



Title: Aboriginal Reconciliation- Statement of Commitment

Category: Strategic- Understand stakeholders and clients

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Related legislation: Reconciliation Act 1991; The Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation Corroboree 2000; The Roadmap for Reconciliation Corroboree 2000.

Related policies: Community Engagement Policy and Framework

Related procedures:

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the implementation of Council's Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Reconciliation which aims to promote unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians, and valuing justice and equity for all Australians.

Background

On 24 February 2000, the Australian Local Government Association Executive Members adopted the Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Reconciliation and recommended that the Statement be adopted by individual councils across the country. In response to this initiative, Canterbury City Council adopted its own Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Reconciliation at a Council meeting of 27 April, 2000.

Rationale

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First People of Australia and have been the traditional owners of the land for over 40,000 years. They have suffered alienation from their traditional lands and loss of lives and freedom and the forced removal of children as a result of European settlement. Today they are a part of our culturally diverse society and need to become our partners in addressing the needs of all communities across the City of Canterbury.

At the 2011 Census, there were 788 people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background living in the Canterbury City.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- Facilitate Aboriginal Reconciliation at the local level;
- Define the scope for consulting local Aboriginal people in the delivery of accessible services to Indigenous residents;
- Raise awareness of the importance and value of local Aboriginal culture and heritage;
- Increase participation by Indigenous residents in local government;
- Ensure the relevance of Council public protocols and communication strategies for people of ATSI backgrounds;
- Provide guidance to Council staff on relevant terms and aspects of Aboriginal Reconciliation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to Council staff in all positions across all Divisions as it reflects the overall commitment of Council to Aboriginal Reconciliation.

4. Definitions

Aboriginal Reconciliation is about unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. It is about respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and valuing justice and equity for all Australians. The reconciliation movement is said to have begun with the 1967 referendum in which the majority of Australians voted to remove clauses in the Australian Constitution which discriminated against Indigenous Australians.

5. Principles

Council is committed to maintaining a culturally diverse, tolerant and open community, and aims to foster a harmonious and co-operative community where a sense of community belonging means all persons matter and all of us belong, and as part of this commitment Council recognises:

- 5.1 Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia;
- 5.2 The feelings of loss and grief experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been caused by alienation from traditional lands, loss of lives and freedom, and the forced removal of children;
- 5.3 The customs and traditions of Indigenous Australians and their spiritual relationship with the land;
- 5.4 The rights of Indigenous Australian to live according to their own beliefs, values and customs, and the vital importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's contribution to strengthening and enriching the heritage of all Australians;
- 5.5 The need for a partnership approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of addressing the aspirations of whole communities throughout Australia;
- 5.6 The need for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to work together for a national agreement or other instrument/s of reconciliation;
- 5.7 The continuing need to improve non-Indigenous people's understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and finding effective ways to work together in partnership to ensure the principles of equity and access for all members of the Indigenous community to culturally appropriate services and programs.

6. Responsibilities

Corporate Services Division/ Capacity Development and Human Resources will be responsible for the following aspects of the policy implementation:

- 6.1 The Capacity Development Team will facilitate a consultation process/structure with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the City of Canterbury, promote the policy and implement projects/initiatives promoting Aboriginal Reconciliation in conjunction with Indigenous residents or Indigenous organisations.
- 6.2 Human Resources will arrange periodic programs for relevant Council staff on Aboriginal awareness and heritage issues as required.

7. Procedures

- 7.1 An Acknowledgment of Country and of Traditional Owners of the land, the Bediagal clan of Dharug people, to be delivered at each Council meeting, official functions and Council events.
- 7.2 Indigenous people invited to be part of Council events and celebrations of significance as a sign of respect for the dignity and protocols of the local Indigenous community.
- 7.3 Aboriginal flag displayed in Council Chambers and on Council's building at all times and in Anzac Mall during National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week; and the Aboriginal flag shall be placed alongside the Australian flag at all official Council Australia Day celebrations.
- 7.4 Canterbury Aboriginal Advisory Group or another consultative structure such as a regional alliance of Aboriginal consultative committees, if established, be supported in providing appropriate advice to Council and in planning and delivering Reconciliation initiatives in the City of Canterbury.