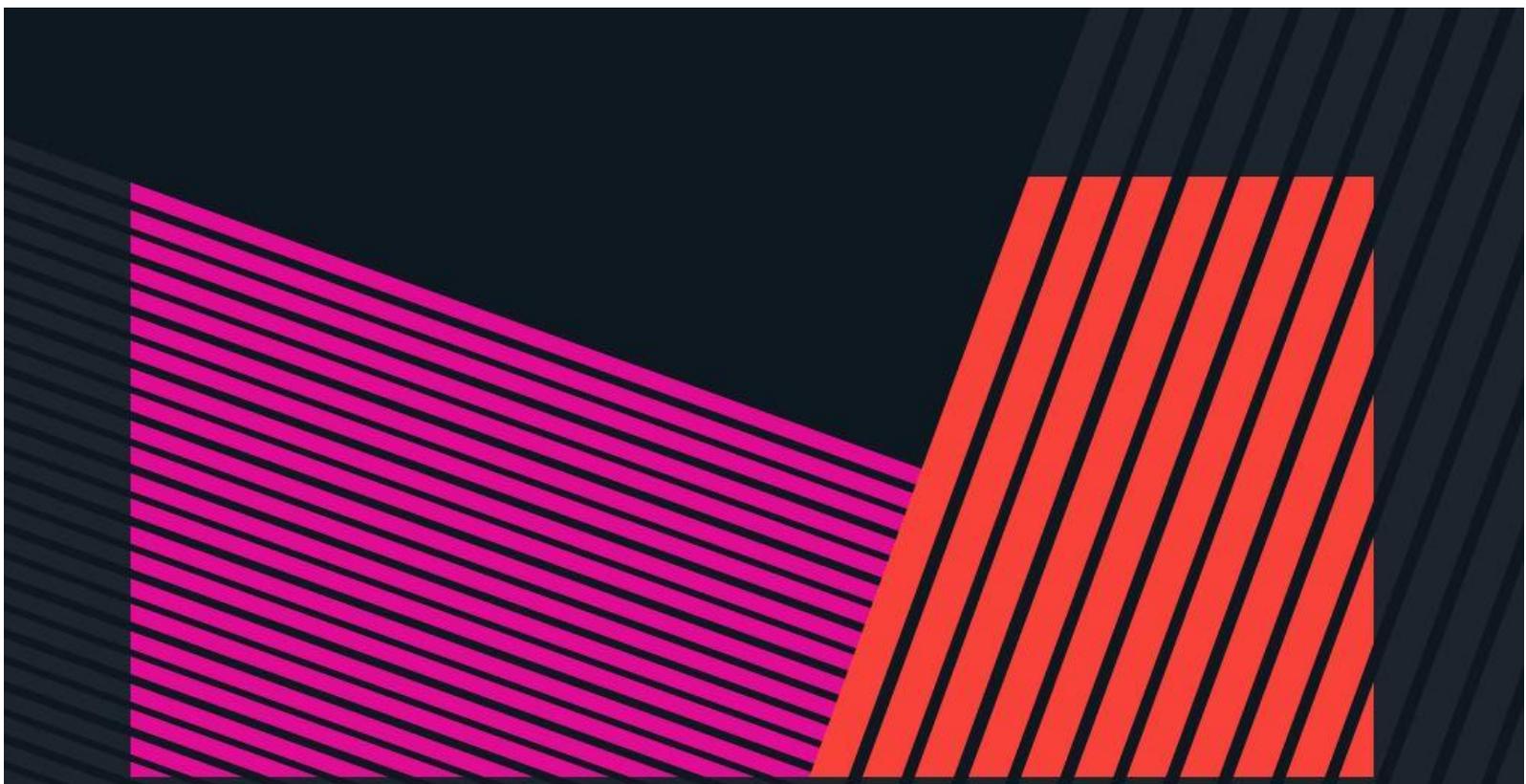


ABORIGINAL CULTURAL
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

DHARAWAL COUNTRY
EDEN STREET ARNCLIFFE



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Research by Sian Hromek (Yuin), WSP. Sian specialises in a variety of fields relating to Aboriginal Country and landscape design, including Cultural Land Management Practices such as cultural burning, and how these practices might inform built outcomes and inform engagement strategies.

