

ATTACHMENT TO AGENDA ITEM

Ordinary Meeting

20 November 2018

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Wilmot Road Primary School

No. 4943

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1/8/2018

Dear Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation,

I am writing on behalf of the Year 5/6 students of Wilmot Road to express our desire to ask permission, seek your guidance and approval to make a change on your land, Yorta Yorta Country.

Our goal is to place signage along the Causeway between Shepparton and Mooroopna and at the beginning of the walking track out of Kidstown. This signage would recognise the cultural place of high significance, The Flats.

The background story so far began in Term One this year. As our school commitment to embedding the localised Kaiela Dhungala First Peoples Curriculum into our teaching and learning, a unit of work was developed by the classroom teachers. The central focus for the unit was The Flats. To begin the teachers gathered the prior knowledge of our students. We videoed eight Indigenous students and asked the question: "What can you tell me about the area between Shepparton and Mooroopna called The Flats?" To our astonishment none of the students had any connection to the word The Flats. Over the term we studied oral transcripts about life on The Flats, mapped the location, researched the Cummeragunja walk off and wrote a timeline of key events at The Flats. We contacted Uncle Reuben who took all Year 5/6 students on a guided walking tour of The Flats. It must be noted that once students were at The Flats all Indigenous students could recall having visited the area.

The classroom activities, the excursion and the lack of prior knowledge about The Flats from the students, teachers began to ask "Why, prior to studying the unit, didn't any of the students know the title of The Flats?" For our non Indigenous students the common reflection was that their families came to SPC KidsTown frequently but they had no idea that this great walk was available to be accessed from the KidsTown front carpark. It must be noted that all students loved the excursion and the interesting facts that they learnt from Uncle Reuben and the signs. The visit also gave the students a better understanding of living conditions at The Flats particularly after the Cummeragunja walk off. The river and bush area for hunting and life without TVs, couches, air conditioners and mobile phones.

Our writing focus was Persuasive Writing and after brainstorming with the students a decision was made that the students were going to write to the local stakeholders persuasive reasons why The Flats should have signage at the key positions of the Causeway and KidsTown. The students began writing and a presentation at a Greater Shepparton City Council meeting was had. Here selected students presented one persuasive paragraph from the writing as to why the area needs to have greater signage.

This correspondence brings us now to the request of your support, guidance and permission in getting this project through.

The project so far has seen great growth in the student's local historical knowledge but in particular for the Indigenous students the project has bought a sense of connection to gain more local cultural knowledge and a deeper appreciation of the area, The Flats. The process is also giving the students a voice for change and contact with stakeholders outside the school gates. The following paragraphs are a small sample of students who presented at the council meeting. The students underlined are all Indigenous students.

My name is KANE

At the start of the school year this year, my teacher asked me the following question-

"What do you know about the area around Shepparton and Mooroopna called The Flats?" I had no answer to give her as I knew nothing at all, about The Flats. I later learnt that she had asked all of the Koorie students in Years 5 and 6 and not one person had an answer for her. Move forward to today and ask me about The Flats and I can give you lots of knowledge about this area. In school we have mapped where the Flats are. We have written a time line of historical events at The Flats. We have read oral histories about life on The Flats. Lastly we went on an excursion to The Flats with Uncle Reuben.

I have loved learning about the local Indigenous history. My learning at school has done this. Thankyou

THOMAS

Hello my name is Thomas and I am here to coerce you into putting a sign up in our town. Did you know that around 50 years ago the local Yorta Yorta people lived across from Kidstown in a place called The Flats? Yet if you drive along the main road between Shepparton and Mooroopna or visit Kidstown there are no signs anywhere to let people know about this special place. Councillors you can do something about this! I believe it is an easy thing to do just put up a sign to say The Flats are this way! Today we are going to tell you why it is so important for all us.

