

Murrindindi Shire Council 'Reflect' Reconciliation Action Plan July 2023 – June 2024



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Acknowledgement of Country

Murrindindi Shire Council (MSC) acknowledges that Murrindindi Shire exists on Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.

We hereby express our respect for the Taungurung people and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land that encompasses Murrindindi Shire.

We pay our respects to their leaders and Elders past and present for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of all Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. We extend that respect to all First Nations people, including other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in our Shire.

Traditional Owners and Custodians have a unique and deeply spiritual connection to Country and this remains strong.

We express our gratitude for the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs incurred through the colonisation of the land, and our hope that we can walk forward together in harmony and the spirit of reconciliation and work together as custodians of the land.

Mayor and CEO Message

We are pleased to present Murrindindi Shire Council's 'Reflect' Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This Plan, including the process we have undertaken to develop it, represents our commitment to deep and meaningful reconciliation, and lays the foundations for future RAPs.

In developing the Council Plan 2021-2025 and our 10-Year Community Vision, one of the key priorities our community identified was the importance of respecting and celebrating the cultural heritage of First Nations peoples.

Through this Plan we aim to strengthen our ties with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and in doing so contribute to reconciliation across Australia.

We acknowledge that the region we service within Victoria has a human history that began with Traditional Owners. We understand the connection and cultural importance of land and water to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and feel a great responsibility to ensure our activities respect these important values, and where appropriate, enhance and celebrate them.

We also understand and appreciate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are facing challenges on many different fronts, particularly with their health and wellbeing, education attainment and gaining employment.

This Plan will enable us to contribute to enhancing opportunities and reducing social disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live in Shire. Our population is growing at a steady rate, and we are aware of our role in managing this growth in a way that protects and enhances cultural and environmental values.

We look forward to working directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, our staff, businesses and the wider community, to implement the actions outlined in this Reconciliation Action Plan.

Cr. Sue Carpenter, Mayor Livia Bonazzi, Chief Executive Officer

Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Officer Statement

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Murrindindi Shire Council to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Murrindindi Shire Council joins a network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Murrindindi Shire Council to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

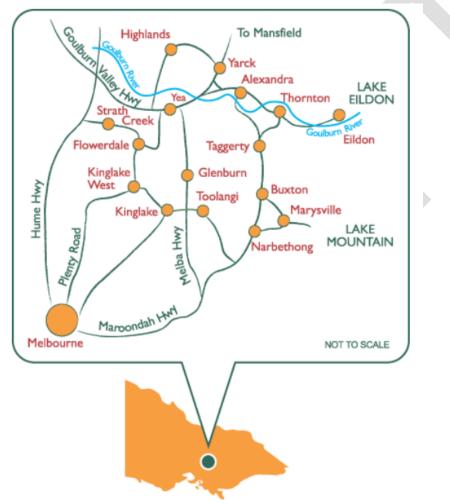
Congratulations Murrindindi Shire Council, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine Chief Executive Officer Reconciliation Australia

Our Place

Murrindindi Shire is located around one and a half hours to the north-east of Melbourne, in the Central Victoria region and covers an area of 3,889 square kilometres. With a population of 15,197 (ABS, 2021), the Shire includes the main towns of Alexandra, Buxton, Castella, Eildon, Flowerdale, Kinglake, Marysville, Molesworth, Strath Creek, Taggerty, Toolangi, Yarck, Yea and many other small communities and locations.

Murrindindi Shire is a place of unique natural beauty and rural character, with mountainous and heavily forested land making up nearly 50% of the total land area, consisting of State Forest, Parks and Reserves and some private forest. The landscape comprises of flat grazing land in the large river valleys, mountainous southern and eastern ranges, like the alpine areas around Lake Mountain Alpine Resort, and the Goulburn River flows through the Shire.



(NB. This map will be changed by graphic design to reflect Traditional Owner lands.)

The Shire's main industries are agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture, forestry and timber processing, tourism and hospitality, light manufacturing and engineering, retail and trades services, education and public services.

Traditional Owners and Registered Aboriginal Parties

The majority of Murrindindi Shire is located on Taungurung Country, with a small area of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in the south of Kinglake. Both the Taungurung and

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples are members of the Kulin Nation – an alliance of five Aboriginal nations in south central Victoria.

We acknowledge the devastating impacts that colonisation has had, and continues to have, on both the Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, and First Nations peoples across Australia. Dispossession of land, dislocation, frontier clashes and introduced diseases led to a dramatic decline in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. First Nations peoples' occupation of and unique connection with the land were seriously diminished.

