

175 – 177 Cleveland Street and 1 – 5 Woodburn Street, Redfern

On behalf of
EG
July 2021



Project Director

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			Name	Signature
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* This document is for discussion purposes only unless signed and dated by the persons identified. This document has been reviewed by the Project Director.

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1 Executive Summary

This Consultation Report has been prepared by Mecone on behalf of EG Funds Management (the Applicant) to outline the consultation with key stakeholders during the preparation of the State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for the site at 175 – 177 Cleveland Street and 1 – 5 Wooburn Street, Redfern.

This Consultation Report has been prepared to address the requirements of the Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued on 3 December 2020.

This Consultation Report describes the consultation process, the issues raised during consultation, and how the proposal has addressed those issues.

The consultation process includes the following key activities:

- Consultation with the Design Review Panel;
- Consultation with stakeholders, surrounding landowners and agencies;
- Consultation with Redfern and Waterloo community and Indigenous groups; and
- Consultation with Consent Authorities including City of Sydney and the Department of Industry, Planning and Environment.

This Consultation Outcomes Report should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Advice Report prepared by NHD Consulting included at **Attachment A**.

1.1 Site Analysis

The subject site (175-177 Cleveland Street and 1-5 Woodburn Street, Redfern) incorporates 7 separate lots and has a site area of approximately 1,060m². The site has three street frontages including Cleveland Street (approx. 30m) to the north, Woodburn Street (approx. 30m) to the east and Eveleigh Street (approx. 22m) to the west. The site is conveniently located within 1.7km south of the Sydney CBD and is in close proximity to Redfern train station (300m), the new Sydney Metro Waterloo station (900m) and Central station (750m).

Refer to **Figure 1** below for the site location.



Figure 1 Subject site

Source: Mecone Mosaic, modified by Mecone

The surrounding development comprises of a mixture of terrace housing, medium density residential, mixed uses, commercial and retail.

The site abuts a 4 storey residential flat building to the south. To the east across Woodburn Street is a part 5/part 6 hotel (Song Hotel) and to the west across Eveleigh Street is a 4 storey residential flat building. Further to the west is Urbanest (157-163 Cleveland Street) which is a student housing development approved in 2012 (refer to section 5 below for further detail).

1.2 Proposal

The proposal seeks approval for:

- Construction and use of a six (6) storey building comprising:
 - 120 boarding rooms, including:
 - 52 single rooms
 - 68 double room
 - Communal facilities including roof terrace, an outdoor cinema, common study area, courtyard and multimedia room;
 - A single ground floor retail tenancy;
- Associated landscape works and public domain improvements; and
- Extension and augmentation of services and infrastructure as required.

1.3 Objectives of the Development

The objectives of the development for 175 – 177 Cleveland Street and 1 – 5 Woodburn Street, Redfern are to:

- Provide a building envelope that is largely materially consistent with the envelope approved under SSD 7064;
- Provide rental accommodation in proximity to major tertiary educational establishments and the growing office market associated with Central Precinct;
- Provide a range of high quality communal facilities;
- Replace the outdated building stock contained within the site with a high quality development;
- Deliver a built form outcome for the site that is appropriate for the context and responds to the character of the area;
- Integrate public art in a meaningful manner; and
- Provide comprehensive landscaping that improves the visual amenity of the streetscape.

1.4 Consultation Approach

1.4.1 Agency and Stakeholder Consultation

With respect to consultation, the SEARs specifies the following:

During the preparation of the EIS, you must consult with relevant local, State or Commonwealth Government Authorities, utility providers, community groups and affected landowners, as identified in any meeting with the Department before the DA is lodged.

As part of the request for SEARs process, the following agencies were consulted with:

- NSW Environment Protection Authority (NSW EPA);
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment;
- Heritage Council of NSW;
- City of Sydney Council;
- State Design Review Panel;
- Sydney University SRC;
- Ausgrid;
- Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Service;
- Surrounding Landowners;
- Stakeholders, including:
 - A member of City of Sydney's Indigenous Lead and Engagement team;

- A local community Elder;
- Three (3) young First Nations community members currently living in the Waterloo-Redfern locality; and
- First Nations organisations.

1.4.2 Consultation Outcomes

This section provides a summary of the feedback received from the relevant agencies, stakeholders and authorities.

