

ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE

A resource for Victoria's transport
and infrastructure industry



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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Victoria and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their spirit and passion in their past and present custodianship of this Country; its lands, waters, skies and its terrestrial and aquatic inhabitants. We also pay our respects to the Elders of the Kulin Nation, past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within this readership.

Introduction

Under the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA), we not only deliver new and upgraded road and rail projects, but also improvements to our communities. These projects not only transform Victoria, but also provide positive opportunities for all.

The Aboriginal Engagement Resource was created under the Victorian Government's Training for the Future (TTF) program. It was co-designed with the TTF's Social Procurement Innovators Network (SPIN), which brought together industry leaders to provide key information for this Resource. We thank SPIN for their invaluable support and contribution.

This resource has been regularly updated to ensure case studies, changes to government strategies and network contacts are current.

Who should use this Aboriginal Engagement Resource?

This Resource is for the businesses, contractors, companies and government agencies working in Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry. It aims to equip industry with the resources to effectively and safely:

- involve Victoria's First People when designing and delivering projects or operating services
- procure from Victorian Aboriginal businesses
- attract and retain Victorian Aboriginal employees and trainees
- create unique projects and run modern services by incorporating Aboriginal culture.

The Resource contains content relevant to people working in planning, engineering, design, communications, procurement, human resources, people management and project management, as well as other fields.

Create your legacy

This Resource includes strategies and case studies to show the type of work already being done in the industry to support Aboriginal Victorians. These are examples of the legacies that projects and operators are leaving behind.

Beyond building a rail bridge or running Melbourne's tram lines, the people who championed these approaches created a legacy for themselves and those who they brought with them on their journey. They did so by realising that they can get more out of their job than meets the eye.

By implementing even some of the suggestions in this Resource, Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry can show just how much of a contribution it makes to the State; now and in the future. This Resource offers ways of working so that everyone wins; government, industry and the Aboriginal community.

Tip for readers

This Resource is best read electronically as it contains hyperlinks to organisations and resources.

Program partners



VicTrack



First things first

The first step (and key to success) in anything you're working on is understanding self-determination and co-design, and then involving Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal groups or organisations in the conversation.

Co-design and self-determination

Co-design is when the users of a product or service are part of its creation.

More than consultation, co-design means talking to users when planning and developing your work, and after completion as it can inform future work. Co-design cannot work if you ask for input after the big decisions are made or if the users don't have enough time to respond.

For industry, co-design means that if you want to employ Aboriginal people, buy from Aboriginal businesses or include Aboriginal culture, you need to identify and contact the appropriate people at the beginning of the decision-making process; even if you don't have a job or contract to award just yet. The relationships you build will improve employment, product and service outcomes and make the process easier and more likely to succeed.

Self-determination is when people have the right to make decisions on matters that affect them.

Enabling self-determination acknowledges that Aboriginal Victorians hold the knowledge and expertise about what is best for themselves, their families and their communities.

Listening to Aboriginal Victorian communities and involving Victorian Traditional Owners from the start of your project or new venture is critical. Explain your work, discuss where

opportunities lie or can be created, and build co-design into your process.

Self-determination is upheld by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is a right that relates to groups of people, not individuals. Victoria's [Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-23](#) sets out these self-determination goals, outlining the State's commitment to self-determination as the guiding principle in Aboriginal affairs.

How our industry can have an impact

The transport infrastructure industry has great capacity to progress that commitment through transport access to health, education, justice and employment services and opportunities, and keeping families and communities connected. It also has capacity through the protection and celebration of Aboriginal culture and heritage, for example through major projects and precinct upgrades.

In particular, the recent increase in size, value, geographical spread and timelines of Victoria's transport infrastructure and operating pipelines unlocks new opportunities for the State's Aboriginal economic participation targets, such as procuring from Aboriginal businesses and employing Aboriginal people.

The Victorian industry's own [Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Plan 2020-2023](#) recognises that Aboriginal Victorians need to be at the centre of decision

making. In a portfolio first, the Plan commits the Department of Transport and Planning and its agencies and operators to engage as one with Aboriginal Victorians. In doing so, it will reduce consultative burden, enable more informed decision making and enhance outcomes through leveraging the portfolio—its projects, operations, budgets and expertise—as a whole.

Some of the Strategy's key points and objectives for the transport portfolio are to:

- establish Regional Chapters at the local level
- co-design partnerships with Registered Aboriginal Parties
- ensure the promotion of cultural safety and environments that are considerate and respectful of Aboriginal people
- acknowledge and address the trauma experienced by the Aboriginal community and support healing
- strive for better outcomes for Aboriginal communities in the delivery of its work
- build self-determination into everyday processes
- advance along the self-determination continuum
- increase accountability for actions that progress self-determination.

Get to know the Traditional Owners

Getting to know the Traditional Owners of the land of your office and/or project can be one of the most rewarding parts of your work.

The insights and connections offered by Traditional Owners are invaluable and can give your project a true point of difference. A great part of working with Traditional Owners is that you can truly localise your work and make it relevant to the place that it is improving. For this to work you need to engage Traditional Owners as early as possible; waiting too long can damage a relationship before it's begun.

Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are recognised as cultural custodians and hold legal decision-making responsibilities for Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area. Depending on your project, this could make a strong relationship with Traditional Owners even more pivotal.

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council website has a map of [Registered Aboriginal Parties](#) and their contact details.

The [Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations](#) can assist you when you are looking to engage with the appropriate RAP.

What is a Cultural Heritage Management Plan?

Visit the [Big Build website](#) to learn more about how we manage Aboriginal places on Victoria's Big Build Projects



*Aboriginal leaders prepare for
Welcome to Country ceremony.*

Engaging local councils and service providers

Local municipal councils and service providers are likely to have relationships with key local Aboriginal groups and Traditional Owners.

They may also be very open to collaborating with you to strengthen

or create new actions that benefit their Aboriginal communities, and simply to work together on the project or service you're managing.

