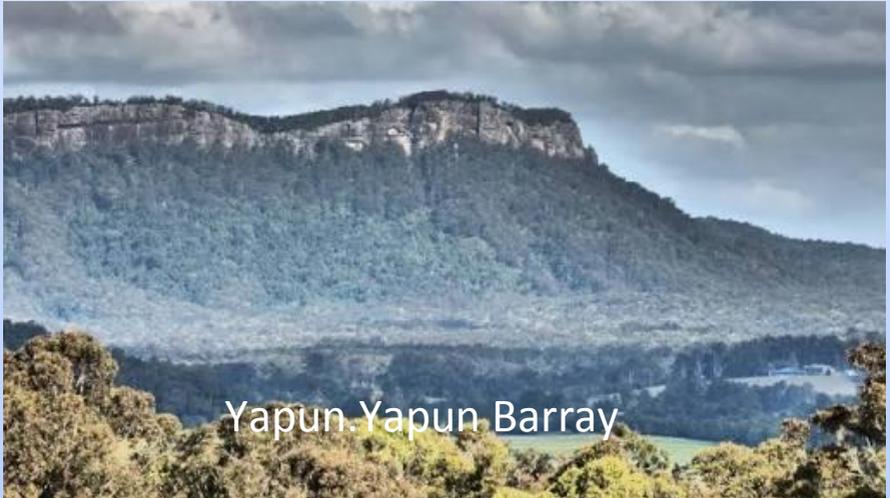


Birpai – Birrbay Barray

Local

Cultural Protocols

Gathay Nyiirun Wakulda – “Let us all go together as one”



Acknowledgements to:

Hastings AECG

Birpai LALC

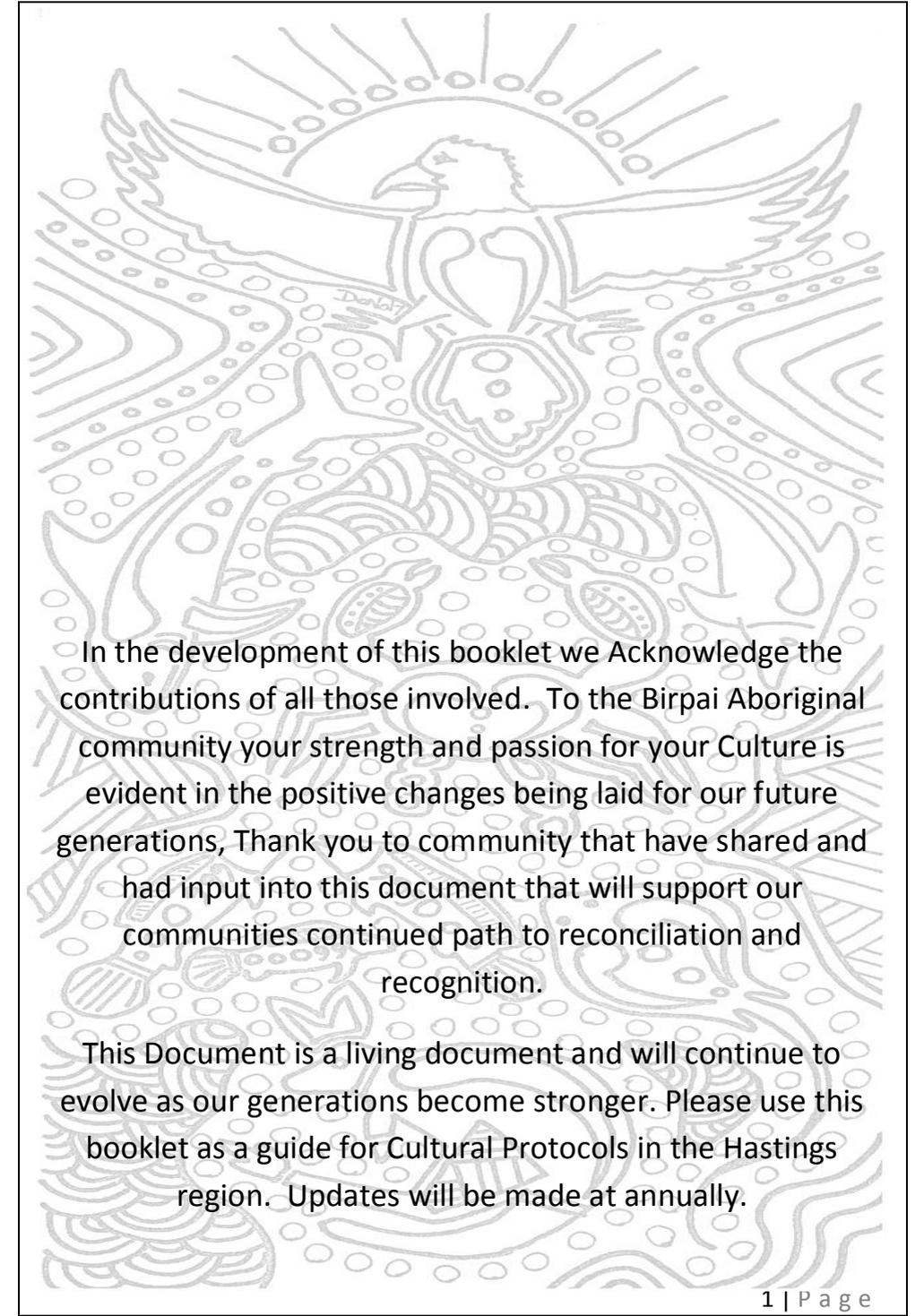
Bearlay Interagency

Bunyah LALC

Hastings Community of Schools

Birpai Elders

Birpai Traditional Owners Advisory Group



In the development of this booklet we Acknowledge the contributions of all those involved. To the Birpai Aboriginal community your strength and passion for your Culture is evident in the positive changes being laid for our future generations, Thank you to community that have shared and had input into this document that will support our communities continued path to reconciliation and recognition.

This Document is a living document and will continue to evolve as our generations become stronger. Please use this booklet as a guide for Cultural Protocols in the Hastings region. Updates will be made at annually.

Introduction:

The Hastings Aboriginal Education Consultative groups in Consultation with the Birpai LALC, Bunyah LALC, Elders Group, Birpai Traditional Owners group and the Bearlay Aboriginal Interagency, have collaborated on this booklet to identify and pay respect to traditional Birpai customs and protocols.

In order to promote ongoing reconciliation and correct respect and observance for local protocols, it is necessary for us to collaborate on this project, but again for it to be successful these Protocols need to stand side by side with Education and school policies.

All school staff need to appreciate and understand these protocols.

Observance of these Protocols will show that schools are being sensitive to the local observances and will achieve the best outcome for all parties involved.

If adopted it will create the greater understanding and awareness of Local Aboriginal cultural protocols to become the first consideration not the second and this will lay the foundations for a cooperative community striving for the same mutual outcomes.

Definition of Protocols:

Basically means how things are done locally - our customs or ways of doing business, how we relate to others without causing grief or anxiety, and thus gain the best response or outcome.

These notes are not extensive and may not cover every situation.

When in doubt, check with your Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO), if you have one, the Birpai or Bunyah LALC, the Bearlay Aboriginal Interagency Group or the Hastings Valley AECG.

Greeting:

- ❖ If it is obvious the visitor is an Elder, or a mature aged person, then it should be asked, *at a convenient time*, “How would you like me to address you? Do they call you Uncle or Aunty, or do you prefer I use your name? “.
- ❖ The attachment of “Aunty” or “Uncle” to someone is a mark of respect that is bestowed on people who may, or may not, be related to you, but, they have some standing in the local community; or it could be simply because of their age (an Elder).
- ❖ You should always have a clear discussion about their role with Elders and what it is that you want them to deliver. Elders are well respected within the community and they should be treated as such, an offer of a drink of water or a hot drink.



Welcome to Country:

In Birpai Country only Traditional Birpai men can perform “Welcome to Country”, (Not Women). A payment fee should be negotiated between function co-ordinator and person delivering the Welcome.

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years.

Crossing into another group’s Country required a request for permission to enter. When permission was granted, the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during their journey. While visitors were provided with a safe passage, they also had to respect the protocols and rules of the local tribal group while on their Country.

