EXTENT

PEOPLE-CENTRED
HERITAGE

# NEXTSENSE

## ABORIGINAL HERITAGE INTERPRETATION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2022

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# Document information

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# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT BRIEF

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd were commissioned by NextSense (formally the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children) to prepare an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation Plan for their new facility to be located at Macquarie University, New South Wales (the 'study area'). The objective of this report is to provide detail on selected interpretive devices, including proposed locations and potential content.

In accordance with the Conditions of Consent (outline in section 1.3, below), the Heritage Interpretation Plan considers Aboriginal heritage values only. Non-Aboriginal themes and storylines have not been considered in the preparation of this plan.

## THE STUDY AREA

The study area is owned and managed by Macquarie University and is within the City of Ryde Local Government Area (LGA). It is located in the County of Cumberland, Parish of Hunters Hill, and falls within the administrative boundaries of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The study area is 14,000m² in size, and is bound by Culloden Road, Gymnasium Road and the Macquarie University Sport and Aquatic Centre (Figure 1). The property is described as part of Lot 220 in Deposited Plan (DP) 1157041 and Part Lot 8 DP 1047085.

The proposal includes provision for a pre-school and primary school, as well as a two-storey administration and medical facility. Further details are provided in the 'Methodology' section to follow.


Figure 1. Location of the study aera, marked in red, in association with the surrounding streets.

## CONDITIONS OF CONSENT

On 26 April 2021 conditions of consent for the RIDBC (now NextSense) were issued by DPIE. These included the requirement to undertake an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Interpretation Plan as part of DA Condition E13. The wording for this is as follows:

*Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Interpretation Plan*

*E13. Prior to the issue of the occupation certificate, the Applicant must submit an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Interpretation Plan to acknowledge the heritage of the site to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. The plan must:*

*(a) be prepared to address the recommendations in section 10.2 of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (reference no. 0220158), prepared by Extent Heritage Pty Ltd and dated 8 October 2020;*

*(b) be prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced expert in consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties, Heritage NSW and Council;*

*(c) recognise and acknowledge the continued Aboriginal connection to the project area;*

*(d) facilitate ongoing Aboriginal community involvement and engagement in the conservation and celebration of Aboriginal heritage values associated with the area.*

## AUTHORSHIP

Dr Madeline Shanahan (senior associated and NSW archaeology team manager) was the primary author of this Heritage Interpretation Plan. Francesca McMaster (heritage advisor) and Rebekah Hawkins (heritage advisor) carried out historical research provided input into key sections. Andrew Costello (senior associate) undertook review and QA.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following people and organisations for their valuable input into the project:

- Laura Mocza, Milestone PMC
- Marcello Tuteri, Milestone PMC
- Oculus, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design
- BrandCulture

# METHODOLOGY

The general approach to the development of this Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation Plan has been adopted from the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013).

Understanding and engaging with the significance, stories and values of the place, as informed by research and community consultation has guided the approach to this Heritage Interpretation Plan.

Considering the NextSense audience profile, accessibility requirements and the unique constraints and opportunities of the development has also guided our approach.

## NEXTSENSE CENTRAL

NextSense will be leading a hub for innovation and advancements in research, education and care in the fields of hearing and vision loss. Due to open in 2023, the NextSense building will include a preschool and primary school, as well as clinical services for children and adults.

Figure 2 Artist's Impression of NextSense (Source MQ Uni; https://www.mq.edu.au/)

## Audiences

The primary users for the site will be students, staff, parents and other stakeholders associated with NextSense.

This community includes a range of age profiles. The majority of students are children, aged from three years and older (80%), but adult students will also be in attendance (20%).

The school community also have varied accessibility needs and three streams, including the Spoken language program, the Blind and Deafblind program and the Auslan bilingual program.

## Opportunities

The opportunity to install Aboriginal heritage interpretation in an educational facility is an important one. Audiences will benefit from content with educational value, and are in an environment, space and program that will help to facilitate learning. Incorporating Aboriginal cultural heritage content in the interpretation scheme is an opportunity to facilitate education and enhance learning outcomes.

There is also an opportunity to find creative solutions for interpretation that are accessible for all site users. This creates the opportunity to explore devices with a range of sensory experiences.

## Constraints

The audience profile and users of the site create an exciting opportunity, but there are some design constraints which need to be considered. These have shaped this Heritage Interpretation Plan:

- The accessibility requirements at NextSense create some constraints around the types of devices that are appropriate. Devices must be accessible to all site users, including people with visual or hearing loss.
- Devices also need to be safe for children and all users of the site. They should not create obstructions or accessibility issues.

- Text and signage need to be kept to a minimum, so as not to create clutter or confusion around entry and exit points.

# KEY TASKS AND STAGES

Preparation of the Heritage Interpretation Plan entailed the following tasks and stages:

## Meetings with NextSense and Design teams

Interpretation is a collaborative process which requires discussion and consultation with clients and design teams to ensure the best possible outcomes. Meetings were held with relevant consultants and the project team to discuss suitable devices, story lines, audiences, constraints and opportunities.

## Review of background material

Background materials and reporting relating to the site and its Aboriginal heritage values was reviewed and synthesised. This research has informed the approach to the Heritage Interpretation Plan, as well as the thematic framework, storylines and proposed content.

The ACHAR undertaken by Extent Heritage in 2020, which included the results of test excavations was a key document. Research relating to the Aboriginal heritage values of the study area were documented in this report and were sent to RAPs for review during the course of that process. This means that RAPs have been consulted on the research basis that informs this Heritage Interpretation Plan previously.

## Thematic framework

A thematic framework was developed for the Heritage Interpretation Plan. The thematic framework aimed to synthesise the range of historical and archaeological information available for the study area, and provides a structure for the plan.

## Precedent research

Research was undertaken on suitable interpretive devices for the development. Factors considered included: audience profile, constraints and opportunities, ongoing design plans and key themes and storylines. Best practice examples of interpretive devices from other sites were identified and have been included in Section 5 of this report.