Most have policies or action plans on how they support and celebrate Aboriginal communities and history. They may also have Aboriginal committees or reference groups. Your work could connect with some of these, even if simply as a means

of gaining introductions, ideas or being briefed on any local issues, especially in contested areas.

The **Municipal Association of Victoria** (a membership organisation and legislated peak body for local government) can provide more information on local priorities and initiatives.

Organisational readiness

Broadly speaking, there are three parts to ensuring that you are ready to recruit Aboriginal people or buy from Aboriginal businesses:

- **setting a workplace culture wherein Aboriginal people and businesses are valued**
- **training your employees in cultural safety**
- **showing commitment in your support for Aboriginal people.**

All three require strong support from leadership teams and all three can be embedded into a Reconciliation Action Plan.

A **Reconciliation Action Plan** outlines practical actions that you commit to doing in order to attract, support and celebrate Aboriginal employees, clients and/or community. The plans help reconcile Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, formalise commitments and activities and are a good way to capture and promote the good work you are already doing.

If you already have a Reconciliation Action Plan, it may include the ideas in this Resource. If it does, ask how your work can connect with actions already being done by other areas of your business.

Reconciliation Action Plans

Reconciliation Action Plans are supported by [Reconciliation Australia](#), who can help identify and develop the type of plan that will work for your business. Watch the [Reconciliation Action Plan video](#).

Leadership and organisational culture

Before you hire Aboriginal people or procure from Aboriginal businesses, it's important that your employees understand your organisation's commitment and workplace culture, and the part they play in this. If leadership or executive teams do not champion moves to support Aboriginal Victorians, any RAP, training, policy

or plan is unlikely to succeed. Setting expectations around culture needs to be genuine in order to be a success.

This means that enthusiastic, committed and motivated leaders are the key to creating an Aboriginal inclusive workplace and business. Influencing leaders should be

done from the CEO down. It can involve training leaders before other employees, introducing leaders to Aboriginal businesses, building actions or targets into key performance indicators and asking relevant questions when potential new leaders are interviewed.



Emma Bamblett (left) from Kinya Lerk at MRPA offices showcasing her artwork.

CASE STUDY

Metropolitan Roads Program Alliance (MRPA) and Emma Bamblett/Kinya Lerrk

Emma Bamblett is a visual artist and proud Aboriginal woman descendant from the Wemba Wemba, Gunditjmara, Ngadjonji and Taungurung people, born and raised in Echuca on the Murray River.

MRPA initially engaged Emma with the idea of commissioning a piece of artwork for a specific project that represented the values and essence of MRPA. Emma's initial piece, *Connecting Mobs*, sits in the foyer of the MRPA office and is a visual reminder of the Alliance's values of inclusivity - it is one of the first things staff and clients see when they enter. Emma was invited to speak at the launch of the artwork, which introduced the piece and highlighted the significance of the artwork and its connection to MRPA's cultural values.

In MRPA's conversations with Emma, the Alliance brainstormed ways by which they could honour the NAIDOC Week 2022 theme of 'Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!'. It was during this time that they decided that if they wanted to encourage their people to do this in all aspects of their lives, that they should look to take the art 'out of the office' and bring the story into their homes. This would start conversations with their families and friends about MRPA's values and what it means for them.

From these discussions, Emma suggested collaborating with the business that she shares with Megan Van Den Berg, Kinya Lerrk, to create custom candles, cards and tea towels as the gifts. This has led to more than just NAIDOC gifts; Kinya Lerrk pieces now feature in Employee Welcome Packs, acting as a mechanism to demonstrate MRPA's commitment to and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island businesses. MRPA uses this to set the tone for new starters from day one, indicating from the outset that they're an inclusive and supportive organisation.

Kinya Lerrk have also created custom Acknowledgement of Country plaques for MRPA offices and site sheds, as well as information plaques about Emma's art, which are on display around the business.

Emma continues to work with MRPA today and has recently been commissioned to work on artwork for community spaces within the project's area.



Employee welcome packs featuring Kinya Lerrk custom artwork

Organisational readiness

Aboriginal cultural safety training or education

Ensuring that employees understand and respect Aboriginal culture needs to be done before Aboriginal people or businesses join your workforce or supply chain—especially if they are people managers or work with clients. This is a matter of workplace safety, as a culturally sensitive workplace can help ensure that Aboriginal employees and suppliers feel safe at work.

As well as workplaces running customised sessions, the Department of Transport and Planning offers Indigenous Culture Awareness and Training to all employees and implements portfolio-wide policies such as Acknowledgment and Welcome to Country protocols.

Multiple certified Aboriginal cultural safety training providers are listed with [Kinaway](#) and [Supply Nation](#) (at time of print). Both organisations can put you in touch with businesses who can assist with your local Victorian employee training needs.

Your local Traditional Owner group and may also offer training, as do the below organisations.

Koorie Heritage Trust

Generalist training is offered at their venue or your workplace for groups over ten people. Or, individuals can join their open sessions on Building Aboriginal Cultural Competency. Koorie Heritage Trust also run regular Cultural Walks, which offer

a different way of learning (but do not replace cultural safety training).

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc. (VACCHO)

VACCHO offer customised training beyond the health sector. Individuals can also join their Introduction to Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training open sessions.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL)

VACSAL offer customised and module-based training beyond the community sector.

CASE STUDY

Connecting through cultural awareness

In an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of cultural awareness cannot be overstated.

Feedback from past Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants highlighted the critical importance of understanding the diverse needs of our audience to tailor and deliver a successful training program. For trainers, whose role involves facilitating learning and development, this understanding and respect for different cultures are not just beneficial but essential.

To support this, Metro Academy trainers gathered at the Koorie Heritage Trust for a session focused on Aboriginal Cultural Awareness, recognising the imperative to deepen their understanding of Indigenous cultures in Australia.

