

WARRIWAR

VERSION 4.0

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY RESEARCH REPORT FOREST LODGE SENIORS LIVING



NGADHU YINDYAMALI NGURAMBANG (WIRADJURI)
I RESPECT COUNTRY

GARIGARRA ACKNOWLEDGE THE ENDURING SPIRIT OF COUNTRY: THE KNOWLEDGES,
LANGUAGES, STORIES, SONGLINES, LAND, SKIES AND WATERS THAT HAVE NURTURED THE
LOCAL PEOPLE HERE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THE LOCAL PEOPLES OF THIS PLACE, THE TRADITIONAL
CUSTODIANS OF THIS BEAUTIFUL NURA/NGURRA/ NGURU, COUNTRY, AND THE MANY
PEOPLES ALSO CONNECTED TO THIS PLACE. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS: PAST,
PRESENT, FUTURE.

WE EXTEND OUR RESPECTS TO THE MANY ABORIGINAL PEOPLES THAT NOW KNOW
THIS PLACE AS THEIR HOME AND MOTHER AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE CARE-TAKING
RELATIONSHIPS THEY HAVE HERE.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTINUED, LIVING PRACTICES THAT HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED HERE
ON COUNTRY AND IT IS THROUGH THIS CONTINUATION OF CULTURE WE CAN CELEBRATE
THE RESILIENCE AND DEPTH OF COUNTRY HERE.

NGIYANHI-GU NGIDYI-GALIA NGIYANHI-GUYULGAN-BUL (WIRADJURI)
WE ARE HERE, HERE THIS DAY. WE ARE STRONG

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of desktop-based research, drawing on publicly available sources and existing documentation relating to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage within the study area. While it has not involved direct consultation with Traditional Custodians or Knowledge Holders to date, garigarra have worked closely with the design team to ensure the integration of Connecting with Country principles across landscape, architecture, and public art.

This report also identifies clear opportunities for the input of Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal community members through future phases of consultation, co-design, and cultural interpretation. These contributions will be critical to shaping a culturally responsive and place-based outcome across all design disciplines.

The insights shared here are intended as a preliminary guide only and are not a substitute for meaningful and ongoing engagement. garigarra acknowledge the limitations of desktop research and affirm that genuine cultural understanding must be grounded in respectful, long-term relationships with local Aboriginal peoples and Nations, and uphold Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights.

2 – 32 Junction Street, Forest Lodge, connects to a variety of disrupted human and more-than-human lineages and ecological processes spanning months, decades, centuries, and millennia. These sensitive and vital lineages still persist in the swampy wetlands of Country here. These watery, terrestrial and aerial systems link, although heavily disrupted, the lives, territories, and cultures of the Gadigal, Bidjigal, Wangal, Wallumedegal, Boromedegal, Gamaragal, Borogegal, Birrabirragal and Gayamaygal Peoples (and many others) through interwoven water bodies, movements of soil, multi-species migrations and other biomaterial flows.

Despite their persistence, these lineages and processes have been radically interrupted. Novel aquatic ecosystems now operate in tension with colonial infrastructures, toxic sedimentation, and ongoing urban disturbance. Industrial and institutional processes, past and present, continue to contaminate the site, fragment habitats, and erode the ethical responsibilities of caring for Country. Local government planning regimes and urban design practices, rooted in eurocentric spatial logics and settler-colonial ideologies of land management, continue to manipulate this landscape. Colonial planting schemes, species selection, and attempts to “beautify” or “regenerate” this place often reinforce ecological injustice, masking the deeper cultural and material disconnections at play.

In light of these complex and entangled material webs, this research asks: how might the site at Forest Lodge re-activate, empower, respect and heal cross-community, cross-species and cross-material relationships? How might design resist simplification and control, and instead open space for listening, reciprocity, and responsibility? These questions are particularly pertinent given the site’s adjacency to Orphan School Creek, a heavily channelised waterway that, despite degradation, still participates in the broader hydrological and cultural systems of the Cooks River and Sydney Harbour catchments. The site is embedded within layers of ephemeral and subterranean water flows, long disrupted yet never entirely severed. Prior to drainage, excavation and enclosure, this area was a rich mosaic of freshwater soaks, ephemeral creeks, dunes, lagoons and wetlands that sustained diverse plant and animal life, including seasonal eel migration. These ecologies carry stories and matter across Country, from the inland to the sea, forming ancient corridors of connection and kinship.

Today, traces of this vitality remain. Orphan School Creek is recognised for its rare and resilient biodiversity including an

Angophora floribunda (rough-barked apple) that may pre-date European settlement. Its gnarled body and protected roots on Wood Street act as a living witness to deep time and custodial memory. In this context, the proposed aged care development must reckon with its role not just as built form, but as part of a larger act of reparation, listening, and renewal.

To support this, the project is underpinned by four interconnected Connecting with Country design principles:

Reconnect Systems of Country
The project seeks to re-stitch the fragmented systems of land, water and sky that once flowed freely across the site. This includes responding to the creek corridor as a living system, restoring multi-species habitats, and designing built and landscape elements that extend cultural safety and Indigenous presence into the fabric of the city. The health of Elders: human and ecological, becomes central.

Resurface Knowledges of Water
The site invites a remembering of ancient relationships to water as life-giving, sacred and sovereign. Through architecture, landscape and public art, water can be honoured not merely as infrastructure but as kin, foregrounding Aboriginal custodianship, care-taking responsibilities and the impacts of colonisation on these knowledges.

Responsibility of Care
Care, in this context, is both social and ecological. The project embraces a relational ethic that extends from Elders in care to the land beneath them. The architecture must express a duty to nurture not only physical well-being but also cultural safety, ecological resilience and communal stewardship.

Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange
Rather than isolating Elders, the project positions them as cultural anchors, holders and transmitters of knowledge. The site and its spatial design will create moments of exchange between young and old, human and non-human, through story, movement, planting, and shared care. These are not symbolic gestures but frameworks for embedding Country as an active teacher.

Together, these principles aim to shift the design process from a static notion of “site” to a living relationship with Country as sentient, sovereign and speaking. They invite design teams to work across disciplines: architecture, landscape and public

art, not as separate entities, but as co-stewards of cultural and ecological memory. This is not simply about remediation or aesthetics, but about reconstituting care, respect, and reciprocity on and with Country.

1.2 COUNTRY

¹ FOSTER, S. AND PATERSON KINNIBURGH, J. (2019) ‘THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE (WITHOUT) COUNTRY’, PLACEMAKING FUNDAMENTALS FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, PP. 63–82.

² DAVID KENNEDY – GUMBAYNGGIRR/ YUIN AND FORMER CHAIR OF ABORIGINAL NETWORK, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

³ BETTER PLACED: CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK, GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NSW

“Country is often misunderstood as being synonymous with land, but it goes far beyond that. It comprises ecologies of plants, animals, water, sky, air and every aspect of the ‘natural environment. Country is a spiritual entity: she is Mother. She is not separate to you: All things are connected, everything is interrelated.”¹

“Since time immemorial, our ancestors, the First Peoples, have been caring for Country in a sustainable way, passing on this continuing responsibility and custodianship to countless generations. As a consequence, profound relationships have been forged with Mother Earth and other ancestral beings which underpin this culture of caring for Country.”²

“All NSW built environment projects will be developed with a Country-centred approach guided by Aboriginal people, who know that if we care for Country, Country will care for us.”³

Country (capital C), encompasses (not only) deep earth, land, waters and skies. She encompasses the tangible and intangible: culture, knowledge and practices, identity, relationships and well-being. Country includes humans, non-humans, flora, natural environments and non-living structures, systems and entities. Country holds memory, story, ceremony, she is a living archive. In this sense, place and site is time. Time is spatial and every project is a point of intersection between Ancestral events, present life, and future responsibility.

Designing with Country is an approach to design and architecture that deeply respects, celebrates and integrates the cultural, environmental, and spiritual connections First Nations Peoples have with Country and their Ancestral Lands. Meaningful processes go beyond using Indigenous motifs or themes; it embeds Indigenous knowledge(s) systems, values, and perspectives into the design process.

Country-centred Design embraces the complex, interdependent aspects of Country, and the knowledges embedded. Moving from an ego-centric approach or human-centred, Country-centred design understands the interconnectedness and relationality of all aspects of living and non-living, nothing exists in isolation. Humans make up only part of Country and are no more important than any other part. This overdue and timely approach to design and architecture recognises the responsibility of the built environment to care for and resurface knowledges, connections and practices of Country. Design must minimise damage, and protect Country (and her systems and ecologies) in a sustainable manner.

The Government Architect NSW Better Placed: Connecting with Country Framework communicates projects (and designers) need to make connections with local Aboriginal Peoples. When designing with Country, it is essential to engage in genuine collaboration with the local Indigenous community(s) by actively listening to and valuing their insights, understanding their connection to Country, and incorporating traditional knowledges into the design, when, where and if appropriate. Consultation should begin from the project’s inception and continue throughout its development. Collaborative design processes lead to innovative and sophisticated solutions that honour Country, her histories and cultural significance. Designing with Country can only be achieved by firstly working to connect to Country.

As designers of built (and natural) spaces, it is our responsibility

to ensure we understand our responsibility. Practices must look beyond the colonial history of a site to uncover and include its whole (and ancient) connected histories.

The benefits of designing with Country extend beyond cultural respect and inclusion. It leads to inclusive, sustainable and resilient designs that are better suited to the local environment. By integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary design practices, architects and designers can create buildings and spaces that are environmentally sustainable, resilient to climate change, and beneficial to the community.

This holistic practice fosters a deeper connection to place for Aboriginal people and all users, promoting a sense of belonging, ownership and collective care. Designing with Country enriches the built environment by creating spaces that are culturally meaningful, environmentally sustainable, and socially inclusive.

1.3 INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

¹ JANKE, TERRI & AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES & AUSTRALIA. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMISSION. (1998). OUR CULTURE OUR FUTURE : REPORT ON AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROP- ERTY RIGHTS.

“Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property” refers to Indigenous peoples’ rights to their heritage. Heritage comprises all objects, sites and knowledge, the nature or use of which has been transmitted or continues to be transmitted from generation to generation, and which is regarded as pertaining to a particular Indigenous group or its territory. Heritage includes: Literary, performing and artistic works (including songs, music, dances, stories, ceremonies, symbols, languages and designs). Scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge (including cultures, medicines and the phenotypes of flora and fauna). All items of movable cultural property.⁶ Human remains and tissues. Immovable cultural property (including sacred and historically significant sites and burial grounds). Documentation of Indigenous peoples’ heritage in archives, film, photographs, videotape or audiotape and all forms of media. The heritage of an Indigenous people is a living one and includes objects, knowledge and literary and artistic works which may be created in the future based on that heritage.” ¹

As such, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) refers to the rights of Indigenous peoples to protect their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions. In Australia, these rights are increasingly recognized and protected through various legal frameworks. ICIP is also recognised in international law, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, **to which Australia is a signatory**. ICIP is underpinned by the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples, and is an important part of the cultural heritage and identity of Aboriginal communities. It is the product of generations of accumulated knowledge and creative expression, and reflects the unique history, values, and traditions of Aboriginal people. The Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) also offers some safeguards, ensuring that original works by Indigenous artists are protected by copyright. Additionally, the Australian Government has introduced initiatives like the Indigenous Art Code, promoting fair and ethical trade in Indigenous art, and the Indigenous Knowledge Systems framework, aimed at safeguarding traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.

Respecting ICIP in design and architectural contexts requires adhering to these legal frameworks while also embracing ethical practices. Designers and architects must seek consent from Indigenous communities before using any cultural elements in their projects. This consent process ensures that Indigenous peoples have control over how their cultural heritage is used and represented. Moreover, legal agreements can be established to outline the terms of use, ensuring that the intellectual property rights remain with the Indigenous communities. These agreements can specify the extent of use, attribution requirements, and any benefits or compensation owed to the community.

To further ensure respect for ICIP, it is crucial to engage in meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities throughout the design and architectural process. This involves actively involving community members in decision-making and design processes, acknowledging their traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights. By doing so, designers and architects not only comply with legal obligations but also foster respectful and sustainable partnerships. This collaborative approach helps to prevent cultural appropriation and ensures that Indigenous cultural heritage is preserved and celebrated in a way that benefits the First Peoples, maintaining their intellectual property and copyrights within the community.

This framework contains the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. All attempts have been made to seek authorisation from knowledge holders and Traditional Owners to share cultural knowledges in this framework. The use or reuse of any part of this knowledge for any purpose not authorised under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) or customary law is not permitted.

This framework is protected by ICIP. Knowledges and guidance shared in this framework are used for this project only.

1.4 GARIGARRA

garigarra: a conduit for Country and the built environment.

The Wiradjuri word for being truthful, garigarra also encompasses humility, authenticity, respect and care. It defines everything we do.

Led by Wiradjuri man Matte McConnell, we collaborate with architecture and design teams to ensure Country is meaningfully embedded into every stage of a project.

Within every space we design, defining everywhere we construct, there is the enduring spirit of Country: the knowledges, stories, Songlines, languages, land, skies and waters that have nurtured the local peoples since the beginning of time. By listening to the ancient knowledges of Country and her Custodians, we begin a process of healing, reclaiming and resurfacing Country through design. Through understanding one’s accountability to the duty of care we have to place and what we design, we begin unlearning, shifting (design) methodologies to recognise the interconnectedness of Country and architectural practices. Building on over 65,000 years of culture is not a last-minute consideration or merely a box to tick-off.

We join your project’s core design team, from planning to design to delivery. Through both Aboriginal and western design expertise, we help you to realise your vision in a way that honours the interconnected complexities of Country at every touch-point. When we respect the connection between built form and everything its natural surroundings encompass, we create a richer outcome for all.

When we take care of Country, Country will take care of us.

“baladhu walumaldhaany
I am a protector of Country.”

A proud Wiradjuri man belonging to the Cudgeegong River, Matte McConnell is Design Director of garigarra. He is committed to meaningfully (re)embedding and (re)centering Country through architecture and design.

His practice advocates for his people, culture and the ancient Country(s) on which he works. It honours and acknowledges his Ancestors, Elders, family and community. Grounded in Wiradjuri philosophies, garigarra (truth) and yindyamarra (respect), he is dedicated to healing, unlearning and resurfacing knowledge and connections to Country through design.

With both Aboriginal and western design expertise, Matte is uniquely positioned to imbue careful Consideration and respect for Country across significant architectural works. Previously a Connecting with Country Design Consultant at Bangawarra, he has been lead on several Sydney projects, ranging from interior architecture to large master-planning.

He worked as an architectural designer at COX for a number of years before that, where he also led reconciliation and cultural competency in the Sydney and national studios. Through his efforts, he helped launch COX’s Reconciliation Action Plan and formed part of its cultural advisory committee.

Outside of garigarra, Matte is a lecturer in the School of Architecture at the University of Technology, Sydney. His research and teaching focuses on Indigenous design methodologies through storytelling, challenging students to understand and acknowledge architecture’s responsibility to care for Country. He contributes regularly to architecture studios across Sydney universities with guest lectures, design workshops and assessment reviews.



1.5 GUIDING FRAMEWORKS

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NSW

“Since time immemorial, our ancestors, the First Peoples, have been caring for Country in a sustainable way, passing on this continuing responsibility and custodianship to countless generations.”
David Kennedy, Gumbaynggirr/Yuin

The NSW Connecting with Country Framework serves as a comprehensive guide for integrating Aboriginal culture and heritage into urban planning and design in New South Wales. Below is a summary of its key elements, including important quotes that align with the approach taken in the TfNSW Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Framework.

