

'PATHWAYS'
BMCC ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
STRATEGIC PLAN TO 2020
HPRM: F05474 – 18/24351

The City of the Blue Mountains is located within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. The BMCC Aboriginal Advisory Council (AAC) recognises that Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners have a continuous and deep connection to their Country and that this is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, both locally and in the region.

For Darug and Gundungurra People, Ngurra (Country) takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape - landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.*

The AAC pays respect to Elders past and present while recognising the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains region.

*This is the traditional term for Country and all it embodies, in both languages and is pronounced N^GOO-rrah with the emphasis on the capitalised sound and the rr being rolled.

PURPOSE OF THE AAC

The Aboriginal Advisory Council is a committee of the Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993.

The Aboriginal Advisory Council (AAC) was established to provide advice to the Council on matters that are significant to the Blue Mountains Aboriginal community. The Council will also seek advice from the AAC when there are matters important to the Council that may involve the Aboriginal community.

The AAC has been established to provide:

- An opportunity where Aboriginal peoples voices can be heard on issues relating to the Councils policies, plans and services and the Aboriginal communities needs and priorities;
- A robust communication mechanism, between the Council and the Aboriginal communities; and
- A meaningful engagement and relationship between the Council and the Aboriginal communities.

The AAC with other Committees and partnerships between the Aboriginal Community and Council, form an essential part of the Council's engagement with the Aboriginal Community to address local priorities.

OVERVIEW

The local Aboriginal community is made up of Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners as well as Aboriginal people whose origins come from throughout Australia. It is intended that Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal key community representatives should guide the direction of this strategy to achieve meaningful community outcomes.

Blue Mountains Aboriginal Community – Current view

- According to the 2011 Census, People that identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander in the Blue Mountains have a population of approx. 1,324;
- No information is available on identifying how many Aboriginal people belong to Traditional Owner groups;

- There has been an increase of approx. 30% in the population since the 2006 Census which in turn had a 10% population increase from 2001, demonstrating a growing population;
- In 2011 51% of the Aboriginal Community in the Blue Mountains was under the age of 24;
- Overall Aboriginal People in the Blue Mountains still have lower educational outcomes, more than twice the unemployment rate of non-Aboriginal people, lower health outcomes, lower life expectancy and lower home ownership (a higher percentage of the Aboriginal population are in rental or public housing than non-Aboriginal people);
- Very few Aboriginal people speak an Aboriginal Australian Language fluently at home; and
- It is likely that very few to no Traditional Owners speak their language fluently or even partially.

The Council are currently part of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the Gundungurra People which considers Co-management of Country and Economic Opportunities. The Council also aspires to seek a similar relationship with the Darug People.

Local and national directions

- The Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander population is expected to continue increase in the next 10-20 years, in higher proportion than non-Aboriginal population as per past occurrences indicate;
- The Aboriginal population, is expected to only age slightly and overall the population and is expected to still be a young population as resulting from higher birth rates;
- If the gap in Aboriginal life expectancy aligns closer with non-Aboriginal people the population of older Aboriginal people in the community is expected to increase;
- Due to higher levels of disadvantage Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people are finding it increasing difficult to afford to live in their Country;
- At a state and national level Aboriginal people are taking great lengths to remain on or are returning to their Traditional *Ngurra* (Country) and asserting their deep connections to that Country and their ongoing rights to live on their *Ngurra* (Country), the management of and speaking for their Country.

This strategic plan has been developed by the AAC and the Council as a working document to guide the direction of the AAC and to achieve a shared vision and outcomes to respond to key trends while also addressing, where possible, issues faced by the local Aboriginal Community.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Darug and Gundungurra People have traditional custodial responsibilities to care for their *Ngurra* (Country), to ensure that it continues in proper order and provides physical sustenance and spiritual nourishment to the people. It must also be acknowledged that the health and wellbeing, economic participation and cultural continuation of Traditional Owners is intrinsically connected to the continuing care and respect for Country.

As such, the interests, wishes and aspirations of the Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners should be critical and central to the strategic directions of the Council in the coming years.

Acknowledgment by the Council that Darug and Gundungurra People should be included and participate in the 'shaping of' the City of the Blue Mountains. It is fundamental that Traditional Owners can tell their continuing story of their Connection to and management of *Ngurra* (Country), and the responsibility of all residents to look after this place. Further to this, the Traditional Owners can also take the lead in ensuring that the needs identified for the broader Aboriginal community are addressed in the City.

