



Acknowledgement of Country



We remember and respect the Ancestors who cared for and nurtured this Country.

Dhumaan ngayin ngarrakalu kirraanan barayidin.

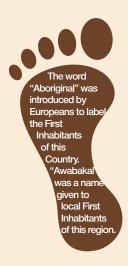
It is in their footsteps that we travel these lands and waters.

Ngarrakalumba yuludaka bibayilin barayida baaduka.

Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges the Awabakal people and Elders past, present and future.

Lake Macquarie City Council dhumaan Awabakala ngarrakal yalawaa, yalawan, yalawanan.

Wording by the Aboriginal Reference Group and translated by Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre







Above artwork by Uncle Jim Ridgeway Anti Bo Ka Awabakal Parai Ta (This is the place that remains Awabakal Country.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges that Aboriginal people, in this area the Awabakal people, were the first people of this land and are the proud survivors of more than 200 years of continuing dispossession. Despite this dispossession, First Nations peoples maintain a strong connection to Country through culture, spirituality, and custodianship, ensuring its protection for future generations.

As a vital step towards building a just and common future, Council recognises the sense of loss and the grief held by all Aboriginal people for the alienation from their traditional lands, the loss of their freedom, lives, languages, health and the disruption of their cultural practices.

Council respects the rights of all Aboriginal people to pursue their own values and culture.

Council acknowledges the Awabakal people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this Plan was prepared and acted upon. We pay respect to cultural knowledge holders, community members of the land and waters, and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

Lake Macquarie City Council has prepared this Plan on behalf of the Lake Macquarie community and would like to thank representatives of the Aboriginal community, residents, service providers, government agencies, community groups and other stakeholders who provided input into the Plan and participated in the community engagement process.

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MESSAGE FROM MAYOR ADAM SHULTZ

I welcome the renewed Lake Macquarie City Aboriginal Community Plan 2025–2029, Bayikulinan. This plan reinforces Council's commitment to supporting the wellbeing, prosperity, and cultural strength of Aboriginal people living and working in Lake Macquarie.

The Awabakal people have called Lake Macquarie home for thousands of years, and we are privileged to share in the richness of Country they have nurtured. Today, 5.5% of Lake Macquarie's population identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander - one of the highest proportions in NSW. This is something to celebrate, as we work together to build a shared future.

Importantly, Bayikulinan has been developed in partnership with the Aboriginal community of Lake Macquarie. Listening deeply to community is one of the most powerful ways Council can be guided toward meaningful action. Key themes emerging from this consultation include the need for social cohesion, culturally safe services, employment opportunities, and genuine consultation with Aboriginal people, especially on decisions that affect them.

The plan also aligns with council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP), particularly across the pillars of economic development, social inclusion and good governance. This renewed plan reflects the strength, resilience, and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Lake Macquarie, including an enduring connection to Country, spiritual ties to ancestors, and the vision for generations to come. It also acknowledges that disadvantage will persist unless we continue to build understanding, foster empathy, listen deeply, and turn good intentions into lasting change.

I welcome Council's ongoing commitment to reconciliation. As a city, we stand firm in denouncing all forms of racism, respecting and conserving Aboriginal cultural practices, and recognising the vital contributions Aboriginal people make to the life and identity of Lake Macquarie.

Mayor Adam Shultz



MESSAGE FROM CEO MORVEN CAMERON

I am proud to present Council's updated Aboriginal Community Plan 2025-2029 'Bayikulinan' (to act in the future) to our community.

The draft plan builds on the progress Council has made towards delivering better outcomes for the more than 11,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call Lake Macquarie City home.

The plan has been developed in close collaboration with the community, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people representing 45% of the people engaged through the creation of the plan.

I am confident that this plan reflects the aspirations of our First Nations people and the wider Lake Macquarie community.

Bayikulinan contributes to achieving broader social, economic and governance goals outlined the Lake Macquarie Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 by setting out four clear objectives: to build social cohesion and address discrimination and racism, to provide Aboriginal people with access to culturally safe and appropriate services, deliver employment opportunities to our Aboriginal community, and to ensure the Aboriginal community is involved in decisions that affect them.

Across the life of this plan, we will increase social cohesion by raising awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage through an exciting program and cultural events and educational opportunities.

We will work alongside health providers and community organisations to ensure Aboriginal people can access the services they need.

As a significant local employer, Council already plays a key role in providing identified trainee opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and we commit to continuing this important work over the life of this plan, while also working with community to boost skills in resume writing, interview preparation and job placement assistance to ensure our Aboriginal community can access employment opportunities.

