

WARRINGAH COUNCIL



'Red Hill' by Jessica Birk

Reconciliation Action Plan



Warringah Council Reconciliation Action Plan

2008



Jessica Birk is a young Aboriginal artist and a Warringah resident. She says of Red Hill:

‘As a Yaegl descendant of the Northern Rivers of NSW, born and raised upon Guringai land in the Northern Beaches of Sydney, I feel I have a unique role as a custodian of these traditional homelands. I have an opportunity to bring my own cultural interpretation to this place.

The Sydney basin is extremely rich in rock art engravings, and the Northern Beaches is no exception. Growing up I have had the opportunity to visit many of these rock platforms and engage in what I see as a residual conversation between us the custodians of today and the original inhabitants and traditional owners of the Guringai homelands; a dialogue between past and present.

As an artist, the remnants of a visual language and the use of symbols found in these engravings are important to tap into and seem to reiterate the need to conserve the environment and its stories. These symbols enable us to decipher a collective Guringai narrative.

By referencing imagery and materials from these engravings I am able to create a visual representation of the connection that I, as an Aboriginal person, have with the Northern Sydney region and its land.’

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I. What is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation in its broad sense refers to a state in which previously hostile parties are brought into harmony. It is closely linked to notions of forgiveness, of making amends for past wrongs and of rekindling or healing a relationship.

In relation to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people¹, the term has a special meaning. Reconciliation Australia² expresses reconciliation in the following terms:

Our vision is for an Australia that recognises the special place and culture of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, values their participation and provides equal life chances for all.

Reconciliation involves justice, recognition and healing. It's about helping all Australians move forward with a better understanding of the past and how the past affects the lives of Indigenous people today.

Reconciliation involves symbolic recognition of the honoured place of the first Australians, as well as practical measures to address the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people in health, employment, education and general opportunity.³

On 13th February 2008, the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, formally apologised to Indigenous Australians for the wrongs committed against them over successive generations. His apology on behalf of the Australian Parliament was directed in particular to the Stolen Generations – the children of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander parents who for 150 years until the 1970s were forcibly removed from their families. The extent of forced removal of Indigenous children was documented in the landmark report *Bringing Them Home*, commissioned in 1995 by Prime Minister Keating and received in 1997 by Prime Minister Howard. That report spoke of the results of the policies of successive governments at both federal and state level; tens of thousands of 'broken families, shattered physical and mental health, loss of language,

culture and connection to traditional land, loss of parenting skills; and the enormous distress of many of its victims today'.⁴

Mr Rudd's speech stated in part:

. . . Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations - this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.⁵

¹ This document uses the term *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander* people or *Indigenous* people in referring to our area's Indigenous inhabitants of today. The singular term *Aboriginal* is used only in describing our local area's pre-European inhabitants or in quoting other sources. In the national context both the *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander* and *Indigenous* terms are generally used, the former in recognition of the fact that both of these ethnic and cultural groups are indigenous to Australia but each has its own distinct and unique history, culture and identity.

² Reconciliation Australia defines itself as the peak national organisation building and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation.

³ What is reconciliation? Reconciliation Australia website www.reconciliation.org.au

⁴ All set for a special Sorry Day, *The Koori Mail*, 21 May 2008

⁵ *Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples*, www.pm.gov.au





Many in the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community – including Warringah’s own Indigenous community – and the non-Indigenous community alike have hailed ‘The Apology’ (as it has come to be known) as a defining moment in national history.

That one gesture of national reconciliation perhaps encompasses Reconciliation Australia’s vision for reconciliation involving both ‘symbolic recognition’ and ‘practical measures’ to further the reconciliation cause. That is because the speech contained both gestures of respect and contrition, and the outlining of a program based on achievement of practical goals.

2. Historical context – then and now

Honouring the First Australians

In discussing human cultures and the origins of human life on earth there are many conflicting narratives on ‘how we got here’. Scientific explanations of these matters can clash with religious and spiritual belief, and in this regard Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture is no exception. There is a point at which different narratives to explain human origins become ‘lost in the mists of time’ and become theoretical or speculative – science meets mythology. Frequently, it must be said, there is truth in apparently contradictory views: in the western context for example, belief in evolution need not be hostile to Judeo-Christian beliefs.

In the case of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture, differing views are employed to explain the beginnings of the Indigenous presence on the Australian continent. Aboriginal spirituality and connection to family and to land is deeply embedded in their people’s *Dreamtime* stories. Clearly such stories are not intended to convey a scientific explanation of the Indigenous presence on this continent; nonetheless they carry significant truths for Aboriginal people and profoundly affect their outlook and philosophy today. *The Dreaming* is a present day

This new partnership on closing the gap will set concrete targets for the future: within a decade to halve the widening gap in literacy, numeracy and employment outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous Australians, within a decade to halve the appalling gap in infant mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and, within a generation, to close the equally appalling 17-year life gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in overall life expectancy.

It is in this spirit of both symbolic recognition and practical measures that this Warringah Council Reconciliation Action Plan is written.

reality for Aboriginal people and many believe that human life on earth started on this continent and moved out into the rest of the world.

In Aboriginal culture *The Dreamtime* is the period in which the Creation Spirits (Ancestors) shaped the world and created every natural thing in it. *The Dreaming* was the beginning.

The Dreaming is integral to Aboriginal spirituality. It establishes the rules governing the interrelationships between people, land and beliefs. The Aboriginal conception of time is cyclic, unlike the western linear view. As such, although the Dreaming is said to have occurred at the beginning of the world, it is seen also as ever-present. Each generation of Aboriginal people, through ritual, song and dance, is able to enter into a direct relationship with the Dreaming and experience its present day reality.⁶

The world of the Dreaming is a fundamental reality to Aboriginal people, integral to their philosophy and law. The Dreaming

. . . is an ongoing link between the Spirit Ancestors and Aboriginal people, animals and nature. Specific Dreamings are linked to specific regions of land / country, and these are the custodial responsibility of specific

⁶ Aboriginal Cultural Education Program, Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE

Aboriginal people. They refer to each group's stories, which express their understanding and beliefs about their origins. For example, an Aboriginal person may point to a certain land-form and say, 'That is my people's Dreaming'.

