
ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE

A resource for Victoria's transport
infrastructure industry



Contents

Introduction	3	Procuring goods and services from Aboriginal businesses	17
Who should use this Aboriginal Engagement Resource?	3	Part of social procurement	17
Create your legacy	3	Social Procurement on the worksite	18
First things first	4	Targets lead to innovative partnerships and wins for all.	18
Co-design and self-determination	4	Aboriginal business directories and peak bodies	19
Get to know the traditional owners	5	Wamarra: building better together	20
Partners from the start	5	Aboriginal employment	21
Engaging local councils	7	Promoting jobs and traineeships	21
Organisational readiness	7	Determination paves the way	22
Leadership and organisational culture	7	Training for the Future (TFTF) Entry Programs	23
Showing support to employees, clients and community	8	Get involved	23
Aboriginal cultural safety training or education	8	Department of Transport Entry Programs	24
Flags	9	Victoria's Big Build Graduate Program	24
Events and meetings	10	Labour hire and recruitment companies	24
Marking key dates	11	GROW leads to growth, even in a pandemic.	25
Using Aboriginal language and art	11	Other pathways to join industry	26
Not just a noise wall	12	On the job support for Aboriginal employees	26
Design	13	Collecting information	29
Follow The Emu To The River	14	Policy and legislative context	29
Cultural Heritage Management Plans	15	Acknowledgements	31
Barongarook Creek Bridge Commemorative Space	15		

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of Country throughout Victoria and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their spirit and passion in their past and present custodianship of this Country; its lands, waters, skies and its terrestrial and aquatic inhabitants. We also pay our respects to the Elders of the Kulin Nation, past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within this readership.

Introduction

The projects under Victoria's Major Transport Infrastructure Authority deliver new road and rail infrastructure in local communities. They also create opportunity for all, especially for Victoria's Aboriginal community.

This Aboriginal Engagement Resource was created under the Victorian Government's Training for the Future (TTF) program. It was co-designed with the Training for the Future's Social Procurement Innovators Network SPIN, which brings together industry leaders and is led by Social Traders with Supply Nation and Kinaway Chamber of Commerce. We thank SPIN for their invaluable support and contribution.

Who should use this Aboriginal Engagement Resource?

This Resource is for the businesses, contractors, companies and government agencies working in Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry. It aims to equip industry with the resources to effectively and safely:

- involve Victoria's first people when designing and delivering projects or operating services;
- procure from Victorian Aboriginal businesses;
- attract and retain Victorian Aboriginal employers and trainees; and
- create unique projects and run modern services by incorporating Aboriginal culture.

The Resource contains content relevant to people working in planning, engineering, design, communications, procurement, human resources, people management, project management as well as other fields.

Create your legacy

This Resource includes strategies and case studies to show the type of work already being done in the industry to support Aboriginal Victorians. These are examples of the legacies that projects and operators are leaving behind.

Beyond building a rail bridge or running Melbourne's tram lines, the people who championed these approaches created a legacy for themselves and those who they brought with them on their journey. They did so by realising that they can get more out of their job than meets the eye.

By implementing even some of the suggestions in this Resource, Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry can show just how much of a contribution it makes to the State; now and in the future. This Resource offers ways of working so that everyone wins; government, industry and the Aboriginal community.

Tip for readers

This Resource is best read electronically as it contains hyperlinks to organisations and resources.

Project Partners



Department of Transport

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First things first

No matter what you're working on, the key to success is understanding self-determination and co-design, and then involving traditional owners and local Aboriginal groups in the conversation.

Co-design and self-determination

Co-design is when the users of a product or service are part of its creation.

More than consultation, co-design means talking to users when planning and developing your work, and after completion as it can inform future work. Co-design cannot work if you ask for input after the big decisions are made or if the users don't have enough time to respond.

For industry, co-design means that if you want to employ Aboriginal people, buy from Aboriginal businesses or include Aboriginal culture, you need to identify and contact the appropriate people at the beginning of the decision-making process; even if you don't have a job or contract to award just yet. The relationships you build will improve employment, product and service outcomes and make the process easier and more likely to succeed.

Self-determination is when people have the right to make decisions on matters that affect them.

Enabling self-determination acknowledges that Aboriginal Victorians hold the knowledge and expertise about what is best for themselves, their families and their communities.

Listening to Aboriginal Victorian communities and involving Victorian Traditional Owners from the start of your project or new venture is critical.

Explain your work, discuss where opportunities lie or can be created, and build co-design into your process.

Self-determination is upheld by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is a right that relates to groups of people, not individuals. Victoria's [Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-23](#) sets out self-determination goals, and its [Self-Determination Reform Framework 2019](#), the State commits to self-determination as the guiding principle in Aboriginal affairs, because it is vital for improving Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing.

The transport infrastructure industry has great capacity to progress that commitment through transport access to health, education, justice and employment services and opportunities, and keeping families and communities connected. It also has capacity through the protection and celebration of Aboriginal culture and heritage, for example through major projects and precinct upgrades.

In particular, the recent increase in size, value, geographical spread and timelines of Victoria's transport infrastructure and operating pipelines unlocks new opportunities for the State's Aboriginal economic participation targets, such as procuring from Aboriginal businesses and employing Aboriginal people.

The Victorian Government's own *Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Plan 2020-2023* recognises that Aboriginal Victorians need to be at the centre of decision making. In a portfolio first, the Plan commits the Department of Transport and its 30 agencies and operators to engage as one with Aboriginal Victorians. In doing so, it will reduce consultative burden, enable more informed decision making and enhance outcomes through leveraging the portfolio – its projects, operations, budgets and expertise – as a whole.

Some of the strategy's key points and objectives for the transport portfolio are to:

- establish Regional Chapters at the local level;
- co-design partnerships with Registered Aboriginal Parties;
- ensure the promotion of cultural safety and environments that are considerate and respectful of Aboriginal people;
- acknowledge and address the trauma experienced by the Aboriginal community and support healing;
- strive for better outcomes for Aboriginal communities in the delivery of its work;
- build self-determination into everyday processes;
- advance along the self-determination continuum; and
- increase accountability for actions that progress self-determination.

