

Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project

PROJECT REPORT June 2013

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1. Introduction

The Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project grew out of a decision by Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group (Geelong One Fire) to engage communities locally in the plans towards a referendum. Geelong One Fire Committee members then met with local Aboriginal people who were interested in participating and the project plan developed. This partnership and sharing of ideas, skills and experiences is what the Project was built on, and this report aims to provide a picture of what we did together, what we learnt and how we plan to progress it to stage two.

This report includes quotes from the evaluation forms plus comments from Planning Group members, so that readers get a real sense of the experience we have participated in together in Geelong for this first stage of public awareness raising and engagement towards the referendum to recognise Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People.

During the establishment of the project, *Recognise* was launched and the Act of Recognition passed in Parliament. Both steps spurred us on and linked us to the growing national arena to achieve a 'Yes' vote at the referendum. Thank you to Shannan Dodson and other staff at *Recognise* for their support, guidance and generous provision of materials.

Reconciliation Victoria had supported us to develop our funding application to Reconciliation Australia, and provided vital guidance, support and links to speakers and other Victorian resources as the project progressed. Thank you to Erin for her wise guidance and listening, and to Damian for his ever generous assistance.

When Daphne Yarram spoke at our public forum, she said: *"It is our shared history, and we can learn and build a wonderful Australia together"*. We are excited about taking this leading role together.

A HUGE thank you to all members of the Steering Committee and Planning Group: Uncle David Tournier, Lowell Hunter, Colleen Gibbs, Tracey Currie, Sharon Buckley, John Burke, Margrette Lewis, Sheenagh Mulroy & Ron Milligan with Vicky Grosser acting as Project Co-ordinator.

Photographs included in this report are by Lowell Hunter & Vicky Grosser.

2. Summary

The purpose of the Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project has been to raise awareness of Constitutional Recognition in the Geelong region over a five month period in early 2013. The tasks undertaken were:

- a. Provision of sessions to 10 local organisations / groups as stage 1 January-May 2013
- b. Evaluate and report on the outcomes to Reconciliation Australia / *Recognise*
- c. Review project and consider next steps

At first a small Steering Group was developed, including members of the Geelong One Fire Committee who were accountable for the Project, plus other interested people. One non-

Aboriginal person in this group expressed an interest in taking on the stage 1 Project Co-ordination, and other members linked into the ongoing Planning Group which became the driving force for the Project.

The decision to engage a group of people through anticipated interest and with the necessary relationships and skills to develop and achieve the Project in this short time line was successful. They became the 10 members of the local Planning Group: five Aboriginal and 5 non-Aboriginal people. As happens with any project, the capacity and interest of members varied, but in general it was a strong group who worked well together and maintained a commitment to deliver the sessions in a range of settings to a reasonably wide demographic of the Geelong community.

We received support from Councillor Eddy Kontelj: Aboriginal Affairs portfolio holder, who we updated as the project progressed. He also set up the invitation for us to brief The Geelong Mayor and Councillors about Constitutional Recognition.

We are pleased with the outcomes, and despite the challenges which went with setting up the sessions, delivering them in a tight time frame and evaluating the feedback as we progressed in order to strengthen them, the approach has proved to be a sound one.

Sessions were provided to –

a) Organisations:

- City of Greater Geelong Mayor & Councillors at a full briefing
- Diversitat (migrant & refugee support service)
- Geelong Trades Hall Board members
- Geelong One Fire members
- Labour Party MP and members
- Liberal Party
- Narana staff, Board members and community members
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative community meeting, including Board members

b) Public:

- Geelong Regional Library Service (events calendar)
- Reconciliation in the Park (focus on younger community members)

We delivered the 10 sessions to a total of approximately 191 people in Geelong over a 3 month period: March-May 2013. (There were additional people who heard a brief speech on Constitutional Recognition provided by Morgan Coleman at the *Reconciliation in the Park* event on 2nd June.)

Of the 97 people (51%) who completed an evaluation form, 55 indicated that they would like to be part of next stage awareness raising in the Geelong region about Constitutional Recognition in the Australian Constitution.

The 10 sessions were generally provided by covering the following three components:

- Local context – including the history of *Djillong* (Geelong) and acts of local reconciliation since settlement

- Status of Constitution Recognition – the sections of the Constitution which the ‘Expert Panel’ have made recommendations to change, and the recent Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act (February 2013) plus what needs to be in place to have a successful referendum
- Developing a stronger local link up of groups & activities connected to wider reconciliation – this was largely achieved through engaging people who are interested in being part of the next stages of Constitutional Recognition in Geelong.

Handouts were available. These included –

- A two sided information sheet on Constitutional Recognition which was developed by members of the Planning Group. It provides both plain language and ‘legal’ versions of the proposed amendments to the Constitution, as developed by the Expert Panel
- Summary of the Expert Panels recommendations
- Article in ‘The Age’ newspaper by Marcia Langton on why she believes that Constitutional Recognition is important
- *Recognise* leaflets, badges and other materials
- Pocket sized Australian Constitution
- www.djillong.net.au website cards
- Information on Geelong One Fire activities

There was unanimous appreciation of the sessions, including the approach we took, plus the information provided about local history and culture as well as information provided on the plans for the referendum. Even in the public forums we received no negative feedback, except understandably some scepticism about the outcomes of this approach to reducing discrimination against Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People.