The special places where the Spirit Ancestors of the Dreamtime now reside are still considered by Aboriginal people to contain their power and creative energy. The Dreaming of a place concerns its physical nature; the animal, bird, fish or plant associated with it. The Dreamtime stories associated with the Spirit Ancestor of a place include both those that are sacred and also the public versions.⁷

In addition to this spiritual basis to Aboriginal culture it is interesting to note that based on the 2001 and 2006 Census' around seven out of ten Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the Northern Sydney region describe themselves as Christians.

In terms of the western / scientific view on the origins of the Indigenous presence on the continent, the following is a broad summary of current thinking:

Australia's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture is today widely regarded as the oldest continuously surviving culture in the world. It is generally accepted that the Indigenous presence on the Australian continent dates back over 60,000 years, yet how the people got here remains the subject of considerable conjecture by historians, anthropologists and archaeologists alike. As one commentator observed:

*Australia's indigenous peoples are there because their distant ancestors crossed at least sixty miles of fairly formidable sea tens of thousands of years before anyone else on earth dreamed of such an endeavour, and did it in such sufficient numbers to begin to start the colonisation of a continent.*⁸

Beyond this, their mastery of the continent and capacity to live in harmony with its many landscapes is also viewed as an incredible, and somewhat baffling, accomplishment.

*They spread over (the continent) with amazing swiftness and developed strategies and patterns of behaviour to exploit or accommodate every extreme of the landscape, from the wettest rainforests to the driest deserts. No people on earth have lived in more environments with greater success for longer.*⁹

When Captain James Cook reached Botany Bay in 1770 the way of life of the Aboriginal tribes of the Sydney region, and those spread throughout the as yet unnamed continent, had endured with little or no outside contact¹⁰ for tens of thousands of years. As Cook famously observed in the *Endeavour Journal*:

*They may appear to some to be the most wretched people on earth, but in reality they are far happier than we Europeans. They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition: the earth and the sea of their own accord furnish them with all things necessary for life. . . they seemed to set no value on anything we gave them, nor would they ever part with anything of their own . . . Elsewhere he added, with a touch of poignancy: All they seem'd to want was for us to be gone.*¹¹

According to Boyce¹² the total Indigenous population in Sydney at the time of the First Fleet was estimated at approximately 2,000 people. Other sources put the number closer to 3,000. Nationally it is thought that the population at the time was between 250,000 and one million, made up of about 600 tribes, each with its own language or distinct dialect.¹³

Clans or bands (called "tribes" by the Europeans) within Sydney belonged to several major language groups, often with coastal and inland dialects. According to *Barani: An Indigenous history of Sydney City*¹⁴:

There is some disagreement as to the degree of cultural separateness of the people who traditionally lived in the adjoining lands which comprise Greater Sydney, encompassing most of the western suburbs and stretching up to the Blue Mountains. The claim that the many language groups were of one tribe is based on an

⁷ Aboriginal Cultural Education Program, Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE

⁸ *Down Under*, Bill Bryson, Random House, 2000. Sometimes the observations of an outside observer can carry added insight.

⁹ Bryson, as above

¹⁰ There had been isolated instances of European exploration of the Australian continent as far back as the early 17th and even late 16th centuries but no substantive contact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had been made and no colonisation had taken place.

¹¹ Quoted in Bryson

¹² *Warringah, Pictorial History*, Jim Boyce, Kingsclear Books, 2006

¹³ Aboriginal Education resources guide, NSW Department of School Education (Metropolitan North Region), 2008

¹⁴ www.cityofsydney/barani



understanding that they spoke the same language, but in two distinct dialects.

However, there is much evidence to suggest that the major language groups of greater Sydney were different groups using different languages and different initiation rites. There is evidence of Aboriginal people migrating in a north-south direction but none from east to west. The appearance of men from the inland group was different from that of coastal men who were missing their right incisor tooth, removed during their initiation.

Similarly, when Bennelong of the Wangal people went into Parramatta¹⁵ in 1789, he did not understand the language spoken there so that's another practical example of tribes being distinct entities. The twenty-nine or so clan groups of the wider Sydney region were associated with specific areas of land by family boundaries, and distinguished by body decorations, hairstyles, songs and dances, tools and weapons.

Warringah's Aboriginal heritage

Although reports from the early days of the colony give some insight into the life and culture of Warringah's original inhabitants, unfortunately little detailed knowledge remains. Even the name of the tribal / language group that lived here at the time of the First Fleet is uncertain. They are often referred to today as the Guringai or Kuringgai people. Although probably Aboriginal in origin, these names derive from the late 19th century and were used by European settlers to describe tribes that extended from modern day Port Macquarie in the north to Bulli in the south. Some historians have conjectured that those living in Warringah were part of the Dharug nation and spoke a Dharug dialect.¹⁶ Others have questioned that theory, suggesting that the Warringah tribes were enemies of the Dharug. The two theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive: suffice it to say that the correct name of the Aboriginal 'nation' to which Warringah's original inhabitants belonged remains uncertain.

The consensus appears to be there were three

clan groups in the Northern Beaches area – the Gayamagal (Manly), the Garigal (Pittwater) and the Cannalgal (around North Harbour). (The Garigal are commemorated by Garigal National Park today.) There was a minimum of about 25 and a maximum of about 130 people in each group, with the average size being around 60 people. There were an estimated 300 Aboriginal people living in Warringah at the time of the First Fleet – curiously, fewer than our current Indigenous population of 457 (based on the 2006 Census). Though, importantly, at that time they made up 100% of the local population whereas now, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people account for just 0.3% of the total.

Warringah's original inhabitants were coastal dwellers and expert hunters and fishers who enjoyed a varied diet of marsupials, fish, crustaceans and local edible plants. They were also excellent boatmen – at least one report (from Lieutenant Bradley) stated that they even used their boats in the surf – a practice emulated by our local surf clubs to this day. The lieutenant observed Aboriginal people landing in canoes on Manly Beach 'which they did with ease although a very great surf was running'.¹⁷

Tragically an estimated one third to one half of Sydney's Aboriginal population was wiped out by a smallpox epidemic in 1789 and from this point on the Aboriginal population declined dramatically. European settlement and policies aimed at containing (at best) or exterminating (at worst) Aboriginal people further decimated their number and culture.

