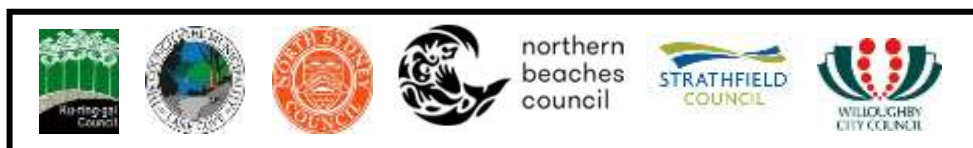


# ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OFFICE



## Annual Report Part 2 July 2020-June 2021

Written and compiled by the  
Aboriginal Heritage Office  
Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Northern Beaches, North Sydney,  
Strathfield and Willoughby Councils



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides information on the Aboriginal Heritage Office Education Program for the year July 2020 to June 2021. It shows the implementation of the AHO objectives, the various roles of the Education Program and the importance of education in the protection of Aboriginal heritage.

### 1.1

COVID – 19 has affected the work at the AHO and of course all partner Councils and our communities. Even though the team has been working from home, it is clear that an extraordinary amount of work has happened. The support from Council is important and there is a growing thirst for knowledge about Aboriginal people, the feedback from schools and the community has been humbling, and the staff at the AHO are continuing to be passionate about their work.

It has been an opportunity also to think about the numbers of people who have connected with the AHO. In the last 10 years at the AHO the Education Program has grown to around 10,000 people per year receiving AHO services. Over the AHO's 21 years of service, it is quite a significant footprint.

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) is a unique, successful and long standing joint initiative by Kuring-gai, Lane Cove, Northern Beaches, North Sydney, Strathfield and Willoughby councils that help all the partners protect and promote Aboriginal heritage.

The most important goal of the AHO is to provide a role model for local, state and federal governments to show that Aboriginal heritage is important to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and can be effectively protected for future generations using the AHO's management strategies. An essential element of this is school, community and staff training and education. The other component is proper care, monitoring and management of known Aboriginal sites. These are both elements neglected in the past.

Many people are surprised when they learn how many sites there are in the northern Sydney region. Even in Strathfield unrecorded sites have been identified by the AHO since Strathfield Council joined the partnership. There are hundreds of sites literally staring people in the face, as they walk around the bushland and foreshores. Rock shelters with shell middens, archaeological deposits, rock paintings and engravings are common and are thousands of years old. These are in urgent need of protection as graffiti abounds and the Australian destruction of important sites continues.



**Northern Beaches Council Bush Care Guided Walk, NAIDOC Week 2019**

Too often the AHO sees this wilful or ignorant damage on Aboriginal sites and signage. Can we keep these sites under lock and key or install security cameras? This type of security, even if it were possible, can cause even more damage. The implication of something sacred can create separateness between the object and the observer and a lack of understanding of the object's nature or the people who produced the objects creates even less value in the observer.

Education is a key to changing this. With over 200 years of continuing destruction of Aboriginal sites in Sydney the AHO education program has never been more important. Let's not forget about Rio Tinto blowing up the Aboriginal Juukan Gorge Caves in Western Australia which dated back before the last Ice Age. Consent for this was given through outdated Aboriginal heritage laws drafted in 1972. These caves held very old great archaeological and Aboriginal history. Most people have little idea of the rich Aboriginal heritage and history of their own area and even do not know how the Aboriginal people lived within the local environment. Through our education programs, the AHO provides a way to help dispel this ignorance.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The main objective of the Education Program is to develop and implement community education activities and events aimed at increasing the collective knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage. By increasing the community's knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage and their local Country, the participating Councils and the AHO believe Aboriginal heritage will be more highly valued and the community will take a more active role in site in education, protection and preservation.

Another objective is to ensure that consultation and communication between all stakeholders is maintained. The AHO supports the objectives of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan. All stakeholders in the 2010 Social Plan identified the need to use culturally appropriate programs to heighten Aboriginal cultural awareness within the non- Aboriginal population and to;

*“increase the involvement of Aboriginal people in the design and development of Aboriginal education programs.....for both Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal students,” and to do this “In partnership with local Councils to facilitate community events and gatherings to promote cultural heritage and identity within contemporary society.” (Coombes, 2010:45).*

### 1.3 THE SCOPE OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT

Within this report are documented the varied roles of the Education Program in community, within schools, online, with Government organizations and institutions. The report shows the value of the Education Program for the AHO in the 6 Council areas providing a school Council and community connection through cultural education programs, information and events. The report discusses how education is a valuable tool in increasing the knowledge of Aboriginal heritage and culture and in protecting Aboriginal heritage. The report also demonstrates how the AHO is an example of a continuing tradition of Indigenous people caring for country, using available technology, resources, knowledge and human interconnections. Due to the continuing danger of COVID -19 face to face presentations and bushwalks have stopped. A brief window between the two lockdowns allowed the program to continue, but once again we are again relying on multi-media technology to continue our work.

The report touches on the following components:

- School and community presentations – verbal or through multimedia and video conferencing
- Teams and Zoom online presentations
- Support for Councils – re signage, parks, development, walks, language, information, written text, resources, recording apps for self -guided walks
- Guided bush walks for schools and community
- Guided tours of the AHO *Museum and Keeping Place*, closed due to COVID
- Support for social and educational Aboriginal cultural and artistic programs for Councils, Schools and community,
- Support for *local Aboriginal Festivals & events*,
- Support to community and schools for acknowledging significant dates & events on the Aboriginal calendar,
- Resource for school students completing major works, Aboriginal Studies,
- Support in the Language naming of buildings, school groups, corporate offices, parks and playgrounds, roads, gardens
- Attendance at schools, outdoor festivals, celebrations and civic events with an education stall or a public address,
- Attendance for Councils to provide an Acknowledgment of Country, and
- Administration component:



- Production of education materials – stationery, Council signage, Council newsletters and Council documents, articles and contributions to books, Council films, Community films
- Production of information for Council
- Updating of the website with current events and downloadable material and produced during first COVID-19, the *Yarnuping* Educational Series Annual and Five Yearly Reports
- Administration of all bookings
- Answering requests for information
- Research to ensure the accurate information for Councils and Community
- Contribution to regular AHO newsletter

Also shown in the report: the results of the various activities, and how the community and schools receive them.



