



First Peoples Action Plan 2024-2026



Ports Victoria Acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Aboriginal Countries now known as Victoria. Their care for Countries, Skies and Waterways extends back tens of thousands of years and remains unbroken today.

As the agency responsible for Victoria’s commercial port waters, Ports Victoria Acknowledges the role that ports and shipping have played in the establishment of colonies and towns that displaced Aboriginal Peoples. This is a complex history that we are committed to exploring and better understanding over time.

We Acknowledge the unique spiritual and cultural significance of land, water and all that is in the environment to Traditional Owners, and recognise their continuing connection to, and aspirations for Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

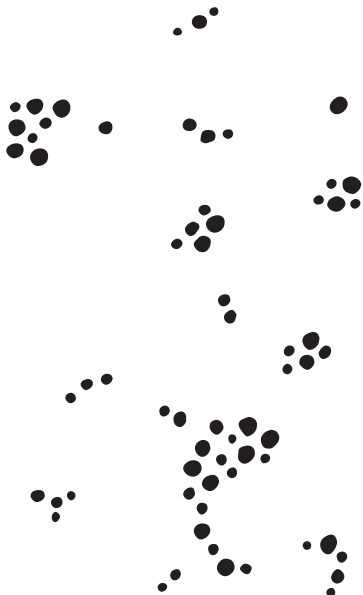
The terms ‘First Peoples’ and ‘First Nations’ in this document are used to respectfully and interchangeably refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Graphic design: Mazart Communications.

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From the Chair

As a lead agency charged with protecting Victorian marine and port waters through safe shipping navigation, Ports Victoria relies on and works with many other custodians of the waters to ensure the future prosperity of all Victorians.

We are committed to building relationships with Traditional Owner groups and First Peoples connected to Victorian ports and marine waters and working toward a shared understanding of the historic and future role of ports in Victoria's history.

We acknowledge the State's work towards Treaty, have previously responded to queries from the Yoorrook Justice Commission, and will respond to the findings and recommendations of the Commission when they are released.

We will continue to support the Transport Portfolio's Aboriginal Self Determination Plan and are committed to working towards aligning our business work practices to the principle of self-determination for all First Peoples of Victoria.

Howard Ronaldson
Chair

From the CEO

I am humbled to present Ports Victoria's inaugural First Peoples Action Plan with the goal to grow our understanding and connection to the work of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community groups in caring for the land and waters on which we conduct our activities.

We have already commenced an ongoing program to increase knowledge and awareness of First Nations issues through education and reflection sessions which generated some important discussions across our Board, Executive and staff teams. I am looking forward to building on this foundation of discussion through further reflection, truth telling and relationship building.

Ports Victoria manages the movement of 1000s of commercial vessels safely through port waters each year, this brings a great sense of responsibility to protect those waterways by all of our staff.

I am committed to finding ways to increase employment and business opportunities in the ports sector and have the fortune of sitting on the Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce to help this occur. I am confident that Ports Victoria can support Victoria's First Peoples to collaboratively protect the land and waterways in areas where we conduct our activities and have ongoing responsibilities.

Craig Walker
Chief Executive Officer



Matynu Wadawurrung Dja,
This is Wadawurrung
Country,

**Koling wada-ngitj, gobata
Wadawurrung Dja, lakorra
baa yaluk** Let us all walk
together, taking care of
Wadawurrung Country,
sky and waterways

Message from Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

We Acknowledge all Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, including our Ancestors – who have lived on and cared for Wadawurrung Country for thousands of generations – including our family today who continue to care and advocate for Country and each other. We also Acknowledge the contribution of all First Nations people to life on Wadawurrung Country today and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Wadawurrung Country encompasses an area of roughly 10,000 km² extending from the Great Dividing Range to the coast. This includes Ballaarat (Ballarat), Beaufort and Skipton in the north, the Wirribi Yaluk (Werribee River) in the east, Djilang (Geelong), the Bellawiyn (Bellarine Peninsula) and Surf Coast all the way around to Aireys Inlet in the west. Wadawurrung Country also includes the Warri (Sea) Country along the coast, Corayo (Corio Bay) and the large number of rivers, creeks and lakes across Wadawurrung Country – and it was because of this that Wadawurrung People were traditionally known as the ‘the people who belonged to water’.

