
Yarra City Council's

***Yana Ngargna*¹ Plan 2020–2023**

A partnership with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung,

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We acknowledge their creator spirit Bunjil, their ancestors and their Elders. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, who have never ceded sovereignty and retain their strong connections to family, clan and country despite the impacts of European invasion. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.

¹ *Yana Ngargna* means 'continuing connection' in Woi Wurrung language.

Contents

Introduction.....	3
An Important Note on Terminology.....	4
Highlights from Previous Plans	6
Welcome to Country Ceremony — background information and protocol.....	6
Acknowledgement of Country—important background information	7
Acknowledgement of Country—official versions and protocol	7
Official Acknowledgment of Country #1.....	8
Official Acknowledgment of Country #2.....	8
Official Acknowledgment of Country #3.....	8
Council's Relationships with the Traditional Owners.....	9
Role of the <i>Yana Ngargna</i> Advisory Group.....	10
Role of the <i>Yana Ngargna</i> Working Group.....	10
Broader Social and Political Context for the Plan: National, State and Local Highlights from 2017 and 2018	10
Relevant Federal and State Policies, Acts and Commitments	12
Council Policy Context	13
Community Consultation Method for this Plan	13
Consultation Results	14
Timeline for development of the Plan	17
Yarra's <i>Yana Ngargna</i> (Continuing Connection) Policy, 2020	19
Council acknowledges:.....	19
Council supports:	20
Council commits to:	20
The Plan: Priority Areas, Commitments, Context and Actions	24
Priority 1. Relationships—Supporting community connections, promoting culture and protecting important places.....	25
Priority 2. A Visible Culture—Increasing the visibility of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, issues and achievements in Yarra.....	29
Priority 3. Community Health and Wellbeing—Working towards improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra.....	31
Priority 4. Organisational Development—Increasing Council's capacity, confidence and connection through improved Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment pathways, cultural awareness and internal coordination.....	34
Thanks.....	36
Appendices.....	37
Census Information: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Yarra.....	37
Key facts	37
Census results	37
Yarra Population and Household Forecasts.....	42

Introduction

The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung are the Traditional Owners of the land and waterways now known as the City of Yarra. Their connection to country extends back more than 60,000 years to the Dreamtime when their creator spirit Bunjil created the land, the people and all living things. Woi Wurrung is the original language of this country, although other languages were also spoken when, for example, neighbouring tribes visited for ceremony, trade and other business.

Incorporated just 25 years ago, Yarra City Council is a relatively young entity. Even younger again are Council's formal relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Formally, these relationships commenced just 21 years ago, with the establishment of Yarra's Aboriginal Advisory Group, which continues to be co-chaired today by a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder.

Many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also made (and continue to make) significant contributions to the life area—and have made generous contributions to the development of Council's policies, projects and relationships. Council's relationships with local Aboriginal organisations and services are an important part of this. Our relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), for example, is vital. Founded in Fitzroy, the positive impacts of VAHS have been monumental, both locally and interstate, with its unique model of community controlled healthcare being replicated all around the country.

Formerly known as the Aboriginal Partnerships Plan, Yarra's official policy will from here-on-in be known as the ***Yana Ngargna* Plan**. *Yana Ngargna* is a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung phrase meaning 'continuing connection'. This refers to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung's continuing connection to culture, country and identity—as well as Council's commitment to developing continuing connections with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations. The Plan was renamed in 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Yarra City Council is proud of the *Yana Ngargna* Plan, our fourth partnerships policy. We thank the many community members who have advised and guided us over the years, as well as those who continue to guide us today.

The *Yana Ngargna* Plan continues to build upon the successes and challenges of previous plans. Council embraces these challenges as an opportunity to engage, listen, learn and grow. We recognise that it is just the beginning of a long shared journey, and while there are significant challenges ahead, there is also so much to be gained.

An Important Note on Terminology

The development of this Plan has seen some significant changes to our terminology. These changes emerged quite late in 2019, during the final review and sign-off processes with both the Aboriginal Advisory Group and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation Committee of Management.

Although on first glance, terminology is a seemingly small issue, it is actually an incredibly important and complex issue, with few solutions that suit everyone. The complexity stems from terminology's strong links to issues of identity (individual and group), impacts of colonisation (past and ongoing) and the right to self-determination (in particular the right for individuals to choose the terminology that is used to describe them).

It is best practice when referring to an individual—when, for example, introducing someone as a guest speaker—to ask the individual how they prefer to be identified. Usually we have found that individuals prefer to be referred to by their tribal / clan lines. For example, Yarra's Aboriginal Partnerships Officer, Uncle Colin Hunter, is a proud Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder, and Smith Street Dreaming Festival producer, Jason Tamiru, is a proud Yorta Yorta man.

In referring to groups of people, terminology becomes trickier. Here are some of the commonly used terms, with a description of each and its general level of acceptance. Note that terms used to describe a group of people should always be capitalised.

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung—this is the term currently used by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung community to describe themselves—and they recently updated the name of their corporation to reflect this. By including the name of their language (Woi Wurrung) in how they refer to themselves, they more clearly show their link to the other tribes in the Kulin Nation (all of which identify by language group). The tribes of the Kulin Nation include the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, the Boon Wurrung, the Dja Dja Wurrung, the Taungurung and the Wathawarrung.

Aboriginal people/community—this is the best accepted term we have at present in Victoria to refer to a group of Aboriginal people from many tribes and nations. The word 'Aboriginal' should always be used with 'people' or 'community', rather than the words 'Aboriginal' or 'Aboriginals' by themselves. It is worth noting though that while this is an English word that is also used to describe many Aboriginal peoples around the world, Aboriginal people here have asserted a strong sense of ownership over the word and many use it to describe themselves and each other. Its use is also strongly associated with the Aboriginal flag as a unifying symbol of solidarity, protest and strength. That said, some community members feel that it is too homogenous a term, applying as it does to all tribes, nations and individuals in Australia and prefer to be identified by their tribe or use other terms.

Torres Strait Islander—this is a widely accepted term used to describe people from the Torres Strait Islands in northern Queensland, who now live in many parts of Australia. Highly respected Torres Strait Elder, Aunty Eleanor Harding, left an indelible mark on the Aboriginal community in Fitzroy in particular, opening her doors to all in the community and volunteering at a number of important Aboriginal organisations, such as the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.

Community / Communities—for the purposes of this document, the terms community and communities will in some instances be used as shorthand for the term ‘Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’. This will only be used when it is abundantly clear which community or communities are being referred to. The term will not be used in any policy statement, priority area, commitment or action that might be directly quoted in another policy or project and therefore needs to stand as a complete and independent statement on its own.

Aborigine—this is generally an outdated and inappropriate term and should be avoided. It was used by the English to describe Aboriginal people from roughly 1789 onwards and carries the negative historical associations of this. An exception with positive associations is the Australian Aborigines Advancement League—the first entirely Aboriginal organisation—which was founded in 1932 by William Cooper. Following on from this, the hugely influential Aborigines Advancement League was formed in Victoria in 1957. It is considered the ‘mother’ of the many other Aboriginal organisations founded in Victoria.

Koori / Koorie—this is a popular term used by Aboriginal people from south-eastern Australia to describe themselves. Ownership of this word is strongly held by the community who use it and, for this reason, it can be inappropriate, overly familiar or appear to be ingratiating when used by non-Aboriginal people and especially government representatives.

ATSI—this is a government acronym standing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Few community members use it to describe each other and many community members actively don’t like it. Sometimes its use is necessary in documents or graphics with limited space, eg. see census data graphs in the appendices of this document.

Indigenous—this term is generally accepted in some contexts but actively disliked by some community members. We have previously been advised to avoid this term due to negative historical associations.

First Nations—Although this term was used in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, specifically in the call for the establishment of a ‘First Nations Voice’, members of our advisory group have told us that they don’t feel a strong connection to this term. It is also worth noting that term isn’t unique and specific to peoples from Australia, but an umbrella term for all First Nations people from around the world.

First Australians—To our knowledge, community members do not currently use nor have a strong sense of ownership over this term, which was popularised by the historical documentary series of the same name by Rachel Perkins.

First Peoples—Although members of our advisory group have told us they don’t feel a strong connection to this term, it is the term currently being used by the Treaty Commission in Victoria. For example, at the time of writing the Commission is taking community nominations to establish the First People’s Assembly of Victoria.

In developing our new Plan, Torres Strait Islanders made it clear that they wanted to be acknowledged more consistently alongside Aboriginal people as a separate and unique group within the municipality. Consistent acknowledgment was discussed and unanimously agreed upon at an Aboriginal Advisory Group meeting. In acknowledging this separate group,

however, it quickly became apparent and that we also needed to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung first-and-foremost as a separate and unique group. This was unanimously supported by all Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders at a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation Committee of Management meeting. The Elders also endorsed *Yana Ngargna* as the new name for the Plan.

Given all of the above, it is more important for Council to use the terminology that the community would like us to use to describe them, than it is for us to have short, convenient terms for our speeches, policies and publications. We also recognise that this is a constantly evolving issue and will remain open to guidance from the community on this issue.

