



The Barossa Council



2021 REPATRIATION CEREMONY REPORT

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	3
A LETTER FROM THE BAROSSA RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE CHAIR	4
BACKGROUND	6
THE CEREMONY	7
FEEDBACK	8
LOCATION	13
RECONCILIATION: THE FUTURE	14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Barossa Council acknowledges the traditional lands of the Peramangk, Ngadjuri and Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relations with Country.

A LETTER FROM THE BAROSSA RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE CHAIR



Organisation for Reconciliation Day 2021 began like most years with plans and collaboration with the Barossa Bushgardens and Elders invited to attend from our three First Nations; the Ngadjuri, Peramangk and Kurna. Little did we know it would evolve into one of the most significant and ground-breaking collaborations with our Ngadjuri Nation.

In a turn of events unconnected to the Barossa Reconciliation Committee, the Ngadjuri nation began to excavate an untimely and unceremoniously disturbed grave of a Ngadjuri ancestor in the picturesque Barossa hamlet of Rowland Flat, in traditional Ngadjuri Country.

Excavation and documentation of this important Ngadjuri site was supervised by our loved and respected Ngadjuri Elder Uncle Quenten Agius, with archaeologist Kylie Lower. Traffic management and security for the site was provided respectfully and professionally by RAWsa; an Aboriginal owned Workforce Enterprise specialising in Cultural Surveys, Civil Engineering, Traffic control, Repatriation for Aboriginal sites.

Along with Mayor Bim Lange and Deputy Mayor Russell Johnstone, I had the extraordinary privilege of seeing firsthand the intricacies, the urgency, the emotion, and naturally some occasional grief and frustration that arose as the two-week archaeological dig progressed. I had the huge honour to witness traditional ceremony as we worked closely with Uncle Quenten and the RAW Team exploring and finding solutions to issues that rose as they excavated the site.

Quickly all parties realised that Reconciliation Day and The Barossa Bushgardens would be a natural solution to the urgent need for a Repatriation Site and Ceremony. With great speed and surprisingly delightful ease Uncle Quenten, the RAWsa team closely collaborated with Barossa Council Staff, The CEO, The Mayor, Councillors, Barossa Bushgardens staff and volunteers and speedily selected, organised and developed a site for repatriation of the ancestor's remains. With an event already in place for the following Saturday the Ceremony was natural and organically situated to occur at the same time.

The day dawned cold and clear, the atmosphere was serious and respectful, with a sense of peace and resolution. Over 300 members of many Aboriginal communities and Barossans stood side by side as one, as our Ngadjuri Ancestor's remains were laid to rest once again in a Repatriation Ceremony. With great respect, love and care we all, as one nation laid a stone on the grave of "our" Ngadjuri Elder as we listened and learnt as Uncle Quenten led the traditional Repatriation Ceremony on Ngadjuri land. Kurna Elder, Uncle Jeffrey Newchurch spoke a heartfelt message, especially honouring Barossa Elders who were present, which struck chords of unity in the heart of all who were present. There were not many dry eyes to be found as the Ceremony and heartfelt words were spoken.

As the day progressed and grew colder we were welcomed by our Ngadjuri and Kurna Elders and their families, chatting, eating and sharing our lives and stories as we warmed ourselves around the fire. Many were loath for the day to end, breaking the spell of the peaceful, natural scene where so many found common ground and even healing. Ngadjuri land was acknowledged, and seen and recognised.

The Ceremony and subsequent day will remain as one of the most powerful, inclusive, and emotional days in my personal memory. But along with a personal understanding, I believe we learnt deep lessons as a

Community. We learnt to understand our Ngadjuri brothers and sisters, we learnt to listen, we learnt to empathise, we learnt to trust each other, we learnt the greatness, the stature and forgiveness extended to us by our traditional Elders.

Uncle Quenten and the broader Ngadjuri community's generosity and open dialogue, their inclusivity and acknowledgement around the Repatriation event, allowed those present to be part of Ngadjuri lands and Barossa's combined healing. It was significant and life changing for all those in attendance.

On behalf of the Barossa Reconciliation Committee, I would like to thank Uncle Quenten Agius and the extended Ngadjuri Community, we were honoured and thrilled to be part of this powerful day. As Barossa Reconciliation Chair, and most importantly as a human being I will never be the same. Reconciliation has and always will be more than just a word, it is action. I felt that Reconciliation with our Ngadjuri nation truly occurred on this day and changed not only individuals, but the broader community. I was grateful to witness to it firsthand, and believe for many opportunities like this day to come.

