

## 13. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

### 13.1 Elliston Coastal Trail Reconciliation Monument Wording

File Reference: 14.19.2/6

Report Author: Manager Corporate and Community

#### PURPOSE

This Report outlines the negotiations between the Council Chairman, and Council Officers, with the Wirangu No 2 about the wording of the Elliston Coastal Trail Reconciliation Monument (**the Monument**).

The Report proposes that Council settle on the wording of the Monument.

#### BACKGROUND

The Elliston Coastal Trail Project started approximately six years ago with Council setting aside some 'seeding' funds to commence the planning and to make application for grants for funding of a coastal trail.

In preparing for making funding applications, the Council sought and received strong support from the Wirangu No 2 Native Title Claimants (**the Wirangu**), who have the only Native Title claim registered over the land on which the Coastal Trail is located.

From the outset, the Coastal Trail Project included a Reconciliation Monument that is intended to symbolise the current generation's recognition of past wrongs against the original inhabitants of this land during settlement.

The Monument has mostly been agreed and erected. What remains for decision is the wording to be placed on a smaller central granite rock that will explain the Monument.

This was not the first time such an attempt had been made to recognise past events. According to the District Council of Elliston's Centenary Book, *Across the Bar to Waterloo Bay – Elliston 1878-1978*:

*In 1970 to coincide with the Cook Bicentenary Celebrations held in Sydney, the Aboriginal Progress Association of South Australia and the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders requested permission from the Elliston District Council to erect a cairn to commemorate the death of aborigines, on the cliffs of Waterloo Bay. **The Council would not agree to the cairn being erected to aboriginals who died in the alleged massacre for lack of definite proof, but consented to one being commemorated to 'Those aborigines who lost their lives in the early development of this area.'** However the erection of the cairn was never proceeded with.*

**(emphasis added)**

Perhaps perversely, given that history and the present controversy, Chapter 2 of *Across the Bar to Waterloo Bay – Elliston 1878-1978*, is titled The Elliston Massacre 1869. That Chapter, along with an earlier page in the book about the history of this matter is attached and marked Attachment 13.1.1.

#### REPORT

As noted above, there has been, and remains, some controversy about the description of history surrounding the alleged Waterloo Bay Massacre (this wording will be used in this Report for ease of reference).

The effect of this is that there is resistance within some elements of the community to using the word massacre for the reasons Council adopted in 1970, that is, the 'absence of definite proof' to describe what happened as a massacre.

Similarly, there are some elements within the community who support the use of the word massacre for the opposite reason, that is, they are satisfied that proof exists.

Council sought the assistance of Dr Timothy Haines, an eminent Anthropologist, to investigate the historical events and the controversy and to assist in the negotiation of a respectful compromise that the Chairman and Council Officers thought would overcome the previous barriers to achieving this important reconciliation initiative.

Dr Haines prepared a Paper titled *European Settler-Indigenous Relations: A Short History of Massacres in South Australia*, which is attached and marked Attachment 13.1.2.

Dr Haines reviews the state of the historical evidence in his Paper.

He then goes on to consider the definition of the word 'massacre', and its application to these circumstances. Of particular importance is Dr Haines' conclusion that the word 'massacre' has a much wider definition than the commonly understood usage of the killing of large numbers of people. Dr Haines points to dictionary definitions that show the word massacre as including, at the extreme, the murder of one person, depending on "...the attitude and intention of the perpetrator, rather than the number of victims."

On that interpretation of the definition of the word massacre, one element of the previous controversy become less relevant – the actual number of people murdered. If you accept that something did happen, but not many were killed, that interpretation of the history is consistent with the use of the word massacre.

Dr Haines goes on to conclude that:

*That people - Aboriginal people - were killed at Waterloo Bay in 1849 seems undeniable. It also seems more than likely that they were killed by police or a police-sanctioned party, perhaps led by Thomas Horn from the neighbouring station. The motivation for the killing is likely to have been a reprisal for the murder of a white settler, or more than one murder. It is always difficult, if not impossible, in such matters to define a point of origin: the "original" crime which set in train a string of "tit-for-tat" killings.*

*It is highly unlikely that huge numbers were involved... ...but there may well have been over twenty, with some evidence of skeletons in the area.*

Ultimately, Dr Haines suggested a form of words which has been the subject of negotiations between the Chairman, Council Officers and the Wirangu for the preceding few months.