## Consultation with RAP groups regarding proposed approach

A preliminary information package on the Heritage Interpretation Plan was sent to RAPs for review and comment on 1 September 2021. The package included information on the project, proposed themes and potential devices.

The review closed on 15 September 2021, with a reminder sent halfway through the two-week period. One group responded in support of the proposed approach.

## Development of Draft Heritage Interpretation and Content

The Draft Heritage Interpretation Plan was completed and was circulated to RAPs for review on 25 February 2022. RAPs were also invited to comment and the report and attend a meeting for further discussion if preferred. The two-week review period closed on 11 March 2022, with a reminder sent on 7 March. One group responded in support of the Draft Heritage Interpretation Plan.

Draft text and potential historical images for signage devices was developed based on the historical and archaeological research and stakeholder feedback. Concept designs incorporating this text and images were included in the Draft Heritage Interpretation Plan issued to RAPS for review. Content development also considered accessibility, and specifically, constraints relating to word count and the need to incorporate braille in future designs.

## Final Heritage Interpretation Plan

The Final Heritage Interpretation Plan was completed after the completion of the review period. No changes were requested by RAPs.

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The following section of this Heritage Interpretation Plan is based primarily on the historical research previously undertaken as part of heritage reporting at the site. These include the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) (Extent Heritage, 2020) and Aboriginal historical research undertaken in 2016.

Much of the information we have about the lives of Aboriginal people after colonisation comes from contemporary documentary sources such as diaries, newspapers, and official proclamations. These sources were written almost exclusively by British men (Clendinnen 2005, 12-66), and so they have some inherent limitations in terms of their reliability. Notwithstanding the issues and limitations of colonial records, historians are left with a rich variety of sources, and careful reading can shed a great deal of light on Aboriginal lives throughout this period.

## WALLUMEDEGAL LAND, WALLUMEDEGAL PEOPLE

At the time of British colonisation, over thirty separate Aboriginal groups occupied the Sydney area, each with their own Country, practices, diets, dress, and dialects. The study area falls within the traditional lands of the Wallumedegal (or Wallumattagal) people, who are a Darug (or Dharug) speaking group. While exact boundaries are not known, Wallumedegal Country is generally agreed to extend along the northern banks of the Parramatta River to Lane Cove, encompassing the area where Macquarie University Campus is now located (Attenbrow 2010, 23). Historian Keith Vincent Smith (2005, 6) speculates that the name derives from the Aboriginal word *wallumai*, or snapper fish. Local oral histories, such as Kerrie Kenton's interview with Balarinji (2016), suggest that the black snapper fish was a totem for the Wallumedegal people.

Most of our knowledge of the Darug language group comes from the work of ethnographer R. H. Matthews who produced 'Dharruk' word/vocabulary lists from Aboriginal people he spoke to in Windsor in the early twentieth century (Matthews 1903, 155). The term 'Darug', means 'wild yam', highlighting the significance of the plant as a food stuff (Attenbrow 2010,31).

In 1790, Governor Arthur Phillip was the first British person to record the name of the Wallumedegal, and described what he understood to be the boundaries of their territory in correspondence with Lord Sydney (Phillip 13 February 1790). Lieutenant Gidley King also recorded the name Wallumedegal in his journal in 1790. King wrote that "the tribe of Wallumede inhabit the North shore opposite Warrane or Sydney Cove and called Walumetta" (King 9 April 1790).

Documentary source material relating to the history of the Wallumedegal people is limited. Historical records from the colonial period have recorded some Aboriginal customs that were of particular interest to the British, such as avulsed teeth and scarification. The initiation ceremony recorded by David Collins in 1798 at Farm Cove, known as 'Yoo-long Erah-ba-diang', noted the presence of a Wallumedegal man named Nanbarry (Smith 2005, 25) (Figure 3). These records have limitations though. Colonial observes often focused on aspects of Aboriginal culture that they found particularly 'foreign' or 'exotic', and so they do not represent a rounded or holistic impression. There would also have been many aspects of culture that colonial outsiders were not privy to.

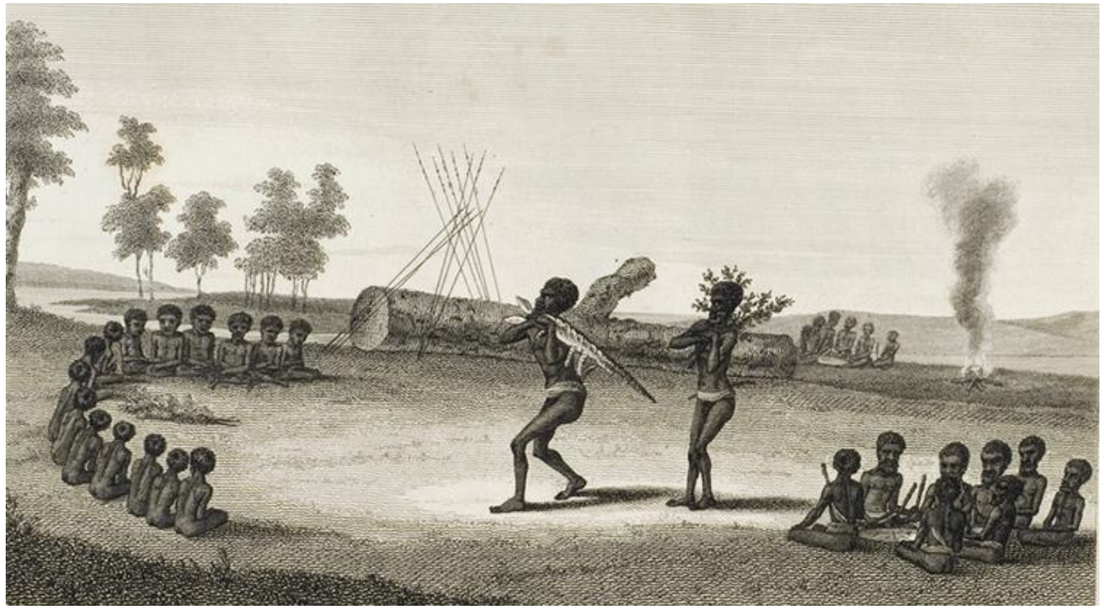

Figure 3.'Yoo-long Erah-ba-diang 2' (c.1798) ceremony at Farm Cove. Source: 'An account of the English Colony of New South Wales...', David Collins, 1798 (State Library of New South Wales, Call number a1341667/Q79/60)