We found that the majority of participants in all of the sessions have not read the Australian Constitution, and so had no awareness that it still contains sections which are directly discriminatory towards Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People as well as failing to recognise them as the First Peoples of these lands.

On the other hand, we found that a significant proportion of local Aboriginal people are unsure whether the plans to update the Constitution will in fact deliver the level of recognition and equality they believe is necessary, with particular reference to achieving sovereignty and putting Treaty in place. The two Aboriginal communities we provided sessions to have requested follow-up with legal expertise to provide answers to some questions they have in order to decide how they would like to vote when a referendum is tabled.

We noted that apart from a few local schools assisting their year 8-10 students to attend the two public sessions we had plus the young people engaged briefly at our final public presence at ‘*Reconciliation in the Park*’ in Geelong, we didn’t reach the younger age group (under 35 years) successfully in this stage of the project. A number of participants have offered support to achieve this in the future.

Almost all of the session participants were non-Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islanders, apart from the sessions at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op and Narana where just one person was non-Aboriginal at each event.

The Planning Group is now discussing a follow-up stage 2 of the Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project, extending beyond the Geelong area and developed through a broader partnership approach.

3. Planning Group & Project Delivery

The Planning Group met on four occasions during the Project time frame. Chaired by the Co-ordinator, who gained regular guidance from Uncle David Tournier in particular, the Group quickly agreed the three key components of the sessions and progressed to engaging the organisations and public settings to provide them:

Delivery Model: Session Contents – Stage 1

- a) ***Djillong*** – local history of the Wathaurong People, including key acts of reconciliation in our shared history since settlement. Resources were shared which have been developed over recent years by Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op in partnership with Geelong One Fire: the *Djillong* website and the Geelong One Fire website.
- b) ***Constitutional Recognition*** – that the Australian Constitution is still discriminatory towards and does not recognise Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People; the establishment of the Expert panel and recommendations, Act of Recognition 2013 and steps towards a referendum. Discussion, comments & questions; plus personal perspectives of facilitators.
- c) ***Next steps*** – ideas and expressions of interest in engaging in developing the referendum campaign in Geelong and surrounding areas.

4. Reconciliation Victoria

- Erin McKinnon & Damian O’Keefe were very supportive of our project – including links to the two presenters for our public events: Daphne Yarram & Morgan Coleman. They also linked a representative of a Constitutional Recognition group developing in Castlemaine with our Project Co-ordinator, and we shared our Constitutional Recognition Information sheet plus evaluation form with them (they will be acknowledged as originating from Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project).
- At the time of writing this report Reconciliation Victoria have received a grant from Reconciliation Australia to provide state-wide Constitutional Recognition support, and Vicky has updated the new Project Co-ordinator there about our activities in Geelong.

5. Recognise

- A couple of months after our Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project commenced, *Recognise* was launched on 13th February 2013. The promotion video and materials created an encouraging resource and link for our local Project, connecting our activities to the growing national campaign.

- Shannan Dodson at Recognise provided very helpful support: sending *Recognise* materials to provide at our sessions, and posting details of our public events on the *Recognise* website and Facebook pages.
- A short report on the first Geelong Constitutional Recognition session was sent to *Recognise* to give the team there a flavour of what we were developing, plus media coverage we received.

6. Role of Co-ordinator, plus Facilitators & Council of Reconciliation Learning Circle Kit

a) Co-ordination –

The Co-ordinator focused on putting the sessions into place as well as creating the program with the main facilitators so that it could be delivered flexibly depending on the participants and context.

It took considerable hours to inform people about the aims of the project, listen to whether they were interested and able to connect it to their services or program of activities, and then timetable the sessions (an hour in length on the whole).

b) Facilitation –

This was provided by 4 members of the Planning Group: the Co-ordinator at all but one (public speaker) session alongside one or two of the Aboriginal facilitators, up to three of us presenting together depending on the group. We largely succeeded in having at least one facilitator at each session that had a relationship with the group or organisation we were providing the session for. This created trust, led to open discussions and engagement of participants as well as leading to some very generous hosting, including the provision of some food before or after the sessions on several occasions.

Uncle David Tournier provided the key guidance on how to provide the sessions. At most sessions we sat in a circle, using the 'Council Of Reconciliation Learning Kit' as a basis for the way we would facilitate the sessions and the need to link Constitutional Recognition to our local history in 'Djillong': the correct pronunciation of Geelong, meaning a 'tongue of land' in Wathaurong.

Uncle David spoke at the main public event run through Geelong Regional Library Service in order to ensure that the local history was covered; and he provided this base to all of the other sessions except one he was unable to attend. www.djillong.net.au and www.geelognonefire.org.au websites information was provided.

The Council of Reconciliation Learning Circles kit includes tips for facilitators. It was read in full by the Co-ordinator who then drew out some key aspects for presenting genuinely alongside one another which were discussed as the first two sessions were planned and delivered. The goal was for us to create opportunities for open discussion and thinking together, as well as engagement of anyone who wanted to volunteer to be involved in next steps after this stage of the project.

Some key aspects of the Learning Circle Kit which we used -

- Reconciliation needs to come from the hearts and minds of the Australian people.

