



Serving the diverse community of Darebin

Incorporated Association: A0022211F ABN: 18134375892

Mayor and Councillors
Darebin City Council

Friday 31st July 2015

Dear Acting Mayor Cr. Oliver Walsh and Darebin Councillors,

Re: Darebin Council support for the placement of the Darebin Community Monument for All The Victims of Genocide and Genocidal Acts at the Ray Brahma Gardens, Preston

As you would be aware, for several years, the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council has been discussing the need for a community monument in Darebin, to honour all the victims of genocide and genocidal acts. For the past two years, DECC has organized successful memorial services at the Ray Brahma Gardens, on the Sunday closest to the 9th December, to mark the date of the United Nations Declaration on Genocide. Several Darebin Councillors have participated in these memorial services.

As the Council, you have previously given support for DECC's initiative that a monument be erected at the Ray Brahma Gardens; and in this light, over the past year, DECC has worked with Council Officers to prepare a proposal for such a monument. Unfortunately, the proposal was not successful in Council's consideration of priorities for the 2015-2016 Council Budget. Nonetheless, based on the level of community support for this initiative, the DECC Steering Committee has engaged stonemasons to develop a suitable design for the monument; and has planned a program of fundraising to cover all associated costs of constructing the monument.

Consequently, DECC is now seeking Council's endorsement and permission, for the Darebin Community Monument for All The Victims of Genocide and Genocidal Acts to be placed at the Ray Brahma Gardens in Preston – near the hilltop on the City-side of the Rotunda, in time for it to be unveiled at **this year's memorial ceremony on Sunday 6th December 2015**. This initiative shall be fully funded by DECC and the Darebin community; and therefore shall **be at no cost to the Council**.

Attached are the **preliminary designs**. The only text to be written at the base of the monument shall be: ***"In Honour of All The Victims of Genocide and Genocidal Acts"***.

The three parts within the bowl are to enable a smoking ceremony; placement of candles in sand; and placement of flowers in water; thereby enabling diverse cultures and faiths to each pay their respects simultaneously. Further background information is also attached.

We look forward to your endorsement of this initiative.

Sincere regards,

Nalliah Suriyakumaran
DECC Chairperson

Sofia Kotanidis
DECC Deputy Chairperson



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**Darebin Community Monument
in Honour of All the Victims of Genocide and Genocidal Acts**

Background

Throughout its history, the area encompassed by the City of Darebin has been home to a mosaic of cultural diversity and interaction, which existed before contact between the Wurundjeri Aboriginal People and white settlers in 1835. Since that time, the area has seen the arrival and settlement of waves of migrants, refugees and adventurers seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

In the past 180 years, the diversity of ethnicities, languages, religions and cultures converging onto this part of northern Melbourne have shaped what is now Darebin into a vibrant multicultural community.

Nonetheless, often stored in the private sphere of family and specific community are the memories and reasons for departure from former homelands; as are the stories of dispossession for local Aboriginal people.

In order for community healing and progression towards wellbeing; and for lessons to be learnt from the past, that will strengthen our resolve to foster harmony, respectful collaboration and peaceful coexistence within a shared environment, there is need for public acknowledgement and reflection of past tragedies and conflicts, and particularly those which have involved genocide and genocidal acts against people and their specific communities.

Based on the wishes of several ethnic communities to open discussion on this theme, in October 2013, the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council approached the Darebin City Council with a proposal **to create a common space for the Darebin community to memorialise and honour all victims of genocide and genocidal acts, regardless of race, religion, sect, language, origin or nationality.**

With the aim of establishing an annual commemorative ceremony to reflect upon and facilitate dialogue around the victims of genocide and genocidal acts, **the inaugural memorial service was held on Sunday 8th December 2013 at the Ray Brahman Gardens, being the site of the original Aboriginal Peace Marker; and was followed with a forum held at the Darebin Intercultural Centre.**

The event was supported by the Darebin City Council and attended by the Mayor, Councillors, several faith leaders, academics and persons in mainstream political life, as well as ethnic community leaders and members of diverse ethnic communities.

This date was chosen as the nearest Sunday to coincide with the date of the adoption of the **United Nations 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on the 9th of December 1948, as a precursor to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was subsequently adopted the following day on the 10th of December 1948.** Australia played a leading role in the negotiation of both the "Genocide" Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and was among the first countries to adopt these documents into practice within its own legal framework in 1951, through legislation of the Australian Parliament.

Following the interest demonstrated through our inaugural event in 2013, the following year, the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council convened a number of discussion groups; and with support from the Darebin City Council organised a second memorial event and discussion forum on Sunday 7th of December 2014.

Participants at this second event were unanimous in their support for a permanent monument to be erected, at which an annual commemorative service could be held on the Sunday nearest to the date of the UN's Genocide Convention. Furthermore, given the growing interest from diverse ethnic communities, participants called for an annual forum to share their experiences of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

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To this end, DECC embarked on discussions with the Darebin City Council administration; and with individual Councillors, in order to progress the proposal towards having a monument designed and erected in time for the memorial service on **Sunday 6 December 2015**.

The Darebin Community Monument

Given the level of interest shown by diverse ethnic communities and member groups of the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, it was determined to seek designs from stonemasons to create a suitable monument.

- Approval from Darebin City Council is required to place the monument at the desired location at the Ray Brahma Gardens near the site of the original Aboriginal Peace Marker.
- DECC is also seeking donations from ethnic communities in Darebin to raise the funds required to pay for the monument and its placement, so that no cost is incurred by the Darebin Council.

The aim of placing a monument at the Ray Brahma Gardens to honour all the victims of genocide and genocidal acts is to:

- Raise awareness within the Darebin and wider community of atrocities that have occurred;
- Provide a focal point for survivors, their families and the wider community to gather and safely remember past atrocities;
- Encourage people of diverse backgrounds in Darebin to share their own stories of survival and in doing so to forge stronger relationships with others in order to build a stronger sense of community and shared humanity.

The Darebin municipality is today home to a diverse and vibrant multicultural mosaic of people who together make the Darebin community. People have come here from all over the world. Many of them, along with the Aboriginal people of Australia, have suffered genocide and ethnic cleansing. In many cases, these communities have not had the opportunity to speak publically about their experiences and traumas.

The Darebin Monument shall provide the community with a place to safely and respectfully remember friends and loved ones lost.

Annual Commemoration at Monument and Forum

The annual commemoration for all the victims of genocide and genocidal acts will also provide an opportunity for dialogue between people of different ethnic backgrounds and faiths, to share their stories, find commonalities as human beings, while acknowledging differences in race, religion, language or culture. The aim is for the memorial service to be followed by a luncheon and forum to facilitate dialogue between communities.

As in previous years, DECC is committed to delivering this event on the Sunday closest to the date of the declaration of the UN Genocide Convention on the 9th December.

This year, the event will be held on Sunday 6th December 2015; and we anticipate the unveiling of the Darebin Community Monument for All The Victims of Genocide and Genocidal Acts on this date.

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