The Council further acknowledges that this process should provide opportunities for Darug and Gundungurra people to refresh their traditional economy, prosperity and well-being, through "On Country" economic opportunities in the Blue Mountains.

Aboriginal Advisory Council Vision

"The Aboriginal Advisory Council works in partnership with the Council and other stakeholders in caring for the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our people and our Ngurra (Country) within the Blue Mountains LGA."

Local aspirations

- In response to growing trends nationally with Aboriginal communities asserting their right to and greater political authority over their *Ngurra (Country)* the Council through the support of the AAC has an opportunity to build on or enter into agreements with local Traditional Owners;
- Agreements should consider management of *Ngurra (Country)*, Traditional Owners right to live on and receive economic outcomes, in lieu of the loss of traditional economies from their *Ngurra (Country)*;
- The Blue Mountains has an opportunity through that process to redress the ongoing effects of Colonisation, what this means for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people while providing an opportunity for non-Aboriginal people to build a deeper respect for *Ngurra (Country)* and its Traditional Owners;
- The AAC and the Council can assist where possible agreements between Traditional Owner groups for the management of *Ngurra (Country)* and economic opportunities.
- It is envisioned that through real and meaningful connections to and outcomes on *Ngurra (Country)* the Council can assist the improved health and wellbeing of Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people in the City; and
- There is an opportunity for the City to be responsive to and inclusive of the Traditional Languages of the Blue Mountains, particularly in place naming, thereby contributing to local linguistic maintenance and renewal.

'Pathways' (Priority Directions)

- **Formal Recognition** - Agreements for Traditional Owners to co-manage *Ngurra (Country)* and all that this includes within the Blue Mountains Local Government Area.
- **Dual Naming** – Build the cultural awareness in the City through place naming practices that include dual naming in Traditional Languages.
- **Living on *Ngurra (Country)*** - Realisation of the social, cultural and economic opportunities on *Ngurra (Country)* for Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people, with a strong focus on younger people.
- **Honouring the Past & Responding to the Future** – Locally recognising and redressing the ongoing process of Colonisation while working with Traditional Owners to develop a shared direction for the future, which embraces the interests of all Aboriginal community members
- **Addressing Disadvantage** - Addressing ongoing disadvantage in the Aboriginal community in Civic Leadership, employment, education and economic outcomes, affordability and importantly the health and wellbeing of the community.
- **Working within Legislation** - Achieving culturally responsive community outcomes, within a Local, State and Federal legislative structure which responds to opportunities for Traditional Owner recognition, inclusion and interests in *Ngurra (Country)*.
- **Building Capacity** – Advocating for and assisting younger Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal young people to gain educational experience culturally, academically and economically to undertake leadership roles particularly in relation to opportunities that derive from *Ngurra (Country)*.

Relationships

The AAC will continue to build on its relationships with Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners to shape and deliver activities to achieve the identified actions. The AAC intends to work in partnership with the Elected Council and Council Officers to achieve outcomes that support the identified 'Pathways'.

The AAC will also build on cultural links to the broader Aboriginal community as well as stakeholders including government and non-government organisations, committees, networks and forums to achieve actions that underpin the pathways through a holistic approach.

The AAC through relationships built with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community will continue to keep the community informed on the delivery of the actions that underpin the 'Pathways'.

EVALUATION

The AAC Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 will be regularly monitored by the AAC and BMCC forming the basis of agenda items for the committee. Evaluation of the success of the Pathways outcomes will be assessed by the achievement of the underpinning actions and targets.

Annual reviews will occur towards the end of each calendar year and progress reported to the Council at the next appropriate Council meeting over the life of the strategy. A final report which will assess the overall achievements of the strategy will be reported to the Council in December 2020.

