

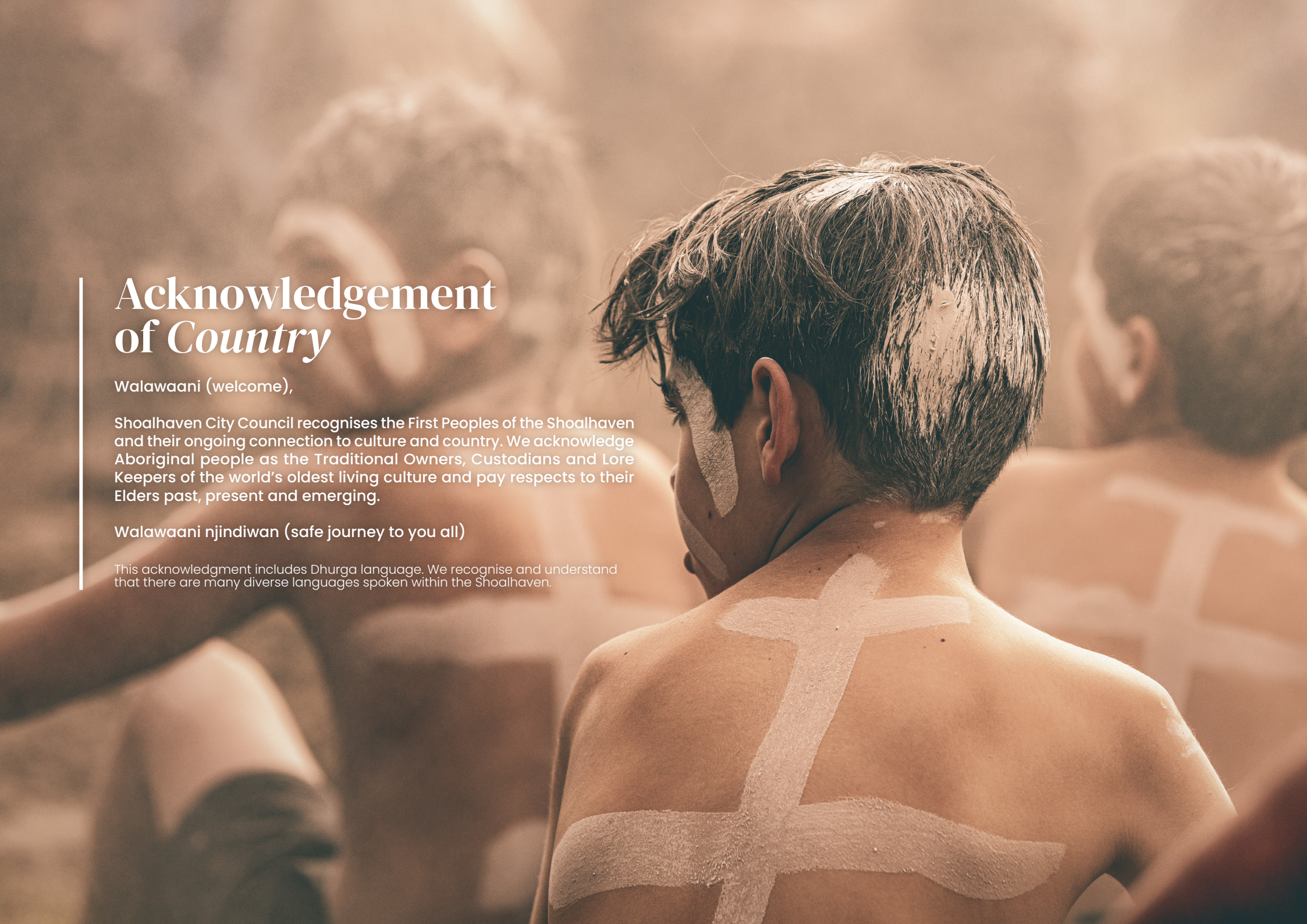


Shoalhaven
City Council

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

March 2025 – September 2026



A photograph of a group of Indigenous Australians, likely from the Shoalhaven region, with white body paint (woomera) applied to their faces and backs. The image is a close-up, focusing on the back of a person in the foreground, with others visible in the background. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a sunset or sunrise setting. The overall mood is respectful and cultural.

Acknowledgement of Country

Walawaani (welcome),

Shoalhaven City Council recognises the First Peoples of the Shoalhaven and their ongoing connection to culture and country. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Walawaani njindiwan (safe journey to you all)

This acknowledgment includes Dhurga language. We recognise and understand that there are many diverse languages spoken within the Shoalhaven.

Contents

Our vision for reconciliation	04
RAP artwork	05
A message from the Mayor	06
A message from the CEO	07
A message from Reconciliation Australia CEO	08
Elders' stories	09
Our community	13
Our people	14
Our places	15
Our organisation	16
Our RAP	18
Why we have a RAP	19
Our approach to developing our RAP	20
Our achievements and current work	22
Reconciliation achievements	23
Our current reconciliation work	25
Relationships	30
Respect	33
Opportunities	36
Governance	38
Acknowledgement of contributors	41

Our vision for *reconciliation*

We walk together, building a foundation of cultural awareness and acceptance in our workplaces and community spaces.

We stand up for reconciliation in our community. Through conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and communities, we promote respect and understanding to drive positive change for a shared future.

We recognise and value Shoalhaven's profoundly rich Aboriginal history, and accept truth-telling, cultural knowledge, and education.

Through our words and actions, we shape a welcoming, inclusive environment by nurturing pride and belonging in our community. We celebrate local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages.



RAP artwork

“Woven” is a communal community painting that serves as a powerful symbol of Aboriginal identity and community connection to the Shoalhaven Region.

Through motifs gathered from community participation, art workshops, and conversations held in diverse locations such as Vincentia, Nowra, Ulladulla and Bomaderry, the circle was identified as the most common representation of unity and marks as an accessible visual language for all.

At the heart of the painting lies a central meeting place that unifies the diverse journeys and beliefs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members, bridging the past with the present and underscoring a shared commitment to reconciliation.

The surrounding empty space represents a pathway toward an unknown future while the rippling effect radiating from the centre reflects the artist’s intention. “It felt like a stone thrown into the water and the ripples transcend through community, multiple understandings, resilience and hopefulness move within”.

Waterways are intricately woven into the design, signifying a connection to place. As the

painting evolved, the form of a woven basket emerged, representing the interwoven histories of the community and the authentic contributions made through a collaborative art practice. A portion of the painting is left unfinished to draw attention to the ongoing “mending” required to sustain and reach full reconciliation.

Embedded into the fabric of the basket is both representation of the Aboriginal Flag and Australian Flag (Union Jack) to illustrate the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community that is the fabric of the Shoalhaven region. The missing elements of the painting are deliberate as it asks the audience to reflect on the perceived connotations of what they believe should be present and then ask themselves the same question about what their contribution towards reconciliation is, is something missing? What is it you will carry into the shared future?

