

WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL
**ABORIGINAL
ENGAGEMENT
FRAMEWORK**

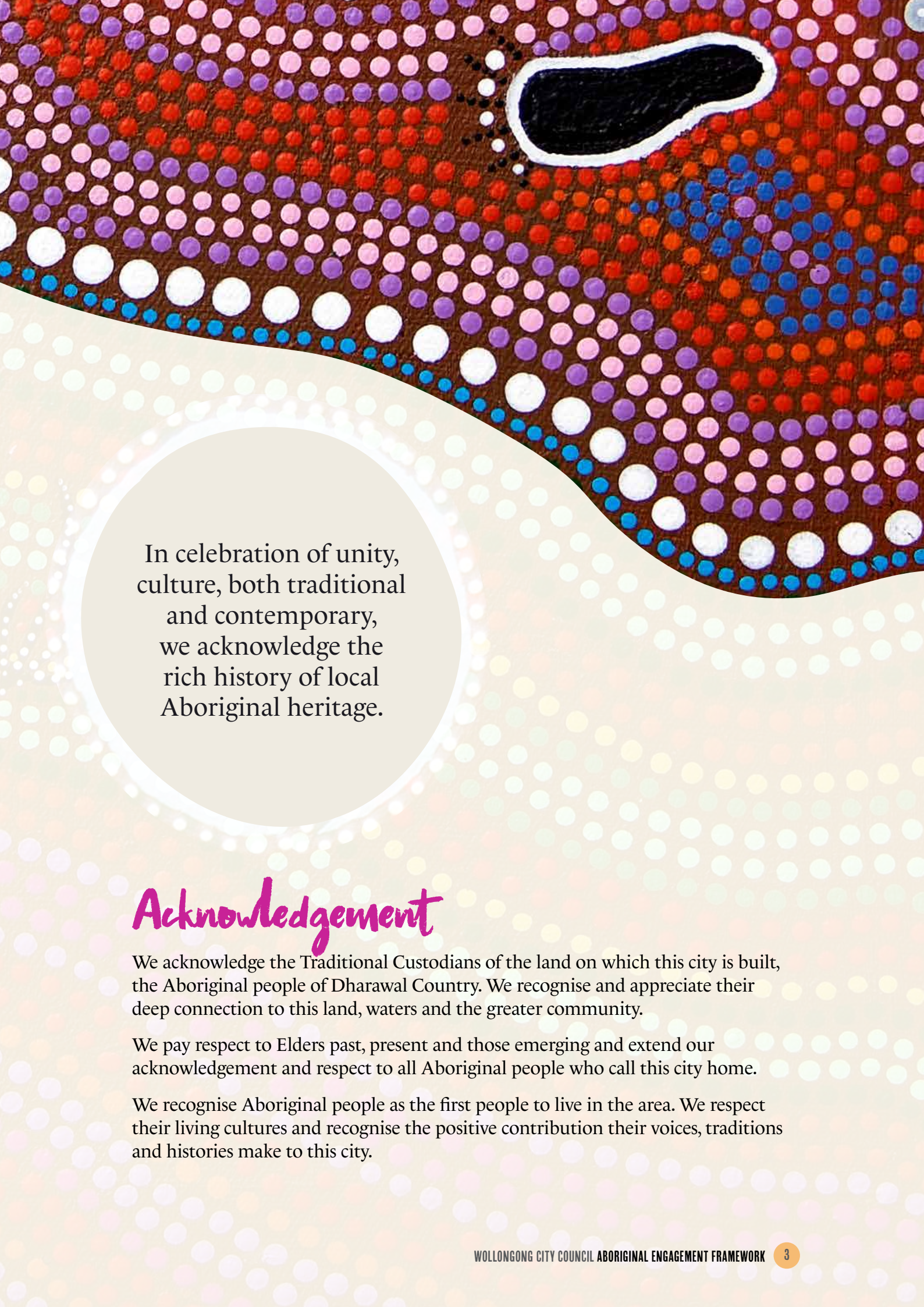
*knowing & valuing local
Aboriginal people and communities*





GLEN SUTHERLAND – GULGUMA ART, ‘MY MOTHER’S STORY’

When my mother was young, her and my aunties always visited their cousin Yuranigh who is buried in central NSW. The footprints in the painting represent our spirits walking the land and carving trees around the meeting place, where Yuranigh is buried. The Emu, Platypus and Goanna are our totems that signify our family connections we have to our home.



