

MINUTES

ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP

9:30AM ON WEDNESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2024



PRESENT	
Michele Moore	Leanne Olive
Aunty Sharralyn Robinson	Brad Anderson
Brendan Newton	

IN ATTENDANCE	
Joshua Wiffen – Chair	Jacinda Marando – Minute Taker
Belinda Morris – Acting Community Development + Engagement Manager	Dale Wright – Community Engagement Officer – Aboriginal Services
Sue Savage – Divisional Manager Community Culture + Engagement	Emma Bedwin – Engagement Coordinator
John Lahai – Acting Community and Cultural Planner	Joel Thompson – Coordinator Heritage, City Strategy
Mike Dove – Social Infrastructure Planning & Development Officer	Thomas Soccio – Manager, Local and Regional Planning – Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure
Carly Pascoe – Community Development Worker	Meegan Martinez – Community Safety Officer
Shannon Kennedy – Acting Coordinator Cultural Development	Lara Acevedo – Aboriginal Health Worker, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District
Brittney Angus – Emerging Aboriginal Artist	Fatima Jafari – Placement Student

1 WELCOME & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

2 APOLOGIES – Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of Lord Mayor Cr Gordon Bradbery, Errolyn Strang and Kathleen Cambourn.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – NIL

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2023 – CONFIRMED

5 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

FREE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT BUS – Sue Savage provided an update from the meeting held in December 2023. Sue confirmed that the community transport buses will need to go via My Aged Care service. Wollongong Council should be able to try and accommodate the service, therefore, special arrangements will be looked into for Culture Mix 2024 to transport community members from the southern region.

SANDONT POINT – In November 2023, there were reports of a deceased dolphin washed ashore at Sandon Point. Committee originally discussed this at the December 2023 meeting 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. An update on this has not been provided as of yet. This item is to remain on the Action Summary List for discussion at the next meeting.

SENIOR ABORIGINAL POLICY ADVISOR POSITION – Sue Savage provided an update on the Senior Aboriginal Policy Advisor position which went out for advertisement on 16 December 2023, and closed on 22 January 2024. The recruitment process is currently in the shortlisting stage, with interviews being scheduled. Uncle Richard Davis has been invited to participate as a panel member.

6 WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL HEALTH PRECINCT PLANS –

Tom Soccio provided an update on the Wollongong Hospital Health Precinct Strategy plans and shared a discussion paper with the Aboriginal Reference Group. This discussion paper provides guidance on adopting a place-based approach for the future Wollongong Health Precinct. This has been confirmed as a process of under-going change and definition of strategic process and is not deemed a precinct yet. Since December 2023, 12 community engagement sessions have been held in person and online, with First Nations engagement sessions being held separately. The first workshop session was held on Friday 9 February 2024 at Wollongong Public Hospital. The topics discussed during the workshop included the social care lifecycle plan, the importance of social competency, examining discreet locations and precinct designs, ensuring adequate gathering spaces for events like sorry business, and promoting appropriate community gatherings. Additionally, the conversation highlighted the significance of prioritising language recognition. Intellectual property is being gathered foremost and there will be clear expectants to better protect and enhance Elders in our community. Over the next 12 months, there will be several opportunities to engage on the project, and the meeting point locations will be shifted for all future engagements.

Tom and Lara confirmed that there will also be a car parking review due to the demand of car parking spaces at Wollongong Public Hospital, Wollongong Private Hospital and Wollongong Day Surgery. There is a potential for additional community transport services or public transport services to be implemented, as well as additional walking paths and bus routes which are all currently being investigated.

It has also been confirmed that we will see an increase of planted trees, and that there will be no tree removal, which includes the legally protected and heritage listed fig tree located in the precinct of the hospitals.

Members of the Aboriginal Reference Group are encouraged to review the report provided, and to reach out to Thomas Soccio for further details or questions.

7 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE –

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – Dale advised about a meeting which will be held on Tuesday 27 February 2024 at Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation which is regarding the land at Hill60 and the interpretation of the language and to discuss the story telling on the hill.

