

# Djilang First Nations People Community Engagement and Participation Plan

Committee for Geelong's  
Leadership Portfolio



This project is an initiative of the Committee for Geelong's Leaders for Geelong Program.

## Project Sponsors and Cultural Advisors

Sharelle McGuirk  
Renee Owen

## Leaders for Geelong Project Team

Kay Mills  
Jessica Larkin  
Pat Friend  
Alasdair Woodford  
Glen Snowden

## Artwork

**Artwork Title:** *New Beginnings* (Acrylic on Wood)

**Description:** This piece is the artists representation of Wadawurrung Country and Connections.

There are the You Yangs, the waterways/river systems, the ocean and coastline.

Bunjil, the creator, the ancestral being, is flanked by a new moon and the sun. This is new beginnings. This represents ongoing, continuous connections to Country, Community and Culture.

The large gathering circle is unity of diversity. The diversity of different peoples.

Travel lines within the bottom section of the piece are an indicator of connections to our past, where we are in our present and what our future may hold.

## Artist Profile

Ammie Howell is a Penangke Skin woman from the Arrernte people, Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Her dreaming comes from the Ntyarlke (Caterpillar). She was born and raised on Wathaurong Country, Geelong Victoria and lives here still with her partner, a Bundjalung man, and their 6 young children.

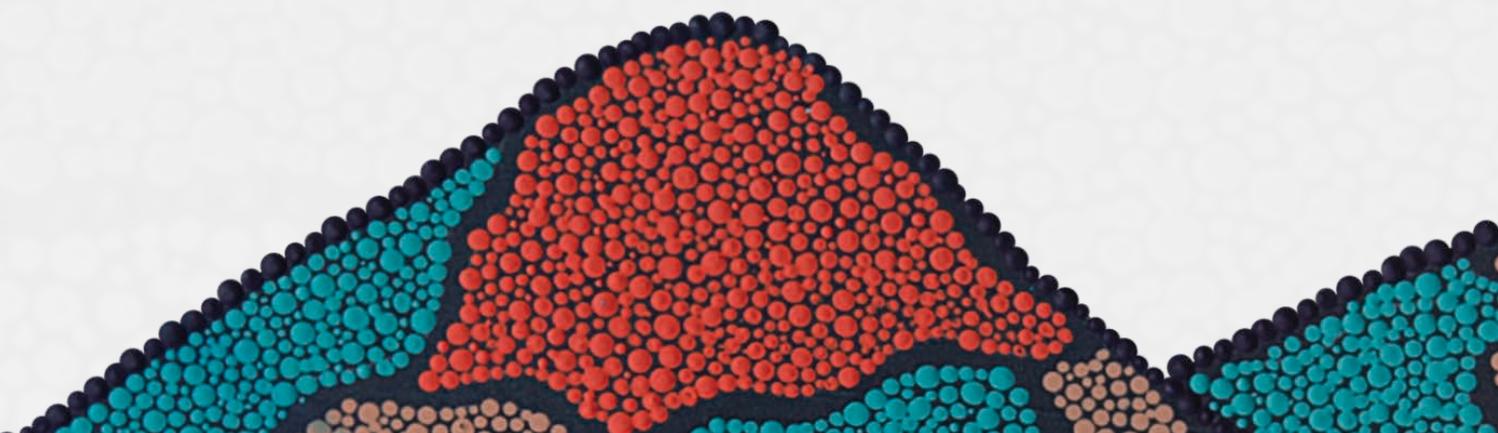
Ammie began painting in her early 20's alongside her mother and mother in-law. Her works have been sold Australia wide. She has donated many pieces to raise money for cancer research, donations to provide sporting opportunities for young people and has worked within schools to teach children about her Culture and Art. Several Sporting clubs have also had Ammie's artworks on their guernseys for Reconciliation Rounds.

Ammie is a contemporary Aboriginal Artist who uses patterns, colour, shape and design to create paintings that portray a sense of country, culture and self.



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# Acknowledgement of Country

The Committee for Geelong acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Nations people and the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to the local Wadawurrung people of this land, their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to First Nations people here today.

A note from the project team:

'First Nations people' is used throughout this report to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of Australia and sovereign people of this land.

At some points in this report, 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' or 'Indigenous' or 'Indigenous Australians' may also be used where appropriate or where referencing a source document.

The Key Terms and Language section of this report provides more information regarding the use of terms in this report.



# Acknowledgements

The Project Reference Group would like to acknowledge the important contributions of the following people, without whom this project could not have been undertaken and completed:

Corrina Eccles — Wadawurrung Traditional Owner

Ammie Howell — Wadawurrung-based Artist

Kaley Nicholson — Aboriginal Workforce Engagement Officer, *City of Greater Geelong*

Libby Lesock — Policy and Programs Officer, *Barwon Health Aboriginal Health Unit*

Jennifer Cromarty — CEO, *Committee for Geelong*

Janelle Meyes — Leadership Portfolio Manager, *Committee for Geelong*

Todd Murphy — Graphic Designer *Todd Murphy Design*

Harwood Andrews

All participants who were interviewed or anonymously surveyed during the information gathering phase of this project, including other leadership program providers, leadership program alumni, and influential Geelong employers.

Thank you.

# Executive Summary

Effective leadership and self-determination are critical to improving social, economic and cultural outcomes of First Nations people. It is widely recognised that efforts to redress disparities that exist between First Nations people and non-Aboriginal people must be led by First Nations people and underpinned by the principles of empowerment, self determination and a strengths based strategy. Supporting and empowering First Nations leaders is essential to capacity building within the community and contributing to a stronger and more inclusive Geelong.

The development of the Plan for the Committee for Geelong's (CfG) Leadership Portfolio is in response to anecdotally low levels of representation of First Nations people participating in leadership programs offered in Geelong. While the focus of this project is to develop the Plan for the CfG's Leadership Portfolio, the content may also be relevant to other leadership programs more broadly.

## The objectives of the Plan are to:

1. Improve the levels of application, engagement, and participation from First Nations people in the CfG's Leadership Portfolio; and
2. Enhance cultural awareness and cultural competence of all CfG Leadership Portfolio participants.

The Plan was developed based on the findings of stakeholder consultation, a cultural audit of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio, and desktop review of policy documentation, frameworks and other relevant reports.

A high level summary of the Plan is outlined below. Further detail including actions, anticipated outcomes and timeframes is included in **Section 7** of the report.

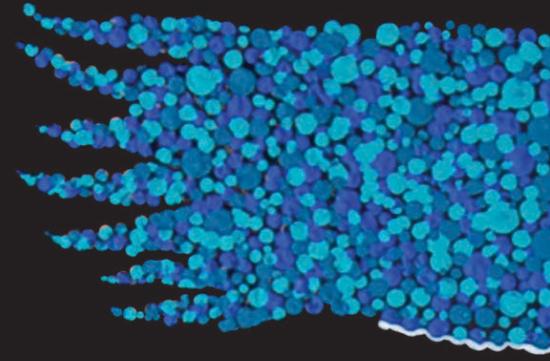
**Table 1: Summary of the Plan**

Domain	Actions
Governance and Reporting	Establish a working group that will oversee implementation of the Plan.
	Improve reporting of First Nations participants in the Leadership Portfolio.
Relationships	Establish and foster mutually beneficial relationships with a range of local First Nations people and organisations.
	Develop a network of support for First Nations participants in Leadership Portfolio Programs.
Respect and Cultural Awareness	Create a culturally welcoming space for local First Nations participants.
	Enhance cultural awareness of all Leadership Portfolio participants and staff.
Participation, Access and Opportunities	Develop a targeted recruitment strategy.
	Expand commercial relationships with local First Nations businesses.
Program Content	Embed local First Nations perspectives throughout the CfG Leadership Portfolio's program content.

The principle of self-determination has been applied consistently throughout this project. With the knowledge and insights of the First Nations Cultural Advisors and consultation with a cross-section of Geelong's First Nations community, the project team has sought to ensure that the Plan is representative of the voices of the First Nations community.

# Key Terms and Language

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The following section provides a summary of the key terms and language used throughout this report. Use of these terms is based on guidance from the First Nations Cultural Advisors regarding their preferences around terminology and referencing relevant Language and Terminology Guides.

**Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people** — 'Aboriginal' refers to the original peoples of mainland Australia. 'Torres Strait Islander' refers to the original peoples of the 274 islands located in the Torres Strait.

**Closing the Gap** — is a government strategy that aims to reduce disadvantage among First Nations people with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, and employment outcomes.