Coordinated by LXRP's Industry Capability and Inclusion team and in conjunction with the Training for the Future (TFTF) GROW Upskilling pilot program, the session commenced with a poignant acknowledgment of the Traditional Custodians of the land, a customary practice that symbolises respect for Indigenous peoples and their enduring connection to the land. Facilitators emphasised the significance of such gestures in creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

Throughout the session, participants engaged in various activities designed to foster empathy and understanding.

Interactive discussions, multimedia presentations and storytelling sessions provided insights into the rich tapestry of Aboriginal cultures, histories, and traditions. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own assumptions and biases, fostering a sense of introspection essential for meaningful cultural learning.

One of the key focal points of the session was the exploration of historical and contemporary issues facing Aboriginal communities. Trainers learned about the profound impact of colonisation, dispossession, and forced assimilation policies on Indigenous peoples. This was followed by gaining a deeper understanding of the ongoing challenges of systemic history and discrimination, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural erasure resulting in a deeper appreciation for the resilience and strength of Aboriginal communities in the face of adversity.

Participants explored strategies for creating inclusive learning environments that honour and celebrate diversity, acknowledging the unique contributions of Aboriginal cultures to Australia's social fabric.

Reflecting on the session, one participant remarked, "these sessions are a reminder of the history in Australia. Important history that we can't repeat".

The session on Aboriginal Cultural Awareness served as a poignant reminder of the ongoing journey towards reconciliation and mutual understanding. By embarking on this collective journey of learning and unlearning, trainers can play a pivotal role in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for all Australians.



If you'd like to learn more about the Cultural Awareness training please reach out to a provider such as the [Koorie Heritage Trust](#) to explore your options.

Wamba
Wemba
Country

Indigenous Victoria

This map recognises the Victoria Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups, illustrating the distinct cultural identities and territories of Indigenous peoples across the state, each with its own unique connection to land and heritage.

Yorta Yorta
Country

Dja Dja
Wurrung
Country

Taungurung
Country

Wadawurrung
Country

Wurundjeri
Woi-wurrung
Country

Bunurong
Country

Eastern Maar
Country

Section of the Indigenous Victoria map.

Using Aboriginal language and art

Victoria has a rich Aboriginal history, with over 38 Aboriginal languages representing the diversity of cultural heritage and connection to Country.

The uniqueness of language is based on location. Each language is deeply rooted to the land and offers an ideal opportunity to connect a name to a place. 90 per cent of Australia's Indigenous languages are endangered; you can learn more with [Australia's Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#).

Whether incorporating language or art, is important to involve Traditional Owners in the early planning stages. As well as ensuring you get the best and highest quality outcome, there may be issues or preferences you need to be aware of.

If you want to use Aboriginal language to name roads, features or localities, Traditional Owners must be engaged as part of Geographic Names Victoria's (GNV's) [namining rules for places in Victoria](#). While anyone can propose a name, municipal councils are Victoria's primary naming authorities, as well as some government agencies and private

organisations. GNV encourages naming authorities to consider Aboriginal names when assigning new names. Aboriginal language naming should only be provided by RAPs, who are the only authority on what is appropriate for naming and how language can be used.

Examples of using Aboriginal language and art in offices and projects are:

Choosing artwork and graphics designed by Aboriginal Victorians in:

- publications
- around your office
- as part of infrastructure (urban design and architecture).

Using Aboriginal language or the names of significant people for:

- meeting rooms
- parks and gardens
- walkways
- bridges.

Case study

[Indigenous artwork transforming green space on Cranbourne-Frankston Road](#)

Collaborate and gain permission

Without collaborating, you are likely to miss the all-important step of gaining permission from the artists, Elders, people and/or families behind the art, language and names you are thinking of using. As well as good practice, it will also protect against any legal issues.

Flags

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are both official flags of Australia.

The [Aboriginal flag](#) was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man of Central Australia and was first flown in Adelaide in 1971. In 1972 the flag became more prolific when it was chosen as the official flag for the Aboriginal Embassy in front of Canberra's Parliament House. According to Thomas, the colours of the flag represent the Aboriginal people of Australia, the red ochre

colour of earth and a spiritual relationship to the land and the sun; the giver of life and protector.

The [Torres Strait Islander flag](#) was designed by Bernard Namok from Thursday Island in 1992. It was the winning entry in a competition organised by the Islands Coordinating Council. The green panels represent the mainlands of Australia and

Papua New Guinea, with the blue representing the Torres Strait waters in between. Black represents the Torres Strait Islander people, and the white is a dhari; a ceremonial headdress that all islanders identify with. The star is a sea-navigation symbol and its five points represent the major island groups. Both are white to symbolise peace.



Aboriginal
Flag



Torres Strait
Islander Flag

A word on terminology

As a Victorian government publication, this document uses Aboriginal to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If you prefer other terms, we suggest seeking the views of your Aboriginal employees, clients, businesses and/or Traditional Owner groups to help you decide.

Organisational readiness

Events and meetings

By incorporating Aboriginal protocols into events and meetings, you recognise and pay respect to Aboriginal people, culture and heritage and demonstrate recognition of Aboriginal people's unique position in Australian society.

Victoria has a strong and proud Aboriginal history, with complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back over 60,000 years.

Depending on the size and audience of your event or meeting, you should consider a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country. **Both should be done at the very beginning of the program, before any opening speeches.**

A Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country recognises the continuing connection of Aboriginal Traditional Owners to their land. Victoria has a strong and proud Aboriginal history, comprising of ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years. They are

part of the process of reconciliation and healing and afford the appropriate respect to Traditional Owners.

A **Welcome to Country** can only be done by a representative of the Traditional Owner group or **Registered Aboriginal Party** of where the event is being held. The short ceremony is done for people visiting their Country, and may vary from speeches, to dances and smoking ceremonies. They should be included at all large public or community events and gatherings, and possibly at industry-wide or internal events that have a broad impact on Aboriginal people.

