



Mullumbimby & District Neighbourhood Centre

Connecting the Byron Shire Community

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement of Commitment

Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statement of Commitment

Acknowledgement of Country

The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre is situated on Bundjalung Country and offers community support and empowerment to communities in the ancestral homelands of the Arakwal, Widjabal and Minjungbal peoples. The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre (MDNC) offers deep respect to the traditional owners of these lands and waters, to elders past and present. The MDNC acknowledges the relationship with Country that Bundjalung people have had for thousands of years.

The MDNC acknowledges that it is through the continued dispossession of Bundjalung people, that this district was established and has continued to expand. This expansion has been to the detriment of Bundjalung Country, communities and cultural practice.

The MDNC acknowledges the historical and ongoing socio-political injustices that continue to affect Bundjalung people. Further we acknowledge the greater impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We extend our respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in our community.



This Statement of Commitment was originally developed in 2018 with the Bagwa Bugalma Collective. This version was revised in 2022.



1. Background

Bundjalung of Byron Bay – Arakwal People’s native title claim over a large area of land within the Byron Shire was determined in 2019. Other traditional Aboriginal clan groups within the Byron Shire include the Widjabal people and the Mindjungbal people from the Bundjalung Nation. Bundjalung people have been heavily impacted upon the ‘Sea Change’ boom and growth in tourism in the Byron Shire and surrounding areas. In the first instance, from the steady rise in property costs and lack of availability of rental properties within their ancestral homelands – referred to in the Aboriginal community as the new wave of dispossession. This has presented considerable boundaries for traditional owners to live in and continue their cultural responsibilities to country and community. This has created division in community as families compete for very limited resources and opportunities. This has further been compounded by the lack of culturally appropriate service delivery and amenity and has fractured the community’s sense of connectedness and cohesion.

Due to the lack of identified community services, the Byron Shire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is fractured with: no hub, no collection of authentic data on community needs, no expert peak organisation to represent in consultation of broader decision making forums and no lead in community development. This has led to a lack of strategic planning for community development, poor partnerships to develop opportunities with mainstream organisations, poor community cohesion and identity. For Bundjalung people this has resulted in difficulty living and working on country and fulfilling cultural obligations whilst also creating social, economic, and spiritual pressures. The community live with poor health support, poor education outcomes and limited pathways to meaningful employment and are inevitably forced to move off country.

The MDNC have developed this document to embed their commitment to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community into all their services and programs and to guide the strategic development of the organisation.

2. Living our Commitment

This Statement of commitment aims to inform the relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the MDNC (staff, volunteers, committee) and

our work with community. Our objective is to live our commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (South Sea Islander) communities.

This Statement of Commitment reflects the shared commitment of our partnership with and for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families. The statement also acknowledges the role of our staff and our volunteers in this partnership. Our team commits to elevating this commitment as an example for the broader community. We acknowledge our opportunity to work to create safety in our community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A Statement of Commitment that is inclusive of the voices of our stakeholders and reviewed regularly strengthens the provision of quality outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Our team commits to living our Statement of Commitment:

- 2.1 Develop a common understanding of our Statement of Commitment among our team.
- 2.2 Embed this Statement of Commitment into our Constitution.
- 2.3 Promote this Statement to our service community.
- 2.4 Share our Statement of Commitment with new volunteers and staff. Include it on our website, our enrolment packs and in new induction checklist.
- 2.5 Review the Statement of Commitment regularly to ensure it reflects emerging issues such as changes in children’s needs and feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- 2.6 Ensure that our policies and procedures reflect the values in the Statement of Commitment

3. Objectives

The MDNC advocates for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to have access to wholistic, culturally appropriate support services including Health and Wellbeing, Family support, Housing, Education, Employment, Transport and Access.

The MDNC is committed to working in partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community towards the following objectives:

- 3.1 Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receive culturally appropriate health, housing, transport, education, employment, and community services in our community.

- 3.2 Place based service delivery providing opportunity for a 'client centred' approach to care,
- 3.3 Establish and respond to Byron Shire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's unique identity and service needs
- 3.5 Transparency and accountability to the Byron Shire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- 3.6 Recognise Byron Shire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights as First Nations people to live on country and in community.
- 3.7 Advocate for Byron Shire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights as First Nations people to access culturally appropriate place-based services on country and in community.

4. Principles of Our Commitment

As we work together in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we will be guided by these principles:

- 4.1 Recognition of Arakwal, Widjabal and Minjungbal peoples of the Bundjalung Nation as the First Peoples of this district
- 4.2 That due to the processes of colonisation our district now consists of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that have significant service support needs.
- 4.3 Self-determination for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- 4.4 Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an acknowledgement that these cultures have a different cultural framework than the dominant cultural framework.
- 4.5 Addressing injustice to restore the strength, wellbeing and resilience of individuals, families, and communities.
- 4.6 Empowerment
- 4.7 Free, prior, and informed consent
- 4.8 A strengths-based approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to support thriving communities.

5. Statement of Commitment

In recognition of the historic circumstances that have led to social and economic oppression of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples the Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre aims to provide programs, services, and opportunities to address these injustices.

The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre acknowledge the acts of dispossession, settlement and discriminatory policies. The accumulative acts of colonial and state governments since the beginning of colonisation have made a continuing legacy of economic and social disadvantage that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced and continue to experience. In the spirit of healing, we commit to working with local Bundjalung communities and the broader local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address the injustices of the past.

The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre is committed to working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community to create opportunities that benefit the health, wealth, economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander of our community.

This Statement reflects our intention to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to increase community collateral such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community led organisations, services, and programs.

Our organisation acknowledges the impacts of policies and practices which have led to the fragmentation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Our objectives are to work with the various stakeholder groups and acknowledge our responsibility to work with formalised stakeholder groups such as Native Title Corporations, Land Councils, Elders Councils, and Community organisations, in addition to community members.

The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre acknowledges the importance of Bundjalung culture to Bundjalung Country and acknowledges that Bundjalung people must control their own cultural practice. The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre will refer decisions of cultural matters to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait organisations.

Our commitment puts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the centre of decision making and planning. The Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre will go beyond consultation and aim to work in partnership. Our organisation understands the importance of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed at the Mullumbimby and District Neighbourhood Centre and is committed to ensuring that these opportunities are enduring.

6. Strategies for Implementation and Outcomes

The MDNC will workshop the strategies and actions for implementation to achieve positive outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

These will include:

- Opportunities for employment pathways and career development,
- Opportunities for partnerships with stakeholders and organisations,
- Professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers,
- Cultural training for all in the organisation,
- Cultural audit of our services to ensure cultural safety,
- Support for local community initiatives,
- Cultural restoration programs,
- Cultural safety framework development.