Event: Welcome Tree planting ceremony
Date: Thursday 2 June
Location: Wakefield gardens

Speech notes
Vice-Chancellor Professor Linda Kristjanson
I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, who join us here today at this important event.

We also pay respects to all Aboriginal Community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

Welcome to our staff, students and friends of Swinburne. We are also very pleased to welcome special guests from across our diverse community:

**Acknowledgements**

- Uncle Bill Nicholson, Wurundjeri Council
- Mr Ian Hamm, Department of State Development, Business and Innovation
- Ms Anne Jenkins, Healesville Indigenous Community Service Association
- Ms Joan Singh, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
Today, during National Reconciliation Week, we celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

The dates that bookend National Reconciliation Week are milestones in Australia’s proud journey.

**May 27 marks** the anniversary of Australia’s most successful referendum, which, in 1967, saw more than 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to include them in the census.

**June 3** commemorates the High Court of Australia’s landmark Mabo decision to legally recognise the Native Title of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and respect their relationship to the land.

The Swinburne community recognises that reconciliation must live in our hearts, minds and actions.

As a university, we aim to ensure Indigenous peoples’ heritage, knowledge and cultures are recognised, and embedded into how we work.
In 2013, we developed a Reconciliation Action Plan to build on our long standing commitment to the education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

Since then, we have been working hard to implement the plan and to bring it to life among our students, staff and the wider community.

**Cultural Competency Learning Program**

Just last week, we launched our new Indigenous Cultural Competency Learning pathway. This suite of new resources and activities will give our staff the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture.

It includes a new online education tool that gives our staff an overview of Indigenous people and their communities, pre- and post-colonisation.

To the staff here today, if you haven’t already, I would encourage you to login to our intranet and take up this learning opportunity.

Also included in the program is a series of cultural walking tours.
The tours run for two hours and give you an opportunity to learn more about the importance of the Wurundjeri land on which Swinburne is located.

The tours will be available throughout the remainder of the year… so if you couldn’t make it to one this week, there will be future opportunities to do so.

We have also introduced a new compliance module that focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness.

All new staff will be required to complete this module when they begin with Swinburne.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategic Action Plan**

I am also pleased that we have recently developed a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategic Action Plan.

This plan aims to attract and recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using a culturally appropriate and flexible approach.
It will also ensure that Indigenous employees are given the right tools and working arrangements to encourage career development.

I am confident that this plan will contribute to a culturally inclusive and diverse workplace, here at Swinburne.

**Other events**

I encourage you to join us for other events during Reconciliation Week.

Tonight, Swinburne hosts its Inaugural Reconciliation Lecture in the AMDC.

Tomorrow, we will be holding Welcome Tree and cultural events at our Croydon and Wantirna campuses.

When I look around at all the people gathered here this morning, I feel a strong sense of harmony and friendship as we reflect upon how fortunate we are to be part of such a supportive community.

I would like to thank you all for being here to celebrate Swinburne’s commitment to Reconciliation.
We have so much to learn from each other – our diversity is our strength.