BELLA

We need to recognise our local Aboriginal people called the Yorta Yorta. Where the Yorta Yorta people lived is important. So are their stories. Stories such as the Cumeragunja Walk Off. After the walk off the Aboriginals made a new home in the bush, which came to be known as The Flats. Here the people lived the life they wanted.

My Dad told me that Nanny Nugget once lived there. My Aboriginal people are important. That's why we need to put a sign up on The Causeway. I am a Yorta Yorta girl and I will be proud to see a sign up. When I see the sign I will always remember that in Year 5, I helped convince the Council to put that sign up! I will also remember my dad telling me about Nanny Nugget living there. When I grow up I will share this story with my family.

RUBY

On our school excursion I learnt lots of stories from Uncle Reuben. Stories about my Indigenous people. I went home and spoke to Mum and Dad about what I had learnt at school. Dad said that some of my relatives lived at The Flats. Lots of Aboriginal history is passed on through stories. The story of The Flats I believe is important to Shepparton and my culture and our community. There is an Art Museum being built near the lake, so why not put some artwork about The Flats in there. Or put some of the stories about The Flats in there so that people would visit The Flats. It would be an inspiration for our Elders and us kids. Let's make our town proud of us. By the way why not give some thought to giving the SAM gallery a local First Nations name. But that's another argument maybe we will discuss that another day!

STORM

In conclusion I am a Yorta Yorta girl and I think it is not nice to not have a sign up. At the start of the year, Mrs McIntyre asked me about the Flats I knew nothing about them. But since we went on excursion with Uncle Reuben I have now learnt lots. The Flats is an important place for me and all of Australia needs to know about them not just me! If a sign does go up I will drive across Shepparton to family in Mooroopna I would feel happy and proud of myself. I will always remember that at school we convinced the Government to do that sign! It will be good memories for me.

FARZANA

If our town has signs to The Flats it will be a simple way to let people know about this historical place. A sign on how to get to The Flats will help visitors to our town find out some cultural information about our local Indigenous people. Visitors will find out lots of our history. My family came to Australia as refugees and we knew nothing about Indigenous culture. But now I do. I have visited Kidstown many times with my family and friends. But never The Flats. Now that I know what facts you can learn at there I want to take my friends and family on the Flats walk. A sign up would help me get there again. I believe that a sign to The Flats can help to close the gap of not knowing and not respecting other cultures. Thankyou.

ZAINUB

Finally by placing a sign up along the Causeway it will show respect to our local Koorie peoples. Let's go back in time and remember that the Indigenous people at The Flats lived and survived happily in this area. Remember that there was no Kmart or Coles to go shopping. But there are signs in town that say Coles and Kmart but no Flats sign. On excursion Uncle Reuben told us how people lived there. They hunted and they survived. There were no fans to keep them cool in summer and there were no couches and TV's but they were happy. They fished from the Goulburn River. How much history does this area hold?

A lot. So let's pay this area more respect than we are right now. Councillors it's up to you! Do it, put up that sign.

ISIAH

Altogether, I think that it will be deeply appreciated by the Shepparton and Mooroopna Indigenous populations if you put up signage. A sign with The Flats will show that Greater the Shepparton Council respects the local history and culture of my people. It will also educate everybody about our town's history. I am proud to be an Aboriginal kid. I love Shepparton and I believe that a sign will be good for all of Shepparton and everyone that has lived on The Flats. Thankyou.

Our students would love to see the next step of the project completed especially since the Year 6 students will be moving onto High School in 2019. As other stakeholders such as the River Connect and Vic Roads would be involved a response (if possible) no later than **Friday 31st August, would be greatly appreciated.** My email is mcintyre.elizabeth.m@edumail.vic.gov.au and the school phone is 58 214953.

We are more than happy for the students to present their persuasive reasons to you in person or if you are happy to visit the school to see the students presentation we would be happy to organise that as well.

We look forward to hearing your response and hopefully working alongside you.

Wilmot Road Year 5/6 students and
Teachers- Keisha Demasi, Liz McIntyre, Natalie Price and Josh Waight.