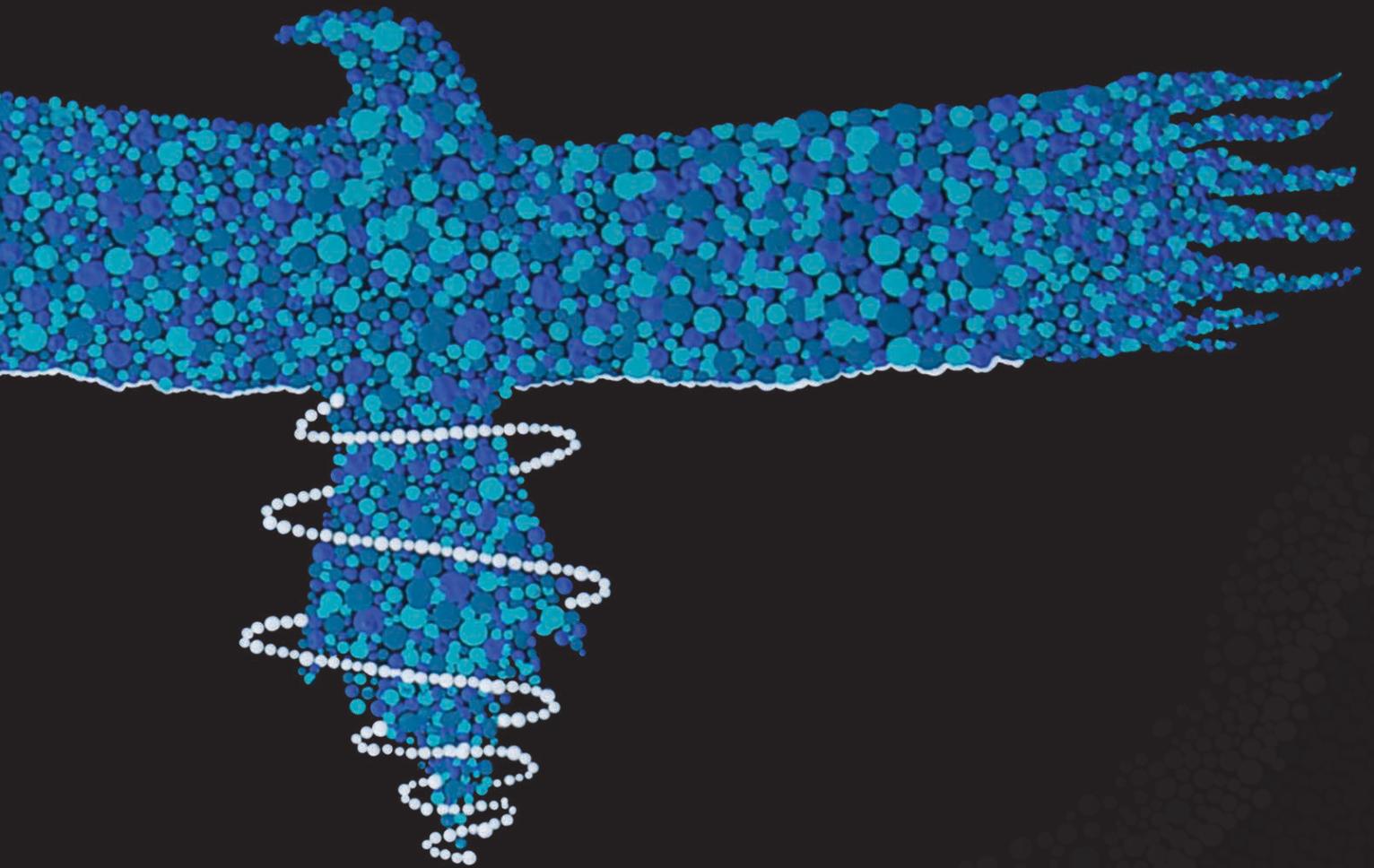
**Cultural awareness** — developing 'cultural awareness' sits along a cultural safety continuum that recognises a continual learning journey which may lead to greater 'cultural responsiveness', 'cultural competence', or 'cultural proficiency'. For simplicity, this report utilises the term 'cultural awareness' when discussing actions to improve cultural safety of First Nations people. These actions require individuals or organisations to commit to improving their knowledge of cultural safety and changing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

**Djilang** — means 'tongue of land', pronounced 'Geelong' since European colonisers came to the area.

**First Nations people** — 'First Nations people' is used to recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of Australia and sovereign people of this land. Similar to 'First Australians', it recognises the various language groups as separate and unique sovereign nations.

**Indigenous or Indigenous Australians** — In some parts of Australia, the term 'Indigenous' can be considered offensive. This report seeks to avoid using this term except where it has been used within another source document such as a government report.

**Koorie (or Koori)** — Across Australia, local terms are used by First Nations people to describe people from a particular region. In some situations it may be appropriate to refer to First Nations people from Victoria and some parts of New South Wales as 'Koorie'.



**Reconciliation Action Plan** – A strategic document that includes practical actions that will drive an organisation’s contribution to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which it operates.

**Registered Aboriginal Party** – A group representing the interests of the Traditional Owner Group at all levels of government and community. Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) is the Registered Aboriginal Party on Wadawurrung Country.

**Traditional Custodian** – Land ownership is a Western concept – generally, Aboriginal people do not own the land. Rather, they have a cultural and spiritual connection to it.

**Traditional Owner** – A local descent group of First Nations people who have common spiritual affiliations to a site on the land, being affiliations that place the group under a primary spiritual responsibility for that site and for the land and are entitled by tradition to forage as of right over that land.

**Wathaurung Aboriginal Co-operative** – an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation which provides holistic and culturally secure services to meet the specific needs of the First Nations community.

**Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung)** – a Registered Aboriginal Party which represents the Traditional Owner interests and has a statutory role in the management of Aboriginal heritage, values and culture within the region.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project Context

Effective leadership and self-determination are critical to improving social, economic and cultural outcomes of First Nations people. Visionary and accountable First Nations leaders that exercise self-determination as an 'ongoing process of choice', can more effectively respond to the unique needs in their communities, contributing to more sustainable outcomes.

First Nations people continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups in Australia in all of the social, cultural, and economic determinants of health and wellbeing. This is reflected in employment and education outcomes, home ownership and incarceration rates, and institutional racism. Despite over a decade of effort under the 'Closing the Gap' agenda, Australia has not been able to address the disparities that continue to exist between First Nations people and non-Aboriginal people.

It is now widely recognised both within the literature and at a Federal and state policy level, that any efforts to address these disparities must be led by First Nations people, for First Nations people. Equitable representation of First Nations people in leadership is essential to creating stronger and more inclusive communities.

This project was proposed due to anecdotal low levels of representation of First Nations people participating in leadership programs offered in Geelong. The Greater Geelong region has the largest population of First Nations people in Victoria outside of Melbourne, yet there appeared to be an under representation of First Nations people in senior leadership positions in Geelong, consistent with national findings.<sup>1</sup>

The CfG is an independent, member-based organisation that provides strategic leadership and influence to leverage the economic potential of Geelong. One of the strategic objectives of the CfG is "community leadership and advocacy". The CfG delivers a Leadership Portfolio to develop the emerging and existing leaders of Geelong. As this project is an initiative of the LfG program, the focus of this project is the development of the Plan for the CfG's Leadership Portfolio. The Plan will provide CfG with a pathway to strengthen engagement and participation by First Nations people in its Leadership Portfolio.

The vision for this project is that the CfG's Leadership Portfolio is diverse and has an effective, inclusive, and collaborative working partnership with key local First Nations stakeholders through ongoing establishment, development, and consolidation (where appropriate) of these partnerships.

While, the focus of the Plan is on the CfG's Leadership Portfolio specifically, the content may also be relevant to other leadership programs more broadly.

<sup>1</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) identified that of the 2,500 most senior leadership positions in Australia, only 0.4 per cent are held by First Nations People.

## 1.2 Project Purpose, Objectives and Outcomes

The purpose of this project is to develop the Plan.

The Plan is intended to provide a cultural framework and context for the CfG’s Leadership Portfolio and its associated programs, events, and activities, and is designed to act as a precursor to the potential future development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

**The objectives of this project are to:**

1. Improve the levels of application, engagement, and participation from First Nations people in the CfG’s Leadership Portfolio; and
2. Enhance cultural awareness and cultural competence of all CfG Leadership Portfolio participants.