- “to enable people to learn and think together at their own pace” towards taking action. To build “more understanding of the unique position of Indigenous People in Australian society”
- Allows people to see that change is possible, and encouraging ongoing community action
- Learning occurs through shared enquiry and dialogue
- Using life experiences, supported by exploring our own backgrounds and views
- Guided by a facilitator: using a positive tone, assist discussion & support learning from one another.

At each session notes were taken about responses, questions raised and main points of discussion.

7. Ten sessions: planning, delivery and outcomes (in order of delivery)

- **Geelong Trades Hall** – this group of 15 local Trade Union leaders received our first session with much respect and interest. Questions and comments included concern at the discriminatory nature of our Constitution, as most people present hadn’t read it. Consideration was given to how the Trade Union movement, which played a key role in supporting the local Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op to become established, can be part of this campaign towards the referendum.

What I learnt:

- ✚ About the laws that the Aboriginal people are up against
- ✚ That the Constitution needs amendment
- ✚ Local stuff that I had no idea about & and Constitutional stuff that I had no idea about
- ✚ Many questions still to be answered
- ✚ There is some history of reconciliation in Djillong

- **Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group** – this was a general meeting with 9 members present. Lowell presented a personal approach to the impact of failure to recognise Aboriginal people in the Australian Constitution. Some good discussion and positive feedback plus interest in next steps.

What I liked about the session:

- ✚ I enjoyed meeting like minded people and hearing about their opinions as it helped clarify my mind about the issues and I would like to be more articulate about them.

- **Labour Party** – 17 people were present at a combined branches meeting. Most people had not read the Australian Constitution, and there was appreciation for the information, including on *Djillong* as well as interest in supporting next steps. Ian Trezise MP offered to set up a meeting with the local Labour MPs.

What I learnt:

- ✚ That the Constitution remains inherently racist and requires changing
- ✚ A lot about the lack of recognition given to Indigenous Peoples & culture

- **Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative** – This session was part of a Community Meeting, with 18 people participating. There was discussion about the benefits of a referendum versus addressing Treaty and Sovereignty issues, and interest in

a follow up session with a lawyer to assist the community to decide how they would like to vote. Uncle David was appreciated for his time contributing to the local awareness raising on the issue.

What I liked:

- ✚ That everyone has a valid opinion, that people are encouraged to have a voice; the general feeling is to voice our opinions; that we matter, we care and we will continue to do so
- ✚ The excellent relaxed discussion, which I found most valuable and we need to maintain continued meetings and maintain accurate reports as to the progress
- ✚ Informed open discussion

What would have made the session stronger:

- ✚ More in depth information on both sides of the argument!
- ✚ A bit of help on legal jargon and what this means for the future and where to from here

- **Geelong Regional Library Service with speaker: Daphne Yarram** – over 50 people attended this public session, in which Uncle David gave information about our local history and *Djillong*. Then Daphne gave a Power Point presentation which engaged people with questions and comments. A good number of people expressed an interest in being part of future campaigning.



What I liked:

- ✚ Such sessions are an important contribution to informing the public of the issues involved here before they are confronted with the referendum
- ✚ Hearing Daphne Yarram: Director of National Congress of Australia First People: a great and engaging speaker. David Tournier is a fine speaker too, and it was powerful hearing him speak in Wathaurong.
- ✚ I liked the presentation about the Constitution and the different stages it has been through
- ✚ All inclusive, we are all affected and can all make a difference.

What I learnt:

- ✚ There is much latent support in the community for the referendum proposals, that could be encouraged to develop into the level of support that passed the 1967 referendum
- ✚ Change must be implemented for us all to move forward as a nation. We must remove racism & discrimination
- ✚ The topic was well covered and my knowledge expanded
- ✚ Lots about discrimination of Aboriginal People
- ✚ All the failed attempts to recognize Aboriginal People
- ✚ So much I feel more informed, I feel more connected.

- **Diversitat (migrant and refugee settlement service)** – This session was for the 10 senior managers and had been set up at our request as Diversitat is affiliated to Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op. Nobody had read the Constitution, and almost all of the team are interested in supporting next steps, with particular interest in reaching younger people.

What I liked:

- ✚ The personal and intimate nature of the session, the understanding of local history and explanation of Constitution I could comprehend
- ✚ The information distributed was really relevant, what a fantastic session!

What I learnt:

- A lot. History, understanding of the areas of the Constitution that are so outdated – we need to change!

- **City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) Councillors & Mayor** & senior officers– This went very well, with fully engaged and open comments and questions from



participants, and there was interest to know more about local history of the Wathaurong People and *Djillong*. Uncle David & Lowell had their photos taken in the old Mayoral chair! Evaluation forms were completed by a couple of the Councillors and an appreciation received from the Councillor with Aboriginal Affairs portfolio. There was also interest expressed in supporting the next stages of this Project. Thanks to Councillor Eddy Kontelj and City of Greater Geelong Officers for assisting to put this session in place.

What I learnt:

- ✚ A great deal of new information
- ✚ An understanding of the intent through Constitutional change

- **Liberal Party** – the Officer at Liberal headquarters in Geelong was very supportive, but unfortunately we had just 2 participants on the evening we facilitated. This included the candidate for the up-coming Federal election who was appreciative and enjoyed some discussion about *Djillong* and the plans for the referendum process, which has bi-partisan support. A letter of support was received later in the week from Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson.