Despite the devastation that the loss of culture, land and identity brought to the Aboriginal people, the Northern Beaches area is fortunate in still playing host to a rich heritage of Aboriginal habitation, including a large number of sandstone engravings, shell middens and sacred sites. Through the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Heritage Office, Warringah and its neighbouring councils are actively seeking to record, protect and preserve this precious heritage.

¹⁵ On the land of the Burramatta people of the Darug (or Dharug) nation.

¹⁶ *Sydney's Aboriginal Past*, Val Attenbrow, 2002. Quoted in Boyce, see above

¹⁷ Boyce

Although the Northern Beaches today has a vibrant Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community, until very recently it was thought unlikely that any direct descendants of the 'Guringai' peoples remained in the area. Apart from the sad loss of the area's pre-European legacy this represents, it has also meant for example that it has not been possible to conduct *Welcome to Country* ceremonies because these may only be conducted by a *Custodian or Traditional Owner* – ie an Indigenous person who is a descendant of the original inhabitants of an area. However it has recently come to light that a local man, Mr Bob Waterer, has documented links to the Broken Bay tribe. The head of that tribe was Bungaree, a well known mediator for early NSW governors who also accompanied Matthew Flinders on his famous circumnavigation of the Australian continent. Mr Waterer has documents showing that he is the great, great grandson of Bidy Bungaree (1803 –1880) from the same tribe. Bidy's father is thought to have been Richard Wallace, an English convict seaman. Bidy adopted the name Sarah Wallace. Bidy's German husband was John Lewis Ferdinando (later known as John Lewis)¹⁸. Her mother was Matora, the first wife of Bungaree.

The local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community of today is a strong and active one, with links to country throughout NSW and Australia. However many have stated that social isolation and feeling cut-off from traditional culture has had negative impacts in their community and in the lives of individuals and families. Particularly among the elders and other adults in the community, concern has been expressed about a loss of cultural identity among younger Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders in the area. Through the work of the Aboriginal Education unit of the Department of School Education and a number of other Indigenous workers and programs in the area, efforts are being made to support Indigenous young people to confidently affirm their heritage, and Indigenous education for all students within the school system is being actively encouraged. However the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community feels

strongly that kinship ties and 'cultural experience' must also be strengthened from within their own community. It is for this reason that a number of the actions in this Plan set out to actively support self-determination and community building on the part of local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.


Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members from the Northern Beaches who provided input into this Plan also spoke of their feelings of marginalisation and isolation. They stated that even amongst 'well meaning people' there was little understanding of this and the stigma that many Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people felt in actively embracing their cultural identity. Some reported feeling 'ignored' or 'invisible' within the broader community. Anecdotally, it has been suggested that the actual population of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in Warringah – and in the broader Northern Sydney region – may be significantly higher than suggested by Census figures. Some in the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community have suggested that many choose to ignore or suppress their Indigenous heritage to avoid the stigmatisation, marginalisation and questioning that this frequently entails – eg 'But you don't *look* Aboriginal'!

Despite continuing disadvantage on the part of Warringah's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population, community members also affirmed that initiatives such as:

- The continuing expansion of the Guringai Festival in the region
- The Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan
- The Aboriginal Heritage Office (serving the Northern Sydney region)
- The Northern Sydney Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy
- The establishment of the Guringai Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)
- The development of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Education Plan

¹⁸ *Elimatta*, Newsletter of the Aboriginal Support Group, Manly Warringah Pittwater, Winter 2007





and a range of other initiatives by community groups and government departments had made a tangible difference in providing recognition, affirmation and support to local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and culture in recent years.

Australia 2008 – An Indigenous snapshot

Local population statistics

2006 Census statistics on the local and regional Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander populations are now available on the Warringah Council and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) websites – see the footnote for details.¹⁹ In brief:

In 2006, 0.3% of the Warringah population were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent compared to 1.1% for Sydney.

While the area has a relatively low proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the proportion per suburb varies considerably. Proportions ranged from a low of 0% in Killarney Heights to a high of 0.8% in Allambie Heights. The five areas with the highest percentages were:

- Allambie Heights (0.8%)
- Narraweena (0.7%)
- Curl Curl – North Curl Curl (0.6%)
- North Manly (0.6%)
- Davidson (0.5%).

Warringah local government area has the highest Indigenous population in the Northern Sydney region, closely followed by Hornsby with 447 Indigenous persons (0.3% of the Hornsby population).

It is not possible at this point to provide a more comprehensive breakdown on the local Indigenous population because many of the available analyses on Indigenous issues are either based on state and national figures or are out-of-date. Based on first-hand knowledge of existing community networks it is likely that the indicators of Indigenous disadvantage on

the national level outlined below are in general less evident in the Northern Beaches area given that the area's relative affluence and generally high education and employment levels are reflected to some extent among its Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population.

That is not to say however that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the area enjoy a privileged position: local Indigenous workers report the continuing prevalence of health problems, high levels of housing stress, educational and employment difficulties and psychological and family trauma among members of the Stolen Generations as indicators of disadvantage within the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population.

This section²⁰ is based on statistics compiled by Reconciliation Australia and highlights Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders' wellbeing. It is based on a number of major statistical collections as well as specific research that has been conducted in recent years. Reconciliation Australia says it should be noted that 'while statistics can be useful indicators of trends and disparities they don't tell the whole story. Averages can't describe the length and breadth of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders' experiences across Australia'.

In cases where only a cross-section of statistics is quoted it is either because they highlight an especially telling aspect of a national issue or because only a limited range is available (eg surveys of individual states only). Unless stated otherwise all data is drawn from statistical analyses compiled by Reconciliation Australia.

Life expectancy

Life expectancy for Indigenous Australians is approximately 17 years lower than for non-Indigenous Australians: 59 years for Indigenous males compared with 77 years for non-Indigenous males, and 65 years for Indigenous females compared with 82 years for non-Indigenous females.²¹

¹⁹ warringah.nsw.gov.au – see links to Population Profile on the home page. See also censusdata.abs.gov.au and follow the links to the council area and regional statistical analyses.

