

2-8 SPENCER STREET, 79-81 QUEENS ROAD FIVE
DOCK NSW

Connecting with Country Report

Final | January 2026

Prepared for DPG Project 37 Pty Ltd.



Virtus Heritage respectfully acknowledges the lands of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Wangal clan of the Eora people and honours their Elders—past, present, and emerging. This Connection with Country report is created in recognition of their profound, enduring, and ongoing relationship with the land and waters. It reflects a deep respect for Aboriginal cultural heritage and emphasises the importance of preserving and fostering a connection to Country.

Content Warning	4
Disclaimer and cultural restrictions.....	4
Version History.....	4
1. STARTING WITH COUNTRY: Project formation	5
1.1 Terminology note.....	5
1.2 Project team and Qualifications.....	6
1.3 Acknowledgements.....	6
2. Project Description	7
2.1 GUIDING DOCUMENTS.....	10
3. Consultation Approach	11
3.1 Defining Community and Rights Holders.....	11
4. Country and Design	12
4.1 Country centrED Design.....	12
4.2 Overarching design principle.....	13
5. THINKING: Communing with Country	14
5.1 Pre-Contact Background.....	15
5.1.1 Dharug Life.....	15
5.1.2 Wangal Life.....	15
6.2 Archaeological Context.....	17
6. FEELING: Sensing Country	18
6.1 Ethnobotany.....	18
7. Key Design Themes (Plus Studio 2025)	20
8. Local Aboriginal-led Cultural Organisations	29
Information References.....	30

CONTENT WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this publication may contain names and images of deceased people, descriptions of traumatic historic events and parts of Country that have been impacted by development.

DISCLAIMER AND CULTURAL RESTRICTIONS

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VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Comments
1a-c	October 2025	Anya Graubard	Kelly Kent	Internal review
2	27 th November 2025	Anya Graubard	Kelly Kent	Incorporate Client edits.
2b	9 December 2025	Anya Graubard	Kelly Kent	Sent to Metro LALC for review.
3	19 th January 2026	Anya Graubard	Kelly Kent	Incorporate MLALC edits, final draft to submit for DA approval

1. STARTING WITH COUNTRY: Project formation

1.1 TERMINOLOGY NOTE

Across Australia and the Sydney Basin, there are numerous cultural groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. In this report, we strive to use the specific names of cultural groups and landscape features wherever possible. Virtus Heritage recognises that the terms "Traditional Owners" or "Traditional Custodians," "Aboriginal," and/or "Torres Strait Islander" are used when general terms are necessary or when the specific names of cultural groups are unknown. Dharug (also *Dharuk*, *Darug*, *Daruk*) is the traditional language group of the First Nations people belonging to the inland areas of western Sydney (Error! Reference source not found.). The name *Dharug* was not recorded by Europeans until late in the 19th century, when it was applied, not entirely clearly, to people who belonged to Camden, Campbelltown, Liverpool and Penrith, possibly extending up to the Hawkesbury River and east to the Sydney coast (*The Sydney Language (Dharug & Eora) 2019*). We have attempted to integrate Dharug words in this report where culturally appropriate. During the review of the draft report, we sought input on the use of words throughout the report and revised as needed.

Note: The Aboriginal community hold cultural knowledge and or/historical connection or contemporary cultural connection to Country/places in the LGA. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states that First Nations peoples have the right to free, prior and informed consent before approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources.

January 2026

Only the Aboriginal community can provide comment on the intangible and cultural and spiritual values of Aboriginal cultural heritage and must be consulted to provide cultural information. Planning or legislative advice or information should be sought from Council, Planning, Legal and/or Heritage expert/consultant. A heritage expert/consultant can also assist in the assessment of other heritage values including scientific, aesthetic and historical values for heritage places and objects.

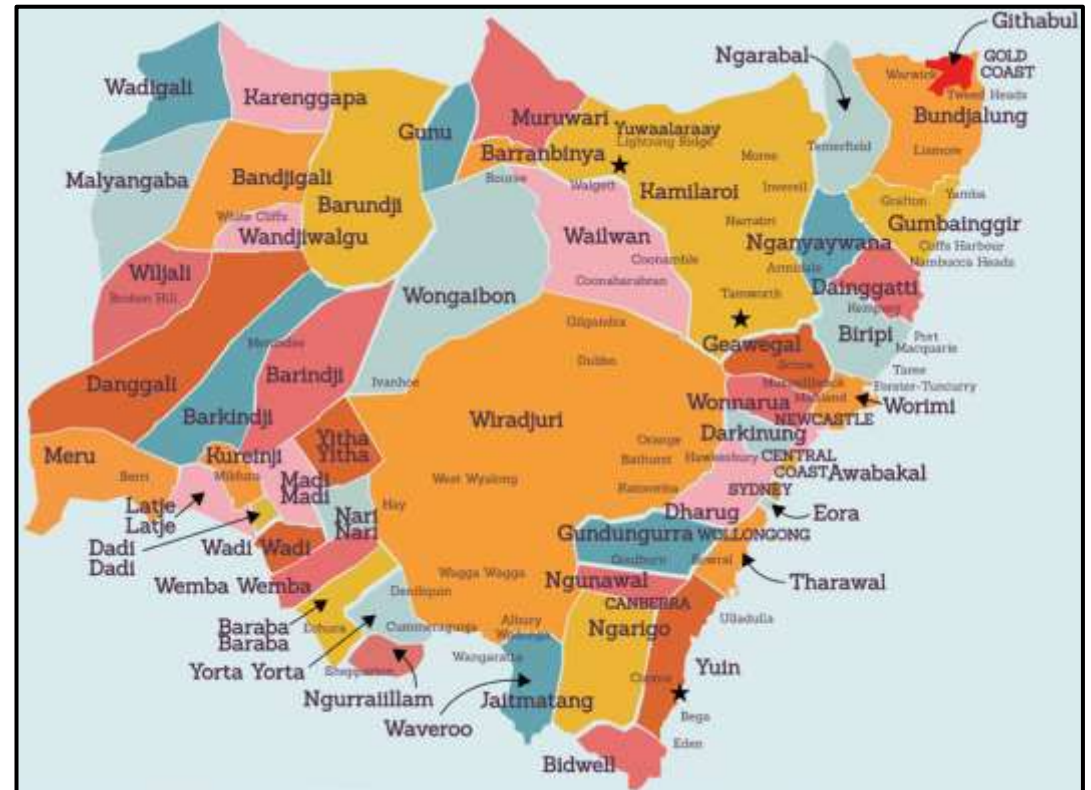


Plate 1. Adapted Aboriginal language map of NSW (Gaawaadbi Gaduha) 2023)

1.2 PROJECT TEAM AND QUALIFICATIONS

This project was directed by Kelly Kent, Associate Director, Virtus Heritage. The report and the Connecting with Country elements of the project managed and compiled by Senior Anthropologist, Anya Graubard (B. Arts, Hons. Anthropology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln). The Walk on Country was undertaken by Anya Graubard, on 13th October 2025 guided by representatives from Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. Also attending were members of the project team from Develotek (Client and project developer), Plus Studio (project architects) and Land + Form (project landscape architects).

