

# ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL 5 SEPTEMBER 2018



**I, Councillor Dick Gross, give notice that I intend to move the Motion outlined below at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 05 September 2018:**

That Council:-

1. Notes the initial positive consultations with the traditional owners of the land, the Boon Wurrung on an additional morning Australia Day celebration;
2. Notes that both the mover of the motion and the Boon Wurrung support the current celebrations of Australia Day conducted by the City of Port Phillip including citizenship with Welcome to Country by the Traditional Owners, educational explanations by the Traditional Owners and Smoking Ceremony;
3. Requests that officers investigate the feasibility and manner of an additional morning ceremony on Australia Day.
4. The morning ceremony should focus exclusively on a ritual of acknowledgement, contrition and atonement of the impacts of Colonial settlement on indigenous people, including a rite based upon the recitation of the massacres in the Port Phillip District (the initial Colonial title for Victoria).
5. The emphasis should be on having as few speeches as possible but involve non-verbal rites including by way of example fire, candles, costume, music, group singing, parading and prayer.
6. The morning ceremony can only proceed with the full involvement and consent of the traditional owners of the land, the Boon Wurrung.
7. This morning ceremony, as suggested in our initial consultation with the Boon Wurrung, should be seen as “a local celebration for a national conversation”.
8. Requests officers to report back to Council on the technical requirements and timing issues involved; strategies for an effective community consultation; the policy alignments of such a project with the current Council Plan; the costs involved and the possible sources of funding for the project.

## **Supporting Information**

Currently Australia Day presents us with an intractable dilemma. On the one hand, it is supposed to inspire the nation to celebrate Australia’s existence and yet the date represents invasion and cultural genocide to many, particularly indigenous Australians.

Amongst the major political parties, there is no political appetite to change the date of Australia Day. Rather there is bipartisan opposition to this. Amongst other parties, there is some trenchant opposition to “Invasion Day”. Some Councils have chosen not to run Citizenship Ceremonies on Australia Day have antagonised other tiers of government. At the same time a growing number of Australians, both indigenous and non-indigenous, wish to change the date. This is an issue cleaving the land.

Another proposal other than changing the date, is to augment the current ceremonies. If the ceremonial response fully and apologetically recognises the damage done by colonisation, then maybe the day might not be so divisive. A reformed Australia Day could be a profound act of reconciliation, education and atonement.



## **A PROPOSAL**

It has been suggested by some that Australia Day festivities could be divided into two. Many ceremonial days are divided into two parts. Anzac Day starts with a serious dawn service and the rest of the day is more celebratory. Easter has the solemnity of Good Friday and the celebration of renewal and hope on Easter Sunday. If we had a “morning of mourning” with a respectful, sombre and inclusive ceremony, it could be a way that Australia Day could be turned around from being an insult to a great annual moment of reconciliation and historical information followed by celebration and citizenship.

This proposal has been discussed with the traditional owners who have given provisional support and indeed suggested that this be a “local celebration for a national conversation”. The Boon Wurrung and the mover of the Motion support Australia Day being unchanged in the afternoon.

Further conversations have been had, over the past year, with Councillors, representatives of the State government, ministers of religion and, indirectly, corporate sponsors. There has been nervous acclamation of this proposal. It is time to come out from the shadows and explore and promote this proposal in the public domain.