

# Gregory Place

SITE PRIMER

20.08.2021

REV A



“When people talk about country it is spoken of like a person: we speak to country, we sing to country, we worry about country, and we long for country.”

— Common Ground First Nations Connection to Country

2 SUMMARY STATEMENT

The cultural landscape that envelops Gregory Place can be viewed through a lens of overlapping and shared experiences between First Nations peoples and European colonisers. Some of these experiences are painful and require acknowledging. Truth telling is what this is often called. Other experiences are to be celebrated.

At Gregory Place - a contemporary housing development on the edge of Parramatta with its noise and bright lights and overwhelming European heritage - we can be forgiven for forgetting that this development is still on Burramattagal Country; and that Aboriginal connection to this place did not cease in 1788 when Hunter and Bradley made their way up the Parramatta River in search of arable land. The question we might start with, therefore, is : ‘what does Country need’?

Colonial occupation is abundantly evident at Gregory Place in the important European heritage sites at Experiment Farm, Hambleton Cottage and nearby Elizabeth Farm. What may be less clear, but no less evident if one looks more carefully, are the quieter elements of this place: the soil underfoot, the plants and animals that still find refuge here, and the traces of water that have been diverted but not silenced.

It is remarkable to think that Aboriginal people have occupied this place since the last so-called Glacial Maximum, 27-17,000 years ago. Once a plain of freshwater creeks and open grasses, a ‘park-like country’ marked by grey box and forest red gum, the Country on which the Gregory Place development will sit still tells this story. It is astonishing to think that Aboriginal people witnessed the geological changes of melting ice sheets and the ‘drowning’ of the landscape by rising sea levels. Fresh water meeting salt water becoming bitter water. What can we make of this knowledge in a contemporary housing development? What stories can be told in response to what County needs?

Importantly, how - through our development work - can we repair relationships to Country and to each other? This is our challenge at Gregory Place and in all the places we seek to change and modernise as we address the pressing needs of a growing and diverse population.

REFERENCES & LINKS

- Cumberland Plain Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
- Dictionary of Sydney
- Guardian, Indigenous Group ‘sickened’ by Powerhouse Museum Expansion

What follows is a snap shot of the cultural landscape in and around Gregory Place together with some provisional thoughts on spatial opportunities within the development. The information contained in this Site Primer is gleaned from existing and publicly available documents and attempts to bring together this information in an accessible way. There is no doubt that some things have been left out or overlooked. This Primer is not meant to be the last word; rather it is an opening to a longer conversation that will ultimately require the guiding voices of Aboriginal people themselves.

Project Name	Gregory Place Affordable Housing - DA
Client	Hallmark Construction Pty Ltd
Deliverables	Project Primer and Aboriginal Community engagement in response to Heritage Council of NSW requirement, <i>item (d) Engage with Aboriginal community prior to submission of a Development Application.</i>
Location	2A Gregory Place, Harris Park, NSW
Country	Harris Park lies on Dharug Country, the traditional lands of the Barramattagal people.
Local ALC	Deerubbin LALC
LGA	City of Parramatta

Steele, Dominic, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Archaeological Heritage Impact Assessment, 10 August 2021



- 1 SITE
- 2 HAMBLETON COTTAGE
- 3 EXPERIMENT FARM
- 4 ROBIN THOMAS RESERVE
- 5 CLAY CLIFF CREEK
- 6 ELIZABETH FARM
- 7 BALUDARRI WETLANDS
- 8 PARRAMATTA SAND BODY





