

Elimatta

Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater

NEWSLETTER 2024



**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER READERS ARE ADVISED THAT THIS NEWSLETTER CONTAIN NAMES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED
ASG ACKNOWLEDGES THE GURINGAI PEOPLE, THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LANDS AND THE WATERS OF THIS AREA**

NICOLE MONKS THANK YOU TALK AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW INSTALLATION AT FRESHWATER



Hi I'm Nicole Monks of mili mili public art. I'm Yamaji Wajarri, Dutch and English.

I am deeply honoured to be here today. Today we are standing on Country where mob have walked since the beginning of time. I would like to thank and acknowledge Elders, past, present and emerging for continuing to care for Country and extend these thanks to First Nation people here today and all First Nations People of this sacred land.

During my life I have had the honour of calling this Country my home for over 5 years, living in Narrabeen, Collaroy Plateau and Manly.

Since colonisation, this is the place known as first contact, the frontier wars, the smallpox outbreak, kidnapping and displacement of people, the 'shoot on site' policy, diseased and rerouted waterways, attempted genocide, and the desecration of rock art and sacred areas.

Before colonisation these lands were pristine, connected and thriving.

I would thank all mob for caring for Country.

All that we are is because of Country, we are made from Country, we are nourished by Country, we dance Country, we sing Country and one

day we will return to Country... and so...we respect and listen to Country.

The First People's of this land that we are on today are the oldest continuous culture in the world. Just take a second to think about that, I'm talking ice ages, sea level rise, mega-fauna extinction, empires falling Yet mob here not only survived, they thrived for millennia.

Building sophisticated Moiety systems, inter mob relationships, complex languages, diplomacy and lore so that there were no jails, no homeless, no one went hungry.

mob here innovated, adapted and thrived while the Country also flourished.

We should pay respect to the Aboriginal philosophy and lore that enable this to happen, authentic sustainability, matriarchal leadership, horizontal hierarchy and inter-generational learning to name a few, there is much to be learnt... if we listen.

And as we all stand here today at Freshwater headland there is deep meaning and story imbedding in this place.

Community here have spoken about the wattle and the whale's song lines, the rock art and sacred places, fire knowledge and sky stories,

the people here being fit and health or Manly, fishing and in particular saltwater animals, contemporary stories and lived memories.

There is a lot to learn about this country...

And on this particular location the artworks inspiration is 'signal fires'. Fires have been lit on headlands up and down the east coast by Aboriginal people for tens of thousands of years, as part of a sophisticated system of communication.

These messages were for many purposes... announcing approaching tribes, hunting signals, corroboree, births, deaths and acting as warnings. This method of communication is primary knowledge to mob up and down the coast.

Possum skins were used to smother and control the smoke signals issuing out coded communications between distant tribes.

The smoke from such fires were the first indication, recorded in many early European journals and artworks, of habitation. When Lieutenant Cook sailed the Endeavour up the East Coast in 1770, Aboriginal people lit carefully managed signal fires on headlands as a warning.

These fires were often started from Banksia pods, which

mob used to transport fire from one place to the next. And you will notice images of Banksia burnt into the deck here, this story and all the images were provided by the local Aboriginal Community.

Also, on their request Signal Fire is set back from the headland and nestled into Country, paying respect to this remarkably beautiful area... in its own right, keeping the headland open to support our connection to the land, water and sky.

This artwork highlights these stories from deep time, about fire knowledge, inter mob communication practices and elemental connections.

While also creating a meeting place for Community and future generations to come together, to watch whales, to start the Northern beaches coast walk, to understand of other ways of being, to enjoy nature, to smell the plants and watch the birds, to feel the energy and our connection with the elements, the water, land, and sky.

All these stories and intention are embedded within this artwork so we may all have a better understanding, a knowing, and a connection to this Country.

So as we stand here today I would like to humbly thank

the local Aboriginal Community who were part of this project, please stand and come up. It has been an absolute honour for me to work with you all, This community has worked tirelessly for the Northern Beaches Council unpaid for decades, to hold Country and share story.

I would like to thank you all for sharing your connection to this place and making it really special for the whole Community, there are many more that couldn't be here today. But all the conversations, walks on Country, phone calls, emails and story from Community have been instrumental in making this what it is today.

They have layered this place with meaning, aligning the direction of the artwork, the scale and the location, selecting the rock, the beam details, the banksias on the deck, have been developed with community and have brought meaning to this special place.