The framework is designed to help project clients, teams, and communities respond to Aboriginal culture and heritage in the planning, design, and delivery of built environment projects in NSW. It encourages collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to create urban spaces that reflect diverse cultural heritage.

The framework outlines core themes:
Cultural Context: The framework emphasizes the importance of understanding “Country” from an Aboriginal perspective, which includes the land, waters, and all living things.

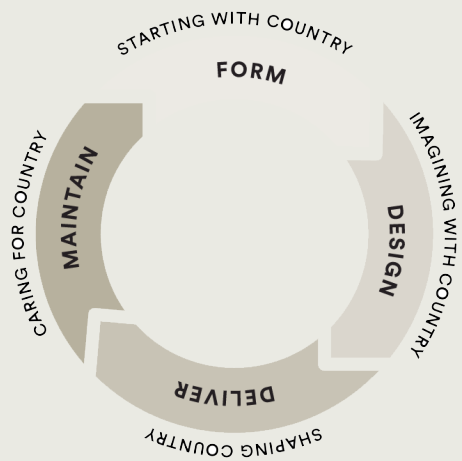
Country-Centred Approach: It advocates for a shift from traditional practices to one that centres Aboriginal knowledge in planning and designing the built environment.

Designing with Country: The framework provides guidance on incorporating Aboriginal cultural principles into design, promoting sustainability, resilience, and community health.

The framework offers practical steps for integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge into planning and design, including case studies that demonstrate successful implementations. It also emphasises the importance of continuous feedback and evolution, with plans for review and updates by 2027.

Outlined by the Connecting with Country Framework, garigarra will work towards considering project life cycles with

Aboriginal perspectives. As illustrated in the diagram below, this is broken into four steps: Sensing, Imagining, Shaping and Caring for Country.



The design methodology developed by garigarra through this project will be aligned to the principles outlined in the GANSW Connecting with Country framework alongside the principles that arise through the collaborative design process. The project will aim to work towards the outcomes for Country outlined in the framework:

- Healthy Country
- Healthy community
- Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Cultural competency
- Better places

BIODIVERSITY IN PLACE

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NSW

The Biodiversity in Place Framework challenges outdated notions that urban development and ecological health are mutually exclusive. It positions biodiversity not as a design afterthought but as a core performance requirement for urban environments. Developed by Government Architect NSW, the framework calls for cities to become active contributors to ecosystem recovery especially as urbanisation accelerates and biodiversity continues to decline.

The framework rejects monoculture lawns and token plantings, advocating instead for ecologically functional, structurally complex, and connected landscapes, spaces that support both human and non-human life. This includes dense under-storey planting, habitat features, nature-based infrastructure, and a rejection of European landscape aesthetics that privilege control and order over life and adaptability.

The framework’s six principles:

- Nature as Partner
- For Humans and non-humans
- Guided by the landscape
- Highly-diverse planting
- Sensitive and skilled management
- Connected across scales

Demand a shift away from decorative greening and towards intervention that builds habitat, supports pollinators, improves water cycles, and sustains climate resilience. Critically, it also recognises the importance of long-term care and adaptive management, noting that landscapes must not be considered “finished” upon installation.

The relevance to Forest Lodge Seniors Living, next to a park and creek, is not simply near nature. It is embedded within a critical ecological corridor. These riparian systems are often the last remaining connective threads for wildlife in fragmented cities. Any project in this context that does not engage with biodiversity as a foundational principle risks becoming a barrier to ecological health rather than a contributor.

Creek corridors are living systems, not visual amenities. They require thoughtful integration, design must support stormwater infiltration, reduce pollutants, and reinforce native

vegetation systems, not override them with impermeable surfaces or ornamental planting.

Adjacent parks and green spaces are potential spaces for species movement. Without active design that connects with these spaces through planting, habitat provision, and water-sensitive infrastructure the project will effectively create ecological dead zones.

Biodiversity should not be contained within the boundaries of the park or creek. The site must take responsibility for expanding habitat, cooling the local micro-climate, and restoring degraded ecologies not simply relying on the adjacent landscape to carry the environmental load.

Failure to act meaningfully in such a location is more than a missed opportunity, it is a form of ecological negligence in the face of well-documented biodiversity collapse.

To build next to a park and creek and not embed biodiversity as a central design driver is to undermine the very systems that make the site viable. Biodiversity in Place is not a guideline to be selectively referenced. it is a provocation to transform the way we build in the age of climate and ecological crisis.

The Biodiversity in Place Framework’s relevance to a Connecting with Country design methodology reinforces the interconnectedness of ecological systems and cultural knowledge, aligning with Aboriginal worldviews that see land, waters, plants, animals, and people (Country) as part of a living, relational system. While the Biodiversity Framework approaches this through a policy and conservation lens, Connecting with Country centres Aboriginal custodianship, emphasising that biodiversity cannot be protected without honouring the deep time relationships, responsibilities, and knowledge systems of First Nations peoples. Integrating both frameworks enables more ethical and sustainable design outcomes that respect cultural authority and restore ecological health.

1.6 GUIDING FRAMEWORKS

SUSTAINABLE SYDNEY 2030–2050 VISION

CITY OF SYDNEY

“We will also broadly implement the concept of designing with Country, including a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and cultural expression.”
(p.21, Yananurala)

The City of Sydney’s Sustainable Sydney 2030–2050: Continuing the Vision provides a critical policy and design framework for projects seeking to embed Indigenous perspectives, cultural sustainability, and ecological responsibility into the built environment. This long-term vision is guided by six core principles, including a commitment to elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and cultures and to support self-determining communities through inclusive governance and design. These principles strongly align with the intent of the Forest Lodge aged care home development to embed Connecting with Country methodologies in architecture, landscape architecture, and public art.

Situated adjacent to Orphan School Creek, a remnant waterway and ecological corridor with deep cultural significance, the site offers a unique opportunity to respond to the City’s strategic direction of becoming both a “green” and “connected” city. The development’s proximity to these landscape systems and its social program of senior living provide a compelling case for restoring reciprocal relationships between people, water, and place, relationships that have been eroded through urban development, channelisation, and erasure of cultural histories.

“We want a city where the real history of our country is acknowledged and truth telling elevated to enable us to go forward together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a true spirit of reconciliation.”
(p.8, Vision Statement – Global)

Of particular relevance is the Eora Journey, Yananurala, a key initiative within the City’s cultural strategy. The Eora Journey articulates a city-wide methodology for recognising Aboriginal histories and living cultures through public domain interventions. As a multi-scalar approach encompassing public art, knowledge exchange, and cultural infrastructure, it offers a precedent for how projects can move beyond tokenistic

gestures to meaningfully embed Aboriginal presence and cultural continuity into the urban fabric. In this context, the Forest Lodge project aims to align with this methodology by creating spaces that allow Elders to maintain cultural identity, engage in intergenerational knowledge exchange, and participate in the shared stewardship of Country.

The Sustainable Sydney framework further emphasises the need for resilient and inclusive communities, where social infrastructure such as aged care is not isolated from the public realm but integrated into the ecological and cultural systems of the city. This project responds by exploring design strategies that reconnect fragmented systems of Country (e.g., Through restored vegetation, water-sensitive urban design, and cultural planting), while also honouring Indigenous custodianship of water and land. Such approaches mirror the City’s broader goal of transitioning towards a regenerative, zero-carbon, and culturally inclusive future.

Forest Lodge aged care project can use the Connecting with Country approach not only to improve environmental and social outcomes but also to critically engage with the ambitions set out in the Sustainable Sydney 2030–2050 vision. It contributes to a re-imagining of aged care as a culturally active, ecologically responsive, and socially connected typology that supports both human and more-than-human well-being on Gadi and Wann Country.

“Water-sensitive cities... must draw on the knowledge and values of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”
(p.66, The Water City)

1.7 SUPPORTING REPORTS

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT: 2 – 32 JUNCTION STREET, FOREST LODGE

UNEARTHED ARCHAEOLOGY & HERITAGE

This section draws on the findings of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report prepared by Uearthed Archaeology & Heritage Pty Ltd (June 2025) on behalf of Corio Projects, the proponent for the redevelopment of 2–32 Junction Street, Forest Lodge. The report was completed as part of a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) and follows the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage’s guidelines for Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment and consultation. While the study area has undergone extensive modification since colonisation including excavation, infill, and industrial development , the report recognises the continued cultural importance of Orphan School Creek to Aboriginal communities. The following summary synthesises the historical, ecological, and cultural context of the site to support a more grounded and responsive approach to design and Country-centred planning.

2–32 Junction Street, Forest Lodge, lies on the traditional lands of the Cadi/ Gadi/Gadigal and Wann/Wangal Peoples, both Dharug-speaking groups whose Ancestral Lands covered the southern foreshore of Port Jackson and extended inland along the Parramatta River. While historic records differ slightly in identifying exact boundaries, both groups maintained long-standing cultural relationships with the freshwater systems, estuarine wetlands, and wooded valleys of the area. The Forest Lodge site, positioned along the now-canalised Orphan School Creek, would have been part of a broader network of seasonal resource zones. As stated in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report:

“Orphan School Creek is important to the local and broader Aboriginal community. The wet and swampy nature of the site historically would have made it a resource zone for Aboriginal people, however they would not have camped here.” - Stening (2024, p. 29)

This description aligns with broader anthropological research on Aboriginal occupation patterns across the Sydney Basin. Attenbrow (2002) notes that Aboriginal use of land focused on “valley bottoms and shorelines” (p. 47), particularly where permanent freshwater sources and food-rich ecotones existed.

However, the site’s geology comprising Wianamatta Shales rather than Hawkesbury Sandstone made it less suited for long-term settlement or rock shelter use, both of which are more commonly associated with sandstone country.

Despite this, the broader region supported a rich and diverse ecological system. As documented in the heritage report:

“The alluvial soils would have supported a river flat forest, which is comprised of various Eucalypt and Angophoras.” - Stening (2024, p. 15)

- Species identified as likely to have been present on site include:
- Eucalyptus siberi (Silvertop Ash)
 - Eucalyptus piperita (Sydney Peppermint)
 - Eucalyptus sclerophyllia (Scribbly Gum)
 - Corymbia spp.
 - Banksia serrata (Old Man Banksia)
 - Banksia spinulosa (Hairpin Banksia)
 - Banksia integrifolia (Coast Banksia)
 - Acacia longifolia and other Acacia spp.

“The alluvial soils would have supported a river flat forest, which is comprised of various Eucalypt and Angophoras. The open woodland community comprised Eucalyptus siberi (Silvertop Ash), Eucalyptus piperita (Sydney Peppermint), Eucalyptus sclerophyllia (Scribbly Gum), plus Corymbia with an under-storey of Banksia serrata (Old Man Banksia), Banksia spinulosa (Hairpin Banksia), Banksia integrifolia (Coast Banksia) and various Acacia spp., Including Acacia longifolia.” - (Stening 2024, p. 15)

(Stening 2024, p. 15; Baker, Corringham & Dark 1986)

These native plant species are typical of the Sydney region’s remnant woodlands and open forests, especially those associated with shale transition zones and valley floors. Their inclusion in the assessment reflects broader ecological classifications previously outlined by Baker, Corringham, and Dark in Native Plants of the Sydney Region, which also informs the source cited in the heritage report (Baker et al., 1986).

In addition to canopy species, the under-storey likely included flowering shrubs such as Telopea speciosissima (Waratah) and Boronia serrulata (Native Rose), as well as groundcovers like Grevillea laurifolia and Persoonia chamaepitys, and clumps of Lomandra longifolia on elevated areas (Stening 2024, p. 15; Baker

et al., 1986).

This diversity would have supported a wide range of fauna including birds, reptiles, and small marsupials and contributed to seasonal food and fibre resources used by Aboriginal people for nourishment, medicine, and tool-making. As Terry Low (1989) describes in Bush Tucker – Australia’s Wild Food Harvest, species such as Banksia, Acacia, and Lomandra were commonly used in Aboriginal cultural practice across south-eastern Australia.

The post-contact history of the site began with a series of colonial land grants, including Catherine King’s 1795 grant, a portion of William Bligh’s holdings, and the 1829 Clergy and School Lands. There is no surviving evidence of structures from these early allocations, and the land was likely cleared and used for agricultural purposes. Urbanisation began in earnest in the 1880s, with the construction of terrace housing, stables, sheds, and light industrial facilities. A multi-storey brick factory and office building, still present today, was constructed in the early 20th century and later expanded. By this time, “the study area had been subjected to significant modification in the form of excavation,” and “cutting and levelling of the site would have removed any evidence of Aboriginal occupation which may have been present” (Stening 2024, p. 27).

The site’s current condition reflects over a century of urban development. Junction Street sits at a higher elevation than the rest of the site, with retaining walls marking the steep gradient. Orphan School Creek, which forms the western boundary, has been channelised and partially covered. These interventions, combined with the site’s geology, underlain by Wianamatta Shales rather than the more archaeologically sensitive Hawkesbury Sandstone mean that “no archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation is expected due to extensive post-colonial disturbance across the site” (Stening 2024, pp. 5–6, 27). The predictive model by Attenbrow (2002) supports this conclusion, suggesting Aboriginal settlement was more intensive on estuarine ridge-lines and sandstone headlands than in freshwater valleys underlain by shale. The physical transformation of the site has been significant. The report documents that:

“The study area has been subjected to significant modification in the form of excavation. There is a large drop from the level of Junction Street to the study area, indicating that the study area has been cut and levelled.” - Stening (2024, p. 27)

Given this disturbance and the absence of previously recorded Aboriginal sites in the immediate area, the predictive model suggests that:

“No archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation is expected due to extensive post-colonial disturbance across the site.” - Stening (2024, pp. 5–6, 27)

However, cultural value persists through the living knowledge and relationships maintained by Aboriginal people today. Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) consulted as part of this assessment agreed that no further archaeological work was necessary, but that cultural consultation should continue. As the report concludes: “Consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties should continue throughout the project.” - Stening (2024, p. 37)

SPATIAL DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

Connection to Orphan School Creek
The creek corridor, although now largely modified and channelised, remains a culturally significant freshwater feature
Design responses could celebrate and make visible the former swampy ecologies and freshwater relationships through landscape integration, materials, or water-sensitive design elements.

Interpretive and Educational Design
The absence of archaeological evidence doesn’t negate the opportunity to acknowledge cultural memory through interpretive signage, public art, or storytelling elements. Focus on “resource zone” rather than “campsite” narratives aligns better with cultural history.

Ecological Restoration
Opportunity to support native vegetation like Angophoras, Banksias, Lomandras, and Eucalypts, reflecting the pre-colonial ecological landscape. Swampy and drier conditions could be referenced through zones of planting and habitat support.

Embedded Cultural Heritage
Consider incorporating design motifs or patterns reflecting Wangal/Cadi tools, crafts (e.g. Fishing hooks, bark canoes), or practices like tooth evulsion and ceremonial life. Use spatial storytelling to highlight the impacts of colonisation, such as displacement, smallpox, and enforced assimilation.

1.7 SUPPORTING REPORTS

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT: 2-32 JUNCTION STREET, FOREST LODGE

WEIR PHILLIPS HERITAGE

This heritage assessment provides an overview of the historical development, physical fabric, and cultural significance of 2–32 Junction Street, Forest Lodge. The report was prepared by Weir Phillips Architects in 2017 to inform proposed development at the site, which includes a former hospital facility and associated buildings. It outlines the site’s evolution from its early colonial use through to its function as part of the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, which occupied the site from the late 19th to early 20th century. The site’s institutional character is expressed through its architectural style, formal layout, and surviving structures, including the 1911 main ward building and later additions.

