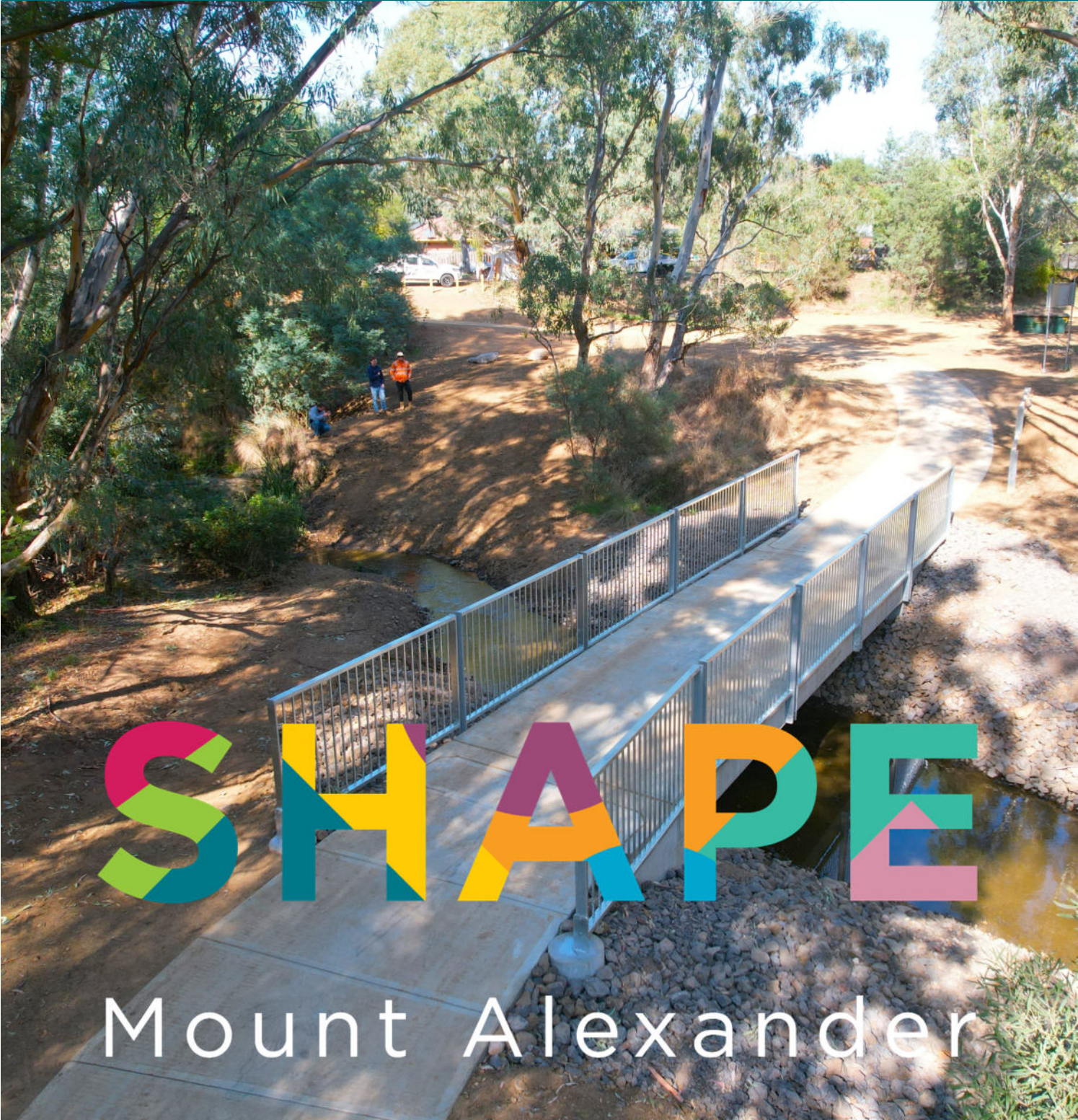


Community Engagement Summary

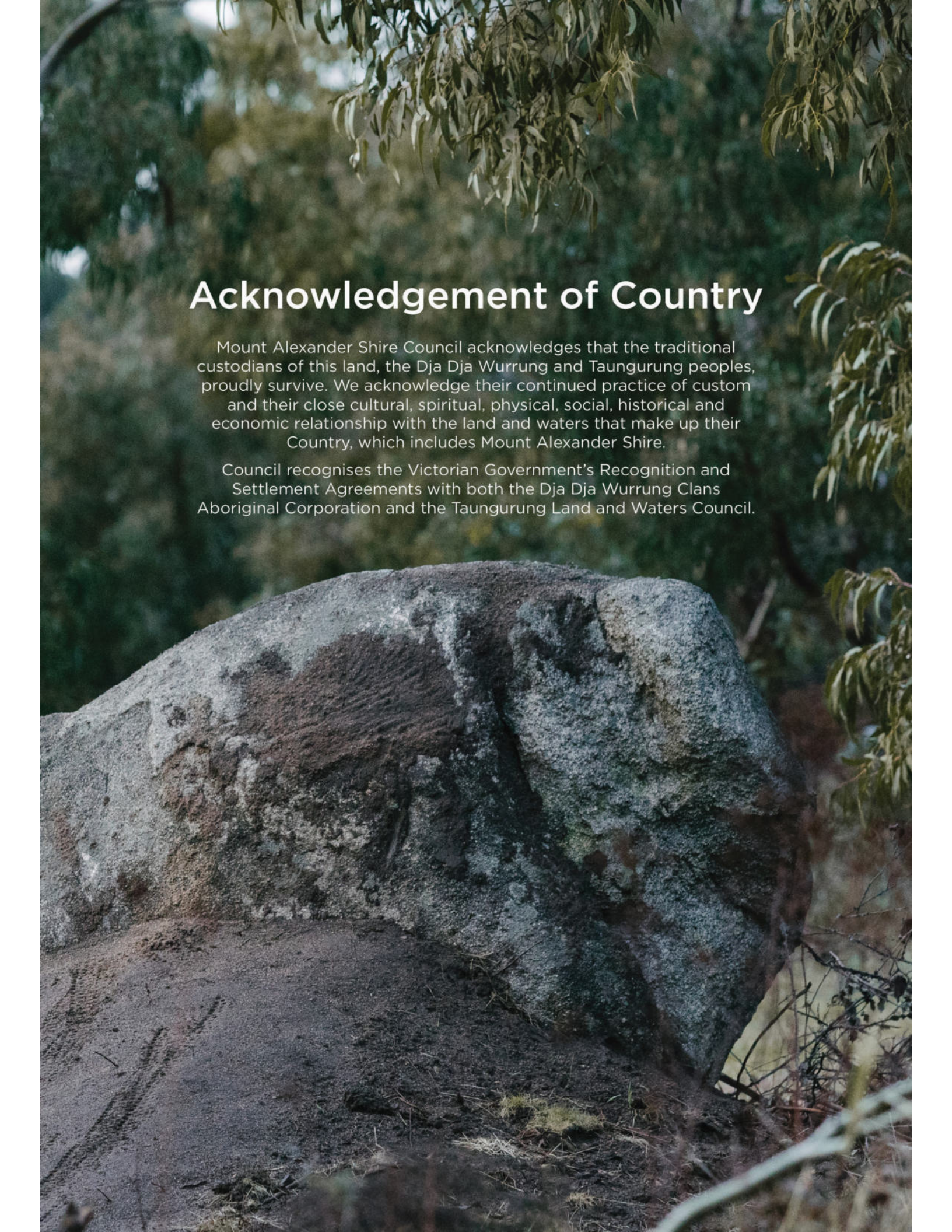


Naming of Campbells Creek Track 2025

A photograph of a concrete bridge with metal railings crossing a small creek. The bridge is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. In the background, a dirt path leads through the trees, and a few people can be seen walking. The word "SHAPE" is overlaid in large, colorful, stylized letters across the middle of the image.

SHAPE

Mount Alexander



Acknowledgement of Country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges that the traditional custodians of this land, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, proudly survive. We acknowledge their continued practice of custom and their close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their Country, which includes Mount Alexander Shire.

Council recognises the Victorian Government's Recognition and Settlement Agreements with both the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.

