




**MITCHELL SHIRE**  
**ACKNOWLEDGING**  
**OUR TRADITIONAL**  
**OWNERS**  
*Resource Guide*



**To ensure consistent use of Traditional Owner Acknowledgement  
across all Mitchell Shire meetings and events**





*People of all ages and life stages are highly valued, all our people's opinions are actively sought, and their rights are recognised and upheld.*

*Taungurung language version*

*Buk wiybo ba darridibup  
gunggi wagabil yulendj,  
buk-ngala nunang ngarrnggi  
budambun, ngalbina-dhan  
ngarrnga ba dadbagik.*

*Woi wurrung (Wurundjeri) language version*

*Gulinj darrango ba wigabil ba narrun yanon-inon yarrbat  
boorndup, gulinj-al mooning-narruki Narbethong yiooken,  
ba boorndup-al ngarrgi-ma ba ngark-djak.*

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are respectfully advised that this publication may contain the words, voices, names, images and descriptions of people who have passed away.

# FOREWORD

Mitchell Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, those of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People.

We pay our respects to their rich cultures and to Elders past, present and future.

Mitchell Shire works closely with our local Aboriginal community through many ongoing partnerships, including our Social Justice Framework.

Our vision is to build an inclusive, equitable and well-connected community; based on the principle of fairness for all.

Mitchell Shire is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure their culture is recognised and celebrated within the community.

Our First Peoples are the oldest living culture in the world. We proudly acknowledge the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People as the traditional custodians of the land we now call Mitchell Shire.

We proudly fly the Aboriginal flag and we recognise the fundamental role Aboriginal people have in Australian history and our future.

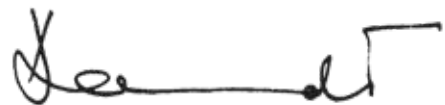
In the future, we aim to develop our first Reconciliation Action Plan to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This is a crucial step to closing the gap and acknowledging one of the oldest and proudest cultures in the world.

Mitchell Shire values its diverse and multicultural community and the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live according to their own values and customs on their land.



**Mayor, Cr Bill Chisholm**



**Chief Executive Officer, David Turnbull**

# INTRODUCTION

The development of respectful relationships between all levels of government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an important step in the broader social movement towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The aim of this guide is to highlight Council's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and assist Council to understand and build awareness around the use of an Acknowledgement of Country, a Welcome to Country and the traditional owners of the Mitchell municipality.



**Flying the flags - Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.**

# TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Mitchell Shire Council spans two Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) land areas, those of the Taungurung Land and Waters Council and Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporation. (See Appendix 1 for RAP Area Maps).

## **Taungurung Land and Waters Council**

The Taungurung people occupy much of central Victoria. Our country encompasses the area between the upper reaches of the Goulburn River and its tributaries north of the Dividing Range. It runs from Kilmore to the Campaspe River up to Rochester and extends eastwards to Mount Beauty. From Benalla in the north it extends south to the top of the Great Dividing Range. Our boundaries with other Aboriginal tribes are respected in accordance with traditional laws.

Traditionally, our people lived a hunter/gatherer existence. The various clan groups migrated through their territory dependent on seasonal variations and food availability.

We represent the rights and interests of our people; the Traditional Owners of the land area described in the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with the State of Victoria<sup>1</sup>.

## **Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporation**

The Wurundjeri People take their name from the Woiwurrung language word 'wurun' meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) which is common along 'Birrarrung' (Yarra River), and 'djeri', the grub which is found in or near the tree. Wurundjeri are the 'Witchetty Grub People' and our Ancestors have lived on this land for millennia.

Wurundjeri Country covers from the Yarra and Saltwater rivers at Melbourne; north to Mount Disappointment, northwest to Macedon, Woodend, and Lancefield, east to Mount Bawbaw at Healesville and south Mordialloc, Warragul, and Moe<sup>2</sup>.

Reference:

1. [www.taungurung.com.au](http://www.taungurung.com.au)
2. [www.wurundjeri.com.au](http://www.wurundjeri.com.au)



**Welcome to Country smoking ceremony at  
the Creative Conversations Art Expo 2015.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY VS

*What is the difference and when do we use them?*

## **What is an Acknowledgement of Country?**

An Acknowledgement of Country is a statement that recognises that Victoria has a strong and proud Aboriginal history and complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years. It pays respect to the Traditional Owners.

