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|  | **ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT**  **IN VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT** | |
|  | Relationships | **Fact Sheet 4** |

**Framework – “Koories in Victorian Councils”**

Respect + Relationships + Opportunities = Aboriginal people benefiting councils and communities


The MAV has invited all councils and Aboriginal people to participate in a Victorian Local Government Aboriginal Employment Framework. Developed through the MAV Aboriginal Employment project, this framework has been designed to provide a tool for local government and Aboriginal communities. It is based on the structure for Reconciliation Action Plans established by Reconciliation Australia so that it can easily align with council Reconciliation Action Plans.

# Why relationships are important

Organisations which have recruited and retained Aboriginal employees all say that having meaningful relationships with the Aboriginal community are vital to success.

Many Victorian councils are already taking practical steps to actively celebrate culture and engage with Aboriginal people, including through initiatives such as NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week celebrations, acknowledgements of traditional owners, flying the Aboriginal flag alongside the Australian flag outside council buildings, and undertaking their statutory responsibilities for Aboriginal cultural heritage. There continues to be, however, advice from Aboriginal community members that they would like more meaningful relationships with councils.

There may be a variety of reasons limiting better connections between councils and their Aboriginal communities. As many groups make up the Aboriginal community (such as, traditional owner groups, Local Indigenous Networks, and Aboriginal people who have moved from other parts of Australia to live in the municipality) councils are not always sure which community members or organisations to approach. In some municipalities there may be no obvious Aboriginal presence. In others, councils face resource pressures on local service delivery expectations from their local communities that limit their capacity to undertake intensive engagement activities. Aboriginal people may also not be aware of the full extent of the services councils provide because they access services from Aboriginal-specific providers. There may be a legacy of mistrust from difficult situations in the past.

Understanding these cultural and historical factors puts everyone in a better position to appreciate the impact of these factors on communities and to work more effectively with Aboriginal people in the future.

Like any good relationship, it is something that is going to take time. There is no reason why councils can’t take the lead in making contact with local Aboriginal communities; don’t wait to be called.

# Top three actions councils can do to make a difference

1. Be open and willing to engage with your local Aboriginal community – get to know who they are. Ring up local Aboriginal organisations and visit their offices
2. Consider partnering with local Aboriginal communities on social and economic development activities to provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to gain experience and understanding of council activities
3. Formally document, and include in the Council Plan, that the council welcomes engagement with the Aboriginal community.

# Activity ideas

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| Let Aboriginal communities know about the sorts of activities and services councils undertake | Review the council website to include recognition of Aboriginal people | Budget for, and conduct, cultural awareness activities for councillors and council staff |
| Develop agreements and memorandum~~s~~ of understanding between your council and local Aboriginal community organisations | Use social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter, to promote your council and its activities to Aboriginal people and communities | Use the principles developed through the [Victorian Local Government Aboriginal Partnerships Project](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-affairs-policy/local-government-aboriginal-partnership-project) to initiate discussions with your local Aboriginal community |
| **SHARE YOUR STORIES**  If you would like to share your examples on the Aboriginal Employment pages of the MAV website, email MAV Aboriginal Employment Adviser, Lidia Thorpe at email [lthorpe@mav.asn.au](mailto:lthorpe@mav.asn.au) | | |

# Getting to know your Aboriginal community

There are a number of ways to find out who your Aboriginal community members are. Good ways to start include:

* Checking the [Victorian Government’s Aboriginal Affairs website](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-affairs-overview) for information
* Checking the [Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/victorian-aboriginal-heritage-council) website to see if you have Registered Aboriginal Parties for your municipality
* Contacting local Aboriginal organisations who may be offering services in your area. [Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation](http://www.vaccho.org.au/om/our-membership/members/) is a good place to start
* Contacting the [Local Indigenous Network](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-community-development) brokers employed through the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
* Checking the NAIDOC websites ([national](http://www.naidoc.org.au/) and [state](http://vicnaidoc.com/)) for NAIDOC activities taking place in your municipality.

# Whole-of-government approach

The following documents and links provide a context and justification for local government to initiate Aboriginal-specific activities:

* The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) - of which the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is a member - agreed in 2008 to [six targets](https://www.coag.gov.au/closing_the_gap_in_indigenous_disadvantage) to address the disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians in life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment. In particular, these are to:

1. Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation (by 2031)
2. Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018
3. Ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities by 2013
4. Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children by 2018
5. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rates by 2020
6. Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and other Australians by 2018.

