

Bridging Now to *Next*

National Reconciliation Week
Kerang Community Walk
Wednesday 28 May 2025

Case Study

BACKGROUND

National Reconciliation Week takes place each year from May 27 to June 3. It commemorates two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey – the successful 1967 referendum that removed clauses from the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the 1992 High Court Mabo Native Title decision that recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rights over their lands.

This year Gannawarra Shire Council co-ordinated the 11th annual Reconciliation Week community walk in Kerang which concluded with an event at the Kerang Memorial Hall. The walk is made possible by the united efforts of the Kerang Elders and Leaders Group, Gannawarra Shire Council, Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) and Northern District Community Health (NDCH).

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2025, Bridging Now to Next, invites all Australians to learn more about our shared history and take simple steps towards a more respectful and inclusive future. By listening, learning, and being open to new conversations, we can all play a part in strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

EVENT AIMS:

- Involve the community in a united display demonstrating support for reconciliation across Gannawarra communities.
- Provide the opportunity for local Elders and Leaders to plan and co-host the event.
- Strengthen relationships and connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and organisations.
- Promote the significance of the dates included in National Reconciliation Week to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rights.
- Work with partner agencies to ensure respectful inclusion of Aboriginal culture and customs into events including a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony.



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EVENT AIMS *continued*

- Increase understanding and significance of Aboriginal cultures, histories and knowledge through music, storytelling and art.
- Provide an opportunity for schools from across Gannawarra to be part of the National Reconciliation Week community walk and event to develop a shared understanding of Aboriginal culture and connection to Country.
- Encourage a continuation of the journey towards reconciliation across Gannawarra communities.
- Extend the opportunity for schools and kindergartens to further develop understanding of Aboriginal culture in the education environment.













WHAT DID THE EVENT DELIVER?

- The eleventh annual Kerang Reconciliation Week Walk was the largest event to date, with approximately 350 community members attending.
- Over 250 children from Kerang Tech High School, Kerang Primary School, Kerang South Primary School, Koondrook Primary School, Murrabit Group School, St Mary's Primary School, St Joseph's Primary School, Barham Public School, Barham High School and the Gannawarra Children's Centre attended.
- Support for bus travel costs to allow attendance from 2 rural schools, Koondrook and Murrabit.
- Support and attendance by all 6 GLAM partner agencies.
- Smoking Ceremony conducted by Hack Webster, who also shared his knowledge of the significance of the native plants used in the ceremony.
- Welcome to Country delivered by Warren Hall Jnr
- Cultural storytelling through song by Yorta Yorta woman, Madi Colville Walk.
- VicPolice provided traffic management to provide safe Nolan street crossing to participants of the community walk in.
- Aunty Lil Murray read the story "Country" with the pages projected on the large screen.
- Display of various pieces of art created by local indigenous artists, children and youth groups, Kethawil Pembenguuk and Tyipen Kwe were a fitting focal point as a backdrop.

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WHAT DID THE EVENT DELIVER? *continued*

- Support of local hospitality businesses including 200 message cookies, #NRW2025 and a morning tea at the event.
- The StoryWalk [R] experience of "Country" by Aunty Fay Muir and Sue Lawson on display in Atkinson Park for four weeks.
- As part of Shared Story Time across the Shire, 13 copies of *Country* by Aunty Fay Muir and Sue Lawson were distributed to Gannawarra primary schools and early education centres.

EVENT REFLECTIONS:

- Increased crowd numbers require street closures in future years to improve safety.
- A later event start time would enable outlying schools to attend more easily.
- Consider consulting schools about a shared lunch event and activity at a school, park, or library.
- Event duration at the hall appeared appropriate.
- Flood recovery funding has supported bus travel costs for outlying schools.
- Ongoing funding support beyond flood recovery funding needs to be considered to include Gannawarra schools (re: bus travel) in future events.
- A group photo of the large number of attendees would be better positioned using the steps of the Council building.
- Audio at the 3 locations worked efficiently, Council's portable PA system at Victoria Square, NDCH's portable PA system at the front of Memorial Hall and *Living it Live* sound and projection inside the hall.
- Feedback from schools on Shared Story Time was positive and the story provided an additionopportunity to discuss Aboriginal culture.



"Thanks again for the book and we had an amazing week here with a whole week focus on reconciliation week."

"Our students across many grades have enjoyed the story"

"We loved the Country book, the artwork was amazing and it lent into lots of discussions about belonging and caring for the land and nature."

"What a beautiful book! We enjoyed it very much..."