## **What is the difference between an Acknowledgement of Country and a Welcome to Country?**

A Welcome to Country ceremony is performed by Aboriginal Traditional Owners for people visiting their country. These ceremonies vary from speeches of welcome to traditional dance and smoking ceremonies. These differ to an Acknowledgement of Country which can be performed by any speaker at an event, meeting, gathering or function who pays respect to the Traditional Owners.

## **When is an Acknowledgement of Country appropriate?**

An Acknowledgement of Country should be given at formal events, forums and functions such as Government and Local Government meetings (i.e. council meetings and advisory committee meetings), conferences, school assemblies, concerts, board meetings, and official openings.

## **Who should give the Acknowledgement of Country?**

The first speaker at an event or function (following the welcome or in the absence of a welcome) should give the Acknowledgement of Country.

Subsequent speakers may also give an Acknowledgement.

## **When is a Welcome to Country appropriate?**

It is suggested that a welcoming ceremony be arranged for major public forums, official openings, meetings and functions. Naturally, if the function has broad impact on, or significance for, Aboriginal people a welcoming ceremony will be appropriate.

## **Can any Aboriginal person perform a Welcome to Country?**

No, a Welcome to Country should only be performed by a representative of the Traditional Owner group.

Asking an Aboriginal person to perform a Welcome to Country when they do not belong to the Traditional Owner group may cause them embarrassment and may offend the Traditional Owners.



# WELCOME TO COUNTRY



Aboriginal traditional dancers at Voices Around the Campfire event.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL



Aboriginal traditional art.

# OWNERS

## **Mitchell Shire Council's Acknowledgement of Country**

Mitchell Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, those of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People. We pay our respects to their rich cultures and to Elders past and present.

*Depending on location of the event use the appropriate reference to either Taungurung or Wurundjeri Traditional Owners.*

### **Taungurung Country**

“Wumindjika Taungurung Biik – welcome to the land of the Taungurung people

Today's event is being held on the traditional lands of the Taungurung Nation.

I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners.

I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and any Elders from other communities who may be here today.”

### **Wurundjeri Country**

“Wominjeka yearmann koondee biik Wurundjeri balluk – welcome to the land of the Wurundjeri people.

Today's event is being held on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people.

I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners.

I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and any Elders from other communities who may be here today.”

## **In performing an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, remember:**

- > An Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners is a gesture of respect to Victoria's first people and their cultural practices.
- > While there is a general formula of words to be spoken, an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners may be added to at the discretion of the speaker and the appropriateness of the event.
- > Identify Traditional Owners for your area: [www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/welcome-to-country-and-acknowledgement-of-traditional-owners.html](http://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/welcome-to-country-and-acknowledgement-of-traditional-owners.html)
- > Seek advice from the Traditional Owner group on the correct pronunciation of the name of the group that is being acknowledged.

# FLAGS AND CELEBRATIONS

The Aboriginal Flag is permanently flown outside the main Council office in Broadford to pay respect to our local and visiting Aboriginal community and highlight Council's commitment to creating an inclusive, welcoming community for all.

The Aboriginal flag was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia. It was created as a symbol of unity and national identity for Aboriginal people during the land rights movement of the early 1970s.

The flag was first flown at Victoria Square in Adelaide on National Aborigines Day, 12 July 1971. The flag was chosen as the official flag for the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra and was first flown there in 1972.

In 1995, the Australian Government proclaimed the flag as an official 'Flag of Australia'.

The symbolic meaning of the flag colours (as stated by Mr Harold Thomas) are:

<b>Black</b>	Represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
<b>Red</b>	Represents the red earth, the red ochre and a spiritual relation to the land
<b>Yellow</b>	Represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector



The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by the late Bernard Namok from Thursday Island. It was the winning entry in a design competition, held as part of a Cultural Revival Workshop, organised by The Islands Coordinating Council in January 1992.

The flag was recognised by the former national body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in June 1992 and given equal prominence with the Aboriginal flag.