* The Victorian Government’s [Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-affairs-policy/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework) provides a framework for governments at all levels to work together to close the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage in Victoria. Page 19 outlines the role of local government in providing and facilitating local employment and economic opportunities, fostering reconciliation and engagement with Aboriginal communities, building access to land and protecting cultural heritage.
* The [Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-affairs-policy/victorian-aboriginal-economic-priorities) sets out ways to boost economic outcomes for Aboriginal people through partnerships with local Aboriginal enterprises.
* The [Closing the Gap Through Place-Based Employment Position Paper](http://www.acelg.org.au/file/1602/download?token=jCmH8Y4qOtw4SZuaZAG7RHDJuiHCYOKhv7p69Qiu2vY) prepared in 2012 by the Australian Centre for Local Government (ACELG) explores untapped labour pools and suggestions for how councils can invest in the recruitment and development of Australian Indigenous workers. The latest [Profile of the Local Government Workforce](http://mavis/sites/HumanServices/Indigenous/•%09http:/www.acelg.org.au/news/local-government-workforce-profile-released) prepared to support the implementation of the National Local Government Workforce Strategy prepared for ACELG by Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) contains information about national statistics for Aboriginal employees working in local government (see chapter 3.2).
* VicHealth’s [anti-racism research](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-discrimination/Mental-health-impacts-of-racial-discrimination-in-Victorian-Aboriginal-communities.aspx) highlights the negative impact of racism on the health of Victoria’s Aboriginal community is a call to act to reduce racism in the community.

# Getting the protocols right – useful links

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| Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet [Guidelines for Acknowledging Traditional Owners](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/protocols-for-recognising-traditional-owners). |
| There are many cultural awareness programs offered by a range of providers. The Reconciliation Australia website section “[Share Our Pride](http://shareourpride.reconciliation.org.au/)” is a good place to start, with background information about Aboriginal Australians. This website also provides a list of providers. |
| [Reconciliation Australia](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/) has a range of tools and information, including how to set about developing a Reconciliation Action Plan, including the [Minimum requirements of a RAP](http://reconciliation.org.au/raphub/program/getting-started/#RAPminimum-elements). |

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|  | The [Victorian Local Government Aboriginal Engagement & Reconciliation Survey 2012](http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/pages/local-government.php) undertaken by Reconciliation Victoria provides an overview of current Aboriginal-specific activities undertaken by Victorian councils. | | |
| 66 councils fly the Aboriginal flag, with 25 flying it permanently | | 42 councils have specific Indigenous commitments or initiatives as part of their organisational plans | 32 councils list Indigenous commitments in their Council Plan |
| 61 councils have a protocol on acknowledgement of traditional owners | | 32 councils provide Aboriginal cross-cultural training to employees and councillors | 65 councils promote local Aboriginal history through cultural tours, publications, in libraries and on their websites |
| 21 councils are involved in Indigenous tourism initiatives | | 60 councils support local Indigenous arts, including commissioning of artworks and performances, exhibitions | 53 councils are involved in protecting local Aboriginal cultural heritage sites of significance |
| 27 councils report Aboriginal input into decision-making | | 61 councils celebrate Indigenous culture through events such as NAIDOC week and Reconciliation Week | 47 councils procure goods or services from Indigenous businesses |

# Useful websites

[Reconciliation Australia](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/)

[Reconciliation Victoria](http://reconciliationvic.org.au/)

[Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-affairs-overview)

[Australian Government website](http://www.indigenous.gov.au/)

# Further information

**Visit the aboriginal employment page of the mav website** [**www.mav.asn.au**](http://www.mav.asn.au/) **or get there directly via** [**www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment**](http://www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment)

**Download Mav Fact Sheets:**

**No 1 - getting started**

**No 2 - resources guide for aboriginal employment in local government**

**No 3 - Respect**

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| See Issue 6 (2014) of CiVic magazine for the centrepiece article on Reconciliation  [Read CiVic online](https://mobile.mav.asn.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=iv1XGl2CEUuoKWqq2GCJ0VE6rybrpNEIK4py9DP426Z1yyihQdTFq4d_NZZSVULkSYIJn6SfUeg.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fissuu.com%2fcivic-magazine)**|**[Download the iPad app](https://mobile.mav.asn.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=iv1XGl2CEUuoKWqq2GCJ0VE6rybrpNEIK4py9DP426Z1yyihQdTFq4d_NZZSVULkSYIJn6SfUeg.&URL=https%3a%2f%2fitunes.apple.com%2fau%2fapp%2fcivic%2fid576216073%3fmt%3d8) |  |