Get to know the traditional owners

Getting to know the traditional owners of the land or project can be one of the most rewarding parts of your work.

The insights and connections offered by traditional owners will be invaluable and can give your project a true point of difference. A great part of working with traditional owners is that you can truly localise your work and make it relevant to the place that it is improving. For this to work you need to engage traditional owners as early as

possible; *waiting too long can damage a relationship before it's begun.*

The Victorian government determines traditional owner groups or Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs). These organisations are recognised as cultural custodians and hold legal decision-making responsibilities for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area. Depending on your project, this could make a strong relationship with traditional owners even more pivotal.

The Aboriginal Heritage Council website has a map of Registered Aboriginal Parties and their contact details.

One part of Victoria has two registered parties, and some don't have any. In such cases, the area could be contested between groups, no group has successfully registered as its owner, or the group has chosen not to be registered. When this occurs, you can engage with both groups and/or build relationships with Aboriginal community organisations and service providers instead.

Aboriginal Victoria and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations can assist you when you are looking to engage with the appropriate RAP.

CASE STUDY

Partners from the start: Wurundjeri elders on the North East Link Project

In 2018, in recognition of their inherent custodianship of Wurundjeri Country, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation was invited to participate directly on the North East Link Project (NELP).

Wurundjeri collaborated with the project team to develop its Urban Design Strategy, which includes a forward by Wurundjeri Elders and a Key Design Direction co-written by Elders.

So far, NELP's partnership with Wurundjeri also led to other successes. Elders identified a series of Wurundjeri's 'cultural themes' which are being used to inspire design teams and can be 'brought to life' through the various stages of the project. This represents an exciting opportunity to share precious

Wurundjeri knowledge and culture and allow shared histories to be told through design.

A Cultural Values Assessment resulted in the development of an animated video entitled 'Birrunj', telling an ancient creation story of the Yarra River spoken by an Elder. Wurundjeri also undertook a review of the technical assessments prepared for NELP's Environment Effects Statement to ensure the design appropriately represents Wurundjeri's ancient cultural heritage.



Image: Aboriginal leaders prepare for Welcome to Country ceremony.

Engaging local councils

Local municipal councils are likely to have relationships with key local Aboriginal groups and traditional owners.

They may also be very open to collaborating with you to strengthen or create new actions that benefit their Aboriginal communities, and simply to work together on the project or service you're managing.

Most have policies or action plans on how they support and celebrate

Aboriginal communities and history. They may also have Aboriginal committees or reference groups. Your work could connect with some of these, even if simply as a means of gaining introductions, ideas or being briefed on any local issues, especially in contested areas.

Organisational readiness

Broadly speaking, there are three parts to ensuring that you are ready to recruit Aboriginal people or buy from Aboriginal businesses:

- **setting a workplace culture wherein Aboriginal people and businesses are valued**
- **training your employees in cultural safety**
- **showing commitment in your support for Aboriginal people**

All three require strong support from leadership teams and all three can be embedded into a Reconciliation Action Plan.

A **Reconciliation Action Plan** outlines practical actions that you commit to doing in order to attract, support and celebrate Aboriginal employees, clients and/or community. The plans help reconcile Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, formalise commitments and activities and are a good way to capture and promote the good work you are already doing.

If you already have a Reconciliation Action Plan, it may include the ideas in this Resource. If it does, ask how your work can connect with actions already being done by other areas of your business.



Reconciliation Action Plans

Reconciliation Action Plans are supported by [Reconciliation Australia](#), who can help identify and develop the type of plan that will work for your business.

Leadership and organisational culture

Before you hire Aboriginal people or procure from Aboriginal businesses, it's important your employees understand your organisation's commitment to Aboriginal culture. If leadership or executive teams do not champion moves to support Aboriginal Victorians, any RAP, training, policy

or plan is unlikely to succeed. Setting expectations around culture needs to be genuine in order to be a success.

This means that enthusiastic, committed and motivated leaders are the key to creating an Aboriginal inclusive workplace and business. Influencing leaders should be

done from the CEO down. It can involve training leaders before other employees, introducing leaders to Aboriginal businesses, building actions or targets into key performance indicators and asking relevant questions when potential new leaders are interviewed.

Training

Aboriginal cultural safety training or education

Ensuring that employees understand and respect Aboriginal culture needs to be done before Aboriginal people or businesses join your workforce or supply chain; especially if they are people managers or work with clients. Cultural safety may be called cultural awareness or competency. However, as a lack of training can result in an unsafe place for Aboriginal people (emotionally and physically), it is useful to consider it as a workplace safety issue.

As well as workplaces running customised sessions, the Department of Transport offers Indigenous Culture Awareness Training to all employees and implements portfolio-wide policies such as Acknowledgment and Welcome to Country protocols.

11 Aboriginal cultural safety training providers are listed with [Kinaway](#) and [Supply Nation](#) (at time of print). Both organisations can put you in touch with businesses who can assist with your employee training needs.

Your local traditional owner group and may also offer training, as do the below organisations.

Koorie Heritage Trust

Generalist training is offered at their venue or your workplace for groups over ten people. Or, individuals can join their open sessions on Building Aboriginal Cultural Competency. Koorie Heritage Trust also run regular Cultural Walks, which offer a different way of learning (but do not replace cultural safety training).

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc. (VACCHO)

VACCHO offer customised training beyond the health sector. Individuals can also join their Introduction to Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training open sessions.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL)

VACSAL offer customised and module-based training beyond the community sector.

Showing support to employees, clients and community

Internal processes and policies

Making the ideas suggested in this Resource a part of your internal systems, processes and policies will ensure that they are not forgotten or dependent on people championing their continuation. Systemising inclusion practices also tells employees, that their leadership team takes inclusion seriously and has an expectation that it becomes business as usual.

