Aboriginal Self-Determination Strategy

Results of community consultation

December 2023 – April 2024

Banyule City Council

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1. Project Overview

On 17 April 2023, Council, endorsed the Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory (RAP) Committee recommendation to develop a localised Aboriginal Self-Determination Strategy (Strategy).

The Aboriginal Self-Determination Strategy is now being prepared in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The Strategy will establish the vision, objectives, key commitments and actions to support the local First Nations community to have greater self-determination. These actions will be implemented over the next five years.

Background

In late 2022, Council, together with the RAP Advisory Committee, appointed Mifsud Consulting & Advisory (the consultant) to support the development of the Strategy and to facilitate community consultation.

An Internal Working Group (IWG) was appointed and included senior managers from across Council.

Engagement activities included:

- a series of Dreaming workshops with the IWG and the community to set a vision statements, objectives and suggested actions
- An online survey on Shaping Banyule from 5 December 2023 – 7 February 2024.

Using the feedback received from the workshops, the Banyule Community Vision 2041 and Federal and State Government strategic policy, the Strategy framework was developed to include a Vision, objectives and key commitments.

The new Strategy will also be strongly aligned to the Banyule Community Vision 2041 and the Council priority themes listed below.

Banyule Community Vision 2041

The Banyule Community Vision states:

> *'We in Banyule, are a thriving, sustainable, inclusive and connected community. We are engaged, we belong, and we value and protect our environment.'*

The six Priority Themes in the vision are:

1. Inclusive and Connected Community
2. Sustainable Environment
3. Well-Built City
4. Valued Community Assets and Facilities
5. Thriving Local Economy
6. Trusted and Responsive Leadership.

2. Engagement Objectives

Four objectives were identified for engaging the community on this project.

Objective 1:

To continue to build awareness of the strategic direction of Council and show how Council is working towards empowering Aboriginal Self-Determination in alignment to the delivery of the Community Vision 2041.

Objective 2:

To strengthen community knowledge of considerations, evidence and constraints that form part of Council's commitment to support Aboriginal Self-Determination.

Objective 3:

To engage with community members on specific negotiables for the Aboriginal Self-Determination Strategy.

Objective 4:

To plan for and include consideration of matters raised through the engagement activities.

3. Engagement Methods

Three methods of community engagement were delivered as part of this project and were complemented by communications activities.

Shaping Banyule online survey

Audience: Banyule Community

Date: 5 December 2023 to 5 February 2024

Stakeholder Consultation

Audience: Banyule Key Stakeholders

Date: 14 February 2024 to 13 March 2024

Community Workshops

Audience: Banyule Community

Date: 28 February 2024 to 8 March 2024

3.1 Shaping Banyule Survey

A Self-determination Strategy page was created on Council's digital engagement platform – Shaping Banyule. The page included context information, links to supporting documents/websites, an online survey, an option to request a hardcopy survey, an option to request a meeting with Council officers and information on in-person engagement opportunities. Officer contact details were provided for community to ask questions.

The survey asked 11 questions to help understand the community's awareness of Aboriginal Self-Determination and invited an opportunity for ideas for the Strategy.

Participation on Shaping Banyule was boosted by a feature article in the Banyule Banner and a targeted paid social media campaign on Facebook.

3.2 Workshops

Workshops targeted First Nations community members through the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Advisory Committee and the Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place Committee.

A public workshop was also hosted to engage broader community members.

Invitations to attend the workshops were sent to members of Council advisory groups, local Reconciliation groups and was available on Shaping Banyule.

All workshops were held in the evening due to an assumption that more people would be available after daytime work and education hours.

3.3 Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation was held with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Aboriginal Corporation and Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries. This consultation was to identify opportunities to strengthen the first draft of the Strategy.

4. Participation

4.1 Shaping Banyule Survey

The Shaping Banyule Survey was open to the Banyule community from 5 December 2023 to 5 February 2024, during which time the online page had 1,449 views. 97 community members and 121 internal stakeholders provided feedback.