4 The swift parrot is native to this area

## HISTORY & HERITAGE

### Precontact

- Evidence of Aboriginal occupation dating to the Last Glacial Maximum, 27,000 – 17,000 years.
- 20,000 years ago, Parramatta was an inland valley drained by freshwater streams. Sea level was 120m lower and coastline further east.
- Warmer inter glacial periods saw melting of ice sheets and rising sea levels. Parramatta become inundated or 'drowned'.
- Current sea levels from 7,000 years ago, but once 1-2m higher.
- Aboriginal people lived through this change when fresh water became estuarine and had to adjust and renegotiate their traditional boundaries.
- Changes to vegetation, from sclerophyll forest to grasslands.
- Two species of eel, *Anguilla Australis* and *Anguilla Reinhardtii*, migrate between the freshwater of the river and to the Coral Sea.
- The Burramattagal took their name from the place where these eels swam at the headwaters of the river. This lent itself to the naming of the second European settlement, 'Parramatta', and the name of the river.
- Cumberland Plain an important camping/meeting place for Aboriginal people travelling across Blue Mountains to Parramatta and Sydney.
- Eastern Creek and Prospect Creek to the west and south west. Aboriginal camping place with good aspect and access to water. Diet of inland ,groups included fruits, berries, burrawany yams, fern root, Banksia flower nectar, ants, quail, possums, mullet, bass, eel, yabbies, freshwater mussels, tortoises, water birds. Kangaroo hunting as a social function.



Parramatta takes its name from the Burramattagal people, which means place where the eysels lay

## HISTORY & HERITAGE

### Postcontact

- February 1788, expedition party with Captain John Hunter and Lieutenant William Bradley reached Duck River.
- The site is located near three areas/buildings of significant European heritage:
  - Elizabeth Farm –
  - Hambledon Cottage – part of Elizabeth Farm, associated with Macarthur family, and an exemplar of 'European land management'.
  - Experiment Farm – first European land grant in Australia, part of Governor Phillip's experiment to develop self-sufficiency.
- European occupation marked the beginning of dispossession in the Parramatta area.
- Located close to the Parramatta Sand Body Conservation Area - containing significant Aboriginal and colonial archaeological record.
- Clay Cliff Creek concrete stormwater channel (constructed in the 1890s) has drastically modified the watercourse. Small remnants of the Creek near Elizabeth Farm at Alfred Street and at Hassall/Grand.
- Archaeological evidence may shed light on 'urban Aboriginal history during the Macquarie period set within 'domestic' town settings that contrast with Parramatta's better known 'institutional' Aboriginal history.' (Refer DSCA Report).
- No archaeological evidence found on site. Nearby sites with known AHIMS recordings include:
  - Robin Thomas Reserve with 59 artefacts including worked glass indicating relationship with colonial settlement - a 'resource and gathering site' overlooking southern bank of the Parramatta River).
  - Parramatta Skate Park, near Harris Street
- Colebee and Nurragingy land grant (1819), first land grant to Aboriginal people in Australia (close to Parklands on Richmond Rd. near Bells Creek). Now part of the Nurragingy Reserve. Given as reward for guiding Gov. Macquarie's 'punitive expedition' of 1816 to the western areas to 'capture or kill' Aboriginal people. Colebee received breast plate, "Chief of the South Creek Tribe"



The Residence of John McArthur Esquire

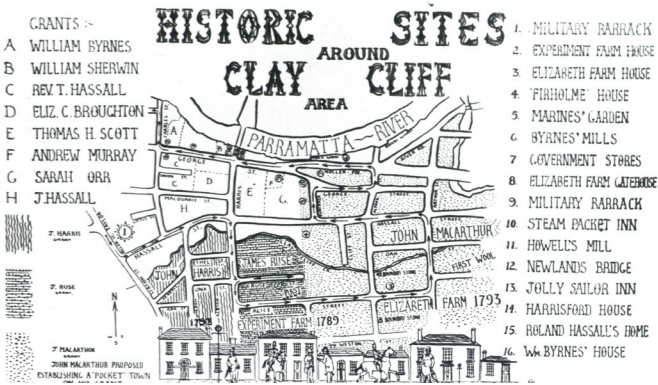
## HISTORY & HERITAGE

### History of Resistance

- Toongabbie and Prospect Hill (located at Pemulwuy), associated with colonial conflict and Aboriginal resistance to convict settlement. Battle of Parramatta in 1797, Bidjigal warrior Pemulwuy attacks military barracks.
- Dharug Strategic Management Group have voiced opposition to Powerhouse Museum development and demolition of Willow Grove which may contain Aboriginal artefacts and burials. (see Guardian). The site may be "the only building in Parramatta that doesn't have a history of colonial violence." Original owner (Annie Gallagher) did not prevent Aboriginal people from accessing the river front as many other homes along the river did. Later used as a maternity hospital in early 20th century and allowed Indigenous women.