The anticipated outcomes identified at the outset of this project included:

Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
CfG reports the number of First Nations participants in its Leadership Programs.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations CfG Leadership Portfolio participants.
Barriers and mitigation strategies to First Nations engagement are identified.	Embed First Nations perspectives and content throughout the CfG’s Leadership Portfolio Programs, events and activities.
There is an increase in applications by First Nations people in the CfG Leadership Portfolio Programs.	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples and the CfG’s Leadership Portfolio.
The Plan outlines strategies and objectives with some of the strategies implemented.	Targeted scholarship to facilitate participation in the CfG Leadership Portfolio Programs for First Nations stakeholders is in place.

The short-term outcomes are those that were expected to be achieved by the end of 2019. The long-term outcomes are intended to be the result of the implementation of the Plan and ongoing work completed by the CfG Leadership Portfolio Team. The expected timeframe for implementation of the Plan is three years (2020–2023) with an evaluation of the Plan and progress against the outcomes also anticipated to be undertaken during this time.

## 1.3 Project Team

The project team comprises two First Nations people as Project Sponsors and Cultural Advisors working together with five non-Aboriginal participants of the CfG's 2018–2019 LfG Program.

The Cultural Advisors also consulted with Traditional Owner and Respected Person, Corrina Eccles, as required throughout the project.

## 1.4 Project Approach

The process for developing the Plan included the following stages:

- **Project initiation stage** to confirm the scope, timelines and methodology for the project and undertake cultural awareness training.
- **Desktop review stage** including:
  - » a **review of policies** and other documents relevant to the project. **Section 3** provides further detail regarding the documents reviewed as part of this stage.
  - » the completion of a **cultural audit** of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio to assess sensitivity to and cultural safety of First Nations people. Details of the cultural audit process and tool are outlined in **Appendix C**.
- **Stakeholder Consultation and Gap Analysis** incorporating:
  - » **Stakeholder consultation** to identify barriers and enablers to engagement, participation and attendance of First Nations people in leadership programs. This included an anonymous survey of past First Nations alumni of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio, telephone interviews with First Nations leaders and organisations, face-to-face and telephone interviews with Regional Community Leadership Programs (RCLP) coordinators across Victoria and, other Geelong leadership program providers. See **Appendix B** for stakeholder list.
  - » **Gap analysis** undertaken based on the findings of the desktop review and stakeholder consultation activities.
- **Validation Workshop** to review findings of the previous stages of the project, consider and identify possible strategies for inclusion in the Plan and facilitate discussion and validation of the strategies.
- **Synthesis and Reporting** including drafting this report, and a presentation outlining the work undertaken in the preceding stages and completion of the final Plan.

This process was overseen by the project reference group.

## 1.5 Project Scope

The project focuses specifically on the development of the Plan. The content of the Plan includes the identification of strategies to improve the participation of, and engagement with, First Nations people across the CfG's Leadership Portfolio. These strategies are specific and unique to First Nations people and do not include strategies for improving representation of people from other culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The project may include the implementation of some initiatives which could form part of a future CfG Reconciliation Action Plan. However, the development of a RAP does not form part of the project.



## 2. Geelong First Nations People Community Profile

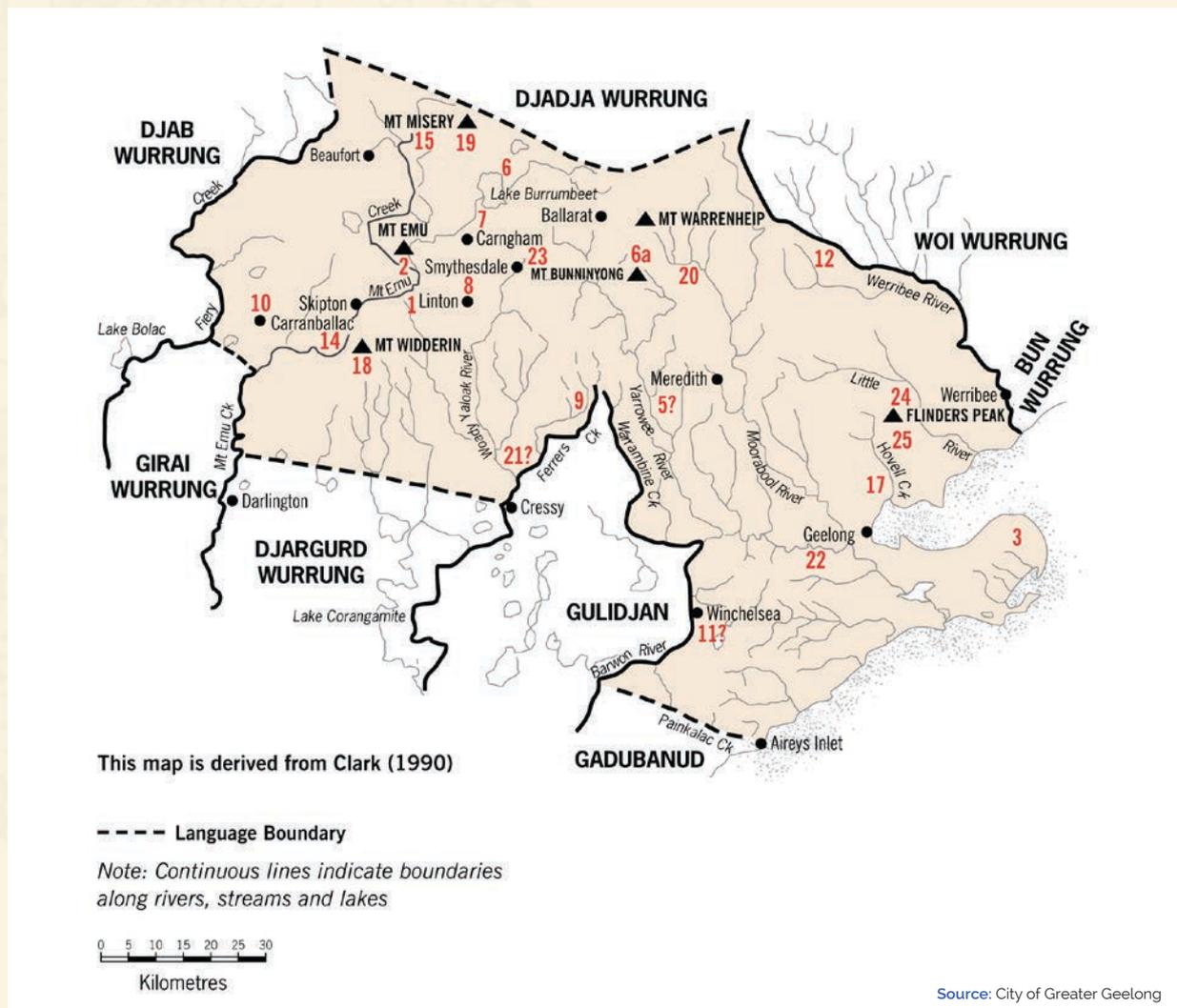
Some of the information included in the following section has been prepared by Libby Lesock (Aboriginal Policy and Programs Officer) from Barwon Health, Aboriginal Health Unit.

### 2.1 The Wadawurrung People

The custodians of the land on which the CfG is located are the Wadawurrung (Wathaurong) people, one of five language groups making up the Kulin Nation who prospered in the areas surrounding Port Phillip Bay. Traditionally, the Wadawurrung people lived as hunters and gatherers with seasonal changes in the weather and availability of foods determining where campsites were located. The Wadawurrung Nation consisted of 25 separate clans which had commonalities in language, custom, traditions, marriage ties, totems, burial rites and very strong trading links. The Wadawurrung people have as their defining creation deity Bundjil, the eagle, and as another social Moiety, Waa, the crow.

Wadawurrung country includes all of Geelong up to Painkalac Creek, Airey's Inlet, North to the Winchelsea river, further North West including Skipton and Beaufort, then East to Ballarat and further East to the Geelong side of the Werribee River.

