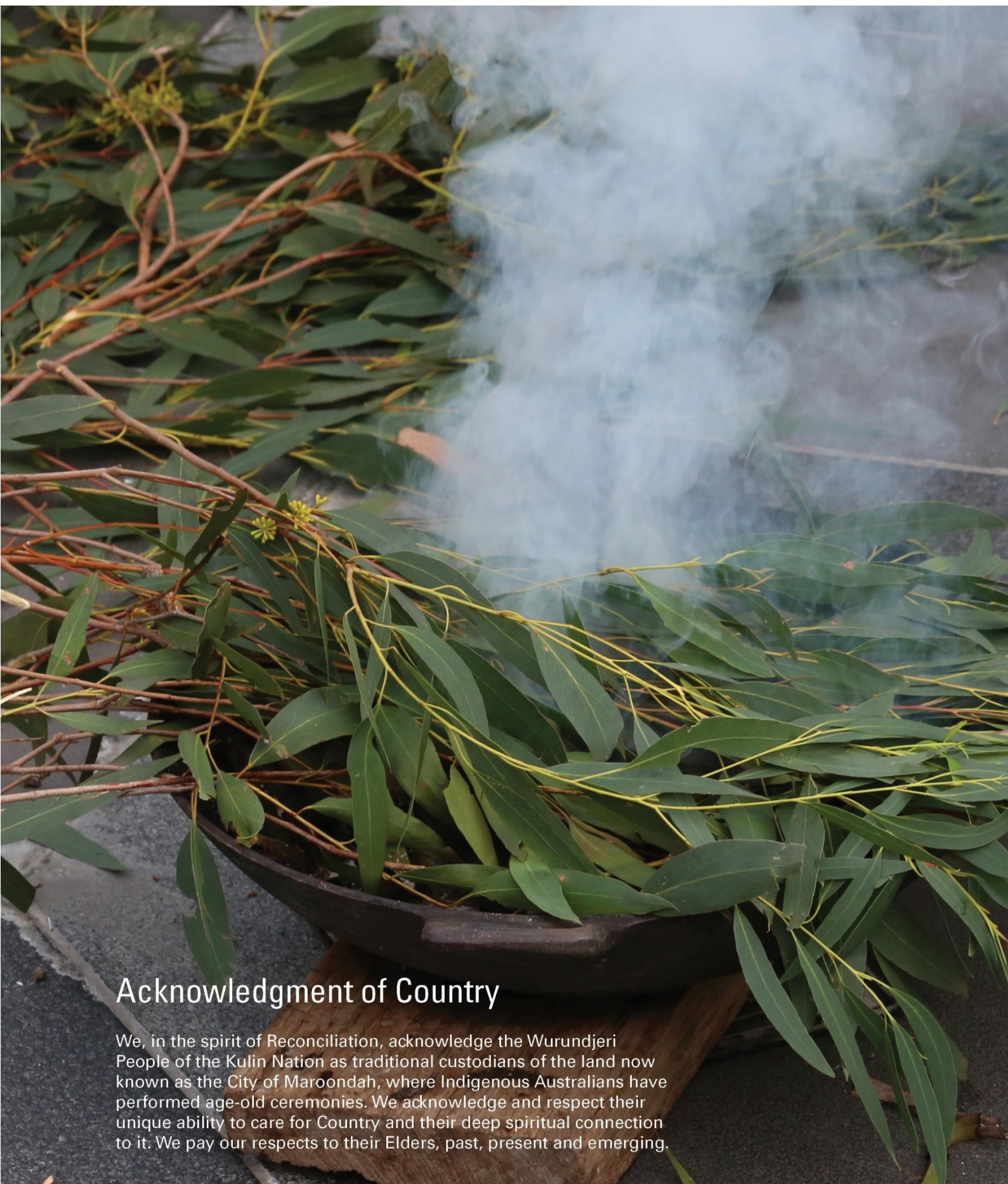




Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030

Working towards a healthy, inclusive and connected community





Acknowledgment of Country

We, in the spirit of Reconciliation, acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as traditional custodians of the land now known as the City of Maroondah, where Indigenous Australians have performed age-old ceremonies. We acknowledge and respect their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection to it. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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Cover image: Mural of Aunty Daphne Milward and Aunty Irene Norman - REALM windows 2023-2026 - artist Amanda Wright.

Acknowledgement page image: Smoking Ceremony Maroondah Reconciliation Week event, 2025.

Mayor's message



It is with great pleasure that I introduce Maroondah's *Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030*, a framework that guides our commitment to building stronger, more respectful relationships with First Peoples and fostering genuine reconciliation within our municipality.

This plan represents our collective commitment to acknowledging the truth of our shared history, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of First Peoples, and working together toward a future of mutual respect and understanding. As we move forward, we recognise that reconciliation is not merely a goal but an ongoing journey that requires dedication, education, and meaningful action from all levels of our community.

We understand that true reconciliation involves listening, learning, and working in partnership with First Peoples' communities to create lasting change. In recognition of this, I would like to thank the dedicated members of the *Maroondah Reconciliation Partnership Group* co-chaired by Wurundjeri Elders Aunties Julieanne Axford and Gail Smith, and Karen Milward AO First Peoples' Senior Advisor, for their valuable contributions and thoughtful guidance during the development of this Plan. We are grateful for your time, expertise and passion in helping us to build stronger relationships with First Peoples and move toward meaningful reconciliation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. J. Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cr Linda Hancock
Mayor

Executive summary

The Maroondah *Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030* represents Maroondah City Council's commitment to advancing reconciliation between First Peoples and the broader Australian community. Building on 16 years of established initiatives, this Plan outlines a practical, locally focused response that translates research, data, and community consultation into actionable initiatives within Council's areas of responsibility.

The Plan builds upon Maroondah's reconciliation journey, tracing evolution from the Reconciliation Policy Statement 2008 through the Reconciliation Action Plan and its ongoing initiatives. It acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the land for over 35,000 years, with their deep spiritual connection to the Birrarung (Yarra River) and surrounding waterways.

The Plan recognises reconciliation as essential for:

- Healing intergenerational trauma resulting from historical injustices
- Addressing systemic inequality in education, employment, health, justice, and housing
- Building trust through genuine partnerships based on mutual respect
- Respecting inherent rights and sovereignty of First Peoples
- Creating a shared national identity that values First Peoples' cultures as central to Australia's story.

Maroondah City Council leverages its unique position as the closest level of government to communities, enabling direct relationships with Traditional Owners and First Peoples, culturally appropriate service delivery, planning decisions that impact quality of life, and visible leadership that models genuine reconciliation practices.

The Plan incorporates extensive community consultation revealing First Peoples' priorities, which include greater respect, recognition, and inclusion through best practice Acknowledgment of Country, along with opportunities for gatherings and meaningful consultation that foster authentic engagement. The community also expressed a strong desire to celebrate their history and achievements through storytelling, public art, and recognition of leaders, while enhancing visibility through cultural events that showcase creativity and cultural expression. Additionally, there are clear calls for transparent pathways for consultation, appropriate remuneration, and recognition of unique community contributions, alongside targeted and culturally appropriate health services that address specific needs. Finally, improved access to Council facilities, grants, and events was identified as essential for full participation and inclusion within the broader community.

