



CITY OF BALLARAT

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2025–27





Ballarat Survival Day Dawn Ceremony dancers - 2025. Photo Jay Kulbardi.

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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.



The City of Ballarat sincerely thanks those who contributed to this plan.

We would like to acknowledge the input of the community and the following groups and organisations in the development of this plan:

- Koorie Engagement Action Group (KEAG)
- Ballarat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including guidance from Mirriyu Consulting
- Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BADAC)
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)
- DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)
- City of Ballarat RAP Working Group – comprised of members of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, DJAARA and City of Ballarat senior management and staff.

Child Safe Commitment Statement:

Ballarat City Council has zero tolerance for child abuse and all forms of harm to children. All children and young people who access our services, programs, events and facilities have the right to feel safe and be safe. This includes spaces owned or managed by Council. We take the wellbeing and safety of children and young people in our care seriously. We maintain a child safe organisation by embedding the protection of children into everyday thinking and practice. All City of Ballarat employees, contractors and volunteers are responsible for ensuring children and young people are valued, heard and protected from abuse.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this document is true and correct at the time of publication.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images and names of deceased persons.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR AND CEO

We are proud to present the City of Ballarat's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2027, which builds on the significant progress we have made on our reconciliation journey to date.

We recognise that reconciliation cannot be achieved in isolation. It must be a collective effort — a process grounded in meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and one that is supported by the broader community.

At the heart of this plan is a shared commitment to creating an inclusive city where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel respected, proud, and heard. We want Ballarat to be a city we can all call home and live together in harmony.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of this Innovate RAP. An Innovate RAP, as set out by Reconciliation Australia, focuses on enabling organisations to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and pilot strategies for further reconciliation commitments and to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An Innovate RAP is implemented over two years.

The City of Ballarat has a critical role to play in advancing reconciliation within our region.

We are committed to building a unified community that acknowledges the ongoing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this land and waterways and celebrates their heritage, cultures, and achievements.

This RAP, which is our fourth RAP since the first edition was adopted in 2011, is guided by five key pillars: Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, Truth-telling, and Governance

These pillars underpin our approach to reconciliation and shape the actions we will take to drive positive, lasting change.

The plan outlines our key commitments and actions for the next two years. It builds upon the foundation of our previous plans and seeks to challenge the status quo. It reflects our unique role in the community as:

- A provider of services, programs, infrastructure and facilities
- A collaborator working alongside partners to show strong, courageous leadership
- An employer aiming to become one of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- A customer of goods and services from local businesses and contractors
- A municipal planner and lawmaker with the ability to shape inclusive policy

We look forward to implementing this RAP and working collaboratively with Traditional Owners and broader community to ensure that reconciliation continues to grow stronger in Ballarat.



Cr Tracey Hargreaves
Mayor, City of Ballarat



Evan King
CEO, City of Ballarat



OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

To promote unity, respect, and understanding by walking together with Traditional Owners and all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in our community towards genuine Reconciliation.

In celebrating and pursuing reconciliation and self-determination, Ballarat City Council will play an integral role in working with Traditional Owners, the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative leaders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to deliver positive and enriching outcomes across the municipality and our broad sphere of influence.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES OF BALLARAT

The municipality of Ballarat extends across parts of the Traditional Countries of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples who have lived here for some 60,000 years and remain connected to their lands, waterways and skies.

Their ancestors shaped the landscapes upon which Ballarat Council now stands through their activities and through knowing it deeply and imbuing it with important cultural and spiritual meanings. The Council area includes layered cultural songlines and heritage that connect Wadawurrung People and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples to place and deep history. Ballarat has become home to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples from across Australia, many due to historic circumstances such as the Stolen Generations removal of children to orphanages here in Ballarat between 1865 and 1972.

Ballarat City Council acknowledges colonisation has left a devastating impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and through this plan seeks to support the community to revitalise languages, lore, cultural practices and continue to care for Country.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation is the representative body for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. The Wadawurrung are the seven family groups who are recognised under the traditional lore and custom as Wadawurrung and are descendants of John Robinson, their apical ancestor.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation was appointed in May 2009 as a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

The Corporation works to support their aspirations and protect Aboriginal Cultural

Heritage across their Country. WTOAC is the statutory authority for the management of Aboriginal heritage values and culture, under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act, 2006 of much of the municipality of Ballarat.

DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) is a representative body for Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples (Djaara)

In 2008, Dja Dja Wurrung People gained Registered Aboriginal Party status under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

On March 2013 the Corporation on behalf of the Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples, and the Victorian Government signed a Recognition and Settlement agreement under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act (TOS Act) 2010. The Agreement recognises DJAARA peoples as the Traditional Owners of djandak (their Country) and includes a range of measures by which Dja Dja Wurrung tradition and their unique relationship with djandak is fostered and strengthened.

In 2021 Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation began trading as 'DJAARA – Balaki Wuka (Giving to community)'.

Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative

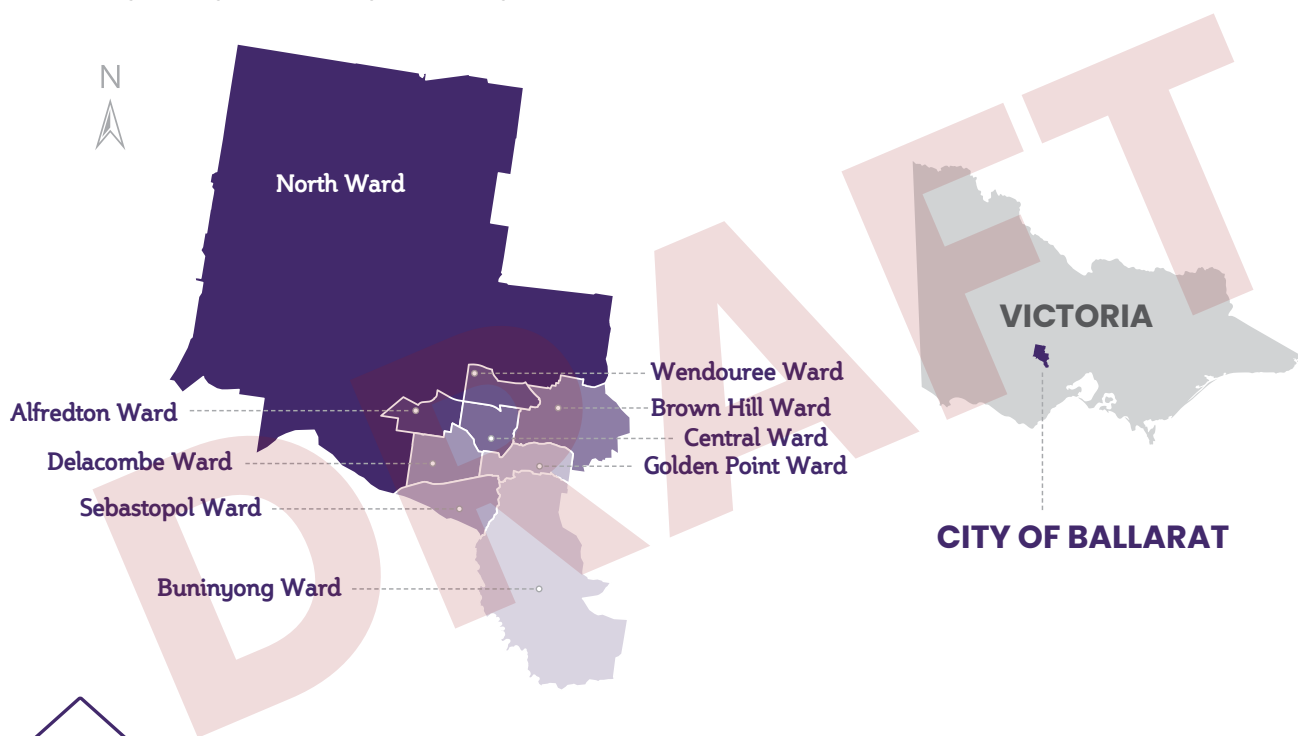
The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BADAC) was established by members of the Ballarat and District Aboriginal community in 1979. It became a co-operative to deliver health, social, welfare and community development programs to local Aboriginal people.

