



Connecting with Country

Guidelines

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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Waterloo Metro Quarter project unfolds. This area, encompassing Waterloo and Redfern, has long been a vital centre of strength, resilience, and determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is one of the highest urban concentrations of First Nations peoples in Australia, a living, vibrant community grounded in culture, connection, and shared history.

For generations, this land has witnessed profound stories of survival, activism, and cultural renewal. Today, the Waterloo Metro Quarter stands at a pivotal moment, as significant urban development and construction reshape the neighbourhood, bringing opportunity, but also displacement and disruption for many. It is crucial that the voices, aspirations, and leadership of First Nations peoples are not only heard but embedded at the heart of this project.

True respect and success in shaping this place can only be achieved through meaningful partnerships with the local Aboriginal community, honouring their knowledge, rights, and self-determination. We commit to walking together with First Nations people in shaping a future for Waterloo Metro Quarter that reflects their culture, identity, and enduring connection to Country.



Executive Summary + Vision Snapshot

Contents

Executive Summary + Vision Snapshot	5
How to Use This Document	6
EARTH – History of Place	8
First Stories - Understanding Country begins with listening to her story	10
Next Stories: Urban Aboriginal identity and contemporary history of Waterloo	12
Today's Story: Aboriginal Community Profile	16
Future Stories: Project overview and Potential	18
WATER – Community Engagement Outcomes	20
Listening to Country: Overview of the June 2025 Engagement Sessions	22
Community Voices: Thematic Summary of Written Survey Responses	28
Designing with Community, for Community – Key User Groups	32
FIRE – Guiding Principles for Action	34
Guiding Principle 1: Amplify Blak Excellence	36
Guiding Principle 2: Design for Everyone	37
Guiding Principle 3: Celebrate Local Culture with Pride	38
Guiding Principle 4: Embed Shared Power	39
SKY – Vision for Country, from truth-telling to transformation	40
Vision for Country	42
Bringing It to Life: Strategic Focus Areas	44
Activating the Vision: Implementation Plan and Future Steps	56
One-Page Summary	60
Conclusion	63

Murawin has been engaged by the Waterloo Collective (Waterloo Developer Pty Ltd) to provide Connecting with Country services for the evolving Waterloo Metro Quarter project. This engagement builds upon our longstanding involvement in the precinct, where we have led First Nations community engagement, contributed to the cultural placemaking and public art strategy, and advised on key project documents including *Stories of Place for Waterloo Metro*, *Waterloo Metro Cultural Placemaking*, and *the Waterloo Metro Quarter – Pre-Lodgement Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report* (Elton Consulting, 2020).

As the world changes in the wake of COVID-19, so too does this site. Once focused on commercial offerings, the Waterloo Metro Quarter is now evolving to include increased residential dwellings alongside co-living and retail at ground level. In this new context, and with the emergence of the NSW Government Architect's *Connecting with Country Framework*, there is a unique opportunity to re-centre Country, culture and community in the next phase of design and delivery.

Murawin, based in Redfern and deeply connected to the local Aboriginal community, brings lived understanding of this place, its people, and its potential. We know the local aspirations, the historical and ongoing barriers, and the deep cultural strength that lives here. Through our work, we aim to ensure that this site is shaped with and for community, not as an afterthought, but as a foundation.

The Waterloo Metro Quarter has the rare potential to be more than a connection point. It can become a destination: a nationally significant precinct that celebrates place, uplifts community, and becomes the heart of a cultural

movement. This vision includes a vibrant and activated sub-precinct that champions First Nations creativity, cultural pride and multicultural strength. A place for First Nations people, and for everyone, that could exist nowhere else.

This is not just about design. It is about relationship, legacy, and celebrating Country and community. These guidelines are intended to provide the Waterloo Collective's design and development teams with cultural direction, place-based insight and alignment with the *Connecting with Country Framework*.

At its core, this work is about enabling shared ownership, cultural safety, economic inclusion and enduring local pride. It is about creating a place the community can thrive in, look after, and feel reflected by.

As one local participant put it,

“If Black people are successful here, the precinct will be successful.”

Community Participant, June 10 '25 Engagement

With strong cultural leadership and authentic partnerships, the Waterloo Metro Quarter can become a national leader in place-based urban Aboriginal excellence, setting a benchmark for how future-focused development can centre First Nations people, celebrate culture, and deliver meaningful outcomes for generations to come.

How to use this Document

Barri Marruma Framework

This document is structured around the **Barri Marruma framework**, a Country-centred methodology developed by Murawin to support culturally grounded, place-based thinking throughout all stages of a project. It is intended to help design and development teams embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, values and perspectives into both project processes and outcomes.



Barri Marruma is drawn from the Dunghutti language, where *Barri* means Country or Place, and *Marruma* means to build or construct. The term reflects not only the physical construction of place, but also the building of trusted relationships, the honouring of history, and the creation of future ways of working together. Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, Barri Marruma uses story, metaphor and cyclical thinking, in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions that have passed down knowledge for tens of thousands of years.

This document can be used as a practical guide at every stage of the Waterloo Metro Quarter project. It is designed to support teams to:

- 🌀 **Respect:** deeply consider and honour the cultural context and local truths of the area
- 🌀 **Understand:** the needs of First Nations communities and lay the foundation for ongoing relationships
- 🌀 **Be Inspired:** by Country to shape meaningful design and development outcomes
- 🌀 **Envision:** a future for the site that is grounded in Country and community

Each section of this document aligns with one of the four interrelated Barri Marruma phases — **Earth, Water, Fire and Sky** — offering cultural insight, project-specific guidance and clear, place-based recommendations.

Earth | Truth



Earth grounds the work in a strong understanding of place. It draws on research, observation, and analysis of Country, history, and context. This phase helps uncover the deeper truths of the site, forming a solid foundation from which culturally responsive and contextually informed design and engagement can grow. The deeper the roots, the more lasting the impact.

Water | Knowledge



Water represents the flow and sharing of knowledge. In this section, the outcomes of community engagement are presented, reflecting the stories, values and priorities shared by local First Nations participants. This phase captures the collective wisdom and cultural knowledge offered during engagement, providing the insights needed to guide meaningful design responses and shape future collaboration.

Fire | Transformation



Fire is the catalyst for transformation, focusing on turning insight into action. This section presents key Principles for Country alongside real-world case studies that demonstrate how culturally grounded design can lead to meaningful, lasting impacts. Fire represents the energy and momentum needed to spark change, guiding teams to embed cultural integrity into projects in ways that honour community input and support long-term impact.

Sky | Vision



Sky is the unifying vision for Country, weaving together the insights, knowledge and momentum of the previous phases to form an overarching aspiration for the site. It offers a bold, future-focused vision for the Waterloo Metro Quarter, one that is grounded in Country, shaped by community, and rich with possibility. This phase is both inspiration and direction, guiding the precinct towards a culturally proud, inclusive and transformative future.

The Barri Marruma framework is designed to inspire and empower project teams. It provides a clear, culturally grounded starting point for embedding First Nations knowledge and leadership throughout the design and development process. Barri Marruma is a tool to build understanding of Country, support confident and respectful decision-making, and lay the foundation for ongoing, long-term integration of cultural values. It ensures that the Waterloo Metro Quarter is a place of lasting value, grounded in relationships, connected to Country, and shaped in genuine partnership with Community.



EARTH

History of Place

Earth is the roots. The context. The stories. The truths.
To understand, you need to know and accept the history.

***"There's history under the ground.
The towers are on top of something."***

Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

The Earth section anchors this report in place, perspective, and people. It invites us to start where all things begin: with the deep time and living knowledge of Country, with the stories and resilience of First Nations communities of Waterloo, and with a growing precinct that is both shaped by history and open to future potential.

Across four chapters, First Stories, Next Stories, Today's Story, and Future Stories, this section brings together the voices, truths, and opportunities that root the Waterloo Metro Quarter project in its cultural and social context. It recognises the enduring presence of Aboriginal people in this place, the impacts of colonisation and urban redevelopment, and the important work already undertaken by community to envision something better.

Here, we acknowledge that the foundations of good development are not just physical. They are relational, built on respect, recognition, and reciprocity. As the first phase of the Barri Marruma framework, Earth is where we listen, learn, and ground ourselves before imagining what can come next.

First Stories - Understanding Country begins with listening to her story

Before we shape what's to come, we must honour what has been, the stories, the belonging, and the unbroken connection held by this place.

Reconnecting with Country begins with recognising the deep time, cultural significance, and natural systems that have shaped this land long before it was known as Waterloo. By acknowledging this context, we open the door to being inspired by it, to shaping a future that is connected, grounded, and guided by Country and its Custodians.

"It's in the land. Even if they knock it down, we remember it."
Community Participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

Before this place was known as Waterloo, it was known as Illpah. This is, and always has been, Gadigal Country.

The Gadigal are saltwater people, coastal custodians who moved with the rhythms of harbour, grassland, and wetland. Yet freshwater was just as vital, and Illpah held deep significance as freshwater Country.

