

## Aboriginal Advisory Committee

**Wednesday, 8 October 2025, 10:00am**

**Glass Meeting Room and via zoom**

### MEETING NOTES

**MEETING COMMENCED:** 10:05am

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Members: Ben Stainer, Wally Stewart, Kerry Boyenga, Cherie Buchert, Vivian Mason, Anita Mongta, Julie Janson, Roslyn Carriage (via MS Teams), Julie-Ann Mason (via MS Teams) and Roslyn Field.

Eurobodalla Shire Council: Councillor Amber Schutz, 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).

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillor Michael Johnson, Councillor Laurence Babington, Linda Carlson, Blaan Davies (Merrimans LALC), Peta Brooks (ESC Senior Recreation Planner), Indi Carmichael (ESC Coordinator Creative Arts Development), James Caffery (ESC NRM Project Officer), Melissa Platts (ESC Engineering Environment Support Officer), and Kathy Arthur (ESC Director, Community Arts and Recreation).

**1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country**

Roslyn Carriage welcomed the committee and provided an acknowledgement of country.

**2. Introduction and apologies, declaration of an conflict of interest confidentiality agreement**

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

Ben Stainer asked the committee if they accept the confidentiality agreement and if they need to declare a conflict of interest.

**3. Previous Minutes discussion**

The Chair, Ben Stainer, confirmed with the committee that the minutes from the previous meeting had been read and were accurate. There were no objections from the other committee members.

Kim noted that Loretta Parsley has formally resigned from the Aboriginal Advisory Committee, and passed on Loretta's resignation email to Ben, who read it out to the committee.

Ben confirmed that Loretta resigned due to family commitments.

Kim further clarified that Loretta has resigned from all three committees:

- Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC)
- Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC)
- Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC)

Ben suggested nominating a Vice Chair to support and step in when he's unavailable.

As the committee members did not reach an agreement on who will take the role as Vice Chair, Ben proposed that the decision be revisited at the next meeting.

#### **Previous Action Items**

The group reviewed actions from the last meeting and confirmed that most items have been completed.

Ben noted that the GM meeting has not yet occurred. All Councillors are supportive of the initiative, which aligned with caring for country principles.

Kim Bush reported that feedback was received from staff in relation to the weed spraying on Potato Point Rd and contractor inductions and options to review chemical use. This issue needs to be followed through by the CLr representative via Council requests.

Councillor Amber Schutz will follow up on the review.

Ben suggested placing steaks in the ground with a signage stating: *'This area is chemical free.'*

Kim contacted Governance staff to clarify what information can be shared with the committee. Governance confirmed that letters to Council aren't normally shared.

Councillor Amber Schutz suggested that members of the public can access government information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act).

#### **ACTION/S:**

- 3a. Wally to provide a presentation from Wally on Native Title matters.

#### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

##### **4. Council Heritage Advisory Committee – representatives from AAC – Chair, Ben Stainer**

Ben asked the committee whether, following Loretta Parsley's resignation, any members be interested in attending the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) meetings in her place.

He noted that he would attend most meetings, but on the odd occasion when he is unavailable, it would be helpful to have another representative.

Ben will attend most Heritage Committee meetings but emphasized the need for someone vocal and knowledgeable, especially in Aboriginal heritage.

Ben confirmed the next HAC meeting date is scheduled for Monday, 10 November 2025.

Rhonnie confirmed that the HAC meet 4 times a year and its mainly on Mondays.

Kerry expressed interest in attending the next HAC meeting, however, as a teacher can only attend on Mondays and Fridays or School Holidays.

Anita asked whether a special request could be made to adjust the meeting dates of the Heritage Advisory Committee to better suit member availability.

#### **ACTION/S:**

- 4a. Rhonnie will contact the Heritage Advisory Committee to confirm whether meetings can be scheduled on Mondays, Fridays, or during school holidays to accommodate interested members.

##### **5. Request For Bayungawaraga Position On Aboriginal Advisory Committee – Kim Bush (ESC) and Vivian Mason**

Ben suggested a vote and discussion.

Vivian Mason introduced *Bayungawaraga*, a women's business group focused on representing elder Aboriginal women. She explained that while the group is not yet formally registered, they are aiming to complete registration by 17 October. Vivian expressed concern that the voices of elder women are currently not being heard or represented within existing structures.

Wally Stewart raised concern about setting a precedent for other groups (e.g. Native Title groups).

Roslyn Field supported inclusion of Aboriginal groups such as *Bayungawaraga* in the committee but stressed the importance of establishing a clear and distinct process for their participation. She recommended that the Terms of Reference be updated to specifically allow access for Aboriginal organisations, separate from the process used for individual community member applications. Roslyn emphasized that each group should be considered on its own merits.

Councillor Amber Schutz noted that while expanding the committee to include more members or groups may enhance representation, it could also make meetings more difficult to manage.

Julie Janson expressed support for the idea of elder Aboriginal women being represented on the committee. However, she suggested that each group should nominate only one representative.

Anita asked if a quorum has been an issue in the past. Rhonnie confirmed only one instance previously.

