

# 40 Memorial Drive Bella Vista

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Connecting with Country

Landen Dev No 8 Pty Ltd

Prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment

26 March 2025



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Artefact acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of our land, Australia.

We acknowledge the Gadigal people as the custodians of Pirrama (Pyrmont) where our Sydney office is located, the Awabakal, Worimi and Wonnarua peoples of the Hunter Region where our Mulubinba (Newcastle) office is located, and the Wiradjuri people of the Central West where our Bathurst office is located. We pay our respects to them, their culture and their Elders past and present. We extend our respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work.

When we travel to Country we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we walk. We acknowledge the Dharug, traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waters where this project was undertaken. We thank them for sustaining and caring for Country for millennia.

Front cover: Detail of *Our Country Connections* by Kayelene Slater (2025),  
© Kayelene Slater, reproduced with permission. 'My Artwork represents the  
connection to the Waterways and Country.'  
Icons used in the report are by Dharug artist Adam Laws

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*Cultural warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this report contains the names and images of people who are deceased.*

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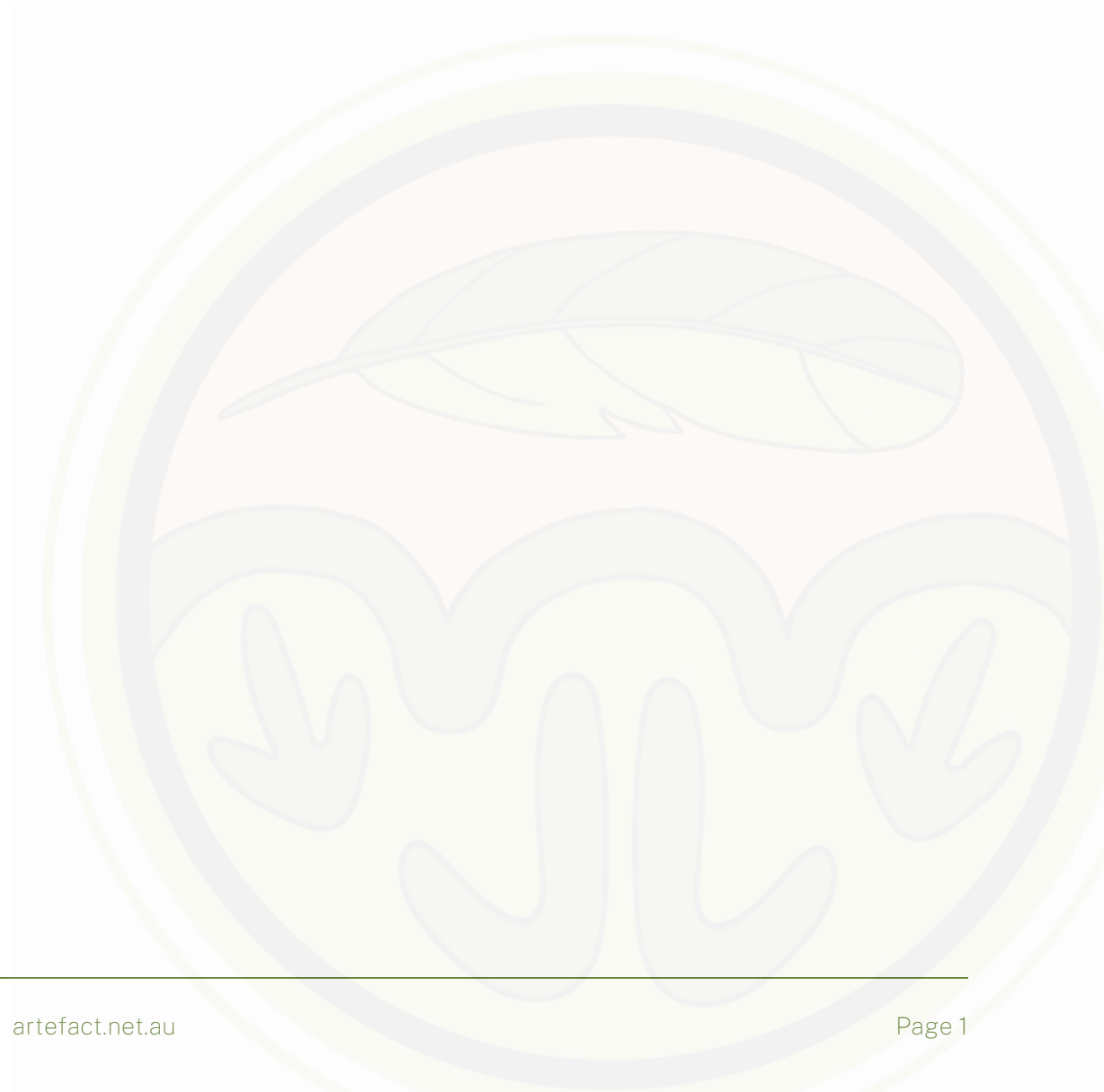
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Background