Some records do provide reference to Aboriginal placenames in the broader region. *Turraburra* was a particularly important location, later renamed Lane Cove River by the British (Thornton 1899, 210). The wider region went by the name *Turramurra*, which was adopted as the name for the later suburb (Larmer 1853; Stack 1906, 53). The river provided the Wallumedegal clan with fish and shellfish, gathered using four-pronged spears as well as hooks fashioned from turban shells. The importance of the waterway is further emphasised by the number of Aboriginal sites discovered nearby. Attenbrow states that records of implements such as boomerangs, shields and stone hatchets occur as stencils and drawings amongst the pigment images in rock shelters, and as engraved figures on rock platforms. Such images occur in rock shelters along Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River (2010, 97).

## THRIVING ON DARUG COUNTRY

Fire was a constant presence in early Sydney, from the 'Smook' that alerted Ralph Clark to the presence of Dourrawan and Tirriwan on the shores of Lane Cove River (Clark 1790, 4) to the 'moving lights' seen on the harbour at night (Banks 1771, 243). 'In all the country thro' which I have passed,' wrote Arthur Phillip in May 1788, 'I have seldom gone a quarter of a mile without seeing trees which appear to have been destroyed by fire' (Phillip, 15 May 1788). The first Australians became known as the 'fire-makers' (Cox, 15 September 1815). They used fire to open paths and to clean country; to drive animals into the paths of hunters and then to cook the kill; to keep warm at night and to carry as a torch the next day; to treat wood, melt resin and crack stone for tools; to gather around and dance and share stories.

The early colonial journals give us an insight into the burning regimes of the Wallumedegal people in this general area. On a hot dry day in September 1790, John Hunter observed Aboriginal people 'burning the grass on the north shore opposite to Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals' (Figure 4). Almost exactly twelve months later, on 31 August 1791, they were again 'firing the country' in the same place on a hot day ahead of heavy rains. While Hunter regarded this to be another 'remarkable coincidence', it suggests a connection to the land and an understanding of the seasons that the British could not fathom (Hunter, September 1790, 31 August 1791). Surgeon George Worgan admired the green landscape north of the Parramatta River on 14 May 1788: 'The Trees are small and grow almost in regular Rows, so that together with the Evenness of the Land for a considerable extent, it resembles a beautiful park' (Worgan, 14 May 1788).

These grassy parklands provided food and habitat for a range of mammals, which were a critical source of food, furs and other materials. Large game, such as kangaroos, and smaller species were all hunted, and no parts of the animals were wasted.

Figure 4. 'Aborigines using fire to hunt kangaroos' (1817) Joseph Lycett. Source: http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-138501179

The harbours, now referred to as Port Jackson and Broken Bay, along with their tributaries such as the Parramatta River, off which the Lane Cove River runs, provided a rich source of food and other resources. These were harvested from the shallows, as well as from bark canoes called *nawi* (Karskens 2014, Coast 2019, 23). These nawi were also used to travel and maintain connections with other groups (Coast 2019, 23). Fishing lines were made from the bark of the kurrajong, cabbage and hibiscus trees and called carr-e-jun (Karskens 2014). These lines were made by twisting two strands of the bark together, running them across the skin, animal fur and skin were also often used to manufacture fishing line (Karskens 2014). The hooks were made from turban shells with the use of a stone file to sharpen them, with the British noting the ingenuity and significance of these items to women (Karskens 2014). Fishing with lines and hooks in nawi is a practice often associated with women and they played major roles in the

fishing economy. Women would head out in the nawi, with their babies, singing with other women as they fished. They often lit fires in the base of the canoes to cook food, and to provide light (Sydney Living Museums n.d.). The men were known to use multi-pronged spears (Galara four-pronged harpoon) tipped with bone and fished from the shallows. Fishing was both a means to obtain food and a cultural practice, involving men, women and children. Freshwater species such as mullet and eels fished from lagoons were also important. Yams were dug out from the riverbanks and worms known as *cah-bro* were extracted from river driftwood.

Starchy tubers and roots, bush fruits and native seeds were also frequently consumed. Certain plant foods such as the blackbean and cunjevoi plants along with some varieties of wild yam (Dioscorea sp.) were unpalatable or toxic in their natural state and required complex processing before consumption. Watkin Tench described how 'a poor convict' had gotten violently ill trying to eat a poisonous yam. After having seen Darug people eating the same yam, referred to as the *midiny* (Hawkins n.d., 19), he concluded that the people had a way of preparing them to render them an 'innocent food' (Tench 1793, 83). To combat toxicity, these foods were roasted in ashes, open fires or earth ovens; pounded and baked into cakes; or grated, peeled or sliced using bone, stone and shell implements and leached for lengthy periods of time in water (Beck 1985:107, 211). Plants also provided resources for the manufacture of tools, for example the grass tree flower stems provided spear shafts (Hawkins n.d., 17) and bark was used to form nawi (canoes).

## COLONISATION, RESISTANCE AND SURVIVAL

On 26 January 1788, life for the Wallumedegal and all of Australia's First Nations people changed forever, when the First Fleet arrived on the shores of what would become known as Port Jackson. Under the command of Governor Arthur Phillip eleven ships anchored in the harbour, carrying convicts, marines, officials, and their families.

Soon after the arrival of the British, a smallpox outbreak had a devastating impact on Aboriginal people. From May 1789, British officers began to find the bodies of smallpox victims washed up on beaches (Collins 1798, Chapter 7; Tench 1793, Chapter 4). Judge Advocate David Collins was told by Arabanoo that many had been killed by the outbreak, and others had 'fled into the interior parts of the country', perhaps spreading the disease further (Collins 1798, Chapter 7). The vast network of pathways connecting Aboriginal communities together, unfortunately also became conduits for the spread of the devastating illness.