What I liked:

- ✚ Opportunity to engage and ask questions
- ✚ History of Wathaurong

- **Narana** – this session included staff from Narana Creations plus the Murrenda Aboriginal Community Care Ltd. Board members and community members were also present: there were 10 people in total. The discussion was lively and engaging, with some scepticism about the impact of this referendum on Aboriginal Peoples rights and day to day lives. Interest in next stages of the Geelong project was expressed.

What I liked:

- ✚ Chance to come together and chat and share our views
- ✚ Simple language used. Opportunity to discuss concerns
- ✚ The discussion was diverse with good points raised

What I learnt:

- ✚ A bit more about the Constitution and the changes
- ✚ The need to take strategic steps towards Treaty!
- ✚ That this is hopefully a starting point



- **Reconciliation in the Park** – engaging younger community. After considering a forum in a central Geelong venue and discussing the goals of reaching older High School students through to young adults in their 20's, we decided to provide a session led by Morgan Coleman who is a younger Melbourne based *Recognise* campaign leader. A marquee at the event provided public access to materials and a chance to talk directly with Morgan alongside local High School students who have been studying Constitutional Recognition. The experiment worked in opening up the issues to another public forum, and was appreciated by the 40 or so people who chose to engage with Morgan.

What I liked:

✚ I gained more information

What I liked:

✚ It was great to receive this information about the Constitution

Comments from Planning Group members who facilitated the sessions –

- Many people know nothing about the Constitution. If we know more about it we can be more effective in bringing about this change but also addressing other issues about our 'Australian' identities.
- All responses have been positive, with everyone wanting to see these changes to the Constitution taking place.
- We've had no negative comments on the sessions, although people want varying things – e.g. more length of session, more handouts, etc
- Most of the sessions have been provided to people over 30 years old. We need to focus on younger people now so that they can be educated and empowered on the topic.
- A number of people have reacted humbly – acknowledging their lack of awareness and recognising a need to become more educated and involved in the recognition of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People.

Several members of the Planning Group along with the Co-ordinator tried to engage a few other organisations / companies as the project developed, including the local Shell Refinery staff, Target headquarters which is based in Geelong and the local Institute of Koorie Education. They didn't take up the offer of a session but have an interest in supporting future steps.

Publicity / Media Coverage

The Project received some coverage in local papers and on radio during April & May -

- A good piece in *Geelong News* in April, which also promoted Daphne Yarram/Library session – and attracted some people to it (see in Appendix).
- Greg at Pulse FM talked about Constitutional Recognition during April on 'Roads to Recovery' and also promoted the library event.
- Vicky got a personal letter into the *Geelong Advertiser & The Independent* in early May, to get some coverage there with quotes from Daphne Yarram & Uncle David from the public session on 30th April.

8. Review & Learning – key issues emerging to date

a) Planning Group observations

Vicky concluded her co-ordinating role by asking the Planning Group members to respond to two questions for contributions to this report –

➤ What have the strengths of the project been in your view?

Ron Milligan: *“The selection of the ten venues was thoughtfully done to provide a good spread with the limitations of time/budget. Bipartisan and across age groups”.*

Colleen Gibbs: *“I enjoyed providing the sessions, getting some awareness out there. We all worked well together and during the sessions it was more like an inclusive information session rather than like a lecture”.*

Lowell Hunter: *“I appreciate how Vicky has co-ordinated the project; that she has kept everyone connected to the project, been clear and consistent”.*

John Burke: *“Effective completion of the intended sessions, and the strong, cohesive Planning Group”.*

Margrette Lewis: *“It was a very strong project: bringing to the public awareness of the issue. It’s very positive what we’re doing together”.*

Sheenagh Mulroy: *“We were able to reach people that wouldn’t have known about Constitutional Recognition otherwise.”*

Uncle David Tournier: *“The Planning Group members being together thinking and acting as one mind, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Also people giving their time to plan and be involved in the sessions, and the local cultural context”.*

➤ What would need to be improved or put in place to make the next stage effective?

Colleen Gibbs: *“more tools when we are doing the sessions for getting around issues that are not directly linked to our issue and pulling people back on track”.*

John Burke: *“Not a lot. We do need to allow for increased interest, which may not all be handled through highly developed sessions. Some may need a more single speaker approach, etc.”*

Margrette Lewis: *“I’m grateful that the politicians are aware, including Richard Marles MP when he spoke about it at ‘Reconciliation in the Park’. It would be good to have all the politicians aware of the issue”.*

Sheenagh Mulroy: *“It would be good to discuss with Council how they can help us promote what we are doing. Also we could look at how to create the safety and trust needed in groups to assist more open discussion and raising of concerns”.*