Cr Cathy Troup

Chair of Reconciliation Barossa



BACKGROUND



Ngadjuri Elder and cultural specialist, Quenten Agius

Unfortunately, in 2021, an ancestral burial site of the Ngadjuri was disturbed in Rowland Flat. This led to a professional archeological dig to investigate and sadly, uncover an ancestor. But, this sad set of events also provided an opportunity for reconciliation to reinter the ancestor. This work was fully funded by the organization that was at fault.

Ngadjuri elder and cultural specialist, Quenten Agius, selected the Barossa Bushgardens as a natural and safe environment for Repatriation.

The Mayor of The Barossa Council along with other Elected Members, the Reconciliation Barossa Committee, Council CEO Martin McCarthy, and staff who coordinated with Ngadjuri Elder Uncle Quenten Agius and Kaurna-led RAW SA over a one-week period and successfully organized; a safe, culturally sensitive burial site in the Bushgardens.

There was heartfelt emotion and significant unity as Ngadjuri and Kaurna elders, their families and around 300 members of the community stood together to witness and participate in a Ngadjuri burial ceremony.

THE CEREMONY



Mayor Bim Lange with Ngadjuri Elder Quenten Agius, opening the Repatriation Ceremony

Reconciliation Day in the Barossa had a special significance this year with a repatriation ceremony of Aboriginal ancestral remains. The Aboriginal ancestral remains discovered at Rowland Flat were interred at the Barossa Bushgardens in a public ceremony on Saturday, 29th of May led by Ngadjuri elder and cultural specialist, Quenten Agius.

300 members of the public attended the ceremony, which formed part of Reconciliation Day Activities including Welcome to Country, dancing, storytelling, bushfood planting, and an opportunity to meet Ngadjuri elders.

FEEDBACK

Council, RAWsa and Reconciliation Barossa are so pleased to be working side-by-side on behalf of the Ngadjuri nation to facilitate this highly significant ritual. This is another wonderful example of how we can support conversations and activities that enhance our understanding of First Peoples connection and retention of knowledge. This is another important step in connecting with and understanding the First Peoples of the Barossa."

– Mayor, Bim Lange

"I learnt a great deal about the repatriation process and what it means to First Nations peoples. The generosity of the Ngadjuri people to share this significant ceremony with everyone in the spirit of Reconciliation was extremely moving. The Bushgardens is now a very different place with significant meaning to the Ngadjuri and everyone who attended on the day."

-Reconciliation Committee

"This is another important step in connecting with and understanding the First Peoples of the Barossa"

– Mayor Bim Lange

"The recent Reconciliation and Repatriation ceremony at the Barossa Bushgardens was a very momentous and impactful moment in time for me. I have lived in the Barossa community since 2006 and this is the first event that I have seen in this community, that has truly embraced and acknowledged First Nations presence pre-dating colonisation. As a Gubbi Gubbi and South Sea Islander woman with a lived experience in this community, it was a very deeply emotive and spiritual experience to have the opportunity to watch generations of the Ngadjuri nation respectfully lay their ancestors to rest in earth to which they truly belong. Caring for country and people is an inherent element of cultural identity and cultural safety, and I truly hope this event opens the community's eyes to the importance of the Ngadjuri peoples connection to the land we walk upon every day. Understanding the impact of land dispossession and intergeneration trauma on cultural heritage and the continuity of stories and songlines has never been more important, and this event helped bring that to the community's attention. For me personally, I try to honour my cultural legacy in my life, my work and my relationships by asking myself "what kind of ancestor do I want to be?" – I now invite the Barossa community to take the next step and ask the same question."

- Dee Edwards, Reconciliation Barossa Committee Member

"On the day I had an overwhelming impression that it was a moment of the red seas parting, I remember on the day thinking wow, how did we get this all done. I spoke with Quenten about the Rowland Flat bones and whether we could complete the ceremony on Reconciliation Day. We were not sure whether we would be able to get it all done in time but within days we all had a mutual understanding to get this done. It was a good thing to come out something so uncomfortable. I felt overjoyed of the amount of people that turned out including the Kaurna elder Uncle Jeffrey Newchurch, people were so respectful of the situation. This was a really important thing for the Ngadjuri and Kaurna people, I would love to have more presence of Ngadjuri people within the Barossa. I am grateful the way the day turned out, we are right at the beginning of something. I also want to acknowledge the support that RAWsa provided. In future I would love for the council to have a RAP and for some point the Barossa Community to have an opportunity to understand the truth of the Barossa."

- Russell Johnstone, Deputy Mayor, The Barossa Council

"There is real energy around this in the Barossa - finally. Elders sit closer to the fire."

