



## **Darkinjung proposal to safeguard majority of Kariong site for environmental conservation**

A Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (Darkinjung) planning proposal to rezone land in Kariong will see more than half the site safeguarded for environmental conservation.

Darkinjung Chairperson Matthew West said the Planning Proposal would see 7.1ha of the 13.2ha site on Woy Woy Road, Kariong zoned E2 environmental conservation, making it an untouchable green space to protect the bush and resident animal populations.

“The proposal would preserve more than half the site in its pristine ecological state for people to cherish and animals and plants to flourish for generations to come,” Mr West said.

“We seek to develop the remainder of the site for residential housing that will help us realise the community, economic and social aspirations we have for our people and the broader community of the Central Coast.”

Mr West said a small, isolated section of the community has criticised Darkinjung’s proposal because it is on land located near the sacred Aboriginal site of Bambara and is surrounded by National Park.

“By definition, all of Kariong is close to Bambara and surrounded by National Park,” Mr West said.

“We are seeking to utilise our land which is not National Park and not a part of the Bambara cultural landscape.

“There is a pervading rhetoric that it is only appropriate for Aboriginal people to utilise our lands for cultural purposes or that our lands can only provide for us in a pre-colonial context.

“We are a community that exists in Australia today and we have very complex needs as a result of the European colonisation process – a process that for a long time excluded us from contemporary Australia.”

Darkinjung is working closely with the NSW Government to develop a new planning framework to provide Aboriginal people with greater ability to determine the use of their land.

The suite of measures includes an Interim Development Delivery Plan that is a pipeline of sites that Darkinjung has prioritised to realise its economic, cultural and conservation aspirations.

The Kariong project is one of a number Darkinjung has at various stages of assessment in the delivery pipeline, including proposals in Somersby, Wallarah and Lake Munmorah that total 331.5ha of its land.

Of that land, 66% (213ha) is earmarked to be zoned environmental conservation and kept as green corridors.

“The remaining one third we hope to use to build homes, create jobs and secure education and training opportunities for not just Aboriginal people but everyone on the Central Coast,” Mr West said

“Progressing our pipeline of development projects will enable us to achieve the big ambitions we have to both improve the lives of people and preserve the beautiful natural environment of the Central Coast.”

The Kariong Planning Proposal is being assessed by the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel.

**ENDS**