

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

A CONVERSATION ABOUT 26 JANUARY

FULL ENGAGEMENT REPORT

MAY 2023

THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG RESPECTFULLY
RECOGNISES THE WADAWURRUNG PEOPLE AS THE
TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES
OF THE DJILANG/GEELONG REGION.

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Executive Summary

The City's Kilangitj Aboriginal Advisory Committee provides advice to Council on First Nations matters and requested that Council consider engaging with First Nations Peoples and the broader community about 26 January.

In 24 May 2022, Council determined to seek community feedback regarding 26 January and community's expectations, ideas and feelings about Australia Day events, ceremonies and activities.

The key purpose of this conversation has been to understand, respect and acknowledge the experiences and goals of First Nations Peoples while ensuring the wider community's voice is also heard on this topic.

A Deliberative Engagement approach was designed for this project to ensure the City took the time to have fulsome conversations and yarn ups about the subject of Australia Day and the 26 January with the First Nations Peoples of the Djilang/Geelong region and also with the broader community.

In order to reach the key stakeholders, this engagement was conducted in two parts, with First Nations Peoples the key participants in Stage One and the broader community the focus of Stage Two.

Overall, the City received 957 survey responses (447 First Nations Peoples and 510 Broader Community) and received feedback from local organisations as well as 23 attendees of four in-person community forums, 18 at the City's Advisory Committee's forum and 15 attendees at a post engagement ideas workshop.

The feedback received across Stage One and Two is the largest number of contributions we have ever experienced from the First Nations community on any issue.

The questions posed during this engagement were deliberately inquiring and open (qualitative). The City wanted to learn how people felt about January 26 and also how we as a City and region could make the day more inclusive.

When evaluating overall sentiment of feedback received, 100% of First Nations Peoples comments included negative feelings; of sadness, disconnection, or a wish for change about the

subject. This overall sentiment for change was echoed by just under 70% of the broader community's feedback.

10% of broader community feedback expressed that there are positive aspects about 26 January that people would like considered too.

Following the close of the six-month engagement period, invitations were sent to the community members who had registered for a yarn up or forums to attend a workshop where community suggestions and ideas were reviewed.

The outcome of the final community workshop was the development of several draft key recommendations that reflected the Stage One and Stage Two survey responses and the previous forums.

All of this information will be presented to the Kilangitj Advisory Committee for any final comments or feedback before being presented to Council in a final report on the project.

Introduction

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In May 2022, the City of Greater Geelong began a conversation about 26th of January – which is known as Australia Day.

For some people in our community, January 26 is a day to celebrate, while for First Nations People it represents a day of mourning, sorrow, and survival.

The City's Kilangitj Aboriginal Advisory Committee provides advice to Council on First Nations matters and requested that Council consider engaging with First Nations Peoples and the broader community about 26 January.

ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

The key purpose of this conversation has been to understand, respect and acknowledge the experiences and goals of First Nations Peoples while ensuring the wider community's voice is also heard on this topic.

It is anticipated that this engagement will also help strengthen relationships in the community with Council building an increased trust through this collaborative project.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report provides an analysis of the engagement findings from this six-month community engagement conversation and will be presented to Council for consideration as part of a decision-making process.

How we engaged

SNAPSHOT

The City's Kilangitj Aboriginal Advisory Committee has been a valued stakeholder group, initially requesting Council consider this engagement and then also during the project planning.

The approach for this engagement was designed to ensure the City took the time to have real conversations and yarn ups about the subject of Australia Day and the 26 January with the First Nations Peoples of the Djilang/Geelong region and also with the broader community.

This deliberative approach enabled many conversations to take place over a long period of time, ensuring that all the voices would be heard.

The engagement was to be held over a six-month period.

While the foundational engagement tool was a survey, the questions were conversational in nature, designed specifically to elicit thoughtful, considered responses.

The questions were also used as the framework for the yarn-up sessions – two with First Nations Peoples, two with the broader community and also for the final workshop with both First Nations and broader community people where the community's feedback and ideas were considered.

The engagement was promoted widely through online methods, media, social media and via partner organisations, the City's advisory committees and through events and in-person meetings, conversations, and yarns.