BADAC is the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) for the Ballarat and district area, covering 4 local government areas (LGAs). BADAC's services are open to all members of the public, with priority given to BADAC members.

A snapshot of Ballarat

Ballarat or Ballaarat (Historical Spelling) 740km² and the 3rd largest City in Victoria

'balla' meaning 'elbow' or 'reclining on the elbow' + 'arat' meaning 'place': from two Wadawurrung words signifying a camping or resting place.



9.8%

Population growth
2021-2025*



164,365

Population
forecast for
2025-2046 a
growth of 31.97%*



2094

people in Ballarat
were Aboriginal
or Torres Strait
Islander+



56%

Indigenous residents
were less than
25 years of age,
compared with 31%
of non-Indigenous
residents+



41%

of Indigenous
residents over 14
years of age, had
left school before
completing year 11,
compared to 29%
of non-Indigenous
residents+



5.3%

of Indigenous
Ballarat residents
aged 25-44 held a
degree, compared
with 17.7% of
non-Indigenous
residents+



12%

of Indigenous
Ballarat residents
were unemployed
compared to
4.6% non-
Indigenous+



62%

of Indigenous
Ballarat residents
were renting their
accommodation+

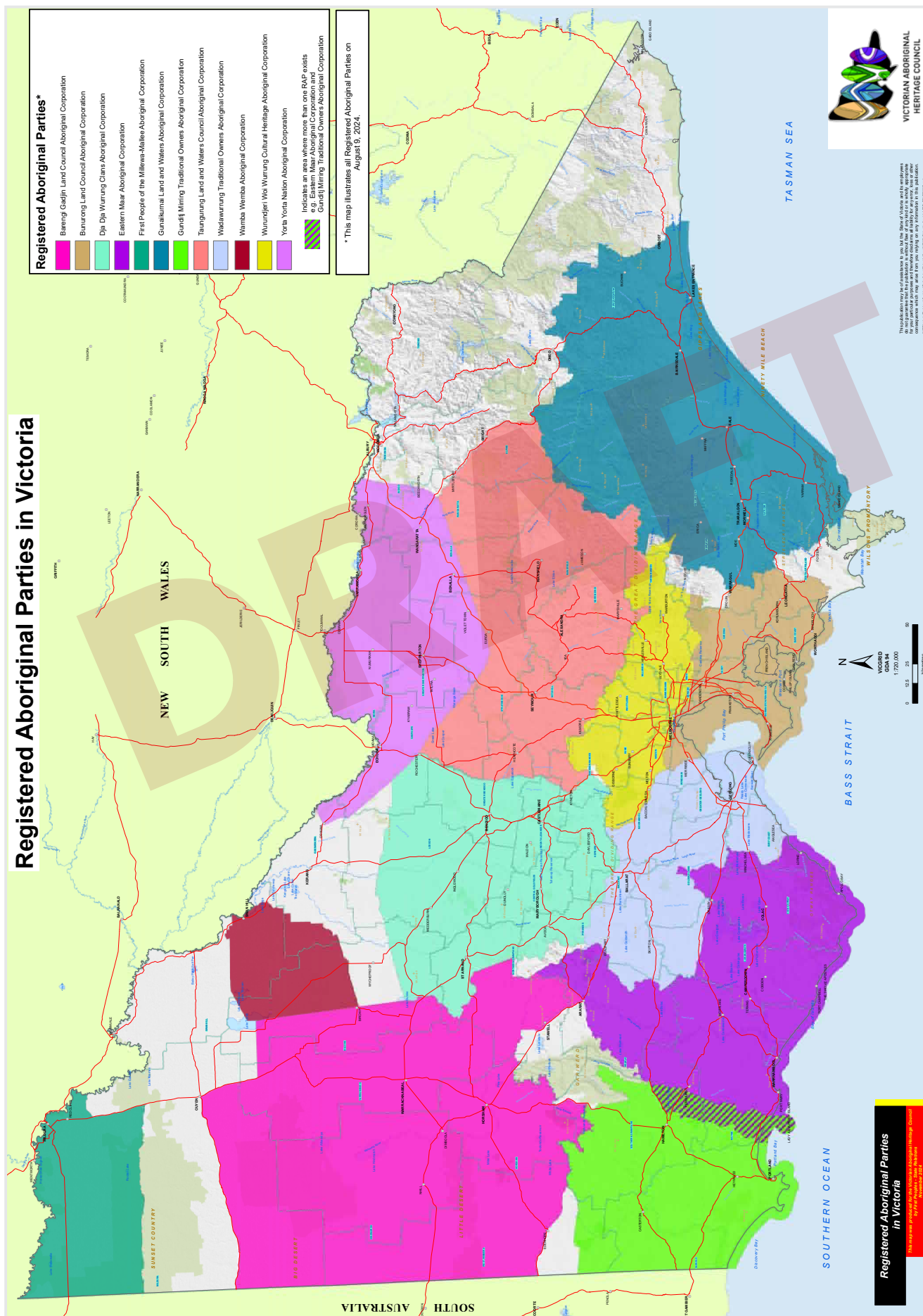
Kulin Nation

The Kulin nation is an alliance of five Aboriginal nations in the south of Australia - up into the Great Dividing Range and the Loddon and Goulburn River valleys - which shares Culture and Language.