Group Impact Property Consultancy Pty Ltd (Impact) have been engaged as Project Managers on behalf of Landen Dev No 8 Pty Ltd to develop the site at 40 Memorial Ave, Bella Vista and 1Z Free Settlers Drive Bella Vista. The project is following a State Significant Development Application (SSDA).

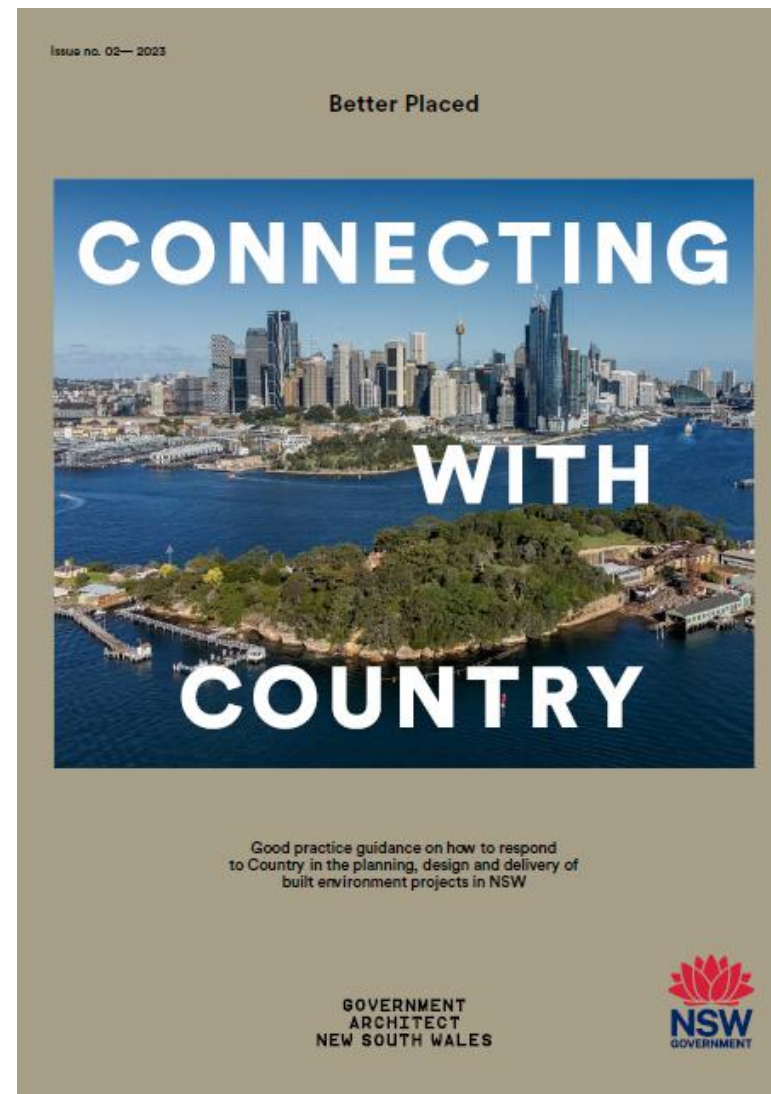
## 1.2 Scope of report

Artefact Heritage and Environment (Artefact) has been engaged by Impact Group to develop a Connecting with Country report for this project which is informed by the cultural connections to Country shared by stakeholders. These cultural values and connections are used to inform actions, outcomes and design principles to embed Country into the development of the site and provide a best-practice framework for designing with Country.

## 1.3 Guiding documents

The following guiding documents have been consulted during the preparation of this Connecting with Country report.

