

## 7.5 Progress report - Development of Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy

### Abstract

At the Council meeting on Monday 26 April 2021, Council resolved a draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy be presented to Council in late 2021 for consideration. The Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy will provide Council with a vision for reconciliation in the municipality and set out a clear roadmap and framework for implementing reconciliation initiatives in the community. The strategy will include a four-year vision and action plan outlining our existing commitments and identifying a program of additional actions which will continue to contribute to the reconciliation process locally and in partnership with our community.

Council also resolved at the meeting an interim report be presented to Council in July 2021 providing:

1. a progress update on the development of a consultation methodology and engagement plan for the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy
2. a proposed governance structure to oversee the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy development and implementation
3. a recommendation for an outcome to the petition (CAS-903996) presented at the Council meeting on 22 February 2021 requesting Council to “raise and permanently fly the Aboriginal Flag at significant locations in Boroondara including the Council Offices, the Hawthorn Arts Centre precinct, the Kew Court-house, and Balwyn Library”.

This report provides an update on each of the points above noting a consultation methodology and engagement plan has been developed to inform the draft strategy. As part of this, Council has engaged a consultant who is respected in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to assist with facilitating the community consultation. The consultant has provided feedback and advice on the community consultation and engagement methodology and is facilitating individual and focus group sessions with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

In addition to the consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Council has also developed an online survey seeking to understand the community’s vision for reconciliation in Boroondara. Consultation with local health and wellbeing services, schools, community organisations and groups, including the Boroondara Reconciliation Network, is also being undertaken in July and August 2021. A communications and engagement plan has been developed to ensure a broad representation of our community and stakeholders are engaged. Promotion of the consultation has been distributed through Council’s communication channels, including utilising our networks and newsletters. In addition, targeted social media posts to reach a diverse cross section of our community have been deployed.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is also being consulted closely and at regular intervals to inform the strategy development as they are now listed as the Registered Aboriginal Party for all of Boroondara.

The findings of the community consultation will be analysed to inform the development of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy, which will be presented to Council for public exhibition in late 2021.

The report recommends an internal Boroondara Reconciliation Advisory Committee be established to oversee the development and implementation of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy. The Committee would consist of councillors and senior Council officers from departments across the organisation responsible for implementing actions in the strategy. The Committee will seek expert advice from external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or individuals when necessary for meeting the objectives of the group. Officers will develop and present Terms of Reference for this Advisory Committee at a later Council meeting.

Twice a year, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and staff will be invited to a meeting for the purposes of Council officers to present on progress and seek feedback on Council's implementation of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy. Council's Reconciliation Advisory Committee will attend these meetings.

In addition to this, Council officers will continue to meet and seek advice and guidance from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation at scheduled regular meetings.

Other key stakeholders will also be kept informed of the development and implementation of the strategy through the development of a local Reconciliation Stakeholder Group, which would include representatives from the sector. Officers will also continue to attend key external stakeholder network meetings.

The report notes a recommendation for an outcome to the petition to permanently fly the Aboriginal Flag at locations in Boroondara. In-line with the Federal Government's advice, officers recommend the Aboriginal Flag should be permanently flown at the Camberwell Civic Centre. As the Council Chamber is at the Camberwell Civic Centre, permanently flying the Aboriginal Flag at this location would demonstrate Council's commitment to reconciliation. It would also be in-line with the benchmarking against the Eastern Metropolitan Region councils who permanently fly the Aboriginal Flag at their Civic Centres.

Finally, the report notes on Monday 7 June 2021, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council released proposals to vary the boundaries of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the boundaries of the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation for a 3,721km<sup>2</sup> area which lies between their existing registration boundaries. On Tuesday 22 June, a statement was released noting the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Heritage Aboriginal Corporation had consented to the proposed variation to its boundary area and they will be formally recognised from 1 July 2021 as the Traditional Owners for all of Boroondara. It is therefore recommended the wording of the Acknowledgement of Country be updated to the statement below, which acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and their accepted status as the Traditional Owners for all of Boroondara:

"I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today."

