

City of Greater Bendigo January 26 Statement of Intent

July 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We would like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, the Traditional Owners of the land. We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing, and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

The City recognises that there are people from many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities living in Greater Bendigo. We acknowledge and extend our appreciation to all First Nations Peoples who live and reside in Greater Bendigo on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country, and we thank them for their contribution to our community.

BACKGROUND TO THE GREATER BENDIGO COMMUNITY VISION 2021 - 2031

The Greater Bendigo Community Vision 2021 – 2031 was developed by a representative group from the community in May 2021.

*‘Greater Bendigo celebrates our diverse community.
We are welcoming, sustainable and prosperous.
Walking hand-in-hand with the Traditional Custodians of this land.
Building on our rich heritage for a bright and happy future’.*

The Community Vision is underpinned by five values – transparency, sustainability, inclusion, innovation and equity. The vision and values guided the development of the 2021 – 2025 Council Plan – *Mir wimbul* which has a dedicated outcome area focussed on Aboriginal Reconciliation with the goal being *‘A community that recognises and respects Aboriginal people and culture and enables the self-determination of Traditional Owners’*.

Council has demonstrated its commitment to Aboriginal Reconciliation over recent years through the development and implementation of two Reconciliation Plans. The first plan (2016 – 2019) formalised and built on existing reconciliation initiatives and opportunities within the City of Greater Bendigo. The second, *Barpangu* (2021-2025), was developed through conversation and consultation with the Traditional Owners, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, the broader local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and City of Greater Bendigo staff.

Barpangu describes Council’s commitment to reconciliation and self-determination with the goal to: *work towards a strong and vibrant culture that celebrates the Aboriginal community of Greater Bendigo and puts them at the forefront to collaboratively heal Country and create an inclusive space where we all celebrate stories, histories and Peoples.*

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Building on these solid foundations Council is committed to listen deeply during ongoing conversations with local First Nations people and demonstrate respect, empathy and understanding to promote healing.

We should listen closely and understand a history of exclusion, oppression and trauma of First Nations people that began on 26 January 1788. The City of Greater Bendigo and Council stand in solidarity with First Nations people in recognising this.

As a Council we have a responsibility to demonstrate leadership to our community, to recognise and understand that many First Nations people and others see this day as one of mourning and deep loss and to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia's history.

Council will work with the Greater Bendigo community seeking to influence how January 26 is understood and acknowledged across the Municipality.

Further, Council will seek to ensure that commemorations reflect a true and representative view of 26 January, to educate the Greater Bendigo community and to establish a strong culture of respect and understanding of history that values and honours the strength and resilience of First Nations Peoples.

This Council commits to walking hand in hand with Traditional Owners and First Nations people to make appropriate changes around January 26 events within our LGA, address the disadvantage and inequity that exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and promote reconciliation and self-determination.

As a Council we commit to:

- Work in partnership with Traditional Owners and First Nations community members to hold an event on January 26 which acknowledges the history, holds space for all First Nations people and provides an opportunity for the Greater Bendigo community to show support
- Partner with Traditional Owners and First Nations community members to build broader community knowledge and promote understanding regarding January 26 in relation to the impact of colonisation on First Nation's people.
- Build recognition and understanding of Traditional Owner's and First Nation's culture into citizenship ceremonies. We will be guided by our Traditional Owners and work in partnership to develop a ceremony that promotes understanding, connection and acknowledges Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung culture.
- Advocate for a review of the date and it's appropriateness Federally, ensuring alignment with the intent of the Uluru Statement of the Heart
- Work together in partnership with Traditional Owners and First Nations people to continue the conversation around January 26 and progress plans to address issues going forward.