



marrickville aboriginal consultative committee

MARRICKVILLE
council

GIFT GIVEN BY ARTIST BROWNY BANCROFT

Marrickville Aboriginal Cultural Protocols

June 2006

MARRICKVILLE
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MARRICKVILLE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee (MACC)

A consultative committee of Marrickville Council

June 2006

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MARRICKVILLE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

What are protocols?

Protocols are suggested rules or guidelines. A protocol tells us how to treat and work with people in a respectful and useful way.

This document has been written for Marrickville Council and the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Council (which advises and works with the Council and local communities) for anyone who wants to work with or consult the local Aboriginal community.¹ It will help you to understand how to consult, who to talk to, what role Elders have, what is meant by Men's and Women's Business, how important it is to recognise that Aboriginal people are the traditional owners of the land and what some of the important ceremonies are.

This document uses the term Aboriginal to refer to all nations Aboriginal to Australia including Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Aboriginal cultures vary from place to place and have developed over at least 40,000 years. This document isn't meant to describe how immensely rich these cultures are. But we hope that it helps you develop productive relationships with the Aboriginal residents of this part of Inner West Sydney which Marrickville Council represents.

What is MACC?

In 1994, Marrickville Council and a small number of Aboriginal residents started working together and set up the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee. Marrickville Council makes **no** decisions about matters affecting Aboriginal people in the area without first consulting this Committee. (link to membership details). A 10 year celebratory booklet is available from Council highlighting achievements over the last decade.

The committee's role is to:

- a) Promote an increased knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and society in the wider community and develop the interests of Aboriginal people in the local area;
- b) Advise Council on issues relating to Aboriginal people;
- c) Act as a representative to Council on issues relating to the Aboriginal community and
- d) Advise on the development and implementation of Council's Aboriginal Services Strategy under the *Belonging In Marrickville Social Plan* and other relevant plans.

Some of the things MACC has achieved include:

¹ **Acknowledgement:** We wish to very gratefully acknowledge that this document has been adapted from *Respect, Acknowledge, Listen*, a guide to working with Indigenous people of Western Sydney, researched and written by Angelina Hurley, Indigenous Program Manager, Community Cultural Development NSW. (<http://www.ccdnsw.org/ccdnsw/pdf/protocols.pdf>)

MACC's achievements

The Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee (MACC) aims to promote an increased knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage within the wider community and supports the development of the interests of Aboriginal people in the local area.

Since its establishment, MACC has achieved the following:

- Recognition: Marrickville Council recognises a strong spirit and pride in the Aboriginal people of Marrickville and Inner West Sydney by flying the Aboriginal flag from all Council buildings.
- Aboriginal Ceremonies. MACC resources Inner West Aboriginal Corporation Company to develop their own cultural events. Through to NAIDOC, community gatherings, and Aboriginal celebrations.
- Social and welfare issues: MACC helped to establish The Inner West Aboriginal Community Company (IWACC) in 1999 to address welfare and social issues of Aboriginal people living in the Marrickville LGA and Inner West Sydney. MACC has also actively endorsed Marrickville Council's Aboriginal Social Plan.
- Communications and Education: MACC helped develop and launch the award winning Cadigal Wangal website during 2003.
- Traditional Ceremonies: MACC organised the traditional Aboriginal smoking of Marrickville Council chambers and new elected Councillors in 2004. This ceremony is a symbolic Aboriginal cleansing process appropriate for commencement of new business.
- Heritage and Culture: MACC is involved in all protocols including consultations with the analysis of middens and other Aboriginal traditional sites surveys in partnership with National Parks and Wildlife, the Australian Museum, Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council, Marrickville Residents for Reconciliation and Marrickville Council.

We are proud that Aboriginal people are recognised as an important and increasingly visible community within the vibrant community of Marrickville.

Statement of Commitment

On the 5th July 1996 Council made a Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Australians to make clear its strong commitment to working with members of the local Aboriginal community to improve their overall quality of life.

The following statement outlines what Council is committed to do for the improvement of conditions affecting Aboriginal people in the Marrickville LGA.

Marrickville Council acknowledges the prior ownership of this area by the Cadigal people who were dispossessed by European invasion more than two hundred years ago.

We celebrate the survival of Aboriginal people and their culture following the devastating impact of European invasion and support their right to determine their own future.

