

221-291 Crown
Street, 216-238
Keira Street and
86-90 Burelli
Street, Wollongong

Connecting with Country

Wollongong Developments No. 8 Pty Ltd

Prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment

24 June 2026



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Artefact acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of our land, Australia.

We acknowledge the Gadigal people as the custodians of Pirrama (Pyrmont) where our Sydney office is located, the Awabakal, Worimi and Wonnaura peoples of the Hunter Region where our Mulubinba (Newcastle) office is located and the Wiradjuri people of the Central West where our Bathurst Office is located. We pay our respects to them, their culture and their Elders past and present. We extend our respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work.

When we travel to Country we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we walk. We acknowledge the Dharawal people of Wollongong, traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waters where this project was undertaken. We thank them for sustaining and caring for Country for millennia.

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Cultural warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this report contains the names and images of people who are deceased.

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1. INTRODUCTION



1.1 Introduction

This Connecting with Country Report prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment on behalf of Wollongong Developments No.8 Pty Ltd ('the Applicant') supports a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for an Infill Affordable Housing Development, SSD-76440958, for the site at 221-291 Crown Street, 216-238 Keira Street and 86-90 Burelli Street, Wollongong (the site).

Specifically, consent is sought for the following development in this SSDA:

- Demolition of existing structures on the site, retention of heritage facades, tree removal and site excavation for new basement.
- Construction of a new mixed-use development consisting of:
 - Four residential towers, ranging from 16 to 38 storeys and comprising 540 apartments including:
 - Approx. 416 market apartments.
 - Approx. 124 affordable apartments.
 - Residential lobbies and podium.
 - Communal open space.
 - A 10-storey commercial office building, an 8-storey hotel comprising 80 rooms, and numerous retail tenancies consisting of:
 - 9,479 sqm of commercial GFA.
 - 7,443 sqm of hotel GFA.
 - 7,110 sqm of retail GFA.
- Car, motorcycle and bicycle parking for residents, workers and visitors across two basement levels, mezzanine, lower ground and levels 1 and 2 including:
 - 675 car parking spaces, including:
 - 496 residential spaces (including 55 accessible spaces).
 - 108 residential visitor spaces.
 - 51 commercial/retail
 - 10 hotel (staff only) spaces.
 - 10 Share spaces
 - Four (4) loading bays.
 - 180 Residential bicycle parking spaces.
 - 45 Residential visitor bicycle parking spaces.
 - 79 commercial and retail bicycle parking spaces.
 - 47 motorcycle parking spaces.

- New public open space including a new public plaza.
- Associated landscaping and public domain works.

1.2 Scope of report

This Connecting with Country report, developed by Artefact, has been Informed by the cultural connections to Country shared by stakeholders during consultation. The report provides actions, outcomes and design principles to embed Country into the development of the site, identifies Country narratives and interpretive themes for the development, and provides a best-practice framework for designing with Country.

1.3 Site description

The site is situated at 221-291 Crown Street, 216-238 Keira Street and 86-90 Burelli Street, Wollongong, within the Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA). The site forms part of the Wollongong City Centre Precinct, as identified in the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan 2009 (WLEP). It is well located, being approximately 280m from Wollongong Train Station which provides services within Wollongong and to the Sydney CBD. It is adjacent to Wollongong Central shopping centre, a major regional retail hub. The site has ample access to public open space being less than 50m from MacCabe Park. The site comprises a significant landholding of approximately 13,088m² with frontages to Crown Street, Keira Street, Burelli Street and Atchison Street. The site is owned by Wollongong Developments No.8 Pty Ltd. The site is in the Illawarra LALC.

An aerial of the site is shown in Figure 1. The site area and legal description is recorded in Table 1.

Table 1 Site Description

Legal Description	Address
Lot 1 in DP 112417	216-222 Keira Street
Lot 100 in DP 774957	226-230 Keira Street
Lot 9 in DP 551157	232-234 Keira Street
Lot 8 in DP 546125	236-238 Keira Street
Lot 1 in DP 88455	86 Burelli Street
Lot 4 in DP 17979	
Lot 5 in DP 17979	
Lot B in DP 395330	90 Burelli Street
Lot 1 in DP 220513	221-229 Crown Street
Lot 3 in DP 17979	231 Crown Street
Lot 2 in DP 17979	233-235 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 17979	
Lot 7 in DP 878243	237-241 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 1135333	243-251 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 226374	253-259 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 183348	
Lot 2 in DP 226374	
Lot 3 in DP 319452	261 Crown Street
Lot 2 in DP 319452	269-271 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 319452	
Lot 2 in DP 181570	273-279 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 1116034	
Lot 1 in DP 82673	281-291 Crown Street
Lot 1 in DP 117019	
Lot 1 in DP 927806	281-291 Burelli Street
Lot 1 in DP 1198873	
Lot 1 in DP 1087986	

1.4 Background

An existing consent approved on 12 December 2022 (DA-2021/957) applies to the site. The consent was granted for the demolition of existing structures, retention of heritage facades, tree removal, excavation for basement car parking and construction of a mixed-use development at the street block bound by Crown, Keira, Burelli and Atchison Streets, comprising three (3) residential towers (shop top housing), one (1) commercial building, retail shops, entertainment facilities (cinema, exhibition/performance space) and a wellness centre (pool, gym, and health services).

1.5 Terminology

Due to the huge disruption of colonisation and the challenges of translating Aboriginal language into written English, there are a variety of ways of referring to the Aboriginal peoples and languages of the Bradfield area. As language is revitalised and more knowledge is shared, terminology may also change.

This report therefore uses different terminology and spellings interchangeably depending on the source for example Tharawal and Dharawal.

1.6 Cultural context

A number of key contextual issues are important to consider when developing a Connecting with Country report for a new project.

1.6.1.1 Definitions from First Nations Advisory Committee with spatial designer Danièle Hromek (2025)

These definitions have been produced by the First Nations Advisory Committee with spatial designer Danièle Hromek. For more definitions, please see *Resource: First Nations Terminology (2025)* and *Resource: Concepts and shared understandings (2025)*:

Caring for Country: Caring for Country refers to the reciprocal obligations Indigenous People have to cultural landscapes to ensure balance and continuity. Based on traditional practices, it includes landscape management techniques such as ceremony, knowledge sharing, periodic burning practices (often known as cultural fire or cultural burning), management of water, bush regeneration, bush harvesting or hunting, invasive species control, biodiversity management, and art making, management and maintenance of art sites. Given cultural practices adapt to new technologies and contemporary limitations, caring for Country has many contemporary iterations where Traditional Custodians continue to express and perform their cultural obligations to care.

Community: A community relates to a geographically located group of people, it may involve both Traditional Owners and those who now live in an area due to colonial movements. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People might belong to a number of communities, for instance, the community of their traditional Country groupings, as well as the community in which they now live.

Connecting to Country: Country is at the heart of First Nations communities; a connection to Country provides a sense of belonging and identity for First Nations Peoples. Many First Nations Peoples say our connections to Country run far deeper and longer than our own lifetimes, and include cultural and ecological responses. The action of connecting with Country is a physical, sensorial, emotional, spiritual and psychological act that First Nations Peoples take as part of both their own health and wellbeing, but also their actions of caring for Country.

Country Centred Design: Country Centred Design is a design methodology of First Nations Peoples. Country Centred Design integrates relationships, as well as tangible and intangible aspects of Country, in design outcomes. Country Centred Design is a process that enables deep history understandings, care for Country, stewardship activities, kinship, culture and cultural practices, spiritual and Indigenous ways of knowing to be integrated into the design process.

Cultural safety: Cultural safety creates an environment that is safe for all people, in which there are no challenges or denial of others' identities. Actions that create culturally unsafe environments include demeaning or

disempowering others, and can originate from individual positions or systemic policies, procedures, or practices. Cultural safety requires self-awareness of one's own values, beliefs, perspectives, and attitudes that may intentionally or unintentionally harm others.

1.6.1.2 Definitions from the GANSW FAQs (2025)

Environmentally sensitive approach: When responding to Country without the involvement of the Aboriginal community you take an environmentally sensitive approach.

Country centred approach: When responding to Country in collaboration with Aboriginal community, you can take a 'Country centred' approach.

1.6.1.3 Definition from Danièle Hromek (2025):

Designing with Country: Designing with Country needs the involvement of qualified and experienced First Nations built environment professionals. Designing with Country needs the designer to be able to read, feel and sense the spirit, energy and story of Country as known and guided by local communities.

1.7 Sources

This report may include information from a number of sources, such as historical records and community knowledge, which at times may contradict each other. This may occur because over time new information and interpretation of sources arises. Further consultation and research should be carried out if developing any future heritage interpretation for this project.

1.8 Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this report contains the names and images of people who are deceased.

Section 5 of this report provides a summary of the landscape, history and culture of the Aboriginal people of the Wollongong area. This section

includes information collated from colonial sources and should be read with this in mind.

The history has images and names of deceased people and contains words, descriptions and terms which reflect authors' views, or those of the period in which the content was created but are not considered appropriate today.

1.9 Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property

Artefact have prepared this Connecting with Country Report for the 221-291 Crown Street, 216-238 Keira Street and 86-90 Burelli Street, Wollongong project. This report, and the information and cultural knowledge gathered in its preparation, are to be used for the above project only.

This project aims to facilitate a meaningful, considered, and functional framework for understanding the relationships between Country, community and individuals and integrating this understanding into design principles for the site.

Please note that all cultural knowledge shared by Elders, knowledge holders, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) that is included in this document remains the intellectual property of those who have shared it. The rights of Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) must be protected at all times.

The following best practice ICIP guidelines from the GANSW *Connecting with Country* (2023) will be followed:

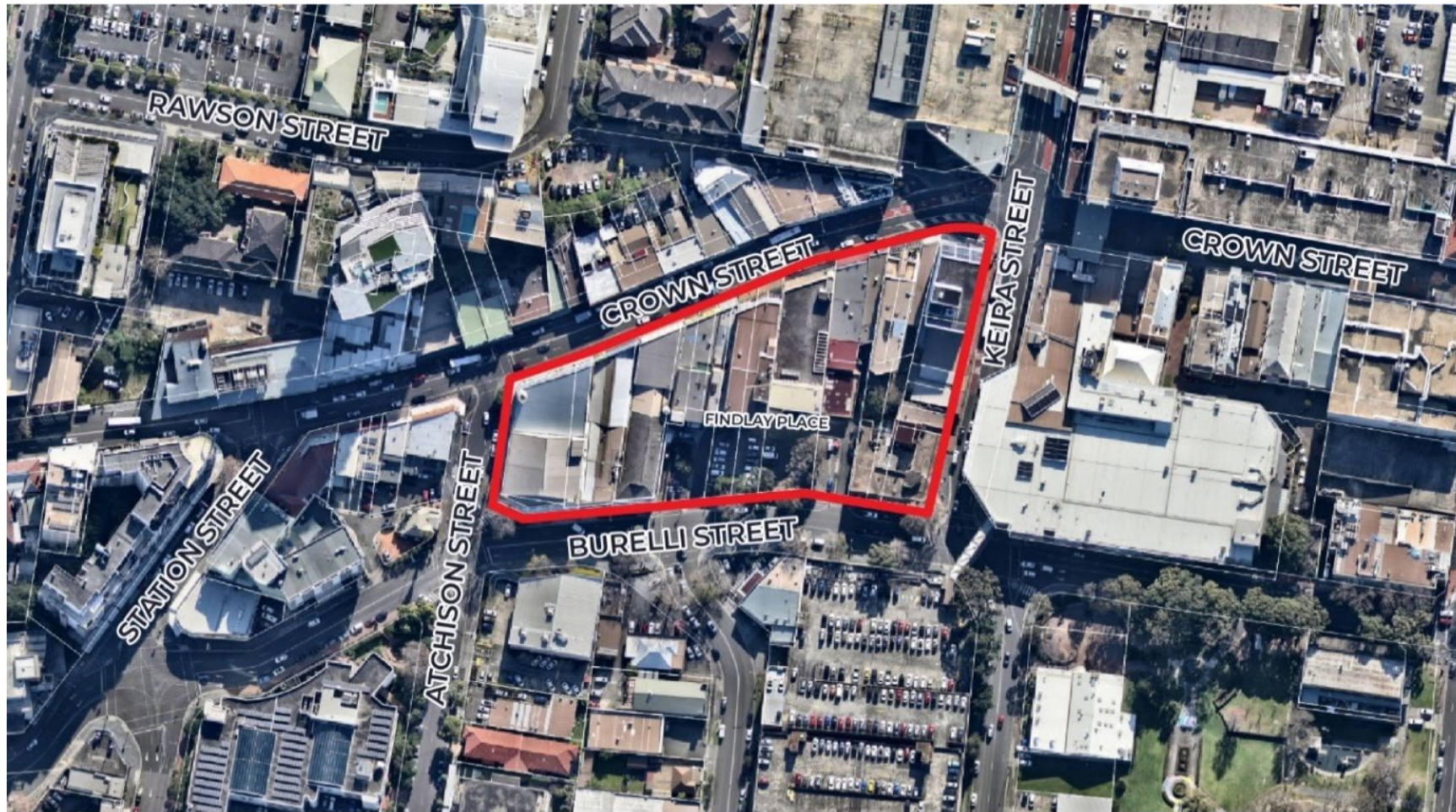
- Payment made to knowledge holders for their traditional knowledges shared.
- Credit of organisations or individuals for their traditional knowledges.
- Information and guidelines about ICIP included in reports.

- All usage of the information must be approved by the organisation or individual before finalised or published.
- If requested by the organisation or individual, ICIP can be included in a written agreement with the organisation or individual.

1.10 Authorship and acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Alexandra Gaffikin (Senior Associate, Artefact), Kelly Barton (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer, Artefact), Sabrina Roesner (Senior Heritage Consultant, Artefact), Katherine Chalmers (Heritage Consultant, Artefact), with input and review from Carolyn MacLulich (Principal, Artefact).

Artefact has worked in collaboration with a number of Aboriginal knowledge holders for the report and would like to thank all knowledge holders for their generosity in sharing cultural knowledge for this project.



 The Site

 NOT TO SCALE

Figure 1: The study area (source: Ethos Urban)

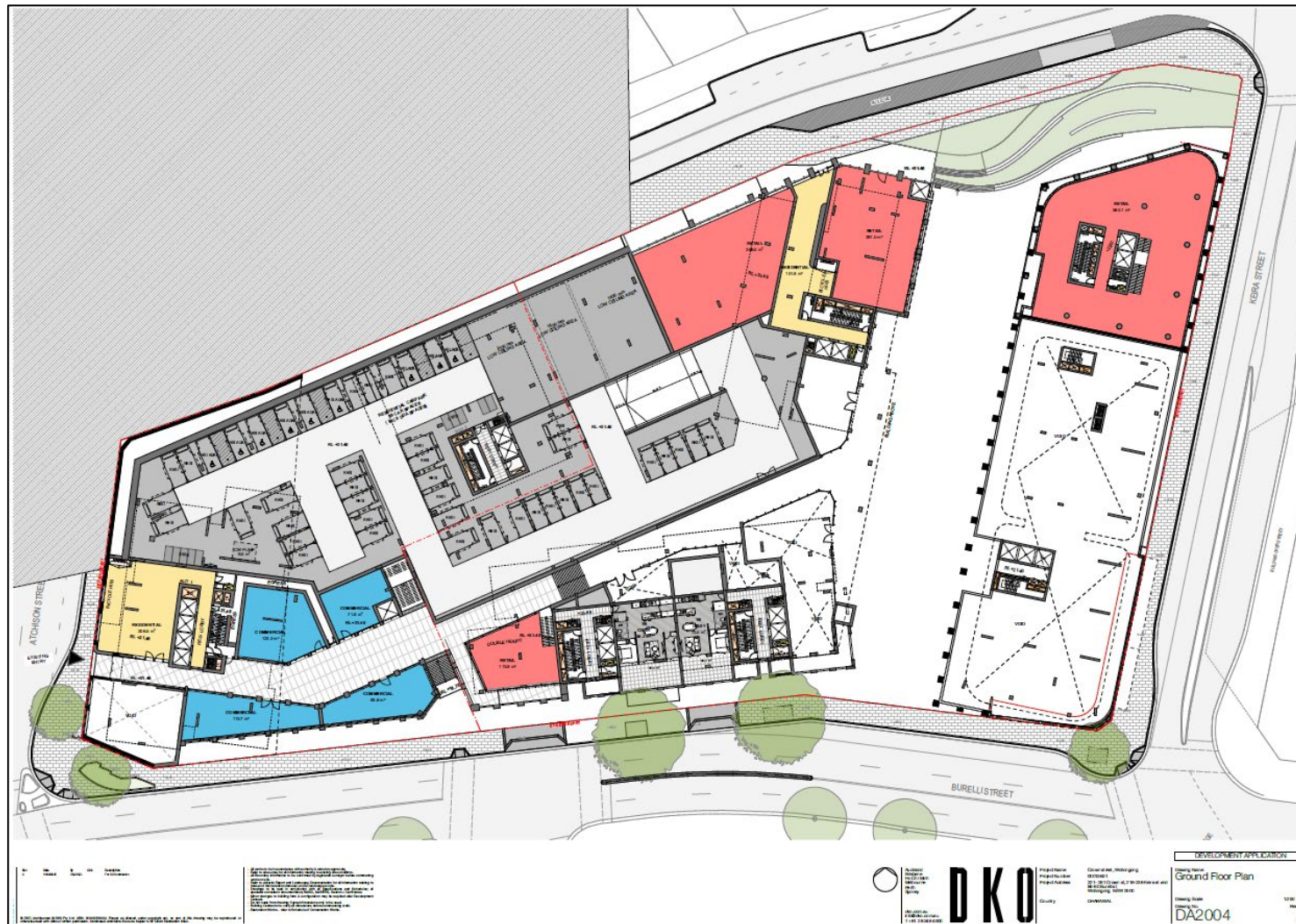


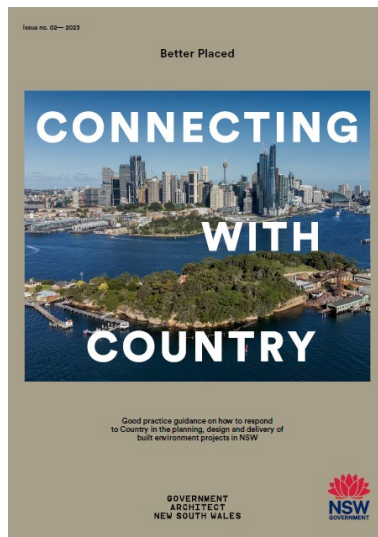
Figure 2: Propose site plan, Ground Floor Plan (source: BVN)

