



CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

OPAL BAYVIEW

ANNAM ROAD, BAYVIEW, NSW

Prepared on behalf of
Opal Healthcare
FINAL 23 September 2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Urbis acknowledges the **Garigal people** as the Traditional Custodians of **Guringai Country**.

We recognise that First Nations sovereignty was never ceded and respect First Nations peoples continuing connection to these lands, waterways and ecosystems for over 60,000 years.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders, past and present.

The river is the symbol of the Dreaming and the journey of life. The circles and lines represent people meeting and connections across time and space. When we are working in different places, we can still be connected and work towards the same goal.

Title: Sacred River Dreaming
Artist: Hayley Pigram
Darug Nation
Sydney, NSW

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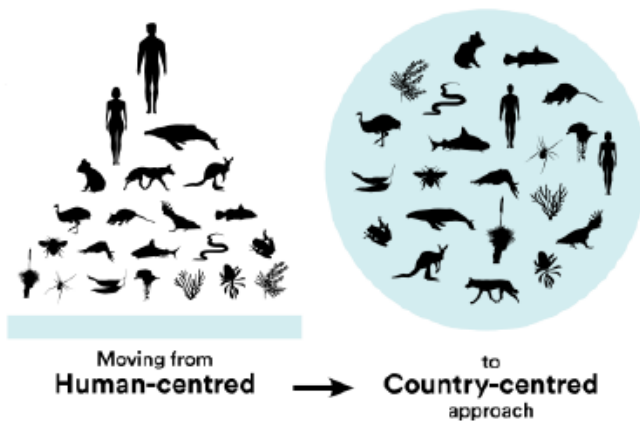
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CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK

The *Connecting with Country Framework* (2023), developed by the NSW Government Architects Office, aims to guide design project teams in incorporating Aboriginal culture and traditional knowledge into development projects. It underscores the importance of shifting the current design approach from human centric to Country Centric.



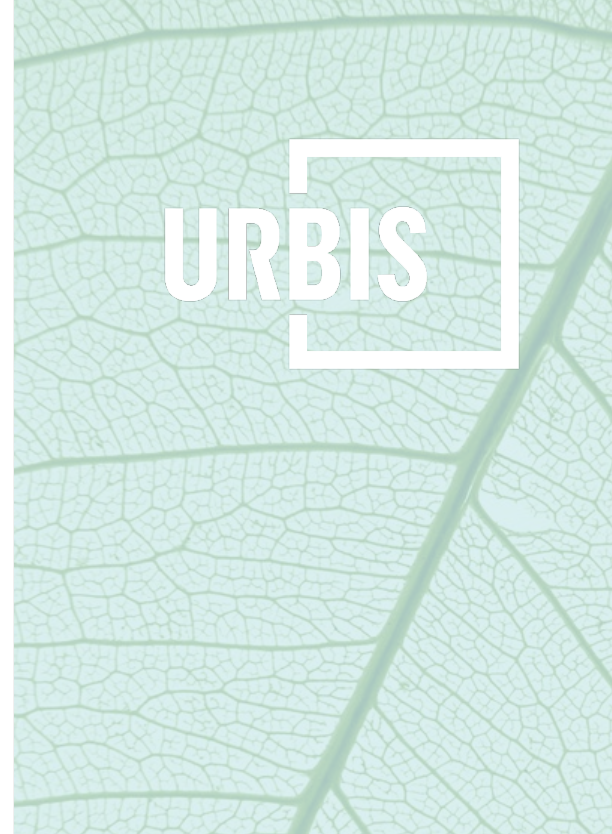
The framework emphasises that a Country Centric approach is crucial for addressing growing environmental challenges, encouraging designers to consider the deep connection between Aboriginal culture and the land, and promoting practices that respect and enhance this relationship. By integrating these principles, development projects can foster a more sustainable and inclusive design outcomes.