Depending on your business, most of the following ideas can be used to show support for Aboriginal people internally among your employees, and externally to clients and subcontractors (either as suggestions for what they could do, or an invitation to collaborate with you).

Ideas for attracting, recruiting and retaining Aboriginal employees are

included in the [Aboriginal employment: staff and trainees section](#).

Recognition and representation in publications and around the workplace

Acknowledging, recognising and including Aboriginal Victorians in your online and hard-copy publications and in your workplace is a small gesture that can make a big impact. No matter what form this takes, it will very likely be noticed by Aboriginal people, who will be more inclined to see yours as an inclusive organisation and be more attracted to want to work with you, or for you. Examples of acknowledging Aboriginal Victorians on websites, publications and in offices or worksites include:

- Adding an Acknowledgement to Country to all written publications
- Installing an [Acknowledgement to Country plaque](#) at offices
- Using photos and video with Aboriginal people (with their permission and if appropriate, advising the possibility of images or names deceased people)
- Displaying small flags, stickers of flags and/or Aboriginal artwork in reception areas
- Providing employees and contractors with pins, badges or hard-hat stickers that represent Aboriginal culture
- Including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in publications and email signature blocks
- Flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at offices and worksites.

Flags

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are both official flags of Australia.

The **Aboriginal flag** was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man of Central Australia and was first flown in Adelaide in 1971. In 1972 the flag became more prolific when it was chosen as the official flag for the Aboriginal Embassy in front of Canberra's Parliament House. According to Thomas, the colours of the flag represent the Aboriginal people of Australia, the red ochre

colour of earth and a spiritual relationship to the land and the sun; the giver of life and protector.

The **Torres Strait Islander flag** was designed by Bernard Namok from Thursday Island in 1992. It was the winning entry in a competition organised by the Islands Coordinating Council. The green panels represent the mainlands of Australia and

Papua New Guinea, with the blue representing the Torres Strait waters in between. Black represents the Torres Strait Islander people, and the white is a dhari; a ceremonial headdress that all islanders identify with. The star is a sea-navigation symbol and its five points represent the major island groups. Both are white to symbolise peace.

A word on terminology.

As a Victorian government publication, this document uses Aboriginal to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If you prefer other terms, we suggest seeking the views of your Aboriginal employees, clients, businesses and/or traditional owner groups to help you decide.

Organisational readiness

Events and meetings

By incorporating Aboriginal protocols into events and meetings, you recognise and pay respect to Aboriginal people, culture and heritage and demonstrate recognition of Aboriginal people's unique position in Australian society.

Victoria has a strong and proud Aboriginal history, complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back over 60,000 years.

Depending on the size and audience of your event or meeting, you should consider a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country. **Both should be done at the very beginning of the program, before any opening speeches.**

A Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country recognises the continuing connection of Aboriginal Traditional Owners to their land. Victoria has a strong and proud Aboriginal history, comprising of ownership and land

stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years. They are part of the process of reconciliation and healing and afford the appropriate respect to Traditional Owners.

A **Welcome to Country** can only be done by a representative of the traditional owner group or **Registered Aboriginal Party** of where the event is being held. The short ceremony is done for people visiting their Country, and may vary from speeches, to dances and smoking ceremonies. They should be included at all large public or community events and gatherings, and possibly at internal or industry-wide events that have a broad impact on Aboriginal people.

An Acknowledgement to Country can be done by any person to demonstrate their respect for the traditional owners of the land where the event is being held. The short formal acknowledgement should be done at all events where there is no Welcome to Country, at large internal meetings such as all staff forums, training sessions, board meetings, and at small internal or industry-wide events.

Here's an example of an Acknowledgement to Country, but it can be nice to adjust it in your own words, and to your own workplace (though it is inappropriate to use it as an opportunity to acknowledge other groups present).

'I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we are meeting on today; the [traditional owner group name] people. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.'

Getting it right

An Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country that includes specific traditional owners is not recommended in areas without a registered Aboriginal party as it may:

- privilege one group's interests over others
- pre-empt the outcomes of formal recognition processes

- lead to disputes between groups who have an interest or association with Country

Instead, it is recommended to acknowledge 'the traditional owners of the land', or, if you are in south-central Victoria, the Kulin nation.

The Kulin people traditionally owned the region extending from Port Phillip

and Western Port Bay, up to the Great Dividing Range and the Loddon and Goulburn River valleys. It includes five language groups; Boonwurrung (Boon-wur-rung), Dja Dja Wurrung (Jar-Jar-Wur-rung), Taungurung (Tung-ger-rung), Wathaurung (Wath-er-rung) and Woiewurrung (Woy-wur-rung); commonly known as Wurundjeri.

Marking key dates

While an organisation's support of Aboriginal people should be clear year-round, key dates offer a specific opportunity to acknowledge Aboriginal history and celebrate Aboriginal culture.

They can also be used to coincide with the launch of initiatives. For example, if planning on raising the Aboriginal flag for the first time, this could be done on

12 July; the day in 1971 when it was first flown in Australia.

Many agencies and businesses across industry run annual NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events, including the Department of Transport.

Transforming Transport

As well as your own events or activities to mark key times, workplaces across industry are encouraged to participate in

Transforming Transport. This Training for the Future (TFTF) program is a series of events and awareness raising campaigns. It aims to build industry's inclusion capability and create workplaces where all employees feel celebrated and safe to bring their whole selves to work. Six interactive events are held each year at key times (such as Reconciliation Week) and the campaigns provide workplaces with communication tools to raise their employee's awareness.

Using Aboriginal language and art

Victoria has a rich Aboriginal history, with over 38 Aboriginal languages representing the diversity of cultural heritage and connection to Country.

The uniqueness of language is based on location. Each language is deeply rooted to the land and offers an ideal opportunity to connect a name to a place. 90 per cent of Australia's indigenous languages are endangered; you can learn more with [Australia's Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#).

