BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

WODONGA ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

2016-2017 TO 2018-2019
Contact

For more information about the Wodonga Aboriginal Reconciliation Action Plan, contact:

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Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this plan may contain images of people who have died.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Wodonga Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which it stands and pay its respects to their Elders past, present and future, for they hold the memories, the tradition and the culture of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Wodonga Council is committed to working together and strengthening our relationship with our Aboriginal community towards a future of mutual respect and harmony. The council recognises that sustained employment, education and economic participation is the key to achieving optimal health, social and financial outcomes for the Aboriginal community of Wodonga. The council also understands that it takes a collective approach to seize on opportunities that are present within the community, both now and into the future.

Wodonga Council will advocate on behalf of – and with – the Aboriginal community of Wodonga to enhance these opportunities.

As a council we recognise our role as a community leader in developing local policy. We play a critical part in the journey towards building a better understanding of our shared past, and forging respectful relationships using the strengths of the Wodonga community to create a better future.

This reconciliation action plan sets out the framework for how we will work with our community, all levels of governments, organisations and agencies to realise our goals.

Cr Anna Speedie
Wodonga Mayor
VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

To be a leading regional city where collectively through community leadership, mutual respect and relationships, our people experience and have opportunity to enhanced social, cultural, economic and environmental prosperity.
STATEMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Wodonga Council:

- Acknowledges that Aboriginal Australians were the first people of this land;
- Acknowledges that Aboriginal people have strived to retain their culture and identity through more than 200 years of non-Aboriginal settlement;
- Acknowledges the past loss by Aboriginal people of their land, their children and their lives since the start of non-Aboriginal settlement;
- Acknowledges the right of Aboriginal peoples to live according to their own values and customs, subject to the law;
- Respects the Aboriginal peoples’ special relationship with the land and values the importance of Aboriginal culture to the heritage of all Australians;
- Recognises the valuable contribution that Aboriginal Australians have made to the community and the state; and,
- Commits to working together towards a future of mutual respect and harmony.
WODONGA COUNCIL’S RECONCILIATION JOURNEY

The Wodonga Aboriginal Reconciliation Action Plan documents, demonstrates and strengthens the council’s good intentions, and commits the council to continuing its journey to reconciliation.

Wodonga Council is just beginning to formally document its reconciliation journey and acknowledges Reconciliation Australia’s ‘Reflect’ Reconciliation Action Plan¹ template as a tool for building the foundations for relationships, respect and opportunities.

The council has a continuing commitment to progressing Aboriginal cultural awareness, employment opportunities, retention and procurement. The council will work closely with the Aboriginal community and actively participate in memorandum of understandings (MOU) with Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, the Wodonga Aboriginal Network, the Hume Closing the Gap Advisory Committee, and the Albury-Wodonga NAIDOC Week Committee.

The Aboriginal reconciliation action plan aims to build on the strengths of the council’s achievements in actively advancing reconciliation.

Key achievements leading up to the development of this Aboriginal reconciliation action plan are:

2010 Memorandums of understanding established with Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation strengthening provision of early years services with a vision to close the Aboriginal outcomes gap.

2011 Began use of Statement of Acknowledgement at all council meetings and civic ceremonies, such as Australia Day and citizenship ceremonies.

2012 Memorandums of understanding established with the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service strengthening provision of early years services with a vision to close the Aboriginal outcomes gap.

2013 Began permanently flying of Aboriginal flag, alongside the Australian flag and Victorian flag, outside The Cube Wodonga as well as in the council chambers.

2015 Wodonga’s Aboriginal infancy and early childhood outcomes surpass those for the wider community.

2016 Formal presentation to council of the Wodonga Aboriginal Network community plan. Development of four short films profiling Aboriginal Elders called Songlines and Storytelling, launched at the NAIDOC Week closing ceremony.

¹ www.reconciliation.org.au
POLICY CONTEXT

The Aboriginal reconciliation action plan has been developed specifically for the local context of Wodonga. It is the council’s plan for its people and community. However, it is related to other important internal and external policies, plans and legislation. The following documents inform what the council does and the Aboriginal reconciliation action plan contributes to the aims and requirements of these documents.