## Officers' recommendation

That Council resolve to note the progress update on the development of a consultation methodology and engagement plan for the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy and to approve:

- the formation of a new advisory committee being the Boroondara Reconciliation Advisory Committee, to oversee the development and implementation of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy. Officers will develop and present Terms of Reference for this Advisory Committee at a later Council meeting.
- Council permanently flying the Aboriginal Flag at the Camberwell Civic Centre in response to the petition (CAS-903996) presented at the Council meeting on 22 February; and
- the proposed wording of Council's Acknowledgement of Country following the boundary variations which came into effect from 1 July 2021, being "I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today."

---

**Responsible director:** Carolyn McClean, Director Community Support

---

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide Council with an interim report on the development of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy including a progress update on the development of a consultation methodology and engagement plan for the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy. The report also seeks Council approval of:

- the formation of a new advisory committee being the Boroondara Reconciliation Advisory Committee, to oversee the development and implementation of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy
- Council permanently flying the Aboriginal Flag at the Camberwell Civic Centre in response to the petition (CAS-903996) presented at the Council meeting on 22 February; and
- the proposed wording for Council's Acknowledgement of Country following the boundary variations which came into effect from 1 July 2021.

## 2. Policy implications and relevance to community plan and council plan

The Boroondara Community Plan 2017-27 is structured around the following seven priority themes:

- Your Community, Services and Facilities
- Your Parks and Green Spaces
- The Environment
- Neighbourhood Character and Heritage
- Getting Around Boroondara
- Your Local Shops and Businesses
- Civic Leadership and Governance

Recognising and celebrating our City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage through the development of a Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy supports the community's vision outlined in the Boroondara Community Plan for 'A vibrant and inclusive city, meeting the needs and aspirations of its community'. It is also relevant to Theme 1 of the Boroondara Community Plan - Your Community, Services and Facilities and in particular the following two strategies:

- Strategy 1.3: Deliver, facilitate, and advocate for services and programs that promote health, wellbeing, safety and a sense of community.
- Strategy 1.8: Facilitate and produce diverse arts and cultural programs to provide entertainment and increase participation in community life for residents and tourists.

## 3. Background

At the Council meeting on Monday 26 April 2021, Council resolved a draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy be presented to Council in late 2021 for consideration. The Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy will provide Council with a vision for reconciliation in the municipality and set out a clear roadmap and framework for implementing reconciliation initiatives in the community. The strategy will include a four-year vision and action plan outlining our existing commitments and identifying a program of additional actions which will continue to contribute to the reconciliation process locally and in partnership with our community.

Councillors also resolved at the Council meeting an interim report be presented to Council in July 2021 providing:

- a progress report on the development of a consultation methodology and engagement plan for the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy
- a proposed governance structure to oversee the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy development and implementation
- a recommendation for an outcome to the petition (CAS-903996) presented at the Council meeting on 22 February 2021 requesting Council to “raise and permanently fly the Aboriginal Flag at significant locations in Boroondara including the Council Offices, the Hawthorn Arts Centre precinct, the Kew Court-house, and Balwyn Library”.

On 15 June 2021, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council released proposals to vary the boundaries of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the boundaries of the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation for a 3,721km<sup>2</sup> area that lies between their existing registration boundaries.

On 21 June, both Traditional Owner groups consented to their respective proposed boundary variations and the changes came into effect on 1 July 2021. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation are now listed as the Registered Aboriginal Party for all of Boroondara and as a result of this change, proposed wording for Council’s Acknowledgement of Country is provided in section 4 below.

Also outlined below in section 4 is a response to each of the points noted above for the interim report.

#### **4. Outline of key issues/options**

##### **4.1 A progress and consultation update on the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy**

Since the Council meeting on Monday 26 April 2021, a consultation methodology and engagement plan has been developed to inform the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy.

