

MINUTES

ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP

9.40AM ON WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2023



PRESENT	
LM Cr Gordon Bradbery	Brendan Newtown
Cr Cath Blakey	Kathleen Cambourn
Adam Towney	Aunty Shelly Moore
Brad Anderson	

IN ATTENDANCE	
Armando Reviglio – Chair	Maiquilla Brown – Community Development Worker, Aboriginal Services
Ali Bradford – Community Development & Engagement Manager	Dale Wright – Community Engagement Officer – Aboriginal Services
Tom McColl – Engagement Coordinator	Kristeen Sandercock – Administration Support Officer – Minutes

1 WELCOME & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY - Chair

MINUTE SILENCE – The meeting held a minute silence for Elders who have passed away recently

2 APOLOGIES – Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of Aunty Sharralyn Robinson, Errolyn Strang, Leanne Olive

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - NIL

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2021 – CONFIRMED

5 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Birthing Tree at Figtree – Maiquilla to provide update later in the meeting

6 CO-CHAIR ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP

In the Aboriginal Reference Group Terms of Reference, it outlines the opportunity for an Aboriginal member of the Reference Group to be the 'Co-Chair'. The chair asked if anyone wants to nominate themselves for the roll now or if not now to advise the Chair at a later date. No nominations came forward.

7 CONFIRMATION OF MEETING DAYS AND TIMES FOR 2023

The capacity to hold Aboriginal Reference Group meetings at various Community locations through the year?

Suggested venues: The Land at Windang, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation (IAC) at the Cultural Centre in Kenny Street; and the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Centre (front office). Lord Mayor offered the Council Chambers to meet.

June/July are busy times for the Aboriginal Community – June meeting to be held at Council Admin building.

Suggested the next meeting (12 April) be held at IAC, Chair to enquire and make arrangements. The Cultural Centre is closing – with the possibility of a new facility to be built on vacant land that Blue Scope own in Warrawong. It is proposed that all IAC services will function from one place.

8 ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP – YARNING TIME MEETING DATES

Council is proposing an opportunity for a Yarning Time when meetings are held at Community venues, Yarning Time will be held after the Aboriginal Reference Group Meeting. The local Aboriginal Community can come and have a yarn with Council officers on any matters they wish to discuss or gain information about.

Propose 1st Yarning Time be held after the next Aboriginal Reference Group meeting on 12 April 2023.

9 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Tom spoke of various projects coming up across the Wollongong LGA. Dale provided updates on the following:

1. **Hill 60** – upgrade to amenities, lookouts.
Ngaraba-aan Project (Art Trail) – upgrades to Fishermans beach, a sign to show significance of Trail for Aboriginal People. We will acknowledge Aunty Gwen Brown who is engaging with us on this sign. Aunty Shelly requested engagement with all the community members and Elders and ask for everyone's opinion on the project. Aunty Shelly is happy to help with making connections within the Aboriginal community for the consultation.
2. **MM Beach** – Sign and artwork is falling apart and will be removed.
3. **Coastal Management Program (CMP)** – How and what is important to us? Over a 10-year period trying to keep the Lake healthy. The CMP looks at what is healthy for our coastline and ties into the opening of the Lake, loss of shells and mitigation works of the area.

Suggested Dale try to contact the "South Coast People's" working group and ask to be a guest presenter at their meeting, explain his role at Council, explain you're always looking for Community members to consult with and you're interested in gaining feedback especially on the lake and ocean. Also wanting to find out information on cultural significance of areas.

4. **Mullet Creek + William Beach Sign Installation** – Dale is engaging with the Community one-on-one to learn about fishing, teaching, ceremonies, and any other cultural significant sites or activities of this area.

EOI opportunity last year to find an Aboriginal artist to create 5 panels of artwork telling a visual storyline of the local history. Only 1 application received. A second EOI is proposed. Does the EOI need to be rewritten so the language is easily understood? The new bridge at Dapto provided opportunity for Aboriginal artists and they worked well with a mentor on that project – suggest that be used again.

Reference Group members to nominate centres where we can offer these opportunities as an opening for young Aboriginal artists. Suggestions were:
Clontarf Foundation schools – may have up-and-coming young artists
Kanahooka High School
Bellambi Community Centre
John Monteleone at Wollongong City Gallery

A visual of where the 5 panels are to be installed was shown to the meeting – installation is to be at the front gates as you drive into the Mullet Creek area. Is this a good location? Does it offer passive surveillance? Will it encourage people to stop and look at the signs. Would they be better placed somewhere in the park/playground area where the community can spend time looking at the signs? Consider the issue of vandalism when placing signs.