It feels fitting then that Ports Victoria – whose headquarters reside on Wadawurrung Country and whose operations are focused on activities in Warri (Sea) Country – have developed their First Peoples’ Action Plan in consultation with ‘the people who belong to water’. Of course, Ports Victoria offices and operations sit across multiple Traditional Owner Countries and waterways and we acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners of those Countries. We also acknowledge Ports Victoria for the sensitivity, openness and respect that they have shown to us as Traditional Owners in building our relationship and developing this Plan. In part this has meant doing things slowly, while we build the Corporation’s capacity to meet complex needs, risks and opportunities across our vast Country.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (Wadawurrung Corporation) was appointed in May 2009 as a Registered Aboriginal Party under the Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* to represent Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. As Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, we live by Bundjil’s lore to care for Country and all things living as our Ancestors have always done for thousands of generations. Wadawurrung Corporation today is guided by our 10 year strategic plan, Paleert Tjaara Dja – Let’s make Country good together. The plan provides guidance for all stakeholders to embed into their responsibilities, governance, and strategic planning and to strengthen their relationships with Wadawurrung Corporation.

Wadawurrung Corporation is committed to working with stakeholders like Ports Victoria to build strong relationships and work towards mutually beneficial aspirations, especially in Caring for Country and Warri (Sea) Country. We thank Ports Victoria for their commitment and partnership in this Plan.

Danae Coots
Proud Wadawurrung Woman
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

Left: Warri (Sea) Country on-Country experience for Ports Victoria staff lead by Wadawurrung Traditional Owner, Danae Cootes (Traditional Language in this message published under a Language Agreement with WTOAC)

Introduction

This document represents Ports Victoria’s inaugural First Peoples’ Action Plan.

As the agency responsible for Victoria’s commercial port waters, Ports Victoria has a deep respect for how the land and waters have been protected and cared for by Aboriginal people over many tens of thousands of years and are committed to seeing that continue.

This action plan aligns to the shared vision of the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning Self Determination Plan:

“All Aboriginal Victorian people, families and communities are healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and living culturally rich lives.”

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-28, Ports Victoria committed to:

Initiative 6.1 – Delivery of Victorian Government environmental and social objectives and targets. Key actions include the development of a First Peoples Action Plan

We look to our organisational values to guide us through the implementation of this plan.

Our Values

We care: Caring for ourselves, each other and our environment, embracing diversity and valuing our differences

Learning and acting: Being open to change and continuously learning and growing and supporting others to develop their talents and potential

Feel trusted and be trusted: Empowering others to share ideas, listen and give them due consideration

Together we achieve: Tapping into knowledge and expertise across and outside Ports Victoria

Point Lonsdale Lighthouse and the Great Ship Channel, Ballawyn (Bellarine Peninsula)

About Ports Victoria

Ports Victoria is a Victorian Government authority that manages the safe transit of ships into and out of Victoria’s commercial ports of Melbourne, Geelong and Hastings and has oversight of these activities for the port of Portland.

We provide maritime expertise, technology and information to keep Victoria’s ports running smoothly and inform the strategic development and operations within Victoria’s commercial ports and waterways.

Our activities include

- Navigational control and safety services in port waters
- Harbour Masters’ Functions
- Maintain port systems, infrastructure and shipping channels (where responsible)
- Marine pollution and emergency response activities in marine and coastal waters
- Advice and information to Government and Port Managers
- Authorise hazardous port activities (cargo transfers and bunkering) for port of Melbourne
- Management of cruise shipping
- Towage and pilotage services licensing
- Access to port information systems



Our operations on Country

Ports Victoria is responsible for safe shipping navigation and port activities within marine and port waters for Victoria's commercial ports. We also work closely with local Victorian port managers such as Gippsland Ports, Parks Victoria and the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority and have marine emergency and pollution response obligations across the Victorian coastline.

Ports Victoria is responsible for activities, staff and assets that are located and carried out across the waters and lands of six of Victoria's 12 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

Port Operations Control Centre and Station Pier, Port Melbourne

Narm-Narm/Port Phillip, Navigation services
Warn-mar-rin/Western Port, Harbour Master and Navigation Services, Ports Victoria office

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

Western Victorian coastal marine waters.
Navigation and pollution response obligations

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

Eastern Victorian coastal marine waters, Gippsland Ports, navigation services support and pollution response

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Kardemudelar/Portland Bay, Port of Portland Harbour Master and navigation services oversight

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Djilang/Geelong, Head Office and Shipping Control Corayo/Corio Bay, Narm-Narm/Port Phillip and Gawayn/Point Lonsdale Lighthouse, Navigation Services

Wurundjejeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Birrarung/Yarra River, port of Melbourne, navigation and port safety services

For a current Registered Aboriginal Parties map, refer to Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/victoria-registered-aboriginal-parties



Policy Context

Self-Determination Reform

Ports Victoria sits within the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and is proud to contribute to the Victorian Government’s Self Determination and Reform Framework.

We align our business activities with the applicable policies and commitments of Government and are committed to improving our systems and processes to be responsive to the needs, priorities and aspirations of Victoria’s First People.