This is a woman's place

Also you may have noticed the surrounding landscape has been regenerating with endemic Native plants by Adam and Clarence from bush to bowl along with their whole team including the NQ sisters crew. Adam has been part of the project from its very conception, and he

will often come down outside of work hours to check on the plants and do a little weeding :) this headland will hold those memories of care and consideration for generations, so thank you, he will have mic next to let you know a little more...

But there is one last thing to be finalised and that is the name - The artwork is currently called 'Signal Fire' but this is a temporary name and once the Northern Beaches Council formalises an Aboriginal Advisory Board, my hope is that renaming the artwork in language or as they see fit will be one of their first tasks.

It has been such an honour to be able to create an artwork in such a special place for your Community, it was really important that this artwork had story and meaning but it also needed to provide for the whole Community for all of you... and so it was created to be more than an artwork it was created to bring people together, a meeting place with 360 degree vistas, the ability to be climbed on, rested within, laid upon, looked through or walked amongst by anyone and everyone, in the day or night.

I'm looking forward to seeing how this artwork is held by Community, what meaning is layered onto this place

in the future, a place for picnics, ceremony, walking the dog, truth telling, Instagram selfies, sorry day or music...

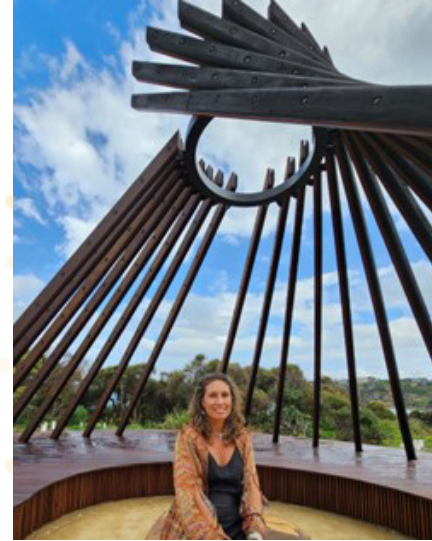
... this place... is for all of you.

And so, we would like to thank Northern Beaches Council for having the vision to bring Signal fire into reality, Christiane, Josephine, Tony and their whole team including the landscapers. And also the Aboriginal Heritage Office in particular Karen. Thankyou

A Big shout out to mili mili team we couldn't do it without you- Colin Ryan and the install team Vince, Johnny, Graham, Paul Christie, Richard, Jamie, Marcus Engineering, Alan, Nick, Josh, Gary and Luisa. Who worked through extreme weather conditions, heat waves, howling wind and rain to make this a reality, great job. Adam from bush to bowl And everyone behind the scenes Lotte, Matt, Suzie, Andrew, Will, Shannon, and Caroline this really could not have happened without you all, so thank you.

I would also like to thank my family supporting me as a working single mother, they really are my rock. And to my son Yarra who is my inspiration to create places like these.

And finally, I would like to thank all of you... the Community here on the Northern



Beaches, for your request to see stories connected to this place told here. your feedback, your engagement and your encouragement and support, Thank you.

For me this project symbolises the beginning of a new journey, and the revitalisation of the history and culture of this place." A place where we can all come together to create a future, we can all look back on, with pride.

And now... it is up to all of you... to hold Country here.

To stand alongside the footprint of some of the most knowledgeable people of all time, to listen to story, to reflect on the unfolding of time on this Country, and see how it calls you...

Thank you URD



FIRST LIEUTENANT WILLIAM BRADLEY



Lt William Bradley, of the First Fleet *Sirius* (which Aboriginal people called the *Mari Nawi* or 'big canoe') was the man for whom Bradley's head was named.

He was present at important times and led the raid that captured Bennelong and Colebee at Manly (probably Collins Beach). He said it was 'the worst order' he had ever been given to carry out. No doubt these men weren't happy about it either.

But it wasn't all abductions and mistreatment. He was taken to a cave at Walsh Bay by the Gadigal and was shown a larder full of Port Jackson Figs that had been pressed into 'cakes' for lean times. This was one of a dozen or more foods that became part of the supplementary diet of first freeters.