2. GUIDING DOCUMENTS



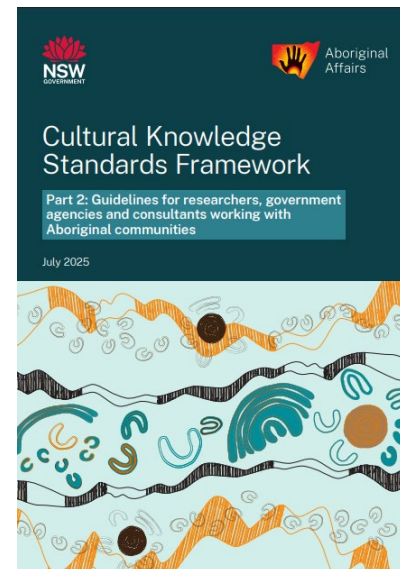
2.1 *Connecting with Country Framework* (GANSW, 2023)

The *Connecting with Country Framework* (GANSW, 2023), prepared primarily by Indigenous architects and designers within the Government Architects NSW Office, seeks to assist design project teams to integrate Aboriginal culture into development projects. The predominant message of the framework is that the current design approach mentality needs to shift from Human Centric to Country Centric, to create a healthy Country with culturally diverse and safe spaces that simultaneously address the growing environmental problems that society faces today. The report includes guidance on carrying out consultation as well as best practice examples of *Connecting with Country*.



2.2 *Cultural Knowledge Standards Framework Part 2* (Aboriginal Affairs, 2025)

The *Cultural Knowledge Standards Framework – Part 2* provides guidance for researchers, consultants, and government agencies working with Aboriginal communities in NSW. It sets expectations for respectful, ethical and culturally safe engagement when accessing or using Aboriginal Cultural Heritage or cultural knowledge. Key requirements include obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); recognising Aboriginal custodianship and Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP); ensuring confidentiality for sensitive or sacred information; and following Indigenous Data Governance and Data Sovereignty principles. Artwork featured on cover: *Living Culture* by Saretta Fielding.



3. GANSW CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK



3.1 Introduction

The *Connecting with Country Framework* 2023, prepared by the Government Architect NSW Office, seeks to assist design project teams to integrate Aboriginal culture into development projects. The predominant message of the framework is that the current design approach mentality needs to shift from Human Centric to Country Centric, to create a healthy Country with culturally diverse and safe spaces that simultaneously address the growing environmental problems that society face today.

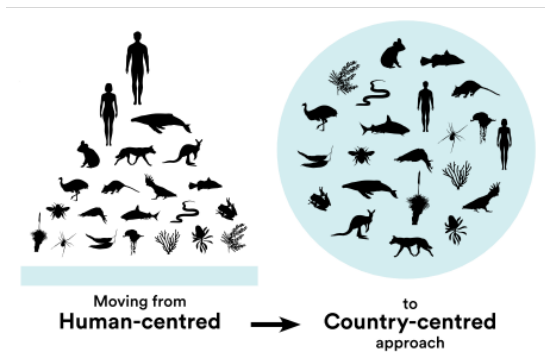


Figure 3: Human-centred or Country-centred approach (GANSW *Connecting with Country*, 2023)

It advocates for an integrated approach that combines Aboriginal knowledge and western science which recognises and appreciates the interconnectedness of all elements of society and the environment. The essential message is that if we look after Country, Country will look after us. To facilitate the behavioural change required to put Country at the forefront of new design, the framework expands upon three components of Aboriginal cultural knowledge systems and aligns them with three cognitive elements (Thinking, Feeling, Behaviour):

- **Communing with Country (Thinking):** the connection to Country through mind and spirit as demonstrated through forms of cultural expression.

- **Sensing Country (Feeling):** immersive cultural practices to provide insight into the emotional connection to Country.
- **Being on Country (Behaving):** working together to share knowledge and perspective to create cohesive and respectful designs.

To implement this Country centric approach, the framework identifies how Country can be incorporated into each phase of the design process as guided by the Aboriginal community:

- **Project formation** – starting with Country – ensuring that the project teams understand the nuanced concept of Country through cultural awareness training.
- **Project design** – imagining with Country – designing led by interpretive cultural narratives and an understanding of Country.
- **Project delivery** – shaping Country – design and construction led by the need to protect and promote Country.
- **Project maintenance** – a commitment to nurture all parts of Country, of which the new development project is part.

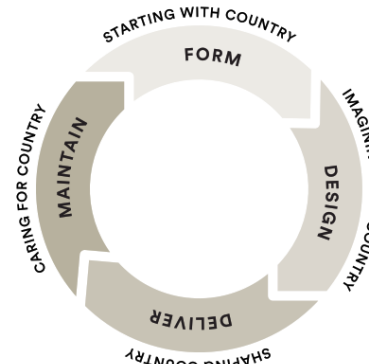


Figure 4: Project lifecycle from an Aboriginal perspective (GANSW *Connecting with Country*, 2023)

The framework has specific guidance around ways to Design with Country, exploring opportunities for design to support connection to Country in built environment projects. These include:

Design focus:

- Language use and first place names.
- Connect to the broader landscape.
- Promote and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Acknowledge our shared history.

Design opportunities:

- Learn from traditional Aboriginal architecture.
- Support living ecosystems.
- Reawaken memories.
- In between spaces.
- Indirect connections.

The framework also provides practical assistance for how Country can be considered in project design at a precinct wide level, a building-scale project level and a small-scale project level.

3.1.1 GANSW Designing with Country discussion paper (2019)

The Government Architect NSW draft Designing with Country discussion paper predates the *Connecting with Country Framework* and fed into its development.¹ It posed questions around developing practical guidance for the design industry to respond to current directions in planning policy. Its

aim was to contribute to better understanding of, and better support for, a strong and vibrant Aboriginal culture in our built environment.

- It stated that there are three essential elements of designing with Country: nature, people, and design:
- Architecture considers design and people (informed by nature). Architecture without people is just a sculptural object.
- Passive design considers design and nature, and when used by people becomes environmental design.
- Biophilic design considers the innate relationship between people and nature. Informed by design, this relationship could be understood as a genesis for Indigenous architecture.

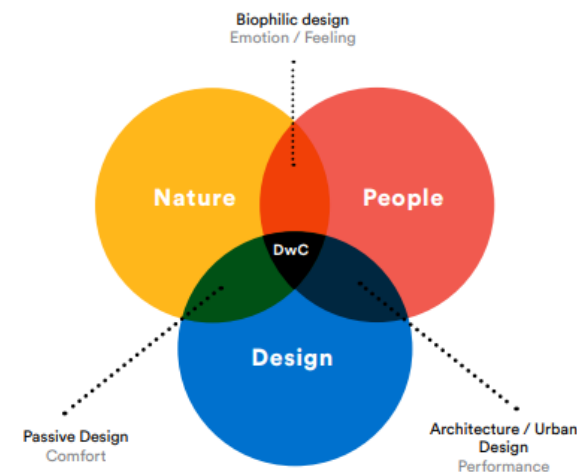


Figure 5: Elements of Designing with Country.(GANSW Designing with Country Discussion paper. Considering Country)

¹ GANSW, 2020b.

4. CONSIDERING COUNTRY



4.1 What is Country?

The concept of Country does not have a corresponding concept in Western culture but is a deeply personal yet universal worldview fundamental to Aboriginal and First Nations people. Individual relationships with and definitions of 'Country' are deeply nuanced, and can vary depending on a person's life experience, place, and personal beliefs. It is key, therefore, to deeply listen to the perspectives of Aboriginal people and remove Western biases when thinking about Country.

A definition of country as 'land' may be the initial association made by a Western person, but this is far too simplistic; instead, the idea of Country is an all-encompassing continuum of past, present and future, connecting tangible things like ecosystems, water, and people, as well as intangible concepts like story, identity, and home.

Country and identity are deeply linked for Aboriginal people, and an understanding of Country is key to understanding both themselves and their community.' Country encompasses everything. It includes both living and non-living elements. It holds everything within the landscape, including Earth, Water and Sky Country, as well as people, animals, plants, and the stories that connect them'² Therefore, a person's identity and personal value cannot be separated from Country and is connected to all elements around them. A person's actions can positively or negatively affect all aspects of Country, including themselves.

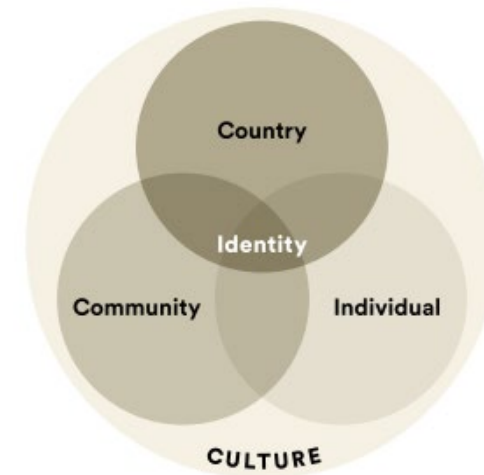


Figure 6: Interrelationships between Country, community and individuals (GANSW Connecting with Country, 2023)

Country, just like people, can be healthy or sick, and requires care and respect. A network of mutual care between the land, animals, plants, and people stretches into deep time and must be constantly protected and nurtured to ensure the health of Country. Knowledge of how to maintain this network of mutual care is expressed through Aboriginal language, stories, and cultural practices and provides the bedrock of First Nations cultures. The network is interconnected and interdependent; changes in language, for example, affects all other elements.

Country is both spiritual and physical. Country is something that can be experienced, and that physical experience is key to the mutual health of First Nations people and Country itself. Walking on Country, feeling the touch of the air, sun, and wind, speaking to and listening to Country, and hunting on Country are ways of practicing culture that have been passed down for many generations. The act of being on Country and feeling the

² GANSW 2023. Connecting with Country Framework

connection with place is deeply significant for Aboriginal communities and a way of ensuring that individuals and families can thrive.

Cultural practices (also called cultural law/protocols) and the languages used to refer to Country, are deeply diverse, reflecting the development of thousands of communities across Australia over millennia. All practices, however, are rooted in the idea of responsibility towards Country.

Country has been significantly disturbed by the colonisation of Australia. Delicate physical and spiritual ecosystems that have been nourished and maintained since deep time have been damaged by deforestation, loss of biodiversity, dislocation of community, and general development. The Western systems of thinking and land-use cannot maintain or nourish Country, and some knowledge of how to care for Country has been lost.

The resilience of Aboriginal people across Australia and the strength of cultural practices, however, has allowed much cultural knowledge and lore to survive colonisation. The knowledge of Aboriginal people of how to care for Country is diverse, and includes practices of agriculture, health, spirituality, and sustainability. This deep knowledge, based on the idea of mutual responsibility, should play an essential part in future placemaking and planning.

Designs that echo traditional forms and stories and their contemporary interpretations are increasingly being integrated within new developments, sending strong, respectful messages about the timeless links between First Nations peoples and the landscape, and allowing for reflection and connection to Country. Traditional knowledge, when embedded meaningfully into development, has positive outcomes for communities and the environment. The significance of such design integration does not just lie in its aesthetics, but in the empowerment that public statements of value bring and the value of sustainable future development.

The involvement and authority of Aboriginal knowledge holders and Aboriginal architects, designers, and artists is paramount in developing future projects that connect meaningfully with Country and promote, sustain, and nurture the health of Country.



Figure 7: Eucalypt and she oak, (source: Artefact)

5. ABORIGINAL HISTORIES OF THE AREA



5.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the history and culture of the traditional owners and custodians of Country where the area known as Wollongong is located. It includes information collated from colonial sources and should be read with this in mind.

5.2 Dharawal Country

Wollongong lies within the Dharawal language group area. Dharawal language speakers lived and continue to live on their Country from Gamay (Kamay-Botany Bay) in the north, through Campbelltown and Moss Vale to the west, and south to the Shoalhaven River and Jervis Bay. The traditional Country of the Dharawal language speaking Wodi Wodi (or Wadi Wadi) has been identified as extending from north of the Shoalhaven River at Nowra to Wollongong and inland to Moss Vale. The Wodi Wodi have been called the ‘people of the Illawarra’.³

People did not usually identify themselves by the name of the language they spoke (they often spoke several languages) but by the clan group within which they lived. According to Dharawal historian Les Bursil, the ‘Camayragal, Dhargarigal, Gweagal, Goonamattagal, Goorungurragal, Murro-ore-dial, Noron-Geragal, Oaree, Ory-ang-ora, Tagarigal, Threawal, Wandeanegal and Wodi Wodi clans spoke Dharawal as their first language.’⁴

Dharawal language people are distinguished as fresh water, bitter water or salt water people, depending on whether they live in coastal regions,

estuarine areas, or the plateaus and inland river valleys. Traditional stories tell of their arrival at the mouth of Lake Illawarra in canoes when the Ancestors were animals. According to Dharawal Elders, the Ancestors ‘brought the Dharawal or Cabbage Tree Palm with them from the north and are named for this sacred tree’.⁵

Dharawal stories say ‘people were always here, from the beginning’. Archaeological evidence has found people living in the Illawarra from at least 20,000 years ago, during the time of ancient megafauna such as the diprotodon. Around 8,000 years ago sea levels were higher. The coastline at Stanwell Park was around 15-20 kilometres further east and under coastal waters today lies further evidence of their long history. A creation story tells of the sea covering land that was once dry, with the Five Islands north of Bass Point joined by land to Hill 60 at Port Kembla – a story told down hundreds of generations.⁶

Dharawal people moved around defined areas according to the seasons and the availability of resources in an economy that had finely tuned for tens of thousands of years. The Wodi Wodi, suggested by Dharawal historian Les Bursil to be about 250 people who lived from Lake Illawarra down to the Shoalhaven River. They remained on the coast during the warm seasons, taking advantage of the abundant marine resources. Lake Illawarra was an excellent source of food and resources throughout the year. According to Yuin Elder, Guboo Ted Thomas,

*The lake is a livelihood. That’s where the tribes would come from south and north and everywhere. They can stay here for two or three days. Plenty of mussels, bimballas, oysters, fish and everything. They can have a couple of days here and then move on. Tucker was always plentiful.*⁷

³ S. Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar: Living in the Illawarra* (Hurstville NSW: National Parks and Wildlife, DECC), 5; Norman B. Tindale, 1974, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: their terrain, environmental controls, distribution, limits and proper names* (Canberra: ANU Press); and Valerie Attenbrow, 2010, *Sydney’s Aboriginal Past: Investigating the Archaeological and Historical Records* (Sydney: UNSW Press).