An Acknowledgement to Country can be done by any person to demonstrate their respect for the Traditional Owners of the land where the event is being held. The first speaker at an event or function (following the Welcome or in the absence of a Welcome) should give the Acknowledgement of Country. Subsequent speakers may also give an acknowledgement at their discretion.

How to make an Acknowledgement of Country – While there are no mandatory protocols or wording for

an Acknowledgement of Country, where the person feels comfortable, a statement can be personalised to show understanding and respect. If you can, deliver it with a personal connection rather than as a 'tokenistic' process – think about your connection to and love of Country; where you grew up, where you live, where you are currently undertaking work. It is a powerful statement when senior leaders and other people leaders prepare their own personal Acknowledgements.

If appropriate or if you can, it is good to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community/individuals in your life that have influenced you in a positive way.

'I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we are meeting on today; the [Traditional Owner group name] people. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.'

Getting it right

An Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country that includes specific Traditional Owners is not recommended in areas without a Registered Aboriginal Party as it may:

- privilege one group's interests over others
- pre-empt the outcomes of formal recognition processes

- lead to disputes between groups who have an interest or association with Country.

Instead, it is recommended to acknowledge 'the Traditional Owners of the land', or, if you are in south-central Victoria, the Kulin nation.

The Kulin people traditionally owned the region extending from Port Phillip

and Western Port Bay, up to the Great Dividing Range and the Loddon and Goulburn River valleys. It includes five language groups; Boonwurrung (Boon-wur-rung), Dja Dja Wurrung (Jar-Jar-Wur-rung), Taungurung (Tung-ger-rung), Wathaurung (Wath-er-rung) and Woiwurrung (Woy-wur-rung); commonly known as Wurundjeri.

Marking key dates

While an organisation's support of Aboriginal people should be clear year-round, key dates offer a specific opportunity to acknowledge Aboriginal history and celebrate Aboriginal culture.

They can also be used to coincide with the launch of initiatives. For example, if planning on raising the Aboriginal flag for the first time, this could be done on 12 July; the day in 1971 when it was first flown in Australia.

Many agencies and businesses across industry run annual NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events, including the Department of Transport and Planning.

For more information on NAIDOC themes and dates, access the [First Peoples Relations site](#) and National Reconciliation Week

Showing support to employees, clients and community

Internal processes and policies

Making the ideas suggested in this Resource a part of your internal systems, processes and policies will ensure that they are not forgotten or dependent on people championing their continuation. Systemising inclusion practices also tells employees that their leadership team takes inclusion seriously and has an expectation that it becomes business as usual.

Depending on your business, most of the following ideas can be used to show support for Aboriginal people internally among your employees, and externally to clients and subcontractors (either as suggestions for what they could do, or an invitation to collaborate with you).

Ideas for attracting, recruiting and retaining Aboriginal employees are included in the [Aboriginal employment: staff and trainees section](#).

Recognition and representation in publications and around the workplace

Acknowledging, recognising and including Aboriginal Victorians in your online and hard-copy publications and in your workplace is a small gesture that can make a big impact. No matter what form this takes, it will very likely be noticed by Aboriginal people, who will be more inclined to see yours as an inclusive organisation and be more attracted to want to work with you, or for you.

Examples of acknowledging Aboriginal Victorians on websites, publications and in offices or worksites include:

- Adding an Acknowledgement to Country to all written publications and installing an [Acknowledgement to Country plaque](#) at offices

- Using photos and video with Aboriginal people (with their permission and if appropriate, advising the possibility of images or names deceased people)
- Displaying small flags, stickers of flags and/or Aboriginal artwork in reception areas
- Providing employees and contractors with pins, badges or hard-hat stickers that represent Aboriginal culture
- Including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in publications and email signature blocks
- Flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at offices and worksites.

Design

Good design rises above stereotypes, clichés and obvious design outcomes. Indigenous design offers a distinctive design ethos that moves beyond a simple western design perspective.

Indigenous design is a process that acknowledges identity and culture and considers connections to place and the deep history and memory of place. Exploring cultural narratives encourages a connection to Indigenous culture, showcases Traditional knowledge, demonstrates respect and embeds cultural significance.

There are many opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal knowledge and values into design, especially with early planning and collaboration across your business. For example:

- precinct planning
 - architecture and built form
 - landscape design
 - interpretation and wayfinding
 - visual art
 - language.
- Once it has been decided to integrate Indigenous design on sites or in offices, it is both important and useful to seek out:
- a time to meet with Traditional Owners as early as possible to discuss opportunities for Indigenous design across the lifecycle, and to understand Traditional Owner aspirations for collaborative engagement
 - colleagues to consult and involve (such as project manager, architect, landscape architect, art curator, any Indigenous designer)
 - examples of relevant precedent projects that illustrate the design quality you hope for
 - case studies of lessons learned from **Indigenous design guidelines** processes and outcomes.





Ngāwara Place, Melbourne VIC

Cultural Heritage Management Plans

Under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) are mandatory whenever a high impact activity is planned in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

'High Impact' activities are listed in Division 5 of the Aboriginal Regulations 2018, and information regarding 'areas of cultural heritage sensitivity' can be found under Division 3 and 4 of the **CHMPs can also be done for any project on a voluntary basis.**

CHMP's include the results of an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed activity on Aboriginal cultural heritage. They outline measures to be taken before, during and after the activity in order to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in the activity area.

When a CHMP is mandatory, statutory authorisation (e.g. a planning permit) can't be issued until a CHMP is approved. CHMPs are prepared by a heritage adviser in conjunction with Traditional Owners. A RAP will evaluate the CHMP if appointed.

[Click here](#) to learn about:

- Aboriginal places
- How we manage Aboriginal places on LXP projects - Cultural Heritage Management Plans
- Hear stories from our Elders.

CASE STUDY

Indigenous design for the Pakenham Line

Engagement with the RAP was held to identify opportunities to integrate Indigenous design into various station and urban design elements of the Pakenham Level Crossing Removal Project.

