

# Annual report of the Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Council

For the year 2008/2009

Darebin City Council  
Social Inclusion and Diversity Branch  
October 2009



## Purpose of this report

The Local Government Act requires that all Special Committees of Council to report regularly to Council concerning their activities at an interval determined by Council. Darebin City Council requires Special Committees to report annually. This report has been prepared to fulfil that commitment and thereby also provide a summary record of DATSICC activities for other audiences.

The report is written at a time when a new Community Council was in the process of being formed. It is also designed to provide a basis for induction and discussion by new DATSICC members as a way forward to the development of a DATSICC plan for the new Council term.

## Background

The proposal to establish DATSICC was developed by a Working Group of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Council officers. The impetus came from the Darebin Aboriginal Reconciliation Working Party Strategic Plan.

The report to Council recommending appointment commented:

- That a special committee would ensure both transparency of process and status commensurate with the activities and membership of the group
- That the “group intends to investigate the possibility in the longer term of separate incorporation and independent operation”
- That the name ‘Community Council’ had been chosen to signify both the intention of the group to work closely with the Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and to draw a parallel between the new structure and the Darebin Ethnic Community Council.

The report also said DATSICC would:

- Have its own budget and control over that budget
- Create its own agenda
- Be able to generate its own projects and activities
- Maintain strong grass roots connections

Council has the opportunity to reappoint DATSICC at the annual statutory meeting of Council. Council has consistently re-appointed DATSICC since 2002.

The term of DATSICC is in line with the Council term. Each newly elected Council is given the option of re-appointing DATSICC. DATSICC has been re-appointed twice since 2002 – in 2004 and during this reporting period in 2008.

DATSICC is a Special Committee of Council established under S86 of the Local Government Act. DATSICC operates under a Committee Charter and has powers and responsibilities delegated to it by Council. As a Special Committee of Council, DATSICC is subject to the Local Law governing meeting procedure as well as to the requirements of the Local Government Act. The implications for DATSICC of these requirements are that DATSICC must:

- Ensure that meetings are open to the public

- Advertise meetings and makes minutes and agendas available.
- Ensure that conflicts of interests are dealt with in accordance with Act
- Conduct meetings using a proscribed and formal meeting procedure which includes provision for a quorum, the formation and movement of motions and recording of procedures.

### ***The DATSICC Charter***

DATSICC operates under a Charter which has been determined by Council in consultation with members. The DATSICC Charter (appendix one) clearly establishes the aims of DATSICC. The Charter states that DATSICC is established to:

- Participate in all relevant Council program and policy development initiatives
- Be educational – an advisor on Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander social, spiritual and cultural issues to Council and the community
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with Council and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community – so as to be a bridge between Council and the Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander people of Darebin
- Nurture the new generation of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander leadership in Darebin by encouraging participation in the governance processes
- Oversee the development of cross cultural awareness programs for Council staff, local businesses and services
- Increase the visibility of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander language, symbols and signs in Darebin to ensure a visible presence of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander culture in the municipality
- Increase the awareness of the living Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander culture in Darebin
- Increase the use of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander personnel at all levels of Council
- Improve access to Council services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and work to improve the cultural relevance and appropriateness of all Council services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Initiate, promote and monitor projects that assist Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander people in Darebin
- Ensure the maintenance of the existing Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander community in Darebin by advocating for affordable housing, employment and improved health and community care
- Advocate on the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Darebin.

### ***Membership and Meetings***

A General Election of Council was held during the current reporting period and the DATSICC membership changed significantly as a result. DATSICC comprises eight community members who are required to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Under the previous Council two Council members were required but this number was increased to three under the new Council. In both cases one Council member is required to be the Mayor of the day.

DATSICC has chosen to fulfil its Charter by implementing a meeting pattern comprised of bi monthly 'formal' public meetings with Planning and Briefing sessions held as needed.

Community members up to November 2008 were:

- Mr Phil Cooper (co-chair)
- Ms Jan Muir (co-chair)
- Mr Alan Brown
- Mr Reg Blow
- Ms Deborah Walsh
- Mr Alf Bamblett
- Ms Vicky Clark (resigned May 2009)
- Ms Nicole Bloomfield.

