



**Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
Community Meeting
Sunday 20 February 2022 Minutes
700-850 Little River-Ripley Rd, Little River
Commenced: 12:40pm**

Attendees:

Beth Davis, Simon Flagg, Chris Murphy, Alice Knight, Stacie Murphy, Cameron Craig, David Tournier, Andrea Tournier, Nellie Flagg, Sandra Brogden, May Owen, Megan Frazer, Judy Dalton-Walsh, Wendy Brabham, Naomi Surtees, Melissa O'Donnell, Adele Welsh, Mark Shaw, Duane Luki, Peter Surtees, Yohan Kumaran, Vicki Figg, Jenny Megee, James McKinnon, Emily Shelley, Tahlia Landrigan, Bronwyn McColl, Penny Henderson, Richard Fry, Tahlia Dempsey, Todd Fry, Cheryl McMurrick, David Barnes, Judy Rosson, Alfie Oram, Fiona Ryan, Phill King, Jayden Hickey, Ebony Hickey, Kristie Fraser-Lange, Naomi Edwards, Jamie Butcher, Lillie Butcher, Shannon Ryan, Kylie Clarke, Shane Clarke, Jasmine-Skye Marinos, Renee Owen, Greg Cooper, Mick Ryan, Hayley Couzens, Kay Edwards, Lyn McInnes, Reg Abrahams, Jessica Brady, Tahlia Flagg, Crystal McKinnon, Carys Herbert, Lynne Lancaster, Joylene Walsh, Eileen Smith, Jannalli Lilburne, Vicki Figg, Kevin Chang, Brian McKinnon, Andrew Clarke.

1. Welcome by Chairperson

Acting Chairperson Wendy Brabham opened the meeting; and the Traditional Welcome to Country performed by Wadda-wurrung Traditional Owner Aunty Judy Dalton-Walsh.

2. Respect protocol – minutes silence

A minute silence was observed for those who have passed.

3. Apologies

Jo Chester, Joleen Ryan, Jackie Brown, Georgina Brown, Kristi Watts, Samantha Watts, Stephen Walsh, Simon Thorne, Michael Thorne, Mark Edwards, Craig Edwards, Jordan Edwards, Lachlan Edwards, Shellee Strickland, Linda Tanner, Patrick Tanner, Kerrie Black, Jordyn Flagg, Kaitlyn Flagg, Dale Owen, Laurie Owen, Margie Hayes, Allan Murphy, Christina Secombe, Megan Howell, Ricky Abrahams, Kiralee Hogema, Kerrie Alsop, Glenn Shea, David Flagg, Sandra Manning.

4. Previous minutes

a) Business arising from previous minutes

Wathaurong's CEO – Simon Flagg noted and responded to the listed action from the previous Community Meeting Minutes:

Action 1: Arrange a section on Wathaurong's website for Community to comment what they wish to discuss at these meetings.

This wasn't able to be actioned as the website doesn't currently have this section. Wathaurong's website is being rebuilt and we're looking at a member's portal to be established on Wathaurong's website which will have this section available.

- Wendy Brabham proposed a motion to ensure that the member's portal is implemented on Wathaurong's website this year.

Moved: Nellie Flagg

Seconded: Richard Fry

b) Acceptance of 21st March 2021 minutes

Moved: Hayley Couzens

Seconded: Stacie Murphy

5. Housing

Simon Flagg provided the Community with a housing update he noted:

In November 2021 the Victorian government announced a housing build which has \$5.3 billion attached to it for the social housing space, they've identified that there will be 12,000 new homes across the state for mainstream and then identified that there will be a certain package that Aboriginal housing providers can apply for. It's expected that 1,000-1,500 extra houses will be available to Aboriginal housing providers. If our application is successful Wathaurong could potentially have an additional 10-20 properties with money for property maintenance and updating our properties to the standard they should be.

Currently we're still working with the government around applying for that funding and allocation with Wathaurong being a priority on that list just because of our housing stock; that Wathaurong has land available and ready to put housing stock on, current housing stock that need repair, and growth of the community. Those three things make Wathaurong a priority for housing funding, and we also have the largest population outside of Melbourne metro, so we need more housing stock.

