

# MINUTES

## ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP

9.30AM ON WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2023



### PRESENT

Lord Mayor Cr Gordon Bradbery	Aunty Sharrlyn Robinson
Cr Cath Blakey	Leanne Olive
Adam Towney	Brendan Newton
Kathleen Cambourn	Brad Anderson

### IN ATTENDANCE

Emma Bedwin – Chair	Dale Wright – Community Engagement Officer – Aboriginal Services
Jacinda Marando – Minute Taker	Belinda Morris – Acting Community Development + Engagement Manager
Sue Savage – Divisional Manager Community Culture + Engagement	Vimala Colless – Community Development Worker
Joshua Wiffen – Acting Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety	John Lahai – Acting Community and Cultural Planner

- 1 WELCOME & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY – CHAIR
- 2 APOLOGIES – Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of Michele Moore, Errollyn Strang & Trudy Costa.
- 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – NIL
- 4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2023 – CONFIRMED
- 5 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

**WEST DAPTO** – Council has received funding from the State Government to master plan two shopping areas at West Dapto: Fowlers Village Centre and Marshall Mount Town Centre. Update on Archaeological Survey will be provided at the next meeting, Wednesday 14 February 2024.
- 6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

**AUSTRALIA DAY** – A Corroboree for the Elders is currently being organised and will be celebrated on 25 January 2024, the day before Australia Day at Stuart Park, Wollongong. The event is aimed for the Elders and is open to the wider community to attend. It has been 100-200 years since the last corroboree, and there is a strong emphasis on strengthening the communities together. Community engagement by Dale asked what level of involvement the Aboriginal communities would like in Australia Day activities, if any. Following lots of conversations, agreement was reached that a twilight Corroboree the evening before Australia Day would be a celebration of culture and recognition of the Elders. Approval was sought from the Elders and the vast majority were supportive, so the Corroboree planning is now underway. Gadhungal Marring and Kugang Djarmbi dance crews and others will perform at the Corroboree, including storytelling by Dr Jodi Edwards. The Corroboree will have a sand circle for the performers to dance as tribute to their culture and in honour of the Elders. Food and a tea/ coffee station will be located in the Elders tent. It was discussed that parking is an on-going current issue with limited car spaces in the area, including an issue with car spaces that allow stays over 2 hours. It was agreed that there will be a designated car park area for the Elders. It was also agreed that Community Transport will be contacted to see if they can assist with driving Elders up from the South.

**Significant discussion was held about the importance and cultural significance of Corroboree.** It was clearly stated that this was not a commercial opportunity, and the Reference Group did not want to see the event look like NAIDOC with stallholders and stand, or advertising. The discussion on food related to the need to ensure the Elders

were honoured, but that as it wasn't a commercial event, the widespread sale of food would devalue its significance, as culturally Corroboree feeds those who attend. Instead, Koori Mens Shed are being asked to run a BBQ, but that those who attend are also going to be encouraged to BYO picnic. People will be able to volunteer but as it's a culturally significant event, it is recognised that we want to retain the focus on honouring the Elders.

**Action** – Transport and parking options will be investigated, including the possible use of the UOW Innovation Campus for this event.

**CITY OF WOLLONGONG AWARDS** – Nominations for the City of Wollongong Awards, previously called the Wollongong Australia Day Awards, closed as of Friday 1 December 2023. These awards are an opportunity to acknowledge the people and organisations who make our city a better place. Wollongong Council received an outstanding 90 nominations, in comparison to half this amount the previous year. All nominations have been collated and panel members are in the middle of reviewing and finalising award recipients for each category.

**HILL 60** – Stage 1 construction for viewing points and car park is currently underway. No further construction has commenced. Interpretive signage will be placed on site, with a possible "Life on Hill 60" story, telling the history of the place, both good and bad. Dale and Aunty Shas to yarn with families who lived on Hill 60 who have passed on, and to seek permission to publish their stories on the hill. There will be a trail journey with site specific information and lived experience. Some discussion about the memorial statue, with and ideas of an Aunty and Uncle statue memorial. Other ideas include the use of QR codes to be placed around to read / listen to stories told. Nothing has been formalised yet, as this is still in the drafting stage.

## 7 CULTURE MIX

**CULTURE MIX UPDATE** – Vimala provided an update on Culture Mix, Council's first free multicultural festival working collaboratively with community, and shared the impact and key outcomes of the event. Culture Mix was a wonderful success in Wollongong on Saturday 21 October 2023 with an estimated 12,000 attendees, with a predicted visitor spend of \$360,000 and economic impact on the Wollongong economy of \$508,000. Some of the event impact shared by Vimala was:

- Welcome ceremony and 8 First Nations performance groups, 3 art workshops, and 8 stallholders from local Aboriginal businesses.
- 17 community groups funded for development of new projects.
- 10 months of extensive community consultation and engagement.
- 110 participating community groups and organisations with more than 850 individuals from community involved in delivery, from over 30 different cultural backgrounds, including newly arrived migrants and former refugees.
- 9 multicultural community food stalls sold out by 6pm and 13 cultural stalls reported very significant sales and engagement.
- 1,000 free food samples and tastings distributed by 5 cultural groups.