The Councillor Representatives were:

- Cr Peter Stephenson (Mayor)
- Cr Mendo Kundevksi

This Committee held two formal public meetings during 2008/2009

- August 13<sup>th</sup>
- October 29<sup>th</sup>

Following re- appointment of DATSICC in December 2008, a call for Expressions of Interest was advertised and a new Committee was formed. The membership of the new Committee is:

Community members in 2009:

- Mr Phil Cooper
- Mr Alan Brown
- Mr Reg Blow
- Ms Deborah Walsh
- Mr Alf Bamblett
- Mr Mikael Smith (appointed in June 09)
- Ms Diedre King (appointed in June 09)
- Ms Nicole Bloomfield.

The Councillor Representatives were:

- Cr Diana Asmar (Mayor)
- Cr Trent McCarthy
- Cr Gaetano Greco

This Committee held two formal public meetings during 2008/2009

- May 6<sup>th</sup>
- June 10<sup>th</sup>

## **DATSICC Key Projects, 2008/09**

2008 was the final year of the current DATSICC Committee and a range of projects that had been commenced in earlier in the Council term or before were progressed. There was a focus during the year of aiming for the completion of projects and the development of processes to plan for the next Council term.

### **Development of a new four year plan for DATSICC**

In May 2009 DATSICC agreed on a process to develop a new four year plan around Council support for Aboriginal issues in Darebin.

The analysis of 2006 Census data provided to DATSICC , together with discussion with DATSICC members and other Aboriginal leaders clearly indicate that the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community face a range of entrenched issues about which Council is concerned. These issues may be considered in the following broad categories:

- Health and Wellbeing: - Including access to services and infrastructure that supports community inclusion and harmony
- Economic Participation – Including the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain employment, enter into business and participate in the local economy and producers and consumers.
- Housing – Including the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have safe, secure and affordable housing that meets the needs of themselves and their families.
- Education – Including the opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain skills and knowledge and to transition between different stages of education and the workforce.
- Community Safety and Family Violence – Including the extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to feel safe and receive support to live in a positive family environment

DATSICC agreed on to undertake consultation with the local Koorie community around these five themes. A series of 'Koorie Conversations' were developed and implementation of the consultation phase began in 2009/10. The consultation process is planned to be completed by the end of the 2009 calendar year and the results of the consultation will be considered by DATSICC early in 2010.

An expected result from this process will be the development of opportunities to create ongoing or medium term groups and structures to further activities identified. This may result in the formation of a youth committee, for example, or the creation of project groups and steering groups for particular activities.

Two key initiatives – the development of a ‘virtual’ business hub and creation of a trader show or market for Indigenous people to showcase their goods – were progressed through the development of the Koorie Night Market

## **Koorie Night Market Pilot Project**

The piloting and subsequent establishment of the Koorie Night Market was the flagship DATSICC project for 2008.

The Koorie Night Market (KNM) is an Aboriginal festival celebrating and promoting Koorie arts, culture and identity. Consisting of well known Koorie musicians and a range of arts, crafts and services offered by in excess of 40 Koorie artisan-stallholders at each market, the Koorie Night Market has an electric atmosphere and is a bridge between cultures.

The idea was originally driven by DATSICC whose support was integral to the three pilot markets held in March 2008 at the iconic Northcote Town Hall. The markets were funded and supported by Darebin City Council in partnership with a range of local community groups. Inspired by the success of the pilot, funding from WISE Employment Ltd Community Foundation enabled Darebin City Council to employ two Aboriginal women to coordinate markets in 2008/2009. Council also committed resources and staff to support these staff and the formation of Koorie Night Market Inc (KNM Inc) in October 2008. This organisation will oversee and manage the markets in the long-term and Council is assisting with project management and covering some costs associated with market operations.

KNM Inc: The KNM Inc Board has 4 Indigenous and 3 non-Indigenous and Board members with Indigenous members having greater voting rights. Board members include representatives from partner organisations, stallholders and the Koorie community. The Board has strong links to the Indigenous community and members with appropriate and relevant business experience were selected to mentor Koorie Board members about governance and project management.

Board meetings take place on the first Thursday of every month.

However as a new organisation, teething troubles such as a lack of policies, guidelines for partnership agreements and financial and operations management will bloom as the organisation and its members become more experienced.

Markets: markets were held on 17 December 2008 and 13 February 2009 at the Northcote Town Hall, the latter in partnership with Stolen Generations Victoria to celebrate the first anniversary of the national apology. The KNM Coordinators also worked in partnership with Songlines and 3KND to provide an opportunity to stallholders at the Share the Spirit Festival in January 2009. The markets demonstrated yet again that the Koorie Night Market has enormous potential to cultivate social equity and cultural vitality.

