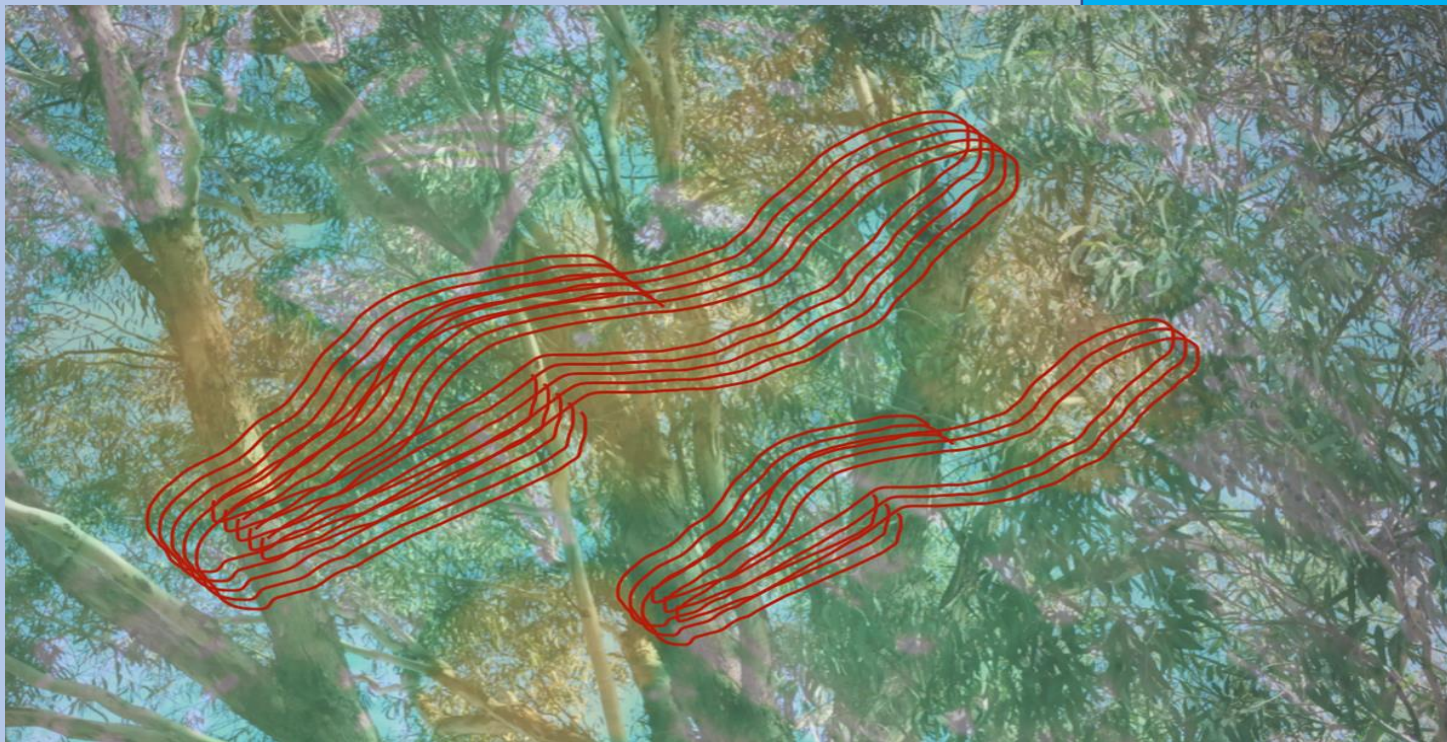


Merri-bek Early Years Management Reconciliation Action Plan 2023 - 2026



Acknowledgement of Cover Page Art Work

Elijah Money (he/him) is a queer Wiradjuri brotherboy who was raised on Kulin Nations where he continues to reside. His practice includes visual art, written work, installations, performance art and more. These are done with strong recurring themes of colonialism, assimilation, skin colour, gender, mental illness, sexuality, climate change, stolen generations, identity as well as critiquing the Eurocentric western idealised structure that each person in so called “Australia” is forced to maintain.