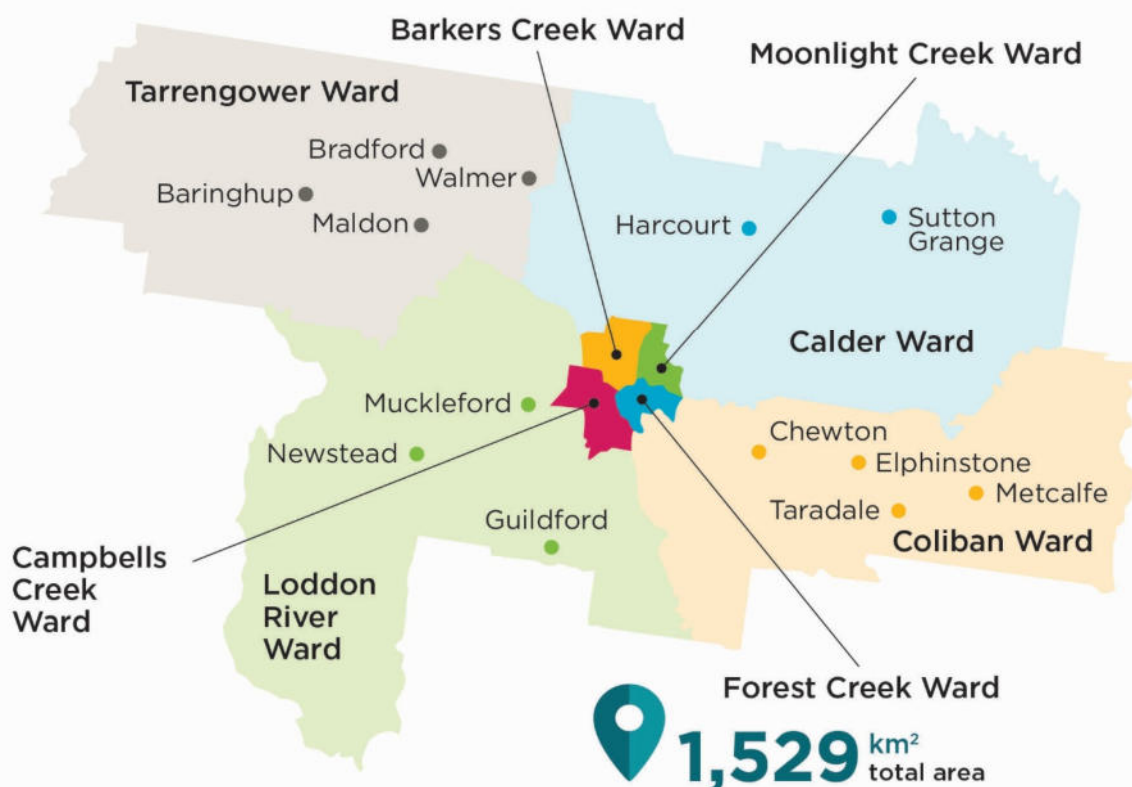
Our shire

Mount Alexander Shire – a snapshot

Mount Alexander Shire is diverse, with urban and rural communities. It has much to offer: Beautiful heritage streetscapes and picturesque towns, stunning natural surroundings, a thriving local economy and a vibrant cultural life.

Our community comprises more than 20,000 people with most living in and around the townships of Castlemaine, Harcourt, Maldon, Campbells Creek, Newstead, Elphinstone, Guildford, Chewton and Taradale.

Located within commuting distance of Melbourne and Bendigo, the popularity of the shire continues to grow as new residents move to the area to make the most of the lifestyle and all the shire offers.



Source: REMPLAN data



Executive summary

In June 2025, Mount Alexander Shire Council sought community feedback on the proposed name **Watjarang Baring** for the newly upgraded Campbells Creek walking and cycling track. The name, meaning *Platypus Track* in Dja Dja Wurrung language, was developed in partnership with DJAARA to recognise the cultural and ecological significance of the area.

A total of **103 submissions** were received from the community via SHAPE Mount Alexander. Of these, **83 respondents supported the proposed name**, while **20 respondents did not support it**. Supportive submissions consistently highlighted the importance of honouring Dja Dja Wurrung language, recognising 65,000+ years of custodianship, celebrating the presence of platypus in the creek, and strengthening cultural visibility across the shire. Many described the name as fitting, beautiful, meaningful, and easy to remember.