²⁰ Source: Reconciliation Australia – www.reconciliation.org.au

²¹ *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*, Productivity Commission, 2005

In Qld, SA, WA and NT, 75% of Indigenous males and 65% of Indigenous females die before the age of 65 years, compared to 26% and 16% of non-Indigenous males and females for the same age group.

Indigenous people experience an earlier onset of most chronic diseases, have more General Practitioner consultations for the management of certain conditions (such as diabetes and ear problems) and are more likely to be hospitalised than non-Indigenous people. Hospitalisation rates are 12 times higher for Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people for care involving dialysis, and twice as high for skin diseases, respiratory diseases and injury.

Education and employment

In 2002, nationally 18% of Indigenous people over 18 years of age had completed year 12, compared to 43% of non-Indigenous people.

Nationally, 46% of all Indigenous people aged 15-64 years were not in the labour force, compared to 27% of non-Indigenous people aged 15-64. Of those who participate in the labour market, 20% of Indigenous people were unemployed, compared to 7% of non-Indigenous people, making Indigenous people 2.8 times more likely to be unemployed. In reality, the extent of this difference is even greater as CDEP (Indigenous work for the dole) participants are counted as employed. If they were counted as unemployed, the Indigenous unemployment rate would be over 40%.²²

Health²³

In 2004, 51% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over were cigarette smokers.

Indigenous people living in remote areas were less likely to consume alcohol (54%) than those in non-remote areas (75%), but the levels of risky alcohol consumption in remote and non-remote areas were similar.

Around 15% of Indigenous people reported risky alcohol consumption; this compares with 14% of non-Indigenous people. (This somewhat counters the stereotype that alcohol abuse is significantly more common in the Indigenous than the non-Indigenous community.)

Incarceration

In 2005, an Indigenous person was 12 times more likely to be behind bars than a non-Indigenous person. Indigenous people comprised 22% of the prison population.

Self harm²⁴

Suicide death rates are much higher for Indigenous people (between 12 and 36 per 100,000 people) than non-Indigenous people (between 11 and 16 per 100,000 people) in most states / territories for which data is available.

3. Why a Warringah Council Reconciliation Action Plan?

Reconciliation Australia has as a key objective closing the unacceptable 17 year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It states that one means of achieving this goal is to encourage organisations to develop their own Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). The first step is the building of positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people: a RAP helps to achieve this by formalising an organisation's contribution to the

reconciliation process. A RAP identifies clear actions and realistic targets, as well as lessons learnt along the way. All RAPs include a creative blend of *relationships*, *respect* and *opportunities*.

In 1998 Warringah Council adopted its first Reconciliation Strategy. That strategy represented an important step forward for both Warringah Council and the community in putting reconciliation on the

²² Based on 2001 Census figures quoted by *Reconciliation Australia*. More recent figures were not available at the time of writing.

²³ 2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, ABS

²⁴ *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*, 2005 (see above)





agenda at a local level, and much has been achieved in the ten years since that strategy was first adopted. (*Appendix A* summarises Council's key achievements in reconciliation over that ten year period.)

Given that 2008 is the tenth anniversary of the above strategy, and given too the renewed commitment to reconciliation that the Australian Government's apology in March 2008 has come to represent to many Australians, it is timely to advance the reconciliation cause in Warringah by revisiting – and re-invigorating – Council's own commitment to reconciliation.

4. Negotiation

According to local Indigenous people that contributed to this plan's development, an important element of this renewed commitment must be to increase the level of 'ownership' of the reconciliation process among the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community. Many local Indigenous people expressed scepticism about the wider reconciliation process at both the national and the local level. Many expressed a view that the 'reconciliation agenda' is seen as tokenistic by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members; a means of appeasing 'middle Australia's guilt' as much as benefiting Indigenous people in tangible ways. Perhaps such a view is understandable given the life expectancy gap and other indicators of relative disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (see *An Indigenous snapshot* in section 2). Clearly there is still some road to travel before full reconciliation can be achieved. To Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, self-determination is integral to the reconciliation process.

According to the resource kit for local government in *NSW Engaging with local Aboriginal communities*²⁵ – developed in close collaboration with Indigenous people:

Self-determination is a key issue for Aboriginal communities in ensuring the freedom to live well, according to their own values and beliefs, have ongoing choice about their way of life, and be respected by non-Aboriginal Australians.

As a means of documenting and progressing national reconciliation, Reconciliation Australia asks that all RAPs be registered with them. This is to ensure that it meets their criteria, which include that they be developed in collaboration with Indigenous people and that they include clear timelines and goals. Therefore it is recommended that this RAP be registered with Reconciliation Australia after consideration by the local Indigenous community, broader community and Council.

Attempts at consultation during the later half of last century were often perceived by communities as tokenistic, as they often were. As a result Aboriginal people may be cynical in their attitude to all levels of government and question the genuineness of the consultation being undertaken.

The term "negotiation" is preferred to "consultation" as it suggests an equal relationship where parties work together to reach agreement on an issue. It is crucial to the success of council programs that Aboriginal people are involved through a process of negotiation.

This RAP therefore sets out to progress Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people's own stated goal of achieving greater self-determination as a key element in the plan's ultimate success.

Further to this, the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people involved in the development of this RAP strongly expressed the view that it is they who should be the primary stakeholders in the plan's initial development. For this reason, negotiation to date has focused on speaking directly with local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members and with key Indigenous workers and organisations from the region. This includes:

- Attendance and scoping of key issues at an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community picnic day at Narrabeen Lagoon in December 2007

²⁵ Published by the NSW Department of Local Government and the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW, 2007

- Meeting with representatives of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, Aboriginal Heritage Office and Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan Project Officer in March 2008
- Meeting with the Community Facilitator for the Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy Project (Northern Sydney Region) and Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan Project Officer in May 2008.

In addition a series of consultation meetings were held with staff from Warringah, Pittwater and Manly councils during May 2008.

The draft Plan was placed on public exhibition in August 2008 and at that time a series of further consultations took place with the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community, agencies and reconciliation groups.

5. Action Plan

It is a Reconciliation Australia requirement that RAPs are arranged under the following headings:

- RELATIONSHIPS
- RESPECT
- OPPORTUNITIES
- TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING

The actions are therefore arranged in accordance with these headings. This enables the plan to be registered with Reconciliation Australia as part of the national reconciliation movement.

