



FIRST PEOPLES DIALOGUE FORUM

MONDAY 6 MAY 2019

Towards Sustainable Sydney 2050



**City of Sydney
Town Hall House
Level 2, 456 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000**

Report on First Peoples Dialogue Forum

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Author:

Darryl Cronin
Edmund Rice Centre
15 Henley Road
Homebush West, NSW

Inquiries:

Inquiries regarding this report can be directed to:

David Beaumont
Community Engagement Coordinator
Tel: 612 9246 7873
Email: dbeaumont@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Front cover image:

This photograph taken by Mark Metcalfe, who photographed the activities of the First Peoples Dialogue Forum, shows the inside of the Nguura (traditional house) built by Jeremy 'Mudjai' Devitt. In the background stands Customs House where the dialogue forum took place. The photograph reflects the context of the dialogue forum, that of seeking connection with the ancestors and understanding the past to inform the future.

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Acknowledgements



The City of Sydney acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the City of Sydney local government area encompasses. The City of Sydney also acknowledges and pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work, study, visit or lead communities in its local government area.

The substantial contribution from the City of Sydney community engagement staff is acknowledged, particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who organised and staged the First Peoples Dialogue Forum. Further the City acknowledges the essential contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and/or consultants who helped make this a successful dialogue forum.

Finally the City of Sydney thanks the participants for their valuable contribution to the dialogue forum, and that which is reflected in this report.

Executive Summary

The City of Sydney is planning beyond its existing community plan, Sustainable Sydney 2030. It has commenced consultations to develop a new community strategic plan – Sustainable Sydney 2050. The First Peoples Dialogue Forum undertaken on 6 May 2019 was an integral part of the community consultation process to ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice is influential in the strategic planning process.

The background context to the dialogue forum was (1) acknowledging the First Peoples of Australia (2) understanding the past to inform the future, and (3) justice and asking the big questions. In keeping with this emphasis the pre-forum ceremony revolved around two Nguura (traditional houses) which symbolised the spiritual and cultural knowledge and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the importance of understanding the past when talking about the future.

The dialogue forum was structured around four key themes:

- Discover – what is the best of what already exists?
- Dream – imagine the aspirations and possibilities for the future
- Design – translate the aspirations and possibilities into action
- Deliver – what is necessary in the relationship to operationalise the aspirations?

In discovering the best of what already exists, participants in the dialogue forum highlighted the empowering nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and memory; the erosion of self-determination as a result of the shift in the political environment; and the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be visible in the city and for cultural authority to be recognised.

In imagining the aspirations and possibilities for the future participants identified a range of priority aspirations. First priority aspirations included: recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority in governance and decision making; representation of youth through and advisory panel; truth telling; and financial security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Participants discussed how they could translate their first priority aspirations into action, setting out some key actions that should be taken.

In discussing what is necessary in the relationship between the City of Sydney and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, participants felt the relationship had to be equal and based on truthful open dialogue. Further the City also had to better represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and in doing so recognise the cultural needs of the community.

Background

“[...] so we are asking you how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and systems; your many generations of custodianship can help shape the future of Sydney. You know you looked after this land for 60,000 years and you did a pretty good job of it [...]. We want to understand your unique insights into place and community if we are to plan a long harmonious and sustainable future for Sydney”
Lord Mayor, Clover Moore.

Since 2008, Sustainable Sydney 2030 has provided the framework for a range of actions and initiatives in accordance with the community’s vision of a Green, Global and Connected City. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a plan for sustainable development of the City of Sydney (the City), not just the physical environment, but the economy, society and culture. However the City of Sydney has had to extend its planning horizon to 2050 to meet planning and reporting guidelines that require Community Strategic Plans to have a minimum ten year planning horizon. This entails a major review of Sustainable Sydney 2030 and the development of a new community strategic plan – Sustainable Sydney 2050.

The City of Sydney has embarked on extensive community consultations and engagement as part of its strategic planning process. In accordance with its community engagement guidelines, the purpose of the community consultations is to:

1. Share plans and progress from Sustainable Sydney 2030 and confirm future directions;
2. Discuss future trends, develop new ways of thinking about 2050 and identify long term community priorities;
3. Identify community priorities for the future of Sydney.

The First Peoples Dialogue Forum is part of the community consultation and community engagement process to hear the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice and for that voice to be influential in the new community strategic plan. Building on Sustainable Sydney 2030, the City of Sydney will continue acknowledging the First Peoples of Australia by incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture, wisdom and values into Sustainable Sydney 2050.¹

What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is a process of inquiry and collective learning. It is the ability of people to talk with each other, to listen, to think, to explore and reflect and to understand in order to co-create meaning. To do so however, it is necessary to create an environment

¹ The term ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’ is primarily used in this report, however the words ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal’ were used in the dialogue forum so they also appear throughout this report.

where people actively listen, respect each other, suspend their assumptions and judgments, and speak their own genuine voice. In dialogic conversation, participants set aside their assumptions, not attack the ideas or integrity of others and not make judgement about others. Participants also step back to self-reflect, becoming aware of their own thoughts and feelings, in order to understand their own thinking and become more open to the views and opinions of others.

Dialogue is not the same as discussion or debate. Debate is about winning an argument and discussion is about deliberation, discussing options to make a decision, whereas dialogue is about opening up new possibilities and discovering new insights. Dialogue also differs from mediation, negotiation and consensus which focus on reaching agreement. Dialogue is different because it encourages diversity of thinking and opinion, focuses on mutual understanding and builds new relationships. It is an important tool for community engagement because it encourages people to participate in building shared meaning.

A genuine dialogue process is characterised by certain principles such as inclusiveness, joint ownership, learning, humanity, and a long-term perspective. Dialogue is **inclusive** when it gives voice to those historically excluded because of gender, age, economic status, race, ethnicity or religion. But inclusion does not mean people are on an equal footing. Steps must be taken to mitigate imbalances. Dialogue provides an opportunity for **joint ownership** when it enables people to shape their own future. **Learning** in dialogue happens through self-reflection as people open themselves to new insights and perspectives. Dialogue requires that people display **humanity**, by being open to other points of views and behaving respectfully and responsibly towards each other. Finally, dialogue requires a **long-term perspective** because it takes time to change individual patterns of thinking and behaviour and to transfer the impact of dialogue to the socio-political level.²

Purpose and Context

The First Peoples Dialogue Forum (the dialogue forum) was set up to hear and incorporate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice into the Sustainable Sydney 2050 strategic planning process. In that regard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives who live, work, study, visit or lead communities were invited to talk freely and openly about questions and issues that are important to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

² Bettye Pruitt & Philip Thomas, *Democratic Dialogue: A handbook for practitioners*, The International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the General Secretariat of the Organisation of American States, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the United Nations Development Program, (New York, 2007), 26-32.

In dialogue processes it is important to understand the context and to lay the foundations for conversation. While the main context of the First Peoples Dialogue Forum was to the review and build onto Sustainable Sydney 2030 there is a larger context, that of past history and justice. Understanding the past, its impact on the present and the future and its connexion with issues of justice are necessary for uncovering the big questions for strategic inquiry.