We recognise the right of Aboriginal people to live according to their own values and culture. We accept our responsibility to develop an awareness and appreciation of

Aboriginal history and society in our community and to protect and preserve the environment and significant and sacred sites.

In doing so we acknowledge that Aboriginal culture continues to strengthen and enrich our community.

The Marrickville area is now occupied by people drawn from many different lands who share the values of tolerance of and respect for one another.

We encourage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to work to overcome their differences and continue to go forward together.

This statement has formed the basis of a strong working relationship between members of the local Aboriginal Community, Council and non Indigenous members of the community and has been the basis for great learning and many shared achievements which are outlined later in this document.

We suggest that whatever your project you consider framing your own statement of commitment as a sign of goodwill/support.

You can also read Council's other policies and plans at the following website:
www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au

1. The first step: Getting to know your local Aboriginal Community

Getting you know your local Aboriginal community is the first step to establishing trust and credibility. Whether your project is artistic, social or economic, a trusting and respectful relationship with Aboriginal people is essential.

How do you establish such a relationship? If you wish to work with the Aboriginal community as a whole, you should consider meeting as many of the Aboriginal groups as possible who are in the Marrickville Local Government Area. Even if your project is more confined to a single area, a wide network is still invaluable. Depending on your area of interest, you should arrange appointments to meet:

- Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council
- Inner West Aboriginal Community Company
- The Aboriginal Medical Service
- Other Aboriginal Health Services in Area Health
- The Aboriginal Legal Service
- State Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee
- Local Aboriginal Education Units
- Universities (UNSW/Sydney& UTS/Jumbunna – not in area but may have good contacts/local projects)
- TAFE www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.

If you want to work with a particular group of Aboriginal people, such as young people, start by first contacting Aboriginal project managers, council or community workers. They can introduce you to the community they work with.

It is vital that you do this in order not to offend important people and community leaders. And you may not achieve what you hope for from your project.

First impressions

Presentation and personal appearance are an important consideration for Aboriginal communities just the same as they are for any group in the community. Dressing too formally or too casually for the occasion can undermine your credibility. For example, when meeting with Land Councils, Community Elders, Aboriginal Government Representatives and other Aboriginal workers, formal and professional dress is important to project a respectful and serious attitude. Meeting with a group of young people might require a much more casual, less imposing form of dress.

Your dress should reflect the nature of the meeting you are attending or participating in. Inquire about appropriate dress before meetings, or when first meeting Aboriginal people or communities.

Important events in the Aboriginal calendar

Getting to know your community also includes attending, taking part in where invited and supporting Aboriginal events to show respect and interest in the community. You will also have a good time!

NAIDOC Week celebrations are important. NAIDOC stands for National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee. NAIDOC week is a way of celebrating and promoting a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our culture. It happens annually in July (visit the following website for details: www.atsic.gov.au/Events/NAIDOC).

Important dates are:

- 26 January - Australia Day/Day of Mourning/Survival Day/Invasion Day/Yabun – a celebration of Aboriginal culture and music
- 21 March – Harmony Day
- 26 May – National Sorry Day
- 26 May to 3 June – National Reconciliation Week
- 3 June – Mabo Day (celebrating the High Court decision that Aboriginal people are the traditional owners of the land in Australia. The decision followed a long fight by Aboriginal people and put to rest the idea that Australia was Terra Nullius or a land with no owners or law when the British invaded.)
- 1st full week of July – NAIDOC Week
- 4 August – National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day
- 9 August – International Day of the World’s Aboriginal People

Information about these events is circulated through the community, and advertised in the media including Aboriginal publications such as the Koori Mail, National Aboriginal Times; you can also

checkout the websites for Indigenous Co-ordination Centres, Gadigal Information Services (Koori Radio), and ABCTV's Messagstick and SBS Aboriginal Unit.

Understanding Aboriginal Identity

The identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is determined only by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) test involves three levels of identification:

1. A person must be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
2. A person must identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
3. A person must be accepted as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person by the community in which they live.

Culture and Heritage

There many different groups within the Australian Aboriginal community. The traditional Aboriginal Groups Of inner Sydney/Marrickville region are the Cadigal Wangal clans – the Eora people.

