



Mildura Rural City Council

Aboriginal Recognition Policy

Policy – CP058

| Prepared | Reviewed | Approved | Date | Council Minute No. |
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| Manager Community Futures | Executive Leadership Team | Council | August 2021 | 2021/0191 |
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| Document Owner: Manager Community Futures | | Review Frequency: 5 years | | |

1. The purpose of this policy is

The purpose of this policy is to provide the mechanism for respect and recognition of the Aboriginal communities within our municipality. This policy will create avenues and develop pathways which connect Council and the local Aboriginal community.

The recognition policy recognises Traditional Owners including First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation and Wotjobaluk Nations. The policy also affirms Mildura Rural City Council's commitments within the Indigenous Land Use Agreement dated July 2003.

2. Policy Statement

As a proud multicultural municipality, Council will recognise and acknowledge the value and important role the First Australians play in our community.

Council is committed to positive strategies for creating a harmonious relationship between Council and the local Aboriginal community.

Council will work with the local Aboriginal community, ensuring a two way conversation to build a solid foundation that fosters recognition and respect through reconciliation. Council recognises the importance of understanding and supporting cultural celebrations and highlighting the community, culture and achievements of Aboriginal in our region.

Language statement

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people living throughout Victoria. Whilst the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, we have used the term 'Aboriginal' to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who are living in our municipality.

This statement is based on a reference in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018 - 2023

3. Principles

Acknowledgement

Council will recognise the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which the meeting is conducted at statutory Council meetings with an Acknowledgement of Country spoken by the Mayor:

Acknowledgement of Country:

First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation

The First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation recommend the following acknowledgement be used within their RAP area.

We acknowledge the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, The Latji Latji and Ngintait as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we are. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present of First Peoples of Millewa-Mallee and the ancient connection they hold with their Country

Wotjobaluk Nations

The Barengi Gadjin Land Council Traditional Owners group are The Wotjobaluk Nations. The group prefers to be recognised as The Wotjobaluk Nations, not Barengi Gadjin Land Council which is an organisation.

The Wotjobaluk Nations recommend the following acknowledgement be used within their RAP area.

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we meet the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Jupagulk and Wergaia peoples. I would like to pay my respect to their Elders past and present and their future leaders.

I would like to thank the Wotjobaluk Nations for allowing us to continue to work and live on their lands and acknowledge the significance of their culture.

Due to the size and extent of the Council, the acknowledgment may be altered to reflect the specific location or country the acknowledgement is spoken.

In circumstances where a general acknowledgement is appropriate, the following wording will be used.

Mildura Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, which now comprises the Mildura Rural City municipality. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate and respect their continuing cultures and acknowledge the memories of their ancestors.

In circumstances where Council may acknowledge traditional custodians of the land on signage in bushland and natural areas, the following wording will be used.

While on this land we ask that you join us in acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of this country and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and honour their culture and traditions.

If holding large or significant events within the municipality, Council will invite a Traditional Owner to perform a Welcome to Country. In the absence of a Traditional Owner, an Acknowledgement of Country can be spoken by the facilitator/chair/MC. The Acknowledgement appropriate to the land upon which any event or function is conducted should be used.

Signage

Council will support the display of symbolic recognition of Aboriginal people as part of entrance signage to the municipality at major transport connections into the municipality.

The agreed process, endorsed by Council's Aboriginal Action Committee will include:

- Sourcing funding for signage
- Engagement with key stakeholders – Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for region, Traditional Owners, VicRoads, Native Title Unit, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources, Aboriginal Action Committee and Mildura Rural City Council
- Location and design to be determined as per VicRoads Welcome to Country Signage Guidelines
- Approval from Native Title Unit for signage
- A plan developed for ongoing maintenance and repairs
- Installation of signage.

Significant Dates & Events – celebrate, support and acknowledge

Council recognises the significant dates and celebrations in relation to Aboriginal history and culture and commits to acknowledge, celebrate and support along with the local Aboriginal community the following dates:

- NAIDOC Week
- Reconciliation Week
- Sorry Day
- Survival Day
- Mabo Day
- National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day
- Ochre Ribbon Week
- National Apology Day
- National Closing the Gap Day
- Harmony Week
- International Day of World Indigenous People
- Indigenous Literacy Day
- Anniversary United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Cultural Safety

Council will recognise the importance of cultural safety and provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal community members within Council's contact points, service centres, offices and buildings. Council's contact points for staff, customers and community members will engage with and represent the diversity within our community, particularly Aboriginal Culture through artwork and imagery. Council will engage with our Aboriginal community and stakeholders and respect cultural practices such as Sorry Business and ceremonies.