Cover Image: Artist's impression of Sydney Aboriginal line based design vernacular.

Executive summary

This report documents a series of consultations and co-design sessions held between Bidjigal elder Yvonne Sims, who is a recognised elder and knowledge holder within Sydney, and Peter Coolie and expert in Sydney based Indigenous land management protocols.

Aunty Yvonne spoke about how this project could be a great place to tell the Aboriginal stories of this Country, such as the story of the whale, of weaving practices and of certain vegetation. Peter expressed the importance use using local indigenous planting of the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub Land variety. This way the site will manage itself better ecologically and fit within the spirit and cycles of Country.

This report recommends further engagement should be held with these elders but also potentially broadening out to include other Aboriginal people, artists, elders etc.



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1.0 Introduction

Late 2020 Billbergia approached WSP to provide Indigenous Specialist Services working closely with project architect GroupGSA, for the new development at Eden St Arncliffe. The objective was to integrate authentic and important cultural themes into the design from a place making (architectural and landscape) perspective. WSP's role was to:

- Provide initial cultural context and competency for the team,
- Propose high level ideas for the integration of culturally driven outcomes,

In early 2021, and in response to this comment from Government Architects Office NSW:

GANSW Minutes SDRP Session 65 held on 21/11/20 'The opportunity exists to engage deeply with the Dharawal heritage and culture to deliver a ground plane, a welcome space and a place that truly speaks to community'

WSP were further engage to provide the following services:

- Identify relevant Knowledge Holders
- Facilitate co-design sessions with Knowledge Holders and the design team.
- Integrate these outcomes into the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment report.

This Aboriginal heritage Assesment is submitted to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) in support of a State Significant Development Application (SSDA-11429726) for the development of land identified at 26-42 Eden Street and 161-179 Princes Highway, Arncliffe (the site) for the purposes of a mixed-use precinct with open space, retail, and residential uses, comprising social and market housing as part of the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC)'s 'Communities Plus' program.

SSDA-11429726 seeks approval for the following development:

- *Demolition of all existing buildings and structures on the site;*
- *Site preparation works, excavation and tree removal;*
- *The construction of a mixed-use development comprising:*
 - *744 apartments across (4) buildings between 19-23 storeys in height, as follows:*
 - *186 market housing apartments in Building A;*
 - *202 market housing apartments in Building B;*
 - *180 social housing apartments in Building C; and*
 - *176 market housing apartments in Building D;*
 - *3,113m2 retail gross floor area;*

- o 240m² for a future childcare centre;
- o 3,706m² of communal open space;
- o 813 spaces of lower ground and basement car parking; and
- 4,870m² of publicly accessible open space including a 4,000m² park, an 870m² public plaza (meeting space), and through site link connecting Eden Street and the Princes Highway.

In accordance with section 4.39 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for SSDA-11429726 were issued on 18 December, 2020. This report has been prepared to respond to the following SEARs:

SEAR	Relevant section of report
Pl 14. Heritage: The EIS must include: An aboriginal cultural heritage assessment report in accordance with relevant guideline, identifying, describing, and assessing any impacts for any aboriginal cultural heritage values on the site, including archaeology	Entire report

2.0 Description of the area

A Country of Beauty and Abundance

Early settlers ‘found environments which reminded them of the manicured parks of England, with trees well spaced and a grassy understorey’.

Arthur Bowes Smyth from The First Fleet described the landscape around Sydney as:

‘. fresh terraced, lawns and grottos with distinct plantations of the tallest and most stately trees I ever saw in any nobleman's grounds in England, cannot excel in beauty those whose nature now presented to our view.’¹

Food resources were readily available along the coast and in the bays. Captain Cook gives us an insight in his journal on 3 May 1770 as to what resources people were accessing:

“There were Six Canoes and Six small fires near the shore, and Muscles roasting upon them and a few Oysters laying near.”²



*A camp on the shores of Botany Bay not far from the Arncliffe project site,
by Joseph Lycett*

A Country curated by Fire

Aboriginal people in this Country used sophisticated environmental management conducted over long periods of time, in particular traditional fire practices.