**Australian Government**

**Victorian Government**
- *Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2006*
- *Victorian Local Aboriginal Networks (Formerly Local Indigenous Networks) Five Year Plan 2016-2020*, Aboriginal Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2016
- *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018*
- *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework*
- *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020*
- *Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*
- *The Indigenous Family Violence 10-year plan: Strong culture, strong peoples, strong families*
- *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*

**Albury-Wodonga**

**Council documents**
- *Municipal Early Years Plan*
- *Cultural Services Plan 2012-2017*
- *Wodonga Planning Scheme*
- *Draft Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2016-2017 to 2020-2021*
ABOUT WODONGA

Wodonga is strategically located about 300km north of Melbourne and 580km south of Sydney on the Hume Freeway.

Wodonga covers an area of 433 square kilometres and stretches along the banks of the Murray River and Lake Hume (6900GL capacity). It is located in the Murray Darling Basin, which is Australia’s largest river catchment, with surrounding hills, rich agricultural valleys, adjacent wineries and historic towns.

Wodonga is the major employment, education, health and sporting centre for North East Victoria. It is also the fastest-growing regional city in the North East with a growth rate of 1.3 per cent and an estimated residential population of 38,559 as at June 30, 2015. The population is expected to reach 57,634 by the year 2036.

Wodonga has one of the youngest median ages in the state at 34 years, therefore comprises of a high population of young children and families.

Combined with Albury, Wodonga is recognised as Australia’s 20th largest city, with a population of 90,281 residents. The wider catchment of Wodonga is estimated to be more than 180,000, the strong majority of which is in Wodonga and North East Victoria.

There are a number of Aboriginal specific organisations in the Albury-Wodonga region working to meet the growing needs of the Aboriginal community. There is anecdotal evidence of a population of 3000 to 4000 Aboriginal people in Albury-Wodonga.²

Wodonga performs several significant economic and social roles for Victoria and the surrounding north-east region, these being:
- The most significant economy in North East Victoria;
- The bookend economy and population mass for Victoria’s northern border;
- A regional capital role for the surrounding districts and townsships;
- Major employment, education, health and sporting centre for North East Victoria; and,
- Key economic zone on the Hume Freeway between Melbourne and Sydney.

Wodonga is a leader in regional health facilities and has a comprehensive range of services available to the community. Wodonga has excellent educational facilities ranging from preschools to a major university, and is home to a broad range of industries that offer a wide variety of employment opportunities.

² WAN, 2015 pg.3
OVERVIEW OF LOCAL DATA

7th highest population of Aboriginal people in Victoria (out of the 79 LGAs)

- The median age for Aboriginal community is 18
- The median age for the wider community is 35

3x more likely to live in single parent families

Compared to non-Aboriginal households, Aboriginal households in Wodonga are larger

- 68% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal households are owned
- 31% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal households are rented
- 35% of non-Aboriginal households are owned
- 65% of non-Aboriginal households are rented

Much younger age profile than non-Aboriginal population

- Median age for the wider community is 35

66% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal population is participating in education

- 31% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal households are owned
- 65% of non-Aboriginal households are owned

Lower Year 12 and tertiary qualification attainment levels compared to the broader Wodonga and Victorian populations

- 66% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal population participated in the labour force, comparable to the Victorian Aboriginal population

Unemployment in 2011

- Half of Wodonga’s Aboriginal population participated in the labour force, comparable to the Victorian Aboriginal population

Excellent kindergarten participation rates

- 68% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal households are rented
- 5% of Wodonga’s non-Aboriginal households are rented

27.8% Wodonga’s Aboriginal population

13% Wodonga’s general population

Excellent participation in maternal and child health key visits

- Participation drops away at a rate greater than non-Aboriginal participation from eight weeks

65% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal population is participating in education

- 35% of Wodonga’s Aboriginal households are owned
- 65% of non-Aboriginal households are owned

Population and housing

0-8 years

- Participation of Wodonga’s Aboriginal families in early childhood services has been close to the non-Aboriginal families and far exceeds the attendance rate in Victoria

Immunisation rates for Aboriginal children are equal to those of the non-Aboriginal population

- Aboriginal Australians were at least twice as likely to rate their health as fair or poor and half as likely to rate their health as excellent or very good

Education, employment and economic

Median household income

- $808 Wodonga Aboriginal household
- $1,081 Wodonga household
- $962 Victorian Aboriginal household

Health, safety and wellbeing

- 41.7% Between 2006 and 2011, the number of Aboriginal people in Wodonga’s labour force increased by 41.7% (60 people)

Many factors contribute to the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health including lower education and employment rates, higher smoking rates, poor nutrition, physical activity and poor access to health services

Legend

10

³ ABS Census 2011, DHS 2012, Maggolee 2015
Wodonga City Council Xpedite data 2015
AIWH Australia’s Health 2014
City of Wodonga Social Profile 2011
ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Wodonga Aboriginal Reconciliation Action Plan is a three-year plan that documents what the council will do within its sphere of influence to contribute to reconciliation.