**Jaz Corr,
Artist**



Jaz Corr, Woven, 2024. Rust and paint on recycled cardboard, 1m x 0.8m

ICIP Notice

Notice of Custodial Interest of the Nowra/Bomaderry, Jerrinja/Roseby Park, Wreck Bay and Ulladulla communities. Dealing with any part of the images for any purpose that has not been authorised by the custodians is a serious breach of the customary laws of the community and may also breach the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). For enquiries about permitted reproduction of these images and cultural consents to use the traditional knowledge embodied in this work, contact Jasmine Caroline Corr.

A message from the *Mayor*

As the newly elected Mayor, I'm thrilled to put my support behind Council's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and work with the community to bring this framework to life.

Reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for the benefit of all Australians. I believe that every voice should be heard and valued, and that active listening and understanding will help us on our path to reconciliation.

The Shoalhaven has always been a place of cultural and spiritual significance for Aboriginal people and this document will allow us to work more effectively and collaboratively with the people in our community.

There are a number of initiatives outlined in this document to guide us forward. Developed in consultation with key staff and community stakeholders, our RAP includes 48 actions that Council is committed to deliver to improve how we provide services and employ people.

Just a few of these actions include:

- Communicating our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.
- Building relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).
- Promoting positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.

- Conducting a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.
- Conducting a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.
- Promoting Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Art) Collections to community.
- Investigating opportunities for targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions within Council teams across the organisation.
- Attending events and programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build relationships and share information.

And most importantly, that we continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.

We are proud to partner with Reconciliation Australia and together, with the community, we can inspire everyone to be part of the reconciliation journey.

On behalf of all elected councillors, I look forward to working together to deepen the relationships and mutual respect between our staff, community members and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Shoalhaven.

Patricia White

P.K. White

Mayor, Shoalhaven



A message from the CEO

It is with great pride that I present Shoalhaven City Council's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Our reconciliation journey is particularly significant to the Shoalhaven community which has a rich Aboriginal history that dates back tens of thousands of years. This Reflect RAP signifies our long-term commitment to supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our community, starting with actions to be implemented over the coming 18 months.

For many years, Council has worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to build stronger relationships and forge partnerships between Elders, staff and community members. We recognise the way forward is to drive initiatives within our business to ensure our formal reconciliation journey is meaningful and sustainable.

This strategic framework outlines actions we will take to ensure equitable access to services and employment on our journey to creating a culturally safe organisation. Our goal is to provide services and employ people in a way that integrates reconciliation, through respectful race relations, understanding the impact of historical wrongs, providing equitable access to opportunities and valuing a shared national identity.

I'd like to thank our Aboriginal staff who have supported and contributed

in a very hands-on and open way. We also have incredibly passionate staff and community members who have contributed through working groups, including our Yarning Group who have provided great wisdom throughout the process. I'd also like to acknowledge the support of Reconciliation Australia as the lead body for reconciliation in Australia and reaffirm our formal commitment through this plan. Reconciliation Australia promote and facilitate reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Council's RAP has the full support of our senior leadership team and they will play an important role in ensuring we deliver on our commitments and achieve our objectives. This plan will help us to achieve reconciliation outcomes that benefit everyone, which is something we can be proud of.

We look forward to moving through the stages as part of our commitment to reconciliation and we are excited to be part of this journey.

James Ruprai



Acting CEO, Shoalhaven City Council



A message from *Reconciliation Australia* CEO

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Shoalhaven City Council to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Shoalhaven City Council joins a network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Shoalhaven City Council to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Shoalhaven City Council, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer

Reconciliation Australia



Elders' stories

The following stories are abridged transcripts, as spoken by local Elders on NAIDOC Day 2024. They are shared here to acknowledge the importance of our Elders and their stories.



Aunty Allison Aldridge

When I was a young child, being one of a family of 10 siblings, I was the fourth eldest. I experienced many expectations of me. As my parents lived in a high poverty lifestyle. Growing up in tents, doing seasonal work, resulting in us older siblings helping to raise the younger siblings. Attending different schools with no parent involvement, as they were working out in the fields seven days a week, completing long hours. This resulted in my education being very limited in my growing up years.

I married when I was 18 and had my three children at an early age. Once the children were enrolled in school I became highly involved with their education and sporting needs. By the time I was in my early 30's I pursued a job, as an Aboriginal Education Assistant at Bomaderry Primary School. I have been in this job now for 39 years. Because of my upbringing I need to be a support person for the local community and students to make sure they have the opportunity to receive an education, as in my time growing up I never had those opportunities.



Aunty Pat Seymour

My expectations for my children growing up in the Shoalhaven

To give them a good education and following that, employment. They were all into sports, so they all represented their school in their school events, carnivals etc. Only one of them competed in the swimming.

How society has changed as a whole from my younger days to now

Well, there are more opportunities out there for our kids, and as I said before, they were all into sports. Now they are all older, my oldest boy is 50, so he's not into that anymore but his grandkids are, that he's got custody of so that keeps them going.

What I would like to see happen in the community for Aboriginal people

Well, I think we are all accepted so that's a good thing. I'm just speaking on behalf of my kids too. All through schooling their best mates were always non-indigenous. And sometimes community people say how come you go to that school, because they went to Catholic School at St John's, and that's because I went to a Catholic School too and I wanted them to have that too.

How we can teach younger generations about our culture, dance, food, language and music

Well, growing up my Dad used to tell stories, and way back then we just didn't think of it as a cultural thing until now. They talk about it more, and you think, well, we did all that. He was a fisherman too and he loved to dive for lobsters, abalones and things like that. We would sit on the rocks, and just do the scrape and whatever it's called the black stuff off the top of the abalone. So then it was easy for you to shuck and take home. So we did a lot through the sea life because we grew up in Narooma, and he also taught us about the bush tucker foods and some medicinal medicines. But we don't share that, only with our family.

Elders' stories

Aunty Pat Seymour (continued)

And another thing is respect too, all my kids are really respectful. If they brought their mates home to our place, before they come home they would say no swearing in our house. Mum doesn't swear and sometimes the young ones when they were in their teens, you know they would let it slip and they would say sorry, sorry. So that still stands today with all the grandkids too. Not just respect for me, but for all the Elders out there.

Where I see the Shoalhaven in another 20 years

I think there should be more, I mean, you probably know about the new shop that opened, Blak Cede. Like if there are more things, like that. Like even an art shop that's owned by the Traditional Owners and community, we did have an art shop there before, but that wasn't owned by Traditional Owners or Koori family. Well, most of my boys and Tina are all very artistic except the youngest one, who said "Mum I'm a sports person".

Changes in my lifetime

Well, it's good to know the dances, that's excellent because we didn't grow up with any of that. Even language. We knew a lot of words or different things, but never put them together, because way back then, nothing was put on paper. So it's interesting now that they've got a book with all these words in it, and I've read the book. There's so many words in there that don't mean anything to me, so I don't know where they really come from.

So back to the dances. I did an exercise programme for Grand Pacific Health when I retired as well and it was excellent and the dancers came in and showed us some dances that we could do, things they were doing out there, just a slower pace because it was all for the Elders. It was just excellent to do that.