Top: *The flag raising at the Wadawurrung NAIDOC event on 4 July 2022, Julie Saylor-Briggs.*

Bottom: *Have your say stand at the Geelong Show; Felicity Bolitho, Julie Saylor-Briggs and Cr Jim Mason, October 2022.*



Who we engaged

WHO WE PLANNED TO ENGAGE

This engagement was planned to be conducted across the whole municipality, in two parts – so that First Nations Peoples would be the key participants in Stage One with a goal that we reach at least 10% of the First Nations Peoples population in the Djilang/Geelong region, estimated at 3,520 (Census 2021).

As adopted in the resolution by Council in May 2022, First Nations People were consulted from the beginning of the consultation in July through to November, the conversation with the broader community in stage two commenced from October 2022

Stage One engagement included the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation, the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative community groups, Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group, the City's Youth Council as well as local First Nations community members.

Stage Two saw the engagement findings from Stage One shared with the community and the survey and forums opened up to hear the broader community's views on the topic.

Stage Two engagement included organisations and groups such the Australia Day Committee, Festival of Sails committee, Lions Club, Victoria Police, Country Fire Association, Barwon Health, Deakin University, Gordon TAFE, the Geelong Public School Association and more.

PARTICIPATION

Overall, the City received 957 survey responses (447 First Nations Peoples and 510 Broader Community) and received feedback from local organisations as well as 23 attendees of four in-person community forums, 18 at the City's Advisory Committee's forum and 15 attendees at a post engagement ideas workshop.

Survey feedback

Stage One:

173 – First Nations (online & hard copy surveys)

(51 contributions and 5 email submission submitted by the broader community were held over and included in Stage Two)

Stage Two:

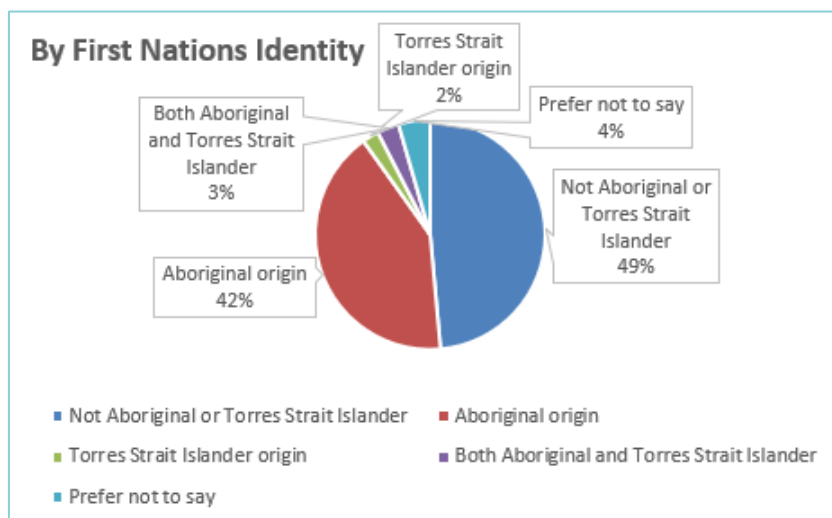
454 – broader community (online & hard copy surveys)

274 – First Nations (online & hard copy surveys)

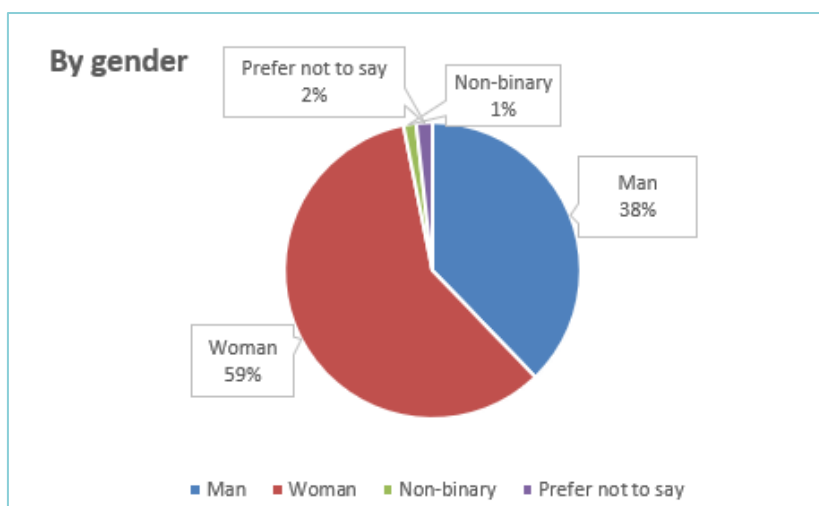
Total contributions: 957

DEMOGRAPHICS (STAGES COMBINED)