Cadigal land lies south of Port Jackson and stretches from South Head to Petersham with part of our southern boundary lying on the Cooks River. On the western border lies the territory of the **Wangal** nation, which extends along the southern shore of the Parramatta River to Parramatta.

Suburbs close to the city such as Glebe are also the home of the Cadigal and Wangal ancestors and the surrounding bushland was rich in plant, bird and animal life with fish and rock oysters available from Blackwattle Bay. The Cook's River (which will be known also by its Aboriginal name in the future following an official ceremony yet to be scheduled) was a beautiful and abundant water course.

For a fuller description of the areas traditionally owned by the Cadigal Wangal people please visit their website at <http://www.cadigalwangal.com.au>.

Aboriginal Connection in Marrickville: Different Nations Have Different Rules of Permission

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are as different from each other as any other selection of ethnic groups in the community. We are not all one cultural group and not all the same. Every community will have common ground and similarities, but also very different issues. Too often it is assumed that one Aboriginal person is the knowledge holder and the sole voice for the whole community in which they live. There are different traditions and customs, different ways of communicating, different understandings, different sensitive issues, different Elders.

Today, Aboriginal communities in the Inner West region are part of a thriving metropolitan area, forming an important part of Sydney's cultural and spiritual mosaic.

Cadigal country is a very different place to what it has ever been, and Cadigal people now share their land with Aboriginals from all over New South Wales and Australia who have made Sydney their home.

Cadigal people have lived through changes in laws, landscapes and attitude. Across the generations, Aboriginals have argued for land rights, education, health, heritage, culture and employment, and sought political voice.

Throughout all this change, Cadigal people have kept hold of their stories and traditions and are now educating the next generation about their unique culture:

"To see my daughter teaching traditional dancing to my grandson and he is learning the didgeridoo. When I see that I just cry as we never had the teaching in our generation and to think it is being renewed through my children. It's such a great feeling" Rhonda Grosvenor

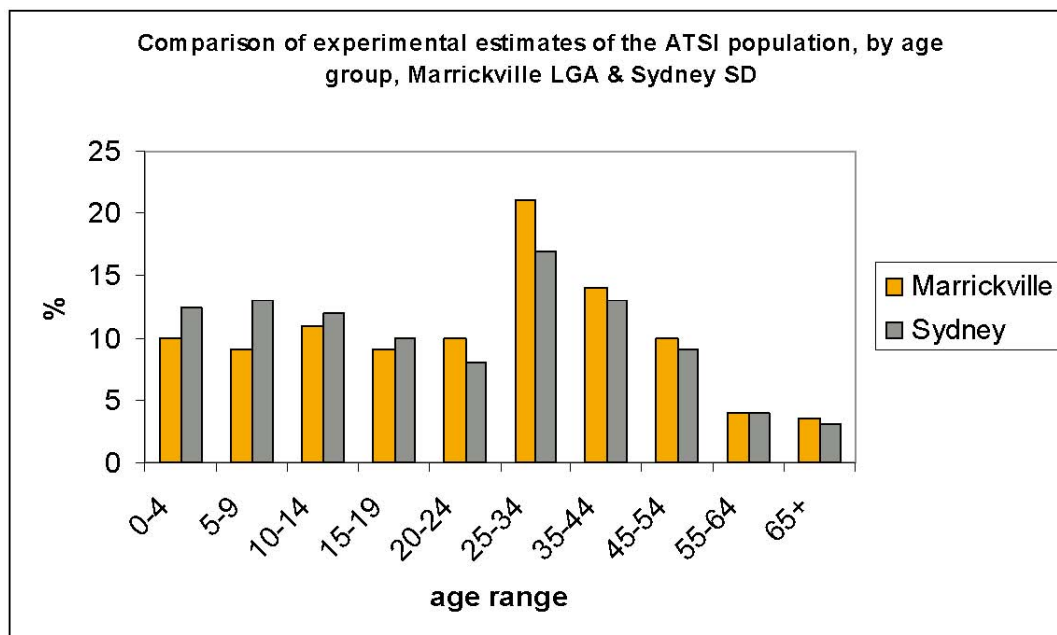


Figure 1. Source: 2004 ABS NSW Regional Profile Table 2.4.1

Marrickville local government area (LGA) has a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In the 2001 Census, 983 people identified themselves as being from either an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. The estimated total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at June 2001 was 1175. Reports from workers in community organisations indicate that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was under-represented in the 2001 Census and has continued to grow over the last three years.