Partnerships

Council commits to working in partnership with the local Aboriginal community through the Aboriginal Action Committee, Traditional Owners and the internal Aboriginal staff group Yapa Wiimbia for the purpose of improving and enhancing the wellbeing of the Aboriginal community in the Mildura Rural City Council municipality.

Engagement and consultation

Council will undertake active and appropriate engagement and consultation with the local Aboriginal community on any council action that impacts the Aboriginal community which includes but is not limited to Council planning, projects and strategies. Engagement techniques may include community forums, yarning circles and direct stakeholder contact.

Flags

Council will continue to fly both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags along with the Australian and Council flag wherever these are flown or displayed as part of Council events, facilities and assets.

Council will place flags at half-mast in the event of a death in the local Aboriginal community as advised by the Chair of the Aboriginal Action Committee. The flags will be flown at half-mast from notification until the day of the funeral.

Culture

Council recognises the significance and diversity of culture within the local Aboriginal community and is committed to continual learning and better understanding the attributes and variables that impact on Aboriginal communities and culture today. In order to best serve and represent our diverse municipality we must understand one another. Staff and Councillors will be encouraged to participate in cultural awareness training, cultural events and recognition activities.

New Councillors will be required to undertake Cultural Awareness Training as part of the Councillor induction process.

4. Who is responsible for implementing this policy?

Councillors, Chief Executive Officer, General Managers, Managers, Team Leaders and staff will be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

5. Definitions

Traditional Owner The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 defines *Traditional Owner* in section 7 of the Act as:

7 Traditional Owners

(1) For the purposes of this Act, a person is a traditional owner of an area if—

(a) the person is an Aboriginal person with particular knowledge about traditions, observances, customs or beliefs associated with the area; and

(b) the person—

(i) has responsibility under Aboriginal tradition for significant Aboriginal places located in, or significant Aboriginal objects originating from, the area; or

(ii) is a member of a family or clan group that is recognised as having responsibility under Aboriginal tradition for significant Aboriginal places located in, or significant Aboriginal objects originating from, the area.

(2) For the purposes of this Act, a person is a traditional owner of Aboriginal ancestral remains if the person is an Aboriginal person who—

(a) has responsibility under Aboriginal tradition for the remains; and

(b) is a member of a family or clan group that is recognised as having responsibility under Aboriginal tradition for the remains.

(3) For the purposes of this Act, a person is a traditional owner of a secret or sacred object if the person is an Aboriginal person who—

(a) has responsibility under Aboriginal tradition for the object; and

(b) is a member of a family or clan group that is recognised as having responsibility under Aboriginal tradition for the object.

Aboriginal Action Committee Council's Aboriginal Action Committee (AAC) was established in 2011. AAC members represent a range of community organisations and networks as well as Elders, community members and is facilitated by Council staff.

Indigenous Land Use Agreement An indigenous land use agreement (ILUA) is an agreement between a native title group and others about the use and management of land and waters.

Mildura Rural City Council has an ILUA with the Latji Latji and Wergaia Peoples in relation to the Three Chain Reserve adjacent to the river, extending from the Marina site down to and including Apex Park.

Please refer to the ILUA document for further definitions.

Custodians A Custodian is someone who cares/d for and valued something. A custodian is a caretaker.

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| Respect | Respect is about acknowledging the sense of worth and value of something or someone such as: the individual, culture or diversity. |
| Protocols | Protocols are an understood and accepted behaviour. There are distinct differences between bureaucratic protocols and cultural protocols. |
| Reconciliation | Reconciliation is about acceptance, respect and understanding of one another. |
| Recognition | Recognition is the confirmation and acknowledgment of the existence of something or the action of someone. |
| Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) | Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are organisations that hold decision-making responsibilities under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area. |
| Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) | A RAP is a strategic document that supports an organisation's business plan. It includes practical actions that will drive an organisation's contribution to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which it operates. |
| Partnerships | A partnership is a working commitment to common goals and reconciliation. |
| Cultural Safety | <p>Cultural Safety is about a physical and visual acknowledgement of culture present in an environment.</p> <p>Cultural Safety emerged as a framework for the delivery of a spiritually, socially and emotionally safe space for community in service providers setting and workplace environment for culturally diverse staff.</p> <p>This knowledge however comes from deep long-term cultural protocols and practices.</p> <p>Cultural safety is present in an environment that is: <i>'... spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together.'</i> (Williams, 1999: 213)</p> |
| Acknowledge | To acknowledge something or someone is to recognise and accept. |
| Elder | An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder is a person who is respected and recognised by their community as being a person who guides the community through leadership. Being recognised as an Elder is not based on a person's age. |
| Welcome to Country | A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to welcome visitors to their traditional land. (<i>Reconciliation Victoria</i>) |