1.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals for the completion of this report:

- Raymond Weatherall, Jordan Marr and Josh Marr, Sites Officers, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Alan Chen, DPG Project 37 Pty Ltd c/o Develotek
- John Walsh, Principal, Plus Studio
- Mahtab Bahrami, Plus Studio
- Ranine Hamed, Senior Landscape Architect, Land + Form
- Jennell Martinez, Graduate Architect, Land + Form

2. Project Description

The project is described by DPG Project 37 as a mixed-use residential development, including affordable housing, to include:

- 5 level basement with vehicular access from Spencer Street.
- Shared 1-storey podium comprising ground level retail, loading facilities and communal open space above.
- 2 residential buildings above, comprising a 5-storey building fronting Queens Road and a 26-storey building fronting William Street.
- Ground level landscaping and public domain improvements, including:
 - 3m public domain setback along Queens Road and Spencer Street.
 - 8m public domain setback along Williams Street.
 - 6m north-south through site link along the western boundary which will connect Queens Road and Spencer Street in the future once 10-12 Spencer Street is redeveloped.
- Associated infrastructure upgrades and diversions

Background Image: (Plus Studio 2025)

PROPOSAL
GROUND PLANE - STAGE 01

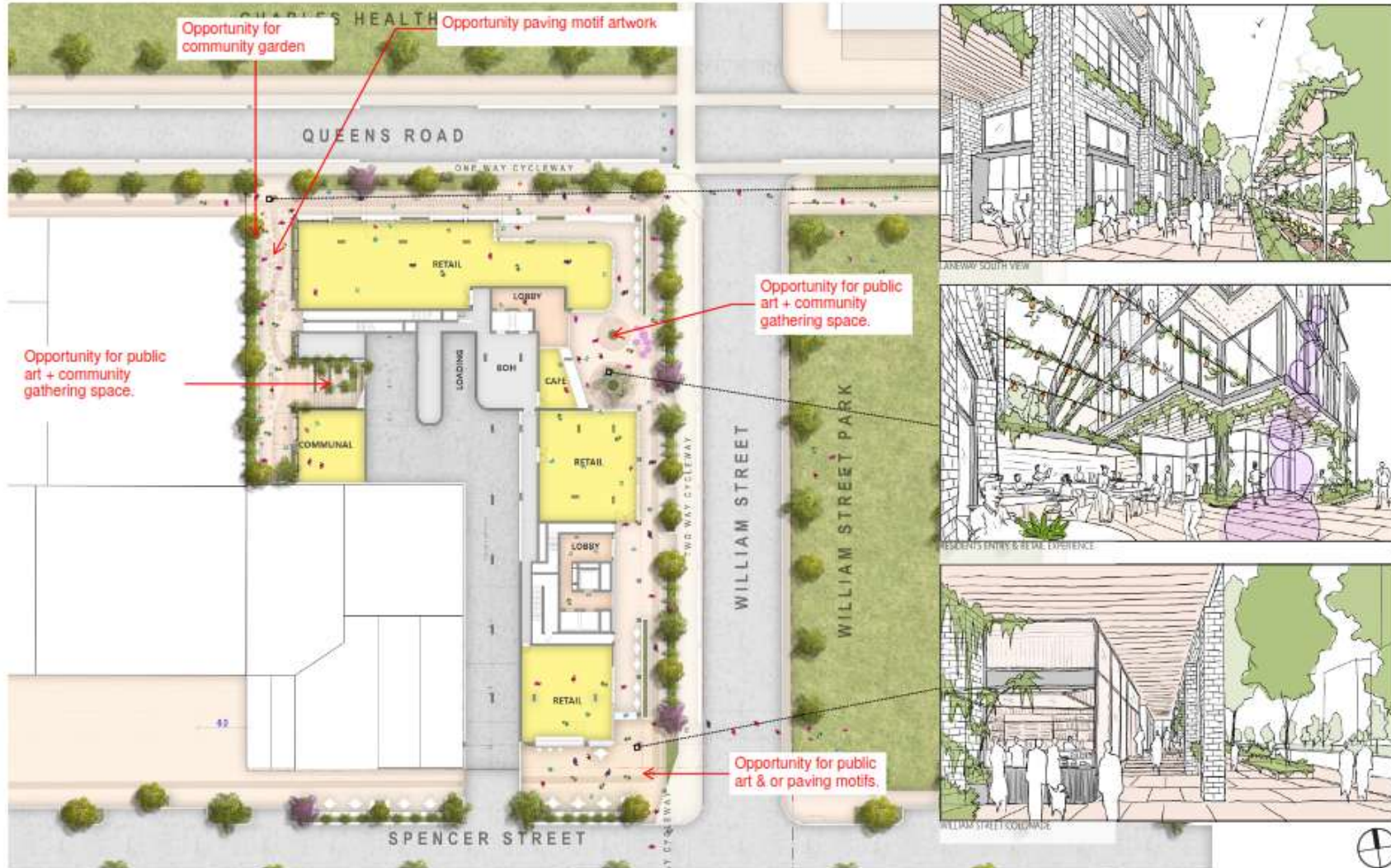
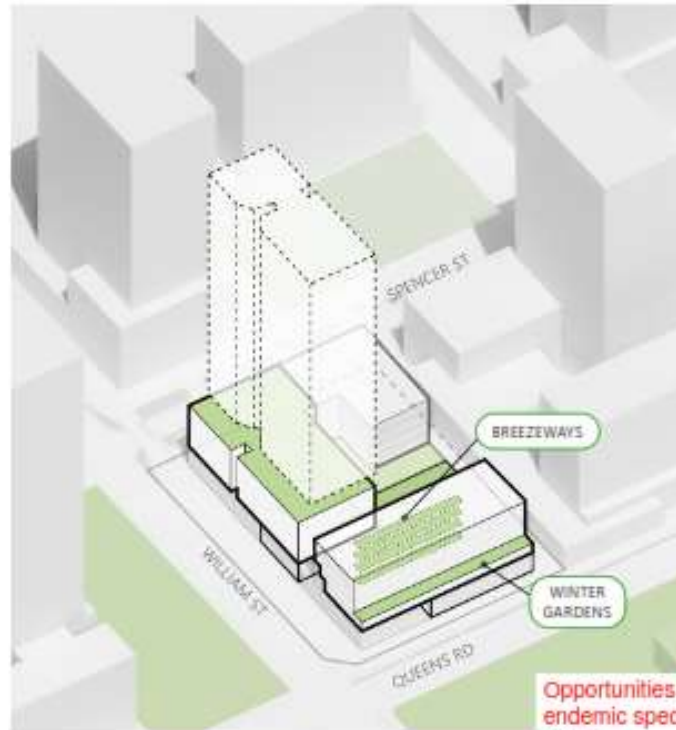
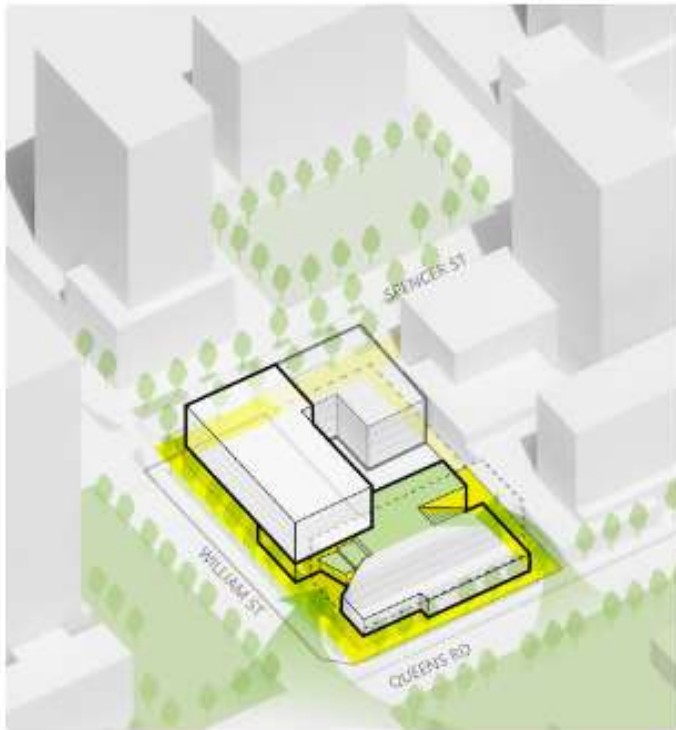