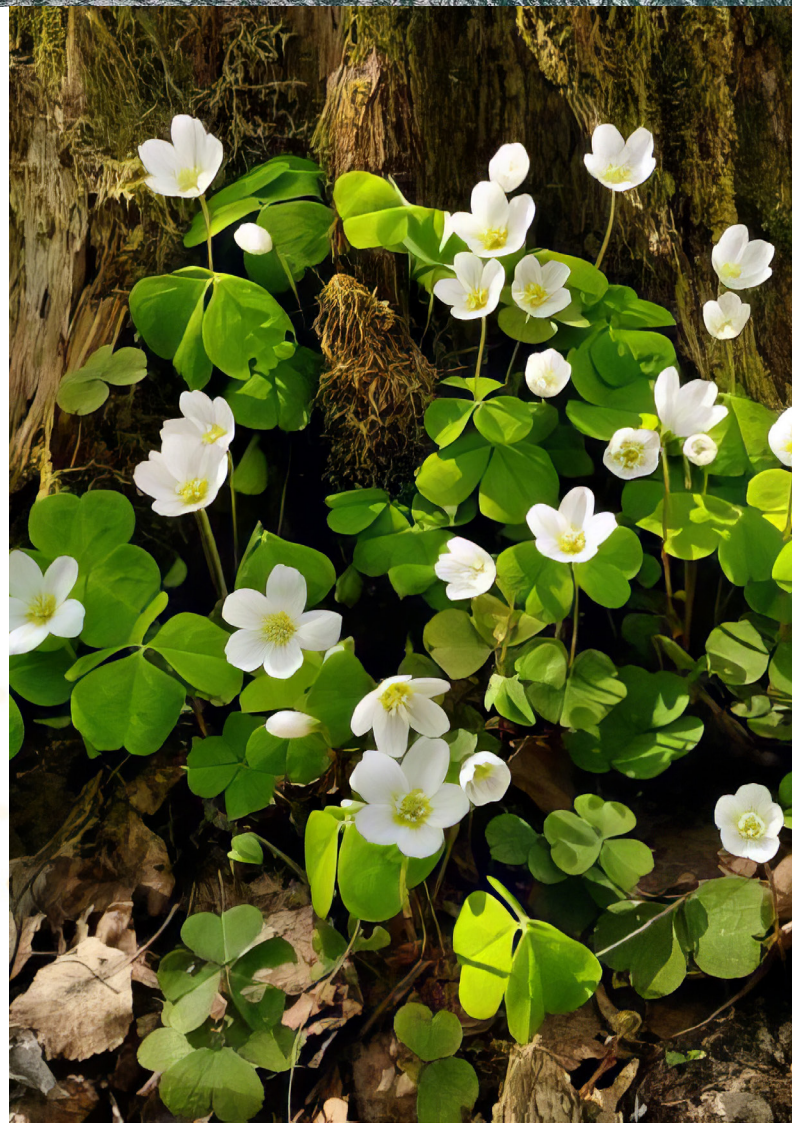
"David Collins, judge advo-

cate of the colony recorded that 'wild celery, spinach and Parsley fortunately grew in abundance about the settlement: those who were in health, as well as the sick, were glad to introduce them into their messes'.

Lt. Bradley listed 'wild spinach, Samphire, Parsley and a small quantity of sorrel and wild celery, all of which with the leaves of several kinds of bushes were eaten by us for want of better vegetables which were not yet supplied by the gardens.'" (Tim Low, *Bush Tucker*)

I was given a wood sorrel plant yesterday at the Friends of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. It might look like ordinary clover, but it has slight differences.

A weed to most gardeners. But part of our food heritage, nonetheless.



BARRENJOEY WAS AN ISLAND BEFORE A PART OF PALM BEACH

About 7000 years ago, anyone wanting to walk from Barrenjoey Head to Palm Beach would have needed the skills of Moses.

At the time, Barrenjoey was an island and actually had a more substantial connection with West Head than it did with Palm Beach.

Barrenjoey is connected to West Head by a low-slung saddle ridge that contains a volcanic dyke that outcrops at both headlands and explains why the entrance to Pittwater is so shallow.

When the sea level was lower than it is at present, Barrenjoey would have been seen for what it was – a bump on the top of a ridge running east from West Head.

The story of Barrenjoey's shifting ties to the mainland begins deep in geological time.

The Hawkesbury sandstone and the Narrabeen group of sandstones and shales of which the peninsula is composed were laid down as sediment in silted lakes and floodplains about 200 million years ago, when Australia was still part of the super-continent Gondwana.

By the time Australia began drifting north from Antarctica about 50 million years ago, the sediment had solidified into the rocks we know today.