The report identifies the land as originally part of the Camperdown Estate, which was created through early colonial land grants. This history marks a shift from relational care and reciprocity to colonial systems of possession and control. These grants fragmented the interconnected systems of Country that were sustained for thousands of years. The imposition of property boundaries and titles led to the physical and cultural disconnection of Aboriginal people from vital sites, including waterways like Orphan School Creek.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the site and surrounding areas were further transformed by industrialisation, with nearby factories, brickworks, and breweries altering the land through excavation, infilling, and pollution. The redirection of creeks, the draining of wetlands, and the hardening of surfaces for roads and buildings contributed to significant environmental degradation. Orphan School Creek, once a visible and ecologically rich watercourse, was piped and buried, reducing its role as a living system and severing its connection to broader ecological and cultural networks. These impacts reflect broader colonial patterns of extraction and control, where land was treated as a resource rather than a living entity.

Although the report’s focus remains primarily on built heritage, it notes remnants of mature vegetation and institutional planting schemes, which serve as modest but meaningful reminders of the site’s layered history. These plantings, along with the terrain’s modified contours, offer opportunities to

consider how Country has persisted beneath disturbance, and how ecological and cultural knowledge can inform restoration and healing.

Looking forward, the report offers several starting points for design and research opportunities. While it focuses on the built heritage of the former hospital, it indirectly reveals the degree to which natural systems, particularly Orphan School Creek, have been modified, buried, or forgotten.

These concealed layers present opportunities for ecological restoration and the reinterpretation of former creek lines within public and private space. The mature trees and altered landforms on site can inform strategies of landscape regeneration that honour both colonial-era layers and deeper Aboriginal connections to Country. In design terms, the report encourages a careful reading of what remains, what has been erased, and what might be re-imagined through culturally informed, ecologically attuned practice.

The report provides a foundation for recognising the deep impacts of colonisation, but also points to opportunities for reconnection and repair. Integrating this understanding into the design process opens the possibility of healing Country, restoring flows, supporting native ecologies, and acknowledging the site’s layered histories, including those that pre-date colonial documentation.

“The subject site has historical significance for its ability to demonstrate the pattern of development of Forest Lodge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”
- p. 38

“The site has associations with various small-scale manufacturing and commercial enterprises, reflecting the mixed-use industrial character of the local area prior to the mid-20th century.”
- p. 38

“The factory building is a good representative example of a utilitarian interwar industrial building... but has been subject to considerable alterations, including internal reconfiguration and removal of original windows.”
- p. 30

“The buildings do not demonstrate a high level of architectural quality, rarity or intactness that would warrant individual

heritage listing.”
- p. 30

“The site has been extensively disturbed by 20th century development and the potential for subsurface archaeological remains is low.”
- p. 33

“The proposed development will result in the removal of buildings that are not of heritage significance and will not impact on the heritage significance of nearby items or conservation areas.”
- p. 40

“The site is not within a heritage conservation area but adjoins one and contains no individually listed heritage items.”
- p. 2

1.7 SUPPORTING REPORTS

FLOODPLAIN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN: JOHNSTONS CREEK

WMA WATER FOR CITY OF SYDNEY, 2017

The Johnstons Creek catchment encompasses Annandale, Camperdown, Forest Lodge, Stanmore, Newtown, and Glebe, draining into Rozelle Bay. This report identifies Orphan School Creek as a key upper tributary, contributing significantly to downstream flood risk and runoff volumes.

“The Orphan School Creek tributary is a major contributor of flow to the upper Johnstons Creek system. The sub-catchment includes residential, institutional and commercial areas and exhibits a dense network of minor overland flow paths.”
- c. 5, p. 2

Urban development and the conversion of natural creek lines into stormwater channels have increased flood risk, decreased ecological resilience, and compromised natural drainage patterns.

KEY FLOOD RISKS

- The catchment is highly urbanised, with impervious surfaces accelerating runoff.
- Flooding occurs both from overland flow paths and stormwater surcharge, especially during 1-in-20 and 1-in-100 year events.
- Key flood risk areas include Wigram Road, Hereford Street, Sparkes Street, Junction Street, and the area around Orphan School Creek.

“During more frequent flood events (e.g. 20% AEP), above-floor flooding is limited; however, significant flooding occurs in roadways and open spaces.”
- c. 6, p. 2

“In a 1% AEP event, flood-waters inundate basements, ground floors, and roadways across Forest Lodge and Annandale.”
- c. 6, p. 6

PROPOSED MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The Plan outlines both infrastructure-based and policy-based mitigation actions, including:

Structural:

- Stormwater upgrades at Sparkes Street, Hereford Street,

- and Booth Street
- Detention basins at St John’s Oval and John Street Reserve
- Pipe capacity enhancements across minor catchments

Non-structural:

- Planning controls to enforce flood-compatible development
- Community education and emergency planning
- Ongoing flood modelling and risk updates

“Structural flood mitigation options will need to be complemented by planning and development controls to minimise risk exposure.”
- c. 10, p. 1

INTEGRATION WITH URBAN DESIGN & ECOLOGY

- The report recognises opportunities to combine flood mitigation with open space enhancement, riparian corridor restoration, and urban cooling through green infrastructure.

“Wherever possible, flood mitigation works should integrate with public domain upgrades, pedestrian and cycling access, and biodiversity improvements.”
- c. 11, p. 2

- For areas like Orphan School Creek, this opens pathways for coordinated design responses that reconnect cultural and ecological systems while addressing hydrological risk.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST LODGE & ORPHAN SCHOOL CREEK

- The Orphan School Creek corridor remains a critical flood path and site of urban runoff concentration.
- There are design opportunities to integrate green stormwater infrastructure, interpretive heritage features, and ecological planting into public domain upgrades.
- Any new development in Forest Lodge must consider floor levels, basement design, and overland flow corridors outlined in the plan.

GLEBE’S HILL: UNRAVELLING ITS BIODIVERSITY SECRETS AND POTENTIAL

DIETER HOCHULI, MANUEL LEQUERICA TAMARA, AND GENEVIEVE HEGGARTY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY FOR THE GLEBE SOCIETY AND THE CITY OF SYDNEY, 2024

The report investigates the remnant native vegetation, ecological potential, and biodiversity of Glebe’s Hill, a steep and underutilised bushland area located adjacent to Jubilee Park and near Orphan School Creek. It provides detailed ecological mapping, flora and fauna assessment, and recommendations for the site’s future care and regeneration.

There is a unique resilience of native vegetation patches in Glebe’s Hill particularly those on thin shale soils and rock outcrops. The report identifies the site’s potential to serve as a key biodiversity corridor between the Johnston’s Creek and Orphan School Creek catchments. It also critiques past landscaping decisions and calls for ecological reparation guided by long-term stewardship and cultural renewal.

The site contains high ecological integrity areas with remnant woodland vegetation, despite urban fragmentation.

Native flora includes Allocasuarina, Melaleuca, Themeda, and patches of native grasses, many of which have persisted in dry ridge environments.

Weeds, edge effects, and historic planting regimes have compromised parts of the site, particularly where kikuyu and non-local trees were introduced.

The site offers critical opportunities to connect fragmented green corridors, support native fauna, and restore pre-colonial ecologies with long-term urban and cultural benefits.

“Glebe’s Hill contains some of the oldest surviving dry-shale ridge-top woodland remnants in the area.”
- Lloyd (2020, p. 7)

“The site holds potential to become a significant biodiversity node and corridor within an otherwise heavily urbanised environment.”
- Lloyd (2020, p. 11)

INTERPRETATIVE WALK IN ORPHAN SCHOOL CREEK

ANDREW WOOD, BLUE WREN SUBCOMMITTEE CONVENOR, 2017

Participants: Approximately 25 attendees, including City of Sydney’s Urban Ecology Coordinator Sophie Golding and Parks Coordinator Nick Criniti.

Purpose: To explore the ecological restoration and historical context of Orphan School Creek in Forest Lodge.

Historical Degradation: Originally described in 1887 as “not much more than a sewer,” Orphan School Creek was piped by 1926 .

Community Initiatives: In 1996, following the closure of Camperdown Children’s Hospital, the Friends/Residents/Ratepayers of the Orphan School Creek Gully (FRROGs) was formed to advocate for the creek’s restoration.

Re-vegetation Efforts: Starting around 2004, native vegetation, including species from the original Sandstone and Turpentine-Ironbark woodlands, was replanted along the creek line. The restoration plan emphasized creating a wildlife sanctuary and green corridor, incorporating habitat elements like logs and rocks .

Site Transformation: Despite initial challenges, including soil remediation and the presence of weeds and rubble, the area has been successfully transformed into a reconstructed bushland park, supporting native flora and fauna.

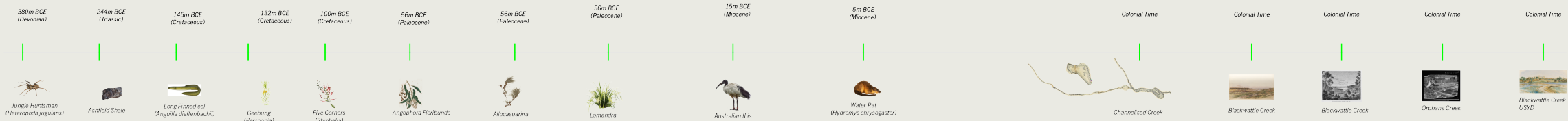
Naming History: The name “Orphan School Creek” originates from land grants intended for an orphan school, which was ultimately established in Cabramatta. The name persisted, and the creek continues to flow from the southwestern corner through St John’s College, under Parramatta Road, and underneath Larkin Street .

Ongoing Maintenance: Since the City of Sydney assumed management in 2013, regular maintenance and bush-care activities have been conducted to preserve the site’s ecological health.

2.0 CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

2.1 DEEP TIME

DEEP TIME LINEAGES OF SITE MATERIALS

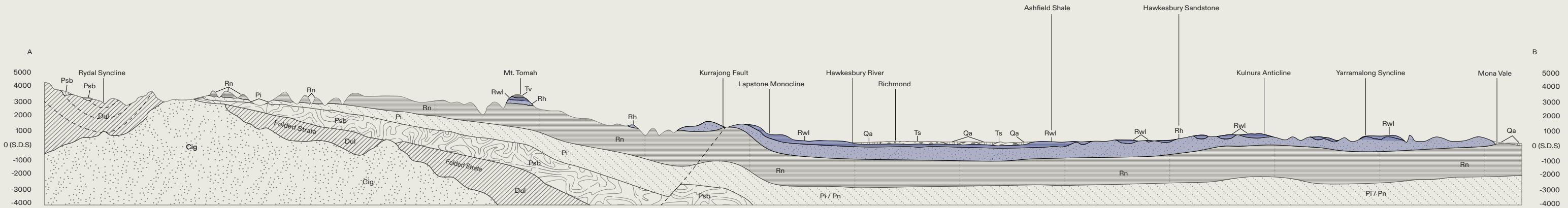


Deep Earth Country (at Forest Lodge) reveals the deep time layers that underpin. The site sits atop a ridge of Hawkesbury sandstone and Ashfield shale, part of a vast geological formation shaped over 200 million years ago. This bedrock forms the foundation of the area’s steep gullies and ridge-lines, influencing drainage patterns and the shape of the creeks that run through the land.

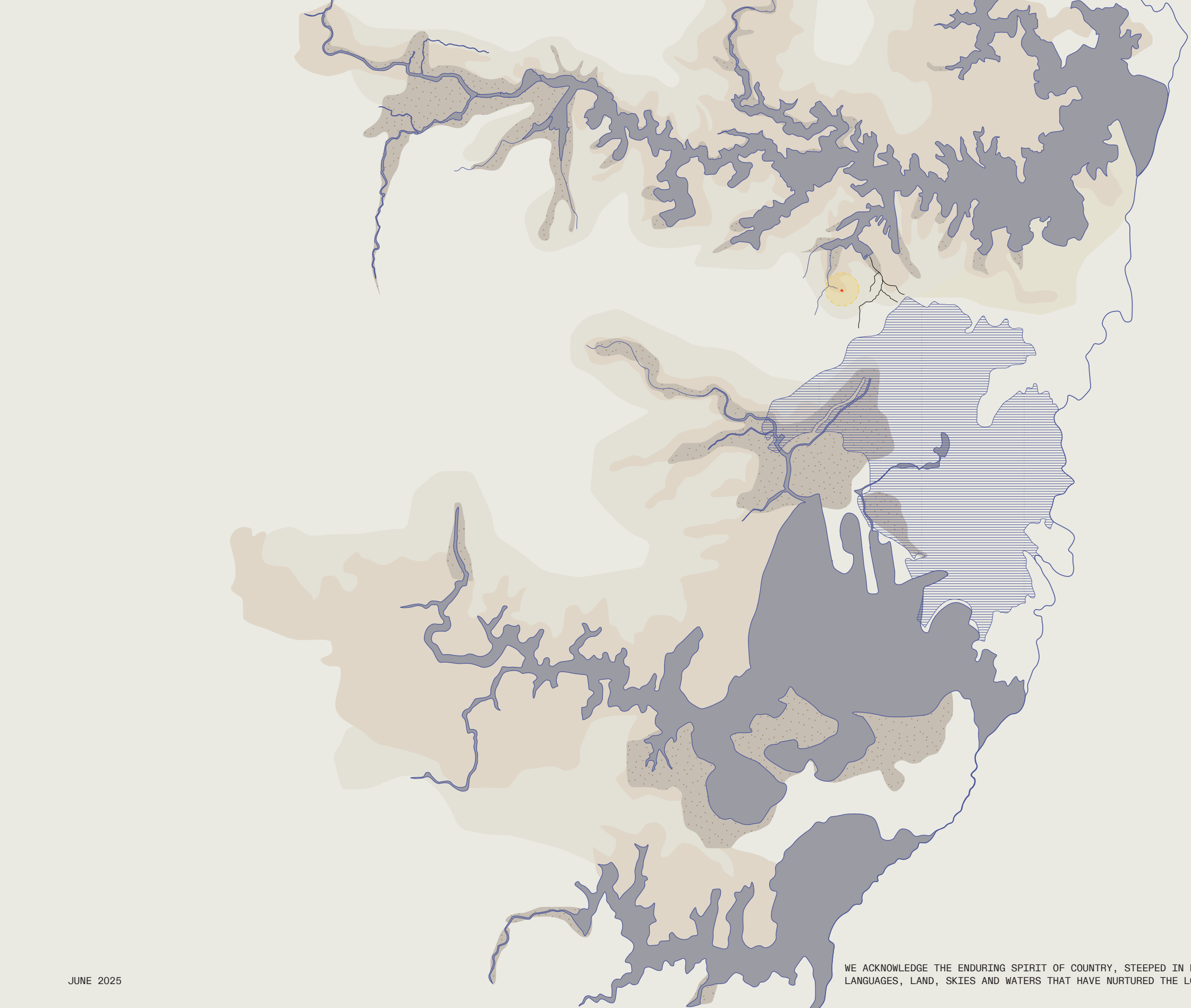
Overtime, weathering of the sandstone created shallow, nutrient-poor soils, supporting a distinctive ecology including Turpentine-Ironbark forest and sandstone heathlands. These thin soils, often disrupted by urban development, retain memory of what once was, anchoring root systems, fungi, and microbial life. Below ground, invisible networks of mycelium and root systems connect tree to tree, transferring nutrients, water, and even signals of distress. The presence of remnant Angophoras speak to these ongoing relationships.