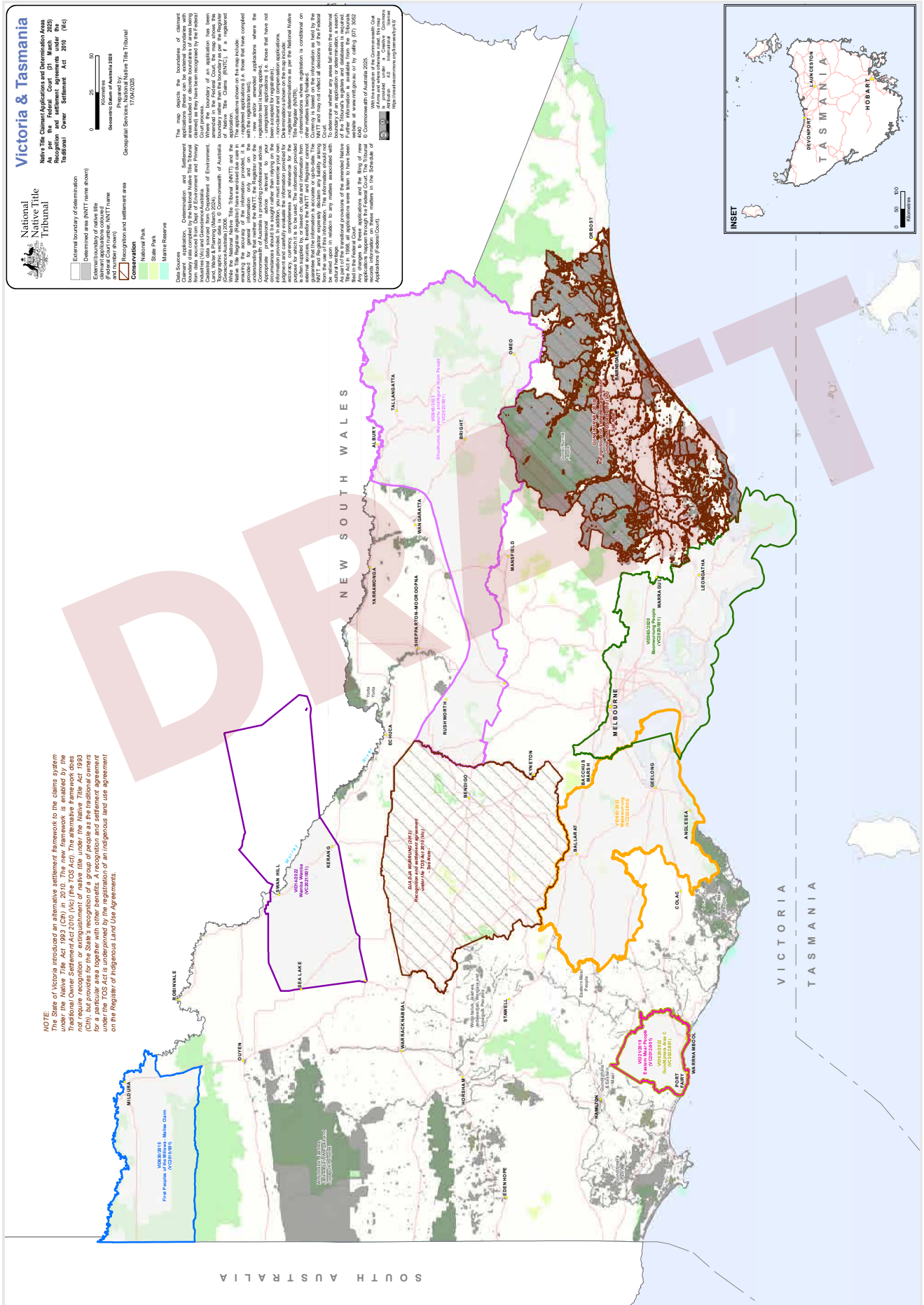
Both DJAARA to the North of the municipality and Wadawurrung are Kulin Nations countries.

Registered Aboriginal Parties in Australia

aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/victoria-registered-aboriginal-parties

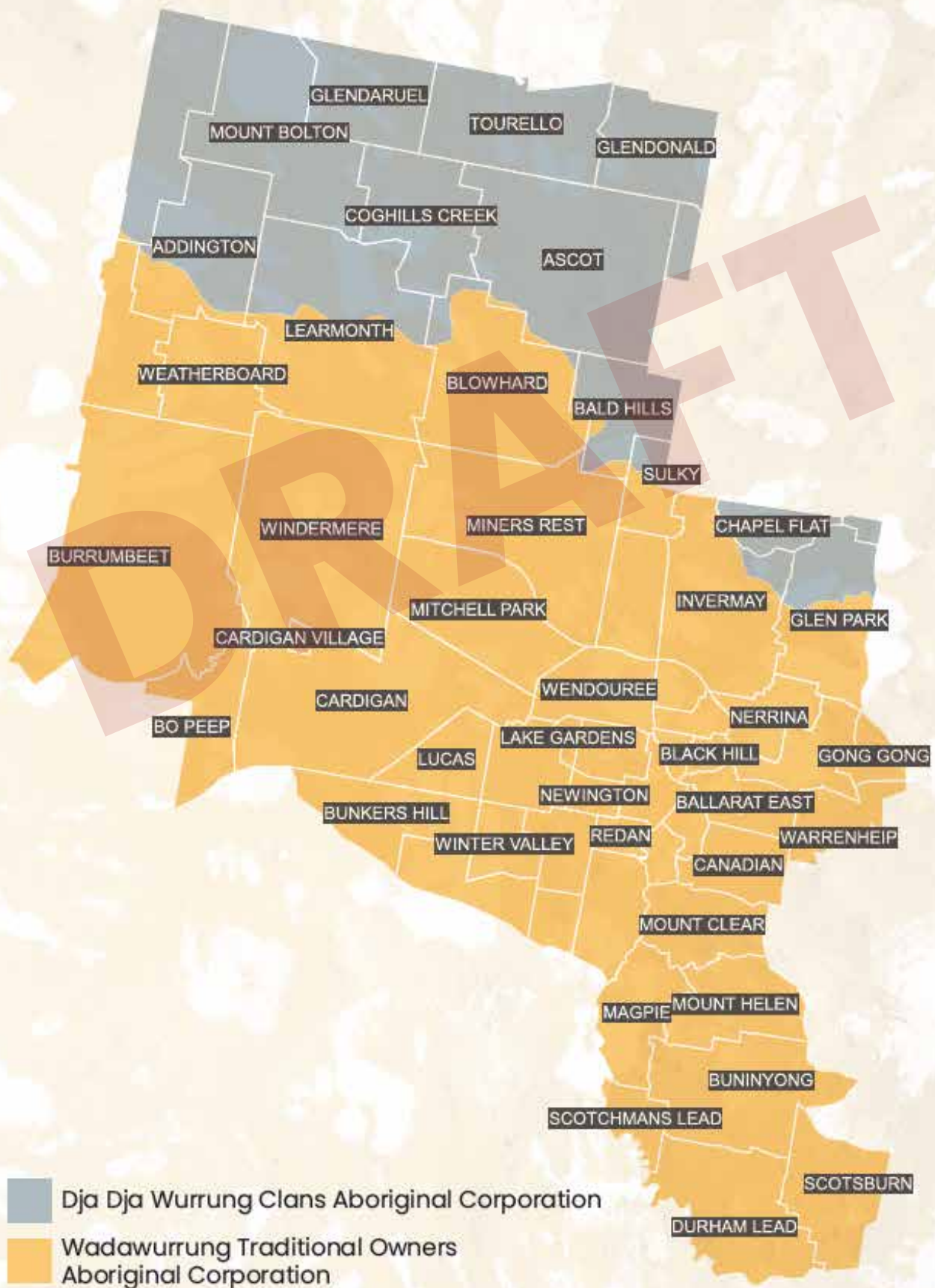


nntt.gov.au/Maps/VIC_TAS_NTDA_Schedule.pdf



CITY OF BALLARAT MUNICIPALITY

Registered Aboriginal Parties





‘Yarrowee River History: Peel to Prest’

The “Yarrowee River History: Peel to Prest” digital mapping project offers a comprehensive exploration of the historical and cultural significance of the Yarrowee River, encompassing the influences of the Wadawurrung Indigenous people and subsequent settlement. The project aims to assist design initiatives focused on enhancing the environmental quality, local habitat, and overall enjoyment for residents and trail users. This is designed to support opportunities for the telling of multifaceted and diverse histories along the linear stretch from the CBD to the beginning of the unchanneled river course. In codesigning this project alongside Wadawurrung Traditional Owner researchers and Federation University it is a live resource for one and all reflecting deep place-based history and was awarded Reconciliation Victoria’s 2024 Maggolee Local Government Award.