This plan's focus is on actions that Warringah Council can take to progress reconciliation locally, but this cannot occur in isolation. Rather, the reconciliation process must, by its very nature, be collaborative, founded on a working partnership with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and supported by the broader community.

To ensure the process stays on track and meets Reconciliation Australia guidelines, the requirement to track and report on progress – part d) in the RAP requirements – is shown in the columns headed Timeline and Measurable Target. This provides a simple means of gauging and reporting on progress in implementing the plan.

Warringah's original Reconciliation Strategy of 1998 incorporated the following principles. They remain relevant today so they have been updated here as the basis of the 2008 plan:

Principles underpinning this Reconciliation Action Plan

In the spirit of reconciliation, the principles underpinning this plan are founded on a commitment to the reconciliation process and the five steps to reconciliation developed by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. These are:

Step 1 - Understanding and accepting the history of our shared experience by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community

Step 2 - Respecting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures and identity

Step 3 - Recognising that past injustice continues to give rise to present injustices for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians

Step 4 - Identifying what more needs to be done and making changes within Australian society

Step 5 - Revaluing our citizenship to live together in unity and harmony.

The other foundational principles are:

- A recognition that the first step towards reconciliation is to acknowledge the traditional custodians
- An undertaking to listen to and learn from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians
- An understanding that achieving reconciliation is as much about the way we do things as what we do





- A commitment to develop and observe appropriate protocols in regard to negotiating and working with Indigenous Australians
- A knowledge that reconciliation will not occur without broad community consultation, involvement and support
- A recognition that this process will sometimes be difficult and that no doubt we will make mistakes
- An appreciation that in order to advance some of the points in this plan Council may need to negotiate agreements with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and / or their representatives
- An awareness that that this process must be appropriately resourced including the costs associated with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander participants in this process
- A belief that an active commitment to the reconciliation process will have a positive impact on the quality of life of the residents of Warringah.

Statement of Commitment

Warringah Council acknowledges that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians were the first people of this land. We celebrate the survival of Indigenous Australians and their culture, following the devastating impact of European colonisation. We support the right of Indigenous Australians to determine their own future.

The arrival of Europeans brought massive change to the Aboriginal people now known as the Guringai people, the original inhabitants of our local area. We mourn their suffering and loss.

Today Warringah is occupied by people drawn from Indigenous and many other cultures. Warringah Council is committed to celebrating diversity and respect for one another's cultures. This Council is also committed to the process of reconciliation, both locally and on a national level.

We accept our responsibility to develop an awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander history and culture which, we believe strengthens and enriches our lives. Warringah Council is also committed to respecting, protecting and managing Aboriginal sacred sites and special places.

We encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together to celebrate their different cultures and to move forward together.

Key actions

This section uses Reconciliation Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan framework to outline key actions for Council in implementing the plan. The Responsibility column highlights in bold the group primarily responsible for implementation (the 'driver'), with partners in that action listed beneath. Unless stated otherwise the driver is responsible for managing the implementation of that action, and for ensuring it is incorporated into that group's business planning and reported on at the end of each financial year in accordance with Council's Strategic Community Plan reporting requirements.

Our vision for reconciliation

This plan reflects Warringah Council's commitment to reconciliation. It has been developed to enable Council to show its respect to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, to honour their descendants and to advance the reconciliation process for all the people of Warringah. As such it recognises the potential role and / or responsibility of local government in the delivery and management of many of the issues identified by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders as being essential to the reconciliation process. This includes cultural, intellectual and cultural heritage rights, appropriate service delivery, human resource policies, governance, and the issues associated with land, land tenure and other natural resource management. The plan seeks to accomplish this by:

- Reflecting the relationship between community / cultural development activities and the attainment of community support for the plan
- Integrating an expression of this commitment into every appropriate aspect of Warringah Council's operations and services
- Identifying the cultural, social, administrative and policy changes needed to advance the reconciliation process throughout the organisation.

Our business

Our Council was established in 1906 and administers an area of 15,200 hectares on Sydney's northern beaches. The area was originally home to several Aboriginal clans now known collectively as the Guringai people and is now the home of approximately 141,000 people. We have a unique bush and beach environment with 14 kilometres of coastline including

nine beaches and approximately 6,000 hectares of natural bushland and open space, with many features of cultural and heritage significance including hundreds of significant Aboriginal sites. We are home to the Manly Dam, lagoons in Narrabeen, Manly, Dee Why and Curl Curl, Stony Range Botanic Garden and 75 threatened native plant and animal species.

We own and manage the Glen Street Theatre and Warringah Aquatic Centre and are a partner in the Kimbriki Waste and Recycling Centre with Mosman, Pittwater and Manly Councils. We also own and manage 24 community centres, four childcare centres and four community libraries.

Our RAP

According to the local Indigenous people that contributed to this plan's development, an important element of Council's renewed commitment must be to increase the level of 'ownership' of the reconciliation process among the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community. For them, self-determination is integral to the reconciliation process. This RAP therefore sets out to progress Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people's own stated goal of achieving greater self-determination as a key element in the plan's ultimate success.

During the course of the plan's implementation Indigenous people will act in an advisory role on issues that concern them. As well as providing a vital lifeline between Council and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community, this will help ensure that the implementation process is kept on track and in accordance with Indigenous people's wishes.



A) Relationships

Since the first Reconciliation Strategy was adopted in 1998 Council has sought to strengthen its relationships with the local Indigenous community and Indigenous agencies. This RAP seeks to take these relationships to a new level both by maintaining regular communication with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community representatives, and by working to improve the responsiveness of Council services to Indigenous people's needs.