The Wirangu remain committed to the inclusion of the phrase Waterloo Bay Massacre on the Memorial. At Dr Haines' suggestion, the following form of words has been negotiated and is now proposed for the Monument:

**This monument commemorates an incident, referred to by the traditional owners of this land as "The Massacre of Waterloo Bay". A large number of Aboriginal people were killed near this site in May, 1849 by a party of settlers.**

**Waterloo Bay is a significant site in the history of frontier conflict between traditional owners and settlers, often resulting in the destruction of traditional family life.**

**This memorial promotes a new spirit of reconciliation, helping to forge a renewed and healing sense of community through tolerance and understanding.**

This wording reflects the past in paragraph 1, the present in paragraph 2, and most importantly, the future in paragraph 3.

This wording includes an important concession by the Wirangu to the sensitivity of some with the use of the word ‘massacre’ – it uses the phrase “The Massacre of Waterloo Bay” in quotation marks, and identifies the phrase as the preferred language of the traditional owners.

Finally on this subject, these final comments on this issue are from an email to the writer by the Wirangu representative:

*I don't believe your Council Members say no Aboriginal People were killed. What I don't know is whether Council Members understand the debate in the same way I do; that is, something did happen and the issue is how to describe what happened... Historical writing records frontier conflict and the killing of Aboriginal people, but what we call those acts today is the subject of this debate: Wirangu people say it is a massacre, some community members do not.*

In light of the most recent work done by Dr Timothy Haines on the state of the history and the appropriateness of the use of the word ‘massacre’, as well as the decision by the Wirangu to accept the identification of the term as one they use, that is, that the incident may not be remembered by all that way, the writer recommends that the draft wording be adopted.

## SUMMARY

This Report offers a brief overview of the evolution of the Elliston Coastal Trail Project and the involvement of the Wirangu No 2 Claim Group in helping Council secure funding for the Project.

The Report touches on, but does not make any attempt to resolve, the ongoing historical controversy surrounding the events in our District during white settlement, and the role in that of the Waterloo Bay Massacre.

Instead, the Report outlines the most recent developments concerning that issue, and in particular, the commissioning of a study by Council from Dr Timothy Haines, which argues that the word ‘massacre’ can be correctly applied to even the most charitable interpretation of what occurred during the Incident, or Incidents.

## MANAGEMENT PLAN DRIVERS

### Strategic Plan Reference

#### 4. Our Community Services

To deliver a high standard of essential community services and show leadership in developing positive community spirit.

#### 5. Our Leadership and Governance

To provide progressive leadership and good governance which encourages confidence of the community in the Council, and conduct our business in a financially responsible manner.

### Finance/Budget

More staff hours and as yet unquantifiable expense to progress issue should it not resolve at this stage, if resolution possible.

### Risk/Asset Management

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Moderate 3	Major 4	Catastrophic 5
A (Almost certain)	H	H	E	E	E
B (likely)	M	H	H	E	E
C (Moderate)	L	M	H	E	E
D (Unlikely)	L	L	M	H	E
E (rare)	L	L	M	H	H

Legend: E: Extreme risk; immediate action required  
H: High risk; senior management attention needed  
M: Moderate risk; management responsibility must be specified  
L: Low risk; manage by routine procedures

*Extreme and High Risk Issues require a Risk Assessment to be undertaken*

#### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

**That the District Council of Elliston resolves that the wording on the Elliston Coastal Trail Reconciliation Monument will be:**

*This monument commemorates an incident, referred to by the traditional owners of this land as “The Massacre of Waterloo Bay”. A large number of Aboriginal people were killed near this site in May, 1849 by a party of settlers.*

*Waterloo Bay is a significant site in the history of frontier conflict between traditional owners and settlers, often resulting in the destruction of traditional family life.*

*This memorial promotes a new spirit of reconciliation, helping to forge a renewed and healing sense of community through tolerance and understanding.*

**Cr McGlasson moved that the meeting break for morning tea at 10.49am  
Seconded Chairman Callaghan and CARRIED.**

**Meeting resumed at 11.14am**

**Cr Callaghan moved:**

**2017.75**

**That the District Council of Elliston resolves that the wording on the Elliston Coastal Trail Reconciliation Monument will be:**

*This monument commemorates an incident, referred to by the traditional owners of this land as “The Massacre of Waterloo Bay”. A large number of Aboriginal people were killed near this site in May, 1849 by a party of settlers.*

*Waterloo Bay is a significant site in the history of frontier conflict between traditional owners and settlers, often resulting in the destruction of traditional family life.*

*This memorial promotes a new spirit of reconciliation, helping to forge a renewed and healing sense of community through tolerance and understanding.*

**Seconded by Cr Allchurch.**

**Cr Hitchcock moved:**

**2017.76**

**That the motion lay on the table.**

**Seconded by Cr Rumbelow and CARRIED.**

**Cr Callaghan moved**

**2017.77**

**That the District Council of Elliston invites the Wirangu representatives to attend an informal meeting with Members of Council.**

**Seconded by Cr McGlasson and CARRIED.**