- Government Architect New South Wales, 2023. *Connecting with Country*.
- Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), 2013, *Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*.



### 1.4 The study area

The study area is located within the suburb of Bella Vista and comprises Lot 1 DP 1237055, and parts of Lot 1 DP 1180837 and Lot 403 DP 1125136. The area is approximately 2 ha in size and is bound by Memorial Avenue to the north, vacant blocks to the east and south, and an unnamed access road runs parallel to the western boundary.

The study area is approximately 40 km to the northwest of the Sydney CBD, and is within The Hills Shire LGA, Parish of Castle Hill, County of Cumberland, and within the boundaries of Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC).



Figure 1: Study Area (source: Artefact)

## 1.5 Terminology

Due to the huge disruption of colonisation and the challenges of translating Aboriginal language into written English, there are a variety of ways of referring to the Aboriginal peoples and languages of the area. As language is revitalised and more knowledge is shared, terminology may also change. This report therefore uses different terminology and spellings interchangeably depending on the source, for example Darug and Dharug.

### 1.5.1 Cultural context

A number of key contextual issues are important to consider when developing a Connecting with Country report for a new project:

**Country, culture and community:** The many interpretations of Country are often expressed by Aboriginal communities through cultural practices of these aspects.

**Caring for Country:** Caring for Country is a cultural obligation that Aboriginal people undertake with a deep sense of responsibility, ownership and stewardship. Caring for Country includes caring for the wellbeing of Country's interconnected systems now and for the future.

**Identify:** 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.

**Cultural safety:** Cultural safety is about creating a socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually safe space where there is no challenge or denial of a person's identity. For Aboriginal people this means feeling safe, valued and able to participate in their cultural, spiritual and belief systems, free from racism, discrimination and lateral violence.

**Indigenous cultural and intellectual property:** Australian Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) are the rights that Aboriginal people have to protect their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and cultural expression.

## 1.6 Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this report contains the names and images of people who are deceased.

Section 4 provides a summary of the history and culture of the Aboriginal people of the Bella Vista area, it includes information collated from colonial sources and should be read with this in mind. The history contains words, descriptions and terms which reflect the views of the period in which the content was created but are not considered appropriate today.

## 1.7 Cultural & Intellectual Property

Artefact has prepared this Connecting with Country Report for the 40 Memorial Drive Bella Vista project. This report, and the information and cultural knowledge gathered in its preparation, are to be used for the above project only.

This project aims to facilitate a meaningful, considered, and functional framework for understanding the relationships between Country, community and individuals and integrating this understanding into design principles for the site. Please note that all cultural knowledge shared by Elders, knowledge holders, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) that is included in this document remains the intellectual property of those who have shared it. The rights of Indigenous or Aboriginal Cultural & Intellectual Property must be protected at all times. The following best practice guidelines from the *GANSW Connecting with Country (2023)* will be followed:

- Payment made to knowledge holders for their traditional knowledges shared.
- Credit of organisations or individuals for their traditional knowledges.
- Information and guidelines about Cultural & Intellectual Property included in reports.
- All usage of the information must be approved by the organisation or individual before finalised or published.
- If requested by the organisation or individual, Cultural & Intellectual Property can be included in a written agreement with the organisation or individual.

This work embodies the cultural heritage, traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expression (ICIP) of the Aboriginal stakeholders listed in the consultation log. It was created with the Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Dealing with any part of this work for any purpose that has not been authorised by the Aboriginal stakeholders is a serious breach of customary law and may also breach the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). For enquiries about permitted reproduction of the ICIP contained in this work, contact Artefact at [office@artefact.net.au](mailto:office@artefact.net.au).

## 1.8 Authorship and acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Hannah Matagia (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer, Artefact), Neve Penklis, (Heritage Consultant), Alexandra Gaffikin (Senior Associate, Artefact), Stephen Gapps (Senior Historian) with input and review from Carolyn MacLulich (Principal, Artefact).

Artefact has worked in collaboration with a number of Aboriginal knowledge holders for the report and would like to thank all knowledge holders for their generosity in sharing cultural knowledge for this project.