A total of 16 responses were received from the correspondence sent to adjoining landowners along the trail corridor, as per the Naming Rules for Places requirement. Of these, **14 respondents supported the proposed name**, while **2 respondents did not support it**.

Timeline

-  **Tuesday 3 June**
Community engagement commences, online and hardcopy survey available.
-  **Thursday 3 July**
Community engagement concludes
-  **March 2026**
Proposed name to be presented to Council for endorsement
-  **Next Steps**
After Council endorsement, name is to be submitted to Geographic Names Victoria (GNV) for approval

Project overview

New name for Campbells Creek off-road track

Over 2024 and 2025, Mount Alexander Shire Council worked in partnership with DJAARA ((Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) and the Friends of Campbells Creek (FOCC) to enhance the 4.3-kilometre off-road Campbells Creek track, which stretches from Campbells Creek Park to Camp Reserve in Castlemaine. To honour the cultural and environmental significance of the area, the proposed name 'Watjarang Baring' - meaning 'Platypus Track' in Dja Dja Wurrung language - was put forward, and Council sought community feedback through a brief survey in June and July 2025 to gauge support for the name.

Impact and integration

This summary presents clearly themed and organised community feedback that can be directly integrated into Councils plans and strategies. It highlights key issues, place-based opportunities, and community priorities in language aligned with project goals. Councillors and Council staff will use this input to guide decision-making, and it provides a transparent record of how community engagement is shaping outcomes.

Themed
responses with
subject matter
related language



Community
identified issues
and opportunities
for place-based
solutions



Community
identified priorities
for elevation and
guidance



Community informed outcomes

Engagement overview

The purpose of this engagement was to inform Council's consideration of the proposed name *Watjarang Baring* for the trail adjacent to Campbells Creek. Community input was sought to understand local perspectives on the cultural, ecological and community significance of the name, as well as any concerns relating to pronunciation, relevance or use of First Nations language.

Consultation was undertaken through a combination of online engagement via SHAPE Mount Alexander and direct communication with adjoining landowners, Traditional Owners and key stakeholders. This process enabled Council to gather a broad range of views, identify key themes of support and opposition, and ensure the naming proposal reflects community sentiment, cultural authority and legislative requirements.

Engagement activity

- We asked community: **Do you support the proposed name Watjarang Baring?** We also gave respondents the opportunity to share further comments to expand on their response.
- Informed the community about the proposed name via a dedicated SHAPE Mount Alexander page, which received **444 visits and 656 views**.
- Consulted the community through an online SHAPE survey, **receiving 103 public submissions between 3 June and 3 July 2025**.
- **Distributed letters to 151 adjoining landowners** to ensure those most directly affected were informed and had the opportunity to participate.
- Raised awareness of the naming proposal **through social media, Council communication channels and direct engagement with key stakeholders, including DJAARA and Nalderun**.
- **Engaged directly with DJAARA through a Wartaka on 4 March 2025 to discuss cultural authority**, language use and interpretive signage.

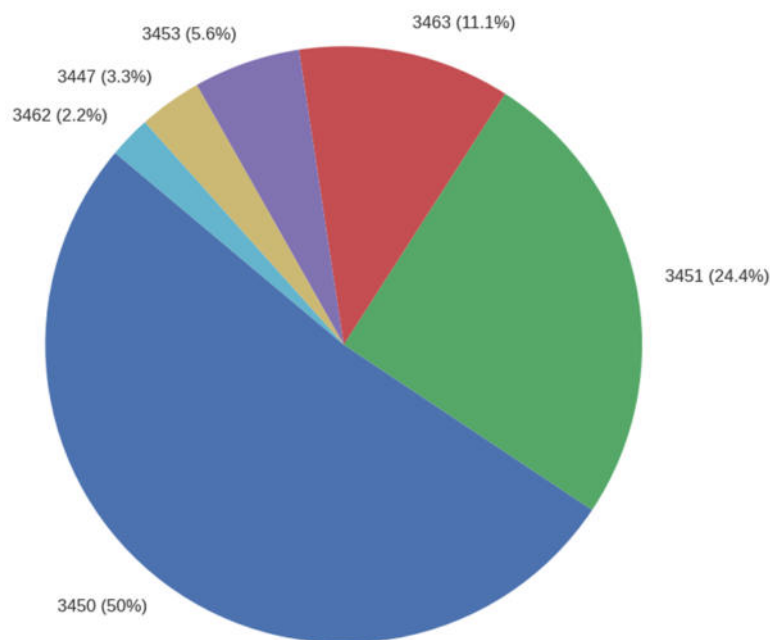
Community response

The following section presents the key themes that emerged from community engagement, organised to reflect the most consistent concerns, values, and aspirations shared by participants. By theming responses and aligning them with the purpose of the project, this section offers a clear and actionable foundation for decision-making. It demonstrates how community input is shaping the direction of the plan.

