



CONNECTION TO COUNTRY REPORT  
104-116 Regent St, Redfern  
November 2021

Report. Ver6



View of Sydney, looking towards old Barrack Square, ca. 1818 by Joseph Lycett Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

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# Scope

This report aims to document Connection to Country principles, activities and engagements that have been undertaken to shape the design to date. This Report will introduce the knowledge holders that have been approached and demonstrate how they have help to influence the response to the connecting to country principles. The report will highlight,

- All correspondence to date including Meeting attendees / relevant persons in telephone/email correspondence
- Issues discussed and key concepts identified that hold significant value for the local indigenous populations
- How the issues and concepts discussed have been addressed within the proposal, including the key findings and recommendations.

*Connecting with Country asks  
you to take up the challenge of  
thinking differently, working  
differently, and making decisions  
that prioritise Country.* (NSW GA, 2020, pg.5)

# Introduction

The NSW Government Architects Connecting with Country framework outlines aims and pathways for those working in the built environment to make meaningful change in the way they engage with and embed Aboriginal cultural knowledge into their projects.

The following text from the Government Architects Connecting with Country 2020 document outlines the ambition of the commitment to improving health and wellbeing of Country is to help realise three long-term strategic goals:

- reduce the impacts of natural events such as fire, drought, and flooding through sustainable land and water use practices
- value and respect Aboriginal cultural knowledge with Aboriginal people co-leading design and development of all NSW infrastructure projects
- ensure Country is cared for appropriately and sensitive sites are protected by Aboriginal people having access to their homelands to continue their cultural practices. (GA NSW, pg. 8)

There are four pathways to assist in achieving the ambition above, identified in the Connecting with Country framework which include:

- PATHWAY 1: Learning from first languages and placenames.
- PATHWAY 2: Develop mutually beneficial relationships with Country.
- PATHWAY 3: Reawakening memories of cultural landscapes
- PATHWAY 4: Finding common ground (GA NSW, pg. 21-24))

In early 2021 Wee Hur approached WSP's Indigenous Specialist Services to engage our Connection to Country services for the project. In alignment with NSW Government Architects Office Connection to Country Guidelines & the International Indigenous Design Charter by Deakin University we have established the appropriate Aboriginal Design Principles (appendix to this report titled: 104-116 Regent St Redfern ABORIGINAL DESIGN PRINCIPLESv1.3) with the following 3 points key:

- **Aboriginal led:** All components of the project that relate to Aboriginal placemaking outcomes will be led by Aboriginal people. Key Aboriginal staff from WSP are leading this project.
- **Community involved,** the appropriate Gadigal knowledge holders will be engaged in the project as early as possible, and a roadmap developed to future engagement through construction and into operation. Gadigal Elders, Allan and Chicka Madden have been engaged and will continue to be through the project's life, including new opportunities to bring in appropriate Gadigal artists and knowledge holders.
- **Appropriately designed,** the project will be designed appropriately with respect to local Gadigal design values, vernaculars, and culture. It will avoid tokenism and be an authentic but contemporary representation of Aboriginal identity on this site.

These Aboriginal Design Principles align strongly with the Connecting with Country ambition and pathways outlined by inviting Gadigal Elders and Knowledge Holders to be consultants to the project from the very beginning of the project. It is through adopting this methodology of consulting with Elders and Knowledge Holders that we aim to

reduce natural disaster impacts, value and respect Aboriginal knowledge and ensure that Country is cared for appropriately. Through this consultation with Elders and Knowledge Holders we use the opportunity to include first languages and placenames, develop mutually beneficial relationships with Country, reawaken memories of cultural landscapes and find common ground.

## Project Description

The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the site as summarised below:

- Construction of an 18-storey building comprising a total of 9,562m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area with a mix of land use activities including:
  - Level 1: 72 m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace, 490m<sup>2</sup> of communal area for the student accommodation, 102 bicycle parking spaces, loading and waste management facilities and ancillary services and facilities.
  - Upper levels: student accommodation providing a total of 411 beds, including ensuite rooms, studios and two-bedroom configurations, with indoor and outdoor communal spaces on Levels 2, 4 and 16 and additional indoor communal areas on Levels 2 and 4.
- Hard and soft landscaping within the outdoor communal terraces on the roof-top of the podium level and Levels 4 and 16.
- Public domain improvements including provision of a landscaped through-site link connecting William Lane to Margaret Street and associated improvements to the Regent Street and Margaret Street frontages, including awnings and footpath upgrades.