Sustainable Sydney 2050

The main context to the dialogue forum is the review of the Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategic Plan and to extend the planning horizon of the City of Sydney to 2050. Since 2008 there have been many changes and challenges for the city. Population has increased and there are major stresses such as affordability of housing and transport as well as challenges with regard to inequitable growth, pressure of health, environment and the economy as well as declining social cohesion. To date community consultations by the City of Sydney community engagement team have uncovered a range of concerns, issues and scenarios for Sydney 2050. Common themes that have emerged in the consultation process prior to the dialogue forum include:

- Retaining and celebration of the unique character of Sydney; a city that is bold and daring and where residents participate in shaping their own future;
- Accommodating a growing population but protecting amenity, character, cohesion, services, and green space;
- Taking action on climate change and living more sustainably, for example renewable energy and recycling;
- More green spaces for liveability, cooling, social cohesion, and biodiversity as well as productive use of available spaces;
- Less cars on the road and more integrated active transport network including cycle ways and walkways;
- More and diverse housing types but not at the expense of character, cultural diversity and affordability;
- Socially connected community that embraces sharing of spaces, resources and knowledge;
- An equitable and inclusive community that celebrates diversity and difference.

Acknowledging First peoples of Australia

Sustainable Sydney 2030 also acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognises their heritage and contemporary cultures. As the site of British colonisation, the Council of the City of Sydney recognises the devastating impact of the 1788 invasion and occupation. The City of Sydney also recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have shown enormous resilience and generosity of spirit to others whom they now share the land with. In that regard the City of Sydney

recognises that acknowledging the shared past is the basis for a future based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for our land.

Over the past 10 years the City of Sydney has instituted a range of initiatives regarding the cultural, social and economic sustainability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It began with the establishment and formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Panel in 2008. A significant program is the Eora Journey which recognises the historic and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout the city. This includes support for and creation of public art projects, support for and promotion of cultural events and cultural attraction, increasing procurement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business services, purchase of the former Redfern Post Office for a local Aboriginal and knowledge cultural centre and the Eora Journey Economic Development Plan 2016. The Reconciliation Action Plan 2015 continues to guide the work of the City of Sydney.



Understanding the past to inform the future

The spirit, culture, knowledge, wisdom and values of Aboriginal people underlie the City of Sydney and has done so for at least 60,000 years or more. This spiritual and cultural knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal people was symbolised by two Nguura (traditional houses, also often called Gunyahs) built by Jeremy 'Mudjai' Devitt in the fore court of Customs House at Circular Quay.³ The Nguura also express the

³ Nguura is a Gumbaynggirr word for hut/house.

importance of Aboriginal knowledge and stories to the Sustainable Sydney 2050 planning process. These stories and knowledge must be uncovered, valued and imbedded into Sydney's vision for the future. While Sydney Aboriginal stories throughout recent history are about colonisation as told through stories of non-recognition and exclusion, resistance and struggle, resilience and survival plus generosity, sharing and friendship with the coloniser, there are also important stories about unbroken connection to land and waters, the cultural practices and sustainable way of life as well as extensive and intimate knowledge of cosmology, the seasons, the climate, the plants and animals. The stories are also about the interconnectedness of families and communities and their connections and relationships with the natural landscape, as well as their cultural and social responsibilities and obligations. These stories give true meaning to the beliefs, practices, values and systems as well as a sense of belonging and pride of place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Sydney.

The history of Sydney and surrounding areas and the ongoing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence in the city provide the frame for understanding the past and for thinking about the future. Sydney is the site of first contact with the British, Captain Cook in 1770 and Captain Phillip and the First Fleet in 1788. The struggle and resistance that played out in Sydney and the surrounding Sydney basin is documented in Stephan Gapp's book *'The Sydney Wars'*.⁴ Paul Irish's book *'Hidden in Plain View'* details how Aboriginal people were widespread and prominent in early Sydney despite perceptions they had died out or disappeared from colonial Sydney.⁵ Further Bruce Pascoe's book *'Dark Emu'* presents a different perspective of Aboriginal people in pre-colonial Australia.⁶ Pascoe shows that Aboriginal people were not opportunistic hunter-gatherers but people who farmed the land, managed the ecosystems and constructed systems of government.

Sydney is also the site of significant events in the political struggle for Aboriginal rights in Australia. For example, in 1924 in Sydney, Fred Maynard formed the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association agitating for land ownership as an economic base, the cessation of removal of Aboriginal children from families, protection for Aboriginal girls, citizenship rights, protecting Aboriginal cultural identity and dissolution of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board. On the 26 January 1938, Jack Patten and William Ferguson of the Aborigines Progressive Association plus other activists staged a Day of Mourning conference at the Australian Hall in Elizabeth Street in

⁴ Stephen Gapps, *The Sydney Wars: Conflict in the early colony 1788-1817* (Sydney, NSW: NewSouth Publishing, 2018).

⁵ Paul Irish, *Hidden in Plain View: The Aboriginal People of Coastal Sydney* (Sydney, NSW: NewSouth Publishing, 2017).

⁶ Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: Agriculture of accident?* (Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2014).

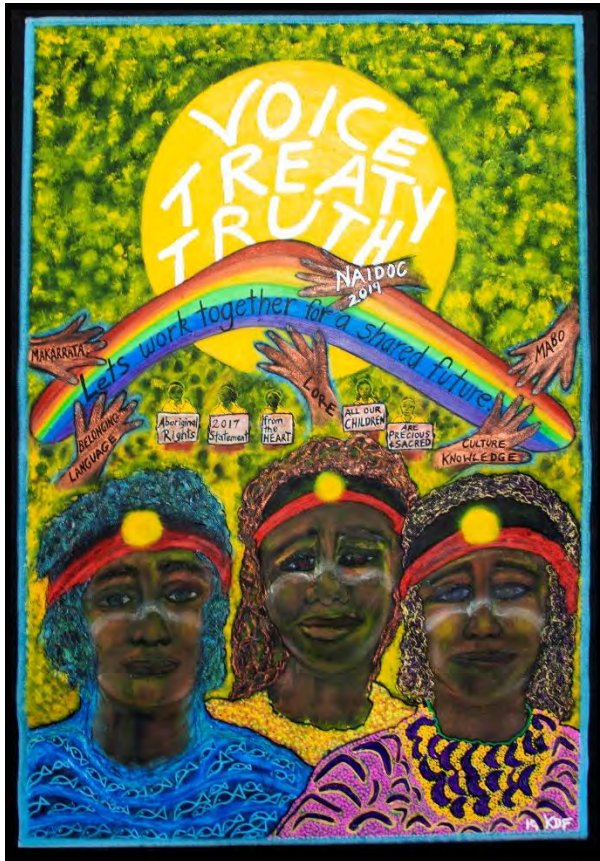
Sydney to carry on the struggle for land ownership, economic self-sufficiency, citizenship rights and the elimination of the Aborigines Protection Board. In January 1972, in protest against Prime Minister William McMahon's Aboriginal policy, Aboriginal activists from Redfern in Sydney established a tent embassy on the lawns of what is now old Parliament House in Canberra. They challenged the government's assimilation policy demanding land rights, calling for recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty, compensation for land taken, mineral rights, and preservation of sacred sites. The tent embassy protest was influential in the Whitlam Federal Government's initiatives in recognising land rights in the Northern Territory and moving to a policy of self-determination.