The Reconciliation Plan identifies key themes, outcomes, and objectives as outlined below.

Theme 1: History, Art, and Cultures

Outcome

First Peoples' histories, art, and culture are central to community identity and reconciliation.

Objectives

- Demonstrate respect through acknowledgment of cultural histories and contributions across Council practices
- Honour First Peoples' leadership and achievements through community-led narratives and tributes
- Promote First Peoples' perspectives in public knowledge systems and education policy
- Preserve cultural heritage through festivals and events fostering cross-cultural exchange
- Showcase First Peoples' creativity through exhibitions, public art, and cultural programs

Theme 2: Relationships, Collaboration, and Partnership

Outcome

Maroondah strengthens First Peoples' organisations through sustained support and collaborative partnerships.

Objectives

- Advance reconciliation through respectful engagement and practical support
- Include mechanisms promoting First Peoples' participation across Council initiatives
- Partner with and support existing First Peoples' organisations and advocate for local health services
- Strengthen partnerships with health services for culturally safe and responsive care
- Improve access to Council facilities, services, activities, and grants
- Provide ongoing support for Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place construction and operations

Theme 3: Leadership, Governance, and Economic Participation

Outcome

First Peoples' participation and perspectives in leadership, governance, and economic development are encouraged and supported.

Objectives

- Consider First Peoples' perspectives in Council decision-making through genuine inclusion
- Build Council's cultural capability through ongoing learning and training
- Increase First Peoples' economic participation through procurement, employment, and business development initiatives

Implementation

- **Governance:** Maroondah Reconciliation Partnership Group (MRPG) oversees implementation with quarterly meetings
- **Integration:** Actions appear in relevant Departments' Service Delivery Plans
- **Monitoring:** Progress monitored through annual Council Plan reporting
- **Review:** Interim review in 2027-28, full review and update in 2029-30

This Plan provides a structured, accountable approach to advancing reconciliation that respects First Peoples' self-determination while building a more just, equitable, and inclusive Maroondah for all residents.

Section 1 – Introduction

Maroondah City Council presents its *Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030* (the Plan)¹ to guide Council's ongoing commitment to reconciliation. This Plan builds on the initiatives of the *Maroondah Reconciliation Policy Statement 2008* and continued through the *Maroondah Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020*.

Reconciliation is about building understanding and respect between First Peoples' communities and the broader Australian community. It recognises the importance of acknowledging history, strengthening relationships, and working collaboratively towards a future that is fair, inclusive, and respectful of First Peoples' cultures, rights, and histories as part of Australia's shared identity.

Central to reconciliation is the recognition that First Peoples of Australia have experienced enduring injustices and inequities, resulting in significantly fewer life opportunities than those available to the general population. These matters have been examined in detail by the Yoorrook Justice Commission, Victoria's formal truth-telling process, and documented in its final report *Yoorrook: Truth Be Told*. The report draws on extensive evidence and lived experience to reveal how past policies and practices continue to influence negative outcomes for First Peoples today.

The Plan provides a practical and locally focused response by translating research, data, and community consultation into actionable initiatives. It outlines actions that Council will take within its areas of responsibility to strengthen relationships, support respectful engagement, acknowledge the inherent value of First Peoples' cultures, rights, and histories, and contribute to improved outcomes over time. The Plan reflects Council's commitment to listening, learning, and working in partnership. It recognises that local government has an important role to play in supporting reconciliation through measurable, constructive, and community-responsive actions.

The History of Maroondah²

For more than 35,000 years the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation were the Traditional Custodians of the land now known as the City of Maroondah. The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People have a deep spiritual connection to the land and waterways, and a unique ability to care for Country.

Kulin Nation refers to an alliance of five tribes (language groups) who live across a geographical area which encompasses Melbourne and its outer regions. Their collective territory extends around Port Phillip and Western Port bays, up into the Great Dividing Range and the Loddon and Goulburn River valleys. The five Kulin Nation language groups are:

- Boonwurrung (Boon-wur-rung)
- Dja Dja Wurrung (Jar-Jar-Wur-rung)
- Taungurung (Tung-ger-rung)
- Wathaurung (Wath-er-rung)
- Woi Wurrung (Woy-wur-rung), of whom the Wurundjeri were the last surviving tribe.

¹ Research and information that has informed this Plan is found in the accompanying *Reconciliation Plan Background Report June 2026*.

² The name 'Maroondah' is a First Peoples' word that means 'throwing leaves'.

These language groups were connected through shared moieties (where everything is split in half but must come together to form a whole), Bunjil (wedge-tailed eagle) and Waa (crow). Bunjil is the creator spirit and Waa the protector of the waterways.

The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People take their name from the Woi Wurrung language word 'wurun' meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus Viminalis*) which is common along 'Birrarung' (the Yarra River), and Djeri the grub, which is found in, or near the tree.

The Traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People is defined by natural and environmental features, most significantly by water. The direction of the water flow provides a clear indication of the shape of Country and reflects the cultural understanding of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People as the "people of the Birrarung" (Yarra River). The Birrarung and the waters flowing into it are the Traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People.

The name 'Maroondah' is an Aboriginal word that means 'throwing' and 'Maroon' means 'leaves'.

Section 2 - Why Reconciliation is important

Reconciliation works toward building a more just and equitable Australian society in the following ways.

Healing intergenerational trauma: Reconciliation is important for healing because it acknowledges the ongoing intergenerational trauma that has resulted from historical injustices like the Stolen Generations, massacres, systemic discrimination and land dispossession. This trauma continues to affect First Peoples today through cycles of disadvantage, mental health challenges, and family breakdown. Reconciliation works to prevent the repetition of these wrongs by creating accountability mechanisms, truth-telling processes, and formal apologies that validate the experiences of survivors, and it creates pathways for healing that respect the cultural frameworks of First Peoples.

Addressing systemic inequality: Reconciliation addresses the inequality that exists when life chances are systematically diminished by racial background. It recognises that systemic barriers - whether in education, employment, health, justice, or housing - have created disparities that First Peoples face every day. Reconciliation aims to dismantle these barriers so that First Peoples have equal access to opportunities and services. It's about ensuring that First Peoples' children have the same educational opportunities as other children, that First Peoples' families have access to adequate housing, and that First Peoples' communities have access to the resources they need to thrive.

Building trust through partnership: Reconciliation builds the foundation for trust and respect between all Australians, which is essential for creating a socially cohesive society. Reconciliation works to create genuine partnerships based on mutual respect, understanding, and shared goals. When relationships are strengthened through reconciliation, communities become more resilient, conflicts are resolved more constructively, and everyone benefits from the diverse perspectives and strengths that different cultural traditions bring.

Respecting Rights: Reconciliation addresses the "unfinished business" of early European colonisation by formally recognising and respecting the inherent rights, culture, and history of First Peoples. Reconciliation takes substantive action—whether through the State Government treaty processes, constitutional recognition, Federal land rights agreements, or the local implementation of recommendations from truth and justice commissions. It is about creating a future where First Peoples are not just acknowledged but empowered to shape their own destinies and where their rights and cultures are fully respected and protected.