Pemulwuy was a leader of the Aboriginal Resistance



The River Foreshore of Early European settler Parramatta





The Yam Daisy was an important local plant and a staple of the diet



The common reed was common in the area prior to European settlement

6  
FLORA

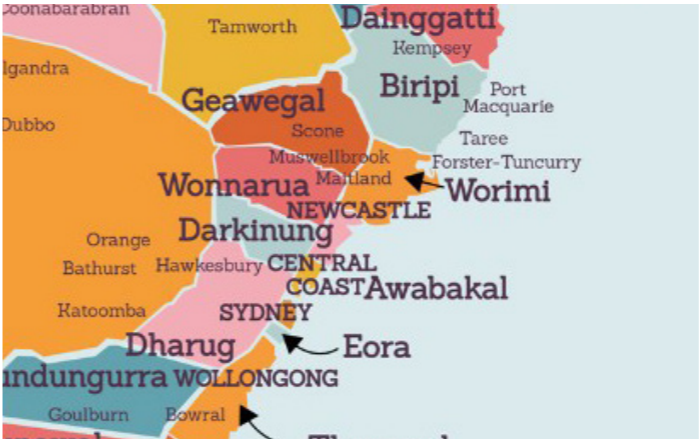
- The site lies within the endangered Cumberland Plain:
- Observations of landscape by exploration party in 1788 was of open grassland and widely spaced trees and shrubs free of underwood, described as resembling 'park-like country.' Evidence of land management, mosaic patterns of fire use.
- Prior to 1788 woodlands of grey box (*Eucalyptus moluccana*), forest red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) and open grasses. Common reed (*Phragmites communis*), paper bark (*Melaleuca linariifolia*), native apple (*Angophora floribunda*).
- Two heritage significant trees on the site: hoop pine and bunya tree at Hambledon Cottage.
- Importance of Midyini, daisy yam (*Micoseris lanceolata*), as a staple of the diet of people living across the Cumberland Plain. (See planting program with DSMG and Muru Mittigar at Parramatta Park. VIDEO
- Endangered plant species include:
  - Native Pear
  - Narrow-leaved Geebung
  - Spiked Riceflower
  - Matted Bush-pea
  - Sydney Plains Greenhood
- Cumberland Plain Woodland (CPW) – 'critically endangered ecological community,' "is the name given to the ecological community in the Sydney Basin bioregion associated with clay soils derived from Wianamatta Group geology, or more rarely alluvial substrates, on the Cumberland Plain, a rain shadow area to the west of Sydney's Central Business District."
- Agricultural use, grazing, use of chemical fertilisers, industrialisation and development have all lead to fragmented and endangered habitat.

FAUNA

- Endangered animal species include:
  - Cumberland Land Snail
  - Swift Parrot
  - Regent Honeyeater

GEOLOGY & HYDROLOGY

- Classified as 'Disturbed Terrain' due to historical development, previous estuaries and wetlands. Soil profile includes loose black sandy loam, compacted mottled clay, transported fill.
- Hydrogeological Landscape (HGL) characterised by flat extensive floodplains and alluvial plains and ponding. Prone to flooding.
- Volcanic latites as well as alluvial sand and gravel deposits formed during the Permian period (approx. 299-252 million years ago).
- Clays of Clay Cliff Creek extracted for brick making.



Aboriginal Languages in NSW & ACT

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following design principles can inform the concept plan and be further explored as the project develops:

1. Agency

Ensure appropriate community engagement and decision-making in the ongoing governance and development of the development. Engagement should be based upon shared knowledge exchange between technical experts and cultural authorities.