## Locality Description

### Gadigal Country

Gadi land extends from Burrawara (South Head) through to Warrane (Sydney Cove), Gomora (Cockle Bay-Darling Harbour) and possibly to Blackwattle Creek, taking in the wetland sand and dunes now known as Redfern, Erskineville, Surry Hills and Paddington, down to the Cook's River. (Redfern Oral History)

### Gadigal People

The Gadigal (Cadigal) are a harbour-dwelling saltwater people. The suffix 'gal' denotes 'people of', and Cadi (gadi) may be the name of the grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea* species), the flower stalks being used as spear shafts.

Another theory is that Cadi is the name of the freshwater creek at Camp Cove, others suggest that it may be Kutti the traditional name of what is now called Watson's Bay. (Redfern Oral History, Attenbrow V., 2002)

## Gadigal Pathways

Well established pathways were maintained over generations through the intentional use of fire. Paths were burnt regularly to keep them clear and open for easy passage.

Obed West, who often hunted with Aboriginal people at Botany Bay during the 1830s, wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald (1882):

“The blacks called Long Bay 'Boora', and it was long before white men came to this country; and for long afterwards, the principal camping place for the aboriginal [people] between Sydney [and Botany Bay]. Several well-beaten paths led down to the bay.”

One notable path runs from Blackwattle Creek at the Brickfields Village (now Chippendale) southwards to the north shore of Botany Bay, was the forerunner of Botany Road. (Redfern Oral History)

## Redfern Gathering Ground

At the time of settlement Redfern was a clear area surrounded by scrub containing food sources such as geebung and five corners. Recorded by Obed West as a '*great rendezvous*' area, it was one of the '*great feasting grounds as well as the scene of many hard-fought battle*' there were campsites around the edge of the cleared area. (Redfern Oral History)

## Redfern Ceremony Grounds

The area called 'Cleveland Paddocks' near Central Station was a ceremony ground, even though ceremonies were discouraged in the 1890's: '*...Corroborees kept the few residents of Redfern awake till far into the night.*' The camps were pushed south towards Waterloo and Alexandria as settlements displaced Gadigal people. (Redfern Oral History)

## Summary of Engagement

### Aboriginal Knowledge Holders Approached

The following Elders and Knowledge Holders were engaged to collaborate with the design team during the co-design process. They were chosen specifically due to their cultural heritage as Gadigal Elders and Knowledge Holders. This methodology of engaging people from the Country you are working on and who hold knowledge is a cultural protocol, plus the State Design Review Panel made this recommendation during their review.

WSP's Indigenous Specialist Services Technical Advisor Michael Hromek initially approached the Elders and Knowledge Holders by making phone calls to discuss the scope and expectations of being engaged on this project and to assess their interest in being involved. After the initial conversation and acceptance from the Elders and

Knowledge Holders, further meetings were held in person and on Microsoft TEAMS to finalise the engagement process.

	<p>Nadeena Dixon is a multi disciplinary Gadigal, Wiradjuri, Yuin Artist, based in Sydney, and born in Sydney in 1969 on her ancestral Country. She has extensive training and skills in Western and Indigenous Art Practice.</p> <p>Nadeena is acknowledged as a Master Weaving practitioner engaged with ongoing revitalisation of traditional cultural practices, supporting young and emerging artists to develop core skills.</p> <p>Nadeena is a Facebook International Artist Alumni, being the first Aboriginal Artist in Residency with the Facebook A.I.R Program. In 2019 Nadeena was commissioned to design and paint a 9-meter internal wall at Facebook's Sydney branch Barangaroo Towers.</p>
	<p>Uncle Allen Madden is a Gadigal Elder, born in 1949 on Gadigal country (Redfern). He has worked for Sydney City Council, Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Children's Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, NCAP and New Careers for Aboriginal People Employment. Uncle Allen has been on the board of Sydney Foreshore Authority, the Central Coast Aboriginal Heritage, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and many others.</p>
	<p>Uncle Charles 'Chicka' Madden is from Gadigal Country and is a recognised member of the Redfern and inner-city community. Uncle Chicka worked in the construction industry for most of his life, and has been involved in many organisations including the Aboriginal Medical Service and Redfern All Blacks.</p>

## Record of Engagement

Date / Location	Attendees	Meeting purpose	Items discussed	Key actions / outcomes
04/05/21  TEAMS conversation	Nadeena Dixon (Gadigal Elder and artist)	Introduce the project to Nadeena and gain agreement from her to be involved	Project introduction highlighting potential opportunities for Nadeena's involvement	Nadeena was generous with her time and advice and unfortunately did not have the capacity to be involved in the project at this time,