Highlights from Previous Plans

Some of the highlights from previous Plans include:

- Creation of the Stolen Generations Marker *Remember Me* by Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi artist Reko Rennie in Atherton Gardens, Fitzroy (2018).
- The January 26 project (2017–ongoing).
- Support for MAYSAR to maintain a community-owned space in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (2009–ongoing).
- Ongoing promotion of local history projects, a teacher's resource and Facebook pages (2002–ongoing).
- The ongoing work of Council's internal *Yana Ngargna* Working Group (formerly the RAP Working Group) in developing organisational confidence, capacity, cohesiveness and competency (2011–ongoing).
- Ongoing support for vulnerable Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members through Billabong BBQ, Yarra Aboriginal Support Network (YASN) and Smith Street Dreaming Festival/ Working Group (2001–ongoing).

Welcome to Country Ceremony — background information and protocol

A Welcome to Country ceremony involves a Traditional Owner formally welcoming people onto their country. It may also involve such things as dance, a smoking ceremony and the granting of safe passage as well as access to resources while on country.

This ceremony should be conducted at significant official events and can **only be carried out by a Traditional Owner on their traditional lands** (that is, a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung person on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung land).

Council commits to: “engaging the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung to conduct ‘Welcome to Country’ at citizenship ceremonies (if applicable), Mayoral and civic receptions, openings of major events, official openings of Council buildings and significant official events where the Mayor is present.”

Ideally, a 'Welcome' should be booked at least 6 weeks in advance of an event through the [Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Tribe Land and Cultural Heritage Compensation Corporation](#).

After a Welcome to Country ceremony, it is customary for the next speaker to thank the Traditional Owner for their Welcome and then read Council's Acknowledgement of Country statement.

Acknowledgement of Country—important background information

Acknowledgment of Country is a simple statement that pays respect to the Traditional Owners and their unique, enduring connection to the land and waterways (tens of thousands of years). It will often acknowledge other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people too.

In the modern day context, it can also acknowledge the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the face of rapid, irreversible changes that were made to their culture, health and ways of life from the time of European invasion onwards. Acknowledging this is an important part of a truth-telling process that has been deferred in various ways and to various ends—from the commencement of European invasion onwards.

Denial of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander existence was the first step in the British taking possession of the land. By declaring the land was *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one), the British were able to 'legally' invade, claim sovereignty and assert English law—including the assertion that the Crown was the absolute owner of all land.

It wasn't until 1992 that *terra nullius* as a justification for British ownership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands was legally declared a fiction.

Invasion impacted heavily on the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung causing loss of life, loss of culture and disconnection from country. Despite this, the strong bonds between the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, their families and country could not be broken.

Whenever possible, Acknowledgment of Country should be read with this historical context in mind. The land was inhabited by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes and nations at the time of European invasion and they are still here. A hastily read or unfeeling acknowledgment implies that it is unimportant business and does more harm than good.

Acknowledgement of Country—official versions and protocol

It is appropriate for the first speaker at an event or meeting to read an Acknowledgement of Country statement. If there has been a Welcome to Country prior to this, the Acknowledgement should take place immediately afterwards. Once Acknowledgment has been pronounced, it is not necessary for subsequent speakers to repeat the Acknowledgment, unless it is a particularly solemn Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community event (eg the Anniversary of the Apology, or National Sorry Day) in which case an acknowledgment might be pronounced by each new speaker. **An Acknowledgement of Country can be spoken by anyone, Aboriginal and Torres Strait**

Islander or not.

Council has three official acknowledgments, which have been written for specific circumstances. In the vast majority of cases, Council staff and Councillors will only use the first one. Further details are outlined below.

Official Acknowledgment of Country #1

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.

- To be used by the Mayor and Councillors at the commencement of all Mayoral and civic receptions, openings of major events, official openings of Council buildings and official events where the Mayor is present.
- To be used by Council officers at the commencement of CEO briefings, significant internal events, as well as Executive, Senior Management Team, Senior Management Team Plus and Branch meetings.
- To be used by Council officers who would like to acknowledge country in any other meeting.

Official Acknowledgment of Country #2

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We acknowledge their creator spirit Bunjil, their ancestors and their Elders. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, who have never ceded sovereignty and retain their strong connections to family, clan and country despite the impacts of European invasion. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.

- To be read by the Mayor at the commencement of all Council meetings and all Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events. It may also be used at any time at Councillor discretion, in place of the Official Acknowledgment of Country #1.

Official Acknowledgment of Country #3

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We acknowledge their creator spirit Bunjil, their ancestors and their Elders. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, who have survived European invasion and

never ceded sovereignty. We also acknowledge the significant contribution made by the many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra.

We acknowledge that Fitzroy and Collingwood are areas of special significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—as the cradle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Victoria, the birthplace of important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, the centre of political activism and a meeting place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to link in with family, community and services. We acknowledge the role played by past federal and state government policies in the social and cultural dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—and the dispossession of land—which has caused the current disadvantages faced by many Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And we believe that having an awareness of, and taking steps towards, mending this disadvantage is the shared responsibility of all residents in the City of Yarra.

Council pays its respects to all in the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.

- To be used by the Mayor and /or Councillors at the commencement of Yarra's January 26 event, Yarra's National Sorry Day event, Yarra's anniversary of the Apology event and Yarra's citizenship ceremonies (if applicable).
- It may also be used at Councillor discretion in place of the other official acknowledgments at any significant Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar day or community event.

Council's Relationships with the Traditional Owners

Yarra's formal relationship with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung formally began in 1999 when Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder, Aunty Annette Xiberras, became a founding member of Yarra's Aboriginal Advisory Group (now *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group). Twenty years on, she continues to co-chair the group and provide invaluable advice, knowledge and guidance. We acknowledge and thank Annette for her ongoing support.

Since 2009, the *Yana Ngargna* Plan has been strengthened by the employment of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder, Uncle Colin Hunter. He is the only Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung person employed in a dedicated position by local government on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country (which takes in 38 municipalities and the principality). We owe much to Uncle Colin's dedication, tenacity and leadership. He is an ambassador for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, for the community and for Yarra City Council.

Through Uncle Colin, we have also strengthened our relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Tribe Land and Cultural Heritage Compensation Corporation.

Role of the *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group

Yarra's *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group (YNAG), formerly known as the Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG), was established in 1999 as a partnership between Yarra City Council, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The group began work on Yarra's first Aboriginal Partnerships Plan in 2002 and endorsed the Plan in 2004.

In the years since, the group has continued to meet bimonthly, overseeing the development and implementation of all subsequent plans. The group maintains an open and standing invitation to all in the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It counts amongst its membership two Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders, two Councillors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives and Council officers.

The YNAG is the formal mechanism for ensuring our partnership with the community is underpinned by regular, ongoing conversations. This mechanism is also now supported by a range of other working groups and platforms for ongoing consultation with the community.

Role of the *Yana Ngargna* Working Group

Since 2012, Council's cross-organisational capacity has been built through an internal working group, known as the *Yana Ngargna* Working Group (formerly the RAP Working Group). The establishment of the *Yana Ngargna* Working Group has built confidence, capacity and co-operation across many units and branches within Council. This group meets monthly to track actions, co-ordinate projects and build cultural awareness and confidence amongst officers. The *Yana Ngargna* Working Group includes an executive sponsor and representation from staff across every division in Council.

A brief note: Although Council supports the aims and achievements of the Reconciliation movement, we no longer maintain a Reconciliation Action Plan. Our *Yana Ngargna* Plan is (and always has been) our lead policy document and, at this stage, best suits our responsive work style, as well as our yearly planning and reporting cycles.

Broader Social and Political Context for the Plan: National, State and Local Highlights from 2017 and 2018

2017 and 2018 saw a number of firsts, milestones and high profile events which increased engagement with (and visibility of) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, experiences, issues, histories and achievements.

2017

2017 was the 50-year anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, the 25-year anniversary of the landmark Mabo decision and the 20-year anniversary of the 'Bringing them Home' report into the Stolen Generations.

In May 2017, The Uluru Statement from the Heart was put together as a joint statement by Elders from around the country, calling for the establishment of a 'First Nations Voice' enshrined in the Australia Constitution and the establishment of a 'Makarrata Commission' to supervise agreement-making and truth-telling between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In June 2017, Woi Wurrung language was spoken for the first time in Victorian Parliament at the adoption of the historic 'Yarra River Protection (*Wilip -gin Birrarung murron*) Act 2017'.

In late 2017, three Victorian Councils—Yarra, Darebin and Moreland—made historic changes to how they mark January 26, taking positions that publicly acknowledge the pain and sorrow experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on this day.

In November 2017, Lidia Thorpe became the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman elected to Victorian Parliament.

2018

January 26 in 2018 marked the 80 year anniversary of the 1938 Day of Mourning protest and the 20 year anniversary of National Sorry Day. January 26 also saw large scale marches in all Australian capital cities in recognition and acknowledgement of this.