Figure 2: Walk on Country, 14 February 2025

## 2. GANSW CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK

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## 2.1 Introduction

The *Connecting with Country Framework 2023*, prepared by the Government Architects NSW Office, seeks to assist design project teams to integrate Aboriginal culture into development projects. The predominant message of the framework is that the current design approach mentality needs to shift from Human Centric to Country Centric, to create a healthy Country with culturally diverse and safe spaces that simultaneously address the growing environmental problems that society face today.

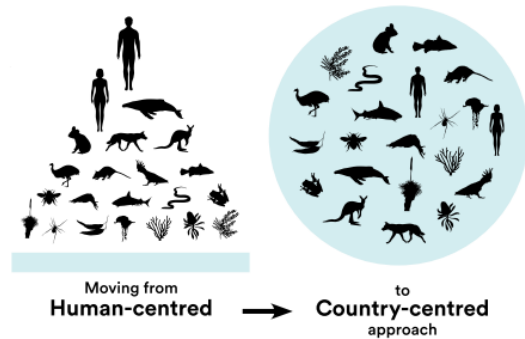


Figure 3: Human-centred or Country-centred approach (GANSW Connecting with Country, 2023)

It advocates for an integrated approach that combines Aboriginal knowledge and western science which recognises and appreciates the interconnectedness of all elements of society and the environment. The essential message is that if we look after Country, Country will look after us. To facilitate the behavioural change required to put Country at the forefront of new design, the framework expands upon three components of Aboriginal cultural knowledge systems and aligns them with three cognitive elements (Thinking, Feeling, Behaviour):

- **Communing with Country (Thinking):** the connection to Country through mind and spirit as demonstrated through forms of cultural expression.

- **Sensing Country (Feeling):** immersive cultural practices to provide insight into the emotional connection to Country.
- **Being on Country (Behaving):** working together to share knowledge and perspective to create cohesive and respectful designs.

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.

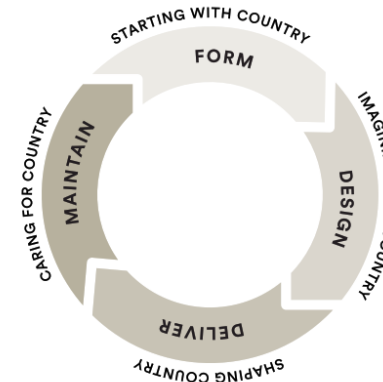


Figure 4: Project lifecycle from an Aboriginal perspective (GANSW Connecting with Country, 2023)

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.

The framework also provides practical assistance for how Country can be considered in project design at a precinct wide level, a building-scale project level and a small-scale project level.

### 2.1.1 GANSW Designing with Country discussion paper (2019)

The Government Architect NSW draft *Designing with Country* discussion paper predates the *Connecting with Country Framework* and fed into its development.<sup>1</sup> It posed questions around developing practical guidance for the design industry to respond to current directions in planning policy. Its aim was to contribute to better understanding of, and better support for, a strong and vibrant Aboriginal culture in our built environment. It stated that

there are three essential elements of designing with Country: nature, people, and design:

- Architecture considers design and people (informed by nature). Architecture without people is just a sculptural object.
- Passive design considers design and nature, and when used by people becomes environmental design.
- Biophilic design considers the innate relationship between people and nature. Informed by design, this relationship could be understood as a genesis for Indigenous architecture.

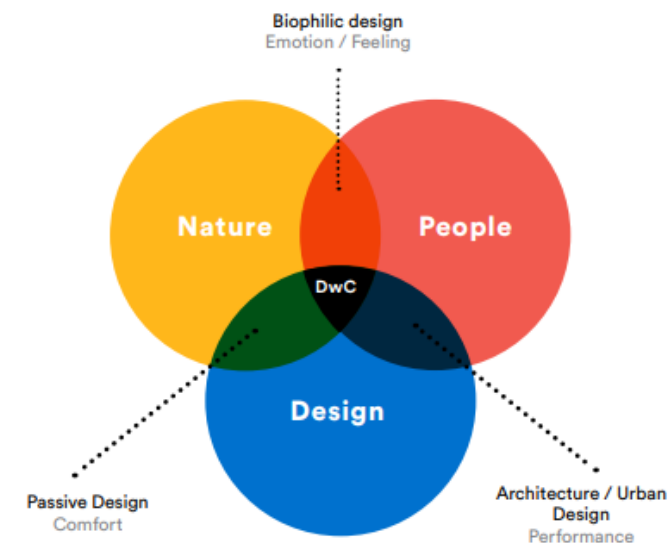


Figure 5: Elements of Designing with Country. Source: GANSW Designing with Country Discussion paper. Considering Country)

<sup>1</sup> GANSW, 2020b.