Justice and asking the big questions

Questions of justice are relevant to planning processes because in planning the future, the community shares a hope for a just and inclusive society. Justice is part of the larger context to planning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Excluding these issues ignores relationships of power and privilege that already exist in the community and in society thereby diminishing the voice of those without power or privilege. In a famous speech at Redfern Park on the 10 December 1992 for the Year of the World's Indigenous People, Prime Minister Paul Keating said that Australia had failed to make the most basic human response in regards to the injustices perpetrated against Aboriginal people. They failed to ask "how would I feel if this were done to me". While the City of Sydney has formally acknowledged the colonial impact on Aboriginal people there is still much to be done. The *Redfern Statement* 2016, for example called for genuine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in government decision making, better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, better resourcing of organisations, the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Department, a recommitment to 'closing the gap', and a commitment to addressing the unfinished business of reconciliation.

A recent appeal for justice is outlined in the 2017 *Uluru Statement from the Heart* which called for a *Voice*, a *Treaty* and *Truth Telling*. The Uluru Statement is a demand by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be heard, to be listened to as well as an invitation to the Australian people to join with them to forge a new co-existence. This is about tackling big questions concerning the future relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Australian nation and envisioning a different future. These big questions are more often hard and confronting questions. The call by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the *Uluru Statement* to be heard, to be listened to and to be joined in a process to forge a new coexistence is applicable to what people in Sydney envision for their future. Listening to and hearing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Sydney as well as joining with them to

forge a different future is relevant to the City of Sydney strategic planning process. The people of Sydney must ask and explore the big questions as they relate to recognising and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their aspirations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Sydney also need to ask and explore the big questions because it is they who determine how they are recognised and valued. Through a process of dialogue, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can inquire into and explore these questions, imagine the future and create strategies to respond to those compelling questions.



“The three strong women who are in the front of the picture are voice, treaty and truth. The first woman is voice, she is the voice of our mother earth, of the waters, the wind and the animals and also our voice, life, waters, trees and nature. The second woman is treaty she is looking to the future and saying its time now for the law to recognize this country and its people. She is the caretaker for treaty. The third woman is truth, the truth for all our children to know their belonging. She is asking the truth to be told for all our generations. The colours on the dress are the colours of the native hibiscus flower which represent the stolen generations. The five school girls in the centre [...] holding the signs [...] say more than what you can hear; the need is for us to listen. The boomerang represents the right of every child to return and belong to their law, their language, their culture, their knowledge. The colours of the rainbow represent hope. The hands on the

boomerang are the hands of my grandson when he was 9 months old, a child with a rare conditions who is now 14 years old. His hands represent our kids working together for the shared future, imagining a good life with pride in their Aboriginality and knowing that they can be real deadly”.

Kathryn Farrawell (explaining her painting at the dialogue forum)

Design and Methodology

In planning and initiating the First Peoples Dialogue Forum the City of Sydney engaged an Aboriginal consultant, Darryl Cronin to assist with designing and planning the forum.⁷ The consultant worked closely with David Beaumont, Community Engagement Coordinator and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement staff of the City of Sydney to design, prepare and deliver the dialogue forum. The

⁷ Darryl Cronin works for the Edmund Rice Centre in Sydney, NSW.

consultant's role was to: (1) collaborate with the City of Sydney community engagement team to design the dialogue forum and undertake preparatory tasks (2) conduct the dialogue forum with the support of David Beaumont and other City of Sydney community engagement team members; and (3) report on the outcomes of the dialogue forum to the City of Sydney.

An Appreciative Inquiry approach was used to structure the dialogue forum. In such approach conversation and dialogue are focussed on questions about what works well and what will continue to work in the future. Appreciative Inquiry provides a framework to view the world through an appreciative lens rather than a deficit lens. It is a strength based approach to open people up to possibility thinking rather than problem thinking. In applying Appreciative Inquiry to this project five stages were identified:

1. Definition – defining the focus and the scope of the dialogue forum
2. Discover – what is the best of what already exists?
3. Dream – imagine the aspirations and possibilities for the future
4. Design – translate the aspirations and possibilities into action
5. Deliver - what is necessary in the relationship to operationalise the aspirations?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in the dialogue forum were asked to **discover** what from the past could inform the future of Sydney, and to **dream** about the aspirations and possibilities for the future. However the dialogue forum was also designed to engage with some of the City of Sydney Councillors and Executive staff who attended the forum. In that regard the last two sessions of the forum (**design & deliver**) involved input from Councillors and Executive staff on how the dreams of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be translated into Sustainable Sydney 2050 and how aspirations can be operationalised.

The practice of dialogue also formed the approach of the consultant in designing the structure and format of the dialogue forum. This involved collaborating with the community engagement team at the City of Sydney, especially facilitating conversations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members to co-create the dialogue forum.

The Dialogue Forum

The First Peoples Dialogue Forum took place at Customs House in Circular Quay, Sydney on Monday 6 May 2019. Commencing at 8:30am with a ceremony in the forecourt of Customs House. Participants then moved to the Barnett Long Room in Customs House where the dialogue forum commenced just after 9:00am. The dialogue forum was completed by 1:30pm.

This section outlines what happened in the dialogue forum and documents outcomes from the forum sessions.

Welcome & Smoking Ceremony

On the weekend before the dialogue forum, Jeremy “Mudjai” Devitt, a descendant of the Gumbaynggirr Nation of the mid-north coast of New South Wales constructed two Nguura (traditional houses) with rainforest cane and paperbark. The two Nguura were part of the welcome and smoking ceremony.⁸ David Beaumont of the City of Sydney played a significant role in organising the welcome ceremony and the dialogue forum. He and Susan Moylan-Coombs facilitated the welcome ceremony and also facilitated the dialogue forum discussions.



The smoking ceremony was conducted by Matt Doyle of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. Mudjai also assisted in the smoking ceremony. In the smoking ceremony participants passed through the larger Nguura. Smoking has a cleansing element but seeking connection to the ancestors and asking for safe passage and well-being were also important elements for the dialogue forum.

The welcome included a performance by the Buuja Buuja Butterfly Dance Group.

⁸ Nguura is a Gumbaynggirr word.



Opening Addresses

"[...] just remember as you go about your duties today my people will be walking besides you; may the spirit of my ancestors walk besides you and protect you whilst you are on Cadigal land, Eora country as I know they walk beside and protect me [...]"

Ray Davison, Traditional Owner



Ray Davison of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council opened the forum in the Barnett Long Room with a welcome to country. Ray explained that he was born in La Perouse, Sydney and his traditional country is the country of the Cadigal people which encompasses the area upon which the forum was taking place.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Panel and thank all the members, past and present for your contributions; it has been really important to have your input".

Lord Mayor, Clover Moore.