Beyond the impacts of diseases such as smallpox, the First Fleet's arrival heralded change on an unprecedented scale for the Wallumedegal. While the first chapter of colonisation was characterised by some fascinating politics and instances of cross-cultural relationship building (Clendinnen 2005; Karskens 2009), these relationships became increasingly strained as traditional laws were consistently violated by the British and access to Country and resources were increasingly restricted. This restriction of access led to deprivation for the Aboriginal communities, and soon conflict became a reality of colonial life.

In 1792 eight former marines were granted land across the present-day area of the Macquarie University Campus. The area became known as the Field of Mars. The marines immediately set about clearing the land of timber and planting crops of wheat, maize and barley (Levy 1947). Aboriginal people were pushed to the limits of their territories and the British agricultural activities increasingly damaged Country and destroyed resources. Between 1797 and 1805, raids on these crops by Aboriginal people, who were increasingly desperate for access to resources, and colonial retaliations, led to a series of conflicts and heightened violence (Smith 2005, 17). The following decades were characterised by ever increasing control of Aboriginal people by colonial authorities, as well as increasing conflict.

It is important to note that this colonisation was actively resisted by Aboriginal survivors and their leaders. Despite the extreme impact of colonisation, Aboriginal people continued to practise traditional food procurement along the Lane Cove River and other waterways around Ryde. A Wallumedegal man named Bidgee Bidgee, was a widely known figure on colonial fishing and sealing vessels (Smith 2005: 17, 21) (Figure 5). Another Wallumedegal man, known as 'Bundle,' was employed as a tracker by James Squire in 1810. Today, the contemporary traditional owners of the region continue to maintain their cultural links to Country, family and aspects of traditional life. They fulfil their cultural responsibilities to care for Country and for their cultural heritage places.


Figure 5. 'Bidgee Bidgee, a native of New south Wales, a well known character at Sydney, speaks very good English and mimicks the manners of every officer and person in the colony', c.1803. Source: National Library of Australia, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135903463).

## MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

After the establishment of Macquarie University on the lands of the Wallumedegal in the 1960s, there has been further recognition of the struggles, triumphs and traditions of the Wallumedegal people. Aboriginal languages were pursued at graduate level at Macquarie University from the late 1970s (Mansfield and Hutchinson, 1992: 157), but the centre of Aboriginal studies at Macquarie University was located in the Department of Anthropology. Historian Lyndall Ryan was the first to offer Aboriginal History at Macquarie University, creating a course in 1982 with funding from the Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the participation of its then Director, Eric Willmot (Mansfield and Hutchinson, 1992: 164). Although these courses were run by academics, it is important to note that they were underpinned by Aboriginal knowledge, culture and history, and that the community made a critical contribution to them. These are another example of the ongoing and continued custodial responsibility and connection maintained by Darug people here.

In 1986 Macquarie University established an Equal Opportunities Officer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Mansfield and Hutchinson, 1992: 263), and from the 1990s Indigenous support for students was made available through the Warawara Indigenous Support Unit. In 2014, the Office of Indigenous Strategy was created to encourage greater Indigenous participation in the University. The support scheme currently holds the Darug name Walanga Muru, meaning 'Follow your Path'.

# THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Themes provide an important structure for interpretation. By grouping diverse stories together into overarching topics, themes help to identify connections and provide order for the information. This order helps the audience to engage with the information more meaningfully. It also helps interpretation specialists plan which stories should be prioritised. Unstructured by themes, audiences can become overwhelmed by too many divergent storylines, and schemes lack clarity in their messaging. Generally, most strategies should adopt between three and five themes, to ensure key messages remain clear and well-articulated.

The themes that have been identified for this Heritage Interpretation Plan are based upon the historical and archaeological research that has been undertaken. They are designed to highlight the most important values of the study area, and to capture the imagination of the specific audiences and users of the site.

Within each theme, several key stories have been identified that will help form the basis of engaging content in subsequent stages. The following section outlines the three themes that have been identified for this Heritage Interpretation Plan.

## THEME 1: LEARNING ON COUNTRY

Dreamtime stories of creation in the local area incorporate local animals and flora, describing their habitats and use, but also have important lessons embedded within them. These lessons have and continue to teach countless generations of Darug people how to live and care for Country, as well as the importance of traditional laws and customs. This theme connects this ancient tradition of education, with its critical lessons about sustainability, with the future of learning in this place.

## THEME 2: CARING FOR COUNTRY, NOURISHED BY COUNTRY

This theme explores the use and knowledge of natural resources in the area. It will include stories about how these resources were carefully managed by Darug people and will highlight the rich range of plants and animals that sustained communities here.

## THEME 3: ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE

The invasion of Darug Country by the British had a devastating impact on Aboriginal communities throughout the region. This theme will acknowledge this painful chapter of history, but will also highlight the resilience of Aboriginal people here. Communities displayed extraordinary resilience in the face of the violent incursions into their traditional ways of life, adapting to new lifeways and maintaining traditions that continue today.

Figure 6. Example of fishing line known as 'Carrejun', Attenbrow, Australian Museum. Source: Australian Museum.

# INTERPRETIVE DEVICES

This section of the Heritage Interpretation Plan outlines the devices that have been selected to communicate the themes and storylines across the site. These devices have been selected in collaboration with NextSense, their design team, and through consultation with the RAPs. In the case of this particular development, some key specific factors determined how appropriate particular devices would be. Important factors were as follows:

- NextSense caters to children and other users with diverse accessibility needs, including the hearing and visually impaired. All devices need to be accessible to the entire community, which means that certain initiatives were not suitable.
- Safety is also a key consideration for interpretation schemes with children and special-needs groups as key users. Devices need to co-ordinate with safe access and movement through the site, ensuring that they do not create obstacles or hazards.
- Finally, as a not-for-profit organisation, devices needed to work creatively and cohesively with existing design plans and budget constraints.