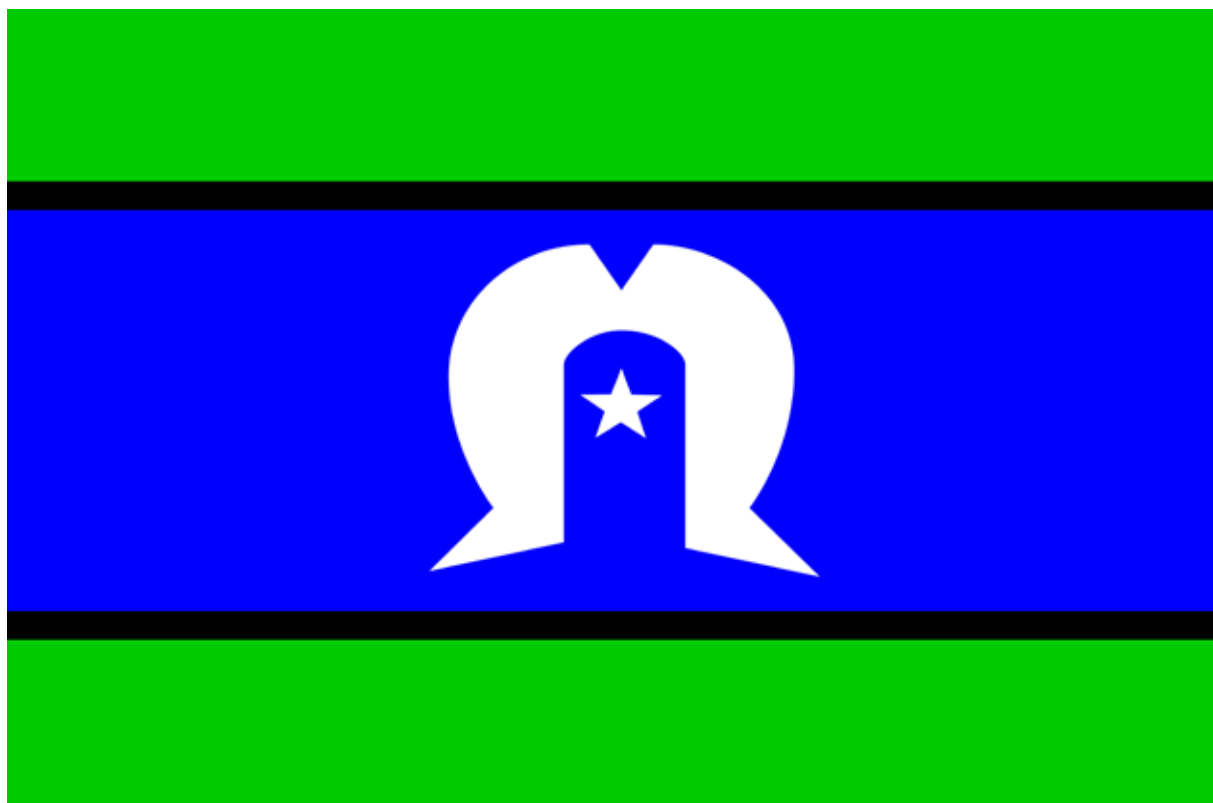
In July 1995, the Torres Strait Islander flag was recognised by the Australian Government as an official 'Flag of Australia' under the Flags Act 1953.

Each part of the flag gives meaning to the Torres Strait Island culture<sup>3</sup>:

<b>Green</b>	The two green lines represent the mainlands of Australia and Papua New Guinea
<b>Blue</b>	The blue between these two continents is the blue of the Torres Strait Island waters
<b>Black</b>	The black lines represent the people of the Torres Strait
<b>Central symbol</b>	Is one that any islander anywhere can identify with, the Dhari or headdress
<b>Five pointed star</b>	The five-pointed star represents the five major Island groups of the Torres Strait as well as sea-faring navigation
<b>White</b>	Represents peace

Reference:

3. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/torres-strait-islander-flag>



# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT

Mitchell Shire Council welcomes all opportunities to work with the community on all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events as part of our commitment to closing the gap and promoting social inclusion.

## Sorry Day

Sorry Day is an annual event held since 1998 on the 26 May across Australia to remember and raise awareness of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The annual commemorations remind Australians about the significance of the forcible removal policies and their impact on the children that were taken, but also on their families and communities.

