

Aboriginal Engagement Plan

November 2015

Adopted: December 2015

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1. Introduction

Consultation was undertaken with local Nyoongar elders and leaders (including Whadjuk traditional owners) to assist the City of Fremantle (City) to develop a draft Aboriginal Engagement Plan. The consultation occurred between February and May 2015 and was structured around the following areas:

- Land and heritage.
- Establishing an ongoing dialogue with the community on strategic matters.
- Building capacity for both the City and Nyoongar community.
- Strengthening relationships with the community.
- Welcome to country and acknowledgment of country ceremonies.

The consultation suggests that:

- The City focuses initially on building trust and grass roots relationship with the local Aboriginal community by engaging with existing forums.
- The City explores opportunities and benefits to work with adjacent local government authorities on a 'regional' approach to engage the Aboriginal community.
- The City and elected members work towards establishing a formal, ongoing dialogue with Nyoongar elders on community matters.
- The City holds a separate land and heritage dialogue with South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) and other relevant representative bodies.
- The City establishes a dialogue with SWALSC to deal with land and heritage matters and provide guidance on individuals appropriate for welcome to country.
- The City considers a formal structure and mechanism for agreement to inform a balanced, long-term dialogue with Nyoongar community elders and leaders around community matters. Such a structure would consider the form of agreement between the parties, rights and responsibilities and how the group could be empowered through an allocated budget and capacity building.

2. Findings

The following table summarises key messages from the consultation with the local Aboriginal community in early 2015.

Theme	Key messages from the community that inform the plan
Land and Heritage owner matters	<p>South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) deals with land and traditional owner matters.</p> <p>Separate community and traditional owner (SWALSC) dialogue.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of Aboriginal lore.</p>
Relationships	<p>An inclusive dialogue is needed with Nyoongar (community) elders, not just with a small number of individuals.</p> <p>First step - build trust and grass roots relationship with Aboriginal community.</p> <p>Engage with younger generation.</p> <p>Go into the community to engage and engage in existing elder forums before attempting to create new forums.</p> <p>City boundaries mean nothing to Aboriginal community, if anything they create conflict. Councils could work together with the Aboriginal community.</p>
Capacity	<p>A balanced and equal relationship – City and Aboriginal community.</p> <p>Empowering the Aboriginal community, a formal agreement mechanism and budget allocation.</p>
Welcome and Acknowledgment to Country	<p>SWALSC provides names of traditional owners to perform welcome to country for “official” events.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of country is performed at non – official events and can be undertaken by anyone (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal).</p> <p>Nyoongar elders can decide who is authorised to deliver a welcome to country.</p>

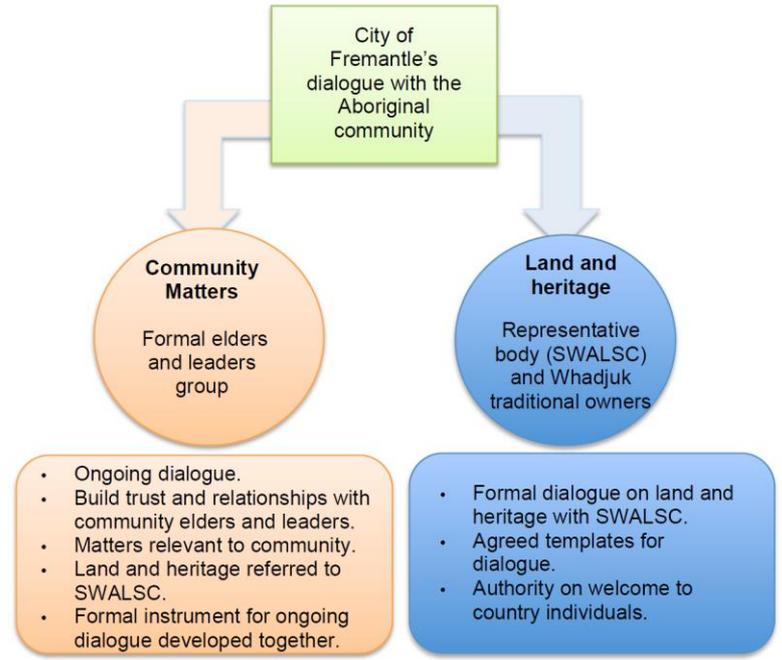
3. The Plan

The purpose of the plan is to build stronger relationships with the Aboriginal community and provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to contribute to the City’s decision-making processes.

