

ITEM 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY ON PARK SIGNAGE**FILE NO: S049708****SUMMARY**

Recognition of the traditional custodians, the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, has been raised by the community, members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, and Council through endorsement of the Reconciliation Action Plan on 29 June 2015 and earlier resolutions.

At its meeting on 8 December 2014, Council resolved to request a report on the feasibility of installing permanent, appropriate dual naming signage and Acknowledgement of Country signage throughout the public domain in the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA).

City staff have discussed dual naming and Acknowledgement of Country with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and, in considering the broader process of choosing Aboriginal names, the Panel was keen to see some early progress on Acknowledgement of Country.

The City's park signage program presents an opportunity to include an Acknowledgement of Country message as part of the welcoming text to enhance the informative content of the signage. The Acknowledgment of Country would educate park visitors about local history and further demonstrate the City's recognition of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the place we now call Sydney.

The signage, consisting of information panels, welcoming messages, interpretive, way-finding and regulatory information is typically located at major park entrances. Previously, a variety of different park signs created inconsistency and contributed to visual clutter. The standard signage is being rolled out in over 400 parks and open spaces.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel has suggested the Acknowledgement of Country be done by adding the Gadigal language words for 'good day' – 'bujari gamarruwa' and a sentence 'You are on Gadigal country.'

Examples of how this would appear on the signage are provided in Attachment A.

The park signage upgrade program is approximately 50 per cent complete, with the remainder of park signage to be completed over the next three years. The Acknowledgement of Country will be included on all new park signs that are installed, and five sites of cultural significance will have their entry signs retrospectively updated. All other existing park signs will be updated when they reach the end of their useful life or require replacement.

Progress on further work underway on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander naming in the public domain will be reported back to Council at a later date.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) wording acknowledging Gadigal country be used on park signage, as indicated in Attachment A to the subject report, and rolled out in the current park signage program; and
- (B) Council note that signage at Redfern Park, Hyde Park, Alexandria Park, Victoria Park and Yellowmunde Park will be retrospectively updated to contain the new Acknowledgement of Country wording.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Examples of Acknowledgement of Country on Park Signs

BACKGROUND

1. The Council of the City of Sydney acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of our land – Australia. The City acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of this place we now call Sydney.
2. The Council recognises that, by acknowledging our shared past, we are laying the groundwork for a future that embraces all Australians, a future based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for our land.
3. Recognition of the traditional custodians, the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, has been raised by the community, members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, and Council through endorsement of the Reconciliation Action Plan on 29 June 2015 and earlier resolutions.
4. On 8 December 2014, Council resolved to request a report on the feasibility of installing permanent, appropriate dual naming signage and Acknowledgement of Country signage throughout the public domain in the City LGA.
5. City staff have discussed dual naming and Acknowledgement of Country with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council on several occasions. While considering the broader process of choosing Aboriginal names, the Panel was keen to see some early progress on Acknowledgement of Country.
6. On 12 March 2007, Council endorsed the design development and roll-out of a new park signage family in parks and reserves. The endorsed signage suite consists of a hierarchy of signs including primary park entry signage, complemented by secondary supporting signage at strategic locations to provide supplementary information about a specific area, for example a playground, or a wetland.
7. The primary entry signage typically consists of two-sided information panels affixed to a free standing post or, in a few cases, wall-mounted panels. The signage panels typically contain the following information:
 - (a) Park identity – the name of the park with a welcoming message. For example: Welcome. Enjoy Hyde Park;
 - (b) Corporate identity – the City of Sydney logo;
 - (c) Customer service information – contact details including website and telephone contacts;
 - (d) Regulatory requirements – a list of activities which are not permitted or require approval;
 - (e) Way-finding – a map showing the location of park features and amenities (typically installed at larger parks); and
 - (f) Interpretive – information about the local, social, or natural history of the site.
8. Since 2007, the standard suite of signage has been installed in approximately 50 per cent of the City's parks and reserves. The new signage will be installed at the remaining parks and reserves by 2018.