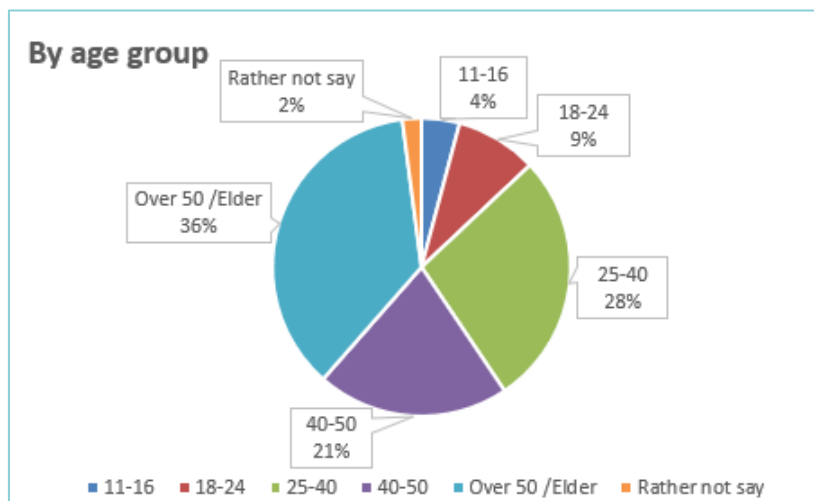
This engagement (Stage One and Stage Two combined) was responded to by an equal distribution of First Nations Peoples and the broader community with 51% First Nations Peoples and 49% non-indigenous respondents.



By gender, respondents were predominantly women at 59% and men at 38%.



When viewed by age, respondents represented all age groups with the Over 50s/Elder representing the largest cohort with 36% and Youth the smallest cohort with 13% of respondents.



WHO ACTIVELY ENGAGED

The aim was to connect with First Nations Peoples living in the Djilang/Geelong region in a two staged approach.

The stakeholder participation goal was met successfully with First Nations Peoples responses representing 12.7% of the First Nations Peoples in the Djilang/Geelong region, this was in great part due to the face-to-face engagement activities undertaken with a large majority of submissions received in-person.

The engagement also successfully received an equal number of respondents from the broader community.

HOW WE COMMUNICATED

This engagement was predominantly focussed on face-to-face conversations, forums and yarns, and to use the HYS page to collect the feedback.

This approach was hugely successful with almost 90% of First Nations People feedback being sourced from in-person activities.

Online, the engagement Have Your Say web page was regularly visited with 4,137 views.

In keeping with this approach, social media was used as a secondary communications channel. A single post was shared early in the engagement period and received a good number of clicks through to the Have Your Say page.

The City also promoted the engagement through three media releases, an article in Community Update (distributed to over 180,000 homes) and in City News (published in local newspapers).

City News (print advertising)

- > 18, 19, 20 Aug
- > 25, 26, 27 Aug
- > 1, 2, 3 Sept
- > 8, 9, 10 Sept
- > Anakie Advocate - Sept 2022

City News (edm)

- > 19 Aug
- > 26 Aug
- > 10 Sept
- > Anakie Advocate - Sept 2022

Hard copy postcards and surveys were also developed (see Attachment one & two) which were distributed at in-person activities.



Social media post:



See more media in the attachments section.

What we asked

WHAT WE ASKED

During both Stage One (July – November 2022) and Stage Two (October – November 2022) we asked the following questions:

Do you identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

How do you feel about 26 January?

How can we be more inclusive of First Nation heritage and other communities in Greater Geelong?

Following this six-month community conversation, what would you hope council could deliver or put in place?

Do you have anything further you would like to add?

WHY WE ASKED

The questions posed during this engagement were deliberately inquiring and open (qualitative). The City wanted to learn how people felt about January 26 and also how we as a City and region could make the day more inclusive.

We did not ask any quantitative questions because the goal was to hear feedback that was shared openly and unadulterated by an overly designed survey process.

The same questions were put forward during both Stage One and Stage Two of the engagement period.

HOW WE ASKED

The engagement methods included a core survey and four Yarn Up forums held in-person at Wurriki Nyal.

Have Your Say stands were also available to community to have their say at the NAIDOC event and the Geelong Show.

Officers also attended a range of meetings and sessions with First Nations Peoples, organisations, community groups and businesses.



Pictured: Kilangitj Advisory Committee member Kayley Nicholson supporting the Yarn Up conversations.