**Aboriginal 2019 NAIDOC Festival  
Northern Beaches Council**

**Community Presentations**





**Judge for Strathfield, NAIDOC Week Art Competition**



**We Help Ourselves (WHO's), New Beginnings Walk at Balls Head**

**Guided walks  
Socially Distanced Guided Walk Balls Head**





## 2. SITE DAMAGE AND VALUE OF EDUCATION

The creation of an Education Program was part of the vision of the original *Memorandum of Understanding* signed back in 1999 when the partnership of Councils began. Education is valued by the AHO as important for the protection of heritage sites.

For the last 21 years, the AHO has developed and implemented public education activities and events suitable for a range of audiences and provided Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people a way to approach with issues, concerns or questions. We believe that this achieves a better understanding of their local area, existing Aboriginal cultural heritage, and informs them of the complexities of site management and shows a way to their continuing protection. It also gives Community Schools and Councils a way to connect to their local area

In our lives every day there are things from our past that we treasure; our mother's ring, the box that our grandfather constructed and old letters and photographs. These things connect us to our family or tell us where we come from. Aboriginal heritage sites provide Aboriginal people with a connection to their ancestors, their family clans and provide all Australians a connection to the oldest continuous culture in the world, Australia's First Nations' people and Australia's first history.

Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII), refers to a release by the Reconciliation Council which documents the right of every person to fully exercise "culture, heritage, religion and language, both individually and in association with others," that is inherent in our constitution. The release goes on to say that "Recognition and protection of cultural rights are essential to the enjoyment of individual rights and the achievement of social justice." (AustLII, 2014: 5)

These heritage sites are in the hands of all Australians. Aboriginal people represent the oldest culture in the world, the first custodians of Australia and form the backbone of our unique identity as a nation.

These heritage sites need all of us to help with protection, as is seen by the destruction of the Juukan Gorge Caves, and education to our Schools, Community and Councils, is our greatest tool by providing a connection to County and Aboriginal heritage, history, culture and story.



**Graffiti in a rock shelter**



**Removal of graffiti, AHO with specialists**



**Graffiti in a rock shelter**



**Hand and boomerang stencil in good condition**

Uncle Allan Madden said about a vandalized Belrose site, "*there's no doubt that this damage was deliberate*". He went on to say, "*this site is part of the heritage not just of Aboriginal people but all Australians. This is heartbreaking. A piece of art hundreds of years old has been destroyed in a matter of hours. We need to continue to educate the community and rely on people's decency and goodwill to keep a look out over our sacred places*" (Madden in Lahey 2004: 5).

Uncle Allan Madden's comments again show that education is the key to breaking down attitudes to heritage sites.

The AHO, through our work educates about the local area, the Aboriginal people that lived in harmony in this land and the legacy the local Aboriginal people left. This encourages a knowledge and understanding of the creation of the sites and the heritage sites themselves.

## 2.1 CONCLUSIONS

Placing the emphasis on education is the key to a growing awareness of Aboriginal people and their cultural practices. It is important to stop the loss of heritage. The protection of existing sites and, using the education opportunity with publically visible sites, demonstrates Aboriginal use and connection to Country. What is also apparent is that the AHO Education Program has to continue its endeavour to reach out to all sectors of the community. The following sections of the report documents the Education Program over 6 Councils, and its broad reach within the community and schools and Council through our many activities. It also shows our passionate efforts to teach about Aboriginal heritage and culture and site protection.



The AHO at the Northern Beaches Council Big Ideas Forum Pre Covid



Questions from Friends of Curl Curl Lagoon



### 3. EDUCATION PROGRAM

The AHO would like to thank the Councils and their employees for their support of the Aboriginal Heritage Office. COVID -19 and then the Delta Strain has affected our busy School and Community Education programs, the Education Program has adapted to this threat, with the use of online presentations and continues writing an educational series for students.

The Education Program was busy working online this year and had many queries from Councils and students. Later as schools returned teachers reached out to address their curriculum and the growing awareness of Aboriginal culture. As the AHO began walks with adults within partner Council areas and we have been welcomed kindly and met interested and understanding adults. The breadth of questions asked sometimes can be quite a challenge. Many older people show embarrassment of 'not knowing' Australia's Aboriginal cultural heritage and history has made all that we do humbling and gratifying and we know this is not their fault. The AHO can see that these education programs make a difference to increasing Aboriginal heritage and cultural knowledge therefore our aims to engender site protection are shown in the receptiveness of schools and community.



#### **Guided walks for community groups -We Help Ourselves (WHO's) New Beginnings Walk in 2018**

The AHO takes the role of community educator very seriously. The policy has been to provide presentations, walks, talks and events free of charge as a service of Councils. The AHO is continuing with its long-term strategy to increase awareness of Aboriginal heritage in the region and our staff are always accessible and approachable and do their best to provide a group with the best service for their event or request. The Education Program is implemented in all six member Council areas. The following sections provide information on some of the key activities.





**Presentations in Schools are from Grade 3 up.**

### 3.1 PRESENTATIONS

Over the past year presentations have had to adapt to different forms due to COVID – 19.

Multi-media presentations conducted on Zoom and Teams formats with a PowerPoint presentation and spoken dialogue and the chance for questions following the presentation.

Most schools now have the facility of a Smart Board and the school children are very visually oriented and retain focus on the interesting PowerPoint. Teachers and parents worked hard to set their children up with their online lessons. Many classes and screens were now able to view the Presentation at the same time. The presentations examine Aboriginal heritage and culture pre 1788 and post 1788, with historical and current paintings, photos and graphic representations. The presentations generally start with an introduction of the AHO and the Councils that support the Education Program followed by an introduction to the Aboriginal Flag. Education Presentations have for many years, been applauded by teachers as fitting in with the curriculum and being a valuable education for teachers and students.