All age groups were represented. 22 respondents identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 15 as living with a disability, 11 from LGBTIQ+ communities and one speaker of English as a second or other language. 55% of respondents identified as female, 29% as male, 3% as non-binary and 10% preferred not to identify their gender.

4.2 Workshops

The in-person community workshops were held on the evenings of 28 February and 6 March 2023. Workshops were facilitated by Mifsud Consulting and Council officers.

34 community members participated across the two workshops. Another workshop was held for members from the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Advisory Committee and the Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place committees. This was a private workshop for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members hosted at the Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place in Heidelberg West.

Two Councillors attended the in-person workshop on 6 March 2024.

Workshop participants were invited to participate in two or more activities to understand what Council is currently doing well in the Reconciliation space and hear if there were any opportunities for growth. Not all people responded to all questions within the workshops.

4.3 Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation occurred with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation (Wurundjeri) and the Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries (YPRL).

Council engaged Aunty Julianne Oxford, Aunty Gail Smith and Charley Woromer as representatives from Wurundjeri. These discussions included feedback on the consultation process and naming of the Strategy. Further consultation has been arranged for feedback on the draft Strategy.

Two representatives from YPRL were also engaged to provide initial insights into the draft Strategy. Further consultation has been arranged with YPRL for feedback on the draft Strategy.

5. Community Insights

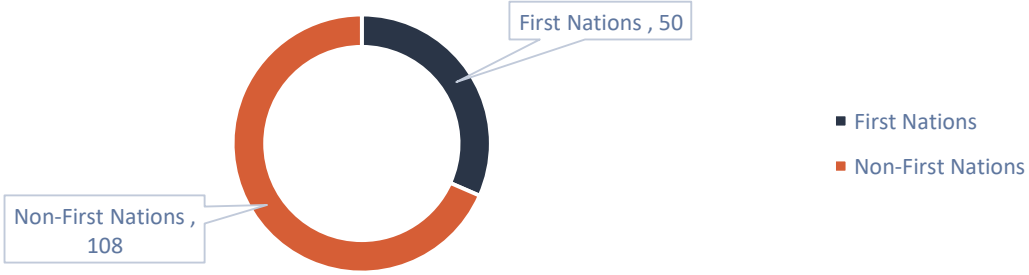
Community members provided insight on the development of the Strategy either via Shaping Banyule or by attending in-person workshops or meetings.

People who participated on Shaping Banyule were asked 11 questions that aimed to understand the education opportunities are offered by Council, respondents' awareness of Aboriginal self-determination and the Victorian Treaty process and ideas on what Council could do better to support the Strategy's ambitions.

The workshops were aimed at increasing awareness of Council's Aboriginal self-determination ambitions and were delivered with an informative approach. It was evident from the workshops that the broader community wants to play a role in supporting Aboriginal self-determination and wants more education opportunities to deepen their understanding of Aboriginal culture and history.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of First Nations and broader community participants, with 44 identifying as First Nations and 99 as not as First Nations.

Figure 1: Demographic of people consulted



Note: Feedback from community members in the below tables has been altered slightly to make more accessible and reduce length. The meaning and essence of feedback has not been changed.

Participants were then asked to identify their current understanding of what Aboriginal self-determination means. These words and sentiments are found in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Open Responses to what does Aboriginal Self-Determination mean.



Figure 3: First Nations Responses to what does Aboriginal Self-Determination mean.



The most common words in responses from the broader community about what Aboriginal self-determination means to them, was decision making, voice and impacts. Compared to the focus responses from the First Nations community which were representation, decision making, and engagement. This tells us that being First

Nations people being involved in decision making about affairs that impact First Nations people is essential in the success for the Strategy.

Some feedback provided by Shaping Banyule survey respondents identified that Council should not be supporting Aboriginal self-determination as it is divisive. Overall, 97% of community have identified they are supportive of Council's local ambitions in supporting reconciliation.