⁴ Bursill et al., 2015. *A History of the Illawarra*, Vol 1: 2

⁵ Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar*: 6-10

⁶ Bursill et al., 2015. *A History of the Illawarra*, Vol 1: 1

⁷ Thomas in Bursill et al., 2015. *A History of the Illawarra*, Vol 1:

There were once vast middens along the coastline, but many were later destroyed to make lime for brick mortar in building. In the colder seasons people moved away from the coast to the many rock shelters in the deep valleys of the escarpment and further inland. Here they depended on fish, eels and yabbies and the men would join women in collecting plant foods.⁸

They also moved beyond these local areas and were known to have travel, trade and ceremonial connections with neighbouring Dhurga, Yuin, Gundangurra and Darug people, and further afield with Awabakal and Wiradjuri people along the coast to the north and west inland. Stone from Bombo was known to have been traded long distances. Longer journeys were usually travelled along a songline or storyline, a pathway journeyed by a creative spirit while bringing the Country into existence. Particular favoured travel routes were coastal, running north-south. Some were east-west and others inland. One path ran 150kms from Jervis Bay via Nowra through Kangaroo Valley, Wilde's Meadow and Robertson to Appin, a five day journey. Gandangarra and Wiradjuri people travelled onto Dharawal Country on the coast to exchange foods, raw materials and artefacts. The fish, oysters, water-fowl and grubs of the Illawarra were particularly valued by inland people. These favoured travel routes, and the associated movement of artefacts are likely to be represented archaeologically in the present-day by site types such as middens, scatters and isolated artefacts.⁹

The landscape along the Wodi Wodi (and broader Dharawal) coast was richly worked with culture, art and industry. Charcoal and ochre paintings and drawings and rock engravings of spirits, animals, fish, birds, humans, tracks and symbols are common in the rock shelters around the Illawarra.¹⁰

So too, Dharawal peoples had a vast array of possessions, tools, clothing and weapons. Artefacts such as spears (karmai), woomeras (womra),

boomerangs (bumarin), shields (hilamin), canoes (maduri) were made from timbers, gums and resins. Nuts, feathers, teeth, ochres, animal skins and plant fibres were used to create decorative clothing, cloaks and both everyday and ceremonial ornamentation. Leaves, bark and stems were used to make baskets, string, rope, nets and toys. Bark, stems and leaf fronds made short-term shelter structures. Although artefacts made of organic materials are inherently susceptible to degradation, these materials may, in some circumstances, still be preserved today in moist, anaerobic depositional environments.¹¹



Figure 8: 'Storm above Red Point and the Five Islands, Illawarra, with Aborigines in the foreground'¹²

⁸ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 1: 3

⁹ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 1: 4, 25; Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar*: 7

¹⁰ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 1: 18-19

¹¹ Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar*: 12-13

¹² Edward Charles Close - New South Wales Sketchbook: Sea Voyage, Sydney, Illawarra, Newcastle, Morpeth, c. 1817-1840, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, SAFE/PXA 1187

Swamp wallabies, possums and other macropods were eaten and their bones and skin used in the manufacture of cloaks, rugs, artefacts and ornaments. The cloaks were worn fur side out in the rain and skin out in dry, cold weather. The skins were pegged out on the ground for curing and finished with decorative markings stained and etched into the suede using a sharp bone or shell. Skins were sewn together with animal sinews through holes pierced by bone awls. As one early colonist on the south coast described a Dharawal possum-skin cloak, 'an opossum cloak, the flesh side out, of one uniform grey colour; the skins were in squares, beautifully sewn together, and ornamented with delicate red lines and dots arranged in geometrical regularity.'¹³

Ceremonial areas are marked by certain trees which may be carved with significant designs to define the area. Trees were also marked to indicate a burial using both symbols and drawings. During gatherings trees were marked to define the temporary home areas for a visiting group. The survival of culturally modified trees today however is directly related to disturbance and land clearing. The forests and grasslands were carefully maintained the continuing application of at least four different fire regimes. 'Cool' fires were used in September and October, but hot fires from January to March to open hard seeds and pods and to germinate legumes. Skilful and controlled fires kept the forests dense, the woodlands open, the grass copious and the game convenient.¹⁴

Dharawal people could communicate by smoke signals for long distance. Variants in the smoke (colour, density, height and duration) communicated different meanings. In 1770 when James Cook and his crew in the HMB *Endeavour* sailed north along the Yuin and Dharawal coastline, they saw

smoke from fires all along the shore as people communicated the ship's presence along the coast.¹⁵

Plants were more than just staple foods – they could also be indicators for hunting. The Bangalow Palm for example, has leaves that can be used to make water carriers, baskets and thatching for shelter, and its presence is an indicator for swamp wallabies, bushrats and bandicoots.¹⁶

Wollongong appears to have been a colonial transcription of 'Woolungah.' In 1894, a local man from Port Kembla Billy Sadlier told the *Illawarra Mercury* newspaper that;

*'the name ' Woollungah ' means a place where a marriage took place between the son of one great king and the daughter of another great king, in the olden days, long before Captain Cook found this country. He explains that the word also means that there was a great feast of fish and other good things at the wedding, which was such a remarkable event that the place was named on account of it ever afterwards.'*¹⁷

5.3 European Colonisation

Apart from the odd group of shipwreck survivors and early navigators such as Bass and Flinders in the 1790s, there was no permanent European settlement impacting directly on the lives of the Aboriginal people of the present-day Illawarra until the 1810s. The impact at first was deadly diseases. The 1789 smallpox outbreak in Sydney and then later outbreaks up to the 1830s had a terrible impact on the people of the Illawarra, as they did elsewhere. Perhaps two thirds of the Dharawal people died from disease in these years.¹⁸

¹³ Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar*: 103; Taylor 1863

¹⁴ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 1: 17

¹⁵ Organ, 1990. *Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines 1770 - 1850*, Volume 1; *Historical Records of Australia*, Volume 1: 213

¹⁶ Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar*: 69

¹⁷ 'Blackfellow Names', *Illawarra Mercury*, 20 November 1894, p. 2

¹⁸ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2; 7

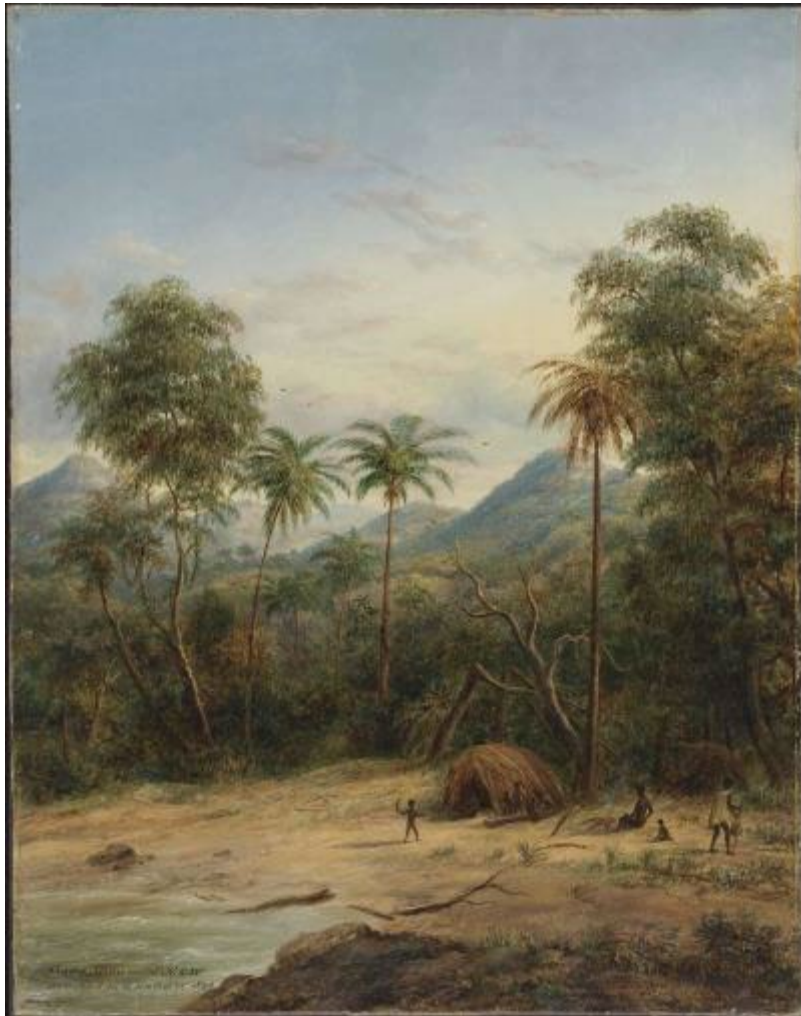


Figure 9. Kiama featuring red cedar forests, c.1860 (source: Kiama Library).

From the late 1790s, whaling and sealing voyagers stopped along the Dharawal coast and conflict commenced. When timber getters arrived in the 1810s, it escalated. As Les Bursil writes;

According to Burriel Paddy of Ulladulla who dies in 1860 and aged 80, he and other men of his clan slaughtered a crew shipwrecked on Ulladulla headland in the 1820s. Around that time, at Black Head, 10 kilometres north of the Shoalhaven River, Arawarra organized and led an attack that destroyed a party of cedar cutters. He was captured and Alexander Berry sent his head to the Edinburgh Museum in 1827 for scientific research.¹⁹

Charles Throsby was a land owner in southwest Sydney known to be a bushman and regarded as sympathetic to Aboriginal people. In 1815, two men Cookoogong and Duall led Charles Throsby down through Bulli Pass where he saw good pasturage. Throsby soon returned with his cattle and built a stockman's hut, the first in the Illawarra. Others soon followed and Governor Macquarie sent John Oxley to survey Dharawal country for land grants. In December 1816, at what now is the corner of Smith and Harbour Streets in Wollongong, Surveyor Oxley issued 2,100 hectares of Dharawal land to five 'non-resident gentlemen.' Few of them left Sydney and relied instead on their stockmen to establish their farms.

In 1818 there were reports of a massacre of Dharawal near Kiama, led by Lieutenant Weston, a land owner at Dapto. There was growing resistance by Dharawal people. In November 1822, the home of the Western family, the first free settlers to receive a land grant in Illawarra, was burned to the ground along with their crops. Retaliations commenced. At Five Islands two Wodi Wodi people were killed after a raid on a farm and no charges laid on their killers. A detachment of soldiers was sent to Port Kembla in 1826. However by the 1830s the Illawarra had been overrun with settlement. By 1828, Charles Throsby's cattle stock alone had increased to 9,000 head. Although resistance against colonisation continued to the south, the Wodi

¹⁹ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2: 8

Wodi, now well outnumbered by Europeans and the cattle and sheep, were merely attempting to survive the onslaught.²⁰

During the 1830s and 1840s some Dharawal men undertook whaling voyages and other families began to work on farms. A Dharawal man known as 'Broughton' (various traditional names of Toodwick, Toodood or Toodwith) had guided Charles Throsby on his southern expeditions. From the 1820s, Broughton ended up working in a variety of jobs on Alexander Berry's 'Coolangatta Estate', on the north side of the Shoalhaven River, at the foot of Mount Coolangatta and at the place Broughton was born, 'Boonga-ree'. Broughton had been a constable, tended tobacco, couriered letters to Sydney, cut reeds in the swamp and netted parrots for collectors. Other Aboriginal people worked piece-meal for the settlers, collecting bark and fishing, Broughton and his wife worked for a weekly ration of 4.5kg of flour, 3kg of beef, some sugar, tobacco and occasionally tea, much less than what usually was given to Berry's white workers.²¹

A listing of 2 July 1827 of blankets issued to Aboriginal people at Illawarra recorded a total of 21 at 'Five Islands' and 35 at 'Illawarra.' It is likely there would have been far larger numbers in the district who were not issued blankets. According to Wesson (2005), while 'blanket returns' and other colonial data are not always reliable, they show that in 1838 there were at least 124 Aboriginal people recorded in the Illawarra region. The locations were Wollongong (Woolungah), Kiama, Tom Thumb lagoon (Tuckulung), Windang (Berrawurra), Shellharbour (Wonwin), Bulli (Wangewarra), Dapto, Red Point (Dhigillawarah), Jamberoo and Taitpoly (place unknown). Despite massive disruption to their culture and way of life, in 1901 there was still an Aboriginal population of nearly 100, with 33 people living at Port Kembla, 13 at the Minnamurra River, 8 at Dapto, 18 at Bombo, 20 at Gerringong, 3 at

Jamberoo and 3 at Kiama. A notable exception by this time is Wollongong itself. The township had grown and Aboriginal people were forced away.²²

While traditional food sources had become scarce, traditional ceremonies and cultural obligations continued. A notable battle occurred in 1830 at Fairy Meadow between people from the southern highlands (noted as 'the Bong Bong Dharawal' but in another source 'Gandangarra') and those of Illawarra over the abduction of a Bong Bong woman by a 'Dr Ellis'. One European observer noted '1,500 warriors engaged in the battle' and there were around 100 deaths – though these figures may have been exaggerated. The dead were apparently buried on Fairy Creek at 'the bottom of Townsend's paddock'. Even in the 1840s an 'old settler' Alexander Stewart recalled Dharawal people were numerous in the area near Tom Thumb Lagoon, Mullet Creek and Lake Illawarra.²³

According to Dharawal historian Les Bursil in 1842 a most extraordinary event occurred – a defence of Wollongong by Dharawal warriors. Bursil recounts:

In Illawarra, despite the military presence, the white population of 800, mainly on isolated farms, was still ill at ease, and for good reason. In response to the spreading and intensifying conflict, in 1842 a Dhurga army moved northward determined to wipe the struggling little town of Wollongong off the map. But they had not reckoned with the power and influence of Geronne, also known as King Charlie Hooka, who was alerted to their plan. Although he did not mix much with whites, Geronne's messengers urged the settlers to flee the advancing Dhurga, to take their cattle, their chattels and themselves to safety at the local Wollongong stockade. Geronne mustered his forces and with some Gandangara men marched, two hundred chanting warriors strong, along the bullock track through Dapto village to a battlefield at Albion Park 15 kilometres away. Many were killed in the fighting, and at the battle's conclusion the victorious Dharawal returned the way they had come, in silence, carrying their dying King. The vanquished returned to

²⁰ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2: 14-16

²¹ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2: 20; Perry, 'Berry, Alexander (1781-1873)' online. Campbell, 2005. 'Broughton (1798-1850)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, online

²² Wesson, 2005, *Murni Dhungang Jirrar*: 9-10; Organ, M. (1990) *Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines 1770 - 1850*, Volume 1;

²³ Kass et. al., *Thematic History of the City of Wollongong*, p. 13

their country in and around Shoalhaven. The whites left Wollongong and returned to their homes naming a small town in Geronne's memory Kanahooka (Kana – king – Hooka). Hooka Island in Lake Illawarra is part of his country, as are Hooka Point in Berkeley, Hooka Creek and nearby Mullet Creek. A king breastplate, entitled Charley Hookah, King of Mullet Creek is in the Illawarra Historical Society Museum in Market Street, Wollongong.²⁴

During the 1800s European settlement destroyed more and more traditional food gathering areas across the Illawarra. People were no longer able to live around the Wollongong township. Dharawal people retreated to small creeks and along the shores of water bodies such as Lake Illawarra or Tom Thumb Lagoon that still offered traditional food sources. They also moved to land less favoured for cultivation or timber getting such as steeper and more heavily vegetated land along the escarpment. An Aboriginal fishing community grew at Berkeley on Lake Illawarra in the 1860s and people continued to live on the shore of Tom Thumb Lagoon until 1928 when they were forcibly moved for the construction of Port Kembla harbour.

By the 1880s some Aboriginal families were able to acquire access to sufficient land, as share farmers or more rarely lease holders, within the new European land regime. They tried to adapt by becoming small scale farmers. However, the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board in the 1880s changed everything. From 1883, the Board took over management of the reserves and revoked many and forced people to move to other reserves.

In the late 1800s Aboriginal people were not reported living in the township of Wollongong. However people were drawn there on significant occasions. In April 1867 there was 'Great excitement' across the Illawarra when the International Aboriginal Cricket team, mainly from the Wimmera district in western Victoria, arrived in Wollongong. They were to play the first eleven of the Illawarra Club in the lead up to their tour of England. They played at

'the Green', now Wollongong Showground with around 700 spectators. As was widely expected, they thrashed the locals.²⁵

In 1896, the Wollongong Agricultural Show was the site of a 'coronation'. Mickey Johnson of Lake Illawarra was suggested to be given the title of 'King of the Illawarra' and a breast plate. While Mickey was obviously a senior man, reflecting the movement of Aboriginal people that had occurred, he was actually from the Richmond River area on the north coast. Mickey told news reporters;

'...there might be diplomatic difficulties in the way in regard to his assuming the designation of 'King of Illawarra,' as he was not actually a native of the district, having first seen the light in the Richmond River district, whence he came to Illawarra in his early days. A moment's kingly reflection on his part, however, solved the difficulty in true Alexander the Great style. With the courtly air of one 'born to command' and who was 'monarch of all he surveyed,' he said 'King of New South Wales. Illawarra in that, all right.' Mr. Campbell communicated accordingly with the authorities, and request was complied with in the main, the brass 'half moon' plate that came to hand bearing as an inscription the words 'Mickey Johnson, King,' instead of 'King of New South. Wales.'

The coronation attracted a large crowd and while it was a patronising display by the white population of Wollongong, it was a rare spotlight on Aboriginal community in the district. As the news report continued;

'King Mickey having concluded his remarks, a descendant of the original inhabitants of Illawarra in the person of 'Billy Sadler,' at one time noted as an athlete, stepped into the centre of the ring and said he wished it to be publicly known that he thoroughly approved of what had been done that day. 'King Mickey' was a Richmond River native, and he ('Billy'), who was a real Illawarra native, was, strictly speaking, the person who should have been crowned king. He, however, did not desire the honor, and he wanted all to know that he was quite agreeable that 'Mickey' should be king.'