In early 2024, the Pakenham team welcomed the RAP Cultural Values and Research Unit for a "Walk on Country" as part of ongoing co-design collaboration with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC).

Some of the opportunities discussed and workshopped with Bunurong Elders included landscaping features and architectural treatments.

Landscaping features

Three key themes were considered by the Landscape Architect to capture and promote the cultural values shared with the Pakenham team by Bunurong Elders: pre-colonisation waterways, eel movements and nature trails.

Through Indigenous-led co-design sessions, the eel journey along the Barring buluk Trail is shown by features representing overlapping yuuk (eels) moving toward the activated space (i.e. playground, where one of the structures resembles an yuuk (eel) trap) and the Pakenham Station.

As the yuuk (eels) overlap, special meeting places may be created and influenced by the cultural values shared by Bunurong Elders, such as Community Bush Tucker gardens.

Architectural treatments

Opportunities co-designed between the Pakenham team and Bunurong Elders for architectural treatments included:

- patterns on the viaduct screen across McGregor Road and Racecourse Road to represent Bunjil, the Wedgetail Eagle creator being
- a Bunjil feather pattern on the Pakenham station concourse
- a fire pattern on the Pakenham station viaduct screen and egress stairs
- Yuuk (eel) trap and fish net weave pattern on retaining wall at various locations.

In addition to the collaborative co-design process with Bunurong Elders, the project gathered over 300 pieces of community feedback.

This feedback highlighted a strong desire to incorporate the traditional history, artwork and practices of the area's custodians.

The community prioritised the creation of parks and gardens for family and friends to enjoy, as well as the inclusion of active spaces and outdoor entertainment areas. There was also a deep appreciation for integrating Indigenous design into open spaces, reflecting Pakenham's rich Indigenous culture and history.



Playground at Pakenham station.

Procuring goods and services from Aboriginal businesses

The Victorian Government defines Victorian Aboriginal businesses as commercial businesses that:

1. Are at least 51 per cent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned
2. Undertake commercial activity
3. Operate and have business premises in Victoria.
4. Are certified by Kinaway Chamber of Commerce or Supply Nation.

Part of social procurement

Aboriginal businesses are not new, but in the last decade, targets for procuring from them have become part of many contracts across industry and is embedded within the Victorian Social Procurement Framework.

Social procurement is when organisations use their buying power to generate social value above and beyond the value of the goods, services or construction being procured.

The government's expectation that social procurement becomes business as usual is clear through Victoria's Social Procurement Framework.

The TFTF program has developed two Social Procurement in Practice resources that support industry's use of social procurement. They were developed in partnership with Kinaway, Supply Nation and Social Traders.

Business goals

The main goal of an Aboriginal business is to run a profitable and quality business – they just happen to be owned by someone who is Aboriginal. There is no expectation that the business creates social impact, but it is more likely. For example, Aboriginal businesses tend to employ significantly more Aboriginal people and allow owners to become self-determining. For more information on the social return on investment when investing in Aboriginal businesses, please refer to The Sleeping Giant Report published by Supply Nation.

Identifying an Aboriginal business in Victoria

In this video, Nerdu Badji Education provide a short overview of how to identify Aboriginal businesses in Victoria, benefits of working with them, and the resulting positive impacts on Indigenous employees, families, and communities.

Visit Victoria's Big Build website [here](#) for more information.

Resources and tools

The [Victoria Big Build Social Procurement website](#) provides an excellent starting point to assist contractors, subcontractors, social benefit suppliers and employment providers navigate their roles within the construction sector effectively. From understanding contracts to diversifying supply chains and forging partnerships, you can find a range of tools and resources in one place.

The Social Procurement in Practice booklet

This [booklet](#) is a strong introduction to social procurement and how to achieve it. It includes the poster and much of the same content as the eLearning Module. It is available in PDF and hardcopy.

The Social Procurement Opportunities poster

This [poster](#) on the following page illustrates just 20 of the broad range of goods and services that Victorian Aboriginal businesses (and social enterprises) have provided to both worksites and offices across industry. It is available as a PDF or A3 hardcopy designed for display in tearooms and high-traffic areas. See page 18 for the [worksite image](#).



Social Procurement on the worksite

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Anti-graffiti paint | 8. People (labour hire) | 15. Signs |
| 2. Architecture and design | 9. Personal protective equipment (PPE) | 16. Traffic management |
| 3. Concreting/formwork | 10. Pipes and drainage | 17. Transport: cars and trucks |
| 4. Earthworks | 11. Safety barriers | 18. Waste management |
| 5. Energy and lighting | 12. Scaffolding and access | 19. Wet hired plant |
| 6. Temporary fencing | 13. Security | 20. Wire and metal fabrication |
| 7. Landscaping (plants, trees, seeds, beds, outdoor furniture, maintenance) | 14. Shipping containers | |

Targets lead to innovative partnerships and wins for all

Aboriginal employment and business targets strengthened by Victoria's Social Procurement Framework have kept the Level Crossing Removal Project firmly focused on Aboriginal inclusion, and some strong

partnerships have been forged. Initiatives include the Metropolitan Roads Project Alliance working with Richmond Football Club on a pathway to employment program, the Southern Program Alliance partnering with

Bunjil Energy to include sustainable solar energy on their sites, and North Western Program Alliance partnering to build the capability of Native Earthworks; an Aboriginal civil construction business.



Did you know?

For every \$1 spent with an Aboriginal business, \$4.41 is generated in social return*

7 ways to identify with Aboriginal Businesses

Watch the [video](#) or visit Victoria's Big Build Social Procurement website: [How to engage with Aboriginal businesses](#) for more information.

Yarning circle south of the rail bridge, Werribee. Artist impression only, subject to change.