Creating a shared national identity: Reconciliation helps all Australians value First Peoples' cultures as a central part of our national story. This means recognising that Australia's history is not just 200+ years of European settlement, but 60,000+ years of continuous First Peoples' culture and connection to Country. When First Peoples' cultures, knowledge systems, and perspectives are valued as integral to who we are as a nation, it creates a national identity that is more authentic, more inclusive, and more reflective of the true complexity and diversity of this continent. This shared identity helps build a sense of belonging for all Australians while honouring the unique contributions and continuing presence of First Peoples.

Reconciliation is an essential pathway toward building a just, inclusive, and resilient Australia for all generations. It requires acknowledging the painful truths of the past while actively working to heal intergenerational trauma, dismantle systemic barriers, and build relationships founded on mutual respect and genuine partnership. By valuing First Peoples' cultures as integral to our shared national identity and ensuring First Peoples have equal access to opportunities and self-determination, we help create a future where all Australians can thrive together.

The role of local government

Proximity to community

Local councils have unique advantages as the closest government level to communities. This proximity enables direct relationships with Traditional Owners and First Peoples. Face-to-face engagement allows councils to understand local contexts, respond quickly to issues, and facilitate authentic connections not just between government and First Peoples, but across the broader community. Being embedded locally creates natural spaces for cultural exchange, mutual learning, and trust built through consistent engagement.

Service delivery and planning

Local governments deliver many of the essential services and planning decisions that directly impact First Peoples' quality of life. In land use planning, councils can ensure that cultural heritage sites are protected, that development respects Country, and that First Peoples' voices are heard in decisions about local environments. In service delivery, councils influence kindergartens, aged care facilities, community health services, libraries, and recreation facilities - all areas where culturally appropriate services can demonstrably improve outcomes. By embedding First Peoples' priorities in these core functions, local governments can ensure that services are accessible, respectful, and effective for First Peoples, addressing the specific needs and cultural considerations that often get overlooked in larger service systems.

Closing the gap

Local governments are formally recognised partners in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, which aims to improve the lives of First Peoples. This Agreement acknowledges that local councils have critical roles to play in improving First Peoples' health, education, and employment outcomes. Local governments can contribute to Closing the Gap through targeted initiatives such as culturally safe health programs, support for First Peoples' education pathways, job training programs, and economic development opportunities that create sustainable employment.

Visibility and leadership

Local councils are highly visible entities in their communities, making them powerful models for what genuine reconciliation looks like. When councils move beyond symbolic gestures like occasional recognition of NAIDOC Week or Sorry Day and instead embed reconciliation in their core operations, they demonstrate commitment through concrete actions. This includes implementing cultural awareness training for all staff, developing procurement policies that support First Peoples' businesses, creating employment pathways for First Peoples' staff, and engaging the community through events that celebrate and respect First Peoples' cultures.

Reconciliation Plans

Through Reconciliation Plans, local governments can create localised, structured, and accountable approaches to advancing reconciliation. These plans provide a roadmap for increasing economic equity through targeted business support, procurement practices, and economic development for supporting self-determination by empowering First Peoples to make decisions about their own futures, and for building understanding and respect through education and cultural exchange programs.

Section 3 - The journey so far

Maroondah City Council's Reconciliation Journey

This section documents Maroondah City Council's 16-year reconciliation journey, tracing our evolution from the *Reconciliation Policy Statement 2008* through the *Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020* to our current ongoing initiatives that continue to advance this vital work.

1. Maroondah Reconciliation Policy Statement (2008)

In July 2008, Maroondah City Council endorsed the *Maroondah Reconciliation Policy Statement 2008* (the Policy Statement). This document guided the work of Council within the reconciliation space for several years under four key pillars seen below:

Four key pillars

1.1 Cultural Heritage and community education

Work in partnership to provide greater knowledge and appreciation of First Peoples' culture, traditions and history.

1.2 Economic development and employment

Consult with the First Peoples' community to develop socially responsible practices that facilitate:

- Education opportunities
- Employment opportunities
- Business development
- Integration into wider and business communities

1.3 Health and wellbeing

Collaboratively work with First Peoples to ensure optimal health, safety and wellbeing which is a holistic concept incorporating

- Respect for culture
- Connection to land
- Spiritual wellbeing
- Identity preservation
- Access to mainstream services

1.4 Governance

Underpin services with principles and practices of good governance including:

- Participative decision-making processes
- Culturally sensitive staff practice.

Significant outcomes were achieved in implementing the Policy Statement. These included:

Cultural recognition and protocols

- Acknowledgement of Traditional Landowners and Welcome to Country Protocol at Council Meetings and civic events
- Permanent flying of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at Ringwood, Croydon Civic Centres and EV's Youth Centre

Cultural education and awareness

- Implementation of Cultural Awareness Training with Council staff and Councillors
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Education Sessions covering culture, history, sustainability practices and current issues
- Culturally sensitive toys, posters and educational materials at MCH and immunisation sessions

Artistic and Heritage initiatives

- Acquisition of First Peoples' artworks for Maroondah's Art Collection
- Cultural Heritage Review of the Dandenong Creek Shared Pathway Project

Community engagement and events

- Facilitation of collaborative National Reconciliation Week events
- Collaborating with local First Peoples organisations and individuals on various initiatives, networks and events

Relationship building and partnerships

- Establishing strong relationships between Maternal and Child Health and Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place's playgroups
- Exploration of employment programs and traineeships with First Peoples' Elders

During 2014, Council undertook a research project to identify the most beneficial and advantageous model by which to review, document and progress Council's commitment to reconciliation. In 2015, Maroondah's Councillors and Corporate Management Team endorsed the recommendation to develop Maroondah's first Reconciliation Action Plan.

2. Reconciliation Action Plan (2018-2020) achievements

In 2016, the Maroondah Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (MRAP Working Group) was formed in accordance with the Reconciliation Australia model and comprised of First Peoples and other community representatives from both within and external to Maroondah City Council and chaired by Maroondah's Chief Executive Officer.

Maroondah's *Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020* was formulated around four key focus areas:

1. Relationships

To build and strengthen respectful and sustainable relationships and understanding between First Peoples and the wider Australian community and to collaboratively work towards achieving our shared reconciliation vision.

2. Respect

Maroondah acknowledges and embraces its responsibility in working collaboratively to enhance understanding, appreciation and celebration of First People's heritages and cultures. We aim to enhance organisational and community awareness of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's, cultures, land, waters and histories.

3. Opportunities

Council aims to be open to and seek out new and innovative opportunities which strive to enhance health, social, cultural, economic, education and employment outcomes for First Peoples.

4. Reporting

Council will report achievements, challenges and learning to Reconciliation Australia and Council.