Understanding Country means recognising that care must extend downward, to what holds water, supports growth, and connects life beyond what we can see. Working with these geological foundations means supporting future interventions support the deep, slow cycles that sustain these interconnected systems.

GEOLOGY OF SYDNEY BASIN



2.2 WIDER INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS



Wider Connected Systems of Country link the site to a vast, living network that extends through Johnstons and Orphan School Creek to Blackwattle Bay, Rozelle Bay, Sydney Harbour and ultimately Botany Bay. These waterways are part of a broader cultural and ecological system that has sustained life for thousands of years.

Water once flowed freely from sandstone ridges and aquifers through wetlands and mangroves into the bays, supporting rich estuarine ecosystems that provided resources. Shellfish, eels, and bird-life followed seasonal rhythms of migration and reproduction, forming part of an enduring cycle of Country.

Urban development has severed many of these links, canalising creeks, piping flows underground, and replacing wetlands with concrete, yet the water still moves.

The care enacted on this site will extend beyond its edges. There is a need to nurture the health of the catchment, respect the movement of water, and recognise its place as a continuous, interconnected element of Country that extends far beyond the immediate landscape.

- KEY:
- Site
 - Site Area
 - Hydrology
 - Botany Sands Aquifer
 - Coastline
 - Saline and Forested Wetlands
 - Dry Sclerophyll Forests
 - Wet Sclerophyll Forests
 - Heathland

2.3 ERASED WATERWAYS



The site is situated within a nexus of water catchments that feeds into major water bodies including the Cooks River, Black Wattle Bay, Johnstons Creek, the Tank Stream and Circular Quay. It is part of inter-catchment, ephemeral water bodies that have now been channelised, contaminated and de-naturalised. These flows once formed part of a continuous network of freshwater and brackish systems shaped by topography, seasonal rainfall, and tidal influence. The site itself features various water management features and flood prevention infrastructure, in an attempt to control and regulate water through channelised and subterranean channels. Stormwater culverts, retaining walls, artificial embankments and sedimentation pits now replace the original creek beds, altering both surface and subsurface hydrology.

Prior to these water regimes, the introduction of invasive species and colonial infrastructure, the area was a series of streams, creeks, ephemeral flood plains, ponds, lagoons and ancient sand dunes, filled with Banksia Scrub mingled with fresh water soaks and wetlands. The sandy soils supported species such as Banksia serrata, Melaleuca nodosa, Themeda australis, and Allocasuarina distyla, many of which persist in fragmented ecological pockets nearby. Freshwater soaks provided year-round sources of drinking water, while sedgeland supported fibre collection, weaving practices and aquatic food systems.

Through water, the site situates itself within deep time geological components, multi-species migration including eels and moths and a plethora of cultural practices. These hydrological systems enabled cultural journeys and seasonal mobility with long-finned eels (*Anguilla reinhardtii*) travelling between inland wetlands and the ocean, and Bogong moths (*Agrotis infusa*) forming part of important ceremonial cycles. The persistence of these flows and their disruption through urban infrastructure marks a layered story of both continuity and dispossession where flood risk, biodiversity decline and cultural erasure intersect.

2.4 FLORA AND FAUNA

PRE-COLONIAL TAXONOMY

BEFORE THE WATER WAS CHANNELISED

Precolonial Taxonomy
Before the Water was Channelised



Long Nosed Bandicoot
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Water Rat
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



White Ibis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Buff Banded Rail
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Long Finned Eel
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Microbat
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Porseavia
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Styphelia
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Juncus
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Ashfield Shale
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Angaphora Floribunda
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca

COLONIAL TAXONOMY

AFTER THE WATER WAS CHANNELISED



White Ibis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



White Banded Jumper
(*Maratus griseus*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Common Myna
(*Acridotheres tristis*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Dark-flecked Garden Sunskink
(*Lampropholis delicata*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Noisy Myna
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Bagong Moth
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Eucalyptus Grandis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Casuarina
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



White Ibis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



White Ibis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Ashfield Shale
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



Australian Raven
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



White Ibis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca



White Ibis
(*Threskionis molucca*)
Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskionithidae
Genus: Threskionis
Species: T. molucca

2.5 ORPHAN SCHOOL CREEK CORRIDOR

KEY:

- Site
- Green space
- Hydrology
- Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest
- Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest
- Samphire Salt-marsh
- Estuarine Swamp Oak Twig-rush Forest
- Peak Flood Depth (m)
 - 0.1-0.25
 - 0.25-0.5
 - 0.5-0.75
 - 0.75-1
 - 1



Brushtail possum navigating fragmented canopy corridors



Mycelium root networks support plant communication and nutrient exchange



Angophora, indicator of pre-clearing forest communities



Ashfield shale, shaping soil structure, drainage patterns & ecologies



Casuarina, riparian species stabilising creek edges and supporting bird habitat



Bogong moth, seasonal migration, part of broader sky and food systems



Longfin eel movement linking inland creeks to the ocean



Creeks redirected into concrete drains

2.5 ORPHAN SCHOOL CREEK CORRIDOR

The site is part of a complex network of interwoven systems that extend far beyond its physical boundaries. Historically, water flowed from the sandstone ridges and Ashfield shale soils through freshwater streams, wetlands, and estuarine systems, linking Orphan School Creek and Johnstons Creek to Blackwattle Bay, Rozelle Bay, and Sydney Harbour. These waterways supported eel migration pathways and shellfish harvesting, as evidenced by midden remnants still found near Johnstons Creek. These freshwater corridors were not just ecological, but cultural highways, facilitating movement, ceremony, and kinship practices across Country.

The site sits within a highly modified but still active hydrological network, with Orphan School Creek forming the most immediate and influential waterway in its vicinity. A tributary of Johnstons Creek, Orphan School Creek once flowed freely from the higher elevations of St Johns College and the University of Sydney, through Forest Lodge, before joining Johnstons Creek near the former Children’s Hospital. Much of the creek is now piped underground, hidden beneath roads and buildings, though its path continues to shape the terrain, stormwater movement, and ecological potential of the area. Although now mostly piped and hidden beneath roads and buildings, the creek continues to shape land contours, water flows, and habitat possibilities.

Today, stormwater infrastructure, pipes, overflow pits, and retention basins, redirect flows, but water still moves across Country. The site’s runoff directly impacts downstream ecologies, highlighting a responsibility to manage water not just functionally, but relationally. Stormwater should not be seen solely as waste but as a carrier of memory, nutrients, and responsibility. Mapping these connections reveals both disruption and potential. The historical burial of Orphan School Creek symbolises a wider pattern of disconnection, yet the persistence of underground flows signals an enduring relationship with water.

During heavy rain events, surface flows re-emerge, reconnecting fragments of the original gully system. Along the creek’s lower section, community-led regeneration efforts, such as those by the Friends of Orphan School Creek, have restored native vegetation and stabilised banks, transforming former industrial and hospital land into bushland with habitat value. These interventions are more than ecological, they are acts of cultural repair.

Part of Orphan School Creek, once buried, is now a site of regeneration through local bush-care efforts. Migratory bird and eel pathways, though fragmented, can be supported through renewed habitat corridors and native under-storey plantings that reinforce mycelial and root networks. These underground networks (fungal, vegetal, and hydrological) reflect systems of knowledge transfer and co-becoming across species. The presence of remnant Angophora trees speaks to a living continuity of place, and to networks of care that extend underground.

The creek ultimately flows into Johnstons Creek, which in turn connects to Rozelle Bay and Blackwattle Bay, feeding into Sydney Harbour. This confluence of waterways creates both ecological and cultural interdependence, connecting local design interventions to a much broader estuarine system.

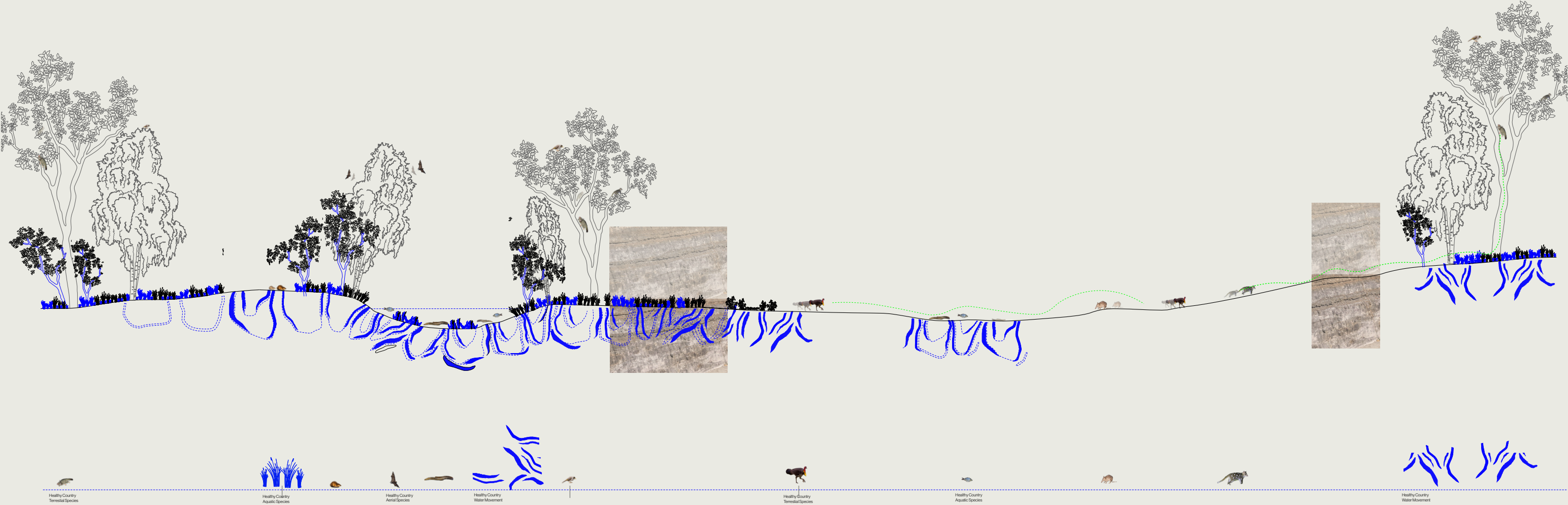
Actions on-site ripple outward, through soil, water, air, and story, inviting a deeper understanding of our responsibilities within a living, interconnected system of Country. Designing with Country in this context means recognising that what we do on this site, from planting to drainage, affects the health and sovereignty of systems far beyond its borders.



UNTITLED 2009, ADRINA KHOBANE, CALDWELL PARK
IMAGE: CITY OF SYDNEY

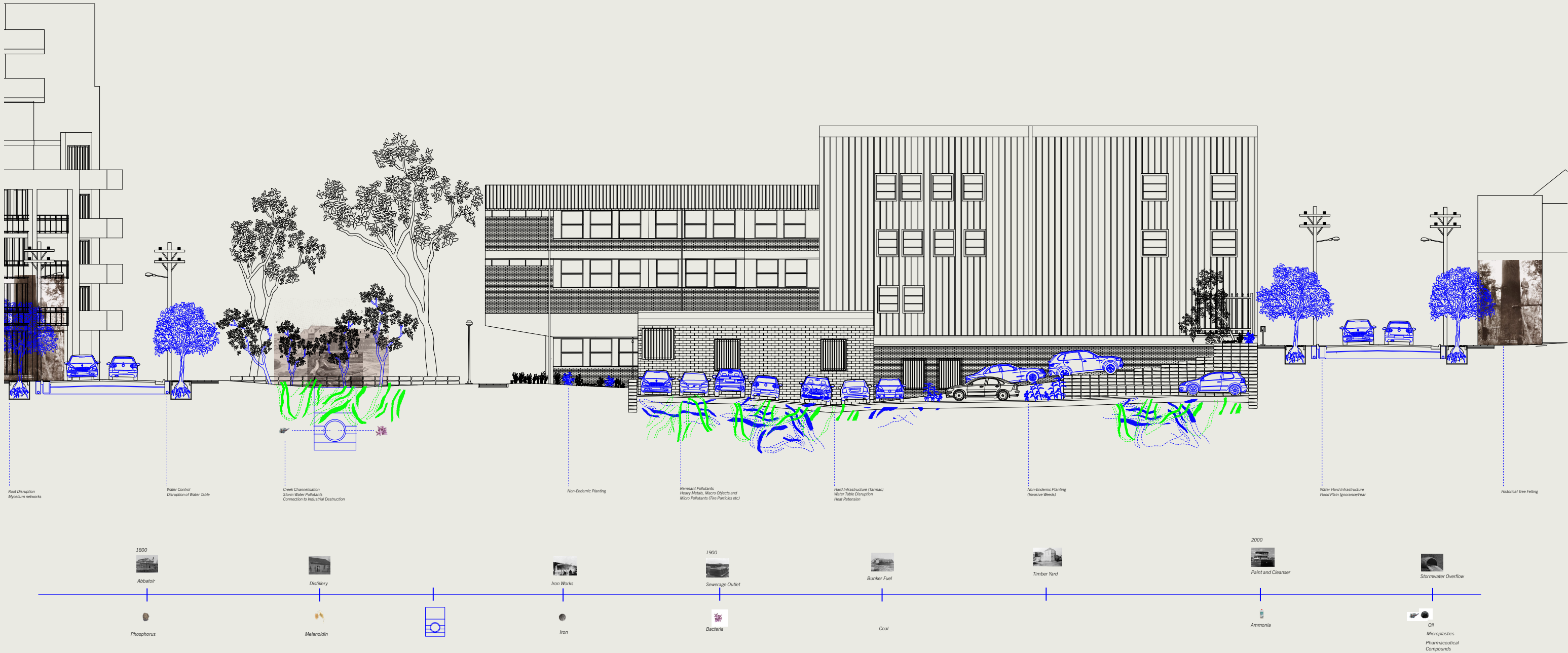
2.6 HEALTHY COUNTRY

PRE-CLEARING



2.7 IMPACTED COUNTRY

CURRENT SITE CONDITIONS



WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE ENDURING SPIRIT OF COUNTRY, STEEPED IN HISTORY AND TRADITION: THE KNOWLEDGES, STORIES, SONGLINES, LANGUAGES, LAND, SKIES AND WATERS THAT HAVE NURTURED THE LOCAL PEOPLES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

3.0 DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY



3.1 CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY PRINCIPLES

RESURFACE KNOWLEDGES OF WATER

Water holds memory and is a vital living presence in Aboriginal knowledge systems. The creek corridor adjacent to this site is not a drain or backdrop. It is part of an ancient freshwater system that has long sustained human and non-human life. The project must acknowledge and respect this. Resurfacing these knowledges requires acknowledging the First Peoples’ custodianship and the cultural responsibilities embedded in water. Architecture and landscape design must be responsive to water as a presence to be listened to, not managed.

Design gestures can reflect these knowledges in form and flow, pathways that follow historical creek lines, drainage that mimics natural filtration systems, and buildings that elevate or open in response to flood-prone zones. Public art and interpretation may carry stories of the site’s aquatic past, but should also invite contemplation of its present and future. What is our shared responsibility to these waters now?

Much of the creek’s original form has been erased, channelised, piped, redirected. This disconnection has impacted Country. Acknowledging this damage does not mean only restoring what once was, but responding to what remains with humility and care. Recognising where water enters and exits the site, where it pools and dries, offers opportunities to design in alignment with these flows rather than against them.

