

Attachment B

First Nations Strategic Framework - Community Insights Report

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Overview

Project background

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.

City staff have been implementing new ways of working to strengthen our internal systems and processes to manage the work sustainably. The strategic framework is a unifying structure, bringing all of our commitments together for better visibility of the work we do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This allows us to better support and manage the work, ensuring it aligns with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's needs and aspirations.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the research, engagement inputs and sense-making activities that inform the development of the First Nations Strategic Framework.

While no new standalone consultation process was undertaken specifically for the framework, it is shaped by a range of existing engagement mechanisms, cultural governance forums, research and internal co-design activities already embedded within the City of Sydney's ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This document demonstrates how the First Nations Strategic Framework reflects the aspirations, priorities and concerns consistently raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders, and how those insights informed the vision, pillars, objectives and principles of the Framework.

Our research process

The process

The Framework is intended to organise and prioritise our existing work. This means rather than seeking new ideas and input, we looked at what we already have heard, what we are committed to and what are some examples of best practice approaches to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We used a layered research and engagement approach that brought together existing evidence, targeted engagement findings and internal sense-making.

The research process included:

1) Review of existing strategic commitments and priorities

- Current City of Sydney strategies and plans that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes
- Relevant external frameworks, strategies and action plans
- Relevant state and national policy directions: Closing the Gap – targets and outcomes, Aboriginal Lands Right Act NSW (ARLA NSW), OCHRE – NSW Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council.
- Productivity Commission’s review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

2) Review of research reports

- Findings from previous consultation processes with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including:
 - Stretch RAP community consultation 2024 and 2025
 - First Nations Dialogue Forum 2010 and 2019
 - 119 Redfern Street community consultation community consultation
 - First Nations Cultural sector consultation report
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce strategy consultant’s report
- Internal and external review of our strategic commitments and action plans including the Stretch RAP.
- 2023 Community wellbeing survey results
- Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community profile based on 2021 census data

3) Engagement through existing forums

- Feedback and advice from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel. The draft First Nations Strategic Framework was presented on 20 October and 30 November 2025. This included reflecting their continued advocacy and priorities as well as feedback from Stretch RAP planning workshops.
- The draft First Nations Strategic Framework was shared with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council in October 2025.
- Insights from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee network RAP workshop in 2024.

4) Internal co-design and sense-making

- Development of a visual storyboard to map recurring themes and priorities. The insights were collated to highlight themes and layers of concepts as a starting point.
- Alignment testing between community insights, existing commitments and draft framework elements. Cross referencing the themes and insights reflected in policies and reports from other sources.

First Nations Strategic Framework – community insights report

- Identify where local insights are backed up by research from other agencies, and demographic insights.
- Iterative refinement of the Framework over time as themes were clarified and tested.

Our research findings

Analysis of existing strategic commitments and priorities

Analysis of the artefacts and evidence revealed a high degree of alignment and consistency in the priorities and issues raised in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs and aspirations. This analysis highlighted recurring priorities, identifying both high-level aspirations and direct, grassroots community outcomes. It also enabled us to distinguish themes focused on addressing the systems and processes that shape how we do the work.

Existing City of Sydney strategies

Across existing City of Sydney strategies and plans, we looked at our commitments and varying approaches to working on social, cultural, economic and environmental projects and operations. This highlighted:

- The importance of long-term commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes
- The need to address systemic and structural barriers within our systems
- A focus on economic participation, employment and procurement
- Workforce capability, cultural safety and leadership accountability
- Our focus on access to culture, cultural respect and community participation
- How can we strategically align to best meet community need and expectations
- The opportunities to prioritise according to most impact
- A structure to align our commitments within the framework
- The breadth and scope of our commitments can support meaningful community outcomes