AIMS OF THE FRAMEWORK

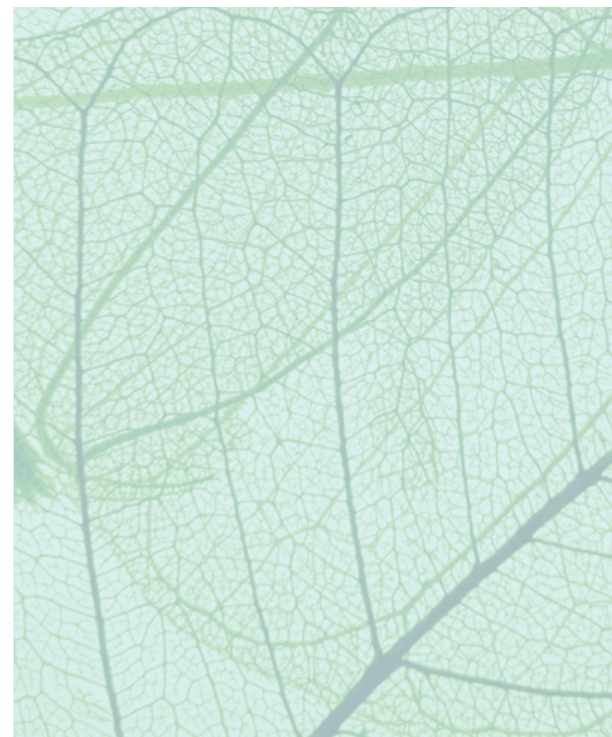
The concept of creating a built environment that promotes environmental sustainability, climate change action, and healthy communities is not a new one. First Nations peoples around the world have long understood the importance of living in balance with the natural world, and have developed traditional practices and knowledge to support this way of life.

The outcome of this process of shifting our thinking, feeling and behaving in relation to Country is behavioural change, enabling a new way of working.

By communing with and sensing Country over deep time, Aboriginal people have developed traditional lore to describe their own laws, customs, beliefs and ways of behaving.



This approach not only benefits Aboriginal communities but also enriches the broader society by fostering a deeper understanding and respect for the land we all share

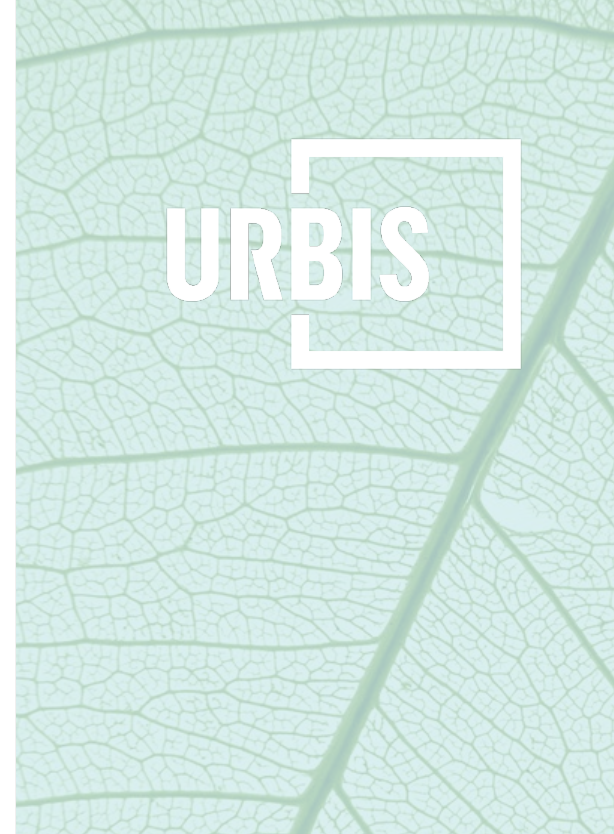


AIMS OF THE FRAMEWORK

When it comes to knowledge sharing, it is essential that Aboriginal people retain authorship and control of their cultural knowledge and intellectual property, and how it is shared with others. Aboriginal people need to be invited to co-design and co-manage projects rather than just being asked to provide their cultural knowledge, stories and insights to help develop projects.