Notable highlights include:

- co-curating “Sight for Sore Eyes” 2020 (Midsumma X Black Dot);
- video artwork for “ALIWA!” 2021 at Counihan Gallery;
- participant for Writing Residency and hosted “Deadly Poets Yarn” 2020 (MPavilion);
- digital artwork and written work 2020 (Archer);
- painted murals 2019 (Melbourne University);
- visual artist and participant “Poetry and the Political” 2020 (NextWave);
- installation artist 2019 “WestRave”(CoolRoom, Due West);
- installation artist “Tesselate” 2019 & 2020;
- multimedia solo show “gurudhaany birranydyang” 2022 (Sawtooth, Launceston);
- jewellery artwork “Namesake” in “Blak Design” group show 2022 (Koorie Heritage Trust, Fed Square).

Instagram: @Eli.money.art

Statement from the MEYM Board

Acknowledgment of Country

MEYM acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation and the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we work – the Wurundjeri people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise their continuing connection to culture, land, water and community and that sovereignty of these lands was never ceded.

The MEYM Board recognises the devastating harm Australia's colonial history has caused to our First Nations peoples. This legacy of trauma, racism and exclusion continues today. We recognise the wisdom and resilience of Australia's First Nations peoples – the longest continuing culture in human history. Each First Nations community is diverse, with unique cultures which provide a context for contemporary education and care programs.

We recognise that unless we are committed to reconciliation through a practical action plan, neither the small or significant changes necessary to achieve true reconciliation will not be achieved. Our Reconciliation Action Plan provides practical strategies for building and renewing deeper partnerships understanding and engagement with Aboriginal communities, organisations, families and individuals, so that we can learn from each other and play our part, as we work together on the reconciliation journey.

We are proud to present our Reconciliation Action Plan and are committed to ensuring our services are culturally safe and inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Our Vision for Reconciliation

Merri-bek Early Years Management Incorporated (MEYM) is a not-for-profit organization that operates seven kindergartens across Merri-bek. MEYM's values of respect, collaboration, integrity and diversity are reflected in our interactions within the community and shared by our staff.

Our organisational vision is that, *"MEYM is a thriving, diverse organisation where innovative educators deliver the best kindergarten programs and children and families are at the centre of everything we do"*.

MEYM's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is the first step in turning intentions into actions. MEYM recognises and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia and is committed to playing our part in contributing to reconciliation through our role of supporting children and families. Our RAP aims to place the organisation in the best possible position to implement initiatives to respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples history and the contributions they make to contemporary Australia.



Staff Professional Development Day 2022.

Staff work together creating representations of how they view indigenous perspectives and culture in our local community.

MEYM is committed to providing support and encouragement to all our staff to expand their knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and provide a safe place to explore, try new ideas, fail and grow in developing their knowledge about how to incorporate Indigenous culture heritage and language into our kindergarten curriculums. There is often a hesitancy about "beginning" on the reconciliation journey in early childhood for fear of getting it wrong. We want to start small. Small conversations, small ideas, small wins, small fails: and after some time, the conversations, ideas and wins will grow and flourish until we all feel that we have done our best and Indigenous perspectives are represented in our everyday operations and thoughts.

Through this first stage of creating the RAP, our aim is to empower children, families, staff and the community to embrace a culture of understanding, awareness, and inclusion in relation to reconciliation. MEYM recognises and affirms that reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is the responsibility of all Australians and therefore we are committed to beginning and then continuing conversations about reconciliation. We will assist MEYM employees, volunteers, children and families to understand the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians and traditional custodians of this land.

As an organisation, we also recognise that we are embarking on the start of our reconciliation journey. We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers, but we are willing to actively listen, participate and change if required, to ensure that reconciliation remains topical and part of our everyday practice.



Merri-bek

In November 2021 Moreland City Council received a request from the Traditional Owners of the land the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurung elders and other community representatives to rename the Moreland local government area. Information was presented to Council showing that the land which was sold without permission of the traditional owners was called Moreland after a Jamaican Slave estate.

On 14 May 2022, Council formally accepted and endorsed three name options offered by the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. A significant majority of participants in a community consultation process chose 'Merri-bek' (meaning rocky country) as their preferred option for the new name of Moreland City Council. Councillors endorsed the recommendation at a Special Council Meeting.