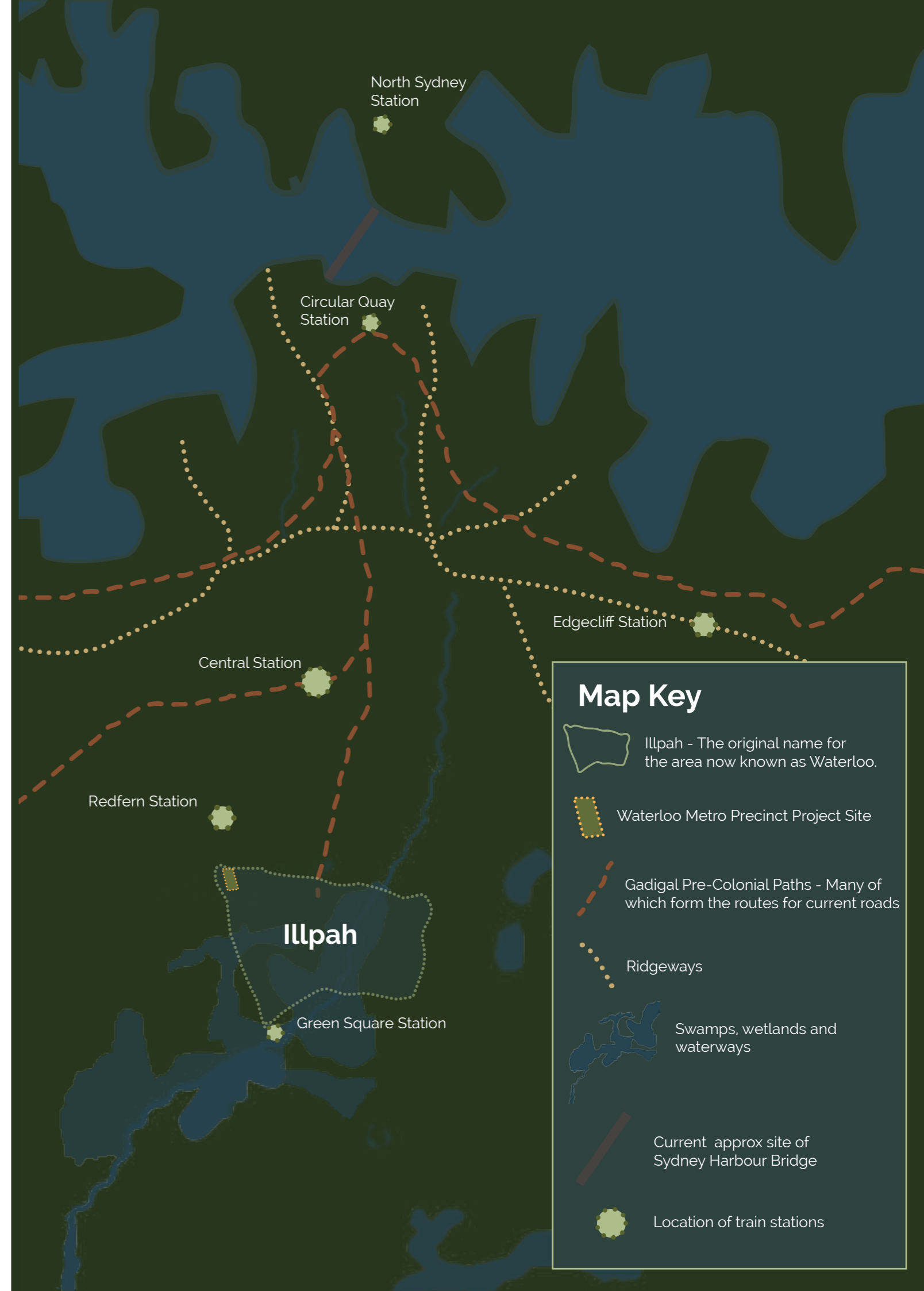
This was an abundant and nourishing pocket of land, shaped by wetlands and Eastern Banksia scrub. It sustained generations with its wild raspberries, birds, wildlife, and plants that offered food, medicine, materials and ceremony.

Before suburb names and site boundaries, this Country was, and remains, part of a broader living landscape. Freshwater once flowed from the ridgelines around Warrane (Sydney Cove), down through sand dunes and wetlands, eventually joining the waters of Gamay (Botany Bay). These flows connected places and people, carrying life across Country.

For millennia, Gadigal people lived with and as part of this place. They cared for Country through deep knowledge, observation and custodianship. And Country cared for them in return.

These foundations have not disappeared. Gadigal ancestors are still present, and Gadigal custodians still hold deep and ongoing responsibilities to this land. As this area changes, we are reminded of the enduring relationships that bind people and place.

By centring these stories, the project can move forward with greater care, informed by the past, inspired by the patterns of Country, and shaped in ways that honour its custodianship.





Next Stories: Urban Aboriginal identity and contemporary history of Waterloo

From a freshwater gathering place to the beating heart of Aboriginal self-determination, the Waterloo-Redfern area continues to be a site of strength, movement, and community. Ilpah, long a place where mobs gathered and sustained themselves through the gifts of Freshwater Country, has evolved into a centre of political, cultural, and social activism. Country remains here, not only in soil and spirit, but in story, in struggle, and in survival.

“They can build new stuff, but the old stuff’s still here underneath.”

Community Participant, June 10 '25
Engagement Session

In the early 20th century, Aboriginal people from across the continent began arriving in Sydney, drawn by the promise of employment, education, and relative freedom from the restrictions of the Aborigines Protection Board. The nearby Eveleigh Railway Workshops, factories along Botany Road, and a growing urban economy offered new opportunities. Waterloo became home to many residents who are part of this shared story. Redfern and Waterloo became places where families reconnected, new lives were started, and urban Aboriginal identity took root.

“Aboriginal people come from all over Australia and they all end up in Redfern/Waterloo areas.”

Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

By the 1960s, this area had become home to more than 35,000 Aboriginal people, a vibrant and diverse population shaping a new kind of community in the city. Despite ongoing systemic discrimination, this era saw the seeds of Aboriginal-controlled institutions begin to grow. In the 1970s, Redfern, alongside Waterloo, became the birthplace of some of the most important organisations in Aboriginal Australia:

- The Aboriginal Legal Service,
- The Aboriginal Medical Service,
- The Aboriginal Housing Company,
- And Radio Redfern (1978), which gave voice to a community often silenced.

This was also the period when Redfern activists took their fight national. In 1972, they established the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House, a powerful assertion of sovereignty and a demand to be heard.

In 1992, Redfern Park was the site of Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Speech, where, in a landmark moment, a sitting Prime Minister acknowledged the injustice and dispossession experienced by Aboriginal people. This recognition did not mark an end, but a continuation, affirming the voices that had already been leading the way.

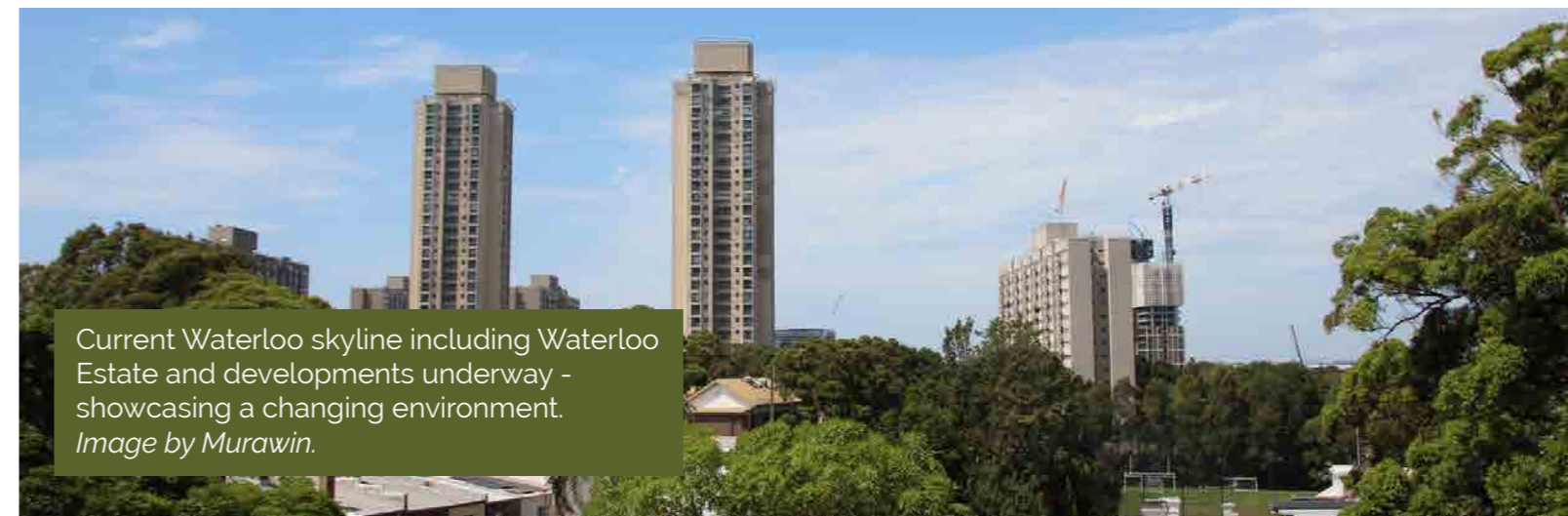
Throughout the 2000s, cultural expression continued to thrive. Yabun Festival, first held in 2001 on Gadigal Country, became one of the largest gatherings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, and a day of celebration, resistance, and pride.

This place is surrounded by and steeped in honoured history. While Redfern is often seen as the technical heart of Aboriginal self-determination, Waterloo, with its housing towers and vibrant streets, remains equally significant as home to a resilient and proud community. These connected, parallel communities exist side by side, bound by geographic proximity and a collective strength that continues to shape the cultural and social fabric of the area.

“Redfern gets all the attention, but we lived in the towers – Waterloo was home.”

Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

Waterloo carries forward a living story of strength, culture, and connection. This is a story that continues to evolve and inspire. As we look ahead, this site must acknowledge, nurture and uphold this legacy. It is an opportunity to ensure relevance, ongoing participation and create a place where future generations of First Nations people and the wider community can belong, thrive, and lead with pride.



Current Waterloo skyline including Waterloo Estate and developments underway - showcasing a changing environment. Image by Murawin.

Contemporary History and Memories

1920s - 1960s

- Local Aboriginal community begins to grow due to availability of jobs at the Eveleigh Railway Workshop and factories on Botany Road, and the opportunity for a better life free from the control of the Aborigines Protection Board.

- In 1968 35,000 Aboriginal people call this area home.

1970

A Aboriginal Legal Service is founded.

1971

B Aboriginal Medical Service is founded.

- Redfern resident Harold Thomas designs the Aboriginal flag.

1972

- Redfern-based Aboriginal activists established a protest camp on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra, known as the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

- Murrawina is founded (closes in 2003)

1983

- 40,000 Years Mural is painted

- (restored by Community in 2018)

1978

D Redfern Radio is established (becomes Koori Radio in 1993)

1977

E 1977 Matavai and Turanga towers opened

1973

- The Block is established (demolished 2011)

F Aboriginal Housing Company is opened

1992

- PM Paul Keating speech acknowledging government wrongs to Aboriginal people, is given in Redfern Park

C Mudgin-Gal is formed for the protection of local people and their families.

1996

G Wyanga Aboriginal Aged Care is founded

2001

- The first Yabun Festival is founded as a continuation for Survivors Day events

H Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation runs their first activities and healing workshops.

2004

I Redfern Community Centre is opened

2006

J NCIE is opened at the old Redfern Public School



Today's Story: Context, Ground Truths and Closing the Gap

To understand Country, we must also understand who lives here now, and what they're navigating. This is a community with deep roots and visible presence, shaped by generations of connection and resilience. The data, connected to Closing the Gap* targets, reveals a reality of both strength and systemic challenge, a contemporary story of First Nations presence in the heart of Sydney.