Biodiversity Strategy–Healing Country Together

Wadawurrung partnered with the City of Ballarat to develop the engagement process and structure for our Biodiversity Strategy: Healing Country Together and were invaluable in the community consultation events. Both Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to their involvement, offering invaluable insights on how the City of Ballarat can partner in mutually beneficial ways in Caring for Country.





Cultural capability tour for City of staff with Mirriyu Consulting – 2024

OUR BUSINESS

Ballarat is a city with a strong identity based on its rich heritage and character, with deep roots into Victoria's Indigenous culture and the nation's sense of democracy and social inclusion.

The City of Ballarat delivers over 80 services, at more than 20 locations across the municipality that support activity on both Wadawurrung and DJAARA lands including Libraries, kindergartens, maternal child health, emergency management, youth, and regulatory and environmental services, which are designed to satisfy broad community and stakeholder needs.

As of February 2025, workforce consisted of 1222 people with two of these employees identifying as Aboriginal Australians. It should be noted that some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff have chosen not to disclose their Indigenous identity.

City of Ballarat has had an identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander position since 2018, the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer which sits in the Community Wellbeing division. This employee assists with administration of the Reconciliation Action Plan and with resourcing the City of Ballarat's Koorie Engagement Action Group Advisory Committee.

In addition to our City of Ballarat employee base, Council collaborates with a range of stakeholders through Council endorsed plans, strategies and Reconciliation activities. Key stakeholders include community, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Traditional Owner groups, government, small business, educational institutions, not for profit partners, peak bodies and suppliers, advisory bodies, content creators, and other community partners.

The City of Ballarat is proud to be progressing its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) journey. Council continues to work to build relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and to engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees and strategic partners around culture.

As always, there is still much work to be done, however Council proudly acknowledges learnings of the journey so far.

Council looks forward to strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultural understanding through the life of this Reconciliation Action Plan and beyond.

Internally, the City of Ballarat's responsibility is to establish a safe and responsive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, where their voices are heard, their identity is respected and celebrated, and career aspirations are supported. This

responsibility lies with Councillors and all staff, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, Directors and Executive Leadership, the RAP Working Group (RAPWG), the Reconciliation Champion, People and Culture, Communications and Design, Procurement and Contracts, and other Networks and Champions.

Externally, the City of Ballarat can leverage its sphere of influence as the most accessible level of Government to constituents of and visitors to the local area. Council can demonstrate how listening to diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives leads to better outcomes for our municipality. Providing influential advice to State and Federal Ministers and their office helps us improve the lives of our constituents. Key external stakeholders include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, Elders, Traditional Owners and other community leaders; peak bodies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and land corporations; Reconciliation Victoria, Reconciliation Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, Kinaway and contractors.

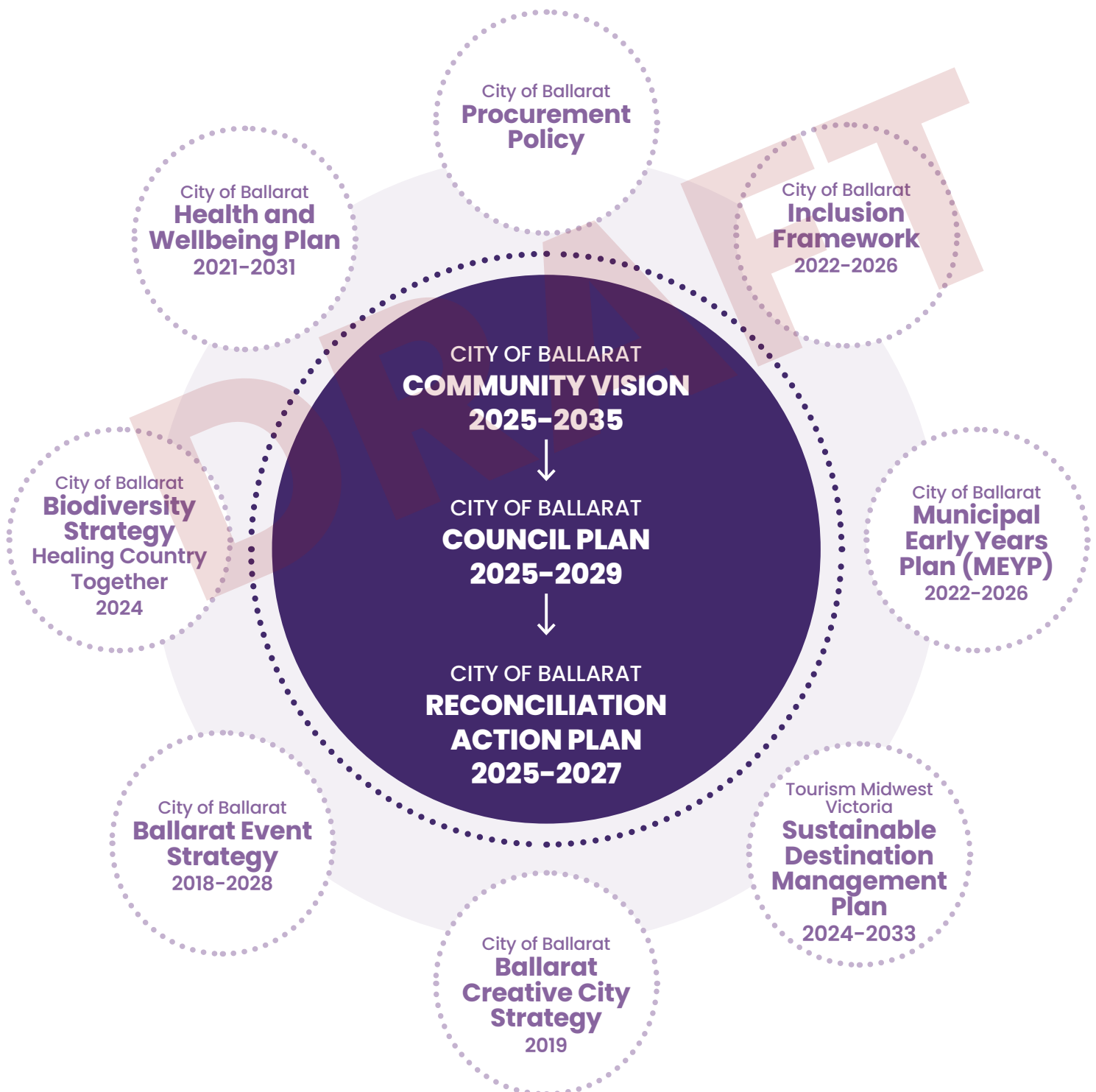
How we work with First Peoples

Koorie Engagement Action Group (KEAG) Advisory Committee

KEAG is a Ballarat Advisory Committee made up of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community including those representing Traditional Owner groups. KEAG provides information, advice and recommendations to Council informing decision-making, strategies, plans, frameworks and policies to ensure inclusiveness of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture, issues and community. KEAG supports the strategic guidance of City of Ballarat's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and associated documents, promoting understanding within the Ballarat community of local and national Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' cultures, society, heritage and priorities.