Despite the effects of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures survived, and bonds between families and clans remain strong.

Taungurung People

The Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) is the Registered Aboriginal Party that represents the interests of the Taungurung people. TLaWC describes the Taungurung people as a group of many clans sharing one language and deep spiritual connection with Country. They are the Traditional Owners of a large part of central Victoria and have lived on Country for more than a thousand generations. Life before European invasion was characterised by a strong, ritually-expressed connection to Country, with a number of clans making up the Taungurung 'wurrung' (language group) or First Nation.

Today, Taungurung people are recovering a sense of shared identity, common purpose and cultural vitality. There is a commitment to reclaim their culture, assert and share history, revitalise language and embrace rightful involvement as the custodians of their traditional lands.

In May 2021 the Taungurung flag, designed by Taungurung Elder Loraine Padgham, was launched. This flag symbolises the reassertion of the identity and pride of the Taungurung people.

In 2009, the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) was recognised as a Registered Aboriginal Party. The TLaWC is the corporate representative and the 'face' of the Taungurung people and aims to serve and uphold their interests with respect to culture and Country.

The TLaWC protects the cultural heritage of the Taungurung people by acting as a Registered Aboriginal Party under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. They also develop projects for the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Taungurung people and provide opportunities for engagement in cultural events by facilitating camps, activities and educational workshops for Taungurung people and minimise barriers to participation.

SOURCE: Taungurung Land and Waters Council (2021) taungurung.com.au/fact-sheets

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people take their name from the Woi-wurrung language word *'wurun'* meaning the Manna Gum which is common along *'Birrarung'* (Yarra River), and *'djeri'*, the grub which is found in or near the tree. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung are the 'Manna Gum People' and their Ancestors have lived on this land for millennia.

Their relationship with the land extends back tens of thousands of years to when their creator spirit 'Bunjil' formed their people, the land and all living things. The land provided all the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung needed – food, water, medicine, shelter – and they treated it with the respect due to such a provider.

The Wurundjeri Woi-w Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party for the northern parts of Melbourne, which includes the small section of Kinglake within Murrindindi Shire. They represent the interests of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and also fulfil the requirements of the Registered Aboriginal Party under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

SOURCES: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (2022) 'Ancestors and Past' Website: wurundjeri.com.au

City of Yarra (2022) 'The Aboriginal History of Yarra' Website: aboriginal historyofyarra.com.au/1-introduction

Local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

We also acknowledge that there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Murrindindi Shire who belong to different Traditional Owner groups across Australia. In Murrindindi Shire, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples make up 1.7% (259) of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Our Business

Murrindindi Shire Council is responsible for delivering a range of services to residents, ratepayers, local businesses and tourism operators and visitors to the area.

These services include economic development, tourism services, events management, youth and recreational development, maternal and child health and immunisation services, community development, libraries and customer service, public health, community safety, waste and recycling, environmental sustainability, planning, business support and roads, parks, infrastructure and building provision and maintenance.

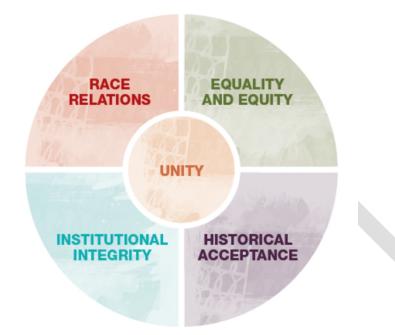
Council is governed by seven elected Councillors who play the important role of setting the strategic direction of Council, as outlined in the Council Plan 2021-2025, and represent the interests and aspirations of the community.

Our Shire comprises five major town centres and 42 smaller localities, across an area of 3,889 square kilometres. We deliver services from our Alexandra, Yea and Kinglake offices. Additionally, our Mobile Library and Customer Service travels to eight locations across our Shire.

Council employs 190 people. None of our employees identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander through the most recent *People Matter* survey, the Victorian public sector's independent employee opinion survey.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Reconciliation Australia's vision for reconciliation is based and measured on five dimensions: historical acceptance, race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity and unity. These five dimensions are interrelated and do not exist in isolation.



Source: Reconciliation Australia (2022) 'What is Reconciliation?' Website: reconciliation.org.au

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey that focuses on understanding and acknowledging historical events of the past and their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ensuring these events are never repeated.