The following are examples of outcomes that were achieved in the implementation of *Maroondah Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020*:

Formal consultation and partnerships

- Established a formal consultation process with First Peoples' Elders, community and First Peoples' controlled organisations, which informed practice across several disciplines in council including community services, arts and culture, community development, and land use planning
- Long term partnership continued with Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place (MMAGP) including collaboration on grants and support for wellbeing and arts initiatives.
- Establishing strong relationships between Maternal and Child Health and Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place's playgroups
- The Mullum Mullum Creek Biolink Plan stakeholder group included representatives from MMAGP

Economic participation and employment

- Actively recruited First Peoples from the Croydon community to work on the Croydon Activity Centre Carpark and sourced First Peoples' businesses to work on the project
- Exploration of employment programs and traineeships with First Peoples' Elders

Cultural recognition and heritage

- Commissioned artwork from the First Peoples community for Realm, Council Chambers and Ringwood East
- Worked closely with the First Peoples' community and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation on the Tarralla Creek Enhancement project
- Cultural Heritage Review of the Dandenong Creek Shared Pathway Project
- Permanent flying of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at Ringwood, Croydon Civic Centres and EV's Youth Centre
- First Peoples' perspectives considered for Assets Play and Gathering Strategy. Learnings implemented in open space planning

Staff development and internal networks

- Implementation of Cultural Awareness Training with Council staff and Councillors
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Education Sessions for Council Staff covering culture, history, sustainability practices and current issues
- Established an internal staff Reconciliation Network

Community events

- Facilitation of collaborative National Reconciliation Week events
- Various community events held including National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week
- Collaborating with local First Peoples organisations and individuals on various initiatives, networks and events

Health and education programs

- Culturally sensitive toys, posters and educational materials provided at Maternal & Child Health and immunisation sessions
- Maroondah Education and Care developed their own dedicated Reconciliation Action Plan with actions including connecting to Country through art and craft, purchasing appropriate educational materials, and connecting with First Peoples organisations.

3. Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030 - ongoing key themes

Maroondah City Council continues its reconciliation journey in the development of this *Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030*, which builds on the themes that run through the *Reconciliation Policy Statement 2008* and the *Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020*. They include:

- Sustained partnerships and collaboration with First Peoples' communities
- Integration of First Peoples' perspectives into council operations
- Cultural education and awareness initiatives
- Employment and economic development opportunities
- Environmental management that respects cultural values
- Arts and cultural programs that celebrate First Peoples' heritage
- Genuine consultation, respect for cultural heritage, and creating opportunities for First Peoples to thrive in the Maroondah community.

Section 4 – What does the evidence say?

Social and emotional wellbeing of First Peoples

In examining the health and socioeconomic findings of First Peoples as outlined below, it is important to understand them in the context of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework (SEWB) for First Peoples which is a culturally distinct and holistic approach to health.

This framework, established through the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023*, recognises that wellbeing encompasses much more than the absence of mental illness. Instead, it views wellbeing as a complex interconnection of social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural dimensions that are intrinsically linked to connection to land, sea, community, culture, and ancestry. The term "social and emotional wellbeing" itself is preferred by many First Peoples as it better captures the holistic nature of health in their cultural context, acknowledging that what constitutes wellbeing may vary between different cultural groups, age groups, and individuals.

Nationwide findings

The Mental Health Australian Report to the Nation (2023) provides insights into the wellbeing experiences of First Peoples in Australia. First Peoples report significantly poorer mental health outcomes compared to the general population, with an overall mental health rating of 5.4 out of 10 in 2023, substantially lower than the national average of 6.9. This places them alongside LGBTQI+ people and those with mental health conditions as experiencing the lowest mental health ratings among population groups. The impact of Australia's cost of living crisis is particularly acute for First Peoples, with 63% reporting that rising costs are having a big impact on their mental health and 75% reporting significant housing cost impacts - both significantly higher than national averages of 59% and 45% respectively. Despite these challenges, First Peoples demonstrate resilience in their community connections, with 46% feeling part of a community and 58% feeling capable and in control, showing similar levels of self-efficacy to the broader population.

While First Peoples face significant barriers to accessing mental health support, with cost being a barrier for 21%, they do engage with various support systems, primarily relying on colleagues, friends and family (39%), followed by seeing a GP (30%), and accessing professional psychological services (8%). The survey reveals that First Peoples experience disproportionate challenges compared to other Australians, particularly around economic pressures.

Profile of First Peoples in Maroondah

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census of Population and Housing reveals a dynamic and evolving First Peoples' community within the City of Maroondah. Drawing from comprehensive census data (ABS 2022) this portrait captures the demographic, social, and economic characteristics that define Maroondah's First Peoples' community today.

A significant feature of Maroondah's First Peoples' community is its growth. The number of people identifying as First Peoples has increased to 734 individuals, representing a substantial 78% growth between 2011 and 2021.

Demographically, Maroondah's First Peoples' community stands out for its youth. With a median age of just 26 years, the First Peoples' population is significantly younger than the non-First Peoples' median age of 39 years. This is particularly evident in the 5-14 and 15-24 age groups. Conversely, the proportion of First Peoples aged 45 and over is notably lower, especially in the 65 years and above category.

Educational pathways reveal some concerning trends. First Peoples in Maroondah are more likely to have left school before year 11 (35%) compared to the general population (21%). This disparity highlights ongoing challenges in educational engagement and completion that may require targeted support and culturally appropriate approaches to learning.

Despite these educational challenges, the community demonstrates some economic resilience. The median household income for First Peoples households (\$1,825) is comparable to that of non-First Peoples households (\$1,867). However, while household economies function similarly, there are differences at the individual level. First Peoples report a lower median personal income of \$665 compared to \$852 for non-First Peoples. This may indicate potential disparities in individual earning capacity that may reflect broader employment patterns and challenges such as the unemployment rate for First Peoples in Maroondah (6.9%) compared with the wider Maroondah community (4.0%).

The health profile of Maroondah's First Peoples' community reveals both challenges and strengths. First Peoples are more likely to experience profound or severe core activity limitations requiring daily assistance, with 7.3% reporting such disabilities compared to the Maroondah average of 6%. However, the community shows lower rates of certain chronic conditions like arthritis, cancer, and dementia compared to the general population. Concerningly, fewer First Peoples report having "no long-term health condition" (39% compared to 54% of non-First Peoples), showing higher rates of diabetes, asthma, heart disease, kidney disease, lung conditions, and significantly higher mental health conditions including depression and anxiety (20.1% compared to 10.4% of non-First Peoples). These patterns suggest complex health dynamics that require nuanced understanding and culturally responsive healthcare approaches.

First Peoples' households are more likely to be renting (49%) compared to the general population (24%), while being less likely to own a home with a mortgage (31% compared to 40%) or own a home outright (19% compared to 33%). Despite these differences in ownership patterns, First Peoples are more likely to live in separate houses (90% compared to 87% for non-First Peoples), indicating a strong preference for standalone housing that aligns with cultural values around family and community living.

Family structures among First Peoples in Maroondah reveal both traditional patterns and some divergences. The most common family type is couples with children (42%), followed by couples without children (28%), with one-parent families representing 26% of the total. However, when compared to non-First Peoples families, First Peoples are significantly more likely to be single-parent households (27% compared to 15%), suggesting different family dynamics and support systems that may reflect cultural, social, or economic factors.

This portrait of Maroondah's First Peoples community reveals a population that is growing, young, and resilient, while facing significant educational, health, economic, and social challenges. The data reflects both the strength of cultural identity and the ongoing impacts of systemic inequities, presenting a complex picture that requires thoughtful, culturally informed approaches to policy, service delivery, and community development.

Evidence for the three themes in the Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030

This Plan has identified three major themes to guide Council's work in the reconciliation space:

1. History, Art, and Culture
2. Relationships, Collaboration, and Partnerships
3. Leadership, Governance, and Economic Participation

In the following section we present the evidence supporting each theme in this Plan. Community consultation and engagement with First Peoples and other relevant stakeholders in Maroondah reinforced the importance of these themes as is outlined in Section 5 of this Plan (pp 16-18).