The design team must consider how built form can honour First Nations relationships with water not through tokenistic representation but through enduring stewardship. Water-sensitive design principles can be aligned with cultural values: ensuring clean runoff, reducing pollutants, slowing flows, and creating sensory, accessible places for residents to sit with water: watching, listening, remembering. These become shared acts of care and respect, helping us all learn to live with water again - a source of life, not a nuisance that needs to be managed.

RECONNECT SYSTEMS OF COUNTRY

Designing with Country at Forest Lodge requires a fundamental (re)connection of the site to the larger living systems that continue to shape it ecological, cultural, spiritual, and temporal. The adjacent creek corridor, a remnant of Johnston’s Creek and its pre-colonial wetland and mangrove systems, offers an opportunity to tap into these layered, integral systems of Country. This means working beyond biophysical restoration to re-establish the interconnectedness between deep earth and sky, water flows and memory, kinship and care. Built and open space should be treated as a continuous field that honours movement of water, species, people, and stories rather than segmented by property and political lines or institutional functions.

Architecturally, spaces should open to and extend into the park and creek corridor, allowing for visual and physical porosity between the built form and living ecologies. These connections could be realised through gentle thresholds shaded verandahs, gathering spaces, board-walks, and public artworks that guide residents and visitors into the landscape without harm. Culturally safe spaces, places of gathering, healing, and ceremony should be embedded throughout the site, offering continuity with other urban spaces across the city that honour Aboriginal presence, particularly in the inner-west and along waterways.

This principle also recognises the non-human systems of Country: birds nesting in Angophoras, possums moving through canopies, soils breathing with microbial life. These kin are not a backdrop to human life, but part of a shared relational world. Public art and landscape interventions can help make visible these systems and their entanglements, bringing attention to their role in Country and care. For Elders residing in the home, connection to these cycles, sunlight, rain, wind, bloom can support well-being and dignity, reminding us that the rhythms of Country remain constant even when our own change.

By grounding the architecture in these systems, we resist isolating the aged care facility from its broader environment. We honour the Elders not only as people, but as cultural archives and relational keepers of knowledge. Connecting human and more-than-human presence on site, through gardens, seasonal planting, soundscapes, and materiality ensures that all aspects of the built form participate in Country’s ongoing story.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE

Care is not an add-on. It is a fundamental ethic that underpins both Aboriginal culture and aged care practices. It extends beyond tending to needs and encompasses relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility to others: both human and more-than-human. Care must ripple outward: from the building to the resident, from the individual to the collective, and from the human to Country. To care for Elders is to honour their role as cultural anchors and knowledge holders, ensuring their presence shapes the design with physical safety, warmth, and cultural resonance. The architecture must act as an expression of care: calm, generous, and responsive.

Care is not be confined to the interior. Country does not end at the edge of a building, and nor should our responsibility. Landscape architecture plays a critical role, through materials that are non-toxic and age-friendly, shaded and accessible paths, and planting that restores ecological balance. Cultural and medicinal plants such as bush foods and native herbs encourage daily rituals of care: watering, harvesting, resting, sharing. These small acts in the public domain foster interdependence between Elders and young people, between residents and neighbours, between people and place. In these everyday interactions, people begin to see themselves not just as recipients of care, but as caretakers of something larger than themselves.

Accessibility is not simply about compliance. It is about relational belonging, cultural safety, and the dismantling of systems that have historically excluded Indigenous, disabled, and other marginalised communities. Most built environments were never designed with these communities in mind. They were designed to exclude, standardise, and control. True accessibility requires a re-imagining of design: one shaped by deep listening, collective consent, and reciprocal relationships with Country. It is a design of invitation, not to adapt to colonial systems, but to remake them entirely.

When care and accessibility are embedded into the project from the outset, they become daily practices of connecting to Country. The placement of rooms, rhythms of maintenance, and gestures of embedded public art ground people to place, and encourage shared care-taking practices and responsibilities. There is opportunity for a building of care, a place that teaches and fosters it. A place where architecture becomes a living, relational practice of honouring Elders, restoring ecologies, and sustaining communities into the future.

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

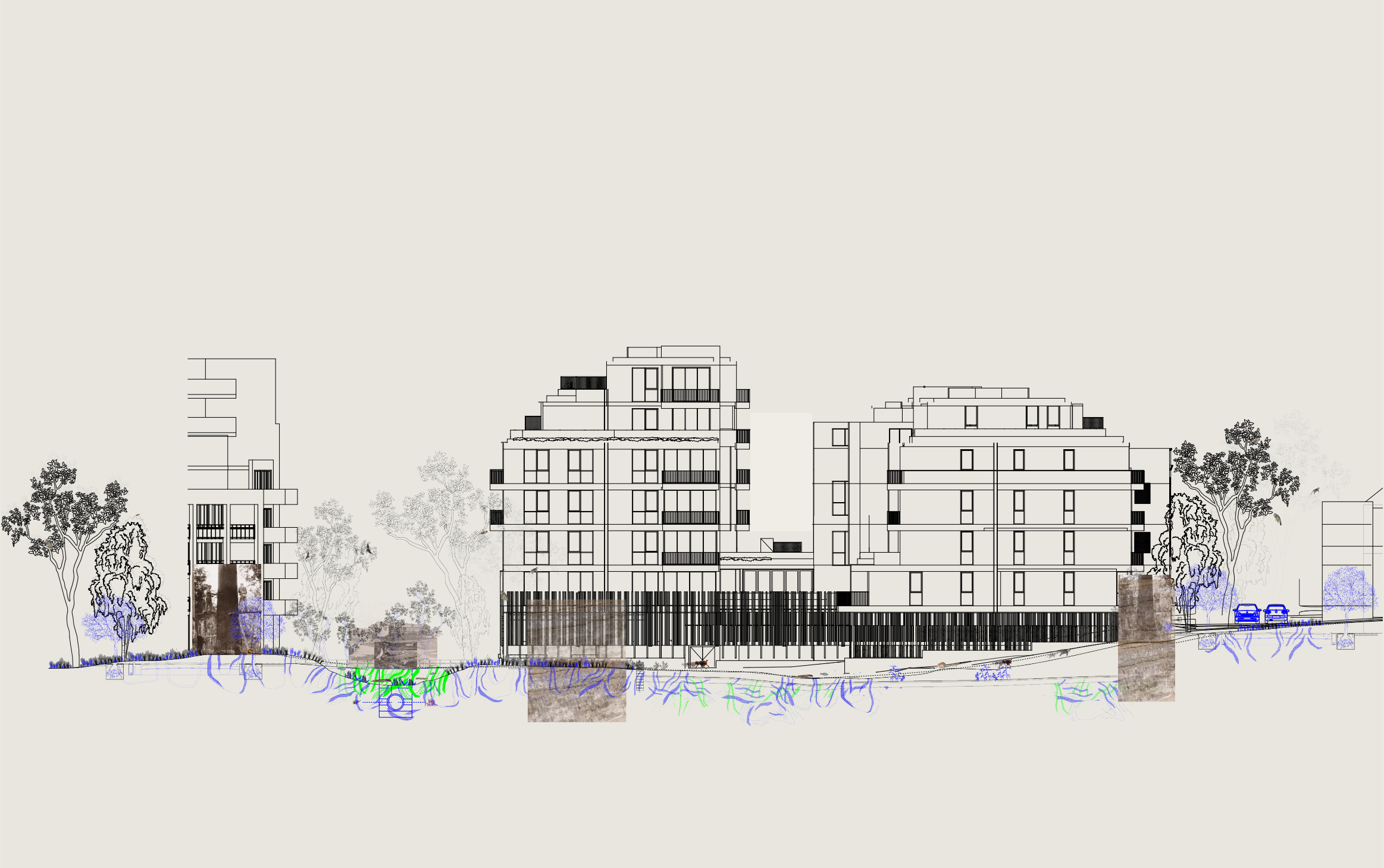
One of the most powerful offerings of a Country-centred aged care home is the opportunity to re-frame ageing through an Aboriginal worldview, where Elders are honoured as holders of knowledge, wisdom, and cultural continuity. In contrast to Western models that often isolate older people, this project should position the aged care site as a community hub for inter-generational exchange.

Architectural and landscape design should facilitate intentional moments of interaction between residents, children, artists, university students, and knowledge holders. Outdoor classrooms, shared gardens, and workshop spaces could allow Elders to participate in storytelling, art-making, or ecological restoration activities. These are not token gestures but fundamental opportunities for cultural transmission and relational continuity.

Design decisions should also recognise that knowledge is not always spoken. It can be held in gesture, place, plant, stone, and movement. Spaces should support different modes of learning tactile, sensory, embodied and be welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. Artworks can embed these teachings materially, while site signage or interpretive pathways can support broader community understanding of the site’s past, present, and future.

This principle acknowledges that knowledge is spatial it lives in Country and must be passed on through Country. By extending the project’s boundary of care into the adjacent ecological corridor, the site becomes a place where intergenerational responsibility is practised. Residents can continue to give care to Country through planting, observation, or simple presence ensuring that the legacy of their lives is not confined to a room, but woven into the fabric of the land.

3.2 BUILDING WITH COUNTRY



32 Junction St, Forest Lodge, must not be seen as separate from the living systems encompassing Country, here. The building sits within a network of ecological processes, cultural relationships, and Country that far pre-date its construction. Waterways, plant communities, soil systems, and migratory species are not just 'natural' elements to be preserved at the edge. They are active agents that shape and are shaped by place and histories. Built environments have a responsibility to work with these systems, not override them. To build here is to enter into relationship with Country, and that relationship must be reciprocal.

The site carries histories of extraction, contamination, clearing, and neglect. These processes have disrupted both cultural and ecological systems. The building, in this context, cannot be neutral. It must take on a reparative role. This means understanding not only the environmental impacts of development but the deep cultural disconnections it can create. In response, the project must commit to restoring flows: of water, of kinship, of story, of care. Its materials, rhythms, and spatial decisions should support the regeneration of soil, species, and community ties alike.

This section drawing envisions the building and Country in active support of each other not as opposing forces but as co-existing systems. Architecture and landscape are integrated to create shared micro-climates, water-sensitive design elements, and culturally grounded spaces of gathering and healing. In doing so, this project affirms that Country and construction are not mutually exclusive when approached with care, accountability, and respect. They can coexist.

3.3 SUGGESTED PLANTING

Planting across the site presents a meaningful opportunity to reconnect with pre-clearing ecologies, support biodiversity, and reflect the layered character of Country. The project lies at the intersection of two distinct, yet complementary, vegetation communities: Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest. Drawing from both provides a diverse and grounded planting palette.

The alluvial soils across parts of the site would have historically supported a river flat forest, comprised of various Eucalypt and Angophora species. The open woodland community included Eucalyptus siberi (Silvertop Ash), Eucalyptus piperita (Sydney Peppermint), Eucalyptus sclerophylla (Scribbly Gum), and Corymbia species, with an under-storey of Banksia serrata (Old Man Banksia), Banksia spinulosa (Hairpin Banksia), Banksia integrifolia (Coast Banksia), and Acacia spp. including Acacia longifolia. These species, along with associated ground flora like Lomandra longifolia and native forbs, are integral to Country’s integrity and to supporting long-term habitat values.

Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, once common across the shale landscapes of the Cumberland Plain, is now critically endangered. Re-establishing even small pockets on site supports long-term ecological resilience and cultural regeneration. Canopy planting might include Turpentine (Syncarpia glomulifera), Red Mahogany (Eucalyptus resinifera), Red Ironbark (Eucalyptus fibrosa/paniculata), and Angophora costata. These species provide habitat, canopy cover, and connection to the deeper geology of shale and shale-sandstone soils. Under-storey planting should incorporate Allocasuarina torulosa, Acacia parramattensis, Pittosporum undulatum, and shrubs such as Breynia oblongifolia, Ozothamnus diosmifolius, and Leucopogon juniperinus. Themeda triandra, Lomandra longifolia, and small forbs like Lobelia purpurascens, all of which create textured, layered micro-habitats.

Exposed to sandstone edges, the project can draw from Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest species. Angophora costata again features prominently, also plantings such as Banksia integrifolia, Acacia longifolia, and Allocasuarina littoralis. Hardy mesic species such as Pittosporum undulatum, Glochidion ferdinandi and Elaeocarpus reticulatus can add shade, seasonal flowering, and attract pollinators. Ground layers in these areas may include ferns, native grasses, and climbers, adapted to dry, sloped, or coastal-like conditions, particularly on elevated or exposed sections of the site.

These communities offer staggered flowering and fruiting throughout the year, creating seasonal rhythms and food sources for insects, birds, and mammals. Themeda triandra flowers in late spring to summer, providing seed for granivorous birds. Banksia integrifolia flowers from autumn into spring, offering nectar during a season when few other trees do. Acacia longifolia blooms in winter, brightening the site with golden flowers and supporting pollinators during cooler months. Angophora costata flowers in summer, attracting nectar-feeding birds, while its fruit matures in late summer to autumn. Lomandra longifolia produces small fragrant flowers in spring, followed by seed that was traditionally harvested.

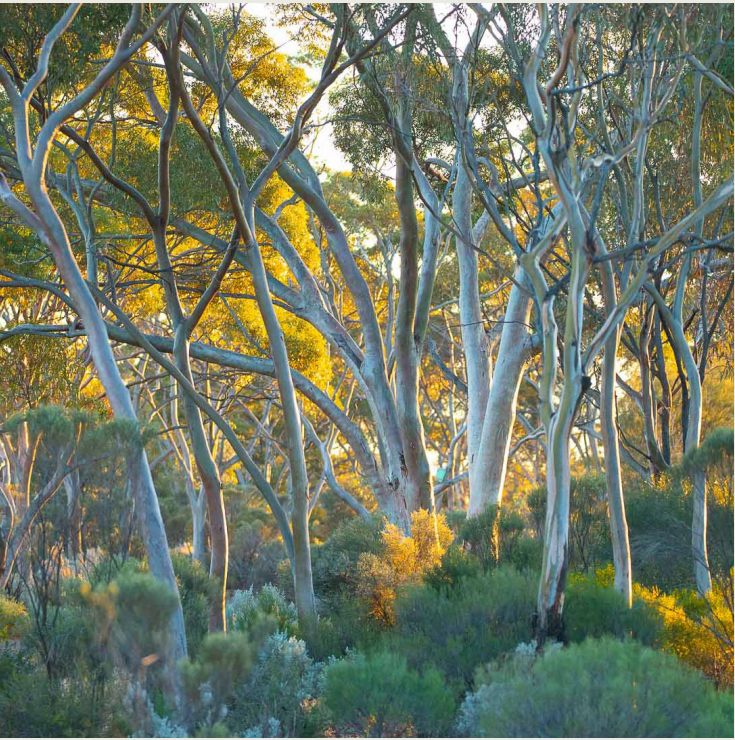
These seasonal cycles not only enhance biodiversity but can also be used to inform design elements and cultural interpretation aligned with seasonal rhythms.

The Landscape Design Report highlights intentions for canopy reinforcement, under-storey shading, and pollinator corridors. Building on this, the planting design can support cultural restoration through inclusion of bush foods and species with cultural significance, sourced through collaboration with nurseries such as IndigiGrow.

The integration of both forest types ensures planting transitions that mirror the geological and ecological gradients of Country, from ridgeline to gully, shale to sandstone, canopy to under-storey, restoring systems of care.