The statistics opposite reflect real lives. These figures reflect real lives. The Waterloo Metro Quarter has the potential to help Close the Gap, though through First Nations-led development, infrastructure that enables cultural safety and pride, and local wealth that stays in community. A precinct that is grounded in Country, and shaped for future generations.

"Our families are still here, even if things have changed — it's still home."
Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

*The Closing the Gap initiative is a national policy framework aimed at improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. First launched in 2008 and revised in partnership with First Nations leaders in 2020, it sets measurable targets across areas like health, education, employment, housing, and justice. These targets reflect a shared commitment between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve equity and self-determination.

**NOTE: Redfern/Waterloo Study Area. Statistics for this section have been derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2021 for the following two regions:

- ILOC Name: Redfern, Code: ILOC10702604 and
- SA2 Name: Waterloo, Code: 117031647

These two areas have been selected as they represent the statistical geographical footprint that best corresponds to this project boundary.

ILOC is defined as "Indigenous Locations" - these represent small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (urban and rural) that are near each other or that share language, traditional borders, or Native Title. Indigenous Locations (ILOCs) are geographic areas built from whole Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s). The ILOC was used for Redfern. For Waterloo the SA2 boundary was used as the boundary better corresponds to the project area than the ILOC which was a larger area including from Darlington to Alexandria.

Income Inequality

\$862 median weekly income for First Nations households vs \$2,072 overall**

This gap reflects generations of structural inequity and reinforces the need for investment in economic systems and services that are inclusive, culturally safe, and driven by community benefit.

CTG Alignment: Target 8 — Strong economic participation and development of people and communities.

First Nations Population

3.6% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population**

Higher than the national average and the highest concentration within the City of Sydney, this highlights Redfern/Waterloo as a longstanding place of gathering, home, and belonging for First Nations people.

CTG Alignment: Target 1 — Close the gap in life expectancy; Target 16 — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong.

Unemployment Gap

11.8% First Nations vs 6% local average**

The unemployment rate is more than twice the NSW average (4.8%), signalling an urgent need to create accessible training, enterprise, jobs, and employment pathways that are culturally grounded and community-led.

CTG Alignment: Target 7 — Increase the proportion of youth (15–24) in employment, education or training; Target 8 — Economic participation.

Health Disparity

51.7% live with long-term health conditions**

Ongoing health inequalities directly impact quality of life for over half of the community, and indirectly impact many more with carer responsibilities, highlighting wraparound care that strengthens connection to culture, supports carers, and sustains wellbeing across generations.

CTG Alignment: Target 1 — Life expectancy; Target 14 — Mental health and wellbeing.



Future Stories: Project overview and Potential

The Waterloo Metro Quarter (WMQ) is a landmark metro-adjacent development located next to the new Waterloo metro station, benefiting from high visibility, foot traffic, and excellent transport connections. Positioned between Botany Road and Cope Street, with Wellington and Raglan Streets as boundaries, WMQ is set to become a vibrant community hub.

This mixed-use precinct will feature an activated ground plane with public art by First Nations artists, sharing community stories and cultural heritage. Housing options include co-living units that enrich community diversity, social housing, and a childcare centre to support local families.

WMQ offers strong potential to support First Nations employment and enterprise through all stages of the project, from construction to ongoing operations, creating meaningful pathways for community engagement and economic participation.

With retail, eateries, and services within walking distance, and just one metro stop from Sydney's CBD, the precinct is designed as a welcoming place for connection, culture, and work. It comprises four parts: a Northern Precinct with residential and retail; a Central Precinct with residential and affordable housing alongside community facilities; a Southern Precinct offering student and social accommodation; and an underground car park.

Construction began in 2022 alongside the Waterloo metro station works, with the metro station opening in 2024. This multi-phase development continues to grow and evolve, responding to community needs with minimal disruption and ongoing opportunities for local involvement. WMQ is set to be a flagship example of urban renewal that integrates First Nations culture, economic opportunity, and community connection.





WATER is Knowledge

Informed by the landscape it moves through whilst simultaneously changing it.

"Inclusion in the process of this project is of the utmost importance to the Cultural history of the area."

Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

Water represents the voices of community shaping this project. This section outlines the engagement sessions undertaken, detailing who participated, what was shared, and the key outcomes that emerged. It presents inspirational quotes directly from community members, reflecting their lived experiences and aspirations.

Water also identifies priority groups for ongoing engagement and highlights important sentiments and themes to be acknowledged and built upon as the project evolves. Like the flow of water nourishing the land, these conversations sustain the connection between people and place, ensuring the project remains grounded in community insight and collaboration.



Listening to Country: Overview of the June 2025 Engagement Sessions

On June 10th 2025, Murawin facilitated a day of community engagement with local First Nations community members, both online and in person. Three separate sessions were held throughout the day, bringing together community members, Murawin facilitators, representatives from the Waterloo Collective development team, and Aileen Sage Architects.

The intention behind the sessions was to hold space for open, honest dialogue, grounded in respect, curiosity and truth-telling. Each session focused on a different aspect of the project: sharing a project update, reflecting on memories and connection to place, and imagining possibilities for design, storytelling, and community involvement. Session 1 opened with updates from the Waterloo Collective and Aileen Sage. While this session was largely driven by project team presentations, the community engaged deeply, asking important, at times difficult, questions. There was some pain in the room, expressed respectfully and received with openness. The team's honesty and transparency were appreciated, creating a platform for shared understanding.

Sessions 2 and 3 were more fluid and community-led. These sessions were filled with warmth, memory, and creative energy. Community members shared reflections of growing up in Waterloo, the deep bonds between families, and the grief that comes with disconnection from place. There was also joy and pride, and a striking abundance of big, bold, and brilliant ideas. These included aspirations around supporting the Black economy, creative industries, accessible services, and spaces that feel safe, inclusive, and distinctly Aboriginal. These ideas form the foundation of this project, and directly inform the design principles in the Fire section, and the Vision for Country in the Sky section of this report.

Engagement Approach: Listening, Sharing, Shaping

Murawin designed the engagement process to serve multiple purposes:

- Session 1 centred on information sharing, providing updates on the project's evolution and the contributions to date from earlier engagement.
- Session 2 created space for reflection and connection to place, revisiting themes first surfaced in 2019 to see what continues to hold meaning for community today.
- Session 3 was a forward-looking workshop, inviting creative thinking about design, storytelling, and long-term community involvement.

The sessions were held in an accessible location close to the project site, and tailored to support safe, inclusive conversations. In smaller sessions, development team members stepped out of the room to create space for more intimate discussions. Participants were provided with an information booklet to take home and share with family and friends, as well as A3 worksheets that were highly visual and spacious, allowing for generous written feedback and creative input.

An additional online session was held using the same structure, ensuring flexibility for community members unable to attend in person.

Cultural Safety and Accessibility

The structure and format of the engagement, including the use of graphic-rich materials, familiar locations, and smaller group sizes were intentionally designed to foster cultural safety, reduce barriers to participation, and support intergenerational sharing.

Listening and Co-Creation

A defining feature of this engagement process was the balance between listening to community wisdom and inviting collaborative visioning. From revisiting earlier insights to surfacing new aspirations, the sessions affirmed that those who know Country best are best placed to shape its future.

Session Snapshots:

Session 1 – Project Update & Truth-Telling

A robust and open session where community asked important questions and expressed both hope and concern. The tone was respectful and grounded. There was curiosity, some hurt, and a strong desire to be heard and informed.

“This is a strong First Nations community, but now the community is hidden, pushed aside, a second thought.” - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

“Seems like Aboriginal Culture is being pushed aside by greed by the non-Aboriginal community building high rise housing.” - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session.

This first session provided participants with a comprehensive update on the Waterloo development. It covered:

- The purpose and scope of the project
- Progress to date, including the outcomes of earlier community engagement
- Key themes and design directions already shaped by Aboriginal input
- Integration of Country and culture in early-stage design and the public art plan

This session was essential in ensuring transparency and shared understanding, setting the foundation for deeper discussion in Sessions 2 and 3. It was also a moment to acknowledge and honour the work already done by the community and design teams.



Session 2 – Memories of Place

A warm and reflective space. Many memories of growing up in Waterloo were shared, centred on family, connection and resilience. This session allowed for emotional truth-telling, as well as joy.

“Redfern/Waterloo was a place for all Aboriginal people. Most came from Country and the homes i.e. Coota Girls, Kinchella Boys. The connection to the others finding their families.” - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

“I remember Raglan Street before the Metro. A lot of Public Housing and low socio-economic living.” - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

“We have called Waterloo home since the 70s.” - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

Building on the 2019 Stories of Place report, this session revisited five community-identified themes that had previously informed early cultural direction. Participants were invited to reflect on the ongoing relevance of these themes, and share any additional stories or perspectives they felt were missing.

Discussion prompts included:

- Which of the original five themes still feel important today?
- Are there new stories, local champions or parts of Country that need greater visibility?
- What has changed in your connection to this place since Metro construction began?
- Do you still feel a sense of community here?
- What would help make this area feel welcoming — especially for mob?
- What are the key stories of people, place or Country that you want carried forward?

This session honoured memory and experience, while also surfacing the impacts of displacement, change, and resilience.



**Raglan Street
Circa 1990**

Image Source: City of Sydney Archives, "Street view, Raglan Street Waterloo, 1961," Item 057/057722, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/583636>

Session 3 – Future Storytelling & Big Ideas

An uplifting and creative session. Community members shared bold visions for the future, with a strong focus on Aboriginal business, art, cultural identity and making the precinct truly inclusive. These ideas are the heartbeat of the project's future direction.

"Historical timeline from Invasion to Present Day (epicentre of Aboriginal Activism and Self Determination)." - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

"Redfern/Waterloo history pavements place around Waterloo Station – Aboriginal based." - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

"More Aboriginal stores or places where we can go to... for Aboriginal people to sell their Artwork, shirts and other clothing things." - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

"More Dreamtime Stories depicted. Whale Dreaming. Busking areas. Black markets. Employment within public areas." - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

"Areas for Elders – so important. Childcare and holiday centre that's affordable for everyone." - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

"Always have Aboriginal input. Very Important! History of Aboriginal Land Rights." - Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

The final in-person session focused on shaping the future. Drawing on what matters most to the community, including cultural identity, everyday memories, and intergenerational strength. Participants shared ideas on how these could be embedded in future design and governance.

