

2.4 FIRST PEOPLES CONSULTATION – 26 JANUARY

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

RECOMMENDATION

That Council undertakes consultation and engagement with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, and the broader community to inform the nature of any activities which acknowledge the pain and loss of culture, language and identity felt by many First Nations people on 26 January, with any resultant activities taking place as of 26 January 2023 rather than 26 January 2022 as originally proposed.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an update on activities proposed to be undertaken on 26 January, including the lowering of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to half-mast and the hosting of a dawn service which acknowledges the pain, loss of culture, language and identity felt by many First Nations people on this date.

BACKGROUND

At the Council Meeting of 30 March 2021, in relation to the 'Welcoming the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission' Notice of Motion (NOM) it was resolved in part that Council:

- *Lowers the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to half-mast each year on January 26 to acknowledge the pain and suffering experienced by First Nations people, befitting a day of grief and remembrance;*
- *To contribute to Makarrata, truth-telling, justice and reconciliation, commits to hosting a dawn service on January 26 from the year 2022 onwards, acknowledging the loss of culture, language and identity felt by many First Nations people on January 26.*

Since the endorsement of the NOM in March, some changes have occurred that require consideration prior to implementing these actions. Specifically, in July 2021 a significant determination of Traditional Owner boundaries was made by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Commission to identify the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as Traditional Owners of the lands now known as the City of Monash. This important determination clearly identifies those parts of the municipality which form part of each Corporation's traditional lands. Council has also begun the development of

its *Innovate* Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which includes comprehensive engagement with Traditional Owners. Consultation has begun with Elders and representatives from both Traditional Owner corporations, with relationships in the early stages of development.

DISCUSSION

Council has a long-standing commitment to multicultural and social justice issues, including those relating to support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This has been further strengthened through the resolution of 30 March 2021 which expressed support for the Yoo-rook Justice Commission and identified ways to acknowledge the pain and loss of culture, language and identity felt by many First Nations people on 26 January.

The recent determination of Traditional Owners and the development of Council's RAP over coming months are important milestones that influence a reconsideration of the timing of any activities being considered for 26 January 2022.

26 January is a culturally sensitive date for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and for a growing number of non-Indigenous Australians. The implementation of a dawn service/ceremony and flag changes does require extensive consultation with Traditional Owners and the broader community to inform the nature of any activities which acknowledge the impact of this date on the Aboriginal community. Given the comprehensive engagement that will occur as part of the development of Council's RAP over the coming 12 months in particular, it is considered appropriate to allow this broad consultation to inform the final nature of activities to be held on 26 January in the future.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified.

CONSULTATION

Consultation with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, will continue. The development of the RAP will include broad engagement of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and people.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no social implications identified.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

This report is relevant to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007.

GENDER EQUITY ASSESSMENT

A Gender Equity Assessment is not required for this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

CONCLUSION

Council's continuing commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is evidenced through the current development of its RAP, and the activities proposed for 26 January which acknowledge the pain and loss of culture, language and identity felt by many First Nations people on this date. It is proposed that consultation and engagement undertaken over coming months will inform the nature and scope of activities provided on this date as of 26 January 2023.