Consultation Outcomes	
NSW Environment Protection Authority	The agency concluded that no follow-up consultation is required.
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment	The DPIE required that further biodiversity surveys be undertaken to determine if bats or signs of bats in suitable roost habitat were present across the site. The surveys have been completed and facilitated the granting of a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report Waiver (BDAR Waiver).
NSW State Design Review Panel	The proposal was reviewed and considered by the SDRP twice. The first meeting was held on the 6 April 2021 and written feedback received on the 4 May 2021. The Applicant's responses to the written feedback was considered at a second SDRP meeting held on the 12 May 2021. Design amendments were incorporated to address the feedback received. Further discussion is provided in Section 2.7 of the EIS. A representative from the City of Sydney attended each meeting. Further discussion is provided in the section below.
NSW Heritage Council	The NSW Heritage Council identified the need to ascertain if the site contains Aboriginal cultural values. The potential for Aboriginal cultural values across the site has been addressed in the Aboriginal Archaeology Report that accompanies the EIS. It is intended that ongoing Aboriginal Stakeholder Consultation will be completed during the post lodgement phase in accordance with the Consultation Strategy prepared by Artefact at Appendix 8 of the EIS.

<p>Heritage NSW</p>	<p>Heritage NSW identified the need for the application to be accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment that addresses the relevant guidelines, visual impacts to nearby heritage items and the site's archeology. The EIS is accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment and Aboriginal Archeology Report at Appendix 20 and Appendix 21 respectively.</p>
<p>Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Service</p>	<p>To facilitate the preparation of the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) included at Appendix 23, the appointed consultant responsible for the preparation of the SIA consulted with the Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Service and Sydney University SRC. The advice received informed an understanding the demographic profile of the site's Social Locality.</p>
<p>Sydney University SRC</p>	
<p>Ausgrid</p>	<p>Watermann Consultants were responsible for engaging with Ausgrid to understand the site's utility requirements. The outcomes of this consultation are address in the Services Report included at Appendix 34.</p>
<p>City of Sydney and the DPIE</p>	<p>The applicant attended a pre-lodgement meeting with staff from the City of Sydney and the DPIE on 26 August 2020. The Applicant received high level feedback in relation to the scheme which has been considered in its ongoing design development. The feedback and how the applicant responded to the comments received is addressed in Section 1.4.5.</p>
<p>Stakeholder Consultation</p>	<p>A community engagement specialist, NHD Consulting, was responsible for consulting with community members on behalf of the applicant. Direct discussions were had with the following Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of City of Sydney's Indigenous Lead and Engage team; • A local community Elder; and • Three (3) young First Nations community members residing within the Waterloo/Redfern locality.

	<p>Electronic information pertaining to the project was sent to several key First Nation organisations in Redfern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal Warrior; • National Centre of Indigenous Excellence; • Gadigal Information Service; • Aboriginal Medial Service; • Redfern Youth Connect; • Weave Youth and Community Services; and • Aboriginal Housing Company. <p>The feedback received from stakeholders related to design changes; ongoing consultation; partnerships with community groups; and measures to encourage the occupation and use of the building by Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander peoples. Further discussion is provided in Section 1.4.4.</p>
<p>Surrounding Landowners</p>	<p>Consultation occurred with surrounding landowners to the immediate east and west of the site. The landowners raised no objection or concerns with the proposed development. Further discussion is provided in Section 1.4.6.</p>

1.4.3 Design Review Panel

The proposal has been subject to ongoing consultation with the NSW Government Architect's Office and has undergone a design review process in consultation with the NSW State Design Review Panel (SDRP).

The applicant attended a Design Review Panel meeting on the 6 April 2021. Written feedback was provided on the 4 May 2021. Following the receipt of this feedback, the proposal was the subject of ongoing design development and reviewed at a second SDRP meeting.

The second SDRP meeting was held on the 12 May 2021 and written feedback provided on the 27 May 2021. The matters raised by the SDRP have been specifically addressed and resulted in a number of design amendments. The comments received and a response to each are included in **Section 2.7** of the EIS.

The written feedback also noted that the '*project should return to the SDRP as part of the response to submission phase*'. In light of this, the proponent is committed to refining the design (if necessary) during the post lodgement and undertaking further engagement activities with relevant stakeholders as required.

1.4.4 Stakeholder Consultation

The applicant has engaged with stakeholders using a very targeted engagement approach that aimed to ensure consultation occurred with community groups and individuals that will be affected by the project and who live in proximity to the site. These engagement activities have been lead by a suitably qualified specialist engagement consultant, NHD Consulting.

The consultation activities included direct discussions with the following:

- A member of City of Sydney's Indigenous Lead and Engagement team;
- A local community Elder, and
- Three (3) young First Nation community members currently living in the Waterloo/Redfern locality.

