

INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2022-2027

Engagement Report

Prepared by Community Development Team

Overview

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) guides the Town of Victoria Park in leading and fostering reconciliation in our community. The Town's Reflect RAP 2017-2022 concluded in June 2022 and a new plan is now being developed using Reconciliation Australia's Innovate RAP template.

The outgoing Reflect RAP has four objectives and 24 actions, based on the Reconciliation Australia template and shaped by the results of community and stakeholder engagement undertaken in 2016. The four objectives were:

- Relationships
- Respect
- Opportunities
- Tracking and progress

The Town is now embarking on compiling the Innovate RAP template.

This report provides a snapshot of the consultation process undertaken to inform development of the Innovate RAP, what we have learned, who contributed, proposed approaches, and focus outcome areas.

Consultation process

Community engagement was held over a six-week period, from the beginning of National Reconciliation Week through to the end of NAIDOC week; Friday 27 May to Monday 11 July 2022.

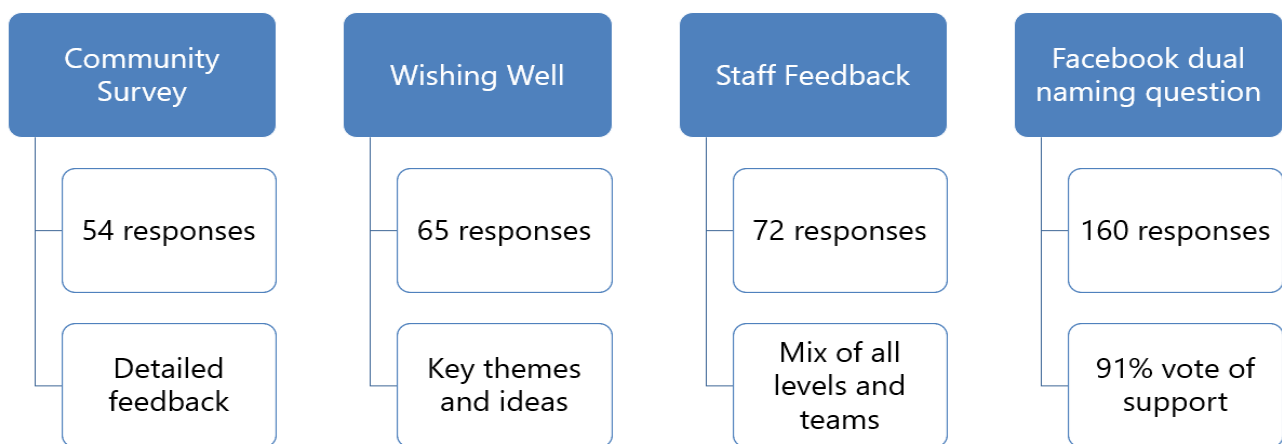
This phase featured four main engagement methods:

- A community survey (online and hardcopy)
- A physical "Wishing Well" positioned at various locations around the town, and an online brainstorming "Wishing Well" tool.
- Online Facebook question regarding dual naming of the Town of Victoria Park

A Background Information Paper was published to support this feedback process, providing

information about our community demographics, community needs and the progress the Town of Victoria Park has made over recent years. Town of Victoria Park staff were also engaged during this phase through questions posed in the all-of staff meeting held on 5 July 2022.

Overall, a total of 371 responses were received over the six-week engagement period, as detailed below.



