



## MAYORAL MINUTE NO 4/2020

### FINDING A WAY TO MOVE FORWARD

Councillors,

The Hills is a diverse community made up of 177, 969 people from at least 117 countries. In fact, 31.5 per cent of us were born overseas, 50 per cent of us have one or more parents born overseas and 0.5 per cent of us identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Our population is growing every year by 3.27 per cent, which is double the state average. That's more than 5000 extra people choosing to call the Hills "home".

We are very proud of our community and what we have achieved together. We are very proud that more and more people want to call the Hills "home". We are proud of our diversity, including our Indigenous Australians. We are proud of the people that live here, their generosity, kindness and willingness to spend their time to helping others. We are proud of our veterans, our emergency services, our volunteers and all our residents.

As a Council, we strive to treat all residents with respect regardless of their origin, place of birth, religion and beliefs. We want to ensure we create a community that is engaged, harmonious and united. A place where everyone feels they belong and have the opportunity to live their best possible life. Our diversity is our greatest strength and our community is a better place because of it.

Over the past week we have seen a global outpouring of grief and anger at the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in the United States. This has erupted into worldwide protests, including in our own cities.

In light of recent comments made by one of our Councillors, concerns have been raised regarding The Hills Shire Council's position on Acknowledgement of Country. The decision not to include Acknowledgement of Country as part of our Council Meetings was never intended to divide or cause offence to anyone. I accept within the community there are divergent views on this matter.

Over the past few days I have taken time to reflect on our changed world in which we now live. I have considered our own community, its expectations and where we want to be in the future. I have spoken with and listened to many people about their views on Council, our position on Acknowledgment of Country and what we do going forward.

What has become clear to me is the need to find a way forward that unites our community and allows us to go on a journey, together, to better recognise the role Indigenous people have had in the past and continue to have in The Hills' story.

It is my view that if we are serious about a united and harmonious community then we need to do things differently. We need to bring about changes that we believe are in line with our community's expectations and will allow us to move forward as a united Hills.

I propose, as an important first step, that Acknowledgment of Country be included at Citizenship Ceremonies and at Hills Shire major events. These events are an important celebration of our

community and it is only right that our community has the opportunity to hear about the wider history of our country and to ensure our Indigenous history is recognised and included in these celebrations.

I also propose that we find ways to practically recognise Indigenous Australians. It may be a physical place that we can recognise, information on our website that tells of the important Aboriginal sites in the Hills or a display in the Council building dedicated to this part of our history. I also think we need to find better ways to connect with our Indigenous community.

For some these proposed changes will not go far enough, while there will be others that feel the changes are too much. I believe these changes are a good starting point that will allow us to begin to build relationships and to further unite our diverse community. I accept that not everyone will agree, but what is important is that we listen to each other and work together to find the best way forward for our community that unites us rather than divides us.

The motto of the Council is "to strive for better things" and I call for unity from all residents and those beyond our boundaries as we strive towards a better future for all regardless of our different origins, beliefs and backgrounds.

I want to ensure that the Hills will remain a place that all of us are proud to call home for many years to come.

Accordingly, I move:

**MOTION:**

1. This Mayoral Minute be received;
2. An invitation be extended to the local Aboriginal Elders to meet with Council;
3. Acknowledgment of Country be included in Citizenship Ceremonies and at major community events; and
4. Council investigate practical ways to recognise our Indigenous Australians.



**Dr Michelle Byrne**  
**MAYOR**