Wally supported expanding the committee but raised concerns about opening it up to everyone. Councillor Amber Schutz noted there is an opportunity for ad hoc nominations, which has merit.

Ben raised concerns about the risk of opening membership up to too many groups, which could impact quorum.

Roslyn suggested maintaining a quorum by setting a limit, e.g. Three ad hoc nominations per term. There is opportunity to revisit this annually. Roslyn added that more Aboriginal voices would be more valuable.

Rhonnie confirmed Vivian is a community committee member. As such if the group is added to the membership a representative of the group could attend as well.

Vivian Mason expressed interest in representing her group, preferring not to be listed as a general community member. Vivian mentioned her group submitted a letter when application opened.

Kim explained that it was important for the Committee to discuss and agree on membership as some members were unsure who the *Bayungawaraga* group were at the time, which was discussed at the first AAC meeting on 16 July 2025.

Roslyn recommended delaying decisions until the *Bayungawaraga* committee is properly established and the ToR are revised.

Kim Bush notated a draft motion to amend the ToR to support Aboriginal group representation, with a maximum of three groups.

Wally raised the issue of Native Title claims involving other shires, highlighting the importance of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and engaging in meaningful consultation with the Aboriginal community. He suggested that Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC) should begin similar consultation processes, particularly along the coast, noting that discussions are already occurring in neighbouring shires.

Julie requested a presentation from Wally on Native Title matters.

As the group could not reach an outcome or vote during this meeting, the item will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

At 11:17am, Vivian Mason left the meeting advising her group is no longer interested in becoming a member of the advisory committees as group could not make a decision.

#### **ACTION/S:**

**5a.** Wally to provide a presentation on Native Title matters.

**5b.** Rhonnie to add 'Alterations to Aboriginal Advisory Committee ToR' for the next meeting.

**5c.** Kim and Rhonnie to provide a draft motion via email to consider for next meeting based on ToR discussions.

## **6. Caring for Country concept discussion – Chair, Ben Stainer**

Ben led the Caring for Country discussion, by highlighting the need for clear framework and branding to support cultural awareness and respect across Council operations. While a calendar was developed with school children, it lacked proper consultation and branding.

The group highlighted the importance of a unified Council approach to Caring for Country, emphasizing cultural induction, meaningful signage, and branding that reflects Aboriginal values and connection to land. While Aboriginal businesses will maintain their own distinct branding, there is a strong call for Council to develop its own Caring for Country identity—one that is visible on vehicles, uniforms, and across teams. This brand should carry meaning and be embedded in induction processes, helping staff understand their role in respecting and caring for country. The initiative is seen as having significant social and economic benefits if implemented thoughtfully, with Council teams encouraged to adopt the philosophy in their daily work.

Anita stressed the need for a framework before Council adopts the brand. Highlighting the importance of cultural inductions for new staff, connecting them to the country they live in and work in. Noted that branding must be more than just a logo, it needs to be a meaning and a purpose.

Kim noted there is quite a lot of work for this to happen and all agreed it is a huge project. There may be opportunities to seek grant funding if supported.

Wally proposed installing QR codes on boardwalk signage to generate revenue when scanned. Emphasized that the shire is large and full of opportunities. Wally highlighted that Caring for Country is not just about the environment, but also about people, land, and water. There is lack of promotion and outdated signage related to local Aboriginal history and culture. He encouraged development of strategies, workshops, and online surveys to engage the community and shape the initiative.

Kerry clarified her involvement with Nina on the calendar, especially through a workshop with school children. She emphasized the environmental theme and her role in helping kids understand the purpose and language of the calendar.

Kim emphasised that branding should be presented to ELT and Councillors, but acknowledged that this will require a clear framework and vision to be developed first. The initial step is to document the vision and framework, and clearly outline what we need to ask Councillors.

Ben expressed interest in initiating a sub-group to brainstorm ideas for the branding framework. The aim is to develop initial concepts and then bring them back to the AAC meeting for further discussion. The meetings can be via online or email if that's easier for those who are interested. Anita, Wally and Julie expressed interest.

Rhonnie (via the Chair) noted that a few attendees were waiting, prompting a shift to wrap up the current discussion.

## **ACTION/S:**

**6a.** Rhonnie to check if there is any grants that may be suitable.

**6b.** Sub-group to report back

## **7. Caring for Country calendar 2026 – community workshop update and calendar launch – Nina Bowbridge (ESC)**

Nina Bowbridge (ESC Sustainability Supervisor) emphasized the environmental concept behind the calendar and its role in supporting community awareness and engagement. Nina has spoken to

some members of the committee independently about the calendar. Nina mentioned that a draft mock up of the calendar has been shared with schools and emailed to the committee.

Cherie and Julie will revise the Caring for Country inclusions in the calendar and workshop materials.

#### **ACTION/S:**

**7a.** Nina to re-send the draft mock-up email to ensure all committee members have the opportunity to review and contribute.

**7b.** Cherie and Julie to revise the Caring for Country inclusions in the calendar and workshop materials.

#### **8. Creative Arts Strategy speed consult – Indi Carmichael (ESC)**

Kim suggested that the Creative Arts presentation could be progressed via email, allowing participants to offer feedback that way.