### 3. CONSIDERING COUNTRY

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### 3.1 What is Country?

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*'Country to us as Aboriginal People is our connection to Country, waterways, sky and its within us.'*

*Aunty Vicky Slater, 14 February 2025*

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The concept of Country does not have a corresponding concept in Western culture but is a deeply personal yet universal worldview fundamental to Aboriginal and First Nations people. Individual relationships with and definitions of 'Country' are deeply nuanced, and can vary depending on a person's life experience, place, and personal beliefs. It is key, therefore, to deeply listen to the perspectives of Aboriginal people and remove Western biases when thinking about Country.

A definition of country as 'land' may be the initial association made by a Western person, but this is far too simplistic; instead, the idea of Country is an all-encompassing continuum of past, present and future, connecting tangible things like ecosystems, water, and people, as well as intangible concepts like story, identity, and home.

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*'We have the same connection, because we are all mob... it's a sense of belonging. All mobs have that same connection, just in different areas.'*

*Aunty Karen Owens, 14 February 2025*

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Country and identity are deeply linked for Aboriginal people, and an understanding of Country is key to understanding both themselves and their community.' 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'<sup>2</sup> Therefore, a person's identity and personal value cannot be separated from Country and is connected to all elements

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<sup>2</sup> GANSW 2023. Connecting with Country Framework

around them. A person's actions can positively or negatively affect all aspects of Country, including themselves.

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*'It is seeing, hearing and feeling... the trees, the birds'*

*Aunty Helen Slater, 14 February 2025*

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*Figure 6: Interrelationships between Country, community and individuals (GANSW Connecting with Country, 2023)*

Country, just like people, can be healthy or sick, and requires care and respect. A network of mutual care between the land, animals, plants, and people stretches into deep time and must be constantly protected and nurtured to ensure the health of Country. Knowledge of how to maintain this network of mutual care is expressed through Aboriginal language, stories, and cultural practices and provides the bedrock of First Nations

cultures. The network is interconnected and interdependent; changes in language, for example, affects all other elements.

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*'Country is a spiritual connection for Aboriginal people not just sky, water and land.'*

*Pearl Depoma, 14 February 2025*

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Country is both spiritual and physical. Country is something that can be experienced, and that physical experience is key to the mutual health of First Nations people and Country itself. Walking on Country, feeling the touch of the air, sun, and wind, speaking to and listening to Country, and hunting on Country are ways of practicing culture that have been passed down for many generations. The act of being on Country and feeling the connection with place is deeply significant for Aboriginal communities and a way of ensuring that individuals and families can thrive.

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*'Country is home'*

*Jandamarra Bryant, 14 February 2025*

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Cultural practices (also called cultural Law/ Lore or protocols) and the languages used to refer to Country, are deeply diverse, reflecting the development of thousands of communities across Australia over millennia. All practices, however, are rooted in the idea of responsibility towards Country.

Country has been significantly disturbed by the colonisation of Australia. Delicate physical and spiritual ecosystems that have been nourished and maintained since deep time have been damaged by deforestation, loss of biodiversity, dislocation of community, and general development. The Western systems of thinking and land-use cannot maintain or nourish Country, and some knowledge of how to care for Country has been lost.

The resilience of Aboriginal people across Australia and the strength of cultural practices, however, has allowed much cultural knowledge and lore to survive colonisation. The knowledge of Aboriginal people of how to care

for Country is diverse, and includes practices of agriculture, health, spirituality, and sustainability. This deep knowledge, based on the idea of mutual responsibility, should play an essential part in future placemaking and planning.

Designs that echo traditional forms and stories and their contemporary interpretations are increasingly being integrated within new developments, sending strong, respectful messages about the timeless links between First Nations peoples and the landscape, and allowing for reflection and connection to Country. Traditional knowledge, when embedded meaningfully into development, has positive outcomes for communities and the environment. The significance of such design integration does not just lie in its aesthetics, but in the empowerment that public statements of value bring and the value of sustainable future development.

