

THE YARRA RANGES INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Report Author: Manager Community Wellbeing
Responsible Officer: Director Communities
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

This report presents Council with the Yarra Ranges Council Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan August 2024 – August 2026 (RAP).

At the time of writing, the content and actions of the RAP have been finalised, with minor edits regarding formatting waiting final approval from Reconciliation Australia (RA).

The minor nature of the formatting issue is not regarded as a barrier in seeking formal Council endorsement, therefore it is recommended that Council formally endorse the Yarra Ranges Council Innovate Action Plan August 2024 – 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council formally endorse the Yarra Ranges Council Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan August 2024 - August 2026.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

The 1997 Yarra Ranges Statement of Apology to the Stolen Generations and Commitment to Indigenous Australians.

The proposed Yarra Ranges RAP aligns with Council's support and overall continuation to work toward reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

As Council's *Reconciliation Framework for Action 2013 – 2023* neared its expiry date, planning for a third iteration of a RAP and strategic approaches began. Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) recommended Council undertake the Reconciliation Australia pathway and come in under their national umbrella. The IAC considered Reconciliation Australia best placed to oversee accountability of actions and commitments.

The IAC considered the Reconciliation Australia approach would best suit Council in continuing its reconciliation journey, building on the significant work undertaken to date. It would ensure our RAP is standardised nationally while reflecting our uniqueness and character. This would be a new direction for Council to undertake as previous Reconciliation Strategies relied on in-house accountabilities.

The IAC advised that the RAP be framed through the lens of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing, and truth-telling and capture Council's Reconciliation journey.

The Innovate RAP

Reconciliation Australia's RAP Framework provides organisations with a structured approach to advance Reconciliation. There are four types of RAP that an organisation can develop: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, Elevate. Each type of RAP is designed to suit an organisation at different stages of their reconciliation journey.

Reconciliation Australia have recommended an Innovate RAP would best suit Yarra Ranges and provide a sound platform to extend its Reconciliation journey towards an Elevate RAP for the next Reconciliation Action Plan.

The story of Waa and Graphic Design

The narrative of Waa the Crow, as shared by Aunty Doreen Garvey Wandin, is a key component of our RAP. Waa's story was selected by the Indigenous Development Team supported by the RAP Working Group for its representation of accountability to the wider community for our actions. Waa is a significant totem for the Wurundjeri people, intricately entwined in their traditional social frameworks and creation narratives.

The stunning artwork depicting Waa was crafted by Wurundjeri artist, Ash Firebrace, and the draft was professionally designed by Bayila Creative, an Aboriginal Graphic Design company meaning 'Red Gum' in the Yorta Yorta language. Ash Firebrace and Bayila Creative worked in collaboration to produce the final design.

The Reconciliation Australia process

Reconciliation Australia made it known that the approval process typically involves several draft submissions before authorisation is granted. The initial draft of the RAP was submitted to RA in November 2023, and subsequent drafts have been through

significant editing based on feedback from RA. Meeting national standards while still showcasing our unique characteristics presented some challenges, particularly in terms of language and protocol.

After four draft submissions to RA, the content and actions of the RAP have been finalised, with only a few minor formatting edits waiting final approval. The graphic design process is structured with Bayila Design so any minor formatting to the final version will be seamless.

Notwithstanding final approved edits from RA, Attachment One is the most final draft provided to Council for adoption.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The development of the RAP was budgeted at approximately \$30,000 which includes art, graphic design, consultation, promotion and printing. These expenses were included within the 2023/24 operational budget.

The costs of implementing the RAP actions will be absorbed through existing operational budgets, the only likely additional budget requirement is \$150,000 over two years for an Indigenous trainee program if this approach is undertaken.

A review of other costs associated with RAP actions has confirmed that cost of action implementation will be met within existing budgets.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

- Healthy & Connected Communities.

International:

- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Federal:

- Uluru Statement from the Heart: The Australian Government has committed to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full. The Statement calls for a First Nations Voice to be permanently included in the Constitution, the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to supervise agreement-making and truth-telling about our history.
- Australia's human rights framework.

State of Victoria:

- *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.*

- Goal 18: Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are realised.
- Goal 19: Aboriginal culture and language are supported and celebrated.
- Goal 20: Racism is eliminated.

Local Strategic contexts include:

- 1997 Yarra Ranges Statement of Apology to the Stolen Generations and Commitment to Indigenous Australians
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Reconciliation Policy.
- Council Plan.

RELEVANT LAW

The draft Yarra Ranges Council Reconciliation Action Plan has undergone a gender impact assessment.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The RAP includes several actions that support the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy for Council, creating better opportunities for education and employment, and actions which enable Indigenous owned businesses to thrive. All of which enhance the local economy and improve socioeconomic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Social Implications

The actions outlined in the RAP aim to significantly enhance the social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through seeking to strengthen the Reconciliation platform and work towards addressing the over-representation of disadvantage across the social and cultural determinants of Aboriginal health and wellbeing.

Environmental Implications

The application of Indigenous knowledge systems into the Nature Plan and other Council environmental activities has the capacity to have a positive effect on biodiversity.

One key area for action in the RAP relates to the Firestick Program that has a climate change focus. Including the Firestick Program allows Cultural burning practices back on local lands that will create greater opportunity toward caring for Country, and ultimately influence climate change factors.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community engagement has included:

- Wurundjeri Woiwurung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.
- Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place.
- Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation.
- Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service.
- Oonah Health & Community Services Aboriginal Corporation.
- Aunty Doreen Garvey Wandin.

The Aboriginal organisations listed above indicated solid support for the Yarra Ranges RAP approach of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing and the importance of Truth-Telling as effective Reconciliation approach and acknowledged that it's something Council should lead.

Of particular interest and acknowledgement was the commitment to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy and Aboriginal procurement opportunities as key deliverables in Closing the Gap. The consultation with Aunty Doreen Garvey Wandin also supported the feedback provided from the Aboriginal community organisations.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The RAP working group and the Indigenous Development team considered many other Local Government and private industry RAPs to determine the content and essence of Yarra Ranges RAP. Through this process and broad research, the Yarra Ranges RAP has been formed to what is presented as Attachment One in this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The primary risk associated with the establishment of a RAP is building trust, confidence and cultural safety within the organisation, Ac and key partners through the RAP development process. To break that trust by not delivering on the commitments outlined within the RAP is a risk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationships and reputation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. The Yarra Ranges Council Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan August 2024 – August 2026 (RAP)