

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE SIGNAGE POLICY

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PREPARED BY:
ASSET SERVICES UNIT



4-20 Eton Street,
Sutherland NSW 2232
T 02 9710 0333
sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au

SUTHERLAND SHIRE

1. PURPOSE

Aboriginal cultural heritage provides an essential link between the past and the present and is a crucial part of the cultural identity of Aboriginal people. The use of interpretive signage provides an opportunity to enhance the community's understanding and appreciation of both the landscape and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Through the use of signage, the purpose of this policy is to:

- Recognise and affirm Aboriginal people as the first inhabitants of the Sutherland Shire.
- Promote an awareness of Aboriginal heritage in the Sutherland Shire.
- Promote the Dharawal language; and
- Identify opportunities to promote education and increase protection of Aboriginal sites.

2. APPLICATION

2.1 Aboriginal Community Consultation

It is fundamental that the Aboriginal community is directly involved in any interpretation of Aboriginal heritage in the landscape. It is up to Aboriginal people to determine the significance of their cultural heritage. Consultation is to be undertaken with the Aboriginal community throughout the process of developing and installing interpretative signs associated with Aboriginal heritage.

2.1.1 Aboriginal Advisory Committee

All proposals for Aboriginal signage will need to be endorsed by the Sutherland Shire Council Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

2.1.2 Local Aboriginal Land Councils

Members of the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council (LPLALC) holds knowledge of *Dharawal* cultural heritage. While Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council owns land in the Sutherland Shire, the traditional owners are *Dharawal* people connected with the LPLALC. Both Land Councils are to be consulted in regards to any proposal to install Aboriginal heritage signage.

2.1.3 Sourcing information

Information for site interpretation and the use of *Dharawal* words and language is to be taken from an authoritative source ensuring consistency and accuracy.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 Existing Signs

Signs at the main entry points into the Sutherland Shire recognise the land as "Dharawal Country." Suburb entry signs also acknowledge the Sutherland Shire as "Dharawal Country". If the suburb name is derived from a *Dharawal* word, its meaning is explained, e.g. Gymea - "*Gyomea*" - Giant lily. Other existing signs are generally classed as interpretive signs or regulatory signs.

3.2 Interpretive Signs

There are many parks and reserves where there is evidence of Aboriginal occupation such as shell middens, sandstone shelters with art, axe grinding grooves or rock engravings. These sites provide an ideal opportunity to promote Aboriginal heritage through the use of interpretive signs. For any interpretive signs Council shall ensure that:

- Signs are not to reveal locations of places or sites that might be culturally sensitive.

- Signs interpreting Aboriginal sites such as midden deposits, occupation shelters, artwork, engravings or special cultural features in the landscape such as plant and animal resources will be developed in consultation with the Aboriginal community.
- Signs are located in parks or at sites where there is evidence of Aboriginal occupation or there is a link to cultural heritage.
- Signs are not to be installed at sites where they are likely to result in the vandalism of Aboriginal heritage.

3.1.1 Site Protection

Providing information on Aboriginal heritage through the use of signage is to be considered as a strategy for reducing degradation of Aboriginal sites. For example, signage explaining the significance of Aboriginal shelters and midden deposit may assist to reduce rock climbing activity at some sites.

Signs will be developed, or a decision made not to provide them, to ensure the protection of Aboriginal sites. This process will be undertaken in consultation with the Aboriginal community.

3.3 Regulatory Signs

Aboriginal objects and places are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974) administered by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH). It is an offence under the Act to harm Aboriginal objects (sites) and places.

Signs incorporating regulations to protect Aboriginal sites will be installed in some circumstance in collaboration with OEH and the Aboriginal community.

3.4 Dharawal Language

There has been ongoing debate over the correct naming and territorial range of the pre-contact Aboriginal groups in the Sydney region. It is generally accepted that the Aboriginal people who occupied the area that is now the Sutherland Shire belonged to the *Dharawal* language group. The *Dharawal* language group is believed to extend from the southern side of Botany Bay, south to the Shoalhaven River and west to Camden.

It is also generally recognised that within the *Dharawal* language group, Aboriginal people living along the southern shores of Botany Bay and the Cronulla Peninsula were known as the *Gweagal* and those to the west of the Woronora River were the *Norongerragal*.¹

Signs to assist in describing places or objects in the landscape will incorporate words from the *Dharawal* language only when there is confidence in the source of the words.