The First Fleet officer John Hunter noted that Aboriginal people around Sydney 'set the country on fire for several miles extent'. He recognised that the purpose was 'to clear that part of the country through which they have frequent occasion to travel, of the brush or underwood', as well as enabling women to get at edible roots with digging sticks and hunting kangaroo.³

The mosaic of landscapes was 'maintained by Aboriginal burning, a carefully calibrated system which kept some areas open while others grew dense and dark'.



*People using fire to hunt kangaroos by [Joseph Lycett, 1817
National Library of Australia, call number # 138501179*

Greater Sydney Region

There are about 29 clan groups of the Sydney metropolitan area, referred to collectively as the Eora Nation. There has been extensive debate about which group or nation these 29 clans belong to.

It is generally acknowledged that the Eora are the coastal people of the Sydney area, with the Darug people occupying the inland area from Parramatta to the Blue Mountains. The Dharawal people's lands are mostly

confined to the area south of Botany Bay, extending as far south as the Nowra area, across to the Georges River in Sydney's west. ⁴

Although there is much information about the life and culture of the coastal Sydney people, the early colonial writings have no detailed information or clear descriptions of direct observations of people using the land and resources of the sandhills and wetlands on the eastern Sydney peninsula. ⁵

Bidjigal Country and People

The Bidjigal people living in La Perouse have the strongest connection with the old folk of this land. They are connected to all people of this land, but in particular to the Dharawal language group.

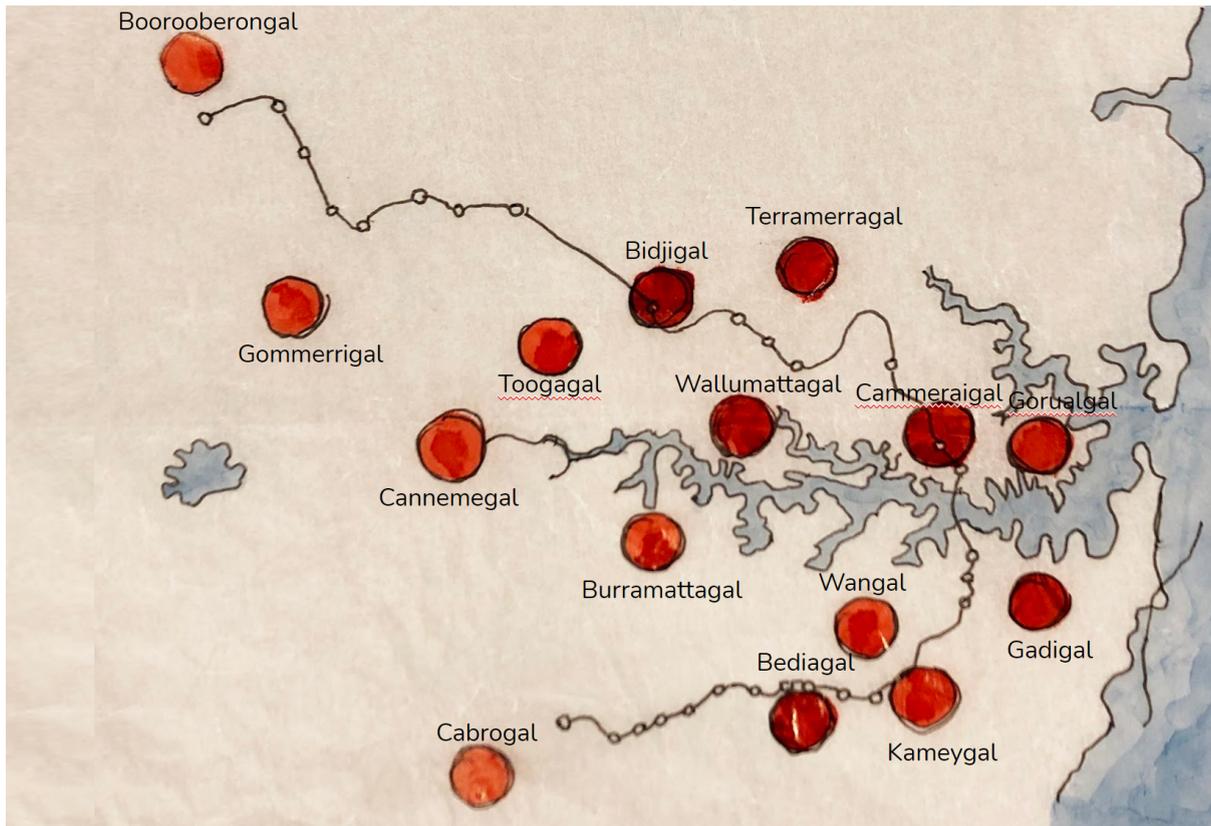
The people of coastal Sydney suffered from the trauma of occupation and the severing of their spiritual bonds to Country. Within two years of settlement, kinship ties in the area were ruptured, more than half the Eora died from smallpox. ⁸