**Presentations in Community and Schools in 2020 and online 2020- 2021**



**Online Presentation Reconciliation Week-2020**





**Presentations Outdoors – a brief window in 2021**

### 3.2 BUSHWALKS

Walks were conducted later in the year in a COVID safe manner and with fewer numbers. Walks occur on Council reserve land across the northern Sydney area in differing environmental zones. The subject matter spoken about depends on the reserve visited and the visible heritage on the tracks. This may include shell middens, bush tucker, medicine and tool plants, rock engravings, axe grinding grooves, *mundoes*, ochre stencils and paintings or charcoal drawings. Bushland walks introduce participants to

the heritage sites and the natural environment. Groups are able to see, touch, smell and sometimes taste bush tucker. They can see an engraving, stencil or painting and view how it was created while learning the story of its unknown ritual or cultural meaning. They learn about the Country they are walking on. They also may use a Council protective barrier and learn about the protective measures used to safeguard the engraving or painting. Actual physical education promotes a large number of questions and a deep and lasting understanding of Aboriginal heritage and the heritage of the site.

**Balls Head Guided Walk / Harold Reid Reserve  
Brief Window 2021**







North Head  
Socially  
Distanced Walk

There are excellent walks in each partner Councils used by schools and community. An example of a popular reserve tracks are:

COAL LOADER SUSTAINABILITY CENTRE, NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL  
 MANLY DAM, NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL

**Balls Head Reserve and the Coal Loader & Sustainability Centre** is at the tip of the Waverton peninsula.

The dominant vegetation association is *Open Forest, Angophora Costata* (Smooth-barked Apple) and *Corymbia gummifera* (Blackbutt) community with *Closed-Forest* on the western facing slope.

The entire area is approximately 10.2 hectares.



### Manly Dam

The area is approximately 377 hectares – Contains the Aboriginal Self- Guided Walk Gulgadya Muru - Grass tree Pathway





Governor Phillip and a party of soldiers and seamen attempted to make their way up the creek on an exploration journey. Their way was blocked by thick Casuarina scrub. They turned back to the coast but on the ridge top was the amazing heathland of the Hawkesbury sandstone vegetation. Today Manly Dam Reserve has more than 300 native plant species recorded, including 18 different species of native orchids.

### Things to see at Manly Dam



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### NOTES ON RESERVE AREAS

Many of our beautiful reserve areas in Sydney are constantly under threat from garbage dumping, graffiti, skateboards, bicycles and dog owners often illegally trespassing with unleashed dogs. In our urban metropolis, there are few areas where heritage sites, native plants and birds and animals can survive. Please respect the rules. These reserve areas can also hold many signs of Aboriginal occupation and way of life.

It is important these areas are protected.

[See Appendix 1: An example of comments received on completed AHO Education Programs](#)



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## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

In 2019 the Education Officer Karen Smith was honoured to receive community recognition from the Rotary Club of Chatswood Sunrise. Karen was presented with the Paul Harris Award which is the highest award Rotary can bestow. Karen also received a nomination for the 2017 Ministers Awards for Women in Local Government.

### Rotary Award



### Friends of Curl Curl Lagoon





### 3 GUIDED TOURS OF MUSEUM AND KEEPING PLACE

One of the AHO's more significant examples of the recognition and respect of Indigenous culture, social values, customary practices and aspirations seen through the establishment of a Keeping Place and Museum in the office. In 2008, at our location in Northbridge, a number of exhibits were housed in over 14 cabinets. Filled with Aboriginal artefacts, historical documents and materials as well as displays, DVD shows and even a model rock shelter. Subsequent moves of the AHO Office & Museum and Keeping Place were not suitable as the artefacts and staff were suffering damp and mould. The Museum and Keeping Place has now successfully reopened at 20 Lawrence Street in Freshwater. It now has an attached bush tucker garden.

The Museum and Keeping Place has always received many visitors from community groups to large School and University groups as well as international delegations. It always received exemplary reviews from visitors. During the Lockdown the Museum has to closed. This has been very sad.



Visitors to the Museum

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## COMMENTS FROM MUSEUM VISITORS

Below are some of the quotes in our visitation record:

“Excellent. See you again! “, “Cultural learning experience”, “Great information, educational”

“Awesome, we need this in every Council”, “Excellent work, very pleased to have this in Freshwater”, “Thank you for the museum and the stories and history told through the exhibits”.



Visitors to the Northbridge Museum (left) and the building of a new exhibit (right).

## Tea and Questions following Presentation



### 3.4 PUBLIC ADDRESSES & RECORDINGS



The AHO is frequently asked to speak on Aboriginal heritage and culture at large and small Council and community occasions. Due to COVID 19, there were few public addresses in 2020. These presentations may address in part, the particular occasion at hand or they may be a broad ranging cultural and heritage discussion. These do not involve a multi media presentation.

Some of the public addresses carried out for organisations last year and this year include: Harbord Gardening Club, Northern Beaches Hospital, Manly Women's Shelter, Grandmas Refuge, Pymble Ladies College WOW, Mackellar Girls, Starwin Shopfront, Catholic Schools Habitat Day, Mater Hospital, Community Northern Beaches, Curl Curl Community Centre, St Marks Freshwater, White Ribbon Breakfast, Grail Women's Group, Macquarie University Harmony Day.



Examples of different community groups and activities



In 2019 and 2020 the AHO was recorded or filmed by the following groups; Kurringai Council Warrimoo Track AP, North Sydney Council – Kalori Productions Filming for 10 Play. Human Library NBC – Filmed Stories. NSW University Nura Gilli Program Filming, Satara Filming, Recorded Interview Bush Tucker Mackellar Girls, Filmed interview Pittwater High School, Recorded interviews for Seniors Week, Filmed interview Mackellar Girls, Filming for MAG&M *Manly Dam Project*.