Lord Mayor, Clover Moore thanked past and present members of the City of Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Panel for their work, whose input and guidance has been significant in formulating and implementing Sustainable Sydney 2030. She said the City of Sydney wants their strategic plan to be a live document and in that

regard the 2030 plan included a series of goals as a way of measuring progress. She said the City was well on its way to achieving its 2030 targets, however the city's sustainability, cultural identity and built form all required long term planning. The City is also facing new and demanding challenges in areas of urbanisation and globalisation, technology and climate change and all of these issues require long term committed action and imaginative solutions. In that regard she explained the City of Sydney will build on its existing work to create a new plan to take the city to 2050. This involves talking with communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, specialists, stakeholders, cultural institutions and other levels of government.



"If we don't deal with that racism we're not going to move forward and this country is not going to move forward until Aboriginal people have their justice and their rightful place in this country [...]"

Millie Ingram, Senior Aboriginal Community Leader

Millie Ingram spoke at length on a number of issues including how development, particularly investment in building apartment units is pushing Aboriginal people out of the inner city as rents have become expensive and Aboriginal owned land is being commercialised. She talked about tackling racism in the work place and in schools because racism damages Aboriginal people, particularly children. She spoke about how Aboriginal affairs is an industry with bureaucrats employed to take children away from families, incarcerate young people in juvenile detention and incarcerate women and mothers in jail, sometimes for minor offences. She wants to see a reduction in incarceration rates and in the number of children taken away. She spoke of the need for affordable social housing in the city because Aboriginal people can't afford to pay market rents. She explained there is need for affordable child care and early education facilities for working families and there is a need to take care of the elders with aged care homes, affordable funerals and this includes the City Council setting aside land for Aboriginal burials. She would like to see the Council put forward a program of employment for Aboriginal people because Aboriginal people want to work. Finally she would like the City of Sydney to provide a building and resources in the city for cultural education and performances and this could link in with a Redfern hub.



"So if you touch your forehead and say "may the sacredness in me open my higher self to the wonders of creation so I may honour it; may the sacredness in me open my mind to the different ways and beliefs of others so I may honour them. May the sacred in me open my ears so I may truly hear what others are saying so I may honour them; may the sacredness in me only allow words of kindness and wisdom to pass through these lips".

Susan Moylan-Coombs (Dialogue Forum Facilitator)





Discover

This session focussed on discovering the best of what already exists in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The intended outcome was for the participants to produce statements and stories which explain how certain elements in their lives and communities are important to the future and can inform the future. Participants were asked to discuss the following question:

What can we learn from our past to inform the future of Sydney? What is it that has brought us to this moment?



The following is a summary of key themes that came out of the discussions.

History, Culture and Memory

Although the past has been traumatic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; the past empowers with stories, icons, connections, and identity and these are sources of resilience. Also the activism by the ancestors for self-determination happened in Sydney. Their work has been empowering and it needs to be recognised.

Language, history and cultural practices confirm Indigenous identity and connections and they inform cultural conversations. It is important to reach back into culture to a time before colonisation to inform thinking and decision making. Hence the power of the Indigenous community comes through history and stories, ceremony and spirituality, families, places and cultural heritage.

The block in Redfern provides many memories for people, especially those who grew up there. The block reflected their indigeneity. It was a community created by Indigenous people and it was a place where stolen generations reconnected with families. But those feelings of Redfern are no longer there so there is a need to create new spaces in Sydney where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can gather and connect.

“A lot of us came from Redfern and grew up like Aunty Wendy on the block and so a lot of our memories are from the block. It was the history of what the block represented, the mission of Sydney and how we made a place that was ours [...] how do we make another Redfern because we don’t really have that any more, that feeling of Redfern, of the block”.

Larissa Minniecon



Eroding Self-Determination

While colonisation has brought a great deal of trauma to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Sydney, it has also created a strong sense of forgetting, where important issues, concerns and questions are suppressed. This makes it difficult to raise matters that need to be dealt with. Learning the truth of Australian history is crucial and this will involve unlearning what has been taught and learning historical truths.

There has been a shift in the political environment away from supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination initiatives and so supportive individuals are no longer making the decisions. This has resulted in an intergenerational repetition of under servicing and under supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, thereby eroding self-determination.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to find self-determination in the long term. This will involve thinking beyond twenty or thirty year time frames to fifty and one hundred year frames. Thinking in longer time frames will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to create a deeper socio-economic base for example through a self-managed sovereign fund to ensure economic prosperity and cultural continuity.

"[...] this city has dealt with a great deal of trauma over its history from colonisation but also some of those deep things, therefore it has a very strong sense of forgetting; it likes to suppress and forget at times, and so how do we bring up those things that need to be dealt with and that often the decision making isn't ours [...]"

Wesley Enoch



Visibility and Cultural Authority

A sovereign space is opened up when Indigenous people are asked to welcome people to country. In this space ceremony, art and culture are shared. However although Indigenous people have the first voice in welcome to country their voice is not really heard. Central to this issue is colonisation by the British and how they came into the country the wrong way. A key question in the forum asked - how do Indigenous people come into the land the right way; how does everybody else come into this land the right way; how do we live in this land with joy and in peace and how do we build that into planning?

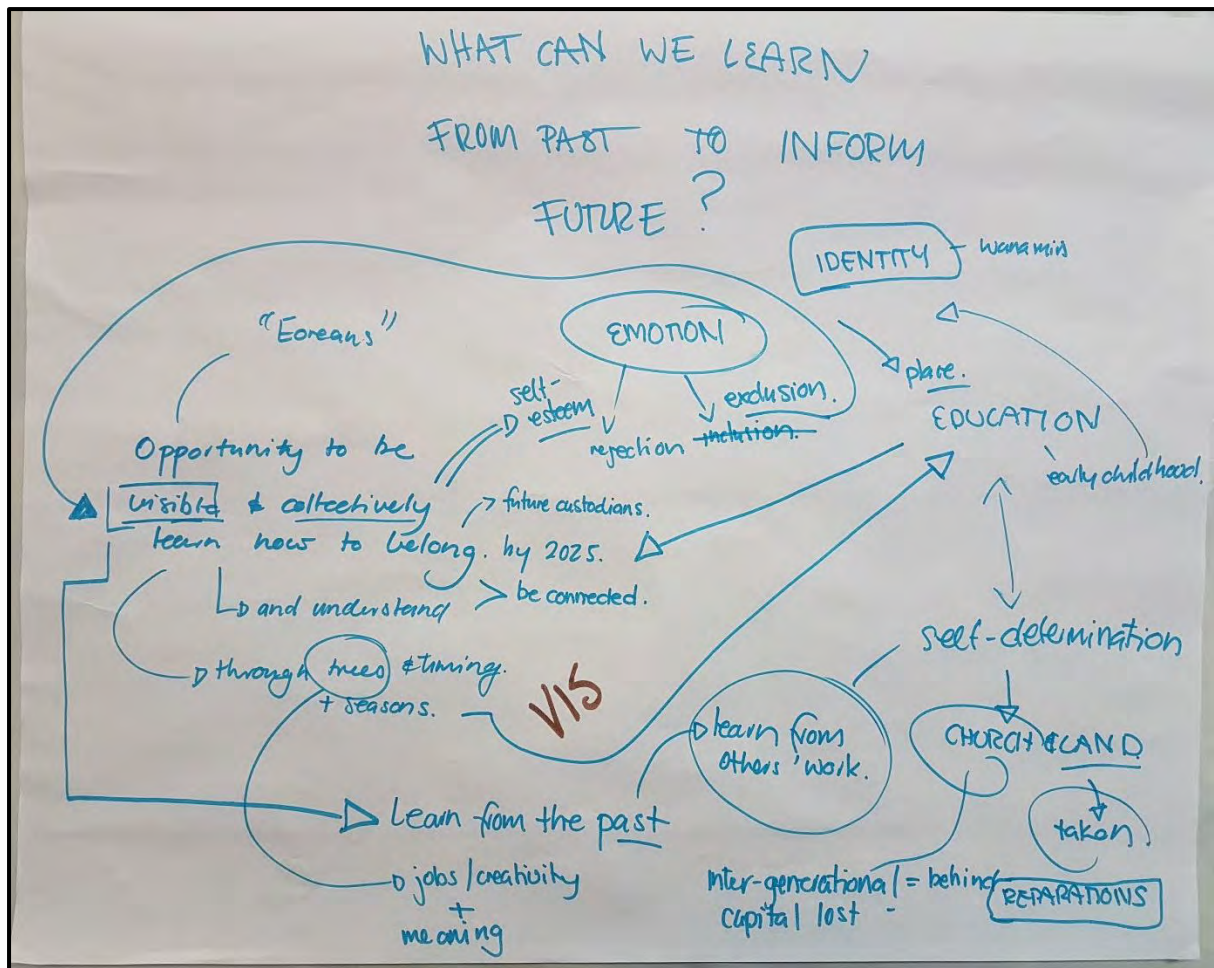
In that regard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural authority should be part of all planning and development decisions; it has to be more than just welcome to country. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to drive the conversations, to be able to speak and be listened to, and to be serviced; they should inform the rules and regulations that affect them. This also includes keeping language and Aboriginal place names at the forefront.