Other feedback from Shaping Banyule, the workshops and meetings are provided below under key titles.

5.1.1 Current Strengths

Throughout all engagement activities there was a number of strengths identified that Council is currently delivering on in the Reconciliation space. Key points discussed:

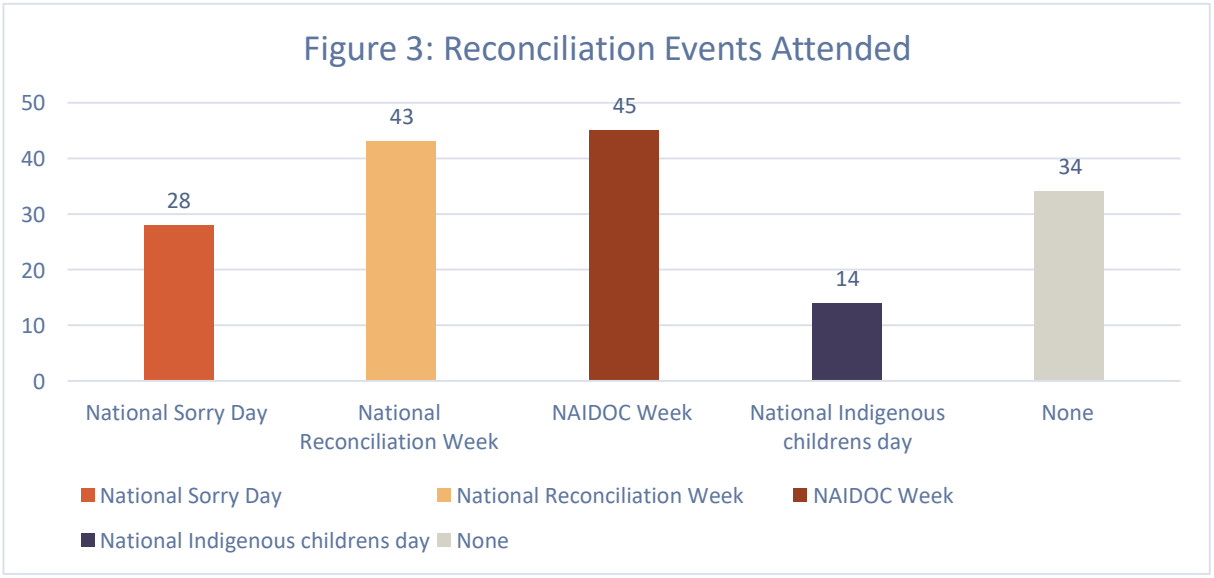
- Endorsement of the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- Spring Culture Walks
- Inclusive Employment Program (First Nations Traineeship)
- Support of RAP Advisory Committee
- Auspice of Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place
- Banyule Banner season inclusions

Below is a breakdown of some of the key strengths in themes from community feedback.

5.1.1.2 Community Education / Events

There was overwhelming support for the education activities and events Council currently hosts within the Reconciliation space. Community identified that by providing these opportunities, the community increases their understanding of First Nations people and culture.

Figure 2 identifies key Council events the community attend.



Through the qualitative data collected the comments in Figure 3 were made:

Figure 4: Qualitative Data on Education responses



There is strong sentiment to support community education opportunities about First Nations culture and history. This is to both increase education and awareness of non-First Nations people to learn traditional methods and ways, but also to have a deeper understanding about culture. It was discussed that through events these opportunities can reach large audiences.

5.1.1.3 Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place

Community and stakeholder feedback shows significant emphasis on the requirement for ongoing support for Barrbunin Beek Aboriginal Gathering Place (Barrbunin Beek). It was identified that as one of few gathering places across Victoria, Council's relationship with Barrbunin Beek will be essential in successfully achieving Aboriginal Self-Determination.

This insight was significantly strong from the closed workshop with the RAP Advisory Committee and the Barrbunin Beek Committee.