## POTENTIAL DEVICES

A range of potential devices were discussed with NextSense and the design team during meetings including. Devices discussed included:

- Signage;
- Plantings, landscaping and inlays;
- Events and programming;
- Play equipment; and
- Public art.

## DEVICE SELECTION

Each of the devices listed above, which were assessed as being potentially suitable to communicate the heritage values of the site, were considered and discussed with the NextSense project team. Through this collaborative process, feedback through meetings, and an understanding of the constraints, opportunities and needs of the site users, a series of particular devices were agreed to. The potential devices, with examples of precedents, were then distributed to RAPs on 1 September 2021 as the first stage of consultation in order to seek feedback on the proposed approach.

The proposed devices, including signage, plantings and programming, are detailed below, along with precedent examples from other sites, identification of proposed locations, and potential content.

## DEVICE 1: SIGNAGE

Although it is one of the more traditional forms of interpretation, signage remains an important form of on-site storytelling. Whereas other types of devices are more immersive and less directional, signage provides an opportunity to convey detailed storylines and content. Creative signage design, utilising shapes, colours and materials, can also enhance storytelling and placemaking further.

Signage can take a number of forms, ranging from small-scale identification plaques and wayfinding devices, through to large scale information boards. This more detailed signage, presenting more extensive content should utilise a range of sources, to produce concise, engaging, highly informed, accurate information panels, which employ a mixture of image and text.

Signage has been selected as an appropriate device for the NextSense school as it provides an opportunity to communicate detailed content relating to the traditional custodians and Aboriginal heritage values of the site. As an educational facility this will enhance understandings of Aboriginal culture and histories amongst students. The use of signage in institutions is also a powerful way to ensure that the traditional custodians are acknowledged and respected.

Signage is also a suitable device for this development as it can be adapted to suit the accessibility needs of all site users.

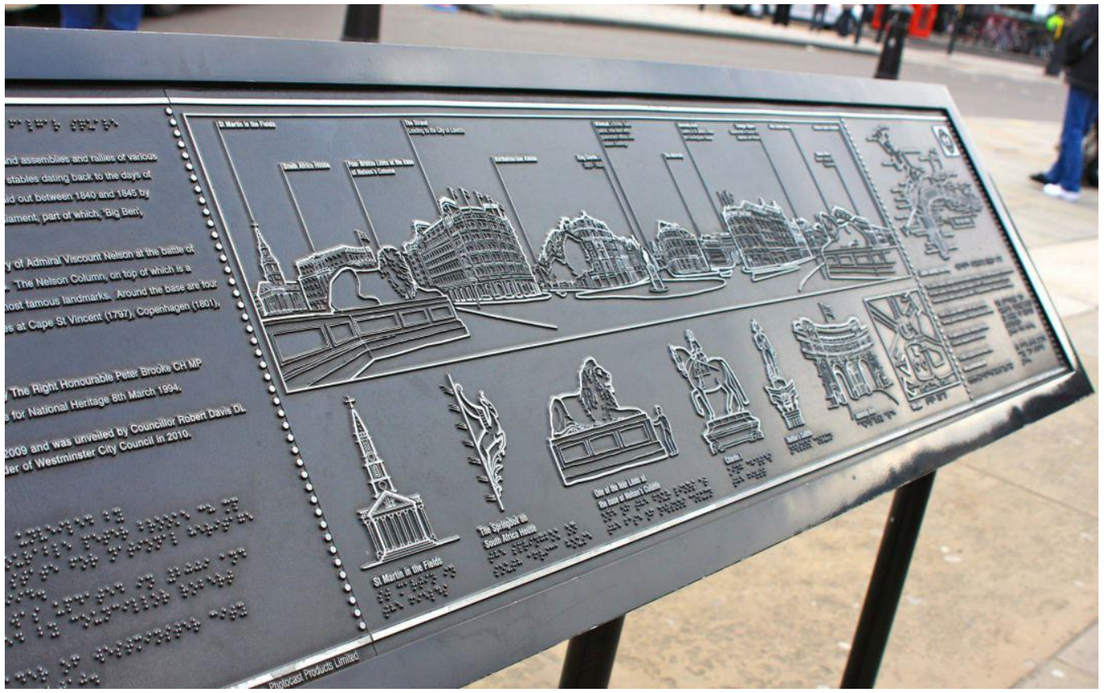


Figure 7. Example of an accessible heritage interpretation signage. Courtesy of Tasha Chemel, https://www.easytactilegraphics.com/

# Signage content and specifications

The following section includes detailed specifications relating to the location, requirements and content of signs proposed for NextSense.

## Accessibility and content

Given the specific needs of the school community, content needs to be prepared that can be easily accessible. This means that word count needs to be restricted to no more than 150 words per sign to accommodate raised text and braille. Content also needs to reflect the age profile of audiences, which includes large numbers of children, as well as adults.

The number of heritage interpretation signs at the site also needs to be kept to a minimum to ensure that it does not become cluttered and detract from critical wayfinding information. In consultation with NextSense and their design team, we recommend the installation of two (2) interpretive signs, that will convey key messages from two of the themes identified in the thematic framework. Potential content and designs prepare by BrandCulture for each of these signs is included below.

## Proposed locations

Ideally, interpretive signage should be positioned in areas where groups of people are to likely pause or congregate, such as entry ways, or spaces with where there are public facilities like benches, water fountains, or shade available.

The locations proposed for the two interpretive signs are in the café terrace (Figure 9). This location has been selected because it is a central gathering place. People will congregate and spend time here, making it more likely that they will engage with the content.


Figure 8. Location of proposed interpretive signs in the Café terrace. Source: BrandCulture, 2022.