Reconciliation is about bringing people together, particularly building better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal peoples for the benefit of all Australians.

To create positive change Wodonga needs more people discussing the issues and coming up with innovative ideas and actions that make a difference.

Reconciliation is required to bridge the division and inequalities between Aboriginal people and the broader Australian community. Key areas of division and inequalities are the differences in health, income and living standards.

The development of the Aboriginal reconciliation action plan involved the input of council staff, Aboriginal Elders, multiple Victorian Government departments, Aboriginal organisations, and organisations delivering services to Aboriginal people. These stakeholder groups were consulted during May and June 2016. The deliverables highlighted in this plan represent a cross section of the needs and preferences indentified through this process.

Governance and implementation

For the implementation of the Aboriginal reconciliation action plan (ARAP) to be successful, clear governance and executive oversight is required.

The Aboriginal reconciliation plan will be championed and driven at the executive level of the organisation. Implementation of the plan will be led by the ARP Implementation Group, an internal working group that includes numerous council employees.
RELATIONSHIPS
The council values the meaningful relationships it already has with Aboriginal people. The council is committed to developing new relationships in the community while continuing to make stronger relationships with current community partners.

RESPECT
The council values an organisational culture based on respect. It will show respect to Aboriginal people, and their culture and history, while encouraging others to do the same.