Plate 2. Ground Plane (Plus Studio 2025)

STRATEGY
PODIUM



Opportunities for
endemic species across
levels

Extending Landscape

Communal Areas

Landscape Characters

Plate 3. Podium Stagings (Plus Studio 2025)

Table 1. Relevant Background Documents

2.1 GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Document and Author	Aim/ Relevance to project
<i>Connecting with Country Framework</i> Issue no. 3– 2023, Government Architect NSW	The aim of the Framework is to link “NSW Government policy intent with the processes of designing and planning the build environment.” By implementing this framework, Aboriginal people are able to guide a Country centred approach under the ideology that if “we care for Country, Country will care for us” (<i>Connecting with Country Framework 2023</i>).
The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999.	<p>The Burra Charter provides guidance on the conservation and management of culturally significant places, based on the expertise of Australia ICOMOS members (Section 3). It emphasises that conservation is a key part of managing such places and is a continuous responsibility. The charter sets standards for those involved in advising, decision-making, or working on these sites, including owners, managers, and custodians. It defines cultural significance as the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual value for generations, which is embodied in the place, its fabric, setting, use, associations, and related objects.</p> <p>The Burra Charter includes both tangible and intangible heritage settings, such as structures, land, water, sky, views, and sensory elements like smells and sounds. It also considers historical and contemporary relationships, including social, spiritual practices, and connections to other places. Meanings tied to these places often reflect symbolic qualities and memories. Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are evaluated based on the Burra Charter’s categories of significance.</p>
<i>Greener Places</i> – Issue no. 3 2023	Best-practice guide for the planning, design, and management of green infrastructure to deliver better places right across NSW” (<i>Greener Places 2023</i>).
79-81 Queens Road & 2-8 Spencer Street, Five Dock Design Report (Plus Studio, July 2025)	Winning public domain design document initially submitted as part of 2025 Design Competition to DPG Project 37 Pty Ltd.

Background Image: (Black Diamond Images 2014)

3. Consultation Approach

Aboriginal people are the primary determinants of their culture and heritage, and cultural values can only be assessed and advised by the relevant Aboriginal parties for the locality.

3.1 DEFINING COMMUNITY AND RIGHTS HOLDERS

Within UNESCO World Heritage documentation in the *Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0*, there is clarification and definitions in terms of community and stakeholders and those who hold rights for heritage (Preserving Legacies Program 2024). These definitions are reiterated here:

Rights-holders are those who have legal or customary rights to the heritage place. Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live.

Local communities are groups of people who possess a direct connection to the heritage place. They may range from Indigenous or traditional peoples to groups of local peoples who live or work in the heritage place, or who hold associations with it. That connection may be tangible as well as intangible or spiritual and has often endured over time.

Virtus Heritage contacted Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council in order to undertake consultation for this project. Ongoing engagement with MLALC ensures that cultural narratives and values are appropriately represented in design outcomes. Consultation is treated as a reciprocal learning process—grounded in respect, transparency, and collaboration—allowing the project team to embed cultural knowledge throughout design development, implementation, and maintenance phases.

4. Country and Design

Under Section 2 of the *Connecting with Country Framework (2023)*, Country, in the terms used for this report, includes living and non-living elements, holding everything within the landscape including Earth, Water, and Sky Country – including the animals, people, plants and the stories that connect them.

Per the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; Country (capital 'C'), contains "complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity" (*Welcome to Country*, n.d.)

Aboriginal cultural heritage and connections to Country include tangible and intangible values, such as Song Lines, Dreaming stories and ceremonies passed from generation to generation, as well as physical objects and places. These important objects and places provide evidence of the diverse values, activities and knowledge of Aboriginal people who co-existed with the natural environment by living in harmony with the land they cherish and, which the Aboriginal communities now manage and protect for future generations (Department of Planning and Environment).