Whether incorporating language or art, is important to involve Traditional Owners in the early planning stages. As well as ensuring you get the best and highest quality outcome, there may be issues or preferences you need to be aware of.

If you want to use Aboriginal language to name roads, features or localities, Traditional owners must be engaged as part of Geographic Names Victoria's (GNV's) [naming rules for places in Victoria](#). While anyone can propose a name, municipal councils are Victoria's primary naming authorities, as well as some government agencies and private

organisations. GNV encourages naming authorities to consider Aboriginal names when assigning new names.

Examples of using Aboriginal language and art in offices and projects are:

Choosing artwork and graphics designed by Aboriginal Victorians in:

- publications
- around your office
- as part of infrastructure (urban design and architecture).

Using Aboriginal language or the names of significant people for:

- meeting rooms
- parks and gardens
- walkways
- bridges.

Collaborate and gain permission

Without collaborating, you are likely to miss the all-important step of gaining permission from the artists, elders, people and/or families behind the art, language and names you are thinking of using. As well as good practice, it will also protect against any legal issues.

CASE STUDY

Not just a noise wall: Woi Wurrung culture and language part of garden

VicRoads (now the Department of Transport) moved beyond a compliance mindset when it partnered with Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

The partners originally worked together on a Cultural Heritage Permit for a planned noise wall along the M80 Metropolitan Ring Road in Gowanbrae. Soon thereafter, Wurundjeri and VicRoads' joined to not only minimise the impact of the wall on an identified stone artefact scatter, but to celebrate and incorporate Aboriginal culture and language.

A genuine partnership between Wurundjeri and VicRoads was at the centre of delivering the project, and it also resulted in Aboriginal employment outcomes. Wurundjeri and VicRoads co-designed the garden, whilst Wurundjeri's Natural Resource Management branch (the Narrap team), was awarded the tender to deliver landscaping including site

preparation, planting and maintenance. The Narrap team worked alongside contractors Ecodynamics to install concreting and hard-landscaping, as part of capability building and training.

The garden includes a plaque with Woi wurrung language gifted by Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Doreen Garvey-Wandin, in her then-role as VicRoads-Wurundjeri Aboriginal Liaison Officer. The words inscribed on the walk-way plaque are 'Gurragu mang mang', meaning 'stop and reflect', or 'stop and remember'. The garden was designed and planted by Elders and employees in the shape of Bunjil; the Wedge-tailed eagle and Wurundjeri creator spirit.

For now, it is called the Gowanbrae Commemorative Garden, but discussions are underway with Geographic Names Victoria and Wurundjeri to officially gazette 'Gurragu mang mang' and formally and publicly recognise and celebrate the use of Woi wurrung language at the garden.

The garden was jointly opened by Wurundjeri and VicRoads in June 2019 with a smoking ceremony, Welcome to Country and morning tea. Along with Wurundjeri Elders and employees, it is the result of collaboration across several VicRoads business areas; the M80 Project, Metro Assets' Environmental Roadside Team and Environment and Land's Landscape and Urban Design, and Heritage Practice and Native Title teams.





Design

Good design rises above stereotypes, clichés and obvious design outcomes. Indigenous design offers a distinctive design ethos that moves beyond a simple western design perspective.

Indigenous design is a process that acknowledges identity and culture and considers connections to place and the deep history and memory of place. Exploring cultural narratives encourages a connection to Indigenous culture, showcases traditional knowledge, demonstrates respect and embeds cultural significance.

There are many opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal knowledge into design, especially with early planning and collaboration across your business. For example:

- precinct planning
- architecture and built form
- landscape design
- interpretation and wayfinding
- visual art
- language.

Once it has been decided to integrate Aboriginal culture and design on sites or in offices, it is both important and useful to seek out:

- a time to meet with traditional owners as early as possible to discuss opportunities for Aboriginal design across the project lifecycle;
- colleagues to consult and involve (such as project manager, architect, landscape architect, art curator, any Indigenous designer);
- examples of relevant precedent projects that illustrate the design quality you hope for; and
- case studies of lessons learned from Indigenous design processes and outcomes.

The [International Indigenous Design Charter](#) outlines protocols for working with Indigenous knowledge in commercial design practice, and considers the needs of global design communities. It extends on the [Australian Indigenous Design Charter](#), which offers information, guidance and professional leadership on the appropriate creation and commercial use of Aboriginal graphical representations.

Image: Karrum Karrum yarning circle works

CASE STUDY

Follow The Emu To The River LXRP Werribee Street, Wadawurrung perspectives

LXRP's Western Program Alliance (WPA) is working with their ICI team to improve infrastructure and ensure the long-term benefits and safety of the growing communities. We are leaving a lasting impression and changing how the community understands the Indigenous Australian contribution to our heritage.

Urban design is one of the many ways the team at LXRP can illustrate their commitment to local communities and businesses and acknowledge its unique culture and heritage.

The Werribee Station level crossing is being replaced with a rail bridge. As a way of acknowledging the Indigenous people of Wirribi yaluk (Werribee) and the Wadawurrung Country the Industry Capabilities and Inclusion team has established relationships with the local indigenous community to unite in the development of a new rail bridge and open space.

Social procurement generates value above and beyond dollars. It provides opportunities for businesses who don't always have a seat at the table.

This means providing greater opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people and businesses to be a part of our projects by appreciating their local knowledge and utilising their supplies.

Early in the procurement process, WPA's ICI team worked closely with the indigenous community to incorporate the Wadawurrung perspectives into LXRP's urban and landscape design.

The use of Aboriginal design perspectives and 'connection to country' paved the way for Aboriginal culture to be enriched and integrated into the design of modern infrastructure. This adds greater meaning to the development of our project.

At Werribee Street the concept 'Follow The Emu To The River' has been incorporated into the landscape design to illustrate the connection between the past life and the present.

The key elements of design leading visitors on a journey of Aboriginal spirituality are water ripples, emu footprints, ceremonial skirt pattern, yarning circle, granite boulders and interpretive signs and together they tell 'The Story Of The Waddawurrung And The Emu'.

