

## Acknowledgment of Country

**Presented to** Council Meeting 23 May 2017

Presented by Cr Jordan Lockett

Report Author Cr Jordan Lockett

Attachments Nil

### Recommendation

**That Council adopt the following wording as its Acknowledgment of Country at formal Council meetings and events:**

**“We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.”**

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### Synopsis

Further to the resolution of Council on 22 November 2016 I have consulted and researched the appropriate wording of an Acknowledgment of Country for use by Council.

I believe that such an initiative is another small step in acknowledging the rich aboriginal heritage within Moyne Shire.

The resolution puts forward appropriate wording for use by Council as an Acknowledgment of Country.

### Background

At the ordinary Council meeting on 22 November 2016 Council resolved as follows:

*“That the Moyne Shire Council authorise Cr Jordan Lockett to approach local indigenous communities and elders to seek input regarding the introduction of acknowledgement to traditional owners / custodians of the land at council meetings.”*

I have undertaken research to understand both the context of, and appropriate wording for, Council’s Acknowledgement of Country.

It is also noted that a significant amount of work has been done in recent years to strengthen the relationship between the Victorian Aboriginal community and Local Government.

One of the initiatives has been the development of the **Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan** which was recently released by the Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Action Plan is intended to be a resource for Local Government and outlines a range of important strategies to support Aboriginal Victorians and Local Councils to improve outcomes for their communities.

It recognises, celebrates and shares good practice and presents a practical framework to help Councils:

- improve relationships with Aboriginal communities;
- promote reconciliation;
- engage Aboriginal people in planning, decision-making, employment, programs and services.

Further information and practical examples of Local Government and Aboriginal communities working together can be found at [www.maggolee.org.au](http://www.maggolee.org.au)

As I have previously stated I feel that introducing the Acknowledgement of Country is appropriate for Moyne Shire and is another small step in acknowledging the rich aboriginal heritage within Moyne Shire.

The Acknowledgement serves as a gesture of respect to Victoria's first people and their cultural practices.

### **Strategic Link**

Council Plan Strategies:

1.3 Strengthen Council's communication and engagement processes.

1.4 Foster leadership in the community.

### **Discussion**

The Moyne Shire is overlaid upon lands that have been inhabited by the Gunditjmara, Peek Whurrong, and Kirrae Whurrong peoples and others for tens of thousands of years. Our Shire represents only a tiny fraction of the total human occupation of this area: to put it in simple terms, about six generations of Europeans after as many as 2,500 generations of Indigenous people.

Right now there is an ongoing Indigenous culture in our Shire, of which we should be immensely proud. Young people continue to learn hereditary practices, and indigenous understandings of the landscape are being shared in ways that benefit us all; things like seasons, fire and water management and even agriculture.

In between this modern coexistence and the deep history of the Moyne Shire lands, there was a period of frontier conflict. It was as brutal here as anywhere on the continent. Some of it we know through historical records, some of it we can only

guess at because it was never recorded, never discussed. Similarly, our region was centrally involved in the practice of removal of Aboriginal children from their families. There are political and personal differences about the ways in which we should respond to those traumas. My own view is that we need to recognise it and discuss it respectfully where we can, so that the lessons of past mistakes can guide us in the future.

One of my aims as a Councillor is to bring our region's strong Indigenous heritage into the light. The fact that we live on an ancient landscape: coastal, volcanic and windswept, is part of what makes us unique. It's a privilege to share that ground with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. An acknowledgment of Country, just a few simple words at the start of each meeting, is a valuable way to remind ourselves of that privilege.

As a matter of protocol, the first speaker at a meeting or event should give the Acknowledgment of Country. Subsequent speakers may also give an acknowledgement.

### **Consultation**

Consultation has occurred with various elders, teachers, musicians and members of the community and a previous Council workshop.

### **Financial Implications**

No financial implications.

### **Risk**

There is a risk that Council's reputation could be damaged if an Acknowledgement of Country is not introduced.

### **Conclusion**

After consulting and researching an Acknowledgement of Country for Council I feel that this is a positive leadership step for Moyne Shire to take and strengthen Council's relationship with the local Aboriginal communities.

The initiative also fits within the broader state wide action plan for improving relationships between Local Government and Aboriginal communities.

### 3. Acknowledgment of Country

**Report Summary:** Further to the resolution of Council on 22 November 2016 I have consulted and researched the appropriate wording of an Acknowledgment of Country for use by Council.

**Cr Lockett moved, Cr Parker seconded** that Council adopt the following wording as its Acknowledgment of Country at formal Council meetings and events:

“We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.”

**Motion carried 5:0**