Figure 3 shows that the Aboriginal population in Marrickville is generally older than the average Aboriginal population across the Sydney Statistical Division. However, the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is young compared with the total Marrickville LGA population. In 2001, 342 or 29% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were aged 0-14 years. This is more than double the proportion of the general Marrickville LGA population which is aged 0-14 years.

There were 250 Aboriginal students attended local schools in 2002, making up 2.4% of the total school population. (*Department of Education, Science and Training 2002 Census*)

Not all Aboriginal residents in Marrickville LGA are from the Cadigal Wangal groups. Some have moved into the area from elsewhere. There are different rules for different areas and it is important to consult local Aboriginal associations, people, workers and the traditional owners about the best way to work with local people.

To see how diverse and rich the Aboriginal culture is in Australia you can purchase the Aboriginal Australia Map from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra. <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/>

2. Self-determination and consultation

Since the British invaded Australia in the 18th Century, Aboriginals have been denied the right to determine their own future. Aboriginals were denied the right to vote and were not counted in the census until well into the 20th century. Self-determination is a key to ensuring that Aboriginal culture is preserved and Aboriginal people grow in pride and self-esteem.

Aboriginal people justifiably complain that in the past much 'consultation' has been tokenistic and that they have not enjoyed an equal relationship with government and other people who have worked with them. You may find that Aboriginal people have a negative or cynical attitude towards consultation because of their past experience. The following guidelines should help to make your consultation more productive:

Making Contact:

1. Make sure you consult as early as possible (at the idea stage) and continue to consult throughout the project. Once the project is completed you should consult to ensure Aboriginal people have an opportunity to give you feedback and take part in evaluation. Make sure they have an opportunity to continue to be involved in ongoing projects.
2. Get permission to meet with the community. You need to get an introduction from someone who is trusted.

3. Aboriginal people prefer face to face communication once you have permission to meet. You can use letters, emails, faxes and phone calls (check with people an appropriate use of contact for them) but they should always be followed up by a face to face meeting. Meetings are very important and it is a good idea to agree on how they are to be conducted e.g. who will take minutes, who should make the next contact and when, who needs to be informed about the outcome of the meeting etc.

Meeting conduct:

1. Consultation and negotiation processes may proceed more smoothly with a facilitator or chairperson who is impartial and able to obtain the agreement of those participating in a meeting to some basic conduct rules and procedures. Rules may include not interrupting, taking turns, being polite to all present and respecting others' views even if you disagree. It is important to get agreement on these rules at the start of the meeting.
2. You may meet with a single purpose in mind but during the meeting a variety of issues may arise from members of the community. It is important to deal with those respectfully and suggest others who may be able to help if you cannot. You should also realise the importance of not just focusing on the issues at hand but recognise things that are important to the Aboriginal community e.g. strengthening and rebuilding the community, healing, self-sufficiency, reconciliation, promotion, self-determination and self-management, forming partnerships and creating opportunities for the Aboriginal community.
3. Minutes should always be taken, agreed on, signed off and distributed to everyone who needs to know about the meeting and actions to be taken.

Aboriginal Reference Groups, Steering Committees and Boards

When you are working with the Aboriginal community it is advisable to establish an Aboriginal Advisory Group, or Aboriginal Steering Committee comprising of members of the local Aboriginal community, or Aboriginal experts in the field to guide and assist through any projects, collaborations, consultations and negotiations.

Membership: You may ask specific people to join these committees, but it is far better to advertise an expression of interest so members from across the whole community has the opportunity to apply.

Terms of Reference: Any committee which is formed must have clear terms of reference which have been negotiated with the community. This means that any decision making capacity, communication channels and areas of responsibility are clearly defined and understood by everyone involved.

Aboriginal participation on non-Aboriginal specific committees, boards or Groups: Please respect and consider the needs of Aboriginal people on non-Aboriginal committees etc:

- Language – avoid jargon or bureaucrat-type language. Many members of the Aboriginal and the wider community find such language difficult to understand. Don't talk down to people. Speak simply, clearly and with respect.
- Responses – silence should not be mistaken for acceptance. Check that you have the agreement of those present and give them an opportunity to voice concerns.

