

Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-27

Discussion Paper

March 2024

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# Introduction

The City of Melbourne is proud of the work that we have undertaken so far to deliver outcomes for Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community. When Reconciliation Australia launched the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) framework in 2006, City of Melbourne was the first local government to develop a RAP. Since then, each RAP has continued to build on the work of the previous, ensuring we learn and continue to do better.

In September 2021 the City of Melbourne Declaration of Recognition and Commitment Aboriginal Peoples was adopted. It recognises Aboriginal peoples as the first inhabitants of this land and sets out our commitment to fully support reconciliation at an organisational, local, national and international level.

The RAP has been the catalyst for a wide range of outcomes including:

* Deepening our relationship with Traditional Owners and increasing their voice in decisions that impact them,
* Sharing knowledge and stories through truth-telling, increasing the broader community’s understanding of Aboriginal peoples’ experiences.
* Launching our Aboriginal Mapping project, an interactive map that reveals places of importance to Traditional Owners as told by Traditional Owners.
* Hosting events across the city to celebrate Aboriginal culture including the annual Reconciliation Oration and Mabo Day in May/June and NAIDOC in July,
* Delivering Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training to Councillors, Executive and leaders. The training has been the foundation of increasing cultural safety across the organisation.
* Increasing the visibility of Aboriginal arts and culture throughout our festivals and events including the delivery of the nationally unique Yirramboi Festival,
* Influencing the design of our public spaces and buildings including the new library and family services building in the Queen Victoria Market precinct – narrm ngarrgu.

This year, City of Melbourne is developing our sixth Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2024-27. Building on our reconciliation commitments we are seeking to develop Stretch RAP: Reconciliation leadership. It will reaffirm our respect for First Peoples’ unique heritage and culture and outline our next steps on the path towards truth-telling and reconciliation. Other capital cities with an existing Stretch RAP include the City of Sydney and City of Adelaide.

The development of a new RAP will be done in consultation with our community, including our Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community and is guided by Reconciliation Australia.

The Stretch RAP will cover a three-year period and is focused on high impact commitments based on defined measurable targets and goals. We’re in the early stages of developing the new Stretch RAP and need your ideas and input to help shape it.

This is your opportunity to influence and help shape the actions and priorities that are set for Reconciliation across City of Melbourne over the next three years.

# Five RAP Pillars for Discussion

## 1. Truth-telling

## Giving Aboriginal voices opportunities for deliberate sharing of history and experience, inclusive of injustice and wrongdoing.

### What we have done

City of Melbourne recognises the importance of truth-telling to further our shared understanding of the past and its impacts today. In our previous Reconciliation Action Plan we added truth-telling as a pillar. Whilst not a standard pillar in the Reconciliation Australia’s framework, it aligns with broader activity in Victoria including the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Under this pillar we supported activities to facilitate learning, healing, and change within the City of Melbourne and externally, for example:

* Holding public truth-telling talks and discussions to enable a greater understanding of Aboriginal peoples’ experiences (past and present), and
* Hosting activities to acknowledge National Sorry Day

We also began the Stolen Generations Marker Project. Guided by a working group, including Stolen Generations survivors, their descendants, Traditional Owners and other relevant community representatives, we are creating a marker to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Stolen Generations.

The marker will be a permanent place with a significant artwork that reflects the resilience of the Stolen Generations and their families, acknowledges the injustices of the past, and provides future opportunities to move along the path to reconciliation together.

### What’s next?

Reconciliation Australia recognises the importance of truth-telling. In a recent report Reconciliation Australia and Deakin University found:

* Local and experiential truth-telling initiatives are important.
* There are rich and diverse stories to be told.
* There is a need to support First Nations leadership of truth-telling.
* Community truth-telling initiatives are an increasingly important source of education for non-Indigenous communities and help shape the national narrative.

## 2. Relationships

## Ensuring inclusivity of Aboriginal people is centric to the work of Council, to strengthen relationships and elevate their voices.

### What we have done

Building strong relationships between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community is at the heart of reconciliation and can benefit all.

Activities under the relationships pillar included celebrating National Reconciliation Week. A highlight each year has been The Oration, a public event featuring incredible First Nations keynote speakers including:

* In 2023, Antoinette Braybrook, a Kuku Yalanji woman, 2022 Melburnian of the Year and CEO of Djirra - a community led organisation dedicated to support and advocacy for Aboriginal women, in particular those experiencing family violence.
* In 2022, Adam Briggs, rapper, record label owner, comedy writer, actor and author.