Dharawal Country and Kameygal Clan

Dharawal people occupy the area between Georges River and Jervis Bay. Around Botany Bay live the most northerly clans of the Dharawal- the Kameygal (Spear Clan) live on the north between the mouth of the Cooks River and present day La Perouse and the Gweagal (Fire Clan) on the south side of the bay.

The 200-strong clan were quite different in appearance to the Port Jackson people by sticking resin in their hair. ⁵

Alternative names: Alternative names: Thurrawal, Turawal, Turrubul, Turuwal, Turuwul, Turuwull, Thurawal, Thurrawal



The many tribal and family groups of Eora Country.

Harbour and Wetland Resource Areas

People living around Botany Bay caught fish and marine animals in the bay and hunted land animals, birds, reptiles; and gathered plants, shellfish, birds' eggs and other small animals around wetlands in the eastern suburbs such as Lachlan Swamp.

These wetlands are important resource areas where fresh water, food, tool making resources, raw plant materials and many animal species were abundant.⁵

Campsites and Rock Shelters

Campsites are usually located close to the shore, especially during summer when fish and shellfish is the main food.⁴

Large shell middens at camp sites near the mouth of the Cooks River and in sandstone rock shelters on its north and south banks are evidence of occupation of the valley for at least between 1,000 and 4,000 years.⁵

An ancient campsite and fireplace at the mouth of Wolli Creek near Tempe House is dated at around 10,500 year old and is one of the oldest sites in the Sydney region.

Pathways and Viewpoints

The first roads of the Sydney region follow traditional pathways used by Aboriginal people. These pathways link spiritual and ceremonial sites, as well as travel corridors throughout the landscape between the coast and hinterland campsites.

Botany Road follows a traditional pathway that connects Port Jackson to Botany Bay.

Spurs and ridgelines are important as routes for travel and campsites above wetlands, with view points in all directions.

Whale Country - Rock Engravings

Rock engravings are prolific in the Sydney region where sandstone dominates the landscape. Rock engravings are most common near the coast. An important totem of this Country is the Humpback Whale, who often uses Sydney Harbour and passes by the coast like clockwork every June,