2. Remuneration and ICIP

Protect and respect Cultural Knowledge. Remunerate Knowledge Holders for their cultural expertise

3. Dialogue and Restoration

Look for opportunities to restore landscape and encourage dialogue across shared histories. This is as much about habitat restoration as it is about repairing relationships with Country.

4. Care

Seek opportunities to embed custodianship within the project plan. Look for economic opportunities through ongoing landscape care and maintenance.

5. Language and Naming

Optimise opportunities for use of language in the naming of places, wayfinding and historical interpretation of the area.

6. Truth Telling

Find opportunities to tell stories of dispossession, frontier conflict, and other painful but important aspects of Australian history. (The nearby Blacktown Native Institute for example has obvious linkages to the Stolen Generation).



The flax-leaved paperbark was an important plant in the Cumberland Plain Woodlands



The following presents some opportunities to integrate the principles and aspirations of the Connecting with Country Framework into the Gregory Place Project. It must be emphasised that these are intended as high level conversation starters. These suggestions are not exhaustive, nor are they all likely to be seen as priorities by local Aboriginal stakeholders. Emphasis should be on genuine engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders.

Frame views and outlook to the Parramatta River to help re-establish a connection to Country.

Integrate endemic species into landscape plan of gardens and courtyards.

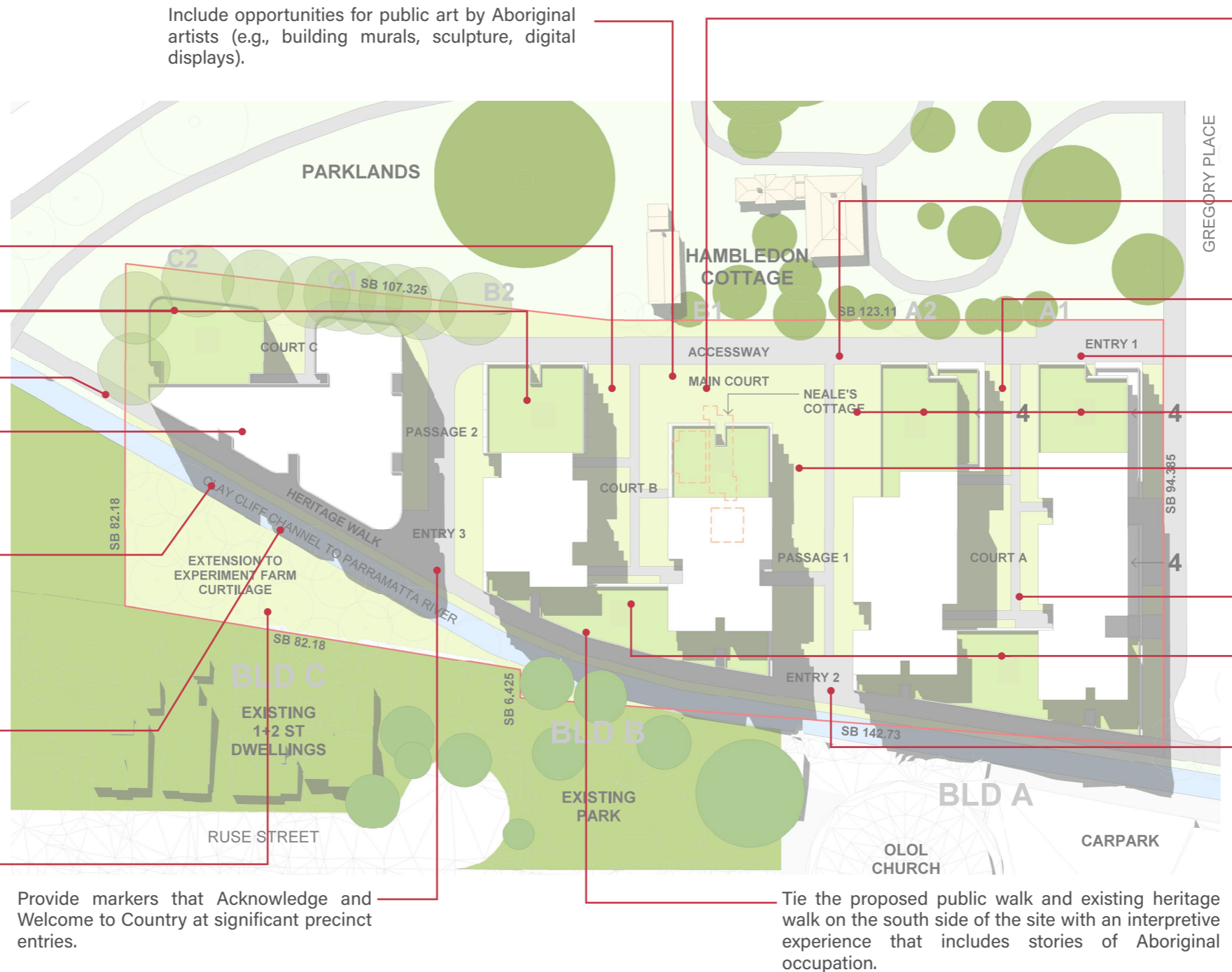
Provide markers that Acknowledge and Welcome to Country at significant precinct entries.