GUIDING STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND POLICY CONTEXT

The City of Ballarat's Reconciliation journey is guided by the following internal strategic documents:



In addition to the requirement to protect and promote the health of the community, the City of Ballarat is required to abide by a range of Commonwealth and Victorian legislation that aim to uphold human rights and safeguard against discrimination.



Commonwealth

- *The Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*



Victoria

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *The Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*
- *The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023 (VAAF)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Racial and Religious Intolerance Act 2001*
- *Victorian Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005*

COMMUNITY VISION 2025–2035

Vision: Ballarat, Victoria's Heritage City leading the way as a sustainable, innovative and inclusive community that is a great place to live

Principle Inclusion: Our vision for a healthy, connected and inclusive community

COUNCIL PLAN 2025–2029

Goal: A healthy, safe, connected and welcoming community for all.

Strategic Objectives

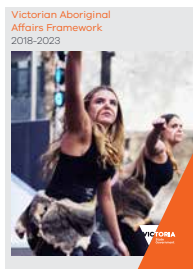
- Provide and promote opportunities that support and celebrate our diverse community and strengthen Ballarat as a welcoming, accessible and compassionate community so that everyone feels included
- Work closely with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Organisations and community to progress reconciliation.

INCLUSION FRAMEWORK 2022–2026

Vision: Ballarat is an inclusive city where diversity is not only accepted but welcomed and celebrated.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2025–2027

The Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2025–2027 aligns to :



Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework
firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au



*Dhelkunya Dja Dja Dja Wurrung
Country Plan 2014-2034*



*Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government
Strategy | **Victorian-Aboriginal-and-Local-
Government-Strategy.pdf***



*Turning 'wrong way' climate, 'right way'
Dja Dja Wurrung Climate Change Strategy
2023-2034*



*Paleert Tjaara Dja Country Plan
(WTOAC 2020- 2031)*



*Djaara Galk-galk Dhelkunya Forest Gardening
Strategy 2022 -2034*



*Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement
Agreement Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and
Settlement Agreement*
firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au



*Dhelkunyangu Gatjin Working together
to heal water Djaara Gatjin Strategy*

WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

At its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia's colonial history is characterised by devastating land dispossession, violence, and racism. Over the last half-century, however, many significant steps towards reconciliation have been taken.

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey that reminds us that while generations of Australians have fought hard for meaningful change, future gains are likely to take just as much, if not more, effort.

In a just and equitable Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will have the same life chances and choices as non-Indigenous children, and the length and quality of a person's life will not be determined by their racial background.

The five interrelated dimensions of reconciliation
Reconciliation Australia



CLOSING THE GAP

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Agreement) arises from a commitment from all Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to a fundamentally new way of developing and implementing policies and programs that impact upon the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It fulfils the commitments made in the historic Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap (Partnership Agreement) which commenced in March 2019 and signalled a new way of working to close the gap.

PRIORITY REFORM TARGETS

The City of Ballarat is considering areas of accountability and commitment under some of the Priority Reform targets with potential to measure the changes and our impact to the way we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Priority Reform One

Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

Priority Reform Two

Building the community-controlled sector

Priority Reform Three

Transforming government organisations

Priority Reform Four

Shared access to data and information at a regional level

OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY

In 2003, the City of Ballarat embarked on a journey towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with a Statement of Commitment.

2003 Statement of Commitment to the Local Indigenous Community

This Statement of Commitment was developed through a process of negotiation and consultation with members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the general community and the City of Ballarat's Unfinished Business Advisory Committee.

2004 First Reconciliation Strategy

This strategy provided a framework for the implementation of the Statement of Commitment.

2009 Community forum on reconciliation

This forum involved the City of Ballarat working directly with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community on how we could best support reconciliation. This forum prompted the re-energising of the existing advisory committee, KEAG, who were empowered to support the development of the City of Ballarat's first RAP.

2011 First RAP 2011–2013

Key achievements include:

- Visible and significant participation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People in major community events and the swearing in of the new Council in 2012
- Strengthening KEAG
- Improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People at the City of Ballarat and auspiced by the City of Ballarat
- Flying the Aboriginal flag at prominent City of Ballarat venues
- Including Acknowledgement of Country at Council meetings and prominent events.
- Displaying Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artwork at City of Ballarat venues.

2011 (cont)

This plan focused on the development of the Koorie Engagement Action Group with the following purpose:

- enhancing and promoting understanding within the Ballarat community of Koorie culture, society and heritage
- providing a Koorie perspective to the operation of local government and other agencies within the sub-region
- identifying issues affecting the health and wellbeing of Koorie people and developing responses in collaboration with key partners, agencies and other tiers of government
- Influencing change processes in agencies providing services to Koorie people to assist in building cultural sensitivity and service integration that facilitates greater responsiveness to the needs of Koorie people
- Advocating for and supporting key elements of the existing current service and support infrastructure in Ballarat for Koorie people.

2014 RAP 2014–2017

This plan was informed by extensive review and analysis, consultation and collaboration.

Key achievements include:

- Demonstrating respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples and their history and culture
- Ensuring and respecting that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their everyday lives
- Encouraging an 'open doors' approach, creating interest in our services and enabling easy access to information
- Supporting the aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by committing to the identified key actions of the RAP and ensuring that Councillors, staff and members of the community are able to contribute to reconciliation.

2018

RAP 2019–2021

This plan continued to progress the success of previous RAPs, with the City of Ballarat committed to challenging and questioning the status quo and encouraging strong and courageous leadership in pursuing reconciliation activities across the organisation and within the community it serves.

Key achievements include:

- Engaging five RAP champions from across Council in key areas for the implementation of the RAP
- Committing to working with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities, networks and organisations
- Employing Council's first Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
- Implementing change in line with Reconciliation Victoria's guidelines for the delivery of activities on 26 January 2020
- Delivering the inaugural 26 January Survival Day Ceremony which was recognised by Reconciliation Victoria as a finalist in the annual HART Awards
- Facilitating Cultural Awareness Training to Councillors and staff
- Conducting Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all important internal and external meetings, including Citizenship Ceremonies
- Celebrating Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and other important events.

2022

- Ballarat Libraries, Eureka Centre, Creative Cities and Art Gallery of Ballarat maintain and celebrate active public programs and activities in collaboration with local and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait suppliers, artists and educators.
- As per previous years NAIDOC celebrated with two flag raising ceremonies, hosted by the Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operation (BADAC) and the City of Ballarat respectively.

2023

- Inaugural Reconciliation Week flag raising and Civic literacy events in collaboration with Ballarat ACCOs; WTOAC and BADAC
- Inaugural City of Ballarat Reconciliation Week - NAIDOC Week Umbrella Lane installation

2024

City of Ballarat awarded Reconciliation Victoria MAGGOLEE Award for Excellence.