In 2021 AHO was recorded by History Hit a History Podcast from the UK. Mark Bowsher from Rabbit Island Productions said of the final film;

“Thank you so much for your time and storytelling. It’s very much a condensed introduction to a staggeringly large and often neglected history but I hope it encourages people to read up more. Many thanks Mark”

<https://access.historyhit.com/videos/an-indigenous-history-of-australia>

**COVID Safe recording for History Hit across continents**







Rock Art Video, Gadyan Track, Wollstonecraft

### 3.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND WELCOMES

“Acknowledgement of Country” is a way that all people can show respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage and acknowledge the traditional Custodians, the Elders, the ancestors and the spirits of that particular Country.

#### Australia Day Awards Socially Distanced Northern Beaches Council



A “Welcome to Country” is conducted by the Traditional Custodians of the Land, usually a senior representative of the local Aboriginal community. However, this is dependent upon the location of the event and the practice of the community. It is usually a person who is known by the community and holds the respect of the community. Welcome to Country is a traditional practice of special significance. Europeans would not let someone unknown into their house without first talking to them and welcoming them at the front door. Local groups would have their own customs and protocols about and around Welcome.

Rhoda Roberts, spoke of Acknowledgement and Welcome in this way:

‘The head of indigenous programming at the Sydney Opera House, Rhoda Roberts, said she was “somewhat dismayed” by ceremonies in which Aboriginal custodians welcome people to their land and the acknowledgement of country that is said as a sign of respect. “It’s difficult. I think what’s happened is that everyone’s got excited about doing the right thing and being PC,” she said. Ms Roberts said these ceremonies were often conducted in a perfunctory way. “I say tokenism in that it’s wonderful you’re doing it but I often feel you

don't have any heart for it," she said. "I want to put the spirit and the heart into it.' '..Ms Roberts said it was not enough to pay lip service to the traditional owners of the land. In acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land, Ms Roberts said people should be able to explain what it means to them: "Or is it something you just say because you're PC? "Now the next phase of it is to actually understand the spirituality of it."

(Roberts in Taylor 2012)



Acknowledgements at Coal Loader Platform Opening



**Uniting Church  
Acknowledgement  
and Presentation**

The AHO ensures that time for an address occurs at the Welcome or Acknowledgment so there is a learning process and the event is not simply tokenistic.

Acknowledgements and Welcomes have been given at large Civic and Council occasions and School assemblies. The AHO also provides wording and advice on Acknowledgement and Welcome. Examples



given this year include: Acknowledgement of Country for several Big Ideas Forums, Ocean Care Day, Northern Beaches Hospital, Pymble Ladies College School Assembly NAIDOC, Northern Beaches Council NAIDOC Ceremony, Manly Art Gallery & Museum, Strathfield Art Competition, Mackellar Girls Assembly, Jakelin Troy Presentation, Sydney Children’s Hospital Quality Awards, North Shore Temple Emmanuel and Manly Tourism Forum

[See Appendix 2: Acknowledgement of Country](#)

### 3.6 STALLS

The AHO hosts information stalls at public events. Stalls are usually part of festivals, expos or may be an open day or Aboriginal cultural day at a school or community event. Stalls allow the answering of questions and the dissemination of Educational Material and presentation of activities or small gifts about Aboriginal heritage. Material given out includes brochures and flyers on *Language, Your AHO, Awareness of Aboriginal Sites, Bush Regeneration and Awareness of Aboriginal Sites, Free Schools Program, call for Volunteer Site Monitors* and also various brochures on Council Walking Tracks or current events. Stalls may have AHO stickers and other give aways, an activity with water hand stencils and a tool and weapons display. Stalls are a good training ground for interns. The AHO presence at stalls provides a relaxed and easy way for the general public to approach us and promotes a wide variety of questions from the general public and school or community groups.

During 2021 all outdoor Festival events were cancelled. Some examples of stalls that had been held over various years are; Ocean Care Day (Northern Beaches Council) Children’s Festival (North Sydney Council) Spring Festival (Northern Beaches Council), Northbridge Open Day, Cammeraygal High School, Flora and Fauna Festival





The AHO Stalls    The Children's Festival



Manly Ocean Care Day

### 3.7 EDUCATIONAL BROCHURES, FLYERS & NEWSLETTERS

#### BROCHURES AND FLYERS.

All brochures and flyers promote learning on Aboriginal heritage and culture.

Brochures and flyers designed to inform and engage the reader, are given away to visitors to our Stalls, Museum and Keeping Place and at various events. AHO Brochures are also free to download from our website. Brochures are also given to organisations for NAIDOC week public displays, library displays or other Aboriginal cultural display days. The AHO also promotes material from other sources eg: Willoughby Heritage Festival, NAIDOC Week, Spring Festival, Balls Head Platform and for other event for various Councils.



AHO brochure.

Brochures may include topics such as Language, Awareness of Aboriginal Sites, Bush Regeneration and Awareness of Aboriginal Sites, Your AHO and also various brochures on Council Walking Tracks. Flyers available may include information on the AHO Free Education Program and the Volunteer Site Monitor Program. Also included are education flyers for each cabinet topic of the Museum and Keeping Place.

After visiting the museum guests are able to take their learning home with them. This reinforces the educational impact of the Museum and Keeping Place and of heritage and culture. All brochures and flyers promote learning on Aboriginal heritage and cultural and protection of heritage and culture.

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## EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES IN YARNUPINGS

The AHO produces a periodic Newsletter 'Yarnupings'.

The Yarnupings Newsletter is designed to be entertaining, informative and educational. Information from each member of the AHO team is included in the Yarnupings Newsletter. The Education program has written articles on boomerangs, Aboriginal military service, possum skin cloaks and Country to name a few. Some of the articles included from other members of the AHO team are articles on sites awareness, damage to sites, regrooving, volunteer stories and other stories about what the AHO has been doing. Yarnupings always features a Track of the Issue, a recipe from our interns or staff, jokes, quizzes, quotes, poetry and a movie review. Yarnupings may also have an article written by our interns about their experience of working at the AHO or from ex staff members of the AHO recounting their tales of work in the field.