We also focused on our relationships with the Aboriginal community, including our Traditional Owners the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boonwurrung peoples, for example:

* Aboriginal Community Engagement protocols have been completed and promoted.
* Traditional Owners, the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal organisations have been supported through our funding and grants programs.
* A First Nations Committee is being established to increase opportunities for Aboriginal community input into decision making.

### What’s next?

Under the Reconciliation Action Plan we can continue to build and strengthen our relationships with the Aboriginal community and between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community, including through:

* How we engage with the Aboriginal community.
* Celebrating National Reconciliation Week.
* Promoting reconciliation through our sphere of influence.
* Anti-discrimination strategies that promote positive race relations.

## 3. Respect

## Understanding of and respect for Aboriginal culture and identity is integral to meaningful and lasting relationships with the community.

### What we have done

We have looked to increase respect for Aboriginal peoples, cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation and our community. The Council Plan recognises Aboriginal cultures are central to our city’s identity and we have prioritised initiatives that celebrate and lead to respect.

This has included:

* Delivering Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training (ICAT) to our staff. A suite of training is now available to staff including tours and specific programs developed and delivered by Traditional Owners.
* A strong focus on implementing and embedding cultural protocols including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country, as well as celebrating NAIDOC internally, in the city, and beyond.
* Aboriginal culture reflected in the core design of civic spaces including the new library and family services, narrm ngarrgu.
* Significant measures to educate the broader community about Aboriginal heritage and culture, including through Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne. This interactive digital map of places of significance within the municipality, was launched in May 2022. Created with Traditional Owners, the map provides a powerful tool for truth-telling. It remains a living resource that will be added to over time, in ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners.

### What’s next?

Under the next Reconciliation Action Plan we can continue to build an understanding of Aboriginal culture as being central to our business, and Melbourne’s identity, including through:

* Promoting and providing ongoing cultural learning opportunities for our staff.
* Continuing our work to understand Melbourne as an Aboriginal city, and how this can be reflected in its design and identity.
* Demonstrating respect to Aboriginal protocols in the conduct of our work.
* Uplifting NAIDOC in our city.

## 4. Opportunities

## Providing and maintaining Aboriginal cultural and social and economic development opportunities enables outcomes to be embedded within the community.

### What we have done

As a city we are immensely proud of Melbourne’s unique Aboriginal cultural heritage and are committed to ensuring it is appropriately recognised, protected and celebrated. It is a key part of our city’s identity and also ensures Aboriginal peoples’ equal participation in the economy and activity of our city.

Outcomes under this pillar include initiatives to improve economic outcomes through employment and business activities. We supported supplier diversity and the exposure and reach of Aboriginal suppliers:

* We are members of Supply Nation and Kinaway and our Sustainable Procurement Framework provides information to staff on how to engage with Aboriginal businesses.
* We hosted the Deadly in Melbourne Business Expo in partnership with Kinaway, which had over 800 registered attendees networking with 52 First Nations businesses showcasing their offerings.

We embraced First Nations social, cultural and economic outcomes in our city including through:

* The YIRRAMBOI Festival, a major festival showcasing contemporary First Nations artistic practice.
* Embedding appropriate design references to Aboriginal cultures across urban and landscape design, for example in Greenline.
* Supporting Aboriginal communities and individuals’ access to and use of spaces in our libraries and community centres.

### What’s next?

Under the next Reconciliation Action Plan we can continue to strengthen opportunities for Aboriginal peoples’, our city and our organisation, including through:

* Improving employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal recruitment, retention and professional development.
* Increasing Aboriginal supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.
* Initiatives to stimulate Aboriginal business development and growth across our municipality.

## 5. Governance

## Aboriginal voices and interests are protected within the organisation and always maintained as priority.

### What we have done

Good governance helps ensure the City of Melbourne has the right inputs to its decision-making and supports accountability.

To support strong governance of our last Reconciliation Action Plan we:

* Established a Reconciliation Action Plan working group with senior executive sponsorship through CEO Alison Leighton.
* Ensured the Reconciliation Action Plan was aligned to the City of Melbourne Council Plan 2021-25.
* Created systems to regularly report and measure Reconciliation Action Plan achievements both internally and externally.
* Participated in Reconciliation Australia’s annual ‘Reconciliation Action Plan Impact Measurement Survey’ and the ‘Australian Reconciliation Barometer National Research Survey’.

### What’s next?

Under the next Reconciliation Action Plan we can continue to strengthen governance, including through:

* Establishing a First Nations Committee to advise Council on First Nations strategy, policy and programs.
* Holding internal quarterly meetings of the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.
* Creating an improved and more robust outcomes framework with Key Performance Indicators.