The feedback received from the discussions with the above stakeholders is detailed in the Consultation Advice Report included at **Attachment A** and can be summarised as follows:

- Community members noted that creating opportunities for First Nations businesses in the ground floor retail space should be explored;
- Scoping or canvassing of First Nations business opportunities should be done so in collaboration and partnership with local community groups and members;
- The landscape approach should incorporate endemic species of flora that are native to Gadigal Country;
- Community members would like the stories of 'Aboriginal Redfern' demonstrated and explored in the design of the building;
- The potential for study areas in the proposal to be reserved for Indigenous students;
- The adoption of the Government Architect NSW's *Connecting with Country Framework* to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are embedded across the project;
- Engagement of Aboriginal creative experts who can advise on the project and its ongoing design development;
- Partnering with community organisations that aim to attract Indigenous back to the local community and who advocate for culturally appropriate affordable and social housing dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- The provision of boarding room configurations that cater for varying family types; and
- Improved accessibility for boarding rooms to cater for those with accessibility needs.

In addition to the above, electronic information was disseminated to several key First Nation Organisations in Redfern. These stakeholders included:

- Tribal Warrior;

- National Centre of Indigenous Excellence;
- Gadigal Information Services;
- Aboriginal Medical Service;
- Redfern Youth Connect;
- Weave Youth and Community Services; and
- Aboriginal Housing Company.

The information aimed to increase awareness of the proposal and to inform community members that there will be future opportunities to provide input into the project.

1.4.5 City of Sydney Consultation

Meetings were held with City of Sydney (Andrew Rees – Manager, Area Planning) and the Department (Amy Watson – Team Leader) on 26 August 2020 to discuss the future redevelopment of the site.

Furthermore, Council provided an email (on 28 August 2020) which outlined Council's position on the redevelopment. The table below provides a summary of key points raised by Council and the applicant's response to each.

Table 1. Summary of Feedback Received by Council	
Summary of key points from Council	Our comment
<u>Email correspondence from Council (28 August 2020):</u>	
<p><i>'We note that there are only implied objectives for the Floor Space Ratio standard and agree with the Independent Planning Commissions assessment of the previous application on the site. That is, it is possible to understand the implied objectives of the standards through an analysis of the history of the strategic planning that has informed the controls for the Redfern-Waterloo area.</i></p> <p><i>The development standards prescribed for the site are based on the Redfern Waterloo Built Environment Plan (Stage 1) 2006. The BEP was informed through an urban design analysis and developed with stakeholder and community input. The FSR standards are to encourage business uses and to limit the proportion of residential development. Economic and job growth is integral to the renewal of Redfern-Waterloo. The Land Use Strategy in the BEP aims to generate non-residential development potential of approximately 440,000 square metres to accommodate around 18,000 jobs in Redfern / Waterloo.</i></p> <p><i>Accepting a variation to the development standard to such a degree would set a highly</i></p>	<p>The proposal is accompanied by two 16A Variation Requests to vary the maximum storey height and residential FSR that applies under the <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (State Significant Precincts) 2005</i>.</p> <p>The variation requests address the implied objectives of the control. The proposed bulk and scale is commensurate with the bulk approved under SSDA 7064. For this reason, the submission of a Planning Proposal is considered unnecessary.</p> <p>The proposal relates to a boarding house development rather than a residential flat building. The boarding house use will generate employment opportunities and is compatible with the surrounding land use mix in that a number of student accommodation facilities are located in the vicinity of the site.</p>

Table 1. Summary of Feedback Received by Council

Summary of key points from Council	Our comment
<i>undesirable precedent, as well as undermine the public's confidence in the validity of statutory controls. Accordingly, the City would not be supportive of using a SEPP 1 variation and recommend that a Planning Proposal be lodged to amend the controls to allow a boarding house use with only ground floor retail.'</i>	

The table below provides a summary of key points raised by the Department and the applicant's responses.

Table 2. Summary of discussions with the Department

Summary of key points from the Department	Our comment
The Department confirmed a new 'State Significant Development' (SSD) DA would likely be required, rather than a modification of the existing 2018 approval.	Asn SSD has been submitted in lieu of a modification request.
Precedent suggests the Department would be inclined to support an exceedance of the maximum residential FSR of 1:1 where it was for an affordable housing typology such as student housing or a boarding house. This occurred for the student housing DA's in 2012 and 2015.	The precedents for varying the residential FSR development standard are addressed in the Clause 16A Variation Request that accompanies the EIS.
The Departmental officers were not aware the properties or immediate precinct were to be excluded from the SEPP.	Noted. The application has been prepared pursuant to <i>Environmental Planning Policy (State Significant Precincts) 2005</i> .

1.4.6 Landowners

The applicant has engaged with surrounding landowners. Consultation with these landowners consisted of engaging in direct discussions with the property owners and sending them details of the proposal via email. The surrounding landowners, or their representatives, included the following:

- The residential flat building to the west at 2 – 8 Eveleigh Street, Redfern;
- The hotel to the east known as the 'Song Hotel' at 179 Cleveland Street, Redfern; and
- The student accommodation facility further westward known as 'The Urbanest Cleveland Street' located to the west.

