

GLENELG SHIRE

STRENGTHENING ABORIGINAL INCLUSION IN GLENELG SHIRE 2026–2030

Glenelg Shire Council position statement, commitments and actions.

We, the elected Councillors of Glenelg Shire Council, acknowledge the Gunditjmara, Jardwadjali and Boandik people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across the Glenelg Shire.

Through the Strengthening Aboriginal Inclusion in Glenelg Shire 2026-30 – Glenelg Shire Council position statement, commitments and actions, we affirm our responsibility to turn these commitments into practice.

This statement stands as a shared commitment to Country, to community, and to the future of Glenelg Shire.

Signed _____ Date: 25/5/26
Mayor Cr Karen Stephens

Signed _____ Date: 25/5/26
Deputy Mayor Cr Matt Jowett

Signed _____ Date: 25/5/26
Cr Duane Angelino

Signed _____ Date: 25/5/26
Cr Michael Carr

Signed _____ Date: 26/5/26.
Cr Robyn McDonald

Signed _____ Date: 26/5/26
Cr John Pepper

OUR POSITION STATEMENT

Glenelg Shire Council acknowledges that we govern and live on the lands of the Gunditjmara, Jardwadjali and Boandik people, who have cared for this Country, its lands, waters, and community for countless generations. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and we honour the strength, resilience, and continuing culture of all Aboriginal peoples across the Glenelg Shire.

While colonisation affected all of Australia, Glenelg's historical context carries particular significance. As a Council, we acknowledge our responsibility to ensure that this history is truthfully and respectfully understood and shared.

We recognise that Portland holds a substantial moment in history as the site of Victoria's first permanent European settlement. The Glenelg Shire region was also the site of profound frontier conflict and dispossession experienced by Gunditjmara clan groups from sealers and whalers leading up to 1834 and subsequent settler arrivals beyond this date. These events have had lasting impacts that continue to be felt by Gunditjmara people today.

As a Council we have a shared commitment to strengthening how the municipality acknowledges, interprets and presents its history through expanding the use of signage, plaques and public art as important tools for truth-telling. These approaches are effective ways to provide broader historical context, encourage community understanding, and ensure that diverse perspectives are recognised.

A key priority to us is the adoption of dual storytelling, particularly at contested or sensitive sites such as monuments and historic locations. This approach enables multiple perspectives to be shared especially for our Aboriginal community, ensuring a more complete and inclusive representation of history. We support initiatives that use these interpretive methods to foster greater awareness, reflection and learning across the community.

As elected members we favour a case-by-case approach to addressing monuments, contested items or place naming that are considered detrimental.

We recognise that the impacts of colonisation are ongoing and reflected in inequities experienced by Aboriginal people across representation, health, education, housing, employment and social outcomes. Addressing these inequities is a shared civic responsibility, and Council recognises that we have a role to play within this.

OUR COMMITMENT

1. Recognition of Unique Context of the Shire

- We acknowledge the true history of the region within the Glenelg Shire, and we commit to truth-telling as a vital step toward awareness, education, recognition and healing.
- We will work with our Aboriginal community to ensure that stories of resilience and survival are recognised, respected, and shared.
- We commit to continue fostering spaces and the creation of visible features for remembrance, cultural recognition, and education within the Shire through adding layers of meaning and interpretation to relevant sites.
- We commit to addressing items and assets that are Council owned or managed that cause distress or cultural harm to Gunditjmara Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people within the Glenelg Shire.

2. Equity, Representation and Voice

- We will actively identify and remove barriers to increase access to Council services, opportunities and engagement through updating policies and processes.
- We will advocate for resources and partnerships to support improved social and emotional well-being outcomes and community-led development.
- We are committed to strengthening Aboriginal voices, and we will seek guidance from Gunditjmara Traditional Owners and our Aboriginal community organisations to ensure Aboriginal voices are heard in matters that directly affect them.

3. Cultural Awareness, Respect and Partnership

- We will continue to learn from and with the Gunditjmara people, valuing their knowledge, custodianship, and ongoing connection to Country embedding learnings into practice and services where appropriate.
- We will continue to support and lead partnerships, events and initiatives that strengthen cultural identity, promote economic participation, and celebrate Aboriginal culture across the Glenelg Shire.

OUR ACTIONS TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL INCLUSION IN GLENELG

1. Organisational Change and Accountability

- **Develop and publish a publicly accessible report outlining our commitment to our Aboriginal community through our Action Plan** with transparent annual reporting.
- **Commit to cultural competency and anti-racism training** for councillors and staff.

2. Truth-telling and Historical Acknowledgement

- **Recognise and commemorate significant sites & stories across the Shire**, in partnership with Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC), Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service (DWECH) and Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation (WMAC), Gunditjmara Elders, local historians and other identified persons through memorials, signage, public art, awareness raising, dual storytelling and place naming.
- **Address culturally detrimental items** on a case-by-case basis, with the view to educate and contextualise by speaking to and visually sharing all parts of local history.
- **Embed local truth-telling into civic spaces** within open spaces, significant sites, visitor information centres, tourism materials and public spaces to ensure the full history of local colonisation and Gunditjmara resilience is visible and known.
- **Host truth-telling forums** and support community gatherings that bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents together to reflect, learn, and discuss pathways to unity.
- **Significant dates and local historical context.** Council recognises that certain dates carry different meanings across our community.
    - Council will continue to support a Gunditjmara community led event on 26 January which is reflected in the Community Funding and Support Policy.
    - Council recognises 19 November and its significance as the local date of colonisation, resulting in Victoria's first permanent European settlement at Portland Bay. Council supports using this date as an opportunity for education and dual storytelling about our shared history.
    - Council commits to embedding Aboriginal flag protocols within the Flags Procedure in consultation with the Aboriginal Partners.
    - Council commits to continuing their work in Reconciliation through public events, awareness raising and promotion of inclusivity.

3. Partnership & Economic Development

- **Continue the Aboriginal Partnership** with genuine influence, that can contribute to Council strategy, policy, and priorities. We recognise that effective partnership sometimes requires Council to lead, and at other times to stand behind and support Aboriginal leadership.
- **Partner with the GMTOAC, DWECH and WMAC** on community development projects that return benefit to Country, Culture and community.
- **Implement Aboriginal procurement within Councils Procurement Policy** that sets considerations for contracting and supply from Aboriginal owned businesses.
- **Commit to reducing cultural load** by improving coordination of work across departments, building internal capability and ensuring consultation is respectful, purposeful and appropriately resourced. We also commit to establishing clear engagement pathways with Gunditjmara Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Organisations and community.

4. Civic and Environmental Leadership

- **Upskill in management of natural assets and the environment** through relevant departments of Council partnering with GMTOAC and other organisations to learn and appreciate traditional ecological knowledge into land and environmental management.
- **Commit to creating the ongoing opportunity for naming and dual naming** of roads, streets, towns, parks, and key landmarks of traditional place names or that represents and recognises Gunditjmara culture, with proper consultation and education. Where re-naming is requested, Council will review locations on a case-by-case basis in partnership with Traditional Owners and the broader community, prioritising contextualisation, education and cultural safety, reflecting these inclusions within our Council Naming Policy.
- **Civic Leadership** will be shown by Council being present at Aboriginal specific events and initiatives and through timely responses to matters of local significance. Council will respond thoughtfully to State and National developments where they directly impact the local community.
- **Celebrate and elevate Aboriginal voices year round** through storytelling, exhibitions, local arts, awards and recognition opportunities alongside youth and community engagement.