Key prompts included:

- How could the five key themes from 2019 be brought to life through design, art or experience?
- What would support local families, culture and wellbeing – especially in community spaces or childcare facilities?
- What does pride look like? What makes you stop and pay attention?
- What types of spaces feel culturally safe and connected?
- What would you like to see done differently – something that truly supports mob and long-term benefit?
- How would you like to stay involved in shaping this place going forward?

The workshop highlighted community appetite for continued involvement, and an emphasis on action, not just consultation.

What still feels important to you?

What's changed?

What would you like to see more of?

Five Key Themes from 2019

1. Waterloo as the Epicentre of Aboriginal Self-Determination: 3

Waterloo-Redfern is a place of strong Aboriginal activism, leadership and community. It has shaped national conversations about rights, housing, health, and justice.

2. Stories of Place:

Everyday and cultural memories – from Dreaming stories and resistance to school days, local heroes, and community gathering places.

3. Stories of the Skies:

Knowledge passed down through the stars, moon and sky – seasonal patterns, constellations like the Emu in the Sky, and stories that track time and Country.

4. Contemporary Place Significance:

Waterloo continues to be a living place of culture. It's a place where Elders pass on knowledge, families grow, and identity is carried forward.

5. Places of Significance:

Landmarks and locations that hold meaning – from ancient wetlands and old gathering spots to housing towers, The Block, corner shops and bus stops.



Online Session

An insightful and intimate session focussed on advocacy and inclusion of First Nations people who have a disability or care for those with a disability, both those you can see and this invisible ones, especially for children and the importance of inclusion plans.

An online version of the above sessions was also held, using the same structure and discussion prompts. This ensured that community members who were unable to attend in person could still share their insights, stories, and ideas.



Community Voices: Thematic Summary of Written Survey Responses

The following section presents the emerging themes from our recent engagement sessions and includes direct excerpts from the written surveys completed by Aboriginal community members. These quotes are grouped into eight key themes that reflect the community's priorities, aspirations, and concerns:

- Black Economy & Aboriginal Business Empowerment
- Cultural Safety & Visibility
- Youth, Elders & Intergenerational Connection
- Affordable & Inclusive Access – Especially for Housing, Childcare & Commercial Tenancy
- Feature Arts, Making & Storytelling
- Community-Controlled Governance
- Disability Inclusion & Accessibility
- Meaningful and Ongoing Co-Design

All quotes are presented verbatim, unedited and in the exact words written by participants on the day. While the sessions were also recorded (with consent), only written responses are quoted directly here. Verbal discussions have been used solely to help shape and support the thematic framing.

Upholding the integrity of each voice is essential. Our role is not to reinterpret what has been shared, but to listen carefully, draw connections, and identify the underlying themes that can guide this project forward in a respectful, community-led way.

Community responses from June 10, 2025 session to the question:

What do you think is important for the future of Waterloo?

Black Economy and Aboriginal Business Empowerment

"First Nations Economy. Employment. Trade. Business."

"Local traditional knowledge as well as the rich Black Political History"

"Local small business"

"First Nations presence so community feels a sense of ownership."

Future Arts, Making and Storytelling

"History of Aboriginal history and presence in Redfern. Honesty."

"Red, Black, Yellow (black pride) large scale artwork and design."

"Aboriginal Art and Design. Gathering Spaces for public to sit and gather. Public toilets (24hrs)"

"Artworks on billboards and their stories, so people can feel proud of our culture."

"Local Artists that represent the local history and identities"

"More Dreamtime Stories depicted. Whale Dreaming."

"Murals. Trees + greenery. Amphitheatre. Festivals."

"History of Aboriginal Land Rights."

"Busking areas. Black markets."

Disability Inclusion and Accessibility

"Aged care very very important to Redfern/Waterloo."

"More Cultural Murals and acknowledging the First Nations Aboriginal Activist women displayed."

"Disability inclusion." (implied through references to aged care and community spaces)

"Safe spaces: Childcare, Elders Spaces, Community Spaces, Yarning Circle Spaces"

Meaningful and Ongoing Co-design

"Just to have further input as a community member."

"More consultation and feedback throughout the process. Invite to the opening!"

"Hold more of these sessions for community organisations to make them visible."

"By further discussions as to when/who/what before development."

Cultural Safety and Visibility

"Cultural Names for these spaces"

"Inclusion in the process of this project is of the utmost importance to the Cultural history of the area."

"More Aboriginal memorials i.e. statues, artwork on buildings, street names, English and Language."

"Always have Aboriginal input. Very Important!"

Affordable and Inclusive Access - Especially Housing, Childcare, and Commercial Tenancy

"Affordable shopping precincts."

"More stable housing for First Nations people."

"Social housing providers also need to review policies on housing debt in households experiencing domestic and family violence, to ensure that exclusion from the highest priority waiting list does not effectively prevent victims—including children—from establishing a safe home away from the perpetrator."

"Safe spaces: Childcare, Elders Spaces, Community Spaces, Yarning Circle Spaces"

"There is an urgent need to increase crisis and transitional accommodation and to increase social housing stock."

"Community room which can be used by everyone. Employ Aboriginal people. Cultural Safety."

Youth, Elders and Intergenerational Connection

"Areas for Elders - so important. Childcare and holiday centre that's affordable for everyone."

"Children are our future: - Maybe Tribal Warrior put in a tender to run the childcare centre - Program space for our children to attend weekly Tribal Warrior programs - Elders Spaces - Play areas for Children"

"Program space for our children to attend weekly Tribal Warrior programs"

"Holiday centre, open and affordable for Koori children."

"Park screenings of Aboriginal Films and open air plays."

Community Controlled Governance

"More input from Aboriginal Elders."

"Always have Aboriginal input. Very Important!"

"Just to have further input as a community member."

"Invite to the opening!"



Community
Voices





Designing with Community, for Community – Key User Groups

Throughout the engagement sessions, participants consistently spoke to the needs of different groups within the Aboriginal community who should be actively considered in the design, programming and future operations of the development. While each participant brought their own unique perspectives, certain user groups emerged as shared priorities: from Elders to children, artists to small business owners. The following groups reflect those most commonly discussed and most in need of intentional support.

Design opportunities and spatial responses for each of these groups are further explored in the Fire (Design Principles) and Sky (Vision for Country) sections of this report.

Elders

Elders were identified as the heart of the community — holders of knowledge, memory and care. Participants advocated for dedicated, comfortable, and accessible spaces for Elders to gather, rest, share stories, and feel safe.

“Areas for Elders — so important.”

Children and Young People

Safe, engaging, and affordable spaces for children and young people were described as essential. There was a strong call for childcare, youth programs, and spaces where young people could connect to culture, creativity and each other.

“Childcare and holiday centre that’s affordable for everyone.”

Mothers and Families

Families, particularly mothers, need support structures to thrive in the precinct. Affordable childcare, gathering spaces, and culturally safe parenting environments were seen as critical to community wellbeing.

“More facilities for mothers with babies.”

Mob from Out of Town

The area continues to be a destination for Aboriginal people from other parts of NSW and beyond. Several participants emphasised the need for services and places of welcome for those visiting for health, family or business reasons.

“Aboriginal people come from all over Australia and they all end up in Redfern/Waterloo areas.”

Aboriginal Artists, Creatives and Cultural Practitioners

The creative economy was a consistent theme. Participants envisioned spaces where Aboriginal artists and performers could showcase their work, be paid for their practice, and connect with local and visiting audiences.

“More Dreamtime Stories depicted. Whale Dreaming. Busking areas. Black markets.”

Local Aboriginal Business Owners

Aboriginal economic participation and self-determination were seen as core to the vision for this place. The precinct should support Aboriginal-led retail, social enterprise and employment opportunities — not just token inclusion.

“More Aboriginal stores or places where we can go to... for Aboriginal people to sell their Artwork, shirts and other clothing things.”



FIRE

Guiding Principles for Action

As a catalyst for change. Through fire comes new growth and regeneration. Working together enables collaborative conversations allowing transformation.



“We want to see black excellence. Show our people as successful people. We don’t want to just be in a history mural as a thing of the past. We want to see our future there too.”

Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

Fire represents a force for transformation. Like a cultural burn, this stage of work sets in motion the next chapter. This energy mirrors the process of collaborative placemaking: it is only through working together that we ignite shared purpose, make space for truth-telling, and create new paths forward.

Building on the insights shared in Earth and Water, this section outlines the key Guiding Principles that emerged through engagement with local Aboriginal community members. These principles should guide future decisions across the design, delivery, activation and long-term operations of the Waterloo Metro Quarter.

They are aspirational, but also practical instructions to shape development and design. If correctly reflected on and applied this will create an outcome for Waterloo Metro Quarter that is grounded in lived experience and bring to fruition future hope.

Guiding Principle 1:

Amplify Blak Excellence

Waterloo Metro Quarter will support a living economy for Blak excellence, where First Nations businesses, ideas, and creative practices drive prosperity, pride and visibility.

Community Aspirations & Insights:

The community expressed a strong desire to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent, innovation and enterprise reflected in the design, tenancy, and operations of the precinct.

Opportunities:

- Prioritise Aboriginal-owned businesses in tenancy plans, with affordable models and long-term support.
- Develop an Expression of Interest process tailored to First Nations retail and social enterprise.
- Create an Aboriginal-led sub-precinct focused on enterprise, creative economy, or youth employment.

Challenges:

- Avoiding superficial inclusion or last-minute tenant placement.
- Building genuine long-term commercial viability for Blak-owned businesses.
- Addressing gentrification pressures and affordability barriers.



“Garala” by Nicole Monks

Located on the Wee Hur Regent Street student accommodation the 38m high spear reflects First Nations talent and ongoing connection to the Redfern/Waterloo area.
Image by Murawin.



Cultural Landscape Garden at South Eveleigh Precinct
 An example of an inclusive space for all with cultural design features.
Image by Murawin.

Guiding Principle 2:

Design for Everyone

Waterloo Metro Quarter will be a place that is actively inclusive. Designed for Elders and babies, parents and teenagers, and people of all abilities. This is a place ensuring care, support and access for all is a fundamental driver for design decisions.

Community Aspirations & Insights:

Community members emphasised the importance of access to affordable childcare, cultural spaces for Elders, and inclusive services. There is a need for welcoming, functional spaces that reflect the realities of Aboriginal families and support community life.