The ICI team continues to break new ground and has developed a social procurement framework to help guarantee opportunities for Aboriginal communities and businesses. Werribee Street is just one example.

Cultural Heritage Management Plans

Under the [Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006](#), [Cultural Heritage Management Plans \(CHMPs\)](#) are mandatory whenever a high impact activity is planned in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

'High impact activity' is defined on page 21 of the [Aboriginal Regulations 2018](#), and '[areas of cultural heritage sensitivity](#)' are shown on this [online map](#). CHMPs can also be done for any project on a voluntary basis.

When a CHMP is mandatory, planning permits, licences and work authorities

can't be issued until a CHMP is approved. CHMPs are prepared by a heritage advisor and include the results of an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed activity on Aboriginal cultural heritage. They outline measures to be taken before, during and after the activity in order to manage and protect

Aboriginal cultural heritage in the activity area.

CHMPs can reveal examples of Aboriginal cultural heritage that, as well as requiring protection, can be opportunities for educating the community about its Aboriginal heritage and recognising Aboriginal culture.

CASE STUDY

Barongarook Creek Bridge Commemorative Space

Major Road Projects Victoria (MRPV) worked in partnership with Traditional Owners on Colac's Barongarook Creek bridge replacement, where a new bridge was built as part of their \$363 million Princes Highway West duplication.

When Aboriginal ancestral remains were discovered during construction, and the site's cultural significance was better understood, MRPV decided to recognise that significance and have it influence the project as a whole.

Working closely with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, a dedicated commemorative space was developed that acknowledges the site's Traditional Owners and

pre-colonial history. It includes an Indigenous landscaping scheme, where a mixture of native plants, grasses, shrubs and trees reflect the site's cultural significance. River red gums were added as natural companions to creeks and rivers, and to provide nesting hollows for native birds such as galahs, cockatoos, cockatiels and parrots. Featuring pathways, seating and a reflection space around a

commemorative stone, the space has become a prominent town feature – a community space for everyone to enjoy and explore.

The contractor; VEC Civil Engineering, introduced strong Aboriginal employment throughout the project, and used Aboriginal businesses to procure safety products, signage and branding.



Procuring goods and services from Aboriginal businesses

The Victorian Government defines Victorian Aboriginal businesses as commercial businesses that:

- are at least 50 per cent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned;
- undertake commercial activity; and
- operate and have business premises in Victoria.

Part of social procurement

Aboriginal businesses are not new, but in the last decade targets for procuring from them have become part of many contracts across industry. It has also become part of what is called social procurement.

Social procurement is when organisations use their buying power to generate social value above and beyond the value of the goods, services or construction being procured. The government's expectation that social procurement becomes business as usual is clear through [Victoria's Social Procurement Framework](#).

The TFTF program has developed three Social Procurement in Practice resources that support industry's use of social procurement.

The eLearning module

A 30-minute, [eLearning module](#) outlining what social procurement is, why it is being done and including practical strategies on how to increase social procurement in this industry, video case studies and a short assessment. It is compliant with learning management systems and available at no cost to industry.

The booklet

This [booklet](#) is a strong introduction to social procurement and how to achieve it. It includes the poster and much of the same content as the eLearning Module. It is available in PDF and hardcopy.

The poster

This [poster](#) on the following page illustrates just 20 of the broad range of goods and services that Victorian Aboriginal businesses (and social enterprises) have provided to both worksites and offices across industry. It is available as a PDF or A3 hardcopy designed for display in tearooms and high-traffic areas. See page 18 for the [worksite image](#).

Business goals

The main goal of an Aboriginal business is to run a profitable and quality business – they just happen to be owned by someone who is Aboriginal. There is no expectation that the business creates social impact, but it is more likely. For example, Aboriginal businesses tend to employ significantly more Aboriginal people and allow owners to become self-determining.



Social Procurement on the worksite

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Anti-graffiti paint | 8. People (labour hire) | 15. Signs |
| 2. Architecture and design | 9. Personal protective equipment (PPE) | 16. Traffic management |
| 3. Concreting/formwork | 10. Pipes and drainage | 17. Transport: cars and trucks |
| 4. Earthworks | 11. Safety barriers | 18. Waste management |
| 5. Energy and lighting | 12. Scaffolding and access | 19. Wet hired plant |
| 6. Temporary fencing | 13. Security | 20. Wire and metal fabrication |
| 7. Landscaping (plants, trees, seeds, beds, outdoor furniture, maintenance) | 14. Shipping containers | |

Targets lead to innovative partnerships and wins for all

Aboriginal employment and business targets strengthened by Victoria's Social Procurement Framework have kept the Level Crossing Removal Project firmly focused on Aboriginal inclusion, and some strong

partnerships have been forged. Initiatives include the Metropolitan Roads Project Alliance working with Richmond Football Club on a pathway to employment program, the Southern Program Alliance partnering with

Bunjil Energy to include sustainable solar energy on their sites, and North Western Program Alliance partnering to build the capability of Native Earthworks; an Aboriginal civil construction business.



Did You Know?

For every \$1 spent with an Aboriginal business, \$4.41 is generated in social return*

Aboriginal business directories and peak bodies

These organisations can help you find and engage verified Aboriginal businesses supplying what you need. As well as supporting buyers, they also support Aboriginal businesses as they enter and grow in the market.

Kinaway Chamber of Commerce

Kinaway is a Gonnai word meaning 'exchange'. **Kinaway Chamber of Commerce** has a database of certified Victorian Aboriginal businesses which complements its membership services. They work with Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses by providing support, policy, advocacy and representation services.

Supply Nation

Supply Nation brings together the largest national database of verified Aboriginal businesses and joint ventures with the procurement teams of Australia's leading organisations to help them engage, create relationships and become part of organisations' supply chain.

Goods and services that Aboriginal businesses have supplied Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry.