- Reconciliation Committee

"What an amazing act of generosity by Quenten and the Ngadjuri Nation to share this significant cultural ceremony with the broader community, in order that it might help us learn, walk a little closer together, and to open our hearts and minds to the oldest continuing culture in the world. This is not about the ceremony itself, but to see The Barossa Council and other agencies working alongside the Ngadjuri Nation in this endeavor felt like a significant shift in 'the way we do things around here' and I don't have the words to describe how important that feels."

- Bronwyn

"Flexibility is key to success! People seemed to only want to stay for the ceremony and then leave. The weaving workshop was a very separate event. Not sure of those who attended were aware of the repatriation ceremony as most seemed to arrive just in time for the workshop."

- Reconciliation Committee

"The event ensured inclusion of everyone and the flow of the event went well."

- Reconciliation Committee

"That this was a crucial pivotal cultural event for the Ngadjuri nation and Elders in the Barossa, it spoke true reconciliation rather than just a token event."

- Reconciliation Committee

"That intergenerational trauma and distress is very real and present with our three nations especially the Ngadjuri nation, we have only scratched the surface of deep restorative healing for our Ngadjuri nation and elders."

- Reconciliation Committee

"The ceremony was very moving, I felt a lot of emotional support from the elders present and a deep energy that resonated with Quenten. Quenten had us all in the palm of his hands, it was an enormous sense of emotion and we listened collectively. As a council we need to ensure our accountability and need to do more. This event gave an opportunity to cement already established relationships and create new ones with people that came from different walks of life. If we knew earlier that the event was happening we could have had more people attend to keep the momentum."

- Kim Thompson, Reconciliation Committee Member

"We were responsive to issues as they arose, and flexible with the program. We successfully engaged with Quenten and RAWsa to achieve positive Reconciliation outcomes."

- Reconciliation Committee

"We need to build on this event, not lose the poignancy and power of repatriation. Begin the conversations with the wider community around an Ancestor remains and artefact amnesty via Leader and Editorial."

- Reconciliation Committee

"Sadly, I wasn't able to attend as was caught up in another environmental project that weekend, however I cannot express enough the importance of this culturally significant event and how wonderful and humbling it was that Quenten and the Ngadjuri people entrusted our Barossa Bushgardens community with this Repatriation ceremony. I am also interested to find out what the future is for the Reparation site and how it is seen to be maintained into the future."

- Kate

"Profoundly moving, extraordinary generosity to allow us to participate. It really means something to have a place created in the Barossa to receive these ancestors. It will be a place we will visit regularly. Extraordinary what was done in such a short amount of time. Hope it is just the start of something. Good work from everyone who cooperated. Plenty powerful, Respectful, hope there will be other ways of paying respect and honouring. Finally, proper attention and respect was being paid."

- Sally & Chris Fox, Reconciliation Barossa Committee Member

"We live in Angaston on Peramangk Country. The number of people attending was far greater than we expected. We attend the Lutheran Church in Angaston. Pastor Robert Borgas and his Lady wife Kriss attended the Ceremony. The Sermon by Rob on the next Sunday was more amazing than we can convey. It acknowledged the European invasion wars with First Nations People i.e. 200-euro deaths and 20,000 First Nations. Comparing this with the small issue of Eureka and the Complete lack of educational/historical re the "Invasion war" and much more! Rob spoke about the thickness of First Nation/Barossa/Council relationships at the Ceremony. It appeared to me (an aged and disabled chair spectator) that the air was charged with spirituality. Things could not have been better! May I suggest that Pastor Robert Borgas would be a great contact for the Barossa Reconciliation Group. He has worked at Yalata....at Ceduna.....and comes here from Alice Springs. Like me he was born on Narungga Country. He arranged the very successful Aboriginal Women's Choir trip to Germany and Kriss has her finger on First Nations Art Scenes. We have left attending local reconciliation meetings because of age disability factors but are always pleased to have the minutes etc. We find many local folk are positively following RAP events. The lack of local press report of the Ceremony was disappointing."

- AJ & Kay

"I attended the repatriation event at the Barossa Bushgardens. I found the event so moving and emotional. I was proud to see the Elders and their families. I was really moved seeing the ceremonial sands and rocks and the time the Aboriginal people spent preparing the site for us to share in it. Also, to see the Elders and their children included in the ceremony and how wonderful it was to see the cultural knowledge and customs passed down and embraced with such obvious joy. I have since told people about the event that they missed an extraordinary event which was powerful and moving. I have since placed a reconciliation sticker on my car and caravan and have deliberately posted Indigenous awareness post on my social media. I would go to another event or anything that encouraged awareness in the Barossa Region. Thanks for organizing such a moving day!