Figure 1: Wadawurrung Country



## 2.2 Population

In the 2016 census, Aboriginal Victorians were found to make up 0.8 per cent (approximately 47,800) of the total population. During the same census the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identified that 1.1% of the population of Geelong (approximately 2,400) are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

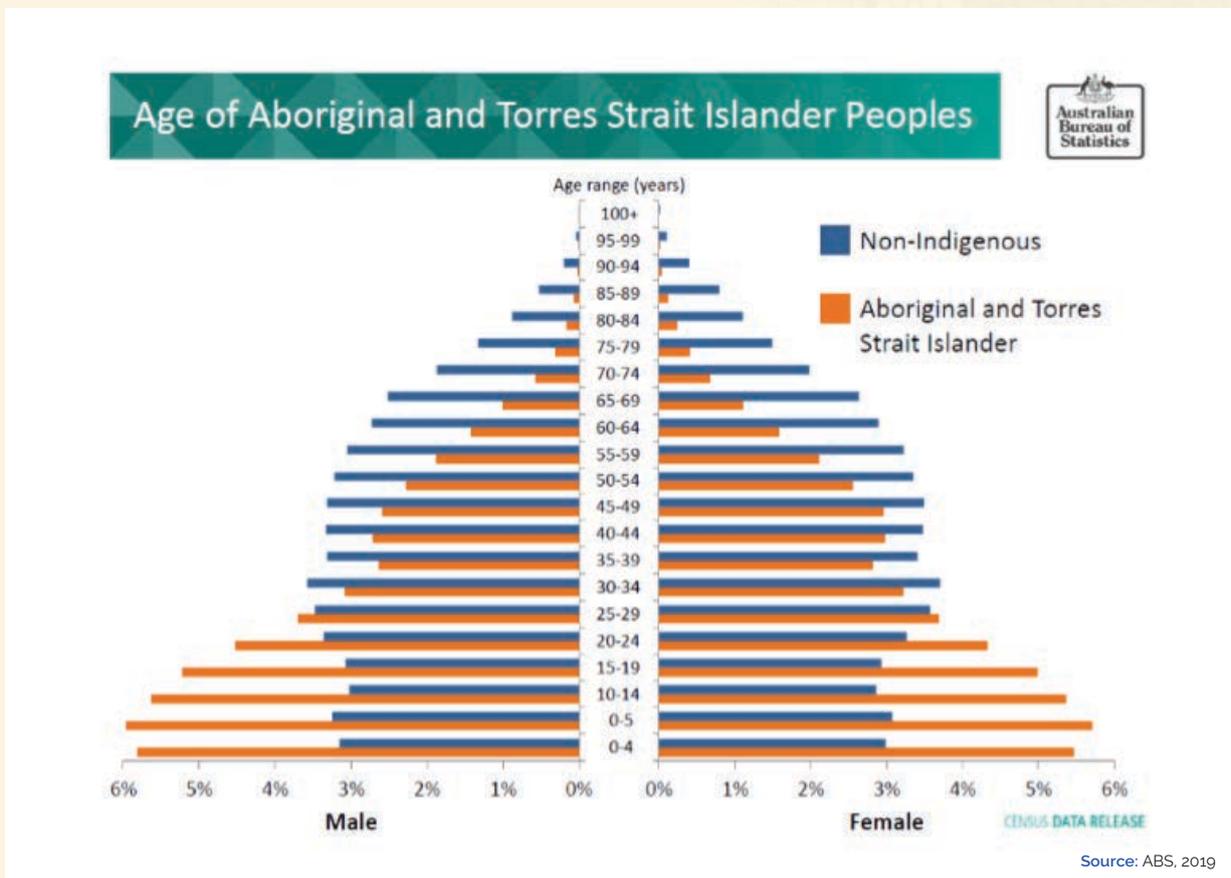
The ABS census data also identified that the Victorian Aboriginal population is young: 55 per cent are aged 25 years or under compared to 32 per cent of non-Aboriginal Victorians. The average age of Aboriginal Victorians is 22 years compared to 37 years for non-Aboriginal Victorians. Figure 2 below demonstrates the marked variation in the average age between Aboriginal Victorians and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Geelong has the highest population of Aboriginal people (approximately 2,500) in Victoria outside metropolitan Melbourne, and there are a further 1,000 Aboriginal people living in the Wyndham Vale – Werribee region who access support and services from Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative in Geelong.

Aboriginal people are living in suburbs throughout Greater Geelong, with the majority residing in Corio (307), Norlane (197), Grovedale/Marshall (215) and Leopold (119).

There are 248 Aboriginal people living in Lara, and over 100 in Belmont.

**Figure 2: Age of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians in 2016**



## 2.3 The Traditional Owner Group

The Wadawurrung people are the seven family groups who are the sole descendants of John Robinson. In 1997, after careful ancestral research, the family groups acquired enough information to be recognised as Traditional Owners. Their family have looked after and cared for the land for over a thousand generations and are still caring for it to this very day.

The Wathaurong Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Wadawurrung) represents Traditional Owner interests at all levels of government and community. With a statutory role in the management of Aboriginal heritage values and culture within the region, the Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Group is also the Registered Aboriginal Party for Wadawurrung country.

Wadawurrung people are determined to see their unique cultural heritage protected and respected. Their main aim is to restore traditional knowledge and authority over the management of Wadawurrung Country for the betterment of those living on, prospering from, and/or simply enjoying its land, waterways and coastal areas.

Wadawurrung also coordinates the performance of ceremonial duties including Welcome to Country/s and Smoking Ceremonies for community groups, corporations, events and special occasions where cultural protocols are valued and practiced.

## 2.4 Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative

The primary purpose of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative is to provide holistic and culturally secure service responses to meet the specific needs of the Aboriginal community. Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative is commonly referred to as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

Wathaurong's overall objective is to provide their members and Aboriginal families living or in transit in the service delivery area with assistance, an increased and improved access to a range of culturally appropriate health, housing, education, employment and cultural services, contribute to improvements in community well-being and build the capacity of the community to control its own affairs and achieve self-determination.

The Co-operative functions in a way that enables them, as a service organisation to build and strengthen the social, cultural, economic, environmental and spiritual foundations of the First Nations community in Geelong.

Wathaurong advocates for the community on issues that affect their lives and operates in a way that ensures the rights of local First Nations people are upheld. Wathaurong works towards broader collaboration and maintaining partnerships with external stakeholders to ensure informed policy, program directions and service access and responsiveness.

“ *Self-determination is about community voice, led by community, measured by community, relating to the whole community.* ”

— Aboriginal Community Member, Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

## 3. CfG's Leadership Portfolio

### 3.1 Regional Development Victoria

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) provides funding to RCLPs to build and strengthen existing local leadership capacity in regional areas, strengthening connections between local leaders and regional development initiatives. The LfG is one of 10 RCLPs in Victoria. The objectives of the RCLPs include:

- building capacity of emerging leaders across a range of sectors to contribute to change in their community;
- increasing the diversity of local leaders including: those that identify as indigenous, people living with a disability, and people from cultural and linguistically diverse and low socio-economic backgrounds;
- increasing participation by community leaders in regional projects of significance; and
- increasing local collaboration to achieve local change through community leadership networks.

### 3.2 CfG Leadership Portfolio

The CfG has been delivering leadership programs in Geelong since 2006. The current Leadership Portfolio includes:

- LfG; and
- Activate.

The CfG has also previously administered two additional programs:

- LEAD Barwon Program funded by the Victorian Government, designed to help ensure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme was the best possible system for Victorians with a disability, together with their carers and families; and
- Barwon Community Leadership Program which was delivered from 2011 to 2014 (to support and develop leaders in Geelong's socially and economically disadvantaged communities).

## Leaders for Geelong

LfG is currently undertaken over two years and aims to develop personal leadership capacity and build an understanding of the social, economic, and environmental issues of importance to the Geelong region. In the first year, the diverse cohort of participants attend monthly sessions where they are challenged and inspired by renowned local leaders and subject matter experts, undertake 'behind the scenes' tours, discuss case studies and participate in a range of other activities through the leadership lens. During the second year, participants work in small teams on a community based project of regional significance.

Interested participants can gain credits from program participation towards the Deakin University Business School Master of Business Administration.

## Activate

Activate is an eight-week program which aims to explore the foundations of leadership and build participants' confidence, knowledge, skills and strategies to develop their leadership capacity. This occurs through participation in weekly program events (that focus on challenges and opportunities facing the Geelong region), reflection opportunities and other learning based activities to support participants' leadership journey.

*“ When you have First Nations people  
in the room, the conversation changes.*

— Leadership Provider

## 4. Desktop Review

### 4.1 Overview

This section provides a summary of some of the documents, reports, Commonwealth and Victorian policy directions, legislation, and frameworks, which are relevant to this Project.

The materials vary markedly in their target audiences and content, due to the disparate purposes for which they were produced. However, there are consistent themes which arise throughout them including:

- self-determination and empowerment;
- local leadership;
- partnership and collaboration; and
- truth telling and respect of culture and histories.

