



**Nina Braid**

**The transition from being culturally aware to becoming culturally competent**

**Yarra Valley Water's Journey**



## Acknowledgement of Country

Yarra Valley Water proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and Owners of the land and water on which we rely and operate.

We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the lands and waterways, and recognise and value their care and protection for thousands of generations.

Our vision for reconciliation is that all who live on this land acknowledge our shared history and move forward, together, in a respectful way.

# YARRA VALLEY WATER

STRETCH  
RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2020 –  
SEPTEMBER 2023



# OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

## 2018

- Inala Cooper joined our Reconciliation Leadership Committee
- Created Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network
- Ran our first stakeholder breakfast on Cultural Flows in conjunction with our local Traditional Owners
- Creation and appointment of Aboriginal Partnerships Manager Role
- Supported Wurundjeri to have titles returned for Galeena Beek properties in Healesville
- Worked with Dreamtime Art to conduct an Aboriginal community photoshoot
- Joined Kinaway Chamber of Commerce as a Platinum Member
- Began working with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung's Water Unit in the Integrated Water Management for Upper Merri Creek sub-catchment planning

## 2017

- Launch of Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
- Karen Milward joined YVW Board
- Creation of Reconciliation Action Plan Choose Tap Bottles
- YVW Employees provided with Acknowledgment of Country Card and Reconciliation Action Plan Artwork Lanyards
- Created Aboriginal Cultural Protocols page, made available to employees through Intranet
- Supported the Eastern Metropolitan NAIDOC Ball through sponsorship and volunteer support
- Aboriginal Flag raised in front of Mitcham Office
- Creation and appointment of Aboriginal Liaison Officer Role
- Supported Wurundjeri employees to attend Wise Waterways seminar in Beechworth
- Included Acknowledgment of Country in Annual Staff Kickoff event

## 2019

- Set up an expression of interest form for potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
- EAP iCare access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
- Created targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Watercare brochures
- Support for Bununrong Land Council in the development of their Country Plan
- In partnership Aboriginal Housing Victoria conducted a concession program
- Ian Hamm joined YVW Board
- Signed up to "Racism It Stops with Me" campaign and hosted a screening of The Final Quarter for employees
- Participated in Sea of Hands in the lead up to Reconciliation Week
- Partnered with AFL SportsReady to begin an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship and Cadetship Programs
- Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place ran didgeridoo and basket weaving lessons for National Reconciliation Week
- Supported Aboriginal Housing Victoria's NAIDOC Family Day
- 162 Staff completed Cultural Awareness Training
- Torres Strait Islander Flag raised in front of Mitcham Office
- Launch of Social and Sustainable Procurement Strategy
- Staff attended the NAIDOC march, NAIDOC ball and the Long Lunch

## 2020

- Commissioned the Torch Project to design and paint a mural at Mitcham Office
- Online event for National Reconciliation Week with Mabu Mabu, attended by staff and partner organisations who learnt to make damper the Torres Strait Islander way
- Joined the "All One Together" campaign and created a video to highlight our support
- Commenced the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cadetship Program
- During NAIDOC week, Inala Cooper spoke to staff on the importance of Uluru Statement from the Heart

# Cultural Learning Strategy

The Strategy supports employees and leaders to:

- Take the appropriate culturally informed approaches to their day-to-day work
- Ensure programs, policies, and service delivery reflect, are appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal peoples
- Engage effectively with Aboriginal people and communities on relevant issues
- Adopt a workplace culture that respects and values the skills, experiences, and different perspectives of Aboriginal employees and communities



# The Framework

The Framework model as recommended by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) has highlighted three pillars of cultural competency. A good example of being Culturally Capable is around *Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country*:



# Core Capabilities

## Foundation — All YVW employees

Knowing	Doing	Being
<p>Knowing and understanding Aboriginal histories, cultures, customs, and beliefs. Part of knowing is also acknowledging the individualism of each Aboriginal person, as well as their community, tribe and/or nation. Knowing is also not assuming, and enabling yourself and others to learn, and acknowledge this is a journey for all involved. This can contribute heavily to holding <i>Welcome to Country</i>. Firstly, knowing the difference between a <i>Welcome to Country</i> and an <i>Acknowledgement to Country</i>. Knowing the difference and conducting the appropriate method at the beginning of a meeting or event is the first step. On top of this, there is the act of knowing who the Traditional Owners of where the meeting or event is taking place.</p>	<p>Culturally appropriate action and behaviour. Being proactive and making appropriate decisions to include Aboriginal colleagues, contractors, sub-contractors, stakeholders, and customers.</p> <p><b>Doing</b> the right things to make yourself and your team culturally aware and capable, regardless of the scale. Engaging a Traditional Owner/Custodian to <b>do</b> a <i>Welcome to Country</i> before a meeting or event, or <b>doing</b> an <i>Acknowledgement of Country</i> yourself. <b>Doing</b> the research beforehand, or by nominating a different staff member each meeting can make it more engaging.</p>	<p>Awareness, authenticity and openness to examining one's own values and beliefs. Your own authenticity is important to cultural capability otherwise the journey as a whole becomes tokenistic and undo hard work which the organisation has done beforehand.</p> <p><b>Being</b> aware when something is not right and doesn't align with this strategy altogether and saying something about it to the right person will contribute to this.</p> <p><b>Being</b> authentic by having a genuine interest in acknowledging the Traditional Ownership/Custodianship of the lands and waterways. Holding a <i>Welcome</i> or <i>Acknowledgement</i> for personal or professional gain, or because you feel like you need to as all other YVW events have one is an example of tokenism, as the action is now not authentic. This can be damaging to relationships with Traditional Owners as well as Aboriginal colleagues, contractors, sub-contractors, stakeholders, and customers.</p>

# Creating a Continuum

Imbedding cultural awareness training as BAU

All new starters do online cultural awareness training

Face to face training with Karen Milward

Cultural immersion opportunities via CHMPs

National Reconciliation Week

NAIDOC Week

Leadership Following

Lunch n Learn

External facing opportunities for contractors

Opportunities for Board



# Lessons Learnt: Yarra Valley Water

- Navigating through what works for Traditional Owners/Custodians takes time – building trusting and sustainable relationships is vital.
- Cultural Awareness training for staff has been key in building relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people and organisations.
- Creating culturally safe work environments is becoming the business as usual model
- Collaboration vs Consultation
- Strong Leadership from the top down towards Reconciliation





# Thank you



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At Yarra Valley Water we are also proud to celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures and abilities.