Survey respondents

We received a combined total of 119 survey responses.

Respondents by postcode



Castlemaine (3450) makes up half of all responses, followed by Chewton, Campbells Creek, and Harcourt (3451) at 24.4%. The remaining postcodes show smaller but still meaningful contributions, helping ensure the responses include diverse local .

Community response

Q. Do you support the proposed name Watjarang Baring?



Overall, the engagement demonstrated **strong community support** for adopting the name *Watjarang Baring*, with a clear majority recognising its cultural, environmental, and local significance. The feedback also provided valuable insight into community expectations around naming practices, accessibility, and communication, which will inform Council's approach to future naming projects.

Comments from supportive voices

"I think it is a really lovely name for the walking track! Very appropriate - hope it encourages some platypuses to come!"

"Wonderful name honouring the 65000 years of First Nations and Dja Dja Wurrung presence and custodianship. And honouring the Ancient wonder of Watjarang, a unique resilient survivor thriving in this landscape despite years of goldmine, agriculture and development abuse. Watjarang Presence here is a treatment to the work of local communities and Dja Dja Wurrung in working together to heal Country."

"I really like the name, it sounds really beautiful and it definitely suits the creek Great idea, easy to pronounce, easy to remember, wonderful way to recognise Australian and First Nations cultures."

"Great to have more First Nations names for our area. A good reminder for the community that we are on Aboriginal land."

"We need to support the Jaara community and their self-determination including the names and symbols we use in the official place names."

"An important step in returning language and leadership for waterways in our region."

"Nice one. Appropriate. Makes sense. Platypi can sometimes be spotted in these waters, mainly thanks to treated sewerage from Coliban Water."

"What a wonderful name to use for this important community asset. I can't wait to make use of the extension that has been wanted for so long."

Community response

Comments from opposing voices

Suggesting the name Platypus Track:

"The name sounds nice, but we need to highlight the platypus. I suggest we simply call it Platypus Track. Thanks."

"I am tired of names that are hard to remember and pronounce. No one will use it on an everyday basis..... So a more colloquial name like Platypus track would be much better."

"Why does the track require a name? If it does - call it Platypus Track. If someone is injured on the track they are not going to be able to remember or pronounce the name to get assistance. What is this costing us as rate payers? I would rather this be spent on cleaning up the track."

"The track should be named in English as this is the accepted language of all Australians, so it should be Platypus Track. To promote our natural wildlife and its importance, we need to communicate to as many people, locals and visitors, as possible the presence of the Platypus. To name it otherwise is to promote confusion for those that do not speak/read Dja Dja Wurrung language."

"And as the Dja Dja Wurrung language is a local language, it is not going to be understood by locals and visitors that do not understand it. What you should do is name it Platypus Track and then have the Dja Dja Wurrung language equivalent next to, or underneath it, same as many signs in Australia already do."

Suggesting the name Campbell's Creek Track/Trail:

Leave it as Campbells creek walking trail/track! It has been known by that for years! If you must apply names, then why not name the bridges, or other landmarks like lagoons, grassy flats or gullies that the track passes by, it would make it easier to arrange meeting places or to guide ambulance/police to someone who needs assistance.

I think it should be named as Campbells Creek track. Because it's the Campbells Creek track.

Other name suggestion:

I wholeheartedly agree to recognise Aboriginal connections throughout our community. But it is difficult if there is no clue about the nature of the place for English only speakers. So I suggest a partially both name 'Watjarang Track'.

Community response

Comments from opposing respondents (continued)

No alternative naming suggestion:

"I think it is ridiculous that an unpronounceable name in a language foreign to most residents and ratepayers is being given to this track to appease the minority of locals who identify as indigenous."