It is necessary for Aboriginal people to have visibility and space in the city of Sydney; not just for daily cultural engagements but to reinforce a sense of Aboriginal community in Sydney, learning from elders, establishing an identity for young people, creating a broader story as First Nations people and be connected to place, history, heritage and culture. This also includes establishing an 'Eorean' identity for all Australians who live in Sydney.

"[...] we need to have visibility right smack bang in the middle, but also let people know about the sense of community for Aboriginal people who all choose to live in Sydney and have a much broader story as First nations people of this country, so learning from others who walked before us, but also establishing identity for our young ones, not so young people but that identity of all Australians who choose Sydney as a place to live; be connected to place, be connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, heritage and culture".

Clarence Slockee





Going Backwards

Many participants felt that these forums are just talk where the same issues are discussed. There was a sense that Indigenous people today are asking the same questions their elders asked in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Participants want to move forward and they want these forums to evolve into places, program and policies that are beneficial to Indigenous people.

“[...] we have to redesign the systems to make them fit for our mob because our answers are in our families. So any government whether it's Local, State or Commonwealth, if they want to get in a room to talk about this we can actually redesign this to make it fit for our people, the policies, the legislation, the program, the practice”.

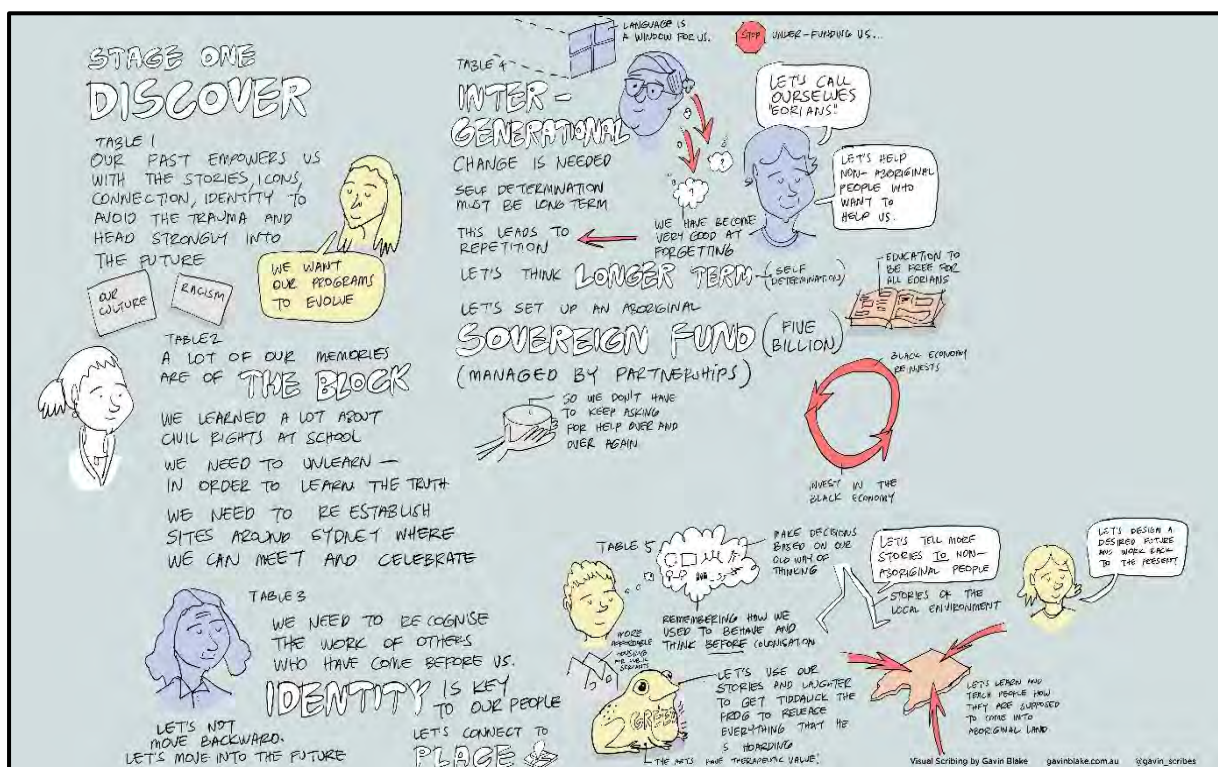
Delilah MacGillivray



... Right way, story, Aboriginal world view ...



... The past gives us the stories that inform our cultural conversations ...



Dream

“I think the potential for new relationships to be formed are enormous because there are so many Australians who really want to fall in love with their country, who feel the pull of country and want to enter its embrace, but the recent history of the country prevents that being done with any sense of security [...] but in loving Australia you have to accept its history; that’s the hard bit, accepting the full history and saying I am an Australian, I know the history of my land, I accept the history, I accept the rights in it, I accept the wrongs in it, I accept the joy and I accept the pain, and that will make us grow up as a nation”.

Professor Bruce Pascoe.

This session focussed on imagining or dreaming about possibilities for the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Sydney. The intended outcome was for the participants to produce statements that define aspirations and possibilities for the future. Participants were asked to discuss the following question and to prioritise their aspirations and/or possibilities:

What are the aspirations and possibilities for the future generations and for the City of Sydney?

Prior to the discussion **Brett Leavy** a Kooma/Muruwari man from Western Queensland explained the digital work that he does in recreating topographically correct renditions of country. His work is about remembering the past. A short video of his work, a virtual representation of Warrane (Sydney Cove) in 1787, was shown as he explained the features of the video.