This photo (adjacent) shows just how many procurement categories have been covered by Victorian Aboriginal businesses (and a few social enterprises) on worksites across industry.

* Reference: <https://supplynation.org.au/sleeping-giant-report/>

Image: Yarning circle south of the rail bridge, Werribee. Artist impression only, subject to change.



CASE STUDY

Wamarra: building better together

As an Aboriginal owned and led self-performing civil contractor, Wamarra is passionately committed to providing meaningful employment and career opportunities for Aboriginal people. They are a solutions-focused contractor, working across a range of construction projects and sectors, including rail, roads, justice and resources.

Wamarra has completed site establishment, drainage and concreting work on four Level Crossing Removal Project sites, with another two underway. They are also completing work on two Major Roads Projects Victoria sites that include

fencing and hoarding as well as civil and structure.

As of mid-2020, Wamarra employs 18 fulltime Aboriginal staff with vast and varying experience across the construction industry.

Their in-house personnel are skilled in plant operations (excavator, truck including NDD and skid steer), carpentry, plumbing and drainage laying, electrical, concreting and general civil works such as placing pavements.

Aboriginal employment: Staff and trainees

Aboriginal Victorians are underrepresented in the industry and considered priority job seekers. Employing or training Aboriginal staff or trainees benefits community through providing opportunities.

There are attraction and retention strategies that workplaces can adopt to position themselves and their employees for success in Aboriginal employment.

Some were outlined in the [Organisational Readiness](#) section, but others relate more specifically to recruitment.

Get in touch

To find out if you or your client have Aboriginal employment or Aboriginal business requirements, contact your contract administrator or manager.

Promoting jobs and traineeships

Any role or traineeship could be filled by an Aboriginal person. There are no positions more or less appropriate, nor more or less likely to be filled by Aboriginal people.

With that in mind, there are some positions and workplaces that Aboriginal people may be more interested in. This could be due to reputation, history, confidence, or an absence of signs that the workplace is inclusive of Aboriginal people. The latter is easily rectified. These suggested approaches can be applied to demonstrate inclusiveness toward any group.

A business can demonstrate basic inclusiveness by:

- adding a note to all job advertisements that applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged;
- including an Aboriginal person in any images used when advertising roles (with permission);
- incorporating Aboriginal culture into publications and offices;
- using plain English in recruitment documents and position descriptions;

- reviewing the need for selection criteria in favour of a CV or resume with or without a cover letter;
- including an Aboriginal person on interview panels;
- conducting interviews in less formal settings; and
- having a team member meet with the interviewee prior to interview to discuss the process and establish greater rapport;

Another approach is implementing 'blind recruitment'. This involves removing certain details from applications until the person is selected for interview. For example, an applicant's name, age, gender, address and any mention of culture or background (including names of educational institutions). While this won't assist if you are specifically seeking an Aboriginal applicant, it will help ensure that your recruitment process is free from unconscious bias. The Victorian Government's

Recruit Smarter program included this approach and found "solid evidence of greater outcomes for underrepresented groups when personal factors were de-identified".

Where you advertise can be just as important as how you advertise. As well as the usual jobseeker sites, Aboriginal jobseekers may be more likely to use certain channels when searching for a role. Below are just a few examples of organisations you might like to consider. To advertise with them, the job needn't be community/social justice' related or designated for an Aboriginal person.

- [Indigenous Employment Australia](#)
- [Aboriginal Employment Strategy Ltd](#)
- [Indigenous Prospects Training and Recruitment](#)
- [Koori Mail](#)
- [JobSeeker](#)
- [Ethical Jobs](#)

CASE STUDY

Determination paves way for brighter outlook with LXR



Jasmine was determined to make something of herself. Growing up with a dad in and out of jail and a brother always in trouble, she knew what happens to those who fall through the cracks.

Life in country Victoria was great as a kid. But opportunity in Bairnsdale was as dry as the land, so the family moved to Noble Park when Jasmine was 17. She dreamt of being a lawyer, politician or a vet.

However, a chance meeting with a McConnell Dowell project manager refocused her aspirations to the construction industry. Recruited into social enterprise 'Try Build', Jasmine discovered the Training the Future's GROW program that led to a traineeship at McConnell Dowell. "I loved it", she said. "It gave me

a new career focus and I now want to work in safety."

Just when she discovered her passion for the industry, Jasmine's traineeship ended and she found herself out of work for over a year. "It was hard to stay positive. I signed up to a lot of labour hire companies but just wasn't getting any opportunities," she said.

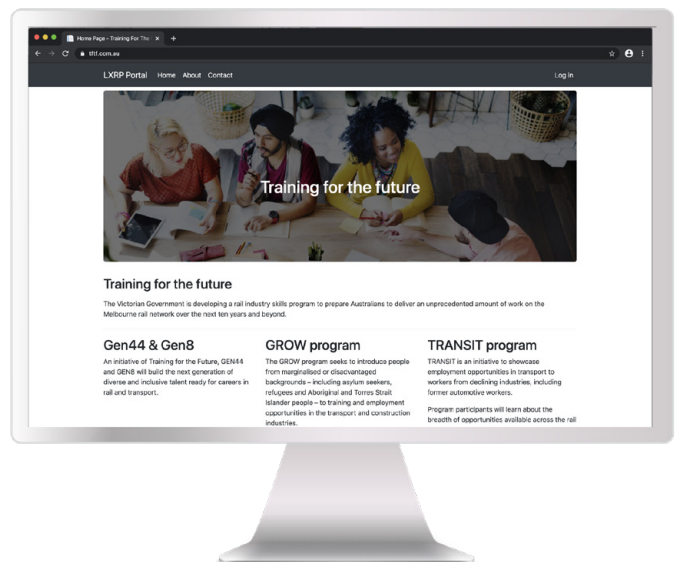
At her cousin's suggestion, Jasmine joined the Brotherhood of St Lawrence's 'Given a Chance' program. Within a week, she landed an interview with the Level Crossing Removal Project's

Metropolitan Roads Program Alliance (MRPA) and secured a job as Safety Administrator. "The best part of being back in the workforce is having something to look forward to everyday," she said. "I just love working in the safety team and contributing to making sure everyone gets home safe at the end of each shift."