Polar ice caps began to form about 15 million years ago and a cycle of ice ages began, during which the sea level rose and fell several times as water was locked up or released from the ice.

As the sea level rose, the low saddle between Barrenjoey

and West Head was submerged, making Barrenjoey an island.

In fact, Barrenjoey was an island several times during the many inundations but just a bump on a ridge whenever the water retreated again.

When the sea level was at its lowest, the coastline was 15-20km to the east, the continental shelf was exposed and rivers had to cut deep valleys through the sedimentary rock to reach the sea. Broken Bay is one such river valley.

The last ice age peaked about 20,000 years ago, at which time the sea level was about 120-140m lower than at present.

As the ice melted, the sea level rose steadily until it stabilised at its currently level about 6000 years ago, by which time Barrenjoey was an island again.

But if Barrenjoey was feeling lonely, a lifeline was on its way from Palm Beach in the form of sand.

As the sea level rose, sediment was moved inshore by the rising water and distributed along the coastline by local currents.

Driven by currents, waves and wind, sand began to accumulate, grain by grain, at what was then the northern tip of the peninsula, forming a sand spit.

Over thousands of years, the sand spit slowly stretched north until it reached Barrenjoey, which became a "tied island" linked to Palm Beach by the isthmus of sand. Once the isthmus had formed, it was consolidated by sand building up on both the ocean and Pittwater sides, and by



the clothing of vegetation that crept slowly northward from Palm Beach to stabilise the sand.

The isthmus connecting Barrenjoey to the mainland is a dynamic system but a fragile one, and the ecological footsteps of humans are heavy.

In just 200 years, human activity has more than halved the height of the isthmus – in 1876 it was 10-12m tall but in 1977 it was only 5-6m tall.

Human degradation of the isthmus began soon after the arrival of the First Fleet and continued unchecked through the 19th century.

The vegetation was cut down for building or fuel, and cattle were grazed and gardens were planted by the fishermen, salt extractors and lime-burners who frequented the area.

The degradation of the isthmus continued in the 20th century as Palm Beach became more popular and more accessible.

A nine-hole golf course was established at the southern end of the isthmus in the 1920s and a camping area de-

veloped adjacent to it, reaching a peak of activity in the 1960s, despite the introduction of controls in the 1950s.

A jetty was built at Station Beach, on the western side of the isthmus, and a clubhouse was built on the ocean side for the North Palm Beach SLSC, many of whose members came from the ranks of the campers.

Eventually the camping area was closed in the 1970s, by which time its facilities had become inadequate anyway.

Thankfully, research into the dynamics of the isthmus was conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s, and remedial work was carried out to stabilise the sand.

Bulldozers were brought in to reshape the isthmus, extensive plantings were made of different species of dune grasses, trees and shrubs, and car access was restricted.

While the isthmus may never return to its pre-1788 extent, at least what remains of the geologically significant part of the part of the peninsula has been saved.



NSW GOVERNMENT BUYS SACRED BUTTERFLY CAVE FROM DEVELOPERS AFTER 13-YEAR FIGHT FOR SITE'S PROTECTION



The Butterfly Cave is a sacred women's place where female elders educate girls

An Indigenous woman hopes the acquisition of a sacred place in the New South Wales Hunter region will open the door to protecting more Aboriginal sites across the country. The New South Wales government has acquired land surrounding the culturally significant Butterfly Cave near Newcastle, which until now had been earmarked for housing development.

The Butterfly Cave is a sacred Aboriginal women's site that has been used for generations by Awabakal women for cultural practices and sacred women's business.

Aunty Margaret Harvey is among a group of women from the Awabakal community campaigning for 13 years for the site to be protected. The women said they

previously had to seek permission from the developer to access the site.

The state government announced on Monday that their campaign had been successful.

"It was absolutely wonderful to hear that news, the most wonderful day of our lives," Ms Harvey said.

"For it to come down to what it has come down to and the minister acquiring the land for us, it's the best news we could have ever heard."

Protected from earmarked development

The Butterfly Cave was declared an Aboriginal Place under the National Parks and Wildlife Act in 2013.

In 2019, the cave and its surrounds were recognised by the federal government as a significant

Aboriginal area.

However, the cave sits within a large housing development and land around the site, including the access path, was previously earmarked for development by Hammersmith Management, which is owned by the Roche Group.

The Roche Group has been contacted for comment.