In addition, close to 450 community members participated in Town-led Reconciliation activities throughout the six-week period and through this were informed on the Town's Innovate RAP, including:

- Approximately 150 attended the opening of National Reconciliation Week – Community event at Bidi Walk, including a smoking ceremony with Shaun Nannup.
- Approximately 30 community members participated in the Mindeera Community Choir, involving five rehearsals throughout the period and a community performance on Saturday 16 July 2022 with around 80 attendees.
- Approximately 20 dancers took part in five rehearsals for, and two performances, of the Noongar Flash mob. One performance was held at the Victoria Park Sunday markets, with over 100 community members watching, the second performance prefaced the Community Choir Event at Victoria Park RSL, with over 80 audience members present. In addition, over 100 Kent Street high school students learnt the flash mob dance under the guidance of choreographer Michael Smith.
- Approximately 80 community members participated in a Walk on Country on the shores of the Derbal Yerrigan, led by elders Simon Forrest and Roni Forrest. Here they learnt of the importance of knowing, caring for and protecting country. They also learnt how to speak of country through learning Noongar language place and animal names, from language teachers Simon Forrest and Dylan Collard.

What we learned

Community survey

54 total responses received:

- 52 online submissions
- 2 hardcopy submission
- (See Appendix 1 for a full list of survey questions)

Most common themes for the meaning of Reconciliation:

- Truth telling
- Recognition, Understanding and Respect for First Nations culture
- Accepting Responsibility
- Acknowledging History
- Embedding and highlighting Aboriginal culture, arts and language into the community/Town.
- Listening to first nation's people and educating the community about past wrongs
- Restoring connection to country/land
- Learning from First Nations people
- Making tangible changes and building connections

Most common themes for what the Town should do:

- Engage/Involve Indigenous People in key decision making
- Rename places and spaces to Noongar names
- Seek advice and leadership representation from Noongar elders
- Educate the community about Noongar culture and Noongar boodja
- Establish a First Nations reference group
- Ensure First Nations culture is visible in the physical environment
- Truth telling
- Teach the community Noongar language
- Share indigenous history of local areas
- Creating spaces for the recognition and celebration of Noongar culture

Most common themes for Town priorities:

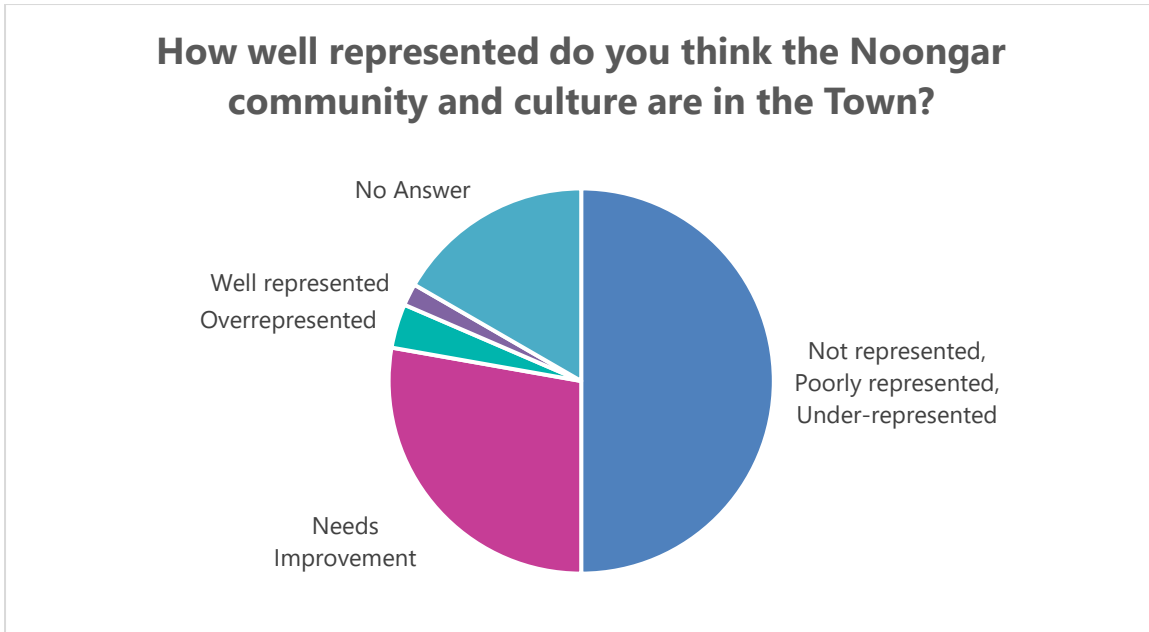
- Rename places and spaces
- Authentically embrace cultural diversity and different ways of living, working and being
- Be Truthful
- Engage/Involve Indigenous People
- Recognition of place and connection to Country
- Change the date
- Learn about caring for the environment from First Nations people
- First nations people on Council
- Dual name the Town of Victoria Park
- Aboriginal people to be listened to and consulted on key decisions

