

reconciliation



victoria

# Guide for Developing a Local Reconciliation Group

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Reconciliation Victoria is proud to present this guide as a resource for community members wanting to set up a local reconciliation group and to support reconciliation progress in Victoria.

## What is a Local Reconciliation Group?

Local Reconciliation Groups (LRGs) play an important role in advancing and promoting reconciliation at the community level. LRGs come together to provide opportunities for learning and action, which can involve organising a range of events and activities such as local forums, film nights, concerts, cultural tours, and walks, talks at local schools, art exhibitions and information displays. Many groups also work with local government and schools to promote reconciliation, as well as greater awareness of Aboriginal history and culture.

## Local Reconciliation Groups in Victoria

Reconciliation Victoria works with an independent network of Local Reconciliation Groups, throughout both metropolitan and regional Victoria who promote cultural awareness, understanding and education in their local communities.

LRGs serve an important purpose in the Victorian landscape and are often the local go-to-group in many metro and regional local government areas. The people who participate in LRGs are strongly committed to reconciliation and work hard to build and maintain positive relationships and friendships with First Peoples. LRGs are strong advocates and allies with a high-level of respect and regard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history. This makes LRGs an important stakeholder for organisations developing Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) or strategies. LRGs are great at brokering relationships and collectively work to influence reconciliation progress, and hold RAP organisations accountable for their RAP actions, deliverables, and commitments.

## Where are LRGs located?

A [listing of Victorian LRGs](#) can be found on the Reconciliation Victoria website.

## Six things to consider when creating a new Local Reconciliation Group (LRG)

1. Why are your group members interested in reconciliation and what would they like your new LRG to focus on? Document your aims and the activities you plan to implement.
2. It's very important to take your lead from First Peoples. What connections do you have, or could you make with local Traditional Custodians or other First Nations people to find out what they would like your group to do?

3. Develop a code of conduct to guide your actions so that you support the local First Nations community and build unity in the group.
4. Are there other local people or groups that might be interested to be involved or support what you're doing? Invite them to a meeting.
5. What structure would you like your group to have? Will it be an informal group or would you like to make it an incorporated association?
6. Register with Reconciliation Victoria to receive invitations to LRG forums where you can share information. Sign up for Reconciliation Victoria's monthly Reconciliation News.

## Getting started

If there isn't a Local Reconciliation Group (LRG) in your area, you can start a new one and be part of the statewide movement for reconciliation.

- Discuss the aim of your group and set some initial achievable goals. You can start as an informal group and even participate in an established LRG while you gain the confidence to start your group.
- Talk with local individuals, groups, or organisations and invite them to join you informally to talk about starting an LRG.
- Most members of LRG in Victoria are non-Indigenous people. It's essential that non-indigenous people listen to and take leadership from First Peoples.
- Reach out to local Traditional Owners and other First Nations people and seek their guidance, noting that not all First Nations people have the same views or objectives.
- Spend time thinking about how to be good allies with local First Nations people and how to support them achieve their goals.
- Attend local First Nations led activities / events to listen and learn and to start making connections. If possible, go on Country to create a foundation to your activities on the Aboriginal land where your group is based.
- Educate yourselves - listen to the lived experiences of local First Nations people. Read books and websites and watch movies and documentaries that expand your knowledge of First Nations people and culture, colonialism, how to oppose racism and how to be a good ally. Get up to speed on the [Treaty process in Victoria](#), and the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#).
- Take the time to get to know each other in your group, including the story of how you came to be living on the Aboriginal Country where you are. This strengthens your connections and helps you work together effectively. It's particularly important when you encounter challenges!
- Structure your meetings to make them as accessible and effective as possible. Online meetings are great for accessibility and face-to-face meetings are great for building personal connections. Most groups use a mix of both. If you meet in public spaces consider how to make these accessible too (for example, many groups find licenced premises inappropriate and not accessible to some members).

- Plan activities which bring you together, such as shared learning about de-colonising society.
- Spend some time setting ground rules (a [code of conduct](#) is a great idea) and clear aims.
- Develop terms of reference and outline the key roles and responsibilities of members to ensure group members are in agreement. Many groups find developing a leadership team is helpful to organise regular meetings and develop links with local networks.
- Look at the pros and cons of becoming an incorporated association. Going down this route involves some additional work but also provides benefits, such as giving your group the ability to have a bank account and apply for grants (note it's also possible to be auspiced by another group that's incorporated to access grants).
- Reach out to other LRGs for advice and an understanding of the kind of work they do. They can pass on important lessons they've learned, how to keep members engaged, and how to run a successful event.
- Register your group with [Reconciliation Victoria](#) to receive invitations to LRG forums and other events. We can also publicise your existence which will help new members find you. Stay informed by [signing up to receive the monthly Reconciliation News](#) from Reconciliation Victoria.

#### **Create a sustainable and successful group:**

- Keep your members engaged by having a clear purpose and direction for the year ahead.
- Encourage and support all members to contribute ideas and feel heard.
- Reach out to local First Peoples to build partnerships and back their intentions; find ways to elevate First Peoples voices and culture in your activities and keep Traditional Owner and First Peoples partners informed of your group's activities.
- Share the load, particularly when organising events. Involve other local community groups, schools, businesses to share resources and provide volunteer help.
- When organising an event or activity, start engaging with community early and give yourself plenty of time to prepare. Keep reflecting on what you are learning and be flexible to change as needed.
- Be bold, and you are likely to make some mistakes. If you have strong relationships within your group and with local First Nations people, these mistakes can be talked about and learned from, which will strengthen your ability and confidence to try new things.
- Apply for community grants to support your events or activities, or those of local First Nations people.
- Celebrate your achievements!

#### **Use Your Skills, Resources & Opportunities**

- Organise at least one event every year that promotes reconciliation, elevates First Nations voices, or educates the community about Aboriginal history and culture within your community. When this is done in partnership with or guided by First Nations, it's going to be much more effective!

- Arrange for your group to undertake training in cultural competency, cultural safety or unconscious bias and privilege training with First People trainers.
- Create a leadership team which is representative of the community in which your LRG is located.
- To help ensure that your group stays accessible and connected, create an email address, social media accounts and perhaps a website so that your group can communicate its activities and be contactable and responsive to external enquiries.

#### **How Reconciliation Victoria can support your Local Reconciliation Group**

- You will be invited to our annual general meeting and our annual LRG forum, which will give you the opportunity to connect with other LRGs.
- Our LRG network comes together for an annual Forum and other meetings throughout the year, to learn about and consider our practice on key issues: for example, advocating to local councils, addressing racism, learning about Treaty.
- You can apply for funding from Reconciliation Victoria for your National Reconciliation Week events. Our monthly *Reconciliation News* will alert you to these opportunities.
- We can promote your events and activities in our newsletter and on our social media platforms.
- We can facilitate connection with other groups, organisations, and local Aboriginal communities to support you with implementing your work and achieving your goals.
- We can provide you with resources and advice to assist you in organising events and activities in your community.