What we heard

KEY FINDINGS OVERVIEW

We received very strong feedback to this engagement – 957 survey responses. This included 447 contributions from First Nations People, the largest number of contributions we have ever experienced from the First Nations community on any issue.

There was a further 510 submissions received from the broader community.

OVERALL SENTIMENT

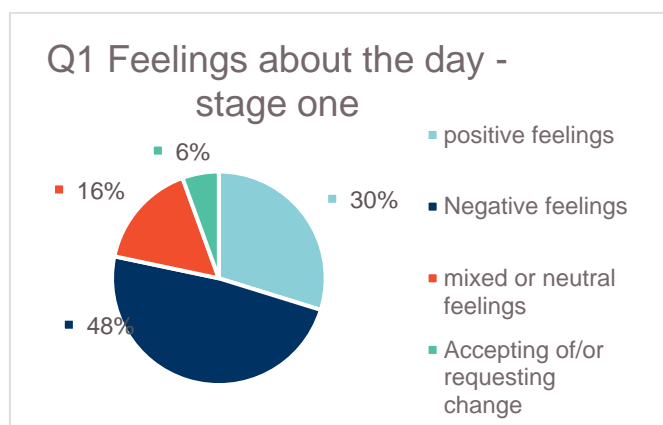
When evaluating overall sentiment of feedback received, 100% of First Nations Peoples comments included negative feelings; of sadness, disconnection, or a wish for change about the subject. This overall sentiment for change was echoed by just under 70% of the broader community's feedback.

10% of broader community feedback expressed that there are positive aspects about 26 January that people would like considered too.

QUESTION ONE

In response to the question *"How do you feel about 26 January?"* the majority of survey respondents (First Nations Peoples and broader community) shared negative feelings, and about a third of all comments (30% First Nations Peoples and 36% Broader Community) included feedback that was either requesting or accepting of change.

STAGE ONE – First Nations Peoples



Verbatim comments - Stage One:

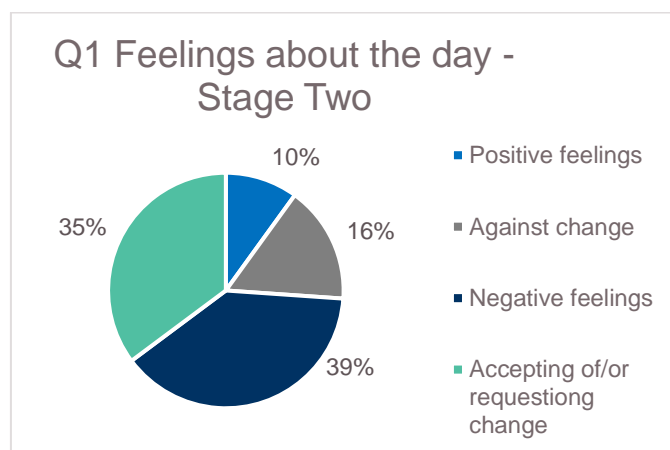
"As an Aboriginal Man Jan 26th is a day that evokes many emotions and thoughts. It's a day of great sadness for our people as it marks a very dark part of our history and with so much of the country celebrating the country on that day it creates a greater divide between aboriginal people and non indigenous people of our country."

"We do nothing and mum is upset all day."

"My Yawuru Mob call it Day of Loss or Sorrow and that's what it is."

"Mixed views. It's National but Indigenous mob left out."

STAGE TWO – Broader community



Verbatim comments - Stage Two:

"As a white person, I feel like it's a day of celebrating stealing a country which is wrong. I still think it's important to have a day dedicated to being Australian (all inclusive) which is not January 26th."

"It has always been Australia day from since my childhood but now the conversation needs to take into account the many wrongs and lack of education to the Australian people."

"January 26 is not a day for celebration - it's the anniversary of a day that marked the beginning of horrific treatment of Indigenous Australians, including mass killings."

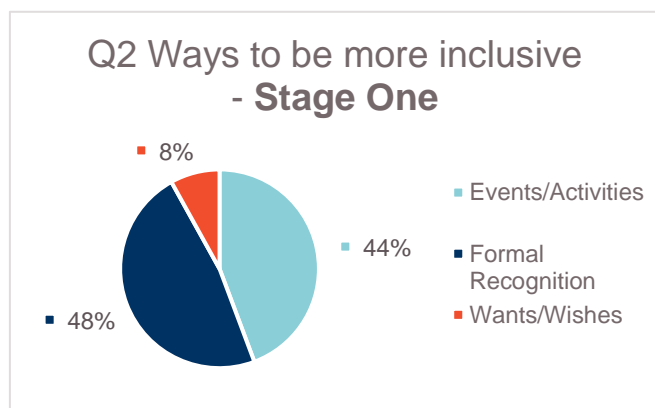
"Leave it the way it is, every country has had bad things happen to them."