Ideas for action:

Themes	Responses
Town-based initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More events like the Bidi Walk event and smoking ceremony. • Flying Aboriginal Flag at Council offices. • Have seen Acknowledgement of Country where people have imparted new knowledge. • Welcome to Country at the start of Anzac Dawn Service. • Town events where due genuine respect is paid to First Nations peoples. • Library Indigenous collection. • Activities at the Art Centre. • More Noongar language and art on murals. • Aware of Advisory Committee. • More events like the Community choir. • Guide community on small things they can do to embed Noongar practices. • More cultural diversity in staff at Council. • More training at Council to promote the importance of acknowledging race and seeing ethnicity. • ToVP to put on more community events that represent Noongar culture for community to attend and appreciate. • Fly First Nations flag at ToVP offices. • ToVP website to use the traditional place name and contact details. • Employ more Noongar people. • Change the date.
Special Days/Weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week celebrations • Noongar artworks at Victoria Park Centre for the Arts during International Women’s Day and Harmony Day. • More events like NAIDOC Week Walk on Country. • NAIDOC Week exhibition at Victoria Park Centre for the Arts. • More events like Noongar Flash Mob at the Markets (NAIDOC Week). • More events like Noongar Choir (NAIDOC Week).
Renamed places and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jirdarup Parklands has lots of signs that talk about the significance of flora/fauna. • Named places with First Nations names. • Kent Street Sandpit upgrade. • Sussex Street Office (Community Law Centre). • Bidi Lane opening. • Plans to return Kent St bushland to an area that celebrates Aboriginal culture. • Noongar name for Koolbardi Park. • Renaming of the Town and its places – dual naming in some instances. • Recognition of place in place making – led by the Town. • Place names!! Street Names!! • Increase knowledge of culture by dual naming parks, landmarks etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More dual naming of places and more in the community to learn these names. • Have our own signage for the area and shops for recognising the land we are on. • More cultural appreciation year-round, such as by more naming or dual naming of places.
Activities in Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools doing great work with students and helping them understand culture and language. • Our Language Matter initiative at Millen School. • Day care centre –engaging Indigenous high school students in buddy program. • Millen Primary School embedding Aboriginal culture and knowledge through Aboriginal Leadership Group. • Stories from Indigenous culture teaching young children about history of indigenous storytelling. • Kent Street SHS yarnning circle and many other initiatives at the school.
Cultural Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural events, murals, paintings, naming of places. • All learn about the culture and see how amazing it is. • Cultural awareness raising in community/ how Noongar culture relates to Vic Park – importance of local places. • Continue to provide /organise Noongar functions/exhibitions/art. • Community participation in opportunities created by the Town to celebrate, recognise, and lift Noongar presence in the Town. • Embrace learning events. • Places of significance showcased more – telling relevant stories. • Community engagement in initiatives that are designed to increase the representation of the Noongar community in Vic Park. • NAIDOC weeks on-going. • More community events celebrating and recognising Aboriginal culture in the Town. • Foster events throughout the year, not just during NAIDOC week. • Public art displays, not just foyer display, 10ft bronzes. • Teach Noongar language in schools, library, community centres. • Learn about Noongar culture. • Talk the language, share the stories. • Don't need to wait for NRW and NADOC weeks – needs to be more subtle and part of everyday life.
Collaborative Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss representation of Noongar people with elders. • Active consulting of Noongar leaders. • First Nations to be the ones to decide what they would like to be done to make improvements. • Listen to Aboriginal people's stories/experiences, hear what they have to say, bear witness. • More collaboration with surrounding LGA's especially along the Derbal Yaragan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More programs and projects should be designed to develop the respectful relationships between the Noongar and other groups in Vic Park to enhance reconciliation. • More collaboration in how we (community) interact. • Groups or community social groups inclusive of Aboriginal people. • Calling out discrimination when it happens. • Supporting conciliatory actions. • Share power.
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26 January:

Approximately 73.1 percent of respondents opposed the celebration of Australia day on 26 January.

