

Monday, 21 March 2011

COUNCIL TO PROTECT GRAVE SITE OF BENNELONG

The City of Ryde will be working closely with the Indigenous community to ensure that the suggested grave site of Woollarawarre Bennelong, one of the key Aboriginal figures in Australian history, receives a high level of protection.

The possible location of the final resting place of Bennelong is the result of investigations by Dr Peter Mitchell, a local resident and member of Council's Heritage Advisory Committee.

Following discussions with the Aboriginal Heritage Office, and Council staff, historical documents were combined with modern surveying techniques to identify the place where Bennelong's remains were last documented to have been buried.

City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Artin Etmekdjian, said: "This is a very sensitive issue and has to be dealt with carefully and respectfully.

"Council will be working closely with the adjoining land owners, the Aboriginal Heritage Office, the Sydney Metropolitan Land Council, the NSW Heritage Office, and the Department of Environment Climate Change and Water on the next steps to take.

"We will consult with the wider indigenous community and bring a comprehensive report to Council on the best way to handle this important matter."

Bennelong, a member of the Wangal tribe, was a crucial intermediary between early colonists and Aborigines. He became a confidant of Governor Phillip and friend of ex-convict brewer James Squire.

Bennelong died in 1813 and was reputed to have been buried in the orchard of the property owned by James Squire at Kissing Point.

One of the most enduring symbols of the Aboriginal presence in the City of Ryde is the plaque dedicated to Bennelong at Cleves Park on the banks of the Parramatta River.