OPPORTUNITIES
The council aims to promote diversity, inclusion and equity by facilitating and advocating for opportunities for local Aboriginal people. Opportunities focus on building the capacity of the Aboriginal community to self-determine their future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>DELIVERABLES</th>
<th>ICON</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aboriginal cultural learning and development</td>
<td>People and Workplace</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Cultural competency audit conducted to review cultural awareness training needs within the organisation.</td>
<td>🏛️</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People and Workplace</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Explore ways to increase awareness of Aboriginal cultures, histories, and achievements within the organisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Services</td>
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<td>All staff to complete cultural awareness training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Understanding Aboriginal culture</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Cultural significance of the lands and waters in the local area are explored and documented in relevant master planning.</td>
<td>🏛️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal cultural protocols.</td>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Protocols to guide the understanding and use of Acknowledgement of Country are implemented.</td>
<td>🏛️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Investigate internal process to recognise when a local significant Aboriginal Elder passes away.</td>
<td>🏛️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Advocacy</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>With partners, advocate for improved investment in, and development of, Burraja Cultural Centre. Investigate with the Aboriginal community Burraja Cultural Centre as an opportunity for employment and training.</td>
<td>🏛️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate for the advancement of outcomes for the local Aboriginal community.</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Identify with the community opportunities to advocate for Government funding for local Aboriginal health, education and support services and facilities.</td>
<td>🏛️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Advocate for increased and improved housing options to meet the diverse needs of the community. Participate in relevant network groups that advance the housing outcomes for the Aboriginal community.</td>
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<td>ACTION</td>
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<td>4. ARAP Implementation Group</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Oct 2016</td>
<td>Form an ARAP Implementation Group, comprising decision-making staff from across the organisation, to implement the plan.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="icon" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish an ARAP Implementation Group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Build relationships</td>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Work with Aboriginal organisations and Elders to develop and endorse Aboriginal engagement protocols.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="icon" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Build internal and external relationships.</td>
<td>Executive and Managers</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Empower the workforce to confidently develop relationships with the Aboriginal community.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="icon" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Improve council participation</td>
<td>Executive and Managers</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Attend Wodonga Aboriginal Network meetings and other relevant committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve council participation in Aboriginal activities.</td>
<td>Council staff</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Participate in relevant networks and engage with Aboriginal organisations to work to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive and Managers</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Explore opportunities with AlburyCity for cross-border initiatives to improve Aboriginal outcomes.</td>
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## EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Aboriginal employment</td>
<td>Economic Development / People and Workplace</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
<td>Develop an Aboriginal employment strategy that focuses on Aboriginal employment within the organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate Aboriginal employment.</td>
<td>Economic Development / People and Workplace</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Investigate with local businesses and organisationals potential Aboriginal employment projects which improve education and employment, whilst connecting Aboriginal community to country.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Supplier diversity</td>
<td>Finance / Business Services</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Undertake an audit to identify local Aboriginal owned/auspiced businesses/organisations that may be a potential supplier of goods or services to council.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate Aboriginal supplier diversity.</td>
<td>Finance / Business Services</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Promote council’s procurement policy to Aboriginal-owned businesses, outlining the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal-owned businesses.</td>
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<td>ACTION</td>
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<td>9. Significant events Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and NAIDOC Week.</td>
<td>ARAP Implementation Group</td>
<td>May/June</td>
<td>Investigate ways to raise awareness of, an participate in activities to recognise and celebrate NRW and NAIDOC Week.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive and Managers</td>
<td>July annually</td>
<td>Use NAIDOC Week as an opportunity to raise awareness and share information amongst council staff and the broader community of the meaning of NAIDOC Week, including information about the local Aboriginal peoples and communities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ARAP Implementation Group</td>
<td>July annually</td>
<td>Increase participation from across the organisation in NAIDOC Week. Council officer to participate on cross-border committee.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ARAP Implementation Group</td>
<td>July annually</td>
<td>ARAP Implementation Group members participate annually in an external NAIDOC Week events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Arts and culture Continue to advance Aboriginal arts and culture</td>
<td>Tourism and Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Investigate the documentation of stories of the Bringing Them Home (BTH) people who were part of the Stolen Generation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Discuss with Wodonga TAFE opportunities to work together in securing funds to deliver culturally appropriate courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism and Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Local Aboriginal artwork is considered when acquiring and exhibiting artwork.</td>
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<td>ACTION</td>
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<td>12. Places of significance</td>
<td>Business Services Place naming</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Consider the inclusion of respected Aboriginal people when naming council</td>
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<td></td>
<td>committee</td>
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<td>and community assets.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parks and Gardens/Tourism and</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Deliver cultural interpretative signage, where appropriate, which</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural Heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td>acknowledges local Aboriginal history.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Support Aboriginal community to preserve artefacts and sites of significance</td>
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<td>via the statutory planning process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Cross border projects</td>
<td>Parks and Gardens</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Identify opportunities to engage the Aboriginal community in the planning of</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>the waterways and cultural land at Gateway precinct as well as the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>hilltops.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Investigate cross-border initiatives that strengthens the opportunities for</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>the Burraja Cultural Centre and Burraja Arts.</td>
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<td>ACTION</td>
<td>RESPONSIBLE</td>
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<td>DELIVERABLES</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Capacity building</td>
<td>Community Planning and Wellbeing</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Consider culturally appropriate ways to engage community and emerging leaders in council leadership, student and volunteer programs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Aboriginal self-determination</td>
<td>Family, Youth and Early Years/Tourism and Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Continue to engage vulnerable and disengaged young people in council programs and the arts.</td>
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<td>through capacity building.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Continue targeted programs</td>
<td>Family, Youth and Early Years</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Continued investment in targeted early years programs for Aboriginal families.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue delivering targeted and enhanced services to close the gap on Aboriginal outcomes.</td>
<td>Family, Youth and Early Years</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Continued investment in targeted programs for Aboriginal young people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Council planning</td>
<td>Community Planning and Wellbeing</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Ensure that Wodonga Council surveys are expanded to include specific Aboriginal questions to inform council and community planning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather improved local information to inform council planning.</td>
<td>Community Planning and Wellbeing</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Ensure that the appropriate council plans and strategies are based on local Aboriginal data and reflect evidence-based practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The process for monitoring, measuring and evaluating this plan is incorporated into the actions.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. ARAP awareness</td>
<td>Community Planning and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Sept 2017</td>
<td>Seek feedback from the Aboriginal community on the implementation of the plan over the first 12 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
<td>Awareness of the ARAP commitments is raised amongst all staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
<td>Key internal stakeholders are informed of their responsibilities within the ARAP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Tracking the plan and review</td>
<td>Community Planning and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
<td>Develop datasets to support measurement of the Aboriginal reconciliation action plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARAP Implementation Group</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
<td>Define systems and processes needed to track, measure and report on ARAP activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARAP Implementation Group</td>
<td>June 2021</td>
<td>Review and refresh ARAP based on learning challenges and achievements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>