The landowners for the above properties raised no objection or immediate concern with the proposal, however were eager to receive more detail during the exhibition

stage of the application. These representatives were comforted in the fact that the proposed envelope was similar to that previously approved for the site.

The applicant advised that they could be contacted by these landowners should they have any queries regarding the development. It is important to note that the property directly to the south of the site is owned by the applicant and therefore no consultation was required for this property.

1.4.7 Ongoing Consultation

The proposed development will be placed on public exhibition for 30 days in accordance with clause 83 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*. During the public exhibition period, Council, State agencies, community groups and the public will have the opportunity to comment on the project.

In addition, the Applicant is committed to engaging in ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders. The feedback received from this consultation process will inform any necessary design amendments, heritage interpretation and the development of public art for the site to be finalised prior to the occupation phase.

A Consultation Strategy for engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders has been prepared by Artefact and is included at **Appendix 8** of the EIS. The Consultation Strategy establishes that

Develop an engagement strategy, which is respectful and inclusive, involving:

- Meeting with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Nathan Moran (CEO), Rowena Welsh-Jarrett (Cultural Heritage Officer)) to discuss the new development, and take advice on integration of a response to the Aboriginal cultural heritage/significance of the site, on programming and accessibility options, and design features;
- Inviting key local community members to discussions to ascertain the needs and opportunities the new development could provide to the community, if advised by Metro LALC;
- Engaging with a small number of local Aboriginal designers/artists to provide input into the buildings' design, including materials and colours, layouts of public/courtyard spaces, artistic features and design interventions within the building, and discussing the concept designs within community consultation sessions.
(NB: all participants should be remunerated for their time and the sharing of cultural knowledge; inner city Aboriginal communities and organisations are experiencing 'consultation overload' and may take a number of months to respond).
- Undertake an assessment of recent existing Aboriginal community consultation reports for developments in the Redfern area.

It is intended that an Aboriginal Engagement Specialist will be engaged during the post lodgement phase to implement and advise on the consultation process.

2 Conclusion

This Consultation Outcomes Report provides a succinct overview of the communication and stakeholder engagement approach that has been undertaken to date and will continue to occur in the post-lodgement phase.

Mecone and the Applicant are committed to contributing positively to the community and will continue to engage with the community, agencies and stakeholders as the proposal develops to ensure the most optimal design outcome for all.

Attachment A – Consultation Advice Report



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**FIRST NATIONS ADVICE IN RELATION TO THE
PROPOSED BOARDING HOUSE, 175-177 CLEVELAND
STREET & 1-5 WOODBURN STREET, REDFERN**

16 JULY 2021



**NHD
CONSULTING**

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is a high-level report in relation to the First Nations engagement approach currently under development for the proposed six-storey boarding house at 175-177 Cleveland Street & 1-5 Woodburn Street, Redfern.

Views, opinions, and recommendations expressed in this report are intended to assist in shaping future First Nations engagement processes to support this project after lodgement of the Development Application (DA).

Where appropriate, high level research has been undertaken to support findings and recommendations made in this report. This report has been prepared on the assumption that a thorough and robust First Nations engagement strategy will be planned and facilitated in future phases of this project.

This report presents the following:

- Project background,
- First Nations feedback, including:
 - Project methodology,
 - Who we contacted,
 - What we heard (explored through overall feedback and aspirations for the project, concerns about the project, and recommendations for the project and future engagement),
- Recommended stakeholders for future First Nations Engagement, and
- Connecting with Country advice.

This report was prepared by Indigenous communications specialist, NHD Consulting.

While all care and due diligence was taken in preparing this report, the document may contain errors.

Date: 16 July 2021

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The primary objective of the proposed development is to deliver affordable rental accommodation to a locality that is experiencing urban renewal. To be located at 175-177 Cleveland St & 1-5 Woodburn St, Redfern, the proposal seeks to be an exemplar for new style co-living developments.

The proposed works will involve construction of a six-storey boarding house providing 120 boarding rooms (mixture of single and double rooms) with ground floor retail. With a gross floor area of 3,685sqm, the building will include 8 car parking spaces in addition to bicycle and motorcycle parking. Landscaping will be undertaken as part of the design.

The project relates to the delivery of a new generation boarding house which incorporates 120 self-contained dwellings. The proposal is unique in that it aims to provide several communal open space areas which are intended to foster a sense of community by encouraging interaction between occupants.

Indigenous communications specialist, NHD Consulting, was engaged by EG to facilitate initial discussions with a small number of First Nations stakeholders in relation to this project. The purpose of these discussions was to collect initial thoughts and feedback on the project, raise awareness of the project in the community, and provide strategic advice to help inform future First Nations engagement activities for the project.

These discussions were undertaken to support lodgement of the DA, noting that strategic, targeted, and robust First Nations engagement is to be undertaken during future phases of the project.

