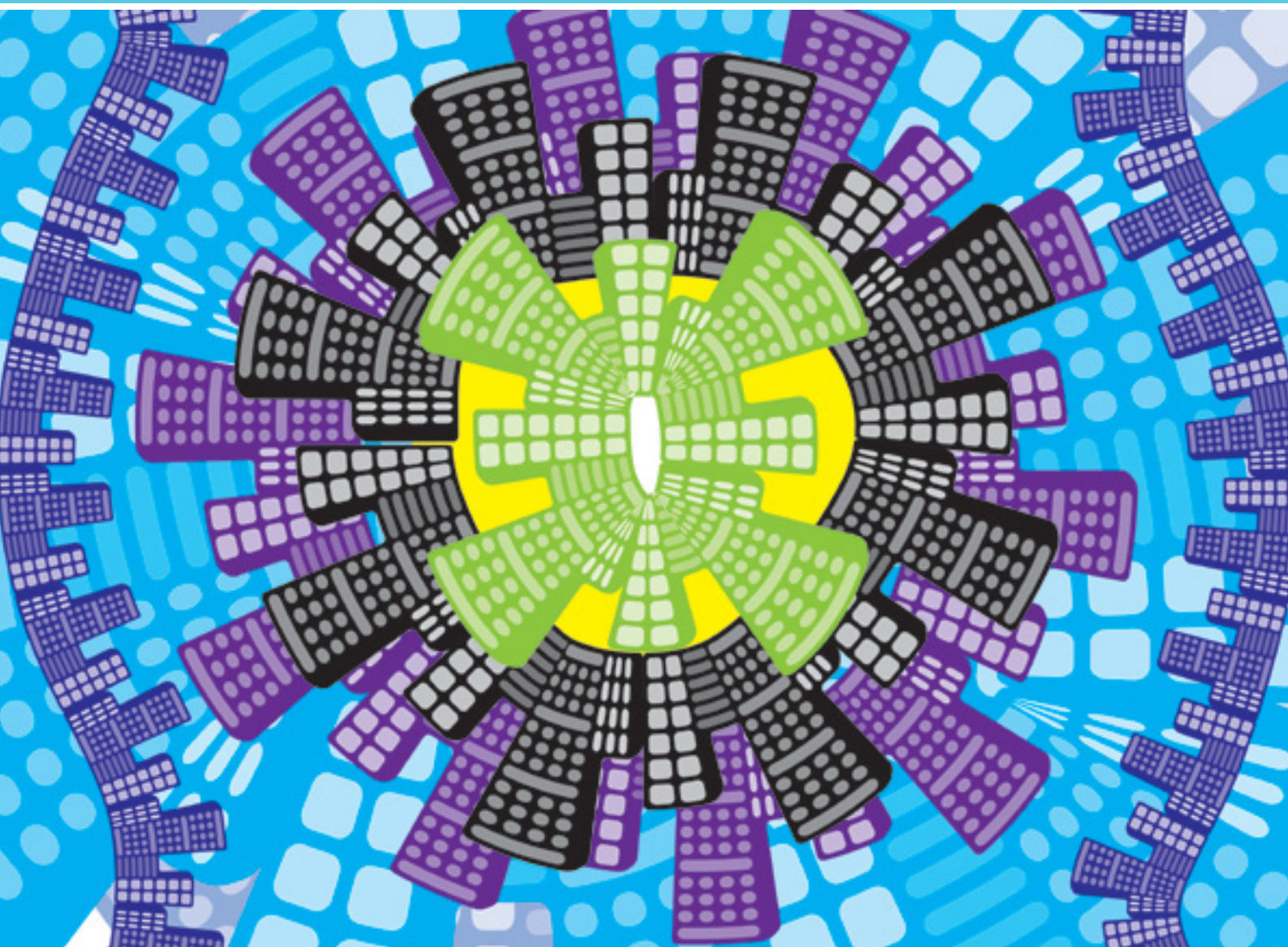


Newcastle City Council *Innovate* Reconciliation Action Plan August 2016 – August 2018

Artwork by Ray Kelly







Cr Nuatali Nelmes
Lord Mayor



Frank Cordingley
Interim Chief Executive Officer

Our vision for reconciliation

Newcastle City Council acknowledges the Awabakal and Worimi peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA). This Reconciliation Action Plan is a call to the people within our organisation to stand up for reconciliation.