(See also Section 4 Communicating)

3. Getting Permission

Getting permission is essential before starting any work which has an effect on the Aboriginal community. It is not appropriate to do research or work on any Aboriginal project without the consent of the community involved and individuals or Elders who know about the issues involved. Aboriginal people feel a strong sense of owning their knowledge and history and of belonging to the land. It is their right to pass knowledge on if they wish. There may be specific reasons why information may not be passed on to you, or why permission might not be given. For example, the information could be sacred or taboo, related to death customs, or it might be specifically women's or men's business.

Failure to respect the wishes of the community will cause great offence, which will jeopardise your relationship and undermine your project.

The Local Community

When working with the community as a whole you need to gain as much permission and support from as many members of the community as possible. This means disseminating your information broadly and making it available to the whole community e.g. advertising, workshops, meetings. In some cases, permission may not be allowed to be given by just one person. You may need the consent of all or the majority of the community. Ensure that you are aware of the protocols for getting permission.

Elders

An Elder is a member of the community, male or female, who is respected and has the authority within the community to give permission, advise others, and pass on knowledge. Elders are usually the holder of traditional knowledge and customs and are the only ones who have the authority to talk about it or not, and to pass it on or not.

An Elder is usually, but not always, an older person. Young people may also be given permission to talk on behalf of an Elder. Remember to ascertain who is the relevant Elder you need to consult on cultural and heritage matters.

You must also be aware of addressing Elder in the appropriate way. Some Elders are referred to as Uncle or Aunty, but you should only use these titles if given permission to do so. As always, simply asking politely is the best way to find out if you can do so or not.

Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners are the original people of the area in which you live. They are the clans, nations, and groups of Aboriginal people who have traditional connections to the land and waters

relating to their area. Traditional Owners differ throughout Australia because of the differences of Aboriginal kinship traditions. They maintain their ownership and connection through their culture.

Ownership, Copyright and Cultural and Intellectual Property

The knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal culture is owned by its people. As stated above, any access to this information must have permission from the relevant individuals and the community. Permission may be individual or communal, depending on the subject. An agreement outlining the conditions of consent must be obtained from the owner/s of the knowledge before commencing the project.

You are advised to have contracts drawn up between Aboriginal and on-Aboriginal parties. Proper legal representation and advice for the Aboriginal community members should be offered so that they understand what they are signing for.

Copyright and moral rights are very important issues to be aware of when working with the Aboriginal community.

In the past, Aboriginal stories, songs, dance, and knowledge have been appropriated by non-Aboriginal people. This has had the effect that Aboriginal knowledge holders are not recognised as the owners of the stories, songs, dance and information that they have imparted to people who have entered into their communities. They have not benefited from the use of their stories and knowledge and they no longer control the dissemination of the material. One example that has occurred in many parts of Australia is where Aboriginal people tell researchers and writers about their culture, or relate a traditional story. The non-Aboriginal person who writes the story in a book is recognised as the copyright owner of the written version of the story.

Traditional knowledge is not protected adequately under Australian and International laws. Concepts of ownership of traditional knowledge differ to Western Law. (For more information visit the WIPO Website www.wipo.int)

It is important that you raise the issue and discuss copyright with the Aboriginal people you are dealing with. The ideas, stories and knowledge that come from Aboriginal people are considered by them to be their intellectual property even though the western legal system may have difficulty recognising this ownership.

Rights to use Aboriginal material can be held by an individual, but mostly cultural material belongs to the traditional owners of that knowledge as a community. These rights are referred to as Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property rights. In many Aboriginal communities there are traditional laws covering the protection of cultural expression and knowledge. These laws cover the visual arts, photographs, stories, songs, dances, colour combinations and other expressions of Aboriginal culture.

To find out more about copyright you can contact the following organisations:

The Australian Copyright Council
Ph: (02) 9215 9000
www.ozco.gov.au

The Arts Law Centre of Australia
Ph: (02) 9356 2566
www.artslaw.com.au

Viscopy
Ph: (02) 9280 2844
www.viscopy.com.au

World Intellectual Property Organisation.
www.wipo.int

4. Communicating with Aboriginal people and communities

The communication process requires:

- Respect
- Good listening
- Patience
- Understanding
- A common language
- Checking, clarification and confirmation.