<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design an Aboriginal-led childcare facility with input from local families and ACCOs. • Ensure universal access is embedded into all public domain and building designs. • Include cultural design features (e.g. yarning circles, shade, signage in language) to support intergenerational use. 	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing commercial pressures with space for care and community. • Ensuring inclusive design goes beyond compliance to culturally safe experiences. • Securing early buy-in from service providers and funders.
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Guiding Principle 3:

Celebrate Local Culture with Pride

Waterloo Metro Quarter will be homeground for Blak stories. Unapologetically proud this place will celebrate resistance, resilience and truth-telling, in permanent and public ways, woven through the entire fabric of this place.

Community Aspirations & Insights:

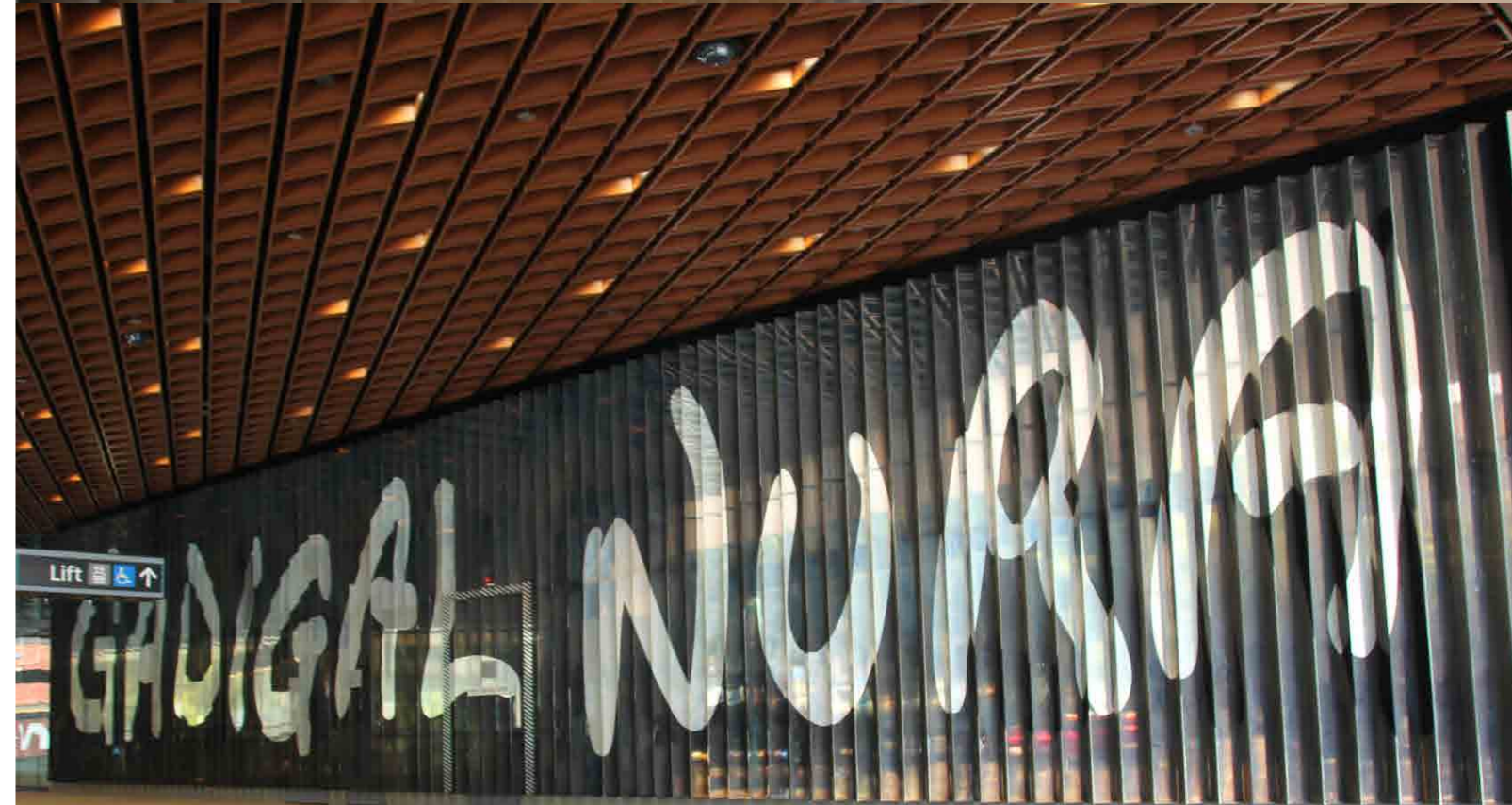
Community called for cultural pride to be visible throughout the precinct. Naming, public art, recognition of local heroes and honest representations of Redfern's past were seen as essential to honouring the community's identity.

Opportunities:

- Co-design public artworks and naming strategies with community, led by local artists and knowledge-holders.
- Embed interpretation elements that reflect both trauma and triumph.
- Incorporate visible cultural cues — colours, symbols, signage — across the site.

Challenges:

- Navigating political discomfort with truth-telling or protest histories.
- Avoiding token gestures or designs that lose authenticity.
- Creating space for shared identity without erasing the specificity of Aboriginal experience.



Waterloo Metro Station Installation

Translating to Footprints on Gadgial Land, the installation is a reminder of where the station is built. *Image by Murawin.*



Cope St Mural
 Examples of murals reminding the public of the Aboriginal history of Redfern/Waterloo can be found all around the area. This one is situated at the start of Cope st leading down to the Waterloo Metro.
Image by Murawin.

Guiding Principle 4:

Embed Shared Power

Waterloo Metro Quarter will be a place of true belonging and shared power. A place shaped, activated and cared for by the people who call it home, through community-led governance and long-term decision-making.

Community Aspirations & Insights:

Community emphasised the importance of Aboriginal leadership and involvement not just in the design stage, but throughout the life of the precinct. Local organisations and representatives should have a clear role in shaping tenancy, programming, and accountability.

Opportunities:

- Establish a Redfern/Waterloo Cultural Safety Reference Group to guide implementation and tenancy decisions.
- Co-develop a governance model with community — potentially a working group or advisory board.
- Involve local ACCOs in childcare, health, disability and cultural programming delivery.

Challenges:

- Ensuring governance structures have real authority, not just symbolic presence.
- Avoiding fatigue from repeated consultation without action.
- Sustaining momentum across political and funding cycles



SKY

Vision for Country

Creating connection between the past, present and future - from truth telling to transformation.

The sky is where our stories, vision and dreams come together in a words of innovation and possibility.

“That it is a safe place. That we are safe here. That our kids are safe. That the future of our community is still here and always will be.”

Community participant, June 10 '25 Engagement Session

The Vision for Country is the culmination of this Connecting with Country framework. It draws from Earth, Water and Fire to articulate a clear and inspiring north star for the project team. It is both a reflection of community voices and a call to action.

Named Made (by Redfern), this Vision is an orienting guide: a starting point to frame decisions and keep the project aligned with Country and community as it evolves. It inspires future collaboration, as a shared compass for design, governance, tenancy, activation, and ongoing care.

This Vision recognises that we are standing on the shoulders of generations, honouring resistance and survival, while imagining bold futures for Waterloo and its people. It acknowledges the trauma and displacement experienced here, while asserting strength, identity, and creativity as the foundations for renewal.

It reminds us: the work does not end with consultation or construction. This is an ongoing journey, to be guided by integrity, community leadership, and care for Country.



Vision for Country

This is Country, connected to the city — a convenient cultural hub, shaped by Blak excellence and enriched by diverse colours and cultures.

Made by Redfern, made for all.

M

“Made (by Redfern)” Vision for Country Narrative

Imagine a precinct where you know you're in Redfern, not just by the signs, but by the feeling.

A

The air carries language and laughter. Murals speak to resistance, resilience and pride. The retail bustles with Black-owned business.

D

You smell bush foods, hear stories from Elders, and see young people walking with purpose, because they belong here. Culture is not just acknowledged. It is embedded.

This place could only be here, in Illpah, on the unceded lands of the Gadigal people, in a suburb that has long been home to Blak activism, creativity, and kinship.

E

Redfern has always been a gathering place, for protest, for protection, for progress. Its streets hold the stories of resistance and renewal. And Waterloo has always been home. Now, with a transport-connected, highly visible site at its centre, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to show what a self-determined future can look like in plain sight.

The precinct is unapologetically Blak and beautifully public.

Architecture takes its cues from Country, materials with meaning, sightlines that honour sky, entries that invite you in. Buildings host creativity, care, healing, enterprise and joy. This is a precinct that welcomes everyone, but is shaped by First Nations people: made for mob, by mob, and safe for all. It is governed with care and accountability.

It's a place created in collaboration and activated by the community. Cultural governance is built in from the ground up: ensuring that decisions are made with integrity, spaces are cared for over time, and that participation is real and ongoing. Community has a seat at every table.



It's Mob.

It's Activism.

It's Dreaming.

It's for Everyone.



It's

MADE

(by Redfern)



Deadly Design Collaborative Art and Place Based Story Telling

Nowra Alive – Collaborative Community Murals

Location: Yuin Country (Nowra), NSW
Development Stage: Concept Design > Activation

Aligned Principles:

- Cultural Safety & Place-Based Pride
- Community Ownership & Governance

Overview: Led by local artist Aunty Noel Butler and muralist Hugues Sineux, the Nowra Alive mural was co-created with Elders and community members. The work tells stories of place, culture, and resilience, with paint days inviting public contribution.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: Shows how collaborative artwork can be a vehicle for intergenerational exchange and public pride. This model could translate into a community mural, sculptural or built interventions around the precinct.

Key Features: collaborative artmaking, community workshops, public storytelling

Bringing It to Life: Strategic Focus Areas

This section of the report brings the Made (by Redfern) Vision for Country into real-world focus. It responds directly to the voices and aspirations shared by local Aboriginal community members through recent engagement, including calls for cultural safety, creative enterprise, inclusive gathering spaces, intergenerational support, and pathways for Blak success. Through a curated selection of local and international case studies, this chapter demonstrates how these values have already been realised in practice, and how they can guide outcomes on this site. These examples are not theoretical; they show how communities have created culturally grounded, economically viable, and socially impactful places that are both beautiful and enduring.