	<p>Michael Hromek</p> <p>Andreas Antoniadès (Antoniades Architects)</p> <p>Mark Albert Surtees (WeeHur)</p>			<p>but we will follow up with her in the future to gauge her availability.</p>
<p>10/08/21</p> <p>Phone conversation</p>	<p>Michael Hromek</p> <p>Peter Coolie from Indigigrow</p>	<p>To enquire if Indigigrow's services of Cultural Land Management advisory and supply services could be offered to the project</p>	<p>Project location</p> <p>Site conditions in relation to sun and shade</p> <p>Relevance to Peters knowledge of the area</p> <p>Potential indigenous plant species appropriate to the site</p>	<p>Peter confirmed his knowledge extends to this area of Sydney and he is an appropriate Knowledge Holder</p> <p>Peter agreed to provide advisory services to the project, but will delay agreeing to supplying plants, tubing stock etc. until he can work on things from his end with other jobs.</p>
<p>07/10/21</p> <p>TEAMS conversation</p>	<p>Uncle Allan Madden (Gadigal Elder)</p> <p>Michael Hromek (WSP)</p> <p>Matt Pellow (WSP)</p> <p>Andreas Antoniadès (Antoniades Architects)</p> <p>Mark Albert Surtees (WeeHur)</p>	<p>Introduction of Uncle Allan to the design team, brief him on the project and hear his initial thoughts</p>	<p>Introduction of the project to Uncle Allan, where it's at etc</p> <p>More in-depth look at the project highlighting Aboriginal design opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Landscape</li> <li>- Façade art</li> <li>- Podium weaving</li> </ul> <p>Initial thoughts from Uncle Allan</p> <p>Next steps</p>	<p>It's important to tell the history of this site. Make it iconic, obvious.</p> <p>For Uncle Allan, the project is about coming and going. Make a good first impression to people want to come back to the site, and welcome them warmly to the site, let the know where they are.</p> <p>Uncle Allan said it was important for the students who will use the building (in particular international students) to understand the important theming</p>

				<p>and stories of Gadigal Country and that these should be woven into the building everywhere possible.</p> <p>Uncle Mentioned the 'Mandoie mans' footprints should be used on the ground as wayfinding</p> <p>Uncle agreed the podium Gadigal weaving pattern was appropriate and wanted to know how we can tell the story of this weaving technique? Signage etc?</p> <p>All agreed to work on Uncle's initial comments above and meet in 2 weeks to show updates.</p>
<p>21/10/21</p> <p><b>TEAMS conversation</b></p>	<p>Uncle Allan Madden (Gadigal Elder)</p> <p>Michael Hromek (WSP)</p> <p>Matt Pellow (WSP)</p> <p>Andreas Antoniadis (Antoniades Architects)</p> <p>Mark Albert Surtees (WeeHur)</p>	<p>Show Uncle Allan the developments that have occurred over the 2 weeks since we meet last.</p>	<p>Update on the podium façade which is referencing Gadigal weaving techniques</p> <p>Landscape, with 'Mundoie Footprint' wayfinding concept</p> <p>Façade Art – Large façade fins facing Regent Street have potential to have artwork integrated onto them.</p>	<p>Uncle Allan liked the woven façade example and mentioned the signage integrated should tell the story of how it developed.</p> <p>Uncle liked the concept as a way finding strategy, and to lead people through the site. Comments were made about how to iterate and abstract the footprints further.</p> <p>Uncle was encouraging of this concept and mentioned a young Gadigal artists should provide the art, in which all agreed.</p>

<p>21/10/21</p> <p>Site Visit</p>	<p>Uncle Allan Madden (Gadigal Elder)</p> <p>Uncle Chicka (Charles) Madden (Gadigal Elder)</p> <p>Michael Hromek (WSP)</p> <p>Matt Pellow (WSP)</p> <p>Andreas Antoniadis (Antoniades Architects)</p> <p>Mark Albert Surtees (Wee Hur)</p>	<p>A site visit and introduction of Uncle Chicka to the design team</p> <p>Update both Uncles on the progress made to Connect the building and site to Country</p>	<p>Developments made on:</p> <p>Landscape design including wayfinding strategy</p> <p>Façade artwork potential</p> <p>Podium weaving pattern</p>	<p>Both Uncles mentioned their Aunty used to live in a terrace house on this site that faced Botany Rd.</p> <p>Uncle Chicka used to collect heritage bottles dumped on this site, which had a lot of debris from the rail line tunnels nearby.</p> <p>Planting advice can be sought from Uncle Chicka's Granddaughter who is becoming a knowledge leader in this space.</p> <p>Internal design ideas were discussed, such as the use of Gadigal shield patterns on glass frosting / privacy screening.</p>
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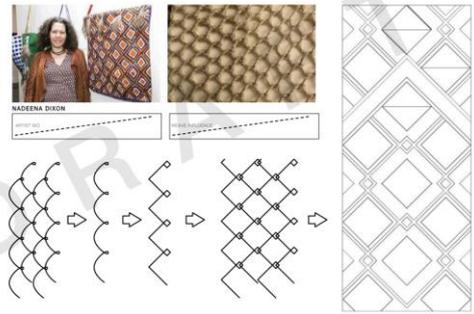
## SDRP Process