In celebration of unity,
culture, both traditional
and contemporary,
we acknowledge the
rich history of local
Aboriginal heritage.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this city is built, the Aboriginal people of Dharawal Country. We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to this land, waters and the greater community.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our acknowledgement and respect to all Aboriginal people who call this city home.

We recognise Aboriginal people as the first people to live in the area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to this city.

MESSAGE FROM THE GM

We are proud of our city and the people who call it home. As our city continues to change and grow it's important to recognise and respect our long history and the diverse cultures that have strong connections here.

While we celebrate our community's diversity with pride and acknowledge those who have been drawn to Wollongong from across the globe, local Aboriginal communities have been connected to this area for thousands of years.

At Wollongong City Council we recognise this long history and are focused on improving our knowledge and understanding of these communities and their diverse cultures and dynamics. This focus on strengthening our relationships with, and within, these communities, allows us to work with and meet the needs of all in our community.

This desire to support local Aboriginal communities is more than an aspiration or goal. We have developed this Aboriginal Engagement Framework as a practical way we can set out a clear and consistent approach to engagement with local Aboriginal community. The Framework was developed to help us build trusting relationships and to create opportunities for conversations. It provides guidance on culturally safe practices and engagement protocols.

We didn't develop this Framework alone. We are grateful for the support of Traditional Custodians, individual community members and Aboriginal organisations who were involved in the process as we sought local input on culturally appropriate engagement, Aboriginal sites of significance and cultural practices.

I am proud of our city's cultural history and look forward to seeing this Framework in action. However, most importantly, I look forward to seeing the benefits of stronger links and understanding with local Aboriginal communities. We all have a role to play in making Wollongong the best place it can be to live, to work and to socialise. This can only be achieved through collaboration and the appreciation that understanding all our differences contributes to a greater whole.

GREG DOYLE

Wollongong City Council General Manager





THE PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Aboriginal Engagement Framework outlines our commitment to the Aboriginal community to engage in a meaningful and consistent way. The Framework is underpinned by local Aboriginal culture, knowledge and heritage.

The Framework aims to provide Council's elected members, staff and consultants with knowledge about local Aboriginal people and their communities, and how to engage with them in a culturally appropriate way. The Framework provides a set of principles, protocols and resources to support engagement with Aboriginal people and their communities.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Our engagement with Aboriginal people will be underpinned by key principles developed in partnership with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.

- We will value and respect Aboriginal culture
- We will allow time for authentic engagement
- We will include Aboriginal people in matters that directly affect them and involve them throughout the life of the project
- We will act with integrity and seek to build trust
- We will be transparent and open with information and processes
- We will listen, learn and talk
- We will deliver on our commitments

OUR ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Our endorsed Community Engagement Policy and Framework guides how we engage with our community. The Policy also applies to engaging with Aboriginal community; however, it must be accompanied by the Aboriginal engagement principles and cultural considerations detailed in this framework.

The Community Engagement Framework provides information and tools to plan, implement, report and evaluate a community engagement process. The Framework is available on the Community Engagement Hub site.

WE PLAN

Who we engage, when we engage and how we engage.

WE EVALUATE

We continue to build relationships with local Aboriginal community and check in about what worked well and what we can do better.

WE ENGAGE

We make phone calls, have face-to-face meetings, Yarning Circles and Walk on Country and check in about what we have heard and documented.

WE ANALYSE

We read, review and consider all the feedback and provide a report for consideration by the decision makers.

THERE ARE SIX STAGES IN THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS:

WE DECIDE

We consider what the Aboriginal community has told us along with other things like legislation, Council policies, technical advice, environmental, social and economic factors.

WE PROVIDE FEEDBACK

We go back to the Aboriginal community and talk with them about the decision and where to next.



THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

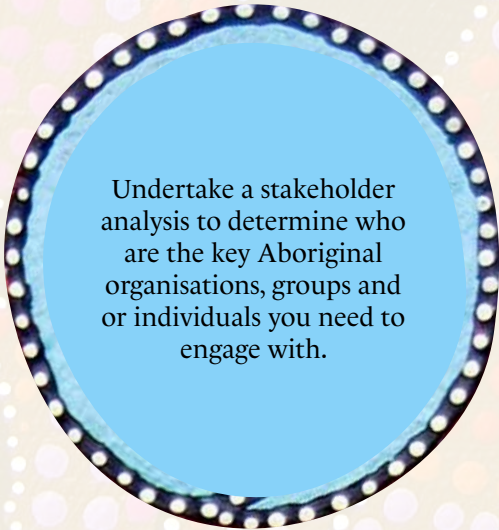
Aboriginal communities and culture vary, differing from nation to nation, country to country and clan to clan. The diversity in Aboriginal culture illustrates their unique connection to land, sea and sky, and narrates stories of dreaming, belonging and identity.

