



LITHGOW CITY COUNCIL

Policy 4.15

CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Version 1

4.15 CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

1. Policy Objectives

- To establish a policy for Council's consultation process in relation to matters that affect the Aboriginal communities and groups, Aboriginal heritage values and places of Aboriginal significance.
- To have documented policies and procedures for managing strategic planning and development assessment processes and other community engagement processes in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage values.
- To improve the protection and management of identified Aboriginal sites and cultural values within Lithgow LGA so that the relationship between the Aboriginal people and those values is maintained.
- To improve the recording of Aboriginal cultural heritage values within Lithgow LGA.
- To engage Aboriginal people in relation to Council planning processes that have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage values.
- To ensure communication and coordination between the Aboriginal community, Council and others involved in matters that affect the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal cultural values.
- To improve awareness within Council of the Aboriginal community and their cultural heritage and to improve awareness within the Aboriginal community of Council processes and the planning process in general.
- High standards of Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment are established within Council.

2. Background

Lithgow City Council recognises that the Aboriginal people and communities have a special connection with the land in ways that are often not fully appreciated nor fully understood by the wider community.

Lithgow City Council will use consultative and participatory processes that are appropriate and relevant to Aboriginal people in order that the views of Aboriginal people are heard in relation to matters that may have an impact on their culture and heritage.

Lithgow City Council recognises the contribution that Aboriginal people may make and of the damage that may be caused to Aboriginal culture and heritage from planning decisions and resultant actions.

3. Use of the Policy

This policy will be used in relation to Council planning and decision-making around matters that have the potential to impact on Aboriginal people as defined by Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) which is the primary legislation regulating the protection of Aboriginal heritage.

This policy will apply to relevant strategic land use planning, development applications being determined by Council and the development of Plans of Management for relevant Community and Crown Lands (of which Council has care and management).

The policy will also be applied in relation to Council's corporate planning processes including the development of Community/Social and Cultural Plans, and decision-making where Council considers that the matter may have significance or relevance to the Aboriginal community.

4. Legislation

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010 states the following:

"The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act), administered by DECCW, is the primary legislation for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales. One of the objectives of the NPW Act is: 'the conservation of objects, places or features (including biological diversity) of cultural value within the landscape, including but not limited to: (i) places, objects and features of significance to Aboriginal people ...' (s. 2A(1)(b))

Part 6 of the Act provides specific protection for Aboriginal objects and places by making it an offence if impacts are not authorised. If impacts on Aboriginal objects and places are anticipated, an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) should be obtained. AHIPs can be issued under ss. 87 and 90 of the NPW Act.

An Aboriginal object is any deposit, object or material evidence (that is not a handicraft made for sale) relating to Aboriginal habitation of New South Wales, before or during the occupation of that area by persons of non-Aboriginal extraction (and includes Aboriginal remains). Aboriginal remains means: '... the body or the remains of the body of a deceased Aboriginal, but does not include:

- (a) a body or the remains of a body buried in a cemetery in which non-Aboriginals are also buried, or*
- (b) a body or the remains of a body dealt with or to be dealt with in accordance with a law of the State relating to medical treatment or the examination, for forensic or other purposes, of the bodies of deceased persons'.*

An Aboriginal place is a place declared so by the Minister administering the NPW Act because the place is, or was, of special significance to Aboriginal culture. It may or may not contain Aboriginal objects.

The NPW Act does not provide protection for spiritual areas or natural resource areas that have no physical evidence of Aboriginal occupation or use, unless they have been declared an Aboriginal place." Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010.