During the State Design Review Panel (SDRP) Process, WSP Indigenous Specialist Services Technical Advisor Michael Hromek presented the 104-116 Regent Street, Redfern Aboriginal Design Principles document to the SDRP. The Aboriginal Design Principles document was specifically developed for the Regent Street project using desktop research to identify whose Country the project was being built on, and some of the unique attributes of the people, culture and place. The approach WSP Indigenous Specialist Services had developed for engaging Elders and Knowledge Holders along with the co-design methodology that would be applied during the iterative design process was also outlined and explained to the SDRP.

The SDRP understood and endorsed the proposed engagement plan and co-design methodology. They made a recommendation to focus on specifically on engaging Elders and Knowledge holders who identify as being from Gadigal Country, to ensure cultural protocols were adhered to and guaranteeing that the cultural integrity of the resulting designs were maintained. In addition to this the SDRP advised that the interior design of the building is also important and they would like to see cultural design solutions be applied to the interior of the building to further enhance user experience while bringing Country into the inside of the building.

The advice received by the SDRP was valued and applied to the roll out of engagement with Gadigal Elders specifically chosen for future meetings with the design team. During this co-design process themes emerged that were then applied to the interior of the building including the weaving pattern, ochre coloring and 'Mundoie Footprint' that have been outlined in this document.

## Impact on the design

Concept	Raised by	How it has been incorporated in the design
<p><b>Gadigal Weaving</b> Gadigal people used natural materials sourced from Country to weave objects they needed to thrive such as dilly bags, fishing nets, strong fishing lines, mats to sleep on and other objects. People would collect reeds from wetlands, vegetation from the forests, process bark into strong twine and create useful objects that were used everyday and sometimes traded to other groups that did not have the same resources in their Country. During the process of collecting materials and weaving up objects the people would yarn, tell stories and talk about the cultural significance of the materials, places they were collected from and techniques used to make different items. This process supported transfer of knowledge between groups and the passing on of important information to the next generation.</p> <p>Weaving practices were not encouraged after European settlement and so the revival of this cultural practice is very important to the people of this place.</p>	<p>Nadeena Dixon, Gadigal Elder and artist</p>	<p>We have replicated the weaving pattern in the podium façade and the external and internal floor treatments.</p> <p>The co-design process resulted in the traditional weaving pattern being translated into a strong repetitive pattern that was appropriate to use as a design feature in the interior of the building.</p> <p>BETTER FOR COMMUNITY</p>  <p>Image: Detail of the evolution of the weaving pattern into a graphic.</p>
<p><b>'Mundoie Footprint' way-finding concept.</b> This unique pattern is from a rock engraving in near the Sydney Harbour. It is to be thought to be the footprint of a creator being and therefore it is highly significant as an iconic design that is from this Country.</p>	<p>Uncle Allan Madden Gadigal Elder</p>	<p>This way finding opportunity was identified by Uncle Allen as a way for people to navigate through the building allowing for legibility while providing a cultural layer to the interior design.</p> <p>These footprints suggest to the users of the building the pathway to follow when moving through and</p>

<p>Engraved footprints found near the Uloola Track in Sydney suggest a pathway that needs to be followed, probably during an initiation ceremony.</p> <p>Engraving into horizontal sandstone rock is a unique cultural activity largely contained within the Sydney region and surrounds. The engravings are thought to have been used during ceremony to teach initiates about the Country and other important information.</p>		<p>had been incorporated into the design for this purpose while bringing some cultural elements into the interior design.</p> <p>Uncle Allan explained the importance of the students in understanding the theming and stories of Gadigal Country.</p>
<p><b>Indigenous planting</b> Incorporating native species that were used by the indigenous population.</p>	<p>Uncle Chicka and Allan Madden Gadigal Elders</p>	<p>Uncle Chicka nominated his grand daughter Lilly Madden, who holds knowledge of plants, to be involved in the next stage of the project with a species palette.</p>
<p><b>Ochre and the Shields</b> Gadigal country has a unique colour and design patterns as seen on the shield, rock carvings. Uncle Chicka mentioned he would like to see the Gadigal design patterns in the project, in particular those seen on the shields and rock carvings on Gadigal lands. This includes the orange and white ochre</p>	<p>Uncle Chicka and Allan Madden Gadigal Elders</p>	<div data-bbox="901 875 1109 1377" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>The patterns can be carved into the pavement, seating and other surface elements. Frosted glass patterns / stencil of the patterns to provide semi-privacy. Ochre orange and white to be used to create the pattern in the interior and exterior where possible.</p> <p>Image: Detail of the weaving pattern combined with the ochre colour for the interior of the building.</p>
<p><b>Indigenous Art on building fins</b> The southern façade is a blank canvas opportunity to display local Aboriginal art, this might be done through a select invitation process targeting Gadigal artists.</p>	<p>Uncle Chicka and Allan Madden Gadigal Elders</p>	<p>Art work is being investigated on the southern façade utilising integrated materials, as well as applied treatments. Art work should reference Gadigal Country, people, or culture</p>