During COVID -19 a *Yarnuping – Education Series* was researched, written and uploaded to the AHO website, to continue the Education from the AHO. The series includes Significant Aboriginal Dates Reconciliation Week and other Secondary & Tertiary subjects. This *Yarnuping - Education Series* will remain uploaded to provide another Educational Stream for the AHO. We will hope to have time to add to this series.

[Appendix 3 Example of an AHO Brochure](#)

[Appendix 4 Example of a Museum and Keeping Place Flyer](#)

[Appendix 5 Example of a Yarnuping Education Article](#)



## 3.8 EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL AND SIGNAGE FOR COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY

### EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

The AHO is often asked to provide educational material, language for naming buildings, School houses, offices, parks or signage for Councils and community. The importance of this opportunity is to spread a heritage or cultural message of the local people and the heritage of the local area. Sometimes this will demonstrate the AHO and the work the office does. Some examples of material provided include:

- Contributing to the writing of Signage, Aboriginal heritage and culture information for Councils and Bush Care Groups
- Providing words for Acknowledgement signs in Bush Tucker Gardens and school and community areas
- Providing Cultural Information for signage and presentation addresses for Exhibitions
- Providing educational material and suggested resources for students in their area of study.
- Providing extensive information for Coastal Arts Trail and Tourism Summit
- Providing extensive information about language, cultural artisans and cultural Acknowledgements

### EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE

The AHO is often asked to provide factual heritage and cultural information for signage in various locations in the 6 member council area. Following are some examples of signage.

- Attending meetings and offering advice on Aboriginal content for the Public Coastal Trail
- Providing information to RTA and Council for consultation of Aboriginal Community re: naming of footbridges at hospital site
- Language name for Children's Park Lane Cove
- Recording App for Warrimoo Track
- Writing material for 4 signs Lane Cove Park
- Stony Range Bush Tucker Signage
- Naming of meeting rooms in Corporate buildings- Zurich/ Dolby/
- Hospital Signage
- Cammeraygal Park Signage
- Curl Curl Lagoon Signage

Across our 6 member council area many acknowledgement signs are being created in business foyers, offices, schools and bush tucker gardens. Our Military establishments are now placing Acknowledgement signs at their installations. Many schools and community groups have asked for appropriate wording for the original custodians of their area for the completion of acknowledgement plaques or signs. The AHO hope to be working with the local Northern Beaches Council and the Aboriginal Community to create easily recognizable Aboriginal signage across the Northern Beaches area.



**New sign at Freshwater and Cammeraygal Park**



### 3.9 SUPPORTING COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY ACKNOWLEDGING SIGNIFICANT DATES

AHO acknowledges all significant dates on the Aboriginal calendar. These dates include National NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, National Close the Gap Day, Sorry Day and Mabo Day to mention a few. The AHO works with Councils and Community to provide a public address, presentation walk or live video conferencing across many schools and councils in support of these days.



**Shortly before Lock Down, Lane Cove Council managed to stage their Reconciliation Event 'Children's Voices of Reconciliation'**

**The Children came from local schools and kindergartens**

**It would be wonderful to see this happen in other Council areas**

Other ways of bringing to community information about the Aboriginal Significant Dates are by providing educational articles in our Yarnupings Newsletter, providing information on our website and updating the website *What's On* to provide brief information about the meaning and the actual date. The AHO also displays posters outside the Museum and Keeping Place. The AHO will also provide information if requested.



The AHO represents each member Council as part of the Northern Aboriginal Festival. This Festival was an important cultural festival and had within its dates Sorry Day, Mabo Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. The Festival was the umbrella under which Councils created cultural occasions for the wider community, who is encouraged to learn about Aboriginal culture and heritage. The AHO aided Councils and contributed to the Festival by attending most meetings, creating a Festival Data base of Aboriginal presenters who could be used by all Councils to reflect the Festival initiatives, creating and presenting Video Conferencing sessions, being the MC for Children's Voices of Reconciliation Lane Cove, supporting the Weaving Bridges program and conducting walks and talks.

The festival committee did not meet in 2019 or 2020 to continue this Festival. The Festival had a brief start in 2021 under total management of the Chairpersons, Susan Moylan Coombs and Caroline Glass Patterson. Lock Down effectively ended the Festival for 2021.



### 3.10 SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS FOR COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY

The AHO supports social, artistic and educational programs run by Councils and Community for Aboriginal people. Some urban Aboriginal people of Sydney have a dislocation from their cultural background and Aboriginal community organisations believe that strengthening cultural bonds improves educational and life outcomes. Examples of support given are; supporting Councils in their Sister Council relationships with Aboriginal Communities, Who's New Beginnings Aboriginal Clients, UTS Nura Gilli Unit, Ngara Yura Aboriginal Juvenile Justice, Biala Girls at Mackellar, Aboriginal students in schools and the Royal Far West Programs.



AHO Supporting a NAIDOC event at MacKellar Girls with the Biala Girls



Some images of Aboriginal Programs

### 3.11 RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS & TAFE

Students regularly contact the Aboriginal Heritage Office. They come from Secondary Schools completing major works and University Students completing thesis work. These students have as their topic Aboriginal heritage and culture. The AHO has also had continued involvement with Aboriginal Studies schools. Killara High School, Pittwater High School and Mackellar Girls High School are very active schools in Aboriginal heritage and culture and sought out the AHO in completing Major Works on; Heritage Protection, Social Artworks, Connection to Culture and Education and Aboriginal Education. Field trips and resources material is supplied or recommended. These students are usually studying Aboriginal Studies. The AHO supports all students who contact us. There is also contact from Macquarie University students, Nura Gilli University of NSW and the University of Technology. Tertiary students are guided in finding resources while undertaking thesis work. Depending on the Education Officer's high work-load University students may be referred on and given a resource list. In addition, TAFE programs are supported.

The high demand from individual Pre-School, Childcare students cannot be met as the AHO program works with students from Year 3 and up. These students are referred on and given a resource list.