²⁴ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2: p. 17

²⁵ Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle, 20 April 1867, p. 4



Figure 10: The crowning of King Mickey Johnson at Wollongong, 1896 (source: National Library of Australia)

In 1899, the La Perouse Aboriginal Mission opened a mission at Lake Illawarra. By this time, 'King' Mickey Johnson had become a noted local figure. After converting to Christianity in 1899, he was the prime mover in having a church built on the reserve. After his death in 1906, William 'Bill' Saddler was made 'King of the Illawarra' in 1909.²⁶

Aboriginal people across the Illawarra moved around in a network of connections with people, for seasonal work, often returning to family at informal camps such as at Hill 60 near Port Kembla. Strong links were forged with the La Perouse Aboriginal community on the southern shore of Kamay-Botany Bay in Sydney. These movement patterns allowed Illawarra

Aboriginals to survive and escape Aborigines Protection Board control but also created bonds, often by intermarriage with groups at La Perouse, the Burratorang Valley, Wallaga Lake and elsewhere. Continuing into the twentieth century and up to the present day, these were valuable links when Aboriginal activism became more overt from the 1930s onwards. The traditional importance of Sandon Point, Coomaditchy Lagoon and Hill 60 was continued by regular family gatherings and occupation into the twentieth century. Thus, these sites have direct links to many Aboriginal people living today up and down the NSW coast.²⁷

In 1883, requests for a boat from the Aborigines Protection Board for the Aboriginal group to use seem to have been the basis for a local fishing industry that had developed near Hill 60 in the 1880s. With its views up and down the coast, Hill 60, allowed the Aboriginal fishers to spot schools of fish. Fish were caught to sell to the local white community and for their own consumption from the early 1880s onwards. Men could also work as coal trimmers or on the wharfs at Port Kembla nearby, whilst women worked as domestic servants. They also took advantage of the opportunity to send their children to Port Kembla Public School. The importance of Hill 60 has led to it being listed as of significance in the NSW State Heritage Inventory.²⁸

However, their occupation of land at Port Kembla was unwelcome to the NSW Public Works Department and there were moves to restrict them to the land at the Reserve at Lake Illawarra, which was not a popular location – most preferred to live near Hill 60. Various moves were made to shift them away from Port Kembla and many were moved to other sites in 1914.²⁹

But not all the attempts to move people were successful. In 1923, the Port Kembla Golf Club built a golf course on the lower parts of Hill 60. When it

²⁶ Kass et. al., Thematic History of the City of Wollongong, pp. 15-16

²⁷ Goodall and Cadzow, Rivers and Resilience, p 87-8, 110

²⁸ 'Hill 60',

https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/SearchHeritageItems?_ga=2.165972984.714120821.1658117920-344545924.1656901875

²⁹ Kass et. al., Thematic History of the City of Wollongong, p. 16

was proposed to expand the course to a full 18 holes in 1929, the residents of Hill 60 gained the support of the Association for the Protection of Native Races and local Labor aldermen. Eventually, the golf club moved to its present site near Primbee.

The Aborigines Protection Board reported that their proposal to 'transfer aborigines [sic] resident at Bombo and Port Kembla to Lake Illawarra' was being resisted. The police at Wollongong reported that 'the aborigines [sic] at Bombo and Port Kembla decline to remove to the lake' and the board, in the face of this desire to remain on Country, gave in and continued 'supplies of clothing' to Bombo and asked the local police to 'induce the parents amongst them to send their children more regularly to school'.³⁰

The Bombo camp continued. In 1910 it was described in a report from the Aborigines Protection Board as one of the settlements where people were 'of steady and industrious habits' and 'on the whole, health is good':

At Bombo, near Kiama, there are two half-caste adults and 10 children in the camp. There is no reserve set apart. A cottage is rented, and the adult man receives 8s 6d per day for laboring at the Government quarry. Two children attend school. Fishing proves profitable to the nine half-caste adults and six children at East s Beach, near Kiama. One girl attends school, and the camp owns five boats.

At nearby Crooked River another camp 'on private property' was reported and it was noted that 'the men work as farmers and fishermen' and 'some of the children attend the Gerringong public school'.³¹

Some Aboriginal men in the Wollongong area enlisted to serve in World War One. Hubert Timbery from Port Kembla, enlisted in 1917 when he was 18. When he was discharged and applied for a veteran's land grant, a soldier settler block, he found that they were given to white ex-servicemen only. During the early 1900s conditions worsened for Aboriginal people. The

Protection Board took children away from their mothers while their fathers fought in the war. Some had land on their reserves taken while they were away in World War One. The most productive land on the reserves was often handed over to white farmers, particularly to white returned servicemen, as part of their repatriation. Between 1913 and 1929, 50 per cent of the land previously won as Aboriginal reserves in NSW was taken away³²

In the early 1900s there were several camps or settlements near Wollongong - at Hill 60, Red Point, Coomaditchie and Tom Thumb's Lagoon. At this time there were around 200 people living in Port Kembla and Wollongong. In 1901 the NSW government re-appropriated land in order to transform Tom Thumb's Lagoon into Port Kembla Harbour. People resisted the attempt by the Aborigines Protection Board to force them from the Lagoon onto the official reserves in 1904. The APB called in the police and they were forcibly evicted.

People at Hill 60 continued to hold out. In the 1920s they attempted to gain security of their land at Hill 60 and succeeded in not being evicted from there. Indeed, the population on the Hill grew. It was, according to Les Bursill, 'an important link in the chain of still active ancient seasonal coastal camps that stretched from La Perouse to across the Victorian border.' Many people found work in the expansion of Port Kembla during the 1930s and often stayed with family at Hill 60.³³

During World War Two Hill 60 was chosen as an important defence location. In 1942, people were forced to move away. Some went to Bundiwalla near Berry. Others set up camp nearby among the sand dunes along Port Kembla beach and around Coomaditchie Lagoon, which Wollongong Council had declared an Official Camp for the unemployed in 1932. By the 1950s sand mining operations threatened the camps, many

³⁰ *Evening News*, 14 October 1899, p. 7

³¹ *Daily Telegraph* 2 June 1910, p. 9.

³² Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2, p. 41

³³ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2, p. 46

people were forced to move away, some into assisted housing in nearby suburbs.

While Port Kembla continued to be an important place where Aboriginal men could obtain employment, and many joined political protest movements there, by the 1960s conditions had not markedly improved for Aboriginal people across the Illawarra and on the South Coast. People were excluded not only from pubs and pools, but also from schools, and faced discrimination in shops and picture theatres. Aboriginal people were fenced off to the front in the Nowra theatre and not allowed upstairs. They could only buy a drink in at the cinema in their own cups. According to Uncle Fred Moore;

They couldn't get a haircut in any town, they weren't allowed to touch or try on clothes in a dress shop.

In 1962 a branch of the Aborigines Advancement League was established in Nowra. It called for 'fair employment in local industries, jobs for young women in shops, offices and anywhere else they wanted to work' as well as the abolition of legal discrimination and of the APB.³⁴ By 1964, action by the Nowra League had ended major elements of open racial discrimination and segregation by the businesses in Nowra – even before the well-known Freedom Rides of 1965.³⁴

During the 1970s, agitation for rights continued. A South Coast Aboriginal Legal Service was formed as well as the Wreck Bay Co-operative Housing Company. In the late 1970s the first land claims were lodged. At a NSW Parliament select committee hearing in 1979 Uncle Percy Mumbler gave evidence and said;

Our brothers and sisters came before Captain Cook put his foot on this earth and came here to control our people and be ignorant of our people in Botany Bay. He

³⁴ Bursill et al., 2015. A History of the Illawarra, Vol 2: 62-3

came with guns and ammunition, not with spears. He saw our brothers and sisters in the wild country. They are still here today, from the south to the north, from the east to the west. They still go on today, our brothers and sisters, and they will never die out. I want to know how he came to take this land from us. And who gave him the rights to say that he owned it? We will not go off without full land rights. This land is ours and we must stand up and fight for it. What we want is full rights to this land that we own. We do not want any of this half-way stuff. We do not want to be asked how much land we would like, a couple of acres or twenty acres or something like that. The Aboriginal people do not want that at all. They want the full rights to this land, to do what they want to do with it and to go where they want to go, all over this country. This is our country.

In 1983, an Aboriginal Land Rights Act was introduced. Although much watered-down, it meant title to much of what had been Aboriginal Reserve land on the South Coast was given to Aboriginal people. Land Councils were set up at Wollongong, Nowra, Batemans Bay, Mogo, Bodalla, Narooma, Wallaga Lake, Eden and Bega, part of a network of 120 Local Lands Councils that make up the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

In recent years Aboriginal people around Wollongong have asserted their cultural heritage. At Sandon Point in the early 2000s, a long and hard fought campaign began to save the area important to Wodi Wodi people from development. In 1998, large seas unearthed a skull within the sand dunes of McCauley's Beach. This archaeological find was identified to be an Aboriginal man of significant cultural status, dated at 6,000 years old. This became an impetus for local Aboriginal activists and community volunteers to form an alliance and resistance to the development and desecration of this sacred site that was known to be a gathering place for millennia. An area at Sandon Point was declared as the 55th Aboriginal Place in NSW in 2007.³⁵

³⁵ 'Sandon Point Aboriginal Place', <https://wollongong.nsw.gov.au/your-council/community-land/sandon-point-aboriginal-place>

Today, Dharawal language speakers continue to live in their Country from Kamay-Botany Bay in the north, through Campbelltown and Moss Vale to the west, and south to the Shoalhaven River and Jervis Bay. Dharawal Language is being revitalised by initiatives like the publication of the *D'harawal Language* compiled by Gavin Andrews, Frances Bodkin and Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews. Many animals and birds feature in traditional stories for the Illawarra such as Mulgani the wallaby and several stories that feature the waratah plant. These stories are still being used to teach principles and history by Dharawal people today.³⁶

Today, the Illawarra LALC is the peak body for Aboriginal people across the Illawarra and Southern Highlands. Their role is to improve, protect and foster the best interests of members and the broader Aboriginal community. Other organisations in the area that work for and support Aboriginal communities include the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation and Gawura Aboriginal Corporation IKMSG.



Figure 11: Illawarra LALC Natural Resource Management Team caring for Country and working with community partners from Wollongong Botanic Garden, Rotary Club of Wollongong and NSW Department of Planning and Environment at Summit Park, Mt Keira (source: Illawarra LALC)

³⁶ Wesson, quoting Mason (2001), 2005: 7; Peck 1933, *Australian Legends*: 108-21, 202-3, 208-214

5.4 Aboriginal art and culture in the City of Wollongong today

The City of Wollongong has developed a variety of ways for locals and tourists to explore Aboriginal art and culture.

Wollongong Art Gallery has a collection of Aboriginal art from around Australia, including work by Illawarra and NSW South Coast Aboriginal artists. Their collection includes works by Aboriginal artists who work on Dharawal Country including Phyllis Stewart, Warwick Keen, Mathew Carriage, Jodie Stewart, Gwendolin Stewart, and Lorraine Brown. The City of Wollongong has public art designed by Aboriginal artists in its suite of public artworks across the city including the mural 'Cultural Conversations' by Warwick Keen (2018)

Wollongong Botanic Gardens has installed the Towri Bush Tucker Garden and Towri Centre. It's name 'Towri' was chosen with Traditional Custodians and means 'learning place bounded by flowers and trees'³⁷ The plants in the garden are mostly native to the Illawarra region and so would have been used by Aboriginal people living in the area. The garden is also a habitat for native animals like the Easter Water Dragons, echidnas, kookaburra and Buff Branded Rails. The Towri Centre is a space used for education and meetings. It is also a place to learn about the use of plants in Aboriginal culture.



Figure 12: *Bean Picking Days* by Phyllis Stewart (2009), Gift of the artist 2011, produced with Thomas Goulder at Duckprint Fine Art Studios, Port Kembla (source: Wollongong Art Gallery)



Figure 13: Mural by Warwick Keen, 'Cultural Conversations' (source: Wollongong Council)

³⁷ <https://wollongongbotanicgarden.com.au/collections/towri-bush-tucker-garden> s

6. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT



6.1 Introduction

An understanding of the relevance and importance of the Aboriginal cultural landscape is fundamental to sensitive cultural design development aligning with the Connecting with Country principles. This understanding provides opportunities to explore Aboriginal peoples' unity with the natural environment and their traditional knowledge of spirit, places, land uses and ecology. These understandings are best developed through authentic and sustained consultation with Aboriginal knowledge holders and professionals.

6.2 Consultation planning

As the Traditional Custodians of the land, the local community maintains a dynamic connection to Country which informs their identity, culture, language, and ways of living.³⁸ The depth of this connection requires that appropriate, effective consultation with relevant community members must take place for any archaeological or heritage works occurring on their traditional land.

Under the Burra Charter³⁹:

Article 12. Conservation, interpretation and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has significant associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place.

The GANSW *Connecting with Country Framework* (2023) recommends the following strategy for building relationship with Aboriginal communities:

Building relationships with Aboriginal people requires appropriate allocation of time and resources to develop personal connections in ways Aboriginal people recommend and feel comfortable with.

Because cultural connections with Country differ between Aboriginal peoples and communities, projects need to be guided by those who are acknowledged by their communities as knowledge-holders for Country, and often in combination with nominated Aboriginal organisations such as local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs).

The GANSW *Connecting with Country Framework* (2023) also highlights categories of stakeholders who could be involved:

Engagement should be undertaken in an inclusive way, and project teams should be open to diverse groups of people and points of view. In addition to LALCs, the groups that should be invited to join the engagement process include:

- 1. Traditional Custodians who have ancestral connections to a place*
 - 2. people from surrounding groups/tribes/ mobs/communities/nations*
 - 3. those who have moved to the area since colonisation and are integrated into the community*
 - 4. everyone else who wants a say.*
-

6.2.1 Stakeholder identification

Stakeholders were identified through previous work in the area and through the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) process and identifying Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

³⁸ Australian Heritage Commission, 2002. Ask First: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values.

³⁹ Australia ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter – The Australian ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance. 3.

6.3 Previous consultation and reports

The GANSW *Connecting with Country Framework* (2023) recommends the activity ‘research and prepare’ and specifically ‘locate previous Aboriginal cultural heritage and technical studies relevant to the project’ so ‘to avoid consultation fatigue and prevent duplicating time and effort when information is already available.’

This section provides a summary of Aboriginal cultural heritage values discussed in existing resources and reports which consulted with stakeholders.

6.3.1 Wollongong Private Hospital Extension, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (Artefact 2022)

In 2022 Artefact carried out an ACHAR for a private hospital in 360/354 Crown Street about 1km west of the study area. The following organisations registered as RAPs for the project:

- South Coast People
- Gumaraa Aboriginal Cultural Experiences
- Murra Bidgee Mullangari Aboriginal Corporation
- Woronora Plateau Gundungara Elders Council
- Duncan Falk Consultancy
- Corroboree Aboriginal Corporation
- Woka Aboriginal Corporation
- Muragadi
- Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Guunamaa Dreamin Sites and Surveying

- Gunjeewong Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Thoorga Nura
- Warra Bingi Nunda Gurri
- Eora Heritage Group

The following Aboriginal cultural heritage values were identified during the development of the ACHAR

- In their registrations many of the RAPs noted their connections to the Country and their ancestors who had lived in the area
- Many of the RAPs also noted their significant experience in carrying out Aboriginal Cultural Heritage projects in the area
- One RAP expressed the importance of sharing histories and passing down knowledges: particularly to current and future generations.
- One RAP noted the positive opportunities to “protect and preserve” Aboriginal heritage. They noted the importance of “conservation of our history”.
- One RAP expressed pride in their heritage and culture which had been passed down to them by their Ancestors.
- In residential areas the original tall open-forest (wet sclerophyll forest) and open-forest (dry sclerophyll forest) have been extensively cleared. Remaining species include bangalay, blackbutt, grey ironbark, swamp mahogany, forest red gum, spotted gum (Corrimal only), two-veined hickory and black wattle (espade).

6.3.2 Animating Wollongong – Public Art Strategy (City of Wollongong, 2022-2032)

City of Wollongong's Public Art Strategy⁴⁰ includes the following guidance for public art:

6.3.2.1 Guiding principles

- Belonging - Connect our public art to our unique Wollongong identity, and use it to celebrate and value all our diverse communities
- Opportunity - Sparking and nurturing our creative community through investment, entrepreneurship, and advocacy
- Place - Create meaning through site specific works that identify and interpret our unique environments and rich histories to enhance our public places
- Value - Amplify our public art through brave and inspirational themes to capture the spirit of Wollongong and its people
- Elevate - Lead the way, through challenging and inspiring public art that embraces contemporary media and is influenced by local, national, and international ideas

6.3.2.2 Opportunities

- Ensure opportunities for the community and visitors to enjoy and connect to our public art collection.
- Continue to include community perspectives through the external Public Art Advisory Panel.
- Ensure transparent processes for the selection and development of public art across the Wollongong City area.

- Support and provide opportunities for artists and creatives through the creation and renewal of public artworks, and through mentoring programs for young and emerging artists.
- Building on the opportunity for public art to create meaning, identity, and a sense of place:
- Continue to develop a program reflecting the region's cultural diversity, including First Nations history and story
- Strengthen the links between our public art program and Wollongong's spectacular environment.
- Reflect the unique character of our suburbs through the delivery of new permanent and temporary public art.
- Enhance place through public art by providing creative and engaging experiences
- Acknowledge traditional artforms, while also promoting new and emerging technologies and contemporary art practice in the creation of exciting, permanent, temporary, and ephemeral public art works in unexpected places

⁴⁰ https://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0038/177797/Animating-Wollongong-Public-Art-Strategy-2022-2032.pdf

6.3.3 Aboriginal Community Members' Stories (City of Wollongong)

Wollongong City Libraries hosts a website of oral histories called "Aboriginal Community Members' Stories" as well as some local Aboriginal cultural history videos. As noted on the site: "The cultural boundaries of the local Aboriginal community extend beyond the Wollongong LGA. People have connections to La Perouse, the south coast of NSW and other places in Australia."⁴¹ The following Aboriginal cultural values were shared through the videos:

Aunty Sharralyn Robinson (Aunty Shas), Kamilaroi/ Yuin, born and raised in Dharawal Country

- Take Country back to a place of caring and sharing and looking after one another.
- Regardless of where people come from, if they make this Country their home and respect its history, it belongs to everyone.
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have a shared history and we need to embrace it and grow together.

