

Aboriginal Advisory Committee

Wednesday, 16 July 2025, 10:00am

Glass Meeting Room and via zoom

MEETING NOTES

MEETING COMMENCED: 10:10am

IN ATTENDANCE:

Members: Julie Janson, Ben Stainer, Wally Stewart (via MS Teams), Blaan Davies from Merrimans LALC (via MS Teams), Linda Carlson and Cherie Buchert.

Eurobodalla Shire Council: Councillor Michael Johnson, Kim Bush (Division Manager Community Development and Participation), Rhonnie South (Coordinator Community Development and Youth), Michael Lawrence-Taylor (Community Development Officer) and Melinda Rowell (Executive Assistant to Director of Community Arts and Recreation (minutes)).

Guests: Nina Bowbridge (ESC Sustainability Supervisor), Peta Brooks (ESC Senior Recreation Planner)

APOLOGIES:

Kerry Boyenga, Andrew White, Cheryl Moreton, Julie-Ann Mason, Vivian Mason, Loretta Parsley, Roslyn Field, and Kathy Arthur (ESC Director, Community Arts and Recreation).

WELCOME:

Councillor Michael Johnson welcomed the committee and provided an acknowledgement of country.

All members of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Eurobodalla Shire staff individually introduced themselves around the table.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. **Nomination of Chairperson -Clr Michael Johnson**

Councillor Michael Johnson discussed with the members of the committee the election of a Chairperson of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

Chairperson Nomination:

Julie Janson suggested consideration of a rotating Chair model. Kim Bush indicated that the Chair normally represents on the Heritage Advisory Committee and for continuity for contact and other representations it would be preferable to have a designated person.

Councillor Johnson proposed having both a Chair and Vice Chair which was agreed as the best solution.

Discussion was had as to whether it should be put to the next meeting to elect the chair with more people to be present. It was agreed that as there was a quorum present that the group would proceed with an election.

Julie Janson nominated Ben Stainer for Chairperson, citing his previous experience on the committee.

Councillor Johnson seconded the nomination.

Ben accepted the nomination. Ben was elected unanimously.

Vice Chairperson Nomination:

Julie Janson nominated Loretta Parsley for Vice Chairperson.

Linda Carlson supported the nomination, highlighting Loretta's traditional knowledge and experience. As Loretta was not present she was contacted via phone and she accepted the nomination.

Loretta was elected unanimously.

2. Terms of Reference and Meeting Code of Conduct Practice – Rhonnie South

Rhonnie read out the Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC) Terms of Reference ToR. Copies were emailed and printed off for all members. Rhonnie emphasized participation and understanding of the ToR and Meeting Code of Meeting Practice (included in the information pack provided in hard and soft copy to members). Draft minutes will be shared with the committee for feedback prior to going to Executive Leadership Team and Council. Rhonnie advised that the AAC will meet four times per year.

Committee roles:

- Chairperson: Ben Stainer
- Vice Chairperson : Loretta Parsley
- Councillor Representatives: Cllr Michael Johnson and Councillor Babington (secondary)
- Contact: Rhonnie South
- Support: Melinda Rowell (minutes) and Michael Lawrence-Taylor (actions)

Kim confirmed that Melinda will now take minutes for both Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC). The goal is to ensure more detailed and consistent documentation across both committees.

Ben requested a summary of the feedback gained from previous AAC members who provided feedback via the exit survey distributed to the previous committee. He noted that there is unfinished business from past members, and understanding their departure would help provide constructive criticism and continuity moving forward.

Rhonnie read out the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) ToR to the committee. Copies were emailed and printed off for all members. Rhonnie made note that the HAC ToR includes two delegates from the AAC as members.

Julie raised concerns about the HAC focused more on colonial history rather than Aboriginal heritage. She shared a personal experience, noting that her husband was previously a member of the HAC. He was an advocate to ensure Aboriginal perspectives were properly represented, especially regarding signage and interpretation of cultural sites.

Kim emphasised the importance of having an Aboriginal member on the HAC to ensure Aboriginal matters are properly represented. She asked if anyone was interested in attending the HAC.

Ben suggested revisiting the discussion at the next meeting when more members are present.

Wally raised concerns about Native Title, noting that cultural heritage remains with Native Title holders and that representation should be consistent and genuine.

Kim proposed that Ben attend the HAC meeting on 28 July, to represent the AAC, voice concerns raised by members, and emphasise the importance of Aboriginal matters. Ben agreed to attend on the 28th July meeting. Rhonnie will advise the administrator for the HAC of this decision.

Julie mentioned she would speak to Loretta, who may be interested in participating in the HAC.

ACTION/S:

2a. Ensure Ben receives HAC meeting invite for 28 July 2025, and paperwork from HAC Administrator - Rhonnie South

2b. Include this topic on the agenda for next AAC meeting for selection of AAC representatives on the HAC – Rhonnie South.