Australian Government
GANNAWARRA Shire Council
Community Recovery Gannawarra
VICTORIA State Government

Supported by Gannawarra Shire Flood Recovery Funding through the Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee

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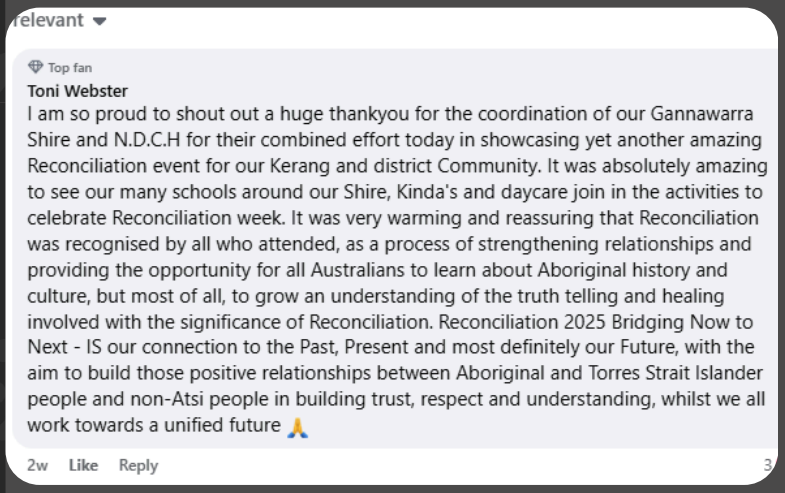
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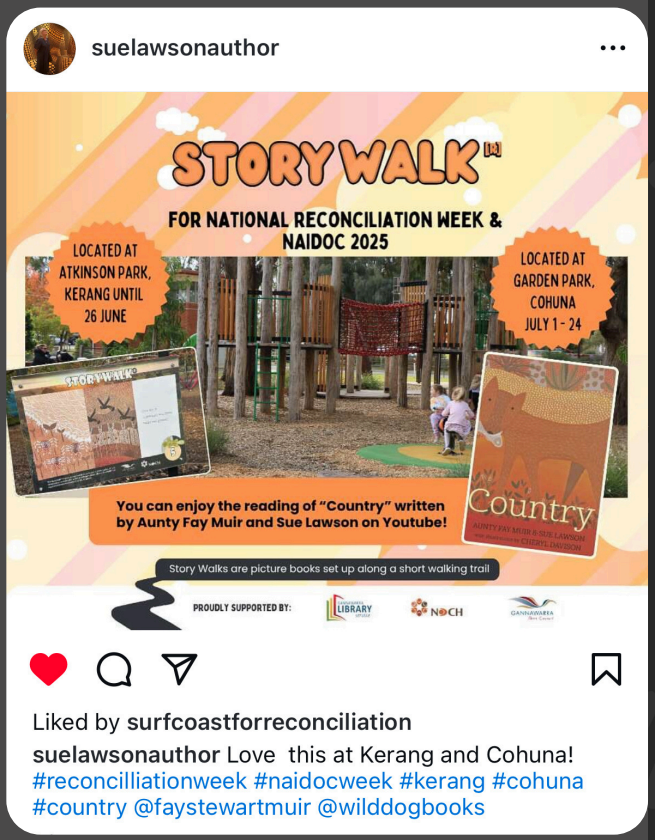
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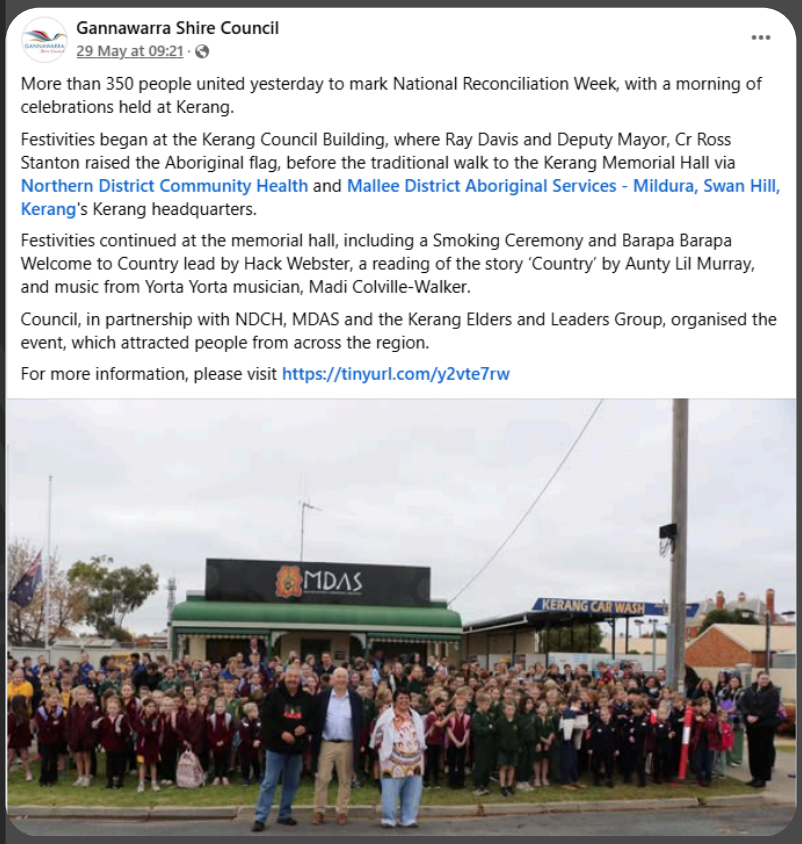
MEDIA:

Gannawarra Shire Council issued two media releases: one prior to the event to generate awareness and anticipation, and a second following the event to showcase its success.

A number of Facebook posts captured the significance of the event and associated activities









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