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Suite of planning measures to assist development of Aboriginal land on Central Coast released for community to have its say

In a first for the state, the NSW Government has today released a set of planning measures to assist the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (Darkinjung) achieve better economic outcomes from its land.

The Central Coast community has been invited to have its say on the Darkinjung Delivery Framework (DDF) Consultation Paper that proposes eight inter-related actions to help Darkinjung overcome hurdles to develop its land.

Coordinator General for the Central Coast, Lee Shearer, said the series of planning measures are leading the way in their breadth, depth and ambition to bring about positive outcomes for Aboriginal people that will benefit the entire Central Coast region.

“This work implements a key Direction of the Central Coast Regional Plan 2036 (Regional Plan) - to strengthen the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities,” Ms Shearer said.

“The Regional Plan recognises that encouraging Aboriginal people to gain economic benefit from their land will support broader regional development, environmental and social outcomes,” she said.

Darkinjung is one of 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils in NSW established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (ALR) Act 1983.

The ALR Act was passed by the NSW Parliament to establish a network of Aboriginal Land Councils to acquire and manage land as an economic base for Aboriginal communities, as compensation for historic dispossession and in recognition of their ongoing disadvantage.

In 2016 the NSW Parliament’s Standing Committee on State Development Inquiry into Economic Development in Aboriginal Communities recommended that the planning system needed to better accommodate aspirations of the ALR Act.

“This suite of proposed measures released today aim to go some way to fix that disconnect for the benefit of Aboriginal communities on the Central Coast,” Ms Shearer said.

“We have worked closely with Darkinjung to develop the Delivery Framework. This is a test case that could potentially be rolled out to Aboriginal Land Councils all over the state.

“Darkinjung is the largest non-Government landowner on the Central Coast which makes them an ideal pilot.”

The DDF Consultation Paper’s actions involve education, collaboration, revised processes and legal change.

Key proposed measures include:

- The Darkinjung Development Delivery Plan (DDDP) – a strategic plan to recognise the development pipeline for Darkinjung land;
- A State Environmental Planning Policy to legally recognise the DDDP;
- A Ministerial Direction to link the DDDP to the planning proposal process;
- A Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Darkinjung and potentially Central Coast Council;
• Strategic conservation planning.

Ms Shearer said it was important to understand that even when the above measures are enacted, Darkinjung’s planning and development proposals will still be subject to all normal assessment processes and approvals for development.

Darkinjung Chairman Matthew West applauded the NSW Government for developing such a bold set of initiatives that could transform the ability for Aboriginal communities to achieve economic self-determination from their land.

“These are profound measures with the potential to bring about positive outcomes for our people for generations to come,” Mr West said.

In addition to its collaboration with Darkinjung, the Department of Planning and Environment has consulted with other Aboriginal stakeholders to develop the DDF Consultation Paper, including: Guringai Aboriginal Tribal Link Corporation, Barang Regional Alliance Central Coast, NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

The DDF Consultation Paper is on public exhibition until 5pm Friday 14 December 2018.

The document is available to view, along with details on how to make a submission at https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/Central-Coast

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