Common words / responses:

- "Change the date"
- "Offensive."
- "Upsetting."
- "Saddening."
- "Should not be celebrating."

Approximately 19.2 percent of respondents indicated that Australia day should be celebrated on 26 January:

- "Keep the date."
- "Do not change the date."
- "No problem with the date."

Approximately 7.7 percent were unsure.

Dual Naming

Approximately 73.1 percent of respondents strongly supported the renaming of parks, reserves and other places in the Town to Noongar names.

- Strongly support- 73%
- Somewhat support – 7.7%
- Neutral – 1.9%
- Somewhat oppose – 7.7%
- Strongly oppose – 9.6%

Wishing Well

This method asked the community to submit their response to: *“What is your wish for Reconciliation?”* A total of 85 wishes were received. The physical well was located during the engagement period at the following places: Bidi Walk, Town of Victoria Park Library, Vic Park Community Centre, Kent Street High School, Social Manna and Vic Park Raiders football club. The key themes captured through this method were:

1. Respect
2. Love, Peace & Equality
3. Understanding of Noongar culture
4. Caring for Country
5. Learning of Noongar language and renaming spaces and places
6. Positive change together
7. Restoring connections to Country

Overall, the most popular words used were Respect and Equality, with two common sentiments:

- The need for all Australians to learn about Indigenous culture, history, and language.
- Ensuring equality for all Aboriginal and Torres strait islander peoples.

Ideas for action relevant to Innovate RAP:

- Truth telling.
- Caring for Country.
- Collective understanding of shared history.
- More formats and forums for deep listening.
- Integration of Noongar language and learning into the Town community
- Renaming and dual naming of places and spaces to Noongar names
- Learning from Indigenous elders about country and culture, including sacred sites, such as Mindeera.
- Change the Date - 26 Jan.
- Indigenous decision making.
- Embrace Uluru Statement from the Heart

Staff Feedback

A workshop was held with 72 staff members and the key results were:

- The results suggest many staff support the concept of Reconciliation and show an eagerness to embrace this within their roles.
- There is a thread of sentiment from staff that indicates some feel the Town's actions towards Reconciliation can be tokenistic. This reinforces that authenticity is valued in this space and its associated actions.
- There are indications that some staff have a distinct lack of education and understanding of the history and experience of Aboriginal people, and the need/purpose of Reconciliation within our community.
- The Town should focus on formalising a centralised process for Aboriginal engagement – including facilitating engagement through Mindeera, embedding within the Project Management Framework coupled with Aboriginal education, training and cultural awareness for staff.