FIRST NATIONS FEEDBACK

Methodology

With regards to the limited timeframe in which to undertake initial discussions with relevant First Nations stakeholders, priority was given to canvassing diverse community voices, including relevant government bodies, Elders and Knowledge Holders, and young Indigenous community members (aged 18-25) currently living in the locality of the proposed development.

Community members were asked to provide their feedback and thoughts on:

- The proposed project,
- Aspirations for the project,
- Concerns about the project, and
- Recommendations for the project and future First Nations engagement.

Stakeholders expressed a desire for their feedback to remain confidential and all discussions were conducted via videoconferencing or telephone calls.

All stakeholders contacted were informed that there would be more opportunities to be engaged at a future time should they wish to provide further input on this project. Please note that the stakeholders we held discussions with **did not** express an interest in being re-engaged.

It is important to note that in addition to the limited time in which to contact stakeholders, there are several current realities at time of writing that made securing discussions with stakeholders difficult. Specifically, the current COVID-19 outbreak in Sydney and ensuing

lockdown and restrictions has made connecting with some First Nations organisations difficult as some of these entities are not equipped for effective working from home arrangements. Further, given it was recently NAIDOC Week, it is not uncommon for First Nations organisations to be delayed in responding to communications following what is typically a very busy and time-poor period for First Nations businesses communities.

Who we contacted

With reference to the limited timeframe in which to contact stakeholders, only a small number of stakeholders and community members were available to discuss this project. Stakeholders that volunteered their time to discuss this project include:

- A member of City of Sydney's Indigenous Lead & Engage team,
- A local community Elder, and
- Three (3) young First Nations community members currently living in the Waterloo/Redfern locality.

Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metro LALC) was contacted for comment, however, the organisation was not able to make themselves available in the limited timeframe under which these discussions were to take place. It is paramount that Metro LALC are engaged as soon as is feasibly possible following DA lodgement.

Additionally, electronic communications were sent out to several key First Nations organisations in Redfern to raise awareness of this project and to inform stakeholders that future engagement activities will be undertaken.

These stakeholders included:

- Tribal Warrior,
- National Centre of Indigenous Excellence,
- Gadigal Information Service,
- Aboriginal Medical Service,
- Redfern Youth Connect,
- Weave Youth and Community Services, and
- Aboriginal Housing Company.

Raising awareness of this project was considered a key priority given the limited timeframe in which to connect with stakeholders. It was also important to inform community members that there will be opportunities to provide input into this project should they wish.

What we heard

The feedback heard through discussions with select First Nations community members is presented through the following domains:

- Overall feedback and aspirations the project,
- Concerns about the project, and
- Recommendations for the project and future engagement.

All feedback has been anonymised.

Overall feedback and aspirations for the project

As the proposed project is in Redfern, community placed emphasis on the importance of involving Aboriginal perspectives in all stages of the project

Redfern is an extremely important and significant place for Aboriginal People. Considered the 'beating heart' of Aboriginal Australia, Redfern was where the Aboriginal civil rights movement began and where many actions for self-determination took place such as the 1938 Day of Mourning, the 1965 Freedom Ride, and the ongoing struggle for Land Rights.

Redfern is also the foundation of key Aboriginal services which became models for the rest of Australia such as the Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Children's Service, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, and Aboriginal Housing Company, among others.

Given the above, and the vested interest that the Aboriginal community has in Redfern, stakeholders noted the importance of including Aboriginal people, voices, and perspectives across all stages of the project and expressed a desire to see this happen as soon as possible.

Affordable housing options in Redfern for Aboriginal people is a key priority

We heard that developing affordable housing options for Aboriginal people in Redfern and Waterloo have long been a priority for Indigenous communities. Due to the continued displacement of Aboriginal people from their Country and traditional lands, advocate groups and City of Sydney strategies have aimed to lobby for and create affordable housing options for Indigenous people.

Stakeholders noted that many Aboriginal community members still reside in social housing in Redfern and Waterloo and the Aboriginal services they access are still there, too. However, community members also relayed the fact that while many Aboriginal people who grew up in the area still see it as their home, they can no longer afford the cost of living associated with the locality. As such, community members would like to see more affordable housing in Redfern, with dedicated tenancy spots for Aboriginal peoples.

Dedicated retail space for First Nations businesses

Community members commented that there are very few First Nations businesses, entertainment venues, cafes and restaurants, galleries, or other cultural spaces with prominent shopfronts, or located on high streets. Some community members noted that creating opportunities for First Nations businesses in the ground floor retail space should be explored. Scoping or canvassing of First Nations business opportunities should be done so in collaboration and partnership with local community groups and members.

Community members want to see their culture and history explored in the design

We heard that community members would like to see the stories of 'Aboriginal Redfern' demonstrated and explored in the design of the building. Stakeholders particularly noted that the landscape approach should incorporate endemic species of flora that are native to Gadigal Country.

