



Board Policy

Acknowledgement of Country and Commitment to First Nations Communities

Endorsed by: Board

Document Owner: Board

Section 1: Preamble

This policy builds on the Governance Board Policy and outlines principles that guide our engagement with those who interact with our organisation. It ensures we meet our cultural, moral and legal responsibilities.

Goulburn Options is committed to fostering a culture that respects the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Australia. Recognising and honouring these communities is a fundamental part of our organisational values.

The Australian Government acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of the lands and waters across Australia.

As such, Goulburn Options recognises its responsibility to uphold the cultural rights of Aboriginal peoples, including:

- Respect for cultural practices
- Legal recognition under the **Native Title Act 1993**, **Victorian Heritage Act 2006**, and **Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010**

Section 2: Policy Statement

The Goulburn Options Board acknowledges all Victorian Aboriginal communities as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waters in Victoria. In particular we recognise the Kulin Nation, and the clans of the Taungurung people, for their ongoing connection to Country where we live, work, and meet.

The Goulburn Options Board is committed to ensuring our organisational practices:

- Respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, peoples, cultures, and heritage, recognising their unique position as First Nations Peoples who have cared for this land for thousands of years.
- Support the right to continue cultural ceremonies, protocols, and practices, as outlined in the Victorian Charter of **Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006** and the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**.
- Acknowledge the essential role of continued connection to Country, cultural values, and practices in supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as recognised in the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008)**.
- Celebrate significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events as part of standard organisational practice.
- Promote inclusive and respectful practices across Goulburn Options through relationship-building, collaboration, and partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and communities.

Goulburn Options is also committed to the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of Aboriginal children. We actively create environments where Aboriginal children are respected, supported in their cultural identity, and encouraged to

express their views. We strive to ensure our services are culturally safe and that all staff understand the importance of cultural connection and strength in supporting Aboriginal children to thrive.

Section 3: Roles

Role	Responsibilities and Accountabilities
Board	Endorses policy and ensures organisational practices align with the recognition of Traditional Owners
Executive Management	Embeds cultural respect and recognition into strategic direction and service planning
Team Leaders	- Lead inclusive practices in their teams - Supports staff understanding of cultural obligations
Administration	Ensure Welcome to and/or Acknowledgement of Country is incorporated into events, documents, agendas and communications
Workforce (<i>DSW, Students, Volunteers</i>)	- Engage respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Uphold cultural safety in daily practice
Participants	Are respected and supported in expressing cultural identity and participating in culturally safe services

Section 4: Related Documentation

Document Name	Document Type
Governance	Board Policy
Board Handbook	Handbook
Welcome To and Acknowledgement of Country	Procedure
Native Title Act 1993	Legislation
Victorian Heritage Act 2006	Legislation
Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010	Legislation
UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2008	Declaration
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Policy
Promoting and Protecting Human Rights	Policy
Key Elements of Participant Safety and Wellbeing	Policy
Code of Conduct	Policy

Section 5: Definitions

Term	Definition
Traditional Owners	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recognised as the original custodians of the land and waters
Country	The lands, waters, skies and spiritual connections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for.
Cultural Safety	An environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe for people of all cultures.

Acknowledgement of Country and Commitment to First Nations Communities

Acknowledgement of Country	A respectful recognition of the Traditional Owners of the land.
Welcome to Country	A formal ceremony performed by Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their land.
First Nations Peoples	A collective term referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia.

Date of Last Review:	June 2025	Date of Next Review:	June 2027
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