Each of the documents, recognises that any efforts to improve the social, cultural and economic determinants of health within First Nations communities must be led by First Nations people. This reinforces the role of community leadership providers in developing First Nations leaders that are able to respond to specific challenges with their communities and support these broader reforms.

### 4.2 Major Reforms and Position Statements

#### The Uluru Statement from the Heart

In May 2017, 250 First Nations delegates met at the foot of Uluru on the land of the Anagngu people, as part of a constitutional convention to develop a consensus position on Indigenous constitutional recognition.

The Uluru Statement called for the establishment of a "First Nations Voice" to be enshrined within the Australian Constitution. It further called for the establishment of a "Makarrata Commission" (Treaty), to supervise agreement making and truth telling between Governments, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The key elements of the Uluru Statement include sovereignty, constitutional reform, Makarrata Commission, truth telling, and having a voice to parliament.

## Victorian Treaty

Australia is one of the only countries in the World where the rights of First Nations peoples are not based on a comprehensive legal framework or Treaty, and while treaty does not have bipartisan support at a Federal level, the Victorian Government has taken steps to advance Treaty for First Nations people in Victoria.

In March 2018, the Victorian Government passed the Treaty Advancement Bill, which resulted in The Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 (Act). The Act is Australia's first (and still only) treaty law.

The Act was the culmination of work by over 7,000 Aboriginal Victorians, who worked collaboratively with the Victorian Government over the preceding two years.

The Act reflects the goal to help improve the lives of Aboriginal Victorians, both now and for future generations. Treaty is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique status, rights, cultures, and histories of Aboriginal Victorians. It can address wrongs and redefine the ongoing relationships between Government and Victorian First Nations' communities.

The role of the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission is to maintain the momentum of the treaty process, and set up the First Nations Peoples' Assembly of Victoria which will establish the guiding principles for treaty.

This First People's Assembly will be the voice for the Aboriginal communities in the next phase of the Treaty process: a powerful, independent and culturally strong organisation made up of people who have Traditional connections in Victoria (Victorian Traditional Owners).

The Assembly will work alongside government to set up:

- The Treaty Authority – an independent umpire throughout the Treaty process;
- The Treaty Negotiating Framework – which will set how Treaties can be agreed in Victoria; and
- A Self-Determination Fund – so community can be on a level playing field with government.

## 4.3 Commonwealth Policy and Directions

### Closing the Gap and Closing the Gap Refresh

In December 2016, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to refresh the 'Closing the Gap' agenda. This decision was made ahead of the tenth anniversary of the agreement, with four of the seven targets expiring in 2018.

In June 2017, COAG agreed to a strengths-based approach to the Refresh, and to ensure First Nations people were at the heart of the development and implementation of the next phase of 'Closing the Gap'.

In 2018, a Special Gathering of prominent First Nations people presented COAG with a statement setting out priorities for a new 'Closing the Gap' agenda. The statement called for the next phase of 'Closing the Gap' to be guided by the principles of:

- empowerment and self-determination; and
- delivering a community-led, strengths-based strategy.

### Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Institute of Family Studies – Engaging with Indigenous Australians

Following on from Closing the Gap, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, together with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, produced a report entitled Engaging with Indigenous Australians.

The key findings in the report can be categorised into:

What we know:

- without genuine engagement of First Nations people, it will be difficult to meet the targets of COAG; and
- the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls on states to obtain free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous people through their representative institutions before adopting legislative or administrative measures that would affect them; it provides an international framework of best practice for engagement.

What works:

Engaging successfully with First Nations communities requires:

- an appreciation of, and the cultural competency to respond to, Indigenous history, cultures and contemporary social dynamics and to the diversity of Indigenous communities; valuing the cultural skills and knowledge of community organisations and Indigenous people;
- clarity about the purpose and the relevant scale for engagement, which may call for multi-layered processes: engagement needs to relate to First Nations concepts of wellbeing; and
- long-term relationships of trust, respect and honesty as well as accessible, ongoing communication and information.

In addition, governance, leadership and capacity building ensures:

- First Nations leadership is adequately resourced and supported for the engagement process; and
- governments or other agencies provide very high-level leadership as well as secure, adequate resources, and culturally competent staff capable of building trusting relationships. These agencies demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to be honest about resource or other limitations, and set achievable goals.

What this means: effective engagement:

Effective engagement is a sustained process that provides First Nations people with the opportunity to actively participate in decision making from the earliest stage of defining the problem to be solved. Indigenous participation continues during the development of policies, the programs and projects designed to implement them and the evaluation of outcomes.

Engagement is most successful when the parties have agreed clear outcomes they want to achieve, they are clear about roles and responsibilities and steps to discharge them and jointly identify indicators of success and monitoring and evaluation processes that meet their respective needs.

What doesn't work:

- hurried, one-off 'consultations' that are organised without the input of First Nations people into their design, where the parameters for discussing the analysis of the problem and possible solutions are centrally determined and fail to take proper account of Indigenous aspirations, ideas of wellbeing, and social contexts; and
- the absence of legitimate and effective Indigenous community governance for long-term engagement and shared ownership of the goals and processes.

## Other National Policy Directions and Documents

There are a number of other National strategies, plans or frameworks around improving the health outcomes of First Nations people. These include:

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013–2023;
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy;
- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Drug Strategy 2014–2019 (currently under review);
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework;
- The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017–2023; and
- The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003–2013.

Consistently, across each of the above strategies, there is a focus on building strengths and capacity in First Nations communities, including encouragement of leadership, action, and responsibility within those communities. They also recognise the importance of organisations understanding communities, respecting local cultures (including their strengths and histories), and differences in social relationships and possibilities for action.

## 4.4 Victorian Policy and Directions

In addition to the Federal policies and directions discussed above, there are several policy documents and initiatives at a State level in Victoria. These include:

- Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023
- Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027;
- Balit Murrup – Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework 2017–2027;
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Framework; and
- The Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework.
- Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board
- Victoria's Social Procurement Framework
- Tharamba Burgheen – Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017–2021

As with the Federal documents, consistent themes from these documents include:

- Aboriginal community leadership;
- prioritising Aboriginal culture and systems; and
- self-determination and empowerment.

### Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 is the Victorian Government's overarching framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians, organisations and the wider community. The framework sets a clear direction for government to progress change, address inequity and deliver strong outcomes for, and with, Aboriginal Victorians.

The framework has led to the development of policy positions and frameworks across all government including the Health and Human Services Portfolio.

### Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027

Supported by the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, Korin Korin Balit-Djak is a new policy framework for Aboriginal health, wellbeing, and safety in Victoria. It sets out the State Government's vision and direction for ensuring positive outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

The plan focuses on five priority areas:

- Aboriginal community leadership;
- prioritising Aboriginal culture and community;
- system reform across the health and human services sector;
- safe, secure, strong families and individuals; and
- physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities.

Korin Korin Balit-Djak sits alongside two other key initiatives, Balit Murrup: Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework, and the Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework.

## Balit Murrup: Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework 2017–2027

Balit Murrup means 'strong spirit' in the Woi-wurring language. It recognises that to reduce the growing mental health gap for Aboriginal people in Victoria, new and innovative approaches are needed to respond to what has been described as entrenched mental health crises. The vision of Balit Murrup is to support Aboriginal Victorians, their families and communities, to achieve and sustain the highest standards of social and emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Balit Murrup's objective is to reduce the health gap attributed to suicide, mental illness and psychological distress between Aboriginal Victorians and the general population.

Balit Murrup's key domains include:

- improving access to culturally responsive services;
- supporting resilience;
- healing and trauma recovery;
- building a strong, skilled and supported workforce; and
- integrated and seamless service delivery.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework

The development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework is a key commitment in the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Aboriginal employment strategy 2016–2021 and in Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027.

The framework is designed to support Korin Korin Balit-Djak to achieve the Victorian Government's vision of "self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal communities".

The framework aims to help strengthen cultural safety by participating in a process of continuous learning and practice improvement. The model is designed to guide in the development of strategies, policies, practices and workplace cultures that address unconscious bias, discrimination and racism.

The framework outlines several key principles and domains that will support individuals and organisations as they reflect and continue on their journey of understanding and improving cultural safety in the workplace.

## Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework

The Aboriginal Governance and Accountability framework aims to:

- embed Aboriginal leadership and decision making at all levels of the DHHS;
- strengthen accountability and transparency to the Aboriginal community; and
- engage and promote the diversity of Aboriginal voices – particularly from local communities.