The case studies are structured around three Strategic Focus Areas that anchor the Made by Redfern vision:

Deadly Design – co-design, interface, legacy

Blak Enterprise – strategic opportunities, procurement, tenancy

Culture in Action – governance, operations, events

Together, these focus areas span all stages of development, from early concept and co-design, to construction, leasing, activation, and long-term site operations. Each case study is mapped to one or more of the Made by Redfern Principles and a corresponding project phase. Some go deeper, presented as "Big Moves", offering in-depth ideas for how a particular vision or strategy could be practically realised onsite, with pathways for further development described in the "Next Steps" chapter.

This section is both visionary and grounded. It offers proof points that culturally rich, inclusive, and community-benefiting projects are not only possible, they already exist. They provide a roadmap for what success could look like at Redfern: bold, meaningful, and made with mob.





My St Pauls – Participatory Photography Exhibition

Location: Bristol, UK
Development Stage: Concept Design > Activation / Operations

Aligned Principles:

- Cultural Safety & Place-Based Pride
- Community Ownership & Governance

Overview: "My St Pauls" was a participatory photography project where residents co-curated a public exhibition that transformed the visual language of their neighbourhood. Large-format portraits were pasted across building walls, celebrating local identity.

Relevance to Made in Redfern:

A bold visual approach to storytelling and reclaiming public space. In Redfern, a similar model could bring pride and visibility to local residents through façade-based or integrated art. Could be a permanent installation, or a rating space for collaborative community input.

Key Features: community-led curation, visual storytelling, transformation of space

Walu-Win Mesh Panels – Co-Design with Local Women and Artists

Location: Wiradjuri Country (Bathurst), NSW
Development Stage: Design Development

Aligned Principles:

- Cultural Safety & Place-Based Pride
- Community Ownership & Governance

Overview: At the Walu-win Wellbeing Centre in Orange, NSW, a key architectural feature is the perforated mesh panels that wrap parts of the building's façade. These panels were developed through a co-design process led by Kaunitz Yeung Architecture in partnership with the Orange Aboriginal Medical Service (OAMS) and Wiradjuri community members. Rather than being decorative afterthoughts, the mesh panels are embedded with community-chosen patterns and meanings, reflecting local cultural narratives and relationships to Country. Through a series of iterative consultations and workshops with Elders, health workers, and community leaders, the design team shaped not only the visual expression of the panels but also ensured their placement supported cultural safety; offering privacy, shading, and storytelling in one. The result is a highly functional and culturally resonant facade that signals Aboriginal leadership in both health and design, contributing to a broader sense of ownership and pride in the space.

BIG IDEA: The Walu-Win process offers a precedent for deep, values-led cultural collaboration that shapes the design language and materiality for the Building 2 Podium. It goes beyond surface-level aesthetics, anchoring identity in place.

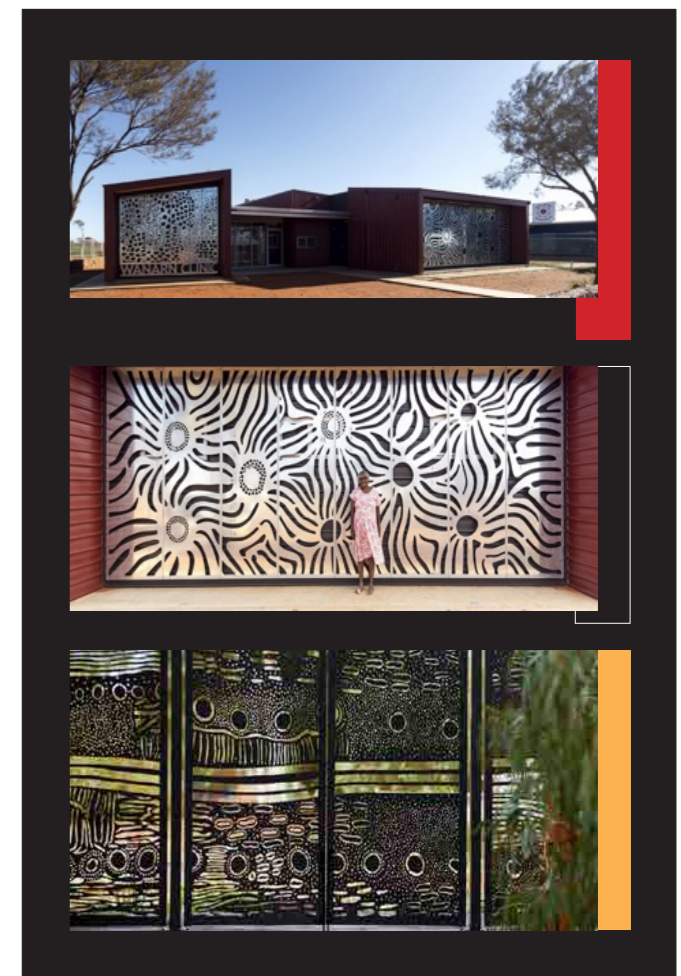
Application to Made in Redfern: We propose that Building 2 build on the design by Aileen Sage to co-design the a series of integrated Possum Skin Cloak-inspired panels, designed in collaboration with Mudgin-gal Women's Centre. These would form a key part of the podium experience and connection to the childcare space housed within. Visible to the public, welcoming, and educational. This would embed culture into form, while celebrating the local community.

Key Features:

- Deep co-design with community members
- Respectful architectural integration of cultural knowledge
- Platform for local women and storytelling



Image Source: <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/area-st-pauls-permanently-transformed-5157940>



Blak Enterprise

Making Places for Creativity and Commercial Success

PHIVE – Activated Curated Precinct

Location: Dharug Country (Parramatta), NSW

Development Stage: Strategic Direction/Concept Design > Operations

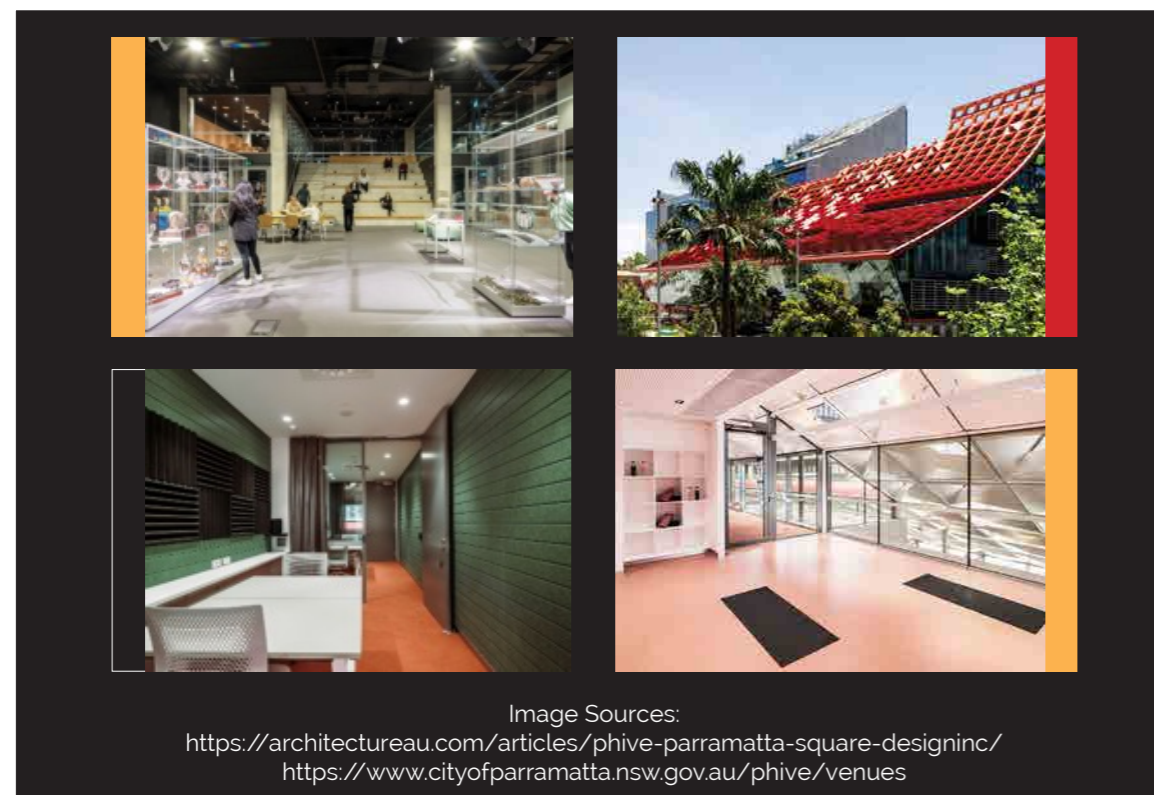
Aligned Principles:

- Blak Success & Economic Inclusion
- Community Ownership & Governance
- Cultural Safety and Place Based Pride

Overview: PHIVE is a state-of-the-art cultural and civic hub at 5 Parramatta Square. With over six floors of mixed-use space, including a public library, council chambers, café, cultural venues, and maker labs, plus sound studios and tech labs. It's designed to support creativity, connectivity, and innovation. The maker spaces are open to the public, equipped for arts, crafts, science, and tech workshops, with full AV support and a resident tech officer.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: PHIVE demonstrates how to integrate creative infrastructure, such as maker spaces, tech studios and performance venue, within a transit-rich precinct. For Made in Redfern, this offers a powerful model: Aboriginal-led maker labs and sound studios could anchor cultural enterprise, programming, and community connection, reinforcing cultural presence and skills pathways.