Ms Harvey hoped the cave's protection would set a precedent for other Aboriginal places to be safeguarded.

"I personally hope that it will open lots of doors now for people to take notice that we do have sites that are hundreds of years, thousands of years old," she said.

"They need to be saved. They can't keep [destroying] our sites and not doing anything about it."

Environment Minister Penny Sharpe said the government had worked closely with the developer on the purchase.

"This land's going to become part of the National Parks and Wildlife estate. It's going to be protected forever," she said.

"There's now going to be just under 26 hectares of bushland, some of it was slated for development, [but] it will remain as bushland now."

Ms Sharpe could not disclose the cost of purchasing the land.

"We're currently finalising the purchase with the developer," she said.

"We've been able to negotiate a good price that is very good for not just local Aboriginal women ... but also for the local community."

Acquisition means 'freedom'

Ms Sharpe said the acquisition included "journey paths" to the site.

"It means women have free access to the cave to undertake the ceremonies and the teachings that they do with young women and elders," she said.

Ms Harvey said the acquisition of the cave would make it easier for female elders to access the sacred place and educate children.

"Before, we never had that sort of access to the cave," she said.

"Freedom is the best word I can say because we now have freedom to come and go when we want to."

Romy Stephens
ABC Newcastle



The cave and surrounding bushland is a sacred site used by generations of Awabakal women





FIRST NATIONS ARTIST WINS GOLDEN LION AWARD AT VENICE BIENNALE

In a first, the Australian Pavilion wins the celebrated international award with an installation by First Nations artist Archie Moore.

The international news sources and social media channels were abuzz with the news that Australian Indigenous artist, Archie Moore's exhibition kith and kin, presented at the Australia Pavilion at 60th La Biennale de Venezia 2024, had been awarded the prestigious Golden Lion for Best National Participation.

It is the first time that Australia has been awarded this recognition in the Biennale's 130-year history.

The jury commented on Moore's installation: 'This installation stands out for its strong aesthetic, its lyricism and its invocation of a shared loss of an occluded past. With his

inventory of thousands of names, Moore also offers a glimmer of the possibility of recovery.'

On congratulating Moore and curator Ellie Buttrose, the Australian Government's Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke said: 'When I announced the Government's support for the new pavilion for the Venice Biennale back in 2013, we could only hope that one day one of our artists would receive this level of recognition.'

On receiving this award, Archie Moore told media: 'As the water flows through the canals of Venice to the Lagoon, then to the Adriatic Sea, it then travels to the oceans and to the rest of the world – enveloping the continent of Australia – connecting us all here on Earth.

Aboriginal kinship systems include all living

things from the environment in a larger network of relatedness, the land itself can be a mentor or a parent to a child.

We are all one and share a responsibility of care to all living things now and into the future. 'I am very grateful for this accolade; it makes me feel honoured to be rewarded for the hard work one does.

I am grateful to everyone who has always been part of my journey – from my kith to my kin – to my Creative Australia team and everyone else back home and those of the Venice Lagoon.'

History, collaboration and sensitivity pull off the world's best

In a formal statement released over the weekend by Creative Australia – the peak body charged

with commissioning and managing Australia's participation as the oldest Biennale in the world – Executive Director, First Nations Arts and Culture, Franchesca Cubillo said: 'For the exhibition to receive this remarkable international recognition has made us all incredibly proud and deeply moved.

'We congratulate Archie on his historic accolade and celebrate this moment of global recognition of the depth of his artistic expression.'

Curator Ellie Buttrose, who worked with Moore on delivering this phenomenal hand-drawn installation, added: 'Moore profoundly affects those who listen. kith and kin enfolds all of us into Archie's family. To be kin is to carry responsibilities – duties for each other and all living things throughout time.'



This commendation is a celebration of Archie's generosity – it is an honour to witness his art.'

Burke continued: 'Archie's work kith and kin shows the power of Australian art and storytelling going right back to the first sunrise. Australian stories help us to understand ourselves, know more about each other, and let the world get to know us. That's exactly what this artwork does.'

About the exhibition

In kith and kin, Moore transforms the Australia Pavilion with an expansive, genealogical chart that has been hand-drawn in

chalk. It sprawls the Pavilion's 60-metre wall length and five-metre height, and takes on the quality of a celestial map.

Key to the installation is the First Nations Australian understanding of time, in which past, present and future coexist.