Our vision is that guided by our values of cooperation, respect, excellence and wellbeing, our staff will actively work towards helping to closing the gap in employment, economic participation, health and education (the social determinants of health) outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community by supporting a diverse and inclusive workplace that celebrates their culture and knowledge.

By placing a high value on this knowledge the whole community will better understand the meaning of our unique landscape which in turn will inform Council's decision making and actions for a sustainable future.

As we enter into our second Reconciliation Action Plan, Newcastle City Council remains committed to the principles and actions outlined in its 1998 *Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Newcastle*. This Commitment, based on respect, forms the foundation upon which we will continue to build stronger ties with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Artist Statement:

The design represents the evolving urban overlay of European settlement on Country and the traditional lands of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. The image shows the many layers of communities connected through the harbour, the wetlands, the sand dunes and the large flat lands of Newcastle.

Ray Kelly

Our business

The land and waters of Newcastle are acknowledged as the country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples, whose culture is being increasingly celebrated in community events, place naming, signage and artworks.

Newcastle is one of Australia's oldest and most interesting cities. Containing a quirky blend of new and old, a rich Aboriginal history, a working harbour and fabulous beaches, Newcastle is known as a unique and eclectic place.

Newcastle City Council was formed in April 1938 with the merger of Adamstown, Carrington, Hamilton, Lambton, Merewether, Newcastle, New Lambton, Stockton, Wallsend, Waratah and Wickham Councils. The local government area currently covers 214 km².

Newcastle City Council has two main parts:

- The elected Council, with a popularly elected Lord Mayor and 12 Councillors. Councillors are elected to represent the interests of residents and ratepayers and provide leadership and guidance to the community.
- The administrative arm of Council is responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the Council's organisation and for ensuring that the decisions of the Council are implemented.

The principles of social justice, ecological sustainability, and local democracy underpin our Community Strategic Plan, Newcastle 2030 and also underpin decisions around service delivery. Council provides approximately 70 community services to the resident population of Newcastle. Some of the services provided by Council include:

- Urban and community planning
- Construction and maintenance of local roads, streets and bridges
- Preservation of historic places
- Food and public health services
- Waste management and recycling
- Supervision of building and development control
- Parking control
- Maintenance of parks, golf courses, sporting fields, pools and beach facilities
- Provision and servicing of libraries, community centres, theatres and art galleries
- Pet registration and control
- Tourism services
- Promotion of economic development

Newcastle City Council employs 919 full time staff. We partner in service delivery with approximately 800 volunteers across a range of programs including bush care, community and sporting facilities management, culture and heritage interpretation and place activation. There are currently 29 staff at Newcastle City Council that identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. Our Council delivers a range of community services to a population of 154,896 (ABS Census 2011). Our Enterprise Award includes a provision for cultural leave for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Dual naming project: **Supporting cultural recognition**

Guraki continues to work closely with Council and local Aboriginal communities to raise cultural awareness and celebrate local Aboriginal cultural histories and knowledge systems. In 2015 it is expected that the New South Wales Geographical Names Board will approve dual names for eight landscape features at Newcastle, including our major icon Nobbys. This dual name project is a current reconciliation strategic initiative by Council.

Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee

The City of Newcastle's 1998 Commitment to local Aboriginal communities underpins Council's reconciliation process. The Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee of Newcastle City Council was officially launched on 1 June 1999 to assist Council in a diverse range of civic processes and activities to promote reconciliation and improve social outcomes and services for Aboriginal people in the Newcastle local government area.



