



Aboriginal Heritage Office Yarnupings

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Issue 6



Well, it's been a big year. As always, the AHO has had its fingers in many pies which makes the role of the office one not easily abridged...but we'll give it a go. There's been many a highlight, numerous projects and so many wonderful people who have been part of the journey.

Thank you to all who have been part of the AHO's 2014. Have a read of just a small insight into what we've been up to

This Issue

The Coastal Erosion Report

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Finally...



And so castles made of sand, fall into the sea, eventually - Jimi Hendrix.

The Coastal Erosion Report has been a project that the AHO has been working on for over two years. The aim of this project is to better understand the rate and processes behind the erosion of the irreplaceable midden sites that are a unique part of our foreshore.

Much attention has been paid to the various risks associated with a rising sea level. However the impact that this trend is already having on Aboriginal shell middens has passed largely unexamined.

16 midden sites were selected for closer inspection from across all eight of our partnering council areas. Detailed site plans were drawn to get a good base for our study. The next step was to select numerous photo monitoring points. By taking photos from these points on an ongoing basis, comparisons could be made to demonstrate the degree of change and degradation suffered at the hands of high tides, boat wash and regular storms.

Cross section transects were also measured early in the study and again during the later stages of our field work. At first glance, a cross section of this nature seems fairly straightforward. However this turned out to be one of the most challenging elements of the study. Mention the words 'cross section' within earshot of Phil and you'll hear a sigh and see a face wrought with pure anguish.

Coming to the end of the study has brought mixed emotions. The future is far from certain for these integral parts of Sydney's story. As seems to always be the case, more questions have been raised than answers found. Nonetheless, we're proud of the work done, we're proud to be the first to carry out this type of research in northern Sydney and we're certain that if we are to protect the middens of this area, we must first understand the threat that is posed to them.

Education

A very full year was had by us at the AHO and for the Education Program. Over 187 presentations were given across all age groups and Council areas. A conservative estimate of 10,000 people learnt about Aboriginal Heritage and Culture in the Northern Region. Programs such as 'First Contact' on SBS showed how necessary the Education Program is to dispel ignorance. I would like to thank the Councils and their staff who have supported the AHO. Travelling within our Council areas and visiting schools and community groups I have been welcomed and have met interested and enquiring children and adults. With NITV going National I have heard many stories from Elders across the Country who remind us that 'we do not own the land, the land owns us'. Enjoy this Christmas time with family and friends and find time to be in Country as it will always remind us of what is important.

Volunteers

It's been a fantastic year for our volunteer site monitoring program. A record number of site reports were received and training and participation in the program is at a record high. While it's very promising to see the program grow at such a rate, the real benefit is the positive impact this success has had on site protection. Volunteers have alerted us to management issues that would have been impossible to know about without their reports. At the end of the day, the aim of the program is simple - to ensure the protection of Aboriginal heritage sites through regular volunteer monitoring, and to further community understanding and appreciation of such sites while actively working to protect them. It's wonderful to see that not only are these aims being fulfilled, they are being exceeded.

Finally...

There have been so many other highlights in 2014. Our largest Yarn Up ever was held earlier in the year with over 60 people including mayors and councillors from around northern Sydney attending to hear the insights of the wonderful Hon. Linda Burney. We also had the opportunity to present some of the issues regarding Aboriginal heritage management at a training forum for the NSW Judiciary Commission. This allowed us to consult and 'yarn' with judges and Magistrates from the Federal, Supreme, Local and Environment Courts. As many of you know, 2014 also saw the relocation of the AHO to Manly Council. Thanks goes to Willoughby Council for their generous hospitality over the years as does our gratitude to Manly Council for accommodating us into the future. Celebrations were also held as 2014 saw yet another signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by our partnering Councils.

We'd like to thank everyone who has been part of the AHO's 2014. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the funding and support from our partnering Councils. Finally, from Dave, Karen, Phil and Gareth, we wish everyone a merry Christmas, a happy new year and a safe and wonderful summer.