It pulls upon Moore's Kamilaroi, Bigambul, British and Scottish heritage, and 'brings international awareness to the vitality of First Nations kinship, in spite of facing systemic injustices since British invasion in 1770,' Creative Australia explained of the installation's focus.

Gina Fairley



Archie Moore and Ellie Buttrose with 'kith and kin' Australia Pavilion at Venice Biennale 2024

H I D D E N

NULLARBOR CAVES

A photograph showing two divers in a dark, rocky cave system. The divers are illuminated by their own lights, creating a dramatic scene against the dark background of the cave walls and floor. The title 'HIDDEN NULLARBOR CAVES' is overlaid on the top half of the image.

BENEATH THE PLAINS OF THE NULLARBOR LIES AN UNDERGROUND WORLD FORMED OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS

Arid, flat, desolate. To many people that is Australia's Nullarbor, but in reality, the surface is pockmarked with holes that open the gateway to a subterranean wonderland.

"It's the world's largest arid limestone karst, 200,000 square kilometres of this enormous, emerged limestone platform that is completely honeycombed," Stefan Eberhard.

"Think of it like a sponge cake. It's flat on top, but underneath it is riddled with holes.

"The entrances of the caves are one of the most spectacular parts of the cave system because they're such a surprise."

Eberhard, a cave diver and documentary filmmaker, has been using ropes to lower himself into these cave entrances for the past 30 years. "Some of them might be 40 metres deep and 80 metres across a big giant black hole ... those ropes might be 20 or 30 metres in depth," he said. In recent years, he's been

able to convince his wife Bronwen to join him.

"I grew up with a fear of heights ... so I've had a real change of narrative in my later life," she said.

"I just fell in love with the Nullarbor the first time I went. It feels like you're crossing time and going into something very special."

The limestone — which was once at the bottom of the ocean — is extremely porous. Any rain that falls on the surface doesn't form lakes or rivers; instead, it seeps into the rock.

Over millions of years, that water gouged tunnels that stretch from where the rain fell to where the plain meets the cliffs overlooking the Great Australian Bight.

"Some of these tunnels are 20 to 30 metres in diameter ... they're like train tunnels barreling underneath the desert, 90 metres below the surface," Eberhard said.

"One of them is 35 kilometres long, snaking its way beneath the plain, and some of them are completely full

of water and the only way to explore them is with diving equipment.

Some of the caves are completely flooded and are only accessible by diving. (Supplied: Stefan Eberhard)

"You can't feel a current, it's moving so slowly ... it's like flying through space."

While the thought of strapping yourself to an underwater scooter and navigating through unknown, pitch-black caves is terrifying to most people, cave experts — or speleologists — say only a tiny fraction of the caves have been documented, and the 'thrill of exploration' keeps bringing them back.

"There's a remarkable diversity of cave-dwelling invertebrates on the Nullarbor which occur nowhere else in Australia or anywhere else in the world," Stefan said.

"There's a giant, blind cockroach, and it doesn't run away like normal cockroaches. There's a gigantic blind cave spider.

"About 20 years ago ... cavers

found a complete articulated skeleton of the famous marsupial lion."

An 'ideal site' for renewables Having dedicated themselves to bringing the little-known world of the Nullarbor caves to the attention of the public, the Eberhard's say they're now in a fight to save them.

A 15,000-square-kilometre section of the Nullarbor in the very far south-east of Western Australia has been earmarked as the site of one of the world's largest renewable energy projects: The Western Green Energy Hub.

The proposal is to build 25 million solar panels and 3,000 wind turbines, capable of generating 50 gigawatts of electricity.

This energy will then be used to create 3.5 million tonnes of hydrogen each year.

"Our ultra-scale hydrogen project requires large, reliable and consistent amounts of electricity to 'feed' electrolyzers," a Western Green Energy Hub (WGEH) spokesperson said.

"The location offers high di-

urnal sun and wind loadings; is relatively unencumbered; and has road, rail and sea access possibilities.”

The developers say green hydrogen is crucial to Australia’s transition away from fossil fuels, as it provides a storable and transferable alternative.

However, the Eberhard’s say the price to pay will be the destruction of parts of the cave system.

“The hard limestone cap rock, which is very hard, it’s only one to two metres thick, though beneath that it’s really quite soft,” Stefan Eberhard said.

“Constructing these massive things is like trying to put bricks on a pavlova.

“What’s at stake here? Too much. This is World Heritage-quality karst.”