Aunty Bev Armer, Yuin

- It is important to foster and maintain strong relationships in the community and with Council.
- Positive changes have occurred. Reconciliation and NAIDOC events are being held through Shellharbour and Wollongong Council and the Reconciliation Action Plan 2022 was an important step. There are also many events about Domestic Violence, which are very important.

Richard Davis, Dharawal, born in Wollongong and grew up in Coomaditchie at Kemblawarra

- Be proud of who you are and where you come from. It shows respect to your Elders and your Country

Vic Chapman, Elder and Yuwaalaraay man

- Education is crucial. It can help people get out of poverty and set you up for life. We now have Aboriginal people with PhDs.
- Aboriginal people are now entering 'Phase 4'. In phase 1 we were spoken about, in phase 2 we were spoken for, in phase 3 were spoken to and, now in phase 4 where we must speak for ourselves.
- Language is now being recorded and taught at University. It is very important to ensure that language is being maintained and shared for future generations.

Uncle Kev Butler, Aboriginal Elder and artist, has lived in the Illawarra for thirty years

- Meeting my birth family after 30 years was like coming home. But for Aboriginal people you are never forgotten. Your place is always on your Country.

Sonny (Henry) Simms, Bidjigal man, born in La Perouse

- Sonny is a member of CBACH, The Children of Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home, at Bomaderry, a home of the stolen generation. His dad was taken at the age of 4.
- Sonny shared stories about the stolen generation and Mission life at La Perouse.

⁴¹ <https://illawarrastories.com.au/aboriginal-community-members-stories-2/>

- Speaking language was forbidden which caused language to be forgotten.

Kirli Saunders, Gunai woman, and award-winning children's author, poet and teacher

- In the interview Leland Kean, Artistic Development Manager at Merrigong Theatre, emphasises the cultural importance of the company's name, derived from the Dharawal word for the Illawarra escarpment, and their commitment to acknowledging First Nations
- Kirli Saunders shared her journey of reconnecting with her First Nations identity, her passion for writing, and her work in promoting Indigenous languages.
- She discussed her creative process, her motorbike passion, and the significance of freedom.
- Additionally, she highlighted her role in empowering young Indigenous artists and encouraging aspiring creatives to trust their journey.

Aunty Lorraine Brown, has lived in the Illawarra for 47 years

- Aunty Lorraine Brown has lived in the Illawarra area for 47 years, meeting her husband in 1972. Her husband grew up in tin shacks in the sand hills near Coomaditchie Lagoon.
- The area is home to the Wodi Wodi people, and Aunty Lorraine expresses deep respect for the Traditional Owners.
- She acknowledged the hidden history of the region and the importance of learning more about it, as people continue to reconnect with their heritage and share knowledge.

Billy Cooley, born in La Perouse with family and tribal connections to the South Coast and has lived in Wollongong for many years

- My people originally lived in the Murramarang area between Batemans Bay and Ulladulla. They were the first Indigenous Australians sighted by Captain Cook. They lived traditionally in humpies, relying on fishing and hunting local wildlife like wallabies and goannas for sustenance.
- Thomas Ulladulla my great-great-great-grandfather. In tribal terms, he was known as Ghadoo, meaning "Keeper of the Ocean." His role was to manage his community's fishing practices and stock retention, ensuring that tribal groups rotated their fishing areas to maintain resource sustainability and provide for traveling tribes.



Figure 14: Excerpt of 'Dharawal Country – Mt Keira and Mt Kembla' (source: Wollongong City Council, You Tube) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_P07xVkgEE)

Dharawal Country – Mt Keira and Mt Kembla is a short video with interviews with Aunty Bev, Aunty Leanne, and Aunty Shas. The Aunties share their experiences of Mt Kiera which they call Djeera and Mt Kembla which they call Jumbulla; 'They are our location points so we always know where we are on Country'.

6.4 Project specific consultation

6.4.1 Dharawal Elders and Knowledge Holders, 30 August 2024

Aunty Gwenda Jarrett and Aunty Jodie Stewart are Dharawal Elders and Knowledge Holders. They gave permission to share the following recommendations with the project team:

- It is important to conserve and communicate the Aboriginal history of an area.
- It is important to respect Country and follow customary law/lore. It is also important to follow protocols and speak to Elders who can speak for Country.
- It is important to recompense Aboriginal people for their knowledge and time.
- Look to the future and encourage more sustainable living, veggie gardens, solar panels and clean energy sources.
- Social housing is important for the Aboriginal community.
- Non-Aboriginal members of project teams should carry out cultural awareness training on Country.
- Aboriginal cultural heritage work on Country should involve both male and female sites officers to cover men and women's business.
- Developments should focus on regeneration of native plants including plants used for medicines. This offers an opportunity for the next generation to learn how to grow, cultivate and use native plants.

- It would be positive to include spaces for ceremony in new developments. These could be spaces for smoking ceremonies or other ceremonies. It is also recommended to include spaces for education and teaching young people – like a yarning circle.
- Developments should consider how Aboriginal culture can be interpreted in new and innovative ways using the latest technologies.



Figure 15: View across Dharawal Country (source: Artefact)

6.4.2 Cultural immersion experience with Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience, 20 September 2024

The GANSW Connecting with Country recommends activities to increase “cultural competency” and “nurturing cultural awareness”. In order to build cultural awareness, the project team attended a cultural immersion experience with Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience Pty Ltd⁴² at Killalea regional park, Killalea drive, Shellcove.

6.4.2.1 Attendees

- Uncle Richard Campbell, Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience
- Scott Parsons, Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience
- David Felicio, DKO
- Nik Burn, DKO
- Claudine Malanum, Level 33
- Cat Gillespie, Level 33
- Kelly Barton, Artefact
- Alex Gaffikin, Artefact

6.4.2.2 Agenda

- Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony
- Introductions
- Talk on plants and their uses
- Talk on the history of Aboriginal communities in the area
- Q&A



Figure 16: Leaves for the smoking ceremony (source: Artefact)

6.4.2.3 Cultural immersion

Local places of importance

- The immersion experience started with Uncle Richard Campbell talking about important local landmarks. He particularly talked about Mount Keira which is a significant site in Dharawal Country.

Native plants and uses

The native plants have a lot of cultural, medical and food uses. Scott Parson’s presentation included a talk about the uses of:

- The Sheoak as a place to go of safety and to avoid snakes
- Lomandra as a plant used for weaving and the seeds to make damper

⁴² Gumaraa, <https://gumaraa.com.au/>

- Dianella as a medicine and painkiller, and using the leaves as a whistle
- Grevilia used to brush hair and get a sweet nectar
- Eucalypt soap

Artefacts

Uncle Richard Campbell spoke about the importance of caring for Aboriginal cultural heritage and leaving artefacts undisturbed. He talked about the physical repercussion and sickness of Country that occurs when artefacts are removed from a sacred site. He spoke about the importance of repatriations and ceremonies which need to happen during repatriation.



Figure 17: Project team listening to Scott Parsons talk about plants and their uses (source: Artefact)

Scar trees

The project team visited a scar tree which had been replanted from a basalt quarry site at Dunmore which was being mined. Though the tree is now dead, it has been replanted here so that Country stays on Country. The Elders placed the tree in the park and conducted ceremonies when it was installed.



Figure 18: Scar tree (source: Artefact)

History of Aboriginal communities in the area

Uncle Richard talked about the tragic history of Aboriginal people following colonisation; for example how many Aboriginal people weren't allowed to teach language and culture, or even today they aren't allowed to carry out traditional fishing practices. He shared stories from the area including songlines and histories. Many of the stories that Uncle Richard shared are

sacred or sensitive and so it would be important to ensure that there is further consultation if any stories form part of future heritage interpretation on the site.

Uncle Richard talked about the difference between Western Law and Aboriginal Lore.

Development and consultation

Uncle Richard talked about the importance of consultation and listening to Aboriginal people. He mentioned in particular the importance of listening to Aboriginal people about the impacts of climate change and back burnings to prevent devastating fires. He noted the importance of black and white people working together for reconciliation.

6.4.3 Online meeting with Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience, 11 October 2024

On the 11 October the project team held an online meeting to show draft plans to Uncle Richard Campbell of Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience. Uncle Richard shared some feedback on the plans as well as possible ideas for interpretation.

6.4.3.1 Attendees

- Uncle Richard Campbell, Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience
- Claudine Malanum, Level 33
- Sunny Oh, DKO
- Miguel, DKO
- Charles Robinson, Landscape architect
- Runshi Liu, Land Form
- Alex Gaffikin, Artefact Heritage

6.4.3.2 Feedback

Values and Stories

- Uncle Richard Campbell agreed that Crown Street was most likely a songline.
- Uncle Richard Campbell talked about The Five Island story as an important story in this area. Mt Keira is included in this story, and so the story dates back to a time when Mt Keira was in fact an Island. The story is associated with the story of Oola-boola-woo.
- The main totem of the Dharawal people is the Whale. Artwork in the development could include this.
- The Dharawal people get their name from the Dhurga word for the Cabbage Tree Palm. Dhurga is the language of the Yuin people (from further south down the coast). Cabbage Tree Palms could also be featured in artwork.

Landscape

- Important flora in this area includes the Gynea Lily, Tree Ferns, Lilli Pillis, Red Waratah, Illawarra Flame Trees, native Cherry trees, Wombat Berries, Dianella. All of these plants are associated with story lines – Uncle Richard Campbell
- A lot of erosion had occurred in this area and it now faces rising sea levels – Uncle Richard Campbell

Development considerations

- The development needs to consider drainage as all of the storm water will run off into the estuaries and creeks – Uncle Richard Campbell
- During the development they need to consider what artefacts may be under the current concrete slab – Uncle Richard Campbell

Interpretive options

- A good example of including Dreamtime stories on panels is down at Wyndang. A similar thing could be done at this development, by incorporating Dreamtime stories into the garden corridors
- The colour palette for the development could include the colours of the land and the ocean
- There are many things that can be done to increase visibility of Aboriginal culture including flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags alongside the Australian flag.
- Ceremonies can be done throughout the development. For example, a smoking ceremony can be done at the start of the development and another smoking ceremony and performance can be done when the development opens.
- The building lobbies, rooms and public spaces could feature Aboriginal artwork by local artists.)



Figure 19: Demonstration of tools on the site visit (source: Artefact)

6.4.4 Archaeological Site Survey for the ACHAR with Wodi Wodi Dharawal/Yuin Traditional Owner and Illawarra LALC, 18 October 2024 (Artefact 2024)

As part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) is being prepared by Artefact. An archaeological survey was conducted on 18 October 2024 with Uncle James Davis, Wodi Wodi Dharawal/Yuin Traditional Owner and South Coast Native Title representative and Steven Henry, Site officer, Illawarra LALC. Further details on their heritage recommendations can be found in the *221-291 Crown Street, 216-238 Keira Street and 86-90 Burelli Street, Wollongong Archaeological Survey Report* (Artefact 2024).

6.4.4.1 Attendees

In attendance were:

- Uncle James Davis, Wodi Wodi Dharawal/Yuin Traditional Owner and South Coast Native Title representative
- Steven Henry, Site officer, Illawarra LALC
- Hannah Matagia, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer, Artefact
- Lily Hackett, Heritage Consultant, Artefact
- Rebcca Bryant, Senior Heritage Consultant, Artefact

6.4.4.2 Results

The results are recorded in the *221-291 Crown Street, 216-238 Keira Street and 86-90 Burelli Street, Wollongong Archaeological Survey Report* (Artefact 2024). Results included:

- the study area contains high historical disturbance levels that has greatly impacted the potential for preserved Aboriginal archaeological material.

- there has likely been a previous removal of Aboriginal archaeological material that may have been deposited within that soil in the majority of the study area
- an area in the southern car park of the study area was identified as being the least disturbed. In conversation on site with James Davis and Steven Henry, they indicated that if Aboriginal objects were present within the study area they would be located within this area.

6.4.4.3 Cultural Values Identified

The following cultural values were identified as part of the Site Survey and ACHAR Process:

Coastal areas and Sand dunes

- Coastal areas and sand dunes, identified by RAPs during consultation and in research, hold high cultural significance for Aboriginal people. Numerous Aboriginal sites near the foreshore reflect activities like camping, hunting, fishing, and burial grounds. Fairy Creek, north of the study area, is historically notable for an inter-tribal battle in the late 1800s.

Aboriginal Occupation

- The Wodi Wodi people, part of the Dharawal language group, have lived in the area for tens of thousands of years, holding a profound connection to the land.

6.5 Ongoing consultation

It is recommended that consultation be carried out by current and future project teams throughout the lifetime of the development of the site, during the Planning Proposal stage and post-Planning Proposal stages. Consultation and engagement could include:

- Engagement of Aboriginal owned businesses and organisations.
- Training and internships for early career Aboriginal professionals and students.
- Holding of smoking ceremonies at the beginning and end of the development.
- Commissioning of artistic works from locally connected Aboriginal artists and in collaboration with Aboriginal Artist Cooperatives such as Eora Centre & Boomalli Artists Cooperative.
- Ongoing approvals from Aboriginal traditional knowledge holders.
- Ongoing consultation with local Elders.
- Attending cultural tours and walks on Country.
- Involvement of RAPs in potential archaeological and heritage work.

7. ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES



7.1 Introduction

A summary of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values from historical research, previous consultation and ongoing project specific consultations is provided in this section.

7.2 Values

7.2.1 Dharawal Country

Wollongong lies within the Dharawal language group area and is home to the Wodi Wodi people. For tens of thousands of years the Wodi Wodi people have cared for Country and continue to have a deep and profound connection to the Wollongong area.

7.2.2 Language

The language spoken by the Wodi Wodi is a dialect of Dharawal. language and is an intrinsic part of culture and identity. Recently, through works such as the *D'harawal Dictionary* compiled by Gavin Andrews, Frances Bodkin and Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, Dharawal language is being revitalised.

7.2.3 Protocols

Protocols are an essential part of Wodi Wodi culture that need to be followed in order to create an environment of safety and respect. Protocols include gaining permission to enter Wodi Wodi Country from Elders and speaking with people who can speak for Country. Protocols also need to be followed when artefacts are found on a site or when working with scar trees. Not following protocols and customary lore may be disrespectful to the traditional custodians and Country, which can manifest in repercussions, including sickness.

7.2.4 Caring for community

Providing support to all members of the community is of the utmost importance to ensure the longevity of the local Aboriginal community. New developments have the opportunity to empower younger members of the community and support Elders, creating spaces that encourage the passing of knowledge from the one generation to the next. It is important that a sense of belonging is fostered, by enhancing connections to Country through engaging younger people in rehabilitation programs that restore the natural environment and usage of language.

7.2.5 Native vegetation

For tens of thousands of years, the Wodi Wodi people managed and maintained the forests and grasslands that used to cover this landscape, to ensure that the community had ample access to food, tools, medicines and building resources. For example, the Cabbage Tree Palms, brought to the coast by the Ancestors, were used for fibres; the Bangalow Palms were used to create shelters and carry water; and fruit could be gathered from the Orange Thorn bushes. In addition, many of trees were and continue to be culturally significant, with some trees being carved to indicate a ceremonial area or the presence of a burial. Today, most of the native vegetation has been cleared and overrun by invasive species, but some fig trees, Orange Thorn bushes and Inkweed continue to grow.

7.2.6 Education

Education and sharing knowledge are essential parts of Dharawal culture, as passing down knowledge to future generations has sustained Aboriginal cultures for thousands of years. For hundreds of years colonial powers prevented Aboriginal communities from teaching language and culture, so now it is important that these practices are revived and encouraged and

extended to those beyond that Aboriginal community, as sharing culture will help to protect it for future generations.

7.2.7 The Five Islands

An important Dharawal Dreaming story is that of the Five Islands, which is the creation story associated with Oola-boola-woo, the west wind, and his six daughters. In the dreaming Oola-boola-woo blew five of his daughters off the mountains on the coast for behaving badly, where each formed an island - the Five Islands, off the coast of Port Kembla. The last daughter, Geera, was lonely without her sisters and hunched down on the mountain for so long and so quietly that she turned to stone. Geera became part of the mountain range and is now known as Mount Keira.⁴³

7.2.8 Djeera and Jumbulla

The region around the Illawarra escarpment has been occupied by Aboriginal groups for thousands of years. As such this landscape and specific features within it, such as *Djembla/Jum-bullah* (Mount Kembla) and *Djera/Geera* (Mount Keira), are a source of past and continuing spiritual significance.

Djeera or Mt Keira has special significance to the traditional Aboriginal custodians of the Illawarra as a women's place. It also has links to Aboriginal creation stories.⁴⁴

Kembla is an Aboriginal word meaning "wild game abundant" or "plenty of game". Local Aboriginal people called the area "jum-bullah" or "Djembla" which means "wallaby".⁴⁵

⁴³ Coomaditchie (2016), The Story of the Five Islands, <https://www.coomaditchie.org.au/dreaming-stories>

⁴⁴ <https://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/council/news/articles/older-articles/support-for-djeera-mt-keira-and-five-islands-aboriginal-place-nomination>

7.2.9 Consultation and reconciliation

Dharawal culture has survived for thousands of years and through consultation and reconciliation, it will thrive for thousands of years to come. Projects need to maintain consultations and Aboriginal communities need to the avenue through which to share their culture with the wider community.