9. The City's ongoing park signage program presents an opportunity to promote awareness of our shared cultural history through the inclusion of an Acknowledgement of Country statement on the park entry signage.
10. The proposed Acknowledgment of Country on park signage involves adding content to the primary identification and information panels. These panels currently include the park name, welcome message, Council identification and contact details and other information as necessary and appropriate to each park.
11. It is proposed that the sign content now includes a welcome using the Gadigal language words for 'good day' – 'bujari gamarruwa' and the words 'You are on Gadigal country.'
12. The words 'on Gadigal country' will also be incorporated into the vertical text on the sign posts (Attachment A).
13. The Gadigal language words "bujari gamarruwa" have been sourced from research undertaken by Professor Jakelin Troy, Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, University of Sydney. Professor Troy's research into the Aboriginal language of Sydney is widely regarded as the best source of information on Gadigal words and is referred to by the City when selecting words for naming of places. The spelling of the words is aimed at ensuring ease of reading and pronunciation for English speakers and are phonetic rather than historical spellings. This approach is recommended by Professor Troy and practiced by the Geographical Names Board of NSW.
14. The incorporation of Gadigal language was requested by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel. Incorporating Gadigal words reflects a broad interest across Australia in the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages. The notion of re-awakening languages as integral to practicing and celebrating culture is demonstrated through the increasing prominence of Aboriginal language education programs, the language curriculum for schools and Aboriginal language dictionaries.
15. The City will promote increasing knowledge about Gadigal language through information published on sydneybarani.com.au and City of Sydney websites, including recordings of words such as "bujari gamarruwa" to support pronunciation.
16. Following Council approval, the amended content would be incorporated on the signage panels to be installed in the balance of parks currently without the new signage.
17. Existing signage panels at key sites of significance, including Redfern Oval and Park, Alexandria Oval, Yellowmunde Park, Victoria Park and Hyde Park, will be replaced with panels incorporating the Acknowledgement of Country.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

18. The proposal responds to Reconciliation Action Plan goals to show respect to the traditional custodians of Sydney through naming, Acknowledgement of Country and increasing knowledge within the broader community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.
19. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. The proposed acknowledgement of country is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City – the Acknowledgement of Country would publicly demonstrate Council's formal acknowledgement of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land. The acknowledgement would also be of educational value to park visitors, particularly visitors unfamiliar with local history.
 - (b) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships – the phraseology of the Acknowledgement of Country has been developed in partnership with the City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel.

Organisational Impact

20. The addition of an Acknowledgement of Country to the City's park signage will occur through the ongoing process of upgrading signage at the City's parks.

Social / Cultural / Community

21. The addition of an Acknowledgement of Country to park signage will have a positive benefit to local communities and park visitors. The Acknowledgement of Country will be of particular significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and will also serve to educate and inform other residents and park visitors about national and local history. Incorporating Gadigal words reflects a broad interest across Australia in the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages.

Environmental

22. Acknowledging country and our responsibility to the land is another way to confirm a commitment from the community to sustainability.

Economic

23. There is increasing interest in business opportunities celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection and knowledge of country. This has been demonstrated through the success of NAIDOC and cultural and bush tucker tours in various parts of the City LGA. Connecting our parks to this growing awareness and interest may increase these opportunities.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

24. The addition of Acknowledgement of Country to park signs at sites where the City's new park signage is still to be installed will not incur costs to the City beyond the current approved capital works budget for these works.
25. Retrofitting the Acknowledgement of Country to signs already installed at key sites of significance (Redfern Park and Oval, Alexandria Park, Victoria Park, Yellowmundee Park and Hyde Park), during the current financial year will incur an additional cost to the park signage program of approximately \$115,000.
26. There are sufficient funds available in the capital works program over the next three years to complete these works and, if required, approval will be sought to bring budget funds forward to complete the works in the current 2015/16 financial year.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

27. Information displayed on park signage is based on the provisions and requirements of the Crown Lands Act 1989, Local Government Act 1993 and Companion Animals Action 1998.
28. Geographical Names Act NSW – the addition of an Acknowledgement of Country to the park signs will not affect or alter the existing park or place name. The modification to signage will not require involvement of the Geographical Names Board of NSW.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

29. Approval of the additional text for the Acknowledgement of Country on the City's park signs by October 2015 would align with the current program of new signs to commence fabrication and installation in November 2015.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

30. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel is strongly supportive of the initiative and provided advice on the proposed wording.
31. The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council has also been consulted on the proposal and is supportive.

GARRY HARDING
Director City Operations

ANN HOBAN
Director City Life

Joel Johnson, Manager City Greening and Leisure
Mark Driver, Parks and Recreation Planner