

# **TOGA CENTRAL: WESTERN GATEWAY SUB-PRECINCT DEVELOPMENT BLOCK C**

**Connecting with Country  
Framework**

Prepared for  
TOGA  
for SSD-33258337

30 May 2022

COX INALL RIDGEWAY



# PURPOSE

This report is dated **30 May 2022** and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect any opinions or recommendations reflected in Cox Inall Ridgeway's (**CIR**) Connecting with Country Framework (the **Framework**).

The Framework should be read in conjunction with other design reports and schemes, including work done by Bates Smart, Arcadia, and other consultants whose work may be informed by the Framework. CIR's community engagement report and the Aboriginal Cultural Values Report prepared by Waters Consultancy should also be reviewed alongside the Framework, both of which have been attached at the rear of Framework.

The Framework has been prepared by CIR with input from specialist associate consultant, Janis Constable. The Framework was developed in collaboration with key Aboriginal stakeholders and was supported by deep Aboriginal heritage and cultural research.

CIR prepared the Framework on the instructions, and for the benefit only, of **TOGA (Instructing Party)** and for the purposes of the **proposed development of Block C, including the Adina Apartment Hotel and Henry Deane Plaza, of Central Precinct's Western Gateway Sub-Precinct** (the **Project**).

The Framework outlines TOGA's commitment to Country, Aboriginal culture, and Indigenous design principles for the Project, and reflects the key principles which are identified as critical in implementing a Connecting with Country approach. In recognition of where the Project is at in its lifespan, the Framework challenges all Project teams to articulate how these principles can influence all Project outcomes.

While views that have informed the Framework are not intended to be reflective of all Gadigal and First Nations community members in Sydney, it is hoped such views may benefit design team members as they progress with detailed design planning for the Project.

CIR made all reasonable inquiries that it believes is necessary in preparing the Framework, but it cannot be certain that all information material to the preparation of the Framework has been provided as there may be information that is not publicly or culturally available at time of inquiry.

The Framework has been prepared for the following purposes:

- Response to the State Significant Development Application (**SSDA**) process
- Response to NSW Government Architect's *Draft Connecting with Country Framework*
- Alignment with the NSW Government's Central Precinct Strategic Vision
- Alignment with relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines
- Shape and inform design processes and outcomes now and in the future
- Inform ongoing Aboriginal engagement throughout the Project
- Provide a basis of discussion for all project proponents across Central Precinct to align on Connecting with Country opportunities

The sharing of any cultural knowledge or Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (**ICIP**) rights owned by First Nations stakeholders during the Project remains vested with these stakeholders. CIR acknowledges and agrees that no ICIP rights are assigned to itself, the Instructing Party, or other Project entity.

Critically, developing this Framework would not have been possible without the generous insights, lived experiences, and sacred cultural knowledge shared by diverse members of Sydney's Aboriginal community.

CIR acknowledges and thanks all community members involved who contributed their time and knowledge to the Project.

## Cox Inall Ridgeway team members responsible for this Framework include:

Project Manager and Senior Consultant	Nick Harvey-Doyle
Senior Associate Consultant	Janis Constable

**Cox Inall Ridgeway respectfully acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters on which the Project is proposed to be developed.**

**We acknowledge the Aboriginal community's historic and continuing relationship with the rich and vast Country encompassing cultural, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions, and recognise the importance of this place to all Aboriginal people.**

***We stand in footsteps millennia old,  
May we acknowledge all Traditional Owners of this great brown land – both past and present.***



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# PROJECT BACKGROUND



# WITH SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS PLANNED FOR CENTRAL PRECINCT, THIS PROJECT PRESENTS A SCALEABLE PLATFORM TO SHOWCASE COUNTRY AND CULTURE

## PREAMBLE

In September 2016, the NSW Government announced engagement on the potential revitalisation of Central Station to better understand what the community, customers, stakeholders, and industry would like to see in the Precinct. From this early engagement piece, this project has evolved to become the Central Precinct Renewal Program (the CPRP).

The CPRP is an NSW Government initiative which aims to renew up to 24 hectares of Government-owned land in and around Sydney's Central Station (**Central Precinct**), the main transport interchange for the city and for NSW. Central Precinct is located on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and holds significant social, cultural, and commercial values to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The CPRP presents an opportunity to reinvigorate Central Precinct for the next generation through urban renewal. It includes Central Station, the broader transport interchange, and its place within, connections to, and revitalisation of the surrounding area.

Central Precinct is a State Significant Precinct (**SSP**), and the Department of Planning and Environment are currently working with Transport for NSW, the City of Sydney, and the Greater Cities Commission to transform Central SSP into a technology and innovation precinct.

The first stage of planning for Central SSP is the Western Gateway Sub-Precinct, which consists of three separate development sites: Blocks A, B, and C. The Framework pertains to TOGA's proposed development of Block C, including the Adina Apartment Hotel and Henry Deane Plaza.

TOGA is proposing to redevelop their land holdings in the Western Gateway Sub-Precinct, immediately adjoining Central Station, creating a mixed-use development including a world-class hotel, commercial office tower, and high-quality retail floorspace.

The restoration of the heritage-listed hotel building, the former Parcels Post building on the site, and the delivery of new commercial and hotel floor space and public domain improvements across the Central Precinct will collectively deliver the Government's vision for an iconic technology precinct and transport gateway.

New diverse public spaces will connect the city and improved pedestrian connectivity will provide efficient modal changes aligned with NSW transport objectives.

The site is included within the Central Railway Station State heritage listing, Sydney Terminal and Central Railway Stations group and is listed as an item of local significance under the Sydney Local Environment Plan. The site is also in proximity to several State and local heritage items.

Block C is located on the western side of Central Station. To the north of the site is the Central Station Western forecourt currently used as a carpark and state rail bus stabling yard. To the south is a series of buildings referred to as Henry Deane Place.

Since the introduction of the Government Architect NSW's *Draft Connecting with Country Framework*, the way designers and property developers approach Country and culture in built environment projects is changing. In late 2021, TOGA engaged CIR to develop the Project's Connecting with Country Framework, which ultimately aims to govern and support the Project's ongoing approach, developments, and opportunities for Connecting with Country.

# CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY IS A HOLISTIC PROCESS THAT FOCUSES ON EMBEDDING ABORIGINAL WORLDVIEWS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH + WELLBEING OF COUNTRY

## CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK

Acknowledging that the Project was in design excellence competition phase at time of the Framework's first draft, CIR considered how best to embed Connecting with Country principles into the Project in its early stages and identified opportunities for how this approach could be implemented across the Project's lifespan.

Importantly, CIR's approach involved developing and implementing a community engagement plan to support ongoing Aboriginal engagement to ensure that the voices and aspirations of Aboriginal people and communities remain anchored in the Project.

The Project acknowledges Connecting with Country as a way of 'seeing, knowing and behaving' as opposed to simply 'doing.'

For the Project, the Framework means central consideration of Country and community as part of:

- An understanding of place and space
- A platform for elevating First Nations voices and being guided by cultural knowledge holders
- A design response
- Promoting and ensuring the health of Country
- A way of defining and understanding success
- A way of growing cultural capability as organisations and individuals

## HOW SHOULD THE FRAMEWORK BE USED?

This Framework is to be used as a resource to guide how Connecting with Country principles and approaches can be embedded throughout the Project's lifecycle. The narratives and themes of Country identified in the Framework and through previous consultation and research reports should be interwoven throughout the Project's planning package.

This extends to how the Project team understands the identity of Country at the Project site, approaches tasks, identifies design outcomes that are informed by Country, and understands how ongoing and transparent engagement fosters a greater understanding of connecting with Country.

As Connecting with Country in NSW is an iterative process characterised by continual learning and development, it is envisaged that this Framework will be reviewed, updated, and revisited as the Project progresses and as the wider Project team is further informed by key learnings and community insights.

Through this, the Framework should also serve as a reminder to all Project teams of the importance of reflecting on their work.

## KEY PROJECT COMMITMENTS TO DATE

**Engaged CIR to undertake Indigenous stakeholder engagement from inception to co-design a Connecting with Country approach with cultural knowledge holders**

**Engaged Waters Consultancy to develop an Aboriginal cultural values report relevant to the Project site**

**Included Connecting with Country as an expected design outcome in Design Excellence Competition**

**Committed to broader and ongoing community engagement**

# ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

## THIS FRAMEWORK SUMMARISES THE PROJECT'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ITS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY RESPONSE, WHICH HAS BEEN A KEY CONSIDERATION FOR THE PROJECT SINCE INCEPTION. THE FRAMEWORK IS EXPLORED THROUGH FOUR KEY DOMAINS:

### Connecting with Country – Approach

The Project followed four key stages in developing principles, process, and design concepts aligned with Connecting with Country outcomes:

- Stage 1 – Traditional Owner Engagement
- Stage 2 – Cultural Values Research
- Stage 3 – Design Excellence Competition
- Stage 4 – Broader Community Engagement

These stages are detailed further in the Framework.

### Connecting with Country – Process

The Project team's process involved a community-centric focus to assist the in building an understanding of Country and how this understanding can build a foundation for us to respond to and respect Country in all Project processes and outcomes.

### Connecting with Country – Design Opportunities

Community engagement and research resulted in three key themes that will underpin the Project's approach to realising Connecting with Country design opportunities and outcomes:

1. Gadigal Country
2. Gathering
3. Movement

These reference points will guide present and future design thinking and approaches.

### Connecting with Country – Alignment with Government Architect NSW

Following the pilot year of GANSW's *Draft Connecting with Country Framework*, there is an increased expectation to acknowledge and include Aboriginal culture, perspectives, and Country in built environment projects. As a scalable and significant project in inner Sydney, TOGA's proposed development provides the foundation to demonstrate best practice design and approaches in the Connecting with Country space. GANSW's *Framework* outlines seven principles that projects are expected to demonstrate commitments to. In order to ensure the Project remains committed to Country, we have identified opportunities for the Project under each principle which provides a roadmap for all consultants to ensure their Project approach is aligned with Country-positive outcomes.



# CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – APPROACH

## DEVELOPING THIS FRAMEWORK WAS PHASED ACROSS ACROSS FOUR KEY STAGES, WHICH INCLUDED BEGINNING AND ENDING WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Stage 1 – Traditional Owner Engagement

In October 2021, CIR undertook engagement with Traditional Owners who possess cultural authority, knowledge, and living memory of the Project site and the wider Central Precinct. Engagement during Stage 1 was undertaken to ensure that cultural knowledge and lived experience formed the basis of the Framework's key principles and process. This engagement was critical in understanding the identity of Country at the Project site, as seen through the perspectives, world views, and experiences of Aboriginal peoples. The outcomes of this engagement was used to identity key project principles to build the Project's approach to Connecting with Country.

### Stage 2 – Cultural Values Research

TOGA engaged heritage consultant, Waters Consultancy, to prepare a cultural values report that identified Aboriginal heritage significant to the Project site. This research was used to further develop the Framework. Research identified the following key pieces of Aboriginal heritage as significant to the story of Country at the Project site: traditional travel routes and pathways, the richness of Country, Cleveland Paddocks, wetlands and sand dunes, Cockle Bay, canoes and fishing, Law at the Brickfields, Devonshire Street Cemetery, Benevolent Asylum & The Stolen Generations, working life, The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, protests and marching, and Belmore Park.

### Stage 3 – Design Excellence Competition

Independent from CIR's work with TOGA, Janis Constable Consulting (**JCC**) was engaged by Bates Smart to provide cultural design advice for the Design Excellence Competition for the Project. JCC's report included an outline of some preliminary cultural considerations as they relate to First Nations communities and the Project site. The report provided advice on key considerations for embedding First Nations design elements into the overall design to support a genuine and robust Connecting with Country approach. After their successful design competition, Bates Smart and JCC worked closely with CIR to bridge the knowledge gap between our approaches and collaborate on and further develop design ideas to realise Connecting with Country outcomes.

### Stage 4 – Broader Community Engagement

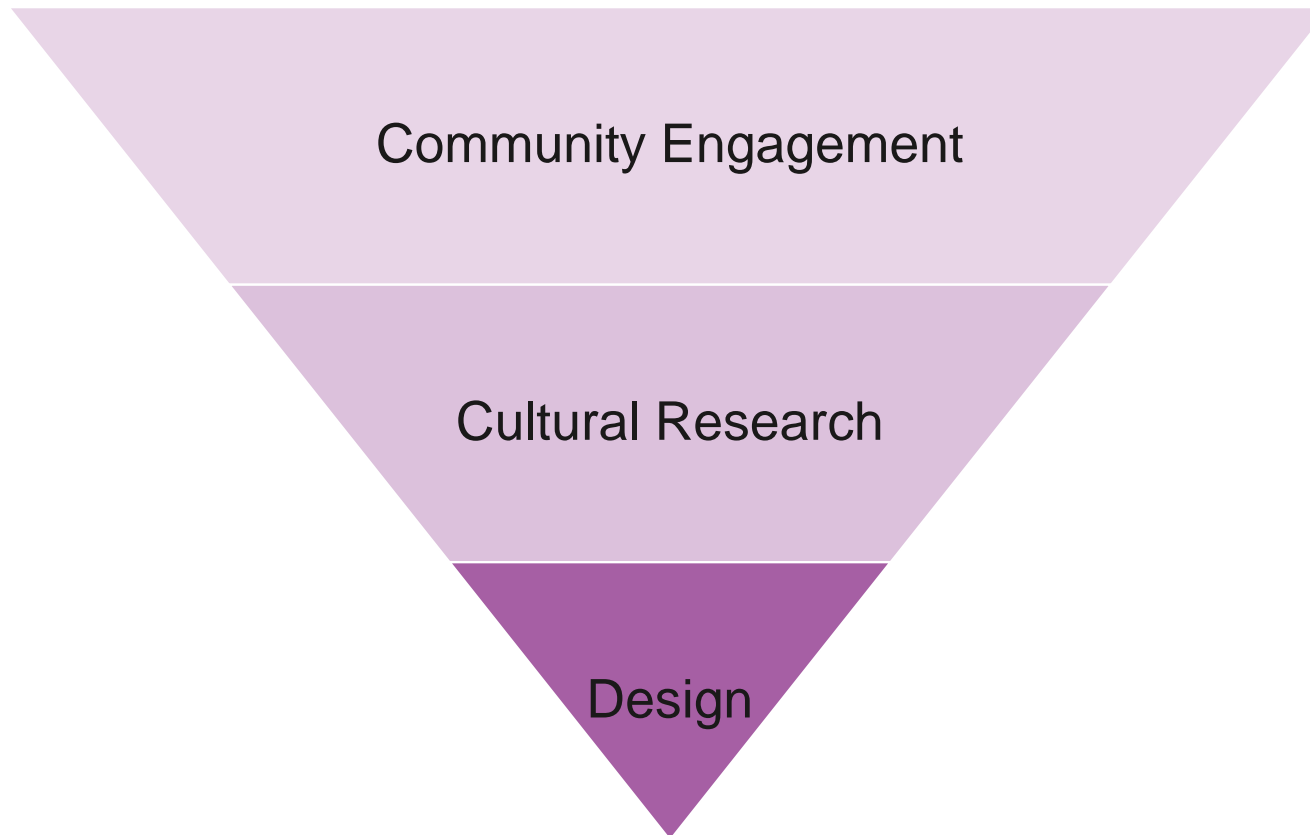
Broader community engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders was conducted from April – May 2022 to ensure authentic cultural voices and perspectives can be embedded in the design, delivery, and operational phases of the Project. The main focus of this engagement was to test the design concepts and approach to Country further developed by the design team to ensure that ongoing Connecting with Country processes and design outcomes are supported by cultural engagement and appropriate protocols. This engagement involved on a broad range of stakeholders such as local Elders, community members, community-controlled organisations, Indigenous digital businesses, Indigenous social enterprises, and relevant government agencies.

# CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – PROCESS

## ALTHOUGH CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY IS OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS A KEY DESIGN OUTCOME, IT MUST BE UNDERPINNED BY A CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND ROBUST PROCESS

The role of First Nations voices in design projects cannot be understated. As the built environment sector strives to undertake design projects that are culturally inclusive and respectful of traditional knowledges and lived experiences of First Nations peoples, the Project and its design teams understand that such design outcomes cannot be achieved in the absence of engagement. The Project has followed a Connecting with Country process that prioritised First Nations community engagement before design planning.

### AN INVERTED PYRAMID APPROACH TO CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY



# CRITICAL TO OUR PROCESS WAS UNDERSTANDING COUNTRY AT THE PROJECT SITE, WHICH BEGAN BY ASKING TRADITIONAL OWNERS THREE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

## How do we understand the story of Country?

Aboriginal people are intrinsically connected to Country, meaning nature and the landscape is a key element of Gadigal Country. Nature is understood as being the key holder of unique and sacred cultural knowledge that ultimately facilitates the connection between people and place. A stakeholder noted that, *“Nature holds source code knowledge that many Aboriginal custodians have today and are passing on to others.”*

CIR heard that the key characteristics of the Gadigal landscape that the Project should consider include:

- The elevated rocky escarpment that runs down to Sydney Harbour
- Sandstone
- Native flora and fauna

When considering the Central Precinct area more broadly, it was commented that, *“Central is truly central to Gadigal Country and was smack bang in the middle of Gadigal land – it was a massive transitional area zone for mob. Central was also in the middle of both a Women’s area and Men’s area which bordered that Kangaroo Grounds. This was also a shared area between the Gadi and the Wangal people.”*

CIR further heard that Central Precinct sits atop a giant multi-generational ecosystem, including:

- Kangaroo Grounds – which were described as a giant grass highway from Sydney Harbour to Cooks River
- East to Central – which were typified by hills and sandstone
- North – a strong hydrological influence with waterways and connections from Hyde Park and to the Tank Stream (essentially Pitt Street). Central is estimated to be sitting atop of where the Tank Stream ended

Due to this, the Project understands the importance of nature and knowledge systems at a subterranean level and that our approach to Connecting with Country should explore what is happening beyond the visible landscape. The cultural significance of the complex underground waterway systems was highlighted as being particularly important. These systems are and always have been active and critical in sustaining life above ground.

## What stories does this Country hold?

Research and stakeholder engagement revealed significant and defining moments of Aboriginal history inextricably woven into the fabric of Country at both a site and wider Central Precinct level, including:

- The Stolen Generation in relation to Central Station and Platform 1
- An abundance of Aboriginal Highways, songlines and movement patterns that intersect with the Project site
- Cleveland Paddocks (Prince Alfred Park), which was an Aboriginal camp site until the mid-19th century
- The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs
- Aboriginal employment
- Aboriginal Activism

These stories are further explored in CIR’s stakeholder engagement summary and are also heavily detailed in the Project’s Aboriginal Cultural Values Report by Waters Consultancy.

## How does Country at the Project site shape who we are becoming?

The Project understands that some of the key considerations in this regard include:

- Creating a cohesive story of Country through collaboration with other Central Precinct developers
- The transition of Central Precinct into a Tech Precinct and the opportunity to recognise Indigenous knowledge and innovation as the world’s earliest technology through design and activation
- Creating a significant public space that is welcoming and inclusive of the Australian Aboriginal historical narrative and enduring quest for representation and equality

**Following a deeper understanding of Country, the Project team developed a process that anchored Country as a key consideration for process and outcomes.**



# CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF OUR PROCESS

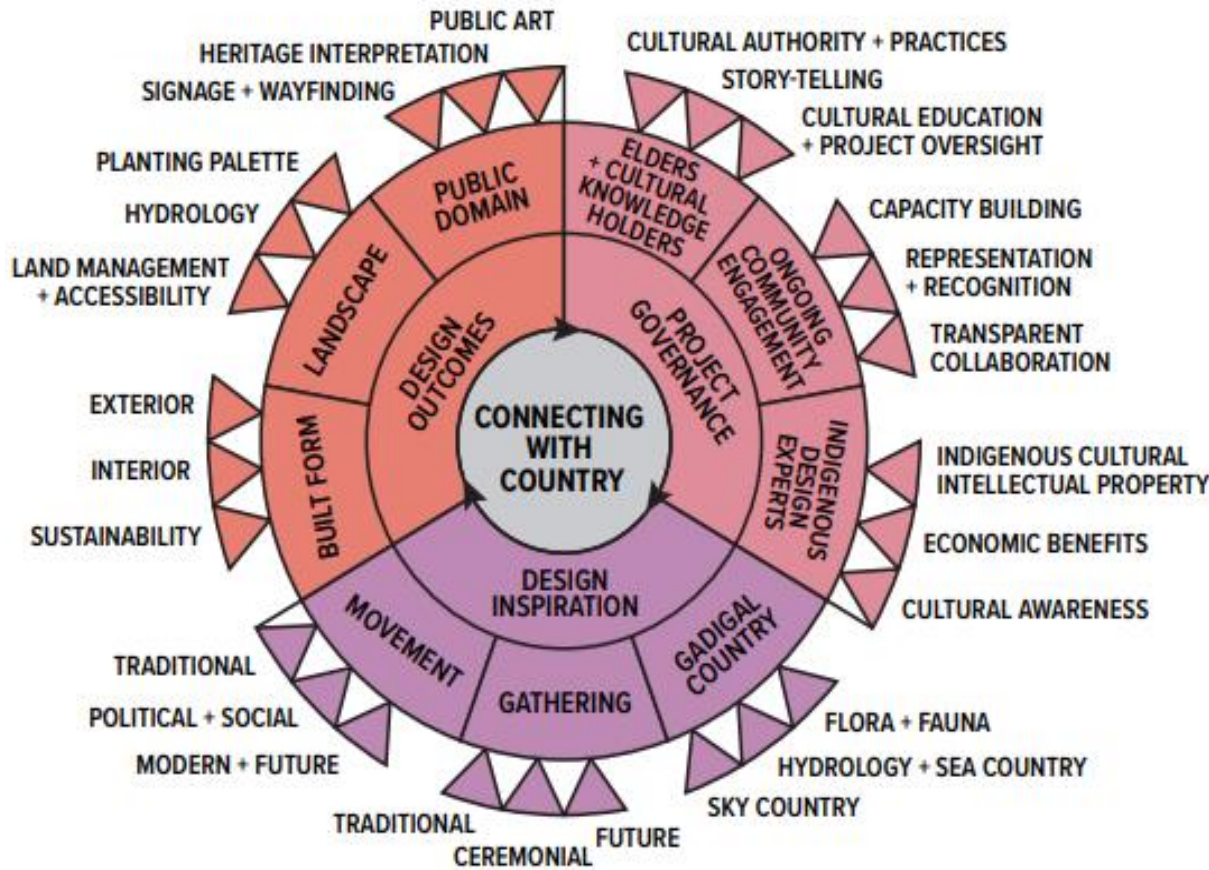


Image A – Connecting with Country Matrix

## Connecting with Country Matrix

Following engagement, we created the Connecting with Country Matrix (Image A – opposite) as a visual representation of some of the key themes that underpin our understanding and consideration of Country at the Project site, as well as a roadmap and reference point for future Project processes and outcomes.

Anchoring Country at the centre of the Framework enabled an assessment of what we conceptually understood Country as being versus what Country actually is at the Project site.

Although not reflected in the Matrix, Aboriginal past, present and future are integral and sustaining elements of the Framework. Placing Country at the centre acknowledges our understanding that everything depends on and grows from Country.

This Matrix should be used to interpret Connecting with Country as a holistic approach. The Framework itself suggests an approach that is cyclical and reliant on cultural knowledge, lived experience, and Indigenous voices.

The three 'macro anchors' of the Framework should be read in sequential order in that understanding the theoretical and practical application of each macro anchor ensures an approach that considers Country at each stage of the Project.

The Matrix ultimately asks all Project teams to begin the design process with Country and challenge any non-Indigenous understanding of Country with the lived experiences and memories of Elders, Cultural Knowledge Holders, and broader community members. Only then can the Project authentically and appropriately understand Country.

The Project's approach to Connecting with Country proposed follows three key phases: 1) Project Governance, 2) Design Inspiration, and 3) Design Outcomes. This approach ensures that all expressions of Country are supported by cultural knowledge.

# ROBUST + INCLUSIVE PROJECT GOVERNANCE IS A KEY PART OF CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

## Project Governance

There is an increasing school of thought, and subsequent expectation from various stakeholders, that Indigenous design outcomes and a proper reading and process for connecting with Country cannot be achieved in the absence of cultural knowledge holders and Indigenous voices. To this end, early engagement resulted in multiple recommendations as how to the governance of the Project could better reflect and include diverse Indigenous voices.

As the Project continues, the following governance structures will be explored:

- **Elders/Cultural Knowledge Holders:** Creating a structure such as a Central Precinct Elders-in-Residence Program to help guide all developments across Central Precinct and providing an avenue that embeds cultural knowledge and decision-making at the core all projects.
- **Ongoing Community Engagement:** Ongoing engagement is critical in not only genuine and beneficial relationship building but also in respecting Indigenous perspectives and cultural knowledge and ensuring that design outcomes are realised in culturally appropriate ways. Future engagement beyond DA submission is recommended.
- **Indigenous Design Experts:** It is becoming more commonplace for projects in the design and development sector to bring Indigenous creatives into the process from the beginning to ensure that Indigenous design perspectives and culturally appropriate ways of working and progressing can be embedded into the project. Stakeholders noted that bringing Indigenous creatives into the Project is especially important due to its size, scale, and duration. As the Gadigal people were the first clan impacted by colonization, it is critical that the Aboriginal connection, history, and stories need to be layered or acknowledged alongside the versions of dominant history which exist in the space, to create a place which can hold all those stories together. Where a project lacks Indigenous creatives, it is easy for the Aboriginal narrative to get lost. Indigenous creatives can often provide the key to transforming Aboriginal storytelling into design outcomes, especially when non-Indigenous design teams may feel uncomfortable in doing so. The Project will commit to identifying Indigenous creative experts to engage for future Project deliverables.

## Transparent and ongoing engagement is critical in Project Governance

Critical to the success of integrating Aboriginal voices into the Project was our robust and inclusive engagement process. Through this, we ultimately aimed to elevate cultural knowledge and lived experience and anchor these learnings as key reference points within the Project.

Given where the Project is currently at in its lifecycle, CIR asserts that prioritising the knowledge and experiences of Traditional Owners at the early stage was critical in developing the Framework and establishing a baseline of success for the Project team.

This is not to suggest an engagement process that is exclusionary or one that disregards other Indigenous stakeholders. Rather, the process of Connecting with Country in the first instance relies on taking a place-based approach and embedding cultural knowledge, lived experience, living memory, and stories of Country from Traditional Owners into modern place-making.

CIR's engagement was used to explore and understand the past, present and future identities of Country relevant to the Project site and broader Sydney community. Through these engagement learnings, we aimed to understand critical moments of Aboriginal past and present to help shape design outcomes and processes that can enable a vibrant and respectful exploration of Country in built form and landscape outcomes for the Project.

Importantly, the engagement undertaken by CIR to develop the Framework should be seen as the beginning in a series of long conversations between the Project and First Nations stakeholders.

Both CIR and stakeholders encourage all Project consultants to form their own relationships with relevant and appropriate First Nations community members to help guide and shape their work.

Rather than siloing Project outcomes, all Project team members should aim to share and distribute knowledge between themselves, including neighbouring developments across Central Precinct.

Knowledge-sharing can be intimate and help bond people together, and knowledge is often contained within the cultural expression of many First Nations peoples. The challenge for project teams – including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members – is to step outside their own cultural comfort zone and be open to other ways of recognising and receiving knowledge.

# CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

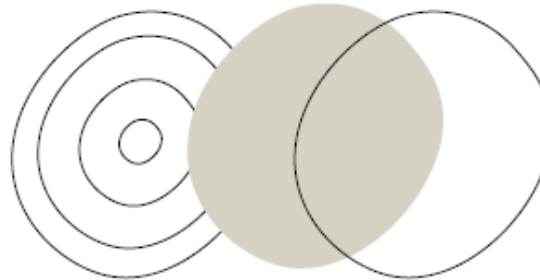
# DESIGN INSPIRATION

# ENGAGEMENT REVEALED THREE KEY THEMES TO UNDERPIN THE PROJECT'S DESIGN INSPIRATION



Gadigal Country

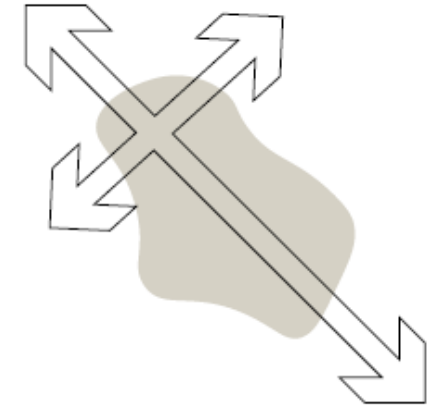
The features of the Gadigal landscape that were highlighted that could be included in design thinking include native flora and fauna, hydrology and Sea Country, and Sky Country. The Project design should challenge the notion of Country as being purely landscape and encompass all facets and organisms of Country. An Elder noted that, "Country is also what you can't see – how are these stories being told?"



Gathering

Large parts of Country around the Project site were used for gathering purposes for both ceremonial and social reasons. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of gathering as a theme relevant to understanding Country at Central Precinct and encouraged the Project to explore how the design could create spaces for gathering, and further, how such gathering spaces could facilitate access to Country.

Through exploring this concept further, community members believe the gathering places offers ample opportunities for cultural education through public art, ceremony, ritual, and Indigenous concepts of space. Stakeholders asked, 'if this space encourages people to gather and reflect, what do we want the surrounding environment to turn their minds to? What are we trying to achieve? There is a distinct difference between doing something because it looks nice and doing something because it tells a story and challenges the way people think.'



Movement

- Movement is a key part of the Project site and wider Central Precinct when considering Traditional Occupation, Aboriginal Highways, modern movement corridors, as well as the future functionality of the Henry Deane Plaza. Other insights around the significance of movement in Aboriginal culture include:
- Native flora: Certain species of native wattle were used as indicators to mark the travel of whales as well as the seasonal travel of Gadi people,
  - Migration of Aboriginal people to Sydney
- Sky Country and Aboriginal Astronomy: An Elder shared that, "The moon was seen to influence the tides which signalled to the Gadi people when certain fish and plants were available to hunt and gather. Tracking of the season as they moved throughout the year was also heavily influenced by the astronomy."



# GADIGAL COUNTRY, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE ARE PRIORITISED AS A KEY DESIGN INFLUENCE

Due to the place-based significance of Aboriginal culture, stakeholders were emphatic when recommending that the Project's Connecting with Country approach be anchored in Gadigal Country and culture. Through exploring all facets of Country – native flora and fauna, Sky Country, Sea Country, subterranean connections, and traditional Gadigal customs and rituals – we are presented with an opportunity to explore Country through a hyperlocal and restorative approach.

## KEY SOURCES OF DESIGN INSPIRATION

**Gadigal Country.** As identified earlier in the Framework, the Project understands that significant features of Gadigal Country identified by stakeholders include the elevated rocky escarpment that runs down to Sydney Harbour, sandstone as a resource and building block, and native flora and fauna. The cultural significance of the complex underground waterway systems was also highlighted as being particularly important to the landscape. These systems are and always have been active and critical in sustaining life above ground. Community members expressed that this interconnected system of underground waterways connects Central Precinct to the surrounding areas, including Moore Park, Hyde Park, and Centennial Park, in which it was said that hanging swamps and boars at these sites were sustained by waterways interconnected with Central Precinct.

**Gadigal Identity.** Stakeholders raised the importance of the Gadigal people as integral to understanding Gadigal Country and said that the 'Gadigal Identity' can be understood and explored that the following cultural characteristics: Sunrise people, Moonrise people, Sandstone people, Stories of whale dreaming, and Dreaming stories of mother earth through fig trees, paperbark trees, angophora trees, ironbark trees. A stakeholder noted that, *"A Gadigal Identity is explicit to Gadigal Country, and I identify as an extension of the land on which Sydney sits. My Totems include the Xanthorrhoea and the Sydney sand goanna. Whales are particularly central to Gadigal women ... But we don't see these stories in modern Sydney. It is an odd thing to feel so connected to a place but not having any visual of physical reflection of this in our landscape."* The Project will continue to explore how the Gadigal Identity can be reflected and realised in the design in an authentic and culturally appropriate way.

**Gadigal Culture.** Some key elements of Gadigal culture identified by stakeholders include daily rituals, such as living by the sun rise and sun sets, being guided across the landscape by Sky Country, using native flora (such as wattle) to track movements of fauna, and Welcomes to Country for disparate language groups.



Image B – Joseph Lycett, *Fishing by Moonlight*, C1817

# THE PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGES CENTRAL PRECINCT AS A SITE OF GATHERING + CONNECTION

The Central Precinct area was, and remains, a connecting place for the local Aboriginal community. Prior to colonization, Aboriginal people gathered nearby this site to conduct trade, perform ceremony and rituals, and gather for recreation activities. The Project commits to exploring this sense of connection through our design.

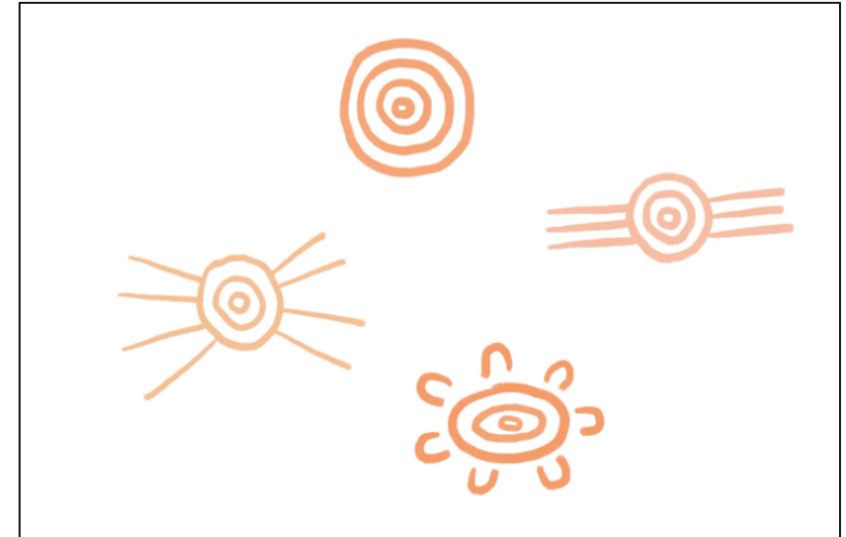
## THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GATHERING + CONNECTION AT CENTRAL PRECINCT

Large parts of Country around the Project site were used for gathering purposes for ceremonial and social reasons. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of gathering as a theme relevant to understanding Country across all areas of Central Precinct and encouraged the Project to explore how the design could create spaces for gathering, and further, how such gathering spaces could facilitate access to Country.

When the railway system was established, Aboriginal people (who were allowed to access to the railway), would travel to Sydney to meet or find family, look for work, and access services. It was also the place where children, who had been removed from their families, were sent on trains to children's homes, orphanages or to work for landowners as indentured labourers. In the middle of the 1900s, Central was the place where Aboriginal men arrived from across NSW, seeking work with the railways or the nearby wharves. Central Precinct remains an important hub for meeting and passing through for Aboriginal people.

Given the significance of the Central Precinct area as a meeting place for Aboriginal people, research was undertaken to investigate potential designs that could represent meeting places. Common Ground, a First Nations initiative promoting cultural storytelling, explain that *“meeting or connection are usually marked as a circle or set of concentric circles. These markings can symbolise a bonfire, campsite or waterhole. Parallel lines connecting circles usually illustrate a journey of some kind, whereby travellers stop at a series of locations.”*

The Project could explore designs that include or reinterpret symbols and representations for travelling, journeys, movement and meeting (like in **Image C** opposite). These symbols could be embedded in the design of the structure of building, in landscape design or in the interior design of the buildings i.e., fabrics, walls, ceilings etc. The Project will also explore opportunities to develop spaces for gathering and reflection.



**Image C – Symbols for gathering and connection**

Through exploring the concept of gathering and connection in design, community members believe that gathering places offer ample opportunities for cultural education through public art, ceremony, ritual, and Indigenous concepts of space.

Stakeholders asked, *“if this space encourages people to gather and reflect, what do we want the surrounding environment to turn their minds to? What are we trying to achieve? There is a distinct difference between doing something because it looks nice and doing something because it tells a story and challenges the way people think.”*

# THROUGH RESEARCH + CONSULTATION, THE CONCEPT OF MESSAGE STICKS FOUND ITS WAY INTO THE PROJECT'S DESIGN INSPIRATION

## MESSAGE STICKS

A consideration relating to the connection of the site is its purpose – for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous history – and specifically trading and communications. Trade and communications have always played a critical role in the lives of First Nations peoples. People from near and distant Countries would walk many days and weeks to trade with other nations at Central Precinct and carry messages announcing a range of information such as upcoming ceremonies, marriages, births and deaths, seasonal events – and even the coming of the Europeans.

The main way messages were conveyed was via a message stick. Message sticks relayed formal and informal messages between groups including between local groups, First Nation clans and other language groups. Message sticks aided oral communication, providing prompts for the carrier – through symbols that denoted the information, and importantly could be translated by different language groups.

A design consideration was to reflect the significance of the Parcels Post building as a key source of communications, through the integration of First Nations traditional forms of communication – the message stick. An example of incorporating a message stick design into modern landscape design are the bronze sculptures (in **Image D** below) created by Nunga artist Barry McGuire, located on the boardwalk around Perth's Optus Stadium.



*Image D – Message stick installation, Barry McGuire, Optus Stadium, Perth*

*Image E – Project tower design, Bates Smart*



In **Image E** above, the primary tower forms were inspired by the message sticks on ideas of communication. The design team will continue to explore how the Project can amplify the communicative role of this building as a marker on ancient and contemporary paths. Through atmosphere, environment, and ceremonial prompts, the Project aims to forge a connection with Country across the site.



## THE PROJECT SITE INTERSECTS WITH COMMON TRAVELLING ROUTES FOR ABORIGINAL CLANS

Stakeholder consultations revealed the important role that the entire Central Precinct area played in relation to the mobility of Aboriginal people, both historically and today. Train journeys taken from Central Station were often a conduit to Country to allow Aboriginal people to return to both their own, and other people's Country for specific celebrations and responsibilities. As the Project site includes a significant movement corridor and connector to other parts of the city, the Project's design and Connecting with Country approach will aim to explore design opportunities that prioritise and explore movement in both functional and creative expressions.

### MOVEMENT + TRAVEL

Movement and travelling to place remains a significant aspect of the area. The symbol (**Image F** opposite) is commonly used in First Nations art and communications to denote travelling between two places.

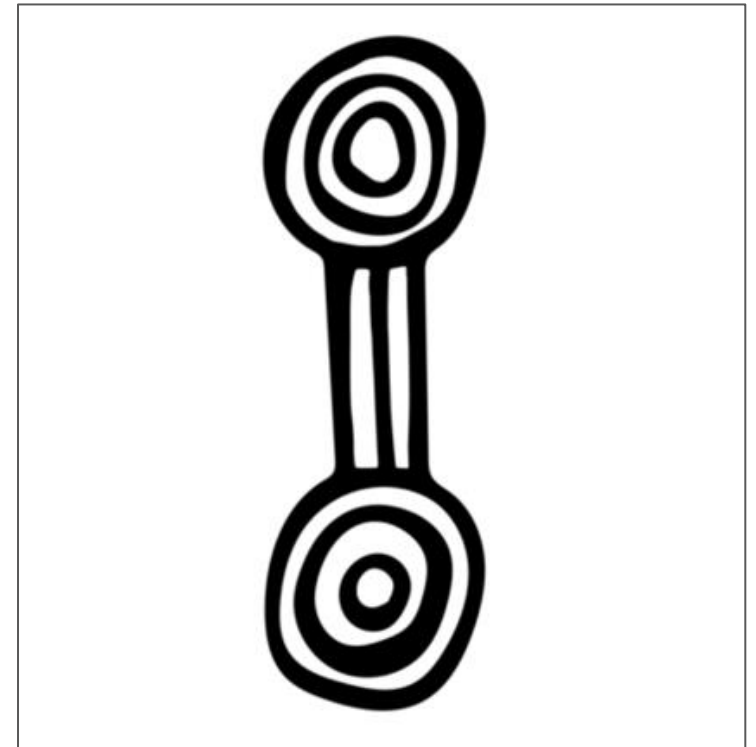
A local Elder provided the concept of "Aboriginal highways", especially in relation to the routes and paths that Aboriginal people tracked and camped along. It was provided that these "highways" could likely be mapped out and that they would follow similar routes to major road and railway systems as Aboriginal people guided early colonists through their Country.

One of the most common routes traversed by Aboriginal people was George Street which led to Warrane – a key focus point for access to water, food, and recreational activities. Elders noted that further research is likely required to unlock the history and common routes travelled by Aboriginal people. Elders also revealed that mob traditionally traversed to Waterloo to conduct men's business.

Stakeholders also reported that Aboriginal people have historically used the stars and astronomy to aid in travel and navigation across Country. Stakeholders also provided comments on stories of the milky way in Aboriginal astronomy. Common amongst different tribal groups included Emu Dreaming and the 'Emu in the Sky', whose constellation of dark clouds told stories of the sun, moon, Orion, and the Pleiades. The setting and rising of certain stars were believed to have informed Aboriginal people of ideal harvest times for certain food and plants, and they believed there to be a strong relationship between the sun and mood and the tided of oceans.

Seasonal travel for different language groups also supported an often transient lifestyle, which stakeholders said could provide design inspiration along the themes of semi-permanence or temporary.

Stakeholders further suggested that movement could be explored artistically, through Indigenous artworks and creative installations, but also more abstract, through water design and features, which would also serve to acknowledge the role and importance of Sea Country in Gadigal life.



**Image F – Straight lines between two sites in Aboriginal paintings generally represent people travelling between the two places**

# DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



# REINTRODUCING NATIVE FLORA AND RESTORING FORGOTTEN LANDSCAPES PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECONNECT WITH COUNTRY IN A DEEP AND EXPLORATORY WAY

Landscape design is an integral part of Connecting with Country. By reconnecting with forgotten landscapes and creating spaces that enable Country to speak for Herself, we are allowing for modern and new connections between people and space to be made.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURE, WATER, AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Stakeholders reinforced that the landscape design for the Project should ideally reflect First Nations knowledge including knowledge about native plants, their uses and location. The archaeological report undertaken for the Project site indicates that for the first twenty years of the colony, the area where Central Station is now located was not developed and consisted primarily of scrub-covered shifting sand dunes, wetlands, sandstone plateau and shale cap which created farming and drainage issues.

First Nations botanist Renee Cawthorne from the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney recommended that the landscape design should include grass trees as *Gadigal* means *people of the grass trees*.

The Gadigal were a group of Indigenous Australians whose traditional lands are located in what is now the city of Sydney. Before being named Sydney in the 1770s, the land was originally called 'Cadi'. 'Gal' means people, so the Gadigal literally means the people of Cadi. The name Cadi comes from the grass tree species *Xanthorrhoea*, a native plant that local Aboriginal communities would make sections of spear shaft from the stems and glue together with the resin. It was also used as a food as the base of the leaf can be eaten raw or cooked, and the plant produces a resin that can be used as an adhesive. Parts of the tree are highly valued in women's practices, as an aid during childbirth.

Other plants important to Gadigal were the Golden and Black Wattle. Golden Wattle was important to Gadigal and other nearby group, as its flowering signified that the whales are migrating to mate, and this means that the mullet are ready to be caught.

Black Wattle was an important resource for Aboriginal people, and endemic to the Sydney area. The tree was used for food (its flowers being used as a flour like substance), bark and leaves used as medicine and for smoking ceremony, its wood being used for weapons, tools and canoes.

Other plants important to Gadigal are Club Rushes – a native tussock grass and *Lomandras* whose leaves were used to make nets and baskets. The Gynea Lily (*Kai'mia*) was used to make a sweet drink, and its flowering also heralded the passing of whales in the Warrane (Sydney Harbour). Flannel flower was also prolific in the area and was used to make a tea to soothe grief and plays an important role in Sorry Business. Other specific recommendations for the planting palette include the eastern suburb banksia scrub, trees including *staphelia*, *xanthorrhoea johnsonii* and *media*.

Water is essential to Country. It is an element that heals and nourishes. It holds history and future. It tells the story of Aboriginal people, it is the memory of truth. It is important therefore that the landscape incorporate water into the design and one that will reflect the meaning of water to Aboriginal people. This feature can also reflect that although there has been tonnes of concrete and bricks placed on the ground to build the metropolis of Sydney, water continues to run underground, it continues to breathe and nourish. Stakeholders said water should be a key design consideration for the Project's connecting with Country approach.

# CULTURAL SAFETY + INCLUSION ARE KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS IN OUR CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY APPROACH

Cultural safety and inclusion are key parts of Connecting with Country. Through enabling a sense of security and safety between person and space, we allow people to form greater connections with places which in turn increases rates of space activation, positive experiences, and more sustainable and behavioral uses of space.

## EXPLORING CULTURALLY SAFE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Discussions with First Nations Disability Network (**FNDN**) heard that if a space is culturally safe and welcoming for an Aboriginal person with a disability, it will be safe and welcoming for anyone with a disability. There is no word for disability in any Aboriginal language. People with a disability were always included in the daily life of the group, and while they might not have been able to hunt or fish, they were responsible for other tasks, like child minding or preparing food.

Some suggestions put forward by FNDN in relation to design and features included telling stories in braille or describing design in braille, or the use of QR codes could be used to provide more detail of artwork or other design features. FNDN also advised that for the performance space area ensure people using wheelchairs and people of shorter stature be provided with opportunities to view performances through easily accessible viewing platforms.

A further suggestion was that for any seating with tables should provide space for people using wheelchairs to comfortably sit and place their chair.

The use of colour was also discussed with FNDN recommending that a subtle colour-palette be used, such as the earth colours of ochre and sandstone, eucalyptus and yellows of wattle can provide a soothing environment milieu.

Regarding culturally safe design, stakeholders unanimously noted that creating a space that feels safe and welcoming should be a key consideration, and that this impinges on how comfortable Indigenous people feel in accessing the space, and whether they feel a sense of ownership over the space. The concept of safety was a common thread across consultations with stakeholders commenting that design of both public and private spaces should allow all people to feel culturally, spiritually, and physically safe.

Stakeholders discussed that critical to ensuring the Project culminates in spaces that feel accessible, safe, and welcoming for First Nations people is to include visible elements of local Aboriginal culture such as flags, totems, Aboriginal artwork, native flora, and other creative expressions. CIR heard that culture being publicly and visually acknowledged typically results in Indigenous people feeling more culturally, spiritually, and physically safe. Stakeholders were further unanimous in their agreement that public spaces must include an acknowledgement of Traditional Owners as a fundamental way to facilitate safety and respect for Country and culture.

Regarding the concept of ownership of a public space, stakeholders noted that ownership is not meant in its traditional sense, but rather through a sense of belonging to the space and feeling free to practice culture and ceremony at the site.

As the Project continues to be developed, team members commit to exploring and defining what cultural safety means as a Project outcome and embedding those considerations into design processes and outcomes as is relevant and appropriate.

# DESIGN OUTCOMES

## THE PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGES THE IMPORTANCE OF APPLYING CONCEPTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF COUNTRY ACROSS ALL DESIGN OUTCOMES

For culturally appropriate design outcomes to be realised in the Project, it is critical that Country is explored beyond typical landscape outcomes. The history between Indigenous people and urban design is fractured as is the historical exclusion of Indigenous voices in these processes. There is an enduring and damaging narrative (although decreasing in recent years) that Indigenous perspectives are incompatible with the built environment. This history is one that the Government Architect NSW's *Draft Connecting with Country Framework* is trying to revise. As such, the Project has challenged itself to explore ways that all design outcomes and propositions can include Indigenous voices, perspectives, and histories.

### EXPLORING DESIGN OUTCOMES ACROSS THREE PLANES

**Built form.** With a particular focus on the exterior, interior, and sustainability features of the Project, stakeholders said it is essential that the Project team consider how the design first and foremost heals Country before exploring other cultural design outcomes. Other key considerations here include building materials, the internal design of the buildings and other opportunities to connect with Country (such as access to Sky Country through design of open roof tops) and the naming of office rooms in local language.

**Landscape.** Stakeholders challenged the Project team to explore a native planting palette, the importance of hydrology and water in the Gadigal landscape and the use of materials in the landscape design to connect with Country. Stakeholders identified native species such as local wattle species (many of which were traditionally used as indicators to mark the travel of whales as well as the seasonal travel of Gadi people. 20 species of wattle were also consumed as local bush food), the eastern suburb banksia scrub, and trees including styphelia, xanthorrhoea johnsonii, xanthorrhoea media. Other considerations in landscape design is how can the design encourage access to land management practices and Country more broadly.

**Public Domain.** Stakeholders want the Project to explore ways in which to ensure public elements of the design “stamp a Gadigal seal across the Precinct.” In achieving this it was recommended that Project teams explore creative and impactful outcomes in the heritage interpretation, public art, and signage and wayfinding domains. Opportunities for Indigenous retail spaces or cultural hubs were also suggested by stakeholders.

# THE FRAMEWORK ACKNOWLEDGES THE IMPORTANCE OF CO-DESIGN IN CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY AT BOTH A PROJECT AND PRECINCT LEVEL

Co-design takes the relationship between the architect, property developer and First Nations stakeholders beyond consultation, developing into a true design partnership, that will see First Nations stakeholders have a continuing, personal, and cultural relationship with the Project site.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CO-DESIGN

For too long, First Nations peoples have shared their knowledge and experience with those who wish to understand culture for a range of reasons but have not been included in the total life cycle of the project. Knowledge is taken and adapted (and often corrupted) by often well-intentioned parties but the resulting product (e.g., policy, program, building) does not reflect the intentions of the First Nations stakeholders.

In a NSW Government report on the outcome of co-design projects with First Nations groups, co-design is described as: *“A philosophical and practical shift away from practice as usual for both parties and requires a great deal of trust in the initial stages. Co-design is in this sense a way of thinking, rather than an event, that requires a different mind-set and a new framework for working toward a solution.”*

Although the Project is a private project that contains some public spaces, entering into a co-design partnership with First Nations stakeholders for relevant design components will ideally render the final result a culturally safe and inclusive space for everyone, and one where First Nations stakeholders can have an ongoing relationship with the space. Stakeholders also noted that they are often engaged too late in the design process and that they are frustrated at how often completed and sophisticated designs and ideas are presented to them during consultation processes.

CIR heard, *“how can something truly reflect us if we Aboriginal people don’t have input from day one? We are sick and tired being asking for our approval or thoughts on a design that has been put together without speaking to community first. This should be a collaborative process – not an approval process. Designers don’t speak for, or represent community.”* As the Project progresses with future design phases, consultants and design teams will work closely with relevant Indigenous stakeholders and community members to realise appropriate connecting with Country processes and outcomes.

## CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – A PRECINCT-WIDE APPROACH

Stakeholders were quick to observe that the Connecting with Country space in Sydney is a “busy one”. With multiple developments planned for the Western Gateway Sub-Precinct (Atlassian, Dexu and Frasers, and TOGA), as well as the Central Precinct more broadly, stakeholders noted that all of these projects are being developed on the same part of Gadigal Country. From an Aboriginal worldview and concept of space, the sites across Central Precinct are not disconnected. Song lines, Aboriginal highways, culture, heritage, stories, lore, and history mapped across these sites connect them to each other. The design and development sector has now reached a level of cultural maturity where conversations through the built environment can be facilitated in ways that are cohesive and collaborative rather than siloed. This presents opportunities for all Precinct proponents through two key considerations: 1) How can all developments across Central Precinct be co-designed in the context of a Precinct-wide renewal of Country, regardless of developer?, and 2) What stories and concepts can be shared and continued across all projects? What stories and parts of culture are site-specific?

Stakeholders steadfastly recommended, with support from CIR, that all project proponents within Central Precinct form a co-ordinated approach to Connecting with Country in order to: 1) Tell the story of Country at the Precinct in a continuous thread, and 2) Ease the burden of stakeholder fatigue on Elders and Knowledge Holders. Stakeholders suggested that all developers in Central Precinct form an Indigenous Advisory Committee to oversee and implement a Precinct-wide approach to Connecting with Country.



# THE DESIGN TEAM IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING DESIGN PROMPTS TO INFORM FUTURE DESIGN OUTCOMES – THESE PROMPTS WERE ENDORSED BY STAKEHOLDERS, WHO BELIEVED THEM TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF GADIGAL COUNTRY, CULTURE, AND CEREMONY

## Culture + Environment



## Atmosphere + Environment





# THE DESIGN TEAM IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING DESIGN PROMPTS TO INFORM FUTURE DESIGN OUTCOMES – THESE PROMPTS WERE ENDORSED BY STAKEHOLDERS, WHO BELIEVED THEM TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF GADIGAL COUNTRY, CULTURE, AND CEREMONY

Lights + Narrative



Community + Gathering





## THE DESIGN TEAM IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING DESIGN PROMPTS TO INFORM FUTURE DESIGN OUTCOMES – THESE PROMPTS WERE ENDORSED BY STAKEHOLDERS, WHO BELIEVED THEM TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF GADIGAL COUNTRY, CULTURE, AND CEREMONY

Ceremony (Smoke)



Communication (Totems)





## THE DESIGN TEAM IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING DESIGN PROMPTS TO INFORM FUTURE DESIGN OUTCOMES – THESE PROMPTS WERE ENDORSED BY STAKEHOLDERS, WHO BELIEVED THEM TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF GADIGAL COUNTRY, CULTURE, AND CEREMONY

Movement (Aboriginal Highways)



Movement (Water)





## THE DESIGN TEAM IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING DESIGN PROMPTS TO INFORM FUTURE DESIGN OUTCOMES – THESE PROMPTS WERE ENDORSED BY STAKEHOLDERS, WHO BELIEVED THEM TO PROVIDE INNOVATIVE AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF GADIGAL COUNTRY, CULTURE, AND CEREMONY

Nature



Temporal/Ephemeral Atmosphere



# **CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NSW**



# WE ARE COMMITTING TO COUNTRY THROUGH ALIGNING THE PROJECT WITH THE GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NSW CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

Connecting with Country is viewed as a way of ‘seeing, knowing and behaving’ as opposed to simply ‘doing.’ A process-based approach, Connecting with Country enables all project proponents to make Country, culture, and community central considerations for any project. This allows organisations and individuals to explore Country through various mediums including understandings of place and space, design responses, engaging with First Nations stakeholders, a renewed way of defining and understanding success, and growth in cultural capability. Ways in which this Project can commit to and align with the seven principles outlined in GANSW’s Connecting with Country Framework are details on proceeding pages.

## EXPLANATION OF THE APPROACH TO THE CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

The Framework outlines the seven (7) key principles which will guide the Project approach through its lifespan:

1. We will respect the rights of Aboriginal peoples to Indigenous cultural intellectual property, and we will support the right of Country to be cared for.
2. We will prioritise Aboriginal people’s relationship to Country, and their cultural protocols, through education and enterprise by and for Aboriginal people.
3. We will prioritise financial and economic benefits to the Country where we are working, and by extension to the Traditional Custodians of that Country.
4. We will share 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.
5. We will respect the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, but we will prioritise the local, place-specific cultural identity of the Country we’re working on. Aboriginal people will determine the representation of their cultural materials, customs, and knowledge.
6. We will prioritise recognition and responsibility of Aboriginal people, supporting capacity building across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and across government project teams.
7. We will support Aboriginal people to continue their practices of managing land, water, and air through their ongoing reciprocal relationships with Country. We will create opportunities for traditional first cultures to flourish.

This Framework adapts and expands the principles from the Government Architect NSW’s *Draft Connecting with Country Framework*, to further explore how they may be both embedded and realised in relation to:

- What they mean for how the Project team operates and what it commits to
- What they mean for design considerations

It is recommended that all Project and design teams review the principles and corresponding commitments to ensure that future Project approaches are aligned with Country-positive outcomes.

# PRINCIPLE 1 – WE WILL RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES TO INDIGENOUS CULTURAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND WE WILL SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF COUNTRY TO BE CARED FOR

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Connect with Country through first languages in collaboration with local community groups and their recognised Aboriginal knowledge-holders	The team commits to working with Traditional Knowledge holders and to prioritising traditional knowledge of the contemporary site	<p>The project will consider how first languages could contribute to a stronger sense of cultural inclusion and space through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Architecture</li> <li>• Public art</li> <li>• Featured landscapes</li> </ul>
Incorporate shared histories of cultural landscapes into Project design principles	The team commits to building relationships with Aboriginal peoples and considering the range and diversity of Aboriginal stakeholders who may have a voice in this project	The project will consider how to create spaces and places for multiple stories, voices, and histories through design approaches

## PRINCIPLE 2 – WE WILL PRIORITISE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE’S RELATIONSHIP TO COUNTRY, AND THEIR CULTURAL PROTOCOLS, THROUGH EDUCATION AND ENTERPRISE BY AND FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Connect with Country by engaging with, and responding to, cultural practices led by community groups and their recognised Aboriginal knowledge-holders with spiritual links to Country	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing on consultation outcomes from previous activity to inform the approach where direct engagement isn’t possible</li> <li>• Elevating the role of Aboriginal knowledge holders in advising on how we respond to cultural practices</li> <li>• Spending time with knowledge holders to learn about cultural practices (<i>where appropriate</i>) in a two-way learning relationship</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider how to respond to cultural practices by potentially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating sacred and quiet places and explore the concept of Keeping Places</li> <li>• Creating spaces for contemporary and emerging practices</li> <li>• Acknowledging the role of water and its significance in the design approach as way to encourage places to be used for gathering and communicating</li> </ul>

## PRINCIPLE 3 – WE WILL PRIORITISE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE COUNTRY WHERE WE ARE WORKING, AND BY EXTENSION TO THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THAT COUNTRY

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Include impacts to Country and culture when evaluating economic, environmental, and social benefits and disadvantages of the project	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly outlining where the financial and economic benefit is to Country (beyond engagement fees) and how it can support Traditional Owners and knowledge holders gain from this development.</li> <li>Establishing a governance model where those who have authority to speak for Country are engaged in key decisions</li> <li>Ensuring that Country is left strong than it was before through the project by including Country as a key consideration in any formal approaches to risk management</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider how to embed principles of environmental sustainability in the design including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoring native plants to the precinct and 'rewilding'</li> <li>Consider how to build in more connectivity through the precincts- how can areas</li> </ul>
Ensure financial benefits of the project are shared with community	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering how any project based and future developments/activities could extend their benefit sharing with community</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider how typological opportunities and settings can facilitate enterprise and self-determination</p>

## PRINCIPLE 4 – WE WILL SHARE 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

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Develop indicators to measure impacts to Country and culture during project formation	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering and learning what success looks like in terms of the health and wellbeing of Country</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider how to support the health and wellbeing of Country throughout the project. This may be through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bringing back native plant life through regenerating and creating green spaces</li> <li>Celebrating the significance of water in the design</li> </ul>

## PRINCIPLE 5 – WE WILL RESPECT THE DIVERSITY OF ABORIGINAL CULTURES, BUT WE WILL PRIORITISE THE LOCAL, PLACE-SPECIFIC CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE COUNTRY WE'RE WORKING ON. ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WILL DETERMINE THE REPRESENTATION OF THEIR CULTURAL MATERIALS, CUSTOMS, AND KNOWLEDGE

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Build deeper relationships with First Nations stakeholders communities and incorporate enterprise opportunities for Aboriginal businesses (local and beyond, existing and emerging) at all stages through the Project life cycle, including future opportunities	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing engagement as early as possible with community members and relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Setting up relationships that are respectful (i.e. moving beyond just consultation to 'active listening')</li> <li>• Considering how Aboriginal business may be engaged through the project. For example: employment during construction and operation of the various rail related buildings</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how the design of buildings (workplace typology) can facilitate growing entrepreneurship and business development in the Sydney CBD (particularly digital businesses)</li> <li>• Consider how these buildings may be used as community resources. For instance, how can they be designed to be family and community friendly?</li> </ul>



## PRINCIPLE 6 – WE WILL PRIORITISE RECOGNITION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING ACROSS ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES, AND ACROSS GOVERNMENT PROJECT TEAMS

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Partner with Aboriginal-owned and run businesses and professional services, from Project formation through to delivery and maintenance, to help guide design and engagement processes	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding Aboriginal governance at all stages of the project in appropriate ways (including through engaging Aboriginal consultants, businesses and community advisors)</li> <li>• Exploring how Aboriginal businesses who may be engaged throughout the project, could also play a role in maintenance</li> <li>• Listening to Aboriginal people and communities</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to elevate Aboriginal voices in design (i.e. how is this explored in creating a sense of connection across the Project site?)</li> </ul>

## PRINCIPLE 7 – WE WILL SUPPORT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO CONTINUE THEIR PRACTICES OF MANAGING LAND, WATER, AND AIR THROUGH THEIR ONGOING RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COUNTRY. WE WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRADITIONAL FIRST CULTURES TO FLOURISH

GANSW PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION	PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES	DESIGN SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES
Identify and nurture immediate and longer term opportunities to support cultural practice on Country – through the development and delivery of the Project as well as future use	<p>The team commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning about the historical, current and potential future cultural practices, that need to be considered</li> </ul>	<p>The project will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to create spaces for cultural practice to occur (by considering the space distribution and nature of spaces)</li> <li>How to create ‘meeting places’ that are inclusive and celebratory</li> </ul>

# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

## THE PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGES COUNTRY AS A HOLISTIC CONCEPT – IT IS CONNECTED TO, AND SHOULD SHAPE OTHER PROJECT OUTCOMES. BELOW ARE TWO KEY CONSIDERATIONS RAISED BY TRADITIONAL OWNERS ABOUT INCORPORATING ELEMENTS OF COUNTRY AND CULTURE THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

### Public Art Strategy

Stakeholders provided several recommendations for the Project's public art strategy, including:

- **Gadigal and Sydney artists should be involved.** All stakeholders expressed the importance of ensuring the choice of First Nations artists for being involved in the Public Art Strategy should be Gadigal of Sydney artists, and that the art should ideally be anchored in the local context. Often political in Sydney, the preference for limiting artist selection to Gadigal artists is difficult given the scarcity of Gadigal artists. The scope should be increased to also include First Nations artists with a lived experience of residing in Sydney. An Elder noted that, *"you wouldn't go to Central Australia and find art from a Gadigal artist being displayed in a public place. It's not the way it happens in our culture."*
- **Take an innovative approach to Indigenous art.** The natural world plays a significant role in the inspiration for First Nations artwork, but there was also suggestions from stakeholders to 'think beyond the expected' and enable a 'culturally immersive experience'. Stakeholders recommended liaising with institutions such as Australia Council for the Arts, Museums & Galleries NSW, and Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-Operative to explore what innovative and unique art works are happening in the First Nations art space.
- **Soundscape.** Stakeholders expressed a desire for soundscapes to be incorporated into the Project to allow opportunities to engage in a multi-sensory experience to showcase language and Aboriginal culture. The 'Edge of the Trees' installation at the Museum of Sydney (Image G adjacent) was highlighted as an example as when walking amongst the pillars in the exhibit, visitors can hear soundscapes of Indigenous voices reciting place names in the Sydney region.

### Language

Developing dual naming options in Gadigal language for new developments across Central Precinct was a sought-after outcome mirrored across all stakeholder groups. However, it was unanimously noted that this requires its own dedicated engagement process as projects around use of language are often political and complex among Indigenous stakeholders and communities.



*Image G – Edge of the Trees, Museum of Sydney*





# COX INALL RIDGEWAY

**TOGA Central**

***Western Gateway Development  
Block C – Indigenous  
Engagement Summary Report***

**May 2022**





## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This Indigenous engagement summary report has been developed by Cox Inall Ridgeway (**CIR**) for TOGA to support the Connecting with Country process for TOGA's proposed redevelopment of The Adina Hotel Sydney Central and Henry Deane Plaza (Block C) as part of the development of the Western Gateway Sub-Precinct (the **Project**).

The contents of this report contain a summary and analysis of feedback following engagement with targeted Indigenous stakeholders collected across two engagement phases from November 2021 to May 2022.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Project's Connecting with Country Framework, which has been prepared by CIR, and is dated 30 May 2022.

This document has been authored by CIR. It reflects the independent insights and analysis of CIR, not TOGA or any organisation or individual consulted for the project.

While all care has been taken by CIR to ensure information is accurate, this document may contain errors.

### Acknowledgements

CIR acknowledges and pays respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations of Australia. We acknowledge and thank the Elders, organisations, staff, and community members who participated in this project and shared their advice, knowledge, and insights.

**Date:** 30 May 2022

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# PROJECT REPORT

## 1. Background

### 1.1 About the Project

In September 2016, the NSW Government announced engagement on the potential revitalisation of Central Station to better understand what the community, customers, stakeholders and industry would like to see in the Precinct. From this early engagement piece, the project has evolved to become the Central Precinct Renewal Program (the **CPRP**).

The CPRP is an NSW Government initiative which aims to renew up to 24 hectares of Government-owned land in and around Sydney's Central Station (**Central Precinct**), the main transport interchange for the city and for NSW. The Central Precinct is located on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and holds significant social, cultural, and commercial values to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The CPRP presents an opportunity to reinvigorate the Central Precinct for the next generation through urban renewal. It includes Central Station, the broader transport interchange, and its place within, connections to, and revitalisation of the surrounding area.

Central Precinct is a State Significant Precinct (**SSP**) and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment are currently working with Transport for NSW, the City of Sydney, and the Greater Sydney Commission to transform Central SSP into a technology and innovation precinct. The first stage of planning for Central SSP is the Western Gateway Sub-Precinct, which consists of three separate development sites: Block A, B, and C. This report pertains to TOGA's proposed development of Block C, including the Adina Apartment Hotel and Henry Deane Plaza.

Block C is located at the northwestern corner of the Western Gateway sub-precinct, on the corner of Lee Street and the northern vehicle access to the precinct. Block C has an area of approximately 5,450 sqm and includes the:

- Adina Apartment Hotel building, an 8-storey building which was formerly the Parcels Post Office and is listed on the State heritage register (Lot 30 DP 880518); and
- Henry Deane Plaza, which contains 22 food, beverage, convenience retail and commercial service tenancies, and a public space used as a pedestrian thoroughfare to the Devonshire Street Tunnel, to/ from Central Station (Lot 13 DP 1062447).

The site is included within the Central Railway Station State heritage listing, Sydney Terminal and Central Railway Stations group and is listed as an item of local significance under the Sydney Local Environment Plan. The site is also in proximity to several State and local heritage items.

Block C is located on the western side of Central Station. To the north of the site is the Central Station Western forecourt currently used as a carpark and state rail bus stabling yard. To the south is a series of buildings referred to as Henry Deane Place. Opposite the site to the west is Railway Square bus interchange (on the corner of Lee and George Streets).

Vehicle access to the site is via Lee Street, with the Lee Street frontage the width of the access handle. A variety of commercial and retail uses are located within walking distance of Block C in Haymarket, Chinatown, Central Park and Surry Hills.

Block C is close to several educational institutions including Ultimo TAFE on the western side of Railway Square, the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) located further west, as well as the University of Sydney and University of Notre Dame, Broadway.

Public open space nearby includes Belmore Park and Prince Alfred Park, which is located south of the site on the opposite side of the railway corridor. Surrounding Prince Alfred Park are several high-density residential areas, including Surry Hills and Redfern.

CIR has been engaged to assist TOGA in preparing its Development Application (**DA**) for the Project. Specifically, CIR will be developing the first draft of the Connecting with Country Framework and be undertaking broader Indigenous stakeholder engagement to support the DA process and requirements. CIR will be working closely with heritage consultant, Waters Consultancy, in delivering the Connecting with Country Framework.

## 1.2 Existing engagement projects

At time of engagement, there were many projects underway in the market that have impacted the availability of stakeholders to be consulted for the Project.

To CIR's knowledge, these Projects include:

- Transport for NSW's **Redfern North Eveleigh Precinct Renewal Project**,
- Transport of NSW's **Redfern Station Upgrade – New Southern Concourse**, major construction is underway,
- Transport for NSW's **Central Precinct Renewal Project**,
- The NSW Government's planning for a NSW-focused Aboriginal cultural space at the **Barangaroo Cutaway**,
- The Aboriginal community engagement for upgrades and place making through the **Circular Quay (Warrane) Renewal Project**,
- The City of Sydney's **Eora Journey**, which has involved a project for an interpretative walk and related artworks. This project is currently at the early planning stages,
- The **City of Sydney's purchase of 119 Redfern Street**. Community consultation is expected in the coming months about aspirations for this space,
- **Atlassian Central Development**, which is currently in the design phase, and
- The **Dexus/Frasers Development**, currently in the design phase and at Stage 3 of the NSW Government's Unsolicited Proposal.

Due to the proximity of this Project in relation to other projects underway as part of the CPRP, stakeholders recommended that all proponents developing Central Precinct consider ways to collaborate on workstreams in order to both ease the risk of consultation fatigue for their stakeholders as well as create a unified design concept so that Central Precinct can embody and tell the story of a strong sense of place.

## 2. Stakeholder engagement

### 2.1 Who we spoke to

To ensure robust and cyclical engagement, CIR conducted two phases of engagement to support the Project.

Across these engagement processes, CIR engaged with a total of 21 stakeholders/organisations, including:

- 2 x representatives from the Davison family (Gadigal family)
- 2 x representatives from the Dixon family (Gadigal family)
- Aunty Margret Campbell
- 2 x local community Elders with cultural/historic connections to the Project site
- 6 x young (aged 18-25) local First Nations community members
- Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens
- First Peoples Disability Network
- Create NSW
- Tribal Warrior
- Dreamtime Southern X
- Youth Action NSW
- Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research
- City of Sydney's Indigenous Lead & Engage Team

Please note that CIR found securing consultation time with Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council increasingly difficult in recent months and that despite best efforts, this stakeholder was not available for engagement.

Phase 1 engagement was used to build the Project's draft Connecting with Country Framework. In building the Framework, CIR targeted local and Gadigal Elders and knowledge holders to embed lived experience and cultural authority into the Project. This engagement occurred in November 2021.

During Phase 1 engagement, CIR consulted with stakeholders to learn how the Project could:

- Identify opportunities to promote and celebrate Aboriginal culture, heritage, and storytelling across all stages of the Project,
- Identify Aboriginal heritage and history significant to the Project site,
- Identify opportunities and approaches for integration of Aboriginal cultural values within the preferred design plans such as through public art, heritage interpretation, landscaping, and programming for the Project,
- Build and/or support relationships between TOGA and its consultants and key Aboriginal stakeholders around the Project, and
- Embed Aboriginal perspectives and voices throughout the Project.

Following Phase 1 engagement, CIR developed a list of key project and design principles to ensure that the Project could progress forward in a way that respected and included Country and Aboriginal culture as key outcomes. The findings from Phase 1 engagement were also used to develop the Project's design response to Country.

During Phase 2 engagement, CIR sought consultation with broader stakeholders to test the Project's design concepts as well as collecting overall feedback on the Project and our proposed approach to Country. Phase 2 engagement was undertaken from April-May 2022.

## 3. What we heard

### 3.1 Feedback on the Project

The highlights and key insights collected from stakeholders are presented against three key themes:

1. Aboriginal history relevant to the Project site and wider Central Precinct,
2. Key design considerations to support a Connecting with Country approach, and
3. Process recommendations to ensure Aboriginal voices are sustained and continued throughout the Project

It is important to note that CIR has undertaken several engagement processes with these stakeholder groups across similar projects over the past 12-months. With their permission, below we have shared several high-level learnings from these engagement projects that may be useful in shaping this Project.

These learnings include:

- Where possible, develop and design projects should promote social cohesion by providing spaces for gathering, connection, exchange, opportunity, and cultural expression,
- Projects need to incorporate Country-centred planning that respects diverse communities,
- Designers, developers, and planning authorities need to balance how they honour the culture, identity, and heritage of a site's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal past, present, and future. Specifically, stakeholders have seen planning authorities preference and prioritize the non-Indigenous heritage of a site despite the design concept embodying a Country-first design approach,
- The importance of acknowledging Traditional Owners, the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, and shared history of sites is paramount in achieving successful project outcomes,
- Projects need to address planning challenges such as how to protect sacred and non-public information, housing affordability, gentrification, and design elements seen as exclusionary to the Aboriginal community,
- To be truthful and committed to reconciliation, projects need to decolonise the city by debunking the myths of Australia and telling the truth and this includes decolonising laws and behaviours,
- Projects need to provide more support for Elders and senior members of the community to pass knowledge and cultural information to shape project outcomes,
- There are significant concerns about decreasing visibility of Aboriginal people in the city driven by factors such as gentrification and decreasing Aboriginal resident population, and
- There are very few First Nations businesses, entertainment venues, cafes and restaurants, galleries, or other cultural spaces with prominent shopfronts, or located on high streets.

The proceeding pages of this report summarise and explore the key feedback heard from stakeholders for the Project. Direct quotes are presented to demonstrate insights of First Nations people in their own words. Quotes are de-identified. To present a diversity of voices no more than one quote from a community member is used in relation to any one theme.



## **Theme 1 – Aboriginal history relevant to the Project site and wider Central Precinct**

Stakeholders were asked if they had any lived experiences, memories, or knowledge of the Aboriginal history attached to both the Project site and the 24-hectares of the Central Precinct.

Stakeholders noted that it is imperative to consider the stories and history beyond site-specific Country as stories are often connected across and transcend the westernized and 'cubic' view of land and property.

While stakeholders did not provide memories of Aboriginal history specific to the Project site, consultations revealed multiple stories that demonstrate Aboriginal significance and connection to the Central Precinct. Stakeholders noted that the Central Precinct has played an important role in defining several key chapters in Australia's Aboriginal history but that there is a severe lack of these stories celebrated or recognized across the Precinct in its current design. Stakeholders expressed a desire that this Project, in addition to other proposed developments at Central Precinct, explore historical Aboriginal narratives in their designs.

Concerning specific and defining moments of Aboriginal history relative to Central Precinct, stakeholders noted that following as especially significant:

- The Stolen Generation,
- Aboriginal Highways,
- Cleveland Paddocks (Prince Alfred Park),
- Belmore Park,
- Moore Park,
- The Foundation,
- Aboriginal Employment, and
- Aboriginal Activism (the Burlington Hotel, the Day of Mourning, and the Trades Hall).

### ***The Stolen Generation***

The damaging and traumatic role that Central Station played in the history of the Stolen Generation is well documented. The information contained below is derived from a series of conversations that were held with Survivors of the Stolen Generation. These survivors asserted an ardent aspiration for their reality, truth and lived experiences to be a key priority and consideration for the Project.

CIR understands that Transport for NSW will be exploring the history of the Stolen Generation in its own design processes and that these design aspirations fall outside the ambit of TOGA's Project.

### ***Aboriginal "Highways"***

A local Elder provided the concept of "Aboriginal highways", especially in relation to the routes and paths that Aboriginal people tracked and camped along. It was provided that these "highways" could likely be mapped out and that they would follow similar routes to major road and railway systems as Aboriginal people guided early colonists through their Country.

One of the most common routes traversed by Aboriginal people was George Street which

led to Warrane – a key focus point for access to water, food, and recreational activities. Elders noted that further research is likely required to unlock the history and common routes travelled by Aboriginal people. Elders also revealed that mob traditionally traversed to Waterloo to conduct men's business.

### **Cleveland Paddocks**

*"Prince Alfred Park, earlier known as Cleveland Paddocks, was an Aboriginal camp site until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Sydney's Aboriginal people lived here, west of the city centre, until the coming of the railway in 1855 and the subsequent use of the park as the showground for the Agricultural Society. Sydney's Aboriginal population had been earlier pushed to the fringes of the city, away from their traditional camping grounds around Sydney Cove at The Domain and Woolloomooloo."*<sup>1</sup>

In 1890, the Echo Newspaper reported that, *"There are many people living who recollect when the Cleveland Paddocks, where the railway station and the exhibition building now stand, were a favourite camping place for the blacks. Then their 'corroborees' kept the few residents in Redfern awake til far into the night."*<sup>2</sup>

When queried about Cleveland Paddocks, stakeholders commented that they were aware that it was a mission for Aboriginal people and that played an important part in "trade" of food and other goods. *"Aboriginal people back then had a very subsistence lifestyle,"* said a local Elder.

### **Belmore Park**

Although not captured by the 24-hectares of Central Precinct, stakeholders commented that Belmore Park plays a key role in the natural landscape of this part of Sydney. A stakeholder noted that, *"Belmore Park was previously a big quarry site with sandstone and hardwood trees. These trees were chopped down and removed so the wood could be used to build houses for white settlers."* Stakeholders further asserted that Belmore Park was, and is used, as a regular meeting place. Community members also asserted that Belmore Park was a central place where all modern-day Aboriginal people live (such as Redfern, La Perouse, etc).

Belmore Park has been used in recent times as a gathering place for protests and small marches. An Elder noted that, *"I have seen a lot of activism and social rights movements take place at Belmore Park. From memory, the last major event was the Apology and handover in 2008. Mob came from all over for that day, and it is a significant part of our history."*

Belmore Park was also the starting and gathering point for the 1989 NAIDOC Week march through to the Domain to protest the Government's policy for mainstreaming Aboriginal services.

### **Moore Park**

Stakeholders revealed that Moore Park was traditionally used as a *"payback area"* for the Sydney local region. In Aboriginal culture, payback referred to a vendetta and the subsequent satisfaction of a grievance (such as death, wife-stealing, etc) through ritual and

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<sup>1</sup> City of Sydney, *'Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow): Sydney's Aboriginal Journey'*, published 20 October 2017, available from <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/barani-barrabugu-yesterday-tomorrow-walking-tour>

<sup>2</sup> Echo Newspaper, 12 June 1890

ceremony, which may have included gift-giving, corporal punishment or in extreme cases, death.<sup>3</sup> Elders noted that colonists knew about the area and would often go and watch the payback rituals take place.

### **The Foundation**

*“The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs was established in December 1964 to provide assistance to Aboriginal people living in Sydney. Although it was originally intended as a non-political and non-religious organisation, it soon became an important steppingstone in the push towards community-control within Sydney’s Aboriginal community. The ‘Foundo’ helped with housing, employment, education, welfare, and legal, medical and financial assistance. It was administered by Aboriginal people including Charles Perkins, Chicka Dixon and Ken Brindle, but non-Aboriginal people were also involved in its operations and helped with fundraising events including dances. The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs bought a building at 810–812 George Street for its headquarters, which was officially opened in October 1966 by Eric Willis, then the Chief Secretary of NSW. The organisation folded in 1977 due to a lack of funding and a general shift towards Aboriginal-run and administered organisations.”<sup>4</sup>*

In addition to helping Aboriginal people with housing, employment and general welfare assistance, community members reflected on the importance the Foundation from a perspective of young and often marginalised Aboriginal community members. Consultations also revealed that The Foundation played host to ‘Aboriginal Debutante Balls’, and that this tradition is what led to the NAIDOC Balls that happen today. In 1968, Prime Minister John Gorton was reported to have attended the Foundation’s Debutante Ball. Stakeholders commented that it was also common for Aboriginal bands to perform at the Foundation and that alcohol was never served.

*“The Foundo played an important role in the socialization of young Aboriginal people. Youth would primarily go out on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights for dances and to connect with each other. It really filled a gap for young Aboriginals who didn’t have many places to meet.”*

### **Aboriginal Employment**

Stakeholder consultations revealed a long history of Aboriginal employment in the Central Precinct, particularly in relation to industrial jobs. The proximity to Sydney Harbour was also said to have brought a series of industrial job opportunities for Aboriginal people.

*“The Central area is so gentrified now that I think younger people would be surprised to find out that, historically, it was a very industrial area with significant Aboriginal employment. Some of the big employers were Carlton United Brewery, the dental hospital, Francis Chocolates, the jam factory, and Australia Post. I can still vividly picture the large neon light of an arm lifting a beer on top of the brewery on Elizabeth Street...”*

Research conducted denotes a distinct lack of photos or media concerning Aboriginal people in employment in the project area. When questioned about the lack of photographic evidence of Aboriginal people working in and around the Central Precinct, a community

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<sup>3</sup> See more on Aboriginal payback: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/tribal-punishment-customary-law-payback>

<sup>4</sup> City of Sydney, ‘Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow): Sydney’s Aboriginal Journey’, published 20 October 2017, available from <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/barani-barrabugu-yesterday-tomorrow-walking-tour>

member noted, “*Aboriginal employment schemes and initiatives weren’t on any government or corporate agenda, so it’s not a surprise that there are no photos floating about. There may be some old black and whites [photos] amongst some of the old Sydney families...*”

### ***Aboriginal Activism (the Burlington Hotel, the Day of Mourning, and the Trades Hall)***

Central Precinct has played home to bouts of activism throughout modern history, with peaceful protests and marches parading down the streets lining the Central Precinct. Below are some other key activist events attached to Central Precinct.

*“It is hard for me to pinpoint a particular march or protest because I can remember participating in so many of them. Even as a young boy, and then when I was older, I would march up and down Elizabeth Street and George Street with other mob. My most vivid memory is probably protesting down Elizabeth Street in 1988 with about 30,000 people. We were marching against the bicentennial celebration, and mob were protesting in the streets, dressed in tribal gear...”*

Whilst none of the stakeholders consulted were part of the events detailed below, community members highlighted them as being significant to Aboriginal history.

#### *The Burlington Hotel*

*Aboriginal people were not free to drink in public bars in Sydney through to the 1970s. Although not upheld by law, this informal apartheid was enforced by patrons, publicans and the police. The imposition of this unofficial ban was a snub to Aboriginal people, and reflected the prevailing attitudes of non-Aboriginal people at this time. On 21 March 1965, a group of 40 Aboriginal men staged a ‘sit-in’ demonstration in the lounge of the Burlington Hotel on the corner of Hay and Sussex Streets in Haymarket. The group led by Charles Perkins and Ken Brindle was protesting against the hotel’s policy to refuse admission to Aboriginal patrons. The protest at the Burlington Hotel came a month after a group of Sydney University students took part in an event that became known as the Freedom Ride.*<sup>5</sup>

#### *The Day of Mourning<sup>6</sup>*

The Aboriginal Day of Mourning was the Indigenous response to Australia’s sesquicentenary on January 27 in 1938. It was the first national gathering of Indigenous people protesting against the prejudice and discrimination that was a daily part of their lives and marked the beginning of the modern Aboriginal political movement.

One of the events for the sesquicentenary was a re-enactment of the landing of Captain Arthur Phillip. Refusing to take part, a group of Aboriginal people met at Australia Hall (located at 150-152 Elizabeth Street) to mourn the loss of their country, their freedom and self-determination, and the deaths of so many of their kin.

One of the key organisers of the event, Jack Patten, stated that, “*We, representing the Aborigines of Australia, assembled in conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1938, this being the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Whiteman’s seizure of our country, hereby make protest against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, and we appeal to the Australian nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, we ask for a new policy which will raise our people*

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<sup>5</sup> City of Sydney, ‘Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow): Sydney’s Aboriginal Journey’, published 20 October 2017, available from <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/barani-barrabugu-yesterday-tomorrow-walking-tour>

<sup>6</sup> See more: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/day-of-mourning>

*to full citizen status and equality within the community.”*

*Trades Hall (4-10 Goulburn Street)*

When Aboriginal people began to organize politically, there were often sympathetic non-Aboriginal people to help in the struggle, some of them unionists. From the 1950s, unions and Aboriginal organisations worked closely to build momentum towards the 1967 Referendum on Citizenship Rights and Commonwealth control of Aboriginal affairs.

Unions helped Aboriginal people from regional areas to get jobs in Sydney and offered support in the education sector by financing scholarships at Tranby College.

The Builders Labourers Federation was a sponsor of the Redfern All Blacks football team, and later placed a Green Ban on the development of The Block in the early 1970s. In 1963, two Aboriginal unionists, Ray Peckham, and Valentine ‘Monty’ Maloney, launched The Aboriginal Worker newspaper, which urged Aboriginal people to ‘play an active part in their union’.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> City of Sydney, ‘*Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow): Sydney’s Aboriginal Journey*’, published 20 October 2017, available from <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/barani-barrabugu-yesterday-tomorrow-walking-tour>

## Theme 2 – Key design considerations to support a Connecting with Country approach

Stakeholders reported several considerations that could be explored to ensure the Project design reflects a place-based and culturally robust Connecting with Country approach. Specific design ideas offered by stakeholders are centered around Country and Aboriginal culture and heritage. It was suggested that designing around Country and culture ensures that the Project represents Indigenous heritage in ways that are culturally appropriate and authentic.

The design themes explored below include:

- Gadigal Country, culture, and identity,
- Anchoring the project in healing,
- Nature as knowledge holders,
- The importance of connectedness, and
- Removing cultural blindness.

Each theme, and design considerations under each theme, are explored in detail below. While all design considerations and suggestions may not be appropriate or possible to be considered in the Project's early stages, such suggestions may provide opportunities to advance the design teams' overall understanding and inclusion of Country and culture throughout the Project's lifecycle.

### ***Gadigal Country, culture, and identity***

Due to the place-based significance of Aboriginal culture, stakeholders were emphatic when recommending that the Project be anchored in Gadigal Country and culture. CIR heard including Gadigal Country in the Project design could be explored through what constitutes the 'Gadigal Identity'.

Knowledge holders shared that the Gadigal Identity is characterized by:

- Sunrise people,
- Moonrise people,
- Sandstone people,
- Stories of whale dreaming, and
- Dreaming stories of mother earth through fig trees, paperbark trees, angophora trees, ironbark trees.

Due to the limited representation of Gadigal culture across Sydney, stakeholders expressed a desire for the Project to explore a thorough, creative, and educational interpretation of Gadigal history and identity.

*"I'd love people to understand that the built environment exists on Gadigal Country. It's still breathing, minerals are all there, and so is Earth Mother's heartbeat."*

When asked about how the Gadigal Identity could be expressed in the Project's design, stakeholders suggested the following:

- Where possible, including landscaping opportunities in the design and develop a native and endemic planting palette such as local wattle species (many of which were traditionally used as indicators to mark the travel of whales as well as the

seasonal travel of Gadi people. 20 species of wattle were also consumed as local bush food), the eastern suburb banksia scrub, and trees including styphelia, xanthorrhoea johnsonii, xanthorrhoea media,

- Exploring opportunities to “*build, develop, and create from the east, as this is where our day starts and our day ends.*” This is in relation to the sun and moon rising to the east and is a key dictator in how Gadigal people lived their life. It was also suggested that this could be explored in artworks, art installations, and other creative expressions,
- Ensuring that the public art strategy for the Project includes Aboriginal artwork telling Gadigal stories created by Gadigal/Sydney artists,
- Using traditional Gadigal language for place names and wayfinding,
- Embedding water elements into the design, and
- Utilising the shapes of culturally significant fauna such as emu and kangaroo tracks in design and architecture. This could be explored through designing supporting beams to replicate the shape of these animal tracks and embedding plaques or information material highlighting the inspiration of native fauna and any significant stories surrounding these animals.

### ***Anchoring the project in healing***

Stakeholders noted that the project should be anchored in healing, which is a regularly sought outcome from First Nations stakeholders in all projects. Due to the national reconciliation agenda and the lag in Australia’s *Closing the Gap* outcomes, stakeholders noted that large-scale projects and developments are expected to contribute positively to Australia’s ongoing journey in achieving reconciliation.

Stakeholders asked the project to consider healing from three perspectives – healing Country, healing culture, and healing spirit. It was noted that these share a cyclical, dependent relationship and that a successful project outcome can offer holistic healing.

*“I want to empower all Sydneysiders with these stories. To bring about reconciliation and belonging.”*

*“Healing happens when you start talking about how Aboriginal people feel.”*

From a design perspective, the following suggestions have been provided by community members to provide a foundation of healing for the project:

- Primarily, the natural environment should always be considered in design outcomes where possible. *“It all comes back to the land and environment. We need to bring back the native plants and look at all layers of the environment from the ground shrubs to the tall canopies of trees. If we do this, the native fauna will come back, too. How can we bring it all back, restore it, and brand it Gadigal?”*
- Develop sustainable design outcomes that benefit the health of Country,
- Move beyond “clinical” representations of culture. Stakeholders noted that culture is often represented in ways that are clinical, academic, transient, and memorialised. This was reported to be directly opposed to what the essence of culture is and how culture should be celebrated, and
- Provide economic development and job opportunities for the local Indigenous community through the Project.

CIR also heard that a key part of healing is educating all people about Aboriginal culture and that this could be achieved through:



- Recognising and including Gadigal identity, language, and culture through the project design and operation, which enables non-Indigenous people opportunities to *“learn and see things in new ways ... how we see them”, and*
- Using highly frequented walkways for First Nations storytelling to help build momentum for future change in the level of cultural understanding held by non-Indigenous people. Stakeholders drew attention to common protest routes around Central Precinct and Australia’s own response to 2020’s Black Lives Matter movement. A community member noted, *“they [non-Indigenous people] are never truly going to understand why we are behaving this way and the symbols we use unless we offer educational opportunities through various mediums and platforms.”* It was noted that storytelling can be explored through many mediums.

### ***Nature as knowledge holders***

Stakeholders reinforced the role that the natural environment plays in not only connecting the Project site to Country, but also re-connecting Aboriginal people to Country and culture. In relation to nature and knowledge, CIR heard the following:

- Respecting the natural environment is a core of Aboriginal culture. *“Nature forever holds knowledge, which is facilitated by ‘families.’ Nature holds source code knowledge that many Aboriginal custodians have today and are passing on to others.”* Community members notes that they want to challenge the project team’s understanding of nature and Country, and the knowledge it holds, and how this can be reflected in the project approach, design, delivery, and operation,
- There is a strong desire to educate non-Indigenous people on the relationships that Aboriginal people have with nature. *“We are the only First Nations people in the world that have kinship relationships with flora and fauna. This is where we come from. These are our family members.”* A stakeholder also noted that, *“trees taught us Aboriginal people how to live in families”,*
- Water is an important aspect of Aboriginal culture, and it was heard that, *“Water defines our identity and is so important to Aboriginal people. Back then, when you look at the tank stream and water system, that was the life giver for us, and this water system ran into the Sydney Harbour, which was the life sustainer for everyone,”* and
- It was noted that there is a general understanding that without nature, Aboriginal people would hold no knowledge.

*“We don’t tell Country what to do. Country tells us what to do.”*

*“The City needs to be vibrant with our ancient tree stories.”*

Stakeholders also asked the Project to consider what is happening beyond the visible landscape and explore nature and knowledge at a subterranean level. Community members highlighted the cultural significance of complicated systems of underground waterways that sustain the life on top of the ground, which are and have always been active. Key areas of significance highlighted by community members include Moore Park, Hyde Park, and Centennial Park where hanging swamps and boars existed, sustained by waterways interconnected with the Central Precinct area.

Design considerations for this theme include:

- Where possible, including native planting to provide a constant reminder that pedestrians are on Country,

- Exploring the mapping and inclusion of waterways through heritage interpretation and art, and
- Taking colour inspiration from native flora, such as wattle and banksias.

### ***The importance of connectedness***

In relation to Central Precinct, stakeholders commented that the concept of it being a connector from a mobility and commuter perspective should be challenged. When explaining connection in a broader sense, community members relayed that the 'identity' of the environment should be seen as providing an umbilical connection throughout Country.

CIR heard that if Central Precinct was viewed as an "impact zone" then the following sites are "umbilically" connected to Central through the natural environment:

- Belmore Park,
- Prince Alfred Park,
- Hyde Park, and
- Moore Park.

It was also noted that the sunrise, moonrise, and saltwater to the east, and the moonset to the west are significant parts of the natural environment and are key connectors in the landscape. Community members reported that the interconnected system of underground waterways creates connections between Central Precinct and the surrounding areas.

Beyond an environmental connection, community members also noted that Central Precinct played a pivotal role for Aboriginal people in social, family, and cultural connections, including:

- The Foundation (on George Street) was used as a place by young Aboriginal people to socialize on Friday and Saturday nights,
- Central Station provided a sense of "arrival" when Aboriginal people began to migrate to Sydney and Redfern, as well as providing a connector to getting back to Country to see their family for holidays, etc, and
- A strong sense of community was gathered and dispersed in and around Central Precinct, *"being part of the Aboriginal community was a powerful thing back then. We supported each other a lot, and we've sort of lost that in today's urban community. But the sense of community and connection was really strong back then [the 1960s and 1970s]."*

*"Back then, this place [Central] had a vibrancy about it to Aboriginal people. It would be great to capture this vibrancy again."*

While community members provided little specific feedback regarding design propositions under this theme, it was noted that the design team should challenge themselves and explore opportunities to represent this 'umbilical connection' – which is relevant to both how Aboriginal people see the environment as well as their own connection to Country.

*"We all have that invisible, umbilical cord that connects us to our Country. People are part of Country without even knowing it, but when you're gone, you feel it."*

### ***Removing cultural blindness***

It was commented that, *"People are still blind to the basic principles of our Culture,"* and that

projects such as this provide a foundation and opportunity to remove some of the cultural blindness that exists. 'Cultural blindness' was described as the result of the lack of Indigenous cultural representation, education, and celebration in Australia. Rather than an outcome of explicit and intentional prejudice, cultural blindness often stems from complex, nuanced, and often changing social and institutional dynamics.

Stakeholders commented that cultural blindness stems from the dominant and mainstream social dynamics and narratives in non-Indigenous Australia which too-often exclude Indigenous people, culture, and history.

*"People walk the streets, but they don't know what's underneath."*

*"The non-Indigenous people of Sydney are blind to as why our mob still marches, and why we're still in the streets. We're not angry for the sake of being angry – we're angry because things still aren't right."*

*"Being culturally blind is not often a choice but rather a product of Australia's national psyche and the apathy towards our culture. Challenging and removing cultural blindness is how Indigenous people work toward belonging and equality."*

It was further heard that a key part of removing cultural blindness is through educating non-Indigenous people on Gadigal culture, as noted earlier in this report.

Community members noted that caring for Country is an obligation that extends beyond cultural identities. It was asserted that non-Indigenous people share this responsibility and that *"most people are not yet mature or aware enough to accept this inheritance,"* which too is in part due to an enduring cultural blindness.

*"I want to see Sydney people be empowered to enough to own our stories and accept custodianship of this Country. It isn't difficult to be a custodian – the inheritance of caring for Country is for everyone. How can this project help spread and cement this message?"*

In addition to relevant design considerations listed earlier in this report, CIR heard the following suggestions:

- Consider how the Project can embed Indigenous truth-telling into the design,
- Consider dual naming opportunities for the Project, and
- Design the Project in a way that encourages people to look after and care for Country (eg. People are more likely to care for a place that has an inherent sense of occasion or sacredness.)

## **Theme 3 – Process recommendations to ensure Aboriginal voices are sustained and continued throughout the Project**

To ensure that Indigenous voices are captured and included at all stages of the Project, stakeholders were asked to provide broad advice on how the Project could include Aboriginal Governance structures to embed local knowledge and advice into the Project throughout its lifecycle. Stakeholders noted that doing this successfully is key ensuring that both the Project and the operational assets are welcoming and inclusive for all First Nations people.

### ***Aboriginal Governance***

Stakeholders suggested several initiatives as to how the Project could embed Aboriginal Governance principles, including:

- Building an Elders-in-Residence model into the Project,
- Developing an Indigenous Advisory Committee, and
- Rolling out Cultural Awareness Training across all Project teams.

The common thread connecting these suggestions is that they are Aboriginal-led initiatives with intended outcomes of:

1. Embedding Aboriginal voices throughout the Project's lifecycle, and
2. Building cultural competency into both the Project and TOGA more broadly.

These initiatives are explored further below.

### ***Elders-in-Residence model***

Several stakeholders suggest that TOGA consider adopting an Elders-in-Residence initiative to help guide the Project as it progresses. An Elders-in-Residence model aims to facilitate unique support and learning across an organisation/project by embedding senior cultural knowledge holders to guide and provide advice as relevant. In practice, this typically involves having Elders embedded into an organisation/project on a semi-regular basis, whose role also includes supporting and meeting with members of the organisation/project.

This model promotes and legitimizes the role of Elders as supportive pillars and cultural knowledge holders within organisations/projects. An Elder-in-Residence program is an avenue for the provision of cultural knowledge and advice whilst promoting the education of First Nations culture and knowledge. It was noted that Elders are too-often engaged on a once-off basis to provide input into large and complex projects which is entirely insufficient in bringing about meaningful and genuine input.

Elders-in-Residence can provide value through:

- Providing high-level advice and support for First Nations cultural activities in the organisation or project,
- Enhancing cultural perspectives, sharing wisdom and teachings, and promoting awareness of cultural traditions, traditional language, and ceremony, and
- Acting as a mentor to individuals and the wider organisation community by providing guidance and consultation.

Elders who participate in such a program are typically senior and respected members of their community with strong cultural knowledge and authority. Any Elder who participates in

this model must be remunerated for their time.

From a logistical perspective, stakeholders suggested that the advisory committee should:

- Comprise at least three (3) Elders of diverse gender identities. It was noted that the number “3” also carries cultural symbolism of the kangaroo and emu footprint,
- Include at least one (1) of the Elder’s must be Gadigal as the Project is being developed on Gadigal Country,
- Reflect a range of knowledge holders (eg. One Elder might have specialist knowledge on trees and horticulture while another might have in-depth knowledge of ceremony and tradition), and
- Be actively and transparently engaged and invited to provide input on the Project at all stages and have the self-determination to decide where Indigenous inputs and perspectives may benefit the Project.

In order to establish an Elders-in-Residence model for the Project, TOGA should:

- Identify any internal barriers to establishing the initiative,
- Secure funding for the model and agree on remuneration rates for the Elders (note: the remuneration fee should be decided in consultation with the Elders),
- Develop criteria for the types of experience and knowledge required of an Elder to advise on the Project (note: this should be done in consultation with a suitably qualified advisor),
- Determine the schedule in which the Elders-in-Residence will be consulted for the Project (note: the schedule should be decided in consultation with the Elders), and
- Consider rolling out cultural training to relevant teams within the Project to ensure that the Elders-in-Residence are entering a culturally safe space.

### *Indigenous Advisory Committee*

Not dissimilar to an Elders-in-Residence model, several community members suggested the Project establish an Indigenous Advisory Committee, which would ideally comprise a range of Indigenous stakeholders engaged to provide ongoing advice to the Project. As ensuring there is a system to support cyclical feedback from Indigenous stakeholders is a key tenet of the Connecting with Country Framework, it was suggested that establishing an advisory committee of respected Indigenous community members for the Project would enable this to happen.

It is important that such an advisory committee:

- Comprises members of the Indigenous community representing diverse ages, gender identities, professional backgrounds, and lived experiences. It was noted that trans representation from the Indigenous community was especially important,
- Defines remuneration, period of engagement, and expected responsibility and outcomes of members of the advisory committee, and
- Has a dedicated contact point within the Project team (ie. Managed by someone within TOGA).

### *Cultural Awareness Training*

Cultural awareness training typically aims to improve the cultural competency of an organisation through immersive training and education of Indigenous history and ways of knowing, being, and learning. Ultimately, cultural awareness training should increase the personal and organisational cultural safety of an organisation, in turn making it a safer place

for Indigenous people to be included. This training is a continuum of learning that begins with foundational cultural awareness training as a building block for further education and experiential learning towards cultural safety.

As the Project will require further Indigenous engagement in 2022 and will ideally result in all Project teams and consultants developing their own relationships with Indigenous businesses/stakeholders independent of CIR, stakeholders asserted that all Project team members may benefit from cultural awareness training, particularly in relation to:

- How to facilitate best practice Indigenous engagement processes,
- The value and benefits of Indigenous engagement,
- How to develop genuine and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous stakeholders, and
- Barriers in developing effective relationships with Indigenous stakeholders.

There are many providers of Indigenous cultural awareness training who can deliver such sessions both online and face-to-face. Stakeholders commented that cultural awareness training is an endorsement from organisations that they are committed to creating safe spaces for Indigenous people, contributing to the national reconciliation agenda, and establishing a platform for listening to Indigenous history and perspectives.

### ***Ensuring the Project is realized as a welcoming and inclusive space for First Nations people***

When asked about strategies to ensure the Project is realized as a welcoming and inclusive space for all First Nations people, stakeholders highlighted two key pieces of feedback, particularly in relation to any public space elements of the design:

- All Project teams should be aware of the historical relationship between First Nations people and public spaces, and
- Access to, and sense of ownership over a public space is critical when designing spaces that are intended to be welcoming and inclusive for First Nations people.

### ***First Nations people and public spaces***

Best practice place-making in First Nations communities and culture directly impacts the uses and enjoyment of public space. In addition to stakeholder feedback, CIR has undertaken high-level research to provide context around First Nations people and public space.

Australia's First Nations people have a particular affinity with public spaces, gathering as communities and families to socialize and undertake cultural activities and business in spaces that are open to all. First Nations people's concepts of space and place can be different from western notions of the environment.

Danielle Hromek, an Indigenous spatial designer, explains:

*The western experience of land is one of property, an appropriated ground given a monetary value, a landscape that is tamed, built upon, produced, owned. In the Aboriginal sense of the word, Country relates to the nation or cultural group and land that they/we belong to, yearn for, find healing from and will return to. However, Country means much more than land, it is their/ our place of origin in cultural, spiritual and literal*

*terms. It includes not only land but also skies and waters.*<sup>8</sup>

Through a post-colonial lens, Australian First Nations people have at times had a troubled history with public spaces, because many Indigenous people have been excluded (formally and informally) from public spaces, and in some locations continue to experience marginalization from so-called public areas.

Historically and in many public spaces today, anti-social behaviours are used to remove Aboriginal people from civic spaces, which results in First Nations communities prohibited from spaces where the rest of the community can freely assemble.

Land is often contested ground, and the history of First Nations land rights in Australia is one fraught with the ongoing impacts of dispossession, loss of culture, language and family, and the tension associated with two systems of lore/law with respect to ownership of land and resources.

Academic Emily Potter observes:

*The acquisition of space, or more concretely land and its resources, is, of course, a driving rationale of the colonial project. It is a marker of the unresolved nature of the settler-colonial state that contestations over spatial ownership, occupancy, and policing feature so strongly in the ongoing experiences of many Indigenous Australians, and in discourses of Indigenous and non-indigenous relations in this country.*<sup>9</sup>

The NSW Government Architect's *Connecting with Country Framework* explains:

*Prioritising people and their needs when designing is widely regarded as fundamental in contemporary design and planning. However, appreciating an Indigenous or Aboriginal world-view suggests that there are limitations imposed by an entirely human-centred approach to design. If people and their needs are at the 'centre' of design considerations, then the landscape and nature are reduced to second order priorities. If design and planning processes considered natural systems that include people, animals, resources and plants equally – similar to an Aboriginal world view – this could make a significant contribution to a more sustainable future world.*<sup>10</sup>

Not only have landscape and nature been reduced to second order priorities in urban landscapes, First Nations values too have been devalued in Australian urban landscapes. This is in direct contradiction to the growing value of First Nations values in the natural environment. Places like Kakadu and Uluru and other significant Indigenous identified environments benefit economically and culturally through being promoted as First Nations land.

Porter (2016) addressed the ongoing and damaging narrative that Indigenous perspectives are incompatible with the built environment and noted that:

*Indigenous values are able to be acknowledged in natural but not in-built environments. These racial stereotypes have been held a long time. They cast*

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<sup>8</sup> Hromek, D. in *Designing with Country: A discussion paper for all stakeholders engaged in built environment projects that impact Aboriginal communities as well as their culture and heritage*, Government Architect NSW, NSW Government, Sydney, 2020, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Emily Potter (2012) Introduction: making Indigenous place in the Australian city, *Postcolonial Studies*, 15:2, 131-142, DOI: 10.1080/13688790.2012.708315

<sup>10</sup> *Connecting with Country - A draft framework for understanding the value of Aboriginal knowledge in the design and planning of places*, Government Architect NSW, 2020, p.17



*Indigenous people in urban environments as “too modern” to make legitimate claims. And they cast urban environments as too modified for ongoing Indigenous cultural connection.<sup>11</sup>*

Behrendt (2006) echoes this frustration when she wrote:

*There does seem to be a greater interest in including Aboriginal people in broader community building activities in relation to green spaces within metropolitan or urban centres. For example, in the national parks that surround our city, there are more active initiatives to engage Indigenous people in co-management arrangements, eco-tourism, educational programs about bush tucker and resource management. While not diminishing the importance of this collaboration, it is noticeable that there is a greater willingness to include Aboriginal people in to the “nature” and “environment” aspects of planning and land management than there is in the planning of urban spaces and communities. It is hard to ignore the “noble savage” romanticism in this preference for Indigenous involvement with plants, trees, and animals over involvement with town planning, infrastructure, and housing.<sup>12</sup>*

Porter (2016) challenges:

*Imagine if we used density and zoning tools to provide reparation for land theft and to redistribute wealth. Imagine if mainstream urban planning processes recognised continuing co-existing Indigenous methods of land governance. Imagine if we did urban development in a way that honours Indigenous histories, knowledge, and relationships with those places.<sup>13</sup>*

The NSW Government has recently taken up this challenge through the development of the *Designing with Country* discussion paper and the *Connecting with Country* Framework, both of which focus on how First Nations cultural knowledge can help inform the design and development of urban public spaces.

In relation to this Project, stakeholders noted that the nature of these sites as “built up urban spaces” inherently carries challenges in facilitating a design process that genuinely reflects Indigenous cultural knowledge that result in creating spaces that are welcoming and inclusive for Indigenous people.

#### *Access and ownership of public spaces*

Stakeholders unanimously noted that creating a space that feels safe and welcome impinges on how comfortable Indigenous people feel in accessing the space, and whether they feel a sense of ownership over the space. The concept of safety was a common thread across consultations with stakeholders commenting that design of public (and where relevant, private) spaces should allow all people to feel culturally, spiritually, and physically safe.

Stakeholders discussed that key in ensuring the Project culminates in spaces that feel accessible, safe, and welcoming for First Nations people is to include visible elements of local Aboriginal culture such as flags, totems, Aboriginal artwork, native flora, and other creative expressions. CIR heard that culture being publicly and visually acknowledged typically results in Indigenous people feeling more culturally, spiritually, and physically safe.

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<sup>11</sup> Porter (2016) *How can we meaningfully recognise cities as Indigenous places?*, The Conversation, May 2016 – article accessed 8 January 2021 <https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/voices/culture/article/2016/10/10/how-can-we-meaningfully-recognise-cities-indigenous-places>

<sup>12</sup> Larissa Behrendt, (2006) ‘The Urban Aboriginal Landscape’ – accessed 8 January 2021 [www.uws.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/6928/Behrendt\\_Final.pdf](http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/6928/Behrendt_Final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Op cit* (Porter 2016)

Participants were further unanimous in their agreement that public spaces must include an acknowledgement of Traditional Owners as a fundamental way to facilitate safety and respect for Country and culture.

Regarding the concept of ownership of a public space, stakeholders noted that ownership is not meant in its traditional sense, but rather through a sense of belonging to the space and feeling free to practice culture and ceremony at the site.





DECEMBER 2021

# TOGA CULTURAL VALUES: DRAFT REPORT



**PREPARED FOR:**

TOGA

**WATERS CONSULTANCY PTY LTD**

**HISTORY • CULTURE • HERITAGE**

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Report produced for TOGA

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**WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE  
TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF SYDNEY  
AND PAY OUR RESPECT TO THE  
CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITIES  
WITH THEIR ONGOING CONNECTION  
TO THIS COUNTRY.**

**WE PAY RESPECT TO FIRST  
NATIONS ELDERS PAST AND  
PRESENT AND THANK THEM FOR  
THEIR CONTINUING CARE OF  
COUNTRY, CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITY.**



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# THE PROJECT

This draft summary report has been produced by Waters Consultancy for TOGA and Cox Inall Ridgeway (CIR) to support the *Connecting with Country* process for TOGA's proposed redevelopment of the Adina Hotel Sydney Central and Henry Deane Plaza as part of the Western Gateway Sub-Precinct.

Drawing on documentary research the report highlights themes and stories that speak to the cultural values of this Country. The research has been informed by the early engagement with cultural knowledge holders and Traditional Custodians undertaken by CIR.

## FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGE

The incorporation in design of First Nations language is an essential element of reflecting and respecting Country and Traditional Owners. While there are historical sources that provide information on language names for elements of this Country, these names have not been included here at this time in recognition that the identification of appropriate language for use in design is a process that must be led by community and Traditional Owners.

Figure 1: 'William Westall, 'Port Jackson, a native boy', 1802, National Library of Australia;



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# PLACE AND MEANING

First Nations understandings of place are subtle and complex weaving past, present and future together. Relationship to Country and place is a living cultural process that is central to First Nations identities:

***“There is an insistence in Indigenous cultures on making space one’s own, by relating to that space in terms of an activity performed there, sometimes a singular highly charged activity, sometimes activities repeatedly performed.”***

*(Riebe, Meaning of Place, 2021).*

The urban environment has historically been, and largely continues to be, one that has signalled white privilege and exclusion to First Nations people. There is an opportunity through engaged planning and design to create spaces that welcome the lived cultural relationship between First Nations people and Country and enable First Nations directed social engagement with place.

This is an exciting opportunity to engage with the rich layered history of the TOGA site through the themes of gathering and movement that are present from deep history to the present day and through providing culturally welcoming spaces to support ongoing Indigenous place making.



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# THE RICHNESS OF THIS COUNTRY

**THE TOGA SITE LIES ON A PATHWAY BETWEEN TWO RICH RESOURCE AREAS WITH THE WETLANDS ON ONE SIDE AND THE ESTUARY AND HARBOUR ON THE OTHER.**



The TOGA site lies on a pathway between two distinct but linked ecological environments: the Country to the south and south-east with its wetlands and sandhills and the Country to the north and north-east focused on the harbour and estuaries. Water is central for both these ecosystems, the freshwater marshes and lagoons on one side and the saltwater of the harbour on the other. In the inlets of the harbour the fresh and saltwater merge into a rich ecosystem of mudflats and mangroves.

The Country that the TOGA site sits within has endured many changes through the impacts of British settlement. These impacts began in the first year after the British invasion and had substantially and permanently altered the landscape by the mid 1800s. The marshes and lagoons around Redfern and further east into the Lachlan Swamps, where Centennial Park and Moore Park now lie, were extensively drained while the creek lines that once ran through Haymarket and Central precincts down to the harbour were redirected into underground drains and the streets of the city have been built over them.



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# TRAVEL ROUTES (PATHWAYS)

Travel routes (pathways) connect people and Country, facilitating complex social, ceremonial, and economic networks. The TOGA site sits on a travel route (pathway) that ran along where Devonshire Street and the Devonshire Tunnel now run and intersected with other travel routes (pathways) linking together significant cultural and ceremonial places including those at Hyde Park, the Brickfields, Cleveland Paddocks and Farm Cove. The network of pathways developed and maintained by Aboriginal people over many thousands of years were utilised by the British colonists and many of the major roads that we travel on today follow these pathways including George Street, Parramatta Road, Oxford Street and Botany Road.



Figure 2: 'Plan de la ville de Sydney: Capitale des colonies Anglaises, aux terres Australes', 1802, National Library of Australia.

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# CLEVELAND PADDOCKS

The Country immediately south-east of the Toga site was once known as the Cleveland Paddocks, extending west to east from George Street to Upper Castlereagh Street (now Chalmers Street) and north to south from Devonshire Street to Cleveland Street. The railway lines now cover the western part of the Paddocks with the eastern side forming Prince Alfred Park. The Cleveland Paddocks are a traditional living place, a high dry area with expansive views where people gathered as they moved between the wetlands and sand dunes on one side and the bays and inlets of the harbour on the other. Cleveland Paddocks continued to be used as a regular living place into the mid 1850s when the intensification in British use of the area increasingly curtailed Aboriginal people's capacity to live on this part of their Country:

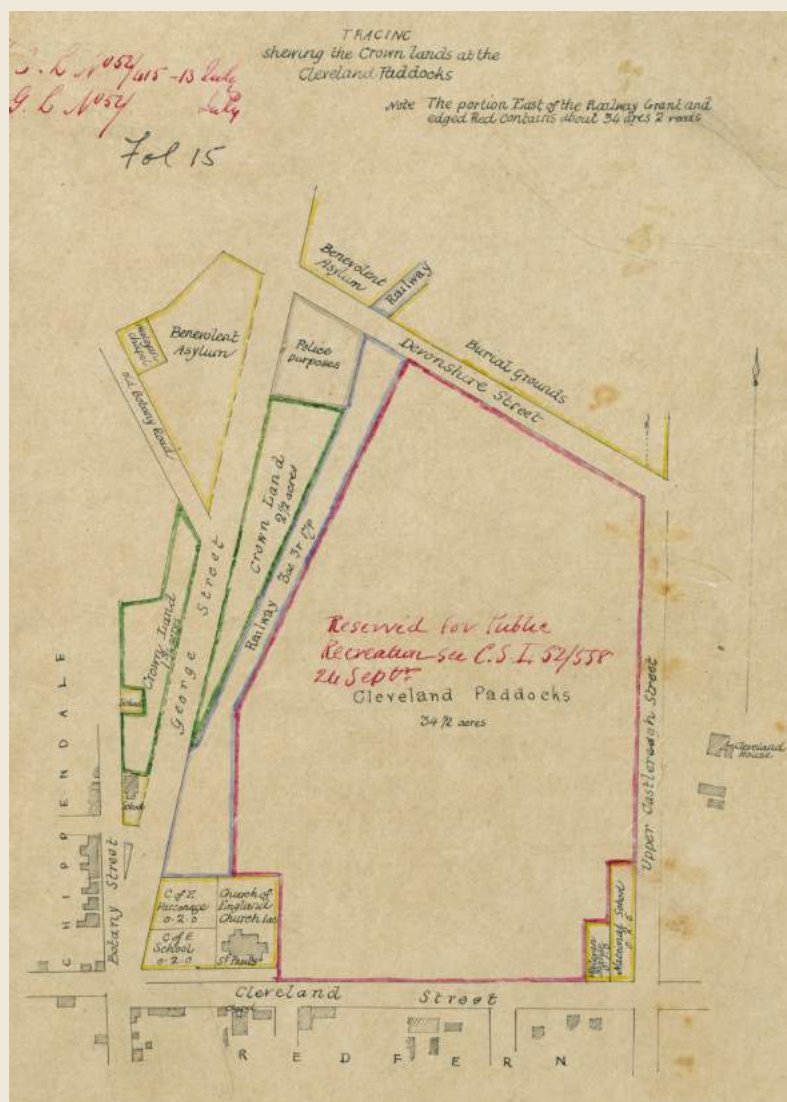
***"... The huge gum trees have been replaced by tall factory chimneys, and the large tracts of flowering shrubs, the banksias, cabbage-tree palms, and other vegetation, have been covered with Chinamen's gardens, brickyards, and other signs of civilisation. There are people living who recollect when the Cleveland paddocks, where the railway station and the Exhibition building now stand, were a favourite camping place for the blacks. Then their "corroborees" kept the few residents in Redfern awake till far into the night. By degrees the camps were driven back to Waterloo and Alexandria..."***

*(The Echo, 12 June 1890)*



Figure 3: Samuel Elyard, 'Cleveland Street', 1866, State Library of New South Wales.





The construction of the railway in the mid 1850s was followed by the area being used as an Agricultural Society Showground. In the mid 1860s the eastern part of the Paddocks was gazetted as a public recreation reserve and soon after named Prince Alfred Park. In 1870 the Intercolonial Exhibition building was constructed on the Paddocks with the Royal Agricultural Show held there into the 1880s.

Figure 4: 'Tracing shewing the Crown lands at the Cleveland Paddocks reserved for Public Recreation', n.d., Surveyor General Sketch Books, State Records & Archives of New South Wales.



Figure 5: 'Exhibition Building, Prince Alfred Park', n.d., State Archives and Records of New South Wales.



Figure 6: John Rae, 'Turning the first turf of the first railway in the Australasian colonies at Redfern, Sydney, N.S.W. 3rd July 1850', 1850, State Library of New South Wales.

**In this painting by John Rae, commemorating the start of construction of the first colonial railway, we have a vista from the Cleveland Paddocks across the current TOGA site and down to Cockle Bay. The vista follows the pathway that ran from the camps in the Cleveland Paddocks down to the harbour.**

**A group of Aboriginal men and women are included in Rae's painting, it is likely that these are some of the people who lived at the Cleveland Paddocks.**

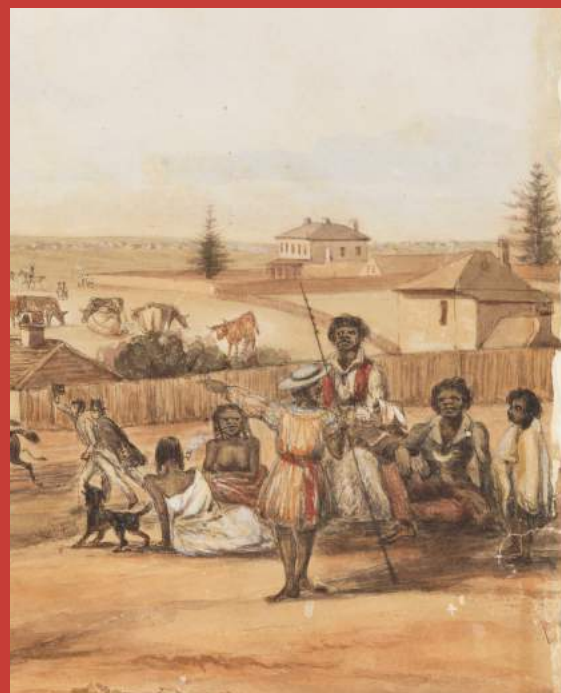


Figure 7: Extract from John Rae, 'Turning the first turf of the first railway in the Australasian colonies at Redfern, Sydney, N.S.W. 3rd July 1850', 1850, State Library of New South Wales.



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# WETLANDS AND SAND DUNES

The Country running south and south-east from the Cleveland Paddocks to Botany Bay comprised banksia covered sand dunes interspersed with freshwater wetlands and lagoons. In the early 1800s the area now known as Redfern was called Boxley's Clear by the British after a Mr Boxley who had a farm between George Street and Pitt Street, Redfern, that

***"... was the only cleared spot amidst the scrub which everywhere abounded."***

*(West, 'Old and New Sydney...', 1883)*

This Country was abundant in resources before it was cleared and urbanised:

***"Nearly all over the present Redfern grew luxuriant crops of geebung and five-corners... ... bronze-wing pigeons, quails, and such like were found in abundance... while parrots and gill-birds were so plentiful that they were not deemed worth the powder expended in shooting them. For those who liked other sport, the cover round about Redfern furnished plenty of bandicoots, 'possums, native cats, &c..."***

*(West, 'Old and New Sydney...', 1883)*



Figure 8: William Curtis, 'Styphelia Triflora [Five Corners]', 1804, State Library of New South Wales.

**THIS EARLY MAP OF THE AREA THAT INCLUDES THE CURRENT SUBURBS OF REDFERN, CHIPPENDALE, CENTENNIAL PARK, ALEXANDRIA AND ZETLAND GIVES SOME INDICATION OF THE FRESHWATER LAGOONS AND SOAKS THAT CHARACTERISED THIS COUNTRY.**



Figure 9: P.L. Bemi, 'Plan of the "Waterloo Estate"... grants from the Crown, shewing also its neighbouring locations', btw 1820-1840, State Library of New South Wales.

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# WETLANDS AND SAND DUNES

The area around Redfern Park, about a kilometre south-east of the Toga site, was described as:

***“... one large swamp, known as Boxley’s Lagoon. It was never known to be dry till in later years the water was drawn off... When known as Boxley’s Lagoon, it was the home of vast quantities of red-bills, wild ducks, snipe, landrail, and other game now rarely seen anywhere near Sydney, while large numbers of eels were to be found in the water.”***

*(West, ‘Old and New Sydney...’, 1883)*

This Country would have been maintained through sustainable hunting, fishing, and plant collecting practices alongside burning regimes that all acted to ensure the health of the Country in all its diversity. As a result of this care the Country provided a comfortable living place rich enough in resources to allow large groups of people to gather together:

***“Boxley’s Clear was a great rendezvous of the blacks, and was one of their great feasting and convincing grounds as well as the scene of many a hard fought battle.”***

*(Obed West, ‘Old and New Sydney...’, 1883)*

As the British pushed Aboriginal people further out from Sydney Cove it seems that the Clear replaced Hyde Parks and the Brickfields (see below) as a justice and law place.

By the 1880s the Country and people’s use of it had changed further, leading Obed West to comment:

***“[Previously] Round the edges of the clear were the camping grounds of the blacks, and little I daresay do those who now occupy comfortable houses in the locality, and have steam tramways running past their doors think that they live over the old dwelling-places of the aborigines, and on many of their graves.”***

*(West, ‘Old and New Sydney...’, 1883)*

The camping grounds may have gone but Aboriginal people have not; the Redfern area has remained throughout its history an area of cultural and political significance to Aboriginal people and continues to be that today.



Figure 10: William Curtis, 'Persoonia Linearis [Geebung]', 1804, State Library of New South Wales.



***“The extensive sheets of fresh water, the luxuriance of the vegetation in the bottoms, and along the edges of the lakes and creeks, and perhaps even the huge mounds of loose sand in which it was so easy to make a nest, and which was always dry, and, as compared with clay lands, warm, - all tended to attract not only birds and animals of all kinds, but even the blackfellows, for whom this region was a sort of paradise. The water fowl of every sort indigenous to Australia which once frequented this region have flown; the kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, have disappeared; and even the opossums and native cats only exist now in some few isolated spots, mostly in that portion of Randwick which still consists of Crown lands, and they are never seen in Waterloo or Alexandria.”***

*(The Echo, 12 June 1890)*



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# COCKLE BAY

From the TOGA site Country runs down into Cockle Bay on the north-east, so called because of all the cockle shells found there; the bay is now known as Darling Harbour. Cockle Creek (also known as Darling Creek) began in Surry Hills and ran down through the Belmore Park area into Cockle Bay. Sydney cockles and rock oysters form the bulk of the shell material in midden sites all around Port Jackson. All around the harbour, and along the coast, were shell middens marking where generations of people had gathered to collect and eat shellfish on the shorelines. These shell middens were rapidly destroyed by the British as they burnt the shells in kilns to produce lime mortar to construct the brick buildings at Sydney Cove.



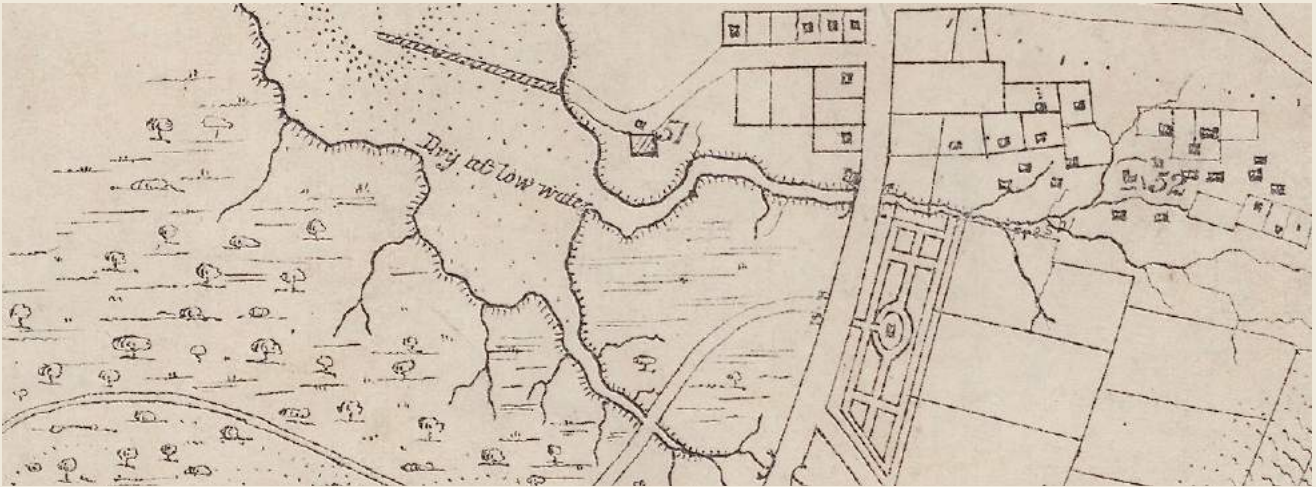
Figure 11: Samuel Elyard, 'Darling Harbour', 1864, State Library of New South Wales.

Shellfish were collected along the shoreline of the harbour, from rock platforms, stretches of sandy beach and the mudflats of the intertidal zone. Sydney rock oysters (*Saccostrea glomerata*), hairy mussels (*Trichomya hirsute*) and Sydney cockles (*Anadara trapezia*) were among the most harvested species. The sheltered environments between the rocks and the mudflats, with mangroves and sea grasses, provided an environment rich in shellfish and medicinal and resource plants. The small, sheltered inlets provided safe breeding grounds for many fish species as careful management of Country would have ensured that those areas were not disturbed in breeding seasons.



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# COCKLE BAY



The Country between the TOGA site and Darling Harbour had already begun to be modified by the 1850s; the course of the creeks had already been altered and over the following few decades they were almost entirely hidden under urban construction. The harbour was also changing from sedimentation caused by British land clearing eroding soils, the silt and rubbish from the streets of the British settlement and growing industrial waste. Sedimentation had caused the low tide mark in Cockle Bay to shift 80 metres in the eight years from 1854 to 1862. The Cockle Bay foreshore was altered with the 'reclaiming' of land for the construction of railway yards and wharves. By the 1870s the goods yards at Darling Harbour were the centre of the railway freight network for the colony.



Figure 12: '[View of Darling Harbour railway goods yard', n.d., State Archives and Records of New South Wales.



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# CANOES AND FISHING

The women of Port Jackson generally fished from canoes using hooks, lines, and sinkers while men fished with multi-pronged spears from rock platforms, shorelines, and canoes:

***“The Natives strike fish with their barbed Spears from the rocks & sometimes from the Canoe in which they stand up: in general we observe the Canoe occupied by the Women who fish with hook & line, which I never noticed any of the Men to use or that the women use the Spear.”***

*(Bradley, A Voyage to New South Wales: 1786-1792, 1802, p.133)*

The naval officer William Bradley kept a journal of his observations of Port Jackson where he arrived in January 1788 as part of the invading British forces. Reading his entries for October 1788 we get a glimpse of the ease and skill that the men and women of Port Jackson showed as they moved around the harbour in their canoes, with their

children on their laps or shoulders and their fires at their feet:

***“The men sit upon their heels with their legs under them & their feet out behind them: The women sit with their knees up to their chin & their feet cross’d before them... they have generally fern & some sea weed under them & under the fire which they are scarce ever without in the middle of the Canoe... The young Children in the Canoes are sometimes laid across the Mother’s lap, setting between her knees & sometimes on the Mens shoulders, holding fast by his head neither of which prevents either Man or Woman from using both paddles...they get in & out [of the Canoes] with great ease, tho’ it is not without great difficulty & attention that any one of us can without oversetting...”***

*(Bradley, A Voyage to New South Wales: 1786-1792, 1802, pp.131-2)*



Figure 13: 'Group of Aboriginal people fishing', c.1790s, attributed to Phillip Gidley King, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

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# CANOES AND FISHING

Many different species of fish were found in the waters of the harbour:

***“In the Summer, the Sea seems to furnish the Natives good subsistence, Fish being then in great plenty in & about the Harbours, among which are the Jew Fish, Snapper, Mullet, Mackrel, Whiting, Dory, rock Cod, leather jackets & various others, some of a species which had never been seen by any of us....”***

*(Bradley, A Voyage to New South Wales: 1786-1792, 1802, p.132)*

By the 1850s fish stocks were declining in Port Jackson from the impacts of British fishing practices. In 1880 a Commission of Inquiry into NSW fisheries recorded a consistent decline in fish catches in Port Jackson, particularly the once abundant snapper.

Some Aboriginal people were fishing on a semi-commercial basis with their own canoes to sell or trade for British goods by the early 1800s. From the earliest days of the British colony Aboriginal people have utilised their skills and knowledge of Country and the waters of the harbour and coast to make spaces for themselves within maritime industries.



Figure 14: Joseph Lycett, '... Spearing fish and diving for shellfish, New South Wales', ca.1817, National Library of Australia.

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# LAW AT THE BRICKFIELDS

The Brickfields, or Brickfield Hill, was the name given to an area around Haymarket in the months following the British invasion as the alluvial clays of the area were used to make bricks to build the new settlement at Sydney Cove. We get a glimpse of how the people of this Country felt about this in William Bradley's journal entry from March 1788 where he states:

***"The people employed making Bricks, were met by some of the Natives who threw stones at them & ran away."***

*(Bradley, A Voyage to New South Wales: 1786-1792, 1802, p.98)*

The Brickfields developed into a small British settlement that by the start of the 1800s included the brickmaking works, several potteries and around 40 houses. By the 1820s brickmaking had largely stopped in the area and by the 1830's the small village had been absorbed into the growing Sydney Cove settlement.

The area around the Brickfields included a ceremonial site used for the application of justice and law through ritual conflict. The Brickfields were used as a ritual fighting location by the Sydney Cove and Botany Bay people as well as those from the north shore of Port Jackson. David Collins recorded in late 1793 that:

***"The natives who lived about Sydney appeared to place the utmost confidence in us, choosing a clear spot between the town and the brickfield for the performance of any of their rites and ceremonies..."***

*(Collins, An Account of the English Colony..., 1795 [1795], p.274)*

Collins gave an account of a ritual punishment at the brickfields in early 1795 that involved the Sydney people and the Botany Bay people who brought with them a man, Gome-boak, who came from further south:

***"About the latter end of the month the natives adjusted some affairs of honour in a convenient spot near the brick-fields. The people who live about the south shore of Botany Bay brought with them a stranger of an extraordinary appearance and character; even his name had something extraordinary in the sound – Gome-boak. He had been several days on his journey from the place where he lived, which was far to the southward. In height he was not more than five feet two or three inches; but he was by far the most muscular, square, and well-formed native we had ever seen. He fought well; his spears were remarkably long, and he defended himself with a shield that covered his whole body."***

*(Collins, An Account of the English Colony..., 1795 [1795], p.342)*





**Figure 15: William Westall, 'Port Jackson, a native', 1802, National Library of Australia.**

We do not know the name of this man whose portrait was drawn by William Westall at Port Jackson in 1802. The markings on his chest show that he was probably a fully initiated man:

***"The eyes, full of concern while staring into the distance, and the laid back, but still proud, pose endows the sitter with a regal quality."***

*(Findlay, Arcadian Quest, 1998, p.35).*

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# LAW AT THE BRICKFIELDS

In 1805 the Sydney Gazette reported on a ritual punishment at the Brickfields involving Bennelong and Young Tedbury:

***“The different tribes of natives met yesterday se’nnight at the Brickfields for the trial of two malefactors, of whom Bennelong was the principal. He withstood innumerable flights of spears with his accustomed sang froid; but narrowly escaped translation [transfixion], as seldom less than three were thrown at once, and most of his adversaries peculiarly skilled in the deadly sciences. Young Tedbury was afterwards wounded through the thigh by a visitor from Botany Bay; who in turn submitted to a similar destiny; when a cessation of arms took place durante noctis.”***

*(Sydney Gazette, 15 December 1805)*

The Brickfields area continued to be used as a law place despite the intrusion of the British. In 1824 French explorers, Rene Lesson and Dumont d’Urville described witnessing ceremonial fighting “in a field between the Botany-bay and Brich [Brick] Fields roads...” (Dyer, ‘The indigenous Australians in Sydney...’, 2002, p.154) d’Urville recorded,

***“From as much as we could understand of their language they were accusing various individuals of having caused the death of a man from the Windsor tribe...”***

*(Dyer, ‘The indigenous Australians in Sydney...’, 2002, p.154)*

The ritual punishments that d’Urville described were of both men and women and were in relation to the deaths of people from Windsor and Parramatta.



Figure 16: Extract from ‘A Survey of Port Jackson New South Wales’, 1826, State Library of New South Wales.

The creek lines that once ran from the Brickfields near Belmore Park down into Cockle Bay are shown on this map extract.

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# LAW AT THE BRICKFIELDS

Farm Cove and Hyde Park were also important ceremonial law places, however, in the 1820s or '30s the law places used for ritual punishment shifted further from the Sydney Cove settlement into the Redfern area in response to the actions of the colonial intruders:

***“Boxley’s Clear was a great rendezvous of the blacks, and was one of their great feasting and convincing grounds as well as the scene of many a hard fought battle. Owing to the disturbances which were constantly taking place in the town when they had obtained a too plentiful supply of drink, the Governor gave instructions that no waddie or spears were to be brought within a mile of the then boundaries of the town, and the clearing at Redfern being nicely adjacent was chosen by the natives as the place of meeting for the settlement of disputes, in lieu of the Racecourse (Hyde Park) and other places where they formerly gathered. This also was the spot where the blacks were punished by their comrades for breaches of their tribal laws. One law amongst them was that if anyone committed such an offence as the stealing of a gin, &c., he was made to stand and allow the friends of the person injured to throw their spears at him, which he might, if he were able, ward off with his illaman, and Boxley’s Clear was frequently chosen as the scene of this rude system of justice.”***

*(West, ‘Old and New Sydney...’, 1883)*

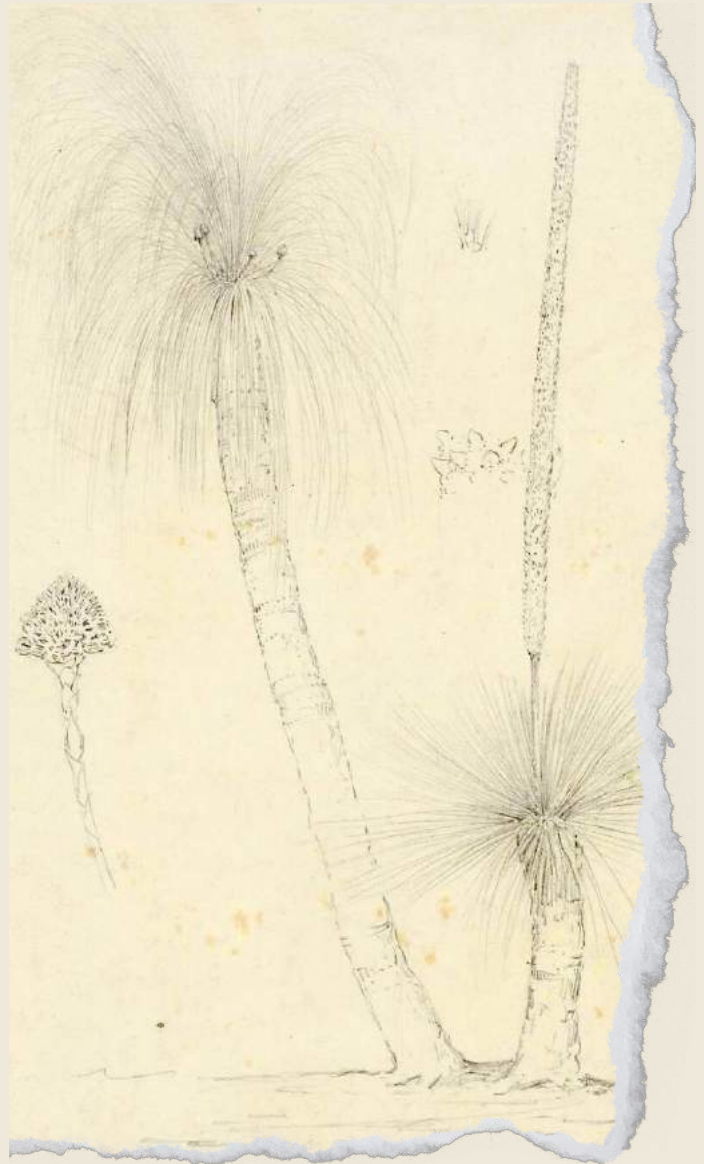


Figure 17: William Westall, 'Port Jackson, grass trees', 1802, National Library of Australia.

The stems of the grass trees were used for the manufacture of spears and as fire drills while the resin extracted from the plant was used as an adhesive in manufacturing spears, spear throwers and hafted axes, for patching water containers, baskets and canoes, for attaching hooks to fishing lines and in hair styling and ornamentation.



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# DEVONSHIRE STREET CEMETERY

The Devonshire Street Cemetery was established in 1820 and officially closed in 1860, although people continued to be illegally buried there for some years after it was closed. The cemetery is sometimes referred to as the Old Sydney Burial Ground but that more properly refers to the cemetery established in 1792 on what is now the site of the Sydney Town Hall in George Street. In 1900 the Devonshire Street cemetery was resumed for the construction of Central Railway Station and over the next six years the headstones and remains of many of the buried were exhumed and reinterred at Rookwood and Botany Cemeteries.



Figure 18: Extract from Mrs Arthur George Foster, 'Headstones in Devonshire Street Cemetery...', 1900-1914, State Library of New South Wales.



Figure 19: Mrs Arthur George Foster, 'Headstones in Devonshire Street Cemetery...', 1900-1914, State Library of New South Wales.

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# KAROO CORA GOOSEBERRY

Kaaroo Cora Gooseberry, a senior Aboriginal woman of coastal Sydney, was buried at the Devonshire Street Cemetery. It is not known how many Aboriginal people were buried in the cemetery. Kaaroo and her spouse Bungaree were both well known to the British colonists and much has been written about them both. When Kaaroo Cora Gooseberry died on 30 July 1852 she was buried at the Devonshire Street Cemetery; her headstone was moved to the Botany Cemetery when the Devonshire Street Cemetery was resumed for the construction of Central Station.



Figure 20: Charles Rodius, 'Goos[e]berry, wife of King Bongarry', c.1844, State Library of New South Wales.



# BENEVOLENT ASYLUM & THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

The Benevolent Society of NSW opened the Benevolent Asylum on the corner of Pitt and Devonshire Streets in 1821. The Asylum provided institutional housing for the destitute and homeless and from the 1860s its primary focus was on pregnant women and children. The Asylum provided a maternity wing and medical care for women giving birth. The Asylum continued to operate until 1901 when the site, along with the nearby Devonshire Street cemetery, was resumed for the construction of Central Station.

Aboriginal women sent to Sydney as domestic servants from around the State went to the maternity wing of the Benevolent Asylum to give birth. Some women were able to keep their children,

relying on the assistance of the Benevolent Society for a short time while others from the 1880s onwards suffered their children being removed from them and 'boarded out'.

The 'boarding out' movement arose in the 1870s from social reformers concerned with the institutional 'barrack' system that existed at institutions such as the Randwick Destitute Children's Asylum; the Benevolent Society supported this movement. In 1881 the State Children's Relief Act formed the State Children's Relief Board and gave them the power to remove children from institutions including the Asylum and 'board them out'. 'Boarding out' is the origin of the state-sponsored foster care system.

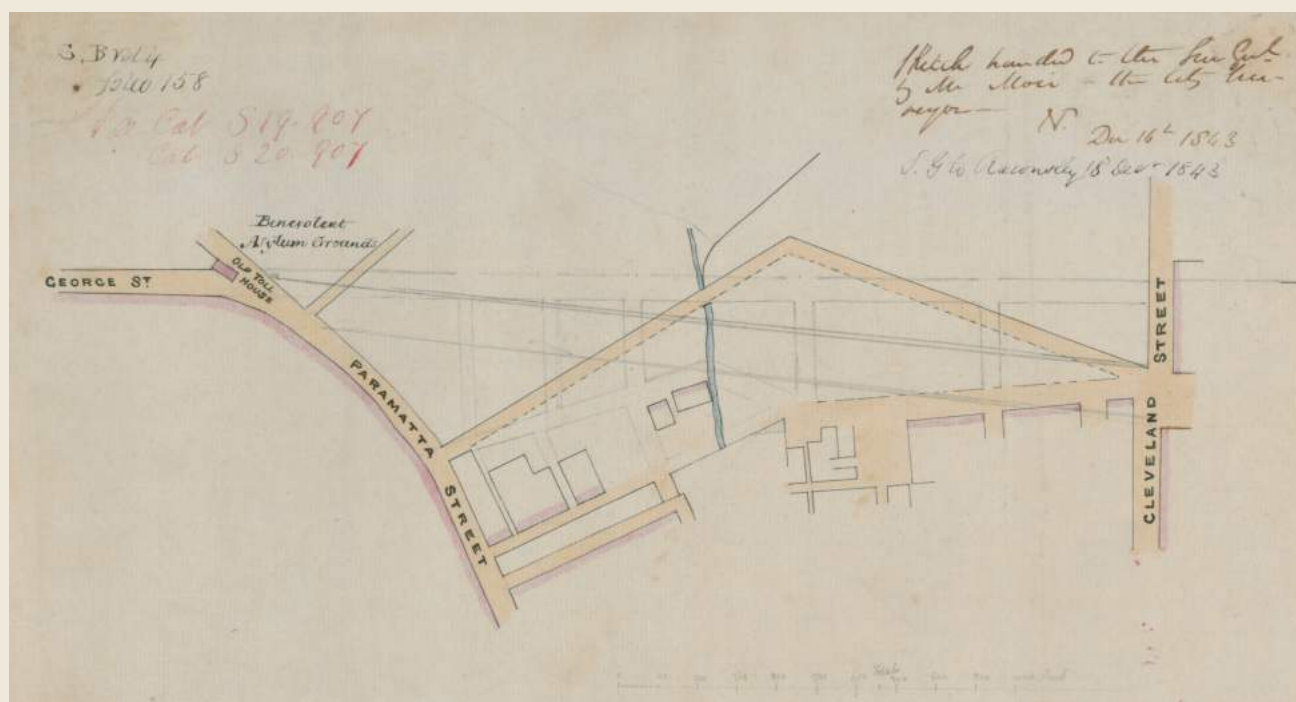


Figure 21: Benevolent Asylum Grounds, 1843, Surveyor General Sketch Book, State Archives and Records of New South Wales.



Figure 22: Benevolent Society, during Central Railway Station construction, 1901-1902, Royal Australian Historical Society Collection, State Library of New South Wales.

**Over a hundred Aboriginal people have been identified in the Benevolent Society's records who entered the Asylum, often for short periods, or accessed its assistance.**



Figure 23: Charles Pickering, 'Benevolent Asylum', 1872, State Library of NSW.



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# WORKING LIFE

In the early to mid-twentieth century the TOGA site was part of an urban landscape that had many industrial features with breweries in Elizabeth Street and George Street, the wharves and goods railway yards at Darling Harbour, small manufacturing factories in nearby Surry Hills and Chippendale, and at the Toga site itself the Parcel Post building with the nearby railways.

Although it can be difficult to find documentary records oral histories show that Aboriginal people worked in all these areas and industries. Common to many of these employers was the hiring of temporary workers in peak demand periods such as Christmas which saw

the Parcel Post buildings workforce increase along with those of the chocolate and ornament factories in surrounding suburbs.

The Parcel Post building was constructed from 1911-1913 on land that had formerly been part of the resumed Benevolent Asylum site. The Parcel Post building was used both as the main parcel processing site and for general mail sorting that had previously occurred at the General Post Office in George Street. In 1919 there were over six hundred people employed in the building.



Figure 24: 'Devonshire Tunnel extension construction', 1975, City of Sydney Archives.

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# WORKING LIFE

Darling Harbour, around a kilometre away from the Toga site, had begun to develop into a busy port as early as 1811 when the Market Wharf was built, and it remained Sydney's main working port for decades with finger wharves, shipyards, factories, and warehouses. The wharves were an important arena for the sharing of ideas and networks between unionists, social activists, and Aboriginal activists. In the early twentieth century Aboriginal wharf labourers interacted with international black seamen:

***“Through this contact, an appreciation of an international black struggle developed among Aboriginal people. They realised they were not alone, and that others around the globe were now speaking out against oppression, racism, and prejudice directed against black people....”***

*(Maynard, 'In the interests of our people...', 2005, p.2)*

In the early 20th century left-wing unions, including maritime unions like the Waterside Worker's Federation of Australia, alongside workers' groups such as the Communist Party, were active supporters of Aboriginal activism including campaigns such as the one for the 1967 Referendum on Citizenship Rights. Many unions actively supported the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, a key Aboriginal activist organisation in the second half of the 20th century.



Figure 25: 'Wharfies support equal rights for Aborigines', 1966, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University.



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# THE FOUNDATION

The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs formed in 1964 and operated up to 1977. It was founded and run by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with a commitment to the aim of achieving equality for Aboriginal people. Amongst those involved in its establishment were Aboriginal activists and leaders including Charles Perkins, Charles 'Chicka' Dixon and Ken Brindle alongside Professor Bill Geddes from the Anthropology department at the University of Sydney and Ted Noffs from the Wayside Chapel. Uncle Chicka Dixon, who managed the Foundation for a time, described its focus as providing a place where,

**"... black people in Sydney... could get advice about jobs, meals, places where they could have social activities, legal advice if necessary."**

(Chicka Dixon in Tatz, *Black Viewpoints...*, 1975, p.36)

The Foundation organised Saturday

night dances at the Redfern Town Hall and Sunday night concerts by Aboriginal artists including Jimmy Little, Col Hardy, Black Lace and Silver Lining.

In 1964 the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs set out to raise money to establish an,

**"... aboriginal centre... staffed mainly by aboriginal people – specially trained to handle these problems [in education, employment, accommodation, health and law]."**

(Canberra Times, 19 August 1964, p.7)

They raised enough money to purchase a building at 810 George Street; though the building itself no longer exists the location is approximately 200 metres from the Toga site. The building had previously been a funeral directors but as Uncle Chicka Dixon said,

**"... we put a bit of life into it."**

(Chicka Dixon in Tatz, *Black Viewpoints...*, 1975, p.36)



Figure 26: Harry Williams, manager of the art store and Charles Perkins, manager of the FAA, at The Foundation's George Street centre in 1967 (*Dawn*, April 1967).

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# THE FOUNDATION

In the engagement for this project community members spoke of how The Foundation played host to 'Aboriginal Debutante Balls', leading to the NAIDOC Balls of today and commented that it was common for Aboriginal bands to perform at the Foundation. Stakeholders reflected on the importance of the Foundation from a perspective of young and often marginalised Aboriginal community members:

**"The Foundo played an important role in the socialization of young Aboriginal people. Youth would primarily go out on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights for dances and to connect with each other. It really filled a gap for young Aboriginals who didn't have many places to meet."**

(CIR, Indigenous Engagement Summary Report..., October 2021)

Commenting on the purchase of the building Professor Geddes, chair of the Foundation, stated that:

**"... the increasing drift to... the city and lack of recognition and social justice had prompted the establishment of the foundation."**

(Dawn, July 1964)



Figure 27: The three story building at 810 George Street that the Foundation purchased with funds raised through its 1964 campaign; the Centre was officially opened in 1966 (*Dawn*, July 1964).

The Tribune, a Communist Party newspaper, ran an article supporting the work of the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) and the Foundation's campaign:

**"Sydney Central Station, 6 a.m. – passengers alight from an early train and hurry away through the bleak early morning, but three passengers, a woman with two children clutching her skirt, stand bewildered – they are Aborigines. There is no one to meet them and they are along in a big and frightening city. They have travelled all night sitting up in hard backed second class seats from Warren in the Central West of NSW. The woman is the mother of nine children and they live in a humpy on the banks of the river in Warren. She has come to Sydney to visit one of her children, ill with a blood deficiency in Camperdown Children's Hospital... She has the address of friends in Redfern where she has been invited to stay... An Aborigine man and a white woman are coming towards her. She senses they are friendly and she feels a great rush of relief. They tell her they are from the Aborigine Progressive Association and often meet country trains to assist Aborigine travellers, who otherwise would be left alone in a strange city they usually know nothing about."**

(McCarthy, 'An Aborigines Mother's Long and Cruel Day', Tribune, 25 November 1964, p.3)

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Although initially non-political in its objectives the Foundation became heavily involved in the 1967 referendum campaign. Chicka Dixon recalled that the Foundation was important because:

**“It taught people to stand up  
and be counted ... to be proud to  
be Aboriginal.”**

(Chicka Dixon in Pollock, 'The Foundation, 2008)

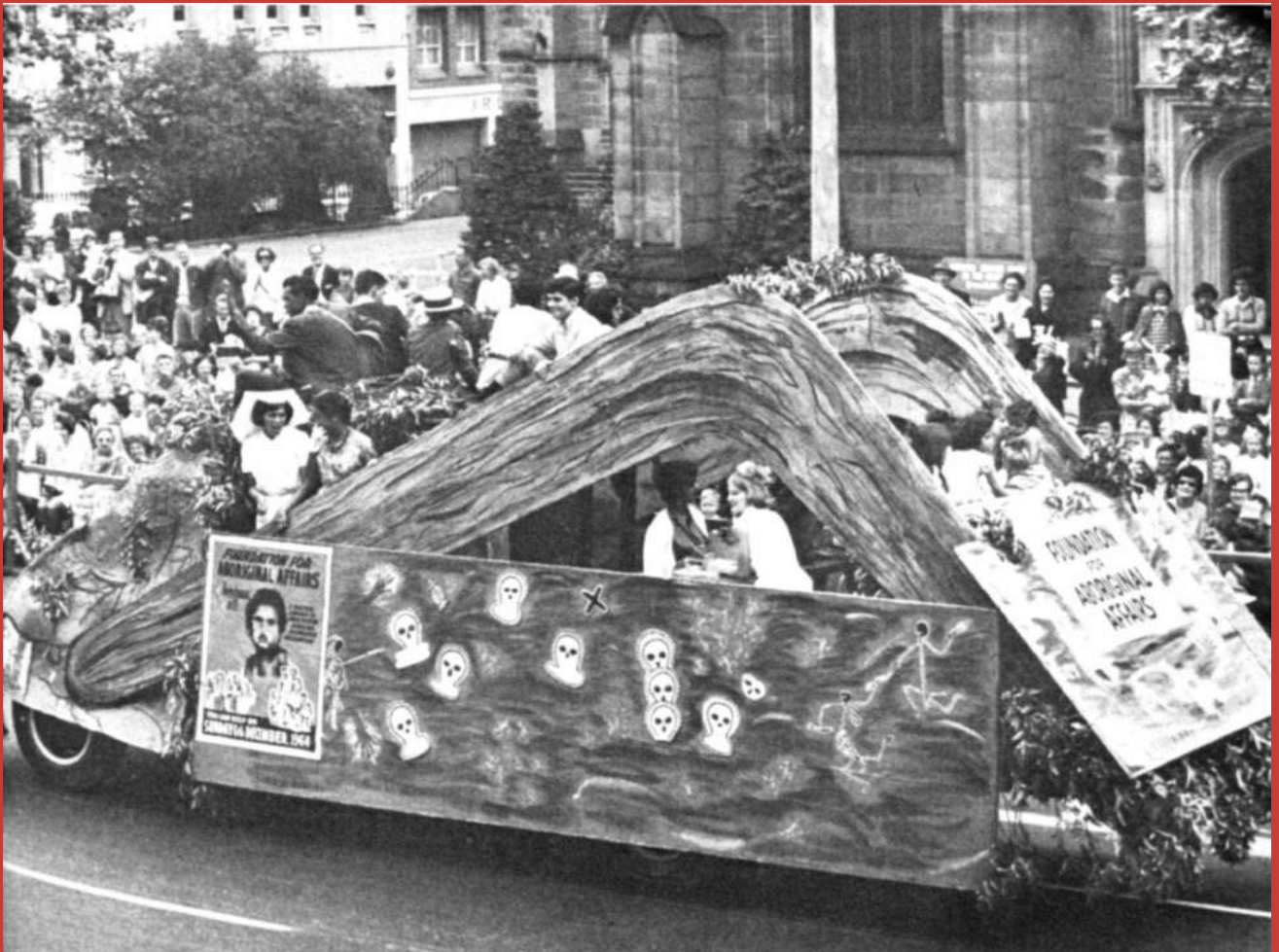


Figure 28: Foundation of Aboriginal Affairs float in the annual Waratah Festival Parade, 1964 (*Dawn*, November 1964).



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# PROTEST, MARCHING & BELMORE PARK

The Sydney city area has been a focus of Aboriginal activism since at least 1938 when the Day of Mourning was held in Elizabeth Street in protest at the celebration of the sesquicentenary of the British invasion. The Day of Mourning was a pivotal event in the history of the Aboriginal civil rights movement.

The area now known as Belmore Park was in what was a low, swampy area adjacent to the Brickfields. Cockle Creek ran from Surry Hills down past Belmore Park into Cockle Bay (Darling Harbour). For a time, the area was known as the Police Paddock as it was next to the police barracks and was presumably used for containing police horses. In 1868 it was dedicated as a public recreation area and named Belmore Park.

With the development of the railways and the construction of Central Station, it became a gathering place for Aboriginal people arriving on the country trains, a place to find community, friendly faces, and assistance.

With its proximity to Central Station, it has become a common starting point for rallies, marking a contemporary form of gathering that resonates with how Aboriginal people came together at the Brickfields for law and justice and at the Cleveland Paddocks for corroborees and cultural business.

Continuing the tradition of the 1938 Day of Mourning in 1988 the Long March for Peace, Hope and Justice was held in protest at the celebrations planned for the bicentennial of the British invasion and their erasure of First Nations people's history and presence. First Nations people travelled from communities all over Australia in convoys of buses and cars to come together in Sydney and publicly mark 200 years of survival under colonisation:

**“The Long March for Peace, Hope and Justice, led by traditionally dressed Aboriginal elders, stretched for more than a kilometre as it made its way from inner-city Redfern to the rally, stopping off at Belmore Park to pick up thousands of mainly white supporters. Their call was simple – land rights for the people who have lived in Australia for 40,000 years.”**

(‘Aboriginal leader calls for summit...’, Canberra Times, 27 January 1988, p.3)





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**THE FREQUENT MOVEMENT OF RALLIES FROM BELMORE TO HYDE PARK AND THE DOMAIN MIRRORS THE 1820S AND '30S MOVEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LAW AND JUSTICE ACTIVITIES FROM HYDE PARK TO THE BRICKFIELDS NEAR BELMORE PARK.**

*The 1988 Long March was the largest rally seen in Sydney since the Vietnam War moratoriums. Elders led around 20,000 (mostly) Aboriginal people from Redfern Park down Elizabeth and Chalmers Streets to Belmore Park.*

At Belmore Park they were met by many thousands more people who joined the march to Hyde Park:

**“The marchers coming from Redfern could not see the park until they had passed right through the tunnel, but the crowd in Belmore Park could hear them coming – the sound of their clap sticks and the songs they were singing in language were echoing and reverberating all across the park, bouncing off the tall buildings around it and washing into the streets beyond. The Redfern marchers did not know what to expect when they came out of the dark tunnel into the blinding light.”**

(Cook & Goodall, Making Change Happen..., 2013, pp.354-5)

The late Kevin ‘Cookie’ Cook, an important Indigenous and union activist, was one of those involved in organising for the march, he later recalled the arrival at Belmore Park:

**“... seeing all those migrants and white Australians, all standing there clapping like that. And people crying – blacks just crying – and people were saying, “The sun’s in me eye!” and they wipin’ the tears away!”**

(Cook & Goodall, Making Change Happen..., 2013, p 358)

The senior Aboriginal activist, and now Senator, Patrick Dodson described arriving at Belmore Park:

**“... we were going to have a rest at this park, you know, sit down and have a drink and everything. And then we couldn’t even get into the park, hey. They were all standing there – clapping. We just couldn’t stop crying, because we didn’t expect it. We didn’t expect anybody there. We thought we were just doing it ourselves.”**

(Cook & Goodall, Making Change Happen..., 2013, p.357)

Belmore Park has continued to be an important gathering place for events with surrounding streets, including Elizabeth, George, and Lee Streets, the routes for rallies that have come together at Belmore Park. In the consultation for this project the importance of Belmore Park as a gathering place was commented on:

**“I have seen a lot of activism and social rights movements take place at Belmore Park. From memory, the last major event was the Apology and handover in 2008. Mob came from all over for that day, and it is a significant part of our history.”**

(CIR, Indigenous Engagement Summary Report..., October 2021)



Figure 29: 'Australian Aborigines Conference: Day of Mourning and Protest', 1938, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

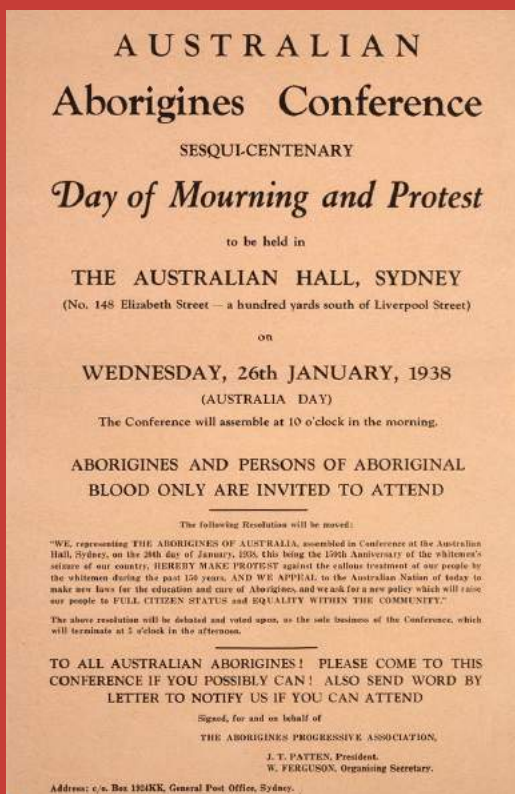


Figure 30: Notice for 'Australian Aborigines Conference: Day of Mourning and Protest', 1938, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.



Figure 31: 1988 poster, Peter Chester, design based on image by Chips Mackinolt, printed by Breakout, 161 Sussex Street, Sydney



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