Specific objectives of the plan are to implement best practice community engagement to:

- Inform decisions, by providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to contribute to the City’s decision-making process.
- Build the capacity of the City and Aboriginal community to engage effectively on issues of shared importance.
- Strengthen relationships, by building new relationships and improving existing relationships between the City and the Aboriginal community.

The key underlying principle of the plan (illustrated in Figure 1) is to establish two separate dialogues, including one for land and heritage matters with the representative native title body (currently SWALSC) and another for community matters, with Nyoongar community elders and leaders.



4. Recommended Actions

The following table provides an outline to assist the City in implementing the plan. The table includes the following information:

- Key focus areas providing the City with high level guidance.
- Detailed actions linked to key focus areas.
- Outcomes that link directly to key messages received from the community consultation.

Key Focus Area	Action	Outcomes
1. Early dialogue with SWASLC on land, heritage and welcome to country.	1.1 Establish formal dialogue with SWASLC to discuss agreed templates for engagement.	<p>Agreed templates to guide discussion between the City and SWASLC on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native title and heritage matters. • Other areas SWASLC seeks involvement or input as representative for TOs.
	1.2 Communicate this plan to process openly to the Aboriginal community.	
1. Early dialogue with SWASLC on land, heritage and welcome to country.	1.3 Establish consistent and clear process within the City associated with SWASLC engagement.	<p>Clear protocol for welcome to country supported by SWASLC and community elders.</p>
	1.4 Initially seek guidance from SWASLC on welcome to country.	
	1.5 Explore this item with the formal elder group once formed.	
2. Reducing impact of City's boundaries on community.	2.1 Engage with City of Melville and Cockburn on strategies to foster alignment for Aboriginal communities across City boundaries on local government issues.	An agreed strategy with adjacent local governments on how to work collectively on Aboriginal engagement and Aboriginal community matters that cross the City's borders.
	2.2 Explore a 'regional' engagement strategy to relieve community from duplicated conversations on local matters.	
3. Community Facilities.	3.1 The City to consider how its policies and statutory framework could provide for long-term tenure on community facilities and land (including long term leases or Memorandum of Understanding for dedicated community use). Note: this action is an opportunity for the City to demonstrate early commitment as a foundation for building trust with the community.	Identified options and mechanisms available to the City to accommodate long-term tenure on facilities/land for community use.
4. Consistent engagement with grass roots community.	4.1 Develop a plan of how to engage with grass roots community to include all levels of City staff and elected members.	Greater levels of engagement between the City and the Aboriginal community.
	4.2 Seek participation from community elders in planning key Aboriginal events such as NAIDOC and Wardanji Festival.	
5. Foundation relationships with elders.	5.1 Build relationships with Nyoongar elders and leaders as a foundation for future ongoing dialogue.	Greater levels of engagement between the City and Nyoongar elders and leaders.
	5.2 Attend existing (regional) forums with Nyoongar elders and leaders.	
6. Formal instrument for ongoing dialogue and capacity building.	6.1 Investigate options for a structure and instrument of a formal agreement with elders and leaders group.	An agreed structure and instrument for a formal agreement with elders and leaders group.
	6.2 Consider the allocation of a future budget to empower the elders and leaders group in decision-making and implementing initiatives	A budget allocated annually to the formal elders and leaders group and a structure to manage the funds.

5. Conclusion

The City of Fremantle is building on fifteen years of initiatives to strengthen its relationship with the Aboriginal community and seeks to establish an ongoing dialogue with the Aboriginal community.

The plan has been developed from consultation with the local Aboriginal community and is underpinned by a key principle of establishing two separate dialogues, one for community matters and another for land and heritage matters.

An important first step in implementing the plan involves establishing a 'grass roots' relationship with the Aboriginal community in advance of convening a formal elders and leaders group for a formal ongoing dialogue on community matters.

The plan is intended to be a working document that is refined over time with community input as the City's relationship strengthens with the Aboriginal community and Nyoongar elders.