Currently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.5 percent of Wollongong's population, and it's anticipated this number will continue to increase. The local Aboriginal community is made up of Traditional Custodians (Dharawal people), knowledge holders, language holders, Aboriginal groups and organisations and individuals. An imperative part of the engagement process is taking the time to research and learn about the local Aboriginal history and heritage, Traditional Custodians and knowledge holders and areas of significance and interest.

Traditional Custodians are knowledge holders within the Aboriginal community and each of these custodian groups have numerous families. If engagement with Traditional Custodians is required, each of the families should be engaged.

There are also individual knowledge holders that are not recognised as local Traditional Custodians. These individuals have a strong connection to restoring local Aboriginal language, culture and knowledge.

It is important to establish who the most appropriate community groups and individuals are to engage for each project. The Engagement Team or the Aboriginal Community Development Officer can provide advice about who to engage. Local Aboriginal community organisations and networks can also provide advice on who should be engaged and how to effectively engage them.



Undertake a stakeholder analysis to determine who are the key Aboriginal organisations, groups and or individuals you need to engage with.



ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS

COOMADITCHIE ABORIGINAL UNITED CORPORATION

provide community-based programs including mentoring, arts and crafts. The members hold local knowledge and history.

ILLAWARRA LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL (ILALC)

represents Aboriginal affairs at state or territory level and aims to protect the interests and further the aspirations of Aboriginal communities. The ILALC advocates and represents the Aboriginal community's local interest of cultural history and heritage with respect to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

ILLAWARRA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (IAC)

is a not-for-profit community organisation that provides services to local Aboriginal communities. The organisation provides advocacy and culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. IAC has a cultural centre and Keeping Place that provides a space to host meetings, gatherings and community-based events. It is an important cultural hub for local Aboriginal people.

ILLAWARRA ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICE (IAMS)

provides health services including clinical services, dentists, general practitioners and nursing. They also facilitate community-based programs.

ILLAWARRA, WINGECARRIBEE ALLIANCE ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

is a platform to discuss and determine decisions regarding Aboriginal education, health, justice, child protection and local cultural issues.

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET (NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY)

supports community networking and undertakes information distribution.

SOUTH COAST NATIVE TITLE CLAIMANTS (NTSCORP)

is a group registered under the Native Title Services Corporation (NTSCORP). The group is a statutory representation of the traditional lands covering from north of George's River National Park to the south of Eden on the South Coast. Members of this group are Traditional Custodians.

LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE GROUP SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN ILLAWARRA

is a resource for school and educational based programs. They assist with information and distribution throughout Illawarra schools.

IAC ABORIGINAL ELDER'S GROUP

is an Aboriginal women elder's group, where women's business is considered and discussed. Men are not allowed to attend the women's group unless given permission by the group.

ILLAWARRA KOORI MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

is an Aboriginal elder's group for men, where men's business is considered and discussed. Women are not allowed to attend the men's group unless given permission by the group.

SANDON POINT JOINT MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

is a Council-formed partnership committee and includes representatives from Traditional Custodian groups and organisations who have an interest with Sandon Point.

WOLLONGONG NORTHERN DISTRICT ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (WNDAC)

is an information sharing and community consultative group focused on stronger communication and engagement for the northern Illawarra Aboriginal community.

COUNCIL'S ABORIGINAL REFERENCE GROUP

provides input to Council regarding issues affecting Aboriginal communities in Wollongong and provides local Aboriginal communities with capacity to inform Council's decision-making processes. This group is important in creating links within local Aboriginal community and providing advice on the implementation of the Framework.

ILLAWARRA ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY BASE WORKING GROUP

is an information sharing and distribution community consultative group. Attended by community organisations, government agencies and community representatives, this inter-agency group focuses on strengthening relationships, building partnerships and advising on cultural appropriateness and safeguards when delivering services to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

There are many Aboriginal organisations, community groups and community members within the Local Government Area. A contact list is maintained by Council's Engagement Team.