In July 2018, NAIDOC Week brought increased awareness of and due recognition to the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

In Victoria, 2018 saw the commencement of historic treaty talks and the adoption of the 'Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians Act 2018'—Australia's first ever Treaty law;

In June 2018, the federal seat of Batman was renamed after Yorta Yorta leader William Cooper.

Sporting organisations like the AFL and NRL continue to build pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement through high profile events such as Dreamtime at the G as part of the Sir Doug Nicholls round.

2019

The United Nations declared 2019 the Year of Indigenous Languages. This was to

acknowledge the fact that indigenous languages around the world are disappearing at an alarming rate—and to acknowledge that languages play a crucial role in the everyday lives of people, not just as a tool for communication, but also as a repository for each person's unique identity, cultural history, traditions and memory. This event provided some impetus for the renaming of Council's Plan in Woi Wurrung language.

The 2019 NAIDOC week theme was 'Voice, Treaty, Truth'.

The 2019 Close the Gap Report—'Our choices, Our Voices' revealed that the target to close the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people by 2031 is widening rather than closing.

From May–August 2019, The Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission took nominations for the First People's Assembly of Victoria. The Assembly will be tasked with establishing a framework and 'ground rules' for the creation of a Treaty.

In August 2019, Stan Grant's documentary on Adam Goodes and racism in Australia, *The Australian Dream*, opened to a standing ovation (2000 people in attendance) at Melbourne International Film Festival.

Relevant Federal and State Policies, Acts and Commitments

Yarra's *Yana Ngargna* Plan 2020–2023 is cognisant of a range of local, state and federal commitments.

At a Federal Level we are bound by:

- The *Close the Gap* targets, which bind us to work towards improved health and life expectancy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The responsibilities inherent to Australia's role as a signatory to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including the recommendation that we develop a Treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In Victoria, we are bound by:

- *The Yarra Protection (Wilip -gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017*, which recognises the Yarra River as having unique qualities in need of special protections.
- *The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006)*, which: protects the distinct rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria; outlines the legal obligation of public authorities to act compatibly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights, and to properly consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights when making decisions; and advocates for consultation with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities when

making any decision or action that may impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights.

- The Victorian State Government's *Close the Gap Statement of Intent 2008*.
- *The Advancing the Treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians Act 2018*, which establishes a framework for the development of a Treaty with Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The *Say No to Racism* campaign.

Council Policy Context

The Plan is cognisant of the Yarra Council Plan 2017–2021 and its values, especially the key objectives:

1. Community health, safety and wellbeing are a focus in everything we do.
2. Inclusion, diversity and uniqueness are welcomed, respected and celebrated.
3. Council leads on sustainability and protects and enhances its natural environment.
4. Development and growth are managed to maintain and enhance the character and heritage of the city.
5. Local businesses prosper and creative and knowledge industries thrive.
6. Connectivity and travel options are environmentally sustainable, integrated and well-designed.
7. Transparency, performance and community participation drive the way we operate.

It is also cognisant of other Council Plans such as the Yarra Arts and Cultural Strategy 2016–2020, the Draft Nature Strategy 2019–2023, and the Yarra Libraries Plan 2017–2020.

Community Consultation Method for this Plan

The initial consultation for this Plan took place during August and September in 2018. This involved discussions with community members and the distribution of online surveys.

Consultation commenced with a special AAG meeting held at MAYSAR (184–186 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy) on 2 August 2018, with approximately 30 people in attendance. AAG co-chair and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder, Aunty Annette Xiberras, opened the consultation with a Welcome to Country ceremony and also shared some memories about the area's history.

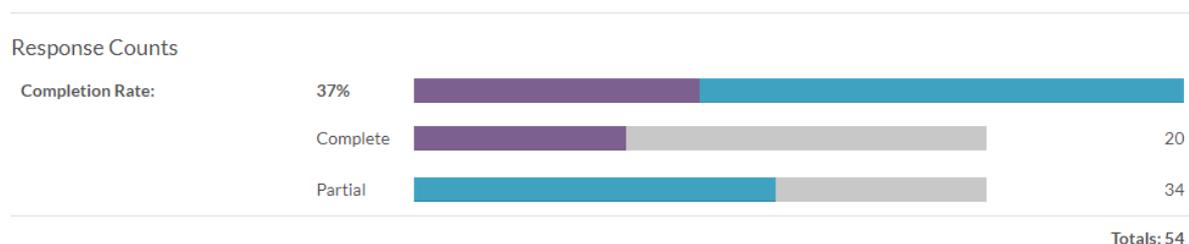
A slideshow was screened, highlighting Yarra's collaborative work with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over the last 20 years. This included a variety of history projects, events, celebrations, project posters and community gatherings. This was followed by facilitated discussions which primarily focussed on a few short questions: What is Council doing well? What does Council need to work on? If you were the Mayor of Yarra, what are the first three things you would do?

After the opening consultation, Community Partnerships officers sent online surveys to their extensive community networks inviting people to share ideas and give feedback. One of

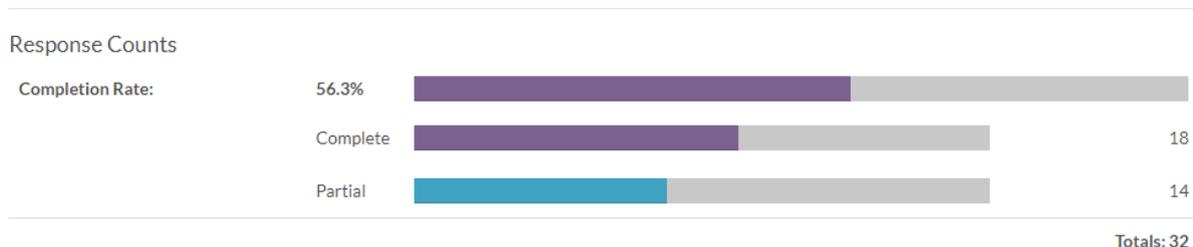
these surveys was for community only, and the other was for service providers and other people who work directly with community.

Council officers also visited a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and network meetings to present the slideshow and initiate discussion. The survey was then disseminated to these organisations for further distribution.

In total, 54 Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participated in the online survey, with 20 complete surveys and 34 partially completed surveys. This was a good level of participation, with many respondents providing rich and detailed information.



In total, a further 32 people who work directly with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community participated in the online survey. This includes 18 complete surveys and 14 partially completed surveys.



Emerging themes from this consultation were then discussed with Yarra staff and the *Yana Ngargna* Working Group to identify opportunities for future projects and actions.

Consultation Results

The majority of respondents from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people who work with these communities said they thought Council was doing a good job. A number of people said that Yarra is leading the way for local government.

Yarra Council is leading the way, not only on a state level, but also on a national level.

Yarra's work on January 26, the Stolen Generations Marker and Smith Street Dreaming

came up again and again, as Council projects that are highly valued by the community.

Yarra does so much for the community. It has been a trend setter and front runner in rolling out and supporting great initiatives for the A&TSI community. Such as the stolen generations marker, smith street dreaming festival and the council's stance on not celebrating the 26th of January.

Smith St Dreaming. It is a celebration and it is on the streets that a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify with and holds history of a long journey.

People also valued BlakWiz, Billabong BBQ and Yarra's historical resources.

Snapshots of Aboriginal Fitzroy, Heritage listing, Atherton Gardens, Wurundjeri History of Yarra, MAYSAR support, Teachers Guide: Connecting with the Aboriginal History of Yarra, Plaque Tour, Stolen Generation project.

People perceived Yarra to have strong relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community underpinned by clear, transparent consultative processes.

Council has done well to build a strong relationship with its local Aboriginal community.

[Council] consults well, has credibility, acknowledges us mob. Yarra is respectful of the

Aboriginal community and consults well with our people and organisations.

A small number of respondents said that they weren't aware of any work that Yarra did with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and that they wanted more contact with Yarra Council, or for events to be better advertised, including through traditional promotion (not just online and social media).

A strong and consistent theme in the consultation was that people wanted Yarra to create more employment opportunities for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both in the organisation itself and in the broader community.

Make sure all the council places are culturally safe and employees have had cultural awareness provided. Employ more Aboriginal people.

Would like to see increase in Aboriginal employment by Yarra City Council. Need to have a think about what this is and how to do it. Need to tease it out and have a strategy for it. You have a RAP Plan, so you may have issues with internal issues, but push it through, just do it! We need jobs! Yarra has such a good reputation, but the RAP Plan is the guts of it. If you're fair dinkum, you've got to make this happen.

Other areas for improvement include: ensuring ongoing, long-term support and protection for MAYSAR as the last community-controlled Aboriginal organisation in historically significant Fitzroy:

MAYSAR to be better funded, community feeling that they need security for the organisation's future. i.e. 10 years or more, so that we can plan for the future.

MAYSAR to be listed to be officially Heritage Listed.

People wanted Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures to be more visible in the municipality:

More of our history and culture needs to be visible.

We wanna show our pride and history.

People wanted us to keep working on broader community education:

Keep up the education—through outreach, the teachers' resource, Aboriginal liaison.

Have an Aboriginal person to go into schools. Teach people—you could partner with SNAICC to do that.