There are some complexities with applying as the Government would prefer to work with housing providers and currently Wathaurong isn't by their definition a housing provider. This may mean that Wathaurong becomes a housing provider in their definition or we partner with somebody else.

We are also going to be establishing a tenants' committee, so tenants that live in our Co-operative owned properties get direct access to provide feedback, letting them know about standards and where we are with our property maintenance, and making sure that we're listening and working with our tenanted community members.

Wathaurong has 22 properties in our rental portfolio, instead of outsourcing half of our properties to be managed by Buxton real-estate, they are now being transitioned to being managed in house by Wathaurong again. 11 of the 22 properties have had their caveats removed which means we now have that flexibility to determine the best use of those properties. We will be selling the Douglass St property which was the block with four 1-bedroom units and with those funds we will be able to purchase better assets. One house will become available shortly for whoever is next on our waiting list and to be on the waiting list you must be a Wathaurong member. Simon noted that our housing is not transitioning housing, most tenants are long term.

Discussion:

- Lyn McInnes asked that a list of the 22 Co-operative properties be provided at the next meeting to show which properties had the caveats removed.
- Joylene Walsh enquired who is in charge of housing. As she has heard that tenants have been subletting to their friends.
- Simon Flagg responded that this is the first time he's heard of that and he will pass along these concerns to our housing manager Rachel Oxford for follow up.
- David Tournier asked what is the time frame for the new properties?
- Simon Flagg stated that he is unsure about the waiting time as there is a long list and it's restricted by government but suggested approximately November or December 2023.
- Mick Ryan asked when we do have funds will we purchase established properties or build new? And is aged care housing still planned?
- Simon Flagg replied that it's dependent on funding provided, we would do both and yes we are definitely looking at aged care housing as well.

- Richard Fry stated when he was a Wathaurong tenant that he had a commitment to attend community meetings and that should be reinstated for current tenants. Also, if all current leases could be re-evaluated by the current housing manager to ensure that our properties are housing our community, and not people who shouldn't be living there.
- Ebony Hickey asked that can we look at assisting people with long term tenants with good rental history to potentially move them into a homeownership program, and then purchasing a new property with the profits from our property sold to a community member?
- Simon Flagg responded that will be happening it is a part of our housing refresh where we are looking at home ownership, increasing the amount of rental properties we own, and establishing our own maintenance program.

Action: At the next Community meeting, provide the list of Wathaurong's 22 properties, displaying the properties with the caveats removed.

6. Finance Update

Discussion: Wathaurong's Chief Financial Officer Yohan Kumaran provided the following Finance Update up to December 2021 and a few projections to June 2022:

For the last two years there was an increase in revenue due to Wathaurong receiving Covid-19 funding (between \$700,000 to \$1 million was received). However, this year's Covid-19 funding has declined with Wathaurong only receiving \$100,000 in January 2022. Wathaurong will need to make adjustments in our spending so we don't spend more than what we receive in funding.

Despite a decrease in funding, there is an expected increase to last year's surplus of \$24,814; this is currently projected to be \$100,000 by end of June 2022.

Our Government funding has decreased from \$15,842,061 in 2021 to the forecasted \$15,350,196 in 2022.

Our self-generated income (Non-Government funding) has decreased from \$2,067,249 to the forecasted \$1,678,784 in 2022.

Our Medicare income in 2021 was \$1,053,311 and is expected to be lower in June 2022 at \$932,200; Our NDIS and Aged Care income in 2021 was \$472,665 and is expected to be slightly higher in June 2022 at \$579,422.

72% of Government funding is from DFFH and Western Vic PHN which funds most of Wathaurong's programs, 9% of Government funding is from the Department of Health (DoH) which funds the clinic