We have developed this Action Plan within the context of the Self-Determination Reform Framework (SDRF) and associated commitments in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023. The SDRF requires departments and agencies to develop actions against four reform domains.

- 1. People
- 2. Systems
- 3. Outcomes
- 4. Accountability

This Action Plan has been developed to align to the four domains of the SDRF together with applicable commitments from the following key documents;

- Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Plan (Transport ASDP)
- Wurrek-al, DTP’s First Peoples Engagement Framework
- Yani Bangal, DTP First Peoples Career Strategy 2023-2028
- Yuma Yirramboi, Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy

Implementation of the Transport ASDP is overseen by a Steering Committee reporting into the Transport Ministers and Cabinet through the Transport Executives.

Ports Victoria’s activities contributing to the Transport ASDP actions:

- CEO representation on the Steering Committee reporting into the Transport Ministers and Cabinet
- Provided funding to the Transport and Planning Portfolio Yani Bangal Scholarship Program
- Ongoing participation by staff in key working groups



Warri (Sea) Country, on-Country experience for Ports Victoria staff lead by Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Ashleigh Skinner

Our Actions

Ports Victoria is committed to implementing an organisation specific, First Peoples Action Plan and aligning our actions to the Transport ASDP.

Our initial actions are based on education and learning, building a full understanding of the evolution and meaning of the land and sea Country on which our ports rely so we can then incorporate that understanding into our everyday activities.

Our actions are aligned to the four reform domains outlined in the Victorian Government's Self-Determination Reform Framework.



Warri (Sea) Country, on-Country experience for Ports Victoria

Actions completed during 2023-24 financial year:

- Cultural Awareness sessions held for the Board, Executive and staff
- Contributed to the Transport and Planning Portfolio Yani Bangal Scholarship Program which is a key initiative of Yani Bangal Transport and Planning Portfolio First Peoples Careers Strategy 2023-2028
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation performed a Welcome to Country Ceremony at Station Pier for the staff move to Station Pier project offices
- Commissioned installation of an Acknowledgement of Country plaque for Geelong head office from Wathaurong Glass
- Formed a First Peoples Action Plan internal working group
- Commenced direct engagement with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Ongoing participation in Department of Transport Self Determination Plan working group parties; i.e. Partnership Agreements working group, Careers & Cultural Safety working group, Barwon South West working group
- Planning potential engagement or secondment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer
- Encouraging buyers to consider seeking relevant social enterprises including First Nations entities through Kinaway and Supply Nation suppliers in the market engagement mix
- Responding to requests for information from the ongoing Yoorrook Justice Commission.



Smoking Ceremony Station Pier, lead by Bunurong Traditional Owner Uncle Mark Brown

Action Plan – People

TARGET: 100% of our Board and staff to complete Cultural Awareness training annually

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE
1. Provide a culturally safe workplace where staff understand and recognise First Peoples culture, history and rights	1.1 Education	
	i. Provide Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training to the Board, ELT and all staff on an annual basis	Ongoing Commenced
	ii. Work with RAPs to explore the historical relationship between First Peoples and the establishment of ports in Victoria and work toward a shared narrative	FY24-FY26 Commenced
	iii. Provide on-Country training program opportunities for staff	FY25-FY26 Commenced
	iv. Implement DTP's cultural safety e-learning training program and make available to PV staff when finalised	FY25
	1.2 Visual Workplace Safety and Recognition	
	i. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in all office locations	Complete
	ii. Install Acknowledgement of Country at all office locations invite RAPS to review proposed wording	FY25 Geelong complete
	iii. Continued Acknowledgment of Country at major meetings, work with RAPs to review wording	FY25
	iv. Increase integration of Traditional ceremonies and cultural commemorations at all locations	Ongoing
	1.3 Art & Language	
	i. Contribute to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) by working with RAPs to identify and integrate use of Traditional language and naming where appropriate	FY25-FY26
	ii. Investigate with RAPs how traditional language could be introduced for meeting rooms, assets, operational areas or strategy documents	FY25
	iii. Work with RAPs through education to understand how Songlines or symbols of significance to our operational areas or activities could be introduced	FY25
	iv. Commission artwork by First Nations artist to represent the land, waters and activities of Traditional Owners and Ports Victoria	FY25-FY26

Action Plan – Outcomes

TARGET: 2% representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our workforce