Uncle David Tournier: *“Next time we need more information ourselves and to be better informed so we can answer difficult questions. Prepare by having a yarn with a legal person to understand the language in the Constitution and maybe have a lawyer present”.*



b) Engagement with community

- There was a high level of interest in the issues once we had engaged specific organisations to receive a session, however it took considerable provision of information (including the information sheet on Constitutional Recognition) and follow up calls plus emails in most cases to actually put each session in place. It was clear that with the low level of awareness about the plans towards a referendum that the most successful way of accessing organisation was piggybacking on existing meetings. Some agencies and a couple of businesses we approached might be interested as the time line and wording for the referendum become more apparent. Once engaged, most of the organisations were interested in further engagement about the issues, with over 50 percent of evaluation sheet respondents specifically offering support. It will be important to connect up with these people in the not too distant future to both find out what they could contribute and inform them of the next stage plans.
- It was very important in retrospect that we provided two sessions through public forums in addition to the organisation based ones. They engaged a wider demographic of people through the combination of the Geelong Regional Library Service (event advertising in local papers may have raised awareness in addition to attendance), plus the annual Geelong Reconciliation week public event in the city: 'Reconciliation in the Park', which also gained more promotion through local media.

c) About Constitutional Recognition itself

- We found that, as suspected there was extensive lack of knowledge of the Australian constitution, which in itself poses challenges in engaging people in the proposed changes to it. On the other hand there were some encouraging signs from several local high schools where Constitutional Recognition is being taught as part of Australian political process or history classes.
- Once people at all sessions heard about the current nature of the discrimination in the Constitution, there was strong recognition of need for change to recognise Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People.
- Aboriginal community members indicated a need to examine related issues of sovereignty and Treaty, and this was also raised by organisations with more awareness about these issues: Geelong Trades Hall and Geelong One Fire.
- The Project indicates that considerable work is needed to raise awareness about the plans for changing the Constitution, but that a sizeable number of local people are interested in participating in order to make the outcome successful.

9. Recommendations for potential 2nd stage project in Geelong

The outcomes of the initial thinking by the Planning Group has led to initial discussions with both City of Greater Geelong and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative towards a partnership with Geelong One Fire (who raised the funds and were accountable for this first stage Project) to develop a plan for the next stage of awareness and public education towards active participation on the referendum, when it is called.

The intention is to broaden the geographical area of the Project, and develop a 'job share' Co-ordination role: one to provide 'training' to a larger group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as facilitators and the other to set up sessions and administer the project day to day business.

10. Conclusion

The implementation of a focused series of 10 sessions on Constitutional Recognition through a group of people who could work together to develop the Project and deliver the sessions in a short time frame as a 'pilot' has indicated that the approach is sound and we are in a good position to progress to a larger scale stage two project. This is compounded by the clear interest that non-Aboriginal people have in learning more about our local history, including about the Wathaurong People and *Djillong*.

We found that most people had no or very little knowledge that Constitutional Recognition is on the political agenda, nor the reasons for the need to change the Constitution in order to recognise Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People. There is clearly significant interest from a sizeable number of people who have participated in the first stage of the Project to progress it to a much wider group of people over the coming 18 months.

We look forward to planning our next steps together, to ensure that Geelong and surrounding areas are ready to actively engage in the developing referendum process to ensure that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People are recognised in the Constitution and we can progress to addressing related issues such as sovereignty and Treaty.

Appendices –

Appendix a)

BUDGET

ITEM	AMOUNT
Coordination, facilitation and participation in specific discussions 9 days @\$250/day	\$2,250
Facilitators - sessional basis payment	\$2,250
Venues, catering and materials	\$ 500
Total	\$5,000

Appreciation is also given to the organisations that supported this budget through 'in kind' contributions such as photocopying of handouts.

PLANNING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Colleen Gibbs
Uncle David Tournier
John Burke
Lowell Hunter
Margrette Lewis
Ron Milligan
Sharon Buckley
Sheenagh Mulroy
Tracey Currie
Vicky Grosser: Co-ordinator

CO-ORDINATORS ROLE

The key tasks of the Co-ordinator were:

- Liaising with organisations to set up the sessions: dates and times and venues
- Working with facilitators to provide the sessions
- Identifying and developing content for sessions
- Liaising with Reconciliation Victoria and *Recognise* regarding project development and possible collaboration with other projects in Victoria
- Reporting on project outcomes

The Co-ordinator may also act as a facilitator of discussions, and this was the case.

Appendix b)

Geelong Constitution Recognition Project

Status / Structure & Planning: 6/12/2012

1. Background and Objectives

Following the report of the *Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians*, the Commonwealth Government provided funding to *YouMeUnity* to raise public awareness of the case for constitutional reform. Subsequently, the Government has introduced an *Act to provide for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* to “to refine proposals for a referendum and to build the support necessary for successful constitutional change” over a two year period.

Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group (GOFGRG) applied successfully for a *YouMeUnity* activity grant of \$5,000 to conduct:

Ten small group discussions with a range of groups who are potential supporters of constitutional reform but not currently well informed, in order to inform and prepare them for more active support roles in the future.

These discussions will pursue the theme that Aboriginal culture enhances our national (and local) identity, which we understand is seen to be a potentially fruitful approach to gaining support for constitutional recognition. The emphasis will be on the strengths of Aboriginal people, culture and society plus Aboriginal people’s position as the First Nation of these lands.

2. Project structure

The project is being overseen by a Steering Committee on behalf of the GOFRG Committee. Steering Committee members are: John Burke (GOFRG President, chair), Tracey Currie (Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative CEO), Lowell Hunter (VAEAI South Western Wurreker Broker), Margrette Lewis (GOFRG Vice President), Ron Milligan (GOFRG), Sheenagh Mulroy, Chris Storm (GOFRG Treasurer).

