

# Koori Inclusion Action Plan

May 2016



Use of the term 'Koori': As a Victorian organisation, the word 'Koori' is employed by CFA as a way to represent all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in Victoria. We are committed to working closely with Traditional Owners and to advancing inclusion and engagement with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in the State.

## Guide to Organising a Welcome to Country

As part of CFA's commitment to increased Aboriginal inclusion it is expected that from January 2016, each new CFA fire station opening will include a Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony. A Welcome to Country is also appropriate at:

- Official, large and/or significant meetings and events
- State-wide conferences and forums
- Events or meetings held in communities with important Koori connections

### Why perform a Welcome to Country?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a unique relationship with the land, and consider their country to be more like a friend or relative, to be cared for and respected. The land sustains and provides for them. A 'Welcome to Country' is therefore a personal introduction, and an invitation to share and respect the land. For CFA it demonstrates that we respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their culture, and acknowledge their role as the Traditional Owners of the land.

A Welcome to Country can only be performed by an Aboriginal Traditional Owner of the land on which an event is being held.



Photo 1. Uncle Bill Nicholson, Wurundjeri Elder conducts a Smoking Ceremony at Badgers Creek Fire Station, August 2015

## What is a Smoking Ceremony?

A Smoking Ceremony is one of the most significant ancient ceremonies performed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ceremony involves the smouldering of various native plants to produce smoke, which is believed to have cleansing properties and the ability to ward off bad spirits.

## How do I organise a Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony?

To organise a Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony you must contact the Traditional Owner Group for the area.

If your fire station opening/event is in a part of Victoria with a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP), you should contact the RAP to arrange the Welcome to Country. The RAP is the formerly recognised Traditional Owner group, or will represent several Traditional Owner groups. As of October 2015 about 60% of Victoria is covered by Registered Aboriginal Parties. *See contact details at the end of this document.*

## What if a RAP is not established in my area?

If there is no Registered Aboriginal Party for the location of the event, there is still a Traditional Owner group. It is important to determine the right Traditional Owner group and who to contact to organise the Welcome to Country or Smoking Ceremony.

You can contact your local Council to find out the details of the local Traditional Owner Group/s. If you are still unsure you can contact Stefanie Russell at CFA HQ at [s.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:s.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au).

If for some reason, a RAP or other Traditional Owner group cannot perform the Welcome to Country, the highest ranking CFA member on the day can say an Acknowledgement to Country.

## Some things to keep in mind:

- A Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony should only be performed by a representative of the Traditional Owner group. Asking any Aboriginal person to perform a Welcome to Country when they do not belong to the Traditional Owner group may cause them embarrassment and may offend the Traditional Owners.
- Do not go to the local Aboriginal Cooperative to organise the Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony, even though they may offer this service to CFA. The local cooperative may not represent the local Traditional Owner group.
- Give yourself plenty of time to organise the Welcome to Country as Traditional Owner groups work with a number of Government and local organisations.
- Some Registered Aboriginal Parties are small organisations; therefore it may take some days for them to respond to your request.
- Some RAPs will ask that you fill out a booking form and will confirm at a later date the person who will conduct the Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony.
- CFA cannot pay cash in hand on the day; we will need to be invoiced.

# Koori Inclusion Action Plan



- The Welcome to Country needs to be placed first-up on the agenda for the event. A CFA person can introduce the representative by saying “I would like to introduce (insert name) as a representative of the (Traditional Owner Clan) people, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are gathered here today”.
- The Welcome to Country may take anywhere between 3 minutes to 15 minutes; please check how long is required. If you are doing a Smoking Ceremony allow an extra 15 - 20 minutes.

## Payment process

- For the opening of a new fire station, invoices need to be sent to the Project Manager for the building project (who meets with the District regularly during the delivery of the project) through Land and Building Services at CFA Headquarters, 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, 3151.
- There is a budget for up to \$800 for a Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony as part of the new building project and this cannot be exceeded.

## On the day of the Station Opening or event

- Make sure a CFA member is tasked with meeting and welcoming the Aboriginal Elder or representative from the local Traditional Owner group.
- Ensure the Traditional Owner is thanked for taking part by the person who follows.

