

MINUTES

ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP

9:30AM ON THURSDAY 9 APRIL 2026



PRESENT	
Brendan Newton	Brad Anderson
Aunty Michele Moore	Aunty Sharalyn Robinson
Kathleen Cambourn	

IN ATTENDANCE	
Alison Bradford - Chair	Cr Jess Whittaker - Councillor
Jacinda Marando - Minute Taker	Cr Ann Martin - Councillor
Julie Street-Smith - Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Officer	Sophie McCrea - Engagement Coordinator
Ebony Preen - Manager Community Culture and Engagement (Acting)	Mark Protolipac – Business Support Services Coordinator

1 WELCOME & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY –

2 APOLOGIES –

Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of Aunty Bev Armer, Aunty Leanne Olive, Nick Kilpatrick and Sue Savage.

3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2026 –

Previous meeting minutes were accepted by Julie Street-Smith and seconded by Brendan Newton.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Aunty Shas and Cr Ann Martin declared interests in Agenda Item 7 - NAIDOC Week Small Grants. Both abstained from discussion and decision-making in relation to the relevant grant funding application.

Brendan Newton declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 - NAIDOC Week Small Grants. He abstained from discussion and decision-making in relation to the relevant grant funding application.

5 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES –

Proposed Artwork Designs for Hill 60 – Council will follow up with Council staff about arranging a meeting with Aunty Shas and Aunty Shelly to discuss the proposed public artwork designs for Hill 60.

6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE –

An update was provided on Brooks Creek, Minnegang Creek and Koonawarra Creek and the Flood Management Mitigation Plans for Brooks Creek. Mapping for Brooks Creek was shared around the room for review.

Let's Talk Dapto community engagement session scheduled for Thursday 30 April 4.00pm-6.00pm at Dapto Ribbonwood Centre.

Draft strategies for the Aquatics and Indoor Sports Strategy and Beach Services and Surf Sports Strategy are currently in development and will be released for community engagement in the coming months. Drafts will be shared with the Aboriginal Reference Group once available.

The Helensburgh Community Centre & Library engagement sessions and Walk on Country were held recently. Engagement closed on 1 April 2026. Feedback is currently being considered by the design team. The Development Application is underway, with the next phase expected between May and June.

Further community feedback is being reviewed for the Dogs on Beaches and Parks Policy. The policy has not gone back to Council yet. The Aboriginal Reference Group will be updated when further information becomes available.

Brief updates were provided on the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Community Safety Plan, and the Delivery and Operational Plan. Links to the engagement website will be shared with the Aboriginal Reference group members when the documents are placed on exhibition.

7 NAIDOC WEEK SMALL GRANTS –

The NAIDOC Week Small Grants were presented to the Aboriginal Reference Group for review and approval (see attached).

The initial amounts suggested to be funded were based upon a tiered classification of events. These were \$1,180 for large, \$1,000 for medium and \$500 for small. This was consistent with the methodology for the 2025 allocations.

Big Fat Smile's event was proposed for \$450 funding instead of \$500 as it is a closed event and not necessarily open to the wider community.

The Aboriginal Reference Group passed a motion at the meeting (moved by Kathleen Cambourn, seconded by Aunty Shas) that the Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre Family Fun Day be included as a large event, and the funding for this classification be distributed amongst the four applicants. This resulted in \$1,637.50 funding allocated for each of the large events.

As noted in declarations of interest, Aunty Shas and Cr Ann Martin abstained from discussion and decision-making for the Coomaditchie grant funding application, and Brendan Newton abstained from discussion and decision-making for the CareWays grant funding application under this item.

Advocacy was noted regarding the need to increase NAIDOC Grant funding annually in line with rising event and cost-of-living expenses. It was requested that the General Manager be made aware that the ARG will be seeking additional funding for the grant program in 2027.

Applicants will be notified following the completion of internal approval processes. Final funding recommendations are outlined in the attached spreadsheet.

8 ABORIGINAL CULTURAL INCLUSION OFFICER UPDATE –

An update was provided on the Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards 2026. Tickets will go on sale in May via EventBrite, estimated at \$80 per ticket.