Make a deliberate connection between the proposed sustainability initiatives and the 'measures of success' for connecting with Country (e.g., healthier Country, fewer floods, better land management).

Restore Clay Cliff Creek stormwater channel, consistent with Heritage NSW recommendations, item (b) *Interpret the original creek line and re-naturalise the current creek (e.g. by adding reed beds)*. While the original Creek will never remerge, the opportunity here is to repair relationships and access to Country.

Replace concrete elements of Clay Cliff Creek stormwater channel with natural features, and tie this to broader flood management of the area, consistent with Harris Park Cultural Landscape Master Plan.

Tell stories of land dispossession and frontier conflict (e.g. Bidjigal man Pemulwuy at Toongabbie; Macquarie's war in the Cumberland Plain). These stories might be conveyed along an interpretive trail adjacent to a restored Clay Cliff Creek.



Provide markers that Acknowledge and Welcome to Country at significant precinct entries.

Tie the proposed public walk and existing heritage walk on the south side of the site with an interpretive experience that includes stories of Aboriginal occupation.

Elizabeth Farm was considered a prototype of European land management in Australia. How does this example compare with that of Aboriginal land management practices (e.g., mosaic burning)? There is a story to be told here that might find its way into landscape design and species selection, juxtaposing alternative methods of land management.

Consider the story of land grants: the first to Europeans (James Ruse) at Experiment Farm and the first to an Aboriginal person (Coolbee) near the site of Blacktown Native Institute.

Frame views and outlook to the Parramatta River to help re-establish a connection to Country.

Provide markers that Acknowledge and Welcome to Country at significant precinct entries.

Integrate endemic species into landscape plan of gardens and courtyards.