Key Features: glass-fronted workshops, creative cluster, flexible spaces



Building BloQs – Open Access Workshops

Location: London, UK

Development Stage: Strategic Direction/Concept Design > Operations

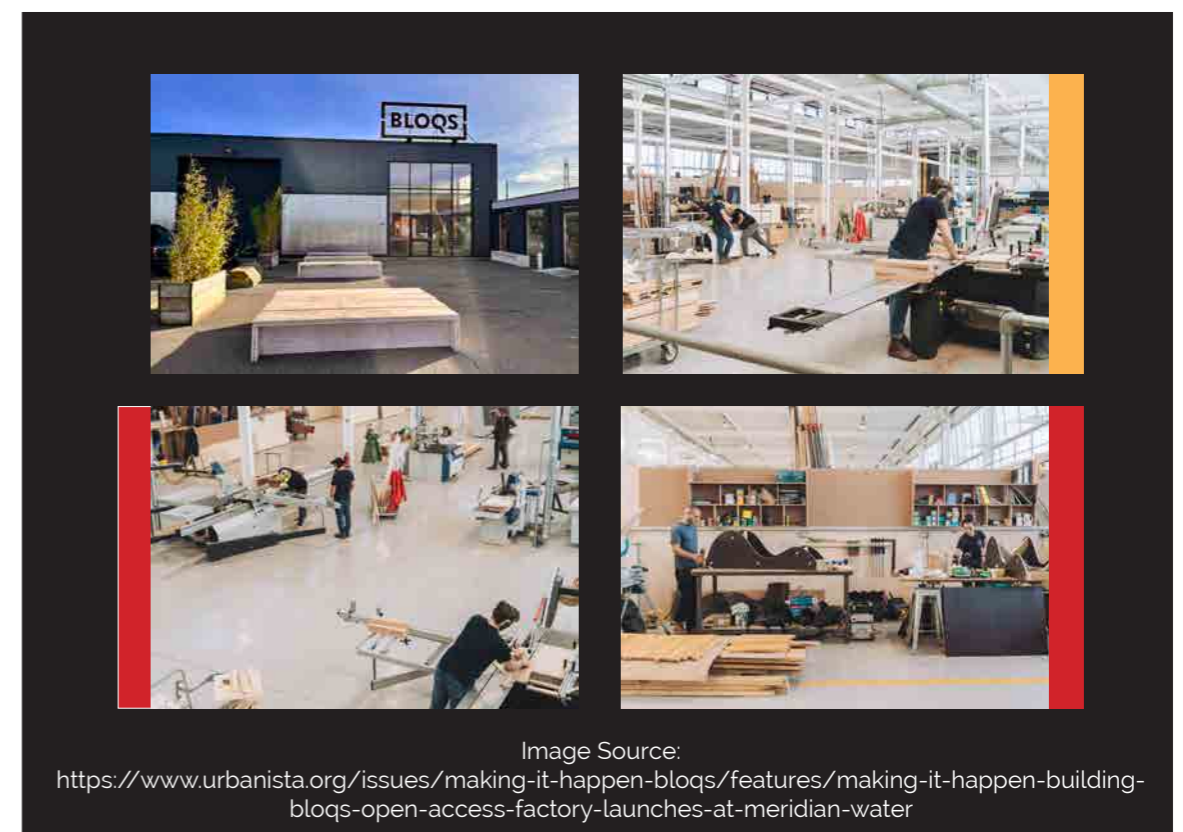
Aligned Principles:

- Blak Success & Economic Inclusion
- Community Ownership & Governance

Overview: Building BloQs is a non-profit open workshop that provides access to tools and workspaces for makers, from fashion to furniture. As a social enterprise, it enables local creatives and small businesses to build, test, and grow. The facility fosters learning, affordability, and visibility.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: Building BloQs offers a model for sustainable social enterprise and vocational learning. A similar approach could provide First Nations creatives in Redfern with tools, resources, and a visible base for creating and trading.

Key Features: open access workshops, affordable manufacturing space, co-location



Art as Enterprise and Social Support The Torch Project – Community Inclusion and Healing

Location: Wurundjeri Country (Carlton), VIC
Development Stage: Tenancy Curation

Aligned Principles:

- Blak Success & Economic Inclusion
- Intergenerational Support & Accessibility

Overview: The Torch supports First Nations artists across Victoria who are incarcerated or recently released, providing mentorship, art sales, and pathways to economic independence. Their model has supported hundreds of artists to heal, earn, and connect with community.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: Shows how art and enterprise can intersect to support those most marginalised. Redfern could host a dedicated retail/gallery outlet for community arts and social enterprise.

Key Features: social impact, economic inclusion, arts mentoring

Image Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/29/the-art-project-aiming-to-keep-australias-indigenous-people-out-of-jail>



Spinifex Skateboards – Youth, Art, and Confidence

Location: Eastern Arrernte Country (Santa Teresa), NT
Development Stage: Tenancy Curation

Aligned Principles:

- Blak Success & Economic Inclusion
- Intergenerational Support & Accessibility

Overview: Founded by ex-pro skater Nicky Hayes in collaboration with , Spinifex is a skateboard brand and youth enterprise that uses creativity to teach life and confidence skills. In partnership with the Art and Aboriginal Culture Corporation (AAAC), the initiative received funding to build a covered skate facility and offer regular lessons in skateboarding, confidence, and life skills. Spinifex collaborates with local Aboriginal artists to produce culturally rich, distinctive skateboard decks and merchandise, celebrating identity while supporting creative enterprise. Through skate tours and outreach, Spinifex connects young people to the wider world while anchoring them in pride of Place. It's a business, a community hub, and a youth space.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: Around 31% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experiencing high or very high psychological distress accessed mental health services in 2018–19. A La Trobe University study found that access to culture and community is a major protective factor



in improving mental health outcomes for Aboriginal youth. In Redfern, a significant percentage of young residents identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, reflecting the area's long-standing role as a cultural and political hub for First Nations communities. Establishing a youth-focused creative enterprise in this context, combining mentorship, cultural connection, and skill-building, presents a powerful opportunity to support identity, wellbeing, and leadership among local Aboriginal young people.

Spinifex demonstrates an inspiring example of how an urban precinct can support youth-led cultural activation and skills pathways. In Redfern, a similar approach could see the development of a culturally safe, Aboriginal-run youth facility, blending recreation, enterprise, and arts into a place that mentors young people, showcases talent, and keeps economic value in community hands. The model also shows how subcultures (like skateboarding) can become powerful tools for cultural connection and economic inclusion. An empowering youth-focused Redfern initiative could include a retail element, skills training, and a cultural brand built with local pride.

Key Features: youth space and leadership, funding partnerships, creative enterprise

Image Sources: <https://www.slamskateboarding.com/item/4767-the-story-of-spinifex-skateboards>
"Healing through culture": Aboriginal young people's experiences of social and emotional wellbeing impacts of cultural strengthening programs" <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213423001874>
<https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/3-10-access-to-mental-health-services>

Culture in Action

Cultural Pride in Public Space

Yagan Square – Culture in the City Centre

Location: Whadjuk Noongar Country (Perth), WA

Development Stage: Operations, Activation

Aligned Principles:

- Cultural Safety & Place-Based Pride
- Community Ownership & Governance

Overview: Yagan Square is a civic space designed in collaboration with Noongar Elders. It includes storytelling elements, architectural expression of Country, and digital towers for language and art. It is both destination and statement.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: A strong precedent for combining placemaking and cultural pride in a highly visible urban site. Inspires Redfern to hold a similar cultural anchor at its heart, calendar of events and rotating and exciting attractions for visitors.

Key Features: First Nations-led design, integrated art and landscape, high-visibility site



Gathering Space for All Generations Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre & Balim Balim Kindergarten

Location: Wyndham Vale, VIC

Development Stage: Tenancy Curation / Operations

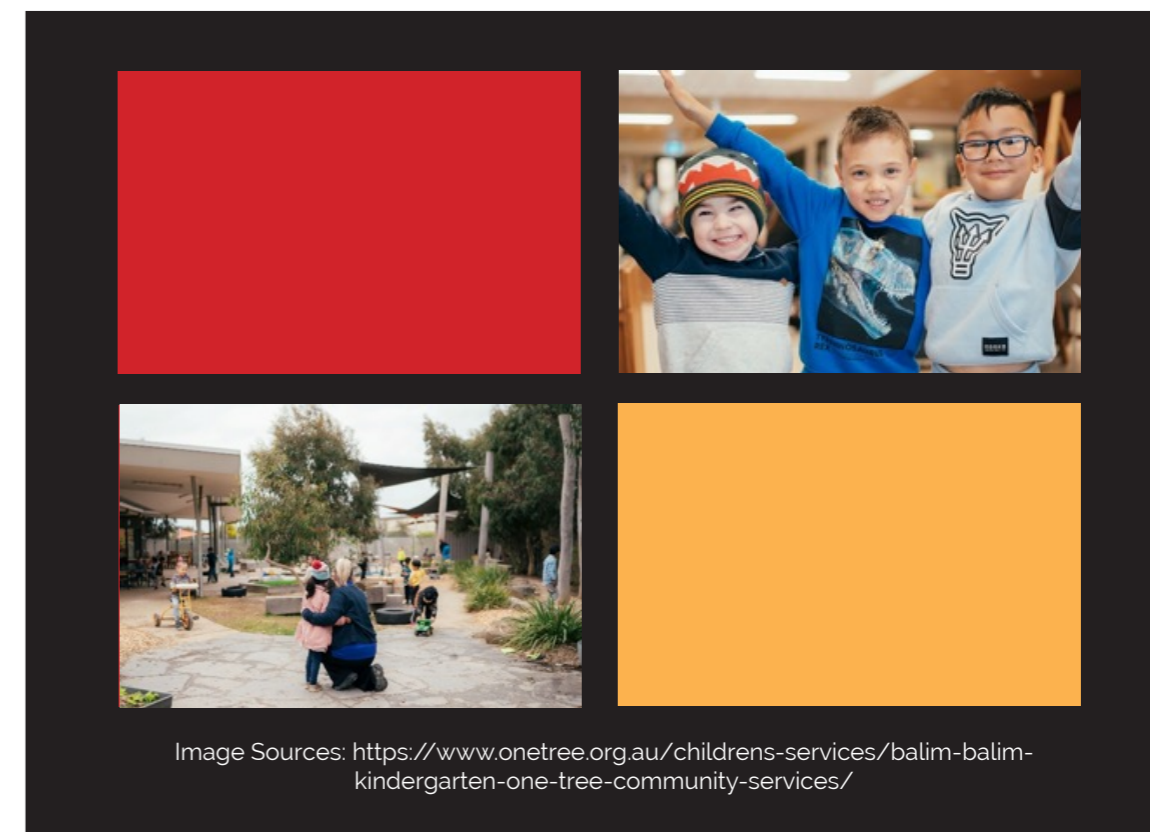
Aligned Principles:

- Intergenerational Support & Accessibility
- Community Ownership & Governance
- Cultural Safety & Place-Based Pride

Overview: The Centre includes an Aboriginal kindergarten and shared community space designed in partnership with Elders and families. The flexible design allows for gatherings, celebrations, health programs, and more, anchoring culture and care.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: A possible model for a Redfern cultural and community facility that supports families, children, Elders, and non-Indigenous neighbours. It could be a space for cultural continuity and daily life, embedded in the precinct.