Our RAP

In March 2011, Newcastle City Council (NCC) endorsed its first Community Strategic Plan (CSP) *Newcastle 2030* under the terms of the NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework. *Newcastle 2030* was based on significant community engagement and input as it is the Newcastle community's vision for the next 25 years. One of the key strategic objectives listed in the *Newcastle 2030* is acknowledgement and respect for local Aboriginal history, cultural heritage and peoples.

The Guraki Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Committee of Newcastle City Council was established on 1st June 1999 (under s355 of the Local Government Act, 1993). Guraki has broad terms of reference that underpin its role as a strategic advisory committee of Council and has a well-established history in supporting and promoting reconciliation and social justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Newcastle area. This includes Council adopting the permanent flying of the Aboriginal Flag alongside the Australian Flag at City Hall and in the Council Chambers in December 2003. Council also adopted an official Acknowledgement Statement to recognise the dispossession of Traditional Custodians in 2003 which continues in our current *Guidelines for Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Custodians and Welcome to Country* available at www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Explore/History-Heritage/Guidelines-for-Acknowledgement-of-Country.



In June 2012, Guraki recommended that Council develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), based on the program provided by Reconciliation Australia, to ensure that Council's reconciliation intentions are translated into measurable actions. The NCC Executive Management Team (EMT) endorsed the Guraki's recommendation in December 2012. A RAP Working Group was formed in February 2013 comprising of NCC staff with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and other staff. An external partner, Yarnteen Ltd, offered to guide the RAP Working Group in the development of our first RAP which was launched during National Reconciliation Week in 2013.

Of the 10 actions outlined in the 2013-2014 RAP, five have been achieved and the remainder were actioned for delivery in 2015-2017. Significant challenges in implementing the 2013/14 RAP were experienced due to the degree of organisational change experienced over the past several years. With the recruitment of another Aboriginal Development Officer in September 2015, the support for existing Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment has significantly improved.

We continue to be a leader in reconciliation as demonstrated by the successful outcomes in the *Past, Present, Future Aboriginal Youth Arts Program* (funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments), the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2013-2017* and ongoing dedication to the 1998 *Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Newcastle*. A key achievement was the development of *Guidelines for Acknowledgement of Traditional Aboriginal Custodians and Welcome to Country*, auspiced by Guraki. This document is now available for both community and staff at www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Explore/History-Heritage/Guidelines-for-Acknowledgement-of-Country and are being well used by both Council staff and across the broader community.

Other successes include the recruitment of two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices per annum and the first year of our Indigenous University Scholarship Program. The recipient of the scholarship received \$5000 toward their tuition and completed a 10 week work placement with council in its Development and Building Unit. Other successes include our "Dual Naming" project to have significant landscapes in the LGA recognised by their traditional Awabakal/Worimi language name. Newcastle Council continues to implement our Aboriginal Professional Development program which is designed to support further opportunities for existing staff at council.

Our second RAP has again been developed by NCC staff who have expressed interest in participating in the process. Of the RAP Working group (positions as noted below), 7 are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Communication Manager	Business Support Officer (resigned from NCC June 2015)
Records Team Leader	Senior Art Gallery Assistant
Resource Co-ordinator Guraki Committee	Aboriginal Development Officer
Business Support Officer	Senior Community Planner
Manager Human Resources	Community Planning Coordinator
Libraries - Cluster Team Leader	Service Desk Operator

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What does Reconciliation Week mean?

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision.

- **27 May 1967 - Marks the anniversary of Australia's most successful referendum** and a defining event in our nation's history. The 1967 referendum saw over 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them in the national census.
- **3 June 1992 - The High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision** which legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a special relationship to the land—that existed prior to colonisation and still exists today. This recognition paved the way for land rights called Native Title.

www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw/what-is-nrw





What does NAIDOC Week mean?