Focus areas			
RECOGNITION, CONSULTATION, NEGOTIATION			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To honour the unique status of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people as the original inhabitants of Australia To actively support Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in achieving their goal of greater self-determination To provide structures and processes that give Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people a say in decisions that affect them To increase the opportunities for direct communication between the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community and Warringah Council. 			
Action	Responsibility ²⁶	Timeline	Measurable target
1. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee comprising Indigenous community representatives to provide a structure for effective communication with Indigenous communities and the opportunity for Indigenous communities to inform and participate in Council decision making. The Department of Local Government's (DLG's) Guide to Engaging with Aboriginal Communities contains guidelines to assist in developing terms of reference for such a group. Approach neighbouring councils to seek endorsement for such a committee to be established on a regional basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy & Policy (Council & Executive Support) in collaboration with Manly, Pittwater and Mosman (ie SHOROC) councils Community & Environmental Services (continuing liaison) 	† Terms of Reference developed by July 2009	Committee established in 2009-10 financial year (either autonomously or with neighbouring councils)
2. Community based management Support the efforts of local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people to achieve greater self-determination by establishing incorporated associations to develop community structures and networks and to attract resources to the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan Project Officer Strategy & Policy (via NSASP steering committee) 	Scoping meeting with community held by September 2008	Incorporation achieved by at least one new Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community organisation in the Northern Sydney region by August 2009

²⁶ The section of Council or other responsible bodies shown in bold represent the primary area of responsibility, with others named providing a support role in implementation.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>3. Community networks Support the efforts of the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community to establish both formal and informal social networks through assistance which may include the provision of premises and other meeting space, expertise and grants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan Project Officer • Strategy & Policy • Community & Environmental Services in collaboration with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members and workers from the region 	Work commenced during 2007-08 and will continue during the life of the present Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan (2007-11)	Networks established by August 2009
<p>4. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander gathering place In collaboration with neighbouring councils support the local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community's efforts to establish an Indigenous gathering place in the region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Environmental Services • Strategy & Policy • Property & Commercial Development in collaboration with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander organisations and community members; neighbouring councils 	Detailed arrangements to be determined by negotiation between Council and local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander networks commencing 2008-09	Identification of potential spaces 2009-10
<p>5. Negotiation and consultation Revise Council's community consultation protocols regarding negotiation with the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community, using the Department of Local Government's Engaging with local Aboriginal communities resource kit and other 'best practice' guides as source documents</p>	Strategy & Policy	Incorporate into Strategy & Policy business plan for 2009-10	Project undertaken 2009-10
<p>6. Reconciliation groups Continue to support the activities of reconciliation groups through practical and in-kind support</p>	Various support and liaison roles including Strategy & Policy, Communications, Cultural Services	Ongoing	Document nature of support given annually





Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>7. Council staff training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand cultural awareness/site management training for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development assessment staff – Land management staff • Incorporate cultural awareness training for staff, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – as part of induction of new staff – for all staff as part of the continuing training program ensuring that such training is delivered by suitably qualified Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander persons and that it has a local focus • Support and encourage all staff teams to implement the knowledge acquired through cultural awareness training in enhancing the accessibility of Council services to the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources • Executive Management Team 	Incorporate into Human Resources business plan for 2009-10	Instituted 2009-10
<p>8. Promotion of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and achievements</p> <p>Publicise the contributions and achievements of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people through Council publications, newsletters and other media</p>	<p>Communications</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Report annually on number of stories / features with Indigenous content</p>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>9. Recognition / awards program</p> <p>Give consideration to the establishment of a local awards program and / or competition to recognise one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievements of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people • The contribution of a local person or group to reconciliation (to be presented during Reconciliation Week) • Promoting a broad reconciliation or other Indigenous theme (eg Aboriginal spirituality and beliefs or connection to land) through an artwork. The competition would be open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people but would be subject to protocols and guidance from the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community 	<p>Details to be negotiated in collaboration with the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee</p>	<p>For establishment in 2009-10 or 2010-11 year</p>	<p>To be determined by negotiation with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee</p>

Focus areas

SERVICE PROVISION and DEVELOPMENT

- To show respect for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and culture in the planning and delivery of Council services and programs
- To consider the needs of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the planning and delivery of Council services and programs

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>10. Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan (NSASP) Project Officer</p> <p>Continue to contribute to the employment of a Project Officer to coordinate the implementation of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan</p>	<p>Strategy & Policy</p>	<p>Implementation continuing till review of plan in 2011</p>	<p>Report annually on number of stories / features with Indigenous content</p>
<p>11. NSASP implementation at council level</p> <p>Continue to implement the NSASP recommendations both at an individual council level and as part of the regional coordination group</p>	<p>Strategy & Policy in collaboration with neighbouring councils and the NSASP Project Officer</p>	<p>Implementation continuing until review of plan in 2011</p>	<p>Will vary from year to year as per annual workplans / business plans of both participating councils and the NSASP Project Officer. Reported on in separate reporting regime</p>





Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>12. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) and its employment of Heritage Officers to recognise and manage local Aboriginal heritage • Actively manage local sites in collaboration with the AHO • Maintain and update the library services' Aboriginal heritage collections 	<p>Strategy & Policy in collaboration with neighbouring councils and the AHO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & Development • Parks, Reserves & Foreshores • Natural Environment • Cultural Services 	<p>Implementation continuing as per separate funding agreement (expires 2010)</p>	<p>As per annual workplans / business plans and related reporting regime</p>
<p>13. Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in the implementation of the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy for Northern Sydney, through: • Assisting its coordinator (Community Facilitator) in developing local Indigenous community networks • Adapting Council services to become more accessible to Indigenous people in keeping with the priorities outlined in the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy and other protocols including those outlined in the DLG's guide to Engaging with Aboriginal communities 	<p>Children's & Youth Services and other teams by negotiation with NSASP Project Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy & Policy (protocols) 	<p>As per annual workplans / business plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports direct to funding body • Annual reporting on number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people on Council's childcare waitlist (see the following action) and using Council children's and family services

B) Respect

Council acknowledges Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land. In respecting this unique status Council undertakes to listen to and learn from our Indigenous community, to adapt our practices and processes to reflect this relationship, and to actively promote reconciliation and respect for Indigenous culture in the broader community.

