

**MINUTES OF THE BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE TUCKEROO ROOM IN COUNCIL'S
CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE
AT 5.00PM ON THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2014**

1. Attendance and Apologies

Members

Lois Cook, Marcus Ferguson

Apologies

Sandra Bolt, Mayor Councillor David Wright

In Attendance

Councillor Susan Meehan

Paul Hickey, General Manager

Steve Barnier, Group Manager Strategic and Community Facilities

2. Appointment of Chair

Lois Cook was nominated to chair the meeting. She accepted the role.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items on the Agenda.

4. Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 7 November 2013 were accepted, by consensus, as a correct record of that meeting.

5. Matters Arising from Last Meeting

There were no matters identified from the last meeting as warranting discussion.

6. Deputations

- a) Council Rangers Joe Sabine and Alfie Proberts presented to the meeting concerning responsible pet ownership generally, and discussed the need for improved management practices in relation to some dogs on Cabbage Tree Island.

The Rangers indicated their desire to work with Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Cabbage Tree Island residents to determine the best ways of approaching and resolving these issues. It was noted that the RSPCA, Northern Rivers Animal Services and some local

veterinarian businesses may also be available to assist to implement programs within the community.

Committee members at the meeting were also interested in the current laws about keeping of dingoes. Enclosed with these Minutes is a brochure from the NSW Department of Primary Industries which provides helpful information.

- b) Council's Natural Resource Officer, James Brideson presented to the meeting regarding the preparation of a draft Vegetation Management Plan for the East Ballina Reserves. It is intended that this plan, when adopted, will replace other plans which operate for this purpose in the same area.

In noting this presentation, Committee members stressed the importance of ensuring that the new document will dovetail with the draft management plan being prepared by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage for the declared East Ballina Aboriginal Place [this was reported to the Committee on 7 November 2013]. Committee members also noted the importance of ensuring that the broad community is consulted in relation to directional and interpretative signage or other material proposed to be placed within the coastal reserve and elsewhere on public land.

A copy of the draft Vegetation Management Plan for the East Ballina Reserves has been distributed to Committee members with these Minutes. Members are invited to review the document and provide feedback to Mr Brideson by 20 March.

Action

That a copy of the draft Vegetation Management Plan for the East Ballina Reserves be referred to the Office of Environment and Heritage requesting that it be integrated with the draft management plan for the declared East Ballina Aboriginal Place.

- c) Council's Engineering Services Manager, Paul Busmanis and Council's consultant, Ian Fox attended the meeting to provide an update concerning planning and community consultation for the Coastal Pathways projects.

Ian expressed his appreciation for the commitment and support of a number of the registered stakeholders during the consultation process. He also outlined current procedures for the registration of newly identified sites on the NP & WS database and that work is progressing on the design of interpretative signage for placement along the shared pathway route.

(Note: Councillor Meehan left the meeting at this point).

7. General Business

a) Aboriginal Welcome Statement

The Committee members present reviewed the draft Welcome / Acknowledgement of Country statement which was presented in the business agenda. Members supported the statement but requested that the word Bundjalung, wherever occurring, be replaced by the word Nyangbul, and that it be used when ever referring to the Country that is Ballina Shire.

b) Council Events and Ceremonies – Welcome to Country.

c) The Committee members present advised they were generally happy with the circumstances in which Council currently undertakes a Welcome to Country for its events, and that these arrangements should continue.

In relation to who should be invited to provide a Welcome, members agreed that Lois Cook is an appropriate representative of the local Aboriginal community for the provision of this service.

On the question of payment for the delivery of a Welcome, it was agreed that current arrangements remain appropriate and adequately address Council's need for openness and accountability in the use of public funds.

d) Proposed Ballina Shire Aboriginal Reconciliation Plan

Copies of reconciliation plans sourced from a number of council areas were distributed at the meeting for viewing. Members concur that it is desirable to work toward the preparation of such a plan for Ballina Shire and felt that members of the community would be willing to support and participate in a process to achieve that.

Mr Hickey indicated that he will invite the Council to consider allocating funds toward this project in the future budget discussions soon to be undertaken.

e) Management of Wardell Cemetery

All at the meeting agreed that it is highly important to better manage the public record of Aboriginal burials at Wardell Cemetery.

Members agreed that discussions be held between Council representatives and community members to discuss a way forward for this project. Mr Ferguson indicated his willingness to assist in facilitating these discussions.

It was also indicated that grant funding may be available to assist with costs associated with records improvement.

f) Coastal Pathways Project

Refer to Mr Fox and Mr Busmanis' deputation. This project will be the subject of regular reports to the Committee.

g) Draft East Ballina Reserves Vegetation Management Plan

Refer to Mr Brideson's deputation. Implementation of the plan (assuming its adoption) can be a matter for reporting to the Committee from time to time.

Members are reminded that any comments concerning the draft plan (a copy is distributed with these Minutes) should be presented to Mr Brideson by 20 March 2014.

8. Business Without Notice

a) Proposed Upgrade of the Pacific Highway

Mr Ferguson raised the matter of the proposed Pacific Highway upgrade, particularly the part of the project in the vicinity of Wardell. He expressed his concern about the potential negative ecological and cultural impacts arising if the selected route is not changed.

Mr Ferguson expressed the view that the Roads and Maritime Services and its consultants have not had adequate regard for these ecological and cultural values in assessing route options or in the conceptual design of the new highway.

Action

That the Committee record its strong objection to the selected route for the Woodburn to Ballina section of the Pacific Highway upgrade project. This objection is based on the fact that the NSW Roads and Maritime Services and its consultants have failed to adequately understand, document and have regard for the important cultural and ecological values of the land that the new road would traverse. Further, that the measures proposed to mitigate these impacts are inadequate in the circumstances.

b) Dalwood Falls, Alstonville

Ms Cook noted the recent fatality at the Dalwood Falls.

Whilst recognising Council's responsibilities to manage risks associated with the public's unauthorised use of the property, Ms Cook advised that the falls comprise a powerful spiritual site for Aboriginal people. She stated that this significance is another reason why Council should do whatever it reasonably can to prevent public access to the falls.

9. Council Documents on Exhibition

The documents which have recently been on public exhibition for community feedback were noted.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held at 5.00pm on Thursday 3 April 2014 in the Tuckaroo Room of Council's Customer Service Centre, 40 Cherry Street Ballina.

Agendas will be distributed to Committee members prior to that meeting. Any matters which members wish to have considered for inclusion in the next agenda should be emailed to Council by Friday 21 March.

11. Meeting close

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.00pm.