

WALK ON COUNTRY & DESIGN INPUT SESSION

The Walk on Country took place on the 3rd of March 2026 for Menangle Road Camden to create a cultural narrative with Elder Aunty Glenda Chalker, Aunty Kazan Brown and Drew Longbottom. The Design Input Session was conducted after the Walk on Country, which allowed the Elders and Design Team to collaborate and blend Modern Design with the influence of Indigenous Traditional input.



Our Elders



Drew Longbottom

Drew Longbottom is a Dharawal and Yuin man who is very active in his community and well respected.



Aunty Glenda Chalker

Aunty Glenda Chalker is a Dharawal woman from the Cabitch Barta clan. Highly respected elder withing the Camden district.



Aunty Kazan Brown

Aunty Kazan Brown is a Gundungurra woman with strong family ties to the Burragorang Valley located on the western edge of Sydney in New South Wales, Australia.

CONNECTING TO COUNTRY

CULTURAL

- Dharawal & Gandangara Country
- The bulls that were depicted in Bull Cave were the first intrusion of white people on this country naming the place the Cow pastures.
- Camden Park was a safe space for Indigenous People.
- This area was important for trading and marriage.
- There are a number of creek and river runoffs as well as major rivers which are our songlines and passageways.
- Songlines were used for survival paths and navigation.
- Indigenous people have a responsibility and obligation to care for Country.
- Rivers in the area (The Nepean and Georges River) run South to North.
- Water is the lifeline of Country
- The Indigenous stories are dated back to before the glacial period.
- This is an old ridgeline that was used for transport.
- This area is built on resistance.
- This area was used for camping, walking tracks and had a lot of viewpoints and vantage points.
- Hospitals are always built on places of significant Indigenous importance.
- Truth telling
- Old Hume Highway is a Superhighway Songline
- Angophoras on site (women's tree)

DESIGN

- Orientate paths / seating towards the mountains and viewpoints as well as around the old walking tracks.
- Community Creation
- Play areas (nature play / immersion areas)
- Create areas to sit and be on Country
- Greenery / yard space for events and socialising as well as being in touch with Country

“TO ME THE TOWN CENTRE IS ONE THING, BUT IT IS ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF THE PLACE”
Anty Glenda Chalker

“TRUTH TELLING, YOU SHOULDN'T BE ASHAMED, IT IS SOMETHING WE NEED TO LEARN FROM AND THINK ABOUT HOW WE GO FORWARD FROM THERE”
Drew Longbottom





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CONNECTION TO COUNTRY - DESIGN THEMES

CONNECTING TO COUNTRY NARRATIVE

The lands of Dharawal and Gandangara Country hold deep cultural significance shaped by thousands of years of movement, knowledge sharing, and care for the land. Long before colonisation, this area functioned as an important place for trading, gathering, and marriage, where different groups came together along established songlines and ridgelines that acted as pathways for survival, navigation, and connection. The waterways that run through the landscape—including the Nepean and Georges Rivers flowing south to north—are the lifelines of Country, guiding travel and sustaining the ecosystems and communities that rely on them. These rivers, creeks, and runoffs form part of an ancient network of passageways that connect people to place and to one another. Elevated ridgelines and vantage points were used for walking tracks, camping places, and observation points, reinforcing the deep knowledge of the landscape held by Aboriginal people whose stories and cultural knowledge date back to before the glacial period.

This Country also carries the story of resistance and change. The bulls depicted in Bull Cave represent one of the earliest recorded intrusions of Europeans into the area, leading to the naming of the Cow Pastures, yet Aboriginal people maintained strong connections to the land. Camden Park became a place of refuge and safety, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of the local communities. Cultural responsibilities to care for Country continue today, guided by the understanding that land, water, plants, animals, and people are interconnected. Significant cultural markers such as the Angophoras, known as women's trees, reinforce the presence of cultural knowledge embedded in the landscape. The Old Hume Highway follows an ancient superhighway songline, demonstrating how modern infrastructure often overlays much older Aboriginal pathways. Recognising these layers of history requires truth telling and respect, ensuring that planning and development acknowledge the enduring cultural significance of Dharawal and Gandangara Country.



DESIGN WITH COUNTRY NARRATIVE

Dharawal and Gandangara Country holds deep cultural knowledge shaped by thousands of years of movement, gathering, and care for the land. Long before colonisation, this landscape supported trading, marriage, camping, and community gatherings, with ridgelines and waterways forming important songlines and travel routes used for survival and navigation. The Nepean and Georges Rivers, along with the many creeks and runoffs that flow south to north, are the lifelines of Country and have long acted as passageways connecting people, places, and stories. Elevated ridgelines, including the pathway that later became the Old Hume Highway, functioned as a cultural superhighway, offering vantage points, walking tracks, and places to rest while travelling across Country. These stories extend back to before the glacial period, demonstrating the enduring connection Aboriginal people have with the land and the responsibility to care for Country through cultural knowledge, observation, and stewardship.

This landscape also holds stories of resistance, refuge, and truth-telling. The bulls depicted in Bull Cave represent one of the earliest recorded intrusions of Europeans into Dharawal Country, leading to the naming of the Cow Pastures, yet Aboriginal people maintained strong connections to the land. Camden Park became a place of safety and gathering, reflecting the resilience and strength of local communities. Designing on Country should respond to these histories by orientating paths, seating, and gathering spaces towards mountains, viewpoints, and traditional walking tracks, allowing people to experience the landscape as it was historically travelled. Spaces for community creation, nature play, and social gatherings should be embedded within green landscapes where people can sit, reflect, and connect with Country. Important cultural markers such as Angophora trees, known as women's trees, should be protected and celebrated, reinforcing the cultural significance embedded in the natural environment and ensuring the ongoing practice of caring for Country.



Bull Cave



Nepean River and Camden aerial



Nature immersion areas / play area

DESIGN THEMES

WATERWAYS AS LIFELINES

Design Idea:

Create paths, seating and viewing areas along creeks and rivers that highlight water as a cultural and ecological lifeline.

SONGLINES AND PATHWAYS

Design Idea:

Design walking tracks that follow old ridgelines and songlines, orientated towards mountains and key viewpoints.

GATHERING ON COUNTRY

Design Idea:

Provide open green spaces, nature play areas, and seating where community can gather, socialise and connect with Country.

TRUTH-TELLING AND CARING FOR COUNTRY

Design Idea:

Use storytelling signage, artwork and protection of Angophora trees to share history and embed cultural knowledge in the landscape.