REMNANT CANOPY OF SYDNEY TURPENTINE IRONBARK FOREST, ONCE WIDESPREAD ACROSS THE SHALE LANDSCAPES OF INNER SYDNEY.



OPEN FOREST STRUCTURE TYPICAL OF SYDNEY COASTAL SANDSTONE FORESHORES FOREST, SHAPED BY SALT-LADEN WINDS AND SANDSTONE ESCARPMENTS.

3.3 SUGGESTED PLANTING

SYDNEY TURPENTINE IRONBARK FOREST

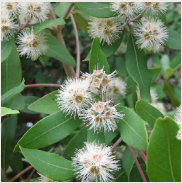
Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest species should be prioritised in the lower levels of the site, particularly around the Larkin Street Reserve extension. The meandering board-walk path can move gently through a re-established Turpentine forest, framed by canopy species such as Syncarpia glomulifera (Turpentine), Eucalyptus resinifera (Red Mahogany), and Eucalyptus paniculata (Grey Ironbark), creating a shaded micro-climate and layered sensory experience.

Under-storey planting can help create visual density and habitat complexity. This forested zone can serve both as a biodiversity corridor and a place of learning, engagement and reflection, particularly when integrated with interpretive signage and guided storytelling.

The memory garden tucked into this space, surrounded by Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest vegetation and designed with multiple seating niches, could become a quiet zone for intergenerational gathering and rest.

In the next phase, this approach will be developed with greater specificity, identifying which species are best positioned in relation to site conditions such as proximity to the creek, moisture levels, and slope gradients. This refinement will require further ecological research and close collaboration with the landscape architecture team to ensure that planting is guided by a deeper understanding of Country.

TREES



SYNCARPIA GLOMULIFERA



EUCALYPTUS PANICULATA



EUCALYPTUS RESINIFERA



EUCALYPTUS FIBROSA



ANGOPHORA COSTATA



ALLOCASUARINA TORULOSA

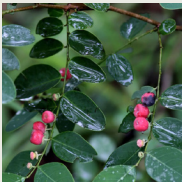
SMALL TREES AND SHRUBS



LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA



LOMANDRA CONFERTIFOLIA



BREYNIA OBLONGIFOLIA



OZOTHAMNUS DIOSMIFOLIUS



ACACIA PARRAMATTENSIS



LEUCOPOGON JUNIPERINUS



DIANELLA REVOLUTA

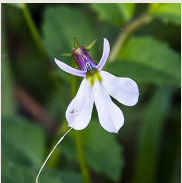


PITTOSPORUM UNDULATUM



CYATHEA AUSTRALIS

GRASSES, CLIMBERS AND GROUND COVERS



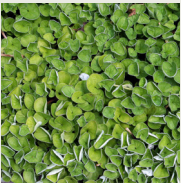
LOBELIA PURPURASCENS



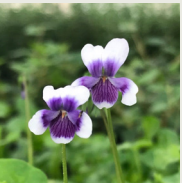
MICROLAENA STIPOIDES



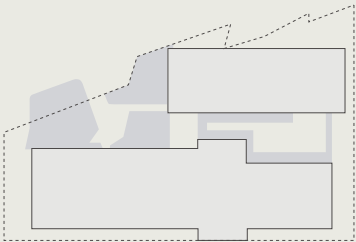
THEMEDA TRIANDRA



DICHONDRA REPENS



VIOLA HEDERACEA



3.3 SUGGESTED PLANTING

SYDNEY COASTAL SANDSTONE FORESHORES FOREST

Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest species can be incorporated into similar zones where sandstone influence is evident, particularly along elevated or sloped sections of the Larkin Street Reserve extension, and can also be used for screening and softening the aged care home building edges.

This vegetation community thrives in slightly more exposed, salt-affected environments, and its inclusion can help visually and ecologically connect the site back to the wider harbour edge ecologies. Plantings might include *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum), *Banksia integrifolia*, *Acacia longifolia*, and *Allocasuarina littoralis* in canopy and mid-storey layers, with mesic small trees like *Glochidion ferdinandi* and *Pittosporum undulatum* framing transitional edges. These selections are ideal for buffering built form while also creating movement corridors for pollinators and birds.

The Memory Garden can blend these species with those from Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest, forming a soft mosaic of flowering, textural, and sensory plants that respond to sun and shelter gradients across the space.

In the next phase, this approach will be developed with greater specificity, identifying which species are best positioned in relation to site conditions such as proximity to the creek, moisture levels, and slope gradients. This refinement will require further ecological research and close collaboration with the landscape architecture team to ensure that planting is guided by a deeper understanding of Country.

TREES



ANGOPHORA COSTATA



BANKSIA INTEGRIFOLIA



ACACIA LONGIFOLIA



ALLOCASUARINA LITTORALIS

SMALL TREES AND SHRUBS



GLOCHIDION FERDINANDI



PITTOSPORUM UNDULATUM



DODONAEA TRIQUETRA



ELAEOCARPUS RETICULATUS



MYRSINE VARIABILIS



ACACIA SUAVEOLENS



POLYSCIAS SAMBUCIFOLIA



DIANELLA CAERULEA



LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA



BREYNIA OBLONGIFOLIA

GRASSES, CLIMBERS AND GROUND COVERS



LEPIDOSPERMA LATERALE



THEMEDA TRIANDRA



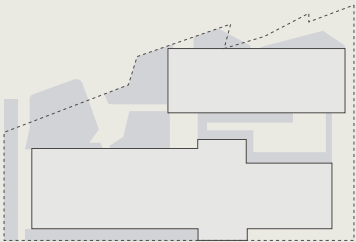
PANDOREA PANDORANA



BILLARDIERA SCANDENS



SMILAX GLYCIPHYLLA



3.4 CONNECTED COUNTRY: LANDSCAPE

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Landscape design should create layered, multi-use outdoor spaces that support storytelling, growing, learning and gathering across generations. Gardens, sensory paths and places of gathering and connecting can become spaces for Elders to share knowledge while being surrounded by familiar plants, smells and textures that hold cultural memory.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE

Landscape elements should model care through accessible planting, therapeutic gardens and ecological restoration that invites daily interaction. Bush foods, native herbs and water-sensitive vegetation offer tangible ways for residents to nurture and be nurtured by Country.

RECONNECT SYSTEMS OF COUNTRY

Landscape design should re-establish the site's connection to ecological corridors by restoring planting communities, creating habitat networks, and allowing water and species to move freely. The landscape becomes a living system, not a backdrop, sustaining both biodiversity and cultural meaning.

RESURFACE KNOWLEDGES OF WATER

The landscape should respond to water's movements by restoring permeability, allowing pooling and slowing flows through natural wetlands, swales and native vegetation. Water becomes a teacher and presence, shaping the land and inviting care.

Through landscape architecture, the Connecting with Country principles invite the design team to go beyond aesthetic greening or ecological restoration, and to instead engage with Country as a living cultural entity. This means designing with an awareness of the layered relationships between people, plants, animals, water systems and stories that have and continue to shape place. Landscape becomes a medium for reconnection between Elders and children, between urban infrastructure and ecological systems, and between memory and material. Through careful planting, spatial arrangement, and sensory design, design can support cultural continuity, reciprocal care, and the visible and invisible systems of Country that hold knowledge, healing and responsibility.

This section takes the Landscape Design Report (prepared by Landfx) for both the Seniors Living environment and the Larkin Street Reserve Extension and responds to them through a Connecting with Country (CwC) lens. Rather than viewing these projects as separate, the analysis recognises their shared values of care, connection, and community. The Seniors Living landscape fosters familiarity, wellness and memory, while the Reserve Extension focuses on ecological regeneration, amenity and access. Both visions support a deeper relationship with Country: culturally, ecologically and socially. By mapping each project's design drivers against the four CwC principles: Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange, Responsibility of Care, Reconnect Systems of Country, and Resurface Knowledges of Water; this section shows how the landscape can become a unified, living system of cultural transmission, care, and ecological renewal.

SENIORS LIVING

RESURFACE KNOWLEDGES OF WATER

Elements such as water features and birdbaths can carry deeper meanings beyond amenity. They offer an opportunity to engage with Country's water systems both as sensory tools for wellness and as cultural touchstones that acknowledge the life-sustaining role of water. Designing drainage and water retention systems to align with natural flows and rhythms can subtly reintroduce relationships with water as a teacher, not just an infrastructure concern.

RECONNECT SYSTEMS OF COUNTRY

Connecting to Country in this setting involves more than aesthetic greenery. Garden walks, birdbaths, and planting palettes should reference local ecologies and their seasonal cycles. Materials and species should be place-specific, ideally drawing from regional plant communities to reconnect the site with the broader landscape systems it belongs to. Designing to attract birds, insects, and pollinators further reinforces ecological relationships that hold cultural significance.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE

This environment prioritises care in both physical and cultural dimensions. Soft edges, gentle gradients, and shaded, textured landscapes support older residents' mobility and comfort while inviting interaction with Country. A planting palette designed to stimulate memory and emotional responses reflects a relational ethic of care not only caring for residents but inviting them to participate in small, daily acts of care for the landscape. These spaces should foster reciprocity, where Elders are not simply recipients of care but also caretakers of cultural and ecological practices.

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The Memory Courtyard and Wellness Space provide spaces where cultural transmission and social connection can occur. These areas can support activities like storytelling, shared gardening, or artmaking allowing Elders to pass on knowledge through action, memory, and presence. Sensory planting that recalls seasonal foods, native herbs, or culturally significant plants can evoke stories and strengthen cultural ties across generations, including between Elders and visiting children or carers.

LARKIN STREET RESERVE EXTENSION

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The educational forest floor walk can function as a cultural learning space, inviting visitors to engage with Aboriginal knowledge systems embedded in plant communities, seasonal change, and place-based storytelling. If co-designed with Aboriginal educators or knowledge holders, it can support broader community awareness of Indigenous land management and ecological wisdom, fostering intergenerational dialogue within a public setting.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE

The use of hardy, low-maintenance materials and increased accessibility speaks to a long-term ethic of care for both users and Country. These design strategies ensure inclusive access for people of all ages and abilities, while also considering the future health of the site. Seating, shade, and gathering spaces create opportunities for everyday relational care, where neighbours, families and local community members can connect and care for each other in place.

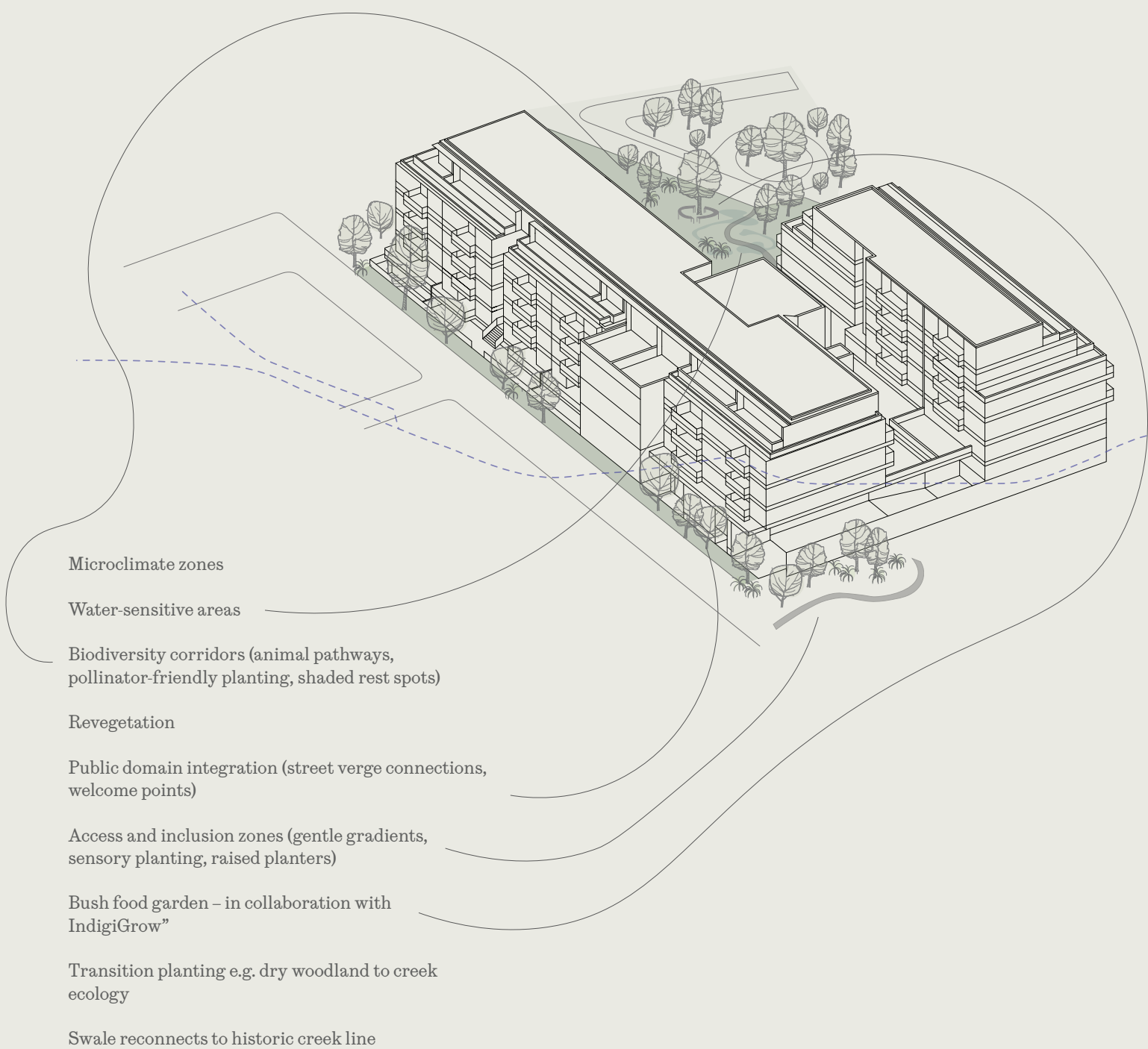
RECONNECT SYSTEMS OF COUNTRY

By reawakening pre-colonial vegetation communities such as the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, the design directly supports the principle of reconnecting systems of Country. These species carry stories, ecological roles, and cultural uses that are often erased in urban development. Reinstating them fosters biodiversity while re-establishing kinship systems between people, plants and non-human life. Increasing permeability and visual access to the reserve helps dissolve colonial boundaries, reinforcing continuity between the site and its surrounding ecological and cultural systems.

RESURFACE KNOWLEDGES OF WATER

The site's topography and vegetation choices can be designed to support water retention, slow flows and infiltration. This landscape can be tuned to surface and honour water systems, even in subtle ways through native understory plantings, damp microclimates beneath canopy cover, or interpretation elements that explain pre-existing hydrological patterns. Reintroducing this awareness contributes to re-learning how to live with water, rather than diverting or concealing it.

3.4 CONNECTED COUNTRY: LANDSCAPE



LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

The landscape offers a unique opportunity to act as both a living system and a healing interface between built form, Country, and community. Working with the grain of existing micro-climates and building mass, the site can be shaped to support layered planting, maximise shade and habitat, and create environments that are thermally comfortable for both people and non-human species.

By connecting to the adjacent park corridor, the site can contribute to a wider biodiversity network, providing habitat and non-human movement paths for birds, insects, and small mammals. Re-vegetation using native and culturally significant plants also opens opportunities to collaborate with groups like IndigiGrow, enriching planting palettes with bush foods and medicinal species.

Re-vegetation strategies should reflect the transition ecologies of Country, from dry woodland to riparian systems, incorporating diverse planting palettes that respond to slope, sun, and soil conditions.

By embracing water-sensitive design, the site can slow, filters, and celebrate water, rather than directing it away. Rain gardens, swales, and retention basins can double as habitat corridors, threading across the site and reconnecting to the broader Orphan School Creek and Johnston Creek systems.

The landscape must remain deeply inclusive. Gardens should be touchable, smellable, and audible, not just decorative. Every threshold, opening and stopping point becomes a moment of potential connection. Pathways should create intuitive, gentle connections to the public domain, welcoming both residents and the wider community into a shared relationship with Country.

3.5 CONNECTED COUNTRY: ARCHITECTURE

RESURFACE KNOWLEDGES OF WATER

Architectural decisions must align with the presence of water, adapting to flood conditions through elevated or open structures. Water-sensitive detailing and material selection should reflect a relationship of respect and responsiveness rather than control.

RECONNECT SYSTEMS OF COUNTRY

Architecture should dissolve edges between built form and surrounding ecologies through verandahs, openings, and low-impact thresholds. The building must invite the flows of light, air, species and people, treating the site as part of a larger living system rather than a bounded property.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE

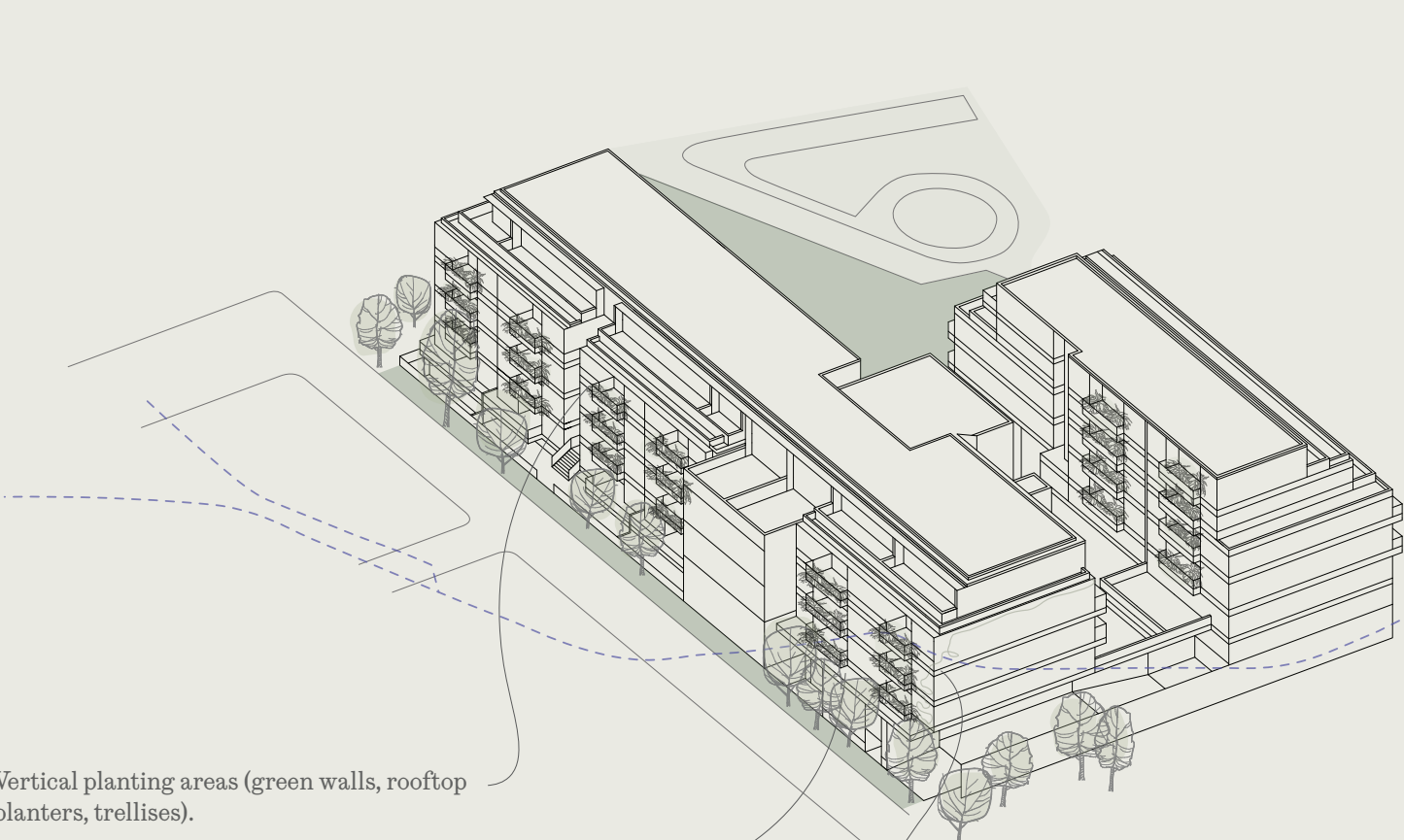
The architecture must express care through warmth, safety and cultural resonance. This includes calm materials, gentle lighting and intuitive circulation that centres Elders' dignity. Design should enable relational care between residents, staff, families and community.

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Architecture and built form should support fluid connections between communal and private spaces, allowing Elders to participate in workshops, teaching, or resting without feeling institutionalised. The built form must encourage interaction across generations by embedding flexible spaces that allow for learning, making and gathering.

For architecture, Connecting with Country requires a fundamental rethinking of how buildings relate to people and place. It moves beyond form-making to consider how spatial decisions support care, kinship, and Country. Aboriginal worldviews remind us that architecture is not inert; it shapes relationships, signals values, and either disrupts or deepens cultural connections. Aged care environments, in particular, must be designed not as isolated facilities but as relational places supporting intergenerational knowledge-sharing, offering sensory access to the landscape, and enabling Elders to remain active participants in the cultural and ecological life of their community. Architecture becomes a practice of honouring, listening, and sustaining.

3.5 CONNECTED COUNTRY: ARCHITECTURE



Vertical planting areas (green walls, rooftop planters, trellises).

Canopy strata layers intersect with tree canopy, understory, and ground layers.

Material reuse (e.g., broken brick, recycled tarmac)

Salvaged tarmac from park and reuse pavers or brick from site

Flood mitigation zones in and around the carpark

Stormwater retention zones and permeable paving to reduce runoff

Accessibility

Interface zones where built form meets planting (e.g., balcony gardens, courtyard walls)

ARCHITECTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities exist to treat the building itself as a layered landscape, integrating planting, materials, and water-sensitive systems into its very structure.

Planting through the building and vertically, on rooftops, balconies or walls, can support layered canopy structures that mirror natural strata, connecting with nearby tree canopies and extending habitat space for birds and insects. This vertical greening also contributes to micro-climate regulation, visual softness, and therapeutic engagement for residents.

The design can integrate materials that speak to place through reuse and reclamation. For example, salvaging elements like old tarmac or bricks from the adjacent park for reuse in the building or landscape tells a story of care, memory, and low-impact construction.

The car-park presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Currently a zone of potential pollution and flooding, considering filtering and managing stormwater, incorporating permeable surfaces, vegetated buffers, or detention areas that slow and clean runoff before it enters creek systems is essential.

Elders and residents in aged care should engage with the elements of Country directly, touching bark, hearing birds, feeling breeze and sun, watching leaves move. This requires more than level access, it means creating spaces where care is reciprocal. Raised planters, shaded resting places, handrails that guide, paths wide enough for mobility aids, and tactile ground surfaces can become tools of invitation, not separation.

Elders, children, carers, and visitors are all part of a living dialogue with Country, community, and care.

3.6 CONNECTED COUNTRY: PUBLIC ART

RESURFACE KNOWLEDGES OF WATER

Artworks can trace the memory and rhythms of water through visual or sensory installations, grounding residents and visitors in its cultural and ecological significance. These works can offer places to sit with, reflect on and honour water as a living being.

RECONNECT SYSTEMS OF COUNTRY

Public art can reveal invisible connections to Country: migratory patterns, spiritual flows, kinship systems through sound, sculpture or mapping. These interventions help people recognise that they are embedded within living systems, not separate from them.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE

Public art should be embedded as part of the care ethic, offering tactile, culturally safe and inclusive works that acknowledge Elders’ roles and reflect the importance of relational responsibility. Art can also prompt reflection on what it means to care for Country and one another.

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The public art strategy can an act as a living archive of intergenerational knowledge, embedding stories, gestures and cultural teachings into built elements, surfaces and materials. These interventions should celebrate the continuity of knowledge while encouraging public engagement across age groups and cultural backgrounds.

Public art plays a vital role in interpreting and amplifying the principles of Connecting with Country. It can give form to stories, teachings, and presences that might otherwise remain unseen or unheard in the built environment. Through material, placement and collaboration, public art can honour Elders, mark cultural thresholds, surface hidden water systems, and celebrate more-than-human kin. Rather than being ornamental or additive, art becomes an embedded cultural practice supporting transmission of knowledge, enabling reflection, and affirming Aboriginal sovereignty. In this context, public art is not a decoration but a conduit for cultural memory, spatial justice and ongoing connection.

This section takes the Public Art Curatorial Vision (developed by Shannan Snowball and Aileen Sage) and responds to it through a Connecting with Country (CwC) lens. Rather than treating the public art strategy and broader landscape or architectural frameworks as isolated, this approach recognises their shared commitment to creating a deeply meaningful, culturally grounded and future-focused place. Public art, when guided by First Nations-led curatorial thinking, becomes more than a visual element, it becomes a mechanism for cultural continuity, ecological care and intergenerational belonging. By mapping each vision principle against the four Country-centred principles: Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange, Responsibility of Care, Reconnect Systems of Country, and Resurface Knowledges of Water; this section shows how public art can hold and express the complex relationships between people, place, history and futures.

A SENSE OF PLACE AND BELONGING

Aligning with:
Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange

This principle reflects the importance of anchoring Elders in a space of dignity, story and continuity. Public art that helps establish belonging can support Elders to see themselves not only as residents but as cultural anchors in the life of the site. It also creates relational ties between residents and the broader community, encouraging reciprocal encounters. This is an opportunity to embed stories, both ancient and contemporary, through form, material and memory, fostering a shared cultural language across generations.

ART UNIFYING AND UPLIFTING

Aligning with:
Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange
Responsibility of Care

Public art becomes a vehicle for social connection, emotional uplift and collective reflection. When developed in collaboration with community, it supports storytelling, celebration and healing - each a form of care. Art as a communal process can foster relational trust, while the presence of the artwork in everyday life can evoke joy, hope and resilience. For Elders in particular, participating in the making or meaning of the artwork can provide a vital sense of purpose and legacy.

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Aligning with:
Responsibility of Care
Reconnect Systems of Country

This principle invites the artwork to participate in a living ecological system rather than sit apart from it. Celebrating the local environment through art can honour the species, rhythms and topographies that have shaped this place long before the development. Art may track seasonal change, respond to plant and animal presence, or integrate materials and forms that echo local ecosystems. This reinforces that care for Elders and care for Country are intertwined and must be sustained together.

A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PROCESS

Aligning with:
Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange
Responsibility of Care

This process aligns directly with the relational ethics of Connecting with Country. Community engagement is not merely consultative, but relational and reciprocal. First Nations-led, co-authored artistic processes honour the cultural authority of local Knowledge Holders and create opportunities for shared authorship. This encourages the artwork to reflect many voices and histories, deepening its social and cultural relevance while also modelling ethical, inclusive practice.

COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS & PERSPECTIVES

Aligning with:
Responsibility of Care
Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange
Reconnect Systems of Country
Resurface Knowledges of Water

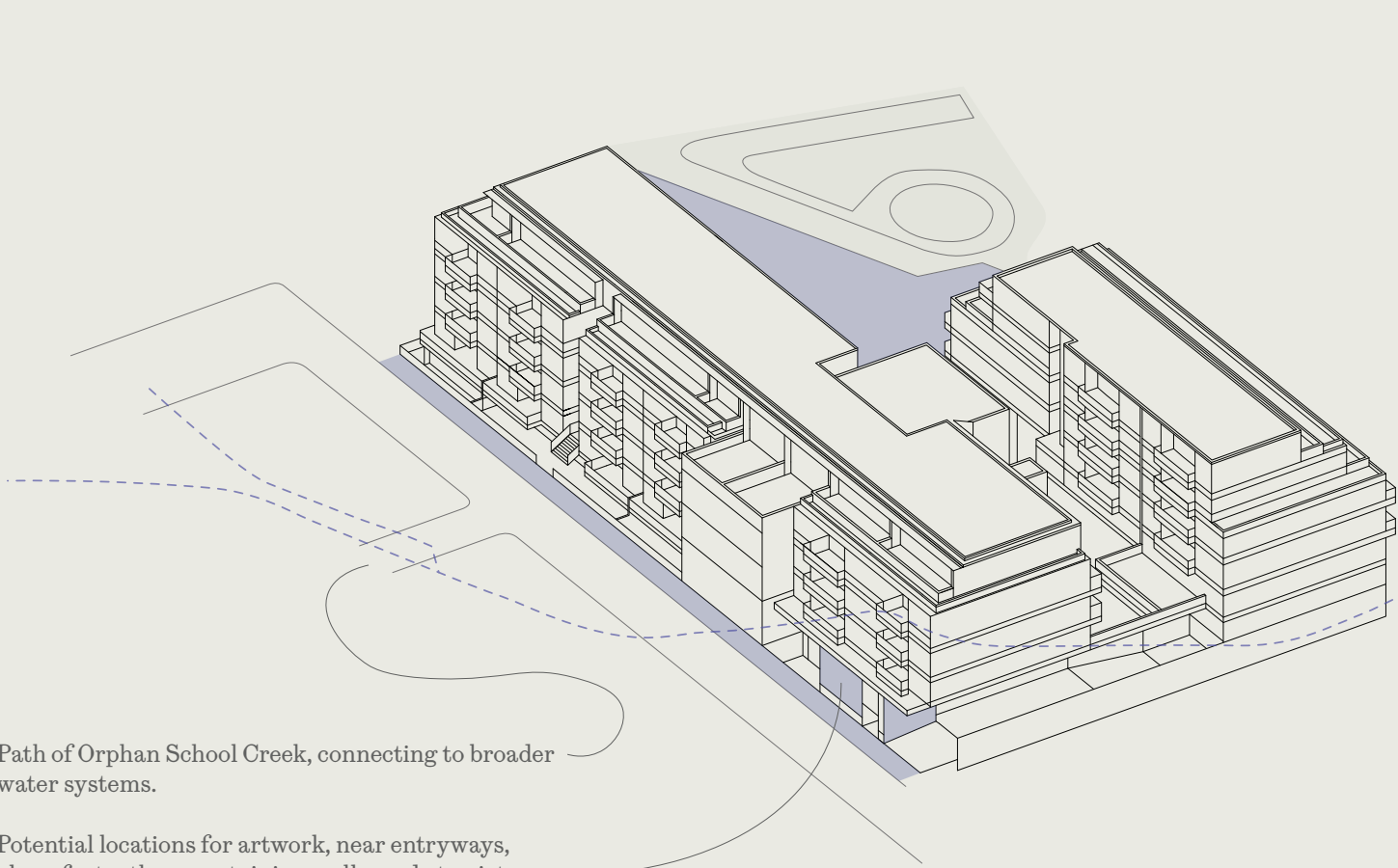
This is the most direct alignment with the Connecting with Country framework. By committing to First Nations leadership in the conception, making and interpretation of the work, the project ensures cultural authority, local relevance and embedded knowledge systems guide the process. The acknowledgement of disrupted waterways, caretaking practices and ICIP protections shows a strong commitment to truth-telling, repair and cultural resurgence enabling the artwork to serve as a living thread between past, present and future.