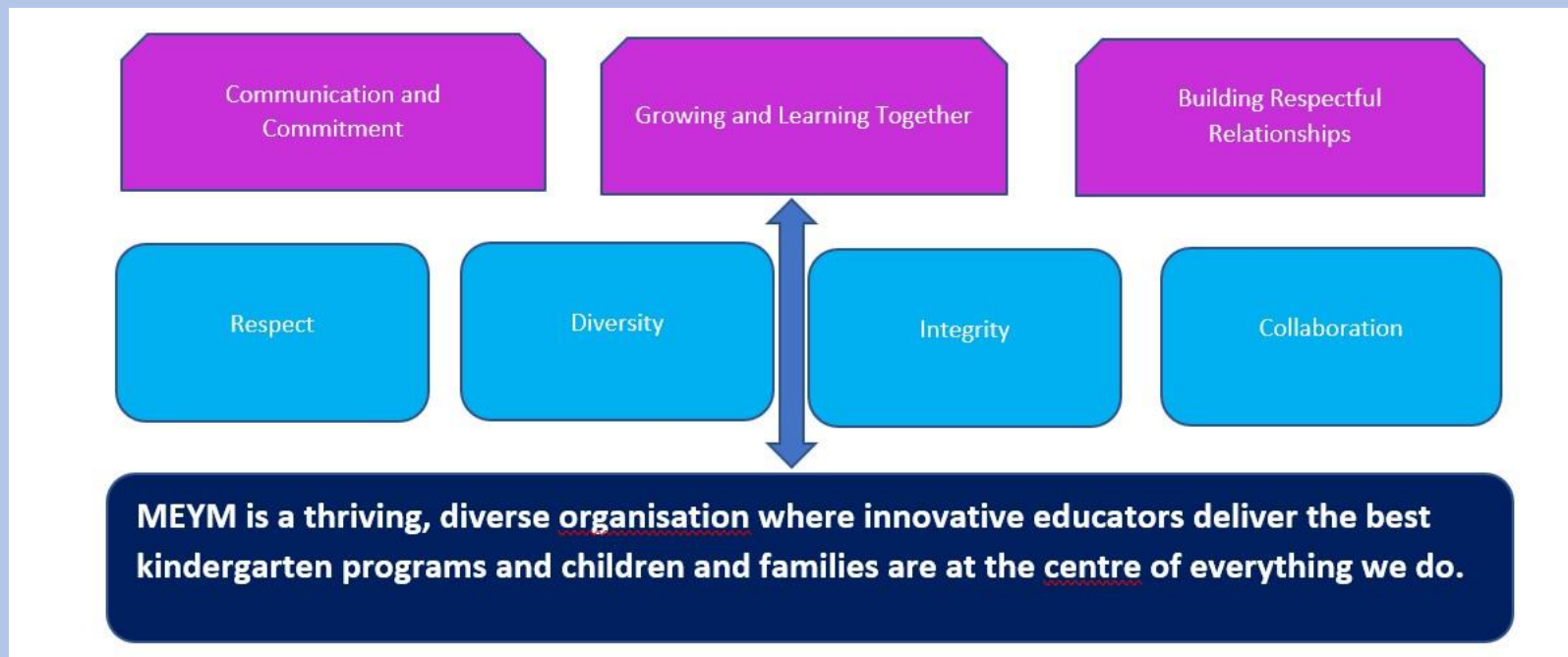
From September 26 2022, Moreland City Council will now be known as Merri-bek.



Lake Park Kindergartens Nature Play Program, where children experience a connection to the land they play on.

MEYM Pillars of commitment to reconciliation

The RAP vision and the values of MEYM are linked, fitting together like a puzzle that without all the pieces the picture is not clear.



Reconciliation Action Plan - Key Actions

Pillar 1 - Communication and Commitment

Objective	Actions	Timelines	Responsibility
To pursue positive relationships to support and promote the notion of reconciliation.	Investigate a name change for the Organisation in line with the local Council's name change.	2023	MEYM Board
	To ensure that an acknowledgment of Country is stated at the start of every formal organisational gathering including staff meetings, stakeholder and Board meetings.	Ongoing	All
	<p>Utilise Reconciliation Australia's 'Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education' program as a resource to support our services in promoting reconciliation.¹</p> <p>The MEYM Leadership Team develop a consistent approach across all our services in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine when and how often will an acknowledgement be done with children • give consideration to whether it is appropriate to use any Woi Wurrung language and if so what, and what if any permissions are needed • give consideration to whether it is appropriate to use 'womindjeka' (see Narragunnawali website) • 	2023	SC GM All staff

¹ Narragunnawali (*pronounced narra-gunna-wally*) is a word from the language of the Ngunnawal people, Traditional Owners of the land on which Reconciliation Australia's Canberra office is located. The word means alive, wellbeing, coming together and peace.