Country-centred projects can be guided by some key behaviours valued within the Aboriginal community:

- fulfilling obligations to care for Country and community
- respecting Elders and family
- deep listening, observing and being modest
- being collaborative, sharing and inclusive.



This approach not only benefits Aboriginal communities but also enriches the broader society by fostering a deeper understanding and respect for the land we all share





OPAL BAYVIEW ANNAM ROAD, BAYVIEW, NSW

This Connecting with Country is submitted to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on behalf of Principal Healthcare Finance Pty Limited (**Opal Healthcare**) in support of a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) (SSD-77240466) for a 177 bed residential aged care facility (RACF) at 36-42 Cabbage Tree Road, Bayview (**the site**).

The proposed development will comprise the following:

- Demolition of the existing aged care building and driveway on the site;
- Construction of a three-storey residential aged care facility, accommodating:
 - 177 beds;
 - Basement parking;
 - Ground floor ancillary facilities;
- Construction of a community room, to be located on the Aveo Bayview Gardens Retirement Living (**Aveo BGRL**) site;
- Construction of a new driveway, to be located on the Aveo BGRL site;
- Torrents Title subdivision of the Opal Healthcare Bayview site from Aveo BGRL;
- Associated amenities and landscaping works;
- Augmentation of, and connection to, existing utilities as required.

For a detailed project description, refer to the Environmental Impact Statement prepared by Beam Planning.

CARING FOR COUNTRY

A core tenet of the *Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* is caring for country.

The framework suggests Caring for Country is “*a cultural obligation that Aboriginal people undertake with a deep sense of responsibility, ownership and stewardship.*” This entails caring for the overall wellbeing of interconnected systems presently and for the future.

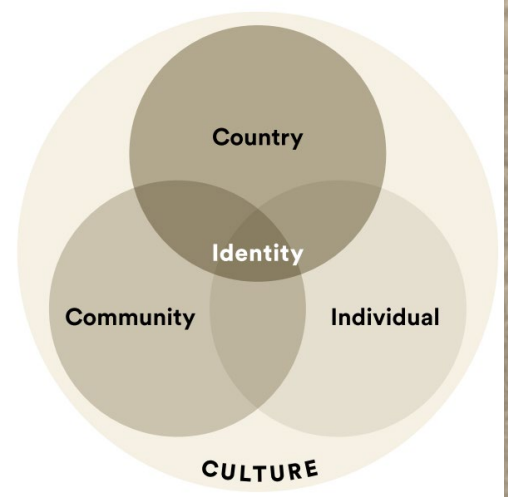
As country encompasses everything, and all things are connected, caring for country systems including country, community, individual, identity and culture.

For Aboriginal people, Country is at the core of identity. Aboriginal peoples’ connection with Country has continued over thousands of years, from deep time. It is a source of valuable wisdom and knowledge that can guide all of us to improve the way we plan and design the places where we live and work.



“Country encompasses everything. It includes both living and non-living elements. It holds everything within the landscape, including Earth, Water and Sky Country, as well as people, animals, plants, and the stories that connect them”

Connecting with Country Framework (2023:20)





THE CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY PROCESS

ABORIGINAL HISTORY OF THE AREA



The archaeological record provides evidence of the long occupation of Aboriginal people in Australia. Current archaeological record establishes occupation of the Australian mainland by as early as 65,000 years before present (BP) (Clarkson et al. 2017). The oldest date for a site in the Sydney region is at Pitt Town on the Hawkesbury River, approximately 41 km west of the present subject area, which is dated to around 36,000 years ago (Williams et al. 2014).

The Aboriginal population in the greater Sydney region is estimated to have been between around 4000 and 8000 people at the time of European contact (Attenbrow 2010). Given the early contact with Aboriginal people in the Sydney region, more is known about these groups than those that inhabited regional areas.