Key Features: welcoming shared space, early years programming, cultural co-design



Governance and Enterprise Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre – Tourism Hub and Cultural Pride

Location: Kuku Yalanji Country (Mossman Gorge), QLD
Development Stage: Operations, Activation

Aligned Principles:

- Blak Success & Economic Inclusion
- Community Ownership & Governance

Overview: The Mossman Gorge Centre is a gateway to Country, offering guided walks, a café, art shop, and training for local guides. It is governed by the local community and presents a model for how tourism can create real local benefit.

Relevance to Made in Redfern: Redfern could host a cultural centre and walking tour hub, led by local Elders and organisations, offering a meaningful visitor experience that celebrates local knowledge and supports community employment.

Key Features: tourism anchor, cultural interpretation, Indigenous governance



Image Sources: <https://www.paulramsayfoundation.org.au/news-resources/communities-know-what-they-need-what-if-we-listen>

Puntukurnu AMS Healthcare Hub
<https://worldarchitecture.org/architecture-projects/hgfv/puntukurnu-ams-healthcare-hub-project-pages.html>



Activating the Vision: Implementation Plan and Future Steps

Bringing the vision to life requires deliberate and long-term commitment to community involvement, cultural safety, and meaningful partnerships. The following Implementation Plan sets out key actions under three "Big Moves" identified earlier — Deep Co-Design, Tenancy Curation + Community Partnerships, and Governance and Enterprise. Each action responds directly to community insights and is designed to help embed connection to Country, cultural safety, and long-term benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout the development lifecycle.

These actions are designed to guide the development team in embedding the vision from design through to delivery, tenancy, governance, and activation.

These moves should be initiated early and sustained throughout the design and development phases. Design solutions and governance models must be shaped with community, not for community.

All initiatives below should be undertaken in close collaboration with local Aboriginal community members, Elders, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). The actions outlined here are intended as a practical guide for the design and development teams to consider, build upon and shape next steps.

All actions can be further developed, facilitated, and implemented by Murawin in future project stages. This includes supporting the design of implementation pathways, setting timelines, hosting workshops, facilitating partnerships, and identifying appropriate community organisations. These steps identify opportunity to continue first nations collaboration closely with the team to bring these next steps to life.

Big Move 1:

Deep Co-Design

Objective: Ensure that Aboriginal community members continue to shape the design, feel, and function of this place, including key public spaces, services and amenities, through structured and ongoing co-design processes. This goes from big picture, down into the details.

Key Actions:

-  **Establish a Community-Led Co-Design Framework**
Co-create a structured framework that outlines how, when, and why community will be engaged across each design phase.
-  **Hold Two Dedicated Co-Design Workshops**
One internal workshop with the design team to clarify design principles and gaps.
One external workshop with community members to directly test ideas and share priorities.
-  **Targeted Co-Design Sessions**
Deep-dives into key themes such as:
 - Childcare services
 - Retail mix and tenancy preferences
 - Public art and creative opportunities
 - Site and building naming
 - Celebrating local heroes through memorials, stories or installations
-  **Develop an Aboriginal Participation Plan**
Consider embedding a formal Aboriginal Participation Plan, grounded in principles of community-led design, construction, and ongoing operations.
Include local Aboriginal trades, creatives, youth, and Elders in project delivery wherever possible.
-  **Establish a Cultural Safety Reference Group**
Create a Redfern/Waterloo-based group to provide ongoing input into design, operations, and tenancy decisions.
Include diverse community voices (youth, Elders, LGBTQIA+ mob, people with disability).






Big Move 2:




Tenancy Curation + Community Partnerships

Objective: Curate spaces that support First Nations self-determination, local economic inclusion, and cultural presence, both in the short and long term. Use the Vision for Country to guide a values-aligned precinct that supports ongoing social connection, and a thriving Black economy.

Key Actions:

-  **Define a Sub-Precinct Vision**
Work with community and creative practitioners to define a clear identity and purpose for the cultural/retail hub of the precinct.
-  **Facilitated Co-Design Workshop on Tenancy Mix**
Collaborate with designers, commercial leads and community to test ideas and scenarios for ideal tenant mix.

Co-design tenancy priorities and early spacial planning
-  **Run a Community Partnership Roundtable**
Host a dedicated session to identify potential anchor tenants, social enterprises and service partners (e.g. childcare providers, artists, mental health organisations).
-  **Retail Expression of Interest (EOI) Process**
Prioritise First Nations-owned businesses, artists, social enterprises and community programs.

Consider a subsidised leasing model, or staged rent-increase structure, to support local start-ups and creative initiatives.
-  **Support and Build Capacity**
Provide access to grant writers, small business support, and creative industry mentors to help local operators take up space confidently.
-  **Partnerships with ACCOs**
Form partnerships with relevant Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to co-design and deliver elements such as:
 - Culturally safe childcare
 - Disability and mental health supports
 - On-site health or outreach services
-  **Pursue Grant and Funding Opportunities:**
Consider early planning for government or philanthropic support to underpin community-focused tenancies and programs.



Big Move 3:

Governance and Enterprise

Objective: Establish a culturally safe, community-led governance model to guide long-term management and activation of the precinct.

Key Actions:

-  **Establish a Community Governance Working Group**
Use an open EOI process to form a group of local community representatives, Elders, youth, and service providers.

Develop clear terms of reference and compensation structure.
-  **Develop a Governance Framework**
This group should lead the creation of a culturally appropriate, community-first governance model that shapes precinct oversight and long-term planning.

Ensure decision-making power is held with community, not just consultation.
-  **Create an Activation and Enterprise Plan**
Develop a calendar of community-led events and initiatives (market days, music, youth enterprise stalls, Elders storytelling sessions).

Prioritise events that celebrate Black excellence, invite cultural exchange, and foster intergenerational pride.
-  **Launch an Interim Activation Trial (First Year)**
Before the full precinct opens, pilot a year-long program of pop-up events.

These may include creative workshops, public art installations, micro-retail kiosks, and cultural performances co-curated with local creatives and youth.
-  **Invest in Enterprise Development**
Explore models like a precinct-based Aboriginal social enterprise hub, business incubator, or artist-in-residence program.

These implementation pathways represent a roadmap for embedding community aspirations into every layer of the project. They will require sustained effort, resources, and culturally respectful processes. We encourage the design and development teams to consider these actions early to ensure they are effectively integrated, with appropriate support to see these opportunities realised sustainably and with Cultural sensitivity into the future phases of work.

Waterloo Metro Precinct Connecting with Country Summary



EARTH – TRUTH OF PLACE

Earth is the roots. The context. The stories. The truths. To understand, you need to know and accept the history.

First Stories

This place is known as Illpah. A vital wetland system, it was a gathering place for thousands of years – sustaining life, ceremony, and movement across Country.

Next Stories

From the 1970s, Redfern became the epicentre of Aboriginal activism, self-determination, and community leadership. Waterloo stood alongside it – a place where mob lived, worked, and supported one another.

Today's Story

Waterloo is a place of potential, shaped by a history of strength but facing the ongoing impacts of displacement, gentrification, and structural inequality.

“Aboriginal people come from all over Australia and they all end up in Redfern/Waterloo areas.”



WATER – COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

Water is movement, listening, and flow. It is how knowledge travels. It connects people, place, and time – shaping how stories are shared and carried forward.

This section captures what has been generously shared by the Aboriginal community through written reflections, grounded truth-telling, and bold visions for the future of this place.



What We Heard

A clear and powerful desire for spaces that honour community leadership, Blak excellence, intergenerational care, and visibility of culture.

“Community room which can be used by everyone. Employ Aboriginal people. Cultural Safety.”

Key Themes

- Black Economy & Aboriginal Business Empowerment
- Cultural Safety & Place-Based Pride
- Intergenerational Connection
- Affordable, Inclusive Access
- Creative Storytelling
- Community Governance
- Disability Inclusion
- Meaningful Co-Design



FIRE – GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COUNTRY

Fire is transformation. A catalyst for growth and regeneration. It is how we respond, igniting shared purpose, commitment, and action.

These Guiding Principles are grounded in what community have asked for. They are the foundation for a future that is culturally strong, inclusive, and community-led.

Igniting Blak Success
“First Nations Economy. Employment. Trade. Business.”

Sharing Power, Enabling Voice
“Always have Aboriginal input. Very important!”



Designing for Every Generation
“Safe spaces: Childcare, Elders Spaces, Community Spaces, Yarning Circle Spaces.”

Proudly Grounded in Culture
“Redfern is the epicentre of Aboriginal Control.”

Each principle includes a clear Statement of Intent, outlining how to turn listening into action. These principles shape the direction of the Vision and set the groundwork for practical steps ahead.



SKY – VISION FOR COUNTRY

This is Country, connected to the city, a convenient cultural hub, shaped by Blak excellence and enriched by diverse colours and cultures.

Made by Redfern, made for all.



ACTIVATING THE VISION: 3 BIG MOVES

1. Deep Co-Design

- Community + Design Workshops
- Aboriginal Participation Plan-

2. Tenancy & Partnerships

- First Nations-led retail, enterprise and cultural partners
- Build relationships now

3. Governance & Activation

- Establish a working group
- Build a living calendar of community-led activity

All future actions in this plan can be supported by Murawin, in future stages.



Conclusion

The vision and principles in this report are not abstract ideals, they are grounded in lived experience, community memory, and collective aspirations. They speak to a future Waterloo Metro Quarter that is unapologetically Blak, proudly intergenerational and inclusive, and shaped by those who call this place home.

Grounded in Country (Earth), and shaped by deep listening (Water), this report reflects the voices, values, and aspirations of community. What has been shared is powerful; truths of displacement and resistance, alongside bold ambitions for healing, prosperity, and self-determination. These insights have informed the Guiding Principles (Fire) that will guide design and decision-making, and culminate in the Vision for Country (Sky), which offers a collective north star for the project. Together, these layers form a framework for action — one that holds Country at its centre and community at its heart.

The opportunity ahead is clear: to create a precinct that does not just acknowledge Country, but actively supports it through action. A place where First Nations businesses thrive, children and Elders feel safe, stories are visible, and community leadership is embedded — not just consulted, but empowered.

By carrying these truths forward into the design and delivery of the Waterloo Metro Quarter, this project can become a powerful example of what it means to connect with Country in an urban context, not just as a concept, but as a lived reality.