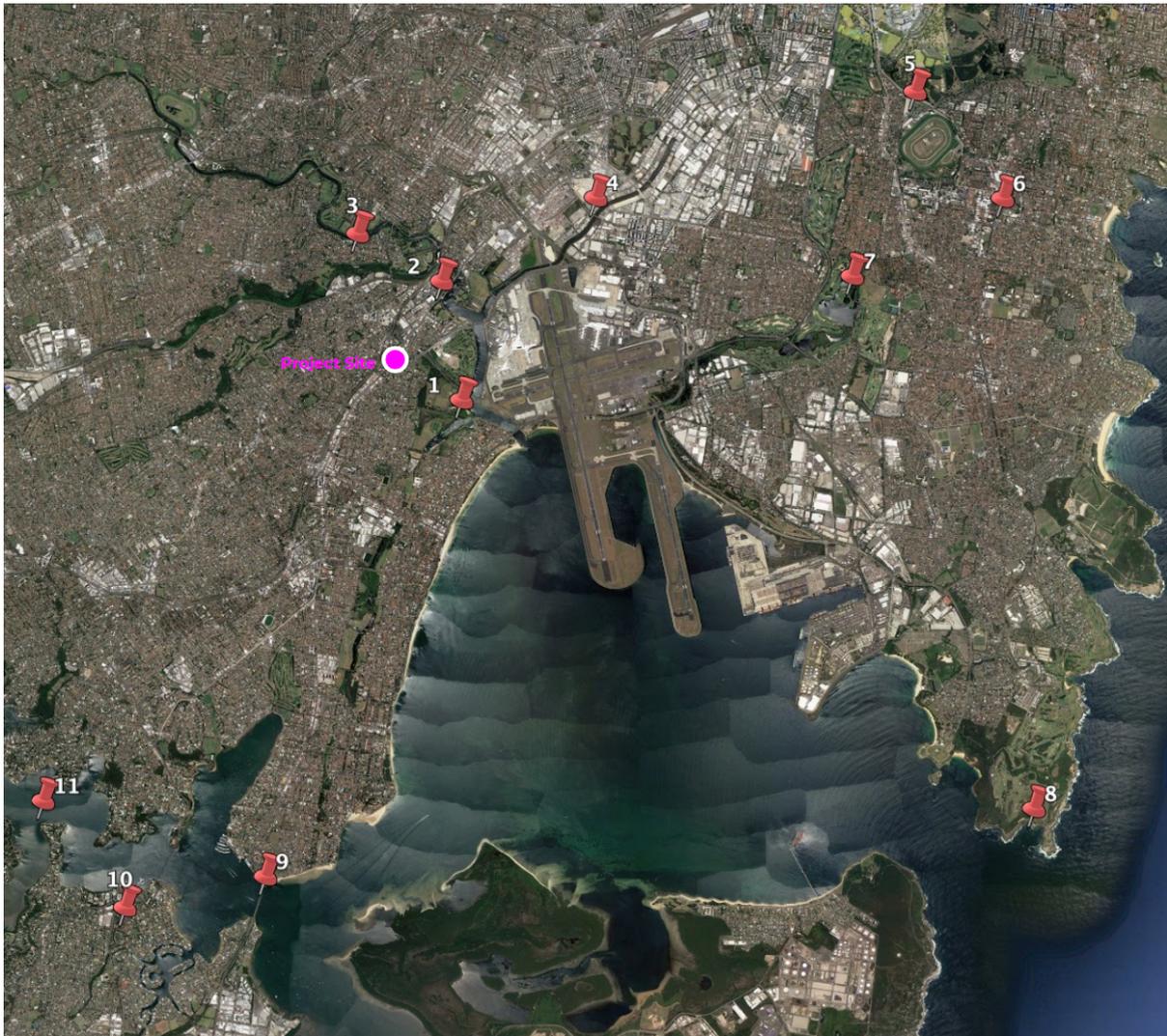
Rock engravings are often shallow grooves less than 5mm deep formed through the pecking of a series of holes in the soft sandstone by a hard rock often brought in from another area. These holes were then joined by scraping away the rock between them, possibly over time and repeatedly, at ceremonies.



^Merriverie Rocks engravings site. >Rock engravings at Ben Buckler, North Bondi.



Queens Park rock shelter



Values Map

1 Wollie Creek Campsite - in 1788, Watkin Tench noted in his diary: '*On the northwest arm of Botany Bay [the Cooks River] stands a village, which contains more than a dozen houses, and perhaps five times that number of people!* Large middens in this area shows occupation over thousands of years.¹²

2 Fireplace at Tempe House, Wollie Creek- the earliest documented evidence of Aboriginal people here is a 10,500 year old fireplace which consisted of a concentration of charcoal in a roughly dinner-plate sized patch of soil. Stone artifacts were also uncovered here.¹³