#### **9. Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) policy DRAFT Update on Indigenous engagement projects – Munjip, Barlings Beach Aboriginal Place. Etc. – James Caffery (ESC) and Melissa Platts (ESC)**

Rhonnie confirmed James had left hard copies of relevant documents for attendees to review.

#### **10. Input to draft Landscape Master Plan and Plan of Management for Riverside Park and Reserves – Chair, Ben Stainer and Peta Brooks (ESC)**

Update via email as Peta is absent.

#### **11. Draft Aboriginal Protocols Staff Induction Slides – Rhonnie South (ESC)**

Rhonnie provided an overview of the document developed by the previous committee and adopted in 2023/2024 and presented the Powerpoint that Community Development would like to use for induction and Councillor workshops.

Wally emphasised that every staff member should receive cultural awareness training as a standard part of their employment.

Rhonnie confirmed that Councils' People and Safety team are responsible for rolling out this training across the organisation.

Wally further noted that there should be a dedicated budget to support cultural awareness training and stressed that Councillors should also be included in the training program to ensure a shared understanding and commitment across all levels of Council.

Julie suggested that the Councillors and Executive Leadership team meet the Aboriginal Committee over a BBQ.

Wally noted that he would like to invite every Councillor and Executive Leadership team on his boat (Narooma Aboriginal Cultural Tours). Wally shared brochures with the committee and explained that the tour offers an educational experience, focusing on both Aboriginal and political history, particularly the impacts left along the South Coast. Wally noted the boat can accommodate up to 25 people and provides a space for informal conversation over tea and coffee, allowing participants to ask questions and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Rhonnie asked the committee if she had their support to take the presentation to Councils Executive Leadership Team to get their support for staff induction implementation.

Wally responded that the meeting between AAC members, Councillors and Executive Leadership team should occur before the protocol presentation is taken to them, so they have a better understanding of local Aboriginal cultural experiences.

#### **ACTION/S:**

**11a.** Rhonnie to update contact details for Mogo LALC in the doc on the Council webpage.

**11b.** Rhonnie to send out an invitation to the Councillors and ELT to meet with the AAC over a BBQ for an informal meeting.

**11c.** Michael to liaise with Wally on a suitable date for the tour.

## **12. Long Spined Sea Urchin impact on local reefs – Wally Stewart**

Ben asked the committee if they had viewed the White Rock documentary shared by Wally Stewart.

Wally emphasized the urgency of the issue, noting that over 50% of reefs on the South Coast are now dominated by long-spined sea urchins. This is causing severe damage to marine biodiversity, including the loss of kelp forests and fish populations. He stated that the issue is now being taken to Parliament in November. A long term plan is needed.

Rising ocean temperatures are contributing to the problem, last Christmas, water temperatures exceeded 20 degrees, increasing urchin breeding success. The issue is spreading to Victoria and South Australia, with businesses in those regions now facing similar challenges. The Aboriginal community is deeply concerned, and Wally urged everyone to watch the documentary to understand the scale of the problem.

He stressed that Council must actively promote awareness, as the issue affects everyone, not just Aboriginal communities.

Julie asked, what can Council do to promote this?

Kim indicated that libraries had included the screening in programs.

Ben proposed the issue should be included in Council induction programs, with Aboriginal business leading the induction to ensure cultural and environmental context is properly conveyed.

### **ACTION/S:**

**12a.** Michael to send the documentary link on sea urchins to Anita.

**12b.** Michael to assist Julie in accessing the documentary.

**12c.** Rhonnie to send the link the White Rock documentary to the Councillors.

**12d.** Kim and Rhonnie to prepare a paper for Councillor workshop and invite Wally to present.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

## **13. Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme information – Rhonnie South (ESC)**

Rhonnie confirmed that Julie shared a Facebook post with Rhonnie related to the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme.

### **ACTION/S:**

**13a.** Rhonnie to share information

## **14. Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning Forum – Rhonnie South (ESC)**

Rhonnie advised that Council will be hosting a disability-focused disaster consultation event at the Moruya Golf Club on Wednesday 22 October and sought advice on who could deliver a Welcome to Country at the event and a smoking ceremony for another event.

Wally recommended Brock Tutt, who is a member of LALC, he does a beautiful Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony.

## **15. Gates installed at Beachcombers, Potato Point**

Anita raised concerns regarding the installation of a gate at Beachcombers, Potato Point, questioning whether Aboriginal parties were consulted. She noted uncertainty around land

ownership, clarifying that the site is not managed by National Parks, and queried whether similar gate installations are occurring elsewhere without consultation.

15.a Kim/Rhonnie to ask if any Council staff are aware of the gate.

**16. Procurement Policies and Aboriginal Engagement**

Wally expressed a desire for local communities to have access to Council's procurement policies.

Kim advised that Council has these and publicly shows outcomes of tenders. The documents are available via Council's website.

**ACTION/S:**

**16 a.** Send committee link to policies

**NEXT MEETING:** TBA

**MEETING CLOSED:** 12:40pm