# Sign 1: Wallumedegal Country

## Response to the Thematic Framework

Sign 1 will acknowledge the Wallumedegal people as the Traditional Owners of Country. Here, and will provide detail on their language and culture. This storyline will respond to the following theme of the thematic framework (Part 4):

- 'Theme3' (Always Was, Always Will Be)

## Proposed Text

The following draft text is proposed for Sign 1:

*Wallumedegal Country*

*NextSense is on the Country of the Wallumedegal (Wallumattagal) people, and pays respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.*

*The name Wallumedegal likely came from the word wallumai, meaning 'snapper'. The importance of the snapper fish highlights the role that the water and its resources played in the lives of people here for countless generations.*

*Snapper appears to have been particularly prized as a favourite species for Aboriginal people in the Sydney region, but shellfish were also important. We know this because of the many piles of shells (known as 'middens') left throughout the region.*

*Aboriginal people developed sophisticated fishing techniques and tools. Men used multi-pronged spears, while women fished from canoes, known as 'nawis', with handlines spun from bark and hooks made from turban shells.*

## Proposed Image

The following image is proposed for use on Sign 1. It depicts the range of fish caught in Sydney harbour, including the Black Snapper, which was a celebrated delicacy for Aboriginal people and important to the Wallumedegal group.

Figure 9. Fish catch, Sydney Harbour, by John William Lewin, c1813. Source: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

## Proposed Design



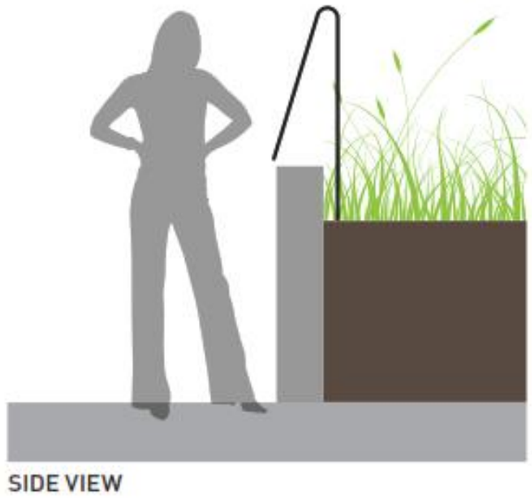


Figure 10. Proposed designs for Sign 1, developed by BrandCulture. Source: BrandCulture, 2022.

# Sign 2: Learning on Country

## Response to Thematic Framework

Sign 2 will explore a storyline relating to the long and continuing experience of education here. It will discuss how Aboriginal people passed knowledge through generations relating to complex and sustainable resource use practices. This story will respond to the following themes in the thematic framework (Part 4):

- Theme 1 (Learning on Country); and
- Theme 2 (Caring for Country, Nourished by Country).

## Proposed Text

The following draft text is proposed for Sign 2:

> *Learning on Country*
>
> *This has always been a place of learning. The Wallumedegal and their other Darug (Dharug) speaking neighbours have lived here for millennia, caring for Country and passing knowledge through generations. Aboriginal people still preserve this knowledge, and we can continue to learn more about Country through their stories.*
>
> *Fire was used to manage the land, encourage growth and attract animals for hunting. Other animals were caught through tree climbing, but nothing was wasted. Meat was a staple part of the diet, furs were used for warmth, bones and shells were for tools, and skins for a range of goods.*
>
> *Plants were important for food, medicine and to make goods such as strings for weaving and fishing. Yams were collected and cultivated in the riverbanks, while fruits and seeds were gathered from forests. Some plants were toxic, so Aboriginal people developed processing and cooking techniques to make them safe to eat.*

## Proposed Image

The following image is prosed as content for Sign 2. It depicts material culture made for use in fishing by Aboriginal groups in the Sydney region. It is suggested as a suitable image because it demonstrates the sophisticated technologies developed and handed through generations and the sustainable use of materials.


Figure 11. Fish-hooks from John White's *Journal of a Voyage to NSW*, 1790, SLNSW.

