

Adoption - First Nations Strategic Framework 2026-2030

File No: X127861

Summary

The First Nations Strategic Framework 2026-2030 (the Framework) is a new approach to strengthen the City of Sydney's work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In 2023, we evaluated our strategic actions relating to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures, including our reconciliation action plan, Eora journey and Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050: continuing the vision. We committed to develop a First Nations strategic framework, in addition to the Stretch RAP, to increase visibility and alignment of all the work we do to ensure meaningful local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community outcomes.

The Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028 was adopted by Council in May 2025. The Framework includes objectives that the Stretch RAP will deliver, alongside other key commitments aligned to support the community's needs and aspirations. The Framework also provides guidance through principles, ways of working and enabling tools to support meaningful outcomes and sustained opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Framework includes an outline of why this commitment is a priority for the City of Sydney. This goes through local context, including historical through to current approaches to government engagement with First Nations people. This serves to build an understanding of local background and current issues, relating to past and present treatment, experiences of First Nations communities and addressing inequities.

The development of the Framework was informed by multiple sources where we have heard directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Community engagement and consultation reports in recent years offered insights on key themes for community priorities. A review of our own and others' relevant strategies highlighted themes, areas of focus and strategic alignment. Key data and reports on current demographics, recent research and social trends also informed the Framework's development.

The Framework focuses our work toward a vision: First Nations self-determination, prosperity and wellbeing. There are guiding principles that inform and support the implementation. The areas of focus are organised into 5 strategic pillars, each with their own objectives and strategic priorities to ensure local, strategic community outcomes:

1. Social justice - we stand for social justice through equity, community, access and cohesion
2. Truth-telling - we centre First Nations voices in truth-telling towards healing, reconciliation and dispelling myths
3. Economic prosperity - we nurture economic equity and participation and remove barriers

4. Cultural rights - we champion cultural rights, recognition and practice
5. Engaged communities - we collaborate to embed engagement, shared decision-making and accountability.

The Framework's governance will include a steering committee that comprises senior First Nations and non-First Nations staff. The steering committee will provide oversight and guidance that ensures relevant work is aligned with the framework.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council adopt the First Nations Strategic Framework, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note the community insights and research to develop the First Nations Strategic Framework 2026-2030, as shown at Attachment B to the subject report; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the First Nations Strategic Framework 2026-2030 in order to correct any minor drafting errors and finalise design, artwork and accessible formats for publication.

Attachments

Attachment A. First Nations Strategic Framework 2026-2030

Attachment B. First Nations Strategic Framework - Community Insights Report

Background

1. The Council of the City of Sydney acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of Australia. The City acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of this place.
2. Key strategic relationships for collaboration and consultation include the Principles of Cooperation with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council signed in 2006 and the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel in 2008.
3. The 4 interconnected projects of the Eora Journey have been a strategic focus in delivering Sustainable Sydney 2030. Significant progress has been made across these projects:
 - (a) Recognition in the public domain:
 - (i) Welcome to Redfern by Reko Rennie in 2012
 - (ii) Born in darkness before dawn by Nicole Foresheew in 2013
 - (iii) Yininmadyemi: thou didst let fall by Tony Albert in 2014
 - (iv) Yananurala (the Sydney harbour walk) name and project commenced in 2021 and
 - (v) bara by Judy Watson in 2022.
 - (b) Significant cultural event:
 - (i) NAIDOC in the City since 2012. Under the direction of First Nations suppliers including Rhoda Roberts, Deadly Vibe, 33 Creative, Gadigal Information Service and We Are Warriors.
 - (c) Eora Journey Economic Development Plan adopted by Council in 2016.
 - (d) Local Aboriginal knowledge and culture centre: 119 Redfern Street opened in May 2024.
4. The City's inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan was adopted in 2015. This was followed by the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan from 2020 that was extended until 2024. In May 2025, Council adopted the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028. These plans have strengthened the organisation's work by progressing our employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, engagement with First Nations businesses and increased staff capability through learning and development.
5. In 2023, we undertook internal and external reviews of our strategic actions, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures, including our reconciliation action plan. We committed to continuing with a reconciliation action plan while also developing an overarching framework to ensure greater strategic alignment and visibility of all the work we do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

6. The Framework was developed using a range of artefacts from community insights and relevant strategic research. To identify the priorities and aspirations of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to inform this organising framework we used existing consultation reports, existing engagement mechanisms, external research and internal co-design activities. The community insights were analysed against our current commitments and a range of methodologies to direct how this Framework can best align to deliver local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community outcomes.
7. The Framework is a unifying structure, bringing all our work and commitment together. It will increase visibility, allowing us to better support and manage the work and ensure it aligns with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's needs and aspirations.

(a) The Vision - First Nations self-determination, prosperity and wellbeing.

(b) Guiding principles.

These shape how we work, how we listen and how we build trust. The principles remind us why this work matters - they inform our decisions and help us understand the powerful impact this work has when it's done well.

(i) This is Aboriginal land

(ii) Listen deeply

(iii) Trauma informed

(iv) Be brave

(v) Community led

(vi) Anti-racist

(c) Strategic pillars

Under each pillar are objectives and opportunities that focus the work towards the vision. They are informed by what we've heard from the community and aim to strengthen impact and outcomes in local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

(i) Social justice - Enabling equitable opportunities promotes socioeconomic justice. Community wellbeing and upholding fundamental rights are central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.

- i. Social support addresses local First Nations needs and priorities.
- ii. Strengthen self-determination of First Nations housing justice and access.
- iii. Transform our systems to ensure First Nations access and inclusion.
- iv. Speak out and take action to eradicate racism.