QUESTION TWO

In response to the question *“How can we be more inclusive of First Nation heritage and other communities in Greater Geelong?”* there were strong themes from both Stage One and Two around the inclusion of culture and heritage, and for holding formal ceremonies or events of recognition of First Nations Peoples.

And while the City noted it was not asking about changing the date of Australia Day, as it is a Federal government set date, many responses included feedback about “change the date” and “leave the date as it is”.

STAGE ONE – First Nations Peoples



Verbatim comments - Stage One:

“Formal acknowledgement with dawn service and 26 Jan concert at Johnsons Park”

“More culture and truth telling. events and music and arts”

“Truth telling events. Morning community open ceremony and celebration”

“Recognition and acknowledgement from Mayor - alongside dawn ceremony and closing events.”

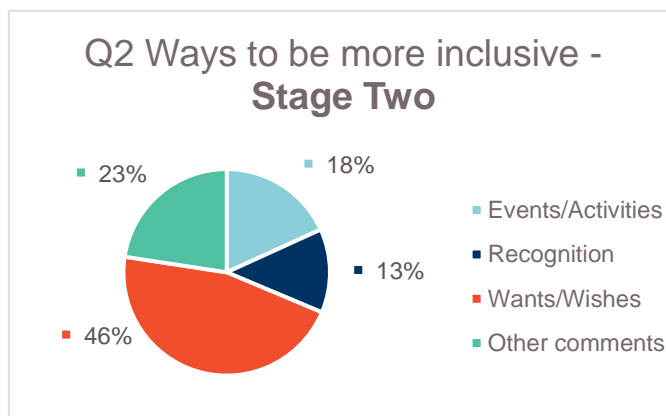
“We should move the celebrations to another, more inclusive day.”

“Koorie stuff all day - dance, music, film, ceremonies in the morning and at night then have fireworks in our flag colors - red-yellow-black-ocean blue and green”

“Change the Day not the date”

“Change the date.”

STAGE TWO – Broader community



Verbatim comments - Stage Two:

“Formally officially address racism and acknowledgement of country”

“can you have more Aboriginal and Torres Strait stuff like music festivals for youth and something for children and families to learn”

“Geelong Council needs to lobby the Vic & Federal Govts to stop discriminating against First Nations peoples (change bail laws, reduce incarceration, stop police harassment of black peoples & “others”, stop child removals, close ALL the gaps, issue permanent visas to all refugees in Australia & bring all those on Manus & Nauru here) & report to the Geelong community on its actions & progress.”

“Acknowledge first nations people in a way that is acceptable to them. NOT in a way we think is ok”

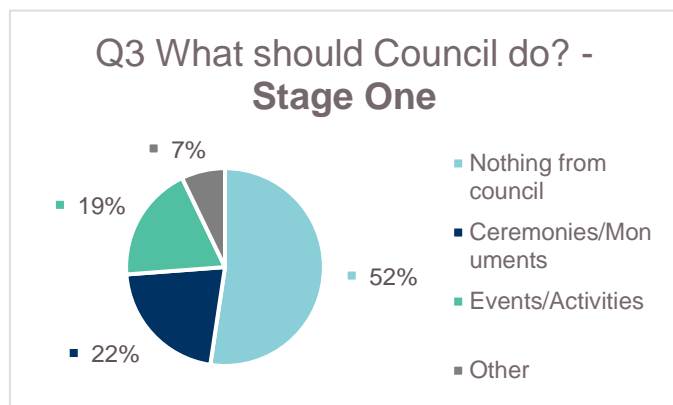
“Change the date.”

“Nothing needed we are inclusive for all citizens, nationalities and culture”

QUESTION THREE

The responses to the question *“Following this six-month community conversation, what would you hope council could deliver or put in place?”* showed the greatest difference between Stage One and Stage Two feedback, with many First Nations Peoples saying “nothing” or not seeing a role for Council, while the broader community shared lots of ideas and suggestions for Council.