MEETING PLACES

The location of meetings is important and can impact participants' level of comfort and their ability to attend. A meeting location should be accessible by public transport. Some suitable locations may include a community centre, an Aboriginal cultural place, cafes or open spaces like parks. Meeting at a site of significance may be appropriate especially if the site is related to the topic being discussed. In this instance, be mindful of cultural sensitivities such as men's places and women's places.

You can find out this information by speaking to the Engagement Team or the Aboriginal Community Development Officer.

A government meeting space or building is not ideal unless suggested by the Aboriginal community.

Here are some venues that may be suitable locations for face-to-face engagement activities. These locations may not be considered a suitable meeting place for all Aboriginal community members. Prior to organising any face-to-face meetings discuss preferences with community members.

PLACE	WHERE	PHONE NUMBER
Illawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre	22 Kenny St, Wollongong	4228 1585
The Land (Warrigal Employment)	1 Bakers Lane, Windang	4276 1878
Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council	3 Ellen St, Wollongong	4226 3338
Dapto Ribbonwood Centre	93-109 Princes Highway, Dapto	4227 8877
Bellambi Surf Club	Morgan Place, Bellambi	4231 4388

WHEN DO WE ENGAGE WITH THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY?

Council delivers a diverse range of services and projects for our community. We develop engagement strategies based on the level of impact, interest and influence. Certain policies, strategies and projects directly impact Aboriginal people and require targeted engagement with Aboriginal people.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS OR SERVICES

Effective programs and services are informed by the ideas and experiences of those who are intended to access them. If you are developing a program or service targeted at Aboriginal people, you should undertake meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities.

PARK AND SUBURB NAMING

The Naming of Community Facilities and Parks Management Policy details our approach to naming community facilities and parks including sports grounds and natural areas. For more information on Naming of Community Facilities and Parks Management Policy visit wollongong.nsw.gov.au.

SIGNIFICANT SITES IN WOLLONGONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Aboriginal Significant sites are located across the local government area. A significant site is a place deemed meaningful, spiritual and form a sense of connection by Aboriginal people based on their beliefs. It may also include any feature in the landscape, along coastal areas, creeks, riverbeds and across other areas of an escarpment. Check the Early Contact Map (see link on page 19) to understand if your project is located near or on an Aboriginal significant site.

It's important to acknowledge and respect that some sites may not be documented or spoken about due to their significance. There are some sacred sites known only to Aboriginal people and their families.

CONSULTANTS

From time to time it may be necessary for Council to employ consultants. The Aboriginal Framework is required to be followed by consultants when engaging with the Aboriginal community.



REMEMBER

Take time to find out who you need to speak to.

CROWN LAND

The Crown Land Management Act 2016 (NSW & ACT) and Native Title Act 1993 provides engagement requirements regarding Crown Lands. For any proposed works on Crown Lands, a formal notification will need to be sent to the NTSCORP. This correspondence must be checked with Council's legal team prior to distribution.

If you are unsure if your project is on Crown Land you can check details on Intranets or contact Council's Community Land Management Officer.

ABORIGINAL DUE DILIGENCE ASSESSMENT

The Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales is a legislated process under the National Parks & Wildlife Act (1974). The process outlines what steps need to be taken if there is a possibility of harming Aboriginal objects. Any activity or work that requires ground disturbance will need to comply with the due diligence assessment. The assessment will determine whether an Aboriginal object will be harmed; if further investigations are required; and, if an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit needs to be conducted.

A key step in the due diligence process is to check for Aboriginal sites on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System provided by Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE IMPACT PERMIT (AHIP)

An Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) is a legislative requirement that needs to be applied when there is potential harm to Aboriginal objects or places. If a project or activity is going to impact on known Aboriginal areas of significance, a due diligence assessment will need to be applied to determine whether an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment needs to be conducted. If both assessments result in high risk impact of Aboriginal Heritage, then an AHIP will be required before any further activities can take place.

If an AHIP is required, it could take 6 to 12 months, depending on the complexities of the project, it may even take longer. A requirement of an AHIP process is to engage with the Aboriginal community, key knowledge holders and the Illawarra Aboriginal Local Land Council.

More information regarding the AHIP process is available online at www.environment.nsw.gov.au or contact Council's Heritage Team for further assistance.

LIVING THE PRINCIPLES – AUTHENTIC & RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT

SET REALISTIC TIMEFRAMES

Timing is key to encouraging Aboriginal community participation in engagement. It is an essential part of getting buy in and feedback from key Aboriginal stakeholders and the broader Aboriginal community.