Where I see the younger generation in years to come

Well, hopefully there will be more employment out there. Because there's a lot of negative things in Shoalhaven all over which is something that never happened when I was growing up, like the drug issues. So that's a big thing. Hopefully over the years, everything will change there for the better. That would be good.

Other stories

In my dad's workplace, we worked in sawmills. So we had a lot of transitions to other places to work in the saw mills. But it was all on the east coast, we never went inland. So we're all connected and it's called the Yuin nation. Even though there's some in Shoalhaven that doesn't like that. But we were brought up not to believe, we were told Yuin nation is from right down near the border, all the way up this side north, so we know a lot of people. So I think that's why I was so accepted in this community, because a lot of them went down south then, it was seasonal work too down the coast.

I was just having an interview with a man and he told me they used to pick peas and beans down there. Peas and beans. So that is how we know so many people through connections, even the two that you know, Jerrinja and Wreck Bay. So I've been accepted by all, in my workplace and out of my workplace.

My father grew up on a reserve at Wallaga Lake down the far south coast, but none of us did, ... but I didn't like that. We didn't like it when we'd have to go and visit the grandparents. You had to go to managers office which was a non-Indigenous person, to get the permission to go in and then on the way out you'd have to let them know you're leaving. So that was my only negative thing about reserves and that happened with all the reserves, but they did put them in lovely spots right near the water.

*The full audio recording is available for listening on the South Coast Cooperative Libraries catalogue.



Elders' stories



Aunty Colleen Webster

Growing up as children we had a hard life, travelling from town to town. This resulted in me not being able to attend school. I have been self-taught with regard to reading and writing growing up.

I married a non-Indigenous man. In those times it was not accepted.

I was very shy growing up. In later years I got involved in community events, both non-Indigenous and Indigenous. Now as an Indigenous Elder of the Shoalhaven I feel accepted by all parties.

What I would like to see in Council's RAP

More input from Aboriginal Elders and the future generation.



Uncle John Beckett

Growing up in the Shoalhaven

It wasn't too bad. It was pretty good. I played football here for the Nowra Warriors. I enjoyed playing at the showground and travelling around playing football.

I went to school at Falls Creek and when I was on the bus, Mum used to say, don't tell them you're an Aboriginal, tell them you are an Italian or something because they treat you like crap. So, all the time I was growing up, I always thought I was Italian. I looked like one. Mum said, look, don't tell them you are Aboriginal because they treat Italians and everyone else better. If you tell them you are Italian you will get treated better. And that was the way it was back in those days.

I remember we used to have to travel from here down to Moruya and Eurobodalla, because sometimes I went to school down there, and we used to pick peas because there was no dole or anything in those days, or anything like that. So we used to work and we'd all go down. There were heaps of families that used to travel down. We'd all meet down there and pick peas and the kids would go to school and we would come home and go straight to the pea paddock to help our parents pick peas and beans. That was our life back in those days and it was great.

I left [school] when I was 14 and 10 months. Dad used to be a timber cutter and I'd go and help him on weekends and all that sort of thing. I got attracted to cutting timber and I liked it, being in the fresh air and away from everybody. I enjoyed it and I left school at 14 and 10 months and went out and worked with Dad cutting timber.

Elders' stories

Uncle John Beckett (continued)

Expectations for my own children

To grow up decent and have a good education. We sent our son to St Gregory's or Oxley College on the bus. He used to go through Kangaroo Valley on the bus, and so did our daughter. She went to Oxley College for years. She got a job in the taxation department. Now she's teaching the Koori Kids at Corrimal High School. The young bloke, he's a carpenter/builder, and has his own building and construction company over in Canada.

You've got to have good ethics, and you've got to have a good work ethic. We tried to teach them to have a good work experience and a good work ethic.

What I'd like to see happen in the community for Aboriginal people

Well, like this sort of thing [NAIDOC Family Fun Day]. We all need to get together and communicate and treat each other with respect and all that sort of stuff.

Where I see the younger generation in years to come

Well, the way things are going, you know, it's not looking good at the moment.

How I think we can teach younger generations about Aboriginal culture, dance, food, language and music

Stuff like this [NAIDOC Family Fun Day], with events like this and a lot of our Elders educating them and teaching them all this sort of stuff. They've got to knuckle down and listen to their Elders instead of going out and running amuck and going astray and doing all these bad things.

Would I like to see more Aboriginal culture and employment in the Shoalhaven?

Yes, a lot of Aboriginal employment. We need to get the kids and we need to educate them. We need to teach them trades and things like that. Getting a trade would be good for them if they could get into a trade and keep them off the streets and out of trouble. That's my way of thinking. A lot of people think differently. But if you are working then you have got no way of causing trouble and getting into trouble.

Changes around Huskisson and Falls Creek

There have been a lot of changes. When we were kids, we used to go down near the falls and mum used to wash the clothes and we'd swim. It was our weekend out. We would go down there and light a fire and a copper on the fire, and mum would wash the clothes with the poker, and we'd swim and catch yabbies and whatever, it was great.

Other stories

I just remember one that mum used to tell me about her grandfather, my great grandfather. He went out with a hunting party once and she told me this story that some white people came along and shot all the men in the hunting party. There were two boys, probably about eight or nine, and they hid in a stump. They were in there for a couple of hours and another white party came along and heard them crying. They came along and got them out and took them back to the place where they were, and they became stockmen. They were brought up to be stockmen and his name was George Thomas. Yeah, and that was my Mum's grandfather.

*The full audio recording is available for listening on the South Coast Cooperative Libraries catalogue.



Our community

The Shoalhaven is located on the South Coast of New South Wales. Our area encompasses 4,531 square kilometres which includes 50 towns and villages, the Shoalhaven River, an abundance of national parks, beautiful state forests, marine parks, bushlands home to numerous flora and fauna, fresh and salt waterways and over 100 amazing beaches, all of which are culturally significant to the Aboriginal people of the area. The regional centre of Nowra-Bomaderry is 160 kilometres south of Sydney and 192 kilometres east of Canberra. Most of our area's population is concentrated along 165 kilometres of coastline.

With a growing population and a robust economy, the Shoalhaven is a popular place to live, work, stay and play. The Shoalhaven welcomes over 1000 new residents every year.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the original inhabitants of the Shoalhaven, having lived here for many generations. They make up 6.5% of the Shoalhaven's 108,531 population (ABS 2021). This percentage is 3.1% higher than the NSW average and 3.3% higher than the national average.

The Shoalhaven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is diverse and complex. Aboriginal people throughout the Shoalhaven may identify as: Jerrinja, Wandj Wandian, Yuin, Bherwerri, Tomakin, Murramarang, Budawang, or identify through their association with Roseby Park, the Wreck Bay Community, the Ulladulla community or have

connections to all. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in the region have moved here for a range of reasons and may maintain their cultural identity and connections to the land and waterways of their family heritage.

Local Aboriginal people may identify their connections to the Dharawal language or Dhurga language group. In many of our communities, languages are being revived and maintained by Elders, families and community members.