STAGE ONE – First Nations Peoples



Verbatim comments – Stage One:

“keep the yarn going”

“Yes - can you at least talk truth on this day - stand with us silence is evil”

“Change the date for our future”

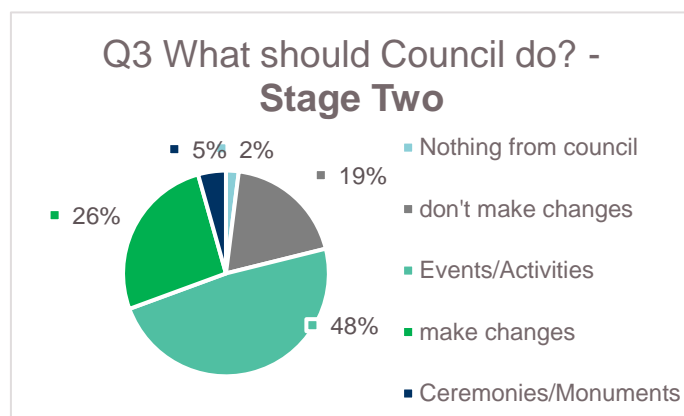
“No more Australia Day - but what about Australians Day?”

“No thank you”

“Nothing.”

“Yes - do not stop this conversation but keep it up its best work Council done for ages”

STAGE TWO – Broader community



Verbatim comments – Stage Two:

“I like the ideas already reported for showing respect and sharing stories in all inclusive events. i.e. (from the report) Showing respect on 26 January: First Nations acknowledgement and stories.”

“Maybe do citizenships on a different day”

“I think it is pretty clear that there needs to be a change. I think your media needs to be clear and concise with any changes.”

“Recognition that Australia Day has outlived its purpose and does not reflect the current nation or its ideals”

“Nothing. Fireworks and a family celebration down at Eastern beach has and is a great way to celebrate being Australian and living in Geelong.”

YARN-UPS & FORUMS

Along with the survey, there were two First Nations Peoples Yarn Ups and two broader community Forums to discuss this topic and the questions posed in the surveys.

This is the first time that the City has taken part in such an opportunity for healing and truth-telling. Regardless of whether they were at a Yarn Up or a Forum, and the people who participated embraced the opportunity to talk to the City about how they feel as Geelong citizens on the topic of 26 January.

At both the Yarn Ups and Forums, everyone fully participated in the spirit of mutual respect and meaningful conversation.

STAGE ONE – Yarn ups

Two small forums with First Nations Peoples during Stage One, allowed for discussion of the survey results and key questions. The themes that emerged are summarised below.

History: “We can’t celebrate the successes without first understanding the despair”

There are many painful stories of the history of Geelong, from colonisation and the Frontier Wars, to the Stolen Generations.

Reclamation: “If we can’t change the date – let’s change the focus”

Recognise it as the day of colonisation and put First Nations voices and stories first. First Nations people want to reclaim their story and share their history.

Wider Change: “There is a groundswell of change”

There is a wider shift in focus for January 26 already occurring and it is time for Geelong to change too. There is momentum at the state and federal level for greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including the commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Other councils are changing, and other big organisations in Geelong are changing too.

Showing respect on 26 January: First Nations acknowledgement and stories

Start with a Dawn Ceremony at the Waterfront with a Cleansing of Country and a minute’s silence. It could be followed by Dance and/or a march. Share history and stories. It would be an inclusive gathering of all First Nations communities and non-Indigenous allies and family. Invite schools, invite other agencies. Invite new citizens and welcome them to the land. The

afternoon could move to a celebration of cultural diversity.

The second forum also called for a statement of commitment from Council to the First Nations communities and Traditional Owners (broader than January 26).

STAGE TWO – Community Forums

Two forums were also held with the broader community during Stage Two, where the First Nations Peoples feedback was shared with the attendees and then the key questions discussed. The themes that emerged are summarised below.

History: “26 January is not an inclusive date”

Participants shared that they haven’t acknowledged Jan 26 for 5/10/15 years (multiple mentions). It’s been a learning process – slow change. A national day is needed – we want to celebrate and be proud of being Australian – but it has to be an inclusive date. 26 January is not an inclusive date. (multiple mentions) ‘If we’re going to call it Australia Day it should be inclusive of everybody.’ ‘We don’t know what it means to celebrate Australia. So we can’t do it.’ ‘Within my family and friends, we all feel it’s inappropriate.’