External frameworks and research

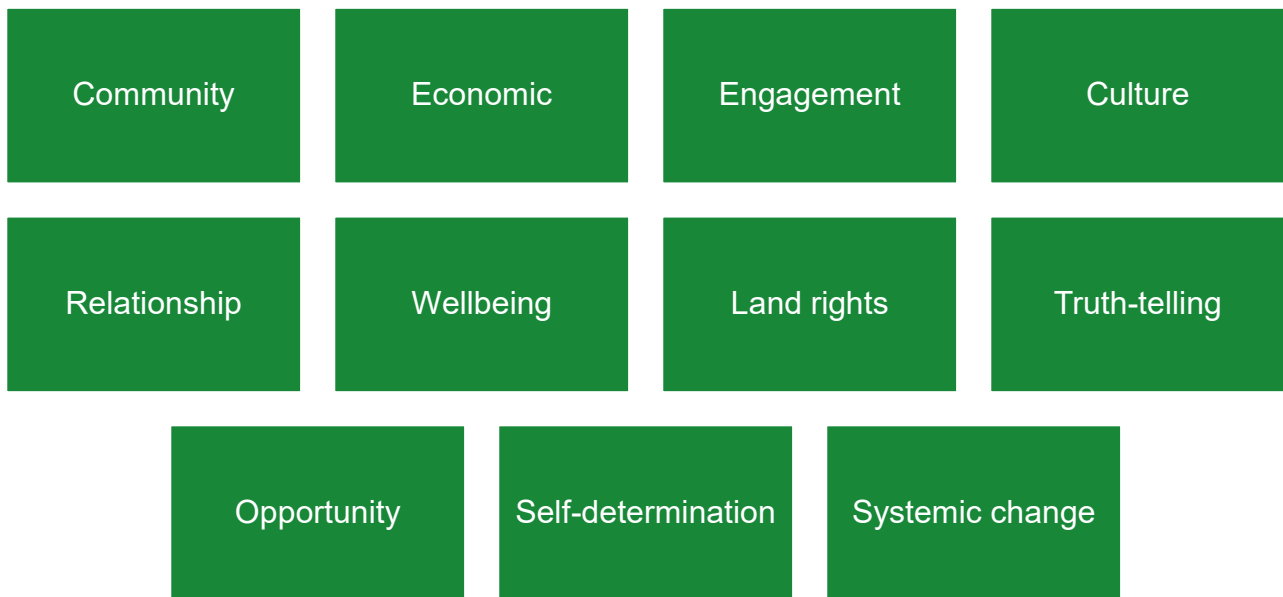
External frameworks and research reinforced:

- The central role of self-determination both as an outcome and a process
- The importance of First Nations-led decision making and governance
- The need for outcomes focused approaches rather than symbolic commitments
- The interconnectedness across sectors. For example, how economic action supports social impact, and how environmental engagement can strengthen cultural support
- The foundational rights that need to be embedded in our work
- The need for governments to transform their approach to work more effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The City of Sydney is committed to the Closing the Gap priority reforms. The Framework both needs to align and be guided by the reforms. The review of the Productivity Commission's review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap also reinforces the urgency and need for governments to refresh their approach.

Findings from research reports and existing forums

The initial review of community insights were consolidated and grouped into recurring themes. These were derived numerous consultation exercises in recent years that continually referred to consistent needs for support, opportunities and addressing systemic challenges. The recurring themes were:



Each theme covered a range of ideas and sentiments that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have told us across numerous consultations:

- **Community:** community connectedness, supporting local Aboriginal community-controlled initiatives and addressing displacement.
- **Culture:** cultural authority, practice and sharing, authenticity, cultural knowledge, rights outlined in United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.
- **Economic:** justice, financial security, remuneration, enabling economic participation through employment and entrepreneurship.
- **Engagement:** consultation practices, how we communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and embedding open communication.
- **Relationship:** building and nurturing trust, deepening existing relations and formalising agreements.
- **Wellbeing:** support for vulnerable communities, addressing racism, cultural safety, healing and culture.
- **Land rights:** justice, access to space, housing and addressing gentrification.
- **Opportunity:** creating meaningful opportunities, access to employment, engagement with businesses and responding to community.
- **Self-determination:** representation in decision-making, community-led, autonomy, support for community initiatives and solutions.
- **Systemic change:** reviewing systems, recognising and addressing barriers to access and participation of First Nations people.
- **Truth-telling:** the history of this place, addressing colonial mistruths, statues, important for healing and reconciliation.

Informing the framework

The findings from community insights and desktop analysis all inform development of the Framework. The insights from artefacts, engagement and internal sense-making were synthesised into the core themes to build and organise the framework. We use the themes to guide the content of the Framework so that the sentiments of the community are strongly reflected. We considered how the City of Sydney can have impact and develop the framework to prioritise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's needs and aspirations.

It was important to align with our key strategic documents. We reviewed relevant priorities including those in our reconciliation action plan, our commitments to Closing the Gap priority reforms alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and Principles of Cooperation with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Vision – these insights guide the aspirations and outcomes that focus our work over the next 5 years. These need to be about the future state that the priorities strive toward. This reflects how the City of Sydney can best support, empower and enable.

Guiding principles – the insights from community and other research inform how we approach this work and guide our decision-making. These are underpinned by cultural safety in our local area.

Strategic pillars – the community priorities and other strategic methodologies shape how the Framework organises the work. The pillars need to cover the areas of work that we focus on in a way that highlights how we do the work.

Objectives – These are the specific examples and diverse areas that demonstrate what we focus on, be it social programs, economic development, housing, cultural practice or information access.