- (ii) Truth-telling - Truth-telling measures foster mutual understanding and healing. To continue our reconciliation journey, we must confront hard truths and listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - i. Elevate the voices and perspectives of First Nations people.
 - ii. Brave responses to our colonial history that dispel myths.
 - iii. Increase community awareness and understanding.
 - iv. Facilitate conversations to promote healing and reconciliation.
- (iii) Economic prosperity - Partnering with, committing to and investing in community led action to develop long-term sustainable economic equity and opportunities for community to thrive.
 - i. Create economic opportunities supporting local First Nations business enterprise.
 - ii. Targeted economic development through business programs.
 - iii. Strengthen relationships with local First Nations businesses.
 - iv. Support local community approaches to sustained First Nations employment.
- (iv) Cultural rights - First Nations cultures are respected, supported and celebrated. We recognise Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights to ensure protection and prosperity.
 - i. Recognise and uphold Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights.
 - ii. Support the community's aspirations to practice, nurture and rejuvenate First Nations cultures.
 - iii. Connecting with and caring for Country is led by First Nations community and knowledge holders.
 - iv. Engaging, immersive, world class celebration of the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- (v) Engaged communities - Collaborative engagement supports community decision-making and partnership enabling community control. Relevant, appropriate and consistent two-way dialogue supports informed decision-making and information access.
 - i. Develop systems and processes to support Indigenous data sovereignty and governance.
 - ii. Embed representation and influence of First Nations people in decision-making.
 - iii. Agile relationships with First Nations community-controlled organisations, Elders, young people and leaders.
 - iv. Increase community oversight and participation through culturally appropriate communications and reporting.
- (d) The framework also includes enabling tools and ways of working, which along with the principles, guide and support staff who are delivering the work.
 - i. United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
 - ii. Principles of cooperation
 - iii. Cultural protocols
 - iv. Indigenous cultural and intellectual property guidelines

- v. Strategic consultation and engagement
- vi. Connecting with Country framework
- vii. Cultural learning and capability
- viii. Strategic consultation and engagement
- ix. Strategic framework evaluation tool

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

8. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - the Strategic Framework supports information access and shared decision-making by strengthening Indigenous data sovereignty and embedding First Nations representation.
 - (b) Direction 2 - A leading environmental performer - the Strategic Framework supports environmental sustainability through First Nations-led Caring for and Connecting with Country.
 - (c) Direction 3 - Public places for all – The Strategic Framework advances truth telling and cultural safety by elevating First Nations voices and confronting colonial myths.
 - (d) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - The Strategic Framework promotes equity by addressing systemic barriers and transforming systems to support First Nations access and inclusion.
 - (e) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities - the Strategic Framework promotes social cohesion and civic engagement by actively addressing racism and increasing community understanding. It supports healing, reconciliation and strong relationships with First Nations organisations, Elders and young people.
 - (f) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural life - The Strategic Framework supports First Nations cultural rights and responsibilities by protecting Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, strengthening cultural practice and renewal, and delivering world class cultural celebration.
 - (g) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - The Strategic Framework strengthens economic opportunities for First Nations communities by supporting local business enterprise, delivering targeted economic development programs, fostering strong relationships with First Nations businesses, and enabling community-led approaches to sustained employment.
 - (h) Direction 10 - Housing for all - The Strategic Framework supports First Nations housing outcomes by strengthening self-determination in housing justice and access.

Organisational Impact

9. The Framework is an organising structure for existing commitments across our strategic and operational activities.
10. A set of resources will be developed to support staff to align their work to the objectives and guiding principles of the Strategic Framework.
11. It proposes a new steering committee as the governance approach to monitor successful implementation. This is to ensure the work is having the desired outcomes and is sustainably managed with existing resources.

Risks

12. The framework supports an innovative and efficient approach to prioritise and manage our existing strategic commitments.
13. The First Nations Strategic Framework is within our risk appetite relating to Service Delivery that determines we have a cautious to open appetite for our strategic, community development, urban planning and creative functions and services.

Social / Cultural / Community

14. The Framework is focused on aligning the work that we do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures to achieve local, meaningful outcomes addressing the community's hopes and needs.
15. The social benefits of the Framework are aimed to address areas of most need, including housing, addressing racism, and truth-telling to foster mutual understanding and healing.
16. The cultural focus of the Framework supports the rights of First Nations peoples to practise, protect and rejuvenate culture. This strengthens our commitments that engage deeply with recognition and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

Environmental

17. The environmental outcomes stem from how the city engages with First Nations knowledge holders to learn from and work closely with to care for and connect with Country. This seeks to ensure an approach that is not simply extractive or transactional but about restoration and rights of First Nations cultures.

Economic

18. The economic impacts of the Framework are a priority to ensure prosperity of First Nations communities as they choose. There is extensive evidence demonstrating how investing in First Nations businesses improves social and cultural outcomes that are underpinned by self-determination.

Financial Implications

19. There are no new budget implications with the Framework. All projects and activities that deliver on the objectives are within current and planned projects for which budget is already allocated or identified.

Relevant Legislation

- 20. Local Government Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

- 21. The term of the Framework will be 5 years from 2026 to 2030.

Public Consultation

- 22. Targeted consultation and engagement on the Framework was conducted with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory panel on 2 occasions in 2025. The framework was shared with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council in November 2025.
- 23. The Framework will not go on public exhibition. The framework is an organising structure of existing commitments and priorities to better strategically align to meet local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs and aspirations.
- 24. The Framework was developed using consultation and research including engagement for the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028 done in February 2025, feedback from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory panel, reports from the 2019 First Nations dialogue forum and data from the 2021 Census and relevant social, economic and wellbeing research.
- 25. Community feedback is sought through targeted consultation on individual projects and initiatives as is standard practice.

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