5.2 Opportunities for growth:

Throughout the engagement activities, there was a number of opportunities for Council's growth in the Reconciliation space including:

- Higher representation of First Nations people in Council
- Higher recognition of First Nations culture in buildings and in landscape
- Increased expenditure on the First Nations community / space
- Culturally safe services
- Greener spaces

Below is a breakdown of some of the key opportunities for growth in themes from community feedback.

5.2.1 Aboriginal Representation

Through both qualitative and quantitative data, approximately 97% of the community engaged were in favour of Council's role in supporting Aboriginal self-determination. Figure 4 below lists some suggestions made by the community on how Council can support this ambition.

Figure 4: Qualitative Data on Council's role in supporting Aboriginal Self-Determination



5.2.3 Increased expenditure

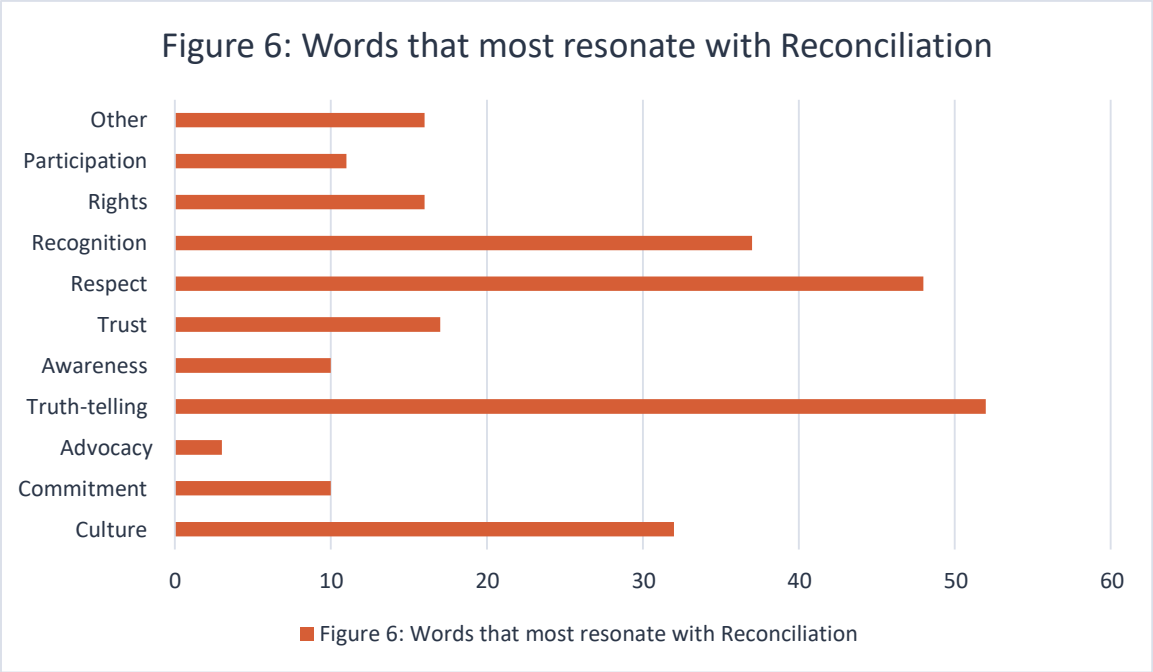
Throughout the engagement the consistent message was the requirement for increase expenditure. All workshops discussed this as a requirement for success in supporting Aboriginal self-determination. Participants identified the key themes below for increased expenditure in the Reconciliation space:

- First Nations staff within Council
- First Nations businesses
- Barrbunin Beek
- Reconciliation significant events
- First Nations access to Council services
- First Nations support in the early years
- Education opportunities for everyone.

5.2.3 Supporting Truth-telling

Participants were asked what words resonated with them when reflecting on Reconciliation. The purpose of this activity was to inform the sentiment of the vision for the new Strategy.

Below in Figure 6 is an overview of the ratings against words provided to respondents.



Words identified in 'other' were harmony, divisive, racist, unity and belonging.