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| Acknowledgement of Country | Unlike a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by a non-Indigenous person. It is a way of showing awareness of and respect for the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custodians of the land on which a meeting or event is being held. (<i>Reconciliation Victoria</i>) |
| Significant Event | A significant event is a notable occurrence, which showcases Mildura Rural City Council, Councillors, staff and community such as festivals, official openings and launches. |
| NAIDOC Week | National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. NAIDOC is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an opportunity to recognise the contributions of the First Australians in various fields. NAIDOC is celebrated in the first week of July every year. |
| Reconciliation Week | National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision. |
| Sorry Day | National Sorry Day is an Australia-wide observance held on May 26 each year. This day gives people the chance to come together and share the steps towards healing for the Stolen Generations, their families and communities. Stolen generations refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who were forcibly removed from their families and communities. |
| Survival Day | 26 January – also known as Australia Day. Survival Day celebrates the survival of Aboriginal culture in the 21 st Century. |
| Mabo Day | Mabo Day occurs annually on 3 June. It commemorates Eddie Koiki Mabo, a Torres Strait Islander whose campaign for Indigenous land rights led to a landmark High Court decision on 3 June 1992 which overturned the legal fiction of Terra Nullius. |
| National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day | National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day is celebrated on 4 August each year. |
| Ochre Ribbon Week | The Ochre Ribbon Campaign raises awareness of the devastating impacts of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and calls for action to end the violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people especially our women and children. |

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| National Apology Day | This event marks the anniversary of the Apology in 2008 to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the House of Representatives. The apology was made by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd for past laws, policies and practices that have impacted on Australia's First Nations Peoples, particularly members of the Stolen Generations. The motion was supported by the Opposition and passed through both houses of Parliament. Many members of the Stolen Generations were present in the Chamber to hear the Apology and thousands more filled the Great Hall of Parliament House and flowed out onto the lawns to watch it on big screens. For more information visit the National Sorry Day Committee Inc. |
| National Closing the Gap Day | In 2006, more than 40 national organisations came together to form Close the Gap - Australia's largest ever campaign to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Every year, Australians are encouraged to hold their own event on National Close the Gap Day to raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians. |
| Harmony Week | Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home – from the traditional owners of this land to those who have come from many countries around the world. By participating in Harmony Day activities, people can learn and understand how all Australians from diverse backgrounds equally belong to this nation and enrich it. |
| International Day of World Indigenous People | <p>There are over 5,000 Indigenous cultures in the world to preserve which UN celebrates the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.</p> <p>The United Nations' (UN) International Day of the World's Indigenous People was first proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1994 and is observed on 9 August each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. This event also recognizes the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection. For more information visit: United Nations.</p> |
| Indigenous Literacy Day | Indigenous Literacy Day aims to help raise funds to raise literacy levels and improve the lives and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in remote and isolated regions. We need your support to help raise funds to buy books and literacy resources for children in these communities. |
| Anniversary United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People | The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007. |

6. Legislation and other references

6.1 Legislation

Not applicable.

6.2 Documents

This Policy is implemented in conjunction with the following documents:

- Mildura Rural City Council Social Inclusion Policy CP019
- Mildura Rural City Council Human Rights Policy CP006
- Mildura Rural City Council Flying of Flags at Council Sites Policy OP178
- Mildura Rural City Council Community Engagement Policy CP020
- Mildura Rural City Council Reconciliation Action Plan 2017-2020
- Victorian Local Aboriginal Network Five Year Plan 2016-2020
- Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework 2013-2018
- National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap)
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2008
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- VicRoads Welcome to Country Signage Guidelines 2009.

6.3 Risk Assessment Reference

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| Risk Category | ✓ | Risk Category | ✓ |
| Asset Management | | Financial Sustainability | |
| Committees | ✓ | Human Resource Management | |
| Compliance – Legal & Regulatory | | Leadership & Organisational Culture | ✓ |
| Contract Management | | Occupational Health & Safety | |
| Contract Tendering & Procurement | | Organisational Risk Management | |
| Corporate Governance | ✓ | Project Management | |
| Environmental Sustainability | | Public Image and Reputation | ✓ |

Map 2: Barengi Gadjin Land Council RAP Area