It's about building and strengthening positive and respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. It also focuses on enabling equal opportunities and participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising and upholding their rights, including their right to self-determination.

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

Reconciliation is not one person or organisation's responsibility; we all have a responsibility to support reconciliation. As the closest level of government to the community, Murrindindi Shire Council has a key role to play in contributing to the reconciliation movement.

One of the ways Council can advance reconciliation is to develop a RAP. There are four RAP types - Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – which are designed for organisations at different stages of their reconciliation journey. 'Reflect' RAPs are appropriate for organisations at the beginning of the journey.

We have developed a 'Reflect' RAP to demonstrate our organisation's commitment to reconciliation and to take meaningful action to advance reconciliation. Our Reflect RAP is for 12 months and provides us with a strategic framework, based on the core pillars of reconciliation, to drive our organisation's contribution to the reconciliation movement and

prepare us for reconciliation initiatives in future RAPs. By committing to a Reflect RAP, we'll be scoping and developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, deciding on our vision for reconciliation and exploring our sphere of influence. Our aim through this RAP is to create a culturally safe and welcoming workplace and to foster deeper connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Council, and the wider community. We have endeavoured to anchor this RAP on the guidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, to provide a chance for our organisation to contribute to and benefit from advancing reconciliation.

In addition to the goals of the organisation, we recognise that our community also has a strong desire to strengthen relationships and engagement with local Traditional Owners. When developing Murrindindi Shire's 10-Year Community Vision, the community told us that respecting and celebrating the cultural heritage of First Nations Peoples is a high priority.

To develop our first RAP, we formed an internal working group, made up of the following members:

- Councillor for Cathedral Ward, Sandice McAulay
- MSC Chief Executive Officer, Livia Bonazzi
- Director Community Engagement, Shivaun Murphy then Kate Siebert
- Manager Community Wellbeing, Stuart Coller
- Coordinator Community Development, Nerissa Carter
- Communications Coordinator, Rosie Kane
- Coordinator Waste Management, Josh Russell
- Coordinator Emergency Management and Business Continuity, Chris Price
- Y Water Centre Coordinator, Julie Blyth
- Library and Customer Service Officer, Kristy Taylor
- Environmental Sustainability Officer, Laura Campbell
- Community Planning Officer, Anna Paix

Our RAP Champion throughout most of the RAP development period was Shivaun Murphy. Going forward, the RAP Champion is Livia Bonazzi. New working group members will also be sought as required.

None of the RAP working group members identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. During implementation of the actions in our RAP, we intend to open an Expression of Interest process to seek representatives from the community to participate in the working group. These additional working group members or advisors will be sought from Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung communities, as well as other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples living within Murrindindi Shire.

The working group will guide the implementation of this Reflect RAP and assign relevant roles and responsibilities to staff at Council to ensure we remain accountable to the actions committed to in our Plan. We acknowledge that reconciliation cannot occur without listening, learning, and engaging with First Nations people and that it is an ongoing commitment we are making.

The RAP working group were pleased to discuss the development of this document with representatives from both the TLaWC and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, seeking review and input.

While this is Council's first formal RAP, we have a long-standing relationship with the Traditional Owners of Murrindindi Shire. We recognise the importance of ongoing consultation and strengthening of our relationships with Traditional Owner organisations and

other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our communities and look forward to the opportunity to improve our collaborative practices into the future.

Partnerships and current activities

Developing our RAP has enabled Council to contemplate and reflect on our reconciliation journey to date and the work we are doing as an organisation to respect, acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This work includes

