

# Mount Alexander Shire Council Reconciliation Plan 2020-2023

## Glossary of Terms

Throughout our Reconciliation Plan we refer to our First Nations Peoples in a number of ways.

This reflects the gradual evolution of what is considered to be the most appropriate terminology, and our desire to be respectful of the preferences of our local Elders at the time.

Here is an outline of the different terminology used throughout the plan, their definitions, and why we've used these terms in the plan.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' refer to different groups of peoples. Aboriginal refers to the original peoples of mainland Australia. Torres Strait Islander refers to the original peoples of the 274 islands located north of Australia, in the Torres Strait.

Our plan makes reference to our 'Commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the Shire'\*. This Commitment Statement was adopted by Council in June 2014, when the use of this terminology to refer to First Nations people was considered the most appropriate.

### First Nations People

In recent times, 'First Nations people' has emerged as a name that recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of Australia. Using the term 'First Nations People' recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the sovereign people of this land, and beyond that, it also recognises various language groups as separate and unique sovereign nations. This term is now widely considered to be the preferred term for respectfully referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Guided by conversation with our local Elders throughout the development of this plan, when referring to people, as distinct to culture and Country, we will now use the term First Nations.

### Indigenous

The true definition of 'Indigenous' means 'belonging or occurring naturally in a particular place' but the term became popular in Australia as a convenient all-inclusive term to describe both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

However, we now understand that some First Nations People consider the term 'Indigenous' to be offensive, because of the scientific connotations which have been used historically to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of the 'flora and fauna' rather than the human population of Australia. Sometimes, it is also seen as a problematically homogenising label for what are, in reality, highly diverse identities.

In our plan we make reference to the Indigenous Roundtable. The Indigenous Roundtable was named in collaboration with our local senior Elder in 2013, when the use of this term was not understood to be offensive and considered to be inclusive of all First Nations people.

## **Koorie (or Koori)**

'Koorie' is a term denoting an Aboriginal person of Victoria or Southern New South Wales, and is derived from the word for 'people' in the Indigenous languages of the coastal groups of New South Wales. For many First Nations people the use of Koorie as an Indigenous language regional term is an expression of pride.

Our plan references the Koorie Bus Service, a program that is supported by Council and delivered in partnership with the community. This program has been in existence since prior to 2014 and was named by our partnering organisation.

## **Traditional Owners / Traditional Custodians**

A 'Traditional Owner or Traditional Custodian' is an Aboriginal person directly descended from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or country, and has a cultural association with this country that derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area.

While 'Traditional Owners' (often abbreviated to 'TO') emphasises the connection to land, 'Traditional Custodian' better reflects the concept that Aboriginal people don't own land, but it owns them.

Our plan uses the term Traditional Custodians when referring to direct descendants of the clan groups within Mount Alexander Shire, Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung clans, who hold the authority to speak on behalf of their clan group.

## **Elder**

An 'Elder' is defined as a significant person within Aboriginal communities who is respected and consulted due to their experience, wisdom, knowledge, background and insight. Often described as the "custodians of knowledge" of a community. Elders are chosen and accepted by their own communities and are highly respected. The term Elder does not necessarily equate with age.

Our plan refers to our local Dja Dja Wurrung Elder, which has been the customary term we use as an alternative to Traditional Custodian or Traditional Owner.