We will continue to listen to the voices of Elders and traditional knowledge holders to ensure Aboriginal people are involved in decision-making and can participate fully in civic life.

I look forward to all that we will achieve together as we implement this plan over the next four years to create a stronger community and even better lifestyle for everyone who calls our city home.

Morven Cameron *Chief Executive Officer*

OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledges that the land and waters of the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area are the traditional Country of the Awabakal people. We reaffirm our commitment to building a fair and truthful relationship between all Lake Macquarie communities and the Aboriginal people who live and work here. We recognise the need to openly acknowledge past injustices to support healing and the advancement of reconciliation.

THEREFORE, IN CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, LAKE MACQUARIE CITY COUNCIL COMMITS TO:

- We stand united in denouncing all forms of racism against Aboriginal people and we are committed to taking decisive action to eliminate racism within our sphere of influence
- Recognising the vital importance and the contribution of Aboriginal people to strengthening and enriching our city and region
- Respecting and conserving Aboriginal cultural practices, traditional sites and significant places
- Actively promoting initiatives that foster cultural sensitivity, deepen understanding, and raise awareness of Aboriginal peoples and cultures

- Working towards the recovery of Aboriginal language, health, cultural practices and lost kinship
- Supporting an agreement between the local Aboriginal community and other community members for the care of the local environment
- Looking to Aboriginal culture for practical knowledge to promote a sustainable future
- Supporting reconciliation between Aboriginal people and the non-Indigenous community
- Promoting the employment of Aboriginal people, and
- Promoting the advancement of economic development for local Aboriginal people through supporting and advocating for community business initiatives.

Lake Macquarie City Council, in conjunction with local Aboriginal people, have developed Bayikulinan to redress disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people of this community. Council recognises the positive contribution made by the Aboriginal people and looks forward to a future of mutual respect and harmony.





VISION

Bayikulinan (to act in the future) reflects the needs and future opportunities for the Aboriginal community in Lake Macquarie.

The purpose of Bayikulinan is set to improve the overall health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living and working in Lake Macquarie, through providing opportunities for equal access to services and creating a culturally safe environment where cultural identity is celebrated and supported.

Bayikulinan reflects Council's commitment to supporting the Aboriginal community in Lake Macquarie. Through collective effort and continuous engagement, we aim to build a future where Aboriginal culture is celebrated, and all community members thrive in a sustained connection to self, spirit, and place.

STRATEGIC LINKS

This strategy directly supports the implementation of Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP), by advancing actions that address Aboriginal people's priorities. It reinforces Council's ongoing commitment to reconciliation, cultural recognition, and the empowerment of Aboriginal communities within our local area.

Bayikulinan provides direct actions and programs for community that meet Council's Community Strategic Plan.

Economic A CITY WITH A DIVERSE AND THRIVING ECONOMY



- **1.3** Our local and strategic centres provide housing, jobs and activities
- **1.4** Local businesses and creators can access support to thrive
- **1.5** Our city has a workforce with skills for growing industries and jobs of the future
- **1.6** People have housing that suits their needs

Social A CITY WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND WORK, AND FEEL CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER



- **3.1** Our city is welcoming, inclusive and safe
- **3.2** People in our city can access the facilities and services they need
- **3.3** Everyone can enjoy open, active and social spaces
- 3.4 We value our First Nations people; past, present and emerging
- **3.5** Our community values and celebrates the art, history and cultures of our city

Governance A COUNCIL THAT OPERATES WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND RESPECT



4.1 Our community is involved in decisions that affect them



Lake Macquarie City Council plays a critical role in delivering local outcomes against State and National objectives. Bayikulinan is informed by the following policies and strategies to ensure all levels of government are working together to achieve greater outcomes for our local community:

Lake Macquarie City Council policies and strategies

- · Aboriginal Heritage Management Strategy
- Ageing Population Strategy 2022-2026
- · Arts, Heritage and Cultural Plan 2017-2027
- Events and Festivals Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028
- Destination Management Plan 2022-2026
- Heritage and Museum Strategy 2023-2026
- · Lake Macquarie Youth Strategy
- · Lake Macquarie Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2024

National policies and strategies

- National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020
- Uluru Statement from the Heart 2017

NSW State policies & strategies

- NSW Aboriginal Affairs Strategy OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment)
- · NSW Health Aboriginal Health Plan (2022–2026)



LOCAL CONTEXT

The Awabakal community has lived in Lake Macquarie for thousands of years, caring for Country and passing on deep cultural knowledge through language, stories, art and traditions. That connection to Country is still strong today and continues to guide how people live, learn and care for each other and the environment.