Stakeholders also noted that the communal areas intended for the building were considered a highlight of the project proposal and provide ample opportunity for the designers to explore Indigenous design principles, inclusion of culture, and creative expression. One stakeholder noted, "*I really like the concept of large communal spaces where people can gather and learn about each other. There's a real opportunity for here the building's residents to celebrate diversity and culture.*"

Creating spaces for affordable Indigenous student housing

Some stakeholders also noted that reserving some of the rooms in the boarding house for Indigenous tertiary students could be considered. We heard that the cost of university often deters Indigenous student from attempting tertiary study, and that offering cheaper accommodation options which are conveniently located within commutable distances to universities in the city would be a desired outcome from projects such as this.

Community members would like to see the project adopt a Connecting with Country Framework

Given it is the pilot year of the Government Architect NSW's Connecting with Country Framework, some stakeholders reported that they would like to see this project adopt a Framework to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are embedded across the entire project. One stakeholder noted that, *"When projects and developments happen in Redfern, it would be remiss to not include an Aboriginal worldview from the very beginning. Adopting a Connecting with Country Framework would ensure that this project remains true to Aboriginal people, and commits to including us, as well as Country, at all stages of the project ... I really would like to see a Connecting with Country response for this project."*

Please note that further commentary on Connecting with Country can be found at the rear of this report.

Stakeholders also noted that they would like to see local cultural knowledge explored and embedded in the project. Creating a Connecting with Country Framework for this project will enable this to happen.

Concerns about the project

'Better' engagement processes

Stakeholders expressed disappointment in the limited engagement time frame and window of opportunity to voice their opinions on the project. Noting that future engagement opportunities will become available, stakeholders still noted that desire for Aboriginal voices to be embedded from the beginning of any project. One community member noted that, *"this is the only way that we can truly, genuinely help shape and influence projects. This is what makes us feel included, respected, and seen."*

One stakeholder noted that Indigenous input should be sought from the beginning of any DA process and hoped that this provides a learning opportunity for the project proponent to apply to future projects.

Gentrification is a 'sensitive point'

Stakeholders noted that Redfern is an important part of Aboriginal history and is currently experiencing a 'busy' phase of gentrification and renewal. Stakeholders highlighted the work being undertaken or proposed at Redfern Station, the Redfern North Eveleigh Precinct Renewal, the proposed development of the Aboriginal Cultural and Knowledge Centre at the former Redfern Post Office, and the Pemulwuy Project as key examples to demonstrate the large amounts of work being undertaken in the area.

We heard that the gentrification of inner Sydney suburbs has meant that historically 'working class' localities such as Redfern and Waterloo have become highly desirable suburbs, with rent increases and house prices excluding Aboriginal people from living in these locations. Community members noted that this was extremely upsetting as Aboriginal people working in Aboriginal services cannot typically afford to live in the community in which they work. We

further heard that Aboriginal people who are beginning their careers on modest or entry-level incomes must leave the community due to the increasing cost of living in the area.

One of the community members noted that, *“I previously lived out in South West Sydney before moving into the City. I moved to Redfern because it was where mob was and because of our history. I was lucky because my salary was reasonable, and I could afford rent ... I know that more young Aboriginal people would move here if they could afford it.”*

It was suggested the projects such as this provide the foundation to bring Aboriginal people “back home” and make their cultural and spiritual home more accessible. As such, gentrification should aim to be inclusive of Aboriginal people and provide opportunities for them to be included in the process rather than excluded.

Historical ‘failings’ in the public housing sector

Some stakeholders noted the history of public housing ‘failures’ in Sydney and highlighted Waterloo Estate and the selling off of Milsons Point public housing as key examples. While community members noted that this proposed development is not public housing, they did express concerns that projects that have ‘social beginnings’ can often and easily become ‘entirely commercial’ and lose sight of any socially-intended outcomes.

Some stakeholders noted that there needed to be project accountability and a ‘chain of custody’ in project processes. We heard, *“some projects start off really positively and they are engaging the right people, asking the right questions, and being inclusive in design process, but when it comes to construction and operation of the project or asset, what was being sold to stakeholders in the design phase is no longer on the table.”*

Stakeholders asserted that they would like this proposed development to be a welcoming and inclusive residential dwelling that retains and attracts residents on lower incomes, particularly First Nations peoples, families with children, older people, and students.

Stakeholders noted that they would like to see a project commitment to ensure that the affordable rental accommodation vision continues when the asset is operational.

