Reconciliation Policy
The Aboriginal flag was designed by Harold Thomas and was first flown in Adelaide in 1971. Since then, it has become a widely recognised symbol of the unity and identity of Aboriginal people.

The meanings of the three colours in the flag, as stated by Harold Thomas, are:

- **Black** – represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
- **Yellow circle** – represents the sun, the giver of life and protector
- **Red** – represents the red earth, the red ochre used in ceremonies and Aboriginal peoples’ spiritual relation to the land

The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by the late Bernard Namok as a symbol of unity and identity for Torres Strait Islanders and was adopted in 1992.

A white Dhari (traditional headdress) sits in the centre, with a five-pointed white star beneath it.

The meanings of the colours in the flag are:

- **Green** – represents the land
- **Black** – represents the Indigenous peoples
- **Blue** – represents the sea
- **White** – represents peace

Date of endorsement: 24 November 2015
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It is with great honour that I introduce Moonee Valley City Council’s Reconciliation Policy. This policy is a commitment by Council to respect, recognise and build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also encourages our community to do the same.

On behalf of Council, I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, their spirits, ancestors, elders and community members past and present.

The City of Moonee Valley has a long and vibrant Aboriginal history. For over 40,000 years, the Wurundjeri people lived on this land, moving according to the seasons. European settlement to the area in the 1840s, brought dramatic changes to the land. The impacts of colonisation on the Aboriginal population were devastating and have been long-lasting, with many of these impacts still being felt today. Despite this, Aboriginal people have shown extraordinary resilience and their vibrant culture and connection to this land continues to be strong.

Today, the Moonee Valley community is vibrant and diverse and Council strives to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate in community life, regardless of their age, cultural and linguistic background, faith, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

In 2014, Council adopted the Diversity, Access and Equity Policy with the goal to support an inclusive city that respects the human rights of all citizens and promotes participation in community life. The Reconciliation Policy is a complementary document that supports the commitments included in the Diversity, Access and Equity Policy.

The Reconciliation Policy will be implemented through Reconciliation Action Plans, the first of which is the Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-18. The policy and first action plan have been guided by community consultation, research and reflection on the current broader political context, and I thank everyone who has contributed to their development.

Cr Andrea Surace
Moonee Valley Mayor
Introduction

Council recognises the distinct culture, unique spirit and past injustices inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. Council also recognises that some of these injustices continue today.

This Reconciliation Policy is a commitment by Council to respect, recognise and build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while encouraging others in our community to do the same.

Importantly, the policy recognises that the impacts of colonisation, dispossession and forced removal on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still being felt today. The policy also highlights that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have shown extraordinary resilience as one of the world’s oldest surviving cultures.

Council is committed to working with our broader community to promote reconciliation, awareness and understanding of our shared history, historical injustices and the place that Aboriginal people hold in Australian society today.

The policy builds on Council’s previous Reconciliation Policy (2010-2014) and focuses on continuing our reconciliation journey from 2016-2020. It has been developed based on consultation with Wurundjeri Council, our community and staff. The policy will be implemented through action plans focusing on respect, recognition and building partnerships.

What is included in this policy?

The Reconciliation Policy includes:

- a Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri people and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- policy statement commitments
- protocols for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri people and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In 2010, a Statement of Commitment was signed by Council and Wurundjeri Elder, Auntie Doreen Garey Wandin during NAIDOC Week. The signed statement is displayed in the foyer of Council’s Civic Centre.

The Reconciliation Policy reaffirms Council’s commitment to Wurundjeri people and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Respect
Council respects:

• The Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the first Australians on this land.
• The unique status of Aboriginal peoples as the original custodians of traditional lands and waters.
• The special and distinctive spiritual and material relationship that Aboriginal people have with the land, water, trees, rocks, hills and valley creeks, rivers and flood plains of the Moonee Valley area.
• The value of the diversity and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Islander people and cultures to the heritage of all Australians.

Recognition
Council recognises:

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as having a distinct culture, history and legacy that all Australians can share in with vibrancy, diversity and richness.
• The unique spirit and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the richness of traditional languages.
• The historical and environmental importance of the significant and sacred sites, and special places within the city.
• The past injustices inflicted on Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by this and previous generations of non-Aboriginal Australians, and expresses its profound regret that these injustices occurred. In particular, Council is sorry for the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, confiscation of their traditional lands, the implementation of policies designed to extinguish Aboriginal practices, language and culture and for the pain these actions have caused and continue to cause the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Relationships
Council will advocate for:

• Respect towards and recognition of the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australian society past and present.
• The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
• Increased opportunities and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
• The sustainability of Aboriginal organisations and programs.
Reconciliation Policy commitments

The following are policy statements that Council will commit to over the life of the Reconciliation Policy.