NAIDOC stands for *National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee*. Its origins can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal groups in the 1920s which sought to increase awareness in the wider community of the status and treatment of Aboriginal Australians.

NAIDOC Week is held in the first full week of July each year. It is a time to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and achievements and is an opportunity to recognise the contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander make to our country and our society. For more information see www.naidoc.org.au



Reconciliation Action Plan

Relationships

During the development and review of the Community Strategic Plan (Newcastle 2030), the Newcastle community placed a high value on the need for this city to be recognised as a caring and inclusive place. The community also recognised the fact that there will be positive community outcomes for all when we embrace the leadership, knowledge and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The provision of effective Council services relies on the development and maintenance of meaningful relationships with individuals, communities, stakeholders and partners. Our Reconciliation Action Plan will strengthen our commitment to building respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities so that we have a shared understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the ways in which it will inform decision making in the delivery of Council services. By strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we can explore opportunities to support economic development, whilst empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be a part of civic processes at the local government level.

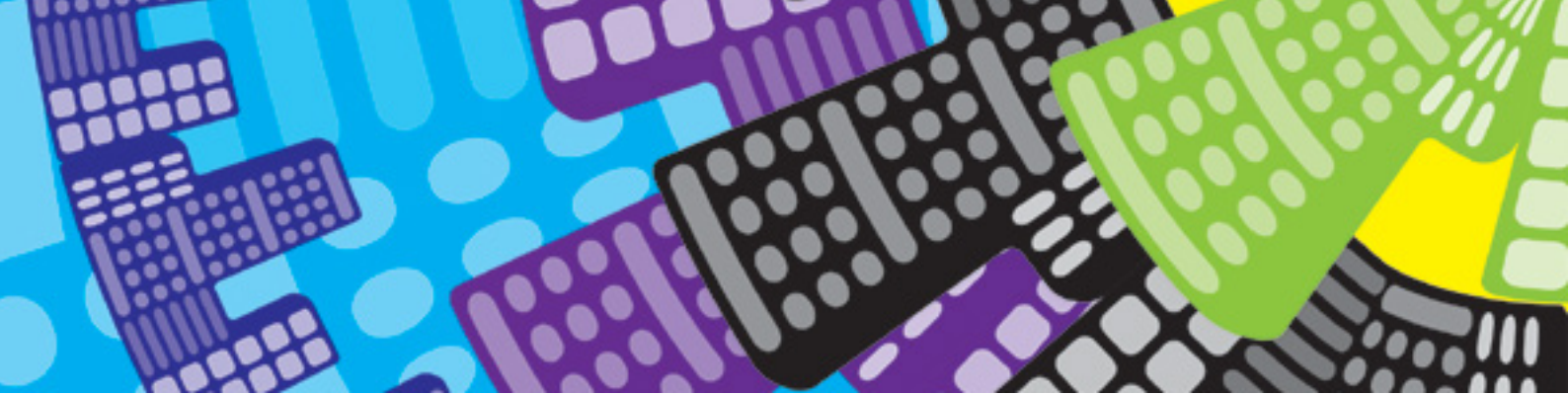
Focus area:

The Newcastle 2030 (Community Strategic Plan) has seven strategic directions identified by the Newcastle community as important to move towards. The **Caring and Inclusive Community** strategic direction seeks to value all people and embraces diversity through the following objective:

- A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other
- Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing
- A creative, culturally rich and vibrant community



