

Indigenous

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1. Purpose

This policy outlines the guiding principles for engaging with the Indigenous community by the City of Greater Dandenong. The policy's objectives are to express the commitment of Council to respect the Indigenous community and ensure that a consistent approach to Indigenous matters is adopted across the organisation.

2. Background

The City of Greater Dandenong has an Aboriginal history that stretches back before white settlement to the Dreaming. For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal people lived within the landscape that is now known as the City of Greater Dandenong. History also tells of the Aboriginal people moving off the missions and back onto this land after settlement. Their vision is to walk hand in hand into the future with all the people that now make up this city.

Within Greater Dandenong there are approximately 500 indigenous residents accounting for 0.5% of the population of this city. They are a relatively young community, with 30% aged 0-15 years, compared with 19% in the wider community and 5% aged 65 years or more, compared with 14% of the general population.

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Conditions among indigenous residents reflect unfavourable social, health, educational and economic circumstances, with nearly two-thirds of indigenous residents having left school before completing year 11, unemployment rates five times the metropolitan average, incomes less than two-thirds metropolitan levels and rates of home ownership amounting to half of those among non-indigenous residents.

Indigenous children attend kindergarten at less than half the participation rate of non-indigenous children. Indigenous children also experience higher rates of disability and levels of abuse than non-indigenous children. Indigenous women are eleven times more likely to give birth in their teenage years than their non-indigenous counterparts.

Health outcomes among indigenous people are generally recorded as poor. Indigenous people are twice as likely as non-indigenous to report poor health, four times as likely to have diabetes, and twelve times as often hospitalised. The life expectancy among indigenous residents is nearly 20 years lower than for non-indigenous people.

On the basis of the above conditions and with funding from Commonwealth and State Governments, Council has undertaken a number of initiatives that include:

- Reducing the inequity of health outcomes through participation in the Closing the Gap project;
- Acting as an advocate by representing the Indigenous Community on state-wide committees and reference groups;
- Improving engagement with the indigenous community across the life cycle;
- Coordinating regional responses to Indigenous issues and developing an integrated approach to these issues through participation in the Inter-Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee (ICACC);
- Advising Council staff and external organisations about the needs of the Indigenous community;
- Providing planning assistance to protect and preserve Indigenous heritage and values; and
- Promoting indigenous culture and history through educational opportunities such as tours of significant sites.

3. Scope

This policy relates to specific initiatives and generalist services delivered by Council that respond to the health, economic and social needs of the Indigenous community.

4. Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the Victorian Human Rights Charter have been considered in the preparation of this Policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter.

- Freedom of expression;
- Right to vote and to participate in public life;
- Right to a fair hearing;
- Right to be free from discrimination and to be equal before the law; and
- Right to privacy.

5. References

Original policy adopted by Council 10 May 1999. Last endorsed by Council, 10 May 2004.

6. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the term Indigenous will be taken to include the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), Aborigine, Aboriginal and all terms used to refer to the First Nations People of Australia.

7. Council Policy

Principles under which Council will engage with the Indigenous community include:

Recognition that many past injustices have affected the Indigenous community and a commitment to ensuring that Indigenous people participate equally in the social, economic and political life of the city;

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Acknowledgement of the Bunurong, Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land on which the City of Greater Dandenong is located; and

Valuing the history and culture of the Indigenous people as an integral part of the City and the belief that people have a right to practice and preserve their unique culture and traditions.

Priority Areas for Council

Advocate for and promote the Indigenous community through:

- Partnerships with groups and organisations within the community to facilitate dialogue and consultation for the benefit of the Indigenous community;
- Facilitate and assist in the resolution of issues that are of mutual concern to local government and its Indigenous community;
- Promoting opportunities for enhanced participation and improved outcomes by Indigenous people in all levels of society, in civic participation, health, education, training and employment;
- Initiatives that enhance funding to support the Indigenous community;
- Improved communication and understanding between the Indigenous community and wider community through the provision of cross-cultural communication training; and
- Commitment to participate on the Inter-Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee.

Protect, preserve and celebrate Indigenous culture by:

- Acknowledging the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land. This can be at significant civic and cultural events, by flying the Aboriginal Flag and in Council publications;
- Identifying, maintaining and protecting Indigenous cultural heritage sites;
- Facilitating celebrations, festivals, support programs, educational opportunities and activities which help to maintain the Indigenous identity within the city; and
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation in the delivery of services to the Indigenous community.

Develop and implement culturally appropriate and beneficial policies and initiatives by:

- Applying Council's Access and Equity Code of Practice to all policies and initiatives;
- Planning for and delivering initiatives that are evidence based, appropriately evaluated and integrated into Council's strategic goals; and
- Ensuring that the Indigenous Policy is reflected in all strategic, service, master plans and programs of the City of Greater Dandenong where appropriate.

8. Related Documents

8a. State Legislation

- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Heritage Act 1995
- Home and Community Care Act 1985
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2002
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006

8b. Federal Legislation

- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975, 1983
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Disability Services Act 1986
- Native Title Act 1993
- Australian Heritage Council Act 2003
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984
- Deaths in Custody Act 1989
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005
- Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999

8c. State Policies

- Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework

8d. Federal Policies

- 2011-14 FaHCSIA Strategic Framework
- Burra Charter

8e. City of Greater Dandenong Policies

- Council Plan 2009-2013
- Greater Dandenong Community Plan: Imagine 2030
- Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy
- Diversity Action Plan
- Access and Equity Code of Practice
- CGD Disability Policy 2010
- Flag Flying Policy
- Cultural Strategy 2006-2010
- Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013