This is the process of declaration of our continual belonging, physically and spiritually, to the lands within our recognised language boundaries.

- ❖ It must always be delivered by a Traditional Birpai Male Elder/Adult, who is recognised and accepted by the Birpai community. This is particularly so, for events that are significant such NAIDOC Week. Presentation /Recognition of student efforts ceremonies or when Regional/State representatives are in attendance at open school events, staff/community workshops.
- ❖ Please contact either Birpai Local Aboriginal Lands Council (LALC) in Port Macquarie or Bunyah LALC in Wauchope as your first port of Call for an Elder to conduct a Welcome.
- ❖ https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/.../welcomecountry_lowres-1.pdf

Acknowledgement of Country:

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for **anyone** to show respect for Traditional custodians and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country.

- ❖ School students can deliver an **Acknowledgement of Country** at school assemblies and every school assembly should begin with an Acknowledgement of country.
- ❖ If in doubt, talk to your Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO), Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) or Aboriginal worker in your school. At all events and meetings, the convenor / master of ceremonies (MC) should, at the very beginning, acknowledge the local people and country on which the event/meeting is taking place.

There are examples of the wording of how this Acknowledgement can be stated, or be creative and put your personal touch to it:

- ❖ **Example 1.**
I pay my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this meeting takes place, and also pay respect to Elders both past and present
- ❖ **Example 2.**
I Acknowledge the Birpai people who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respect to Elders both past and present of the Birpai nation and extend that respect to our Aboriginal guests off country today.
- ❖ In both instances, the NSW AECG , DoE and the NSW Teachers Federation has a detailed Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines and Protocols document for NSW Public Schools and TAFE NSW Institutes
- ❖ <https://www.nswtf.org.au/pages/welcome-country-or-acknowledgement-country.html>

❖ Smoking Ceremony:

Smoking Ceremonies are only to be conducted by Traditional Birpai Men with specialised cultural knowledge, and usually Elders.

In Birpai Country only men perform Smoking Ceremonies (Not Women). A payment fee should be negotiated between function co-ordinator and person delivering the Smoking Ceremony Given that this is a very culturally significant ceremony, Smoking Ceremonies are usually only performed at major events; i.e. Official Opening of Buildings or events.



Fee for Services:

In providing cultural services such as a welcome to country, artistic/dance performances and ceremonies, Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property and giving up their time.

As such providers of such knowledge or services should be appropriately remunerated.

Appropriate remuneration and / or assistance should be negotiated between the School, the cultural service provider or the Elder and taking into account:

- Speaker or Performance fees
- Travel to and from the event
- Public profile of the event

Sorry Business and bereavement protocols

There are a number of responsibilities and obligations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to attend funerals and participate in Sorry Business or bereavement protocols.

In some communities, the Sorry Business prohibitions extend to not conducting activities, events, meetings or consultations during the observance of Sorry Business, and this must be observed and respected by all those working with Aboriginal organisations and communities. These prohibitions may last for various periods of time.

It is important to inquire before going to a location or visiting community members to ensure that Sorry Business protocols are not being observed.



Visit to School by Parent/Carer (in response to a complaint, or to receive a more detailed, face-to face explanation etc.:

When there is a crisis at the school involving a parent/carer's child, Aboriginal people generally want to deal directly with the main person; this usually means the Principal, or in their absence, the next senior person, or those who have the authority to take action or make decisions. Failure to meet this request could result in an angry exchange, even if it may appear to be without foundation to the person dealing with the parent/carer. Obviously this is not always the case, as it will depend on the individual(s) and the

mannerism of the school staff member. To the parent/carer, it is a waste of time to speak with anyone junior, or any of the front-office staff. Most will insist on seeing the Principal.

In summary, to avoid any unpleasant situations, if the Principal is available, then they should make every effort to see the aggrieved parent/carer.

Meetings with Community/School:

Always set out the rules of the meeting before it gets underway

For example:

- ❖ Set a time limit to allow people to finish speaking without interjections
- ❖ Respect their views even if it differs from yours or others,
- ❖ If some appear to be monopolising the session, target someone for a response in order to get some balance, as some may not be as forthright as others.
- ❖ Wherever possible seating should be arranged in a circle.