Some of the Steering Committee members plus other interested people will form a more informal planning group to determine the approach to the sessions. This group will include people interested in facilitating the sessions, or supporting them because they have an interest in the issue being raised in an organisation/ group they are involved with. So far Uncle David Tournier (Wathaurong Cultural Heritage Officer) and Colleen Gibbs (AMWU, member ACTU Aboriginal Policy Committee) have expressed interest.

The initial Steering Committee meeting recommended the appointment of Vicky Grosser as coordinator of the project. Vicky has accepted the position until end May 2013. Paid facilitators will be appointed for each session, with other people participating as volunteers.

3. Proposed Groups for Sessions

The following groups have so far been identified to provide the sessions to:

Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group members
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op
Local Indigenous Network

Diversitat
Barwon Youth
CoGG staff / Councillors / Mayor plus Eddy Kontelj
Geelong West Neighbourhood House
Geelong Trades Hall / trade unions
Narana staff
Shell Refinery
Schools – c/o Koori Educators & IKE
Target
DHS

4. Model Session

These are initial thoughts, to be confirmed with planning group, and would vary depending on the group and amount of time available. Sessions are expected to be 1-2 hours.

Welcome to Country / Acknowledgement of Country

Introductions and purpose of the session: some discussion about reconciliation, local activities / websites, etc. information about the plans towards a referendum on 'constitution recognition'

1. What do we mean by reconciliation?
 - Introductory discussion
 - What sounds positive about it?
 - Are there any challenges / concerns about it?

Use the learning circle model from the Reconciliation Toolkit -

A learning circle is built around the principle that everyone has something to contribute and everyone has something to learn—a principle that fits well with the goal of reconciliation. Organising a learning circle is straightforward. You don't need teachers or subject experts. People learn through discussion and sharing life experiences, often supported by resources on the issue they are interested in. Decisions about what the group will focus on and what action to take, if any, are taken by the group. A facilitator, often a member of the group, helps the group to work together effectively.

2. Local history, current activities / resources
 - Djillong website
 - History hand-out (Ron to draft, Uncle David to edit)
 - Activities
 - Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op
 - The Storyteller inc leaflet
 - Wathaurong Glass
 - GOFRG & website plus link to Reconciliation Victoria (inc Framework)
 - Karreenga Action Plan - CoGG
3. Constitution Recognition
 - Since 1967 referendum
 - Expert Panel – PowerPoint slides, recommendations, hand-outs
 - Act of Recognition
 - Next steps

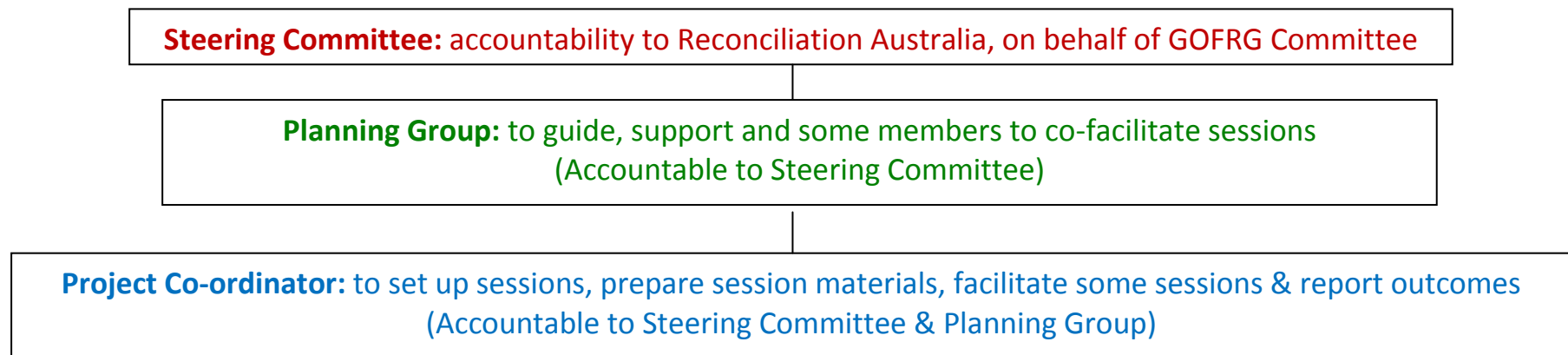
Feedback / Evaluation forms (for both participants and facilitators)

Appendix c)

**Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project:
Project Structure Map: January-May 2013**

Purpose - raising awareness of Constitutional Recognition in the Geelong region:

- Provision of sessions to 10 local organisations / groups - stage 1 January-May 2013
- Evaluate and report on the outcomes to Reconciliation Australia / *Recognise*
- Review project and consider next steps



Appendix d)