5. Consultation Process

In undertaking consultation in accordance with this policy, Council will refer to *The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010* which states the following:

“These Requirements are underpinned by the following guiding principles:

In recognising the rights and interests of Aboriginal people in their cultural heritage, all parties concerned with identifying, conserving and managing cultural heritage should acknowledge, accept and act on the principles that Aboriginal people:

- *are the primary source of information about the value of their heritage and how this is best protected and conserved*
- *must have an active role in any Aboriginal cultural heritage planning process*
- *must have early input into the assessment of the cultural significance of their heritage and its management so they can continue to fulfill their obligations towards their heritage*
- *must control the way in which cultural knowledge and other information relating specifically to their heritage is used, as this may be an integral aspect of its heritage value.*

For the purposes of these requirements:

- *Effective consultation requires a commitment by all parties to work in the spirit of cooperation, mutual understanding and respect.*
- *The richness, ancient and ongoing significance of Aboriginal culture and heritage to Aboriginal people and the broader community should be appreciated, valued, protected and conserved for the benefit of current and future generations.*
- *Consultation with Aboriginal people is important and needs to be sustained throughout the heritage assessment process to ensure cultural perspectives, views and concerns are taken into full account.”*

Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010.

It is Council's intention that proponents (including where Council is the proponent) of development strategies, studies, re-zoning or development proposals that impact on Aboriginal people, will consult early in the process, prior to the proposal or study etc being developed or lodged with Council.

Council will also notify relevant Aboriginal groups in accordance with this policy once Council receives a development proposal where that proposal has the potential to impact on Aboriginal people.

Council will require written correspondence from the relevant Aboriginal organisations as evidence of the consultation process or where no such correspondence has been received, evidence of the consultation process that was attempted.

6. When Council will Use the Policy

6.1 Strategic Planning

Consultation will occur in accordance with this policy whenever:

- Council undertakes, initiates or reviews land use and development strategies and/or studies with the intent to identify areas for future development.

- A draft Local Environment Plan (LEP) proposal is lodged with or generated by Council under Part 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act 1979.

and where that study, plan, review or proposal has the potential to impact on Aboriginal people as defined by Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act).

6.2 Plans of Management

Consultation will occur in accordance with this policy whenever Council develops Plans of Management for Community and Crown Lands (of which Council has care and management) where that proposal has the potential to impact on Aboriginal people as defined by Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act).

6.3 Development Assessment

Consultation will occur in accordance with this policy whenever a Development Application is lodged with or generated by Council under Part 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment EP&A Act 1979 for Designated Development as defined in Schedule 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 where that proposal has the potential to impact on Aboriginal people as defined by Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). Council also reserves the right to consult in accordance with this policy for other types of development if it is of the opinion that the proposal is of a type or location that may give rise to the operation of Part 6 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

7. Identifying Organisations and People that Council will Consult With

In accordance with DECCW Consultation Requirements, the Aboriginal people who can provide the information required to inform an assessment of cultural significance, are those Aboriginal people who are the traditional owners or custodians of the land. Council and other proponents using this policy must compile a list of Aboriginal people who may have an interest in the area being assessed and who hold knowledge relevant to determining the cultural significance of Aboriginal objects and/or places. The list must be compiled by writing to:

- Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water Environment Protection and Regulation Group.
- Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council
- National Native Title Tribunal
- Native Title Services Corporation
- The relevant Catchment Management Authorities for details of any Aboriginal Reference Groups
- Gundungurra Tribal Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association
- Mingaan Aboriginal Corporation
- Native Title Services Corporation
- Wiradjuri Council of Elders

Council and other proponents must then write to the people identified as having an interest in the area as well as any other individual or organisation that registers its interest with Council to notify them of the details of the proposed project.

Proponents will also place an advertisement in the Lithgow Mercury advising of the proposed project.

8. Skills

Consultation with Aboriginal people requires an understanding of Aboriginal history and culture as well as certain skills, principles and ethics. Council will provide training to staff undertaking consultation in understanding and working with Aboriginal communities.

9. Reimbursement of Costs

Council may consider requests from Aboriginal people for the reimbursement of reasonable costs incurred in relation to Council consultation processes undertaken in accordance with this policy including travel, overnight accommodation and out of pocket expenses. The terms of any reimbursement will be negotiated prior to the costs being incurred.

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