

Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

1. Preamble

1.1 Womin je ka yearmenn koondée bik Wurundjeri balluk

Welcome to the land of the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners and caretakers of this land, which includes all of the City of Yarra. The Wurundjeri territory lies within the inner city of Melbourne and extends from the mountains of the Great Dividing ranges south to the Yarra River, west to the Werribee River and east to Mt Baw Baw. The Wurundjeri Tribe belongs to the Woiwurrung language group and is a member of the Kulin Nation.

1.2 Indigenous Australian culture is the oldest living culture in the world today. Its significance to Australian society rests on the premise that it is a culture indigenous to this country and therefore deserves proper recognition and acknowledgment by this country.

1.3 Local councils have a key role to play in the local Indigenous Australian community. This role should not only aim to accommodate the needs of the local Indigenous community but should also strive to ensure that Indigenous Australian culture, as the indigenous culture of this country, is acknowledged and respected by the entire community.

1.4 Victoria is the only state at present that does not have elected Indigenous Australian community representatives at local council level. Council sponsored Indigenous Advisory Groups are a mechanism which promotes Indigenous Australian involvement in municipal decision making including at elected Councillor and at other levels.

1.5 For Victorian Indigenous people, the suburbs of Fitzroy and Collingwood hold special historical meaning. Fitzroy and Collingwood became the central meeting point for all Victorian Indigenous communities as it was here, during the 1940s and 1950s that Indigenous families first lived when they moved from country Victoria to Melbourne. This means that Indigenous Australian people have strong family connections to the area even though their tribal links may lie elsewhere.

1.6 In the 1960s and 1970s, it was also these areas that witnessed the birth of the very first metropolitan Indigenous Australian community organisations still in existence today. Most of these are State-wide and cover areas such as Indigenous health, housing, legal issues, sport and recreation and community and child-care services.

1.7 The Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group was first convened in 1999 and has provided invaluable advice to Yarra Council on local Indigenous matters across a broad range of issues.

1.8 In 2002, the Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group identified 2 key strategic partnership directions for Yarra Council and the local Indigenous Australian community being:

1.8.1 Preparation of a Partnership Plan between the City of Yarra and the Wurundjeri people; and

1.8.2 Identification of an action plan to address social justice issues for local Indigenous Australian people.

Documents outlining these strategic directions identify Council's role concerning issues pertinent to local Indigenous Australians.

2. Council's City Plan 2002/05

2.1 Council's City Plan 2002/05 confirmed its commitment as:

2.1.1 "In partnership with the Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group develop Reconciliation initiatives"; and to

2.1.2 "Provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in Council decision making processes".

3. Terms of Reference

3.1 Purpose

The Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group has been established as a partnership between Yarra City Council and the local Indigenous Australian community.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group are to:

3.2.1 Provide a structure for on-going consultation between the Indigenous community and Yarra City Council across a broad range of issues such as health, housing, legal, sport and recreation, culture, heritage, environment, employment, training and childcare;

3.2.2 Provide Council with strategic advice regarding issues pertinent to the Wurundjeri people and issues pertaining to social justice for Indigenous Australians; and

3.2.3 Assist Council to identify its on-going role in regards to issues affecting local Indigenous Australians.

3.3 Roles & Responsibilities

In order to achieve the above objectives, the Yarra Aboriginal Advisory Group will include the following roles and responsibilities:

3.3.1 Information.

To improve communication, consultation and information sharing between the Indigenous Australian community and Yarra City Council;

3.3.2 Advice.

To provide advice to Council on Indigenous Australian community issues;

3.3.3 Strategic Planning.

To provide support in the preparation of a Partnership Plan between the City of Yarra and the Wurundjeri people. To guide the development of Council's strategic approach including an action plan to address social justice issues concerning local Indigenous Australians;

3.3.4 Integrated Planning.

To increase cross-cultural awareness by ensuring that Council incorporate Indigenous Australian community interests in its policy, planning and service delivery activities;

3.3.5 Participation.

To increase Indigenous Australian community participation in municipal affairs;

3.3.6 Access.

To work with Council to improve access for Indigenous Australians to local resources; and

3.3.7 Responsiveness.

To increase the responsiveness of Council on issues affecting Indigenous Australians.

4. Membership

4.1 The membership will consist of representatives of City of Yarra located Indigenous Australian organisations and City of Yarra representatives including:

- Wurundjeri Elders
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
- Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria
- ATSIC Commonwealth/State Relations
- Melbourne Aboriginal Sport and Recreation
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd.
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Services Cooperative
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Local Indigenous Australian artists
- Other locally based Indigenous Australian organisations
- City of Yarra Councillor
- Manager of Community Planning and Advocacy and Council officers as required

5. Chair

5.1 Chairing of the Aboriginal Advisory Group will be determined by the Group, and may be shared between the Indigenous Australian members and a City of Yarra Councillor.

6. Advisory Group meeting schedule & Structure

6.1 The Advisory Group:

6.1.1 Will determine its meeting schedule. It is anticipated that meetings will be bimonthly; and

6.1.2 May establish sub-committees or task groups as required.

7. Accountability to Council

7.1 Accountability and reporting to Council will occur through:

7.1.1 The Manager of Community Planning and Advocacy and the Director Community Programs;

7.1.2 Presentation at Councillor Briefings; and

7.1.3 Council meeting delegates reports.

7.2 The Advisory Group will provide advice to Council but is not a formal Council committee.

8. Public Statements

8.1 The Advisory Group cannot make public statements on behalf of Council as an independent group.