- Jane, resident, aged 80

I was extremely honored and touched to be involved closely with Quenten and the Elders of the Ngadjuri and Kaurna Nations as we organized the repatriation of the ancestral remains uncovered at Rowland Flat. I was deeply touched by the raw emotion, passion and dedication of the Elders and their families as they came together for the dig and ceremony. I was privileged to be a part of facilitating this process one I will never forget. I saw firsthand the pain, grief, comradery, sometimes anger that the Elders felt as their ancestor's bones were disturbed and irreverently ploughed over. I could only imagine if that was my father how would I feel if that happened to me and I emphathise. The two week period was enormously impacting, it taught me deep lessons in listening, caring and getting to know people from our First Nations. I cherish that time and would do it over again. It has enlarged me, it has changed me, I feel connected to our nations in a deeper

way. Thank you to Quenten and Ngadjuri Elders and Nations for sharing with the wider community and with me your journey!"

- Cathy Troup, Elected Member

"The day was moving and beautiful. I feel a great deal of pride that I could be present, show support for the ceremony and the creation of a new positive chapter in the relationship between The Barossa Council and all community members."

- Gillian Logan, The Barossa Council

Pam and Doreen, from the Barossa Bushgardens provided their feedback on their feelings and reactions to the repatriation ceremony and reconciliation moving forward in the Barossa. Pam and Doreen stated that people have been visiting the site since the repatriation ceremony when attending the Barossa Bushgardens.

"The ceremony itself made me feel a bit sad but I felt a sense of connection. It was quite somber. I really enjoyed the after part of the ceremony as it was like a celebration. We had the opportunity to speak with the elders and the aunties and see Quenten's granddaughters dance which I really enjoyed."

- Pam, Nursery Manager, Barossa Bushgardens

"This was a once in a lifetime event and I am glad that I got to be a part of it."

- Doreen, Natural Resource Centre Coordinator

"Quenten was extremely open, forthcoming and inviting and shared his knowledge to provide further understanding. The wider Barossa community is interested in reconciliation, this is a step forward in reconciliation for the Barossa council. Mayor Bim doing an Acknowledgement of Country and his speech was also a special part of the day. We hope that he will keep to his words to work together and show this through his actions.

We are looking forward to Quenten coming back to the Barossa Bushgardens to help design the site, add signage, display educational information and choose the plants. In the future we are hoping to have a path to the site with clear signage and educational information."

- Pam & Doreen

Dear Quenten,

My name is Malcolm Gunn aged 80, and I am the father of Cathy Troup.

Sorry about the lateness of this letter.

I just want to express my gratitude to attend the Repatriation of Ancestors Ceremony. It was very moving and significant to all of us who attended.

I learnt so much...

- The significance of the three indigenous groups in this area, especially the Ngadjuri.
- The deep relationship with country, especially the new location...(right now, I am further learning this with the programme of "Back to Nature" on the ABC).
- The importance of Elders like yourself.

I have been on a long journey regarding Reconciliation...

- I have no doubt that during my upbringing I (probably mostly unconsciously) learnt racist attitudes.
- I was a teacher for 40 years, especially in the areas of geography, history and social studies. What was taught over most of the years was grossly inadequate, insensitive, and misleading.
- During the latter years I have read considerably, and with travel in our caravan, both myself and my wife Jan, really starting to learn the "real story".
- I am a "nutty" AFL and Crows supporter...
- I cannot tell you how much joy I have had watching the indigenous boys (and now girls) play, and more importantly, their stories...Goodes, McLeod, Betts, Burgoyne, Rioli to name just a few.
- Overall, I believe, despite the failures especially with the recent Tex Walker / Robert Young incident and Eddie Betts deep anguish (and just today, Karl Amon's), that the AFL / SANFL has been an important vehicle for Reconciliation, especially highlighting racial trolls on social media.