3.5 Signage Style Guide

Signs installed shall be in accordance with the Sutherland Shire Council Signage Style Guide.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Responsible Officer

The Team Leader Open Space Assets is the Responsible Officer for this Policy and is responsible for:

- The installation of signage in Council open space;
- Liaising with the appropriate representatives of the Aboriginal Community;
- Ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of signage; and
- Compliance with relevant legislation.

¹ Dallas, Mary (2002) *Sutherland Shire Council Aboriginal Cultural heritage Study* p.41.

4.2 Council

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*, Council is responsible for the installation of signage.

4.3 Chief Executive Officer

Council has delegated the Chief Executive Officer the authority to approve the installation of signage.

4.4 Directors

Directors are responsible for ensuring their Division adheres to the requirements of this policy and provide guidance in respect of achievement of the objectives of the policy within their division and the organisation.

4.5 Staff

Staff must adhere to the requirements of this policy and operate within the authorities of their delegations.

5. MONITORING

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Team Leader Open Space Assets.

Council will review this policy within four years or at the request of Council or in response to legislative and statutory requirements.

6. RECORD KEEPING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Council adheres to and complies with the NSW State Records Act 1998 and Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 through its Enterprise Content Management Policy and Privacy Policy.

7. BREACHES OF POLICY

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures and will be advised to the Chief Executive Officer and/or Director Shire Infrastructure via the Manager Asset Services.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Aboriginal Advisory Sub-Committee Chart
- Aboriginal Reconciliation Statement

9. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).
- State Records Act 1998 (NSW).
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW).
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).
- National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974)

10. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
“Aboriginal heritage”	Evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the landscape from the presence of objects including middens, axe grinding grooves, shelters with art, hand stencils or artefacts.
“Interpretive Sign”	Sign that helps to create a narrative about the landscape that acts to generate a positive user experience.
“Regulatory sign”	Sign used to indicate or reinforce laws, regulations or requirements which apply either at all times or at specified times, the disregard of which may constitute a violation.

End of Document

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APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF CREDIBLE LITERARY SOURCES

"That Council reviews the current list or lists of Aboriginal words and their meanings¹ used when assigning names for streets, suburbs, reserves and parks etc., and ensure that for each Aboriginal word, its meaning is reliably sourced,² and further that if the meaning of a given word is not reliably sourced, then it should be stated as such in the list, and that the given word then not be considered for selection for future naming purposes. Implicit in this motion is that an attempt be made to add words to the list or lists that do have proper sources for their meanings, and in particular words that can reasonably be assumed to be from the Dharawal Language, and further that only those words with a proper source for their meanings and that are likely to be Dharawal,³ be considered as suitable when choosing a name."

¹ Referred to as CL Aboriginal Words in the Council's documents Origin of Street Names, and Origin of Suburb Names, and any other sources used both now and in the past.

² Examples of reliable/proper sources would be:

- William Dawes who compiled many words spoken by the Aboriginal people of Port Jackson after about 1790, with their meanings, or any similar "First Fleeter" like Arthur Phillip or Watkin Tench or David Collins.
- Ethnographers like R.H. Matthews (in the late 1800's) who liaised with Aboriginal people on the south coast and compiled their language.
- George Thornton who was founding chairman of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (NSW) in 1883, and who liaised with Aboriginal people and became familiar with their language.
- Lists of words and their meanings sourced from Aboriginal people, examples of which can be found in the book Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines 1770-1900, compiled by Michael Organ, which is available as a free download by searching its title.
- Those words recorded in 1803 by the botanist Robert Brown from the people living near Mill Creek, one of which was "yarramong" and the given meaning is "eucalypt". [See "Nature's Investigator - the Diary of Robert Brown in Australia, 1801-1805, T.G.Vallance, D.T.Moore & E.W.Groves (2001), p.445.]
- The book "Macquarie Aboriginal Words" which provides well researched word meanings and includes "The Sydney Language" (which can reasonably assumed to have had at least some cross-over into the Dharawal Language).

³ Examples of inadequate sources would be any of the books that have lists of Aboriginal words and their meanings where no indication is given as to how/when/from where the meanings were derived. Such books were authored by W.W. Thorpe (1921), Sydney Endacott (1924), F.D. McCarthy (1952) and others in the early to mid-1900s.