

# 16<sup>th</sup> Aboriginal Community Advisory Group Meeting

## Meeting Minutes

<b>Date:</b>	10 and 11 May 2022
<b>Time:</b>	9.00am to 12.20 pm
<b>Location:</b>	Charbonnier Singleton Hotel, 44 Maitland Rd, Singleton

## Attendees

<b>Co-Chairs</b>	Deb Swan*	Norman Archibald, Biraban LALC
<b>Hunter LLS Board Representative</b>	Liz McEntyre	
<b>Members</b>	<b>Community Representatives</b>	<b>LALC Representatives</b>
	Arthur Fletcher	Joanne Bolt, Forster LALC*
	David Ahoy	Tara Dever, Mindaribba LALC
		Paul Myers, Awabakal LALC
<b>Hunter LLS Staff</b>	Toby Whaleboat, Senior Land Services Officer	Clare MacDougal, Manager Healthy Landscapes
	Kath McLoughlin Team Leader Community Engagement	Sue Rowland Healthy Landscapes Project Officer
	Brett Miners, General Manager*	Tony Hegarty, Hunter LLS Chair
<b>Guests</b>	Georgina Mason, Education Officer, Specialised Programs, Tocal College*	Allison Warry, Soil Conservation Services and Hunter Aboriginal Riverkeepers Team*
<b>Apologies</b>	Warranha Ngumbaay	John Clarke
	Kate Gifford	Sharon Hodgetts
<b>Secretariat</b>	Sue Rowland	

*\*In attendance for part of the meeting*

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## Minutes

### 2. Welcome to Country

Uncle Arthur offered a Welcome to Country.

### 3. Conflict of Interest declarations

Liz McEntyre declared her membership of the Mindaribba LALC Board.

### 4. Report - key items from the closed session

Request for visitors to attend meetings – was discussed and agreed a submission to Co-Chairs for approval ahead of the meeting would suffice.

### 5. Yarning Circle

Keepa Keepa Elders

- Rising from the Embers Festival – invite all to attend.
- Attended a weaving class at Mindaribba – thoroughly enjoyed learning a new skill and is important for men and boys to also learn skills passed down from their mothers and Aunties.

Biraban LALC

- NAIDOC activities will include a Cultural burn being organised, collaboration with NPWS on a Biraban site at a Morriset Cultural men's site.

Mindaribba LALC

- About to open a Cessnock office following COVID shutdown delay. Regent Honeyeater release on land at Kurri Kurri with birds pairing up, building nests and fledglings have been observed. This release was to increase regent honeyeater populations in the area and the first time a successful fledging was identified under the project. Mindaribba and Birdlife Australia delighted with the result.
- Cessnock based residents are being encouraged to become involved in Land Management training. Hoping to complete a Cultural burn this winter.
- Collaborating with Awabakal LALC for information on their experience as they are hoping to develop an Aboriginal Place Declaration within the Mindaribba LALC area.
- The construction of the Richmond Vale Railway bike path is a threat to some significant Cultural sites in the area.

Awabakal LALC

- Will have a Cultural report at next meeting.
- The CEO position will be advertised soon.

Dave Ahoy, Lower Hunter Land Management Inc – planning to expand native nursery to enable sale of native seed and plants to Land Councils when fully functioning.

Liz McEntyre has felt disconnected and isolated from LLS and unable to contribute at a board level due to her personal views on Covid vaccination. Requested to attend meeting with LLS CEO and

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Executive Officer and People and Culture to address concerns. The Hunter LLS Chair spoke in support of Liz and considers her a valuable member of the Hunter LLS Board.

Aboriginal membership on LLS Board is considered to be essential. Hunter LLS to draft a letter to the Agricultural Minister on this issue. An invitation to Minister Saunders to attend the next ACAG meeting should also be issued.

Moved: Tara Dever, Mindaribba LALC. Seconded: Arthur Fletcher, Community

***Action 1: Letter from HLLS, in support of ACAG, to Minister for Agriculture expressing concerns about lack of Aboriginal representation on LLS Boards***

***Action 2: HLLS to issue invitation to Minister Saunders to attend next ACAG meeting***

***Action 3: LALC Planned NAIDOC Week activities be forwarded to LLS for inclusion in event calendar***

## **6. Hunter LLS Welcome, Chair and General Manager Q&A**

There are Cultural Burn plans in place for the Upper Hunter but have been postponed due to adverse weather events. 20% of students at Merriwa Central School identify as Indigenous and would benefit from having involvement in the burns but require at least a four-week lead time for excursion arrangements.

Building community capacity to participate in Cultural activities can be a difficult process due to changing community dynamics over the years.

Discussion around the potential approach to allow access to Travelling Stock Reserves (TSR's) and how LLS will manage the process around expected land claims. Consultation with LALC's/TO's who make the claim should be the first step in the process.

***Action 4: HLLS to develop a process for engaging with the Aboriginal community when a land claim is instigated***

***Action 5: Provide ACAG with Hunter LLS staff/team overview***

***Action 6: HLLS to develop a case study of shared TSR outcomes using the Hollydeen example***

## **7. ACAG Shared Purpose/Vision**

A video presentation for having a Vision Statement and past priorities were shared with the group to seek feedback on members' vision, priorities and outcomes for the ACAG, a whiteboard brainstorming session followed:

Current outcomes include:

- Aboriginal land management team members training in more complex conservation land management
- Indigenous fire knowledge training for communities
- On ground pest management and Aboriginal site identification and assessment

Recommended additions to include in the program:

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- Encourage community to affirm who they are and where they belong
  - Enable communities to reconnect to Country
  - Facilitate skills for youth to access Country
  - Building trustworthy relationships
  - Increasing employment outcomes from training
  - Sourcing appropriate skilled people, internal and external, to assist Aboriginal communities in learning and reconnecting to Country
  - Identify gaps in knowledge and abilities to access Country in communities
  - Encourage Aboriginal youth to pursue education and opportunities for future growth and social connection

***Action 7: Include recommendations into the 2022 Program Plan.***

***Action 8: HLLS to draft ACAG Vision Statements for the 17<sup>th</sup> ACAG Meeting.***

## **8. Revised ACAG Terms of Reference**

Proposed amendments to the current ACAG Terms of Reference, including the addition of Code of Conduct, were discussed and agreed more refinement was required and Cultural protocol should be taken into consideration.

