

2019 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Twenty years on from Darebin Council's initial "Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Australians" (1998), this updated Statement of Commitment renews, strengthens and formalises Council's long-standing commitment and relationship with the diverse Aboriginal¹ and Torres Strait Islander communities of Darebin.

1. Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirms that Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. Council acknowledges that Elders past, present and emerging are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.
2. Council respects and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and waters and their right to self-determination. Council also recognises the diversity, including the diversity of views and opinions, within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have had and continue to play a unique role in the life of the Darebin municipality. Council recognises and values this ongoing contribution and its significant value for our city and Australian society more broadly. Darebin is home to people from many of the 500+ clan groups that exist in Australia and is also home to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of many skin, moiety and language groups, genders, ages, abilities, sexualities and gender identities etc.
4. Council respects the human, cultural and spiritual rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and notably acknowledges their right to "enjoy their identity and culture, maintain and use their language, maintain their kinship ties and maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters"². Council also acknowledges the right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Darebin to respect and equality and to live free from discrimination (first and foremost racism, but also sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia) and disadvantage.
5. Council acknowledges the powerful call contained in the *Uluru Statement from the heart* and its aspirations for justice, truth-telling, Makarrata (agreement-making) and a voice. Council hears this call and will continue to seek guidance from Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on, and respect their leadership towards, self-determination (as per the recommendations of United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous people) and towards a fairer Australian society, and at our own, local level, a fairer Darebin.

¹ "An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander **descent who identifies** as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the **community** in which she or he lives." Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs 1981.

² Section 19(2) of the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*.

6. Council acknowledges that Aboriginal people are Australia’s first peoples and that January 26 marks the beginning of the British invasion of their lands. Aboriginal people never ceded sovereignty of the land and have continuously cared for their country for over 60,000 years as the world’s oldest living culture. Theirs are rich and varied heritages and histories, both pre and post-invasion.
7. Council acknowledges that present disadvantage stems from past injustice, dispossession, oppression, colonisation, forced removal and the crime of genocide inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country, the ongoing effects of which still affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. While devastating on the traditional life of Aboriginal nations, these have not diminished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s connection to country, culture or community, their resilience and their strength.
8. In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations, Darebin City Council is committed to working towards a future based on justice, respect, understanding and the elimination of disadvantages and barriers to equality, notably in health, education, housing and employment, in the spirit of the *Close the Gap Statement of Intent 2008*³.
9. Darebin is a significant gathering place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the homeland of a number of significant Aboriginal peak bodies, organisations and businesses. It has also been a site for significant events in post-contact history such as the ‘signing’ of the ‘Batman Treaty’. Council acknowledges and values the opportunities this association brings for listening, learning, understanding and relationship-building and for genuine collaboration on issues of shared concern.
10. Council affirms the positive forward movement towards equality and equity, race relations, institutional integrity, historical acceptance through truth-telling and unity⁴. Council acknowledges its educational role and its responsibility to take deliberate action to ensure that the broader community more fully understands the experiences and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and the true account of our nation’s history.

Signatories (TBC):

 Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung elders
 Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung
 Cultural Heritage
 Aboriginal Corporation

 Darebin Aboriginal
 Advisory Committee
 representative

 Mayor Darebin City Council

³ With the aim of “closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians on life expectancy, educational achievement and employment opportunities”.

⁴ Reconciliation Australia