

CHARTER

ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP 2017-2020



1 INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) will provide input to Council regarding issues affecting the Indigenous community in Wollongong and provide the Aboriginal community with capacity to inform Wollongong City Council's decision-making processes.

Broadly, the Reference Group will enable Wollongong City Council (Council) to meet its Community Strategic Plan, in particular those parts of the plan that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Reference Group will also provide a point of contact for Council's broader consultation with the Aboriginal community and promote Aboriginal initiatives and celebrations auspiced by Wollongong City Council.

2 OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the ARG are to:

1. Provide input to Council in relation to:
 - a. Wollongong Community Strategic Plan;
 - b. Relevant Council policies;
 - c. Council programs, services, functions and facilities to ensure access and appropriateness for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
 - d. Issues relating to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.
2. Support Council in promoting appropriate celebrations with the Aboriginal community.
3. Provide advice on key planning issues relating to Aboriginal sites in the City.
4. Discuss issues of mutual concern in relation to Council policy, strategy or direction, so that they can be resolved to the benefit of both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

3 MEMBERSHIP AND/OR REPRESENTATION

Membership and representation of the Aboriginal Reference Group will be sought from Aboriginal community members through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process advertised in the media and promoted within the Aboriginal community and the broader Wollongong community. Nominees will be required to submit to Council their responses to the questions found on the EOI nomination form.

The Reference Group will include:

- 5 Aboriginal community representatives who may also be constituents of particular interest groups or employees of particular Aboriginal organisations, and
- 1 representative per Aboriginal community organisation as listed below (total of 3) and as nominated by the following organisations:
 - Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation (1 representative)
 - Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council (1 representative)
 - Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service (1 representative)

In addition to the above members, the Aboriginal Reference Group will be supported by:

- 2 Wollongong City Councillors; and
- 1 Wollongong City Council Officer

If Aboriginal membership falls below eight (8) during the term of the Reference Group, the membership EOI process may be conducted to select additional members.

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The approach to membership selection will facilitate achievement of the objectives of the Aboriginal Reference Group. This process provides an opportunity for Council to ensure that the group will be broadly representative of community interests and will have the necessary capability to achieve governance and policy outcomes.

4 CONDUCT OF REFERENCE GROUP

- Term of appointment will be for three (3) years from December 2017 to September 2020 (to be in line with the election of the new Council/Councillors in 2020) and may be reviewed on an annual basis if required.
- Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis, four times per year. If a pressing issue is identified, and the community and/or Council determine that the Aboriginal Reference Group needs to meet, an extraordinary meeting can be called by Council.
- Aboriginal Reference Group members will be required to act in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.
- Meetings will be conducted under the general provisions of Council's Code of Meeting Practice.
- A quorum will consist of one (1) Council representative and three (3) Aboriginal Community representatives.
- Meetings will be co-Chaired by a Council representative and an Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Reference Group member. The Aboriginal Co-Chair position will be elected from the Aboriginal Reference Group membership.
- Where members are absent for three (3) meetings without an apology they are to be contacted by Council to ask if they still intend to be a member of the Aboriginal Reference Group, if no reply within a reasonable period of time then their membership will cease.
- Other community representatives may be invited to attend Aboriginal Reference Group meetings on occasion and all attendance of non-members will be by invitation only.
- Membership will be terminated where a member is absent for more than 4 consecutive meetings unless a leave of absence has been sought.
- Members will be required to declare an actual or perceived conflict of interest at the commencement of each meeting.

5 ACCOUNTABILITY

- Requests and outcomes of the Aboriginal Reference Group meetings will be forwarded to the Manager, Community, Cultural and Economic Development in the first instance for action or referral to the relevant Division of Council.
- Feedback will be provided to the Aboriginal Reference Group as necessary by Council staff.
- The Aboriginal Reference Group shall hold no powers of investigation.

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6 ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- Meetings will be serviced by an administrative officer.
- Proposed meeting agenda items must be received by Council at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting. The final agenda will be distributed at least one (1) week prior to the meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting will be distributed to all Reference Group members by Council.