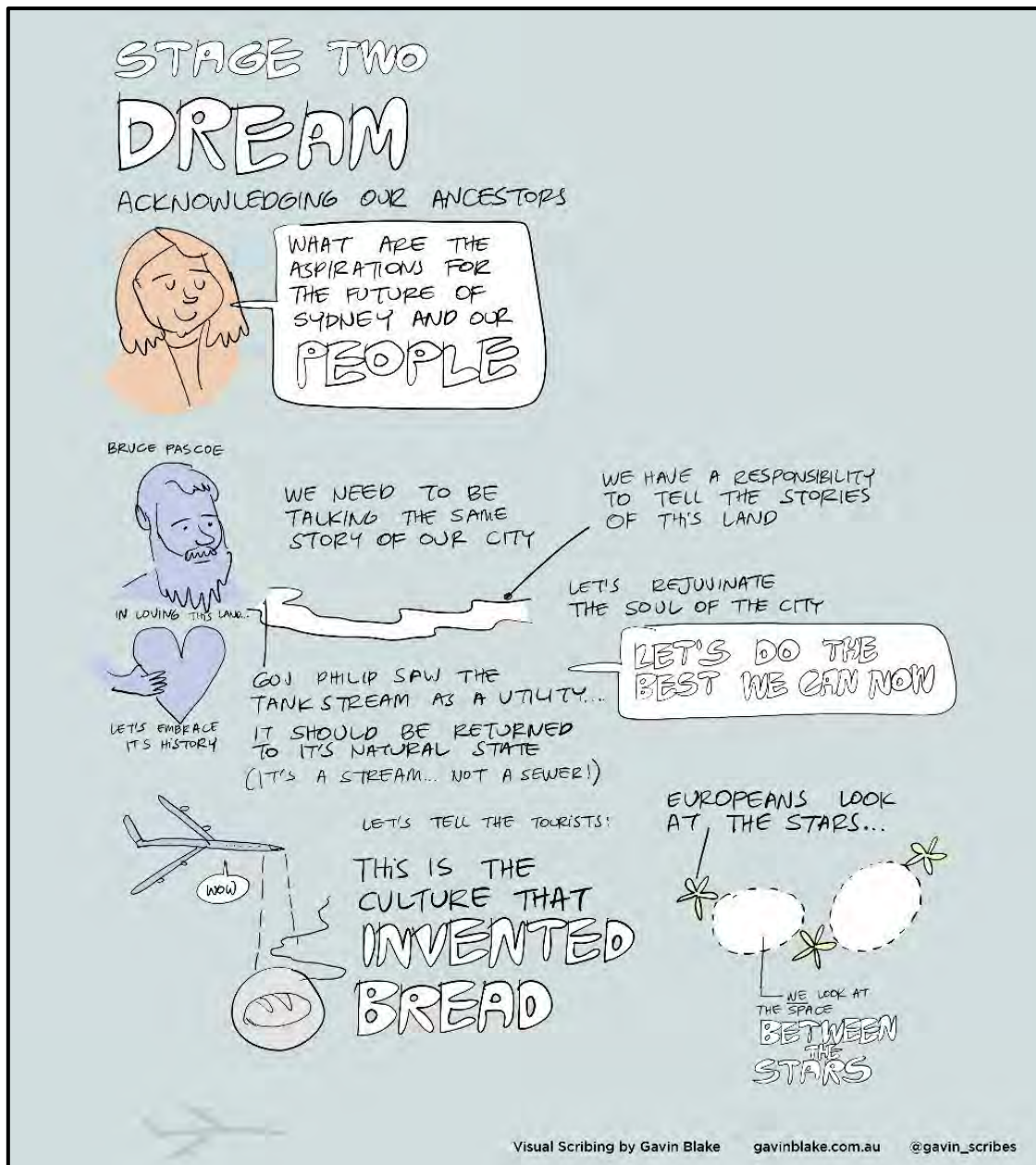
Also a video of **Professor Bruce Pascoe**, a Bunurong/Tasmanian man was presented to the participants. Professor Pascoe spoke about the need to have the same story of Australia and its history; only then can we start talking about nation building and working together as one nation. He said the City of Sydney was full of stories, not just the politics in Redfern but the significant knowledge of the past and dreams for the future. He said rejuvenating these stories and the significant sites, such as the tank stream would be a wonderful symbolic recognition because it is about rejuvenating the soul of the city. He also said there was potential for new relationships to be formed because many Australians want to fall in love with their country, but Australians had to accept the full history of the country. This would make us grow up as a nation. He explained that we can all love the country and the majority of people who want to love the country will have to remember that the law comes from the three per cent of the people. It is this law that has protected the country for thousands of years. Taking the land did not mean taking control of the law because Aboriginal people are still holders of that law. This means there is a responsibility to the land and to the people who created the law of the land. He said there was potential to provide an Aboriginal

experience to overseas tourists who visit Australia and Sydney because the evidence of Aboriginal humanity and historical human development still exists. A significant part of human development began in Australia. However Aboriginal people must be involved in the tourist industry and every effort must be made to make the industry attractive to Aboriginal people.



... Waterways, law of the land, holders of the law, Aboriginal people our responsibility ...





The following is a summary of the session with priority list of aspirations.

1st Priority Aspirations

- 1 Be the first city to recognise and embed Aboriginal cultural authority in the constitution, governance and decision making
- 2 New narratives to be built into policies; bring Aboriginal concepts into planning and development; bring physical and cultural assets back to our control – water is spiritual, find out where the water ran on the land and bring it back, make it visible
- 3 Youth formerly represented through youth advisory panel
- 4 Sustainability, carbon neutrality, water positive, global warming action
- 5 Truth telling initiatives; share and include language
- 6 Financial security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

2nd Priority Aspirations

✚	Community cultural and artistic spaces
✚	Local and affordable home ownership
✚	An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council
✚	Explain the continuing link/connection to country and having an 'Eorean' identity in Sydney
✚	The community to measure what success is
✚	Cultural spaces and places; we need to be able to reach back into our culture and history and bring it into the present

3rd Priority Aspirations

✚	Education inclusive of cultural practices to strengthen young voices, identity and language
✚	Indigenous knowledge and expertise on culture to be respected and utilised; local government to respect Indigenous workers
✚	Use culture and art to empower people and link to financial security and connection to country
✚	Truth telling and ensuring a future place/presence for the Aboriginal community in the City of Sydney; activating culture and keeping it alive in the city - not just put up monuments
✚	Help families to reconnect, create a hub so that we can connect and share stories

Other Priority Aspirations

✚	Local government to create a culturally safe workplace; deal with issues of systemic racism
✚	Cultural identity and cultural sustainability
✚	Investing in young people
✚	Have an Aboriginal position on Council to attend Council meetings
✚	Local Government Aboriginal child care centres

"A lot has happened to us and we have been disrupted, [...] we need to be able to reach back into our past into our culture and history and to be able to touch that and bring it back into our present. I think we really need to do it in a way that is very visible in our communities and in the places that we're living in terms of our development and our planning and central to that is water, the fact that water is very spiritual it has a spiritual relationship to the land [...]"