More than 11,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people call Lake Macquarie home, equating to approximately 5.5% of our city's population.

Our Aboriginal community is made up of many proud families, with strong connections to culture, to each other and to this place. Many families face challenges such as lower incomes, reduced access to housing, jobs, or education compared to non – Aboriginal families along with a need for better access to culturally safe health and support services.

The community is strongly supported by Elders, community leaders, local organisations and young people who are making a difference through culture, education, sport, and advocacy. Lake Macquarie City Council is proud to be part of the community network supporting and enhancing Aboriginal wellbeing outcomes.

Lake Macquarie is home to several Aboriginal organisations, including Muloobinba and three Local Land Councils – Awabakal, Biraban and Bahtabah, who provide vital services and cultural leadership. These groups are at the heart of what makes our community strong.

This plan — Bayikulinan — is about listening to community and walking together to create change. It's about making sure Aboriginal voices are captured and reflected in decisions that affect Aboriginal lives, families and future. Council is committed to continuing that journey with community, grounded in truth-telling, respect and real partnerships.





CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT DATES

As part of Lake Macquarie City Council's ongoing commitment to reconciliation, cultural respect, and inclusion, this section highlights key dates of cultural significance to the city's Aboriginal communities. Recognising these dates demonstrates Council's support for truth-telling, healing, and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal peoples.

Each year, Council will identify which of these culturally significant dates it will formally recognise in partnership with community stakeholders. This helps make sure the events stay relevant and meaningful for our local community.

THE DATES BELOW ARE FOR THE 2026 YEAR, WITH * INDICATING A DIFFERENT DATE EACH YEAR.

13 FEBRUARY NATIONAL APOLOGY ANNIVERSARY

20 MARCH* NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY

26 MAY NATIONAL SORRY DAY

27 MAY-3 JUNE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

3 JUNE MABO DAY

1 JULY COMING OF THE LIGHT

7-14 JULY* NATIONAL NAIDOC WEEK

4 AUGUST NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY

9 AUGUST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

3 SEPTEMBER* INDIGENOUS LITERACY DAY



A SNAPSHOT OF OUR COMMUNITY

The community seeks more inclusive planning, protection of sacred sites, and support for cultural education and awareness across the broader population.

Historical disadvantage and systemic discrimination has lead to Aboriginal people being at higher risk of experiencing poor health and education outcomes when compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

The Awabakal people, continue to experience the long-term impacts of colonisation, including loss of land, language, and cultural practices. There is a strong sense of grief and disconnection from traditional Country, which affects identity, wellbeing, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

There is a growing call for stronger Aboriginal representation in decision-making processes and greater recognition of cultural heritage.

A SNAPSHOT

The 2021 Census data shows the following characteristics about the Lake Macquarie Aboriginal population.



5.5% of our population, or **11,757** people identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



Aboriginal families are more likely to have more people and more dependent children (three or more people) in their families than non- Aboriginal families



More likely to be on lower incomes than non-Aboriginal people



Less likely to complete year 12 (33.5% Aboriginal vs 44% non-Aboriginal)



55.5% of Aboriginal persons are employed in the workforce which is **.55** lower than non-Aboriginal persons



More than twice as likely to rent than non-Aboriginal residents



Have higher rates of youth disengaged from education (21.9% compared to 9.4%)



More likely to have mental health conditions compared to non-Aboriginal persons (17.4% vs 11.7%)

Council acknowledges the importance of fostering a cohesive and inclusive community that celebrates diversity and stands against all forms of racism and discrimination. Through Bayikulinan, we commit to tangible, achievable actions that support reconciliation, cultural understanding, and equity for Aboriginal people. This work is embedded in our broader goal to promote social harmony and create a safe, respectful environment for all residents.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE:

Council has taken several proactive steps within its scope of influence to promote social cohesion and cultural respect, including:

- Hosting annual NAIDOC Week celebrations, including Council's formal ceremony.
- Delivering the NAIDOC Grants Program to support schools and community organisations in recognising and celebrating Aboriginal culture.
- Offering Aboriginal cultural awareness training to Council staff, community members, and local service providers.
- Recognising National Reconciliation Week through inclusive community events.
- Promoting pathways to employment through Aboriginal-specific recruitment and traineeship programs.
- Showcasing Aboriginal culture through public art installations, exhibitions, and cultural programs.
- Supporting dual naming of community facilities to reflect Aboriginal language and heritage.
- Publishing the Koori Grapevine newsletter, a regular communication platform for the local Aboriginal community.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CONSULTATION AND SURVEY OUTCOMES

To inform the development of Bayikulinan, Council engaged with local Elders, community groups, service providers, government organisations and community members.