Because of the Shoalhaven's unique environment and close proximity to Sydney and Canberra, it is also home to an ageing population. 36.1% of our residents are aged 60 years or older. This is 13% higher than the Regional NSW average and the national average.

As well as our unique environment, the Shoalhaven is home to the HMAS Albatross naval air station, and borders the federal territory of Jervis Bay Territory which includes Booderee National Park and HMAS Creswell naval training facility.

With spectacular natural environments that bring people from across the state to visit, the Shoalhaven is visited by 3 million people annually, making it one of the most popular tourist destinations in New South Wales.



Our people

Population
(ABS ERP 2023)

109,895

13.5% born overseas
8.1% need disability
assistance

Projected increase

+12,735

by 2031

Average age

48 yrs

19.2% aged 0-17



36.1%

Population
of avg. age 60+

Current population forecasts indicate that the ageing population (65+) in the Shoalhaven will increase from 29,679 (2021) to 33,795 (2031). An increase of 4,116 people or 14%. This is significant as it will impact service delivery and the way we have to engage with the broader community. This is an upward trend as numbers are expected to continue to increase.



6.5%

of the Shoalhaven's
population identify as
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander



39.5%

Completed year 12
26.6% vocational education
15.8% university education



Jobs

41,571

48.8% in workforce
4.9% unemployed

Households

21%

made up of couples
with children

31%

Couples
without children

18%

Older couples
without children

28%

Single
person

10.3%

Single
parent

Single person households increasing from
12,908 in 2021 to 14,151 in 2031 – an increase of
1,243.

Total households

45,894

25.8%

Mortgage

23.1%

Renting

3.4%

Social
housing



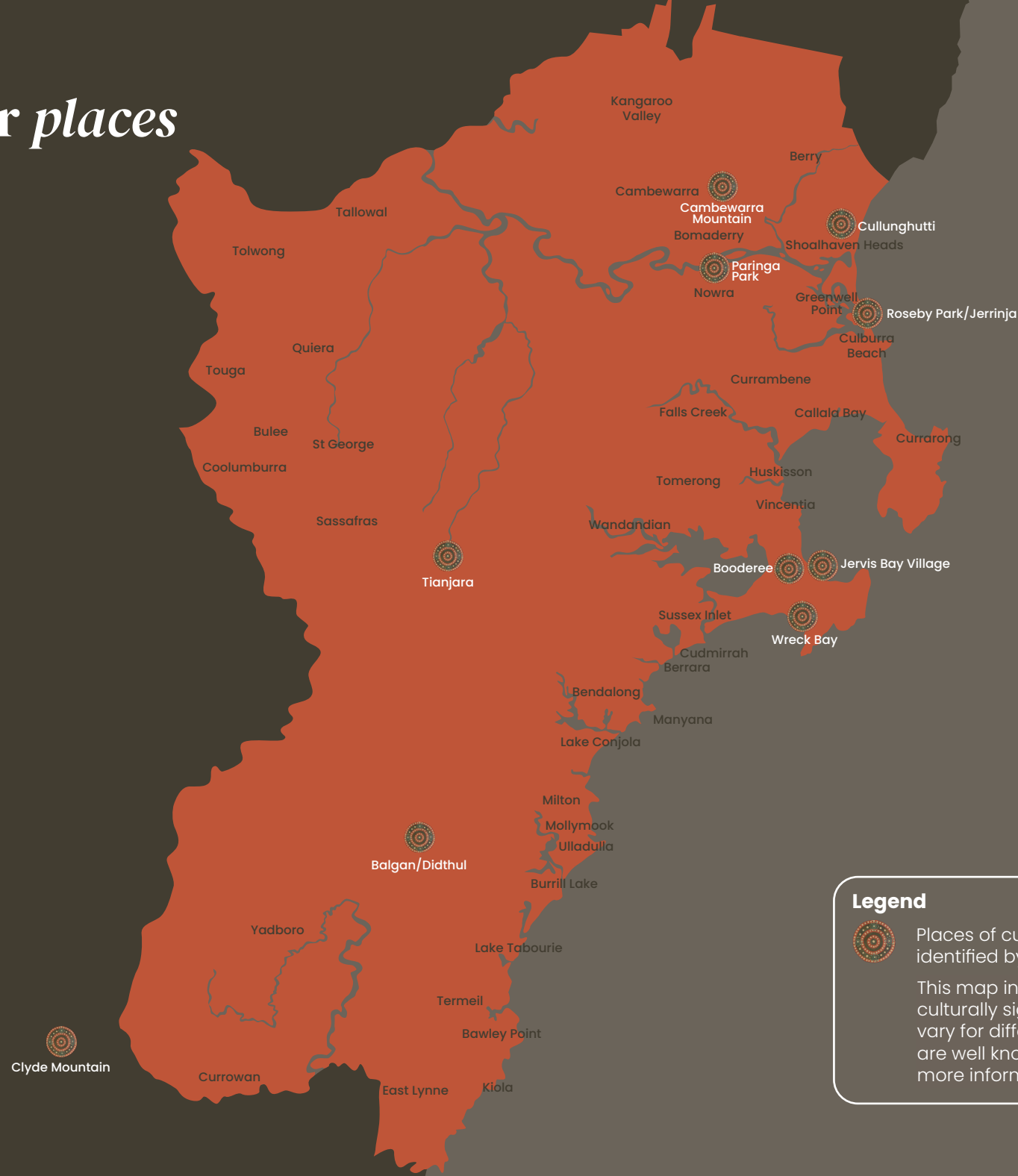
429

Individuals homeless

Statistics sourced from 2021 Census data and forecast.id

NAIDOC Family Fun Day

Our places



Legend



Places of cultural significance identified by the Yarning Group

This map includes a small sample of culturally significant places. Significance may vary for different groups. All of these places are well known as culturally significant, and more information is publicly available.

Our organisation

Our organisation's core purpose is to deliver and maintain services and infrastructure for all the people of the Shoalhaven in accordance with the Local Government Act, our Code of Conduct, and in alignment with our vision and values.

Our Council is made up of 12 elected Councillors and our Mayor. Our elected Councillors represent three wards of the Shoalhaven. Council staff headed by our CEO, provide advice on our operations and work to support Councillors in their role.

Our organisation's current key priorities are as noted in Council's Community Strategic Plan – Shoalhaven 2032:

- Resilient, Safe, Accessible & Inclusive Communities
- Sustainable, Liveable Environments
- Thriving local economies that meet community needs
- Effective, Responsible & Authentic Leadership

In support of these priorities, we provide a vast range of services, facilities and infrastructure to our community from the footpaths you walk on, the water from your tap, the roads that you drive on and the recreational spaces you enjoy.

Our organisational structure is headed by our CEO. Reporting to the CEO are four directorates.

The City Performance Directorate provides long term planning for financial and organisational performance through corporate finance, business assurance and risk, and information technology services. We support people and culture with human resources, staff development, work health and safety compliance and training, and Council's payroll services, staff development, and work health and safety compliance and training. Our customer experience teams deliver a coordinated initial point of contact for optimal service delivery to the community.