Recommendations for the project and future engagement

Aboriginal families typically ‘use’ spaces ‘differently’ and this should be considered in design approaches

We heard that Aboriginal families are typically bigger, particularly due to caring obligations such as looking after Elders or nephews and nieces. While an ‘immediate’ Aboriginal family may be ‘nuclear’ in nature, stakeholders reported that it isn’t uncommon for up to 10 Aboriginal family members to be housed at any one time, even in a two-bedroom unit. Stakeholders noted that the design of rooms in the boarding house should consider different family dynamics and able to cater to ‘out of the box’ social and familial structures.

Stakeholders also raised the issue of mobility of Elders and older Indigenous community members and accessibility of the building. Specifically, if Elders were to visit their family members living in this boarding house, there should be some units ‘reserved’ on lower floors for Indigenous tenants to ensure better accessibility for elderly visitors.

Create co-design opportunities wherever possible to maximise community involvement

We heard that one of the most significant insights community members wanted to share is that engagement plans and activations are most effective and appropriate when they are designed in partnership with Aboriginal communities. One stakeholder noted that

communities hold knowledge and preferences around engagement and consultation approaches that work best for them and are an integral partner in providing input into evolving and success engagement processes.

Look at existing housing strategies and initiatives for project alignment

We heard that there several housing strategies and initiatives currently in the market that could provide some consideration and direction for this project in making the proposed boarding house an inclusive and accessible rental option for Aboriginal people and families.

Stakeholders specifically referenced:

- The City of Sydney's 'Housing for All' Strategy – in relation to First Nations people, the Housing for All Strategy creates an opportunity to start a process of bringing the people back across the local area by partnering with the community to advocate the provision of culturally appropriate affordable and social housing dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Stakeholders noted they would like to see this development be aligned with this Strategy,
- St George Community Housing – the City of Sydney has secured a 25 per cent target for Aboriginal housing with St George Community Housing for the Marion St Redfern housing complex currently under construction, and
- St George Community housing – the affordable housing complex at 11 Gibbons St, Redfern has a percentage of units reserved for Aboriginal tenants, in addition to having a dedicated employee who is responsible for placing Aboriginal people into this housing. Stakeholders noted that this has been well received from the community.

Develop a targeted, inclusive, and effective engagement strategy and mitigate consultation fatigue

Due to the large number of projects in the market that require consultation with First Nations stakeholders and communities, a number of stakeholders noted that the engagement strategy for this development needed to be targeted and effective rather than just 'casting a wide net'.

Specifically, recommendations included:

- Engaging with groups/bodies that are directly aligned with the project context, such as the Redfern Waterloo Aboriginal Alliance Campaign,
- Engaging with Aboriginal residents who currently live in social and affordable housing,
- Capturing voices of youth representatives' voices,
- Being flexible with engagement and accepting feedback through multiple mediums (virtual consults, phone calls, written communication, social media, etc),
- Providing payment/reimbursement for the time of those who participate in engagement processes, and
- Considering 'extended engagement' through embedding key Indigenous stakeholders in advisory roles on the project team.

Stakeholders also noted that consultation fatigue is very present in the current market. With the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of Aboriginal engagement and in the pilot year of the Connecting with Country Framework, many organisations and communities are reporting 'over consultation.' This can be influenced by how Government and planners identify various places and spaces by precinct and responsibility.

In some instances, the story threads and knowledge that is shared during Aboriginal engagement has relevance to a broader place than the one being consulted on. It is not uncommon for Traditional Owner groups to be approached up to 4-5 times for a handful of different projects, for what is essentially identified as the same place/region.

Although the issue of over consultation is not a new one in the Indigenous engagement space, exploring the recommendations above may be beneficial in helping manage consultation overload for this project in a locality experiencing extensive renewal.

Embedding Aboriginal governance into the project team

Stakeholders noted that the future First Nation engagement strategy should explore ways to meaningfully embed Aboriginal governance into the project in ways that work best for both community members and the project team. For example, this could be through the engagement of Aboriginal advisors, as well as introducing joint decision-making models around particular project decisions. In recent projects, we have seen an increase in embedding 'continued knowledge' through initiatives such as 'Elders in Residence' where local Elders are invited to advise on the project during its lifecycle. These Elders are paid for their time.

In a similar vein, stakeholders also suggested that Aboriginal creative experts should be embedded in the project team, whether that be Indigenous designers, artists, place makers, or creative consultants.

Capturing the voices of young people

Some stakeholders noted that it is now common practice in Indigenous engagement processes to invite their families to engagement activities. This was identified as being important for several reasons.

Firstly, some family groups may wish for the option to be consulted as a family group in engagement going forward, to ensure a multi-generational lens to engagement and to better articulate and affirm ongoing connection to place through a continuous thread, or to present the importance of a project through different generations.

