



Shire of Northam
Heritage, Commerce and Lifestyle

REFLECT

Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2020 - June 2021



**RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN**

REFLECT

Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of Northam would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Ballardong and Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.



Artwork: Ballardong Boodja by Bradley Kickett
Front cover L-R: Cody Kickett, Hayden Kickett, Kieryn Kickett, Jezeel Kickett, Juwarne Winmar. Photograph by Michelle Blackhurst

Warning

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may contain images and artworks of people who have passed.

Message from the President

Councillor Chris Antonio



It has been a privilege to have been involved with the process of developing the Shire of Northam's first Reconciliation Action Plan.

I am now delighted to be able to present the Shire of Northam's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group has provided valuable insight into the development of this plan.

The plan provides a positive guide and vision toward a positive future vision of conciliation and partnership between the Shire of Northam and our community.

Our long and vibrant history needs to continue to be recognised and celebrated. With the opening of Bilya Koort Boodja – Centre for Nyoongar Culture & Environmental Knowledge - in August 2018, the celebratory events during the past two years in National Reconciliation Week, and proudly flying the Aboriginal Flag at Shire localities, the Shire of Northam has demonstrated steps toward reconciliation.

Ongoing objectives of the Reconciliation Action Plan include establishing partnerships to be able to provide traineeship and general employment opportunities, both within the Shire of Northam and the wider business community. Additionally, the Shire of Northam continues to develop an understanding of procurement and promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.

I look forward to the continued development, working together, and action of this plan.

Chris Antonio
Shire President – February 2020





Our Vision for Reconciliation

The Shire of Northam is proud to be embarking on the journey towards reconciliation. As an organisation we are committed to increasing our understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and seek to capitalise on our unique position as a local government authority to be able to publicly acknowledge and celebrate the cultures, histories and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the Shire of Northam.

We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all our community as we move forward, creating a community strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider local community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Business

The Shire of Northam is located within the picturesque Avon Valley and is the key administration, business, industry and service centre for the broader Avon Region. It covers a diverse 1,443km² of natural environment, rich agricultural land, small country towns and the historic regional centre of Northam. The western boundary lies 60 kilometres east of Perth and the town site of Northam is a further 35 kilometres east. The Shire delivers local government services to more than 11,500 residents, around 6% of whom identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (ABS, 2016). In addition to the town of Northam, key localities include Bakers Hill, Clackline, Grass Valley, Spencers Brook and Wundowie.

Northam is renowned as being among one of Western Australia's first settlements following British colonisation; but of course its history stretches back long before this time with the Nyoongar people having walked the lands of the Avon Valley and holding a deep spiritual connection with its waters and land. This is reflected by the numerous significant sites registered within the Shire boundaries. The Shire of Northam is located on Whadjuk and Ballardong Nyoongar country.

The Shire employs approximately 115 people working across the many services it provides. Of these 10 of them identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

The Shire of Northam have been working towards building relationships with the areas Traditional Owners and celebrating Aboriginal Culture and achievements for several years. This culminated in the development of an Aboriginal and environmental interpretive centre, which opened in August 2018. The planning and development of the Centre was overseen by local Aboriginal Elders, who formed the Aboriginal Advisory Group. The Aboriginal Advisory Group choose to name the centre, "Bilya Koort Boodja, Centre for Nyoongar Culture & Environmental Knowledge". Bilya Koort Boodja, translates from the Nyoongar language to River Heart Lands.