## Proposed Design

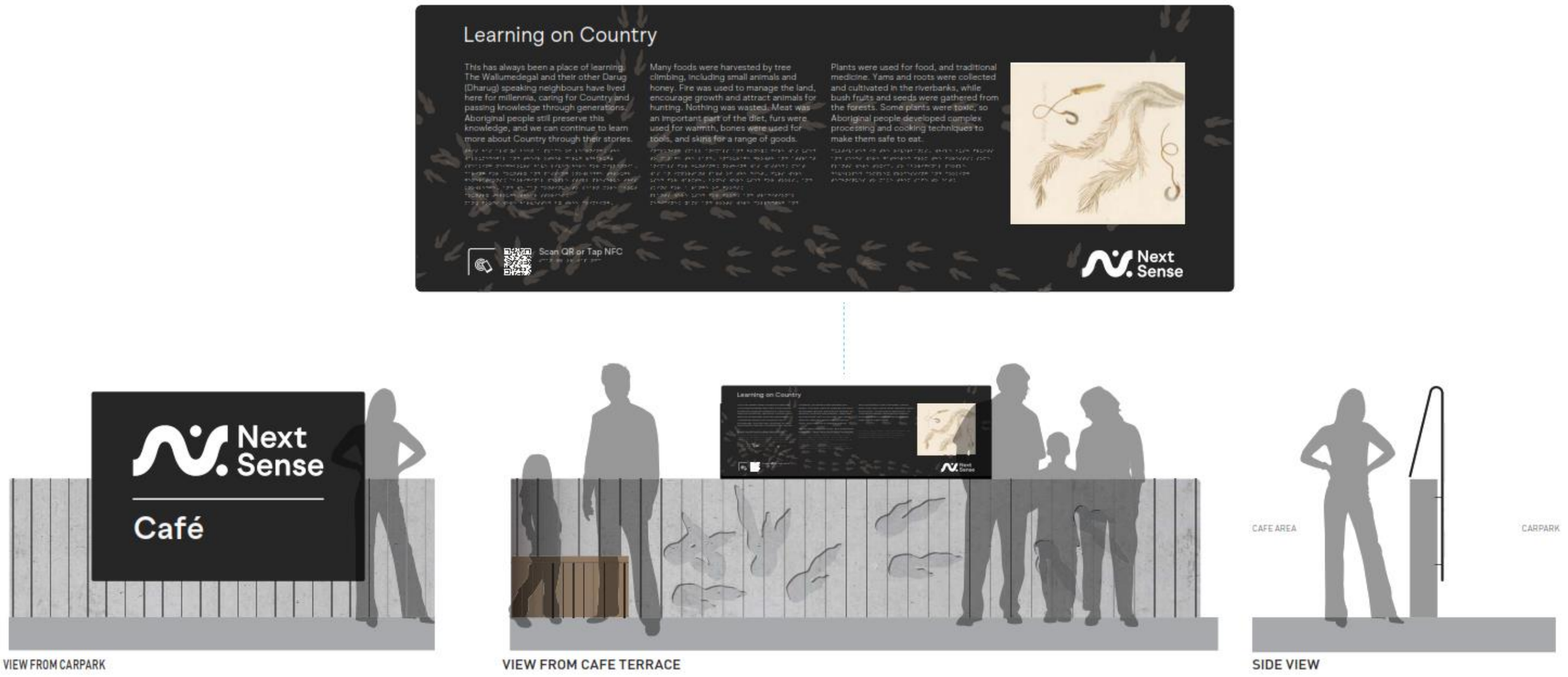


Figure 12. Proposed designs for Sign 2, developed by BrandCulture. Source: BrandCulture, 2022.

## DEVICE 2: INTERPRETIVE PLANTINGS

Plantings and landscaping can be an effective interpretive device that enhances placemaking and conveys the heritage values of the place in a sensory way. Landscaping and planting initiatives can take a number of forms, ranging from community gardens to paving and ground inlays. Landscaping can assist with placemaking and provides an immersive rather than didactic experience.

Using vegetation as an interpretive device is a creative way to provide a non-text-based element that also contributes to the landscape amenity and character of an area. This can range from small plantings of specific species to larger areas of foliage depending upon the theme being interpreted and the intended message. The benefit of plantings interpretation is that as well as being eye catching and evocative, they also contribute to the environmental aspects of an area, providing shade for audiences, home and food for native flora, and an aesthetic quality to a site.

Vegetation can be used as an interpretive device in several ways. Rows of native trees, shrubs or plants can create internal vistas and guide the audience's eye to certain elements or objects in the distance. The absence of plantings in an area heavy with vegetation can be used as a tool to highlight features that are no longer extant in the landscape, such as an archaeological feature or a structure that once sat in the landscape but has since been removed.  Flora planted in specific patterns or chosen because of the nature of their leaves, bark or flowers may also act as an evocative tool to 'echo' heritage features of an area.


Figure 13. The Living Pavilion, Sarah Fisher/ University of Melbourne

Figure 14. Audiences learning more about Country and culture through their engagement with interpretative plantings, Sarah Fisher/ University of Melbourne

# Planting recommendations and specifications

Native plantings and landscaping are a suitable interpretive device for NextSense. The use of plantings will ensure elements of the natural environment and landscape are retained, and the importance of these resources to Aboriginal people can be highlighted and celebrated.

Plantings are also a suitable interpretive device as they are accessible to all users and audiences. Plantings can be experienced through the full range of senses and so can be enjoyed by audiences in multiple ways.

The following section provides more details relating to the proposed planting initiatives.

## Native Planting Path

NextSense proposes to install a native planting path designed by Oculus. The planting scheme will include bush foods, displays of flowering native plants and additional species with very brief accompanying identification signage. Audiences will be encouraged to walk through the planting scheme, experiencing the species and learning more about them as they engage with the site.

The broader landscaping around the school also uses native tree species to profile different types of regional forests in appropriate locations.

## Accessibility

The use of plantings will create an interpretive experience that is accessible to all users of the site. Plantings can be experienced with multiple senses, including sight, touch, smell and even taste, if appropriate.

## Response to the Thematic Framework

The interpretive plantings respond to the following interpretative themes established in this plan:

- Theme 1 (Learning on Country)

The interpretive plantings will encourage users of the site to engage with Aboriginal systems of education and knowledge sharing relating to safe and sustainable resource use. This active, tactile educational opportunity will encourage new generations to continue to learn about Country and culture in this place.

- Theme 2 (Caring for Country, Nourished by Country)

Interpretive plantings also help to explore stories relating to Aboriginal resource use and sustainability. Audiences can begin to understand which plants Aboriginal people used, and the role that they played in diet, medicine and material culture. If safe and appropriate, bush foods may be planted and enjoyed, to help audiences experience Aboriginal flavours in an immediate way. If there are opportunities for students to be engaged in maintaining the plants, this also becomes an active and tactile lesson in how Darug people cared for all aspects of Country for many millennia to the present and encourages a focus on sustainability.

## Plant Species

The full list of species to be included in the planting scheme has been supplied by Oculus and included as Appendix 1. In addition to a large range of trees, shrubs, climbing plant and ground covers, the landscape scheme will include a 'bush tucker' garden. This list of bush tucker planting is included here due to its significant interpretive value:

- Midgen Berry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*)
- Native River Mint (*Mentha australis*)
- Pepperberry (*Tasmania lanceolata*)
- Native Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon ambigus*)
- Grey Saltbush (*Atriplex cinera*)
- Warrigal Greens (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*)

For the full list of plant species to be included in the scheme refer to Appendix 1.


Legend:

- Indicative Native Plant Excursion Route
- Bush foods opportunity
- Flowering Natives Display
- Indigenous Plantings Information Display

Signage Examples:


Plant identification tag with QR code
*Source: PlantsMap.com*


Plant identification tag with Braille
*Source: UK Sensory Trust*

Environmental Signage - Marker
*Source: Heine Jones*

Figure 15. Design plans showing the NextSense: Centre of Excellence building layout and intended areas of landscaping.
Source: Oculus, March 2021 design plans.

## DEVICE 3: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Ongoing educational programming will be an important way to ensure that the ongoing Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the study area are celebrated and communicated to future generations. Hands-on experiences and an opportunity for students to learn directly from knowledge holders will be an important part of educational outcomes. Ongoing programming and educational packages will also ensure that stories remain current, and that content can change and adapt over time in response to new research and community priorities.