The objectives of the consultation are to:

- ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities voice is heard and respected and the issues and priorities important to them are understood, acknowledged and considered
- facilitate authentic relationship building and strengthening between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' sector and the City of Boroondara
- understand the broad community vision for reconciliation in Boroondara and how residents, community groups, service providers and organisations would like to collaborate with Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to progress and celebrate reconciliation in our municipality
- recommend appropriate strategies and actions Council can include in its draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy to progress reconciliation locally and in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the broader community and organisations.

A list of key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to engage with has been developed with feedback sought from representatives from the First Peoples - State Relations, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Boroondara Reconciliation Network.

To provide advice on the development of the strategy and to assist with facilitating the community consultation, Council has engaged a consultant who is respected in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The consultant has well established relationships with key local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders identified by Council and our partners and has also provided feedback on the stakeholder list and methodology process. The methodology has also been shared with key advisors including the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and the Boroondara Reconciliation Network for information and/or comment as required. The consultant is facilitating the consultation sessions with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure it is respectful and contribute towards building stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations. Finally, the consultant will also provide advice on the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy to ensure appropriate language, themes, strategies and actions are incorporated.

As part of the consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander key stakeholders, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is being consulted closely to inform the strategy development as the Traditional Owners of all of Boroondara.

Council has also developed an online survey seeking to understand the community's vision for reconciliation in Boroondara and ideas for Council to progress reconciliation locally. Consultation with local health and wellbeing services and community organisations in Boroondara such as the Boroondara Reconciliation Network, schools, churches and kindergartens is also being undertaken. This will assist Council to understand the activities organisations are already undertaking to progress reconciliation locally and to identify any potential partnership opportunities.

A communications and engagement plan has been developed to ensure the engagement of a broad representation of our community and stakeholders. Promotion of the consultation has been distributed through Council's communication channels, including utilising our networks and newsletters. In addition, targeted social media posts to reach a diverse cross section of our community have been deployed.

There is also an opportunity through the consultation for residents, local community organisations and stakeholders to identify if they would like to be kept informed of opportunities to partner with Council on the implementation of actions over the four years. The findings from the consultation will then be used to progress discussions with interested organisations and individuals once the strategy has been endorsed.

Consultation activities will be undertaken across July and August 2021.

A keep informed list has also been established on Council's website so interested community members and organisations can be kept informed on the consultation process and development of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy.

The findings of the community consultation will be analysed to inform the development of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy, which will be presented to Council for public exhibition in late 2021.

#### 4.2 A proposed governance structure to oversee the development and implementation of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy

To inform the development and implementation of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy it is proposed an internal Reconciliation Advisory Committee be established. The purpose of the group will be to provide support on the development and delivery of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy and to oversee implementation and evaluation of the actions. Officers will develop and present Terms of Reference for this Advisory Committee at a later Council meeting.

The Committee term would run for four years (aligned with the Strategy dates) and would meet quarterly and consist of councillors and senior Council officers from departments across the organisation responsible for implementing actions in the strategy. The Committee will seek expert advice from external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or individuals when necessary for meeting the objectives of the group.

Twice a year, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and staff will be invited to a meeting for the purposes of Council officers to present on progress and seek feedback on Council's implementation of the Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy. Council's Reconciliation Advisory Committee will attend these meetings.

In addition to this, Council officers will continue to meet and seek advice and guidance from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation at scheduled regular meetings.

In addition to the Advisory Committee, Council officers will also develop a local Reconciliation Stakeholder Group, which would invite representatives from the sector including the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Boroondara Reconciliation Network, First Peoples - State Relations, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and the Koorie Engagement Unit at the Department of Education. The purpose of this group would be for Council officers from different departments across the organisation to keep members updated on the deliverables of the strategy and identify opportunities to collaborate, share information, increase cultural understanding, strengthen relationships and deliver actions in the community.

To ensure the community is kept informed on implementation of actions in the strategy, a yearly update will be published on Council's website.