The framework establishes a set of governance mechanisms that extend across the DHHS that will facilitate joint leadership between Aboriginal communities and the department to guide and oversee all Aboriginal policies, programs and initiatives.

## Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board

The Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board was established in June 2016 to drive business development and employment opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians.

It focuses on delivering the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013–2020 through procurement, business development, employment and place-based initiatives.

Responsible for championing Victorian Aboriginal economic development initiatives, the Board advises the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and has three key objectives:

- encourage more businesses to procure Aboriginal goods and services;
- encourage Aboriginal entrepreneurialism and enterprise; and
- support and promote place-based Aboriginal economic development opportunities.

The Board's work also intersects with a number of Victorian Government strategies and initiatives, including the Tharamba Bugheen Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017–2021, the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026, and Barring Djinang Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

## Victoria's Social Procurement Framework

In 2018, the Victorian Government released Victoria's Social Procurement Framework.

The purpose of the framework is to streamline and embed social procurement processes within ordinary Government processes. It lays out a scalable and consistent approach to social procurement for all Government departments and agencies.

The economic advancement of Aboriginal Victorians is critical for self-determination and better health outcomes. The Government has therefore established a target equal to one percent of Government procurement for Aboriginal businesses, to apply from 2019–2020.

This target recognises procurement spending is one of the strongest levers for ensuring that beneficiaries of Government business include Aboriginal Victorians.

## Tharamba Bugheen – Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017–2021

The purpose of Tharamba Bugheen is to help advance the economic position of Aboriginal Victorians.

Full participation in the economy provides Aboriginal Victorians with the resources needed to determine their future. Economic participation is therefore critical to self-determination.

The Victorian Government is targeting its efforts at different levels, with support offered to individual entrepreneurs, social enterprises and more traditional businesses.

The Government has established an advisory group of Aboriginal entrepreneurs to support the development of Tharamba Bugheen. Aboriginal entrepreneurs and business owners were also involved in intensive planning workshops to determine the strategic focus of the Strategy.

## 4.5 Other Key Documents

### Leading for Change

In 2016, the Australian Human Rights Commission published *Leading for Change*. This document highlighted the lack of First Nations leadership represented within the senior leadership positions in Australian business, politics, government and universities.

In 2018, *Leading for Change* was revisited to report on updated data on rates of cultural diversity within organisations and institutions, and to provide a blueprint for change.

While the report is not unique to First Nations people, it does highlight that of the 2,490 most senior leadership positions in Australia, only 0.4 percent of those are held by First Nations people.

For organisations to take committed action, the report recommends change across three areas: leadership; systems; and culture.



## 5. Key Findings and Gap Analysis

This section outlines the key findings of the project and the strengths and limitations of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio from the perspective of engagement by and participation from First Nations people. This section is based on the findings of the cultural audit, stakeholder consultation and desktop review stages. The findings have been grouped under key themes. These themes will also be used to form the basis of the Plan.

### 5.1 Governance and Reporting

- Most RCLPs are collecting and reporting data on participation of First Nations people in their leadership programs either through the statewide database, RDV or through internal reports.
- Collection of data by other Geelong leadership providers on participation of First Nations people in their leadership programs was limited.

### 5.2 Relationships

- Several leadership providers reported that engagement with First Nations Organisations, ACCOs and Traditional Owner groups is more successful, where relationships are genuine, collegial and two-way.

### 5.3 Respect and Cultural Awareness

- Creating a trusted and safe environment was conducive to learning and engagement. This included the physical environment and the language used by presenters and participants.
- Cultural awareness training was seen as integral in promoting cultural safety. This feedback was provided by both First Nations alumni and leadership providers. One leadership provider delivered this training at the opening residential so that participants had an understanding of the history and background of the region in which they lived and worked.
- Some leadership providers aimed to create a welcoming environment by conducting activities such as a Welcome to Country or Smoking Ceremony at their program launch. They also ensured that locations of site visits were culturally relevant and appropriate.
- Many leadership providers reported that their staff completed cultural awareness training.
- All RCLPs performed an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of all sessions.
- Some providers utilised their alumni networks or First Nations participants to share their lived experience, with many of the learnings shared opportunistically over the course of the program. This was seen as positive from the perspective of the leadership providers but from the perspective of First Nations participants, doesn't carve out a safe environment for them to be a participant.
- Venues that are consistent with the theme and the speaker were highlighted as important to creating a trusted and safe environment.

## 5.4 Participation, Access and Opportunities

- In leadership programs where there is low participation by First Nations people, there was also no targeted approach to participation. This was consistent across RCLPs and other Geelong leadership providers
- First Nations alumni were motivated to attend Leadership Portfolio Programs to increase their understanding of Geelong, increase networking opportunities, develop their leadership capacity, and build capacity to take back to their community.
- Developing a role for champions and ambassadors of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio was identified as a potential mechanism to contribute to greater rates of participation.
- A number of RCLPs were utilising targeted scholarships to remove financial barriers to participation, including the Bank of Australia Community Leadership Program Scholarship.
- A long-term recruitment strategy was seen as most effective in increasing participation, with one provider collaborating with local First Nations organisations to recognise possible participants three years before the commencement of a program.
- Cultural obligations (family and community) impacted the ability of some alumni to engage with and participate in leadership programs.
- Flexibility of attendance requirements on a case-by case basis was considered important in being able to support First Nations participants when cultural obligations arose.
- Building credibility with the First Nations community and people being aware of "what's in it for me" may assist in increasing applications for leadership programs. That is: what is the value proposition of attending the program to the community and the individual?

## 5.5 Program Content

- Many of the First Nations alumni were positive about their experience and the learnings they gained from the Leadership Portfolio. The most common take-aways from the programs included: networking; building interpersonal skills and the ability to influence; an understanding of leadership theory or individual personal leadership style; confidence and self-awareness; and knowledge of the Geelong region and the key stakeholders.
- Some RCLPs applied a First Nations lens across all program content, including trips to Canberra and Melbourne. For example, one leadership provider visited the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies whilst in Canberra.
- The Koorie Grapevine is a credible source of information. There was a perception by some First Nations people that LfG was for "High Up Managers". This may have contributed to a lower number of people applying.
- Content should be relatable and culturally relevant to First Nations people.
- One RCLP provider offered a full day on country with First Nations Elders. The participants visited sacred sites and developed an understanding of local Aboriginal history. This created an understanding of connection to country and set the scene for cultural safety. First Nations leadership principles were also discussed, which contextualised leadership.
- Content across year two of the LfG program was identified as potentially problematic in ensuring that there were culturally appropriate and safe projects for First Nations participants. First Nations alumni identified that working on projects that did not have a First Nations focus was challenging. There were however, examples of RCLPs that had implemented projects with a First Nations focus and had worked closely with the local ACCO to develop them. This was reported to have been positive for participants, RCLPs and ACCOs.

## 5.6 Gap Analysis

### Strengths

- CfG's Leadership Portfolio is utilising an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of every session and a Welcome to Country is completed by Traditional Owners at the CfG's Leadership Breakfast; Project Presentation Event; and Annual Dinner and Graduation.
- The program content of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio met expectations of First Nations alumni surveyed, however improvements could be made to increase the participation of First Nations people, provide more culturally appropriate content, improve the cultural safety of participants and increase cultural awareness of other non-Aboriginal participants
- There is an existing community membership arrangement between CfG and Geelong-based First Nations organisations including Wathaurong Co-operative and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Group.
- Flexibility in attendance in Leadership Portfolio is considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Availability of a scholarship and financial support is offered on a case-by-case basis.
- Leadership Portfolio participants are encouraged to be involved in important First Nations events (for example, participants were recently involved in the CfG's NAIDOC Week event held at Barwon Water).
- The Acknowledgement of Country that is currently in use was developed in consultation with Wathaurong Co-operative.

### Limitations

- There is no data recorded or reported regarding attendance and participation of First Nations people in the Leadership Portfolio.
- While CfG has a community membership arrangement with Wathaurong and Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Group there does not appear to be a robust, ongoing, two-way, collaborative relationship between CfG's Leadership Portfolio and these organisations.
- There is no formal process of self-reflection in place to support staff or leadership participants in ensuring that no assumptions are made based on values, stereotypes, prejudices or family history. Assumptions and use of stereotypes can devalue the contribution of First Nation people, affect truth telling, and lead to culturally unsafe environments.
- While the program includes First Nations speakers, the program content has not been developed with input from local First Nations people and relevant representatives/ organisations.
- First Nations content in the CfG's Leadership Portfolio does not reflect some of the culturally responsive practice demonstrated by other RCLPs for example, a day on country, applying a First Nations 'lens' across all theme days including the trip to Canberra, and using First Nations venues.
- Leadership Portfolio staff and participants do not complete cultural awareness training; however staff training was in progress at the time of writing.
- There is limited awareness of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio within the First Nations community.
- There is currently no use of a targeted scholarship for First Nations people such as the Bank of Australia Indigenous Scholarship.
- Culturally appropriate content across year two (project year) of the LfG program is limited.