**Respect**

Council respects the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first inhabitants and custodians of this land.

**Objective:**

To acknowledge the place that Aboriginal people hold in Australian society and educate Council staff and the broader community about the importance of reconciliation.

**Council will:**

- Acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique role in Australian life.
- Promote Council’s commitment to reconciliation.

**Recognition**

Council recognises the unique contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Australia in the past and present. Council recognises the past injustices and current inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a result of colonisation.

**Objective:**

To increase the understanding of Aboriginal culture past and present, protect heritage and celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To develop practical actions that address disadvantage.

**Council will:**

- Acknowledge Aboriginal history within the municipality.
- Preserve the heritage of the traditional custodians of Moonee Valley: the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.
- Recognise, acknowledge and promote the unique values and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Promote and celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Moonee Valley and Australian life.
- Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organisations.
- Offer practical assistance to community groups that work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Develop working partnerships with local, state, community and industry groups to create opportunities that are in line with the needs and desires of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Reconciliation Policy commitments continued

**Relationships**
Council will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build partnerships and create opportunities that will reduce inequalities.

**Objective:**
To develop meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Council will:

- Promote opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in community consultations and decision making processes.
- Contribute to the distribution of accurate information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.
- Identify issues and develop joint strategies through collaboration with state and regional local government associations and networks.
- Work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment groups to support the identification of employment opportunities across the city.

**Tracking progress and reporting**
Council will continually evaluate progress and develop new initiatives to support the Reconciliation Policy.

**Objective:**
Ensure that Council is accountable and the Reconciliation Policy remains proactive and relevant.

Council will:

- Include the Reconciliation Policy and its action plans in Council's report systems.
- Review and modify action plans to ensure relevance and integrity.
- Review the policy every four years to ensure Council continues to reflect contemporary issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Incorporate consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait representative organisations in the development of action plans to ensure they meet current priorities.
- Advocate to other spheres of government in the interest of co-existence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ rights.
Protocols for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Protocols are standards of behaviour that people use to show respect to each other. It is recognised that every culture has different ways of communicating. To work respectfully, unique protocols need to be understood and applied.

Using protocols helps Council to actively support reconciliation and legitimise a sense of place and space for all Australians.

Why are protocols important?
Understanding the protocols and applying them, demonstrates respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs and traditions, which have been in continual practice since time immemorial. This includes at Council operated and community events. Being knowledgeable and practicing the protocols recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and values are different to other cultures practised in Australia.

Who is this information relevant to?
All staff, especially those responsible for organising meetings, events or civic occasions.

When should these protocols be used?
At all public gatherings, formal meetings and events. By consistently recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as having a rightful and respected place in society, Council is providing a consistent message of its Reconciliation Policy commitments.

A written acknowledgement is also to be used in Council’s strategies and plans. Please refer to the Communications Style Guide for content and wording.

Flag flying
Where there are two flagpoles and where the Australian flag is flown, the Aboriginal flag must also be flown. The Mabo High court decision confirmed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people held title to Australia prior to European settlement. Flying the Aboriginal flag with the Australian flag acknowledges Australia’s rich history and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodianship of the land.
Protocols for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People continued