The City Services Directorate delivers planning, design, development and maintenance of our roads and infrastructure. Services provided by our Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, aquatic and sports centres, sporting fields, community halls and centres, cemeteries, wharves, jetties, tourist parks are managed by this directorate, as well as our waste services facilities. Our emergency management team plans for and manages responses to emergencies in our area including flood and fire.

The City Development Directorate looks strategically to the future of the Shoalhaven area. This includes how our towns and villages develop and transform for improved community, tourism, economic and built environment outcomes. The directorate also supports the Shoalhaven through the Regional Gallery, Shoalhaven Libraries, business, events and grants support, social planning, and community support and advocacy. The directorate assesses and certifies development, and oversees



 Ronald Carberry, Ganger –
Bushcare Regenerator
Working on Country, Jerrinja
Tribal Man

safety compliance including ranger services, animal management, food and building safety. Environmental services monitor and protect our waterways, beaches and bushland.

The Shoalhaven Water Directorate, Council's water utility, manages the collection, treatment and distribution of water in the Shoalhaven City. It also collects, treats and disposes of wastewater safely back into the environment.

At the time of writing, Council employs 1,555 people who deliver these services for our community. Whilst staff are not required to advise, 2.82% of people working for Council have told us they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Our teams work from many locations in the Shoalhaven, with a large portion of indoor workers located at Council's administration building in Nowra. Our organisation has operational depots located in Bomaderry, Woollamia and Ulladulla.

Our workplaces are located throughout the Shoalhaven from the north in Kangaroo Valley to the south in North Durras.





Our *RAP*

Why we have a RAP

This Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) sets out actions and commitments to strengthen relationships, demonstrate respect, celebrate culture and traditions, and work more closely and collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve reconciliation outcomes in the Shoalhaven area.

Council is committed to ensuring equitable access to services and employment. The RAP acts on this commitment, providing the framework by which Council will engage with staff to increase understanding of the importance of reconciliation by: developing greater cultural awareness across the organisation; embedding professional development practices in our everyday work; and building the capacity of our staff and networks to maintain cultural safety, thus enhancing Council's contribution to, and reputation within the community.

Council interacts with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Traditional Custodians, residents, ratepayers, staff, business owners, suppliers, land holders and consumers. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a great deal to contribute to the cultural, social, and economic development of our community. The RAP actions guide Council to develop relationships with local Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people, improving our understanding of the diverse cultural dynamics within these communities and enabling Council to scope where our organisation can best support reconciliation within our sphere of influence.

This RAP supersedes Council's Statement of Commitment, adopted in 2009, which recognised Aboriginal people's valuable contribution made in strengthening and enriching our communities and heritage of all Australians, and committed Council to several actions to improve our work with Aboriginal communities. Progress towards the implementation of the goals in the Statement of Commitment was varied as there was no reporting process in place to track progress. This RAP will be supported by a rigorous reporting mechanism to ensure that teams across the organisation are accountable for their actions and are actively working towards delivering outcomes for reconciliation.

Key to the development of the Statement of Commitment was Shoalhaven City Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee which was established in 1997, and is still in place in 2025. In June 2020, Councillors initiated the step to adopt the Local Government NSW Albury 2018 Conference policy on the Uluru Statement from the Heart. To build our organisational capacity, senior staff and Councillors attended cultural

immersion, diversity and inclusion training in 2022, and Council launched an Aboriginal Protocol Guide as a resource for our staff in 2024.

The development of Council's first RAP aligns with our Community Strategic Plan – Shoalhaven 2032 which sets the future direction for Shoalhaven City Council for the next ten years, with the delivery of Council's first RAP being an action in the Delivery Program, Operational Plan.

Our Chief Executive Officer is Council's nominated 'RAP Champion' and will be responsible for providing strong and supportive leadership to guide the implementation of our first RAP, as well as supporting the development of subsequent RAPs.

Our approach to developing our RAP

Council appointed a Project Lead to co-ordinate and have oversight of the activities and groups involved in developing the RAP. A project plan was developed, guided by principles that were developed in partnership with Aboriginal project staff, and in consideration of Reconciliation Australia's RAP Framework.

Council established an internal RAP working group in December 2023. The purpose of the Working Group has been to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan for Council that will effectively contribute to reconciliation in the Shoalhaven, within the scope of Council's role, and considering advice from the Yarning Group. From the 27 staff who submitted an Expression of Interest to join the Working Group, 14 staff were appointed as Team Representatives ensuring representation from across the organisation's five directorates as well as Shoalhaven Water and the CEO's Office. Three of the 14 Team Representatives identify as Aboriginal. In addition, two representatives of the Yarning Group attend the Working Group meetings.

The Yarning Group was established concurrently

with the Working Group. The purpose of the Yarning Group has been to guide the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan and offer advice about the effectiveness of the proposed RAP in progressing towards reconciliation in the Shoalhaven. This group comprised 10 community representatives (including service providers, community members and Elders), six employee representatives, and two representatives from Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee. This sought to achieve membership representing diverse community perspectives and interests, and with a majority of members having a family/community connection to the Shoalhaven. All members of the Yarning Group identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

A Steering Group was also appointed in May 2024, to ensure clear communication and understanding of the RAP project at the executive level and provide endorsement and approval for decisions that do not come under the purview of the Working Group. This group was made up of two of Council's Directors, the Project Manager, the Media & Communications Manager, and the Chairs of the Yarning Group and the Working

Group. One member of the Steering Group identifies as Aboriginal.

As Council moves to implementation, all three groups will continue to convene with the purpose of each group shifting. As the governing body of the RAP, the Working Group will be responsible for implementation and reporting of the RAP, including communicating and promoting the deliverables within the RAP to the teams across the organisation.

The Yarning Group will continue to provide cultural advice to Council on the effectiveness of RAP activities and implementation and will be kept informed of progress. The experience gained from the Working and Yarning Groups' meetings every four weeks throughout the development of this Reflect RAP provides us with the opportunity to use our learnings and a continuous improvement approach to support the effective functioning of these groups as we progress on our reconciliation journey and implement our first RAP. The Steering Group will have oversight of the RAP through its implementation.

Working Group

Decision-makers from Council teams that will deliver RAP actions

Role

Make decisions about what to include in the RAP, informed by:

- Requirements of Reconciliation Australia
- Organisational capacity
- Information gathered from community, staff and stakeholders

Proposed RAP actions

Input and advice from Yarning Group

Yarning Group (advisory group)

Aboriginal staff and key Aboriginal stakeholders

Role

Guide development of the RAP by providing advice about the effectiveness of the proposed RAP in progressing towards reconciliation in the Shoalhaven.

Input and advice from Yarning Group

Proposed RAP actions

Project Team

Team organising the meetings

Role

Plan and deliver project activities by:

- Collating and presenting information gathered from meetings
- Project planning, reporting, communication with Reconciliation Australia

Approval of decisions outside WG scope

Steering Group

Director City Development, Director City Performance, Manager People & Culture, Manager Community Connections, Manager Media & Communications, RAP Project Lead, RAP Yarning Group Chair

Role

- Ensure clear communication and understanding of the RAP project at the executive level
- Provide endorsement and approval for decisions and content that do not come under the purview of the Working Group (WG), including communications and engagement.