7.2.10 Preservation of Aboriginal histories and practices

Conserving local Aboriginal histories and practices is essential to honouring and sustaining the deep heritage passed down by Aboriginal ancestors. Pride in their culture reflects the resilience of communities who, despite historical prohibitions on teaching language, practicing traditional customs, and even fishing, continue to uphold these traditions. Preserving this history requires open communication, as these stories hold sacred meaning and often include songlines and local histories that are integral to the cultural landscape. Elders, such as Uncle Richard, have shared stories and practices of profound importance, reminding us that respectful consultation is crucial to ensure sensitive heritage interpretation aligns with community values and respects cultural protocols. Conservation not only safeguards these histories but also reinforces cultural identity and pride for current and future generations.

7.2.11 Local Landforms

The coastal areas and sand dunes around Wollongong hold profound cultural significance for Aboriginal communities, reflecting a deep-rooted connection to the land. These local landforms, identified by Registered

⁴⁵ <https://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library/explore-our-past/your-suburb/suburbs/mount-kembla>

Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) during consultation and research, are not only natural features but also sites of historical importance, supporting activities such as camping, hunting, fishing, and serving as burial grounds. The foreshore's abundant resources made it an essential gathering place for Aboriginal people, fostering a lifestyle closely tied to the natural environment. Nearby, Fairy Creek is especially notable as a historical site for an inter-tribal battle in the late 1800s, underscoring its cultural resonance. Preserving these areas helps protect both the physical landscape and the cultural heritage they embody, offering present and future generations a connection to their heritage and the traditions upheld by their ancestors.

7.3 Registered Aboriginal sites

The location of Aboriginal sites is considered culturally sensitive information. It is advised that this information, including the AHIMS data appearing on the heritage map be removed from this report if it is to enter the public domain.

An extensive search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) was undertaken on 4 October 2024 (Client Service ID: 936813) to determine the location of Aboriginal sites in relation to the current study area.

There was a total of 17 AHIMS registered sites located within the extensive search area. However, no registered AHIMS sites were located within the study area. The closest AHIMS registered site is AHIMS ID 52-2-4498 and comprises an artefact site. Artefact and shell middens sites were the most common site type within the extensive search. Previous investigations of Aboriginal archaeology in NSW have resulted in Aboriginal sites located more frequently near areas of permanent water sources as well as within or adjacent to sand dune systems (Attenbrow 2010). This is reflected in the AHIMS search results where the majority of the registered sites are concentrated along the eastern foreshore of Cove Beach and Wollongong North Beach, northeast of the study area. They largely comprise shell midden and artefact sites likely due to the proximity to the ocean that would have provided an abundance of food resources. This concentration of sites is also located within the marine Wollongong soil landscape characterised by deep (>200mm) sands comprising of beaches, foredunes and swales that provide good preservation of organic material like shells (Attenbrow 2012). Aboriginal burials are also often located within sand dune systems (Heritage Victoria 2008) which is consistent with the two burials

within the extensive search are located within the Wollongong sands within areas of minimal development. Areas within these sands also of low historical ground disturbance have potential for other burials to be present.

In comparison, only two AHIMS registered sites are located further inland from the ocean foreshore (AHIMS ID 52-2-4498 and AHIMS ID 52-2-4878). This is likely reflective of the inland areas, including the land of the study area, located within the residual Gwynneville soil landscape. This soil landscape is characterized by shallow soils susceptible to erosion and flooding. The fragile nature of the soil landscape in combination with the high levels of historical development and subsequent ground disturbance west of the foreshore has likely greatly impacted or destroyed the thin layer of soil that may have once contained Aboriginal archaeological deposits. This has likely resulted in few AHIMS registered sites being identified in these areas. Additionally, certain site types, such as culturally modified trees, are particularly vulnerable to destruction through historical occupation. Due to the largescale removal of native vegetation in the area, any culturally modified trees have likely been removed and therefore no culturally modified trees have been registered within the extensive search.

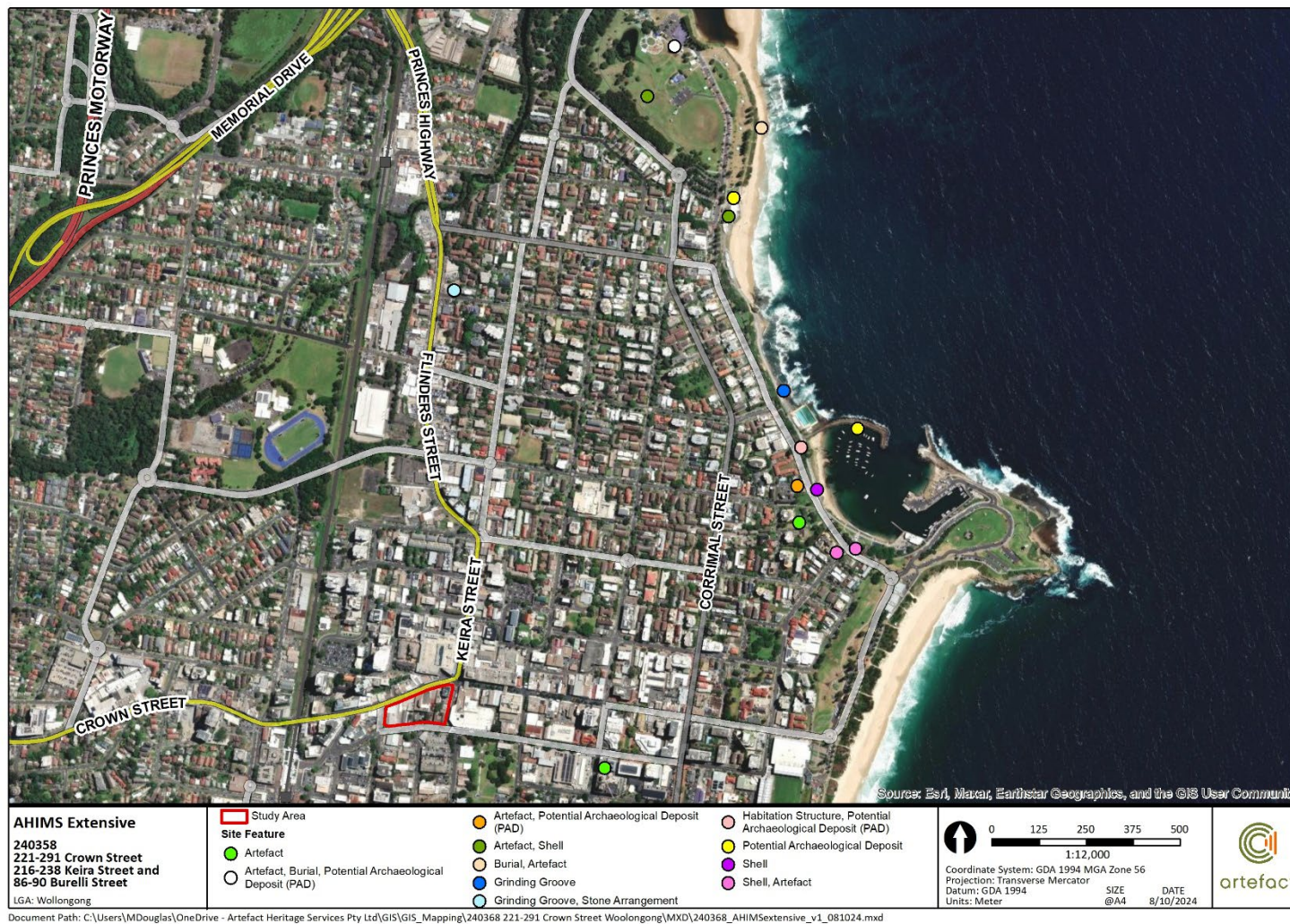
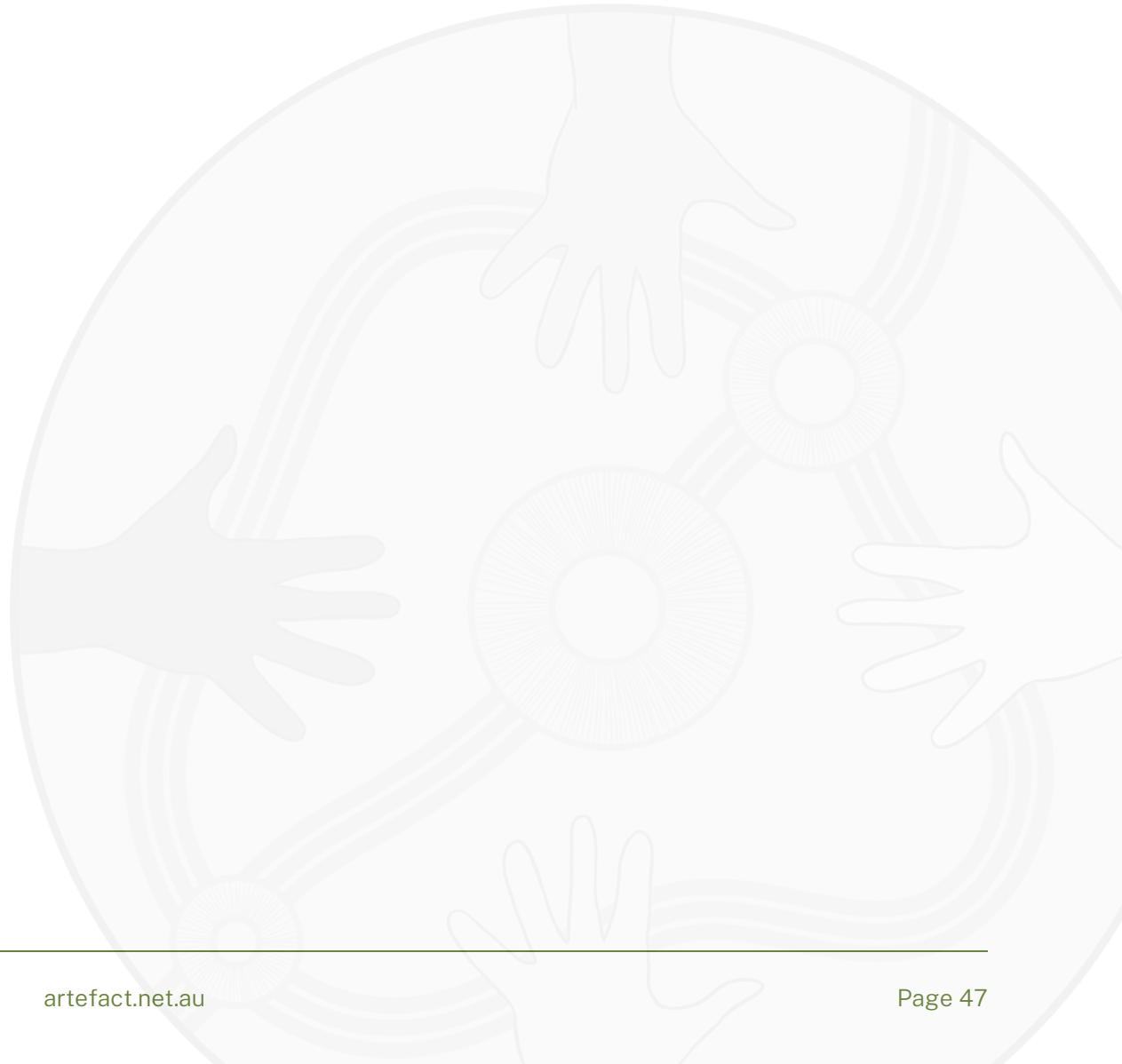


Figure 20: AHIMS extensive search results

8. DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY



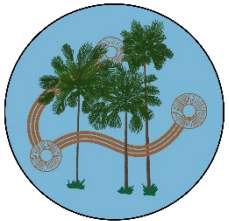
8.1 Introduction

The GANSW *Connecting with Country Framework* (2023) provides direction on ways to explore opportunities for design process and practices to support connection to Country in built environment projects. Bringing an understanding of Country into these processes can help improve project outcomes.

8.2 Design Principles

These broadly applicable set of design principles are a useful tool for designers and developers to create places that reflect Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Dharawal icons by Wirrin Ward-Lowe.

Acknowledge Country



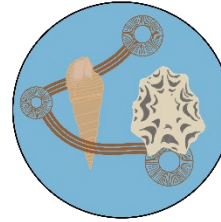
Provide acknowledgement, interpretation and resources about the Dharawal and Wodi Wodi people. Learning about and having access to cultural heritage is important. Meaningful interpretive signage can acknowledge the Wodi Wodi, Dharawal and their Country while Elders could be invited to give a Welcome to Country at events.

Native planting



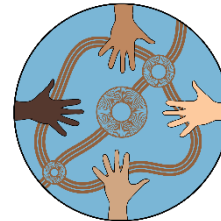
Reconnect site users and local communities to Country by making native flora the main characteristic of landscape design. Reintroducing native plants that have been overlooked and removed over the past two hundred years to heal the landscape. For example Cabbage Tree Palms, traditionally used for fibres; the Bangalow Palms, used to create shelters and carry water; and Orange Thorn bushes with their edible

Connect with Country



Connecting with Country is an important cultural heritage value for Aboriginal people. Create spaces and opportunities which are calm, tranquil, and which offer contact with sky, land, water and fire. Offer spaces which benefit health and wellbeing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and consider outdoor play spaces for children.

Consider maintenance



Maintenance of plants and landscapes such as coastal dunes should be considered so that Country is cared for in the long term. Low maintenance landscapes ensure longevity. Similarly, expressions of Aboriginal culture like artworks need to be protected and cared for so that they aren't disrespected by vandalism.

Celebrate culture

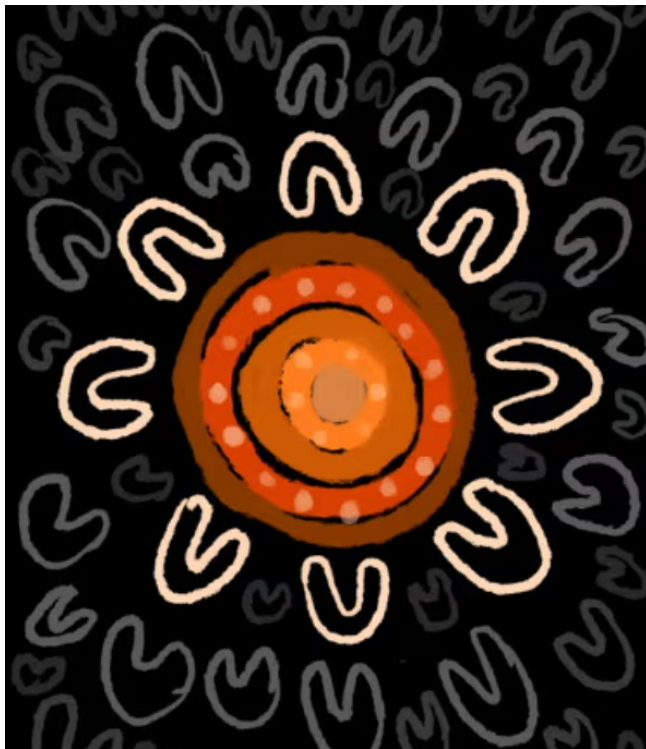


This development can celebrate Dharawal culture, by committing to long term consultation, facilitating traditional Aboriginal ceremonies and using art, language and interpretation to educate and celebrate keys parts of Dharawal culture including the story of the Five Islands.

8.3 Examples of design realisations

8.3.1 Introduction

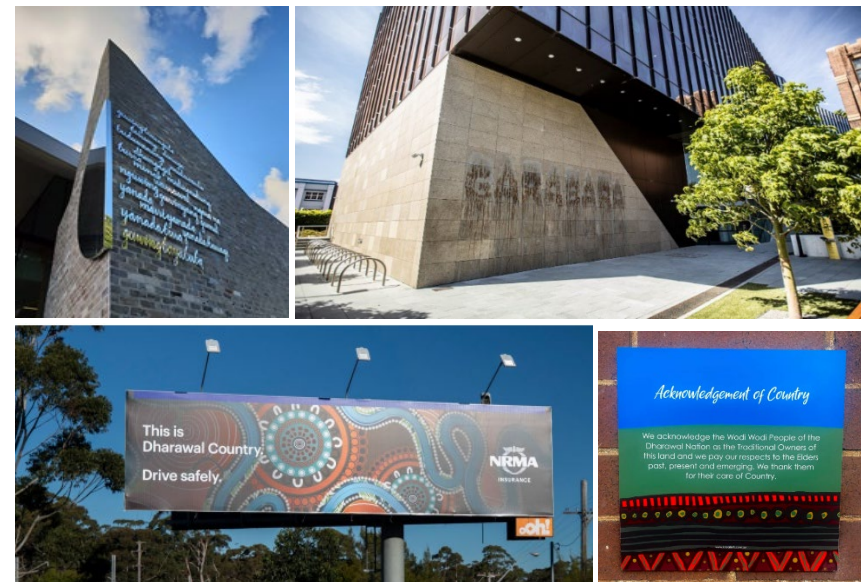
This section showcases some possible ways that the Design Principles outlined in 8.2 could be realised in the architecture, landscaping and interpretation of the site. Please note that these examples are from a range of Aboriginal heritage interpretation from different Aboriginal Countries.



Designed for Koori Curriculum by Dharawal, Bidjigal and Dhungutti artist Garry Purchase as the cover design of the Educator Yarns book and podcast.

8.3.2 Acknowledgement of/Welcome to Country

A key method of communicating the importance of Country to visitors at the site is by providing a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country message. A Welcome to Country is given by the traditional custodians/knowledge holders of the area welcoming people to their land, while an Acknowledgement of Country is a sign of respect to the traditional owners of the land stated by the asset holder. This can take the form of physical signage, artwork or installations or be hosted on an online platform. The examples below demonstrate successful and eye-catching ways to Acknowledge Country through graphics, language, sculpture and signage.

