

Media Release



14 February 2024

Council Upholds Acknowledgement of Country

Barunga West councillors have voted to defeat a motion to remove the Acknowledgement of Country from all Council meetings and events.

This decision, taken last night during a respectful debate at an Ordinary Council Meeting in Port Broughton, reaffirms Barunga West Council's commitment to recognising the traditional custodians of the land at the Top of the Yorke, and to fostering a respectful and inclusive community that is the envy of the region.

The motion was met with appreciation for the effort and detailed viewpoints it represented. However, a majority of councillors, reflecting on Council's previous decisions and the community's views, found compelling reasons to maintain the Acknowledgement of Country as an expression of respect and recognition.

Barunga West Council has, on two separate occasions, including as recently as November 2022, voted to include the Acknowledgement of Country in its meeting agendas and at Council events.

Council's discussions last night highlighted the importance of the Acknowledgement of Country in fostering a strong relationship with the Narungga people and promoting reconciliation. The Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association (NAPA) had expressed concern that removing the acknowledgment could significantly harm the growing partnership and shared efforts towards reconciliation and community development.

Council noted the role of the Acknowledgement of Country in ensuring that Barunga West Council's practices align with broader reconciliation efforts and guidelines offered by the Local Government Association, and state and federal governments.

Council is in the process of developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), demonstrating its commitment to meaningful action towards reconciliation.

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Barunga West Council CEO Maree Wauchope welcomed the decision of councillors at last night's meeting and commended them for the respectful nature of the debate.

"The decision by councillors to uphold the Acknowledgement of Country is a testament to our Council's unwavering commitment to driving positive change and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion," Ms Wauchope said.

"We are dedicated to working alongside the Narungga people and all community members to ensure our actions reflect our collective values and contribute to a harmonious and inclusive society. Council's decision is a clear indication of its dedication to reconciliation, respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the promotion of a community that values diversity and inclusion."

In February 2023, Council formally partnered with NAPA to establish Narungga Wambana Ngarga (Narungga Knowledge Group), a community group providing cultural advice on Council projects.

For several years, Council staff have worked closely with NAPA to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are integrated into projects such as the Civic Square as part of community consultation. An outcome of this engagement is the Narungga Artwork being applied to the Civic Square Totem poles, and heritage assessments for the area.

NAPA has secured an RAA Grassroots Grant to fund a Welcome to Country involving regional artists, and Smoking Ceremony to accompany the official opening of the Civic Square project, scheduled for completion in June 2024.

Barunga West Council will continue to work closely with NAPA and the broader community to develop its Reconciliation Action Plan.

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