Geelong Constitution Recognition Project

SESSIONS Provided March - May '13

Organisation	Facilitators	Date & Venue
Geelong Trades Hall / Unions	Colleen/Uncle David/ Vicky/Sheenagh (notes)	Tuesday 5th March 5.00-6.00pm at Geelong Trades Hall
GOFRG members	Vicky / Lowell	Tuesday 19th March – 7.30pm at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op
ALP – Geelong West branch	Colleen/Uncle David/Vicky	Monday 15th April - 6.30 food for 7pm start at Geelong Trades Hall
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op	Tracey/ Uncle David/ Vicky	Sunday 21st April - 11-12 at the Co-op
Geelong Library Service	Daphne Yarram / Uncle David	Tuesday 30th April 6.30 – 8pm at Waurm Ponds Library. Speaker: Daphne Yarram.
Diverstitat	Uncle David / Vicky	Friday 3rd May – 9.30am at Diversitat northern hub
CoGG Councillors & Mayor	Uncle David / Lowell/ Vicky / Sheenagh (notes)	Tues 7th May 7.00pm (45 mins) at Council Chamber
Liberal Party	Colleen/Uncle David/Vicky	Monday 20th May – 7pm Belmont Liberal party offices
Narana	Uncle David/Vicky/Colleen/ Sheenagh (notes)	Wednesday 22nd May – 10am at Narana
Youth Forum / Event	Morgan Coleman <u>Support:</u> Colleen	Rec in Park:2nd June: brief talks over the mic., & CR table for younger people discussion / engagement

Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project
Information Sheet: Update – April 2013

The Australian Constitution is currently silent on the existence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our Constitution even permits laws that prevent people from voting, owning property or working in certain professions on the basis of race.

In January 2012, an Expert Panel handed their Report to the Prime Minister recommending that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be recognised in the Australian Constitution. The Panel said that as well as adding a section to the Constitution to recognise the special place of Australia's first peoples, sections of the Constitution that allow discrimination against people on the basis of race should be removed.

The Expert Panel recommended the following changes to the Australian Constitution –

(This is the Panel 'short version' – please see page 2 for the full version)

- **Remove Section 25** - which recognises that the States can ban people from voting on the basis of their race;
- **Delete section 51(xxvi)** - which can be used to discriminate on the basis of race;
- **Insert a new section 51A** - to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to preserve the Australian Government's ability to pass laws for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- **Adopt a new section 116A**, banning racial discrimination by the commonwealth; and
- **Insert a new section 127A**, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were this country's first tongues, while confirming that English is Australia's national language.

These changes continue the reconciliation journey started with the 1967 referendum and continued with Kevin Rudd's 2008 *Apology to the Stolen Generations*.

A Referendum -

For a referendum to succeed to make these changes to the Australian Constitution, it would require:-

- Bi-partisan support (Labor & the Coalition)
- Majority of Australians, and in a majority of States, supporting amending the Constitution

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act (passed House of Rep. 13 Feb 2013) -

The Australian Government introduced this Bill into Parliament on 28th November 2012.

- It shows support and commitment to constitutional recognition of Australia's First Peoples.
- It will help raise awareness of the importance of constitutional change in the community.
- It includes a statement of recognition of the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that largely reflects the wording suggested by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- It proposes a 2-year period for a review of the approach to a referendum

www.recognise.org.au
www.antar.org.au/constitutional_recognition
<http://www.indigenous.gov.au/act-of-recognition-passes>

DELETE	ADD
<p>Section 25:</p> <p>Provision as to races disqualified from voting.</p> <p>25. For the purposes of the last section, if by the law of any State all persons of any race are disqualified from voting at elections for the more numerous House of the Parliament of the State, then, in reckoning the number of the people of the State or of the Commonwealth, persons of that race resident in that State shall not be counted.</p>	<p>new Section 51A – Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</p> <p>Recognising that the continent and its islands now known as Australia were first occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;</p> <p>Acknowledging the continuing relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with their traditional lands and waters;</p> <p>Respecting the continuing cultures, languages and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;</p> <p>Acknowledging the need to secure the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;</p> <p>the Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>
<p>Section 51 (xxvi):</p> <p>Legislative powers of the Parliament.</p> <p>51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to:-</p> <p>(xxvi) The people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws</p>	<p>new Section 116A – Prohibition of racial discrimination</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Commonwealth, a State or a Territory shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic or national origin. 2) Subsection (1) does not preclude the making of laws or measures for the purpose of overcoming disadvantage, ameliorating the effects of past discrimination, or protecting the cultures, languages or heritage of any group. <p>new Section 127A – Recognition of languages</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The national language of the Commonwealth of Australia is English. 2) The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are the original Australian languages, a part of our national heritage.

Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project

Evaluation Form: February – May 2013

DATE:

1. Did you know anything about the plans towards 'Constitutional Recognition' before this session?

NO

YES

A LITTLE

2. What did you like most about the session?

3. What could we have done to make the session stronger?

4. What did you learn from this session?

5. Would you be interested in being part of local activities to tell more people about 'Constitutional Recognition' in the future?