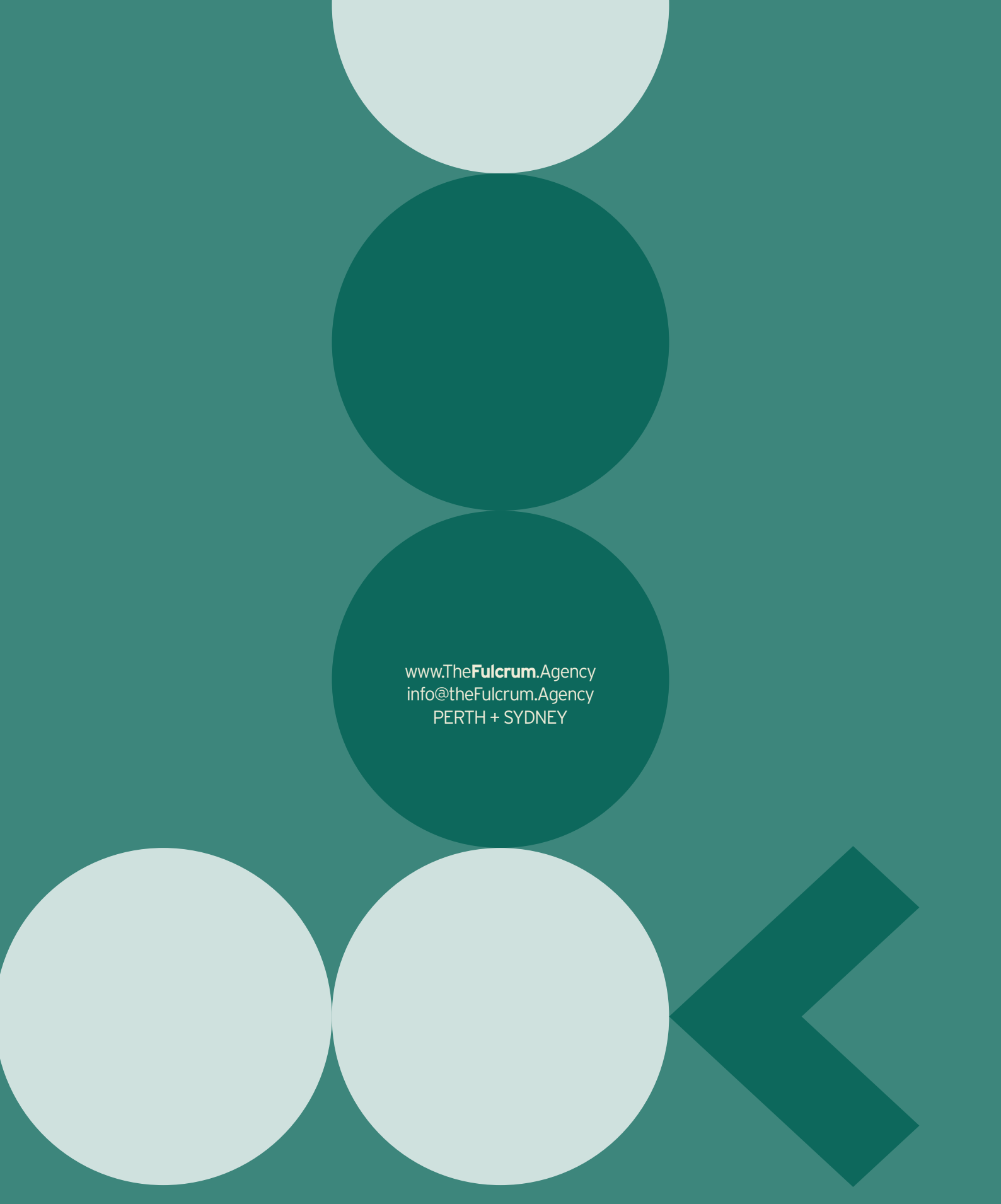
Consider use of clay as a building material, referencing Clay Cliff creek and the clay extracted to make bricks at the time of European occupation. Note also the use of lime mortar from riverbank middens.

Integrate public art by Aboriginal Artists into courtyards and public spaces

Integrate endemic species into landscape plan of gardens and courtyards.

Provide markers that Acknowledge and Welcome to Country at significant precinct entries.



A decorative graphic on a teal background. It features a vertical column of four circles: a light teal circle at the top, followed by two dark teal circles, and two light teal circles at the bottom. To the right of the bottom two circles is a large, dark teal chevron pointing downwards.

[www.The\*\*Fulcrum\*\*.Agency](http://www.TheFulcrum.Agency)  
[info@theFulcrum.Agency](mailto:info@theFulcrum.Agency)  
PERTH + SYDNEY

**THE FULCRUM AGENCY**

A white horizontal line with a small white circle in the middle, followed by a white chevron pointing downwards on the right side.