



## Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc

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## Media Release – Flying Aboriginal flag is inclusive NOT divisive.

Recently the Campbelltown City Council decided against flying the Aboriginal flag all year round, instead preferring to only display the Aboriginal flag during NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week during a council meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 2016. The Council rejected the recommendation of its Reconciliation Advisory Council to permanently fly the Aboriginal flag outside Council offices.

Despite Kurna yarta (land) being the birthplace of the Aboriginal Flag, which was first flown in Tarndanyangga, known as Victoria Square in 1971, the Campbelltown City Council have chosen to neglect the Aboriginal constituents within their council area, which has included myself for the past 23 years.

This is a disappointing decision from the Campbelltown City Council, preferring only to give tokenistic recognition of Aboriginal people, rather than cement their resolve to build genuine relationships based on respect with Aboriginal people as the First Nations peoples of this land. The symbolism the Aboriginal flag has for Aboriginal people cannot be underestimated, it is a part of our identity and acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and their culture which has previously been denied and is long overdue.

The decision by the Campbelltown City Council does little to enhance the Council's Reconciliation Action Plan, essentially ignoring the Aboriginal voice through the Reconciliation Advisory Committee by rejecting their recommendations, and leads to questions regarding their commitment to Aboriginal people. The simple act of flying the Aboriginal flag is about respect, acknowledging the First Nations, the Kurna people whose land the Council office is located, and also as a welcoming sign to Aboriginal people within the Campbelltown Council area.

The Council previously erected a Migrant Monument to reflect the migrant population and the "valued contributions of migrant families...who have given much over the years". However, the Council have denied recognising the contributions of Aboriginal people, in particular the Kurna people whose dispossession from their land continues to benefit the Council and community as a whole. There is no group within our community that have sacrificed and given more than the Aboriginal people, but the recognition of this is still lacking. If having a permanent Aboriginal flag flying is seen as "divisive" than what would be said of a whole monument dedicated to the Kurna people, the traditional custodians of the Adelaide Plains region?

It is saddening that despite it being 2016, we still are engaged in these kinds of discussions. I would strongly suggest that the Campbelltown City Councillors take a leaf out of the book of Port Adelaide Enfield, Prospect and Playford, who all proudly fly the Aboriginal flag all year round.

Yours sincerely,

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