Focus areas			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>14. Consultation</p> <p>Seek the permission of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people before starting work on any Council project likely to have a direct impact on them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Management Team • Whole of Council 	Ongoing	Annual review for reporting on programs involving Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander negotiation / consultation
<p>15. Flying the flag</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe existing protocols governing the displaying of the Aboriginal flag in relation to other flags • Subject to advice from the local Aboriginal community consider flying the Torres Strait Islander flag alongside the Australian, NSW, Aboriginal and Council flags to commemorate days of significance to Indigenous people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council & Executive Support • Communications • Cultural Services 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flag on permanent display at Council • Flying of Torres Strait Islander flag discussed with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee in its first year of operation





Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>16. Welcome to Country</p> <p>Welcome to Country is where an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Custodian²⁷ welcomes people to their land at the beginning of a meeting, event or ceremony. An appropriate person such as a recognised Elder within the local area needs to conduct this welcome.</p> <p>Welcome to Country enables Traditional Custodians to give their blessing for the event. It is an important mark of respect for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people. In Warringah's case it is recommended that, because of the small number of documented descendants of the area's original inhabitants, a Welcome to Country be reserved for particularly significant occasions such as the inauguration of a new Council, the opening of a significant building or other community project or the opening or naming of a site with special significance to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council & Executive Support • Communications • Cultural Services 	Ongoing	Instituted at the inauguration of a new Warringah Council in October 2008
<p>17. Acknowledgement of Country</p> <p>Acknowledgement of Country is where other people – either Indigenous or non-Indigenous - acknowledge and show respect for the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the event is taking place. Council already uses an agreed form of wording for such occasions. However in practice it appears to be used somewhat inconsistently therefore it is timely to review the circumstances in which an Acknowledgement of Country takes place and to clearly specify who are regarded as appropriate people to issue such an acknowledgement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council & Executive Support • Communications • Cultural Services 	Ongoing	Review and recommendations made 2008-09

²⁷A Custodian or Traditional Owner is an Indigenous person who is a descendent of the original inhabitants of an area.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>18. Indigenous art strategy</p> <p>Consider developing an Indigenous art strategy for Warringah so as to ensure that Warringah's publicly owned artworks reflect themes and history of the area's Indigenous presence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Services • Strategy & Policy 	2009-10	For consideration as part of 2009-10 business plans
<p>19. Public art</p> <p>Provide opportunities for Indigenous art and artists to be featured in prominent locations such as parks, town centres and roads in accordance with Council's Public Art Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Environmental Services • Cultural Services • Property & Commercial Development 	Ongoing	Consideration of Indigenous public art projects included in business plans / CapEx on an annual basis
<p>20. Signs</p> <p>Consider the use of entry markers and other signs in public locations to pay respect to an area's traditional owners. This can also be of invaluable educational benefit to the local population and to visitors alike. Guidelines and suggestions for appropriate usage and placement are included in Council's Cultural Plan (2007). Signs can be used in a number of ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To mark area boundaries (eg Lane Cove Council has introduced public art incorporating Council area boundary signs to respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Land of the Cameraygal people) • To mark sites of significance to traditional owners (eg sites thought to be sacred) • To mark sites of significance to the broader community but with connections to the Indigenous community (eg a park, street, town square or other feature to commemorate Indigenous people's achievements or to otherwise acknowledge and pay respect to them) • It can also be used in publications and in other visible locations such as on websites, letterheads etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Environmental Services • Communications • Cultural Services • Council & Executive Support (liaison with Council and other teams) 	Implemented during first term of new Council 2008-2012	Annual reporting on new signs introduced to acknowledge Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and culture





Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>21. Corporate identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Council's 'Corporate Communications and Visual Standards Manual' and practices with a view to giving significantly greater visibility to acknowledging the area's traditional owners Include Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander artwork and an Acknowledgement of Country in Council publications, stationery and on Council's website Maintain, update and promote the 'Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Warringah' portal on Council's main website to increase its value as a resource for local Indigenous people, agencies and the broader community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Information Management and Technology (statistical / technical support) 	Review current guidelines 2008-2010	Monitor usage levels of 'Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Warringah' web pages
<p>22. Naming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is little in the way of prominent acknowledgement of the area's traditional owners in terms of signage or the naming of streets, parks, buildings or other landmarks in the area. As such it is recommended that Council review its naming protocols, in collaboration with local Indigenous people, with a view to significantly increasing the visible acknowledgement of the area's traditional owners the Guringai people in prominent public locations Incorporate a greater Indigenous element into public art projects in Warringah Consider incorporating significant Indigenous influence into the naming and identification of high visibility sites in the redevelopment of Dee Why Town Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council & Executive Support Communications Community & Environmental Services Cultural Services 	Implemented during first term of new Council 2008-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review instituted 2009-10 Annual reporting on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander place names, public art introduced

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>23. Sister Cities</p> <p>Maintain and expand the cultural exchange opportunities created through the Brewarrina Sister Cities relationship through continuing the annual youth exchange program and through consideration of a higher level of corporate and community support for the program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Services (to conduct a review of the program 08-09) • Recommendations may affect other areas of Council and / or community organisations that support the program 	<p>Review commencing 08-09</p>	<p>Review recommendations introduced 2009-10</p>
<p>24. Use of Council reserves and facilities</p> <p>Investigate the inclusion of zero and low-cost fees within Council's fees and charges for defined Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander events in Council managed reserves and facilities</p>	<p>Community and Environmental Series</p>	<p>For consideration in relation to fees and charges for the 2009-10 financial year</p>	<p>Implement recommendations 2009-10</p>



C) Opportunities

Since the time of European settlement Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people have had to face marginalisation, disadvantage and exploitation. The imposition of an unknown foreign culture onto their traditional ways of life has had devastating effects on their wellbeing both individually and collectively over the last 220-plus years. National statistics continue to paint an alarming picture of the many deficits Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people face when compared to the population at large: the gap in average life expectancy of 17-plus years between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians starkly highlights the need for significantly increased opportunities and for greater self-determination for Indigenous people.

Focus area			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
To facilitate opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people within Council and the community			
<p>25. Equal Employment Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Council's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and procedures with a view to optimising opportunities for Indigenous people to gain: • Work experience (for students) • Employment • Graduate development with Warringah Council. • Seek opportunities through the Elsa Dixon Employment Program and other funding schemes to increase employment opportunities for Indigenous people at Warringah Council 	Human Resources	Commencing 2008-09; review for implementation commencing 2009-10	Annual reporting on number of Indigenous employee working with / applying for positions with Council and monitoring of trends over time

D) Tracking progress and reporting

To ensure the process stays on track and meets Reconciliation Australia guidelines, the requirement to track and report on progress - part d) in the RAP requirements – is shown in the *Measurable target* column in the preceding tables. This provides a simple means of gauging and reporting on progress in implementing the plan.