The next steps are to plan for the 2024 ongoing funding MC NSW and Wollongong City Council for Culture Mix. The 2024 projected date is Saturday 19 October 2024. Next year will be a similar footprint with the event stretching a bit further up Crown Street mall. Community Transport to be looked at for next year due to the transport issue in Wollongong.

**Action** – Sue Savage to follow-up with ongoing Transport Agenda to discuss the free bus coming from the South.

## 8 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER UPDATE

**RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP)** – John Lahai provided an update on the current RAP, which ended in November 2023. Some action items have been achieved, and some are still a work in progress. The RAP review is commencing internally over the November – February period, in recognition that the Reconciliation Action Plan should be a clear demonstration of the actions the non-Aboriginal community are taking towards reconciliation. To facilitate this conversation and opportunity for learning 5 internal Yarning Circles have been offered to Council staff, with 2 Elders present to lead the storytelling. The sessions are not compulsory but were so popular that we increased the workshops from 4 to 5 already. They have already created some powerful conversations and greater levels of awareness internally, which is exciting.

Everyone has the opportunity to share ideas on improving relationships and increase understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and knowledge. The first 2 sessions were held on November 29 and December 12, which had an excellent turnout. The remaining 3 sessions will be held in the New Year on January 23, February 6, and February 13. Workshops will then be open to external attendees in February 2024 once internal staff have had the opportunity to complete the workshops.

**SENIOR ABORIGINAL POLICY ADVISOR** – This position went out for recruitment on 16 December 2023, and will be open for application until 22 January 2024. This position is a 2-year term contract with the possibility of extension and permanency. This position works closely with the Executive and Senior Leadership teams to provide strategic guidance and support in advancing our Reconciliation Action Plan. All members of the Reference Group are asked to share this opportunity to their contacts, as this will be an important position within Council.

**CULTURAL ABORIGINAL EDUCATOR** – This position is on the radar for advertisement in 2024, but there are no current updates on this position. An update will be provided in the New Year.

### 9 ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED AT THE NEXT MEETING

If you would like to propose an item for discussion, please forward the information to Josh Wiffen for inclusion at the next meeting.

### 10 GENERAL BUSINESS

**CAR PARKING** - Jacinda to arrange car parking permits for Aboriginal Reference Group attendees for all meetings held at Wollongong City Council only due to the on-going issue of limited car park spaces in Wollongong.

**SANDON POINT** – In November 2023, there were reports of a deceased dolphin washed ashore at Sandon Point. Committee discussed and were informed of the protocol in place. Noting that Council have recently employed the Beach Lifeguards for the summer season, it was highlighted as an opportunity to ensure that they are all aware of the protocols about what to do with deceased animals washed ashore.

**BUSHCARE GATHERING** – The Invasion Day Bushcare Gathering has been organised for 26 January 2024 at Gilmore Park from 9am. This day will be commemorating Invasion Day with a bit of Bushcare and is welcome to anyone who would like to mark the day by joining and caring for Country. There were 100 people attendance in 2023, and it is anticipated that this will double in attendance for the 2024 Bushcare Gathering.

**SAND MINING** – In 2021, applications for a Section 10, 12 and 18 were submitted to Minister for approval. With wildlife, birdlife and habitats predicted to be lost, we are hoping to receive a Determination and outcome soon.

**WADI WADI MIXED TRIBE DANCE GROUP TRIP TO MACEDONIA** – Aunty Shas has requested for a video to be put together to publish the Wadi Wadi Mixed Tribe dance group trip to Macedonia earlier this year.

### 11 NEXT MEETING – **WEDNESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2024** FROM 9.30AM TO 11.30AM

The meeting concluded at 11.32am.

Minutes to be confirmed at the next meeting to be held at 9.30am on Wednesday 14 February 2024.

2024 – Future Meeting Schedule		
Wednesday 14 February 2024	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9:30am – 11:30am
Wednesday 10 April 2024	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9:30am – 11:30am
Wednesday 12 June 2024	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9:30am – 11:30am
Wednesday 14 August 2024	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9:30am – 11:30am
Wednesday 9 October 2024	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9:30am – 11:30am
Wednesday 11 December 2024	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9:30am – 11:30am

## ACTION SUMMARY

Item	Action	Officer	Status
5	Update from the Engagement Team about the West Dapto archaeological survey at next meeting, 14 February 2024	Dale Wright	
6	Transport and parking options will be investigated, including the possible use of the UOW Innovation Campus for this event.	Events team	
7	Sue Savage to follow-up with on-going Transport Agenda to discuss the free bus coming from the South for Council's next Culture Mix event.	Sue Savage	
10	Inform Sandon Point lifeguards of protocol for deceased animals on the beach shore.	Lifeguards	