4.1 COUNTRY CENTRED DESIGN

Section 3 of the *Connecting with Country Framework* (Government Architect NSW 2023) identified the need for project

teams to "make a clear commitment to act in ways that can deliver positive outcomes for Country and community." By implementing Country centred design over human centred design, project teams can place environment at the centre of the design process, rather than people (refer to Figure 3). The aim of eco-centred design in this context is to create positive outcomes for Country (such as healthy Country, healthy community, protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage, cultural competency). Section 3.2 of the Framework specifies that prioritising people and their needs being at the centre of design considerations within a hierarchical system leads to overlooking landscape and natural values.



There is no single way to define Country, as its descriptions vary from person to person, shaped by the traditions and knowledge handed down through family and community.

By considering natural systems that see people, animals, plants and resource at an equal level and understanding their interconnection, significant contributions can be made to a more sustainable future. Within First Nations communities, people are interconnected to Country and have a

cultural responsibility and spiritual relationship which is iterative with their environment. This relationship includes deep attachments that is embedded in oral history and been passed down with cultural lore and responsibility over thousands of years within families and clan groups.

Specifically, reframing the approach of project delivery from human centred to Country centred needs to be guided by Aboriginal community.

Image: Parramatta River at Five Dock (Anya Graubard 2025)

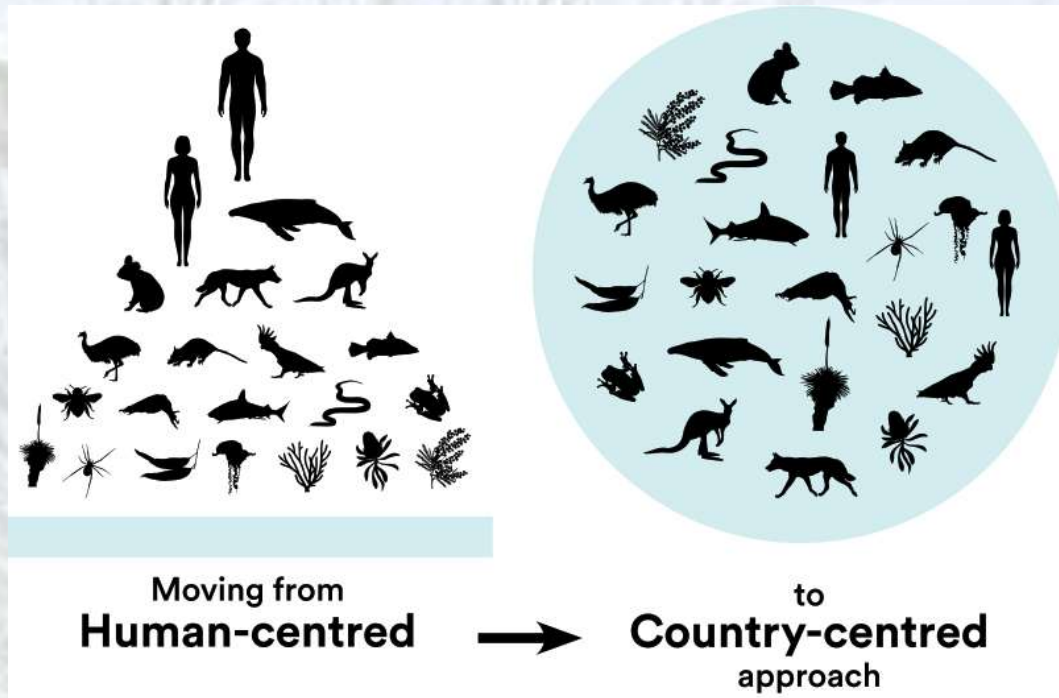


Plate 4. Human-centred vs Country centred design (Source: Steffan Lehmann 2010)

Country centred design is being considered for this project in the form of engagement of Tract Consultants, a leading national planning and design practice who have implemented co-design practices in a variety of their projects. Tract have assisted in the development of specific design principles to ensure that Country centred design principles are upheld, outlined in the *79-81 Queens Road & 2-8 Spencer Street Five Dock Design Report* (Plus Studio 2025). These principles are directly informed the *Greener Places* framework (2020), a draft Green Infrastructure policy drafted by the Government Architect NSW, aiming to create a healthier and sustainable urban environment.

Image: Parramatta River at Five Dock (Anya Graubard 2025)