There's more education needed.

Both community members and service providers wanted Yarra to advocate for affordable housing and find ways to maintain community connection to Yarra.

Advocate for increased public, social and affordable housing for Aboriginal people to remain in Yarra. Support organisations to stay in Yarra.

People feel that their community is being "pushed out" as services and affordable rent have pushed the community out of the area.

People also wanted us to provide support for people who are at risk of coming into contact with the justice system and people who are coming out of prison.

Help with dealing with the high rates of the mob being incarcerated. Help to reconnect, to link to community and culture. Programs inside and out of prison. Having people with lived experience to facilitate the programs.

Support healing services, or centres as a better way forward.

People wanted to see more support for young, vulnerable and homeless Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as people with substance abuse issues.

More youth activities—give them an alternative to drugs and alcohol, give them respect and a place to belong.

Move the local Aboriginal community out of North Richmond and provide support and

resources for the substance issues.

Further community quotes and background information are also included in the 'context' sections for each of the four priority areas detailed in this Plan.

Timeline for development of the Plan

July–September 2018

- Review of successes, challenges and opportunities emerging from the last four year plan.
- Community consultation undertaken.

October–November 2018

- Consultation information compiled, reviewed and themed.
- First draft Plan written.

November 2018

- First draft Plan (high level summary) presented to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation Committee of Management for feedback from the Elders.
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders provided advice on the exact wording of Yarra's Acknowledgement of Country statements.

December 2018

- Draft Plan presented to AAG for discussion. This included an extensive discussion of Yarra's Acknowledgements of Country statements.
- Draft Plan emailed to the extensive Aboriginal Partnerships Officer's contact list for feedback.

January 2019

- Draft Plan presented to Executive Briefing

February 2019

- Draft Plan presented to Council Briefing
- Feedback on the Plan discussed at AAG.

March 2019

- Final year report on implementation of the Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018 presented to Council.
- Draft Plan presented to Council Meeting

March–July 2019

- Plan put on Public Display and promoted to networks with invitations to comment.
- Twenty-two people provided feedback on the Plan, with the 'Community Health and Wellbeing' priority receiving the most suggestions.

August 2019

- Final AAG discussion of the Plan with a special focus on terminology
 - The group resolved to change terminology to consistently acknowledge Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- High level summary of Plan presented to Elders at the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Woi

Wurrung Corporation Committee of Management.

- *Yana Ngargna* endorsed as new name along with updated terminology.

September 2019

- Final Plan presented to Executive Briefing

October 2019

- Final Plan presented to Councillor Briefing

November 2019

- Final Plan presented to Council Meeting for adoption.

Yarra's *Yana Ngargna* (Continuing Connection) Policy, 2020

The following policy statement, previously known as the Yarra Aboriginal Partnerships Policy, 2015, is a quick reference stand-alone document which lists Council's official acknowledgments, statements of support and commitments. It remains the foundation of our work with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The values and commitments outlined here are applicable to all Councillors and officers at Yarra City Council.

Council acknowledges:

1. the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra.
2. the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung's creator spirit Bunjil, their ancestors and their Elders—past, present and future.
3. the strength and resilience of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, who have never ceded sovereignty and retain their strong connections to family, clan and country despite the impacts of European invasion.
4. the impacts of frontier wars, massacres and frontier violence in Victoria and the role these things played in the dispossession of Aboriginal people.
5. that Fitzroy and Collingwood are areas of special significance to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—as the cradle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Victoria, the birthplace of important Aboriginal organisations, the centre of political activism and a meeting place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to link-in with family, community and services.
6. the strain that the rising cost of living and rapid population growth continue to put on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to Yarra.
7. that ongoing presence, visibility and participation of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra is vital to maintaining connection to Yarra.
8. the significant number of volunteer hours worked by many Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in order to fulfil cultural, familial and community obligations, often without acknowledgement.
9. the role played by past federal and state government policies in the social, cultural and economic dispossession of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; the ongoing intergenerational trauma experienced by many Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a result of this; the compounding effects of racism (overt, covert and unconscious) on this trauma—and the ways in which these forces combine to reinforce entrenched disadvantage, poor health outcomes, increased contact with the justice system and economic disadvantage.
10. that having a historical understanding of the ongoing impacts of European invasion on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today is

essential to our shared healing in the City of Yarra.

Council supports:

11. the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung community in their role as Traditional Owners.
12. the rights of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live according to their own values and customs.
13. the *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group, as a mechanism for ensuring Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input into the development of Council policies.
14. Yarra Aboriginal Support Network (YASN) as a mechanism for co-ordinating support for the Parkies community and other members of Yarra's disadvantaged Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
15. the Federal Government's 'Close the Gap' commitments.
16. the anniversaries of The Apology, NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Week, Close the Gap Day, National Reconciliation Week, Indigenous Literacy Day, International Day of the World's Indigenous People and Indigenous Children's Day.
17. development of treaties with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as per the recommendations of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which Australia is a signatory.
18. truth telling between governments and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Council commits to:

19. consulting the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Council on all decisions affecting the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on all issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra.
20. increasing employment of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Council and working towards Yarra becoming an employer of choice.
21. developing Yarra's organisational culture so that it is attracting and welcoming to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
22. brokering Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community employment opportunities in the broader municipality.
23. ongoing employment of an Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person as the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer², with special consideration given, in the case of a vacancy, to a person who can demonstrate strong community connection.

² At the time of writing, Aboriginal Partnerships Officer is the official title of this role, although this *may* go through an HR process to update it to reflect updated terminology used in this Plan.

24. engaging the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung to conduct 'Welcome to Country' at citizenship ceremonies (if applicable), Mayoral and civic receptions, openings of major events, official openings of Council buildings and significant official events where the Mayor is present.
25. paying respect to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by reading:
 - a) Council's official Acknowledgement of Country #1 statement at the commencement all Mayoral and civic receptions, openings of major events, official openings of Council buildings and official events where the Mayor is present, as well as CEO briefings, significant internal events, Executive, Senior Management Team, Senior Management Team Plus and Branch meetings.
 - b) Council's official Acknowledgment of Country #2 statement at the commencement of all Council meetings and all Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events.
 - c) Council's official Acknowledgment of Country #3 statement at the commencement of Yarra's January 26 event, Yarra's National Sorry Day event, Yarra's anniversary of the Apology event and Yarra's citizenship ceremonies (if applicable).
26. remaining a local government leader and innovator in strengthening relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; increasing visibility of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, issues and achievements; improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra; and developing the organisation's confidence and capacity in working with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
27. developing a new action plan for each year of the four years of the *Yana Ngargna* Plan 2020–2023, to ensure Council projects and actions are responsive to and aligned with community need and emerging community issues.
28. maintaining recognition and profile of areas of local significance to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
29. seeking opportunities to name places in Yarra using *Woi Wurrung* language, in line with Yarra's *Naming of Roads Features and Places Policy, 2014*.
30. flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on Council's Town Halls on a daily basis, and at all ceremonial Council events where the Australian flag is flown.
31. including an Acknowledgment of Country statement on all Yarra staff and Councillor email signatures.
32. advocating for improved Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and cultural awareness among staff in Victoria Police, Office of Housing Victoria and local services and agencies.
33. supporting the ongoing development of MAYSAR as a community space run by

- community for community, and the ongoing vitality of meeting places like The Stolen Generations Marker, The Meeting Place and Billabong BBQ.
34. promoting 'The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Protocol' as the first step for people, businesses and organisations planning cultural and community activities in Yarra.
 35. facilitating ongoing monthly Yarra Aboriginal Support Network (YASN), monthly *Yana Ngargna* Working Group (YNWG) meetings and bimonthly *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group (YNAG) meetings.
 36. building strategic, collaborative and supportive partnerships with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, other levels of government, the community and the private sector, in Yarra and beyond.
 37. promoting and holding a small-scale, culturally-sensitive event featuring a Smoking Ceremony on January 26 that acknowledges the loss of culture, language and identity felt by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on January 26.
 38. developing a communications plan that focuses on broader community education, to help people better understand the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community experiences of January 26 and to explain Council's position on January 26.
 39. promoting information about Council's position on January 26 in the six most commonly spoken community languages in Yarra, and partnering with the Yarra Settlement Forum and the Yarra Multicultural Advisory Group to distribute and promote educational information.
 40. partnering with Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sport and Recreation Incorporated (MAYSAR) to run a forum for young Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, on the local history and achievements of Elders in the area.
 41. continuing to help co-ordinate and provide administrative support for the 'January 26 Network'—a multi-council and community info-sharing group, which meets quarterly.
 42. continuing to promote Melbourne City Council's Share the Spirit Festival and other respectful Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events held on January 26.
 43. ceasing to refer to January 26 as Australia Day in all communications, to acknowledge the fact that this date commemorates the British invasion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and is therefore not an appropriate date for an inclusive national celebration.
 44. referring to January 26 merely as January 26 until a more appropriate term is adopted nationally to acknowledge the experiences of the people who inhabited the land for more than 60,000 years prior to the raising of the Union Flag on Gadigal country on January 26 in 1788;
 45. not holding Citizenship Ceremonies (if applicable) on January 26;
 46. continuing to recognise excellence and service in Yarra's community through

Community Awards that are awarded on days other than January 26, which better suit the nature of each award, and not under the banner of Australia Day Awards.