## 6. Summary of the Plan

This section provides a high-level summary of the Plan.

**Table 2: Summary of the Plan**

Domain	Actions
Governance and Reporting	Establish a working group that will oversee implementation of the Plan.
	Improve reporting of First Nations participants in the Leadership Portfolio.
Relationships	Establish and foster mutually beneficial relationships with a range of local First Nations people and organisations.
	Develop a network of support for First Nations participants in Leadership Portfolio Programs.
Respect and Cultural Awareness	Create a culturally welcoming space for local First Nations participants.
	Enhance cultural awareness of all Leadership Portfolio participants and staff.
Participation, Access and Opportunities	Develop a targeted recruitment strategy.
	Expand commercial relationships with local First Nations businesses.
Program Content	Embed local First Nations perspectives throughout the CfG Leadership Portfolio's program content.

“ *At the moment, our definition of leadership is giving Aboriginal Victorians a seat at our table. But real leadership is about making it their table, too. Our effort must have heart and it must have ears.*

*It must be for Aboriginal people and by Aboriginal people.*

— The Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria, 18 March 2015,  
Closing the Gap Event, Queens Hall, Parliament House Melbourne

# 7. The Plan

## 7.1 Governance and Reporting

### Action 1: Establish a working group that will oversee implementation of the Plan

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Form a working group that will allocate tasks, monitor progress, and work to promote awareness of the Plan	All objectives of the Plan achieved	CfG Chief Executive Officer (CEO) & Leadership Portfolio Manager (LPM)	Commencing Mid 2020  Ongoing
Develop terms of reference for working group that identify membership inclusive of First Nations representatives, meeting frequency, and expectations of the group	All objectives of the Plan achieved	CfG CEO & LPM	Mid 2020

### Action 2: Improve transparency of First Nations participants in Leadership Portfolio

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Collect information on application form regarding each applicant's First Nations background	CfG reports the number of First Nations participants	LPM	In progress  Ongoing
Report number of First Nations participants (complete and incomplete) via CfG database and/or relevant Reports	CfG reports the number of First Nations participants	LPM	Ongoing

## 7.2 Relationships

### Action 1: Establish and foster mutually beneficial relationships with a range of local First Nations people and organisations

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Beyond the current community membership arrangements, explore formal partnership opportunities with local First Nations organisations, in particular Wadawurrung, and Wathaurong.	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples' and CfG Leadership Portfolio.	CfG CEO & LPM	End 2020 Ongoing
Compile a list of local First Nations organisations	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples' and CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM Working Group	Complete and for ongoing review
Establish an electronic mailing list of First Nations alumni	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples' and CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM	Mid 2020

### Action 2: Develop network of support for First Nations participants in Leadership Portfolio

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Identify a local skill base of mentors and alumni and the supports they may be able to offer First Nations participants.	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples' and CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM Working Group	Mid 2020
Consult and engage with the local skill base of trusted mentors to support CfG Leadership Portfolio's response to individual cultural issues that may arise.	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples' and CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM Working Group	End 2020 Ongoing

## 7.3 Respect and Cultural Awareness

**Action 1: Create a culturally relevant and safe physical space for local First Nations participants.**

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Display First Nations artwork in CfG office.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	CfG CEO	End 2019
Display Acknowledgement of Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in CfG office or other prominent location relevant to Leadership Portfolio.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	CfG CEO and LPM	End 2019
Respectfully acknowledge First Nations people and branding in CfG Leadership Portfolio brochures, publications, materials, handbooks, website and email signature block.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	February 2020
Include venues, where appropriate to programming, for CfG Leadership Portfolio events that are culturally appropriate spaces e.g. Wadawurrung; Wathaurong; Narana; or venues that have First Nations symbols of welcome readily visible.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	Ongoing
Develop a portable resource kit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander desk flags, Acknowledgement of Country and an Aboriginal map of Australia for use where a venue does not include First Nations symbols of welcome.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	Mid 2020
Include First Nations brochures in CfG reception including brochures of local First Nations services; the Koori Mail, and Wathaurong newsletter.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	CEO/LPM	Complete and ongoing

**Action 2: Enhance cultural awareness of Leadership Program participants and staff**

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Support CfG Leadership Portfolio staff to complete regular cultural awareness training.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	In progress  Ongoing every 3 years
Hold a cultural awareness session for Leadership Portfolio participants at commencement of leadership programs.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	February 2020
Provide opportunities for Leadership Portfolio participants and staff to participate in NAIDOC week and other significant events on the First Nations calendar.	Embed First Nations perspectives and content throughout CfG Leadership Portfolio.	CfG CEO and LPM	Annually, on-going
Invite a First Nations person to speak at one of the significant events in the Leadership Portfolio calendar (i.e. breakfast, graduation).	Embed First Nations perspectives and content throughout CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM	In progress

## 7.4 Participation, Access and Opportunities

### Action 1: Develop a targeted recruitment strategy

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Identify a clear value proposition for First Nations people in attending a CfG Leadership Portfolio program. This should be able to be easily communicated and marketed during recruitment and in discussions with First Nations organisations	Increased applications by First Nations people in CfG Leadership Portfolio	LPM Working Group	August 2020
Work collaboratively with First Nations organisations to identify emerging leaders ahead of time (3 years or more) and support them to be ready to apply for CfG Leadership Portfolio in future years.	Increased applications by First Nations people in CfG Leadership Portfolio	LPM Working Group	August 2020 Ongoing
Implement a targeted First Nations scholarship.	Targeted scholarship in place	CfG CEO & LPM	August 2020
Aim for a minimum of two First Nations participants per intake, to foster cultural safety and peer mentoring.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	Ongoing
Include a First Nations person on the interview panel for First Nations applicants initially, then for all applicants ongoing.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM Working Group	November 2020
Consider First Nations Alumni as Champions or Ambassadors for the CfG's Leadership Portfolio that can help build credibility within the community and on the 'Koorie Grapevine'.	Increased applications by First Nations people to CfG Leadership Portfolio	LPM Working Group	Ongoing

### Action 2: Expand commercial relationships with local First Nations businesses

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Source a relevant local First Nations product to give as a gift to CfG Leadership Portfolio presenters.	Strengthened partnerships between Geelong-based First Nations peoples' and CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM	February 2020

## 7.5 Program Content

**Action 1:** Embed First Nations perspectives throughout the CfG Leadership Portfolio's program content.

Deliverable	Anticipated Outcomes	Responsibility	Timelines
Hold a smoking ceremony for launch and conclusion of Leaders for Geelong and explore opportunity to include in Activate program.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	February 2020
Review overarching leadership framework, program content and evaluation processes in collaboration with local First Nations organisations to embed First Nations perspectives throughout and include site visits to First Nations organisations in Geelong, Melbourne and Canberra.	Embed First Nations perspectives and content throughout the CfG Leadership Portfolio.	LPM Working Group	Late 2022 Ongoing
Ensure First Nations participants are not expected to play any formal part in the delivery of cultural information to other participants except where prior agreement with First Nations participants has been reached.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM Working Group	Ongoing
Aim to include First Nations project of local significance in second year of LfG Program.	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM	2020 Ongoing
Include written and verbal disclaimers where program content includes Aboriginal history, culture and perspectives that may be distressing to First Nations participants and consider external supports made available to First Nations participants (i.e. counselling, mentoring).	Increased Cultural Safety of First Nations participants.	LPM Working Group	Ongoing

## 8. Key Project Learnings, Reflections and Conclusions

### LfG Project Team Reflection

**The development of the Plan and this project would not have been possible without the knowledge and insights of our First Nations Project Sponsors and Cultural Advisors. Consistently applying the principles of self-determination throughout this project, no decision was made without their input and guidance. The team as a whole, also engaged with a cross-section of the Geelong First Nations community to ensure that the Plan appropriately represents their voices.**

As a project team, we came to this project with a foundation of common values base, humility and a desire to learn. We have had an invaluable opportunity to walk our leadership journey together with First Nations leaders, hearing and learning from their stories and perspectives. Committed, from the outset, we recognised the potential of this project and were keen to learn more about leadership from the perspective of First Nations people. However, the depth of learning we experienced, both individually and as a team, has extended well beyond First Nations leadership.

