

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.1

Advance our commitment to Reconciliation - Declaration of Recognition and Commitment

Council

Presenter: Hans Bokelund, Director Aboriginal Melbourne

28 September 2021

Purpose and background

1. City of Melbourne (CoM) seeks to advance our commitment to Reconciliation through ratification of a “Declaration of Recognition and Commitment” (Declaration).
2. Endorsing this Declaration would not be dissimilar to Council endorsing the three climate declarations – Better Futures Australia, Edinburgh, and C40 Renewable Energy.
3. Constitutions provide the basic legal framework for a democracy and the rule of law. They are essential to building peace, and they create inclusive institutions in divided societies. Here in Australia at a federal level there is a push for Aboriginal constitutional reform.
4. In 2004 the Victorian constitution was amended to recognise and acknowledge Aboriginal Peoples of Victoria in the Preamble, which created momentum for active engagement with traditional owners. Other supporting Victorian Acts are the:
 - 4.1. *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
 - 4.2. *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*
 - 4.3. *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018.*
5. CoM recognises that building, supporting and investing in Aboriginal peoples is necessary to meet municipal community aspirations aligning with the *Local Government Act 2020*.
6. CoM’s reconciliation vision is a just and inclusive society, which respects, recognises, engages and celebrates Aboriginal peoples and their cultures to the advancement of all Victorians.

Key issues

7. The Declaration (attachment 2) will serve as the foundation document, providing guiding principles as part of CoM’s reconciliation journey. A foundational basis of our current and future Reconciliation Action Plans.
8. It is envisaged that ratifying the Declaration with the Aboriginal community will only build on and make CoM’s relationship with the Traditional Owners more enduring.
9. The Declaration is in keeping with the State of Victoria’s Treaty process.
10. Ratifying the Declaration by the Lord Mayor and Chief Executive Officer not only dignifies, but signals and elevates CoM’s shared commitment for reconciliation across the whole of the organisation.

Recommendation from management

11. That Council:
 - 11.1. Approves the ratification of the Declaration.
 - 11.2. Requests the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer sign the Declaration on behalf of the Council.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 3)
2. Declaration of Recognition and Commitment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. The report accurately identifies the relevant statutory context.

Finance

2. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder consultation

5. No consultation has been undertaken however ratification of the Declaration is consistent with Council commitment to reconciliation as demonstrated in the recently endorsed Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-23.

Relation to Council policy

6. The Declaration is aligned with Council plan 2021-25 Aboriginal Melbourne.

Environmental sustainability

7. This proposal has no significant impact on environmental sustainability.'

**DECLARATION OF RECOGNITION AND COMMITMENT
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF MELBOURNE, recognise the unique place of Aboriginal people in our shared place and the enduring value of their culture to the City of Melbourne, and that as traditional owners their sovereignty has never been ceded.

The City of Melbourne recognises, protects and respects Aboriginal heritage and cultures and understands the impact of non-Aboriginal settlement of this country.

The City of Melbourne acknowledges and respects the customs and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and their special relationship with the land, waterways and sea.

The City of Melbourne acknowledges the right of Aboriginal peoples to live according to their own values and customs.

RECOGNITION

1. The City Of Melbourne recognises that Aboriginal peoples were the first inhabitants of this land and have striven to retain their culture and identity through the period of European settlement for more than two centuries.
2. The City of Melbourne recognises the valuable contribution to Victoria made by Aboriginal peoples and will work towards a future of mutual respect and harmony.
3. The City of Melbourne recognises the value of the diversity and strength of Aboriginal cultures to the heritage of all Australians.
4. The City of Melbourne recognises that family life is at the core of Aboriginal community life and that these family relationships, links and customs involve particular sets of social and cultural obligations.
5. The City of Melbourne recognises and supports the ideal of reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples to redress their serious social and economic disadvantage.

COMMITMENT

1. The City of Melbourne is proud to make a commitment to fully support reconciliation and embrace reconciliation within our organisation and to encourage reconciliation across the city and through our connections nationally and internationally.
2. The City of Melbourne is committed to truth-telling about Victoria's history and the impact of colonisation, which will help us to understand, address and build a stronger Victoria, by bringing us closer to genuine reconciliation.
3. The City of Melbourne is committed to meaningful engagement with Aboriginal peoples and will foster and build respect for Aboriginal history, culture and knowledge.
4. The City of Melbourne is committed to ensuring that the Aboriginal cultural heritage of Melbourne is appropriately recognised, conserved and celebrated by all. By sharing stories about the history of our place, including the heritage and culture woven into that history.
5. The City of Melbourne is committed to creating a city that takes pride in the contribution Aboriginal people have made, and continue to make.
6. The City of Melbourne is committed to Aboriginal peoples in Council Plans, Policies, Procedures and Services.

STATUS OF THE DECLARATION OF RECOGNITION AND COMMITMENT

The City of Melbourne does not intend any of the provisions of Declaration of Recognition and Commitment to be legally enforceable or limit the Council's exercise of its own functions. However, that does not lessen the commitment of the City of Melbourne to fully implementing the Declaration of Recognition and Commitment in a transparent, consultative, accountable and respectful manner.

EXECUTED AS A DECLARATION OF RECOGNITION AND COMMITMENT on this [date]

LORD MAYOR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER