

## **Connecting with Country Report, Forest High School.**

Site	Forest High School
Proponent	Schools Infrastructure NSW, Department of Education NSW.
Client Contact	SiNSW c/o Patrick Wright, Johnstaff Consulting.
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## Acknowledgement



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Tocomwall Pty Ltd gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the local Aboriginal community in preparing this report.

## Acronyms and Definitions

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Acronym	Definition
<b>CWC</b>	Connecting with Country
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>NSW</b>	New South Wales
<b>RAP</b>	Registered Aboriginal Party

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## **Executive Summary**

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Tocomwall Pty Ltd was engaged by The Proponent Schools Infrastructure NSW to undertake a Connection with Country (CWC) assessment and report for Forest High School. A CWC assessment provides an opportunity for local Aboriginal culture to be included in the built form of the new project.

The CWC methodology involves consultation with the local Aboriginal community. Findings from these discussions highlighted seven main suggestions for inclusion which involves incorporating a Yarning Circle, Acknowledgement of Country, landscape connection, engravings, waterways, native garden, Aboriginal artwork, education of History and Indigenous artefacts. These suggestions inform several recommendations that ensure the upgrade of Forest High School is guided by Aboriginal connections with Country.

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## 1 Background

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### 1.1 Background to Proposal

Tocomwall Pty Ltd was engaged on 26 November 2021 by Schools Infrastructure NSW, part of the Department of Education NSW [The Proponent] to undertake a Connection with Country (CWC) assessment and report for Forest High School (henceforth ‘the study area’). Tocomwall Pty Ltd has been directly appointed by SiNSW.

Tocomwall Pty Ltd is an Aboriginal owned cultural heritage consultancy firm that provides strategic planning, cultural heritage, ecological and archaeological services across Australia. Our philosophy and practice is aimed at fostering an understanding amongst the broader community, the underlying basis of this being that strong relationships lead to ethical outcomes for Aboriginal stakeholders and clients whilst satisfying regulatory requirements. We believe that we share a responsibility with government, business, and the Aboriginal community to conserve and manage the natural, cultural and archaeological heritage of Australia.

At Tocomwall Pty Ltd, we assist our clients achieve Aboriginal cultural heritage management outcomes that are:

- In compliance with State and Federal Requirements;
- In line with the principles of the Burra Charter;
- Both practical and cost-effective to adopt and implement;
- In accord with the ethics and the pragmatics of the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
- Culturally appropriate and sensitive to Aboriginal community needs and aspirations; and
- Address the rights and responsibilities encompassed within the term “intergenerational equity”.

Delivery of this project will be underpinned by our team’s extensive knowledge of cultural heritage and landscapes across Australia. We will ensure expert individuals in the areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage, project planning and management are part of the project team and that a tailored approach is adopted to suit the needs of the client.

## 2 Connecting with Country Rationale

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Tocomwall’s Connecting with Country strategy is underpinned by the Government Architect NSW Draft Connecting With Country (2020) framework. The framework “aims to help all of us – Aboriginal

and non-Aboriginal people – to work together collectively, respectfully, and with open minds to unite our complementary knowledge.” Tocomwall’s approach of engaging and seeking Aboriginal community feedback and independent input in the design phase is pivotal in achieving the goals and outcomes set by the Government Architect NSW.

Additionally, Indigenous education and philosophy are rooted in an understanding of relationality within place-based experiences and knowledge. The circular relationship between place and identity is often manifested in understandings of wellbeing, seasons, life cycles and how land and its resources are preserved. Circular shapes are a culturally significant motif recognised by Indigenous peoples around the world. These shapes represent a culturally safe space for sharing, teaching, learning and collective knowledge development and maintenance.

### 3 Project Scope

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Tocomwall Pty Ltd has been engaged to develop a CWC strategy for the proposed upgrade of Forest High School on behalf of Schools Infrastructure NSW, part of the Department of Education NSW. The CWC strategy is an opportunity for Aboriginal culture to be included in the built form of the upgrade work to the school. The primary purpose of the CWC strategy is to:

1. *Consider cultural connection to the landscape of the site where the development is to take place.*
2. *Document the cultural heritage of place through time.*
3. *Recommend approaches for the architect and designers to incorporate Aboriginal cultural meaning and connectedness to place in the design and build of the upgrade work to the school*

Tocomwall will collate, assess and report on the cultural connections in a final project report that will inform the State Significant Development Application for the site.

## 4 Site

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Forest High School (Figure 1) is located on Cammeraygal land and under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. The site is bounded by Allambie Road to the north and a private Road to the south. The school is positioned in a high-density residential and next a bushland corridor linked to Manly Dam.



Figure 1 Location of Forest High School



Figure 2 Project Masterplan

## 5 Methodology

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Tocomwall Pty Ltd was appointed to undertake a CWC assessment and report for the study area. Tocomwall's approach includes a seven-stage process that includes data collection, consultation, assessment and reporting. Tocomwall's approach focusses on inclusive equitable stakeholder engagement that strives to provide a sense of ownership of place.

### 5.1 Data Collection Desktop Assessment

The desktop assessment aimed to provide an initial understanding of the site and local Indigenous community. As the first stage, it provided background information to familiarise the reader with any material relating to the sites historical or cultural context. The desktop assessment considered both published and unpublished sources such as:

- Previous Due Diligence and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Reports;
- Primary and secondary historical sources such as diaries, maps or photos in the first instance and published historical accounts in the latter instance. This includes a review of historical aerial photography;
- Published geological and soil mapping and associated reports to identify the relevant landscape conditions; and
- Any study area specific ancillary data such as geotechnical or land-use history studies commissioned which are usually provided by the client.

### 5.2 Concept Design

Tocomwall archaeologists and anthropologists develop built form, cultural and artistic design concepts that best incorporate the Aboriginal cultural significance of the study area.

### 5.3 Consultation

Consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties, Land Councils and Aboriginal Community Members is an important part of the Connecting with Country process. Consultation involves inviting relevant Aboriginal stakeholders – in this instance primarily Cammeraygal knowledge holders - to provide comment on the overall design(s), offer suggestions for additional considerations to incorporate in the design(s), and provide examples of motifs, artefacts or artworks for inclusion in the design(s). Specifically, Tocomwall traditionally asks stakeholders:

1. *What is culturally significant to Aboriginal people about the land on which the school is located?*
2. *How can we incorporate Aboriginal connection with Country in the proposed design of the school?*

3. *Describe what you would like to see in the design and build of the school. This may involve specific materials, symbols, colours, plants, etc.*
4. *Is a Yarning Circle an important feature to include in the upgrade of the school? What can we include to make this more meaningful for Aboriginal people?*

Due to premature consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders by the project team prior to the engagement of Tocomwall for the CWC consultation strategy, stakeholders demonstrated a reluctance to further engage with the process. Minutes for the consultation with Aboriginal cultural stakeholders made prior to Tocomwall's engagement has been included in Appendix 1. Due to the limited available input from stakeholders, Tocomwall has incorporated information previously provided by Cammeraygal community and other relevant knowledge holders for the area.

## 6 Collation of Data

During stage 1 of our CWC process, Tocomwall identified the Cammeraygal people of the Eora tribe as the traditional owners of the land on which Forest High School resides. Historical accounts describe the Cammeraygal people as skilled hunter–fisher–gatherers. Cammeraygal connections to Country are tangible, and intangible. Tangible connections are physical representations of Cammeraygal life and culture for example, rock engravings found on outcrops throughout the area. The CWC process aims to identify similarly significant intangible connections through community consultation.

In light of the difficulties relating to engaging with community, and following advice from AECG and Project Architects, Tocomwall proceeded with the CWC process in a more generalised sense. Tocomwall has used broader Aboriginal cultural values, and the surrounding landscape to inform the connections put forward in this report.

### 6.1 The Landscape

Forest High School will be situated in an environmentally dynamic area of the Sydney region. Characterised by a steep coastal escarpment leading to a coastal plateau, the area supports a number of unique and rare flora and fauna. Immediately surrounding the proposed Forest High School is the Duffys Forest Ecological Community (Table 1). This community was recognised as unique and of significance by the *Threatened Species Conservation Act* in 2002. This predominantly open-forest and woodland community dominates the Warringah, Pittwater and Manly regions along ridgetops, plateaus and upper slopes of Hawkesbury sandstone geology that have a soil influence from shale and laminite. The *Grevillea caleyi* is iconic to the Duffys Forest Ecological Community and is seen only rarely elsewhere in the Sydney bioregion.

Table 1 Plant species associated with the Duffys Forest Ecological Community

Plant Species of the Duffys Forest Ecological Community		
Acacia linifolia	Acacia myrtifolia	Acacia suaveolens
Acacia ulicifolia	Actinotus minor	Allocasuarina littoralis
Angophora costata	Anisopogon avenaceus	Austrostipa pubescens
Banksia ericifolia	Banksia serrata	Banksia spinulosa
Billardiera scandens	Boronia ledifolia	Boronia pinnata
Bossiaea heterophylla	Bossiaea obcordata	Brunoniella pumilio
Cassytha pubescens	Ceratopetalum gummiferum	Conospermum longifolium
Comesperma ericinum	Cyathochaeta diandra	Dampiera stricta
Dianella caerulea	Dillwynia retorta	Dodonaea triquetra

Entolasia stricta	Epacris pulchella	Eucalyptus capitellata
Eucalyptus gummifera	Eucalyptus haemastoma	Eucalyptus sieberi
Gompholobium grandiflorum	Gonocarpus teucrioides	Grevillea buxifolia
Grevillea caleyi	Grevillea linearifolia	Hakea dactyloides
Hakea sericea	Hakea teretifolia	Hibbertia bracteata
Hovea linearis	Lambertia formosa	Lasiopetalum ferrugineum
Lepidosperma laterale	Leptospermum trinervium	Lindsaea linearis
Lindsaea microphylla	Lomandra glauca	Lomandra longifolia
Lomandra multiflora	Lomandra obliqua	Lomatia silaifolia
Micrantheum ericoides	Patersonia glabrata	Patersonia sericea
Persoonia levis	Persoonia pinifolia	Petrophile pulchella
Phyllanthus hirtellus	Phyllota phyllicoides	Pimelea linifolia
Platysace linearifolia	Pteridium esculentum	Pultenaea daphnoides
Pultenaea elliptica	Pultenaea linophylla	Telopea speciosissima
Tetrarrhena juncea	Xanthorrhoea media	Xanthosia tridentata
Xylomelum pyriforme		

Additional to the Duffys Forest Ecological Community, pockets of Northern Hinterland Wet Sclerophyll and Sydney Coast Dry Sclerophyll are found adjacent to the Forest High School site.

Within the landscape Rosenberg Goanna and Glossy Black Cockatoo stand out as culturally significant for broader Aboriginal people.

Goannas are prominent in the cultural customs of many language groups. The goanna is seen in many Dreamtime stories throughout Australia.

The Glossy Black Cockatoo has a strong spiritual connection for many Aboriginal people and it features in many stories. Glossy Black Cockatoos are often seen as an indication of soon arriving rain. The feathers of the Glossy Black Cockatoo are used in body art, decoration and important ceremonial events.

The landscape is a major influence of Aboriginal culture. Within the study region, there is a significant landscape feature – water – that was central to the day-to-day life of the Aboriginal people of the area. Specifically, themes around the interaction of salt and fresh water are relevant to this region.

The importance of water and a long-term interaction with water in this regional setting are seen in engravings and other Aboriginal art within the vicinity of the study area.

## 6.2 Engravings

There are many rock engraving sites within the vicinity of the Forest High School site, however three of these are particularly relevant for this Connecting with Country report. The three main rock engraving sites that will form the focus are: Bantry Bay and Manly Vale and Moon Rock. The deep engravings etched into the sandstone rock found in the region feature a range motifs of including land based and aquatic themes. The connection of the engravings with water is seen more in Bantry Bay and Manly Vale. At Bantry Bay, more than 80 motifs have been etched into the sandstone rock surfaces and include footprints, people, animals, fish, shields, a whale, and a canoe, among other things. Similarly, the engravings at Manly Vale include a whale, fish, people and animals. At one engraving located at Manly Vale a man is depicted spearing a fish.

Moon Rock at Oxford Falls is of particular interest and is unique among the rock engraving sites considered in this report. Moon Rock, as the name suggests, depicts engravings of the moon. The site consists of about 50 engravings that all depict different phases of the moon, tools, weapons and animals consumed s food by users of the site. The site is particularly significant because it provides evidence of an understanding of astronomy, along with the interaction of Baiamee (the Creator) and the different seasons experienced by the Cammeraygal and other transient people of the area.

Additional early European reports of engravings and rock carvings in the Duffeys (Duffys) Forest area talk to the presence of female deity figures, Baiamee (the Creator) and Bora-nore (ceremonial grounds).<sup>1</sup>

Inclusion of rock engraving as a feature of the build design of the school will be a strong connection to the Cammeraygal country.

## 6.3 Waterways

Water is a major feature in the Cammeraygal landscape. Depictions of water and water associated entities demonstrates a deep and long connection of the people to water. This knowledge has been carried through to Tocomwall in previous conversations with Cammeraygal knowledge holders, who draw a deep connection to the ocean and the coastal ecosystems of the region. There are stories of Aboriginal people camping, hunting, and gathering resources for everyday living nearby water. Inclusion of waterways in the overall built design of the Forest High School may involve the use of a water feature, water-related symbols, or materials in the school design. The school community described more specifically how the inclusion of coloured or textured glass or a water feature in the entry area of the school would be a great addition.

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<sup>1</sup> HORNSHAW.B01.BW (N06792-N06819; N06825; N06865) The B. L. Hornshaw Collection. Photographs taken at rock art sites throughout New South Wales and other Australian locations between 1892 and 1937

#### **6.4 Native Garden**

As documented in section 6.1 the Forest High School is proposed to be built adjacent to the Duffys Forest Ecological Community. This unique and special ecosystem could be echoed in the planting of a native garden, or native landscaping throughout the school.

Previous engagement with Cammeraygal knowledge holders has resulted in an endorsement of a kitchen or native garden. This includes the use of plants to recreate a native landscape, as well as plants utilised by Aboriginal communities for their nutritional or medicinal value. Respondents suggested planting strategical native plants and trees to co-exist with the environment and seek Indigenous knowledge to guide landscaping design.

School communities often suggested that these gardens are interactive and accessible for the purpose of classroom teaching, however, also need to be protected from students who may pull out plants. The involvement of eco and environmental school leaders is paramount in this project. It is important to create an inclusive, interactive, and sensory experience involving sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

Plants that may be prioritised for use in the native garden are *Grevillea caleyi* and *Tetratheca glandulosa* as these plants play a particularly important role in shaping the characteristic form of the Duffys Forest Ecological Community and have been found in bushland adjacent to the site.

*Xanthorrhoea* sp. (grass tree) is an important plant for many Aboriginal communities. The grass tree provided many uses, but most commonly the resin was used in spear-making and in patching vessels.

Inclusion of native plantings that are both region specific, but also widely recognised in Aboriginal culture will provide a connection to country that is inclusive of all stakeholders.

#### **6.5 Aboriginal Artwork**

Respondents are always enthusiastic about an Aboriginal artwork or mural. The school communities often request this artwork or mural be permanently displayed in the entrance of the school. With consideration of this, an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country mural would be a good addition. Themes for the artwork could be drawn from rock engravings, including footsteps, human forms and lunar or astronomy motifs. Additionally, the involvement of students in the creation of an artwork is important to give them ownership of the experience.

A critical note is that an Acknowledgement of Country is the recognition provided to a First Nations group when on their country, a representative of that group may or may not be present. A Welcome to Country can only be offered by an authorised representative of a First Nations group on whose country that welcome is being performed.

#### **6.6 Education of History**

Respondents often feel it is important to educate the wider community about Indigenous culture and history before and after colonisation and assimilation. Indigenous Australian culture is one of the

oldest continuing cultures in the world and respondents feel it is important to share culture with this school community. The school community often embrace the idea and report how they would like to include this shift away from a predominantly Anglo school environment. They suggest the importance of including dual signage around the school and with any Connecting with Country concept designs.

### **6.7 Indigenous Artefacts**

The display of Indigenous artefacts is often proposed. These artefacts would be site specific and integrated safely into the school. Discovery of artefacts during the build phase of the project would determine the appropriateness of an artefact storage facility within the school. Usually such a repository is housed within the library.

### **6.8 Yarning Circle**

A Yarning Circle is often supported by respondents. It promotes a culturally safe and collaborative mode of communication. Respondents describe how the circular shape of the space is important in a meeting place, but also reflective of Indigenous understandings of wellbeing, lifecycles, and seasons. A RAP explained how a Yarning Circle will allow all students, but especially Indigenous students, to have a safe place to yarn about our culture but also can be used as a space for ceremonies. The use of sandstone blocks or stones from the site was suggested in the creation of the Yarning Circle. The space should be large enough for approximately 30 children (or one class) and be utilised as an outdoor learning space. It is important to locate a Yarning Circle in a central location so that it occupies a prominent position in the school.

## 7 Connecting with Country Design Suggestions

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These recommendations are provided with consideration of findings from section, with the aim to enhance Forest High School's connection with Country, as stated by The Government Architect of NSW. All input has been collated and the salient design suggestions have been included to inform the recommendations.

The recommendations are:

- Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country
- Connection to the landscape
- Engravings
- Waterways
- Native garden
- Artwork
- Education of history
- Artefacts
- Yarning circle

### 7.1 Acknowledgment of Country or Welcome to Country

An Acknowledgment of Country or alternatively a Welcome to Country is a crucial piece of the Connecting with Country framework. An example of an Acknowledgment of Country is provided below.

*The community here at Forest High School would like to recognise and honour the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today. We acknowledge the Cammeraygal people and other First Nations people that have passed over this country. We recognise the importance of country and culture to the First Nations people, and we share a commonality through the sharing of knowledge in this place. We recognise all First Nations people, past and present, and pay our respects to Elders.*

### 7.2 The Landscape

Drawing from the forms, colours and textures of the landscape Tocomwall suggests that the built form of Forest High School include a mix of earthy-tones and textures, combined with the vibrant colours of flowers and other vegetation, alongside colours and textures that can be associated with the ocean environment (Figure 3).

Another component of the landscape that is important to reference is the dependence on fire. The deeper colours of the post-fire landscape, combined with the colours of regrowth and rebirth of Country included in the design (Figure 5).

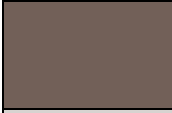
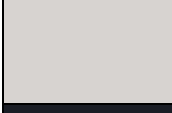



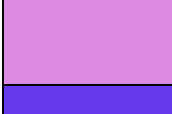
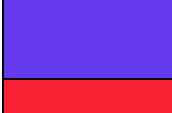




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Figure 3 Suggested colour palette for Forest High School. Colours are derived from Country.



Figure 4 Eucalyptus haemastoma – Scribbly Gum. A tree species common to the local Country of Forest High School.



Figure 5 Regrowth and recovery of Country



### **7.3 Engravings**

Artwork engraving a distinguishing feature of the communities local to the Forest High School area. It is therefore essential that engraving been included as part of the overall Connecting with Country design of the school. It is recommended that rock or concrete is used to replicate engraving sites, and include regionally relevant motifs in those engravings. Engravings may include plants, marine life (Figure 6) or footprints to mimic engravings found local the site (Figure 7 and 8).



Figure 6 Rock engraving at Bantry Bay site. Engraving depicts fish swimming in formation



Figure 7 Rock engraving at Bantry Bay site. Rock engraving depicting a canoe.



Figure 8 Rock engraving at Moon Rock site. Rock engraving depicting a spiritual figure.

## 7.4 Waterways

The inclusion of a water feature directly references the importance of waterways to Indigenous peoples. The water feature should refer to Indigenous symbols and imagery (for example, Figure 9). A water feature may be included in the garden landscape of the school, and this may reflect something similar to the pools of water that occur near rock engraving sites following rainfall. These small oasis-like areas may also attract wildlife including the red-crowned toadlet.

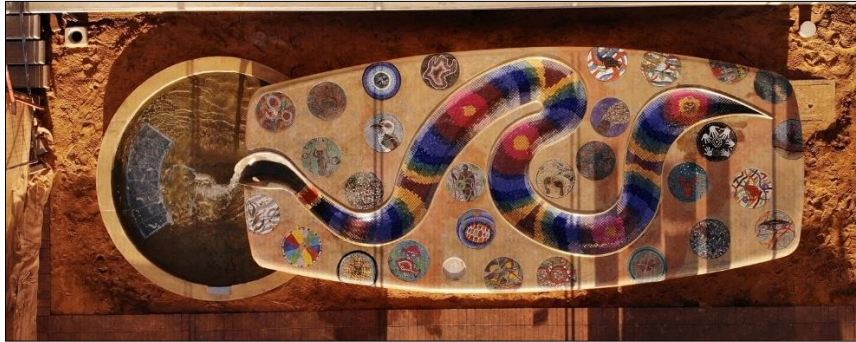


Figure 9 Gunnedah's Rainbow Serpent Water Feature



Figure 10 Example of a naturally forming water feature.

Furthermore, the location of this water feature at the school entrance would provide an aesthetically pleasing design feature for visitors to the school to enjoy.

## 7.5 Native Garden

An ornamental native garden (Figure 11) could draw from the surrounding landscape to elevate the importance of the Duffys Forest Ecological Community. A key species to include would be the *Grevillea caleyi* as this is iconic to the local area. Inclusion of other plants of utility including the *Xanthorrhoea* sp. would draw a greater cultural connection to country. Additionally, providing plantings that attract local wildlife including the Glossy Black Cockatoo and Rosenberg Goanna would allow the country around the school precinct to be introduced into the country of the school. Some examples of plants found locally are provided in Figure 12 – 16).



Figure 11 Example of a naturally forming 'ornamental' native garden on Country.



Figure 12 Wax Flower



Figure 13 Unknown Sp.



Figure 14 Red Spider Flower



Figure 15 Coastal Banksia



Figure 16 Hairpin Banksia

A native food garden could consist of edible plants such as:

- Illawarra Plum (*Podocarpus Elatus*),
- Raspberry jam Wattle (*Acacia Acuminata*),
- Red-eyed Wattle (*acacia Cyclops*),
- Lemon Aspen (*Acronychia Acidula*),
- Smooth Davidson's Plum (*Davidsonia Johnsonii*),
- Finger Lime (*Citrus australasica*),
- Native Lemon Grass (*Cymbogopon Ambigus*).

A native kitchen garden is useful in educating students about environmental and sustainability learning in Indigenous Australia. Kitchen gardens provide opportunities to grow and produce food that is utilised by local Indigenous communities and learn about their nutritional and medicinal value. It is

important to raise the planter boxes to an appropriate height for children to promote accessibility. Sensory elements must be included, for example:

- Sound: to stimulate hearing, choose plants that make noise when wind passes through them like Raspberry Jam Wattle and Native Lemon Grass. Wattles make a distinctive sound when wind passes across empty seeds. Including plants that encourage wildlife in the garden is also a good way to stimulate the sense of hearing. Raspberry Jam Wattle attracts pollinators such as birds, Bee's and Butterflies as do most flowering trees.
- Touch: include plants that offer a wide variety of textures, such as the Prickly-leaved Tea Tree or Finger Lime. Creating space for other textures like sand and soil will further diversify the garden and assist with oral storytelling practices
- Smell: incorporate highly aromatic plants such as Bracelet honey Myrtle, Lemon Myrtle, Native River Mint and Native Thyme which was once used as a medicinal herb.
- Sight: adding visually interest can be achieved in many ways, such as through layout or plant choice. Utilising plants with varying habits such as those that creep, climb, trail, bush, or stand upright like Smooth Davidson's Plumb or Blue Lilly Pilly. Additionally, include plants with different bloom, leaf, bark, and stem colours will increase visual appeal.
- Taste: encouraging the taste of plants like Blue Tongue, lemon Aspen, Midyim Berry, Red Back Australian Ginger, Tucker Bush Cherry, Illawarra Plumb and Smooth Davidson Plumb is important in stimulating taste buds and provides an enjoyable interactive experience for students

## 7.6 Aboriginal Artwork

The inclusion of an Aboriginal artwork is a modern celebration of Indigenous knowledge systems and storytelling practices. The creation of an artwork should involve both local Aboriginal artists and students attending Forest High School and, consequently, facilitate a collaborative connection between communities. Alternatively, commissioning a local artist like Jamie Eastwood to create a mural or architectural installation within the school will also respect and celebrate the traditional custodians of the land on which the site is situated.

Artwork can be both decorative and informative. In the broader context of the Forest High School in the surrounding landscape, it is most appropriate for artwork to include an earthy tone, yet vibrant colour palette. It is also appropriate for artwork to draw inspiration from engravings of marine life, and most critically, of the astronomy engravings depicting lunar cycles.



Figure 17 Moon Rock engraving site. Lunar motifs are engraved into the rock surface.

### **7.7 Education of History**

Respondents regularly highlight the importance of ‘walking with’ Country to connect, therefore the inclusion of local history and stories along a walkway will provide the opportunity to create a Songline. Dual language signage along this nature trail is important in communicating history and creation stories and facilitate outdoor cultural learning opportunities. Signage will include the school emblem, local language and a QR code. The QR code will link to an audio recording created by members of the local Cammeraygal community telling their stories and teaching about different aspects of their history and culture. This aims to preserve native language, culture and oral story-telling practices of the local Indigenous community and allows Cammeraygal family groups to control the narrative of the land and their lives.

### **7.8 Artefacts**

At the time of writing Tocomwall was unaware of any artefacts for this site, therefore cannot comment further.

## 7.9 Yarning Circle

An example of a Yarning Circle is presented in

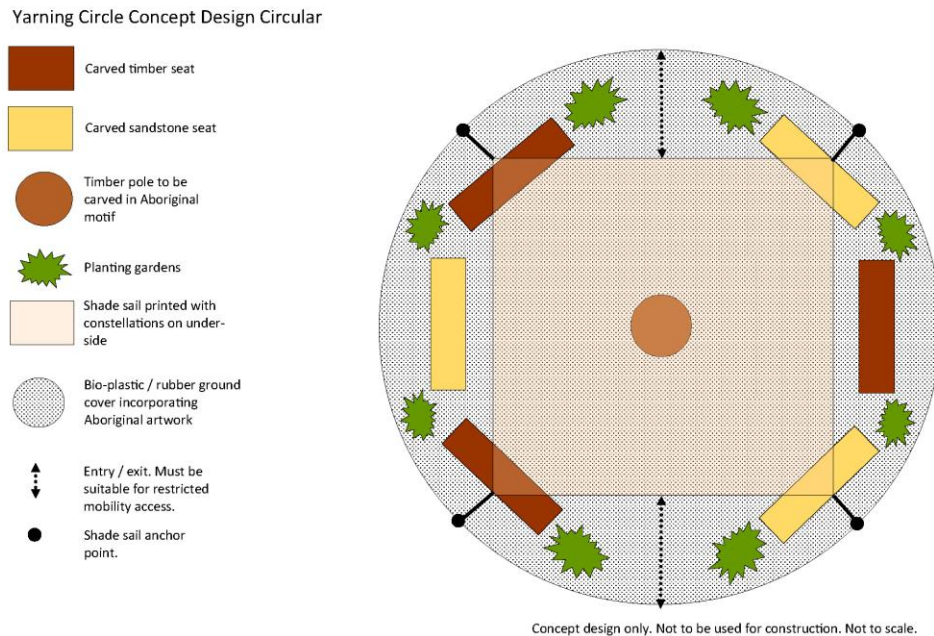



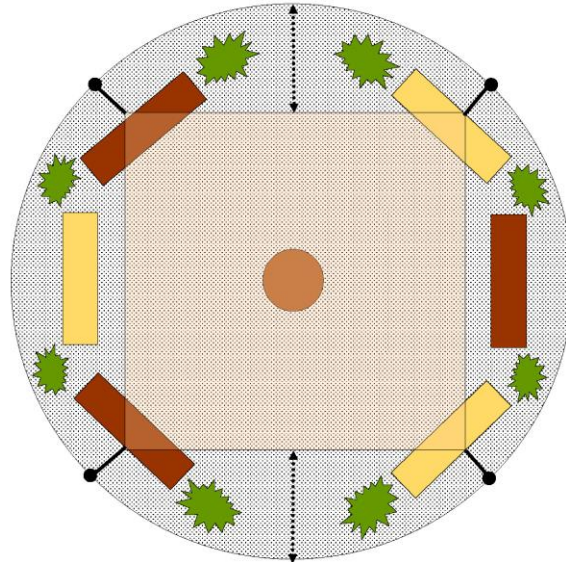


Figure 18. It is centred around meeting places still used within cultural landscapes today. The design elements aim to create a culturally immersive, inclusive, and respectful setting that allows for Aboriginal culture to be transmitted from one generation to another through contemporary story and truth telling practices.

An ariel view of the Yarning Circle also refers to Indigenous symbolism of waterways and a meeting place (Figure 19), linking the importance of a safe cultural space with the nearby harbour. As emphasised by the school community, this space should be in a prominent position on site and be big enough to seat a whole class. Tocomwall recommends location of a Yarning Circle in a central and accessible location in the school.

Yarning Circle Concept Design Circular

-  Carved timber seat
-  Carved sandstone seat
-  Timber pole to be carved in Aboriginal motif
-  Planting gardens
-  Shade sail printed with constellations on underside
-  Bio-plastic / rubber ground cover incorporating Aboriginal artwork
-  Entry / exit. Must be suitable for restricted mobility access.
-  Shade sail anchor point.



Concept design only. Not to be used for construction. Not to scale.

Figure 18 Tocomwall's Proposed Design of a Yarning Circle

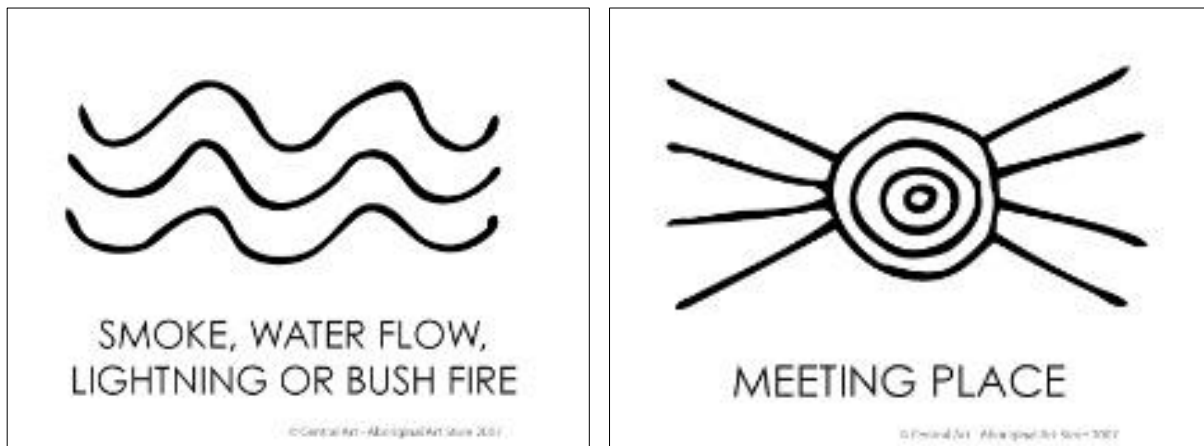


Figure 19 Aboriginal Symbols

## 8 Final Recommendations

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Tocomwall recommends that the design team incorporate the following components in the design portfolio and built form of Forest High School. Importantly, we suggest recommendations are implemented with ongoing inclusion in learning and lesson plans.

The recommendations are:

- Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country
- Connection to the landscape
- Engravings
- Waterways
- Native garden
- Artwork
- Education of history
- Artefacts
- Yarning circle



## 9 Conclusion

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Tocomwall has undertaken an extensive CWC review and developed a strategy that it deems to be suitable for guiding the design process of Forest High School. Tocomwall has identified key themes that are culturally significant to the site, community, and students of Forest High School. Tocomwall's CWC recommendations are provided to provide value to current and future generations while also ensure cultural interconnectedness is retained through the built form of the school precinct.



## **10 Appendix 1.**

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**From:** [Patrick Wright](#)  
**To:** [Elizabeth D'Olier](#); [Paul Harvey](#)  
**Cc:** [Chris Traill](#); [Sumi Thambyrajah](#); [Scott Franks](#); [Cassie Chivers](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Forest High School CWC  
**Date:** Monday, 30 May 2022 2:24:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image007.png](#)  
[image008.png](#)  
[image009.png](#)  
[image010.png](#)  
[image011.png](#)  
[image012.png](#)  
[image013.png](#)  
[image014.png](#)  
[211125 - AECG Meeting #1 Minutes.pdf](#)  
[211125 Indigenous Consultant workshop\) Email.pdf](#)  
[RE Forest HS CwC.msa](#)

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Hi Paul,

For your background, back in February 2022 Dani had a conversation with Eliza Pross chair of the local AECG to get her opinion on how best to approach what elements should be considered for the CWC. She determined that due to the displacement of many original peoples around Sydney and the contention that is felt between groups today, that the focus should be on Country rather than stories, totems and beliefs. Rather, focus on the landscape, flora and fauna of the area.

Dani was drafting a report that addresses information about the region, plants, animals, ocean and perhaps include examples of local engravings and rock art, and known mollusc species that are present in middens in the area. We saw no objection to that as long as it met the SEARS requirements.

Please see attached:

- Minutes of the last AECG meeting held 25/11/21 that effectively lists our CWC stakeholders
- Architectus presentation at that meeting
- Dani's email summarising the above

We really do need your assistance to draft this report, particularly as we need to present initial findings to the government architect on 15/6/22.

Kind regards,



**Patrick Wright** Project Director  
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**From:** Elizabeth D'Olier <[elizabeth.dolier@johnstaff.com.au](mailto:elizabeth.dolier@johnstaff.com.au)>

**From:** [Eliza Pross](#)  
**To:** [Dani Mitchell](#)  
**Cc:** [angus.bird11@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:angus.bird11@det.nsw.edu.au)  
**Subject:** Re: Forest HS Connecting with Country  
**Date:** Wednesday, 9 February 2022 3:30:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

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Hi Dani,

I am happy to have a chat but we have had various discussions about this with different stakeholders and it is feeling pretty repetitive without the parties sharing the feedback we have already provided.

Have you been provided with our feedback and input provided already? As we have already volunteered hours of time to provide it.

Regards,  
Eliza

---

**From:** Dani Mitchell <dani@tocomwall.com.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 9, 2022 3:47 pm  
**To:** eliza@ochreandsalt.com.au  
**Cc:** angus.bird11@det.nsw.edu.au  
**Subject:** Forest HS Connecting with Country

Hi Eliza,

Tocomwall have been engaged by Johnstaff to assist in the CwC for the Forest High School development. I understand they have already had a meeting with you to discuss the project, but I would really appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about ideas you may have in regard to acknowledging Country through design.

I would also appreciate if you can advise on anyone else that may be a relevant knowledge holder to that area. I have reached out to Metropolitan LALC with no response so far. If you know of any respected community members, that would be great.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

**Dani Mitchell**  
**Senior Archaeologist**  
Tocomwall Pty Ltd  
e: [dani@tocomwall.com.au](mailto:dani@tocomwall.com.au)  
Dharug Country



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# Minutes

## Aboriginal Consultation Meeting #1– The Forest High School

**Date** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021  
**Location** Microsoft Teams  
**Chair** Ryan Thoroughgood

Invitees	Organisation	Role
Ryan Thoroughgood (RT)	SINSW	A/Director, Infrastructure Planning
Angelo Parissis (AP)	SINSW	Senior Project Director, Infrastructure Delivery
Sumi Thambyrajah (ST)	SINSW	Project Director
Rosemary McDowall (RM)	DoE	Principal, The Forest High School
Nathan Lawler (NL)	DoE	Acting Principal (2022), The Forest High School
Mathew Finley (MF)	DoE	Deputy Principal, The Forest High School
Alan Duffy (AD)	External	Principal Architect, Architectus
Steven Whisker (SW)	External	Senior Architect, Architectus
Kaustav Gupta (KG)	External	Senior Architect, Architectus
Alia Khan (AK)	Occulus	Landscape Architect
Rosalie Brooker (RB)	Occulus	Landscape Architect
Keith Stead (KS)	Occulus	Landscape Architect
Scarlett Leung (SL)	Occulus	Landscape Architect
Patrick Wright (PW)	External	Senior Project Director, Johnstaff
Elizabeth D'olier (ED)	External	Project Director, Johnstaff
Les Pitt (LP)	External	Community member
Eliza Pross (EP)	External	AECG President
Nateya Tai (NT)	DoE	Student Representative

Apologies	Organisation	Role
Angus Bird (AB)	External	Community Member
Kylie Ann Watts (KAW)	External	Community Member
Clarence Bruisma (CB)	External	Community Member
Lois Birk (LB)	External	Community Member
Karen Keers (KK)	DoE	Aboriginal Education Wellbeing Advisor

## Meeting minutes

Item	Discussion	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction and Apologies</b>	
1.1	As noted above.	Noted
<b>2</b>	<b>Project Update</b>	
2.1	<p>RT noted the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project is currently nearing the completion of the Schematic Design</li> <li>Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements have been received</li> <li>SINSW is programming to submit the State Significant Development Application in early 2022</li> <li>Demolition of existing building likely to be 1st half of 2022</li> <li>Main Works likely to be tendered early next year</li> </ul>	Noted
<b>3</b>	<b>Architectural Presentation</b>	
3.1	Architectus provided a presentation of the site, the school and landscape design. See attached presentation for further detail	Noted
<b>4</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
4.1	EP noted that there is a history of trauma in the local area being an area or first contact and most traditional custodians were removed from the land.	Noted
<b>4.2</b>	EP noted that the use of sandstone is encouraged as this is sandstone country	Noted
4.3	EP requested that intentional spaces be considered in the landscaping such as native grasses for basket weaving, growing native foods and having areas that provide a view to Country. Furthermore, exploration of the possibility of a fire pit and yarning circle would be a positive addition.	Noted
4.4	LP noted that there may be an opportunity to use QR codes around the site to provide a learning opportunity in certain settings	Noted
<b>4.5</b>	LP noted that it could be beneficial to recognise families and people who had used the site previously including the previous users from the	Noted

Item	Discussion	Action
	Cerebral Palsy Alliance	
4.6	It was noted that providing an Acknowledgement of Country should be provided at entry points	Noted
4.7	It was noted that the bushland to the west of the site could be utilised for supervised student learning opportunities. This should be explored further in a dedicated session.	Noted
4.8	It was noted that these meetings would benefit from focussing on specific spaces and areas for feedback.  SINSW to develop a strategy and meeting schedule to discuss specific spaces and focus areas	SINSW
4.9	EP recommended consideration of diverse aboriginal communities from different zones in the design e.g. saltwater/river/desert plus use of stories and artwork from students off country. This could be incorporated through colour, materiality or art.	Noted
5	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
5.1	Nil	
6	<b>Next Meeting - TBC</b>	