Our achievements and *current work*

Reconciliation *achievements*

Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities of the Shoalhaven

In July 2009, as recommended by Shoalhaven City Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee, Council resolved to develop a Statement of Commitment with the Aboriginal Advisory Committee to show their recognition of the Traditional Custodians and culture. Council also resolved to include the Aboriginal flag in the Council Chambers alongside the existing flags, and to hold a formal handover ceremony to present the Aboriginal Flag to be raised in the Council Chambers.

Council's Aboriginal Community Development Officer and the Aboriginal Advisory Committee developed the Statement of Commitment, and Council adopted the Statement of Commitment on 21 December 2009. The Aboriginal Advisory Committee assisted in planning the formal ceremony.

A civic reception was held on 26 February 2010 to celebrate the adoption of the Statement of Commitment and the raising of the Aboriginal Flag in the Council Chambers. Feedback from the Aboriginal Elders and community members who attended was very positive, including comments about experiencing feelings of pride, recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal peoples' valuable contribution to Shoalhaven City.

At the ceremony, Shoalhaven City Mayor, Paul Green said:

"Today we honour the Aboriginal people of Shoalhaven City, a truly enduring people with a rich culture and history. I also acknowledge that much of that history has included injustices and mistreatments."

"Today we make a special commitment to Aboriginal people so that not just Council but all people of Shoalhaven City can learn more about the valuable contribution and richness that Aboriginal peoples offer to our City."



IN MEMORY Exhibition

The IN MEMORY Exhibition was a photographic and multimedia display recognising Shoalhaven's Aboriginal service men and women's contribution to Australia's defence force.

The exhibition was driven by the stories and reflections on military services, war and homecoming of Aboriginal service men and women and their families. Held at the Shoalhaven City Regional Art Gallery from 20 August 2014 to 11 October 2014, it shared memories and experiences, working to overcome the lack of knowledge and awareness of local Aboriginal people's military service, past and present.

Shoalhaven City Council coordinated the IN MEMORY Exhibition in collaboration with Aboriginal service men and women and their family representatives, the Australian War Memorial, museums, historians and Nowra RSL Sub-Branch.

Walking on Country film

Beautifully filmed in the Shoalhaven, Walking on Country (August 2020) is a short film that captures the unique experience of what connection to Country means to the individual Shoalhaven Aboriginal community members.

It highlights a strong message that cultural heritage is a vital element of Aboriginal people's identity, spiritual beliefs and affinity to the cultural landscape. Walking on Country celebrates the cultural vibrancy and rich heritage of the film participants who share their 'living culture' with us. Connection to Country is who we are, past, present, and future.

The Walking on Country project was visioned and developed by Shoalhaven City Council, in partnership and collaboration with community members. It was proudly supported by the NSW Government - Heritage NSW. The film is available to view on Council's website - search Walking on Country.

Aboriginal Protocol Guide for Council staff

The Aboriginal Protocol Guide is a resource that provides Council staff with knowledge and understanding of community protocols and encourages inclusive consultation and engagement processes with Aboriginal communities.

A guide of Aboriginal protocols and practices, it supports Council staff to provide opportunities for inclusive decision making processes and promote recognition and respect of Aboriginal heritage and cultures within the Shoalhaven. An increased awareness of Aboriginal cultural protocols assists in strengthening respectful and collaborative engagement strategies with Aboriginal communities within the Shoalhaven.

The Aboriginal Protocol Guide was developed collaboratively with Aboriginal staff and a Council staff working group to provide guidance and advice on local Aboriginal practices and protocols, released 22 March 2024.

Local Government Regional NAIDOC AWARDS 2024

Hosted by **Shoalhaven City Council**

In partnership with :



NAIDOC Awards -
Gadhungal Marring
performance





Our current reconciliation work

Aboriginal Advisory Committee to Shoalhaven City Council

The Shoalhaven City Council Aboriginal Advisory Committee is a mechanism for local Aboriginal people to have a stronger voice in Council's decision-making processes. The Committee supports Council to build and strengthen respectful relationships and develop

collaborative approaches with Aboriginal communities.

The purpose of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee is to provide advice to Council on all issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Shoalhaven, including monitoring the implementation of relevant Council plans and strategies with respect to the

needs, issues and interests of Aboriginal people and communities.

It was established in 1997 as a formal Committee of Council under Section 355 of the Local Government Act (1993). The Advisory Committee meets quarterly and continues to advocate for Aboriginal people to ensure Aboriginal people's voices are heard.

Reconciliation Garden at Boongaree Rotary Nature Play Park

Direct engagement with local Aboriginal groups, Elders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people has been planned for the proposed Reconciliation Garden, in accordance with the Council endorsed Masterplan for Boongaree regional park in Berry. The Reconciliation Garden is planned for the north/eastern section of Boongaree, near Bundawallah Creek, near the site of an Aboriginal camp in the early 1900s. Concept designs were prepared following previous engagement activities.

Bushcare and Landcare restoration of endemic plants have taken place on Country at Boongaree. A Reconciliation Fig was planted by local Aboriginal children on International Tree Day, 31 July 2022. Fig trees are traditionally recognised as protective trees under which to enjoy company, with good shade and in connection with Country. People from several local Aboriginal groups attended the ceremony, along with local Councillors and Council staff. One attendee painted the garden's concept design on the grass, incorporating paths from the Fig to a smoking circle and a yarning circle, symbolising connections with Country and people.

Our engagement seeks wide input from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and aims to develop 'shovel-ready' detailed designs for future implementation when funding becomes available. Engagement activities display concept designs for discussion and development of detailed designs, and are undertaken at a gentle pace, with quiet conversations.

Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards

The passion of five Aboriginal community development officers from five councils across the region led to the creation of the Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards, as an accessible platform that showcases local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. The first award ceremony was held in 2011 hosted by Shellharbour City Council and since then, the awards are organised collaboratively with four councils who take it in turns to host the event in their region.

The awards celebrate and recognise the remarkable accomplishments and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and businesses based in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven area. Shoalhaven City Council's Community Connections team partner with Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama Councils to plan and deliver the awards each year by committee. Shoalhaven City Council hosted the awards event in July 2024.

Supporting the Sorry Day event in Bomaderry

National Sorry Day is a day to acknowledge the strength of Stolen Generations Survivors and reflect on how we can all play a part in the healing process for our people and nation. Council's Community Connections team provides support where needed to South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation to deliver a Sorry Day event in Nowra/Bomaderry, and coordinate Council teams for track clearing, traffic control plans, event permits, DA advice, risk assessments as well as staff to assist the community walk.

Local Aboriginal Communities, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, school children from nearby schools, government, and non-government organisations, and groups

from up and down the South Coast, all unite for the three-kilometre walk across the Nowra Bridge to the Bomaderry Homes. The walk is followed by stories, dance, music, art, and complimentary food and beverages. The event serves as a tribute to the strength of Stolen Generations Survivors, encouraging contemplation on how each of us can contribute to the healing process of our people and nation, and an opportunity to connect as a community.