WGEH believes the project and the caves can co-exist, and it will do all it can to preserve them.

“WGEH advocates for the ‘avoidance of impact’, which would also apply to any caves in our project area, and to the karst system more generally.

“We continue karst system and cave mapping to ensure that we isolate project ‘no-go’ areas.”

It says any visual impact can be minimised thanks to the sheer size of the footprint.

“Wind turbines will be located on the Hampton Tablelands, set back at least 15 kilometres from the escarpment, which itself is some distance away from the Eyre Highway.

“Turbines will be located around 2.5 kilometres apart, with flexibility on each specific siting.”

Deal on the table for native title holders.

There are three partners to the proposed development: Singapore-based Intercontinental Energy, CWP Global and Mirning Green Energy Limited.

The Mirning are the traditional owners of the Nullarbor, and Mirning Green Energy is the commercial arm of

the Mirning Traditional Lands Aboriginal Corporation (MTLAC).

In 2017 the Mirning People were granted native title over the land on which the developers now want to build, which means before any development can go ahead, an Indigenous Land Use Agreement must be negotiated.

“Our cave systems are our storylines,” MTLAC chair Shilloh Peel said.

“Each family is connected to each cave, as well as the rock holes that provide water to the caves.

“We need to bring our people along with us ... and we would have to make sure that all our cultural sites, heritage sites are protected.”

The current proposal is for Mirning Green Energy to be given a permanent seat on the board, to have a 10 per cent stake in the project and have the option of securing majority ownership in 50 years after a financial investment decision is made.

Ms Peel and the Mirning people must therefore balance any potential risk to their cultural sites with clear financial incentives.

“Economically, these things are good for our people, [we will] get a rangers program up and running,” Ms Peel said.

“Just to have that sense of people going back to country working for country and being on country.”

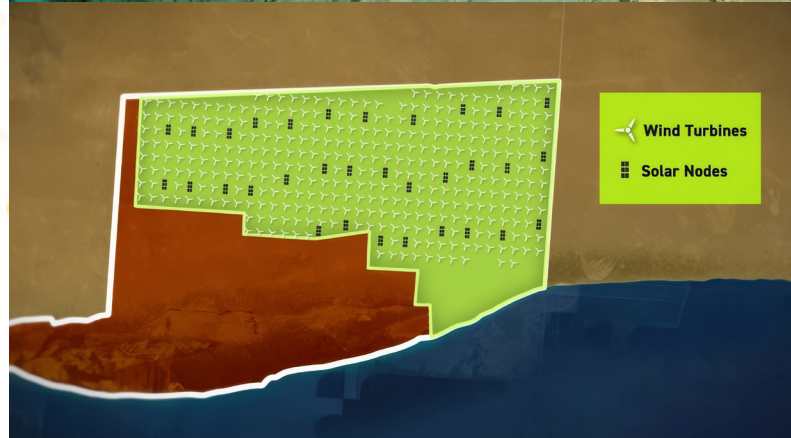
WGEH says this is the only site it is considering, partly because of its ability to partner with the Mirning in exchange for the use of the land.

A financial commitment to the project isn’t due until 2029, and an agreement with the Mirning Traditional Lands Aboriginal Corporation is one of many hurdles.

“Our Mining community, we are vast and wide, but they will come together and work these processes,” Ms Peel said.

“They will have the final decision.”

Will Murray



ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA ARE BEING UNNECESSARILY REMOVED FROM FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

The report released by South Australia's Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People has found the department of child protection's cultural responsiveness was "severely lacking".

An "institutionally racist" child protection system is trampling on First Nations children, according to a scathing report released by South Australia's Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

In the Holding on to Our Future report tabled in SA Parliament on Wednesday, Commissioner April Lawrie found in a single calendar year, one-in-two Aboriginal children are reported at least once to child protection authorities, whilst one-in-ten are placed in out-of-home care (OOHC).

"The Aboriginal community will no longer tolerate this cost to continue to be at the expense of our children and future generations," Commissioner Lawrie said.

Furthermore, without meaningful change, SA will see 140 out of every 1000 Aboriginal children placed in state care by 2031, the report said. Currently, Aboriginal children and young people constitute approximately 5.5 per cent of the population of children un-

der the age of 18, but 37.4 per cent of all children in OOHC.

The report has made 48 findings and 32 recommendations to reduce the number of First Nations children in the child protection system.