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
1.1 RAP Working Group (RWG) actively monitors RAP development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting	Manager Strategic Planning Services	June 2016 Quarterly meetings Feb, May, August, November 2016, 2017, 2018 December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RWG oversees the development, endorsement and implementation of Newcastle Council's RAP 2016-18 Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on the RWG Meet quarterly to monitor and report on RAP implementation Establish a Terms of Reference for the RWG
1.2 Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians	Manager Human Resources Manager Communication and Engagement Manager Libraries	27th May-3rd June 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise at least one internal event for NRW each year Register NRW events on the Reconciliation Australia NRW website Support an external NRW event Establish an intranet link to Reconciliation Australia's NRW web resources to staff Encourage staff to participate in external events to recognise and celebrate NRW Host public NRW events across the areas in which we operate
1.3 Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes	Manager Communication and Engagement Manager Human Resources	June 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders Continue to implement the Aboriginal Employment Strategy by participating in and strengthening existing relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Hunter Aboriginal Interagency Network b) The Aboriginal Employment Network c) The Muloobinbah Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Explore opportunities to support Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning through the Muloobinbah Aboriginal Education Consultative Group activities with local schools
1.4 Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our business and sector	Manager Communication and Engagement Manager Strategic Planning Manager Human Resources	June 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a communication strategy to inform internal and external stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Include 6 monthly updates on RAP progress to all staff Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders including invitation to relevant events Establish an intranet link on OnePlace to Reconciliation Australia's web resources to staff Engage our senior leaders in the delivery of RAP outcomes



Reconciliation Action Plan

Respect

For 60,000 years the Awabakal and Worimi peoples have been and continue to be the custodians of the Newcastle Local Government Area. At council we believe we share an ongoing custodial role with the Awabakal and Worimi peoples across the Newcastle LGA.

Newcastle City Council believes in walking the journey together and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to revive and reclaim their cultural traditions creating greater community understanding and shared learning. Through this we can build a sustainable community that incorporates and respects the values and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Focus area:

The Newcastle 2030 (Community Strategic Plan) has seven strategic directions identified by the Newcastle community as important to move towards. The **Caring and Inclusive Community** strategic direction seeks to value all people and embraces diversity through the following objectives:

- A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other
- Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing
- A creative, culturally rich and vibrant community



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
2.1 Engage employees in cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements	Manager Human Resources Manager Communication and Engagement	December 2016 December 2016 December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a cultural awareness training strategy for all employees, including senior management and Leadership Group Investigate opportunities to work with local Traditional Owners to develop cultural awareness training and collateral for Council staff Provide opportunities for RWG members, RAP champions, and Leadership Group to participate in cultural training.
2.2 Engage employees in understanding the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country to ensure there is a shared meaning and maintain respectful partnerships	Manager Communication and Engagement	June 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote and distribute Council's Guidelines for Acknowledgement of Traditional Aboriginal Custodians and Welcome to Country to staff and community which include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A directory of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country Identification of occasions and protocols when a Welcome to Country should be organised Identification of when to use Council's adopted Statement of Acknowledgement Identification of when a shorter Acknowledgement Statement is to be used Ensuring a Welcome to Country is included at the commencement of a new Council term and other significant events. Continue to include Council's Statement of Acknowledge in all public documents Display an Acknowledgment of Country statement in our public customer service area. Include the Statement of Acknowledgement in Council's sponsorship and grants collateral
2.3 Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and communities by celebrating NAIDOC Week	Manager Human Resources Manager Strategic Planning	July 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are aware of the Cultural Leave provisions in Council's enterprise award Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in NAIDOC Week celebrations through their Cultural Leave provision Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in NAIDOC Week activities Support the NAIDOC Family Fun Day
2.4 Celebrate and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance	Manager Communication and Engagement Manager Strategic Planning	December 2016, 2017, 2018 December 2016, 2017, 2018 December 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commemorate and celebrate that Newcastle was the first Council to raise and has continuously flown the Aboriginal Flag beside the Australian Flag at City Hall (9.12.2003) Update Council's Events Calendar to include dates of significance such as Anniversary of the Apology, NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week Promote awareness of dates of significance in Council media and publications



Reconciliation Action Plan

Opportunities

Council recognises that sustainable, welcoming communities find strength in diversity. We remain committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities to identify opportunities that will further contribute to the development of a smart and innovative city that

attracts people to live, invest and visit. The Innovate RAP will facilitate opportunities for council to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the areas of procurement, development, access to services and building on the successes from the previous Reconciliation Action Plan.