Prioritisation of Aboriginal language in place naming

Council has been working to prioritise the use of Aboriginal language placenames through its role in delivering Urban Release Areas. Place names connect people to a place and play a vital role in our social and cultural environment. Using Aboriginal language for place naming acknowledges and celebrates the long lasting connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to those places; helps to reawaken, preserve and grow Aboriginal languages; and supports the strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' connections with culture and identity.



 Elder, Aunty Nabu Deliah Lowe

Nowra Riverfront Designing with Country Framework

Council engaged 100% Aboriginal owned design consultancy, Yerrabingin to prepare a Designing with Country Framework for the Nowra Riverfront Precinct. Developed in close collaboration with the local Aboriginal community, the work identifies Aboriginal design narratives and principles to guide the future design and activation of the precinct. This approach seeks to meaningfully embed Aboriginal knowledge and culture into the Nowra Riverfront masterplan from early on, following the Connecting with Country Framework (Government Architect of NSW) principles.

Through a series of co-design sessions with local Aboriginal community members, three overarching design principles were developed – cultural landscapes, accessibility and water – with associated design elements and opportunities for interpretation allowing all users of the precinct to interact with and appreciate local Aboriginal culture and heritage. The Nowra Riverfront project will seek to continue the Designing with Country approach throughout future design and delivery phases.

Cultural Immersion Training

Council is rolling out a new Diversity and Inclusion training package to all staff, which is mandatory across all positions within Council. In response to community feedback Council has identified a high priority for a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural immersion module. Council collaborates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training companies to

develop resources, identify training content and support delivery of training modules, which may be presented by Council's People and Culture Department or by organisations engaged to deliver the training. Additionally, we engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and the Yarning Group to ensure training is effective and tailored to the needs of our Council and staff.

The goal of the training is to create a safe and inclusive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by enhancing cultural awareness, immersion, and safety among all staff. Implementing mandatory training through Council's People and Culture Department strengthens Council's previous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness training modules that have been presented only to interested staff over the past 10 years by Council's Community Development Officer – Aboriginal.

Protection of Aboriginal heritage items & respect for culturally significant sites as part of Council projects

Requirements for the protection of Aboriginal heritage items and consultation governed by legislation (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974) but does not always cover the values and concerns of Aboriginal community members. We therefore seek to undertake consultation with relevant Aboriginal stakeholders – as well as engage Aboriginal heritage site officers to monitor works – on Council led projects occurring in areas known to be culturally significant, but where requirements beyond due diligence are not triggered under legislation. We also facilitate the return of artefacts to Country

(in accordance with the wishes of the relevant Local Aboriginal Land Council).

Supporting Aboriginal cultural heritage protection with a new planning and development toolkit

Council recognises the importance of, and is committed to, ensuring its strategic planning and development processes support the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage. As part of this commitment, Council plans to develop a new planning and development toolkit to help strengthen the consideration of Aboriginal cultural heritage in new projects and developments across the LGA. This could include things like mapping of culturally significant areas known to the community (an example of this can be seen in the Tweed Shire) and improved guidance for Council assessment staff and developers. This work will be guided by the Aboriginal community. Council is at the beginning of this process and will keep the community informed on ways to get involved and on the work as it progresses.

Flag raising and civic reception for NAIDOC Week

Each year we celebrate NAIDOC Week with a civic reception that includes the raising of the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags by civic leaders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders. We strive to include cultural performances by local Aboriginal people and invite all Elders from across the region to attend, along with staff and community. A morning tea is held for Elders to attend.

Supporting community committees to deliver NAIDOC Week events and activities

NAIDOC Week, which first began in 1975, provides an opportunity for all Australians to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples cultures and histories, and to participate in celebrations of the oldest continuous living cultures on Earth. Across the Shoalhaven, Aboriginal communities gather to plan and deliver a number of events across the week.

The Community Connections team support NAIDOC Week committees, either through financial contribution or in-kind support (staff resource, venue, equipment, other resources and materials), to deliver community led events and activities including NAIDOC Week Family Fundays and Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards.

Aboriginal identified employment

Council currently has seven permanent identified positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- Library Assistant – Collection Services
- Library Assistant – Outreach Services
- Community Capacity Builder Aboriginal, Cadet
- Community Capacity Builder Aboriginal
- Ganger – Bushcare Regenerator
- Skilled Labourer – Bushcare Regenerator
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ranger

Skills for Life Nowra

Skills for Life is a program that provides employability skills, industry specific training and facilitates connections with local employers. It is a three week program tailored toward the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Community and covers Cultural Engagement, Digital Skills, and Industry Exploration. Council will be attending the Industry Exploration and showcasing available jobs and career pathways with Council. We will have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees attend to discuss their careers and experiences with Council.

Attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees and apprentices

Council engages a group training organisation for the provision of trainees and apprentices, and to provide opportunities for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This initiative provides a Mentorship Program, career days, and partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers. Career days provide information on career pathways such as apprentice and trainee opportunities, and how best to start a career with Council. Reporting measures and regular meetings with the Group Training Organisation enable Council to monitor the training and apprentices program, review processes with the contractor, and actively work to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices and trainees within Council.

These efforts are part of our commitment to assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve qualifications and meaningful employment across a wide range of disciplines in the Shoalhaven.

Career Pathways for school students to apprentices and trainees

Council works with local high schools to educate and expose students to opportunities and career pathways within Council. This includes partnership with five public high schools, a community college and three private schools in the Shoalhaven. Between January 2023 and October 2024 Council has hosted 102 students through our work experience and work placement programs, whereby several students gained successful traineeships or apprenticeships with Council.

Council's Workplace Learning Officer maintains strong relationships with Careers Advisors across the Shoalhaven. We engage with career-oriented programs such as 'Get back in the game', and support students to complete compulsory work placements for nationally accredited qualifications, alongside their HSC.

Council also partners with The Smith Family's Work Inspiration Program, which provides the

opportunity for 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students to obtain career exposure and interview tips from several organisations across the Shoalhaven.

Showcase and support of local Aboriginal artisans

Shoalhaven Visitor Centres sell merchandise in Nowra, Ulladulla and also online. Standard operating procedures ensure that authentic Aboriginal artisans from the local south coast region are stocked for sale. This includes boomerangs, cards, and various other crafts. These items are authentic for visitors and they also support local Aboriginal artists.

Business development & promotion of cultural tourism operations

Research shows that visitors to Shoalhaven want to engage in Aboriginal cultural experiences when in region. There are around 3 million visitors to Shoalhaven every year. Council's Tourism & Economic Development team work with business

operators from the start of an idea all the way through to having them on sale and assisting with marketing promotion. We assist in business development and connecting them to various services that can also help grow their business.

Shoalhaven Visitor Guide – Aboriginal Cultural Directory

The opening four pages of the annual visitor guide for Shoalhaven has an Acknowledgement of Country followed by a two page spread of all known Aboriginal cultural products available for visitors to engage with. This plus rich photos and a directory in the index helps to support promotion of Aboriginal Cultural businesses.