WE ASKED OUR COMMUNITY TO

- share ideas for programs and initiatives to provide support for our Aboriginal community, and
- identify strengths, priorities and actions to address local challenges.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

Of these participants, 46% identified as neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 45% identified as Aboriginal, and 9% preferred not to answer.

WE REACHED



20,453 subscribers reached via Council e-newsletter



16,373 reached via Council's social media



visits to Council's online engagement platform, Shape Lake Mac



online survey responses



TWO WORKSHOPS

with the Batahbah Local Aboriginal Land Council's Elders' groups and staff

KEY THEMES

The key themes identified are the need to:

- Consult with and listen to the Aboriginal community, especially Elders when addressing community matters
- Strengthen relationships and create partnerships with Aboriginal community businesses and services to co-design programs and initiatives for the Aboriginal community
- Increase training and learning opportunities for community to develop a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and history
- Advocate better access to culturally appropriate health, wellbeing and support services for Aboriginal people
- Increase culturally appropriate supports, programs and community connection opportunities for Elders, children and young people
- Increase cultural representation at community events
- Increase Aboriginal art and Awabakal language throughout the city and in Council's communications.

KEY CHALLENGES

The key challenges identified through community engagement are:

- Lack of wider community awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture, heritage and the challenges facing the Aboriginal community
- · Discrimination and racism
- Access to culturally appropriate health, wellbeing and other services
- Employment opportunities
- Limited representation and voice in decisionmaking processes
- Lack of cultural learning and wellbeing activities, programs and opportunities, especially for children and young people.



OBJECTIVES

Together, through extensive consultation with local Aboriginal people and the wider community, four objectives have been identified:

- To build social cohesion and address (reduce) discrimination and racism
- Aboriginal people have access to culturally safe and appropriate services
- Aboriginal people are provided with employment opportunities
- 4 Aboriginal people are involved in the decisions that affect them.



TO BUILD SOCIAL COHESION AND ADDRESS (REDUCE) DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Provide cultural advice, information and support to enhance awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal history within Council, the community and service providers. This includes offering education and training to deepen understanding of the histories, traditions and experiences of culturally diverse groups.

Promote the cultural and holistic wellbeing of Aboriginal community members by supporting programs and activities that encourage the preservation of traditional knowledge, practices and languages. These initiatives should focus on enhancing cultural identity, fostering intergenerational connections, and integrating culturally appropriate health and wellness practices to strengthen the overall wellbeing of the community.

Lake Macquarie City Council is committed to ensuring that local services, facilities and programs provided, sponsored and supported by Council are designed to meet the needs of the Aboriginal community, and are delivered in a culturally appropriate, accessible and inclusive manner.

Since the Voice to Parliament referendum, many local Aboriginal people have shared that experiences of racism and discrimination have become more frequent and more intense. The national conversation brought long-held prejudice to the surface, and for many in our community, it felt as though their identity, rights and connection to Country were being questioned or dismissed.

Racism isn't new, but the referendum made it more visible and, for some, more acceptable to express, especially online and in public spaces. This has had real impacts on the wellbeing of local Aboriginal people and reminds us how important it is to stand up for respect, truth and unity.

We must combat discrimination and racism by supporting the creation of policies and programs that promote equity and inclusivity. This includes encouraging initiatives that challenge bias, amplify Aboriginal voices, and help build a community where everyone is valued and respected.



ABORIGINAL PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO CULTURALLY SAFE AND APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Ensure that Aboriginal community members have access to services that meet their cultural needs. This includes collaborating with service providers to tailor programs and creating safe, welcoming environments where Aboriginal people can access support without fear of discrimination.

3

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE PROVIDED WITH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Support the creation of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people by encouraging partnerships with local businesses, advocating for culturally relevant training programs, and developing pathways that help Aboriginal individuals enter and succeed in the workforce.



ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM.

Promote the inclusion of Aboriginal voices in Council's decision-making processes. This can be achieved by encouraging Aboriginal representation in leadership roles, forming advisory committees, and ensuring that policies reflect the diverse perspectives and needs of the Aboriginal community.