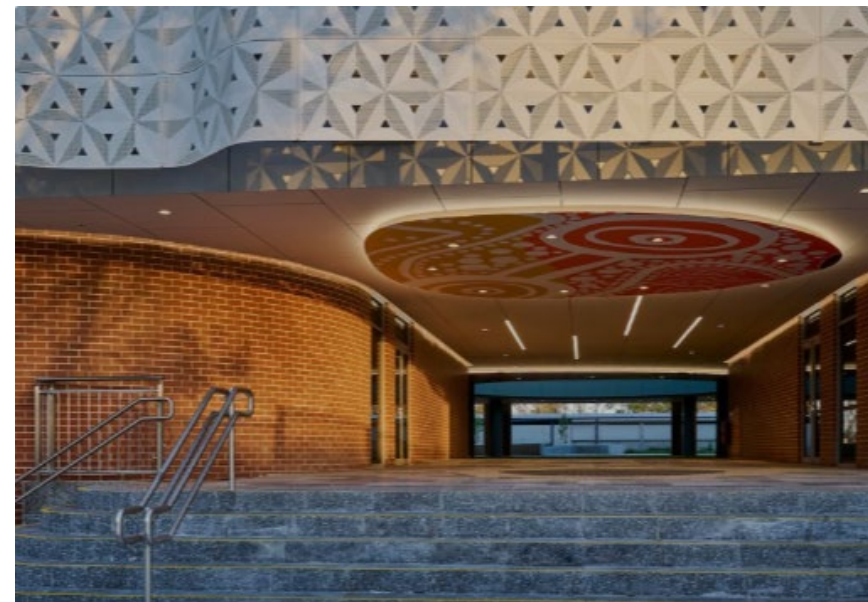


Top left: Marrickville Library Acknowledgement of Country; top right: University of Sydney Acknowledgement of Country; bottom left: Dharawal Country NRMA road signage; bottom right: Acknowledgement of Country sign by Indigenous business Kinya Lerrk.

8.3.3 Integration of Indigenous designs and forms into built environment

Creative practices relating to place-making and the built form are powerful devices to incorporate and reflect the heritage values and stories of a site in a new development. Heritage values embedded within the site can be expressed through innovative architectural design responses for new developments, providing a visual exploration of the history of each site. This can be realised through the form of new buildings, integrated applications within new developments and the shaping of the landscape's geometry.

This interpretive media option is an effective approach to integrating Aboriginal cultural values into the built form. Designs that echo traditional forms, spaces and narratives and their contemporary interpretations are increasingly being integrated within new developments worldwide, sending strong, respectful messages about the timeless links between Aboriginal people and the landscape, and allowing for reflection of contemporary connections to the land. The following examples below demonstrate the way design and form can be used to represent Country.



Left: Biripi Aboriginal Clinic (Source: Purfleet); top Warwick Keen, 'Cultural Conversations' 2018, (source: City of Wollongong); bottom National Aboriginal design agency.

8.3.4 Landscape geometry and plantings

Interpretive landscaping is an effective approach to evoke past structures, gardens and landscapes within public and private developments. Landscaping devices, including use of turf and hardstand, geometry and shapes, use of water and planting certain species, can create an immersive space for site users that gives a feeling of being surrounded by heritage.

Plantings of species that were in the area prior to European arrival, and therefore part of the Indigenous landscape experienced by the local Aboriginal community, is a powerful interpretive approach for landscaping. Planting patterns, where trees and understory plants were clumped rather than planted in lines, are preferred to enhance the naturalistic feel and echo Country. Plants that could be integrated into landscape designs include Cabbage Tree and Banaglow Palms, and Orange Thorn bushes.



Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service allied health services hub in Newman. (Noel Nannup and Simon Forrest).



Cabbage tree (Cordyline australis) landscape design. (Source: Shades of Green Landscape Design Architecture)



Orange Thorn Bushes used in hedges. (Source: Gardening Know How)

8.3.5 Views and visual links across Country

Placemaking is enhanced by vistas and viewpoints which allow visitors and users to get a holistic sense of the landscape. High points allow for sightlines across rivers and urban areas. Walkways can give access to viewpoints to allow residents and users a chance to immerse themselves on Country.

Creating visual links to nearby green spaces connects people with Country and can significantly contribute to their well-being. Built design that facilitates experiences with nature, allowing people to see, hear, and physically connect with the natural environment enhances this connection. Incorporating elements like large windows, open spaces, and utilising natural light can seamlessly integrate the built environment with the surrounding landscape.



Example of signage interpreting views



*'Mount Canobolas summit visitor precinct artwork by Mick Crook.'*⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The redevelopment of the Mount Canobolas summit visitor precinct in 2021/22 was founded on the collaborative involvement of the Wiradjuri community in the project. They considered this an appropriate opportunity to share publicly for the first time the Three Brothers Creation story describing the mountain's formation. An artwork depicting this story was created

especially for the project by Mick Crook. This artwork and the story is displayed prominently at the summit entry. Alongside it a special pavement treatment derived from the original painting was installed in collaboration with the artist.' (source: nature tourism services): <https://www.naturetourismservices.com.au/indigenous-interpretive-signs.html>

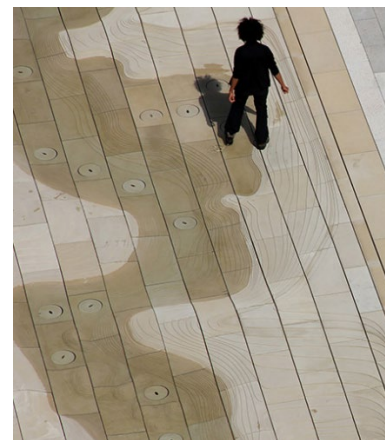
8.3.6 Ground plane elements

Ground plane elements embedded in public domain areas are a subtly effective heritage interpretation medium. Paving colours, metal inlays or sandblasted patterns may be installed into ground planes, forming artworks, tracing the footprints of former structures or containing small 'bites' of textual information, quotes or dates creating a narrative as paths are traversed.

Embedding Aboriginal design elements or language into the ground plane of a site can connect a new development directly to Country, providing a tangible aesthetic reference to significant physical, social, or spiritual features of the land. By installing such ground plane elements into outdoor spaces, a strong visual message about the Aboriginal heritage of the site can be created. Words in Wodi Wodi/ Dharawal language and graphic references to local fish, landscape topography and ocean shores could be interated into ground plane elements for the development .



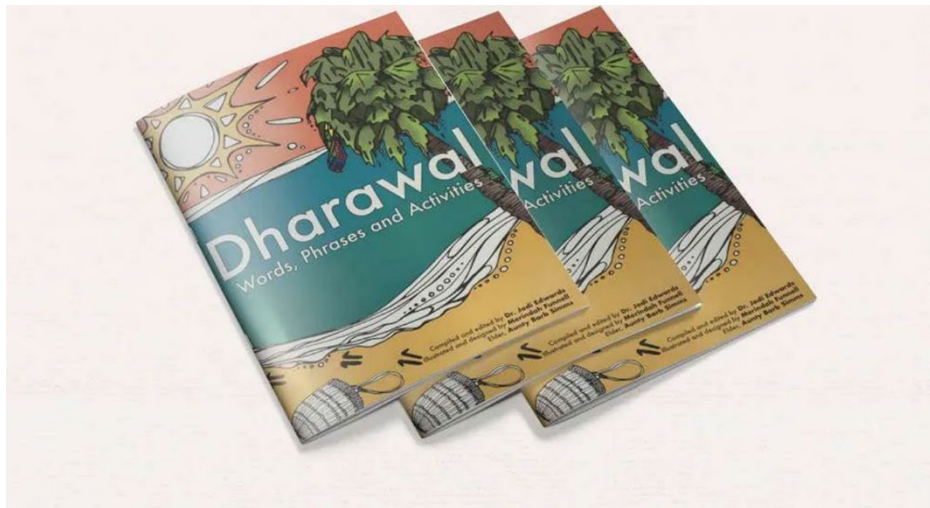
Bulletin Place inlays in language.



Top left and bottom left – Yagan Square ground plane water feature referencing the former wetland system that was an important meeting and food-gathering place for Aboriginal people. (Source: Peter Bennetts). Bottom right - Citizens Gateway ground plane elements by Brian Robertson, Cairns

8.3.7 Naming/Use of language

For Aboriginal people, connection with Country is intrinsically connected to identity through language, cultural practices and long held relationship between people and the land. Using Aboriginal words or phrases in audio recordings, as elements in the paving, to name key features in new developments or as dual naming for streets and public spaces is an interpretive option that recognises Aboriginal cultural heritage values. All language usage should be done in consultation with Aboriginal knowledge holders. Wodi Wodi/ Dharawal language could be integrated throughout the development. This could include naming of buildings, rooms, functional elements and public areas. The following are examples of Aboriginal language being used across a range of mediums.



Dharawal language book 'Dharawal: Word, Phrases and Activities'.



Bench with local place name at Pyrmont Cove (Pirrama).



Njirangga dharidhamayi Dharawal nguradha - You are standing on Dharawal Country. Entry Sign at Campbelltown Billabong developed by Aboriginal Stakeholders and artist Danielle Mate.

8.3.8 Gathering spaces and seating

New developments provide an opportunity to integrate heritage interpretation into buildings and public spaces, with heritage details incorporated into functional elements such as stairways, seating, shelters, balustrades and screens. As well as being essential elements of public space, these items can be canvases for heritage content.

Embedding heritage interpretation elements within the seating, ground plane, and shade structures within gathering spaces provides a rich context and points of engagement and conversation. Patterning, text, or graphic image-based seating inserts are effective forms of interpretation, strategically positioned to engage people who have some time to pause, read and reflect absorbing messages and stories about the site. Similarly, utilising overhead elements such as canopies, roofs, shopfront awnings or shade structures for portraying images or Aboriginal designs are opportunities for unique expressions of a destination's heritage.



Bilya Marlee houses the School of Indigenous Studies, Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health, and the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health in Perth.



University of Queensland Reconciliation Garden by Arcadia Landscape Architecture



Render National First Nations Colleague gathering space, UTS (Source: Greenaway Architects, Warren and Mahoney, OCULUS)

8.3.9 Interpretive Signage

Well-designed and written interpretive panels are an excellent media for conveying key stories and rich narratives in an effective, accessible manner. If integrated into the design of a precinct they can be strategically located to gain appropriate exposure. Interpretive panels, as text-based media, are ideally suited to tell more details of site-specific stories providing contextual information in a succinct and engaging manner.

Panel text can encourage visitors to look more closely at their surroundings or text can pose questions to stimulate conversations. They should be located in spaces which allow for a longer dwell time or in natural pause points such as public squares, parks or seating areas. When used across a site, panels should have a consistent 'look and feel' so audiences know they are encountering heritage information.

Interpretive signage highlighting the ongoing connection of Dharawal/Wodi Wodi People could be integrated throughout the new development.

The following section provides examples of interpretive signage featuring Aboriginal cultural values and stories.



Interpretive signage at Yirran Muru playground, Shellharbour.



Kamay-Burrawang Walk interpretive signage by FRD.



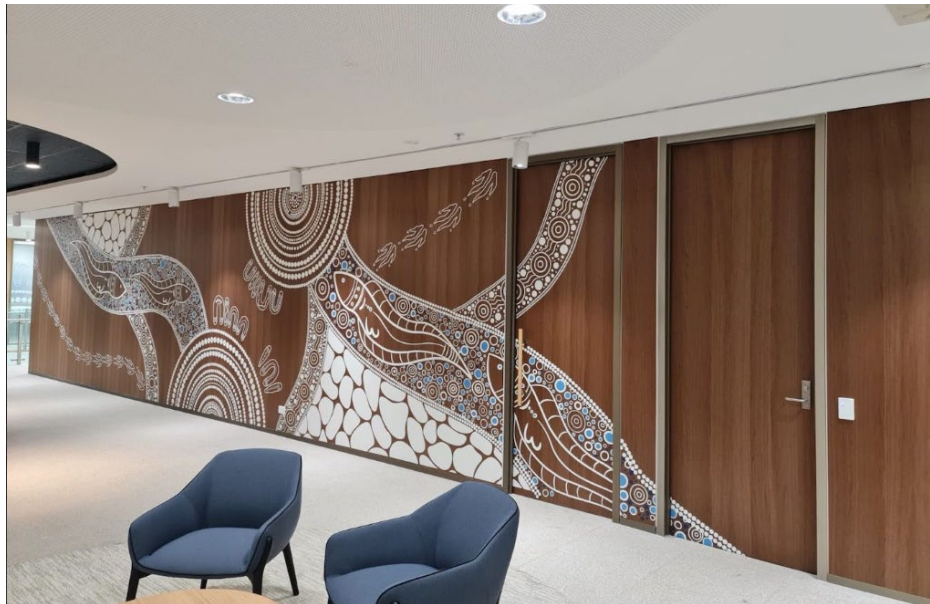
Left to right - Cairns foreshore interpretive panel on poles. Cotter Dam Discovery Trail.: Bushland Reserves interpretive signage by Heine Jones.

8.3.10 Interior design

Incorporating soft furnishings such as wall paper, furniture and carpets from Aboriginal artists and designers into interior design is a way to support local Aboriginal businesses while creating a sense of place and expressing Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Statement pieces can help to create welcoming and culturally safe spaces.

Local Aboriginal artists and designers can be commissioned to create site specific designs for interior elements, adding to the unique cultural aesthetic of the living and public areas of the new development.

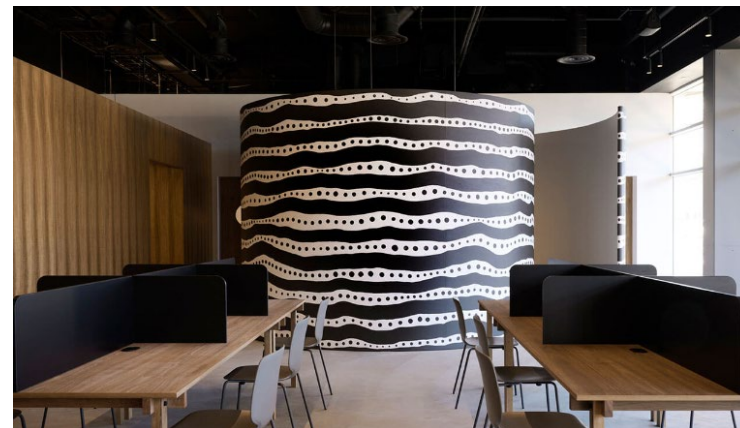
The following are examples of interior elements and soft furnishings using Aboriginal designs, patterns and colour schemes.



Sydney Water offices, Hannah Pettit “Burramattagal” design. (Source: National Aboriginal Design Agency)



Water Yuludarla commercial carpet collection – a contemporary interpretation, based on the artwork of Gumbaynggirr Artist, Brentyn Lugnan.



Murran - First Nations Business, Retail and Arts Hub. Dawn Architecture. Photo: Earl Carter Studio

9. PRACTICES



9.1 Introduction

This section explores how key elements of Aboriginal knowledge systems can be aligned with cognitive concepts of thinking, feeling and behaving, which are fundamental in the Connecting with Country design process, and provides examples of actions that can be undertaken by project teams to reframe their design approach to be Country centred.

9.1.1 Thinking

‘Communing with Country’ describes a cultural practice used by Aboriginal people to connect with Country through their mind and spirit. The word ‘communing’ has been selected to convey a specific meaning: being in deep and intimate conversation with Country but not in a religious sense as some may understand it. Communing with Country is presented as an invitation to explore the deep connection Aboriginal people have with Country, demonstrated through various forms of cultural expression. Project teams can learn about cultural practice as a way to deepen cultural understanding, guided and mediated by Aboriginal people.

Activities

- Engage in cultural awareness training,

9.1.2 Feeling

Understanding how emotions and feelings shape our responses to experiences and knowledge is an important step towards changing our approach. Where guided by Aboriginal people, being immersed in Country can awaken our senses and feelings and inform a deeper understanding of Country.

Activities

- Walk on Country
- Participate in appropriate ceremony

9.1.3 Behaving

Being on Country refers to the experience of being connected to and living in harmony with Country. Being on Country requires an understanding and balancing of complex systems of knowledge sharing, interrelationships, protocols and behaviours.

For many Aboriginal people, being on Country is also an important part of their identity and sense of belonging. It provides a connection to their ancestors and other living entities, to their cultural heritage, and to the broader community of humans and living beings that inhabit Country. A vital part of being on Country is through knowledge-sharing practices to support the health and wellbeing of Country. Knowledge is contained and shared within the cultural expression of many Aboriginal peoples.

Activities

- Ensure Aboriginal people retain authorship and control of their cultural knowledge and intellectual property, and how it is shared with others.
- Invite Aboriginal people to co-design and co-manage projects rather than just being asked to provide their cultural knowledge, stories and insights to help develop projects.
- Respect Elders and family
- Listen and observe closely, and be modest
- Ensure the design process is collaborative and inclusive.

10. ACTIONS



10.1 Introduction

This section discusses actions which can be undertaken throughout the lifecycle of a project to facilitate the shift from Human-centric to Country-Centric development. It is presented under the four categories: Form (Starting with Country), Design (Imagining with Country), Deliver (Shaping Country) and Maintain (Caring for Country).