	Work with Merri-bek CC to ensure that all new Capital Works infrastructure projects have a focus on Indigenous perspective / or incorporate an Indigenous perspective where possible and ensure that garden spaces reflect MEYM's commitment to outdoor learning and indigenous plantings and biodiversity.	Ongoing	Council Representatives Board GM
	To continue to work with Merri-bek CC and Department of Education to prioritise Aboriginal children with MEYM services and provide support for the families if required.	Ongoing	
	<p>Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between First Nations peoples and Australians of other descent.</p> <p>Participate in NAIDOC Week activities to celebrate and promote the importance of reconciliation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all staff to use Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week as times to build their knowledge and understanding of First Nations and Wurundjeri people. 	Ongoing	SC All staff
	Build meaningful links and to engage with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Council, recognising them as the registered Aboriginal party for Country.	2023	GM
	Developing an understanding of how to create a culturally safe learning and working environment, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identifying as educators may be encouraged to take up employment opportunities with MEYM.	Ongoing	GM

Pillar 2 - Growing and Learning Together

- The overall objectives are to support MEYM staff in their professional learning and growing commitment to First Nations perspectives, to have an ongoing commitment to embedding First Nations perspectives in children’s programs, and to provide a welcoming and culturally safe environment for First Nations children, family, staff or visitors.
- This section addresses First Nations people at MEYM, professional learning for staff, children’s programs and resources.
- Given that we play and learn on Wurundjeri Country, we will give priority to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung in our choices of content and resources.

Objective	Actions	Timelines	Responsibility
To create opportunities for adults and children to learn and grow together to gain a greater understanding of Australia’s first peoples’ culture and heritage.	Invite a suitably qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person to spend some time in each service/group, and make suggestions on how to improve cultural safety.	2023	PL NS Staff
	To develop learning and language kits for sharing across each of the 6 MEYM kindergartens.	2023-2024	PL
	To collaborate with Merri-bek CC to host a conference with a focus on growing the understanding of Indigenous perspectives. Ideally this should be done in collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Council.	2024	Working Group PL
	To facilitate access to outdoor spaces where children can engage and care for country. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that all kindergartens have at least two incursions/excursions annually that have a focus on Indigenous culture and inclusion. 	Ongoing	All staff

	<p>Use Woi Wurrung language as part of the educational program where we have permission to do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support staff to develop permission, knowledge of protocols and confidence in using Woi Wurrung language. • Support staff to build their knowledge of Country, including in particular the local landscape, indigenous plants, animals, insects and birds. • Aim to include information about individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the curriculum, with a particular focus on local and Wurundjeri people. Refer to these people by name and acknowledge their contributions with the children. • Support staff to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture, both in relation to history and as living culture now. • Develop an understanding of diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Recognise that modern urban Aboriginal people are still Aboriginal. 	Ongoing	
	<p>To continue to support MEYM staff and provide learning opportunities to understand, appreciate and respect the culture and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>Development of a resource lending library for MEYM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEYM will aim to continuously add to a high-quality collection of resources for teaching about Indigenous Perspectives, with a commitment to authentic resources created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 	2024	PL NS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In order to afford authentic hand-made art artefacts, a system for sharing resources will be implemented and a list of preferred suppliers known to be ethical will be developed and provided to services.• Services will aim to borrow and use the Possum Skin Pedagogy kits from FKA.• Encourage all staff to reflect on how they currently provide a welcoming aspect and effective support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families at individual services.		
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Pillar 3 - Building Relationships

Objective	Actions	Timelines	Responsibility
Pursue opportunities for partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to continue to grow the organisations understanding of the culture and heritage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Work with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Council to gain permission through appropriate protocols to use Woi Wurrung language in learning programs.	2024	GM PL
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Board and provision of employment opportunities in our services.	Ongoing	MEYM Board
	Work with Council to ensure that garden spaces reflect our commitment to outdoor learning, indigenous plantings and biodiversity, especially during the coming expansion phase.	Ongoing	NS
	Build relationships with local groups that care for Country, including the Merri Murnong Patch, Bababi Djinanang, and Coburg Lake. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to families about working bees and other community information to support these groups through MEYM social media. 	2024 - 2025	NS All Staff