

Additional Agenda Item: Inclusion of an Aboriginal Cultural Story in the Ballina Major Regional Centre Strategy (BMRCs)

Background

The BMRCs will set out what needs to be done to accommodate the changes that occur as Ballina becomes a regional centre over the next 20 years. The draft strategy identifies key drivers of change, opportunities and key challenges over the next twenty years and proposes a series of actions that may be taken to respond to changes in a proactive and positive manner.

The draft strategy also seeks to recognise important historical elements which led to the establishment of the Ballina Township, including Aboriginal cultural heritage and early European history.

It is proposed that the *Three Brothers Story* will be included in the document, as it is an important cultural story of belief for Bundjalung people and describes the origin of Aboriginal people in this region.

The Three Brothers

About this story: The Three Brothers is a cultural belief story about the origin of all Bundjalung people. It describes Aboriginal people arriving on the Ballina coastline and how they began. There are versions of this story for different cultural groups (or clans) within the Bundjalung region. This is the earliest written version told to Rev. H. Livingstone, who recorded it in 1892. This version of the story, told exactly as recorded, is appropriate to tell here for the Ballina area; however, other versions remain relevant to other Bundjalung cultural groups.

Long ago, Berrug, with his two brothers, Mommom and Yaburog came to this land. They came with their wives and children in a great canoe, from an island across the sea.

As they came near the shore, a woman on the land made a song that raised a storm which broke the canoe in pieces, but all the occupants, after battling with the waves, managed to swim ashore.

This is how 'the men', the paigal black race [*Aboriginal people*], came to this land. The pieces of the canoe are to be seen to this day. If anyone will throw a stone and strike a piece of the canoe, a storm will arise, and the voices of Berrug and his boys will be heard calling to one another, amidst the roaring elements. The pieces of the canoe are certain rocks in the sea.

At Ballina, Berrug looked around and said, nyug? [*what or something*], and all the paigal about there say nyug to the present day, that is, they speak the Nyug dialect.

Going north to the Brunswick, he said, minyug? [*what or something*], and the Brunswick River paigal say minyug to the present day.

On the Tweed he said, gando? [*what or something*], and the Tweed paigal say gando to the present day.

This is how the blacks [*Aboriginal people*] came to have different dialects.

Berrug and his brothers came back to the Brunswick River, where he made a fire, and showed the paigal how to make fire. He taught them their laws about the kippara [ceremony], and about marriage and food.

After a time, a quarrel arose, and the brothers fought and separated, Mommom going south, Yaburog west, and Berrug keeping along the coast.

This is how the paigal were separated into tribes.

Reference: Rev. H. Livingstone ***A Short Grammar and Vocabulary of the Dialect spoken by the Minyug People, on the North-East coast of New South Wales.*** (Wimmera, Victoria), contained in L.E. Threlkeld (1892) ***An Australian Language as spoken by the Awabakal the people of Awaba or Lake Macquarie (near Newcastle, New South Wales) being an account of Their Language, Traditions, and Customs*** re-arranged, condensed and edited by John Fraser.