47. supporting the #changethedate campaign (as long as it remains in-tune with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sentiment) in Council publications and social media in the lead up to January 26 to seek a more inclusive day to celebrate national pride.
48. working to achieve aims expressed in the Victorian State Government's Close the Gap Statement of Intent (2008).
49. remaining a signatory of the:
 - a) Say No to Racism campaign.
50. Maintaining the responsibilities inherent to Australia's role as a signatory to the:
 - a) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Plan: Priority Areas, Commitments, Context and Actions

For the next four years, Council's work with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will be guided by four high-level **priority areas**:

- **Priority 1—Relationships**—supporting community connections, promoting culture and protecting important places.
- **Priority 2—A Visible Culture**—Increasing the visibility of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, issues and achievements in Yarra.
- **Priority 3—Community Health and Wellbeing**—Working towards improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra.
- **Priority 4—Organisational Development**—Increasing Council's capacity, confidence and connection through improved Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment pathways, cultural awareness and internal coordination.

Each of these priority areas is underpinned by a number of **commitments**, which are detailed in the following pages, and a **context** description, which tells the story of each priority area and includes direct quotes from the community consultation.

Actions will be written into annual action plans (calendar year), with the Year One Action Plan 2020 being the first.

All priorities, commitments, contexts and actions are cognisant of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community consultation conducted from mid–late 2018, community feedback received during the public display period in 2019, as well as ongoing Council projects, commitments and relationships with the community, and emerging opportunities and constraints within the organisation.

Action plans will be available on Council's website and in printed hardcopies by request via the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer at the beginning of each year until the end of 2022. Email: info@yarracity.vic.gov.au, Phone: (03) 9205 5555

Priority 1. Relationships—Supporting community connections, promoting culture and protecting important places.

Commitments

Council will:

- 1.1 Consult the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people on all decisions affecting the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, and consult the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on all issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 1.2 Promote broader understandings of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, history, achievements and challenges in the broader community, so that more people, services and organisations (as well as landlords and employers) are able to understand and support Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community connection to Yarra.
- 1.3 Continue to advocate for the ongoing protection and vitality of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services in Yarra, as well as important urban meeting places and sites.
- 1.4 Continue to develop a range of positive relationships with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and support organisations that are also building positive relationships with these communities.

Actions

Detailed actions for each of the above commitments can be viewed in annually produced action plans. An updated action plan will be produced for each calendar year of the Plan's four year lifespan (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023). Action plans will be available on Council's website and in printed hardcopies by request via the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer at the beginning of each year until the end of 2023. Email: info@yarracity.vic.gov.au, Phone: (03) 9205 5555.

Context

Council's relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are at the heart of Yarra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Plan 2020–2023. These relationships are both formal and informal.

The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung's unique connection to the land and waterways in Yarra extends back tens of thousands of years to the time when their creator spirit, Bunjil, created the land, the people and all living things. Given this enduring and special connection, it is vital that Council continues to develop a stronger relationship with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people—and especially with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Aboriginal Corporation (the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation).

At present, Council engages the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation for cultural, ceremonial, naming and land management issues. Further to this, Council commits to promoting the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung as the Traditional Owners, advocating for their projects and concerns, and maintaining regular contact.

According to some people who participated in the consultation for this Plan, Council is doing a good job of working with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung.

Contact with the Wurundjeri Council is excellent.

We will continue to build this relationship with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung through our *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group (YNAG), which is co-chaired by Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder, alongside various Yarra Councillor and Mayoral co-chairs. This group maintains an open and standing invitation to all in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and provides an avenue for community to have an influence on strategic planning and decision making.

For the last ten years, Council's relationship with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung has been greatly strengthened also, by the employment of Uncle Colin Hunter—the only Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder to be employed by a local government on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country (which takes in 38 municipalities and the principality).

Council also deeply values its relationships with the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community connected to Yarra. The area remains an important place for members of this community, who live, work and spend time in the area. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history of Fitzroy maintains a deep resonance with the community. And it is perhaps because of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's pride in and connection to Fitzroy that Yarra has developed such a strong relationship with and commitment to the community. As one consultation participant described Fitzroy:

Fitzroy is the heartland and sacred place to Aboriginal community. It always has been and always will be.

Fitzroy stands along Redfern in its stature as an urban area of special significance. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders gained influence and important organisations were born in and around the streets of Fitzroy. The area has seen Stolen Generations and estranged families reunited and it has given rise to renowned artists, activists and athletes. The positive impacts that ripple out from this community continue to be felt today. As another consultation participant put it:

Victoria has always been the home of radical Aboriginal politics. We lead the way for the rest of the country. We have always been progressive blacks—strong, proud and radical!

It is worth noting, to follow on from this last quote, that many of the community members that advise and partner with Council today are the descendants of Elders and political activists who have led great social change. Many are strong social justice

advocates in their own right. They know the history of the area and demand that Council take a strong leadership role on a range of issues relevant to the community. This history is vital in understanding

A number of branches within Council maintain relationships with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, with support offered by officers from the Community Partnerships Branch when required. Other branches such as Arts and Cultural Services, Yarra Libraries, Communications and Strategic Advocacy maintain solid relationships with the community and deliver work, events and information of a consistently high standard.

Over the last twenty years or so, forces affecting greater Melbourne have continued to exert increasing pressure on community connection to the area. Greater Melbourne's rapidly growing population continues to push up property prices and population density, and increasing traffic congestion continues to put a strain on services, infrastructure and community connectedness.

According to the latest population forecasts, the City of Yarra's population will grow from 97,077 in 2018 to 157,607 by 2041. The number of dwellings is forecast to increase from 46,213 in 2018 to 78,327 in 2041.³ This growth will have significant implications for service demand and delivery in the area—and will continue to strain Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community connection to the area.

Need to protect and maintain community connection: Gentrification continues to push people further north and away from Fitzroy.

Honouring, supporting and promoting community connection to Yarra in the face of these challenges is something that was repeatedly mentioned in the consultation for this Plan. It is also an issue that has no simple solution and requires a multi-pronged approach. Maintaining strong relationships will be an important part of this—to ensure we are in tune with community sentiment and ready to act on emerging opportunities.

In the consultation, people were eager to see Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, spaces and meeting places supported, advocated for and protected. Many people said they wanted to see MAYSAR supported and protected as the last community controlled organisation in Gertrude Street. People also wanted to see Charcoal Lane supported as an important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth training facility and social enterprise restaurant.

Secure more funding to employ staff and develop programs at MAYSAR. This place could resemble the Aboriginal Centre for Excellence in Redfern.

Maintain the good things we have: MAYSAR, Charcoal Lane

³ <https://forecast.id.com.au/yarra/>

People wanted to see more Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community spaces created in Yarra.

Buy back the Doug Nicholas Church and give it back to our community as a new Centre for us.

Buy back buildings in Fitzroy for our community to create community organisations in.

Yarra should buy or access deceased estates for the Aboriginal community for safe housing.

As well as advocating for community spaces, people were keen to see walking tours run in the municipality, as a way to educate people about the history of the area and how this history links to current challenges faced by the community.

Have the time to be story tellers about the Wurundjeri people, e.g. at committee meetings tell us about the Wurundjeri Aboriginal Land and Compensation Council, e.g. take the committee on the local Fitzroy walk, which is good not only for Aboriginal people but educates non-Indigenous people about the rich history of the local area. This will assist non-Indigenous workers to understand the diverse background (of life) for Aboriginal people who lived in the local region and help them to better understand the significance of this area and understand issues such as the stolen generation, trans-generational trauma, being institutionalised, grief associated with loss and highlight matters such as Aboriginal unemployment, lack of housing, limited opportunities for education, family breakdown, loss of lands and cultural practices and drug and alcohol issues, etc.

This last quote points to the simple act of storytelling as means to connect and improve relationships between otherwise disparate or disconnected groups. Storytelling will remain an important part of what we do—and this includes ongoing promotion of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history through a variety of platforms and formats.

Priority 2. A Visible Culture—Increasing the visibility of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, issues and achievements in Yarra.

Commitments

Council will:

- 2.1 Strive to increase the visibility of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, arts, events, significant calendar days, culture, languages, achievements, issues and history in Yarra, and provide opportunities for the broader community to engage and learn.
- 2.2 Continue working towards a celebration of national identity that is more inclusive of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as outlined in Council's 'January 26 decision' of 15 August 2017.

Actions

Detailed actions for each of the above commitments can be viewed in annually produced action plans. An updated action plan will be produced for each calendar year of the Plan's four-year lifespan (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). Action plans will be available on Council's website and in printed hardcopies by request via the Aboriginal Plan Officer at the beginning of each year until the end of 2023. Email: info@yarracity.vic.gov.au, Phone: (03) 9205 5555.

