

Report from Supporting First Nations Group: SWAN AGM September 2021

During the past 12 months SFN expanded to 7 members. A comprehensive list of actions undertaken by the Group in this period can be found on the Supporting First Nations Peoples page of the SWAN website: <https://swanwomen.org.au/supporting-first-nations-peoples/>

Key highlights of our activities since the last AGM are outlined below.

- Throughout the year, as well as strengthening our engagement with local First Nations organisations, we continued to liaise with MPSC Warringinee Group in response to specific requests for support and on how SWAN can help to achieve the outcomes in the Shire's Reconciliation Action Plan.
- In follow up to SWAN NAIDOC Week presentation by Teela Reid (November 2020) letters sent to the Prime Minister and selected Federal and State politicians stating SWAN's support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Letter endorsed by representatives from local First Nations organisations: Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association Gathering Place, Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Association Gathering Place; Baluk Arts and the Bunurong Land Council.
- In December 2020, response prepared re the MPSC Master Plan for Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association Gathering Place.
- SWAN Committee endorsed SFN paper entitled: 'Why SWAN should become an ally of First Nations'.
- Participated in 'Change the Date' events held by Willum Warrain Aboriginal Gathering Place and Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place in conjunction with Our Songlines on 26 January.
- At a half-day Strategic Planning workshop, 28 February 2021, we confirmed the main purpose and key priorities of the Group. Our primary focus is on engaging with local First Nations people and actively supporting their concerns, activities and campaigns. Our advocacy work should be in direct response to the requests for support that are made by First Nations people at a broader policy level.
- In March we helped prepare SWAN's response to Government's Indigenous Voice Co-design process.
- In April/May 2021, Museums visited to investigate historical sources re Bunurong/Boonwurrung peoples: Sandringham Museum; Nepean Historical Society Sorrento Museum.
- In July, two SFN members attended the 'Nerdudara Djumi: Then Now 10+1' Baluk Arts exhibition opening at Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. Proposal for networking/volunteer work with Baluk Arts under discussion (postponed due to COVID restrictions).
- A key priority for 2021 has been to support SWAN to promote Truth-telling with its members and in the Mornington Peninsula more broadly. This led to the preparation of SWAN's Truth-Telling resource to support our members to share information about our colonial history, current injustices faced Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people, and to advocate against racism. This was launched by SFN with audience interaction at SWAN'S NAIDOC WEEK meeting, 11 July 2021.
- Following Aunty Helen Bnads keynote address at SWAN'S NAIDOC WEEK meeting, audience discussion led to a list of actions on how SWAN members can support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- Letter drafted to MPSC CEO John Baker requesting clarity and voicing concerns about lack of Indigenous council staff post re-purposing of Warringinee Group, Deb Mellett's departure and subsequent consequences for RAP. Sent by Erica Churchill 21 July; Response received 28 July 2021.
- Letter refuting the claim of insufficient support for a Referendum on the Enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice in the Constitution sent to the Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt; the Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs; the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights; Greg Hunt (MP); Peta Murphy (MHR); Adam Bandt (MHR); Linda Burney (MHR) and Senator Pat Dodson, sent 30 July. Response from Ken Wyatt 21 August 2021.
- In August Erica Churchill wrote to Greg Hunt MP to request that he meet with a delegation to discuss matters related to SWAN's submission to the Indigenous Voice Co-design process.
- Letters written to Government and media concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaths in Custody, Black Lives Matter and the age of incarceration. Throughout the year.
- Letters sent to federal Members of Parliament urging escalation of COVID-19 vaccination program for Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander peoples, August 2021.
- Advised SWAN members re MPSC approval of Willum Warrain Master Plan and cultural activities and an online donation drive to raise \$150 000 is at tinyurl.com/FundWW for those keen to support.
- Guided walks with Living Culture in September 2021 postponed due to COVID restrictions. Proposal for guided Indigenous walk at McClelland Gallery Sculpture Park under discussion.