In 2008, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd moved the “Motion of Apology to Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”, apologising for past laws, policies, and practices that negatively impacted these individuals, families and communities, particularly members of the Stolen Generation.

## Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. ‘Reconciliation’ refers to bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians to support reconciliation and work to overcome the division (often called ‘the gap’) and inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Differences are greatest in health, income, living standards and life expectancy, but also prejudice and racism.

## 1967 Referendum

Two dates commemorate significant milestones in the reconciliation journey – the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum, which saw over 90 per cent of Australians voting to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognise them in the census, and Mabo Day. The referendum vote saw two references in the Australian Constitution, which discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, removed.

## Mabo Day

On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision which legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a special relationship to the land that existed prior to colonisation and still exists in the current day.

The Mabo ruling overturned the legal justification - ‘terra nullius’- used by the British Empire for the appropriation of Australia.

# ISLANDER CALENDAR

## NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week originally stood for 'National Aborigines Day Observance Committee' after a Day of Mourning was held on Australia Day, 1938. The Day of Mourning was declared due to the lack of response from the Commonwealth government to petitions from Aboriginal people in 1935 and 1937 seeking representation in the Parliament and the establishment of a national department of Native Affairs and State Advisory Councils.

From 1940 until 1955, the Sunday before Australia Day was the Day of Mourning, now known as Aborigines Day. However, in 1955 the day was shifted to the first Sunday in July and was promoted as a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

In 1957, the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC) was formed and the second Sunday in July became a day of remembrance for Aboriginal people and their heritage. In 1991 NADOC became NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) to recognise Torres Strait Islanders and to describe a whole week of recognition, rather than one day.

Today NAIDOC celebrations are held around Australia in July by all Australians to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



**Aboriginal traditional dancers at Voices Around the Campfire event.**

# TERMINOLOGY (NOT LIMITED TO)

**Ngun godjin:** Kind regards (Taungurung)

**Djimbangga:** Red Kangaroo (Taungurung)

**Wominjenka:** Welcome (Wurundjeri)

## INDIGENOUS

Indigenous is sometimes used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

- > Avoid using the term Indigenous when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People unless a precedent exists (i.e. referring to the name of a document which references the word 'Indigenous').
- > Always use with an upper case 'I'.
- > 'indigenous' with a lower case 'i' may be used when describing indigenous people from other parts of the world not necessarily Indigenous people of Australia.

## KOORI, KOORIE OR KOORIES (PLURAL)

Refers to Aboriginal people from Victoria, southern parts of NSW and some parts of Tasmania and ACT.

- > Use when a precedent exists (i.e. referring to the name of a document which references Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as 'Koories').
- > This is sometimes the preferred term when referring to Aboriginal people from Victoria.
- > Always use an uppercase 'K' for Koori or Koories.

## ABORIGINAL

An Aboriginal person is a descendent of the Aboriginal Peoples; identifies as an Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives or has lived.

- > The term 'Aboriginal' may be used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Ensure this is made clear or footnoted in any documents/videos etc.
- > Use 'Aboriginal' as an adjective rather than a noun (i.e. Aboriginal Community, Aboriginal People).
- > Always use an upper case 'A' for Aboriginal when referring to Aboriginal people from Australia.
- > Do not abbreviate 'Aboriginal' as this may be considered offensive.
- > When using 'Aboriginal Peoples' the word 'Peoples' with an 's' acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal communities, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. Use in appropriate context.

## TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

The Torres Strait waterway lies between Papua New Guinea to the north and the Cape York Peninsula of Queensland on the Australian mainland to the south. Of the more than 100 islands that constitute the Torres Strait Islands, 17 are occupied by a total of 18 communities. Torres Strait Islander persons are individuals who are descended from Torres Strait Islander persons, who self-identify as Torres Strait Islander persons, or who have been recognized as Torres Strait Islander persons by their own community.



## TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Traditional Owners are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who directly descended from the original Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or country. Traditional Owners have a cultural association with this country that derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history.

- > Use 'Traditional Owner(s)' to refer to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or group as defined.
- > All formal meetings, presentations and gatherings should be opened with an Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the land on which the gathering is taking place.

## MOB

'Mob' is a term identifying a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People associated with a particular place.