5. THINKING: Communing with Country

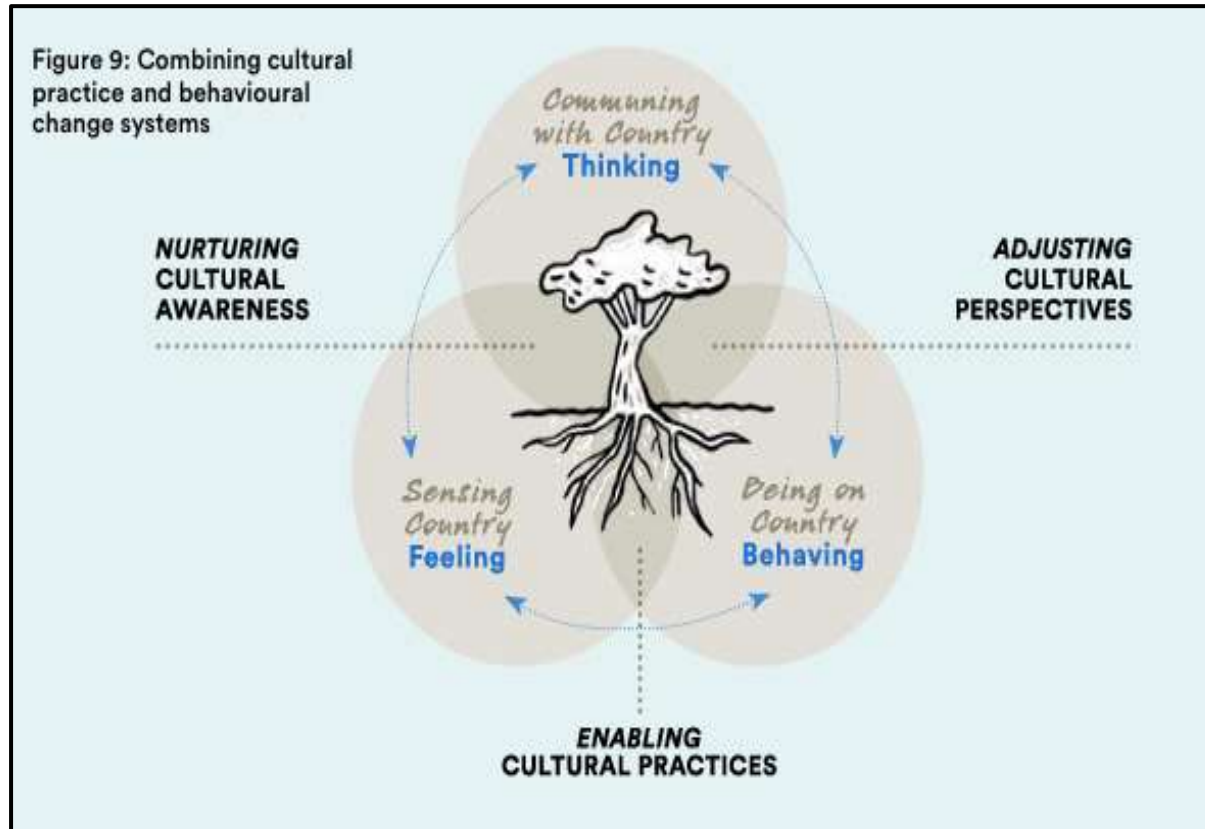


Plate 5. Combining cultural practice and behavioural ecosystems (Source: Government Architect 2023)

The *Connecting with Country Framework* (2023 p.35) proposes a method of learning from cultural practices to inform a new approach to design:

We can consciously cultivate behavioural change, using processes of thinking, feeling and behaving that are informed by the cultural practices of communing, sensing and being on Country. Through this we can gain a deeper insight into traditional knowledge systems that informs a new approach and way of working.

5.1 PRE-CONTACT BACKGROUND

5.1.1. Dharug Life

This section has been informed by (Artefact Heritage, 2016, 2025):

The Dharug were the traditional First Nations language group of inland western Sydney, encompassing people from Camden, Campbelltown, Liverpool, and Penrith, possibly extending to the Hawkesbury River and parts of the Sydney coast. Prior to colonisation, they lived in extended family groups of 30 to 50 people organised into an estimated 30 clans, each associated with specific territories that provided social and economic rights. These groups moved seasonally within defined areas following resource availability, with the resource-rich Sydney region sustaining a comparatively large population through fishing, shellfish gathering, and hunting.

The landscape was carefully managed through practices like 'firestick farming,' which served multiple purposes including opening tracks, driving animals toward hunters, and creating gathering places for dancing and sharing stories. This sophisticated land management system was organised around the Dharug calendar, which recognizes six distinct seasons based on natural phenomena such as plant flowering, weather pattern changes, and the lifecycles of birds and animals. Unlike Western seasonal divisions, these six seasons developed from contemporary observations rather than fixed calendar dates.

Early British colonists initially believed Aboriginal people lived exclusively along the coast, but exploration quickly corrected this

These pathways carry deeper cultural significance through Dreaming stories such as that of Gurangatch and Mirragan, which describes an epic battle between a giant rainbow serpent and native cat. Their struggle across the landscape created the mountains, caves, and rivers that continue to shape the region today, embedding spiritual meaning into the physical geography that guided Aboriginal movement and settlement patterns.



Plate 6. Corroboree around a camp fire, Joseph Lycett c.1817 In: Drawings of Aborigines and scenery, New South Wales, ca. 1820 | Source: National Library of Australia, call no. PIC MSR 12/1/4 #R5685

5.1.2. Wangal Life

Multiple groups existed within the Dharug language area. Local groups referred to the region around Five Dock as Wanne

County, which largely occupied the Balmain Peninsula and the south bank of the Parramatta River (Attenbrow 2002). The eastern boundary was probably Me-Mel or May-Mi (Goat Island).

The Aboriginal people of this area belong to the Eora Nation, along with others across the Sydney region. The word Eora, meaning 'here' or 'of this place', was not traditionally used by Aboriginal communities before European contact but emerged during first encounters with non-Aboriginal settlers (City of Sydney 2013). It is now accepted as an appropriate term for the coastal Aboriginal peoples in the broader Sydney area. Traditional fishing practices continued around the subject site into the nineteenth century.

By the 1830s, records of Aboriginal occupation near the subject site had become scarce. Most of the surrounding land had been cleared or fenced off, displacing the Wann-gal from their traditional country. Historical records indicate that small pockets of communities continued to live near the Parramatta River in scattered groups, likely including Wann-gal people. Extensive intermarriage with groups like the Wallumetta-gal probably occurred



Plate 7. By Samuel John Neele From the collections of the State Library of New South Wales [a1476007 / DL Q80/18]

following the initial waves of disease that devastated the Aboriginal population around Sydney Harbour. The resulting 'tribes' were family groups bound together for survival.

During the 1820s, a tribe called the 'Kissing Point' people lived near landowner James Squire's estate on the opposite side of the Parramatta River. Reverend Samuel Leigh reported that members of this tribe were 'related to the chief Bennelong, who had died a short time before.' This community could speak English and readily conversed with local missionaries who had known Bennelong. Other tribes reported in the local area included the 'Concord' tribe and the 'Duck River' tribe, which may have also included Wann-gal survivors (Artefact 2022).

5.1.2.1 BENNELONG

Bennelong (**Plate 7**) was a Wangal (also spelled Wanngal or Wahngal), a clan whose heartland on the Parramatta River centered on the shallow area of The Flats (now Homebush Bay). This area, with its salt marsh, reed swamps and mudflats, provided rich fishing

grounds and sources of mud oysters, shellfish, crustaceans, ducks and other birds. Bennelong lived here for the first half of his life.

Bennelong was about 24 years old in January 1788 when a convoy of British sailing ships brought approximately 1,000 men, women and children to Sydney Cove to establish the convict colony of New South Wales—an event that would change his life forever. In mid-1789, smallpox swept through the First Nations population. Bennelong survived, but later said the epidemic killed half the Aboriginal people, including his first wife, whose name is not known.[3]

Governor Arthur Phillip ordered First Lieutenant William Bradley of HMS Sirius to capture 'a Man or two'. On 25 November 1789 at Kayeemy (Manly Cove) on the north side of Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour), two Aboriginal men—Bennelong and Colebee—were lured from a gathering on the beach by a gift of two large fish. Bradley, who painted a watercolour illustrating the abduction he supervised, wrote later:

They eagerly took the fish, they were dancing together when the Signal was given by me, and the two poor devils were seiz'd & handed into the boat in an instant...They were bound with ropes and taken by boat to Sydney Cove...It was by far the most unpleasant service I was ever ordered to Execute...all that could be said or done was not sufficient to remove the pang they naturally felt at being torn away from their friends; or to reconcile them to their situation.