WEST DAPTO & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAPPING – Mike Dove and Joel Thompson shared a power-point presentation and provided an update on the Site Feasibility Study for Planned Marshall Mount Town Centre Community Facilities. The objective of this site feasibility study is to identify and determine the preferred sites for the eventual acquisition of land to establish social infrastructure required to service the future needs of the West Dapto community.

The planning and development of social infrastructure in the Marshall Mount Town Centre is guided by several Council documents that outline Council's vision, principles, development contributions, and master planning in this town centre.

The West Dapto structure plan is in Council's vision, and Council has commissioned consultation with Urbis to do the Master Planning for Marshall Mount. The West Dapto Vision identifies that West Dapto will be serviced by eight centres over time with three new town centres known as Bong Bong Road, Darkes, and Marshall Mount and five new villages referred to as Wongawilli, Jersey Farm, Fowlers, Huntley, and Avondale.

Mike and Joel shared map figures of the West Dapto areas where the proposed locations of the town centres will be. There are demands for a range of community facilities to meet the expected future population needs, including:

- Childcare centres and facilities
- Community meeting rooms
- Library spaces
- Spaces for organised activities, cultural events, and private functions.

The West Dapto development reveals more house to come to meet the housing demands. Council have been working on this project for 40+ years, and there are plans for archaeologists to go through a talk with the community to gather information, followed by Aboriginal archaeologist testing at a detailed level.

The next approach is to understand context of site from First Nations perspective and recognising the site importance and significance based on local Aunty knowledge and supported by the evidence found in the Austral Assessment study. Yarns will be initiated around how the area can be protected, and discussions will be initiated around how the community facilities may provide opportunities to celebrate and recognise the cultural significance of the site by integrating cultural elements.

8 SAFER CITIES: HER WAY DAPTO SQUARE PUBLIC ART PROJECT –

Meegan Martinez provided an update on the Safer Cities: Her Way project, which is a collaborative partnership project between Wollongong City Council and Transport for NSW. The program aims to improve the perception of safety for women, girls, and gender diverse people when walking, moving to, through and within public spaces and transport hubs in the following areas: Wollongong CBD, Dapto Town Centre, and Port Kembla Town Centre.

So far, the program has undertaken several day and night walks with community members, co-design workshops, community mapping, and engagement sessions with women and gender diverse people in the community. Concerns and suggestions were raised, and recommendations were provided to co-design. The main highlighted recommendations in the projects were:

- Maintenance and upkeep of public spaces to create a pleasant and inviting space.
- Request for gender-sensitive lighting and improved street lighting.
- Maintain landscaping.
- Adding artwork.
- Activating certain areas that have low foot traffic to reduce crime.
- Improvements for Dapto Square and McCabe park.
- Removal of the shade sail at Dapto Mall.

Trial interventions have been implemented at various locations which commenced December 2023 and will run through until Mid-2024. Some of these trial interventions so far have been Dapto Sounds in the Square, Exercise in the Park, Picnic in the Park, Cinema in the Park, and Cinema in the Square. There will be measures and evaluations before, during and after the trial to understand whether the interventions improve perceptions and safety. Procurement at Wollongong Council has gone out for solar lights to be installed at the train station as well as installation of fairy lights.

Young artists and design motifs to the square are being sought after as Dapto Square requires more love and attention and to provide a feeling of safety. An EOI was circulated via the Cultural Development process for the Public Art Project. Young Indigenous emerging artist, Brittney Angus, was a preferred candidate in this EOI process to help design the artwork in Dapto Square and to help with a creative installation that is colourful, and contemporary in design. Brittney shared her initial designs and previous works with the Committee and is seeking guidance from Elders for feedback and guidance.