Further, we heard that the voices of children and young people are fundamental to engagement processes due to the following:

- The demographics of the Aboriginal population in Sydney necessarily mean that children and young people will be major potential users of property, precincts, and public sites,
- It is integral to capture current and contemporary connection to place which children and young people have a unique perspective on. For many Aboriginal young people who have grown up in Sydney for instance, their connection to Redfern will naturally be different,
- Involving children and young people can facilitate deeper exploration of continuous connection and cultural responsibilities to place and encourage this to be acknowledged by Governments and other stakeholders, and
- Involving and including children and young people in critical conversations can also facilitate both formal and informal knowledge exchange between multiple parties and over the longer term, can help to build trust and establish better relationships between families/communities and Government organisations.

Stakeholders recommended that future engagement processes try and capture voices of young people and families.

RECOMMENDED STAKEHOLDERS FOR FUTURE FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

While not undertaking an extensive and thorough stakeholder mapping exercise, it is recommended that the following stakeholders be considered for consultation in future engagement activities for this project. Given the cultural significance of Redfern in First Nations history, we considered the broad depth and extensive number of Aboriginal stakeholders and organisation in the Redfern area. Stakeholders identified below has intended to be inclusive with regards to several factors including age, gender, social services, recreational and community centres, community support and known Elders.

It is not proposed that all identified stakeholders below will want to be consulted for this project.

STAKEHOLDER	KEY CONTACT	SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT
ORGANISATIONS/COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS		
Tribal Warrior	Shane Phillip	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site
National Centre of Indigenous Excellence	Clare McHugh and/or Jodie Stevens	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site
Gadigal Information Service	John Leha and/or Tim Leha	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site
Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern	Edie Coe	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site
Redfern Youth Connect	Solomon Haumono	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of young Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site
Weave Youth and Community Services	Siobhan Bryson	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of young Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site
Aboriginal Housing Company	Michael (Mick) Mundine Snr	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and opportunities for housing facilities in the project area
GOVERNMENT		
City of Sydney	Edie Coe	Ensure alignment with other relevant projects

		Advice throughout the project as required, noting Redfern engagement projects being planned by the City of Sydney in the future
Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council	Nathan Moran	Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area, and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the area for the future of the site Seek advice about Elders or knowledge holders who should be engaged through the project
ELDERS		
Uncle Ray Davidson		Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area
Aunty Esther Dixon		Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area
Aunty Dulcie Flowers		Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area
Uncle Allen Madden		Inform and seek advice on the project, the history and cultural heritage of the project area

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY ADVICE

Since the introduction of Government Architect NSW Connecting with Country Framework, the way in which built environment projects are approached by all project proponents is changing. This Framework intends to enable project teams to develop connections with Country that can inform the planning, design, and delivery of built environment projects in NSW. The ambition of this Framework is that each proponent delivering government projects will “...commit to helping support the health and wellbeing of Country by valuing, respecting, and being guided by Aboriginal people, who know that if we care for Country – it will care for us.”¹

The role of community engagement is critical in building out a thorough, refined, and culturally robust Connecting with Country Framework and approach. Engaging community is fundamental in unlocking cultural knowledge that is key to affirming and driving design processes in built environment projects.

Successfully refining and embedding Connecting with Country throughout any project is based on strong and ongoing engagement with the Aboriginal community, through all project stages. All engagement must be undertaken with consideration of cultural and ethical protocols, including consideration of reimbursing participants for their time and knowledge and the rights of Aboriginal people to determine the use of their Intellectual Cultural Property. It is acknowledged that the stakeholder engagement approach will require detailed consideration of who should be involved, at what stages and in what ways. These

¹ <https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country>

considerations would be best explored in the development of an engagement plan, which would ideally be co-designed in partnership with Aboriginal community members.

As part of this project, it is recommended that a detailed Connecting with Country Framework is developed, based on the key principles outlined in the NSW Government Framework. The development of this project's Framework should be a collaborative exercise amongst all project teams, including Indigenous community members. This Framework would ideally draw out some of the key principles that govern the way the project team operates, the design principles, and the engagement and consultation process that will be carried out across the project.

It is proposed to consider the development of a Connecting with Country Framework as it will act as a guide for the broader project team and demonstrate to the community that this commitment is embedded in the project approach at all levels and in a meaningful way. This Framework can also help to ensure that the full breadth of Connecting with Country considerations, including things like how the project can ensure ongoing care of Country beyond its lifespan and how it can foster economic opportunities for Aboriginal people during the project, are considered.

Further, a Connecting with Country Framework also provides opportunities to upskill all project team members. As Connecting with Country is a process of continual listening and learning, the project team should consider investing in ongoing training and familiarisation of the approach. This learning and upskilling may be delivered through formal approaches, but the project may also consider seeking to informal learning opportunities for project team members, such as inclusion in engagement activities with community members and through spending time on Country with local Elders and Traditional Owners to understand the 'identity' of Country on which the project is being developed.