It found a need to involve Aboriginal people in decisions about Aboriginal children; unnecessary removals were disproportionate and only growing, causing long-term harm; and systemic racism and cultural bias in child removal and placement decisions.

Ms Lawrie said, in the majority of cases she examined, the underlying issues that led to families' contact with the child protection service system "have not been about the intentional harm of children".

"They are characterised by problems associated with poverty and intergenerational trauma, mental illness, domestic and family violence, homelessness and substance use," the Commissioner said in the report.

"In responding to these issues, removals should be a last resort, but often problems have been allowed to escalate to a point where removals become the first step taken when intervening with these families."

Ms Lawrie said there needed to be an acknowledgment



that a system had been built, "where the only option to respond to problems associated with disadvantage is to funnel families into child protection."

"This has to change," she said.

"The child protection service system is not equipped to meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal people."

The report found there was not enough funding for early intervention services for vulnerable Indigenous children and the Department for Child Protection's (DCP) cultural responsiveness was "severely lacking". It recommended working the DCP work in partnership with the Aboriginal community to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children in SA.

"The government has been told before that investment in early intervention and support is insufficient," Ms Lawrie said.

"This investment must elevate the capacity for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to be able to provide this early support and move away from the DCP being the only responder.

"Failure to act means that struggling, vulnerable families will continue to encounter the child protection service system at increasing rates, and that Aboriginal children being removed from

their families will mean the government will pay the cost one way or another, for matters that are preventable."

The report also recommended laws surrounding child protection be amended to include the Child Placement Principle, which the SA government - along with all other states and territories - had agreed to implement and ensures the removal of Aboriginal children from their families is a measure of last resort.

The report found for all Aboriginal children in OOHC, only 38 per cent are being cared for by their Aboriginal kin or a member of the Aboriginal community.

"Aboriginal people have had enough of watching an institutionally racist system that does not adequately apply the Principle or know how to consider safety within the broader context of a child's family, community and culture," Ms Lawrie said.

The ABC reported SA Minister for Child Protection, Katrine Hildyard said the government would take time to consider the report's recommendations before acting accordingly.

"What is clear is that further effort that privileges the voices of Aboriginal families and communities is required," the minister said in a statement to parliament.

April Lawrie "The current culture and methods of child protection needs to change".



WHAT'S ON



6TH JULY **JOIN US FOR THE - NEW MOON CEREMONY**
 North end Mona Vale Beach
 5.30pm for 6.00pm start - Weather Permitting.
 We suggest you bring a folding chair and/or blanket and some water.
 This FREE community event is alcohol-free. All Welcome

7 - 14TH JULY **NAIDOC WEEK 2024**
 Theme "Keep the fire burning! Blak, loud"

7TH JULY **BUSH TOUR - 3pm**
SINGING UP COUNTRY 4pm - 9pm
 St Anthony in the Fields Church 46 Myoora Rd Terrey Hills
 A list of fantastic entertainers and great raffle prizes
 For this upcoming events Booking at: [TryBooking.com/CRXDR](https://trybooking.com/CRXDR)



15TH JULY **COMMUNITY MEETING 7.30pm - 9.30pm**
 Guest Speaker from Permaculture Norther Beaches
 Where Would We Be with Out Bees, which native bees are in your area?
 All Welcome - FREE Event
 Memorial Hall 1 Park St Mona Vale 2103



9TH AUGUST **TOGETHER WE CAN FIND A VOICE**
 DINNER and CONVERSATION; SHARING THE VOICES
 5.30 for 6PM (World Day for Indigenous Peoples)
 St Anthony in the Fields Church 46 Myoora Rd, Terrey Hills
 Cost: \$45 for Nibblies, 2 Course Dinner, Coffee / Tea.
 Booking a must: [TryBooking.com/CSQDN](https://trybooking.com/CSQDN)

ASGMWP THANKS DEE WHY RSL AND NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT

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Annual Supporters Fee \$25



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**ABORIGINAL SUPPORT GROUP
 MANLY WARRINGAH PITTWATER**
 Founded 1979

0419 219 770 ASGMWP.net
[Facebook.com / ASGMWP](https://facebook.com/ASGMWP)
 P.O. Box 1235 NEWPORT NSW 2106
Koorimail.com Facebook.com/Koorimail

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If you use any of the material it would be appreciated if the extract is set in context and the source acknowledged.



Editor: Neil Evers
 Graphic Design: Nathan John