

## FLAG POLICY REVIEW

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Report Author: Manager Organisational Performance and Integrity  
Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services  
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*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

The Yarra Ranges Flag Policy (the Policy) was developed to inform and guide Council Officers on the applicable protocols for flying the Australian National Flag and other flags at the Civic Centre and other Council facilities.

A review of the policy has been undertaken. As part of the review the Policy's scope has been broadened to include guidelines for flag usage in digital and print formats, ensuring consistent, respectful and appropriate representation across all Council platforms.

In completing this review, Council Officers assessed the current application of the policy relating to the flying of physical flags, including the process for flying ceremonial or specific flags. No material change is recommended to this section of the Policy.

An assessment was undertaken in the use of flags for digital and print formats across Council's operations and it is recommended that a section covering this is incorporated into the policy. The review has specifically addressed the use of the National Australian Flag, Aboriginal Flag and Torres Strait Islander Flag with the Acknowledgement of Country Statement in digital and print format.

## RECOMMENDATION

***That Council adopt the Yarra Ranges Council Flag Policy.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

December 2021 Council adopted the current Flag Policy.

August 2024, Yarra Ranges Council endorsed the Yarra Ranges Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, two deliverables under action six of this plan related to

the use of images of flags. This are to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags and an Acknowledgement of Country on all employee email signatures. To include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on all YRC brochures.

### ***Background***

This report presents the reviewed and updated Yarra Ranges Flag Policy 2025 for consideration of Council. The purpose of this draft Policy is to inform and guide Council Officers on the applicable protocols for:

- Flying the Australian National Flag and other flags on flagpoles managed by Council.
- Displaying flags in digital and printed formats across Council's operational online platforms and electronic communications.

These protocols are designed to ensure consistent, respectful and appropriate flag usage, in line with the *Flags Act 1953*, associated guidelines, and Council's commitment to reconciliation.

In undertaking the review, officers considered the use of physical flags in line with the existing Flag Policy. This review indicated that the existing Flag Policy has been successful in achieving clarity of process relating to the use of physical flags, and in outlining the process when community approach Councillors or Council Officers to fly a community flag.

In reviewing this policy, consideration has been given to recent requests received from community members to incorporate the Australian Flag in digital and print formats, including where Council places digital and print flags beside the Acknowledgement of Country Statement.

There is a diversity of views across the Yarra Ranges municipality about the use of images of flags on Council's communications and it is important to consider the diversity of views carefully to ensure that any flag representation is creating an inclusive community which values the strength of our diversity and rich heritage, with respect, inclusivity and acceptance.

Yarra Ranges Council has been at the forefront of inclusivity and reconciliation issuing a Statement of Apology in 1997 to the Stolen generations: *"If we are to proceed in an open-hearted and responsible way to address the issues which will come before us in the future, we first need to acknowledge the past."*

The use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and the Acknowledgment of Country Statement plays an important role in Council's reconciliation efforts as outlined in Council's adopted Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which recently reaffirmed Council's commitment to progressing reconciliation in the most inclusive way possible.

The inclusion of the Australian flag alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in the context of an Acknowledgment of Country Statement needed to be considered sensitively. As such, specialist advice was sort from Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) throughout the Policy review process.

Recognising Council's adopted commitment to reconciliation and inclusivity the IAC have provided their support for the Australian National Flag to be included alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flag with a clear direction that the flags should be represented in the following order left to right, Aboriginal Flag, Torres Strait Islander Flag, Australian National Flag, followed by the Acknowledgment Statement.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

The review of the Policy was managed within current operating budgets.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

This draft Policy relates to the following Council's plans and policies:

- Yarra Ranges Community Vision 2036: The Policy contributes to the Community Vision by demonstrating Council's commitment to inclusivity, community connection, and responsible governance.
- Council's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2024 - 2026.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

The Flag Policy is guided by and adheres to the *Flags Act 1953*. This Act provides the primary legal framework for the physical flying of the Australian National Flag.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

There are minimal economic implications associated with this Policy. Costs related to flag maintenance are managed within existing operational budgets.

### ***Social Implications***

There are possible social implications to the updated Policy. These are covered in the following Community Engagement section.

### ***Environmental Implications***

The Policy does not have significant direct environmental implications.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement has not been undertaken during this review process as the Policy is primarily an internal governance document.

The Policy will be publicly available on Council's website following consideration of Council.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

This updated Policy broadens the scope to include flag usage in digital and print formats, ensuring respectful and appropriate representation across all Council platforms.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Policy provides a clear position in respect of roles, responsibilities and the rationale associated with flying flags at the Civic Centre, other council facilities and via digital and print formats. There is a low-level non-compliance risks associated to this policy. As any failure to adhere to the Policy could result reputational or regulatory issues for Council. This Policy mitigates these risks by providing clear guidelines and procedures for the flying, display, and use of flags.

## **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. Yarra Ranges Council Flag Policy 2025