© ACTION PLAN

To achieve the objectives of Bayikulinan the following Action Plan has been developed.

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
To build social cohesion and address (reduce) discrimination and racism	Increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage.	Deliver cultural awareness training for Council staff, community, and service providers.	Annually	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
		Deliver cultural events and festivals to celebrate and promote Aboriginal heritage.	Biannually	Aboriginal Community Development Officer Coordinator Lifelong Learning and Engagement Arts Producer - Lake Arts Precinct
		Create and distribute regular information through accessible channels, including the Koori Grapevine newsletter.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
	Provide cultural learning and wellbeing opportunities, especially for children and young people.	Promote programs aimed at teaching Aboriginal children and youth about their heritage and culture.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
		Organise community activities that promote cultural learning and connection.	Annually	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
		Provide support for young people to connect with Elders and other role models in the community.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
	Reduce discrimination and racism within the community.	Promote anti-racism policies and programs in collaboration with community groups and schools.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
		Share information about support services for individuals experiencing discrimination or racism.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
Aboriginal people have access to culturally safe and appropriate services	Improve access to health, wellbeing, and other essential services that are culturally appropriate.	Collaborate with health providers that offer services that respect and incorporate Aboriginal cultural practices to increase awareness of services within the community.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
		Host wellbeing programs tailored to the needs of the Aboriginal community.	Annually	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
Aboriginal people are provided with employment opportunities	Enhance employment opportunities for the Aboriginal community.	Promote support services such as resume writing, interview preparation, and job placement assistance.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer People and Culture
		Support and encourage Council to continue to offer the traineeship program providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within entry-level roles.	Annually	Aboriginal Community Development Officer People and Culture
	Increase the representation and voice of the Aboriginal community in decision-making processes.	Establish regular consultation meetings with Aboriginal Elders and community groups.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
Aboriginal people are involved in the decisions that affect them.		Support the formation of an advisory panel within the Council to ensure Aboriginal perspectives are included in Council decisions.	Ongoing	Aboriginal Community Development Officer People and Culture

© ACTIONS FOR 2026 - 2028

FIRST NATIONS STORIES AND COMMUNITIES

In Lake Macquarie, the MAC yapang Aboriginal Reference Group is active in steering programming and cultural practice at the city's Museum of Art and Culture, yapang. This group has been an integral part of the art gallery since 2000 and is engaged across the cultural precinct along with the East and West Lake Elders groups, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, other Aboriginal groups and individuals. MAC yapang offers the yapang placement annually for First Nations artists, curators and educators. This program was developed uniquely for our community and is supported by cultural mentors and the University of Newcastle.

In line with the Sculpture Park redevelopment, currently underway at MAC yapang the Keeping Place project will be undertaken in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group. Designed as a place for learning, a portion of the current Art in Community and Library space will be redesigned to capture local stories. and from the site itself, which includes middens and a knapping floor where stone tools were made. Community will be working with Built In Kind a fabrication workshop program that aims to dismantle entrenched gendered and cultural norms by providing access and agency to diverse communities.

Artist and composer Adam Manning has been engaged to develop a Sound Trail for the Sculpture Park and installation artwork to be shown at MAC yapang in 2026.

The MAC yapang Art Prize will continue as a biennial art prize with the yapang award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from across Australia.

MAP mima is committed to honouring First Nations stories through key programs like Mob Stars, which celebrate local dancers, musicians, and performers. Our First Nations Digital Commission further supports Indigenous artists, offering resources and a prominent platform for culturally significant narratives in contemporary art.

Specific Lifelong Learning programming to be run annually include; Reconciliation Days at MAC yapang for local schools

FIRST NATIONS
PROGRAMMING
AND ENGAGEMENT

Continue to listen,
learn and collaborate
with key First Nation
groups, Artists and
community to keep on
strengthening visual
arts programs and
cultural initiatives for
First Nations people."



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The progress of this strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure actions are on track to be met. Reporting on strategy outcomes will be updated monthly through Council's reporting system. An evaluation of the strategy will be undertaken during annual progress reviews and again at the finalisation of the strategy in 2029.

REFERENCES

- 1. Language translations provided by the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre.
- 2. NSW Department of Planning and Environment Hunter Regional Plan 2036, published 2016, OEH2016/0547.
- 3. Australian Population Census information provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016. The copyright in all Census data is held by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the Commonwealth of Australia. The copyright in the design, text and software code used in this product, called a Portrait, is held by The Public Practice Pty Ltd, ABN 003 052 140.
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