

**ITEM-21: LMM 27/11/18 - RECOGNITION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GURAKI ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

---

**RECOMMENDATION**

That City of Newcastle:

- 1 Notes that on 1 June 2019 the Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee (Guraki) will celebrate its twentieth anniversary as a committee of the City of Newcastle and that this anniversary date falls during Reconciliation Week 2019;
- 2 Recognises that Guraki was established on the 1 June 1999 to facilitate the implementation of the Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle;
- 3 Acknowledges the service to the City of Newcastle of local Aboriginal community members and stakeholder groups by formally recognising the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of Guraki;
- 4 Hosts an event during Reconciliation Week 2019 to recognise past and present members of Guraki, and other key local stakeholders, and stakeholder groups, who have partnered with Council to progress reconciliation.

**BACKGROUND**

- 5 On the 16 November 1993 Council adopted a *Commitment to Indigenous Australians*, and on the 23 November 1993 the former Lord Mayor John McNaughton assigned the common seal to the Commitment witnessed by Aboriginal community members Charles Richards and June Mason. The signing of the Commitment was celebrated with a 'Coming Together Day' event held at Newcastle Foreshore.
- 6 On the 31 May 1995 Council hosted a community forum at City Hall to consider strategies to turn the intent of the 1993 Commitment into practical outcomes for all citizens of Newcastle. Council then resolved on the 28 May 1996 "to revise and renew Council's commitment to Indigenous Australians" (Lord Mayoral Minute, 28 May 1996).
- 7 In 1997 the former Lord Mayor Greg Heys took steps to revise the original Commitment. Council resolved to place a draft revised Commitment on public exhibition, to send a delegation to the Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne to table the draft document, and to convene a working party to develop a process for consultation and review of the final draft document for Council adoption in NAIDOC Week 2007 (Lord Mayoral Minute, 20 May 1997).
- 8 On the 8 July 1997 Council adopted the new wording for the *Commitment by Newcastle City Council to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle*.

- 9 On the 14 April 1998 a civic ceremony was held at City Hall to witness the fixing of the City's common seal to Council's new *Commitment*. The Commitment was signed by Iris Russell, Jim Wright and Rodney Smith on behalf of the local Aboriginal communities.
- 10 Council further resolved on the 15 September 1998 to establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee of Council with a mandate to give life to the Commitment, that committee being the *Newcastle City Council Indigenous Issues Advisory Panel*. The initial membership of the panel was Lord Mayor Greg Heys, Councillor Margaret Henry, Councillor Keith Parsons; Aboriginal community members being Narelle Anderson, Craig Aspinall, Beverly Chapman, Doug Gordon, Ray Kelly, Donna Meehan, Craig Ritchie, Laurel Williams, and Marilyn Wilson; and City of Newcastle staff Graham Clarke, Therese Postma, and Sandy Johnston.
- 11 At a meeting of the Advisory Panel on the 20 May 1999 Members resolved "The Newcastle City Council Indigenous Issues Advisory Panel will be known as The Guraki Committee of Newcastle City Council.
- 12 The meaning of 'Guraki' is to be wise, skilful." Guraki was officially launched on 1 June 1999.
- 13 Guraki has operated continuously since 1999 promoting public dialogue and encouraging active participation by Council, local Aboriginal communities, and stakeholder agencies in discussions, deliberations, and in taking prescribed actions for the benefit of all citizens of Newcastle.

#### **RELATED PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

- 14 On 16 November 1993 Council resolved to endorse the *Commitment to Indigenous Australians*.
- 15 On 8 July 1997 Council adopted a revised Commitment statement.
- 16 On 15 September 1998 Council resolved to establish the Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A:** A Commitment by Newcastle City Council to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle.

# A Commitment by Newcastle City Council To Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle

The Council of the City of Newcastle acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in this council area Awabakal and Worimi, were the first peoples of this land, and are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of continuing dispossession.

Newcastle Council recognises that the British invasion initiated massive changes to the land and its peoples.

As a vital step towards building a just, common future, Newcastle Council recognises the loss and the grief held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Council acknowledges that this loss and grief has been caused by alienation from their traditional lands, the loss of their lives and their freedom, and the forced removal of their children.

Newcastle Council supports the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live according to their own values and cultures.

Newcastle Council recognises the vital importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' contribution to strengthening and enriching our city and region.

Newcastle Council, in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is committed to:

respecting and conserving their cultural practices, traditional sites and significant places,

promoting activities which increase cultural sensitivity and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,

developing an agreement between local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other community members for the care of the local environment,

working towards the recovery of their languages, health, cultural practices and lost kinship.

Newcastle Council will look towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for practical knowledge which could help to secure a sustainable future for our community.

Newcastle Council, in negotiation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, will further reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other community members by working together for a treaty and/or other agreements of reconciliation.

Newcastle City Council, in negotiation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, will develop an action plan to redress disadvantages and attain justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community.



Signed for and on behalf of  
Newcastle City Council by:

The Right Worshipful  
The Lord Mayor of Newcastle  
Councillor Greg Heys

*Greg Heys*

Mr Robert Gibbons  
General Manager, Newcastle City Council

*Robert Gibbons*



Signed for and on behalf of the  
Aboriginal Community of the  
Newcastle Local Government Area by:

Mrs Iris Russell

*Iris Russell*  
ATSIC Commissioner NSW East Zone  
Mr Jim Wright

*Jim Wright*  
Mr Rodney Smith

*Rodney Smith*

14 April 1998