Context

One of the ways participants in the consultation for this Plan were keen to see the community supported was through increased visibility—of people, activities, events and use of traditional languages. Renaming this policy in Woi Wurrung language was an immediate and obvious first step in responding to a call for more use of traditional languages. We will also continue to promote and mark significant Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar days and weeks so that they are more visible to the broader community. This visibility is essential to maintaining a connected, supported and active Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence in Yarra.

More public visibility. Like the Stolen Generations Marker.

City of Yarra cannot be a monument to Aboriginal history. It is a living history. There is a deep connection to this space that every young person that comes to Charcoal Lane gets when they come to Yarra. Yarra must support MAYSAR and Charcoal Lane to share the rich history of this area with the next generation. Through Charcoal Lane we connect young people to culture through food and experiences. Yarra honours Community well. We are hoping our students can embrace the community of Yarra and feel connected to a progressive municipality.

This increased visibility also needs to be inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people and history.

Torres Strait Islander history to be more visual and present—and Torres Strait Islander people to be invited to everything.

People cited The Stolen Generations Marker, Smith Street Dreaming Festival and the use of *Woiwurrung* language to name *Bargoonga Nganjin* as good examples of Council projects that have succeeded in increasing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's visibility. It is worth noting that these projects are supported by educational activities and events, and that the combination of the two is important.

I loved the Stolen Generations marker because it encouraged inclusion—and is a welcoming site (for sitting and spending time).

Continue to run Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community events that provide an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are comfortable, feel acknowledged and can celebrate, share and express themselves as cultural people.

Council's stand on January 26 also increased pride, connection and visibility in the community—and also increased understanding of important issues relating to the current position of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our celebrations of national identity.

To do what you did [re January 26], to stand against it, was really great. It's really great to have it finally recognised.

Not celebrating 26th Jan. You recognise the contribution Aboriginal Community has played in shaping the municipality and you celebrate it.

Council will continue to mark January 26 in line with our 15 August 2017 resolution and advocate for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, places, culture, achievements and experiences to hold pride of place in our local and national identity and any celebrations relating to identity.

Priority 3. Community Health and Wellbeing—Working towards improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra.

Commitments

Council will:

- 3.1 Support vulnerable Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
- 3.2 Advocate for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on issues in which they are experiencing poor outcomes.
- 3.3 Fight racism and advocate for broader understandings of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community experiences, issues and stories in line with Council's 'January 26 decision' on 15 August 2017.

Actions

Detailed actions for each of the above commitments can be viewed in annually produced action plans. An updated action plan will be produced for each calendar year of the Plan's four-year lifespan (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). Action plans will be available on Council's website and in printed hardcopies by request via the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer at the beginning of each year until the end of 2023. Email: info@yarracity.vic.gov.au, Phone: (03) 9205 5555

Context

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra, like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people all around the country, continue to experience disadvantage in almost every measure of health and wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be imprisoned, to experience racism, to have housing issues or be homeless, to live shorter lives, to experience more grief, mental health and substance abuse issues. As one consultation participant put it:

No council has really taken the steps towards addressing the issues that have long plagued our communities and enforced change within council.

This is not an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community issue but a whole of country issue—and working towards mending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage is a shared national responsibility.

As a Local Government, some of the ways that Yarra can work towards improving this situation is by building relationships and networks to support vulnerable people, identifying opportunities and pushing for improvements.

Participants in our community consultation were very clear on areas we should focus on. Homelessness, housing, youth, justice and incarceration were all issues that participants repeatedly mentioned.

People were keen to see Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth supported.

More work needed with early intervention and youth services. There is very little work being done to support Aboriginal families to avoid having children being put into out of home care.

Provide more opportunities for young kids to have a chance, to get the experience so they can get jobs. Something like Charcoal Lane.

Lots of talented kids out there but no chance to showcase talents—give them possibilities, show them people care (SNAICC rep would partner).

As part of our commitment to increasing Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, we will ensure that there is a youth focus built into our employment model. We will also explore ways in which we can provide other developmental or experiential opportunities that might lead to work opportunities. Council will also continue to build and explore relationships with organisations and services working with youth to see how we can build upon our existing commitments.

Consultation participants also raised the high rate of imprisonment as an urgent issue—the need for preventative measures as well as support and healing measures to be taken.

Need to have rehabilitation programs for those out of prison, to help with connection and employment opportunities.

Council will continue to develop relationships and knowledge about preventative programs, support services and healing programs through YASN, Billabong BBQ and informal networks. We will also work to support vulnerable people in and around Richmond, including people who inject drugs.

Housing and homelessness were also big issues raised in the consultation.

Support Council's homelessness worker with more funding and resources to address homelessness.

More effort to support vulnerable people and to address homelessness, substances abuse issues

Accessibility for our community to rent in Fitzroy and our community to buy housing in the areas.

Supporting Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access housing in Yarra is an increasingly challenging issue. With housing primarily being a State Government issue, advocacy is our best tool at the local government level. All advocacy work will be performed in consultation and with guidance from the community. And Council will only act on an issue concerning the community with permission and/or guidance from the

community. We will also build relationships with organisations and services who are working on community housing and homelessness issues.

In the wake of Yarra's January 26 decision, we received both positive and negative feedback from all around the country. The positive feedback was often heartfelt, appreciative and eloquent. The negative feedback was frequently racist, angry and irrational. As a signatory to the *UNESCO Coalition of Cities against Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific*; the *Say No to Racism* campaign and the responsibilities inherent to Australia's role as a signatory to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, it is vital that Council acts to stamp out racism and its well-known impacts on communities and their wellbeing.

In places where there is racism and hatred we must advocate for understanding, compassion and connectedness. We can especially do this through our positive promotion of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, histories and experiences in our day-to-day communications and on social media. Also by making information available to Yarra's CALD communities and through other recommendations adopted as part of Council's 'January 26 decision'.

Participants in the consultation for this Plan were extremely happy with Council's 'January 26 decision' and were keen to see more leadership in this space.

Cancelling Invasion Day was a good idea.

Bringing in other councils (on January 26) is where I'd like Yarra to go—advocate for a minimum of flags at half-mast. Put steps to do this in the Plan. Let's bring it on!

I'd like Council to bring in an action to spread through the metropolitan area—and eventually the country.

Council will continue its commitments to January 26 in line with the Council resolution of 15 August 2017.

Council will also continue to engage and support vulnerable people. Council currently has a number of successful ongoing models for this. Billabong BBQ provides a weekly support mechanism for the Parkies and other vulnerable community members. Council also provides funding for an outreach officer, who engages community members on a number of cultural and well-being focused activities. We will continue to convene the Yarra Aboriginal Support Network (YASN)—a monthly meeting of service providers, agency representatives and community members, held to co-ordinate services to the Parkies and respond to emerging issues. And council continues to support Melbourne Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Sport and Recreation (MAYSAR) as a community-controlled space that supports both vulnerable and broader community members.

Priority 4. Organisational Development—Increasing Council's capacity, confidence and connection through improved Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment pathways, cultural awareness and internal coordination.

Commitments

Council will:

- 4.1 Improve employment opportunities for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Council and in the broader community.
- 4.2 Build organisational capacity, confidence and cultural awareness to better serve the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- 4.3 Maintain clear, transparent and accountable processes in implementing and tracking commitments detailed in this Plan and annual action plans.

Actions

Detailed actions for each of the above commitments can be viewed in annually produced action plans. An updated action plan will be produced for each calendar year of the Plan's four year lifespan (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). Action plans will be available on Council's website and in printed hardcopies by request via the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer at the beginning of each year until the end of 2023. Email: info@yarracity.vic.gov.au, Phone: (03) 9205 5555.

Context

Council first recognised the need to develop its internal capacity for working with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in 2010. Until that point, we had relied almost exclusively on the Aboriginal Partnerships Officer, to facilitate all engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community—a big job!

In 2011, Council formed its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group—a dedicated group of staff members who would meet monthly to identify needs and opportunities, to collaborate and co-ordinate, and to think about how we can improve the ways in which we work with the community. Slowly but surely, this group has helped to develop the organisation's capacity, leading to improved relationships between the community and many parts of Council.

You're not just talking reconciliation. You're doing it. You turned it from a noun to a verb.

One ongoing issue for improvement, however, which was repeatedly mentioned in the community consultation, was the need for more Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment opportunities at Council and in the broader community.

Problems with Aboriginal employment, not enough Aboriginal people employed at Council. The work

place needs to be an Aboriginal friendly environment. Don't wait until Aboriginal people are job ready, get them job ready while doing a work placement.

As part of implementation of our Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015–2018, Council made efforts to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment but the model proved ineffective and yielded limited results. What we must now do is learn from the past and try some new approaches.

We will continue to employ an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Officer and continue to seek guidance on our processes.

We will also:

- Apply internally for funding for two new dedicated part time positions for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Apply for funding for a dedicated position for the Heritage Team.
- Review Council's employment diversity policy.
- Continue to develop culturally appropriate and flexible recruitment and selection processes.
- Continue to work towards flexible working arrangements (in line with the EBA).
- Promote and seek opportunities to broker Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment opportunities in the broader community.