It became apparent through the development of the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre that the Shire of Northam needed to affirm its commitment towards reconciliation through a Reconciliation Action Plan. In November 2017, Council resolved to establish the RAP Working Group to advise and assist Council to establish its first Reconciliation Action Plan. The RAP is championed internally by the CEO and Executive Managers with guidance and support provided by the RAP Working Group comprising of:

- Councillor Michael Ryan – Chairperson
- Kathy Davis – Respected Elder & Aboriginal Community Representative
- Deborah Moody – Respected Elder & Aboriginal Community Representative
- Brenda DeAtta – Aboriginal Community Representative
- Rueben Kickett – Aboriginal Community Representative
- Councillor Attila Mencshelyi – Council Representative
- Councillor Chris Antonio – Council Representative
- Jason Whiteaker, Shire of Northam Chief Executive Officer - Ex-Officio Member
- Ross Rayson, Shire of Northam Executive Manager Community Services - Ex-Officio Member
- Jaime Hawkins, Shire of Northam Community Development Officer – Ex-Officio Member



This Reflect RAP is a public declaration of Council's dedication to achieving meaningful engagement with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It provides a framework to guide the Shire in scoping and developing relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and a vision for reconciliation to aspire towards. As we achieve the outcomes set out in this Reflect, we will be better positioned to produce future RAPs that are meaningful, mutually beneficial and sustainable.



Photograph by Michelle Blackhurst

Our Current Partnerships & Activities

Over the years the Shire of Northam have built working relationships with and supported various Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander organisations. As the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre continues to increase its capacity and expand its programs it is anticipated that further partnerships will develop. The Aboriginal Advisory Group for the Bilya Koort Boodja continue to meet with the Shire regularly to oversee the activities of the centre.

The Shire currently contracts the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management, Aboriginal Rangers for ground keeping and maintenance of the Northam Cemetery and other outdoor locations within the Shire. Council also works in partnership with the Northam Aboriginal Men's Shed to maintain tracks and trails around the Avon River and provides them with financial support through our Community Grants Program.

In 2018 the Shire hosted its inaugural Reconciliation Morning Tea in the Northam town centre to commemorate National Reconciliation Week. This event was initiated by the RAP Working Group and was well attended by various community organisations, government departments, and the wider community. We were extremely fortunate to have several local businesses support the event with donations and bush foods supplied by the Northam Aboriginal Yorga's Group. The morning tea was again held during the 2019 National Reconciliation Week, this time incorporating a reconciliation walk. The intention is that this will become an ongoing annual event. In previous years Council has partnered with other organisations and businesses to deliver community NAIDOC Week events and activities.



Over the next 12 months the Shire of Northam commits to:

Relationships



Action 1 Continue to develop the RAP Working Group

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
1.1	Ensure Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples are always represented on the RAP Working Group.	June 2020	Executive Manager Community Services / Community Development Officer
1.2	The RAP Working Group oversees the development, endorsement and implementation of the RAP.	June 2020	Executive Manager Community Services / Community Development Officer
1.3	The RAP Working Group meets a minimum of twice per year to monitor the implementation of the RAP.	July 2020 November 2020	Executive Manager Community Services / Community Development Officer
1.4	Ensure Membership of the RAP Working Group and the RAP Working Group Terms of Reference are reviewed in line with all Committees of Council.	June 2020	Executive Manager Community Services / Community Development Officer

Action 2 Build internal & external relationships

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
2.1	Identify and develop a list of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Elders, people, communities and organisations within the Shire of Northam or sphere of influence that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2020	BKB Coordinator
2.2	Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2020	BKB Coordinator

Action 3 Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3.1 Support and/or deliver an annual NRW event in collaboration with the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community.	27 May – 3 June 2021	Executive Manager Community Services / Community Development Officer / Events Coordinator
3.2 Register Shire of Northam NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	April 2021	Community Development Officer
3.3 Encourage Shire of Northam Councillors and Staff to attend NRW events.	27 May – 3 June 2021	Chief Executive Officer / All Executive Managers
3.4 Distribute and promote NRW fact sheets and other resources to Councillors, Staff and the wider community.	27 May – 3 June 2021	Community Development Officer / Community Services Administration Officer
3.5 Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June 2021	Chief Executive Officer / Executive Manager Community Services

Action 4 Raise internal awareness of Council's RAP

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
4.1 Ensure that all employees have an understanding of the Council's RAP commitment and how each department can contribute.	July 2020	All Managers
4.2 Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP.	July 2020	Executive Manager Community Services / Community Development Officer