Below is a website link to an extraordinary body of work by Grace McKay and Cora Campbell from Mackellar Girls

*"I would like to give you a copy of my final project. The link to my website is below.*

<https://racismimpactaboriginalhealth.weebly.com/>

Thank you again for your immense ongoing support with my project!

Kind regards, Grace McKay

Hi Karen,

I just want to say thank you again for helping me yesterday! It was lovely to catch up with you and I really appreciate all the knowledge and help you have given me to help me complete my project!

Cora





**Cora Campbell and Pemulwuy**  
Year 10 student at Mackellar  
Girls Campus taking the  
Preliminary Accelerated  
Aboriginal Studies course

### 3.12 WEBSITE

The AHO website is an important point of contact for the office and is often the first point of contact. It also shows our AHO *What's On* Section. All members of the AHO team contribute to the website. The website is a valuable resource for students, school teachers and community. Some enquiries can be directed to the website for information. On the website freely accessible and for download is information on proper care, monitoring and management of known Aboriginal sites, a photo gallery, information for community and site volunteers and many sections on education including the new Yarnuping- Education Series. Below are the main features of the website:

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#### WEBSITE HOME PAGE

**Information on:-** The home page introduces the subject of heritage and culture and the role of the Aboriginal Heritage Office in heritage protection, education and the community.

**Member Councils:** The home page also shows the corporate logo of the member Councils that support the AHO and enables links through to each council's website.

**Contact Information:** Also from the home page one can see the *contact us* link referring to contacting the AHO. This page provides a location map and address of the AHO, public transport information to find your way to the AHO and a contact form to contact the AHO.

Videos On: A video about the AHO can also be accessed here.

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## ABORIGINAL SITES

Information on: Aboriginal Sites. Identifying Sites, Potential Site areas, Legislation

Downloadable Brochures on: Aboriginal Sites and the Law, Aboriginal Sites Register, Sites Awareness, Bush Regeneration and Aboriginal Sites

Videos on: The Aboriginal Heritage Office Heritage and Culture

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## EDUCATION

Information on: Aboriginal History, Language, News, Archived Newsletters 'Yarnupings', What's On in All Council Areas, Frequently asked Questions, Reading List, Resources, Yarnuping- Education Series, Museum & Keeping Place and Links

Downloadable Brochures on: Your Aboriginal Heritage Office, Languages, Schools Flyer and Galuwa Inyun Bulga, Garadi Track, Mana Badangi Walking tracks

Videos On: Museum and Keeping Place, Sites and Sounds Video, Guided Tours in Country  
<https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/resources/videos/>

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## VOLUNTEER SITE MONITORS

Information on: all information relating to Aboriginal Sites. Information on Volunteer Site Monitoring

Downloadable Brochures: All Aboriginal Sites Brochures and a Site Report Form

Videos On: Volunteer Introduction Video



Rock Art promotional video

Virtual Tours

Here are a few videos about Aboriginal heritage in the area.

**Aboriginal Rock Art and Engraving Sites, Sydney**



AHO Rock Art promotional video



### 3.13 ADMINISTRATION

The AHO also spends extended time in the office on essential administrative tasks. The AHO answers emails from many sources. Enquiries are broad ranging and can be about booking the AHO or questions about language, culture, naming, clan boundaries, re-grooving, protocols, elders, artefacts, acknowledgements, finding family, burials, bush tucker gardens and more. Due to COVID the AHO has spent much time at the desk developing online resources.

The other administrative sectors to the Education Program include administrating all bookings by, whiteboard entries, electronic calendars, updating the 'Whats On' and sending calendar invitations to the booker. The Education Program maintains a schools database for the 6 member Council areas. Also an extensive Education Report is maintained and an Annual Report is submitted every year. The AHO also facilitated the visit of students and clients to the Museum and Keeping Place prior to COVID -19.

During lockdown many Councils and Community took this time to update their Aboriginal Information, place signage in their parks and complete other Aboriginal cultural projects.



The AHO Education Whiteboard in pre COVID Years

### 3.14 OBSERVATIONS

The AHO walks, talks, presentations and resource material have been widely acknowledged by the children, educators, principals and the broader community as important educational knowledge. The AHO uses reliably supported factual information and thanks the community for understanding the importance of trying to find the most reliable information and not relying on misinformation to just fill the void. An initial unexpected outcome of the Education Program is the teachers informing the AHO that they themselves have learnt extensive information from the material presented by the AHO. The information provided gives the schools and the wider community a good foundation to build their lesson plans or future learning. In northern Sydney there is a dearth of reliable information but a plethora of unsubstantiated information.

The AHO has been informed that the information given is in keeping with the school curriculum. Community groups involve a broad cross section of the community and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Groups from the older generations often responded with their stories of heritage they have seen as a child, and their sadness that they are only now learning about Aboriginal heritage and culture in their later years of life. The questions from all age groups show the keenness to learn and understand and we hear the disbelief of the evidence of heritage destruction. This face to face talking and connection will continue to be important and the AHO has now to turn to new technologies to reach people who cannot reach us face to face and to increase our reach.

Although the AHO website is a well-used resource with free downloadable material, the burgeoning of 'smart' technologies is the next area for the AHO Education Program to progress. The growing demand for instant accessible information is apparent in the hand held devices and interactive apps that are commonplace. Accessing these different kinds of media resources and others such as radio, film, social media and on line print media is our next exciting vision. The AHO Education Program wrote and presented live interactive classrooms as part of a prior Guringai Festival and would like to continue this for our local Council areas and across the greater Sydney area and beyond this year. This was an extremely successful program with room for improvement. The AHO recorded information for Q Codes in various Council reserves. The AHO Education Officer will refine, adjust and adapt these lessons for the coming year. The office has placed new videos on the website and created 360 Virtual Tours of rock art sites and shell middens. Following COVID – 19 the Education has continued on-line with Webinars, Zoom presentations, Teams Presentations and on-line meetings and the writing and uploading of the Yarnuping-Education Series.