The preparation of this Connecting with Country report is fundamental to shifting to the Country-Centric design approach, as it identifies Aboriginal cultural values and provides practical means of ensuring these values are reflected in the development. The table below identifies actions that have been taken in the preparation of this report which demonstrate how the Country-centred approach has been achieved and provides recommendations for further actions required to start with Country.

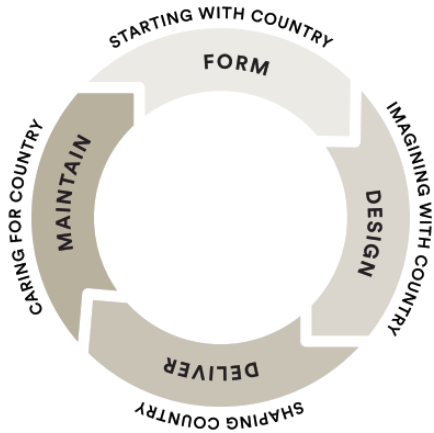


Figure 21: Project lifecycle from an Aboriginal perspective (GANSW Connecting with Country)

10.2 Form – Starting with Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Research and prepare	Locate previous Aboriginal cultural heritage and technical studies relevant to the project.	Outcomes - See previous consultation and reports in section 6.3 Recommendations - All project team members should review this <i>Connecting with Country</i> report including summaries of previous consultation, research, strategies and reports related to the project area.
	Considering undertaking cultural awareness training, including identifying the Aboriginal stakeholders you will be working with	Outcomes - Project team members attended - Cultural immersion experience with Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience on 20 September 2024 (DKO, Level 33) - Online meeting with Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience, draft plans and designs, on 11 October 2024 (DKO, Land & Form)

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
		Recommendations Cultural awareness training should be undertaken by all future project team members
Allocate time and resources	Allocate sufficient time and resources for community to participate, ensuring there is flexibility with timing and location of meeting	Outcomes - Artefact has organized consultation with key stakeholders at a suitable time and location for attendees - Ongoing consultation with Stakeholders throughout the project is a recommendation in the Connecting with Country report Recommendations - Project teams should ensure that project timelines and budgets account for knowledge sharing workshops that are flexible - Continue consultation including project update meetings throughout the development of the project
Empower	Enable Aboriginal community to lead and guide the project from the outset and throughout the project lifecycle, including financial decision making	Outcomes - Consultation meetings including Walks on Country, Cultural Immersion workshops and online consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders and traditional custodians and the project team. Recommendations - Schedule in more consultation at future stages of development - Follow the recommendations in the ACHAR (Artefact, 2024) - Schedule meetings on site upon project completion.
Collaborate	Follow established community engagement protocols	Outcomes - This process has engaged with stakeholders who were identified through the ACHAR process and through self-identification as people with a connection to Country. - Stakeholders were asked how they would like to be addressed - ICIP and other protocols were discussed at the start of the discussion and Immersion. Recommendations - The ICIP guidelines outlined in section 1.9 should be followed in future consultation – particularly in development of public art and Aboriginal heritage Interpretation.
Share knowledge	Discuss with all involved how historic events and cultural narratives will be supported	Outcomes - ICIP protocols were discussed with the project team and stakeholders during consultation meetings. - Draft reports are being distributed to all stakeholders for input and feedback. - Through consultation and historical research this CwC has identified key historical and cultural narratives. Example of how these narratives can be interpreted are described in section 8.3. Recommendations - The preparation of a Heritage Interpretation and Art Strategy would assist in identifying and conveying key cultural events and historic narratives

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
	Listen to community concerns about building development and how it will affect Country	Outcomes - Concerns and opportunities were discussed during the Cultural Immersion workshop and online consultation meeting. Recommendations - The project team should review and respond to the discussion feedback outlined in section 6.4. - Project update meetings with stakeholders should be organized by the project team to share the ongoing progress and continue to seek feedback.
Respect ICIP	Establish ICIP protocols that will ensure knowledge and other intellectual property (e.g. Artwork) is protected and appropriately credited	Outcome - The ICIP guidelines are outlined in section 1.9 and were discussed with stakeholders and the project team at the beginning of each consultation meeting. Recommendations - The ICIP guidelines outlined in section 1.9 should be followed in future consultation – particularly in development of public art and Aboriginal heritage Interpretation. - Renumerate key stakeholders for the sharing of cultural knowledge - Provide key stakeholders with the draft CwC report for review and input.
	Keep confidential records of all engagement sessions. Report back to community on how ICIP is being used and seek permission before sharing information	Outcomes - ICIP and other protocols were discussed with stakeholders and the project team at the beginning of each consultation meeting. Recommendations - Redact key information when reports are made publicly available. - Establish protocols to communication is maintained with community - This report and notes from the discussion during the Walk on Country, Cultural immersion workshop and online meeting will be shared with stakeholders to check they approve of their knowledges being shared
Create Employment Opportunities	Consider engaging an Aboriginal cultural advisor who has spatial design skills	Outcomes - Research local cultural advisors and seek recommendations from key stakeholders on consultants to engage Recommendations - Collate a list of Aboriginal owned business and services in the area who can contribute to this project at all stages - Use Supply Nation to identify and work with local Indigenous-owned businesses: https://supplynation.org.au/

10.3 Design – Imagining with Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Design basics	Use first place names	Outcomes Recommendations regarding use of Dharawal/ Wodi Wodi language within the development have been provided in section 8.3.
		Recommendations: - Start incorporating Aboriginal place names into reports. - Incorporate place names into design concepts - Use Dharawal/ Wodi Wodi language in wayfinding and interpretive signage
	Connect to broader landscape settings	Outcomes - Specific landscape opportunities using endemic flora have been provided in 8.3.4. - Engage local Aboriginal landscaping companies for the project's landscape design implementation.
		Recommendations Consult with Aboriginal knowledge holders when conducting and developing environmental management recommendations to encourage the maintenance of this knowledge and improve the health of ecosystems
	Protect Aboriginal cultural heritage	Outcomes - The production of this report is a key step in identifying Aboriginal cultural values, and provides information for future developments about means of celebrating and protecting Aboriginal heritage - An ACHAR for the project is being produced (Artefact 2024) - Interpretation opportunities for local Aboriginal Cultural Values have been identified in section 8.3.
		Recommendations Consider the development of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Art Strategy
	Acknowledge shared history	Outcomes Opportunities to interpret and acknowledge shared histories have been identified through design realisation and interpretation opportunities in 8.3
		Recommendations Preparation of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Art Strategy would assist in presenting the different historical narratives
Design opportunities	Learning from traditional Aboriginal architecture	Outcomes: Examples of good practice in incorporating Aboriginal design into development are given in section 8.3.3 and section 8.3.8.

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
		Recommendations Further consultation needs to be organized to ensure the Aboriginal community approves of design concepts
	Supporting living systems: Earth, Water and sky	Outcomes Consider recommendations by stakeholders included in section 6.4 with respect to landscaping, places of healing, access to the sky, and access to water and soil.
		Recommendations Environmental assessment recommendations and design concepts should be prepared in light of knowledge shared by community that promote healthy Country
	Reawakening memory	Outcomes Facilitate and provide access to cultural ceremonies such as smoking ceremonies.
		Recommendations - Organize a smoking ceremony on site at the beginning and completion of project development. - Consider the preparation of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Art Strategy

10.4 Delivery – Shaping Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Construct with Country	Consider how the building of the place will become part of Country once completed.	Recommendations - Prior to construction commencing, an Unexpected Finds Protocol should be developed which should include a condition regarding consultation - Consult the ACHAR (Artefact, 2024) including protocols for findings of Aboriginal objects. - Consult with project RAPs, LALC and key stakeholders about the caring and storage for any Aboriginal objects that may be found.
	When significant items are discovered during subsoil investigations, collaborate with local Aboriginal community to determine culturally appropriate handling, repatriation and reburial of any ancestral remains or artefacts	
	Undertake a skills audit of the community before construction	Recommendations - Provide training and employment opportunities for community - Project teams to participate in Cultural Awareness Training

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Celebrate	Plan for ceremony. Look for opportunities to involve the community throughout the development process, such as -Invitations to perform a Welcome to Country ceremony at important milestone events, noting that a Welcome to Country needs to be done by Traditional Custodians -Invitations to attend official openings	Recommendations • Commission a Welcome to Country ceremony at important milestone events • Organise a smoking ceremony at the beginning and completion of the project. • Invite key stakeholders to perform and participate in any Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies.

10.5 Maintain – Caring for Country

Activity from framework	Action from framework	Outcomes and recommendations
Provide access to Country	Support the return of community to Country by providing access to sites where projects are being developed and delivered	Recommendations • Ensure the design concept includes a space where community can gather/have access • Provide culturally safe spaces within the development for community
Monitor and evaluate	Undertake post-occupancy evaluations to establish project success and areas for improvement	Recommendations: • Undertake post-occupancy evaluations
	Maintain ongoing relationships with community	Recommendations: • For developments that arise from the masterplan, ensure a condition of approval is Aboriginal engagement
	Continue to develop and strengthen cultural awareness	Recommendations: • Develop cultural awareness projects which can be implemented throughout the development to the non-Aboriginal community • Project teams to attend local cultural events and celebrations.

11. OUTCOMES FOR COUNTRY



11.1 Introduction

The outcomes of a Country-centred approach to planning new developments are presented in this section as practical indicators of success.

11.2 Healthy Country

Healthy Country describes healthy, interconnected natural ecosystems, supported by regenerative practices based on Aboriginal knowledge.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Recommendations
Healthy Ecology	High biodiversity includes a wide variety of plant and animal species, including those that are rare or endangered	• Incorporate native and endemic plants within the project design to create healthy eco-systems and micro-habitat.
	Ecological systems are resilient to impacts from drought, floods and fires, as well as human-induced disturbances such as habitat destruction and pollution	• Use endemic and climate resilient plant species and re-introduce plants that were present at the site prior to colonisation. • Implement native planting schemes that are resilient to or thrive in the environmental conditions, based on advice from Aboriginal community members
The physical form of Country remains recognisable and restored where possible	Interference with natural water systems is minimal	• Use materials that reference the local landscape such as sandstone in building and landscape design • Consider how the project can improve waterflow and filtration through the property and positively impact on nearby environment. • Note the important views to local mountains and ridges

11.3 Healthy Community

Built environment projects can provide opportunities for employment and capacity building within the Aboriginal community, and support Aboriginal communities' connection to their cultural identity, which supports positive health and wellbeing.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Recommendations
Strong cultural identity, connected to place and community	Aboriginal community sees their cultural heritage appropriately reflected in the design of places where they live and work	• Consider the development of a Heritage Interpretation Strategy

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Recommendations
Cultural safety	Aboriginal people feel safe, respected, and supported in how they express their cultural identity	- Ensure consultation is ongoing - Ensure ICIP protocols are followed
Relief for Aboriginal communities who are fatigued by the workload imposed on them by project teams seeking their advice on Country	A strategic plan or register is established to identify technical and cultural skills of Aboriginal community Community is involved early in the decision-making about which projects they are best placed to work on	- Collaborate with the Illawarra LALC - Seek advice from Council on appropriate contacts and existing registers - Continue consultation including with the RAPs identified during ACHAR process and Aboriginal stakeholders identified in this CwC
Training	Training is provided to develop communities' spatial design skills and understanding of planning and design processes	Identify opportunities for training for Aboriginal trainees, interns and students as part of the development
	Financial supports including scholarships encourage community to pursue a career in built environment professions	Consider opportunities for scholarships for Aboriginal trainees, interns and students
Employment opportunities	Jobs are created that allow people to stay connected to community and Country,	- Consider how an Indigenous employment program could be incorporated into the development - Prioritise Aboriginal owned business where relevant
	Employment opportunities are provided throughout all stages of project life cycles	
	Aboriginal businesses are supported in the project procurement strategy	

11.4 Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage

It is critical that Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected in the built environment, both through the design and development of projects, and by acknowledging and respecting the rights of Aboriginal people and community over their cultural intellectual property.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Aboriginal cultural advisers guiding project teams and clients to better connect with Aboriginal community	Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected and celebrated within planning and design outcomes.	Community will have the opportunity for input into Connecting with Country reports through review of the draft.
Project teams and processes for project delivery respect ICIP	Aboriginal community endorses the project outcomes and behaviour of the project team.	Give opportunities for Aboriginal stakeholders to endorse the Connecting with Country report

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Aboriginal language placenames are used	Aboriginal placenames are used for parks and streets. Dual naming, or returning the original name, is used for natural features	- Contribute to reviving Dharawal/ Wodi Wodi dialect by using local language within the project. - Consider the development of a Heritage Interpretation Plan
Access to Country is provided	Access to Country enables community to practice ceremony and undertake obligations to care for Country.	Opportunities should be sought for appropriate ceremonies (e.g. smoking ceremonies and Welcome to Country ceremonies) during the development/ opening of the project.

11.5 Cultural competency

Implementing the *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework* (2023) through built environment projects provides educational opportunities for project teams, clients, and the public, to develop a deeper cultural awareness and respect for Aboriginal people and culture.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Cultural competency ongoing cultural awareness training develops skills and competency in delivering Country centred design projects	Workplace culture supports training, immersion and learning for built environment professionals, including individuals, project teams and across agencies.	- Project team members participate in Walks on Country and workshops with stakeholders - All new project team members to undertake Cultural Awareness Training - Proof of cultural awareness training is included in procurement contracts.
	Cultural awareness training is embedded into continuing professional development.	
	Requirements (e.g. NSCA) Proof of cultural awareness training is required in procurement contracts	

11.6 Better Places

Adopting a Country-centred approach creates better places, informs sustainable designs, integrates with the broader landscape to form place-based design responses, and promotes strong community engagement to create welcoming and accessible places.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Planning and design projects create places that are connected with Country	Project sites are connected to broader landscapes beyond property or project boundaries	• Incorporate colour schemes connected to the local landscape into final building design (exteriors and interiors) • Incorporate endemic plants into final landscape design e.g Cabbage Palms and Orange Thorn bushes • Incorporate local materials into landscape designs • Consult with Aboriginal knowledge holders when conducting and developing environmental management recommendations to encourage the maintenance of this knowledge and improve the health of ecosystems
	Where possible, locally sourced, sustainable building materials are used; they have a relationship with and belong to the Country they come from.	
	First placenames guide design and planning outcomes: placemaking, dual naming and wayfinding.	• Contribute to reviving Dharawal/ Wodi Wodil dialect through use of local language within the project. This can include use of language in building name or spaces within the building or landscaping
Planning and design outcomes support Living cultural practices	The memory of significant cultural, historic and natural events can be read and traced within Country's landscape	• The development of interpretive media can explore the key cultural narratives and values identified in this CwC.
	Projects support ongoing opportunities for on-Country tours, ceremony, and sourcing Indigenous food and materials.	• Community spaces can be used by local communities for cultural practices and workshops.
Original landscapes are repaired or restored	Landscapes are regenerated.	• Landscape plans should be developed which incorporate endemic flora and support natural habitats • Landscape plans should consider views to mountains and ridgelines

12. CONCLUSION



12.1 Conclusion and recommendations

This Connecting with Country report for 221-291 Crown Street, 216-238 Keira Street and 86-90 Burelli Street, Wollongong has been prepared to align with the principles and guidelines of *the GANSW Connecting with Country Framework* (2023) and associated best practice documents. The report has been prepared in consultation with key Aboriginal stakeholders from the area and provides a vision and design principles to embed Country into the future development of the site.

It is recommended that the project team consider key elements from this Connecting with Country report within the future planning for the site including:

- considering the Design Principles within the design stages for the current Planning Proposal and future development of the site – see section 8
- actioning appropriate recommendations from the Outcomes for Country – see section 11
- facilitating ongoing consultation and design workshops with the Aboriginal stakeholders during subsequent key development stages.
- integrating meaningful interpretation/artwork/landscape elements within the design development stages of this project, through the development of a Heritage Interpretation and Art Strategy that requires consultation with key stakeholders.
- arranging Cultural Awareness Training for current and future project team members.
- updating Aboriginal stakeholders on the progress of the future development of the site.

Artefact would like to thank all stakeholders for their generosity in sharing their expertise and cultural knowledge during this project.



Figure 22: Dharawal Country, 11 October 2024

13. REFERENCES

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14. APPENDIX A: CONSULTATION LOG

Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
Richard Campbell, Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience Pty Ltd	29 and 30 August 2024	Artefact	Online form / Email	Cultural immersion program with cultural activities
	20 September 2024	Project team	Walk on Country	Walk on Country and cultural immersion experience
	11 October 2024	Project team	Online	Online briefing about project
	22 October 2024	Artefact	Email	Sent notes from immersion experience
	14 November 2024	Artefact	Email	Sent report for comment and approval
Aunty Gwenda Jarrett, South Coast Native Title Claimant	30 August 2024	Artefact	Email	Permission to share previous knowledges
Aunty Jodie Stewart, Senior Sites Officer	30 August 2024	Artefact	Email	Permission to share previous knowledges
Illawarra LALC	October 2024	Artefact	Email	Invited to be a RAP and carry out site survey
	18 October 2024	Artefact	Site Survey	Attended site survey with Artefact Aboriginal Archaeology team. Results recorded in Archaeological Survey report (Artefact, draft 2024)
Uncle James Davis	October 2024	Artefact	Email	Invited to be a RAP and to carry out site survey
	18 October 2024	Artefact	Site Survey	Attended site survey with Artefact Aboriginal Archaeology team. Results recorded in Archaeological Survey report (Artefact, draft 2024)



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