Focus area:

The Newcastle 2030 (Community Strategic Plan) has seven strategic directions identified by the Newcastle community as important to move towards. The **Smart and innovative** strategic direction seeks to support innovation and competitive advantage through new technologies, services and culture led renewal create through the following objectives:

- A culture that supports and encourages innovation and creativity at all levels
- A thriving city that attracts people to live, invest and visit

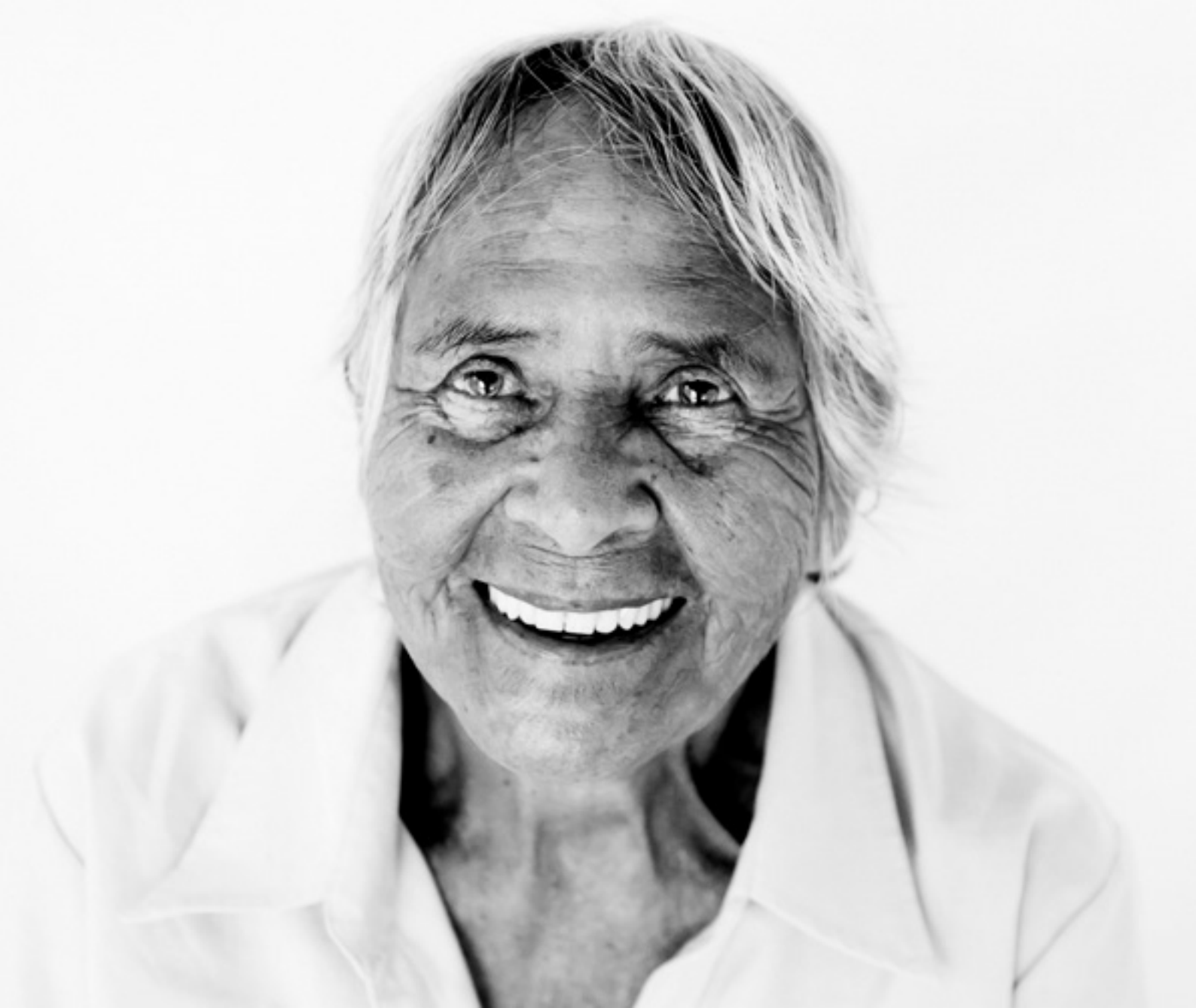
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
3.1 Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace	Manager Human Resources Manager Human Resources	December 2017 December 2017 December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2013-2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue with delivery of professional development plans and workshops for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees • Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to enable participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants in our workplace • Continue to include in all job ads a statement that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply'
3.2 Provide opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity within our organisation	Manager Projects and Contracts	December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (mandurahhbc.com.au) to promote equitable access by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers to Newcastle Council procurement processes
3.3 Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Council activities	Manager Strategic Planning	June 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with local schools and community groups to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to join Council committees (eg Youth Council)