Suggestion also for information signs with more detailed description, be placed in a different area.

5. **Flood Mitigation Plans for Creek and Flood Plains** – Water runs down from mountains into the plains. Need cultural advice on how to develop creek and flood plain plans to support infrastructure in a safe way that protects sacred and cultural sites along the creek beds.
6. **West Dapto Precinct Upgrade** – Dale to meet one-on-one with Community.

Tom talked about the context of Community Engagement – he wants to make it easy as possible, involve the Community, listen to their input, negative as well as positive, and seek information. The Aboriginal Engagement Framework is a tool which enables us to engage in Community and we are very committed to this.

10 ABORIGINAL-SPECIFIC SITE PLAN – KEMBLA GRANGE CEMETERY UPDATE

As most of the Reference Group members are new to the group, the Chair provided a brief history on how we got to this point in developing an Aboriginal-Specific site at the Kembla Grange Cemetery. Final Draft Concept Plan was handed out showing the suggested infrastructure at the site.

Not a stock-standard Cemetery in that the burial area can be curved rather than straight lines. It is estimated on the current design it has space for 300 burials plus cremation areas. The draft plan includes the option to face in different directions to be culturally appropriate i.e. towards the ocean or the escarpment and the opportunity for double depth graves. The space will have natural elements, trees, timber will be used in the infrastructure and incorporate dream story poles.

The final community consultations will be at the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation and then a broader community engagement. The artworks and other site works will be overseen by Cultural Services and another department of Council.

11 ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE GROUP UPDATE

This project has come to a halt and cannot continue. There are 69 suburbs and villages with 33 being identified as having an Aboriginal name and meaning. As suburb signs are update it is intended have the signs showing the Aboriginal name, meaning if possible and pronunciation.

The Reference group will be consulted on 'who' should inform Wollongong City Council what to put on signs. 'Dharawal Country' will be used on the sign if consensus cannot be reached on the Aboriginal name and its meaning/spelling. Language is a very culturally sensitive area and Council is asking the Reference Group to email or ring Armando or Maiquilla if they have any ideas of how we can progress this project.

Council approached the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council, but their feedback is that they don't want to take on such a project as language is complex and it's not their role to decide this.

Is there a State based knowledge/group we can call on? Its possible other LGAs are grappling with the same problem. Council would need to consider payment for people's time to look at the list of suburb names and their advice for its Aboriginal meaning and pronunciation. A suggestion was to cross reference animal names respective of suburb names in Dharawal Country. The Reference group suggested if consensus is not reached by those consulted as to the meaning and pronunciation of a suburb name then it is acceptable to adopt the majority view. A lists of possible Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal people to consult with is to be developed and sent out to Reference group members for their approval.

12 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER UPDATE

1. **Beaton Park Swim School Mascot** – 'Bugi' (meaning swim). The Centres are creating a new mascot and have approached us to see if there is a Dharawal word or name they can use. The mascot is a Platypus (Artwork shown) that loves to swim. Suggest the background around the platypus include some Aboriginal style art.

Can we use a Dharawal word to name the new mascot? Dale made enquiries through the meeting and located the word through Community contacts. Djamalang is Dharawal for platypus. At end of meeting the Reference group agreed Djamalang is a better sounding word and a good name suggestion. The phonetic pronunciation needs to be included on the advertising.

2. **RAP Update** – we're about to start the process of reviewing and updating a new RAP. Council's current Innovate RAP 2021-2023 comes to the end of its timeframe in November 2023. Reconciliation Australia sets a list of prescribed deliverables that we must include in our RAP for it to be endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

We will be undertaking community consultation for a period of 3 months in the middle of the year so the Community can guide us on how they want us to achieve these deliverables. We're aiming for the DRAFT RAP 2023-2025 to be endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and by Council in November 2023. Once endorsed we will begin delivering against our commitments. Updates will be provided to the Reference Group through the year.

3. **Regional NAIDOC Awards Planning Committee** – the Regional NAIDOC Awards will take place on Saturday 29 July 2023 at the Kiama Pavilion, facilitated by Kiama Council. The working group is coming together to plan the event. Some questions have arisen that require some further Community consultation, the Reference Group were asked their views on the following:

Q1 Should we use 'First Nations' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' when referring to the local Community?