- Andrew Clarke asked if there was a role within the organisation to search for grant funding.
- Simon Flagg responded that we now have created a role that helps us in looking for grant opportunities both in government and in private sector as well.
- Lyn McInnes enquired as to why we don't receive more funding from the federal government?
- Simon Flagg replied that Wathaurong receives more state government funding than federal government funding largely due to the way federal have redefined their funding scheme. They prioritise rural then regional and lastly metro.
- Simon Flagg stated that both state and federal Covid-19 funding was given to Wathaurong with three objectives: 1. they wanted the Community to have access to vaccination; 2. they wanted the Community to have information about the vaccination; and 3. they wanted Wathaurong to support Community. So through this outcome based model with no Key Performance Indicators, we were able to achieve the best outcomes in all three objectives.
- Mick Ryan asked who represents us at NACCHO and VACCHO
- Simon Flagg answered that VACCHO Board member Dallas Widdicombe from Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative represents Victoria at NACCHO and that he represents Wathaurong as a VACCHO member.
- Kylie Clarke enquired about non-government funding and wondered about philanthropic groups who can provide Wathaurong with donations ongoing long-term with no reporting requirements.

- Simon Flagg responded that Wathaurong doesn't utilise our Not-For-Profit (NFP) status the way we should to acquire funding and we will look at how to do that this year. This will include donations through our website but we have a great opportunity with our NFP status to receive charitable donations we need to use it.

Motion: Finance Update is noted and accepted by those present.

Moved: Tahlia Dempsey

Seconded: David Tournier

7. Presentations

a) Wathaurong's priorities 2022

Simon Flagg presented the following:

Wathaurong advocate and support Community through the 80 services that we deliver but we shouldn't be talking just about these services, instead it's about our connections and our culture. Culture and Community is central to everything we do at Wathaurong, our vision is we want to be engaged and be supportive of our Community but if we don't know what our Community needs, how will we know that the services we are delivering are meeting these needs. So we really want to get back to culture and Community being at the centre of everything we do. We need to be more than just service delivery, we need to have Community activities that allow us all to come together and engage with each other, and then Community can tell us what are the programs that are wanted and Wathaurong will find a way to provide them.

Things we will prioritise in 2022/2023 is a revision of our Strategic Plan and Rule book; Re-establishing our connection with our Community (Community Strengthening Model); Establishment of a dedicated Community Engagement Team; and Infrastructure Projects. We will undertake Wathaurong's Strategic Plan refresh through three phases. Phase 1 is from now till April 2022 where we will draft the new Pillars and Vision for Wathaurong; and obtain staff and Community feedback from working groups. Phase 2 is from May to June 2022 and will be about the validation of everything received from staff and Community which will lead to the development of an Organisational Accountability framework. Phase 3 is the implementation period which will be from July to August 2022.

Wathaurong currently don't have a model of care and we are going to be building that through our Community Strengthening Model which will be around understanding how do we engage with our Community and what are the key elements.

The establishment of the Community Strengthening Model aims to:

- Re-establish Wathaurong as a place of gathering, cultural connection and belonging for all our Community members, through regular Community gatherings, cultural, language and sporting events.
- Establish Community committees including Respected Person and Youth committees to support Wathaurong to centre Community voices at the heart of everything we do and shape our organisational direction.
- Implement community-led innovation projects that prioritise culture, self-determination, and strength-based and trauma-informed practice.
- Share learning and promising practice from culturally strengthening Community gatherings, and Community-led innovations to support self-determined and culturally embedded ACCO ways of working across all streams.
- Develop localised principles for Aboriginal Community development and engagement.

The key focus of the Community Strengthening Model will include:

- **Strengthening Community & Cultural Connections** – Aboriginal community development approach for cultural connection and belonging and resetting relationships and building on positive social norms.
- **Refocus and reinvigorate Wathaurong as a place of gathering** – This will include the development of a co-designed whole of organisation healing model that aims to engage our mob and align our support services by strengthening their connection to culture and Community.