"That trail did not exist 200 years ago so I cannot see how there would ever be an indigenous name for a track that was non-existent back then. What evidence is there that the track was ever associated with the Platypus? What language has it been derived considering no written language was ever recorded. Using English letters to rename a track in a language that is unknown is more than ludicrous."

"Hard to spell, pronounce and remember."

Engagement insight for consideration

While 97 respondents supported the proposed name *Watjarang Baring*, only 17 of them (around 18%) chose to leave an additional comment. In contrast, all 22 respondents who did not support the name (100%) provided detailed written feedback.

This pattern is common in community engagement:

- **Supportive respondents** often feel the proposal "speaks for itself" and require less explanation, resulting in shorter or fewer comments.
- **Non-supportive respondents** are more likely to elaborate, using the comment field to express concerns, propose alternatives, or explain their disagreement.

The result is a high volume of commentary from a small minority, which can create the impression of stronger opposition than the quantitative data reflects. In this engagement, the written feedback provides valuable nuance, but the overall sentiment remains clear: the majority supported the name, while the minority provided more extensive reasoning for their disagreement.

Community identified issues and opportunities

Pronunciation, spelling, and accessibility concerns

Many respondents felt the name *Watjarang Baring* would be difficult for some community members to pronounce, remember, or spell. They worried this could reduce everyday use or create confusion for visitors and emergency services.

Strengthening cultural recognition and visibility

Supportive respondents saw the name as a meaningful way to honour Dja Dja Wurrung language, custodianship, and 65,000+ years of connection to Country. This presents an opportunity to deepen cultural understanding and reconciliation across the shire.

Preference for English or existing names

A significant portion of unsupportive comments expressed a desire to retain the existing name (*Campbells Creek Track*) or adopt a simple English name such as *Platypus Track*. These respondents felt English names were more familiar, descriptive, and inclusive for all users.

Celebrating local ecology and the presence of platypus

Many supporters valued the name's connection to the platypus population in Campbells Creek. This creates opportunities for environmental education, signage, and storytelling about local biodiversity and waterway health.

Broader resistance to Indigenous naming

Some respondents expressed discomfort with the increasing use of Indigenous names for public places, questioning relevance, cost, or cultural legitimacy. These comments reflect a broader community tension around cultural change rather than concerns specific to this track.

Building community pride in place

Supporters described the name as beautiful, fitting, and reflective of the area's identity. This offers an opportunity to strengthen community pride, enhance the track's character, and reinforce the partnership between Council, DJAARA, and local volunteers.

Community priorities

If we combine the key feedback themes with the community identified issues and opportunities, some distinct community priorities emerge. These will help guide the project team and Council as they consider next steps.

1

Celebrate and protect local ecology, especially platypus habitat

Supportive feedback highlighted the significance of the platypus population in Campbells Creek. The community expressed a desire for naming, signage, and storytelling that elevate awareness of local biodiversity and encourage environmental stewardship.

2

Honour and strengthen Dja Dja Wurrung cultural recognition

Many respondents strongly supported the use of Dja Dja Wurrung language in public places, seeing the proposed name *Watjarang Baring* as an important step in acknowledging 65,000+ years of custodianship, healing Country, and strengthening cultural visibility across the shire.

3

Ensure names are accessible, understandable, and easy to use

A consistent theme among unsupportive respondents was the need for names that are easy to pronounce, spell, and remember. This reflects a broader community priority for clarity and accessibility in public naming, especially for visitors, emergency services, and everyday use.

4

Maintain familiarity and local identity in place naming

Some respondents expressed a preference for retaining the commonly used name (*Campbells Creek Track*) or using English descriptors like *Platypus Track*. This highlights a community priority for continuity, familiarity, and ease of navigation in local infrastructure.

5

Provide clear communication about naming decisions

Across both supportive and unsupportive comments, there was a desire for transparency about why names are chosen, how they are developed with Traditional Owners, and what they signify. This points to a priority for clear, proactive communication that builds understanding and trust in Council's naming processes.

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Cnr Lyttleton and Lloyd streets
Castlemaine VIC 3450

Phone: (03) 5471 1700

Email: info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

Website: www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au

Shape website: www.shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au