Ten top tips for policy & programs

The numerous reports, studies and research papers published over the years outline clear and repeated principles that can guide successful Indigenous programs and policies.

Reconciliation Australia has identified ten ingredients for successful Indigenous policies and programs:

- ❖ 1. Genuine engagement with communities in talking about, developing and implementing policies.
- ❖ 2. Active and well-supported Indigenous led decision-making in program-design.
- ❖ 3. Grass-roots, bottom-up approaches that knit together local knowledge within a national framework.
- ❖ 4. Local and region specific programs that are tailored to the needs of particular communities rather than "one size fits all" approaches.
- ❖ 5. Investment in and support for local Indigenous leadership.
- ❖ 6. Long-term investment in strengthening communities at a local level to decide and manage their own lives.
- ❖ 7. Programs and policy approaches that are geared towards long-term achievements.
- ❖ 8. Real investment of dollars and people based on need and ongoing support for programs that work.
- ❖ 9. Regular and independent public evaluation of programs and policies to make sure we learn from mistakes and successes.
- ❖ 10. Co-operative, cross sector approaches which reduce the burden of duplication and red-tape on community organisations.

Use of Abbreviations, and the usage of the words

Aboriginal/Indigenous/Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander

Recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' diverse and distinct cultures:

- ❖ Recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have retained their distinctive identities
- ❖ Avoid offensive and outdated descriptions
- ❖ **Never use the word "Abo" in discussions or in the written form. It is offensive to Aboriginal people.**
- ❖ Always use a **capital A** when writing the word "Aboriginal" as a reference to our mob i.e. he is an Aboriginal person, they are Aboriginal people.
- ❖ Please avoid using 'ATSI' as an abbreviation for 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander'
- ❖ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find it offensive to be described as 'full blood', 'half caste' or 'quarter caste' or percentage – these terms are unacceptable in all contexts.

Some Aboriginal people don't mind the word **Indigenous**; however some are the complete opposite. If in doubt, **ask the group** what terminology they prefer to be used.

In NSW some areas of language the word "**Goori/Goorie/Koori**" refers to us – it is what we call ourselves. These words mean "Aboriginal/Aboriginals/Aborigines". One thing to understand though is that in our Gathang Language this word written Guri means "Aboriginal Man", so caution to the use of this word also, and who it is directed at.

Use of and Teaching of Gathang Aboriginal Language in Birpai Country

Protocols on use of Gathang language

These language protocols have been developed by the Gathang Language Group (GLG) to ensure that Gathang language is treated with respect and that its integrity is maintained: this means making an effort to use correct pronunciation, spelling and grammar.

- Ultimately, only Gathang people should teach the Gathang language
- The GLG should be consulted and involved in the development of any language projects, courses or classes involving the Gathang language, Muurrbay who will then pass on information to any relevant members. Email admin@muurrbay.org.au

Purpose

These protocols are designed to protect Birrbay, Warrimay and Guringay cultural and intellectual property rights. Cultural and intellectual property rights include the right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to:

- own and control their cultural and intellectual property
- ensure that any means of protecting their cultural and intellectual property is based on the principle of self-determination
- be recognised as the primary guardians and interpreters of their language and culture and so regulate how stories and information is presented
- authorise or refuse the use of their cultural and intellectual property according to customary law
- maintain the secrecy of their knowledge and other cultural practices
- be given full and proper attribution for sharing their heritage

Community contacts:



Birpai LALC –

Address: 14 Aston St, Port Macquarie NSW 2444

Phone: (02) 6584 9066

Bunyah LALC –

Address: 208 High St, Wauchope NSW 2446

Phone: (02) 6585 3882

Hasting AECG-

2018: President: Maree Hutchison

Email: maree.hutchison4@det.nsw.edu.au

Bearlay Aboriginal Interagency -

2018: Chairperson: Jamie Donovan

Email: Jamie.donovan@det.nsw.edu.au

Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative -

Address: 14 Bellwood Rd, Nambucca Heads NSW 2448

Phone: (02) 6569 4294

admin@muurrbay.org.au

Hastings Gathang Language Group

Rhonda Radley - 0431324309

anjilkurricconnections@hotmail.com

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