

Advice from Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee

to

Darebin City Council

Endorsed by the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee on 12 July 2023

DAAC wishes to firstly acknowledge and pay respects to the Traditional custodians, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, and acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging. We pay our respects to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Brothers and Sisters.

Aboriginal peoples have stood on the lands and waters now called Australia from time immemorial.

In what is now known as Darebin, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have lived for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies, maintaining their living culture and caring for Country.

Countless other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have had, and continue to play, a unique role in the life of the Darebin municipality with Darebin being an important gathering place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the homeland of many significant Aboriginal peak bodies, organisations and businesses.

For over 20 years, Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee (DAAC), has been providing advice and recommendations to Council on matters affecting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In matters regarding Country, we defer to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as Traditional Owners - ensuring cultural protocol is observed and respected. As a cultural authority entrusted to represent the views and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Darebin, we undertake this role with great commitment, care and respect.

In the context of the Voice to Parliament DAAC offers the following advice that we trust will be embraced by Council:

Foremost we wish to acknowledge and recognise that there are a diversity of views within the Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including that of DAAC members, and which reflects our own diversity of experience, knowledge and perspective.

DAAC is aware that for many people in Darebin and across the State, the priority is the Victorian Treaty and Yoorrook truth-telling process which is well underway. This is having an influencing impact on how the Voice to Parliament is viewed and potential level of engagement.

“We know that many kitchen table conversations amongst the local community have been around the Victorian Treaty and Yoorrook truth-telling process,” Uncle Alan Brown, Chairperson, DAAC.

Regardless of where we sit on the spectrum of opinions and views, all of us are united in the clear understanding that DAAC offers the following advice as an accurate mirror of the local Darebin Aboriginal people and community:

- since invasion, Aboriginal peoples have made clear we never ceded sovereignty and our right to self-determination.
- not every Aboriginal person nor every Aboriginal body will have a position. Some people will vote ‘Yes’, some will vote ‘No’, some will be undecided, and others disengaged. The diversity

of views within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community must be acknowledged and respected with time for deliberation and reflection.

- while there will be diversity of experience, we want all people in Darebin to be well informed, be involved, encouraged to find out more and with the opportunity to be engaged in Referendum discussions.
- platforms for engagement and access to information for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities should be made available and in ways that are culturally safe for all.
- non-Aboriginal people are encouraged to learn about the Voice to Parliament while being mindful that engagement with Aboriginal people or organisations can create an emotional and cultural load.
- racism and vitriol increasing during this time must be tackled with appropriate supports and access to programs that help empower communities such as Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (VHREOC) online tool *Report Racism*.
- sovereignty, justice, truth-telling and progression towards Treaty are paramount and must be upheld, as part of this referendum campaign and going forward, in years to come.
- the foremost consideration is for the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including DAAC members, Darebin City Council employees and local Darebin community that is culturally safe.
- the Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders People remains a key guiding document.

In this spirit, we call on Darebin Council to commit to the following actions:

- 1. In consultation with DAAC, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the next few months as the Referendum campaign plays out, including:**
 - remaining responsive to needs the local community acknowledging local priorities and the local conversations.
 - facilitating conversations that are inclusive, respectful and culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and organisations to learn more about the Voice to Parliament.
 - supporting participation that promotes health and wellbeing.
 - ensuring referral information is made available for people seeking support and advice as duty of care.
- 2. Encourage the whole of Darebin community to inform and educate themselves about the Voice to Parliament and support them to do so by:**
 - providing access to accurate information and facilitating processes such as registration on the electoral roll utilising Council platforms and resources such as libraries, community centres/hubs and newsletters.
 - disseminating and promoting relevant and accurate information e.g. through a dedicated page/section on Council's website and in partnership with other local stakeholders;
 - supporting learning and awareness-raising within the broader community through platforms such as libraries, community centres and hubs and newsletters
 - reaching out to, and engaging with, existing networks, including advisory committees, notably (but not limited to) interfaith and multicultural communities;

- encouraging all residents, businesses and staff to participate in the processes leading up to the referendum.
- ensuring Council front line staff have required information and are well supported in their roles.

Across all this work, ensure adequate resourcing is provided.

3. Continue to work towards truth-telling and stand up against racism, as this is the foundation for progress towards self-determination and Treaty.

As we expressed it in the 'Our Black Lives Matter collective statement' of June 2020, "every Australian rests and rises on Aboriginal land", so "there is no better time than now for all Australians to join with us in the struggle to bring to an end the centuries-long racism and social inequity that has been forced upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country."

Three years on, this remains just as true and regardless of referendum outcomes, the work continues.

We trust this advice is understood and embraced by all Councillors and support DAAC's advice.

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