Cultural protocol includes respect of each other, respect of others Country, sharing of knowledge and responsibilities around Intellectual Property (IP).

***Action 9: Toby to liaise with ACAG members out of session and draft an approach for the Cultural protocol for review at September meeting***

***Action 10: Liz McEntyre to send Cultural Protocol examples to ACAG members for consideration and review***

***Action 11: Review ACAG recruitment interview process for consideration of tailoring interviews to individual needs***

***Action 12: HLLS to send ToR to Liz in Word to include Cultural protocols***

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## Day 2

### 9. Report on Actions from previous meeting

Previous minutes were reviewed and approved.

*Moved: Arthur Fletcher, Community. Seconded: David Ahoy, Community.*

Action list was reviewed and noted.

### **Action 13: Date in Action 3 be amended to 09 May**

### 10. Highlights from recent HLLS Aboriginal Program

Highlights of the HLLS Aboriginal Program were discussed and noted. Highlights included:

- 24 of 26 students have graduated from Tocal College with a Certificate 3 in Conservation Ecosystem Management in March
- Tocal College Introduction to Land Management short course, in 4 blocks, commenced April 2022
- Declaration of Rocky Knob as an Aboriginal Place has taken place and a celebration is being planned for NAIDOC week
- Wollotuka Institute is hosting the Rising from the Embers Festival as part of Reconciliation Week celebrations 27 & 28 May
- 3 Cultural burns planned for June – Warners Bay, Tarbuck Bay, Karuah
- 13 applications have been received for the Aboriginal LSO position advertised

**Action 14: Toby to invite ACAG members to Rocky Knob Aboriginal Place celebration with notice**

**Action 15: Toby to send out stallholder EOI for Rising from the Embers Festival to ACAG members 11 May**

### 11. Draft Hunter LLS Aboriginal Engagement Strategy

The draft Hunter LLS Aboriginal Engagement Strategy was reviewed and suggested amendments included:

- Objective 1.1 – Actions - include reference to Tocal College
- Objective 1.2 – include Hunter LLS' role/advocacy in supporting declaration of Aboriginal Places
- Objective 2.2 – include Hunter LLS support of opportunities to build business management, project management and financial skills in addition to Land Management skills
- Outcome 4 – include staff have face to face or seconded time in Aboriginal organisations

### 12. Aboriginal Land Management Training/Tocal Partnership

Georgina Mason facilitates the Conservation and Ecosystem Management Program at Tocal College.

- Conservation and Ecosystem Management Certificate 3 – 29 expressions of interests received with 24 students enrolling, 23 continued with their studies and 1 student withdrew due to an

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offer of further employment. 20 graduates in 2021, 2 students have completed the course since the College cut-off date and 1 is continuing their studies

- Skills Course allowed current graduates of Certificate 3, 4 and/or Diploma courses to move into the Firesticks Certification Program of which 10 students enrolled and completed
- Courses and workshops were taken to the community rather than in classrooms
- Covid forced courses to be taken online. Information and activity packs were posted to students. Firesticks Alliance delivered the fire unit and conducted assessments online
- Scholarship funding allowed students who had no work to continue their studies
- Guest speakers, Elders and outside consultants were utilised to support the program, providing mentoring for learning and Culture and unforeseen issues
- Reflection days for students were valuable in supporting them to complete the units
- Audio and video recordings became as important, and were used in addition to, written exams

2022 Conservation and Ecosystem Management Program has commenced with connectivity to Country, Cultural practice and strong community engagement with 22 students enrolled in Introduction to Land Management skills-based units which will lead into the Certificate 3 course. A new Certificate 4 course, consisting of 6 skills units, 3 of which are Culture-based with these students becoming the mentors for Certificate 3 students.

A new Introduction to Land Management course will commence in July and EOI's will be sent out in coming weeks.

***Action 16: Toby to forward the Introduction to Land Management course EOI to all ACAG members on receipt from Tocal College***

***Action 17: Toby to liaise with Tocal College in developing Governance training for ACAG members***

***Action 18: Toby to share 2021 Conservation and Ecosystem Management Certificate 3 course closure report from Tocal with minutes***

### **13. General Business**

Mirring Women Muree (the fire spirit) will be hosting the women's World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Cultural burn from June 13 – 16. Darkinjung LALC will send out an EOI to everyone shortly.

Conflict of Interest declarations should be completed annually and as part of ACAG induction with new updates communicated at each meeting.

Meeting evaluation:

Site visit/field trip is valuable – good to break up the day.

2-day meetings can be a bit long in terms of managing other LALC business

Engaging with the LALCs and encouraging them to send a representative to ACAG meetings is seen as a priority – part of the role of the new Aboriginal LSO could be to nurture relationships with LALC's.

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***Action 19: Locate Conflict of Interest declaration and send out to ACAG members for completion***

***Action 20: HLLS to consider options to engage LALC's and encourage attendance at ACAG meetings***

Meeting Closed – 12:20 pm