Change the date (13 of the 14 participants expressed that they wanted a different date to celebrate Australia Day)

Inclusiveness: “Listen to First Nations Peoples”

Belief that a Citizenship ceremony and ‘citizen re-commitment ceremony’ held with First Nations Traditional Owners welcoming people to the land would be more inclusive. Separate the concept of British Australia Day from Australians’ Australia Day. We need greater awareness and education. (multiple mentions) “Listen to First Nations Peoples”

A way to move forward together: “Need greater awareness and education”

Separate the concept of British Australia Day from Australians’ Australia Day. We need greater awareness and education. (multiple mentions). Hold a morning event – start with First Nations. Sombre, acknowledging, like ANZAC day. Afternoon – celebrate all cultures.

POST ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Following the close of the six-month engagement period, invitations were sent to the community members who had registered for one of the four

yarn ups & forums to attend a workshop where community suggestions and ideas be reviewed.

The purpose of the community workshop was to review the consultation feedback and as a community to develop opportunities and recommendations to put forward to council.

This consultation commenced with community and closed with community as council had requested.

The outcome of the final community workshop was the development of several draft key recommendations that reflected the Stage One and Stage Two survey responses and the previous forums.



What we have done and next steps

REPORTING

An interim engagement report shared after each stage of the engagement project.

[Your Say page](#)

[Interim Engagement Report – Stage One](#)

[Interim Engagement Report – Stage Two](#)

NEXT STEPS

A council report is being prepared which will share the feedback, themes and recommendations included in this document and will be presented to Council for their deliberation in March 2023.

ATTACHMENTS OVERLEAF...

26 JANUARY FEEDBACK



THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG RESPECTFULLY RECOGNISES THE WADAWURRUNG PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES OF THE GEELONG (DJILANG) REGION.

We acknowledge that 26 January is traumatic for many First Nation Peoples, and with the growing support from across the community, the City is commencing a six-month conversation in regards to 26 January. This has commenced with First Nations Peoples and will broaden later in the year to include conversation with the broader Geelong communities.

The City is mandated by the Federal government to conduct certain events as part of Australia Day celebrations. However, we are committed to engaging with all communities to build a way forward. We are hosting a series of forums and conversations, and are keen to hear your feedback and comments.

This survey is for First Nations People of the Djilang (Geelong) region.

ABOUT YOU

1. Do you identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Aboriginal origin

Torres Strait Islander origin

Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Prefer not to say

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

2. What town or suburb are you from?

3. Please share your name

4. Please share your phone number

5. Please share your email

ABOUT 26 JANUARY

6. How do you feel about 26 January?

7. How can we be more inclusive of First Nation heritage and other communities in Greater Geelong?

26 JANUARY FEEDBACK



10. Would you like us to keep in touch?
YES
NO

☐
☐

8. Following this six-month community conversation, what would you hope council could deliver or put in place?

Thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.
You can view our privacy statement at
www.geelongaustralia.com.au/governance

PLEASE RETURN TO:

Healthy Communities department- 26 January
City of Greater Geelong
PO Box 104
Wadawurrung Country
Geelong, VIC 3220

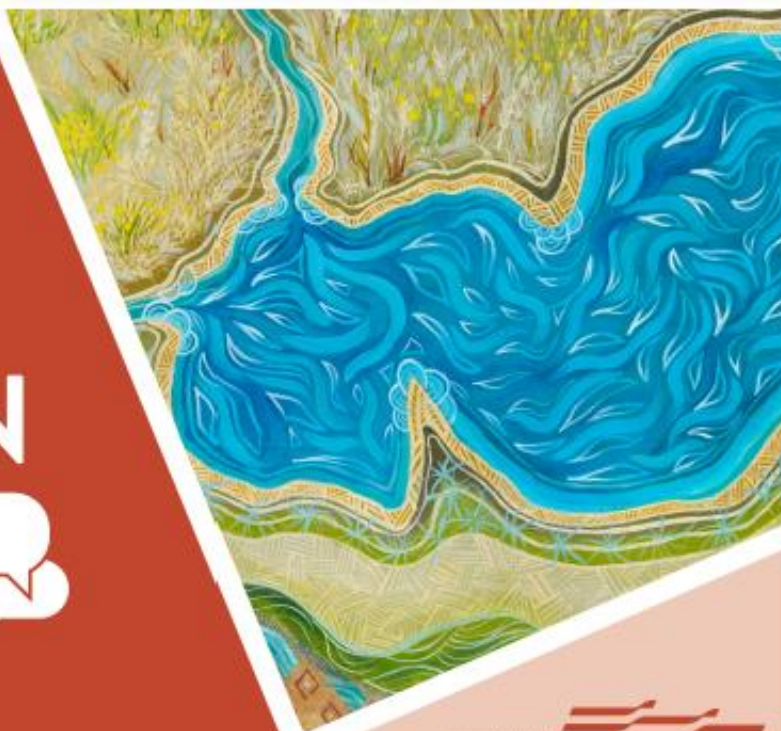
9. Do you have anything further you would like to add?