**Aboriginal Heritage** - The Aboriginal clans who once occupied this area left important evidence of their past and way of life before colonisation. The sites are of significance to the Aboriginal people because they are evidence of the past Aboriginal occupation of Australia and are valued as a link with their traditional culture. There is also great scientific value in these sites. By studying the shells, stones and bones, we can learn a great deal about past environments, what plants and animals were used by people, what tools they used and how they survived. Aboriginal heritage is not only sites but is deeply linked to a holistic view of the environment, its plants, animals, landscapes and people.

**Country** - "This is the land of dreaming, a land of wide horizons and secret places. The first people, our ancestors created this Country in the culture that binds us to it." Hetti Perkins Art and Soul Study Guide 2013:16

**Shell Midden** - Mounds built up over 1000's of years from meals of shellfish. Found on ocean coasts, estuaries, rivers, inland lakes. They contain-shell, bird, fish, animal teeth and bones, campfire charcoal, stones and flakes, the remains of tools sometimes. Differ in shape and size, a few scattered shells, meters thick deposit buried beneath vegetation.

**Axe Grinding Grooves** - These are grooves resulting from the production or sharpening and maintenance of an edge ground tool. These sites are generally located near creeks or rock pools.

**Mundoes** – These tracks comprise carvings of seemingly human footprints on the rocks. There is a wide variety of these tracks from adult and child size tracks to exceedingly large even gigantic tracks that some historians (see McCarthy, Artists of the Sandstone 1969:749) purport to be the tracks of ancestral beings. Mundoes also vary in creation from simple oval shapes to footprints, sometimes carved with vertical bars within them, sometimes with different numbers of toes and some with the toes carved within the footprint outline. These footprints may lead from one site to the next where development has not occurred. "Mundoes are the most common motif in the Sydney basin".

Frederick McCarthy, Artists of the Sandstone. Vol 4 Ch.15 pg.749

**Rock Carvings** - Sydney is built on the geological formation of Hawkesbury sandstone. The rock carvings are found on the tops and sides of ridges and across plateaus where flat expanses of sandstone are found. They may depict men, woman, possible ancestral beings, sea mammals, terrestrial mammals, birds, reptiles, animal and human tracks, fish, invertebrates and plants, weapons, hunting and fishing devices, utensils, implements, designs, ceremonial objects, circles and ovals and are large number of miscellaneous and unfinished carvings.

**Ochre Stencils and Paintings and Charcoal Drawings** - Aboriginal paintings are found on the ceilings and walls of rock shelters, which occur wherever suitable rock surfaces and outcrops exist. Figures include humans, kangaroos, emus, echidnas, grid patterns, animal tracks, boomerangs, axes, hand stencils and other motifs. Paintings are drawn or stenciled by spraying from the mouth white, red, yellow and black pigments. Charcoal drawings are also common.

**Stone Artefacts** - Flaked and ground edged tools made from fracture-resistant stone which were often traded and show evidence of long distance travels. Used to shape wood, bark bone and as knives to cut meat or animal skin or to form spear-tips. Volcanic stone created an axe head honed to fine edge and attached to a wooden handle.

**Scar Trees** - Scarred trees sites are evidence of bark and wood that has been removed from trees. The trees can be divided into three groups,1. Bark removal for use eg. Coolamons, shields, canoes,



shelters 2. Wood removal for use eg Boomerangs and other tools 3. Evidence of climbing footholds eg. hunting for possums. The tree was not killed by these methods and therefore scarring is evident.

**Archeological deposits** – These site types may be evidence of past occupation in the form of open camp sites, middens and rock shelters. The evidence that people have lived here before is revealed in scatters of stone tools, evidence of fireplaces and food remains in the form of shells, bones and plant seeds. Also found can be ashes from fires, weapons and sometimes human burials.

**Cicatrices** - refers to new tissue that forms over or inside a wound during healing creating raised scars on the body. This was more than just decoration.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1 EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES RECEIVED – AHO EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Thank you so much for this morning, the kids were really excited by everything you had to say and you just made everything so real for them. Which is not easy to do over zoom!

I really appreciate your patience with all the technical difficulties too. I'm so glad that it worked in the end.

Best,

Bryony

\*\*\*\*\*

Thanks Karen.

The information was very helpful. I am looking after the re-write of the constitution and i will prepare a draft in the next few weeks for discussion with you.

All the best

Michael

.....

Dear Karen

Thank you so much for the very interesting, moving and informative presentation on indigenous history, culture and presence on the Northern Beaches which you gave to members of the Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association at their June coffee meeting.

It was a wonderful opportunity to understand the role of the Aboriginal Heritage Office, ask questions and raise awareness of special places in Palm and Whale Beach and also to know about the Museum & Keeping Place in Freshwater.

Hopefully you have been able to enjoy some NAIDOC events this week despite the Covid-19 lockdown!

Kind regards Virginia Christensen

PBWBA vice president

.....

Dear Karen,

Thank you so much for your prompt, detailed, interesting and helpful reply to my query.

I really appreciate the information and further links you have provided and will pursue them - this is not only an important issue but it is fascinating.

Cheers and thanks again,

Fran Rein

.....



Thanks so much to you all for your very detailed and prompt response, I appreciate all the resources!

Kind regards,

Jessica

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Wow!!

I really appreciate how much time you have taken to respond to my email. I just skim read it and wanted to reply to you with a quick thanks. Really excited about the info you have included.

When I get some time away from Library2U today I will have a thorough read.

Thanks again!

Charlie.

---

Thank you Karen for taking the time to send me this information. I will, as you suggest, acknowledge both the clan names, Gayamaygal and Garigal and the reasons for the lack of certainty. It is tragic that this identity and information is lost, not to mention the reasons why and it is past time for us to openly and regularly acknowledge this history.

Warmest Regards,

Susie

---

Hi Karen,

Thank you for your advice and assistance. I appreciate you taking the time to send me the extensive list of contacts and the information regarding stories.

All the best for the remainder of 2021,

Regards,  
Lauren.