3 Art site at Earlwood- a midden in a rock shelter with stencils of 23 hands and 2 feet on the rock walls of the shelter. The Midden is largely undisturbed and site is situated within the context of a rock outcropping from the sandstone ridgeline which dominates the landscape on the south side of the Cooks River valley at Earlwood.¹²

4 Dugong Bones, Shea's Creek Alexandra uncovered in the 1890's, some ribs and other bones had deep scratches and cuts that could only have been made by Aboriginal people. Radiocarbon dating shows they are 6,000 years old. ¹⁴

5 Randwick Stabling Yard Artifacts - over 22,000 artefacts around 3000 years old were uncovered on a construction site for Sydney's Light Rail line. Among the artefacts were spear tips, knife blades, scrapers, cutters and about 12 marriage stones. A trade route with the Wonorouah people to the north is indicated through specific materials from there. ¹⁵

6 Hearth near Prince of Wales Hospital- dated to 8,000 years ago. A rare site predating sea level rise. ¹⁶

7 Lachlan Swamp resource area- an important resource area or 'living larder' where people would go to collect food, fiber and freshwater. These wetlands formed the largest freshwater wetland system in the eastern Sydney area. ¹⁷

8 La Perouse- the only Sydney suburb where Aboriginal people have held onto their territory from settlement until the present day, it is a story of survival of Aboriginal culture and coexistence. ¹⁸

9 Rocky Point- rock engravings of 3 fish and a short V line are visible below the high water mark on rocks on the south-west side of the point. ¹⁹

10 Georges River- rock art, axe grinding grooves and middens are common around the bays of the Georges River. Middens are still visible at Alfords Point, Connells Point, Lime Kiln Bay, the largest midden being on Jewfish Bay, Oatley Park. ¹⁹

11 Sylvania- a rock shelter, midden, hand stencils, human remains, a traded axe and remains from cooking fires were uncovered in 1982. A permanent source of water and rock shelves used to store items were identified within the cave. ¹⁹

3.0 Consultation process

The consultation process for this report included the following:

- Identification of relevant Knowledge Holders that can provide input into the cultural significance of the site and how best to care for Country. The following people were identified and approached:
 - Peter Coolie from Indigigrow who do Indigenous cultural land management practices, run out of La Parouse
 - Auntie Yvonne Sims, a widely recognised Bidjigal elder from La Parouse.

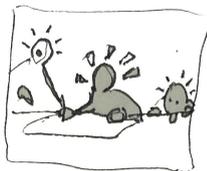
The design narrative for the project has evolved alongside our consultation process - to help understand the value of Country and ensuring that better built environment outcomes are informed and guided by Aboriginal knowledge and leadership.

Two engagement sessions with Auntie Yvonne Sims and two codesign sessions with Peter Cooley were held to ensure that our interpretations and embedding of Country into the design hold significant meaning and expression. This allowed the design team to prioritise and think differently about Country, to establish a pathways and re check and align with Aboriginal values as a way of connecting throughout the project lifecycle. This has enabled the team to refine the design and ensure the best outcomes for the project and the community it will serve.

The Co-Design process

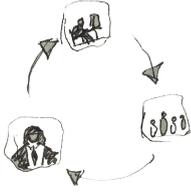
1.Engagement

The first step will be to engage with the relevant Aboriginal group (artist / elder, Lands Council etc), early and often, through a series of 'yarns' or conversations about the potential opportunities to incorporate the theming contained within the document (or other themes) into project outcomes.



2.Co Design

To kick of the co-design process design teams are given time to integrate the themes and ideas into the scope of the project



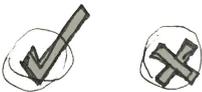
3.Co Design workshops

Engagement workshops with the relevant Aboriginal group will everyone gets in the room to co-design cultural solutions to project outcomes, yet Aboriginal voices should be given preference to ensure they are heard.



4.Endorsement:

All content that uses local Aboriginal theming will be endorsed by the Aboriginal group.