Make Your Place:

Throsby Creek Message Sticks

A local group of Carrington residents undertook a placemaking project, the creation and installation of 3 Story Sticks, to show how, as children, the Aboriginal residents interacted with Throsby Creek. The images tell the stories of the blood worm, the stingray and the fish, the importance of the creek to those who lived there and also Dreamtime stories.





Newcastle Museum: **Women of Wisdom Exhibition**

'Women of Wisdom' had the objective of celebrating the Hunter's Aboriginal women and recording their beauty, words and wisdom in a supportive and safe environment. The project aimed at bringing together the women, their portraits and stories with the outcome of an exhibition in the Newcastle Museum in 2014.

The themes of respect, family and learning emerged from the workshops and conversations. The focus on women addressed a gap identified by the Aboriginal Youth Arts Coordinator, where most projects have been with Aboriginal youth and elders, predominately male.



Reconciliation Action Plan

Tracking Progress and Reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
4.1 Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the RAP Impact Measurement Report	Manager Human Resources Manager Communication and Engagement	30 September 2016, 2017, 2018 June 2016, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annuallyInvestigate participating in the RAP Barometer
4.2 Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally	Corporate Planner	June 2016, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Publically report our RAP achievements, challenges and learningsProvide an annual briefing to Councillors by our RAP ChampionProvide 6 monthly updates to staff and Guraki on the progress of Council's RAP
4.3 Review, refresh and update RAP	Manager Strategic Planning Services	January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In partnership with Reconciliation Australia, develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievementsSend draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal feedback and endorsement

Newcastle Art Gallery: **Showcasing Aboriginal Art**

The Newcastle Art Gallery holds an extensive collection of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. It comprises over 200 works of art that represent a diversity of artistic practice from different geographical regions, as well as a variety of art-forms; including barks, paintings, ceremonial poles, works on paper, fibre textile sculptures, photography and new media art. The Gallery regularly develops and presents exhibitions of these works, both from its own collections and with major incoming travelling exhibitions.

Showcasing Aboriginal art at the Gallery enhances understanding and awareness about Aboriginal culture in the wider community. By exhibiting both traditional and contemporary works from remote and urban environments, it promotes the continual evolution of these practices, and celebrates the dynamism and richness of these cultures. The Gallery also presents public programs and events to support these exhibitions. These programs create opportunities for the public to engage in an inviting and accessible environment, and play a meaningful role in the reconciliation process.

Visual art is amongst one of the most accessible routes to promoting understanding of Aboriginal culture and bridging the gap between Aboriginal and wider communities. It is an important part of moving towards reconciliation in the Newcastle region.



Contact details:

Public enquiries about your RAP

Nathan Brennan
Aboriginal Development Officer

Phone: 4974 2345
Email: nbrennan@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Sandra Feltham
Senior Community Planner

Phone: 4974 2961
Email: sfeltham@ncc.nsw.gov.au