Jasmine is completing a Certificate IV in Workplace Health and Safety and looking forward to joining Fulton Hogan's 2021 Graduate Program as a Safety Cadet on MRPA.

Training for the Future (TFTF) Talent Platform

This online platform is designed to provide industry with the talent to fill job opportunities. It allows employers to search for high-priority job candidates who are qualified, job-ready and want to work in our industry. It features job postings, a referral function and can match candidates to your recruitment needs. The **TFTF Talent Platform** is free for TFTF partners, but available to all industry employers. It is a cloud-based talent software system developed by Refugee Talent; a social enterprise who recruit refugees for Australian employment.



Training for the Future (TFTF) Entry Programs

A targeted approach achieves better outcomes. Below are some industry-specific programs that are designed to help industry recruit job ready Aboriginal people.

GROW

The **GROW program** introduces people to training and employment opportunities in Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry. During the five-day program, participants receive practical, job-ready training to help them gain competency and employment. This includes accreditation for Train Track Safety Awareness and the Construction White Card. After the program, participants are supported to network with program partners and apply for roles.

GEN44

GEN44 is designed to build a diverse pipeline of graduates ready for careers in transport and infrastructure. It aims to provide a minimum of 44 rail-focused internships each year to university students studying a range of fields; such as law, communications, engineering and IT. The interns are chosen by our partner, **Career Trackers** who are a national non-profit organisation. Their goal is to create pathways and support systems for Indigenous young adults to attend and graduate from university with high marks, industry experience and bright futures.

Rail Careers: School Engagement

Interest in industry starts at any age, and the saying 'you can't be what you can't see' has never been more true; both in terms of awareness of our industry's opportunities, and people seeing themselves having a place in our industry. Rail Careers is led by the Rail Academy and works with secondary schools to raise awareness about career opportunities in the rail, light rail and construction industries. They do this through the below four programs, and Aboriginal students are strongly encouraged to participate.

1. Regular careers days where students engage in hands-on learning experiences such as Track Build, where they work as a team to lay a simulated track. Content is linked to mathematics and critical and creative thinking, with a focus on transport infrastructure.
2. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workshops where students engage with inspiring female industry leaders through anecdotal presentations, interactive sessions and discussions with female STEM graduates. Students find out what STEM is in our industry, what different types of engineers do and the range of career pathways.
3. Sessions where teachers, career coordinators and pathways counsellors learn about the rail industry and increase their understanding of available learning and work opportunities. Participants connect with industry experts and learn how to locate and use career information.

4. Certificate II in Heavy and Light Rail Fundamentals (Pre-vocational); a VET course providing basic knowledge and a realistic preview of Victoria's train and tram industry. Through structured and self-directed learning, and hands-on training in a simulated work environment, students can make informed choices about a future career in industry.

Rail Signalling Engineer Cadet Program

This program seeks to meet Victoria's demand for rail signalling engineers. Rail signalling is a highly specialised and growing field, and its engineers contribute to the design, construction, maintenance and project management of the signal systems that regulate train movements across the network. This program for electrical engineering graduates provides a fully paid, three-year cadetship with placements at Australia's biggest rail and construction operators. Upon completion, cadets are awarded a Graduate Diploma of Railway Signalling Systems.

Get involved

Many business and agencies make up our industry, so if you'd like to be involved in any of the above Training for the Future programs please get in touch at tftf@levelcrossings.vic.gov.au

Department of Transport Entry Programs

The Department of Transport are establishing a portfolio-wide scholarship program for Aboriginal secondary college, VCAL, TAFE and university students.

Recipient's education expenses will be subsidised, they will be invited into industry during their scholarship period to identify areas of interest and recipients are guaranteed a job at the end of the program.

Victoria's Big Build Graduate Program

Victoria's Big Build is comprised of the following five projects under the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA):

- Level Crossing Removal Project
- Major Road Projects Victoria
- North East Link Project
- Rail Projects Victoria
- West Gate Tunnel Project

Each year, university graduates can apply for a two-year graduate program at MTIA where they complete tailored rotations and a Graduate Learning Series. Graduates are exposed to different teams and specialisations within their discipline and collaborate across multi-disciplinary teams.

Labour hire and recruitment companies

While all labour hire companies can and do recruit Aboriginal people, there are also several Aboriginal owned labour hire companies who are relevant to industry.

Some specialise in hiring only Aboriginal people, and others operate more broadly but are nonetheless more likely to employ Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal businesses.

12 Aboriginal labour hire or recruitment businesses are listed with Kinaway and Supply Nation (at time of print). Both organisations can put you in touch with businesses who can assist with your vacancies.



Skate park underneath rail bridge, Werribee. Artist impression only, subject to change.



CASE STUDY

GROW leads to growth, even in a pandemic

When COVID-19 hit, we were all affected. For seven Aboriginal people, opportunity arose in Victoria's GROW program (outlined on page 23) and its work with [Traffic Diversions Group](#) and [GOAL Indigenous Services](#). Participants gained information about the transport infrastructure industry, completed necessary construction certificates and opened the door to new professional networks. Not only that, but thanks to GROW they all secured traffic control jobs on major transport infrastructure projects. Here are some of their stories.

Matty

Those in the events industry were particularly affected by the pandemic. Moving to Richmond from the Northern Territory in 2014, 44 year old Matty Hancock spent the last few years setting up large-scale events. With no local family support, he felt down and out at the start of the pandemic, but used the time for re-training, upskilling and gaining a new perspective. "These COVID times have been crazy but I found endless opportunities through GROW. The educators and support network are unreal" he said.