Aboriginal business directories and peak bodies

These organisations can help you find and engage verified Aboriginal businesses supplying what you need. As well as supporting buyers, they also support Aboriginal businesses as they enter and grow in the market.

Kinaway Chamber of Commerce

Kinaway is a Gonnai word meaning 'exchange'. **Kinaway Chamber of Commerce** has a database of certified Victorian Aboriginal businesses which complements its membership services. They work with Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses by providing support, policy, advocacy and representation services.

Supply Nation

Supply Nation brings together the largest national database of verified Aboriginal businesses and joint ventures with the procurement teams of Australia's leading organisations to help them engage, create relationships and become part of organisations' supply chain.

Goods and services that Aboriginal businesses have supplied Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry

This photo (adjacent) shows just how many procurement categories have been covered by Victorian Aboriginal businesses (and a few social enterprises) on worksites across industry.

* Reference: <https://supplynation.org.au/sleeping-giant-report/>



CASE STUDY

North Western Program Alliance (NWP) and NLA Trucking

NLA Trucking is proud to be the only 100% Aboriginal Female Owned plant hire business in Victoria.

What started as a one-truck business in 2016 (with the owner Nicole driving the truck herself) has developed and grown steadily to a fleet of over 150 independent contractors and over 15 items of their own equipment.

NLA were first introduced to LXP through the sub-contractor Delcon on a SEPA package. Since then, their work across multiple level crossing removal projects/Alliances has steadily grown and they provide tippers for asphaltting, profiling and excavation works.

NLA were recently invited to tender for NWP's Keon Parade package. This was the first large scale contract that NLA had ever tendered for and being a relatively new supplier, NLA wasn't familiar with the tier one tendering

process and admits to struggling with it. NWP's Social Procurement Lead sat down with Nicole and her team and worked through what they needed to do to complete the tender documents accurately and in-full, to ensure they put their best foot forward. They were successful in being awarded the package of work.

The support from NWP's Social Procurement Lead built their capability in responding to tendering, which enabled them to successfully bid for subsequent pieces of work, with the next being the Maidstone tram maintenance and stabling facility, an even larger package of work for NLA.

As a result of this growth from the NWP packages, they've recently ordered two

more trucks and established a factory in Epping, providing more opportunities for Indigenous people in Melbourne's north to gain sustainable jobs in the transport sector. They've employed an older Aboriginal man as a truck supervisor on the ground in Maidstone, who had previously struggled to find work. He's now gaining important skills in project management.

Through NWP's support, NLA has now been able to expand into other Big Build projects where they send out an additional 10-20 trucks per day.

Nicole and her team of drivers love working on the major construction projects because they get to be part of the change and see progress for local communities.



Aboriginal employment: Staff and trainees

Aboriginal Victorians are underrepresented in the industry and considered priority job seekers. Employing or training Aboriginal staff or trainees benefits community through providing opportunities and can help you meet government expectations (it is considered social procurement).

There are attraction and retention strategies that workplaces can adopt to position themselves and their employees for success in Aboriginal employment. Some were outlined in the [Organisational Readiness](#) section, but others relate more specifically to recruitment.

The [Transport and Planning Portfolio Yani Bangal - First People's Career Strategy](#) outlines a strategic and integrated approach to building a skilled, diverse, and thriving First Peoples workforce across all areas of the Transport and Transport Infrastructure industry.

Get in touch

To find out if you or your client have Aboriginal employment or Aboriginal business requirements, contact your contract administrator or manager.

Promoting jobs and traineeships

Any role or traineeship could be filled by an Aboriginal person. There are no positions more or less appropriate, nor more or less likely to be filled by Aboriginal people.

With that in mind, there are some positions and workplaces that Aboriginal people may be more interested in. This could be due to reputation, history, confidence, or an absence of signs that the workplace is inclusive of Aboriginal people. The latter is easily rectified. These suggested approaches can be applied to demonstrate inclusiveness toward any group.

A business can demonstrate basic inclusiveness by:

- adding a note to all job advertisements that applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged
- including an Aboriginal person in any images used when advertising roles (with permission)
- incorporating Aboriginal culture into publications and offices
- using plain English in recruitment documents and position descriptions

- reviewing the need for selection criteria in favour of a CV or resume with or without a cover letter
- including an Aboriginal person on interview panels
- conducting interviews in less formal settings
- having a team member meet with the interviewee prior to interview to discuss the process and establish greater rapport.

Another approach is implementing 'blind recruitment'. This involves removing certain details from applications until the person is selected for interview. For example, an applicant's name, age, gender, address and any mention of culture or background (including names of educational institutions). While this won't assist if you are specifically seeking an Aboriginal applicant, it will help ensure that your recruitment process is free from unconscious bias.

The Victorian Government's [Recruit Smarter](#) program included this approach and found "solid evidence of greater outcomes for underrepresented groups when personal factors were de-identified".

Where you advertise can be just as important as how you advertise. As well as the usual jobseeker sites, Aboriginal jobseekers may be more likely to use certain channels when searching for a role. Below are just a few examples of organisations you might like to consider. To advertise with them, the job needn't be community/social justice' related or designated for an Aboriginal person.

- [Koori Mail](#)
- [Ethical Jobs](#)
- [CareerTrackers](#)
- [Career development for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff](#)
- [Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural capability toolkit.](#)



GROW Program participants at Rail Academy Newport. Program delivered in partnership with Dardi Munwuro acceleration pathways team.

Training for the Future (TFTF) Entry Programs

With anything, a targeted approach achieves better outcomes. Below are some industry-specific programs that are designed to help industry recruit job-ready and skilled Aboriginal people. They are all for Aboriginal people and other priority job seekers, aim for women to make up 50 per cent of the total intake, and are part of the TFTF program.

GROW

GROW Employment Pathways is a Victorian Government initiative run by LXP. The program has been co-designed to support the construction industry to create better pathways for increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce participation.