In excess of 120 artisan-stallholders have participated the markets, generating an average of \$30,000 in sales of Indigenous arts and crafts and positively represent Indigenous culture in Victoria. Even as bushfires raged in Victoria and communities were incapacitated by both the emotion and devastation of the fires, the February market which occurred less than one week after black Saturday was well attended by stallholders and punters. Sales averages were maintained and many people attended the film screenings presented by Stolen

Generations Victoria. This demonstrated yet again the potential of the project and the mass support of the community.

Coordinators: The two Indigenous Coordinators are the interface with the Indigenous community and local organisations. This is essential to ensuring the markets encourage participation and ownership by the Koorie community. The markets also create a safe and positive meeting place for the local Koorie community, for the broader community and a place for the two communities to come together. Surveys undertaken at each market demonstrate that the markets are valuable place of social exchange. They facilitate a rich cross-cultural experience between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and surveys showed that for many local Victorians, the markets are the first opportunity to meet Koorie people.

Partnerships play a critical role in the projects' success and are critical to ensuring the markets continue to attract and engage artisan-stallholders and the broader Koorie community. Formal links have developed with a range of Koorie and non-Koorie community organisations working with or committed to raising the profile of Indigenous arts.

## ***CORE ISSUES***

### Funding

WISE Employment Community Foundation, who has been the key funder for the Markets, approved an application from Council for a further grant of \$9,000 to purchase promotional materials for the markets. To date, a logo, letterhead, posters and website have been designed. The funding also allows for a promotional DVD and branded marquees.

An application to the Indigenous Small Business Fund administered by Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) submitted in February 2009 was successful, providing \$84,000 including GST for employment of a Business Manager (30 hours/ week x 12months) and development of a Business Plan.

KNM Inc has also received \$41,800 funding from Indigenous Cultural Support program administered by the Department of Water, Heritage and the Arts. This funding aims to further the cultural fundamentals of the KNM by supporting visual and performing artists, delivering cross-cultural training to volunteers and developing the cultural integrity of market activities.

The City of Melbourne also recently approved funding for \$7,800 for KNM to run a tourism marketing strategy, volunteer recruitment and merchandising workshop for stallholders.

### Office Space

The Darebin Enterprise Centre is a key partner in the KNM project. They have supplied office space for the two coordinators at well below market rates. The office is serviced by internet, printers, phones and extensive business support including day-to-day financial management. As the KNM business incubation model develops, this partnership will play a key role in the success of many new Indigenous businesses.

## Opportunities

KNM receives, on average, 3 invitations per month from community groups and local governments to attend or supply stallholders for events. Although KNM is not ready to engage in this level of activity, these invitations present valuable business opportunities for the future.

## Critical issues

Strategic planning remains a key issue for KNM however with the funding coming online from DEEWR in the coming weeks, KNM's planning capacities will improve.

With any new organisation, funding is an issue. The extensive Business Planning processes that will occur through the funding secured from DEEWR will generate key targets and provide a framework for viable market operations.

## **Spiritual Healing Trail Signage**

The Spiritual Healing Trail is a key cultural and environmental feature of the Darebin Parklands. It is a gift from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community as a gesture of reconciliation. It aims to promote personal good health through improving people's emotional and spiritual wellbeing and a sense of connection to the land.

Walkers were guided through the trail by discrete brass plate signs using a detailed brochure but over time these signs fell into disrepair. In 2008/09 Darebin City Council upgraded and update and replaced the signage with more durable, distinct, yet subtle signage that guides walkers through the trail without the need for the brochure.

The Spiritual Healing Trail covers a number of important elements to be considered in the healing process. They are:

1. Gathering – Gather your thoughts, identify and prioritise your issues;
2. Purifying – Let the water wash away issues you have no control over;
3. Contemplation – Draw energy from the good things in your life;
4. Possibilities – One step at a time; and
5. Ready to go – You're on top of the world and on top of your issues.

The Spiritual Healing Trail is a contemplative and personal journey for people as each of the sites emphasise the meaning. The Spiritual Healing Trail has been visited by many visitor groups coming as far away as Horsham and the Bass Coast district. Psychologists, youth and grief counsellors and many mental health professionals also use the trail. Over 4,000 visitors walked the trail during the 2006/2007 year.