Britney Angus shared her concept development called Beneath The Surface, which delves into the rich cultural and environmental history that lies beneath the seemingly ordinary concrete of Dapto Square and aims to bring forth the deep-rooted connection between the local community, their cultural heritage, and the natural environment that surrounds. There are three core components within Beneath The Surface; Cultural Layers, Local Knowledge, and Nearby Sites (Mullet Creek). Brittney is working with Shannon Kennedy, Acting Coordinator Cultural Development at Wollongong Council, to add and remove elements in the motif to suit. The proposed designs by Brittney reveal a canvas of story telling and showcases the artwork to actively contribute to the Safer Cities initiative by fostering a sense of pride, promoting cultural well-being, and creating a visually engaging deterrent to anti-social behaviour.

The recommendations provided by the Elders were to come up with ways that deter people from graffiti, such as inviting local young people to help, and to also install a floor journey with floor motifs and non-slip stickers.

9 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER UPDATE

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP) – Carly Pascoe provided an update to the Committee on the Reconciliation Action Plan engagement staff workshop sessions and the new Reconciliation Action Plan for 2024-2026. Wollongong Council's current Innovate RAP expired in November 2023, and have been actively working on the development of Council's 2024-2026 RAP. Wollongong Council engaged with several schools including Bellambi Public School, Illawarra Sports High School, KU Corrimal East Pre-school and Nareena Hills Public School in late 2023 to help develop our next reconciliation action plan.

Wollongong Council scheduled four staff RAP workshops between November 2023 and February 2024, which were held on 29 November 2023, 12 December 2023, 23 January 2024, and 6 February 2024. The sessions were not compulsory for staff to attend; however, they were very popular, therefore a fifth workshop was added for 13 February 2024. Staff had the opportunity to share ideas on improving relationships, increasing awareness, and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and knowledge, as well as participate in Yarning Circles with Elders within the Community. The Staff RAP workshops were highly successful, and some valuable feedback was provided by staff.

On Thursday 22 February 2024, A Reconciliation Action Plan Vision Workshop has been scheduled for Council staff to convene and collaborate on developing a new Vision statement for 2024-2026. An update on this final vision statement will be provided at one of the next Aboriginal Reference Group meetings.

A Council Reconciliation postcard was distributed to all Council departments and services both within and outside the Administration Building. The postcard urged employees to scan the QR code included to join a session. In case staff members were unable to attend, they were also given the chance to offer feedback and express their thoughts. The postcards could be deposited in a collection box located on the bar counter of Level 2 Admin Building or handed to a Coordinator.

The two questions asked on the post card and at the staff RAP engagement sessions were:

1. How can we start and keep good relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations?
2. How can we increase understanding, value, and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and knowledge?

10 ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED AT THE NEXT MEETING

BELLAMBI FLOOD STUDY – The Bellambi Flood Study will be raised and discussed at the April 2024 meeting.

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

11 GENERAL BUSINESS

CAR PARKING – Jacinda to arrange car parking permits for Aboriginal Reference Group committee for all meetings held at Wollongong City Council, due to the on-going issues of limited car park spaces in Wollongong.

RAP MEMBERSHIP – Adam Towney has withdrawn his membership to the Aboriginal Reference Group.

WCC LADY MAYORESS AFTERNOON TEA DANCE – Wollongong City Council in conjunction with the Seniors Festival Committee is hosting the annual Lady Mayoress Afternoon Tea at Wollongong Town Hall on Tuesday 19 March 2024 from 1pm to 3pm. Lady Mayoress, Pilar Helmers, and the Lord Mayor Cr Gordon Bradbery AM will be hosting an afternoon of entertainment, dancing, and a light afternoon tea. This is a free event; however, it is ticket limited. This event is open to any seniors in the Wollongong community. Council have kindly reserved 10 tickets for Elders, which will be provided on a first basis request.

NAIDOC AWARDS – The NAIDOC Awards are now live for nomination, with an application closing date of 25 March 2024.

12 NEXT MEETING – **WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2024** FROM 9:30AM TO 11:30AM

The meeting concluded at 11:33am.

Minutes to be confirmed at the next meeting to be held at 9:30am on Wednesday 10 April 2024.

2024 – Future Meeting Schedule		
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
10	Inform Sandon Point lifeguards of protocol for deceased animals on the beach shore.	Lifeguards	Continued