Further discussion occurred regarding cultural elements of the Awards, including the soil pouring and Welcome to Country. Members will be invited to provide their feedback via feedback about who should perform each ceremony.

Feedback was requested on the cultural and dancing elements of the night, and it was recommended during the meeting that local young school aged children should participate within the dance groups. It was also recommended that multiple mobs should dance as one together at the NAIDOC Awards. Further consultation will occur with recommended performance groups.

Availability was discussed for Session 2 and Walk on Country for the Helensburgh Community Centre and Library. The suggested dates are Monday 4th May 1.30pm, Tuesday 5th May (afternoon), Wednesday 6th May and Thursday 7th May. These dates will be provided to consultants, and confirmation circulated to members.

9 GENERAL BUSINESS

An update was provided on branch movements and Aboriginal identified positions. Feedback highlighted the importance of recognising Aboriginal significant dates as part of standard work practice and the need for improved retention.

Members requested consideration of a consent form, policy, or agreement for Elders engaged in consultation to ensure appropriate and upfront remuneration for cultural knowledge sharing.

The Reconciliation Action Plan has been noted by Council and submitted to Reconciliation Australia. Approval is expected within 4-6 weeks.

The Illawarra Indigenous Business Expo will return this year. A date has not been confirmed, but October is the likely month.

The Illawarra Indigenous Business Expo has been nominated for a National Award for Local Government (under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Recognition and Cohesive Communities categories). Members were encouraged to vote via the awards portal. An email will be circulated after the meeting with additional information of how to vote.

Upcoming Reconciliation Walks and Significant Events for noting –

- Bellambi Reconciliation Walk – Thursday 28 May, 11am
- Koonawarra Reconciliation Walk – Thursday 21 May, 10am
- Blak Markets – (NAIDOC event) – 9 July
- Bundaleer Saltwater Festival – Wednesday 16 April, 10am-2pm
- South Coast AMS Sorry Day Event – Tuesday 26 May, 10am-2pm
- 210th Anniversary of the Appin Massacre – Friday 17 April, Flag raising ceremony at Campbelltown City Council Forecourt, followed by a community ceremony at Cataract Dam Picnic Area on Sunday 19 April, 11am-3.30pm

An email with event details will be circulated.

10 ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED AT THE NEXT MEETING

If you would like to propose an item for discussion, please forward the information to Julie Street-Smith or Alison Bradford for inclusion at an upcoming meeting.

11 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 11 June 2026.

The meeting concluded at 10:50am.

Minutes to be confirmed at the next meeting to be held at 9:30am on Thursday 11 June 2026.

2026 – Future Meeting Schedule		
Thursday, 12 February 2026	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30am – 11.30am
Thursday, 9 April 2026	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30am – 11.30am
Thursday, 11 June 2026	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30am – 11.30am
Thursday, 13 August 2026	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30am – 11.30am
Thursday, 8 October 2026	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30am – 11.30am
Thursday, 10 December 2026	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30am – 11.30am

ACTION SUMMARY

Item	Action	Officer	Status
5	Aunty Shas and Aunty Shelly to meet with Shannon and Amanda to discuss proposed artwork designs for Hill 60 public art works.	Sofia, Amanda & Shannon	In progress
6	Share draft Aquatics and Indoor Sports Strategy and Beach Services and Surf Sports Strategy reports with Aboriginal Reference Group members when ready.	Sophie	In Progress
6	Provide an update to the Aboriginal Reference Group once further information is available on the Dogs on Beaches and Parks Policy.	Sophie	In Progress
6	Share links of the Engagement website to the Aboriginal Reference Group once Draft Plan (DIAP, Community Safety Plan, Delivery and Operational Plan) documents go on public exhibition.	Sophie	In Progress
7	Advise the General Manager that the Aboriginal Reference Group will be seeking additional funding for the 2027 NAIDOC Week Small Grants program.	Ali	In Progress
8	Invite members to provide feedback on ceremony performers for the 2026 Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards.	Julie	In Progress
9	Circulate an email with voting instructions and encourage members to vote for the Illawarra Indigenous Business Expo.	Julie	Completed
9	Circulate an email listing upcoming Reconciliation Walks and ensure all approved NAIDOC events are published on Council's website.	Julie	In Progress