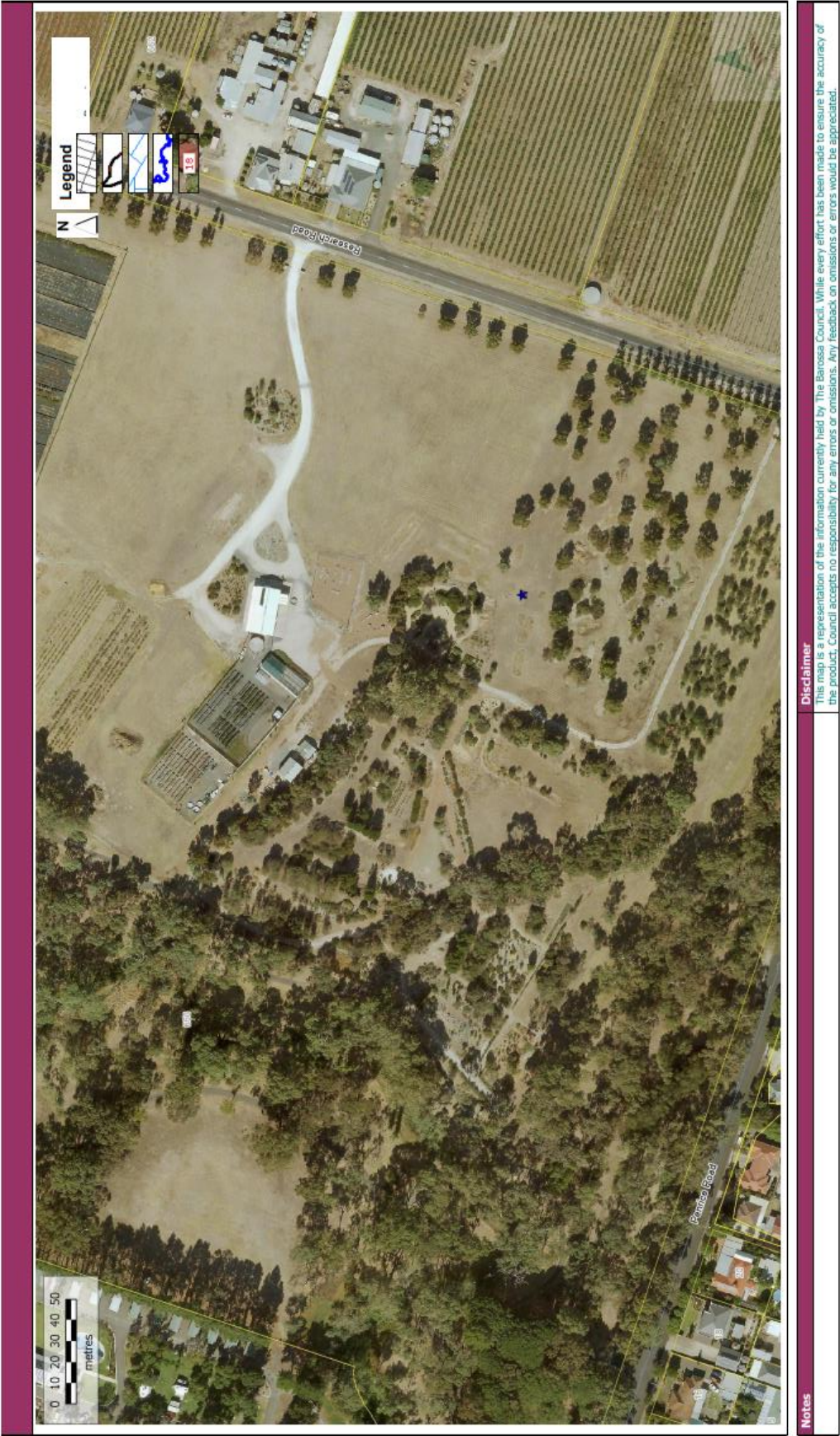
A few personal suggestions...

- I have no doubt that education is the significant tool, starting with very early years...I have been involved in curriculum development for over 30 years (and I know school curriculums are crowded). There now should be a continual programme starting from Year1 to Year 12, essentially aimed at truth, understanding and respect for our First Nation People.
- I would hope that a permanent building & memorial be placed next to the new burial site in the Barossa Bushgardens, exhibiting indigenous information, history, and culture.
- Perhaps the Barossa Council, through the Reconciliation Group, set up a programme where indigenous "achievers" (in sport, the arts, culture, leaders including Elders...) go around to all schools at least once a year tell their stories and the true indigenous stories.

Again, a huge thankyou,

Malcolm Gunn

LOCATION



RECONCILIATION: THE FUTURE



Granddaughters of Ngadjuri Elder Quenten Agius who taught traditional dancing at the event

Reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Reconciliation is a journey for all Australians – as individuals, families, communities, organisations and importantly as a nation. At the heart of this journey are relationships between the broader Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We all have a role to play when it comes to reconciliation, and in playing our part we collectively build relationships and communities that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures, and futures.

The Barossa Council is committed to the ongoing reconciliation and healing of the Ngadjuri, Peramangk and Kaurna Nations in the Barossa Valley and acknowledge their ancestral connection to their land, and pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.