## RAP Contact Details

Registered Aboriginal Party	Contact	CFA Districts
<b>Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Bryon Powell (Chairperson) PO Box 734, BALLARAT VIC 3353  Email: <a href="mailto:bryon@wathcorp.com.au">bryon@wathcorp.com.au</a> Phone: (03) 4308 0420 Fax: (03) 4308 0421 Mobile: 0421 158 944 Email: <a href="mailto:bookings@wathcorp.com.au">bookings@wathcorp.com.au</a>	<b>D7, D15, and some of D6, D14, D16</b>
<b>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council</b>	Level 1, Providence Building Abbotsford Convent 1 St Heliers Street Abbotsford VIC 3067  Phone: (03) 9416 2905 <a href="mailto:reception@wurundjeri.com.au">reception@wurundjeri.com.au</a>	<b>D13, D14, D2 and some of D15, D8 and D9</b>
<b>Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Lawrence Moser Chief Executive Officer 36 Station Street Seymour VIC 3660  Email: <a href="mailto:taungurung@gmail.com">taungurung@gmail.com</a> Phone: (03) 5799 0097 Mobile: 0400 638 960	<b>D12, D22, D23 and small parts of D2, D13 and D20</b>

# Koori Inclusion Action Plan



Registered Aboriginal Party	Contact	CFA Districts
<b>Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Damian Britnell   GKTOLMB Executive Officer Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board 574 Main Street (PO Box 1012) Bairnsdale 3875 Phone: 03 5150 3573   Fax: 03) 5150 3555 Email: <a href="mailto:dbritnell@egcma.com.au">dbritnell@egcma.com.au</a>	<b>D9, D27, D10, D11 and small part of D24, D23</b>
<b>Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Shepparton Office PO Box 1363, Shepparton VIC 3632 127 Welsford Street, Shepparton, VIC  Telephone: (03) 5832 0222 Fax: (03) 5821 0367 Email: <a href="mailto:reception@ynac.com">reception@ynac.com</a>	<b>D22, D23 and D20 and a small part of D24</b>
<b>Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Rodney Carter (Chief Executive Officer) PO Box 1026, Bendigo 3552  Email: <a href="mailto:ceo@djadjawurrung.com.au">ceo@djadjawurrung.com.au</a> Website: <a href="http://www.djadjawurrung.com.au">www.djadjawurrung.com.au</a> Phone: (03) 5444 2888 Fax: (03) 5441 6472	<b>D2, D20, and small parts of D15, D16 and D18</b>
<b>Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Mr Jeremy Clark PO Box 43, HALLS GAP 3381  Mobile: 0419 132 471 Email: <a href="mailto:easternmaar@gmail.com">easternmaar@gmail.com</a>	<b>D5</b>
<b>Guditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Damein Bell (CEO) 4/48 Edgar St (PO Box 216) Heywood VIC 3304  Phone: 03 5527 1427 Email: <a href="mailto:damein@guditjmirring.com">damein@guditjmirring.com</a> Keicha Day <a href="mailto:Keicha@guditjmirring.com">Keicha@guditjmirring.com</a>	<b>D4, D5 and small part of D17</b>
<b>Martang Pty Ltd</b>	Tim Chatfield PO Box 20 Halls Gap VIC 3381  Email: <a href="mailto:djabwurrung@gmail.com">djabwurrung@gmail.com</a> or <a href="mailto:martang1362@bigpond.com">martang1362@bigpond.com</a> Phone: (03) 5356 6188 Fax: (03) 5356 6108	<b>D16 and D5</b>
<b>Barenji Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation</b>	Janine Coombs (Chairperson) 142 Firebrace Street Horsham VIC 3400 PO Box 1255 Horsham VIC 3402  <a href="http://www.bglc.com.au">www.bglc.com.au</a> Email: <a href="mailto:admin@bglc.com.au">admin@bglc.com.au</a> Phone: (03) 5381 0977	<b>D17 and D18 and a small part of D16 and D5</b>