Phil Bligh

TABLE 1 PRIORITIES

1. YOUTH FORMALLY REPRESENTED (ADVISORY PANEL)
- 1b SUSTAINABILITY
2. COMMUNITY & CULTURE SPACES
- 2b HOME OWNERSHIP (AFFORDABLE/LOCAL)
3. EDUCATION - INCLUSIVENESS OF CULTURAL PRACTICES

TABLE 2 PRIORITIES

1. TRUTH TELLING INITIATIVE
2. ABORIGINAL & TORRES ST ISLANDER MAYOR
3. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE VS NON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ON CULTURE

TABLE 3 PRIORITIES

1. LINK TO FINANCIAL SECURITY
2. LINK TO COUNTRY
3. USE CULTURE & THE ARTS TO EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE

TABLE 4 PRIORITIES

1. BE THE FIRST CITY IN AUSTRALIA TO LEAD WITH CULTURAL AUTHORITY
2. COMMUNITY TO SET METRICS ON SUCCESS
3. TRUTH TELLING: A PLACE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN THE CITY OF SYDNEY
 - ACTIVATING CULTURAL ASSETS
 - REAL PLACES TO FEEL OUR HISTORY - TO MOVE FORWARD.
4. INVEST IN OUR YOUTH

TABLE 5: PRIORITIES

1. NEW NARRATIVE BUILT INTO POLICIES
 - WATER: BRING OUR PHYSICAL LAND ASSETS BACK INTO OUR CONTROL
2. CULTURAL SPACES
3. FOCUS ON FAMILIES
4. DEAL WITH THE "FORGETTING"

① YOUTH INITIATIVES

② TRUTH TELLING

③ FINANCIAL SECURITY

④ BRAVE COUNCIL

⑤ NEW NARRATIVES

Visual Scribing by Gavin Blake gavinblake.com.au @gavin_scribes

Design

In this session each group of participants discussed how they can translate their first priority aspiration (from the previous dream session) into action. The structure of the session was for the table of participants to discuss and list actions which they thought are required to achieve their aspiration. They then passed their work sheets to the next table of participants who added any further actions they thought necessary and which were not listed. The sheet was then passed back to the original table of participants. The intended outcome was a series of actions for each key aspiration.

The following summarises and lists the priority actions.

Be brave and be the first city that recognises cultural authority and embed it in governance structures and decision making

Actions:

1. Aboriginal governance/representative structure within the Sydney City Council. Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives to be endorsed or elected by the community; perhaps elevate the advisory panel

2. Create the space for recognition of Indigenous cultural authority, but Indigenous people design the model and process for representation; local government ensures a process for Indigenous people to get there
3. Value Aboriginal authority and cultural knowledge and this includes valuing it in dollar terms; embed values not erode the cultural and historical; establish awards to recognise cultural authority and knowledge; culturally safe processes and structures; underpinned by self-determination and human rights; decolonising frameworks

"So the big focus is that brave is courage, because actually what you are saying is if you are going to acknowledge Aboriginal cultural authority, part of that is the awareness that you might have to actually give up power and that there is a power and authority in a place, that is the community that you have just been dealing with in an advisory role or seeking their advice but then going away and making the decisions, so part of that is to develop new governance structures."

Peter White

New narrative built into policies; sense of belonging/healing; bring physical land assets back to our control – find out where the water ran and make visible.

Actions:

1. Influence future discussions on national narrative, Constitutional change, Uluru Statement from the Heart, truth, treaty and justice
2. Map the water flow through Sydney to understand the connections and opportunities; understand the therapeutic value of water and our spiritual relationship with water; water capture and recycling for more affordable and sustainable water
3. When the water has been mapped create master plan / infrastructure plan including housing design that allows the aspiration to be realised if and when development occurs; give water a voice – it will tell us how high/far we can go and how far the setback should be; the water front is for art and culture, not development that is antithetical to Indigenous thinking

"When we look into our culture, our law, our authority comes from within the environment, so our power, our authority comes from within the environment and the Western way, the coloniser's way or their power, I think is somewhat of an illusion that they have power over the environment [...]"

Phil Bligh

Youth formerly represented through youth advisory panel

Actions:

1. Establish Youth Advisory Panel for City of Sydney (mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)

2. Encourage youth to participate in policy discussions, to protest, advocate for change for issues that will impact on their futures, for example climate change, education, arts, home ownership
3. Elders as mentors to the youth; how to be an emerging elder
4. Educating young people on how local government works

Truth telling initiative

Actions:

1. Decolonising the city; decolonising place names in the city and debunking the myths; council to rename places, suburbs, streets, new suburbs
2. Healing places, stories, memorials as part of truth telling in the community
3. Educating schools and councils about Australian history as part of truth telling

Financial security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Actions:

1. The City of Sydney as enabler for Aboriginal businesses; to set up an enabling space to promote Aboriginal culture through tourism, art, music, history, heritage
2. Capacity building for financial sustainability through partnerships through local LGA, State, Federal, Corporates, Community
3. Industry specific employment strategy to develop skills of young people so they can move into viable employment or financial security; tied to industry cultural awareness
4. Have a permanent visual presence in the city, for example a big gunyah, a statue of a powerful Aboriginal woman



STAGE 3 DESIGN

TABLE 1: YOUTH REPRESENTATION

- YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL
- ELDERS AS MENTORS
- TO EDUCATE ON EXISTING GOVT STRUCTURES & PROCESSES
- JUST MORE REPRESENTATION BY OUR YOUTH

TABLE 2: TRUTH TELLING

DECOLONISING THE CITY
HEALING PLACES
UNLEARNING / RELEARNING

THIS LAND WASN'T EVER LOST

TABLE 3: FINANCIAL SECURITY

ENABLING ABORIGINAL ENTERPRISES
CAPACITY BUILDING

- INDUSTRY SPECIFIC
- CULTURAL AWARENESS
- PERMANENT VISUAL PRESENCE OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE
- WOMEN SPECIFICALLY

TABLE 4: EMBEDDING CULTURAL AUTHORITY

- NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES
- NORM CONSENSUS THROUGH DIALOGUE
- ABORIGINAL AUTHORITY & CULTURE TO BE VALUED (INCL FINANCIAL)
- AWARDS TO BE IMPLEMENTED
- BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

DEFINED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

TABLE 5: NEW NARRATIVES

- DE-COLONISATION OF THOUGHT
- (EXISTING LAWS (BRITISH) ARE PRESCRIBED ... OUR GOVERNING STRUCTURES COME FROM WITHIN)
- 1. INFLUENCE FUTURE DISCUSSIONS ON NATIONAL NARRATIVE, CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE, JURY STATEMENT OF THE HEART - YOUTH TREATY JUSTICE
- 2. WHEN WATER HAS BEEN MAPPED, CREATE A MASTERPLAN / INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (INCLUDING HOUSING DESIGN) THAT RESPONDS TO THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ALLOWS THE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE REALISED IF / WHEN DEVELOPMENT OCCURS

GIVE WATER A VOICE

Visual Scribing by Gavin Blake | gavinblake.com.au | @gavin_scribes

... Council: renaming of places, suburbs, streets, new suburbs ...



... Youth can be leaders for a more inclusive community and we can all learn from them ...