Matty is excited about joining an industry that embraces and acknowledges people of all ages and from all walks of life. He has already gained enough valuable experience to have set himself a goal to become a Team Leader. "My life has been changed for the better" he said, which inspires him to become a

figurehead and mentor to other Aboriginal people. Matty sees long-term prospects for himself in the industry in employment growth and opportunities to earn; something he never expected.

Caitlin

Caitlin Whitten was first introduced to the possibilities and endless opportunities that GROW offers after two of her older sisters completed the program. Seeing the opportunities afforded to them and seeking change from working in disability support, she was quick to jump on board and enrol. Caitlin started in traffic control on City Power and, thanks to the GROW program, is now equipped with skills and knowledge in workplace health and safety and hand hygiene. These hot topic areas have been incredibly beneficial in her work on MTIA sites and are allowing her to advance her career.

Jamie

With a background spanning banking, tennis coaching and new car sales, Jamie Drys was ready for a role on major projects. Relocating to the Yarra Valley, he was keen to work on LXP's Lilydale site. Seeking 'a door opening opportunity' and the right skills, Jamie joined GROW. However, he got so much more. Jamie learned a safety-first approach and immense knowledge across multiple fields. "There was never a moment where I was bored or wondering when the next break was. In a small group it was great. Everyone was very chatty and inclusive", he said. Jamie is excited about his next chapter, finding interest, satisfaction and endless prospects. "Give it a go. Regardless of where you are from or where you are going, just try it. Everything is hard when it's unfamiliar but make the jump."

Other pathways to join industry

Aboriginal people wanting to join Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry are encouraged to reach out through the following ways.

- Emailing tftf@levelcrossings.vic.gov.au about industry-wide training and entry programs and for contacts at the Level Crossing Removal Project alliances.
 - Searching for vacancies on:
 - Victoria's [Big Build website](#) for government and business sector positions across the [Major Transport Infrastructure Authority](#)
 - [Victorian Public Service Careers website](#) and selecting relevant departments/agencies
 - the websites of Training for the Future program partners who recruit directly ([Metro Trains Melbourne](#), [V/Line](#), [VicTrack](#), [Yarra Trams](#)).
-

On the job support for Aboriginal employees

Once Aboriginal people have joined your workforce, there are actions that can support your new team members to be successful and feel included. Some of these are:

- Providing information on available professional development training
- Offering encouragement to join a mentoring program (or consider creating one)
- Pointing out any relevant policies and conditions, such as cultural leave days or a Reconciliation Action Plan
- Connecting new and current Aboriginal employees through a 'buddy system'
- Encouraging participation in any employee networks; Aboriginal focused or otherwise.





Diversity within diversity

Aboriginal communities are just as diverse as any other group. Since people have many parts to themselves, it is important to suggest a range of networks and programs. Your workplace may have their own, and below are some of the industry-specific and industry-wide initiatives delivered under the TFTF program.

BentRail's Rainbow Connections Network

The Rainbow Connections Network brings together LGBTIQ+ employees and allies across industry. Members meet quarterly to build a network of peers and hear about opportunities to create an LGBTIQ+ friendly industry. Rainbow Connections creates a community for LGBTIQ+ people, is a platform to share stories from existing Pride Networks, and is part of the TFTF's [BentRail program](#).

Women in Transport

These programs are part of the Department of Transport's [Women in Transport \(WiT\) program](#).

WiT Mentoring

This six-month [mentoring program](#) runs twice a year and custom-matches female mentees with mentors and offers professional development sessions, networking and guidance to structure monthly mentee-mentor meetings.

WiT Leadership Development Scholarships

The Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA) funds four scholarships per year for courses at Masters, Post-Graduate and executive level in a transport and infrastructure related areas. [Scholarships](#) are open to female Victorian Public Service staff employed by MTIA and its projects, or by DoT and its agencies.

Collecting information

In their contracts with the Victorian government, many transport projects set Aboriginal employment and business targets that they report on.

Victoria has set the targets to ensure Aboriginal Victorians benefit from the unprecedented works taking place, and that the works themselves are of benefit.

When asking your contractors or employees questions to assist in reporting, it is best to explain why. Doing so ensures employees know why you're collecting the information.

Policy and legislative context

This Resource is consistent with the below Victorian government documents, which may be valuable to your workplace.

- [Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Action Plan 2020-2023](#)
- [Barring Djinang; five-year Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian public sector](#)
- [Tharamba Bugheen: Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-21](#)
- [Local Jobs First Policy](#)
- [Social Procurement Framework 2018](#)
- [Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-23](#)
- [Self-Determination Reform Framework 2019](#)
- [Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 \(and Regulations 2018\)](#)
- [Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010](#)
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)



This Resource aims to provide Victoria's transport infrastructure industry with the information they need to effectively include Aboriginal Victorians, Aboriginal businesses and Aboriginal culture.

Our hope is that the resource is used by agencies and businesses to prepare for Aboriginal inclusion and to support and celebrate Aboriginal people, business and culture.

With simple actions, we can make our industry a place that Aboriginal people see themselves being a part of and one that they are proud to be part of.

What can you do to attract and retain Aboriginal people and businesses?

How can your project or service incorporate Aboriginal culture?

Acknowledgements

Contributors

This Aboriginal Engagement Resource was developed with Victoria's transport and infrastructure industry. We thank the below projects and businesses for contributing case studies and suggestions.



Project Partners

We also thank our Training for the Future program partners; the Level Crossing Removal Project, Metro Trains Melbourne, Rail Projects Victoria, V/Line, VicTrack and Yarra Trams.



Training for the Future

Training for the Future is a Victorian Government program led by the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority and delivered by the Level Crossing Removal Project. It is a transport infrastructure industry skills program preparing industry to deliver an unprecedented amount of work on Victoria's transport network.

Training for the Future will result in a new generation of rail talent and offer opportunities to priority job seekers in our industry. Its key elements are industry capability, skills development and inclusion.

For information about the Training for the Future program, please email tftf@levelcrossings.vic.gov.au



For more information please visit
levelcrossings.vic.gov.au/careers/training-for-the-future



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