Thrust into history by his abduction, Bennelong would lead a tumultuous life, becoming the best-known Aboriginal figure in the first decades of European settlement. More than a mediator and interpreter, he connects twenty-first century Australia with

the social and spiritual Aboriginal world that existed before the English colony of New South Wales. His voice, filtered through accounts by First Fleet observers, speaks to us across the centuries and has been interpreted and misinterpreted in turn by historians, linguists and anthropologists. It reminds us that Sydney has an ancient Aboriginal past and for thousands of years belonged to the coastal clans who called themselves Eora ('People').

6.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The project area sits on the broader Sydney Basin on terrain shaped by a mix of sandstone and shale formations, with estuarine deposits closer to the river (Plus Studio 2025). An Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) search was undertaken for a 1km buffer around the project area on 7th October 2025. The results of the search found the following registered sites:

- AHIMS #45-6-2142 (Midden) About 780 m northeast of project area
- AHIMS #45-6-3906 (Artefact, Destroyed) about 840m west of the project area

Design concepts can speak to the coastal archaeology pertinent to the project area, given its location 530 m south of the Parramatta River and the eventual link from the project area to the shorefront via William Street. Raymond Weatherall (MLALC) emphasised that though tangible aspect of heritage may be disturbed, the intangible values of the project area remain extremely culturally significant.

6. FEELING: Sensing Country

Section 6 summarises knowledge gained from *sensing* Country, including the Walk on Country undertaken on 13th October 2025 guided by members of the community (see **Section 5**).

A selection of endemic species is included in **Table 2** below along with their native uses. Information from the native uses **could be used to inform signage at the location of these plants**.

6.1 ETHNOBOTANY

Ethnobotany was a key theme discussed with the MLALC. Ethnobotany—the study of relationships between people and plants—is central to understanding Aboriginal cultural practice and land stewardship. The Wangal, among other groups, developed extensive understanding of native plant species, including their seasonal availability, harvesting methods, and multiple uses spanning food sources, medicinal applications, materials for tools and shelter, and ceremonial significance.

Table 2. Significant Flora and fauna

Scientific Name	Common Name	Cultural Uses/Significance
<i>Calyptorhynchus</i>	Black Cockatoo	Totemic animals for various Aboriginal groups, including the Wangal. Linked to various Dreamtime stories
<i>Allocasuarina</i>	She-oak	Wood used for making boomerangs, shields, and tools (<i>Western Sheoak (Allocasuarina Fraseriana): A Unique Native Tree of Wes – Australian Woodwork, n.d.</i>).
<i>Corymbia gumifera</i>	Red bloodwood	Used in Smoking Ceremonies.

Incorporating Aboriginal ethnobotanical knowledge into project design means restoring native plant communities that reflect pre-invasion vegetation and the plant palette the Wangal people or other local groups managed and utilised. This involves prioritising species with cultural significance that supported food security, medicine, and material culture, that can also act as habitat to re-introduce native fauna to the project area.

Native plant restoration is not merely historical recreation but enables contemporary connection to Country and cultural continuation, facilitating living practices of harvesting, preparation, and knowledge transmission within Wangal communities.

Specific plant species, harvesting protocols, and cultural practices should be developed in direct consultation with Wangal Elders and cultural representatives to ensure cultural authority and accuracy.

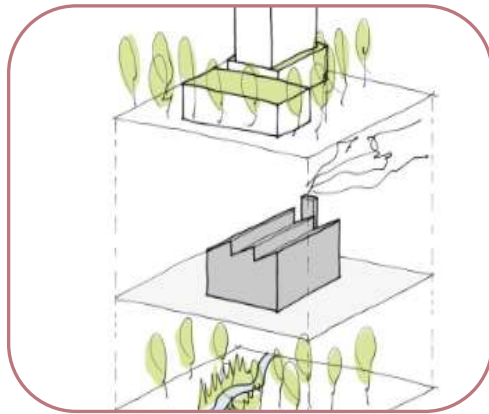
Image: Brendan Kerin of Metro LALC performing a Smoking Ceremony at Rosebery Engine Yards (Taylor.com.au 2022)

<i>Eucalyptus amplifolia</i>	Cabbage Gum	Eucalyptus leaves are deeply connected to First Nations spiritual health practices, as one of the leaves often being burned in smoking ceremonies.
<i>Eucalyptus parramattensis</i>	Parramatta Red Gum	
<i>Angophora floribunda</i>	Rough-barked Apple	Ideal habitat tree for its hollows, would attract array of native fauna for the nectar, seed and insect feeders (Australian Plants Society 2021).
<i>Melaleuca decora</i>	Honey Myrtle	Flowers were soaked in water to create a sweet drink, the bark of the myrtle was used for shelters, fires and as an oven bag for earth-cooking (<i>Growing Illawarra Natives</i> , n.d.).
<i>Livistona australia</i>	Cabbage Palm	Parts used for food, medicine and shelter. Fibres were used in string, rope, and fishing lines manufacturing. (State Library of Sydney 2020)
<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>	Prickly leafed paperbark	Oils have antiseptic properties, and bark has variety of uses including shelter, bedding, <i>coolamons</i> (bowls), and cooking vessels. (Gardening Australia, 2010)
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Spiny headed rush mat	Starchy base could be chewed as an energy boost. Leaves could for weaving purposes as well eel traps and nets.

Ecology is culture...a gateway to connect with community and culture

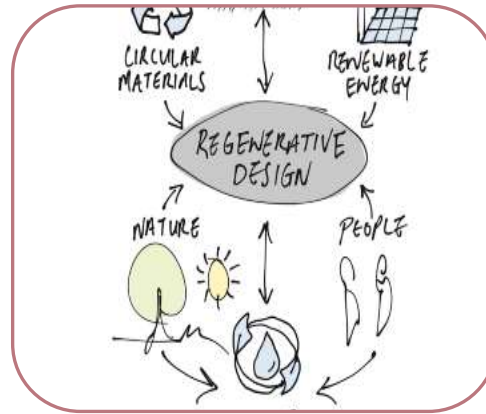
Josh Marr, MLALC

7. Key Design Themes (Plus Studio 2025)



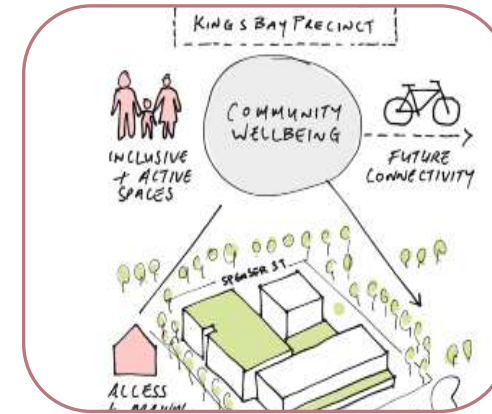
Caring for Country

Encourage sustainable practices in the design and built form of the development, including water-sensitive urban design and ensure ecological protections are in place