Action 5 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5.1	November 2020	Human Resources Coordinator
5.2	January 2021	Human Resources Coordinator



Artwork: Wardong and Manidj by Kirk Garlett



Action 6 Investigate Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development for Council

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
6.1	Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements	September 2020	BKB Coordinator / Human Resources Coordinator
6.2	Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within the Shire of Northam.	September 2020	Human Resources Coordinator / BKB Coordinator
6.3	Develop a project plan for increasing staff's knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.	November 2020	BKB Coordinator



Action 7 Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC Week

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7.1	November 2020	BKB Coordinator
7.2	November 2020	CEO / Executive Management / BKB Coordinator
7.3	8 November – 15 November 2020	BKB Coordinator / Community Development Officer / Events Coordinator
7.4	8 November – 15 November 2020	Community Development Officer

Action 8 Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8.1	August 2020	BKB Coordinator / RAP Working Group
8.2	August 2020	RAP Working Group / BKB Advisory Committee / BKB Coordinator
8.3	August 2020	BKB Coordinator / RAP Working Group

Action 9

Publicly acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
9.1	Investigate the opportunity for Council to explore ways of appropriately acknowledging Traditional Owners of the local area, including Acknowledgement of Country in all meetings of Council, displaying an Acknowledgement in Council buildings, Council signage, and employee email signatures etc.	October 2020	RAP Working Group / CEO
9.2	Investigate flying the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander flags at Administration and other Council buildings.	September 2020	Governance Officer
9.3	Investigate opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander artworks to be displayed in Council facilities and to be commissioned as public art works.	August 2020	Community Development Officer / Art Advisory Committee
9.4	In consultation with local Traditional Owners, investigate the opportunity to incorporate dual naming, with the English and Nyoongar name to be printed on signage at significant landmarks.	December 2020	Manager Tourism & Events / Community Development Officer / RAP Working Group



Opportunities



Action 10 Investigate opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment and retention within Council

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
10.1	Capture baseline data on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment & retention within the Shire of Northam to inform future employment.	July 2020	Human Resources Coordinator
10.2	Investigate Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment pathways for people to seek employment, traineeships and work experience within the Shire of Northam	October 2020	Human Resources Coordinator
10.3	Develop a plan to increase Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment within the Shire of Northam	November 2020	Human Resources Coordinator

Photograph by Navigator Photographix



Action 11 Investigate Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
11.1	Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	February 2021	Executive Manager Engineering Services/ Executive Manager Corporate Services/ Procurement Officer
11.2	Review Council's Procurement Policy to ensure that there are no barriers for procuring goods and services from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander businesses	January 2021	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Executive Manager Engineering
11.3	Promote Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander businesses within the Shire of Northam	August 2020	BKB Coordinator
11.4	Support and/or create opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander business development within the Shire of Northam	January 2021	Executive Manager Community Services / BKB Coordinator
11.5	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	January 2021	BKB Coordinator / Procurement Officer

Photographs by Michelle Blackhurst



Governance & Tracking Progress



Action 12 Build Support for Council's RAP

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
12.1	Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation	July 2020	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer
12.2	Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities	July 2020	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer
12.3	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia	September 2020	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer
12.4	Include information on the implementation of the RAP in Council's annual report	April 2021	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer



Action 13 Review and Refresh RAP

Deliverable		Timeline	Responsibility
13.1	Review the progress of the RAP with the RAP Working Group	January 2021	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer
13.2	Draft and refresh a new RAP for the Shire of Northam based learning, achievements and challenges experienced in the previous RAP	January 2021	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer
13.3	Submit draft of new RAP to Reconciliation Australia	March 2021	Executive Manager Corporate Services / Community Development Officer



BILYA KOORT BOODJA
CENTRE FOR NYOONGAR CULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE



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This RAP is available in alternative formats upon request.