- Codesign and Working agreement with Traditional Owners to develop Council's Biodiversity Strategy
- 6th Survival Day Dawn Ceremony event and formation of Ballarat Community Dance Group and Choir
- Inaugural NAIDOC Week flagraising and commemorative walk in collaboration with BADAC and WTOAC

2025

RAP 2025–2027

This plan will work towards the following:

- Progressing the five priority areas of the RAP.
- Achieving cultural proficiency across the organisation to enable staff to work respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to deliver culturally responsive services
- Developing policies, processes and practices that are inclusive of the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- Implementing City of Ballarat policies to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, procurement and engagement.
- Eureka Centre display honouring Wadawurrung with art and cultural artefact acquisitions





Ngarrimili Djakitj Djarring; Balla-Arat Community Dance Group. Photo: Jay Kulbardi Photography

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) guides the way in which the City of Ballarat will work to embed reconciliation within operations and shows an ongoing commitment to the development and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationships, cultural recognition, and the provision of opportunities to improve outcomes.

This RAP commits Council to do better by taking a whole-of-organisation approach to reconciliation. This includes ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are visible, represented, and able to participate in community life as they choose.

The City of Ballarat will take a range of practical actions over the coming two years working towards building an inclusive city. Actions have been structured around priority areas identified below in the development of this plan.

Priority areas



Pillar 1: Relationships

"We build mutually beneficial relationships to promote reconciliation through respect and trust."



Pillar 2: Respect

"We promote respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories."



Pillar 3: Opportunities

"We take a whole-of-organisation approach to promoting reconciliation."



Pillar 4: Truth telling

"We support truth telling for a greater understanding of our history and the resilience and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People."

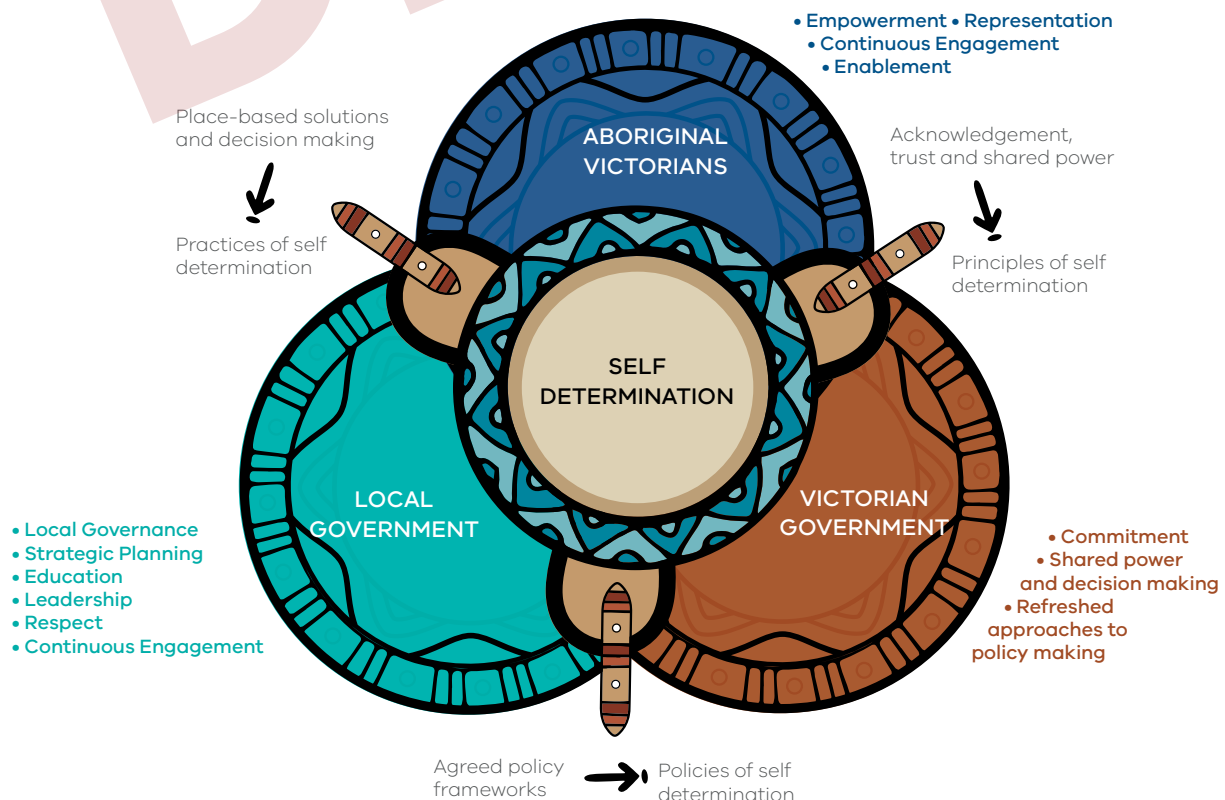


Pillar 5: Governance

"We commit to monitoring, evaluating and reporting on our progress towards reconciliation."

Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026 Pathway to Stronger Partnerships

PROGRESSING SELF DETERMINATION TOGETHER





2023 – Jay Kulbardi
HERE – Art Gallery Annexe Wall

"I have created a design that encapsulates the memories I have been fortunate to make throughout my childhood growing up Here in Ballarat and attempt to pass on that experience to the mural's passersby.

I have included traditional Noongar symbols for water, development (eggs), and community, and I constantly revisit both water bird symbolism to encapsulate the Ballarat environment and development, and childhood memories and upbringing."

This mural is part of the City of Ballarat's public art program which invests in sensitive and appropriate temporary and permanent public art and is responsible for the creative activation of public space. This has been funded by the City of Ballarat.

ACTION PLAN 2025-2027

RELATIONSHIPS

Respect and inclusion of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures through all levels of our organisation to ensure cross-cultural understanding and to achieve economic, social and cultural equity.