At the commencement of this Plan, Council's RAP group is stronger than ever, counting 20 staff members from across Council in its membership, including an Executive Sponsor and representation from all five Council divisions. The *Yana Ngargna* Working Group allows staff to network, support each other, learn, collaborate, build confidence and identify issues.

Ensure all employees across the Shire were continually educated, audited, accredited in cultural safety; capacity building particularly around employment where every non-Aboriginal employee worked in a co-mentor partnership with Aboriginal people; address the structural arrangements that privilege whiteness to reflect cultural sovereignty.

Council acknowledges that up to a third of the work undertaken with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is responsive in nature. It is a vital part of our work with a dynamic community. Having the *Yana Ngargna* Working Group group allows Council to be more agile and responsive to emerging issues.

Another mechanism that ensures agility and responsiveness is the creation of annual action plans for each year of the four year *Yana Ngargna* Plan 2020–2023. This is underpinned by ongoing consultation (formal and informal), progress reporting and constant evaluation.

I like that there is much more visibility of community and programs or initiatives in such a progressive electorate than others.

Provides opportunities for community to participate in decision making processes. Transparent processes/consultations.

Writing annual action plans ensures that Council projects remain aligned with emerging community issues. Actions for each year will be drawn from Council's ongoing relationships with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, direct suggestions from community members and Council officer knowledge of local, state and federal level issues. Each action plan will be developed and implemented in consultation with the *Yana Ngargna* Advisory Group (YNAG). The Aboriginal Partnerships Officer is responsible for annual progress reporting to Council on the implementation of each action plan.

I have only just returned to live back in Melbourne however I have attended the Stolen Gen's marker launch this year and attended yesterday's community engagement forum. What is noticeable is Yarra's transparency and open willingness to do well in this space and to be supported by council. The forum also included many Aboriginal people with a good mix of council staff. It also seems as though Yarra have ensured there are Aboriginal voices at the decision making table.

Thanks

We thank everyone who helped to shape this Plan by sharing their thoughts, ideas, knowledge and feedback; it is sincerely appreciated. We hope that the Plan will generate great benefits for the community in the years to come!

Appendices

Census Information: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander⁴ population in Yarra

IMPORTANT NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING CENSUS DATA: Because of the small number of people in Yarra who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the Census, findings need to be interpreted with caution, particularly when broken down further.

This increase does not necessarily represent an actual increase in numbers but potentially more people choosing to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the Census, or perhaps more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people completing the Census in 2016 than previous years. At a national level, a significant increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was seen between the 2011 and 2016 Censuses and which is explored here in a [publication](#) by the ABS.

It is worth noting too that the quantitative data regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Yarra is somewhat at odds with the qualitative data conveyed to us by those who participated in the community consultation.

Key facts

- 386 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Yarra (as per 2016 Census)
- Highest number recorded in 20 years
- 1 in 4 live in social housing
- Lower labour force participation rate than general population
- 36% earn less than \$500 per week

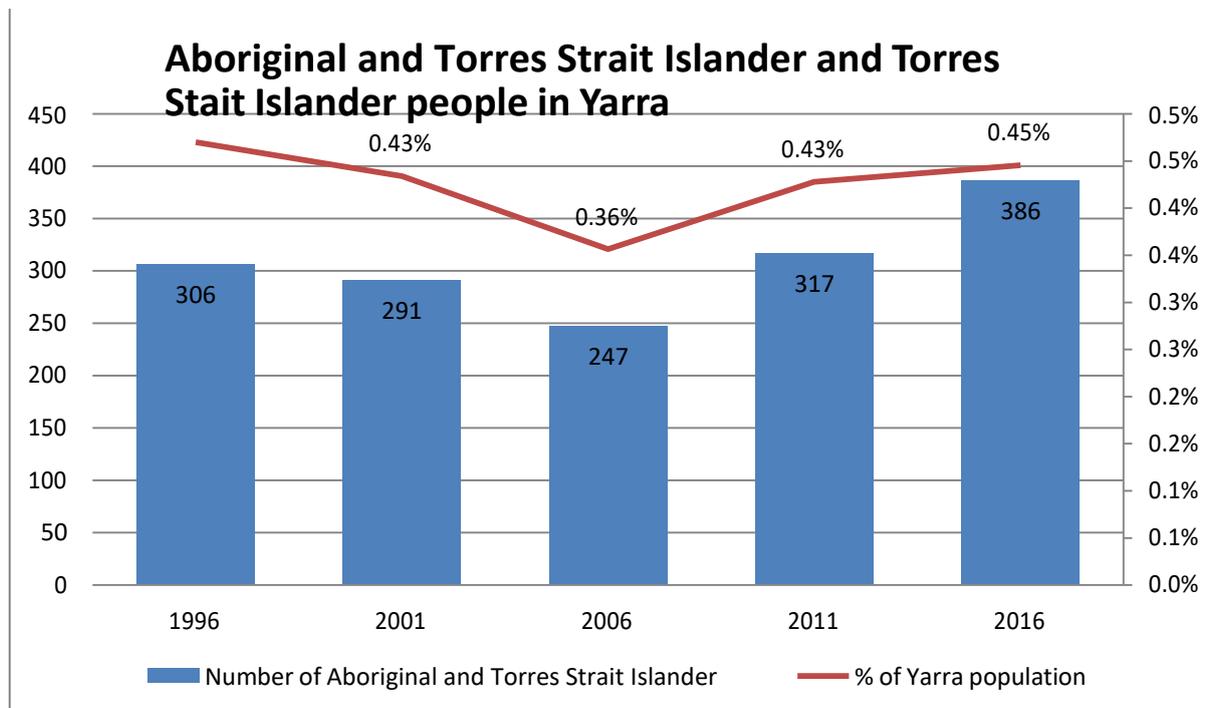
Census results

In the 2016 ABS Census 386 people in Yarra identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander⁵. This is the highest number recorded over a 20 year period⁶.

⁴ Note that we have reverted to using the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander here to be consistent with terminology used in the Census.

⁵ Because of the small number of people in Yarra who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the Census, findings need to be interpreted with caution, particularly when broken down further.

⁶ This increase does not necessarily represent an actual increase in numbers but potentially more people choosing to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the Census, or perhaps more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Torres Strait Islander people completing the Census in 2016 than previous years. At a national level a significant increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was seen between the 2011 and 2016 Censuses.



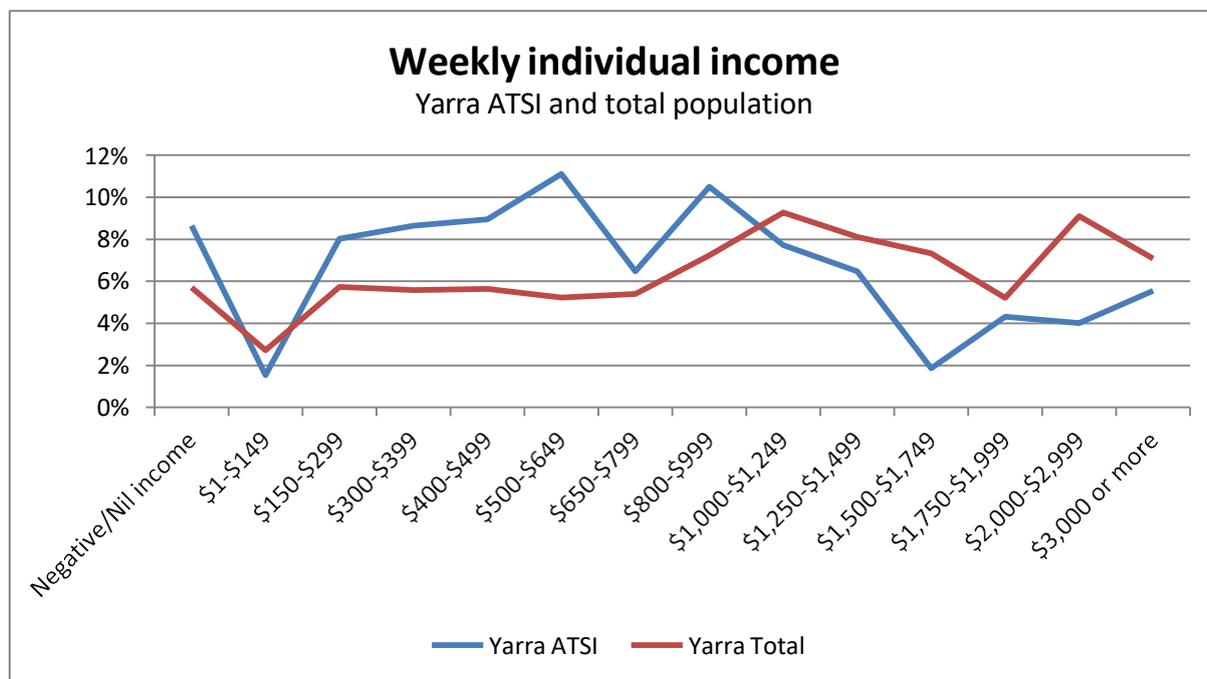
There were slightly more males than females (52% to 48% respectively) in 2016. The majority of those who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander were Aboriginal (356), with far smaller numbers identifying as either Torres Strait Islander (20) or both (10).