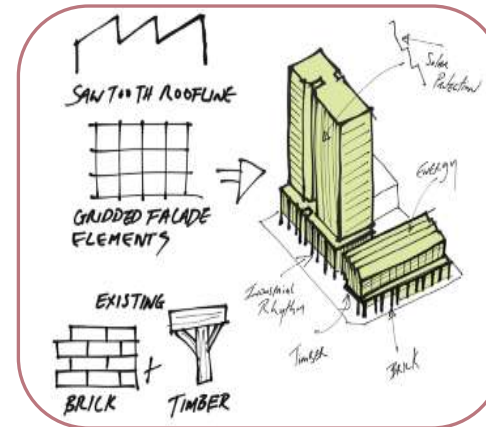
Regeneration

Focus on rehabilitation of the site through re-use of existing materials.



Community - Healthy People

Builds on vision for King's Bay Precinct by creating inclusive and active spaces and enhance future connectivity



Context & Proposed form

Design acts as a continuation off place, layering new meaning onto the site while respecting its historical foundations.

SUSTAINABILITY

A **Healthy Country** is the overarching outcome of the *Connecting with Country Framework*, supported by ‘regenerative and sustainable environmental practices’ (Government Architect 2023).

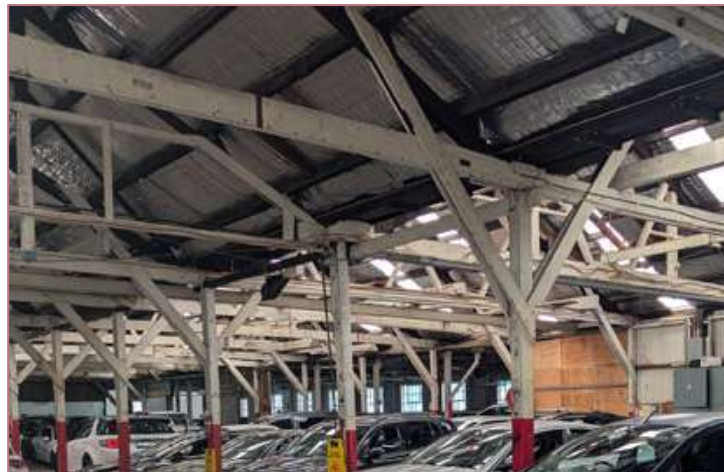
The theme of sustainability and specifically upcycling material was discussed extensively with community on site.

Plus Studio intends to **reuse existing timber and bricks (Image 2)**. Reusing materials from Five Dock’s industrial past serves as an interpretive cultural design gesture illustrating how both First Nations and industrial heritage can be honoured together. These physical remnants of industry become interpretive narratives, acknowledging the connection between First Nations people and Country alongside the labour history of the modern era



1

Daramu House in Barangaroo (Image 1) was constructed from recycled timber, featuring a wooden interpretive art installation as a feature wall showing the changing shoreline of Barangaroo.



2

[Australia] *leads in destructive ways we shouldn't*

Jordan Marr, MLALC

WAYFINDING AND LANGUAGE

Wayfinding refers to how humans interpret visual cues, signs, maps, and landmarks to determine their location and navigate to their desired destination efficiently.

At Five Dock, wayfinding design can honour Country by integrating directional patterns inspired by traditional Aboriginal pathways.

Rather than relying solely on written language, the design can look to integrate Aboriginal visual symbols (Image 3) —a communication method with deep historical precedent. In Aboriginal cultures, where many different languages were spoken, visual storytelling, art, and symbols bridged language gaps during Corroborees, meetings, and celebrations, allowing groups to share important ideas, beliefs, and histories beyond spoken word.



3

Dharug language can be considered within wayfinding in consultation with relevant knowledge and language holders, though incorporating multiple languages and symbols may better reflect the shared, multi-cultural nature of Country. Animal tracks and plant motifs embedded in walking and cycling routes (Image 4) guide visitors toward communal spaces—the garden, amphitheatre, and gathering areas—while reinforcing the cultural significance of moving respectfully across Country and honouring the diverse clans and languages that have shaped this landscape.



4

HARDSCAPES

To create a living landscape that reflects both the geological character of the area and the cultural significance of sandstone in First Nations practice.

Sydney sandstone holds deep cultural meaning as evidenced by the visible engravings found across the region—such as those at Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (**Image 5**) — which demonstrate the enduring relationship between Country and First Nations custodians.

Contemporary applications of sandstone can honour this heritage through thoughtful integration into the site design: as landscape features, retaining walls, seating (**Image 6**), and other elements that ground the space in local materiality while creating functional gathering places



5

Sandstone-inspired colour palettes are recommended to ensure seamless integration with the natural geological environment. Drawing from Hawkesbury sandstone formations, a cohesive palette should incorporate soft oranges and ochres that reflect oxidised minerals, warm greys and taupes that reference the stone matrix, and subtle browns and rust tones from natural weathering. Applying this muted, earthy palette across cladding, paving, and landscape features reinforces integration with the existing geological and ecological context while maintaining contemporary design quality.



6

LIGHTING

Throughout both retail and residential buildings, the interplay of light and shadow becomes a dynamic representation of Sky Country and Water Country. Architectural elements such as perforated screens, canopies, and patterned glazing inspired by Sky Country (**Image 7**) could cast gradually shifting shadows that mimic atmospheric layers and water's fluid movement, using the sun as a sustainable lighting source.

Feature lighting installations could be integrated at key site locations, such as the Level 01 communal garden space or as standalone public art . With internal illumination, these sculptural elements create shadow patterns referencing the archaeological context (such as middens in **Image 8**) and cultural importance of middens while evoking celestial and aquatic storytelling traditions.



7



8

COMMUNITY GARDEN

The landscape masterplan includes a community garden, strongly supported by MLALC, that incorporates native bush tucker species. **MLALC emphasised the importance of ensuring all plants are safe for consumption**, with any harmful species managed separately. There is opportunity to **employ an Aboriginal caretaker to manage the garden**, fostering social enterprise through initiatives such as bush tucker talks led by a local Aboriginal knowledge holder. These sessions could educate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members on identifying and using native bush foods.