Theme 1: History, Art, and Culture

Historical truth-telling

A commitment to historical truth-telling is essential for genuine reconciliation. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) affirms that truth-telling is a cornerstone of reconciliation processes. Research demonstrates strong support for truth-telling initiatives. The 2022 Australian Reconciliation Barometer shows that 87% of First Nations respondents and 83% of the general community support formal truth-telling processes (Reconciliation Australia 2022; ANTAR 2023).

Truth-telling is particularly valued by younger generations. Research indicates that 14% of 18-24-year-old non-First Peoples people and 21% of 25-34-year-olds have participated in local truth-telling activities in the past year (Reconciliation Australia 2024). This high level of community recognition underscores the importance of acknowledging historical injustices as a foundation for reconciliation.

Community truth-telling processes are emerging across Australia, with local initiatives helping to create new relationships between First Peoples and non-First Peoples' communities (Payne and Norman 2024). These processes are seen as critical for building mutual understanding.

Art and Cultural participation

Art and cultural participation are powerful tools for healing and community development. Cultural connection is crucial for wellbeing, supporting mental health and community resilience (Payne and Norman 2024). First Peoples' cultural industries contribute significantly to the Australian economy through cultural tourism, heritage management, and artistic expressions that create employment opportunities for First Peoples' communities (Reconciliation Australia 2022).

Communities with strong cultural practices demonstrate better social outcomes. Cultural participation supports employment outcomes and community cohesion, contributing to more inclusive societies (Universities Australia 2022). Cultural connection is particularly important for youth wellbeing. Maintaining cultural connections supports positive mental health outcomes and identity development for First Peoples' young people (Reconciliation Australia 2022).

Cultural recognition

Recognising and valuing First Peoples' cultures enhances social cohesion and community wellbeing. The Uluru Statement from the Heart emphasizes the importance of recognition as part of the reconciliation journey (Uluru Statement Council 2017). Schools that incorporate First Peoples' history and culture show improved educational outcomes. Culturally inclusive education supports better engagement and outcomes for First Peoples' students, while also promoting cross-cultural understanding among all students (Universities Australia 2022). Cross-cultural education initiatives have been shown to reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations, contributing to more inclusive communities (Reconciliation Australia 2022).

Economic and social benefits

Investing in First Peoples' cultural programs yields social and economic benefits. Cultural initiatives support employment, business development, and community wellbeing (Reconciliation Australia 2022). Cultural heritage preservation contributes to social cohesion and community identity. The social value of cultural heritage is well-documented in reconciliation research (Payne and Norman 2024).

The importance of action

Failing to invest in history, art, and culture has negative impacts for communities. Historical ignorance perpetuates systemic injustice, and cultural disconnection contributes to social challenges (Payne and Norman 2024). Without acknowledging past wrongs and supporting cultural continuity, meaningful reconciliation cannot occur. Truth-telling, cultural recognition, and economic participation are all essential components of the reconciliation process (United Nations 2007; Uluru Statement Council 2017; Reconciliation Australia 2022).

Theme 2: Relationships, collaboration, and partnerships

A focus on relationship-building is fundamental to successful reconciliation. Reconciliation is about healing broken relationships between peoples. Without addressing the relational aspects of injustice, structural changes alone fail to achieve lasting peace. Relationship-focused approaches create the social trust necessary for meaningful change (Reconciliation Australia 2021).

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer consistently shows that relationship quality is a key indicator of reconciliation progress. Trust between First Peoples and non-First Peoples' Australians is significantly higher in communities where relationship-building is prioritized (Reconciliation Australia 2022).

Collaborative approaches

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer indicates that collaborative processes show higher community engagement rates than top-down approaches (Reconciliation Australia 2022).

Research-practice partnerships are more effective at addressing systemic inequities when they include both community and institutional perspectives (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2023). The AIHW emphasizes the importance of "meaningful relationships and partnerships with First Nations people, communities, organisations and businesses to ensure that their insights and perspectives can shape our products and services" (AIHW 2023).

Communities with collaborative reconciliation processes experience more effective healing from historical trauma when community voices are centred in decision-making (Reconciliation Australia 2021). Collaborative approaches also leverage existing community resources more effectively than top-down institutional approaches (CSIRO 2023).

Partnerships

Partnerships that include both research and community perspectives lead to improved diversity of viewpoints and more comprehensive solutions (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2023). The AIHW notes that "actively developing and cultivating meaningful relationships and partnerships with First Nations people, communities, organisations and businesses" is crucial for effective reconciliation work (AIHW 2023). Partnerships addressing persistent challenges through collaborative work show measurable improvements in addressing systemic inequities when solutions are culturally appropriate and community-validated (CSIRO 2023).

Partnerships combine different types of knowledge and expertise, create shared ownership of the reconciliation process, and ensure solutions are culturally appropriate and community-validated (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2023; CSIRO 2023).

The economic case for collaborative reconciliation

Collaborative reconciliation delivers strong economic returns. Partnerships reduce program costs by leveraging existing community resources more effectively (CSIRO 2023). The Treasury's Reconciliation Action Plan emphasizes the economic benefits of "enabling social and financial participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses" (Treasury 2024).

The cost of non-collaborative approaches

Non-collaborative, top-down initiatives have significantly higher failure rates than partnership-based approaches. Programs that ignore relationship dynamics show lower long-term engagement and higher rates of program abandonment (Reconciliation Australia 2022). The Australian Bureau of Statistics emphasizes that culturally inclusive approaches are essential for achieving meaningful outcomes (ABS 2023).

Specific benefits for First Peoples

First Peoples communities report higher satisfaction with reconciliation processes involving genuine partnership. The Australian Reconciliation Barometer consistently shows that First Peoples prefer collaborative approaches that respect their cultural protocols and decision-making authority (Reconciliation Australia 2022). Collaborative approaches show better outcomes in addressing intergenerational trauma when community-led solutions are implemented (Reconciliation Australia 2021).

Methodological advantages of partnership approaches

Collaborative reconciliation processes allow for more comprehensive documentation of needs and outcomes, enable better sense-making and interpretation of results, and ensure diverse perspectives are included (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2023). The ABS notes that "creating a culturally inclusive and safe organisation whose services and products elevate and reflect the voices, lived experiences, and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" is essential for effective reconciliation (ABS 2023).

Theme 3: Leadership, governance, and economic participation

Leadership and governance

Effective reconciliation requires both strong leadership and good governance working in tandem. Participatory governance approaches that include diverse leadership perspectives demonstrate better outcomes. Leadership that incorporates traditional knowledge systems shows higher community acceptance rates when cultural protocols are respected (Reconciliation Australia 2021; 2022).

Economic participation

Economic reconciliation is crucial for building resilient economies and creating opportunities for all. Research shows that focusing on economic reconciliation and inclusion of First Peoples leads to better project outcomes when community partnerships are established (Reconciliation Australia 2021; 2022).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that demographic shifts mean workforce participation must increase to maintain living standards (ABS 2023). First Peoples' communities with strong economic participation show improved economic outcomes when local governance structures are respected (ABS 2023).