- > 'Mob' is an important term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, as it is used to describe who they are and where they are from. 'Mob' is generally used between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
- > It is not appropriate for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to use this term unless it is known to be acceptable.

## STOLEN GENERATION

The 'Stolen Generations' are the generations of Aboriginal children forcibly taken away from their families by governments, churches and welfare bodies to be brought up in institutions or foster homes.

- > Removing children from their families was official government policy in Australia until 1969. However, the practice had begun in the earliest days of European settlement, when children were used as guides, servants and farm labour.

## CLAN

A clan is a subset of a nation. It is a local descent group, larger than a family but based on family links through a common ancestry.

- > The term 'clan' has specific meaning which derives from non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and may not be applicable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- > Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People use the term, its usage should be respected. If unsure, guidance should be sought from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People or organisations.

# TERMINOLOGY (OFFENSIVE TERMS)

Below is a guide that helps with the use of appropriate Aboriginal terminology, along with offensive terms that should not be used at any time. By using inclusive language, we avoid marginalising people who are already marginalised<sup>4,5</sup>.

MORE APPROPRIATE	LESS APPROPRIATE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Indigenous Australian people/s</li> <li>&gt; Aboriginal people/s</li> <li>&gt; Aboriginal person</li> <li>&gt; Torres Strait Islander people/s</li> <li>&gt; Torres Strait Islander person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Aborigines</li> <li>&gt; The Aborigines</li> <li>&gt; The Aboriginal people</li> <li>&gt; Aboriginal, Aborigines</li> <li>&gt; The Torres Strait Islanders</li> <li>&gt; Coloured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Blacks</li> <li>&gt; Whites</li> <li>&gt; Yellafellas</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Indigenous Australian peoples</li> <li>&gt; Aboriginal peoples</li> <li>&gt; 'Torres Strait Islander people or peoples' may be preferable, depending on the context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Transitional</li> <li>&gt; Traditional</li> <li>&gt; Isolated or remote Aboriginal people/Torres Strait Islander people</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Traditional custodian</li> <li>&gt; Aboriginal nations</li> <li>&gt; Aboriginal communities</li> <li>&gt; Mob/s</li> <li>&gt; Language groups</li> <li>&gt; Traditional Owner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Tribe</li> <li>&gt; Horde</li> <li>&gt; Band</li> <li>&gt; Clan</li> <li>&gt; Moiety</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Spirituality</li> <li>&gt; Spiritual beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Religion</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Elders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Chiefs</li> <li>&gt; King/Queen</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Invasion</li> <li>&gt; Colonisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Settlement</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Creation/Dreaming Stories</li> <li>&gt; Teachings from the Dreaming/s</li> <li>&gt; Legends (Torres Strait Islander people only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Myths</li> <li>&gt; Story</li> <li>&gt; Folklore</li> <li>&gt; Stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Legends</li> </ul>

References:

4. [www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/10043/appropriate\\_indigenous\\_terminology.pdf](http://www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/10043/appropriate_indigenous_terminology.pdf)

5. [www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/151923/communicating.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/151923/communicating.pdf)



# GROUP NAMES BASED ON GEOGRAPHY

Aboriginal people on the mainland, both individually and collectively as a community group, define themselves by their culture not the colour of their skin. The following are broad terms of reference by which Aboriginal people identify themselves. In recent times, Aboriginal people are increasingly identified by their specific clan and language group such as the Yalukit Willam Clan of the Boon Wurrung.

<b>Kulin Nation</b>	This is an alliance of five Aboriginal language groups in central Victoria, including Melbourne. The collective includes the Boon Wurrung (Yalukit Willam), the Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri), the Watha Wurrung (Wathaurong), the Daung Wurrung (Taungurung), and the Dja Dja Wurrung (Jaara).
<b>Murries/Murris</b>	Queensland
<b>Nungas</b>	South Australia
<b>Koories/Kooris</b>	New South Wales/Victoria
<b>Noongar/Nyungar/ Nyoongah/Nyungah/ Nyugah/Yunga</b>	South-western Western Australia
<b>Yamatji</b>	Coastal and mid-western Western Australia
<b>Wangai</b>	Central Western Australia
<b>Yolngu</b>	(Top End) Northern Territory
<b>Anangu</b>	(Central Australia) North of South Australia, and neighbouring parts of Western Australia and the Northern Territory
<b>Palawa/Pallawah</b>	Tasmania