ART AS FUTURE SHAPING AND LEGACY

Aligning with:
Responsibility of Care
Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange

This principle invites the artwork to imagine and express an ethical future grounded in relationships with people and place. For residents, especially in the later stages of life, the opportunity to be part of shaping a shared cultural legacy can provide deep meaning. The materiality and form of the work should convey timelessness while remaining open to ongoing interpretation ensuring that the art remains active and responsive, not fixed or closed. This supports a vision of legacy as a living practice rather than a static monument.

3.6 CONNECTED COUNTRY: PUBLIC ART



Path of Orphan School Creek, connecting to broader water systems.

Potential locations for artwork, near entryways, along footpaths, on retaining walls, and at quiet resting spaces.

Story nodes or interpretive points exploring eel migration stories, creek flows and seasonal knowledge.

Co-design collaboration with Traditional Owners and community artists.

PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES

The site presents a powerful opportunity for public art that connects with Traditional Owners, honours water systems, and communicates the deep-time stories of Country. Public artworks could serve not just as aesthetic interventions, but as acts of care, recognition, and cultural transmission, embedding meaning into the everyday landscape of the aged care home and its surroundings.

Water, as a central element of this site’s cultural and ecological significance, offers a strong narrative thread. Orphan School Creek, once a visible freshwater system and now largely piped, remains a vital cultural waterway that connects to Rozelle Bay, Blackwattle Bay and Sydney Harbour. Public art could trace these hidden flows across the site, revealing what is unseen, and acknowledging the importance of caring for Country through water.

Collaborating with Traditional Owners and artists, art installations could tell stories of eel migration, fishing practices of the Gadi and Wann Peoples and wider Sydney Nations, plant relationships, or the seasonal indicators used to care for land and water. Art could be integrated into walking paths, walls, retaining edges, or garden beds encouraging residents, staff, and visitors to encounter and reflect on Country through daily movement.

3.7 PRECEDENT:
CANAL CAFE
DILLER SCOFIDIO AND RENFRO (DS+R)

Canal Café, designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro for the Bahrain Pavilion at the 2025 Venice Architecture Biennale, is a operational café that uses water directly drawn from the Venice canal system to make coffee. The project centres on a sophisticated water treatment process that is visible to visitors, making the purification of dirty canal water both a technical and architectural feature.

The system begins with raw water intake from the nearby canal. This water is initially filtered through a natural process involving aquatic plants and biological media, essentially simulating a constructed wetland or phytoremediation strategy. After this first stage of ecological filtration, the water undergoes a series of technical treatments, including chemical filtration (such as activated carbon or ion exchange) and UV sterilisation. These stages are designed to remove contaminants, toxins, and pathogens from the water to make it safe for human consumption.

The treated water is then fed into an espresso machine inside the café, where it is used to prepare coffee that is served to visitors. The act of drinking canal water, once polluted and unfit for use, becomes a central part of the visitor experience, encouraging personal reflection on the value of clean water, the consequences of environmental neglect, and the possibilities of ecological repair.

The space itself is minimal, with exposed tanks and transparent systems that allow visitors to see the stages of water treatment as they queue or sit. This transparency is intentional: rather than hiding infrastructure behind walls, the project makes it central, legible, and educational. In doing so, Canal Café connects the public to processes that are usually invisible in urban life.

By transforming toxic water into something consumable, the project becomes a symbolic gesture of restoration, raising awareness about water pollution, climate change, and urban resilience in a highly accessible, interactive way.

Canal Café is not just a commentary on pollution or climate change. It is a re-imagining of how we might care for water and through water, care for each other. In aged care, where vulnerability, memory, and interdependence are daily realities, this model invites us to design for healing, not only of people, but of places.

LANDSCAPE
Just as the café treats and repurposes polluted canal water, aged care landscapes can integrate ecological water systems (like swales, wetlands, or rain gardens) that restore local waterways. Planting with native species that naturally filter water can create both beauty and function, offering therapeutic spaces while healing degraded land. Gardens can be designed not just for leisure, but for ritual and interaction, inviting residents to touch, tend, and be in relationship with water.

ARCHITECTURE
Canal Café shows how building systems can be made visible and meaningful. In aged care settings, rainwater collection, grey-water reuse, or visible water harvesting features can be integrated into shared spaces like kitchens or dining rooms. These gestures can foster a sense of environmental responsibility and re-frame sustainability as care, care for Country, for future generations, and for each other.

PUBLIC ART
The poetic framing of drinking canal water, something usually hidden or avoided speaks to the potential of art to address trauma, memory, and ecological grief. In aged care, public art and storytelling installations can honour the histories of local waterways (including stories of dispossession or damage) while inviting reflection and reconnection. Water-based rituals, like tea ceremonies, watering plants, or even shared washing can become artful and healing when intentionally designed.



3.7 PRECEDENT:
COSMO MOMA PS1
ANDRÉS JAQUE / OFFICE FOR POLITICAL INNOVATION

COSMO was the winning installation for the 2015 Young Architects Program at MoMA PS1 in New York. Designed by Andrés Jaque and the Office for Political Innovation, the project transformed a complex and urgent political issue, urban water infrastructure, into a public, visible, and celebratory spatial experience.

The installation purified 3,000 gallons of wastewater over a four-day cycle using a mobile, closed-loop system built entirely from standard agricultural irrigation components. These pipes and tanks were sourced from off-the-shelf industrial parts commonly used in American farming and water management. COSMO reassembled them not as hidden utilities but as visible, performative architecture, highlighting the political and ecological implications of water infrastructure and access in urban contexts.

The water used in COSMO came from contaminated sources connected to New York City’s stormwater and wastewater systems pointing to the infrastructural challenges of ageing sewer systems, combined sewer overflows, and ecological damage in urban environments. Rather than hiding these issues, COSMO celebrated the complexity of purification and maintenance. It used a mix of natural processes (plants, algae, bacteria) and mechanical treatment (UV sterilisation, pumps, aeration) to clean water, and once the water reached a safe level of purity, the structure lit up transforming an environmental system into a public signal.

The project is intentionally political. It critiques how water infrastructure is often unseen and depoliticised, despite being deeply linked to social inequality, urban policy, and environmental degradation. COSMO responds to a real need for public awareness around who controls water, how it is managed, and who benefits or suffers from its distribution.

COSMO demonstrates how water infrastructure often treated as apolitical, neutral, or invisible can be re-imagined as public, cultural, and participatory. For aged care settings, this precedent encourages a model where design does not only serve immediate functional needs but also addresses broader environmental and social responsibilities: healing water, restoring connection to Country, and making care visible in every part of the built environment.

LANDSCAPE
COSMO is effectively a functioning water garden. Its biological and mechanical treatment stages: algae baths, microbial tanks, plant-based filters. This mirrors what could become permanent features in an aged care garden: wetlands, bioswales, and rain gardens. These features could not only manage stormwater and reduce site runoff but also offer habitat for native species and sensory environments for residents. In contexts where water on site may be polluted, these systems can actively contribute to healing land and water while supporting meaningful, low-effort interactions with Country.

ARCHITECTURE
COSMO makes a case for revealing infrastructure as part of architectural expression. In aged care, where buildings often hide mechanical systems, there’s value in making water infrastructure visible and educational. Rainwater tanks, filtration units, and reuse systems can be designed as part of communal spaces helping residents and staff understand where water comes from, how it is treated, and how it connects to the broader ecology(s). This builds environmental awareness and can support storytelling and resident engagement, especially when linked to cultural values around care and sustainability.

PUBLIC ART
By turning an industrial water system into a glowing, responsive structure, COSMO shows how art can engage people in complex systems without oversimplifying them. In an aged care context, especially on sites with a history of ecological disruption, public art can play a restorative role helping people understand water histories, cycles, and relationships. It can also honour First Nations knowledge systems around water, making space for story, ceremony, and reflection. COSMO’s approach, making pollution and purification both visible and interactive encourages us to use art not only for beauty, but as a vehicle for education and healing.



3.7 PRECEDENT:
GRØNNINGEN-BISPEPARKEN
SLA

Commissioned by the City of Copenhagen, SLA's redesign of Grønningen-Bispeparken addresses the pressing need for climate resilience in urban settings. The park features 18 bioswales - engineered depressions that manage stormwater runoff, capable of retaining up to 3,000 m³ of rainwater. These bioswales double as 'social swales,' serving as recreational spaces during dry periods. The design incorporates five distinct landscape typologies:

- Bio Oases: Wetlands prioritizing biodiversity and habitat creation.
- Between the Trunks: Dry biotopes offering intimate spaces for relaxation.
- Common Lawns: Open areas for sports, markets, and community events.
- Pocket Squares: Informal gathering spots nestled between buildings.
- The Bunker Hills: Re-purposed Cold War bunkers transformed into year-round recreational spaces.

The project emphasises sustainability through the use of recycled materials and native plant species, enhancing local biodiversity and reducing the carbon footprint. Community engagement was integral, with residents participating in the design process to ensure the park met local needs and fostered a sense of ownership. Artist Kerstin Bergendal's intervention, "Concerning A Meadow," introduced wooden art structures co-created with residents, blending art seamlessly into the landscape.

Grønningen-Bispeparken serves as a model for integrating ecological sustainability, community involvement, and cultural expression in urban design. Its principles can inform aged care projects aiming to create environments that are resilient, inclusive, and enriching for residents.

LANDSCAPE
Grønningen-Bispeparken demonstrates how landscape design can operate across multiple ecological and social layers. In an aged care project, this approach offers a clear opportunity to support biodiversity and create meaningful outdoor experiences by working with the site's natural gradients and hydrological systems. Drawing on the precedent, aged care landscapes can include native grasses, reeds, and other plant communities that are adapted to both wet and dry conditions. These not only support local ecologies and pollinators but also allow for a diversity of spatial experiences from open, sunlit lawns to shaded, moist under-storey gardens.

Designing with varied topography and soil moisture zones allows the site to hold water in key areas such as bioswales, rain gardens, or low-lying wetlands while also maintaining drier elevated zones for walking paths, rest areas, and social spaces. This creates a mosaic of micro-climates and habitats that respond to seasonal changes and invite residents to engage with the cycles of Country. Using native plants with cultural or medicinal significance can further embed care and connection in everyday routines, while also reducing maintenance needs and increasing resilience to climate impacts.

The landscape becomes more than just green space, it is a living system that supports ecological restoration, therapeutic engagement, and cultural continuity. Like Grønningen-Bispeparken, the design can turn ecological necessity into a shared asset: a place where nature and people co-exist through thoughtful, layered design.

ARCHITECTURE
The park's integration of infrastructure and recreation illustrates the potential for architectural elements to serve multiple purposes. In aged care facilities, incorporating visible water management systems such as rain gardens or permeable pavements can educate residents about sustainability and foster a connection to natural cycles. Designing communal spaces that adapt to environmental conditions, like flood-resilient courtyards, ensures safety and comfort for residents.

PUBLIC ART
The collaborative art installations in Grønningen-Bispeparken highlight the role of art in community engagement and place-making. Incorporating art into aged care environments can reflect residents' histories and cultures, providing a sense of identity and belonging. Interactive and participatory art projects can stimulate cognitive function and encourage socialization among residents.



3.7 PRECEDENT:
FRIENDSHIP HOSPITAL
KASHEF CHOWDHURY/URBANA

Commissioned by the NGO Friendship and located in a remote rural region near the Sundarbans mangrove forest, the Friendship Hospital addresses urgent healthcare and environmental challenges. The site is low-lying, flood-prone, and affected by saline groundwater due to rising sea levels. In this setting, where climate change and poverty converge, the design offers an architecture of restraint, rooted in environmental logic.

The project comprises a series of low-slung brick buildings connected by a canal that harvests rainwater and passively cools the micro-climate. Unlike Western models of healthcare that often rely on sealed, mechanical environments, this hospital turns to porosity, shade, and ground-connectedness as strategies of healing. It relies on a local workforce, vernacular building knowledge, and material economy not as aesthetic choices, but as ethical imperatives.

The project challenges dominant paradigms of high-tech architecture by demonstrating that resilience, care, and beauty can emerge from cultural intelligence and environmental attunement rather than expensive technologies. In doing so, it redefines excellence through a decolonial and climate-conscious lens.

Friendship Hospital is not a luxury project, but a deeply ethical one. It confronts resource scarcity, ecological instability, and healthcare inequity head-on, offering a spatial model based on care rather than consumption. For aged care design, it offers a compelling precedent: that buildings for care can be rooted, responsive, and dignified without needing to imitate the language of hospitality or institutional modernism. It invites us to build not just for safety or amenity, but for climate justice, memory, and everyday beauty.

LANDSCAPE
Friendship Hospital uses landscape as infrastructure. A central canal cuts through the site, capturing and storing monsoon rainwater to mitigate the salinity of the local water table. This water body is not just functional it becomes an organising spine for movement, a reflective element in the landscape, and a thermal device that cools adjacent courtyards. These courtyards open, shaded, and vegetated serve as social and sensory spaces that facilitate patient recovery and offer respite from the harsh climate.

The edges of the hospital blur with the surrounding fields, allowing native vegetation to persist and integrate into the experience of the site. There is no manicured lawn or imported aesthetic rather, it is a humble, living terrain shaped by necessity and care.

- Water-sensitive design and micro-climate management can reduce heat stress for older residents.
- Landscapes that invite touch, reflection, and routine interaction offer therapeutic and sensory benefits.
- Designing for seasonal cycles and ecological continuity rather than static “greenery” fosters long-term resilience and a deeper relationship to place.

ARCHITECTURE
The architectural strategy is rooted in restraint and environmental empathy. Locally made brick, chosen for its affordability, craft lineage, and thermal mass is used throughout. The plan is carefully fragmented to break down the scale and allow light and air to penetrate every part of the hospital. Circulation corridors are open yet protected, allowing for shaded movement, breezes, and constant visual connection to the landscape.

Importantly, the hospital’s organisation is not hierarchical. Rather than monumentalising healthcare, it embeds it in the daily and the ordinary. The buildings are human in scale, tactile in material, and quiet in expression offering dignity and a sense of belonging to both patients and staff.

- Fragmented, low-scale planning can avoid the institutional feel of aged care facilities.
- Material tactility: brick, timber, render, enhances sensory engagement and memory recall.
- Passive design and open circulation reduce operational costs and support year-round comfort.

PUBLIC ART
Though not defined by formal public art, the project embodies cultural embeddedness as its guiding principle. The hand-made brick, construction techniques, and spatial arrangements evoke vernacular traditions while avoiding mimicry. In this way, the building acts as a cultural artefact, embodying values of frugality, solidarity, and connection to the land.

By resisting imported aesthetics, the hospital becomes a form of situated knowledge speaking to the people who use it in a visual and material language they understand. The absence of “decoration” does not result in austerity; instead, the rhythm of brick walls, filtered light, and layered spaces create profound beauty.

- Integrating cultural and craft traditions into the fabric of the building affirms residents’ identities and memories.
- Design that speaks through materials and spatial rhythm, rather than signage or superficial ornament, can enhance legibility and emotional warmth.
- Embedded beauty arising from construction, craft, and care can provide residents with dignity and sensory richness without over-sanitising their environment.



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MANDAANG GUWU
THANK YOU