The economic case for inclusive participation

Research indicates that inclusive economic participation contributes to overall economic growth and stability. Addressing First Peoples economic participation could significantly contribute to solving workforce challenges (ABS 2023). Economic equality is fundamental to genuine reconciliation. Economic participation builds self-sufficiency, reduces dependency, and creates shared prosperity while reducing social tensions (Reconciliation Australia 2021).

Leadership development and capacity building

Leadership development programs show improvement in reconciliation outcomes when cultural knowledge is integrated (Reconciliation Australia 2022). Capacity building in governance structures demonstrates better long-term sustainability when community-led approaches are implemented (Reconciliation Australia 2021).

International best practice

Countries that integrate First Peoples leadership into governance structures show better reconciliation outcomes when traditional knowledge systems are respected (Reconciliation Australia 2022). Economic participation models that balance traditional knowledge with modern systems demonstrate higher success rates when community partnerships are established (Reconciliation Australia 2021).

Section 5 – What we did and what you told us

Comprehensive community engagement was undertaken to develop the Plan over a two-year period from February 2024 to June 2025.

Karen Milward OAM was engaged as First Peoples' Senior Advisor to Council during this period. Karen has extensive experience as a First Peoples' consultant to all levels of government and many First Peoples' organisations across Australia.

Community engagement comprised of the following:

One-hour online meetings with leaders from the following organisations:

- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders Aunty Gail Smith and Aunty Julianne Axford
- Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place (CEO)
- Oonah Belonging Place (CEO)
- Eastern Community Legal Centre (CEO)
- Aboriginal Housing Victoria (Local Government Senior Project Manager)
- Dhelk Dja (Eastern Metropolitan Region Coordinator)
- Koorie Education Unit, Outer East, Department of Education and Training (Coordinator)
- EACH Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Service - Ngarrang Gulinj-al Boordup Team
- Swinburne University (Associate Professor, Indigenous Studies)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Community Partnerships, Outer East (Senior Advisor)
- Uniting Homelessness Services, Ringwood (Senior Manager)

Engagement with First Peoples community members:

- Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place – two evening online yarning circles (6 participants)
- Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Melbourne - Men's Group (5 participants)
- Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place Trivia Night – table discussions (100 attendees)
- Short online survey (13 responses).

Group discussions with the following Maroondah City Council committees and forums:

- Reconciliation Partnership Group
- Staff Reconciliation Network
- Leadership Forum
- Community Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Disability Advisory Committee
- Access, Inclusion and Equity Advisory Committee
- Arts Advisory Committee
- Environment Advisory Committee
- Business Advisory Committee
- Liveability, Safety and Amenity Advisory Committee
- Youth Wellbeing Advocates

Community engagement results: feedback on reconciliation

Through community engagement with First Peoples community, organisations, and other relevant stakeholders, Maroondah Council has heard a clear call for **greater respect, recognition, and inclusion**. First Peoples want best practice in the Acknowledgment of Country, visible recognition in Council communications, and **meaningful opportunities for gatherings and consultation**. The community values their **participation in Council work and wants clear pathways for consultation** and appropriate recognition of the unique value they bring to Maroondah.

There is strong interest in celebrating **First Peoples' history and achievements through storytelling, public art such as statues and murals, and regular recognition of leaders and traditional custodians**. The community values expanded cultural learning opportunities including library collections, Elders' Storytime, on-Country tours, and educational programs in schools. Support for First Peoples' festivals, markets, and cultural events is important, as is showcasing creativity through **exhibitions, public art, youth artwork, and artist residencies**. Overall, First Peoples want their culture and contributions to be acknowledged, celebrated, and woven into community life.

First Peoples have emphasized the importance of **education and youth engagement**, wanting their stories, languages, and cultures shared in schools. They seek programs that welcome and support their children, better teacher training on reconciliation, and more inclusive youth programs for First Peoples' young people.

Health and wellbeing are key concerns, with First Peoples asking for more targeted and culturally appropriate health services in Maroondah. They want Council to support First Peoples' organisations, address service gaps, and provide practical resources like office space and mobile clinic parking. There is also a need for mainstream services to be more culturally safe, accessible, and responsive.

Access to Council facilities, grants, and events is another priority. First Peoples have asked for barriers to participation to be identified and removed, for Council spaces to be welcoming and culturally safe, and for support in accessing community grants. They also want Council to help promote and sponsor key community events and to provide ongoing support for important organisations like the Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place.

The community has expressed a strong desire for the establishment of a dedicated First Peoples' liaison position and Advisory Committee within Council, with active involvement from Councillors. This is seen as essential to ensuring **meaningful voice in decision-making processes**. Oversight of the Reconciliation Plan by a dedicated group is also important to make sure Council policies genuinely reflect a reconciliation perspective and support the aspirations of First Peoples.

There is a clear call for **genuine inclusion of First Peoples in all aspects of Council's work**, including participation in committees, working groups, and evaluation processes, with an emphasis on culturally sensitive and participative governance. The community values **strategic partnerships** such as formal agreements with organisations like Aboriginal Housing Victoria to help reduce bureaucracy, enhance community inclusion, and increase affordable housing options.

Building cultural capability within Council is a priority. The community supports senior management leading the creation of a Cultural Capability Plan, which would include a Cultural Safety Framework, targeted cultural awareness and anti-racism training, and leadership development for both First Peoples and Council leaders. **Economic participation** is important, with suggestions to improve access to Council employment, set procurement targets for First Peoples' businesses, and support First Peoples artists and entrepreneurs through initiatives like BizHub and regional procurement strategies.

The community wants to see First Peoples' culture visibly represented and celebrated in public spaces through **placemaking, signage, and open space planning** that incorporates First Peoples' perspectives.

Finally, there is strong support for initiatives that **build capacity, such as mentorships, mutual secondments, and the development of regional strategies and Treaty frameworks** to support First Peoples' businesses and employment.

Section 6 - Strategic context

The *Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030* has been developed in the context of Maroondah's Integrated Planning Framework and responds directly to the following Council strategic documents³.

Maroondah 2050	
Vision	Maroondah is a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community, striving for a green, prosperous, and sustainable future for all
Goal	A healthy, inclusive, and connected community
Community aspiration	Everyone in Maroondah feels valued, welcome and respected, and has opportunities to thrive regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances. Community members experiencing vulnerability, marginalisation, or disadvantage have access to the support they need. Opportunities for social connection and to enhance health and wellbeing are encouraged
Key direction	Partnering with the traditional custodians of Maroondah to acknowledge, celebrate and engage with Maroondah's First Peoples' heritage, culture and communities
Council Plan 2025-2029	
Key direction 1.9	Partner with the First Peoples of Maroondah, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation, to acknowledge, celebrate and engage with their heritage, culture, and communities
Key direction 1.10	Partner to advocate for the needs of, and greater opportunities for, Maroondah's First Peoples.
Priority action	Develop and implement Council's Reconciliation Plan
Liveability, Wellbeing, and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Update 2025)	
Key Focus Area	Embracing Diversity
Strategic Priority	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (First Peoples)
Objective	Work collaboratively to celebrate, promote, recognise, and integrate the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (First Peoples) to facilitate equity, respect, understanding and reconciliation