Shortly after European arrival in 1788, the Pittwater region was explored by Governor Arthur Phillip (Phillip 1788). The ethnographic records account meetings with the local Aboriginal people. During one of these meetings, it was recorded that Caregal (or Garigal) was initially given as name of 'a man, or a tribe who resided to the northward of Port Jackson. Although in a later account, Nanebarre an Aboriginal interpreter, stated that 'Caregal' referred to man's name who lived at or near Broken Bay (Hunter 1793). It is difficult to fully ascertain the boundaries of the Clans due to early biases of Europeans and their arbitrary divisions of Country. The boundary of their area however is generally accepted to extend from Narrabeen Lagoon to Broken Bay and even as far north as the Central Coast (Pittwater Council PoM 2009).

During the consultation process for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) it was noted that cultural connection with the landscape continues. Tiarna Bird provided the following insight:

We have a deep connection to the land, with our family having lived and grown up in the area for generations. We represent a number of clans, including the Ngunnawal, Darkinjung, Dharug, Garigal, and Gumbaynggirr peoples. Our commitment is to share our knowledge and ensure that Aboriginal culture remains at the forefront, preserving it so that nothing is lost to history.

Areas of significance:

In the Bayview area, as part of the traditional lands of the Garigal people, there are several areas of significance that would have been important to the Aboriginal community, both historically and culturally. These areas are tied to the natural environment, including land, water, and resources, which held deep spiritual, cultural, and practical value. Below are a few key areas of significance:

1. **Pittwater and Surrounding Waterways:** The Pittwater area, including the bays, coves, and inlets, would have been an important site for the Garigal people. The waterways provided abundant resources such as fish, shellfish, and other marine life. The Garigal people would have used these waters for fishing and transportation, and it was likely an important part of their social and ceremonial life.
2. **Narrabeen Lagoon:** Although a bit further south of Bayview, Narrabeen Lagoon is a significant area for the Guringai and Garigal people. It is a site of rich ecological resources, particularly important for fishing and gathering food. The lagoon and surrounding areas would have been used for hunting waterfowl and harvesting aquatic plants.

3. **Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park:** To the north of Bayview, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park is part of the traditional lands of the Garigal people and holds great significance. This park contains many sacred sites, including rock engravings, ceremonial grounds, and areas rich in plant and animal life. The park has many Indigenous heritage sites that reflect the long history of the area and its importance to the Aboriginal community.

4. **Indigenous Rock Engravings and Sites:** The region surrounding Bayview contains various rock engravings and archaeological sites that reflect the presence of the Garigal people. These sites often have deep cultural significance, serving as markers for navigation, sacred places, and areas for ceremonial practices. While the specific locations may be protected, these sites are part of the broader heritage of the Northern Beaches region.

5. **Bushland and Coastal Areas:** The natural bushland surrounding Bayview, including the coastal ecosystems, would have been important to the Garigal people for a variety of reasons. The rich diversity of plants and animals would have provided a sustainable source of food, medicines, and materials for making tools. The coastal environment, with its abundant marine life, was crucial for survival and cultural practices.

These areas of significance reflect the strong connection that the Garigal and Guringai people had with their land and waters. Their traditional knowledge of the environment was key to their survival and cultural practices. Today, these areas are often celebrated for their natural beauty and ecological importance, but they also carry deep cultural and historical meaning for the Aboriginal people of the region.



TAKING A COUNTRY CENTRED APPROACH

Recognising the significance of Aboriginal cultural landscapes is crucial for thoughtful cultural design that aligns with Connecting with Country principles. This recognition allows us to delve into the deep connection Aboriginal peoples have with the natural world and their traditional insights into spirituality, places, land use, and ecology. Genuine and ongoing engagement with Aboriginal knowledge holders is essential to fostering these insights.



TAKING A COUNTRY CENTRED APPROACH

To implement this Country centric approach, the framework identifies how Country can be incorporated into each phase of the design process as guided by the Aboriginal community:

- **Project formation** – starting with Country – ensuring that the project teams understand the nuanced concept of Country through cultural awareness training.
- **Project design** – imagining with Country – designing led by interpretive cultural narratives and an understanding of Country.
- **Project delivery** – shaping Country – design and construction led by the need to protect and promote Country.
- **Project maintenance** – a commitment to nurture all parts of Country, of which the new development project is part. The framework has specific guidance around ways to Design with Country, exploring opportunities for design to support connection to Country in built environment projects. These include:

Design focus:

- Language use and first place names.
- Connect to the broader landscape.
- Promote and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Acknowledge our shared history.

Design opportunities:

- Learn from traditional Aboriginal architecture.
- Support living ecosystems.
- Reawaken memories.
- In between spaces.
- Indirect connections.

CONSULTATION PROCESS



Identification of local knowledge holders / traditional owners who may be interested.

For this project the registered Aboriginal parties (RAPs) who expressed an interest in the subject area during the ACHA process along with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metropolitan LALC) were contacted due to their continuing participation in the project and familiarity with the subject area.



Provision of project information and draft design information to stakeholders and coordination with design team with regard to stakeholder inputs.

An initial site visit was held for the ACHA to conduct a thorough briefing about the proposed development. This included a walkover of the subject area, and a preliminary discussion of the CwC process.

An additional meeting specific to the concepts for CwC was held with stakeholders including Aboriginal knowledge holders, as well as project architects and landscape architects

IDENTIFIED STAKEHOLDERS

For this project stakeholder identification was carried out through:

- Liaison with Metropolitan LALC.
- Reference to contact lists provided by government agencies..



MEETING 1

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- Jordan Marr, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
 - Tiarna Bird, Mura Gadi Aboriginal Corporation
 - Peter Carroll, Mura Gadi Aboriginal Corporation



MEETING 2

-
- Tiarna Bird, Mura Gadi Aboriginal Corporation
 - Peter Carroll, Mura Gadi Aboriginal Corporation
 - Lara Calder, Calderflower
 - Bradley Wahl, Calderflower
 - Aaron Lakeman, Taylor Brammer
 - Harry Bate, Bloompark
 - Juliet Scholefield, Urbis
 - Ali Byrne, Urbis

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

A general outline of the project and proposed development provided context for the group. Of particular interest were the potential of the courtyards for “households” within the complex, which will contain landscaping intended specifically for each care group; and the proposed colour scheme and texture/materiality of the new building, which has been designed to respect the existing natural landscape, as well as the existing structure on site.

It was suggested that, if possible, any residents within the Aveo site who identify as Aboriginal be asked if they would like input to the concepts.

Plantings in general are intended to comprise native endemic species and will be selected to suit the locations re: sunlight and exposure.

The above contributes to the overall connection with this locality in both its current state and what it would originally have been.

COLOUR PALETTE

- Soft greens for trim and features
- Red to brown brick (facing)
- Generally softer tones to keep with the setting

LANDSCAPING

- Maintain overall temperate rainforest across site
- Create ‘theme’ gardens for ‘households’ within the development
- Consider endemic species, perhaps ‘bushtucker’ plantings

DESIGN OUTCOMES - ARCHITECT

- A colour palette was selected based on the existing site and in consideration of discussions with Aboriginal community members
- The palette embraces the natural greens, greys and reds of endemic species and natural formations
- The architecture plans and design plans prepared by Calderflower Architecture (7 August 2025) and the landscape plans by Taylor Brammer (4 August 2025) have been reviewed in the preparation of this document.