Relationships

Section 1

30

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
1.1 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1.1 Build a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Community Capacity Builder - Aboriginal	Jun-2026
	1.1.2 Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Jun-2026
1.2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	1.2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	City Performance - People & Culture	Manager - People & Culture	May-2025 May-2026
	1.2.2 RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Manager - Community Connections	27 May - 3 June 2025, and 27 May - 3 June 2026
	1.2.3 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Jun-2026
1.3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	1.3.1 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	May-2025 May 2026
	1.3.2 Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Community Capacity Builder - Aboriginal	Sep-2026
	1.3.3 Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Manager - Community Connections	Sep-2026
	1.3.4 Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group members to attend team briefs across the organisation, to inform teams about the RAP.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Sep-2025

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
1.4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	1.4.1 Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Jun-2026
	1.4.2 Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Jun-2025



Respect

Section 2

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
2.1 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	2.1.1 Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Sep-2025
	2.1.2 Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Sep-2025
	2.1.3 Provide ongoing opportunities for Council staff and Councillors to learn about Aboriginal heritage, customs and culture including in corporate inductions and cultural awareness and immersion training and attendance at cultural events.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Jul-2026
	2.1.4 Promote Shoalhaven Libraries' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections to local community.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Collections & Resources Manager	Sep-2026
	2.1.5 With the assistance of Elders sharing their experiences of living in the Shoalhaven, collect and preserve the stories of the local Aboriginal community and make these accessible into the future through the Shoalhaven Libraries' Oral History project.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Local Heritage Librarian	Sep-2026
	2.1.6 Share resources with community groups (including Community Consultative Bodies) about reconciliation, including what an Acknowledgment of Country is and why it is important, with examples.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Community Connections Officer	Sep-2025
	2.1.7 Celebrate and exhibit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples works from Shoalhaven City Art Collection Aboriginal Art collection in customer-facing locations across Shoalhaven City Council facilities.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Director	Sep-2025
	2.1.8 Investigate alternative workwear options for teams that incorporate local Aboriginal artwork.	Shoalhaven Water - Water Operations & Maintenance	Water Operations and Maintenance Manager	Sep-2025
	2.1.9 Investigate making Customer Service areas more culturally welcoming by incorporating suitable art, signage, stories, historical photos and information.	City Performance - Customer Experience	Manager - Customer Experience	Sep-2026

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
2.2 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	2.2.1 Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Manager - Community Connections	Sep-2026
	2.2.2 Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Lead - Community Capacity Building	Dec-2025
	2.2.3 Include an Acknowledgment of Country on all Shoalhaven City Council staff email blocks.	City Performance - Information Services	Information Technology Manager	Jun-2025
2.3 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	2.3.1 Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Lead - Community Capacity Building	Dec-2025
	2.3.2 Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Jul-2025
	2.3.3 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Jul-2026
2.4 Provide equitable and culturally-safe services	2.4.1 Engage with staff and community to understand their experiences of reconciliation, both in the Shoalhaven and when interacting with Council, to inform how we plan and deliver our services.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Sep-2026
	2.4.2 Run programs and activities that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal communities in libraries and outreach programs.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Outreach & Digital Resources Manager	Sep-2026

Opportunities

Section 3

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
3.1 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	3.1.1 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	May-2026
	3.1.2 Investigate opportunities for targeted Aboriginal positions within Council teams across the organisation.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Sep-2025
	3.1.3 Investigate mechanisms to acknowledge the cultural load on Council's Aboriginal staff.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Sep-2025
	3.1.4 Attend events and programs led by Aboriginal communities to build relationships and share information.	CEO's Office - Media & Communications (Community Engagement)	Community Engagement Officer - Media & Communications	Jun-2026
3.2 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	3.2.1 Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	City Performance - Finance	Procurement Manager	Jun-2025
	3.2.2 Investigate Supply Nation membership.	City Performance - Finance	Procurement Manager	Jun-2025
	3.2.3 Improve opportunities by generating a database of Aboriginal artists interested in Council public or corporate artwork commissions.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Director	Jun-2025
3.3 Improve equitable access to employment opportunities by fostering cultural safety in our workplace	3.3.1 Review Council's leave policy considering impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Sep-2025
	3.3.2 Socialising and supporting managers to understand any policy changes.	City Performance - People & Culture	Lead - Human Resources	Sep-2025

Governance

Section 4

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
4.1 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	4.1.1 Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Jun-2025
	4.1.2 Review a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Jun-2025
	4.1.3 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Jun-2025
4.2 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	4.2.1 Define resource needs for next RAP development and implementation.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Sep-2026
	4.2.2 Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Sep-2026
	4.2.3 Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	Executive Management Team	Chief Executive Officer	Jun-2026
	4.2.4 Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Jul-2025

Action	Deliverable	Responsible team	Responsible officer	Timeframe
4.3 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	4.3.1 Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services, City Performance - People & Culture	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs: Manager - Community Connections, Manager - People and Culture	Jun-2025, Jun-2026
	4.3.2 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Jun-2025, Jun-2026
	4.3.3 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Sep-2025, Sep-2026
4.4 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	4.4.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	City Development - Cultural & Community Services	Social Planner	Jun-2025



 Scott Aldridge,
Team Supervisor
- Central
Maintenance



Acknowledgement of contributors

We are grateful for the valued contributions of everyone involved in developing the RAP as part of the Working Group, Yarning Group, Steering Group and Project Team, as well as our mentor and artist contributors, including the following people:

Community representatives

Uncle Tom Moore, a respected Aboriginal Elder of our community

Charlie-Ann Rogers, Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child & Family Centre

Kerry-Ann Perry, Waminda (South Coast Women's Health & Welfare Aboriginal Corporation)

Natalie Nye, The Sacred Murring

Sharlene Cruickshank and Dane Walker, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

Aboriginal Advisory Committee representative

Caryn Carpenter

Staff contributors

Aaron Coomb, Adam Crossley, Allen Bloxsome, Amanda Crangle, Andrew McVey, Beth Britton, Caitlin Lewis, Carly McWalters, Casey Holtom, Charmaine Sutton, Greg Wellington, Jane Lewis, Jesse Ailwood, Jessica Hughes, Joanne Cottell, Julia Simpson, Karen Patterson, Karen Rourke, Kerrie Hamilton, Kristin Holt, Kristy Mayhew, Lauren Buckingham, Matthew Rose, Michael Paine, Nicole Lonesborough, Rachel Di-Masi, Richard McGuinness, Scott Aldridge, Shane Brown, Sharon Neradil, Skye Phillips, Stuart Carless, Trish Jeffs

Mentor

Di Ellis, Senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Manager, National Roads & Motorists Association

Artist

Jaz Corr, Visual Artist, Visual Arts Teacher & Wayapa Wuurk Practitioner

Thanks also to former Mayor, Amanda Findley and former CEO's Stephen Dunshea and Robyn Stevens.





Address all correspondence to:
The Chief Executive Officer
PO Box 42, Nowra NSW 2541
shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/contact
1300 293 111