5.Other opportunities:

Should be highlighted and put forward to ensure the local Aboriginal community has opportunities, economic outcomes and better connections to their Country, through the project



Auntie Yvonne Sims - engagement 1

Date and time: December 2020

Location: Auntie Yvonne's house in La Perouse

Attendees: Auntie Yvonne Sims, Michael Hromek, WSP, Group GSA Architects

Description:

- In this introductory session we met at Aunties house as that was the most comfortable for her. Bringin drawing and baked goods we got to know each other, and held an initial co-design session to get some ideas and feedback from Yvonne on the importance of the site from a cultural perspective, and how to best integrate these values within the design of the precinct. Various family members visiting Auntie gave their input also. The ideas mentioned included:
- The project should have spaces to celebrate Country, a space for smoking ceremonies, weaving space, yarning spaces.
- Thinking of kids was important for Yvonne and she expressed interest in the design of the playground and how it should reference local fauna and flora, such as a swing in the shape of a flower, or a totem, like the whale.
- Material was left with Yvonne (architecture plans, Aboriginal Design Principles document, other drawings etc)



Engagement Session with Auntie Yvonne

Auntie Yvonne Sims - engagement 2

Date and time: March 2021

Location: Auntie Yvonne's house in La Perouse

Attendees: Aunty Yvonne Sims, Group GSA Architects

Description:

- This follow up session was to report Aunty how her feedback had been integrated with the current design, and to gain endorsement for the design.
- Aunty endorsed the concepts of representing the whale and weaving practices within the playground as appropriate themes.
- The use of language was mentioned as important and if places could be named in language.



Engagement session with Auntie Yvonne Sims to discuss cultural awareness and the childrens play area and productive garden

Peter Coolie - engagement 1

Date and time: December 2020

Location: Indigigrow Nursery in La Perouse

Attendees: Peter Coolie, Michael Hromek WSP, Group GSA Architects

Description:

- For this intro session Peter gave the design team a tour of his indigenous nursery which focuses primarily on species within the eastern suburbs extending to the Arncliffe site.
- Landscaping plans were introduced to Peter and some of his staff and initial input and thoughts were given.
- Peter stressed the importance of planting the right vegetation, which needs to be plants of the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrubland family.
- Material was left with Peter (landscaping plans, drawings etc)



Peter Coolie, Indigigrow



Site visit to Indigigrow to meet Peter Coolie and learn about potential plant species for the open space



Codesign design with Peter Coolie, Indigigrow



Site Visit to the Indigigrow Nursery

Peter Coolie - engagement 2

Date and time: February 2021

Location: Group GSA Architects office, William St, Sydney

Attendees: Peter Coolie, Michael Hromek WSP, Group GSA Architects

Description:

- For this follow up session the team presented to Peter how they have integrated his initial feedback into the parklands around planting choices, soil deaths, appropriate species etc.
- Peter was happy with the range of opportunities to use Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrubland species within the landscape design.
- Peter agreed to put together a species list and match them to a landscape plan.



Summary of key themes from the engagement

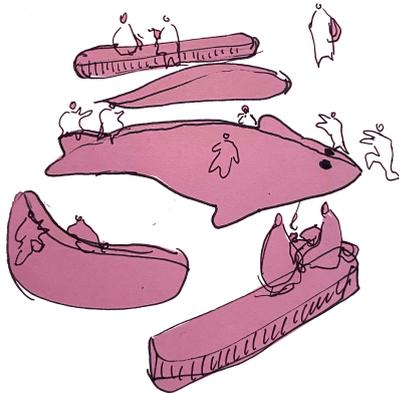
Through engagements with Bidjigal elders, Aunty Yvonne and Uncle Peter, some important principles were established as to how we should approach the design of this project:

Tell the story of Country

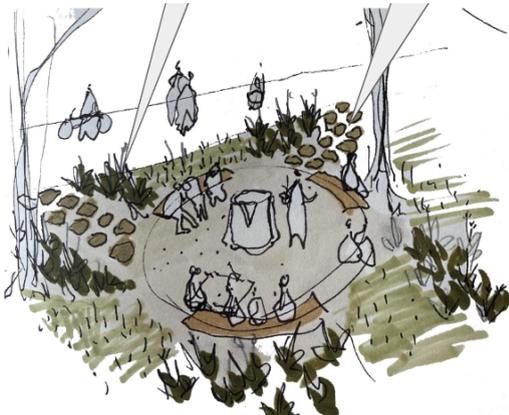
The story of Country should be told through an integrated literal and representational theming through subtle and tangible elements that reference the important elements of this Country.