Based on the 2016 Census results, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander were twice as likely to have a disability as the Yarra population as a whole (7% as compared to 3.5%).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Yarra had a labour force participation rate of 64% (as compared to 70% for Yarra on average).

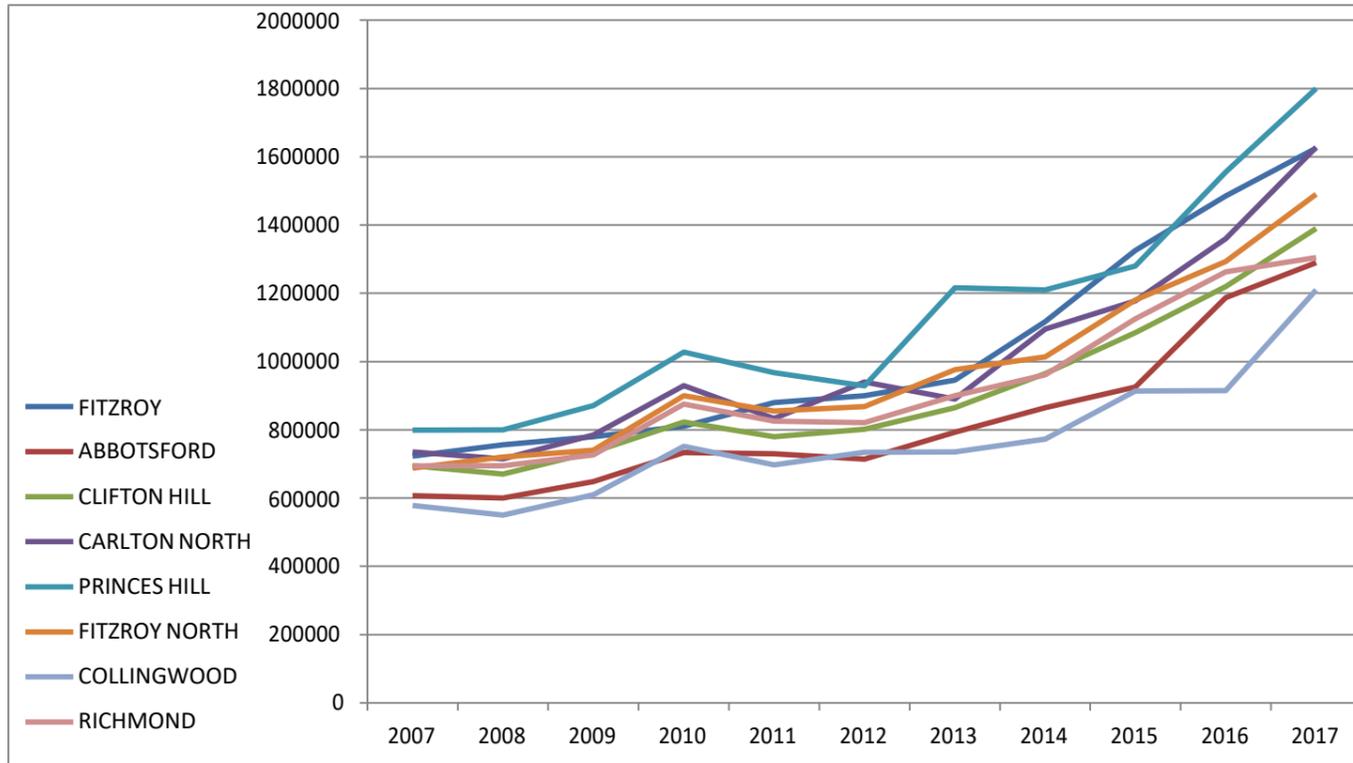
	ATSI population		Yarra Total
	n	%	%
Employed	196	94.2%	94.7%
Unemployed	12	5.8%	5.3%
Total labour force	208	100%	100%
Total labour force	208	64%	70%
Not in the labour force	105	32%	21.1%
Not stated	9	3%	9.2%
TOTAL PERSONS AGED 15+ YEARS	324	100%	100%

36% of those living in Yarra who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the latest Census earned less than \$500 dollars per week (total personal income). The comparison for Yarra broadly is 25%. The graph below shows the income bracket distribution for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Yarra as compared to the whole Yarra population.

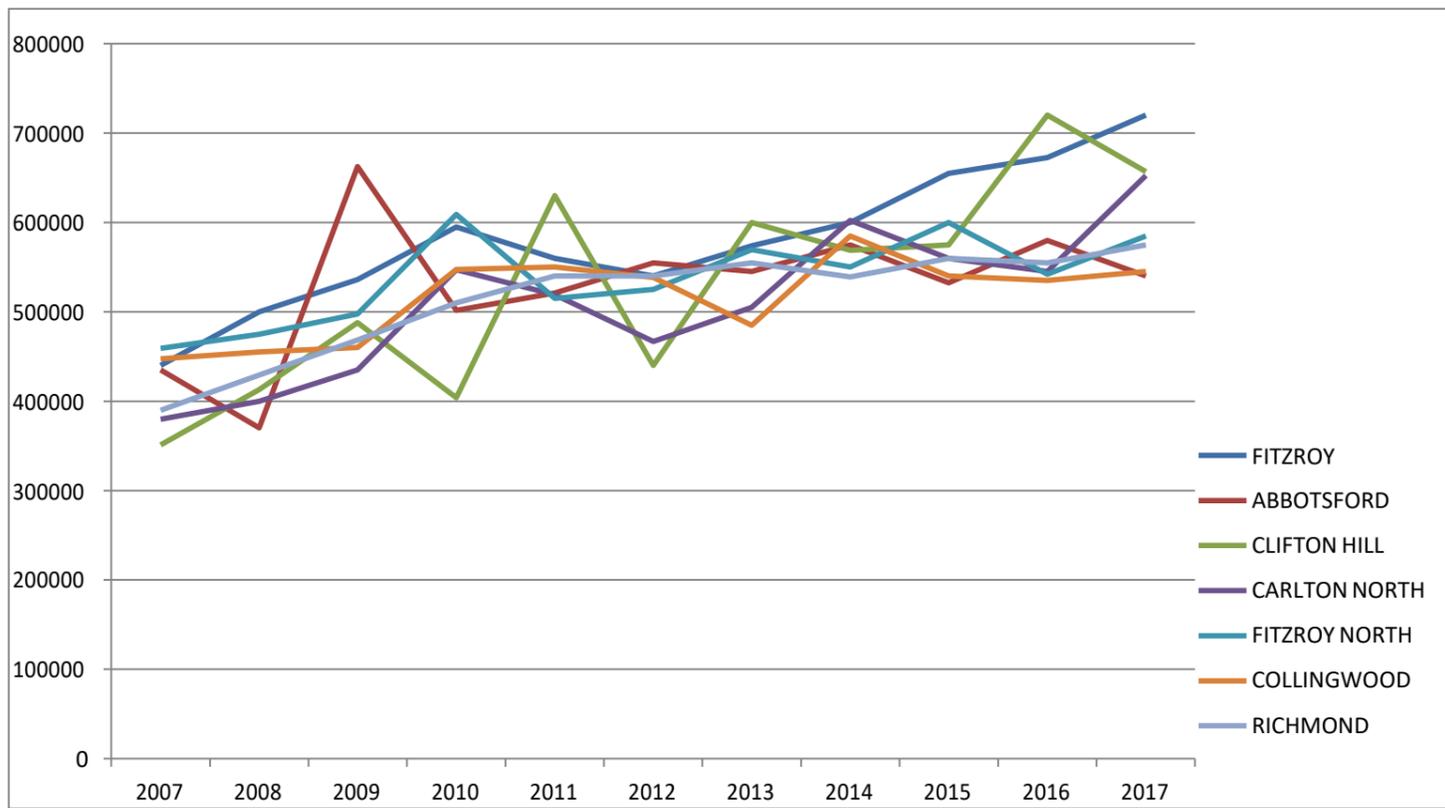


According to the latest Census, more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in social housing (24%) than own their home (23%). By contrast, across Yarra four times as many own a home (39%) as compared to living in social housing (9%).

Median House Prices in Yarra (2017)



Median Unit Prices in Yarra (2017)



Yarra Population and Household Forecasts

New population and household forecasts have been prepared for the City of Yarra, showing significant population growth for the municipality in the next 20+ years.

In Yarra, new dwellings are the major driver of population growth and overseas migration is one of the most important contributors of population change. Between 2018 and 2041, Yarra is expected to grow by over 60,500 people to a population of 157,600. The number of dwellings is forecast to increase from 46,213 in 2018 to 78,327 in 2041 (an increase of more than 32,000 dwellings).

Population growth will be largely driven by inflows of younger persons attracted to higher density housing, cultural amenities and employment. This means that the current age structure of Yarra is expected to remain, with continued high proportions of lone persons and couples without children in the 20–39 age range. It is important to note that significant numbers of children and older persons are also forecast, with greater implications for service demand and delivery in the area.