Deliver

In this session participants were asked to identify key elements and principles that describe and guide the relationship between the City of Sydney and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Participants discussed the following question and produced a list of principles and elements:

What key elements and principles are necessary to improve and strengthen the relationship between the City of Sydney and the Indigenous community in order to operationalise the aspirations of Indigenous people?

These principles and elements will be incorporated into an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement for Sustainable Sydney 2050.

Below is a summary of the list of elements and principles produced in the discussion.

- ✦ The relationship must be equal and based on truthful open dialogue
- ✦ Decolonise the city by debunking the myths of Australia and telling the truth and this includes decolonising laws and behaviour
- ✦ Promote and memorialise Indigenous people/stories and ensure an Indigenous presence/visibility in the city
- ✦ Recognise Indigenous cultural authority, spirituality, cultural/family connections and the relationship to the natural environment
- ✦ There must be acceptance, tolerance, and acknowledgement of both narratives
- ✦ The Council must better represent the interests of the Indigenous community
- ✦ Promote Indigenous self-determination and empowerment
- ✦ Provide opportunities and space to the Indigenous community, especially investing in Indigenous culture and identity
- ✦ Value and protect the Indigenous voice in Sydney and really understand and value the community
- ✦ Hear the diverse voices of the Indigenous community
- ✦ Indigenous cultures/environs and lore/laws must be protected not destroyed
- ✦ Engage the Indigenous community in a culturally responsible and culturally safe way
- ✦ Recognise the cultural needs of the Indigenous community in providing services
- ✦ Develop an Indigenous frame for examining issues and making decisions
- ✦ Be accountable to the Indigenous community and measure success according to Indigenous perspectives
- ✦ There must be collaboration and partnerships in delivering Indigenous aspirations
- ✦ Recognise and promote the professional and cultural expertise of Indigenous people

- ✦ The Council is to lead by example and if necessary be prepared to make hard honest decisions and not compromise the Indigenous community
- ✦ Consultation with the Indigenous community must be genuine and ongoing



The dialogue forum participants want the relationship between the City of Sydney and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to be equal and based on truthful open dialogue. Decolonising the city of colonial narratives and myths plus telling the truth is critical to the relationship. This also includes decolonising laws and behaviours. In doing so the City of Sydney must promote and memorialise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and stories and it must ensure an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence and visibility in the city. The relationship must recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural authority, spirituality, cultural/family connections and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationship to the natural environment. The ongoing relationship must be based on acceptance, tolerance and acknowledgement of not only Indigenous narratives but also non-Indigenous narratives.

The City of Sydney must better represent the interests of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and through this representation it must value, understand and invest in the community. This involves: promoting self-determination and empowerment; investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity; valuing and protecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice in Sydney; hearing the diverse voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;

engaging the community in a culturally responsible and culturally safe way; and being accountable to the community.

The City of Sydney must recognise the cultural needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in providing services. In particular this involves developing an Indigenous frame for examining issues, making decisions and measuring success. The City of Sydney must collaborate and partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as provide opportunities and space for the community. It must also recognise and promote the professional and cultural expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Importantly though, the City of Sydney must lead by example and if necessary Council must be prepared to make hard honest decisions by not compromising the Indigenous community.

... Aboriginal community is valued by Council; make Council think deeply about it ...

Closing Statement

The First Peoples Dialogue Forum brought together 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders, City of Sydney Council members and executive staff plus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers/consultants who contributed to the dialogue forum in different ways.

Attendance by City of Sydney Councillors and executive staff demonstrated goodwill on behalf of the City of Sydney and this reflects a commitment by Council to not only acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but ensure that their aspirations and concerns are taken seriously by Council.

Strategic planning is not just an exercise for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but is a process intimately tied to bigger questions of justice and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Discussions on the day uncovered a number of aspirations and issues that are fundamental to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These aspirations and issues should not only be incorporated into the strategic plan but also put into action through collaborative partnerships.

Finally the participants in the dialogue forum want the relationship between the City of Sydney and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to be equal and based on truthful open dialogue. They want the City of Sydney to better represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people and they want the City of Sydney to value and recognise the cultural needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

"What I learned today and what I am hearing today, which has to be mapped out and then presented back to you and the Council, is that what we ought to be working on is a 2050 vision that's narrative is deeply infused with the cultural knowledge that comes from this community and our First Nations people. That we need to find a way to write a story about this city's future that is deeply informed by the knowledge that people like you have and bring and that if we could do that we would truly be creating something that perhaps has never really been created before and that includes acknowledging cultural authority in that process".

Monica Barone, CEO City of Sydney.



... Visibility is a constant reminder ...

... Cultural tourism, art, music, history, heritage ...

... Indigenous people in higher positions within Council and elected to Council ...

... Statues of significant Aboriginal man and woman at Town Hall and Barangaroo ...

Workshop with the Panel

Following the First Peoples Dialogue Forum a workshop was convened with the City of Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel (the panel) on 30 May 2019 to discuss outcomes of the forum. The following is a summary of key issues raised in the workshop.

Safety for Women

There needs to be a serious conversation about the safety of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the city. Women need to feel safe in the city but this issue is not being addressed. There must be long term strategies for women's safety by the City of Sydney not one-off projects. The City of Sydney should also look at what other Councils are doing about women's safety.

Relationship with Council

Some panel members felt as though the panel is a 'rubber stamp' for the City of Sydney Council, whereby they approve matters for Council's benefit and convenience. Consequently Council is not empowering the panel or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. There is a need to go beyond the advisory panel model to having an Indigenous voice to Council. While the role of the panel is to provide advice to Council, panel members need to be proactive in developing their voice and role, redesigning systems and finding solutions to issues and problems including finding solutions outside of the advisory panel space. The panel needs to focus on its relationship with Council, develop their own terms of reference, as well as design an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement strategy. Most panel members are also new to their role therefore they are still becoming acquainted with their role and responsibilities. Previous experience suggests there can be frustrations while becoming acquainted with the role.

Report back on Issues

There was concern that issues raised and discussed by the panel in previous meetings don't come back on the panel agenda – the issues seem to disappear. There is no report back on the status of issues. These issues should be identified, collated and presented to the panel. Further the annual report needs to show what the panel has done. The last Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander panel had standing items to report back on. It was also pointed out that there are some service issues which Council does not have responsibility. They are State or Federal Government responsibilities.

Captain Cook Commemoration

A question was raised as to whether the panel had discussed the matter of the Captain Cook statue as proposed by the Federal Government and the proposed voyage of a

replica Endeavour ship around Australia. The Australian Museum is apparently forming a response to the Captain Cook commemoration, and the panel should talk with the museum in that regard. The panel needs to have a voice on this matter and the City of Sydney should make a strong statement. It was mentioned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at the museum were struggling with the idea of the Cook commemoration and were being silenced on the matter.

Acknowledging Traditional Owners

The City of Sydney needs to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Sydney basin. An example was given of the City of Sydney opening an art program about the Cadigal people but the Cadigal were not involved. This needs to stop. Council has protocols with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council however there must be clarity in Council's application of the protocols and in engaging with Traditional Owners. Advice to the panel on what the Council has agreed to with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and who are the Traditional Owners would be useful.