Muru Mittigar, the largest First Nations-operated native seed bank in NSW, focuses on species from the Cumberland Plains and Blue Mountains. They helped to create the Great West Walk Bush Food Trail (**Image 9**) featuring bush tucker plants. Seating and educational signage along the trail enhance user experience, encouraging learning opportunities.



9



10

SHELL

Middens have been identified near the project area and would have, prior to invasion, been numerous along the shores of the Parramatta River. These archaeological sites represent layers of cultural memory where Aboriginal communities gathered to eat, camp, and connect to culture across generations.

The significance of these middens can directly inspire materiality in the built form. **Shell aggregate** from midden deposits can be incorporated into hardscape paving, pathways, and courtyard surfaces, (Image 12) creating tangible reference to this heritage. Shell-based materials might also articulate building cladding or accent features, as shown by the Shell Wall created by Esme Timbery, a traditional shell worker (Image 11).



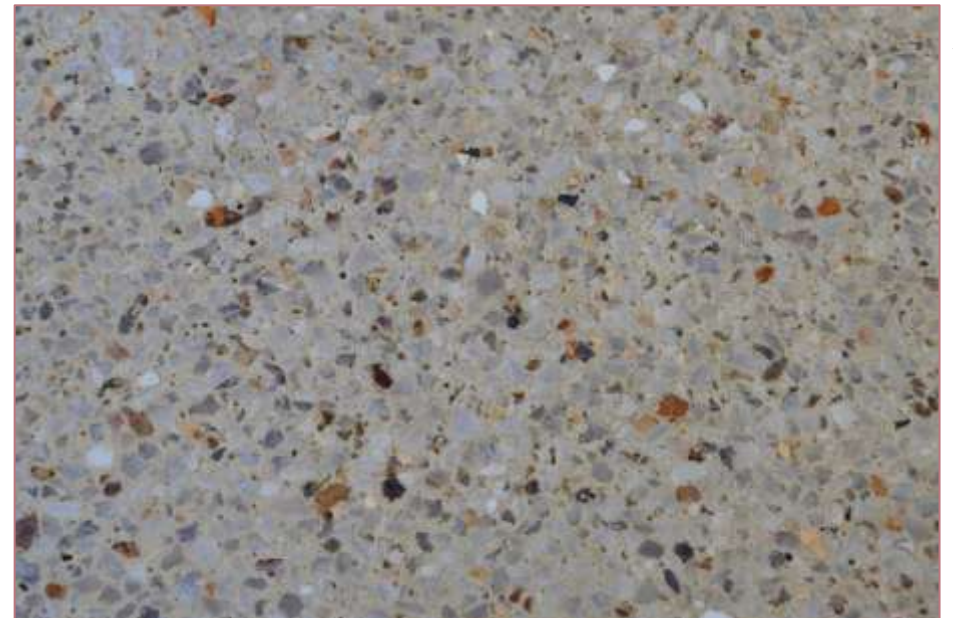
11

Oysters soaked up negative and toxic materials in the waterways

Josh Marr, MLALC

[middens denote a
*social place to eat,
camp, connect to
culture*

Jordan Marr, MLALC



12

RAINGARDENS

Water Sensitive Urban Design is being considered through the incorporation of **swales and raingardens (Image 13)**, respecting the Dharug people's knowledge of the Parramatta River (*Burrumatta*, Image 14) and its catchment.

As the project area is flood-prone, this approach works with natural water flows, acknowledging Traditional Custodians' deep understanding of seasonal water patterns across Country. Stormwater runs into the gardens from hard surfaces such as streets and nearby roofs whenever it rains.

Layers of select materials including sandy soil and recycled shell, filter the water and support the growth of perennial and annual plants chosen for their resilience to periodic flooding.

The Georges River flows into the Hume [Murray] River...one big water table, one part doesn't separate from another part

Raymond Weatherall, MLALC



13



14

Where possible, **culturally significant native species should be incorporated**, protecting water quality before it reaches the Parramatta River and honouring both contemporary water management and traditional ecological knowledge of wet-dry cycles.

COMMUNAL SPACE

Designs include a **community amphitheatre** space that serves as a focal point for gathering and cultural exchange. This space can **integrate sandstone and native plant species**, grounding the design in Five Dock's geological and ecological character.

The amphitheatre may incorporate a central water feature that references the Parramatta River—a significant waterway that has shaped the area's industrial and First Nations heritage. This feature could take the form of a reflecting pool, cascading water element, or interactive water play area that responds to the tidal nature of the river system. It functions both symbolically and practically, creating a meditative focal point that honours the enduring importance of waterways in First Nations culture while enhancing the site's connection to Water Country



15

Integrated seating around the water's edge creates opportunities for contemplation and informal gathering, while potential lighting elements could illuminate the water at night, transforming the amphitheatre into an evening destination that celebrates both cultural significance and community vitality.

16



8. Local Aboriginal-led Cultural Organisations

It is recommended that the wider project team and construction team undertake basic cultural awareness training in order to understand the cultural heritage context of the project area. Local organisations that can assist in cultural awareness training include (but not limited to):

Organisation	About this organisation
 <p data-bbox="517 453 992 517">Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council</p> <p data-bbox="517 552 770 584">p. (02) 8394 9666</p> <p data-bbox="517 619 931 651">e.: metrolalc@metrolalc.org.au</p>	<p data-bbox="1070 459 2110 603">The Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) is bound by the key legislative requirements which determine the objects and functions of a Local Aboriginal Land Council as contained in the amended Aboriginal Land Rights Act (ALRA).</p> <p data-bbox="1070 619 2110 762">The LALC is an incorporated body constituted under the ALRA. The ALRA states that the object of each Local Aboriginal Land Council is to "improve, protect and foster the best interests of all Aboriginal persons within the Council's area and other persons who are members of the Council".</p>
 <p data-bbox="663 833 902 865">p. 02 47 300 400</p> <p data-bbox="663 916 1048 948">e. info@murumittigar.com.au</p>	<p data-bbox="1070 831 2110 938">Muru Mittigar is a proud Dharug Aboriginal Social Enterprise in Western Sydney. We offer employment, education, and training to our local Indigenous community.</p> <p data-bbox="1070 954 2110 1098">And our services include Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Programs, Community Assistance, Financial Services, and services such as Arboriculture, Bush Regeneration, Landscaping and a Providence Native Nursery." (<i>Muru Mittigar - Proud Dharug Aboriginal Social Enterprise, n.d.</i>)</p>

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