Focus area			
To report on progress in implementing the Warringah Council Reconciliation Action Plan			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>26. RAP reporting</p> <p>Council will oversee the implementation, reporting and further development of the RAP through its regular annual business planning and reporting regime and through liaison with the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy & Policy • All teams 	Commencing 2008-09 year	Outlined annually in business reporting for each unit and for Council as a whole
<p>27. RAP promotion</p> <p>Council RAP to be promoted internally and made available to the public and relevant external organisations on the Council website and the Reconciliation Australia website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy & Policy 	Commencing 2008-09 financial year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress of 2008-09 RAP actions to be identified and tracked with all relevant units by end October 2008 • RAP to be promoted on Council website and forwarded to relevant organisations by end November 2008 • RAP to be published on Reconciliation Australia website by end November 2008
<p>28. Annual updating</p> <p>Council RAP is reported on and refreshed annually and made available to the public on the Council website and the Reconciliation Australia website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy & Policy 	Commencing 2009-10 financial year	Reporting undertaken by end 2009-10 financial year

Warringah Council's achievements in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander reconciliation since its first Reconciliation Strategy, 1998

In May 1998 Warringah Council adopted its first Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Strategy. In the decade since, Council has been involved in a significant number of activities and programs to progress the cause of reconciliation. The 2008 Reconciliation Action Plan seeks to build on the foundation laid by the original strategy, to re-interpret it in a contemporary context and to increase the momentum for reconciliation within Council, within the Warringah community, in the region and in forums beyond.

Although much more needs to be done, much has been achieved in the ten years since the first strategy was adopted. The following summary provides a brief outline of progress to date. It is worth noting that whilst not all recommended actions have been implemented, many actions not included in the original strategy have since been introduced. These include collaborative projects such as the development of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan, establishment of the Aboriginal Heritage Office and the rollout of the Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy across the Northern Sydney region.

The sections headed Room for improvement include actions recommended in the original strategy but not fully implemented. In some cases this is because the actions recommended at the time later became less relevant; in other cases priorities changed or resources were not made available to fulfil the recommendation. As far as possible the framing of recommendations in the new Reconciliation Action Plan have sought both to incorporate and update those actions from the first strategy that were not implemented.

AIM ONE

To establish and express Warringah Council's commitment to the Reconciliation process by involving the local community in the process

of developing better relationships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders and/or their representatives

Key achievements:

- Consultation protocol adopted that provided guidelines for Council staff in community consultation. Covers consultation with target groups including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people
- A series of events instituted with an Indigenous and reconciliation focus including Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and the Guringai Festival
- Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians incorporated into Council protocols
- Permanent flying of the Aboriginal flag instituted
- Indigenous information and performances incorporated into citizenship ceremonies
- Indigenous themes incorporated into some public art in parks and playgrounds.

Room for improvement:

- Specific Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander consultation protocols yet to be instituted at an organisational level
- Recommendation for a Reconciliation Forum not carried through as an annual event
- The commissioning of plaques and other signs that provide the public with information about the Indigenous history of the area has been piecemeal
- No dedicated Reconciliation Park as recommended.

AIM TWO

To undertake community and cultural projects and activities that inform and involve the wider community in the Reconciliation process and encourage the involvement of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community workers, cultural workers and artists

Key achievements:

- Council's participation in the Guringai Festival from its inception to the present
- A number of local Aboriginal history projects have been instituted
- Indigenous people have been employed in a number of public art and other arts and cultural projects
- Projects by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander artists or groups and projects that promote reconciliation have been added to the priority list of the cultural grants scheme
- A sister cities relationship instituted with Brewarrina in western NSW
- The Warringah Library Service has expanded its collections on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander themes and issues
- Council has actively involved young people in reconciliation activities – in particular in relation to the Brewarrina sister cities relationship.

AIM THREE

To promote and reflect an awareness and understanding of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage through service delivery

Key achievements:

- Cultural awareness training in relation to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture provided to Children's Services and other staff
- Some cultural awareness elements incorporated into Council service delivery
- Warringah Council has been an active participant in the development, implementation and funding of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan in collaboration with nine other councils from the region
- Council has participated in the development and implementation of regional programs supporting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and their culture, including the Families First Community Facilitators Project and the Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children and

families incorporated as a key target group in Council's Children's and Family Services Strategy

- Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) involved in school education programs
- Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group and Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan Project Officer support of Aboriginal cultural awareness education and curriculum development in local schools
- Department of Education & Training has significantly improved Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education within the region's schools and through the AECG liaison with the community and other agencies has increased.

Room for improvement:

- Cultural awareness not provided for all staff or targeted to 'frontline' staff
- There is a need for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander service delivery protocols and training for staff across all service areas.

AIM FOUR

Working with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders on natural resource, land management and heritage issues

Key achievements:

- Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) established in collaboration with neighbouring councils, and with ongoing liaison with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC), to chronicle and preserve the region's Indigenous cultural and archaeological history and to protect the region's natural areas
- Memorandum of Understanding established between MLALC and Council
- A record of Aboriginal sites in the area has been established and is updated and maintained by the AHO
- Developers required to conduct archaeological surveys in consultation with the Aboriginal Heritage Office in order to identify and protect Aboriginal sites
- Conservation plans have been developed for Aboriginal sites
- Aboriginal Land Working Group.





AIM FIVE

Improving councillor and staff awareness of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and the issues of concern to Indigenous Australians

Key achievements:

- Professional development and awareness information provided for Councillors and Administrator
- Training provided by AHO for staff involved in development assessment and management of open space.

Room for improvement:

- A more active approach to Equal Employment Opportunity and recruitment and selection procedures to facilitate the training and employment of more Indigenous people is suggested.

AIM SIX

To evaluate Warringah Council's progress in contributing to the achievement of the aims of reconciliation

Key achievements:

- Progress toward reconciliation and improved service delivery toward Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people recorded in annual reports and other Council publications.

Room for improvement:

- Such reporting has been more general in nature and has not always been specifically based on Reconciliation Strategy actions.