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Thursday, 8 September 2022

## **ABORIGINAL LAND CLEANSING CEREMONY PREPARES SITE FOR NEW EUROBODALLA REGIONAL HOSPITAL**

A ceremonial land cleansing was held today on the site of the new \$260 million Eurobodalla Regional Hospital Development, as part of an ancient Aboriginal tradition used to regenerate Country and prepare the land as a safe and welcoming place.

Led by Aboriginal Elders and knowledge holders on Yuin Country, the event included a traditional smoking ceremony and cultural burn and was the first to be carried out on a NSW hospital project site.

Yuin Elder Uncle Bunja Smith said cultural burning is an ancient fire practice which has been used by Aboriginal people for over 60,000 years.

“For millennia Aboriginal people managed the land through cultural burning - it was one of our farming and land management practices to care for Country and will help to restore the land to create a healthy foundation from which the new hospital can grow,” Uncle Bunja said.

“Cleansing the land is an integral part of our connection with Country to restore and rejuvenate the land spiritually, and today’s ceremony signifies that this hospital will be a healthy and safe place where the whole community can come to be healed.”

Minister for Regional Health Bronnie Taylor said the local Aboriginal community has been central to helping shape the new hospital.

“Listening and collaborating with the Aboriginal community on this important new health facility for the Eurobodalla community, has allowed us to engage and learn about culturally significant traditions which can be incorporated into the hospital’s planning and design,” Mrs Taylor said.

“Today’s cultural burn is an important way for the NSW Government and community to recognise, respect and continue ancient traditional Aboriginal practices and acknowledge the continuing connection to land, culture and community.

“Ensuring this new, modern hospital is a safe and welcoming place that supports the health needs of the entire Eurobodalla community – from Narooma to Batemans Bay - is key to delivering better health outcomes for all.”

The new hospital’s design is being guided by local Aboriginal knowledge to build connections with Country including the use of Dhurga language to support wayfinding around the hospital campus and the inclusion of a Meeting Place.

The Eurobodalla cultural burn was performed ahead of work commencing on site later this year, by a team led by local Aboriginal cultural burn practitioner Andrew White, from the Batemans Bay

Local Aboriginal Land Council who has been conducting cultural burns in the Eurobodalla and surrounding region for more than 10 years.

The Eurobodalla Regional Hospital will support core clinical services to be delivered at a role delineation Level Four and will provide more health services than are currently available at both the Moruya and Batemans Bay hospitals combined, as well as an overall boost to bed capacity.

Early works are expected to commence in late 2022, with main works construction scheduled to commence in 2023. The hospital is expected to open to patients in 2025.

The new hospital is part of the NSW Government's record \$11.9 billion investment in health infrastructure over four years to 2025-26, with nearly a third of the capital allocation in this financial year going towards regional and rural health facilities.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land, the tribal groups that make up the Yuin Nation, on which our event took place and on which the new Eurobodalla Hospital will be built.

For more information about the new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital development please visit the project website: [www.eurobodallahs.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.eurobodallahs.health.nsw.gov.au)

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