#### 4.3 Recommendation for an outcome to the petition (CAS-903996) presented at the Council meeting on 22 February 2021

As noted above, at the Council meeting on 22 February 2021 Council was presented with a petition stating:

*We, the undersigned, petition the Mayor and Councillors of the Boroondara City Council to raise and permanently fly the Aboriginal Flag at significant locations in Boroondara including the Council Offices, the Hawthorn Arts Centre precinct, the Kew Court-house, and Balwyn Library.*

The petition was generated by the Boroondara Reconciliation Network through the social media site change.org and had approximately 700 signatures from all around Australia.

Flying the Aboriginal Flag is a visible symbol of respect and can be used to promote a sense of community, create a welcoming environment and demonstrate a commitment towards reconciliation.

The Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has a set of protocols about the appropriate use and flying of the Australian National Flag and other flags of Australia including the Aboriginal Flag. They advised officers it is best practice to have three flagpoles at any site and to fly the following flags from left to right in this order:

1. Australian National Flag
2. State Flag
3. Aboriginal Flag.

According to desktop benchmarking, there are 63 Victorian councils permanently flying the Aboriginal Flag, including 28 in Metropolitan Melbourne.

In-line with the Federal Government's advice, officers recommend the Aboriginal Flag be permanently flown at the Camberwell Civic Centre from Tuesday 27 July 2021. Flying the Aboriginal Flag at the Camberwell Civic Centre would be in addition to continuing to permanently fly the Aboriginal Flag at the Kew Library. As the Council Chamber is at the Camberwell Civic Centre, permanently flying the Aboriginal Flag at this location would demonstrate Council's commitment to reconciliation. It would also be consistent with the benchmarking with the Eastern Metropolitan Region councils who fly the Aboriginal Flag permanently at their Civic Centres.

#### 4.4 Proposed variation to boundaries of existing registered Aboriginal parties

As noted above, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council released proposals to vary the boundaries of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the boundaries of the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation for a 3,721km<sup>2</sup> area that lies between their existing registration boundaries. This is a significant step towards determining formally recognised Traditional Owner groups for the Melbourne CBD and 24 local councils including Boroondara.



On 21 June, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council released statements noting the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation consented to the proposed variations to their respective boundaries.

This decision means the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation are formally recognised through the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* as the Traditional Owners for all of Boroondara. This boundary variation eliminates uncertainty of Traditional Owner Groups in the southern part of our City and it would be appropriate to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and their accepted status in our Acknowledgement of Country.

Based on this announcement, it is recommended the wording of the Acknowledgement of Country could be updated to the below statement:

"I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today."

## **5. Consultation/communication**

To inform this report, officers from Facilities, Waste and Infrastructure, Capital Projects, Environmental Sustainability and Open Space, and Governance were consulted.

Feedback was also sought from representatives from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation on the proposed Governance structure, revised wording for the Acknowledgement of Country and the consultation methodology and engagement plan.

Officers sought advice on the list of key stakeholders from representatives from the First Peoples-State Relations, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Boroondara Reconciliation Network.

Council officers have also sought advice from the consultant who has been engaged to provide feedback and advice on the community consultation and engagement methodology.

As noted above, Council is also consulting with the broad Boroondara community, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, local organisations and internal Council departments to inform the development and implementation of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy.

## **6. Financial and resource implications**

Developing a draft reconciliation strategy will be completed within the Community Planning and Development operational budget.

## **7. Governance issues**

The officers responsible for this report have no general or material conflicts of interest requiring disclosure.

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, particularly those rights associated with respect, equality and dignity.

## **8. Social and environmental issues**

Advancing reconciliation contributes to greater understanding, trust and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community. It also contributes to an inclusive community where all community members feel valued.

## **9. Conclusion**

The community consultation for the development of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy will be completed in August 2021. The findings from the consultation will inform the development of the draft Boroondara Reconciliation Strategy to ensure it reflects the community's vision for reconciliation in Boroondara.

**Manager:** **Nicole White, Manager Community Planning and Development**

**Report officer:** Katherine Wright, Senior Coordinator Social Planning and Research