---

Hi Karen,

Thanks very much for meeting with me today. Super constructive and some fabulous ideas! Really appreciate your time and sharing all these great things. Plenty of work to get on with but I'll touch base with you in the coming week on how things are progressing.

Thanks,

Bianca

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\*\*\*\*\*

Hi Karen

Thank you so much for taking the time to write such a detailed response to my questions. I really appreciate it.

Thank you for the references, I will definitely read them to learn more.

It really is heartbreaking that so much history and so many stories have been lost. I am so grateful to be able to live in such a beautiful part of the world. I will definitely acknowledge the Gayamaygal and Garigal people in my Acknowledgement of Country and will recount our interaction to explain the limited clarity.

Thank you again!

I hope you have a lovely afternoon

Cheers for now

Kelly 😊

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## APPENDIX 2 EXAMPLE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS GIVEN



An Aboriginal Heritage Office has many responsibilities; one main aspect of the role is to give the Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people involved with Council an avenue of approach to discuss issues or concerns they may have. An important part of the AHO is to communicate with school groups and teach children an ethos of understanding to appreciate the unique culture of the Aboriginal people.

The AHO now has a museum and education centre, that is open to the public on weekdays or by arrangement. For further information please do not hesitate to contact the office.

Aboriginal Heritage Office  
 Phone: (02) 9949 9882  
 aho@northehdwy.nsw.gov.au  
 www.aboriginalheritage.org







## Your Aboriginal Heritage Office




The Aboriginal Heritage Office is a partnership of eight local Councils.

The role of the Aboriginal Heritage Office is to ensure the protection of Aboriginal sites and cultural heritage within the partnering council areas.



APPENDIX 4 EXAMPLES OF MUSEUM FLYER HANDOUTS

**Women**




**Coolamon**

Made from bark of tree or shaped from the knot of a tree.


Used for:

- Gathering food, seeds and shells;
- Mixing ochre;
- Grinding;
- Fire ceremonies;
- As cradle for a baby.



**Digging stick**

- Hard wood pole sharpened at one end.
- For digging in the ground roots of tree and under grassroots.
- Used to dig earth ovens and strip bark of trees.



**Weapons**



**Boomerang**


- Come in many shapes and sizes depending on their geographical or tribal origins and their function.
- Returning.
- Hunting.

Used for:

- Hand to hand combat, hunting.
- Throwing.



**Music**




**Yidaki/Didgeridoo**

- Originates from Northern and Central Australia
- Can be made out of the trunks or limbs of trees and often out of bamboo or stringy bark
- Primarily played by men although women are permitted in some areas



- Played while breathing as through the nose (circular breathing)
- Sounds often imitate those made in nature
- Didgeridoo is a European name. There are also many traditional names. Yidaki is commonly used


**Aboriginal land**



**Country**

*"The land is my backbone... I only stand straight, happy, proud and not ashamed of my colour because I still have land... I think of land as the history of my nation"*

GALARRWY YUNPINGU, Dr Yunpingu's brother



*"This is the land of dreaming, a land of wide horizons and secret places. The first people, our ancestors, created this country in the culture that binds us to it"*

HETTI PERKINS

**Sandstone Landscape**




Diagrams by David Wells of Aboriginal Heritage

**Rock Engravings**

- May include image of sea or land animals, human figures, deity figures, human or animals tracks, tools and implements (like shields), and more abstract images, like circles.

**Rock Stencils:**

- Can have ochre paintings, stencils and charcoal drawing as well as:
- Occupational deposit, such as Shell Midden and archaeological deposit (like hearths and artifacts).

**Ridge top**

- Rock Engravings are often near good views
- Stone Arrangements can be found.
- Open Artefact scatters and Shell Middens are also found here.

APPENDIX 5 EXAMPLE OF NEWSLETTER ARTICLE EDUCATION



250 gms Almond Meal  
 1 or 2 teaspoons wattle seed  
 3 or 4 Bananas (large/ small Are best ripe and then frozen for at least overnight - easier to puree and have more flavour)  
 2 Teaspoons of Gluten Free Baking Powder  
 3 Eggs  
 80 ml's Honey

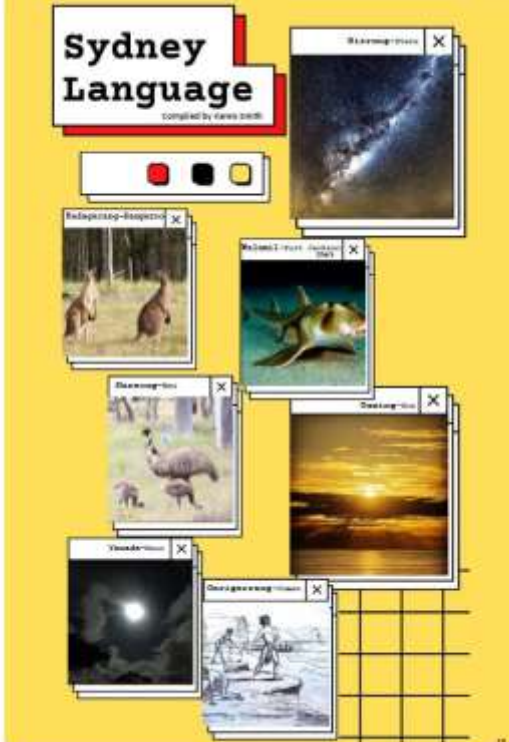
Preheat Oven to 160  
 Prepare Loaf Pan by lining with baking paper.

Puree Bananas with Honey and Baking Powder, beat in eggs  
 Combine wattle seed with almond meal - beat into banana mixture  
 Place mixture in loaf tin  
 Bake for 45mins - 1 hour - cooked when skewer comes out clean  
 This is not a sweet loaf, top with jam if you like things sweeter.

A highly nutritious start to the day

BY KAREN SMITH

*Gluten Free  
 Wattle Seed  
 Banana Cake*



**Sydney Language**  
 compiled by Karen Smith

Adaptation - koopjoojoo  
 Wattle seed - wattle seed  
 Emu - emu  
 Sunset - sunset  
 Star - star  
 Boat - boat