Key features include:

- Co-designed with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- Culturally responsive pre-employment program to ensure job readiness and build a candidate's confidence
- Collaboration with funded employment service providers to facilitate pre and post employment support
- Partnership with construction industry partners who have a pipeline of work
- The program prioritises cultural safety and self-determination over immediate employment targets, helps demystify industry pathways, and prepares candidates for successful employment. It recognises cultural safety as essential for creating meaningful connections between Aboriginal jobseekers and culturally competent employers, establishing sustainable pathways into transport infrastructure careers.

Rail Careers: school engagement

Interest in industry starts at any age, and the saying 'you can't be what you can't see' has never been more true; both in terms of awareness of our industry's opportunities, and people seeing themselves having a place in our industry. Rail Careers is led by the Rail Academy and works with secondary schools to raise awareness about career opportunities in the rail, light rail and construction industries. They do this through the below four programs, and Aboriginal students are strongly encouraged to participate.

1. Regular careers days where students engage in hands-on learning experiences such as Track Build, where they work as a team to lay a simulated track. Content is linked to mathematics and critical and creative thinking, with a focus on transport infrastructure.
2. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workshops where students engage with inspiring female industry leaders through anecdotal presentations, interactive sessions and discussions with female STEM graduates. Students find out what STEM is in our industry, what different types of engineers do and the range of career pathways.
3. Sessions where teachers, career coordinators and pathways counsellors learn about the rail industry and increase their understanding of available learning and work opportunities. Participants connect with industry experts and learn how to locate and use career information.

4. Certificate II in Heavy and Light Rail Fundamentals (Pre-vocational)—a VET course providing basic knowledge and a realistic preview of Victoria's train and tram industry. Through structured and self-directed learning, and hands-on training in a simulated work environment, students can make informed choices about a future career in industry.

Rail Signalling Engineer Cadet Program

This program seeks to meet Victoria's demand for rail signalling engineers. Rail signalling is a highly specialised and growing field, and its engineers contribute to the design, construction, maintenance and project management of the signal systems that regulate train movements across the network. This program for electrical engineering graduates provides a fully paid, three-year cadetship with placements at Australia's biggest rail and construction operators. Upon completion, cadets are awarded a Graduate Diploma of Railway Signalling Systems.



Department of Transport and Planning Entry Programs

The Department of Transport and Planning established a portfolio-wide scholarship program for Aboriginal secondary college, TAFE and university students.

Recipient's education expenses will be subsidised, they will be invited into industry during their scholarship period to identify areas of interest and recipients are guaranteed a job at the end of the program.

Victoria's Big Build Graduate Program

Victoria's Big Build is comprised of five projects under the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA).

Each year, university graduates can apply for a two-year graduate program at VIDA where they complete tailored rotations and a Graduate Learning Series. Graduates are exposed to different teams and specialisations within their discipline and collaborate across multi-disciplinary teams.

Labour hire and recruitment companies

While all labour hire companies can and do recruit Aboriginal people, there are also several Aboriginal owned labour hire companies who are relevant to industry.

Some specialise in hiring only Aboriginal people, and others operate more broadly but are nonetheless more likely to employ Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal businesses.

Multiple Aboriginal labour hire or recruitment businesses are listed with Kinaway and Supply Nation (at time of print). Both organisations can put you in touch with businesses who can assist with your vacancies.



Western Program Alliance (WPA) Project, Underneath rail bridge, Werribee.

Other pathways to join industry

Aboriginal people wanting to join Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry are encouraged to get in touch through the following ways.

Searching for vacancies on:

- Victoria's **Big Build website** for government and business sector positions across the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA)
- **Victorian Public Service Careers website** and selecting relevant departments/agencies
- the websites of Training for the Future program partners who recruit directly (**Metro Trains Melbourne, V/Line, VicTrack, Yarra Trams**).

On the job support for Aboriginal employees

Once Aboriginal people have joined your workforce, there are actions that can support your new team members to be successful and feel included. Some of these are:

- Providing information on available professional development training
- Offering encouragement to join a mentoring program (or consider creating one)
- Pointing out any relevant policies and conditions, such as cultural leave days or a Reconciliation Action Plan
- Connecting new and current Aboriginal employees through a 'buddy system'
- Encouraging participation in any employee networks; Aboriginal focused or otherwise.
- Ensure formal meetings and staff forums offer an Acknowledgement of Country
- Procure Acknowledgment of Country plaques for workplace environment entry way
- Embed the organisation's values into staff inductions to promote the practice of inclusiveness and identify tokenism as inappropriate
- Require all staff to undertake cultural awareness training
- Promote organisational policies that address racism, bullying and activities that perpetuate marginalisation.

Girraway Ganyi EAP and Cultural Mentoring Service

The Girraway Ganyi EAP and Cultural Mentoring Services program is a key initiative as part of the **Transport and Planning Portfolio First Peoples Cultural Safety Framework**. Girraway Ganyi's services are provided by qualified counsellors and psychologists who are First Nations people and is available to the following people within the Transport and Planning Portfolio:

- First Peoples Staff and their managers
- Staff who work directly or indirectly in the First Peoples space.

Department of Transport and Planning First Peoples Staff network conference

Aboriginal people working at Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning (or one of its 30 agencies) can participate in annual conference where opportunities and support are promoted, issues are identified and Aboriginal networks are created. Enabling an Aboriginal peer to peer support network is a key retention initiative as part of the Yani Bangal Strategy. For details, please email **firstpeoplescareersandculturalsafety@transport.vic.gov.au**

Diversity within diversity

Aboriginal communities are just as diverse as any other group. Since people have many parts to themselves, it is important to suggest a range of networks and programs. Your workplace may have their own, and below are some of the industry-specific and industry-wide initiatives delivered under the TFTF program.