Aligned to the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy

Pillar 1 Culture, Respect and Trust

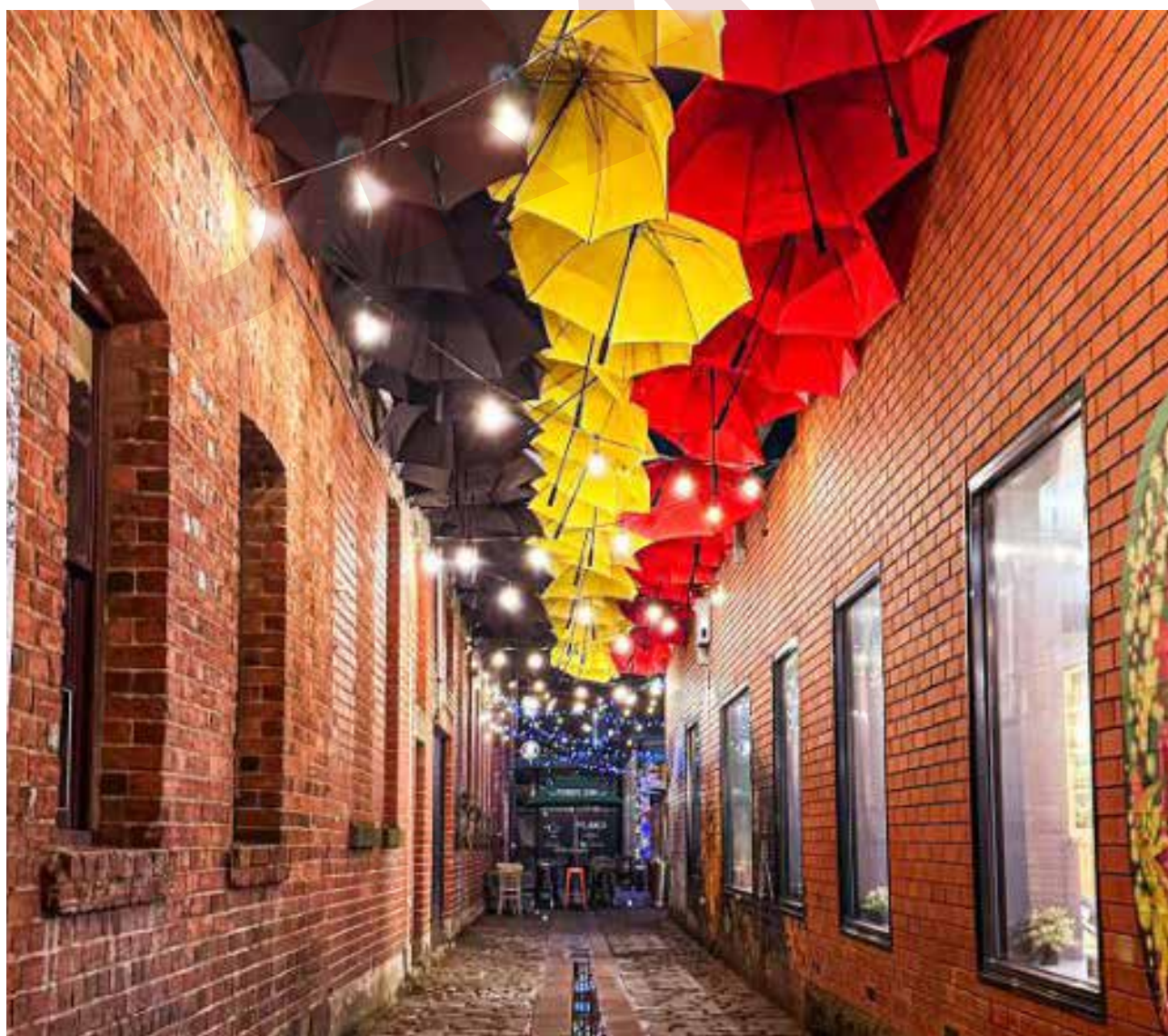
Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils, and the Victorian Government that celebrate, understand, and embed Aboriginal cultural heritage and foster trust and respect.

To succeed we must: Create and maintain broad awareness, understanding, and embedding of Aboriginal culture fostering continual reflection

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Develop and implement engagement guidelines to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to strengthen relationships and facilitate collaborations. Including but not limited to: • Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation • DJAARA • Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC)	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Facilitate Council's Koorie Engagement Action Group (KEAG) Advisory Committee to ensure business units are informed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community, Traditional Owner and key stakeholder representatives.	Monthly	Engaged Communities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and days of significance.	Organise an annual National Reconciliation Week event each year in partnership with local stakeholders.	Annually	Engaged Communities
	Coordinate City of Ballarat community events in partnership with local stakeholders including: • 26 January (Dawn Survival Day Ceremony) • National Apology to the Stolen Generations • Sorry Day • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day • NAIDOC Week	Annually	Engaged Communities
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Communicate City of Ballarat's commitment to reconciliation by publicising a statement of commitment across a range of settings (such as facilities, website, social media).	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation and shared cultural awareness opportunities across Ballarat.	Year 2	Engaged Communities
	Ensure City of Ballarat-led children and family services are culturally safe through ongoing staff capacity building.	Year 1	Family Youth and Children's Services

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of City of Ballarat HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	Year 1	People and Culture
	Review, implement and communicate the City of Ballarat Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Harassment and Vilification Procedure.	Year 2	People and Culture
	Strengthen partnership opportunities to host an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sporting carnival.	Year 2	Sport and Recreation





We promote respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.

Aligned to the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy

Pillar 1 Culture, Respect and Trust

Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal Victorians, local councils and the Victorian Government that celebrate, understand, and embed Aboriginal cultural heritage and foster trust and respect

To succeed we must: Empower Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to tackle discrimination and racism together through shared understanding, truth, respect and care.

Pillar 2 : Awareness and Engagement

Open, proactive and ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal Victorians and local councils that is understanding, purposeful, meaningful, thoughtful, and mutually beneficial.

To succeed we must: Ensure all parties who work together understand how to best apply the strategy.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within City of Ballarat.	Year 1	People and Culture
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Strengthen cultural learning in the City of Ballarat staff team via regularly updates to the internal Koorie Resources Hub needs.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning program	Year 2	People and Culture
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, People and Culture leadership and key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	Year 2	Engaged Communities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Promote opportunities for older Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander people including members of the Stolen Generations to participate in Ageing Well activities.	Year 2	Libraries and Lifelong Learning
	Ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members is observed around collection practices of historical documentation housed at the Research Hub at the Eureka Centre through use of Inclusive Collection Guidelines.	Year 2	Libraries and Lifelong Learning
	Promote opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members to access Research Hub and Public Records Office Victoria services at the Eureka Centre.	Year 2	Libraries and Lifelong Learning
	Be guided by relevant strategic documents and regular engagement with Traditional Owners for sustainable solutions for environmental conservation, biodiversity protection and actions to address a changing climate.	Year 2	Waste and Environment
	Deliver actions under the Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy in partnership with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and DJAARA.	Year 2	Waste and Environment
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind Cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Develop, implement and communicate a City of Ballarat cultural protocol document, incorporating advice around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	Year 1	Engaged Communities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Invite local Traditional Owners to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	Year 1	Civic Support
	Consider place naming in Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung languages in City of Ballarat venues and facilities.	Year 1	Property and Facilities
	Explore opportunities to showcase Indigenous culture through room naming in new City of Ballarat venues and facilities.	Year 1	Property and Facilities
	Consider installation of Aboriginal plaques/signage in Council buildings in accordance with City of Ballarat Plaques and Memorial Policy Acknowledging Country.	Year 2	Property and Facilities
	Review cultural safety for Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander families accessing Maternal Child Health Centres and services.	Year 1	Family, Youth and Children's Services
	Address captioning issue on City of Ballarat website to enable captions under photos whereby images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are properly acknowledged.	Year 1	Communications and Design
Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
Increasing integration and building capacity in our commitment to RAP outcomes	Report on reconciliation activities via the completion of an annual survey and report card by City of Ballarat business units.	Annually	Engaged Communities

OPPORTUNITIES

We take a whole-of-organisation approach to promoting reconciliation.

Aligned to the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy

Pillar 4: Governance and Participation

Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge and rights are embedded into the critical work local councils perform in creating vibrant local communities.

To succeed we must: Embed Aboriginal cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights into Council's work.

Embed Aboriginal perspectives and participation in local council processes.

Pillar 5: Economic Participation

Aboriginal people are actively participating in the state economy through employment and business ventures.

To succeed we must:

Procure the services of local Aboriginal businesses.

Increase the number of Aboriginal employees through career pathways that are diverse and inclusive, and that lead into senior positions with pay parity.