This is whale Country.

Aunty spoke about the importance of the whale as a totem for this Country. How might we honour the story in the project?



The Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrubland is, as Peter stressed, what this Country wants to be, with its sandy soil and salty winds. With Aboriginal land management principles in mind, how might landscape design work with Country?

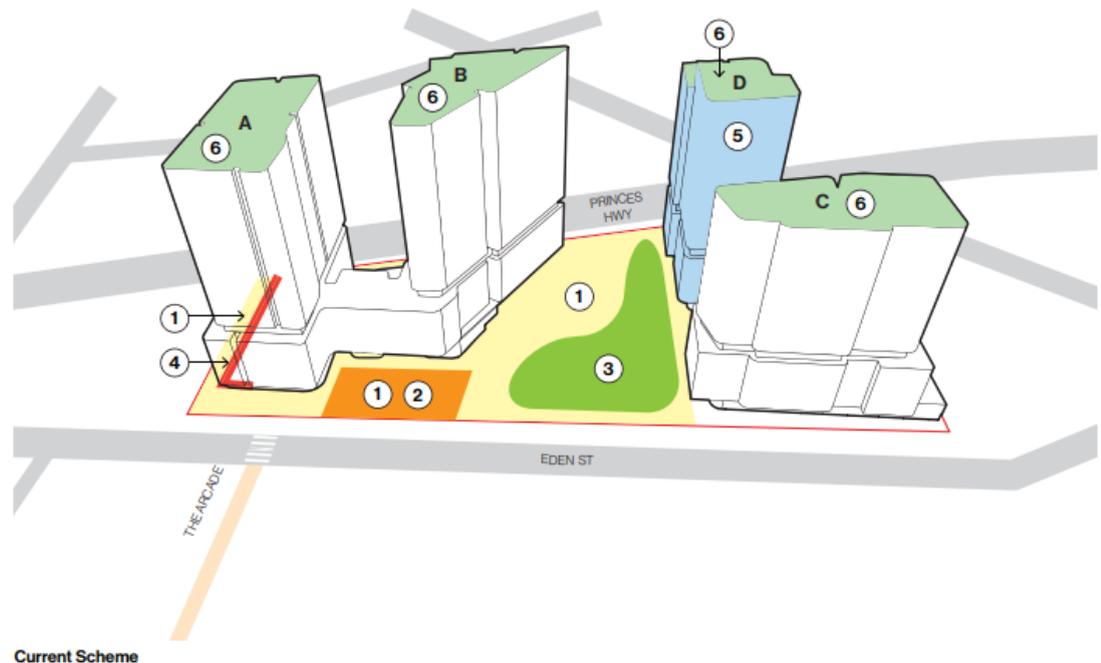


Recommendations for further Aboriginal involvement in Eden St, Arncliffe

- Consider how art procurement will work within the project. There are various opportunities within the project to engage with a local Bidjigal artist, or / also a more well known contemporary Aboriginal artist, for example Reko Rennie or Jonnathan Jones.
- Consider broadening the Local indigenous engagement. Can you bring more Aboriginal people in for co-design sessions?
- Naming and interpretation should be considered for the site.
- Indigigrow should be engaged further in the design process and in the procurement of plant material. Ensure to pre-ordering plants that are hard to come by or needing time to grown to maturity
- Indigigrow should be involvement in the Productive garden / bush tucker garden concept
- Indigigrow should be engaged for maintenance, hopefully into the long term
-

POTENTIAL USE OF ABORIGINAL DESIGN

- 1 Place naming of park, through site link and meeting place
- 2 Development of the meeting place
- 3 Development of landscape
- 4 Light artwork to through site link
- 5 Pattern in facade
- 6 Landscape



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