CITY OF GREATER
GEELONG

YARN UP



Image: Dr Jenny Murray-Jones
Title: "Corio" 2019



CITY OF GREATER
GEELONG

CONTACT US:
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT - 26 JANUARY
CITY OF GREATER GEELONG
PO BOX 104
WADAWURRUNG COUNTRY
GEELONG VIC 3220

**We welcome you to join
us in a yarn up about
26 January.**

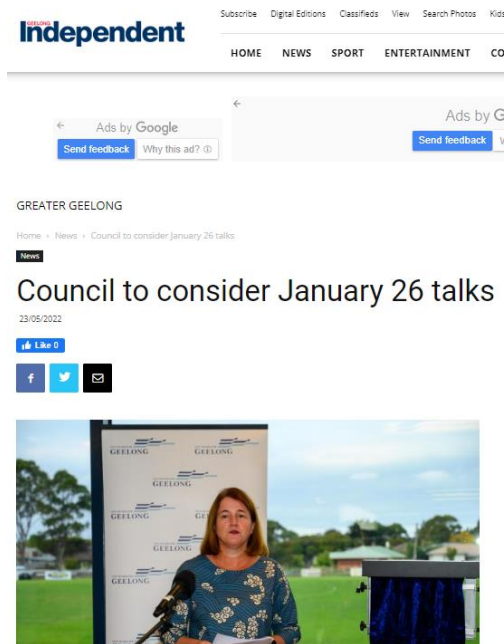


Scan the QR
code to join the
conversation.

Proud supporters of our First Nation communities

MEDIA CLIPPINGS

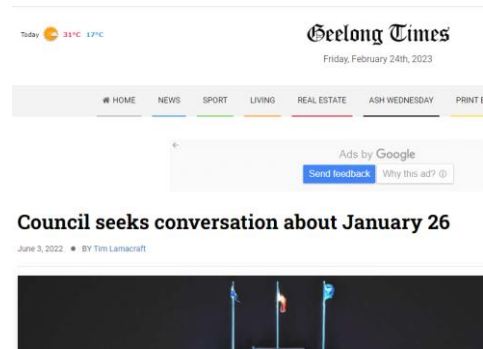
<https://geelongindy.com.au/news/23-05-2022/council-to-consider-january-26-talks/>



<https://geelongindy.com.au/news/19-10-2022/january-26-discussions-continue/>



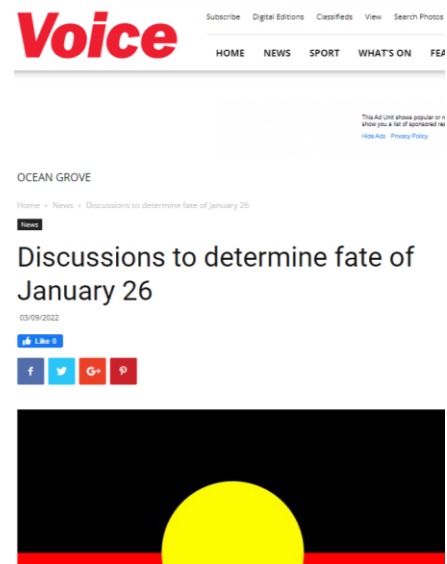
<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/geelongtimes/news/council-seeks-conversation-about-january-26/>



<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/geelongtimes/news/council-widens-debate-on-january-26/>



<https://oceangrovevoice.com.au/news/03-09-2022/discussions-to-determine-fate-of-january-26/>



<https://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/news/geelong/city-reveals-first-nations-australia-day-engagement-results-opens-consultation-to-wider-community/news-story/cef4acf77ed8c30603f177d4cf011711>

Geelong
Advertiser

Australia Day: Our First Nations residents signal change is needed

A council review of how the city recognises Australia Day is being opened for community feedback, after initial conversations with First Nations people found about half supported change