2c. Provide exit feedback of previous AAC members – Rhonnie South

2d. Provide link to the Heritage Strategy – Rhonnie South

3. Meeting days and times (four meetings annually) – Kim Bush

Kim led the discussion with the committee to determine suitable meeting days and times for the upcoming AAC meetings.

It was agreed that meetings will be held on Wednesdays from 10am to 12 noon to suit majority of members present with consideration given to hold these in the school holidays where applicable to support Kerry to attend.

Transport support along with holding meetings at locations such as LALCs will be investigated to support attendance of members.

ACTION/S:

3a. Send email confirming the next proposed AAC meeting dates and times and venue (Wednesday 8 October, 10am to 12pm) - Rhonnie South

3b. Follow up with any members needing transport support – Michael Lawrence Taylor

4. Request for Bayungawaraga Lore group position on Aboriginal Advisory Committee – Kim Bush

Kim explained the agenda item and discussed a request to Council from the Bayungawaraga group, expressing interest in being listed in the ToR as an automatic member of the AAC. She advised that one of the members Vivian Mason was successful in gaining membership of the AAC but was unable to attend today to speak to the request.

Wally Stewart expressed concerns about fairness, stating that if one group is allowed to attend all meetings, then all Aboriginal representative groups should be allowed, which could create issues such as a very large unwieldy committee.

Wally asked for a copy of the letter sent to Council. Kim Bush explained that the letter was addressed to Council and as such would be confidential. She will seek advice from Governance staff to see if a precis can be distributed.

All members agreed they would like to speak to Vivian first before voting on whether a Bayungawaraga representative should be added as a group for automatic membership of the AAC. The vote will be held at the next meeting, when Vivian can attend.

ACTION/S:

4a. Include Bayungawaraga Lore group to the agenda for next AAC meeting for discussion – Rhonnie South

4b. Seek advice from Governance staff, on what information can be shared with the committee – Kim Bush

OTHER BUSINESS

5. Ben Stainer regarding Broad Weed Spraying practices – All

Ben has raised ongoing concerns about the use of chemical weed spraying along Potato Point Road in Bodalla, particularly focusing on its potential environmental and health impacts. He has also expressed dissatisfaction with previous interactions with Council regarding this issue.

Last year the AAC met on-site with two Council employees Paul and Heidi to discuss the matter. During the meeting, they addressed key topics including the comparison between chemical spraying and slashing as weed control methods, and the associated risks. However, some of the discussion, affected the tone of the meeting. Ben offered to manage vegetation through slashing to avoid the environmental harm caused by chemical spraying. The Council staff offered some advice about not slashing African Love Grass (ALG) and needing to wash down the slasher afterwards to prevent spreading the weed. Council staff also indicated that sections of Potato Point Road that were not being maintained by residents would be sprayed to remove the ALG.

Despite this, contractors were observed slashing the area that was to be sprayed and not washing the slasher afterward. Further to this, where residents have been maintaining the verges for some years and where they have registered with Council not to spray chemicals, a contractor just recently sprayed along Potato Point Road, Bodalla and towards the bridges which will now destabilise the verges that will now be open to erosion. There remains concern about herbicide use and runoff entering waterways and the marine environment where residents have registered for no spraying of chemicals that have been totally disregarded.

Ben spoke about a call he received from a Narooma resident who explained to him that she has an illness linked to the product Roundup and that she has put council on notice.

Ben showed samples of ash from mismanagement of our bush causing mass ash build up in our oceans and sand dunes, samples of micro plastics massively increasing that do not disappear. The urgency to protect the environment and our biodiversity. He talked about induction of who we are as a country community and why and how we care for country so when people come and visit or move to the area, that they respect and appreciate this special place.

Lastly, Ben talked about the precautionary principle that we need to urgently adopt towards this loose use of a dangerous chemical - glyphosate.

MOTION: The committee request that Councillor Johnson seek responses from those responsible in Council in relation to weed management along Potato Point Rd and:

1. Request why signage can't be put in the appropriate place to ensure chemical free zones are more visible and to signify Council are 'caring for country'.
2. Seek advice on the operational plans for the treatment of African Love Grass to have a consistent approach to weed management; and
3. Request that the responsible area of Council review its communication and induction processes to reduce the risk of future staff or contractors from spraying chemicals on areas where the residents are maintaining verges and electing to be chemical free.

Moved: Julie Janson

Seconded: Councillor Michael Johnson.

Ben also indicated the huge reduction of pippies at Potato Point Beach and the observation of tourists taking shells and oysters at great rates that impact the ecosystem at the site.

Julie suggested signage to be placed nearby with a QR code for different languages for people to understand that they can't continue to take the shells and the oysters.