Language

The understanding and use of language used in communicating with the Aboriginal community can be very different from that of the wider community. There are different ways of using language, which you will have to take into account and adopt when talking to any member/s of the Aboriginal community you are working with. The following points to remember are drawn from the document 'Protocols for Consultation and Negotiation with Aboriginal People', by Huggins, Jackie, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development, Brisbane, QLD, 1999.

1. Don't assume anything.
2. Be honest and sincere.
3. Use simple, clear, plain and appropriate language.
4. Speak slowly if and when necessary.
5. Jargon or technical language should be explained.
6. Don't mimic Aboriginal ways of speaking ie words, slang, speech or accent.
7. Be open minded.
8. Never be boastful about your ideas.
9. Don't be too direct as this can be taken as confrontational and/or rude.
10. Direct eye contact may also be considered confrontational and/or rude [check with someone who has experience with the people you are dealing with].
11. Emphasise the purpose of your activity and intended benefits to the community.
12. Don't ask hypothetical questions.
13. Deal in practical, real issues not theoretical ideas.

To gain the support of the community you will need to demonstrate that you are there to assist their community. The client/s need to be invited to provide input (not just feedback) during and after

consultation, and decision-making processes. You may need a facilitator, interpreter or mediator to assist you through this process. It is recommended that you employ an Aboriginal person in such a role.

Koori Concept of Time

The Aboriginal community, like many other cultures, does not operate at the same pace or to the same timetable as the non-Aboriginal community. It takes time to build up trust and respect within an Aboriginal community. What is important to you may not be to them. The community should dictate the pace of any project.

This does not mean that it will take forever to consult, collaborate on or finish a project. Common understandings have to be arrived at and negotiation and collaboration is essential. The more effort you put into meeting with the community, keeping them informed and in the loop, the easier it is to develop common goals and outcomes. You may find that you deal one way with a specific community and a totally different way with another.

Reporting Back and Staying in Touch

Staying in constant contact with the community is essential because:

- It keeps both you and the community informed and aware of any potential problems which may arise. The community should have the right to make final decisions and give permission to any stage of a project that affects them.
- Keeping the community informed about the progress of the project also promotes good relationships, trust and goodwill.

Indigenous Media and other Channels of Communication

The Indigenous media can provide information on Aboriginal affairs and may be used for communicating about your project. See Section 8 for a full list.
www.teachers.ash.org.au/aussieed/aboriginalaustralia.

5. Ethics and Morals

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and privacy are essential when working with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people have traditional customs, stories, and sacred information that may or may not be passed onto you. If you are given this information/knowledge, remember, it is given in trust. That trust requires that you respect that confidentiality. To breach community confidentiality by translating, reproducing or passing on any information, practices or cultural product without permission would be devastating to your project and erase any trust developed during consultation and negotiation processes. **You should assume that all information is confidential unless you have specifically negotiated permission to use it.**

Gender Protocols: Men's and Women's Business

Unlike Western society, Aboriginal society still regards some information as specific and sacred to either men or women. These matters are very sensitive issues within the Aboriginal culture. This information may only be talked about, negotiated and consulted on by either men or women. It

should also be recorded or stored in a way that only men or only women have access to it as appropriate.

It is unlikely that you will be able to distinguish between men's business and women's business. From the beginning, you and your staff should be aware that they exist and seek advice from the Aboriginal people you are dealing with to let you know how to deal with the subject of gender protocols.

Integrity and Trust

The integrity and trust you develop within an Aboriginal community is vital and must be maintained if you want a good, continuing relationship. Continual acknowledgement and attribution of clans, elders, traditional owners, information, ideas, and research has to be written into any documentation and stated clearly in speeches, talks and presentations. Any advertising, media releases, news articles etc concerning Aboriginal people should only be made with the knowledge and agreement of the community concerned.

6. Correct Procedures

Respect

Respect and acknowledgment are essential to good working relationships with Aboriginal communities and should be your first priority. For example, discussing when and how to use Traditional Welcomes and Acknowledging Traditional Owners will show that you are respectful of Aboriginal connection to the land. This demonstration of your respect will make it easier to set up mutual standards of respect and trust and will make it easier for consultation and negotiations to take place effectively.

