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The Secretary  
Standing Committee On Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
House Of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

### **Inquiry into Indigenous Employment**

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the Inquiry into Indigenous Employment being conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. The City of Whitehorse is pleased to have input into the Inquiry to identify positive outcomes and best practice.

Please find attached a description of a successful initiative undertaken by the City of Whitehorse that involved the design and development of an Indigenous garden. The project provided employment and training opportunities for young indigenous people.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Noelene Duff  
Chief Executive Officer

Enc.

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## **House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs**

### **Inquiry into Indigenous Employment**

#### **Response from the City of Whitehorse**

The city of Whitehorse adopted a statement of commitment to indigenous people in February 1997. This joint commitment was made in conjunction with the cities of Banyule and Manningham and the shire of Nillumbik. The statement of commitment provided participating councils with a framework for possible future initiatives and partnerships with the indigenous community. The City of Whitehorse adopted its first Reconciliation Action Plan in 2001. This plan was reviewed in consultation with Indigenous elders and a revised Aboriginal Reconciliation Policy and Action Plan 2002 – 2005 was adopted in October 2002.

As part of its commitment to Reconciliation activities, Council, in conjunction with Indigenous community representatives has determined to develop two Indigenous gardens.

The first garden is located at the Blackburn Lake Sanctuary and was launched in March 2005. The Garden provides a permanent and powerful educational resources to promote a greater understanding of Indigenous history, the spiritual relationship between Indigenous people and the land and the diversity of flora and fauna native to the City of Whitehorse. Development of the garden provided employment and training opportunities for Indigenous young people.

The garden was developed in conjunction with a project reference group. The Group included representation from:

- Wurundjeri Elders and local Indigenous people
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE)
- Swinburne Learning Pathways Project (LPP)
- Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP)
- Community Advocates and Learning Partnerships for Conservation and Land Management (CALP)
- Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR),
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI),
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- ParksVic
- Council Officers from the Community Development, ParksWide and Arts and Recreation Development Departments
- Whitehorse Friends for Reconciliation (WFFR)
- Rotary Club of Nunawading Inc
- Blackburn Lake Advisory Committee



The objectives were:

- To ensure that Wurunjeri Elders were consulted in all aspects of the garden development;
- To seek advice and guidance from Indigenous people in the design, development and implementation of the gardens including plant selection and placement, wordage on the plaques, signage and associated artworks;
- To develop partnerships with key Aboriginal organisations in employment and education to provide student placement and employment opportunities through the development and ongoing maintenance of the gardens;
- To raise public awareness of the garden and Reconciliation; and
- To develop educational materials and programs associated with the gardens.

The garden is located next to the existing Blackburn Lake Visitors Centre. This centre currently houses Indigenous art, artefacts and historical information and is visited frequently by local schools and community groups as well as the wider community.

Students were engaged throughout the project to contribute to the signage, artwork, publicity and promotional materials for the gardens through Swinburne TAFE and Box Hill TAFE. Employment and training opportunities were provided for Indigenous young people through the Yarra Ranges and Dandenong Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) and Community Advocates and Learning Partnerships for Conservation and Land Management (CALP).

For additional information regarding this project, please contact Helen Killmier, Manager Community Development on (03) 9262 6334.