ACTION/S:

- 5a.** Follow up with Councils Environment Officers to respond to Ben's emails dated 7 March 2023 and 19 April 2025 – Rhonnie South
 - 5b.** Invite Heidi to the next AAC meeting to hear the Committee's concerns and answer any questions – Rhonnie South
 - 5c.** Forward Ben's emails re the slashing and spraying to Councillor Johnson for follow up with Councillor Requests – Rhonnie South
 - 5d.** Send his email of concerns to Councillor Amber Shutz, as the issue may be of interest to her. – Ben Stainer
 - 5e.** Seek feedback in relation to opportunities for signage with QR codes with links to websites to inform visitors about leaving the environment as it is (take photos and only leave footprints). – Michael Lawrence-Taylor.
 - 5g.** Request the appropriate Council area to review communication and operational plan and induction process for contractors. – Kim Bush
 - 5h.** Councillor Johnson and Ben to meet with GM to provide detail about broad roadside spraying – Ben Stainer/Cllr Johnson.
 - 5i.** Provide Ben with an update on where Council's Biodiversity Strategy is up to – Rhonnie South
- 6. Student artwork for annual calendar – 2026 theme 'Caring for Country' – Nina Bowbridge, Sustainability Supervisor**
- Nina shared artwork for this year's calendar themed "Caring for Our Country," focusing on waste reduction, biodiversity, sustainability, and chemical-free living. The Council received 250 submissions, all of which will be displayed around the community. Nine artworks were selected for the calendar and are currently with the graphic designer. Nina is enthusiastic about incorporating

traditional practices and promoting intergenerational learning, and she is open to feedback and collaboration on her artwork.

Blaan Davies asked if Council's protocols had been followed in relation to engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities to inform the "Caring for Country" concept. As Nina just started in the role, she was unable to provide a firm answer but took on board the requirement and is keen to ensure it is followed in her work.

Ben mentioned he had been asked by a previous Sustainability team member to provide some workshops for them for the calendar in schools. Ben agreed and prepared for them and was never contacted again about it. He was surprised to see that the calendar is now ready for print. Nina confirmed that she will be sitting in on the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee (CEAC) which the first meeting will be in August 2025.

Nina informed the AAC that there will be further workshops coming up in the community she, as the new staff member, would be happy to include members to participate in and support these. Multiple members expressed interest in attending and participating in these.

Wally raised concerns about the devastating impact of long spined sea urchins on local reefs, particularly along the Eurobodalla coast. He highlighted the documentary he has been working on "White Rock", which showcases both the ecological damage and the potential for community-led restoration. The film has already been shown to 50 communities, including at the Narooma Oyster Festival and in capital cities. The team is seeking \$200,000 in funding to expand the documentary's reach and raise awareness. Government funding has not been difficult, so local council support is being sought to help promote. Kim suggested involving local cinemas and libraries to help promote the film publicly.

Wally emphasized the urgency: sea urchin populations are growing, but the damage can be reversed with timely action.

The committee would like to revisit this issue and add to the agenda for the next meeting.

Nina is happy to share her contact details with the committee and follow up on all the discussions from today's meeting and moving forward.

The Committee approved Rhonnie to send out everyone's details to Nina.

ACTION/S:

- 6a.** Nina to be provided with the committee contact details – Rhonnie South
- 6b.** Documentary and other information to be shared with the group – Wally Stewart
- 6a.** Include the sea urchin topic in the next AAC meeting agenda. – Rhonnie South

7. Moruya Master Plan Review – Peta Brooks, Senior Recreation Planner

Peta shared a presentation on the development of Riverside Park Plan of Management (POM) and shared a copy Landscape Master Plan (LMP), outlines upcoming community consultation, an invited committee input. The purpose of this presentation was to provide background information on the development of the POM and LMP for Moruya Riverside Park and Reserves to date, advise the Committee of the upcoming community consultation activities, seek advice regarding those Groups/Individuals Council should be consulting with, provide the Committee with an opportunity

to outline their ideas for the site and feedback on the draft Plans and outline next steps in the development of the LMP and POM.

Peta advised the committee that there are two pop up sessions and the first consultation date is this Saturday 19 July 2025 at the Moruya markets. The second is at Moruya Library Monday 21 July 5-8pm and the third at SAGE markets on Tuesday 22 July from 3-5pm. She indicated that it would be good to have AAC members there. Multiple committee members agreed it would be a good idea.

Peta suggested that she would like to see signage on bush tucker, medicines to show the cultural significance of indigenous culture. Bikes and trails will be planned through there and will be used as outdoor classrooms. Can the AAC members contribute to any cultural perspectives? Trish Ellis and Kerry Boyenga were suggested as authors of the dhurga dictionary and knowledge holders.

The committee would like to take the POM and LMP away to read it in more detail and then revisit it at a later date.

Blaan has concerns about how the project aligns with the protocols and Peta explained that she is just starting her community engagement and the AAC is the first stop with more opportunities coming in the next month. She is happy to engage where the AAC suggests.

ACTION/S:

- 7a.** Post community consultation details to Yuin Facebook page. – Rhonnie South
- 7b.** Share Peta's contact details with the committee – Rhonnie South
- 3d.** Provide Julie Janson and Cherie Buchert contact details to Peta – Rhonnie South
- 3e.** Send invitation of Moruya Library consultation engagement to the committee – Peta Brooks

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 8 October, 10am to 12pm, MOGO LALC

MEETING CLOSED: 12:45pm