³ For Federal and State Strategic Contexts please see *The Reconciliation Plan Background Paper June 2026*

Section 7 - Strategic Framework

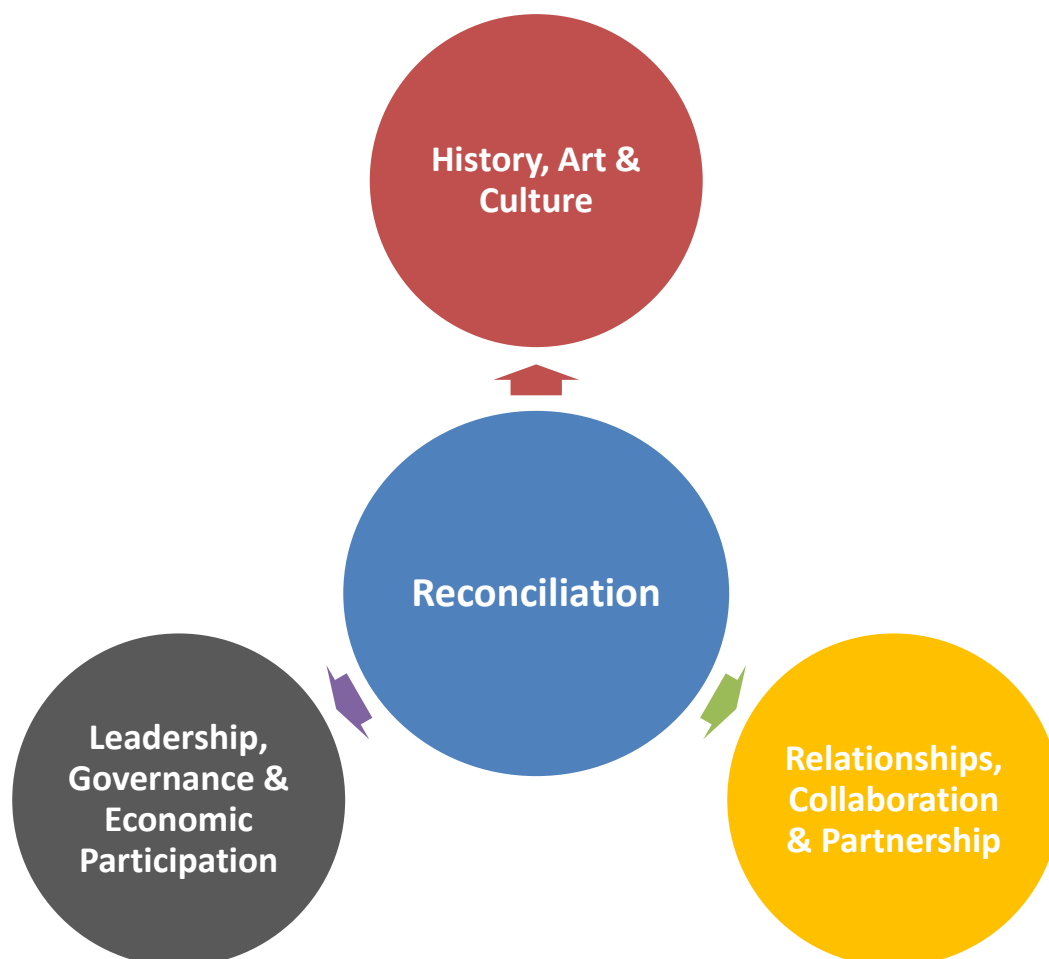
A vision for the Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030

Maroondah City Council is committed to working collaboratively on a journey of meaningful and sustainable reconciliation between First Peoples and non-First Peoples Australians.

Our vision for Maroondah is to be a municipality that:

- Respects and celebrates traditional and contemporary First Peoples cultures, knowledge, and customary practices, honouring the deep connection to land, kinship, and Country.
- Strengthens and promotes collaboration and partnerships with First Peoples' community and organisations built on open communication and respect.
- Strives to enhance First Peoples' participation in leadership and governance processes.

The Reconciliation Plan is structured under three themes as seen in the diagram below:



Theme 1 - History, Art, and Culture

Outcome

First Peoples' histories, cultures and creativity are acknowledged, respected, and promoted.

What the evidence tells us

History, art, and culture are essential to meaningful reconciliation. Australians widely support acknowledging past injustices because it helps with healing and understanding. Cultural participation creates economic opportunities and strengthens communities by bringing people together. When First Peoples' histories, arts, and cultural practices are included in education and public life, we see real benefits: students do better in school, prejudice decreases, and people understand different cultures better. Other countries have shown that cultural recognition helps build more inclusive societies. Communities that focus on cultural connection and truth-telling have better social outcomes, stronger economies, and more resilient societies. For Australia's reconciliation journey to succeed, we need to keep valuing First Peoples' cultures, acknowledging their histories, and building a society where everyone can share in the benefits of true reconciliation.

What the community has told us

From engagement with First Peoples, Maroondah Council has heard a clear call for greater respect, recognition, and inclusion. First Peoples want best practice in the Acknowledgment of Country, visible recognition in Council communications, and opportunities for gatherings and meaningful consultation. There is strong interest in celebrating First Peoples' history and achievements through storytelling, public art (such as statues and murals), and regular recognition of leaders and traditional custodians. First Peoples also value more opportunities for cultural learning—such as expanded library collections, Elders' Storytime, on-Country tours, and educational programs in schools. Greater support for First Peoples' festivals, markets, and cultural events is important, as is showcasing creativity through exhibitions, public art, youth artwork, and artist residencies. Overall, First Peoples want their culture and contributions to be acknowledged, celebrated, and woven into community life.

Objectives

- 1.1 Demonstrate respect for and recognition of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Maroondah's First Peoples by acknowledging their cultural histories and contributions across Council's practices.
- 1.2 Honour and promote First Peoples' leadership and achievements through community-led narratives and knowledge-sharing, and culturally significant tributes.
- 1.3 Promote First Peoples' perspectives across public knowledge systems, strengthen community-led storytelling, and advocate for the inclusion of First Peoples' culture, history and contributions in education policy and curriculum
- 1.4 Preserve and celebrate First Peoples' cultural heritage by delivering festivals and cultural events that foster broad community participation and cross-cultural exchange.
- 1.5 Foster and showcase First Peoples' creativity through curated exhibitions, public art installations and cultural programs that enhance visibility and recognition

Theme 2 - Relationships, collaboration and partnership

Outcome

Maroondah strengthens First Peoples' organisations through sustained support and collaborative partnerships.

What the evidence tells us

The evidence demonstrates that relationships, collaboration, and partnerships are fundamental for achieving meaningful and sustainable reconciliation. Collaborative approaches deliver better results, higher community engagement, greater sustainability, and stronger economic returns. Partnerships help heal communities by bringing together different ways of knowing, sharing responsibility, and making sure solutions work for everyone involved.

The statistical evidence from Australian Reconciliation Barometer surveys and organisational reports demonstrates that investment in collaborative reconciliation delivers substantial returns: better healing outcomes, stronger communities, more sustainable change, and greater social cohesion.