YES

NO

If yes, please provide your name & details:

6. Any other comments

7. Age range: Under 20 21- 30 31-45 46 – 65 Over 65

8. Are you Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander?

Yes No

9. Where did you hear about this session?

Appendix g)

Summary of Evaluation Forms

	No. resp-ond/ No. part-icipate	1. Did you know anything about the plans towards 'Constitutional Recognition' before this session?				5. Would you be interested in being part of local activities to tell more people about 'Constitutional Recognition' in the future?			7. Age range						8. Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander?		
		No	Little	Yes	NR	Yes	No	NR	Under 20	21-30	31-45	45-65	Over 65	NR	Yes	No	NR
Trades Hall Council	15/15	10	4	1		5	8	2		1	2	11	1			15	
Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group	6/9		4	2		4	1	1			2	3	1			6	
Labor Party	14/17	3	6	4	1	6	7	1			2	4	6	2	1	13	
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op	9/18	4	2	3		4	3	2		1	3	2	1	2	8		1
Geelong Library	29/50+	8	8	13		17	8	4	4	1	2	12	9	1	2	26	1
Diversitat	10/10	3	5	2		9	1				4	6				10	
City of Greater Geelong	2/20		2			2					1	1				2	
Liberal Party	2/2		2			2					1	1				2	
Narana	7/10	1	4	2		4	3			1	2	3	1		6	1	
Reconciliation in the Park	3/40		2	1		2		1			1	2				2	1
Total	97/191+	29	39	28	1	55	31	11	4	4	20	45	19	4	17	77	3

The following are approximate classifications of responses to the different sessions, which varied in themselves (some session specific responses have been excluded).

2. What did you like most about the session?

- Being informed about the constitution/proposed changes, handouts and presentations (44)
- Meeting likeminded people, hearing opinions, open discussion, intimate nature (28)
- Hearing from an Aboriginal person, their opinions, local history (16)

3. What could we have done to make the session stronger? (Many positive comments, change nothing, no response - 57)

- More in depth information – on both sides of the argument (8)
- More ‘Yarn’ time – discussing the potential changes as a group (6)
- Visual aids/poster/film/handouts (5)
- Wider members of the community/more publicity (3)
- Help with legal jargon/interpretation of meaning of changes (3)
- More Aboriginal speakers/Wathaurong history (2)
- More information about the subject of sovereignty

4. What did you learn from this session?

- The recommendations for the changes to the Constitution/timeline (25)
- That the Constitution is complicated/archaic/racist (15)
- How Aboriginal people were treated, past relationships in the Geelong area (11)
- About the Djillong website (5)
- Importance of passing on to others/promoting the issue (4)
- The history of attempts to change the Constitution (3)
- Ideas for future/that this is hopefully a starting point (2)
- That so many are weary of trusting governments and see this as half hearted
- How uncertain things are
- There is much latent support in the community for the referendum proposals
- Need to learn more about the need for Constitutional change
- We don't seem to know who we really are as Australians among so many ethnic cultures.
- The need to take strategic steps towards Treaty!
- A little more about what is needed to have equality

Resources: *Djillong*, Geelong One Fire & *Recognise* websites

Djillong website: local history and culture of the Wathaurong People and the Geelong region, before and after settlement. Includes a podcast: *Johnstone Park Dreaming* (May '13)

www.djillong.net.au

Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group website: purpose, activities and links to other resources, including *Djillong*

www.geelongonefire.org.au

Recognise: the official campaign to inform and support the plans for the Constitutional Recognition referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. It includes a range of information, updates, videos, badges and stickers to purchase plus other resources

www.recognise.org.au

Local media coverage of the Project: *Geelong News* April '12

www.geelongnews.com.au

It's time to show we exist

Courtney Crane

GEELONG residents will have the chance to learn more about the movement to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution at a free event next week.

The forum has been organised by the Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group as part of the Geelong Constitutional Recognition Project and will be one of the first of its kind in Victoria.

"Many people don't realise the Australian Constitution is currently silent on the existence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," said group secretary and project coordinator Vicky Grosser.

"The Constitution still has two sections that are discriminatory against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Under section 25 the state can disqualify people from voting on the basis of race, and section 51 (XXVI) is the race power that allows the state to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of any race - which is what has been happening in the Northern Territory."



David Tournier

The event will feature talks from National Congress of First Peoples board member Daphne Yarram and Uncle David Tournier, who will talk about Geelong's local Aboriginal history and acts of reconciliation in Geelong.

Ms Grosser said the Geelong Constitutional Recognition planning group had been established in December last year. It consists of five Aboriginal and five non-Aboriginal people. The group is also in the process of running information sessions with private groups including Geelong councillors, diversity and political groups.

The free public event will take place on Tuesday at Waurm Ponds Library from 6.30-8pm. Bookings via website or phone 5272 6010.

Appendix j)

Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group: name, history and activities

The name “One Fire” stems from discussions of early members of the group with the late Allan Browning, former cultural leader and Heritage Officer of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. Allan said the word ‘reconciliation’ did not exist in Aboriginal languages, but that they would express the notion implied in it as “people sitting together around one fire”.

The Group was formed from a DONT (Defenders of Native Title) group in 1996 and incorporated in 1998. Many activities have been conducted over the years, with highlights including:

- The organisation of the first National Sorry Day in 1997 at Rippleside Park attended by at least 1500 people
- The organisation of a Special Train from Geelong to Melbourne for the Reconciliation Walk on 3rd December 2000
- Promoting and engaging in the launch of the permanent flying of the Aboriginal Flag by the City of Greater Geelong at the Geelong Waterfront in November 2001
- A series of “Groove 4 Reconciliation” concerts through the early to mid-2000s
- Four Reconciliation in the Park events in Johnstone Park from 2010 in association with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
- The development of the *Djillong* website and timeline
- This current project on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Geelong One Fire Reconciliation Group can be contacted at geelongonefire@gmail.com or through the website <http://www.geelongonefire.org.au/>