- **Celebrate our culture and connection** – Embedding our healing model across the whole organisation to support our Community development approach for culturally appropriate service provision centered on cultural connection and belonging.
 - **Increasing our Community membership** – Create an environment that engages our Community to become members of the organisation and celebrate Community achievements.
 - **Support Workforce Development** – Co-design of Graduate Diploma in Domestic and Family Violence (Aboriginal Community Development) with RMIT
 - **Systems Transformation** - leading systems transformation of mainstream services in our region. *This will be supported by the Strategic Policy team's community-led work in the Anti-Racism and Cultural Safety Toolkit development for justice and other sectors.*
- Kita Murphy asked if there is a youth program for teenagers, like camps and youth groups.
 - Simon Flagg responded that we have already started to do camps, as that was one of the foundation programs, we will definitely be focusing on that space and how we can do more. We started up a relationship doing camps with the western ACCOs. We have started talking to the koorie youth council about starting state-wide youth camps again. We will be turning Forster St site into a dedicated Youth Hub which will give the youth a space to hold all their programs there with the aim to have that running by the end of the year.
 - Beth Davis stated that we organised 2 overnight camps last year and one excursion camp.
 - Jacob asked if there will be programs for the little kids.
 - Simon Flagg replied that once we have established the Community Engagement Team, that they will look at how do we get programs for all age groups, for our young one, youth and adults. We're looking at establishing sports academies. If Community want a specific program we will develop and establish it for Community as he wants everyone to be active and involved with the Co-operative.

b) Infrastructure Project Priorities

Simon Flagg presented the following:

We have five Infrastructure Project Priorities, they are: 1. Morgan Street; 2. Wurdi Youang; 3. Forster Street; 4. Surrey Street; 5. The Colac Gathering Place; and 6. Wilkins Close.

1. Morgan Street – we are going to redevelop this site so that we can better support our Community and bring all services under one roof. We've engaged architects – Woods Bagot to assist in the Morgan Street redevelopment, it will not just be a service provider site but also a conference venue. The estimated cost is \$28 million and we have already secured \$2.4 million towards this build. Wathaurong will raise these funds as we build, this will be done through our not-for-profit status using philanthropic donations and funding support from the Government.
2. Wurdi Youang – we are trying to obtain IPA funding for Wurdi Youang, we currently has an IAS agreement but no funding. The IPA funding is being blocked by the RAP group not wanting to work with us. We also need to consider the overlays on this area as Wurdi Youang is a part of the protected native grasslands.
3. Forster Street – we plan to develop this site into a dedicated Youth Hub.
4. Surrey Street – currently a block of land that we plan on putting a maintenance crew work shed there.
5. The Colac Gathering Place – we are hoping to improve our engagement in Colac.
6. Wilkins Close – is a property that we are in discussions with the department to hand over the title to Wathaurong so we can create a men's centre.

Woods Bagot presentation by Bronwyn McColl, Tahlia Landrigan, and Jasmine Kerdel

Woods Bagot is a global architectural firm that was started in Australia just over 150 years ago in Adelaide. Woods Bagot doesn't have a particular architectural style, their organisations philosophy is people architecture, creating spaces and places for people and communities to thrive.

Engagement with Community and how this would be achieved was discussed noting these points:

- Deep listening – not having preconceived ideas, building trust, and listening to the Community through Community consultations

- Ask (questions) – to better understand more about the Community, Culture, how we work together, and what we want for the Co-operative to do for future generations and how it helps Wathaurong strategically
- Inform – how we communicate, partner and facilitate. It's about bringing our Culture and values together with their knowledge about designing buildings, that it's efficient sustainably, meets our targets and last long term.

Examples of other Woods Bagot architectural projects were presented, they were: Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre (Adelaide), Christchurch Convention Centre, and Ilbjerri Theatre Company (Melbourne).

Action: Wathaurong's members are to be sent a media release regarding the Morgan Street redevelopment plans; and will include Woods Bagot PowerPoint presentation.

8. Other General Business

a) Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) update

Aunty May Owen presented an LAECG update noting the following:

- The LAECG is made up of 32 chairs across Victoria and works with Koorie students from preschool through to tertiary/TAFE.
- There will be a 2 day Aspirations Day held at GMHBA Stadium in April 2022, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the Geelong and Colac region. The first day will be for Years 7-9, and the second day for Years 10-12. From these two days a 3 year program will be launched.
- Aunty May Owen would like for there to be an aspirational program for all Koorie kids despite where they attend school. Also that we celebrate the achievements of our Koorie students.
- This 3 year program will be supported by philanthropic means, Sandra Brogden has already spoken with the Polly Farmer Foundation who agreed to support this year's Aspirations Day. Annual fundraising for the Koorie Aspirations Day will help to ensure that the LAECG continue to provide these Aspiration Days in the future.

9. Meeting closed 3:08pm – Wendy Brabham thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.