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City of Parramatta’s relationship with Dharug and the First Nations community has hit a new milestone with the official launch of the ground breaking First Nations Strategy at the City’s meeting place, Parramatta Town Hall.

The First Nations Strategy 2024-2029 will drive understanding, recognition, and respect of Dharug and other First Nations people across the City of Parramatta and is a first for a council within Greater Sydney beyond a Reconciliation Action Plan.

The strategy will work towards First Nations people having better access to local services and programs, grant funding, and greater input into Council’s work and decision-making processes. The strategy will also build on Council’s ongoing efforts to acknowledge Dharug history and celebrate their rich culture.

City of Parramatta First Nations Committee chair Jayne Christian said consultation with Dharug and the First Nations Indigenous community was key.

“The First Nations Strategy is the result of a process informed by the Aboriginal Community that distils what’s important to the Aboriginal Community connected to Parramatta,” Ms Christian said.

“It allows for the cohesive functioning of the whole Community and it embeds these principles and objectives into how the City of Parramatta measures success.”

City of Parramatta Lord Mayor Councillor Pierre Esber said the Strategy is about putting words into action.

“We want to centre Dharug and all First Nations people at the heart of what Council does,” Cr Esber said.

“We are moving past a reconciliation plan and taking the next step towards practical outcomes - I am proud Council is stepping up and delivering this strategy.”

Cr Esber said this strategy allows for a bigger vision to become a reality.

“Our goals and actions must also reflect the needs and aspirations of Dharug and other First Nations people who have a connection to this Country.

“Parramatta has always been an important gathering place for Dharug and other First Nations people, and we want to ensure it continues to be.”

This five-year strategy has been developed in consultation with the First Nations community, service providers, staff and the wider community for almost two years and is focused around five pillars: social justice, cultural leadership, social cohesion, celebration and accountability.

It builds on the legacy of Council’s Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, which increased spend in procurement from First Nations businesses and delivered greater incorporation of First Nations culture into programming including at Riverside Theatres and Parramatta Artists’ Studios.