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE
2. Establish mutually beneficial relationships with RAPs and community groups	2.1 Direct engagement	
	i. Identify First Nation stakeholders and communities within PV's operational areas	FY24 Complete
	ii. Build relationships with Traditional Owner groups connected to Victorian ports and marine waters to understand how PV can support their needs and interests	FY24-FY26 Commenced, ongoing
	iii. Work with RAPs to support the implementation of Caring for Country strategies and actions, particularly related to protection of Sea Country and RAMSAR wetlands	FY24-FY26 Commenced, ongoing
	iv. Develop a process with RAPs and DTP/DEECA to provide notification of PV projects planned in RAP areas	FY26
3. Increase understanding of self-determination principles, DTP's Self-determination plan and PV's role in the plan	3.1 Engagement with DTP	
	i. Request DTP to provide self-determination information session/ awareness training to PV staff	FY25
4. Increase our own knowledge and share with others	4.1 Industry Networks	
	i. Establish industry relationships with organisations with existing First Peoples commitments and actions (port system and others)	Ongoing
	ii. Work with Ports Australia and other port industry operators	Ongoing
	iii. Continue participation in The Gordon Institute Geelong region Community of Practice Geelong	Ongoing
	iv. Investigate commissioning an educational video on Aboriginal history around port Phillip and their connection to each area	FY26
5. Identify employment opportunities for First Peoples	5.1 Partnerships & Employment	
	i. CEO participation in the Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce	FY25
	ii. Explore partnerships with other Government agencies and port industry operators to identify commercial opportunities for First Peoples businesses within the port system network	FY26

Action Plan – Systems

TARGET: 1% of our procurement from small to medium enterprises to be from Aboriginal businesses

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE
6. Adapt PV systems and practices to be cognisant of self-determination principles	6.1 Procurement	
	i. Encourage indirect social procurement through supplier screening and selection criteria for RFQs below the State social procurement thresholds.	FY25 Commenced
	ii. Track and report to DTP on a quarterly basis First Peoples procurement spend	Annual
	6.2 Recruitment	
	i. Develop a recruitment strategy to attract, recruit and retain First Peoples	FY26
7. Provide employment opportunities for First Nations people	7.1 Employment	
	i. Develop and implement a Cultural Leave policy	FY25
	ii. Appoint an Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator (Level 4) by Q1 FY25	FY25
	iii. Provide funding toward DTP’s First Peoples scholarship program	FY24-26 Commenced
	iv. Work with DTP to provide work experience for the DTP Yani Bangal Scholarship Program participants	FY25

Action Plan – Accountability

TARGET: Maintain Ports Victoria representation on the Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Steering Committee and Working Groups

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE
8. Remain accountable for delivering on our First Peoples objectives and commitment	8.1 Internal Working Group	
	i. Establish an internal working group to coordinate development of the action plan, participate in workshops	FY24 Complete, Ongoing
	ii. Establish terms of reference for the working group	FY25
	8.2 Action Plan Implementation	
	i. Deliver on the organisation-specific First Peoples Action Plan, governance and monitoring	FY24-26 Ongoing
	8.3 Reporting	
	i. Maintain CEO representation on the DTP Aboriginal Self-Determination Steering Committee with Aboriginal representation which oversees the state wide rollout of the Transport ASDP	Ongoing
	ii. Continue PV representation on Transport ASDP working groups	Ongoing
	iii. Report to the Ports Victoria Board on progress against the action plan on a 6 monthly basis	FY25
	iv. Report publicly through the Ports Victoria web site on the progress against the action plan annually	FY25
	v. Report employment and procurement outcomes to DTP annually	Ongoing

Monitoring and Reporting

As part of the Transport portfolio, Ports Victoria will maintain representation on the Transport portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Steering Committee and Working Groups and remain accountable for our contribution to implementing the Transport ASDP as well our own First Peoples Action Plan.

Ports Victoria’s First Peoples Action Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Board every two years.

Implementation of the Action Plan is the responsibility of the Ports Victoria CEO with progress to be reported through to the Ports Victoria Board at least twice per financial year.

A dedicated staff member is accountable for the development of the Action Plan with oversight of delivery of the actions to be coordinated through an internal First Peoples Working Group.

With our head office located in Geelong and as part of our commitment to building relationships with Traditional Owner groups and First Peoples connected to Victorian ports and marine waters, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation RAP kindly accepted our invitation to review and provide comments on this inaugural action plan. As implementation of this plan progresses, we will seek further engagement and input into ongoing actions from additional RAPS.

Glossary

Term/Acronym	Description/Meaning
ASDP	Aboriginal Self Determination Plan
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Change
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
First Peoples/ First Nations	The terms ‘First Peoples’ and ‘First Nations’ in this document are used to respectfully and interchangeably refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
PV	Ports Victoria
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
Transport ASDP	Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self Determination Plan
SDRF	Self-Determination Reform Framework
Sea Country	Estuaries, beaches, bays and marine areas (collectively known as ‘Sea Country’)
Self-Determination	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. It also describes self-determination as a right that relates to groups of people, not individuals.
Songlines	Describes the features and directions of travel that were included in a song that had to be sung and memorised for the traveller to know the route to their destination