- offering 'Acknowledge This!' training for Council staff to increase their understanding of Acknowledgements of Country and how to create and communicate a genuine and thoughtful Acknowledgment of Country
- flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags outside all Council offices
- introducing Acknowledgement of Country protocols for all Council events, functions and larger meetings and within Council publications and email correspondence
- supporting Dr Jennifer Jones in making a grant application to the Victorian Government to assist with publication of the book *On Taungurung Land: Sharing History and Culture* by Roy Henry Patterson and Dr Jennifer Jones
- supporting Aunty Loraine Padgham to preserve Taungurung language with funding from our Grants and Contributions Program to publish the book 'Bijil Ba Wudhi Deberra'
- supporting community activities and events for National Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks through our Grants and Contributions Program
- supporting the 'Honour the Taungurung' community action group, with funding to commission three concept designs from Taungurung artists for a public art installation
- working with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council across a number of projects, including
 - participating in the development of Memorandum of Understanding, supporting an effective partnership between the two organisations into the future
 - signage projects that recognise the Traditional Owners of land in Murrindindi Shire
 - incorporating traditional Aboriginal narratives from the local area in the design of the Eildon Splash and Skate Park, in collaboration with TLaWC
 - ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners surrounding best practice for land management
 - community planning in Marysville, Toolangi-Castella, Yea and Eildon, supported through TLaWC representation and promotion
 - representation of Traditional Owners on the Great ArtDoors Rail Trail Art Installation Project Control Group
 - Taungurung Language Cards developed and distributed for early years services across the Shire, with an accompanying resource kit
 - funding and managing the Yea Fossil Timeline Path Project an interpretive representation of the geological history from the Palaeozoic Era through to the arrival of First Nations Peoples

 developing and registering a RAP with Reconciliation Australia for Council's Family Day Care service which was subsequently delivered

Relationships				
Action	Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships 	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Is organisations within our local area or connect with on our reconciliation jour	sphere of influence to	July 2023	Coordinator Community Engagement
with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and	Develop engagement guidelines for C partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres stakeholders and organisations.		August 2023	Coordinator Community Engagement
organisations.	 Maintain and strengthen our current re Taungurung Land and Waters Counci wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal (projects 	l and Wurundjeri Woi-	March 2024	Coordinator Community Engagement
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NF reconciliation materials to our staff.	RW resources and	May 2024	Coordinator Community Engagement
	RAP Working Group members to part event.	icipate in an external NRW	27 May - 3 June, 2024	RAP Champion
	Encourage and support staff and seni at least one external event to recognis		27 May - 3 June, 2024	RAP Champion
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reco	onciliation to all staff.	July 2023	Communications Coordinator
	Communicate our commitment to reco	onciliation publicly	October 2023	Communications Coordinator
	Identify external stakeholders that our with on our reconciliation journey.	organisation can engage	August 2023	Coordinator Community Engagement
	 Identify RAP and other like-minded or approach to collaborate with on our re 		August 2023	Coordinator Community

			Engagement
 Promote positive race relations through anti- discrimination strategies. 	When reviewing or developing policies and procedures consider best practice in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	November 2023	People and Culture Business Partner
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2023	People and Culture Business Partner

Respect			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation.	December 2023	People and Culture Business Partner
	• Prepare a strategy document for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	February 2024	People and Culture Business Partner
	• Explore opportunities for staff to meet on Country and participate in cultural immersion experiences.	October 2023	Coordinator Community Development
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	 Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. 	October 2023	Communications Coordinator
by observing cultural protocols.	• Work with Traditional Owner groups to develop best practice guide for staff to engage respectfully and appropriately and observe cultural protocols.	October 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing
	Continue to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of all Council events, functions and larger meetings	March 2024	Manager Governance and Risk

	 Develop a plan to increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	February 2024	People and Culture Business Partner
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	 Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. 	June 2024	Communications Coordinator
	 Continue to support community NAIDOC week events through our Grants and Contributions Program. 	July 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing
	 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	First week in July 2023	RAP Champion
	 Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	July 2023	Communications Coordinator

	the meaning of NAIDOC Week.		Coordinator
Opportunition			
Opportunities			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	 Identify barriers in recruitment and selection process that may be preventing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander from applying for jobs or progressing to employment. Continue to build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities 	January 2024 January 2024	People and Culture Business Partner People and Culture Business Partner
	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	February 2024	People and Culture Business Partner

9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	February 2024	Procurement and Risk Management Officer
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	February 2024	Procurement and Risk Management Officer

Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	July 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing/ RAP Champion
	Review and update Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing/ RAP Champion
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	September 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing/ RAP Champion
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Maintain executive and Councillor membership within RAP Working Group to champion our RAP internally.	July 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2023	RAP Champion
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2023	Integrity and Governance Coordinator

	Define resource needs for ongoing RAP implementation.	November 2023	Manager Community Wellbeing
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• 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.	June annually	Manager Community Wellbeing
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	August annually	Manager Community Wellbeing
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Manager Community Wellbeing
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's <u>website</u> to begin developing our next RAP.	June 2024	Manager Community Wellbeing

Contact details:

Position: Coordinator Community Engagement Phone: (03) 5772 0333 Email: engagement@murrindindi.vic.gov.au