Material Palette Inspiration by Calderflower Architecture 2025



Sydney red gum tree



Rock



Sydney blue gum tree



Red nandina berries



Red-browed finch bird



Painted fibre cement cladding



Painted fibre cement cladding



Powder-coated window & door frame



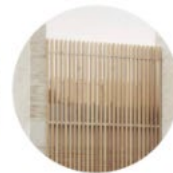
Rust colour powder-coated structure, pergola & awning



Sandalwood brick



Extruded brick pattern



Timber-look screen



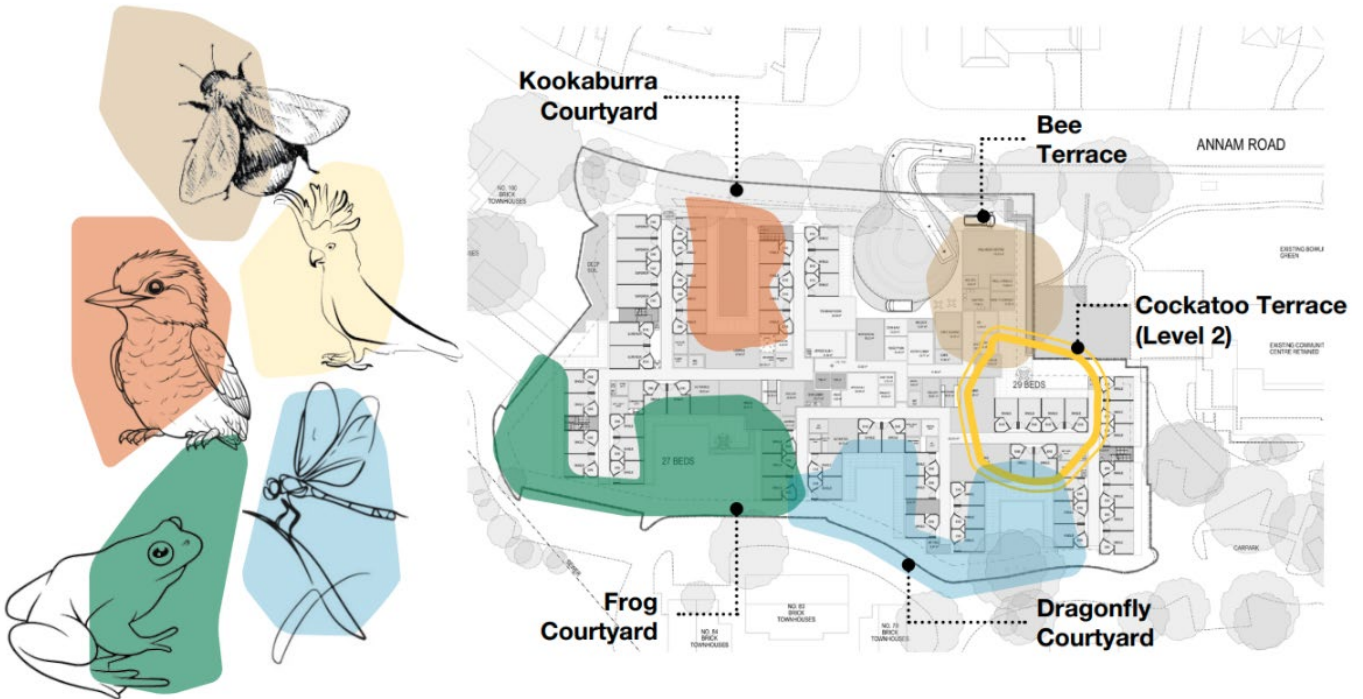
Concrete

DESIGN OUTCOMES - LANDSCAPE

- Creation of themed courtyards/terraces for 'households' or sections of the development
- Specific plantings / species to be confirmed.

Design themes by Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects 2025

PROPOSAL DESIGN THEMES



RESPONSES



The architecture designs and landscape architecture plans were provided for review to the Aboriginal stakeholders on 5 August 2025.

Responses received are provided below.

Mura Gadi responded:

“I think the design looks fantastic, and the garden themes are such a great concept. One additional idea that could complement the space is incorporating a few bush tucker plants—like lemon myrtle, finger limes, native mint, and midgen berry. Not only would they add to the aesthetic, but they also offer an interactive element, giving residents the opportunity to use the plants in their cooking and enjoy a small connection to living off the land.”

APPENDIX A