When is a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country to be used?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welcome to Country</th>
<th>Acknowledgement of Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of and description</strong></td>
<td>Welcome to Country is a common place and ancient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition that is performed by the traditional custodian clan to welcome new arrivals to their land. It is made at the start of formal events as a sign of respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An Aboriginal elder who is a descendant of the area’s original clan is required to perform the Welcome to Country. The Welcome is usually a speech but can include other cultural activities such as songs, music, and dance in negotiation with the person performing the Welcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **When** | A Welcome to Country occurs in the opening part of the event and preferably as the first item on the agenda at the following occasions:  
- Mayoral investiture;  
- All citizenship ceremonies;  
- Spirit of Moonee Valley Awards ceremony;  
- Opening of major festivals such as the Moonee Valley Festival;  
- Major award nights by Council;  
- Conferences hosted by Council; and  
- Important Civic events where external guests have been invited | Acknowledgement of Country occurs in the opening part of the event and preferable as the first item on the agenda at the following occasions:  
- Formally constituted Council meetings;  
- Launches and public events where the community has been invited to attend;  
- Receptions for visiting dignitaries; and  
- Occasions where a Welcome to Country is appropriate however a Wurundjeri elder is not available. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Welcome to Country</strong></th>
<th><strong>Acknowledgement of Country</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who performs this?</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Welcome to Country is where the traditional Aboriginal custodians (in most cases it is an elder), welcomes people to their land.</td>
<td>Usually at Council events and meetings, a chair or speaker may begin by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place on the country of traditional custodians by using the Statement of Acknowledgement for public events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The traditional Aboriginal custodians of the City of Moonee Valley municipality are the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To engage a Wurundjeri elder for a Council event, contact Wurundjeri Council directly on 03 9416 2905.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will be required to complete a Welcome to Country request form and submit to Wurundjeri Council.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is also important to note that not all Aboriginal people have the cultural authority to conduct a Welcome to Country. Wurundjeri Council would nominate the appropriate person/people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wording</strong></td>
<td>Moonee Valley City Council respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land— the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation* their spirits, ancestors, elders and community members past and present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given that this is performed by a Wurundjeri elder or representative, this wording is developed by the elder.</td>
<td>Council also extends this respect to the elders and descendants of other Aboriginal peoples here today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event organiser can give the elder information about the event to allow the elder to tailor their Welcome to Country to the event.</td>
<td>*For events outside the municipality, please contact Council’s Communications team to identify the relevant clan and prepare a correct Acknowledgement of Country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other important information</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that the Aboriginal elder or representative is comfortable with the preparations of the event and this should be discussed before the occasion being held. Aboriginal elders are not paid performers, but holders of huge amounts of cultural knowledge commanding respect and appreciation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to Country is a right of the traditional Aboriginal custodians and should never be seen as a privilege.</td>
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Reference to and images of deceased persons

In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the use of a deceased person’s name or image is forbidden. A pet or nick-name is sometimes used.

Council staff need to seek clarification from family members before making reference to any deceased person who has not already been named or photographed in publications or broadcasts. Stickers are available from Council’s Social Planning and Wellbeing team to place on existing material.

When reference to or images of deceased people are included in Council publications, indication of this fact needs to be included prominently at the beginning of the publication or broadcast. Preferred wording is as follows:

Gender specific access to sacred sites, knowledge, stories or artefacts

The use, display or access to specific songs, artefacts, artworks, sacred patterns or designs, stories or sites may be restricted to women or men only or inappropriate for printing or public display.

Council staff should seek clarification of access issues when planning exhibitions, events and performances from Wurundjeri Council if specific to Moonee Valley cultural heritage sites and/or people, or the Koorie Heritage Trust for protocols outside Wurundjeri boundaries.

**WARNING:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this publication contains names and/or images of people who are now deceased.
Moonee Valley City Council Reconciliation Policy

Supporting documents

Council’s Reconciliation Policy has been developed following a review of the Reconciliation Policy 2010-2014; Federal, State and Local Government policy context; best-practice research; and consultation with Wurundjeri Council, service providers, staff and the community.

Key findings from this review:

- Since 2010, Council has made some significant achievements in working to deliver on its key commitments in the Reconciliation Policy and accompanying action plans.

- There continues to be significant difference in health outcomes, incomes and living standards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal Australians. Council has an important role to play in improving outcomes through the provision of services, Council’s connection to residents, advocacy and Council’s role in managing land and development.

- Reconciliation continues to be important to address the inequalities, systemic injustice, discrimination and misunderstandings experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- Following the consultation process and in line with best practice, there are some proposed minor modifications to the Reconciliation Policy and some recommendations for future Reconciliation Action Plans.

For further information about the key findings from this review, see the Background Report (June 2015).

Action plans

To support implementation of the policy, Council will develop action plans. The action plans will outline a whole-of-Council approach to delivering on Council’s policy commitments to show respect, recognition and build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and our broader community.

These action plans will be available to view on Council’s website at mvcc.vic.gov.au/reconciliation.
Acknowledgements

Council would like to thank all those who contributed to the review and update of Moonee Valley’s Reconciliation Policy through:

- a roundtable involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, representatives from key organisations and interested community members
- an internal workshop with Managers and staff that have been involved and/or shown interest in working towards actions of the Reconciliation Action Plan
- meetings with various teams/units of Council
- interviews or cultural consultations with key stakeholders including consultations with Wurundjeri elders
- interviews with key community service organisations and individual residents

Thank you to the Incinerator Gallery who provided the photos of artwork featured in this publication.
Artwork credits

Council wishes to acknowledge the talents of the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

Front cover

Inner pages