As a local government authority, we may interact with the Aboriginal community on a range of levels and setting realistic timeframes can be a challenging process. When planning to engage with the Aboriginal community, adequate timing needs to be considered.

Generally, one month prior to broader engagement is a realistic time for cultural needs to be considered, however, this could change due to other cultural sensitivities such as family responsibilities and sorry business.

Take time to consider the impact of the project on the Aboriginal community. If the project is linked to a significant site, you should start the engagement process as early as possible.

For advice on suitable engagement timeframes speak to the Engagement Team or the Aboriginal Community Development Officer.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Aboriginal culture is communicated orally and through face-to-face communication, known as yarning. Yarning is highly valued and provides an opportunity to build relationships and have open discussions.

To arrange a face-to-face meeting the first point of contact should be by phone. We need to be clear about what we are requesting, for example,

are we asking to meet to provide information, do we want advice or are we asking them to participate in a meeting with others.

During the phone conversation discuss meeting arrangements to determine an agreed time and place. Timeframes will differ between organisations, groups and individuals. Allow adequate time between the phone call and when the meeting is held, based on the stakeholders needs.

During the phone call also discuss what information they would like to receive in writing prior to the meeting. If they are interested in receiving written communication discuss whether post or email is the preferred method for receiving it.

Depending on what you are asking, it may take a long period of time or require multiple meetings to receive a response. There may be cultural sensitivities around your request or time needed to build trust.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication is not the preferred method of communicating. It is important that if there has been no response to written communication that it is not considered acceptance or disinterest.

As with any community member, overload of information or documentation can be overwhelming and/or misinterpreted. To reduce the risk of this happening, meet face-to-face to clarify intent, relevance and discuss the information.

Organisations and well-established groups may prefer written communication, however a follow up phone call should be made to confirm if the correspondence has been received.

Written notifications are required for some engagements related to Native Title, Crown Lands and Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permits (AHIP). Council is guided by state and federal legislation on how to notify the Aboriginal community and what is required in these processes.



YARNING CIRCLES

Yarning Circles are similar to a forum or meeting, however for the Aboriginal community they are more than that. Culturally, 'Yarning Circles' were used as a mutual gathering place to learn from each other, share stories, preserve and pass on cultural knowledge.

The use of Yarning Circles is an important process for Aboriginal people, it provides an environment to build a shared understanding of information, clear communication between participants, cultural sensitivities and respect, relationship building and a safe space for open discussion. Yarning Circles also provide an opportunity to bring community together to establish common ground.

WALKING ON COUNTRY

'Walking on Country' is similar to a site visit and is a useful engagement method to acknowledge and learn about the connection Aboriginal people have to their land/s. 'Walking on Country' provides the opportunity to build relationships and strengthen partnerships with the local Aboriginal community.

BE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT

Transparency and openness are important. Share with those you meet that you are also meeting with other interested parties. It is useful to outline Council's commitment to engage with the broader Aboriginal community.

Communication and messaging must be consistent across all parties involved in the engagement. Any information shared should be distributed to the broader Aboriginal community, unless there are cultural sensitivities, which will require permission from the source of the information. Ensuring consistency in access to information reduces the likelihood of perceived misrepresentation and unease between Aboriginal groups, organisations and individuals.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Maintain openness about how, why and when a decision-making process will be required. For Aboriginal people and their communities, it is important to know the level of influence they will have in the decision-making process.

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

The local Aboriginal community has been let down by past governments and agencies, and many times have felt forgotten or left out. Building trusting relationships takes time but is an essential step moving forward.

Throughout the engagement process it is necessary to maintain regular communication and involvement with those we are engaging. It is important we are not there just to find out information and leave. If possible, maintain contact once the project is finished, for example, arrange a face-to-face meeting for a catch up or a yarn.

ENGAGEMENT FATIGUE

Council is a large organisation that engages with the Aboriginal community on a diverse range of projects, policies and programs. This often places demand on Aboriginal organisations and community members which can create a sense of fatigue with engagement processes. Be considerate of this and check in with what else is happening across the organisation by speaking to the Engagement Team or Aboriginal Community Development Officer.



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

UNDERSTAND CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SENSITIVITIES

There may be cultural and community sensitivities that need to be considered when determining engagement methods. To understand the best approach to limit confrontation or conflict, discuss methods with the Engagement team or the Aboriginal Community Development Officer.