Answer – *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* is the preferred collective noun. First Nations is the new buzz word, it originates in Canada, and we don't identify with that word locally. It's like Indigenous and it lumps us all together. We prefer to recognise everyone equally.

Q2 Should we have gender or non-gender awards, specifically for young people? Should we still offer two awards for young people if we stop awarding gender awards?

Answer – Group agreed that non-gender awards are appropriate for young people but keep gender awards for the Elder Awards. Keep two awards for young people and follow that tradition, keep opportunities available for young people. But make sure award recipients are selected based on diversity, try to avoid having two sports people as recipients in one year etc.

4. Update on Review of Council's Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country Protocols – the protocol has been reviewed and updated with the following three additions about information around the definitions as detailed below:

- provide a definition of Country from an Aboriginal perspective
- update the definition of an Acknowledgement of Country
- provide a detailed distinction between a Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country

5. Yaroma Figtree Artwork Update – There is an old public artwork near the Moreton Bay Fig tree located at Figtree that some local Aunties have complained about. A summary of the complaints is the artwork deals with men's business and is incorrectly located at a women's sacred site. The artwork has been assessed by Council's Public Art Officer and due to its age and the community members feedback, a decision was made to remove the artwork.

The artist of the artwork has been informed of the decision and although not happy about it, understands that the artwork's lifespan has been reached and will need to be removed sooner or later. The artist has been consulted on the removal process. The local Aunties group who provided feedback about the artwork will meet with Council staff to be informed about the process for removing the artwork and they will be consulted on what can happen in this space once it has been removed.

6. City Centre/Mall – Nandhi Ngara - Wollongong City Council is undertaking a project where local students are supported to design artworks about what Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week means to them. The artworks will be digitised and made into banners that will be placed throughout the City Centre and Mall. The project itself is still in pre-approval stage and staff are completing scoping the design and implementation of the project which will include workshops to be held in local schools. The overall objective is to give children and young people a voice and ownership over their city by displaying their artworks and increasing visibility of Aboriginal culture and heritage during Reconciliation and NAIDOC weeks. To seek guidance on the design of the project the following questions were asked of the Reference group members:

Q1 Can non-Aboriginal students participate in Aboriginal art workshops?

Answer Yes, all Reference group members supported using a mixture of all students both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal for Reconciliation week workshops. Suggested to split the workshops for NAIDOC week workshops to just be Aboriginal students.

Q2 If non-Aboriginal students participate in Aboriginal art workshops, can we still call it Aboriginal artwork or Aboriginal-inspired artwork or something else?

Answer No. The artworks cannot be called Aboriginal nor Aboriginal-inspired artworks. This can give the wider community the wrong impression about who can create Aboriginal artwork, it's a very complex topic.

The artwork can be called:

- Aboriginal Reconciliation artworks, or
- Reconciliation artworks, or
- Contemporary artworks

If they are to be called 'Aboriginal artworks' it's suggested a NAIDOC workshop with Aboriginal students only be held, however, if still combining the Aboriginal NAIDOC banners with the mixed Reconciliation banners they cannot be called Aboriginal artworks.

An official launch will be held and invitations offered to Elders, Aboriginal Reference Group members and other Community leaders and members.

13 GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Cath Blakey asked the group their views around the Federal Governments proposed “The Voice”. Reference Group members expressed diverse views about it particularly around the themes of Truth, Treaty and Voice. This is a contentious issue within the Aboriginal Community, there are those views for and against it while others are still undecided. There are those supporting the Voice, others wanting a “Treaty” rather than a Voice, others don’t feel they can trust “Government” to work out the details later, based on the performance of previous governments not to adhere to what they promised, others feel they are not listening to Community and others are just jumping on the band wagon.

Steven Jones attended the Community Based Working Group meeting with a commitment to come back to conduct an in-depth consultation to hear what people have to say. Members believe there should be more education, its vague and rushed and there will be legal implications around this issue for generations to come

14 NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY 12 APRIL 2023

The meeting concluded at 12.00pm.

2023 – Future Meeting Schedule

Wednesday 12 April	Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation	9.30 – 3pm
Wednesday 14 June	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30 – 11.30am
Wednesday 9 August	To be advised	9.30 – 11.30am
Wednesday 11 October	To be advised	9.30 – 11.30am
Wednesday 13 December	Level 10 Committee Room 2 & 3	9.30 – 11.30am

ACTION SUMMARY

Item	Action	Officer	Status