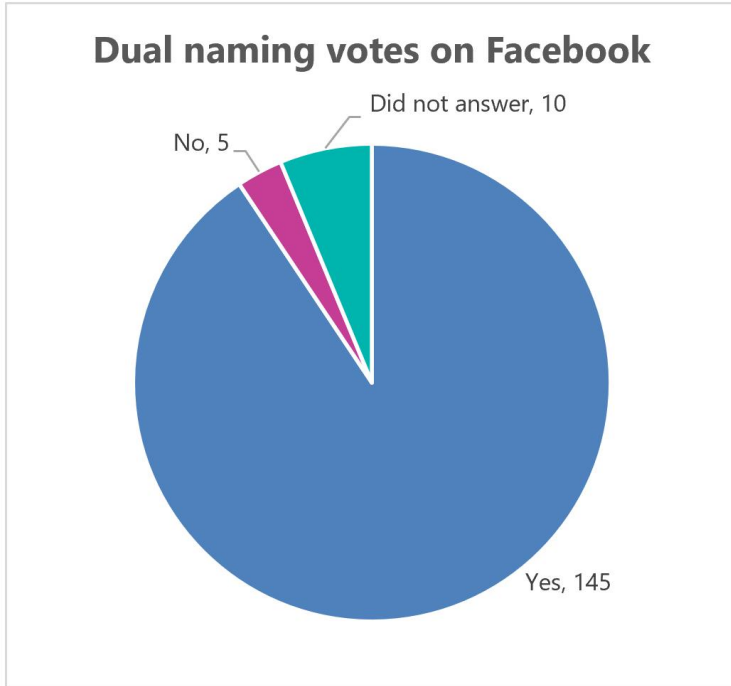
Opportunities raised for organisational improvement:

- To shape organisational culture so the way we approach Reconciliation is second nature. Comments included:
 - We need to acknowledge cultural beliefs, mindful inclusiveness,
 - have understanding, empathy and respect for Aboriginal culture,
 - affirmative action,
 - respectful engagements,
 - being welcoming,
 - treating everyone equally with understanding, sensitivity and dignity,
 - using Kaya when greeting,
 - doing our Acknowledgement of Country, and
 - inclusion of Aboriginal people in all walks of life
- Build a clear centralised and formalised process for how to engage Aboriginal representatives for Town-led projects. Comments included:
 - I don't do it because it's not required,
 - no formal process to follow,
 - we need help to better understand cultural matters and contexts,
 - need a process to assist with language meaning and spelling,
 - formalise a process in engaging with the Mindeera Advisory Group.
- Strong leadership around Reconciliation. Comments included:
 - Including recruitment of Aboriginal people,
 - staff education and training,
 - integrating Reconciliation into strategies,
 - using more Noongar language and culture in the workplace,
 - incorporating Noongar language into the Town's everyday language/culture, and
 - talking more about what each person can do to advance Reconciliation.
- More Town and community projects. Comments included:
 - direct partnerships with Aboriginal people,
 - more environmental and/or capital projects,
 - ideas for public art and community events and to deliver/facilitate education for community.

Facebook dual-naming question

A question regarding dual naming was posted on Facebook on 6 July 2022. Results included:

- 6,424 people reached.
- 536 total engagements, made up of 350 reactions (likes/reacts), 160 comments and 9 shares.
- 91% of comments showed support for dual naming.



Appendix 1

Community survey questions:

1. In a few sentences, describe what Reconciliation means to you.
2. The Town's first Reconciliation Action Plan, the Reflect RAP, was developed around three key pillars of developing relationships, building respect, and investigating opportunities to advance reconciliation. We are now embarking on our journey to create our second Reconciliation Action Plan, the Innovate RAP. Can you tell us in a few sentences what you feel are the most important actions the Town and the Community could take to advance Reconciliation?
3. If you had to choose just one action that you'd like to see in the community to advance reconciliation, what would it be?
4. Have you seen or heard anything in the Town that you feel best represents Reconciliation? This could be a landmark, an artwork, an event you've attended, or even an idea that you've heard.
5. How well represented do you think the Noongar community and culture are in the Town of Victoria Park. And what can you, the community, do to increase the presence of community and culture?
6. Is there anything else you would like us to know about Reconciliation, respect, building relationships, or caring for culture and for country in the Town of Victoria Park?
7. Celebrating 26 January as Australia Day has been a matter of controversy across local and regional communities. How do you feel about the issue?
 - a. Do you think Australia Day should be celebrated on 26 January?
 - b. Why? Could you briefly elaborate on your answer?
8. Noongar language is an integral part of Noongar culture, providing a strong connection to Country (animals, land, ceremony, ways of knowing). How do you feel about the renaming of parks, reserves and other places in the Town to Noongar names, as a way of recognising and honouring Noongar culture?