Remunerate Aboriginal Victorians for their expertise when engaging and partnering.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding and tracking of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing levels to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Year 1	People and Culture
	Build, develop and implement a recruitment, retention and professional development strategy including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.	Year 2	People and Culture
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Year 1	People and Culture

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Investigate the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement guidelines.	Year 2	Business Services
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Year 2	Business Services
	Update practices to better enable the procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. Communicate these opportunities to staff.	Year 2	Business Services
	Expand the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural resources and programs in the City of Ballarat libraries and community hubs.	Year 1	Libraries and Lifelong Learning
	Collaborate with KEAG to inform the community about the adaptation of ATSILIRN (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network) protocols for City of Ballarat libraries, archives and information services.	Year 1	Libraries and Lifelong Learning
	Provide opportunities and support for exhibitions celebrating Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander Culture and commemorating significant events across City of Ballarat libraries and community hubs.	Year 1	Libraries and Lifelong Learning
	Provide opportunity to feature content showcasing culture and history of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' peoples during Ballarat Heritage Festival and the Begonia Festival.	Year 2	Arts and Events
	Host or support at least two Aboriginal performances or shows at Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat annually. Promote attendance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.	Year 2	Arts and Events

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Undertake advocacy with Visit Victoria to profile local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' tourism in partnership with the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).	Year 1	Visitor Economy
	Partner with Traditional Owners to support the development of First Peoples' cultural tourism and experiences.	Year 2	Visitor Economy
	Seek to collaborate with Wadawurrung and DJAARA on native plant selection, biodiversity improvements and caring for Country as part of park, garden and reserve upgrades.	Year 2	Operations
	Consult with relevant Traditional Owners and government departments about key strategies in reference to land management and controlled burns during peak and off-peak seasons.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Enable self-determination for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families by offering choice of services and referrals to community organisations and services.	Year 1	Family Youth and Children's Services
	Actively promote youth volunteer and leadership programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and peak organisations.	Year 1	Family Youth and Children's Services

TRUTH TELLING

We support truth telling for a greater understanding of our history and the resilience and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Facilitating education	Share information and support capacity building within the tourism space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business.	Year 1	Visitor Economy
	Ensure Eureka Centre's exhibitions embed respect for Wadawurrung custodianship of the site of the Eureka Stockade, and include the involvement of Aboriginal people within the storytelling of goldrush history.	Year 1	Arts and Events
	Throughout the development of the World Heritage nomination, support Traditional Owners to explore opportunities for restoring and enhancing protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, recognising custodial ownership, building awareness, truth-telling and healing, business and employment opportunities and telling their and our story to promote understanding and respect for Traditional Owners and continuity of connection to Country.	Year 2	Economic Growth

GOVERNANCE

Governance – we commit to monitoring, evaluating and reporting on our progress towards reconciliation.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Establish RAP working group (RWG)	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Establish and apply Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	RWG meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Engage senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Define and maintain appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP champion from senior management.	Year 1	Engaged Communities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia and review findings collaboratively.	Annually	Engaged Communities
	Publicly report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings.	Annually	Engaged Communities
	Participate in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	Year 2	Engaged Communities
	Develop and implement the City of Ballarat Local Government Engagement Strategy Action Plan.	Year 1	Engaged Communities
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Year 2	Engaged Communities



2025 Craft Lab. Photography: Meda Design AU



The Country Fire Authority, Forest Fire Management Victoria and the City of Ballarat partnered with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation's Wiyn Murrup (Fire Spirit) Rangers to return Cultural fire practice in Ballarat, at Sparrows Ground Reserve for the first time on record.

This traditional cool, slow fire, led by the Rangers, was applied under expert guidance to reduce fuel load and support endemic plant regeneration in a suburban area of Ballarat. Remarkably, green moss thrived beneath the burn and the earth remained cool showcasing the sustainable nature of this practice. Cultural burns create patchy landscapes that protect wildlife and boost biodiversity.



TERMS USED IN THE PLAN

This Plan uses **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and First Peoples** to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who aren't necessarily also Traditional Owners of Ballarat.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are incorporated under the Corporations (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*) Act 2006 (Commonwealth), *Corporations Act 2001* (Commonwealth) or *Co-operatives Act 1996* (Victoria). Boards of Aboriginal people manage them for the sole purpose of serving the local Aboriginal community. ACCOs serve their communities by delivering social, health, and housing services, among other support and service functions.

Aboriginal Victorians refers to members of: Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs); Registered Aboriginal Parties; Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs); and Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) in Victoria. The term also includes any other members of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

Country to an Aboriginal person means both a place of belonging and a way of believing, it includes both the physical place but also the people, the culture and the nature of a place. (Reconciliation Australia)

Country Plans developed by Traditional Owner Groups re-affirm aspirations and describe the future of Traditional Owners of the Country. They recognise the importance of cultural heritage – significant places and landscapes, stories and language, customs and practices, and responsibilities in looking after Country. They also describe the pathways communities have determined they need to take to rebuild and prosper.

DJAARA

Djaara – “people” in Dja Dja Wurrung language

Djandak – ‘country’ in Dja Dja Wurrung language

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, First Nations or First Peoples refers to peoples or nations of people connected to an area before colonisation. While these terms have some general acceptance, some individuals or groups of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples may not prefer them.

Law means Commonwealth, Victorian or local government legislation, regulations, bylaws and other subordinate regulations

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) allow organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation. Based around the core pillars of relationships, respect, and opportunities, the plans provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They increase economic equity and support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander self-determination.

Registered Aboriginal Parties The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Aboriginal people as the primary guardians, keepers, and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Self-determination is defined under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

Self-Determination Local Actions Plans will be localised plans developed between local government, Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Organisations, and the Aboriginal community. These plans will be based on agreed actions and priorities. They will provide the opportunity to demonstrate progress on the path to Aboriginal self-determination.

Traditional Owner means the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters with unique roles in caring for Country and a deep spiritual connection to it. The term “Traditional Owner Group” is defined in section 3 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)*.

A **Traditional Owner Corporation (TOC)** is an incorporated group representing Traditional Owners' interests in a particular area. On behalf of the Traditional Owners it represents, a TOC may hold rights under the *Native Title Act 1993 (NTA)*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (AHA)*, and/or the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (TOS Act)* or have no formal agreements in place.



Cover artwork:

BALLAARAT MURRUP BY JENNA OLDAKER

Ballaarat is named from two Wadawurrung words: 'balla' meaning elbow or reclining on the elbow, and 'arat', meaning place. Murrup meaning 'spirit'.

Art description: Wadawurrung people were once known as the water tribe, due to our harmony with nature and resourcefulness using rivers as both our food and water source. Our coastal country, rivers (yaluk), creeks and wetlands are represented in the artwork by the strip of blue moving through the left hand side.

In the centre of the artwork is the symbol for meeting place - a place where we can all come together to yarn, connect and share stories. The meeting place symbols are all connected to one another through journey lines - symbolising our connection to not only one another, but also our land Country, water Country, the community, our culture, and our heritage. In the artwork, this represents Ballarat, whilst the smaller meeting place symbols surrounding it represents all the other amazing regional towns that surround us. The concentric circles and lines illustrate journey paths, as we travel from one place to another across Country together as a community.



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