Local recognition of the Traditional Custodianship, language, links to kinship and connection to country is imperative. We must acknowledge how we receive information, who we received the information from and how we are permitted to use the information.

It may also be required to determine how the Aboriginal community would like Council to store information.

CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

The Aboriginal community's connection to country is fundamental to their culture. The spiritual connection to land is an essential source of belonging and identity for Aboriginal people. Connection to country must be considered in any relationship we have with the local Aboriginal community.

SORRY BUSINESS

Sorry Business is a term used by Aboriginal people when there has been a death in the family or community. It relates to cultural ceremonies and rituals associated with the passing of family members, including immediate and extended family, or other influential person/s within the community. It is important to understand, acknowledge and respect that 'Sorry Business' is a sensitive cultural practice and those affected may require time to grieve and pay respect to those that have passed.



ABORIGINAL CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

might be understood as the ways in which Aboriginal people regard and act out their relationships with each other, with their lands and environments, and with their ancestors.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

There are times when we engage with the Aboriginal community to seek general feedback and at times, we are seeking cultural knowledge. It is important that we are clear about what we are seeking and engage the Aboriginal community accordingly.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Council recognise that Aboriginal people should determine what happens with their cultural knowledge, how it is used and who can access it.

When seeking to source and use Aboriginal knowledge, Council will:

- consult with the relevant custodian groups, organisations and key individuals
 - as identified by the Aboriginal community
 - to identify appropriate protocols on how the information can be used
- seek advice from the Aboriginal community about the correct implementation of cultural protocols
- obtain consent from identified parties to use cultural knowledge

There are times that payment is made to Aboriginal Traditional Custodians and knowledge holders for their services and cultural knowledge. In these cases, a legal agreement will need to be written. Contact Council's legal team for information and support.



CALENDAR OF SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL EVENTS

Please note: consideration should be given to the cultural appropriateness of undertaking engagement on dates of cultural significance.

WHEN	WHAT
26 January	Survival Day
13 February	National Apology to the Stolen Generation
19 March	National Close the Gap Day
26 May	National Sorry Day
27 May – 3 June	Reconciliation Week
3 June	Mabo Day
July (first full week)	NAIDOC Week
4 August	National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day
9 August	International Day of Indigenous Peoples
October long weekend	NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout Carnival

TERMINOLOGY

Appropriate use of terminology and language on reports, letters and other forms of publications is important to show recognition and respect to Aboriginal people.

ABORIGINAL OR ABORIGINE

Avoid using the term 'Aborigine' as it can be offensive and symbolic, which could relate to past trauma and the misrepresentation of Aboriginal people. Always refer to using 'Aboriginal' or 'First Nations people' where possible, it distinguishes that the Aboriginal people were the first inhabitants of NSW.

ATSI

ATSI is an acronym for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and should not be used in oral or written form.

COUNTRY

The term 'Country' is used by Aboriginal people to refer to their traditional lands and where they come from. 'Country' does not refer to the whole of Australia rather their connection to where their 'mob' or 'clan' originate from. For example, local Traditional Custodians will signify the Illawarra as 'Dharawal Country'.

INDIGENOUS

Using the word 'Indigenous' can be misunderstood or interpreted differently in Aboriginal communities. It's commonly used to reference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a collective and does not recognise the distinction between the cultures. In NSW, the preference is to use 'Aboriginal' or 'First Nations Peoples' rather than 'Indigenous'.

KOORI

In most NSW Aboriginal communities, Koori is an alternate word for Aboriginal. Koori relates to Aboriginal people from South East Australia (NSW and Victoria). It will be referred to and referenced by the Aboriginal community during engagements however should not be used by Council officers.

RESOURCES

COUNCIL POLICIES

- Wollongong City Council's 'Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country' Protocol Management Policy
- Aboriginal Reference Group Charter
- Community Engagement Policy
- Naming of Community Facilities and Parks Management Policy

LEGISLATION

- Native Title Act 1993
- Crown Land Management Act 2016 (NSW & ACT)
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010 (Part 6 of the National Park and Wildlife Act 1974)

ILLAWARRA EARLY CONTACT MAP

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cultureheritage/illawarraAboriginalHistoryPoster.pdf

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT

www.documents.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@wic/documents/doc/uow257281.pdf

WHAT IS ABORIGINAL CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE?

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cultureheritage/commconsultation/09782factsheet1.pdf