# REFERENCES

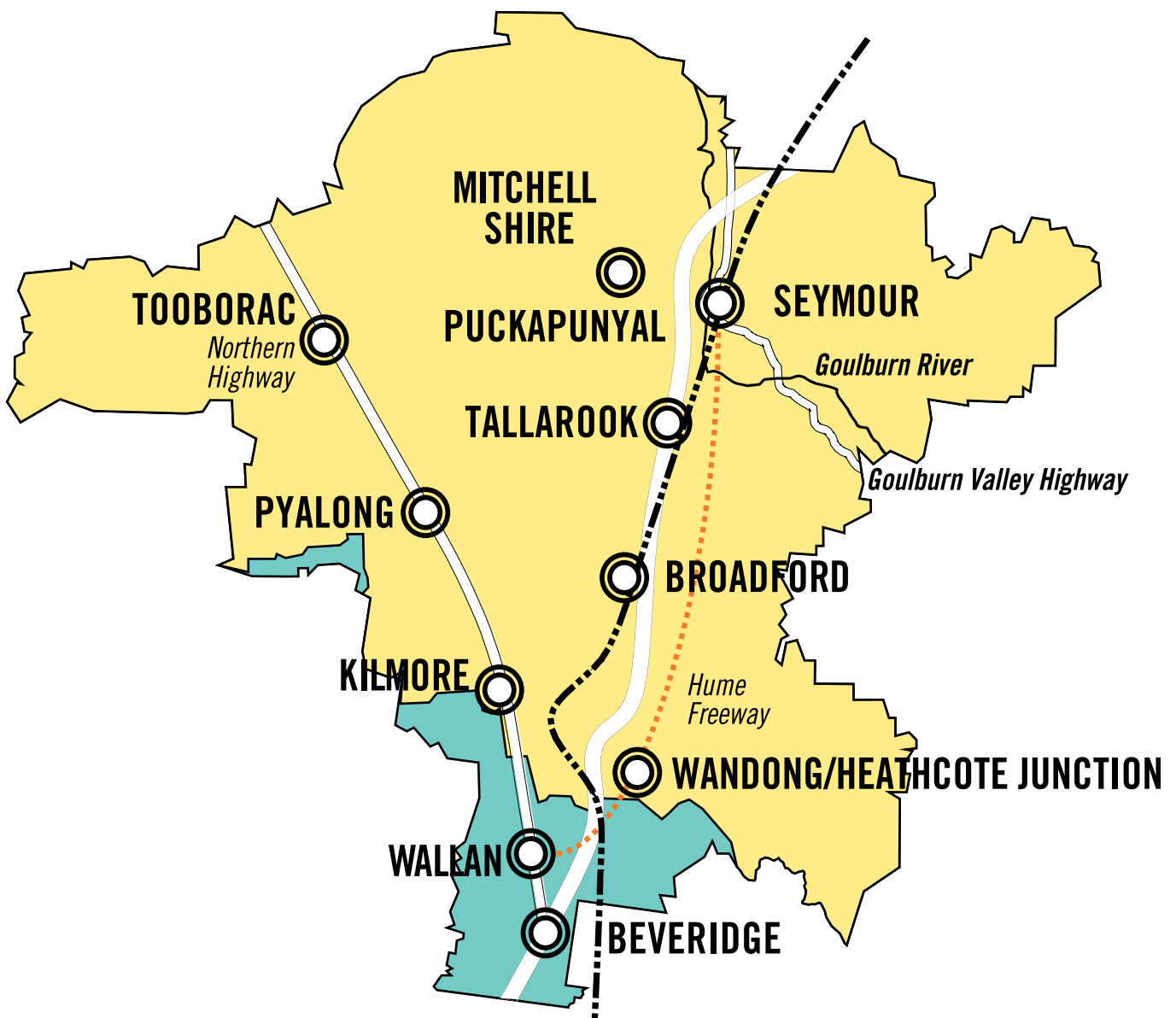
These broader references have supported the development of this document.