What the community has told us

First Peoples have expressed a strong desire for greater recognition and inclusion within the community, especially through education and youth engagement. They have highlighted the importance of sharing First Peoples' stories, languages, and cultures in schools, and want more programs that welcome and support their children. There is a call for teachers to be better equipped to discuss reconciliation, and for youth programs to be more inclusive of First Peoples' young people.

First Peoples have also told Council that their participation in Council work should be valued and supported. They want clear pathways for consultation, appropriate remuneration for their contributions, and recognition of the unique value they bring to the community.

Health and wellbeing are key concerns, with First Peoples asking for more targeted and culturally appropriate health services in Maroondah. They want Council to support First Peoples' organisations, address service gaps, and provide practical resources like office space and mobile clinic parking. There is also a need for mainstream services to be more culturally safe, accessible, and responsive to the experiences of First Peoples.

Access to Council facilities, grants, and events is another priority. First Peoples have asked for barriers to participation to be identified and removed, for Council spaces to be welcoming and culturally safe, and for support in accessing community grants. They also want Council to help promote and sponsor key community events and to provide ongoing support for important organisations like the Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place.

Overall, First Peoples are seeking genuine partnership, ongoing support, and meaningful opportunities to shape the services and community spaces that affect their lives.

Objectives

- 2.1 Advance reconciliation within Council and in the community through respectful engagement with First Peoples, recognising and promoting their histories and cultures, and delivering sustained, practical support.
- 2.2 Include mechanisms to promote and support First Peoples' participation and engagement across Council's initiatives.
- 2.3 Partner with and support existing First Peoples' organisations and advocate for the establishment of targeted locally based First Peoples' health services.
- 2.4 Strengthen partnerships with Council's health and wellbeing services to deliver culturally safe and responsive services to First Peoples.
- 2.5 Foster inclusion by improving First Peoples' access to Council facilities, services, activities and grants, and by actively encouraging participation to strengthen social connection and community engagement.
- 2.6 Provide ongoing support for the construction and operations of the Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place through advocacy and partnerships.

Theme 3 - Leadership, governance, and economic participation

Outcome

First Peoples' participation and perspectives in leadership, governance, and economic development is encouraged and supported.

What the evidence tells us

Good leadership, governance, and economic participation are key to making reconciliation work. Strong leadership drives better outcomes, good governance provides sustainable frameworks, and economic participation creates genuine equality and shared prosperity. The research from Australian Reconciliation Barometer surveys and organisational reports reveals that inclusive approaches deliver substantial returns: better community engagement, improved project outcomes, and more sustainable change.

Research consistently shows that reconciliation efforts excluding First Peoples' voices from leadership, governance, and economic decision-making fail to achieve meaningful or sustainable outcomes. In contrast, approaches that include and empower First Peoples' participation demonstrate significantly better results across all measured indicators.

What the community has told us

The First Peoples community has expressed a strong desire for the establishment of a dedicated First Peoples' position and Advisory Committee within Council, with active involvement from Councillors. This is seen as essential to ensuring that First Peoples have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes. Oversight of the Reconciliation Plan by a dedicated group is also important, to make sure Council policies and plans genuinely reflect a reconciliation perspective and support the aspirations of First Peoples.

There is a clear call for genuine inclusion of First Peoples in all aspects of Council's work. This includes participation in committees, working groups, and evaluation processes, with an emphasis on culturally sensitive and participative governance. The community also values the development of strategic partnerships, such as formal agreements with organisations like Aboriginal Housing Victoria, to help reduce bureaucracy, enhance community inclusion, and increase affordable housing options for First Peoples.

Building cultural capability within Council is a priority. The community supports senior management leading the creation of a Cultural Capability Plan, which would include a Cultural Safety Framework, targeted cultural awareness and anti-racism training, and leadership development for both First Peoples and Council leaders. Economic participation is also important, with suggestions to improve access to Council employment, set procurement targets for First Peoples' businesses, and support Indigenous artists and entrepreneurs through initiatives like BizHub and regional procurement strategies.

Finally, the community wants to see First Peoples' culture visibly represented and celebrated in public spaces, through placemaking, signage, and open space planning. There is also strong support for initiatives that build capacity, such as mentorships, mutual secondments, and the development of regional strategies and treaty frameworks to support Indigenous businesses and employment.

Overall, the community's feedback highlights the need to embed First Peoples' leadership and voices across all areas of Council activity, fostering cultural capability, economic participation, and meaningful partnerships.

Objectives

- 3.1 Consider First Peoples' perspectives in Council decision-making by promoting genuine inclusion in Council processes and committees through culturally sensitive practices.
- 3.2 Build Council's cultural capability by delivering ongoing learning, development and training to enable respectful, effective engagement with First Peoples.
- 3.3 Increase First Peoples' economic participation through Council procurement, employment pathways, and business development initiatives.

Tracking our progress

The **Maroondah Reconciliation Partnership Group (MRPG)** will oversee the implementation of the *Reconciliation Plan 2026-2030*. The MRPG meets quarterly and consists of Senior Council Officers, Wurundjeri Elders, and representatives from key First Peoples' organisations, and State Government Department agencies.

The Plan will be supported by actions responding to each objective in the three themes above that will appear in relevant Departments' Service Delivery Plans. Progress on these actions will be monitored and reported on through the annual Council Plan reporting process.

In the 2027-28 financial year, we will conduct an interim review of the Plan to evaluate progress on the objectives and actions, before a full review and update in 2029-30.

Key terms

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO)

Independent, not-for-profit organisations run and managed by local First Peoples in their own communities. These organisations make decisions about their own services and programs based on what their communities need.

Closing the Gap

A national effort to improve the lives of First Peoples by addressing the gaps between their health, education, employment, and living conditions compared to other Australians.

Country

For First Peoples, Country is more than just land. It includes everything - the soil, water, plants, animals, and air - and their connection to it is spiritual, cultural, and physical. It's their home, identity, and responsibility.

Cultural Safety

When services and environments are safe and respectful for First Peoples. This means understanding their culture, history, and experiences, and not doing anything that might cause harm or disrespect.

First Peoples

The preferred term to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. This term acknowledges that they were the first people to live on this land before European settlement.

Intergenerational Trauma

When the hurt and pain caused by past injustices (like being taken from families, losing land, and discrimination) continues to affect current and future generations of people.

NAIDOC Week

A week in July that celebrates First Peoples' cultures, achievements, and contributions to Australia. It's a time for everyone to learn about and respect First Peoples' history and culture.

Native Title

The recognition that First Peoples have rights to their traditional lands and waters, based on their continuous connection to Country since before European settlement.

Reconciliation

The process of improving relationships between First Peoples and non-First Peoples Australians. It involves acknowledging past wrongs, understanding each other's perspectives, and working together to build a fairer and more respectful future for everyone.

Self-determination

The right of First Peoples to make their own decisions about their lives, communities, and futures. It means having control over things that affect them rather than having decisions made by others who don't fully understand their culture and needs.

Treaty

An agreement between governments and First Peoples that recognises their rights, addresses past injustices, and outlines how they will work together in the future. It's about creating a fair and respectful relationship.

Truth-telling

The process of honestly discussing and documenting the true history of what happened to First Peoples, including the painful parts that have often been ignored or hidden. This helps with healing and understanding the present.

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung

The specific First Peoples who are the Traditional Custodians of the land that is now Maroondah. They have lived here for over 35,000 years.

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