Pathways (Priority Directions) – Delivery Plan

Pathway	Actions	Role of AAC	Targets (over life of plan)
Formal Recognition	Further develop and implement Connecting to Country programs and assist with Co-management agreements with Traditional Owners	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A program of Connecting to Country activities and events is delivered annually The AAC supports initiatives that enhance Co-management outcomes The AAC assist where appropriate in supporting a Co-management agreement between the Darug Community and BMCC
	Establish connections with Major land Managers in the LGA and champion the opportunity to build agreements with Traditional Owners	Advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Council to identify major land managers in the LGA Through the AAC establish relationships with these land management representatives Advise and assist with recognition of Traditional Owners through formal arrangements, where appropriate
	Advocate and support Traditional Owner Community Leadership on Country - 'Speaking for Country'	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider approaches to assist Traditional Owners to be further acknowledged as the appropriate members of the Aboriginal community 'who can speak for Country' and local cultural protocols Support Traditional Owner Elders to enhance cultural stability and guidance
Dual naming in Traditional Languages	In response to the BMCC Asset Naming Policy develop a processes for including Darug and Gundungurra Place names in the LGA	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a process to provide Darug and Gundungurra Language names for parts of Country in the LGA in accordance with the BMCC Asset Naming Policy 2017. This process should be responsive to opportunities for new names as well as including dual names for existing named assets. Develop and agree on the implementation of this process including how places are identified and named / dual named etc. Seek knowledge holders that can assist with Traditional languages to provide existing or potential names Ensure that the Traditional Owners communities are involved in the decision making on proposed names
	Provide advice on the development of interpretive material that provides understandings of continuing connections to Country and languages of Traditional Owners	Advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an approach that informs the Council of the method of inclusion of Traditional Owners stories and language in interpretive materials. Within this approach develop a process around identifying how Aboriginal connection to Country and culture is included and what interpretative information should be standard i.e. what is meant by Country etc.
Living on Ngurra (Country)	Develop and implement BMCC 'On-Country' economic development strategies for Traditional	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development and implementation of an 'On-Country Economic Development Plan' for Traditional Owners

	Owners and in consideration of broader Aboriginal community inclusion.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider economic opportunities that are inclusive of Aboriginal people from other 'Countries' now living in the LGA
	Develop and advocate for Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal Community cultural exemptions for the Council to consider i.e. licences, charges etc.	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify types of activities administered by BMCC where Traditional Owners feel cultural exemptions may be appropriate. Consider if there are exemptions which may also assist the broader Aboriginal community Develop position and process on exemptions and seek formal endorsement by the Council on exemptions and associated processes
	Engage with tertiary institutions to build innovative training and development programs for the Aboriginal community	Advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out and build relationships with tertiary educational institutions Establish partnership opportunities between the AAC and these institutions Consult with the Aboriginal communities about training needs Develop programs with institutions that meet training needs using innovate approaches
	Capacity building in Cultural Arts and Cultural product i.e. Tourism, artwork for sale etc.	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with BMCC Cultural facilities to develop programs and events Seek out and build relationships with prominent cultural facilities in the LGA Engage programs that assist the development or enhancement of Traditional Owner / Aboriginal groups and or business in cultural 'products'
	Undertake events and celebrations on Country for Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how the AAC can support significant Aboriginal events including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAIDOC Week; Significant calendar days; and Cultural and Community events
Honouring the Past & Responding to the Future	Develop a statement of recognition by the Council of Traditional Owners Connection to Country and acknowledge the real impact of colonisation for Aboriginal people locally	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a statement of recognition of the ongoing impacts of colonisation (invasion) of Darug and Gundungurra Country while including a commitment to address issues locally Undertake Aboriginal community consultation on the draft statement Seek adoption by the Council
	Develop and deliver a program that shares Aboriginal cultural perspectives and acknowledges the process of colonisation of Aboriginal people and Country	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal groups to develop a cultural program which considers anti-racism awareness and concepts of social inclusion Build capacity within the Aboriginal community for Aboriginal people to be potential trainers Implement training program with interested local organisations

Addressing Disadvantage & Building Capacity	Work with the Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community to identify areas of disadvantage	Advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake investigation into statistical information regarding disadvantage in the Blue Mountains LGA, i.e. employment levels, tenancy types etc. • Seek out qualitative information from Aboriginal community members and community stakeholders regarding areas of disadvantage
	Assist capacity building amongst Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community to develop and implement innovative approaches to address disadvantage	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research approaches from other communities that have proven outcomes in addressing disadvantage • Develop local responses that incorporate proven outcomes or new methods to address disadvantage
	Continue to support and work with external governance bodies that focus on key issues in the Aboriginal community such as health, housing, employment etc.	Advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the AAC establish or continue relationships with key stakeholder groups that support key community issues • Seek partnership approaches to develop and implement responses to addressing disadvantage. • Advocate on issues as identified above with relevant stakeholders.
Working within Legislation	Investigate ways to achieve on-Country outcomes in Co-management and economic outcomes within existing local, state and federal legislation	Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Traditional Owners to document aspirations for 'On-Country' outcomes including cultural continuation and culturally based economic outcomes. • Identify how the development and implementation of these aspirations may be affected by local, state and commonwealth laws. • Develop approaches that work within legislative frameworks to establish outcomes identified by Traditional Owners and assist with the implementation.

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