Ongoing involvement by community organisations will also help to fulfil the following condition of consent:

> *d) facilitate ongoing Aboriginal community involvement and engagement in the conservation and celebration of Aboriginal heritage values associated with the area.*

Figure 16. 'Let's Go Walkabout', Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park, D'harawal Knowledge Keeper Shannon Foster

## NextSense Aboriginal Heritage and Culture Curriculum

Within their existing ethos and curriculum NextSense have already enshrined the study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures within their school. The curriculum ensures that units of work on Aboriginal history and culture are taught at different stages of development and progression as a key priority. NextSense programming is in accordance with The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) and their National Quality Framework (NQF) as well as the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Within this there is the guiding principle to ensure that Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued and that their families, culture, language and other identities are respected.

According to the NextSense Statement of Indigenous Culture (2021), existing subjects and topics explored include, but are not limited to:

- Local communities and languages;
- Sacred sites and significant places;
- Aboriginal custodial responsibility;
- Australian Indigenous customs, beliefs, ceremonies and celebrations;
- Food and food gathering practices;
- Music, dance, art and material culture;
- Aboriginal agricultural and environmental management practices;
- The Stolen Generations;
- Key civil rights moments (for example, the 1967 referendum, and the Mabo decision); and
- Shared heritage.

Educational experiences and teaching methods currently include:

- Acknowledgment of Country;
- Formal programming and teaching;
- Gardening and planting;
- Art and craft;
- Cooking; and
- Inviting Aboriginal groups/Elders/ family members to provide talks and content.

# Programming recommendations and specifications

Given the rich programming currently in place, and the requirements of ACECQA and NESA, additional recommendations with respect to heritage interpretation should seek to support NextSense's ongoing commitment and existing curriculum. Recommendations need to be flexible and adaptable, so that they can be maintained and supported into the future. The following key priorities should be adopted and maintained:

- Local knowledge holders and elders should remain a part of activities on site. This will ensure that ongoing community involvement and engagement is facilitated, in accordance with best practice and the conditions of consent.
- Nextsense school and preschool will be committed to inviting local Aboriginal communities and elders to:
    - Yearly presentation award ceremonies where they can actively participate in acknowledgement of student achievements.
    - Annual visits to the school and preschool to work with students and deliver workshops related to Aboriginal history/culture/art and stories.
    - Annual visits to talk about native planting/agricultural practices and custodianship of the land.

## Response to Thematic Framework

Educational programming has the potential to contribute to communicating all three themes of the thematic framework (Part 4). Content can be flexible and accommodate a range of stories. Themes could be explored as follows:

- Theme 1: Learning on Country

Ongoing educational opportunities and experiences get to the heart of what this theme conveys. By learning on Country children will continue a tradition here spanning many generations. By engaging local Aboriginal communities and knowledge holders Nectsense will support the opportunity to continue to learn from them.

- Theme 2: Caring for Country, Nourished by Country

Themes around resource use, environment and sustainability can be at the core of any programming. The existing curriculum ensures that these stories are central, and future planning can also make these key areas for learning.

- Theme 3: Always Was, Always Will Be

Education is a key priority in raising awareness about the many millennia of Aboriginal sovereignty and the ongoing impacts of colonisation. The existing syllabus already covers key content relating to this theme, and future programmes can ensure that understanding of this subject continue to develop in culturally appropriate ways.

# CONCLUSION

This Heritage Interpretation Plan includes recommendations for an interpretive scheme which will help audiences and users of the site to understand and engage with the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the study area. Once approved and implemented, the completion of this Heritage Interpretation Plan will have satisfied DA Condition E13 (see section 1.3).

A series of key research tasks and engagement with the project team (outlined in section 2.2) has been completed in order to design a scheme which is suitable for the needs and users of the site. Accessibility requirements, and projects constraints such as budgets and safety requirements have all been factored into the recommendations of this report.

Aboriginal community consultation has also been a key element of the methodology and has ensured that community views, perspectives and priorities have shaped the development of the approach and content. This consultation has taken place in several stages including:

- Consultation relating to the research basis and findings of the ACHAR (Extent Heritage 2020) which have informed the content development and thematic framework.
- Preliminary consultation at the beginning of the project to seek feedback relating to potential themes, storylines and devices. An information pack was sent to all RAPs.
- The report was sent to all RAPS to provide an opportunity for review and comment, with an invitation to a meeting for further discussion. Only one group responded in support of the scheme.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

This Heritage Interpretation Plan has recommended the following thematic framework for the scheme:

- Theme 1: Learning on Country
- Theme 2: Caring for Country, Nourished by Country
- Theme 3: Always Was, Always Will Be

It has also proposed implementation of the following interpretive devices:

- Two interpretive signs that should be accessible to all site users and convey stories relating to Theme 1, Theme 2 and Theme 3.
- An interpretive native planting path with accompanying identification signs. This will convey stories relating to Theme 2 and Theme 3.
- Ongoing educational programming that will connect to Themes 1, 2 and 3.

## PRELIMINARY CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Preliminary phases of content development have been completed as part of this Heritage Interpretation Plan. This content may require further refinement in subsequent stages.

- Text content and historic images (by Extent Heritage) and concept designs (by BrandCulture) for two interpretative signs have been drafted and reviewed by RAPs. This text conveys stories relating to each of the three themes. It has been drafted in line with accessibility requirements, so word counts are limited and the number of signs has been kept to a minimum.
- The native planting path has been designed by Oculus. Concept designs for the scheme are included in Part 5.
- Details relating to current educational programming and recommendations for future considerations have been made in Part 5.

# NEXT STEPS

The following steps will be required in order to implement the scheme:

- Finalisation of signage content and designs;
- Fabrication and installation of signage;
- Refinement, finalisation and implementation of landscaping scheme. Detailed requirements for this should be advised by Oculus or other qualified landscape designers; and
- Ongoing educational programming undertaken in collaboration with local Aboriginal groups and knowledge holders.

If any significant changes are made to the proposed approach and content reviewed by the RAPs and detailed in this report, subsequent stage stages of consultation will be required.

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# APPENDIX 1-

## LIST OF PLANT SPECIES BY OCULUS