What to Call People

It can be offensive to refer to Aboriginal people in the wrong way. Some prefer to be called 'Aboriginal' and others prefer 'Indigenous'. It's always a good idea to try and gauge how people want to be addressed. Spend some time listening to their conversation, or you can ask if you feel that it won't be offensive. It is generally better to avoid referring to Aboriginal people as Kooris or Murris or any other name they may use themselves.

Traditional Welcome to the Country

The original residents of Marrickville were the Cadigal people who lived in the area for more than 40,000 years. The Cadigal were a clan of the Darug people and spoke the coastal Eora language. Other clans of the area included the Wangal, the Kameygal and the Bediagal. They did not settle in the Marrickville area, but for thousands of years roamed through territory which stretched from Port Jackson to Botany Bay. Aboriginal artefacts found around Cooks River and Alexandra Canal area indicate at least 7,000 years of occupation. Even though all land in the area had been taken from the traditional owners by the middle of the 19th Century, the traditional owners have a continuing relationship with the land and it is important to respect that by including a traditional welcome and acknowledgement in agendas.

A traditional welcome is a speech that is given, usually by an Elder of the local Aboriginal community and traditional land owners. It is mostly done at major events, and meetings. It

welcomes people to visit and meet on the traditional area. The traditional owners of the area are people who have originally come from that area, and also are acknowledged by the community.

Acknowledging Traditional Owners

Each speaker should also acknowledge the traditional owners as a sign of respect and recognition.

Even if an Elder is not available to give the Traditional Welcome, the gathering is less formal gathering, the first and every speaker after that should acknowledge the traditional owners.

This should be done as the first duty of any meeting, event opening, or speech. An example follows:

"Firstly I would like to pay respect to and acknowledge the Cadigal Wangal people who are the traditional owners of this land we stand/meet on today."

It also appropriate to acknowledge local clans and particular individuals such as Elders, Auntys if this is known.

Paying People

For too long it has been assumed (and it often still is) that Aboriginal people will participate and work for nothing. It may be seen by others that asking Aboriginal people to participate is sufficient and is courteous. However, Aboriginal people are the owners and holders of their culture and knowledge. Only they have the knowledge, expertise and permission to work in, with and pass on their culture.

In western culture, specialised knowledge is not something that is given away for free. Information and expertise is regarded as valuable. Therefore, if an Aboriginal person chooses to work with you in any capacity ie by performing a traditional dance, giving a speech, a talk or traditional welcome, providing artwork or participating in a project etc they should be paid for their time, expertise and knowledge. This would be the case for any other artist or professional. An information sheet on employing artists is available from CCDNSW. <http://www.ccdnsw.org/ccdnsw/pdf/protocols.pdf>. Fees for services in any field date very quickly and need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

Involving Aboriginal People

When you work with the Aboriginal community, you should ensure that Aboriginals are involved throughout the project eg as curators, staff, project officers, artists, advisory group.

Through your networking process you will have gained contacts and established relationships with people who you can work with and who will advise you on appropriate procedure/protocols. Your project should also have allocated payment within its budget to employ and to involve Aboriginal workers from the community. Remember to also seek to involve Aboriginal participation in decision making wherever possible.

MACC Cross Cultural Training Modules currently being developed.

Please seriously consider providing cross-cultural training for your staff, organisation or volunteer group who will be working with Aboriginal people. You may want to organise and pay for a local

Aboriginal community member, worker, or representative to come and deliver a talk, or workshop about the traditional landowners and the local community in which you live and/or work.

7. Marrickville Council's Policies, Procedures and Plans

[Marrickville Council Website](#)

8. A List of Aboriginal Organisations and Indigenous Media

[AIATSIS](#)
[www.blackpages](#)

9. Other Useful Protocol Documents

'Australian Copyright vs Aboriginal Intellectual and Cultural Property Rights: a discussion paper'

Heiss, Anita, The Australian Society of Authors, Sydney, NSW, 1999.

<http://www.asauthors.org/cgi-bin/asa/information.cgi>

'Cultural Protocols for Aboriginal Reporting in the Media'

Messagestick Online, ABC, NSW.

<http://abc.net.au/message/proper/>

'Doing It Our Way: Contemporary Aboriginal Cultural Expression in New South Wales'

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