The project team completed cultural awareness training at the outset, which not only assisted in building an awareness of matters affecting First Nations people locally and nationally but also served to drive home the incredible privilege that many non-Aboriginal people hold. It was confronting to hear stories about the atrocities that took place in the Geelong region under colonisation and the forcible removal of children in the very recent past at institutions that many of the team visit and work at today. It was overwhelming to attempt to understand the tangible effects of intergenerational trauma and the heavy burden that is the 'cultural load' that many First Nations people carry. While this training served to develop the project team's cultural awareness, it also motivated us to look beyond the scope of the project. It encouraged many of the

team to consider the immediate environment and reflect on the contribution our own work places are making to engage with and improve opportunities for First Nations people.

We have sought to include an Acknowledgement of Country in meetings where this did not already take place, and this has had a ripple effect of increasing awareness outside of the project team. This project has highlighted that it is not solely the responsibility of First Nations people to educate those around them. It is incumbent on us all to ask, "How can we do better?"

At a practical level, the completion of this project has been dependent on working cohesively as a project team both within the group and with the Project Sponsors as part of the Project Reference Group. Both groups met regularly face-to-face or virtually (using video or phone conference technology) with clear agendas and documented minutes. The team had a clear sense of their individual strengths from the outset and the completion of tasks flowed naturally when coupled with open and honest communication.

The team utilised a variety of IT platforms in order to bring this project to fruition: DropBox, Slack, Lifesize and email. While meeting in person was important in building the team and developing trust and working relationships, the various IT platforms have enabled us to communicate effectively outside of meetings, meet the project deadlines and remain on task.

The Plan provides a road map for progressive activity that can be implemented in the short, medium and longer term, developing the cultural framework and context for the CfG's Leadership Portfolio. The deliverables included in the Plan align to the key themes that emerged from the desktop review: self-determination and empowerment; local leadership; partnership and collaboration; and truth telling and respect for culture and history.

While the 2018–19 LfG project formally concludes in September 2019, the project team, as a whole, is committed to supporting this project beyond its formal conclusion and supporting any broader CfG efforts to increase representation of First Nations people. Maintaining the equal and respectful relationships formed as part of this project is integral to the successful implementation of the Plan and continuing to engage with First Nations communities must be prioritised on an ongoing basis.

Over the past two years of our LfG journey, we have been challenged to reflect on, and examine, our personal values and beliefs, understand issues of strategic importance to our region and build our leadership capacity through lifelong learning and a willingness to challenge the status quo. In many ways, this project epitomises all that and more for our team. From a learning and leadership perspective, arguably this project has been a success. However, the success of this project, won't be measured by our project team. It will be measured by the First Nations people of Geelong and whether this project develops our future leaders so that not only do First Nations people have a seat at the table, but it becomes a truly shared table for all.

## Project Sponsors and Cultural Advisors Reflection

As privileged Aboriginal women being raised, educated and employed on Wadawurrung country for many years, self-determination is at the forefront in every facet of our lives. We both continue our individual leadership journeys and this project has given us the opportunity to ensure that local First Nations people are included, and they can and want to, actively participate in all aspects of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio.

The benefits to including First Nations perspectives and First Nations people in the Leadership Portfolio are fundamental in increasing cultural awareness, demonstrating cultural inclusiveness whilst simultaneously expanding the cultural responsiveness of the CfG and its programs.

Throughout this project our cultural knowledge and expertise has been valued and respected in the true spirit of reconciliation and genuine partnerships.

Our vision for the Djilang First Nations People Community Engagement and Participation Plan is successful implementation, review, and evaluation over the next three years.

In closing it has been an absolute pleasure working collaboratively with our LfG project team and we thank them for their faith, willingness and unwavering support in ensuring this project progressed. The project team safeguarded cultural integrity and maintained the interests of the First Nations community at the heart of the project.

**Sharelle McGuirk & Renee Owen**  
*Project Sponsors and Cultural Advisors*

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## Appendix A — Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
BCLP	Barwon Community Leadership Program
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CfG	Committee for Geelong
COAG	Council of Australian Government
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
Djilang	Geelong
LEAD	Leading, Educating, Advocating for Disability
Leadership Portfolio	CfG leadership programs, being Leaders for Geelong and Activate
LPM	Leadership Portfolio Manager
Plan	First Nations Community Engagement and Participation Plan
LfG	Leaders for Geelong
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RCLP	Regional Community Leadership Program
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
UN	United Nations
VRCLP	Victorian Regional Community Leadership Program

## Appendix B — Stakeholder Consultation

### Interviews

Face-to-face and telephone interviews were undertaken in order to develop the Plan. A semi-structured interview tool was used to facilitate interviews. The following is a list of individuals consulted as part of this process.

Organisation	Name
Aboriginal Future Leaders Program, Victorian Public Sector Commission	Mason Atkinson
Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program	Karlie Langdon, Anthony Brophy
Bank of Australia	Cheyne McKee
Barwon Water	Shu Brown
City of Greater Geelong	Christine Walters, Kevin Krastins, Kaley Nicholson
Community Leadership Loddon Murray	Jude Hannah
Deakin University	Professor Barry J Cooper Professor Yin Paradies
Fairley Leadership	Michelle Luscombe
Geelong Manufacturing Council	Emmy Oudman
Gippsland Community Leadership Program	Mark Answerth
Gordon TAFE	Suzie Kelly, Vikki Millar
Leadership Ballarat and Western Region	Michelle Whyte
Leaders for Geelong	Janelle Meyes
Leadership Great South Coast	Amanda Hennessy
Leadership Wimmera	Emily Telfer
Northern Mallee Leaders	Jennifer Grigg
Rivers and Ranges Community Leadership Program	Lisa Linton
Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation	Corrina Eccles
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative (Former CEO)	Rod Jackson
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative (Board member)	Mick Ryan

## Survey

In addition to the above interviews, an anonymous survey of First Nations alumni of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio was also undertaken. An email was sent to all Leadership Portfolio alumni to seek feedback from First Nations people specifically. The project team received 13 responses which provided valuable feedback on motivations for attending the program, skills and knowledge received, any challenges affecting engagement in and completion of the program, and any suggestions for improving cultural sensitivity of the Leadership Portfolio. Due to the sample size, individual survey results were not included within this report however broad findings have been incorporated into the Key Findings section.

## Validation Workshop

A validation workshop was held on 16 July 2016 at Harwood Andrews. The aim of the workshop was to review key findings of the project, consider and identify strategies for inclusion in the Plan and facilitate discussion and validation of the strategies. Participants of the workshop are listed below.

Sharelle McGuirk	Project Sponsor and Cultural Advisor
Renee Owen	Project Sponsor and Cultural Advisor
Jennifer Cromarty	CEO, Committee for Geelong
Janelle Meyes	Leadership Portfolio Manager, Committee for Geelong
Kaley Nicholson	Aboriginal Workforce Engagement Officer, City of Greater Geelong
Kay Mills	Project Team
Jessica Larkin	Project Team
Glen Snowden	Project Team
Pat Friend	Project Team
Alasdair Woodford	Project Team

## Appendix C — Cultural Audit

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The Cultural Audit of the CfG's Leadership Portfolio was conducted on 11 June 2019 by Renee Owen (First Nations Project Sponsor and Cultural Advisor) and Kay Mills (Project Team) at the Committee for Geelong office with Janelle Meyes, Leadership Portfolio Manager, Committee for Geelong.

The tool used to conduct the Cultural Audit was adapted from a cultural audit tool for health and community services which was designed by First Nations people and non-Aboriginal people.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of the Cultural Audit was to assess sensitivity to and cultural safety of First Nations people within the CfG's Leadership Portfolio. The audit tool was designed to be informal and to serve as a prompt to encourage discussion and challenge existing cultural norms and values that can limit the accessibility, responsiveness, and accountability of services and programs in the community.

Following the Audit, the discussion was written up and shared with Janelle Meyes and further comments were added. A number of suggestions and areas for improvement were identified and these have been incorporated into the initiatives that form part of the Plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Making the Two Worlds Work, Cultural Audit tool, <[https://www.whealth.com.au/mtww/documents/MTWW\\_Audit\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.whealth.com.au/mtww/documents/MTWW_Audit_Tool.pdf)>

