfree.au
- www.australiansforunity.com.au