1. [www.taungurung.com.au](http://www.taungurung.com.au)
2. [www.wurundjeri.com.au](http://www.wurundjeri.com.au)
3. University of Melbourne. 2018. Indigenous Cultural Protocols: Guidelines. University of Melbourne, [https://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/2896828/UoM-Indigenous-Cultural-Protocols.pdf](https://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2896828/UoM-Indigenous-Cultural-Protocols.pdf)
4. City of Port Phillip. 2014. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols Framework. City of Port Phillip, Melbourne, Victoria. [www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Indigenous\\_protocol\\_brochure\\_170614.pdf](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Indigenous_protocol_brochure_170614.pdf)
5. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC). 2016. Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners 2016. NATSICC, Stepney, South Australia, [www.natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html](http://www.natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html)

# APPENDIX

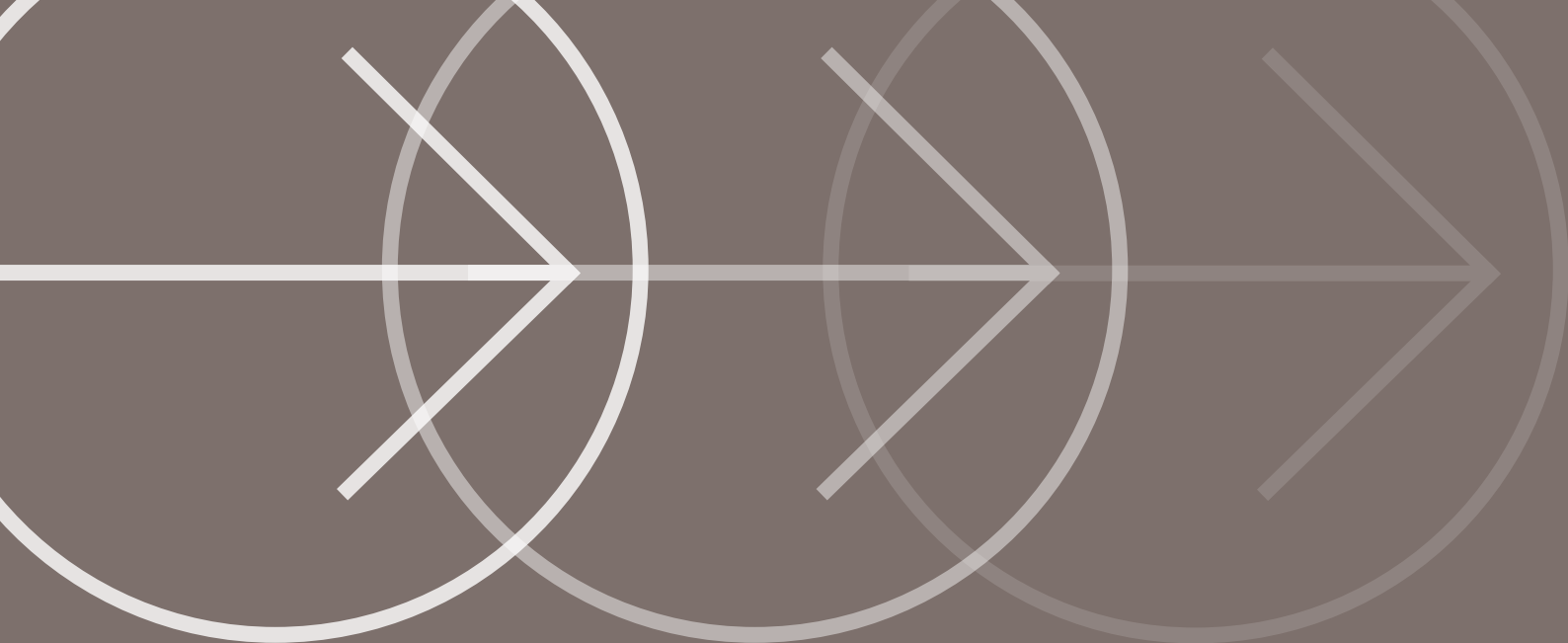
## Appendix 1: Taungurung Land and Waters Council Land and Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporation Land

-  Taungurung Land and Waters Council Land
-  Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporation Land





**Australian and Aboriginal Flags flying out the front of Council Broadford Office.**



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**MITCHELL  
SHIRE COUNCIL**

