

Dear Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group

“Following our last email exchange I sent the proposed program of events and some of the messaging to the BMCC Aboriginal Advisory Council (AAC) for their thoughts. I can advise that the AAC generally support the idea to recognise International Refugee Day through events particularly highlighting some of the extremely difficult challenges faced by refugees.

The AAC really supports the welcoming of refugees to the community and generally felt the message ‘our community welcomes you’ in place of “we come from....everyone is welcome here” would be more appropriate.

The feeling from local Traditional Owners (though all AAC members are Traditional Owners somewhere on the continent), as you rightly pointed out in your first email are *‘the original owners of the land which has never been ceded’* which as you may appreciate is still an unresolved matter for Aboriginal people generally with the Commonwealth. This also relates to the larger concept of how the broader Australian community welcomes any newcomers to a this Continent (Everywhere is Traditional Country), though this too has not yet reconciled with the true owners of Country. Adding to this is the legacy of the imbalance in contemporary Australia held as a result of the first wave of people that came by boat, which also has not been properly addressed.

With the greatest respect and sensitivity, the AAC also felt it may be good for BM Refugee group with the events to also take a moment to reflect that the whole continent is Aboriginal Land, which may resonate with refugees and give a sense that there is more to what is now Australia than they may have been aware. I would also suggest an Acknowledgment of Country at the start of each event would be a respectful inclusion. Some words for this can be found at <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/community/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community>

Thanks again for seeking guidance on this matter which the AAC considered with the greatest sincerity. I hope the events are enjoyable but also very meaningful for all involved.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Regards

Brad

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