# Statement of Commitment

Through appropriate engagement of Gadigal Elders and Knowledge Holders as design and cultural consultants, we have ensured that their rights to Indigenous cultural intellectual property is protected, and that first languages and shared histories of cultural landscapes are incorporated into this project. The inclusion of the 'Mundoie Footprint' as a wayfinding device is an example of how we are embedding cultural history and language into the design.

We have prioritised Aboriginal people's relationship to Country, and their cultural protocols, through education. The inclusion of art and interpretive signage for students and users of the building ensures information about the significance of this location and cultural practices connected to this place are learnt and communicated.

Through engagement of Gadigal Elders and Knowledge Holders we have prioritised financial and economic benefits to the Country and people of the project where we are working. The decision to engage Indigigrow and Uncle Chicka's Granddaughter as consultants to advise on the right plants for this part of Country shows consideration about the impacts to Country and culture when evaluating economic, environmental, and social benefits and disadvantages of the project.

Through uplifting the stories of Country, people and culture of this place we are sharing the tangible and intangible benefits with the Country where we are working, and by extension the Traditional Custodians of that Country, including current and future generations.

By engaging Gadigal Elders and Knowledge Holders we have prioritised the local, place specific cultural identity of the Country we're working on. Our methodology supports Aboriginal people to determine the representation of their cultural materials, customs, and knowledge.

Through the development of the Aboriginal Design Principles- Connection to Country strategy, (attached in appendix, titled 104-116 RegentStRedfernABORIGINALDESIGNPRINCIPLESv1.3 ) we have prioritised recognition and responsibility of Aboriginal people and supported capacity building across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and across government project teams.

Key take ways include:

- The design team and architects to support Aboriginal people to continue their practices of managing land, water, and air through their ongoing reciprocal relationships with Country.
- Connect the project to Country by integrating key Gadigal design patterns, as seen in weaving and rock carvings and etchings into the ground for wayfinding
- Provide art opportunities including façade art facing Regent St, internal art with patternation and language, and landscaping design reflecting Country

# Summary and Conclusion

Through the ongoing co-design process and engagement of Gadigal Elders as consultants informing the design team of relevant cultural themes and focus for the project there have been solid project specific features that have been decided upon.

By consulting Indigigrow and potentially others recommended by the Gadigal elders, we have ensured that the right vegetation for this site will be chosen for its suitability and cultural significance.

The inclusion of the weave pattern in the façade and floor finishes reflects the cultural practices and identity of Gadigal people and their way of being and doing in this place. So too is the inclusion of the ochre colour in the detail of the building.

The Mundoie Footprint patterns have been offered by the Gadigal Uncles as a wayfinding device for students to navigate their way around the building. By including these features, we anticipate a development of interest and curiosity to learn more about Gadigal culture, people and Country and so will be including information panels to educate and inform users of the significance of this design symbol to Gadigal people.

# Photos from the engagement:

Site visit 21/10/21



Uncle Chicka Madden and Matt Pellow discussing the project



Uncle Chicka and Allan Madden talking with Andreas Antoniades

## References:

Redfern Oral History, *Gadigal clan of coastal Dharug*, available-  
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[https://www.centennialparklands.com.au/getmedia/e32ae90a-e730-4c28-82c4-4b17e9e3c5e1/Appendix\\_S\\_-\\_Pre-colonial\\_Archaeology\\_report\\_Val\\_Attenbrow.pdf](https://www.centennialparklands.com.au/getmedia/e32ae90a-e730-4c28-82c4-4b17e9e3c5e1/Appendix_S_-_Pre-colonial_Archaeology_report_Val_Attenbrow.pdf)

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