Bent Transport

The Bent Transport brings together LGBTIQA+ employees and allies across industry. Members meet quarterly to build a network of peers and hear about opportunities to create an LGBTIQA+ friendly industry. Bent Transport creates a community for LGBTIQA+ people, is a platform to share stories from existing Pride Networks, and is part of the the Department of Transport and Planning's program. Email bent.transport@transport.vic.gov.au

Women in Transport

This program is part of the Department of Transport and Planning's **Women in Transport (WiT) program**.

WiT Mentoring

This six-month mentoring program runs once a year and custom-matches women, gender diverse mentees with a mentor (of all genders) based on needs, skills and career goals. The program offers professional development sessions, networking and guidance to structure monthly mentee/mentor meetings.

Collecting information and reporting on targets

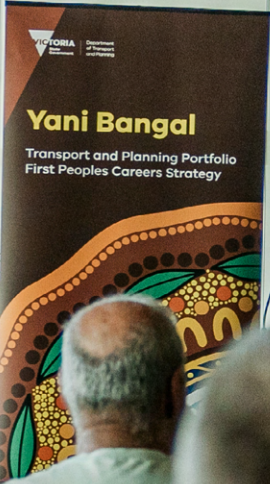
In their contracts with the Victorian government, many transport and infrastructure projects and operators are set Aboriginal employment and business targets that they are asked to report on.

The details will depend on your workplace (check with your contract administrator), but one point to note is that these targets are not a secret. Victoria has set the targets to ensure that Aboriginal Victorians benefit from the unprecedented works taking place, and that the works themselves benefit

from Aboriginal Victorians being involved across various roles.

So, when asking your contractors or employees questions to assist in reporting, it is best to explain why. Doing so ensures that employees know why you're collecting the information

and what you're doing with it, making it more likely that they will share the information. All employees should be asked if they are Aboriginal and asked after they have commenced work (people may be hesitant to answer before securing a job).



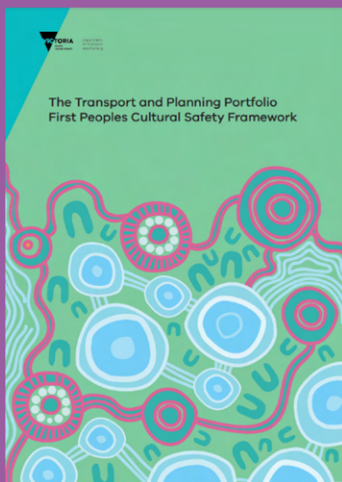
*Department of Transport and Planning's
First Peoples Staff network conference*

Policy and legislative context

This Resource is consistent with the below Victorian government documents, which may be valuable to your workplace.

- [Yani Bangal Transport and Planning Portfolio First Peoples Scholarship Program](#)
- [Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Action Plan 2020-2023](#)
- [Barring Djinang: five-year Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian public sector](#)
- [Tharamba Bugheen: Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-21](#)
- [Local Jobs First Policy](#)
- [Social Procurement Framework 2018](#)
- [Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-23](#)
- [Self-Determination Reform Framework](#)
- [Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 \(and Regulations 2018\)](#)
- [Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010](#)
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



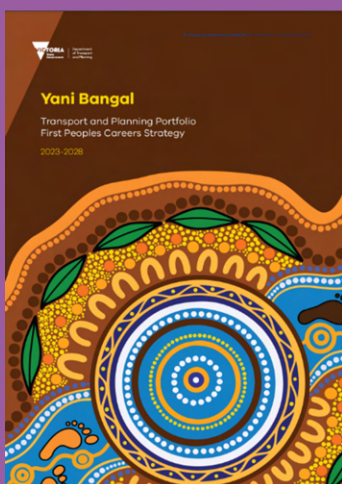
The Transport and Planning Portfolio First Peoples Cultural Safety Framework

The Transport and Planning Portfolio First Peoples Cultural Safety Framework lays the groundwork for the Department of Transport and Planning's commitment to improving cultural safety. The Framework aims to increase safety for First Peoples who use and work within the Transport and Planning systems and the Traditional Owners and First Peoples Community who engage with the portfolio. In early 2024, the Pakenham team welcomed the Indigenous co-design Team for a "Walk on Country" as part of ongoing co-design consultations with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (Bunurong).



Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Plan

The Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Plan formalises how the transport portfolio will work together as one in a coordinated, integrated fashion to deliver outcomes with, and for, Aboriginal Victorians. Through implementation of the plan, the Transport portfolio aims to deliver on the Victorian Governments commitment to enable self-determination.



Yani Bangal—First Peoples Careers Strategy

The Yani Bangal – First Peoples Careers Strategy outlines the Transport and Planning Portfolio's strategic and integrated approach to building a skilled, diverse, and thriving First Peoples workforce across all areas of the Transport and Transport Infrastructure industry.



Smoking ceremony
at Souther Program
Alliance project site.

This Resource aims to provide Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry with the information they need to effectively include Aboriginal Victorians, Aboriginal businesses and Aboriginal culture into their projects or services.

Our hope is that the Resource is used by agencies and businesses to prepare for Aboriginal inclusion and to support and celebrate Aboriginal people, business and culture.

With simple actions, we can make our industry a place that Aboriginal people see themselves being a part of and one that they are proud to be part of.

What can you do to attract and retain Aboriginal people and businesses?

How can your project or service incorporate Aboriginal culture?

Acknowledgements

Contributors

This Aboriginal Engagement Resource was developed with Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry. We thank the below projects and businesses for contributing case studies and suggestions.



Project Partners

We also thank our Training for the Future program partners.



Training for the Future

Training for the Future is a rail and transport infrastructure industry skills program to prepare Australians to deliver an unprecedented amount of work on the Melbourne rail network over the next 10 years and beyond.

Led by the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA) and delivered by the Level Crossing

Removal Project with input from transport industry leaders.. Its key elements are industry capability, skills development and diversity and inclusion.

For more information please visit bigbuild.vic.gov.au/jobs/training-programs/training-for-the-future





*Journey across Three Countries
by Robert Kelly – Wathawurrung*



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