The involvement and authority of Aboriginal knowledge holders and Aboriginal architects, designers, and artists is paramount in developing future projects that connect meaningfully with Country and promote, sustain, and nurture the health of Country.



Figure 7: Bella Vista site vegetation (source: Artefact)

## 4. ABORIGINAL HISTORIES OF THE AREA

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## 4.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the history and culture of the Aboriginal people of the area. It includes information collated from colonial sources and should be read with this in mind.

## 4.2 Early history

Many Aboriginal people, like other Indigenous or First Nations people have been living on Country from ‘time immemorial’ – they have always been here, and their origins lie in the creation of the land and animals.

Over the last few decades, archaeologists’ knowledge of deep human time in Australia has expanded from just a few thousand years in the 1950s, to 25,000 years in the 1960s, then 40,000 years, to now around 60,000 years or more.<sup>3</sup>

Archaeological evidence of Aboriginal people living in the Sydney region from Shaw’s Creek west of the Dyarubbin (Nepean) River is dated at around 14,000 years ago and numerous other sites in the area have been dated at around 15,000 ago. While Cranebrook Terrace, near Penrith in Western Sydney, has been dated to 41,700 years and a site near Parramatta at 30,000 years old, there is growing consensus among archaeologists and historians that people have lived across the Sydney region from around 50,000 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Belshaw, Nickel & Horton, 2020. ‘Histories of Indigenous Peoples and Canada’; Griffith, 2018, *Deep Time Dreaming*, p. 112; Karskens, *The Colony. A history of early Sydney*, 2009, p 25. Munro in Currie, *An Aboriginal history of Willoughby*, 2008, p. 4

<sup>4</sup> Attenbrow, 2010, *Sydney’s Aboriginal past*, pp 18-20; Nanson, Young & Stockton, 1987, ‘Chronology and palaeoenvironment of the Cranebrook Terrace’, p. 77; Williams, et al., 2017, ‘The Cranebrook Terrace revisited’, pp 100-109; Jo McDonald, 2005, ‘Heritage Conservation Strategy for Aboriginal sites’, pp 4, 87-94; Attenbrow, 2012, ‘Archaeological evidence of Aboriginal life in Sydney’. See Williams et al., 2012, ‘A terminal Pleistocene open site on the Hawkesbury River’ for comparison of site ages along Dyarubbin. Karskens, Burnett & Ross are confident that ‘Aboriginal people were living on Dyarubbin/ the Nepean River as long as 50,000 years ago’ (2017, ‘Traces in a Lost Landscape’, p. 4).

More ancient sites lie off the coast and in river valleys, now deep under water. Before the major sea level rise event at the end of the last ice age around 17,000 years ago, Aboriginal people living along the Parramatta River could have walked downstream along the riverbanks to the sea about 30 kilometres beyond the current day coastline. Over generations they would have watched and told stories about the gradual change as the sea rose to fill the ‘drowned river valley’ of what is now Sydney Harbour until it reached present levels around 6,000 years ago<sup>5</sup>.

Given the devastating impact of violent dispossession and disease upon Aboriginal people in the Sydney region during colonisation, the precise identification of language groups and historical traditional lands or Country for a given area is often difficult today. Early colonial observer Watkin Tench believed there was at the least coastal and inland dialects of the same language and, while this is challenged by some historians who prefer less distinction between what were all ‘canoe cultures’ around Sydney’s coast and waterways, there seems to have been an alignment with inland economies of the rivers, creeks and open forests of the Cumberland Plain, and coastal ‘saltwater’ focused groups.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to colonisation, Aboriginal people in the relatively resource rich Sydney region lived in extended family groups estimated at around 30 to 50 people. These groups were associated with certain territories or places that gave clan members particular social and economic rights and obligations. Each of the estimated 30 clans in the Sydney region had a

<sup>5</sup> There are now at least 21 identified oral stories around Australia that describe ancient sea-level rise. See Nunn & Reid, 2016, ‘Aboriginal Memories of Inundation of the Australian’ p. 11; Attenbrow: 2010, *Sydney’s Aboriginal past*, pp 154-155; Birch, 2007, ‘A short geological and environmental history of the Sydney’, pp 217-219.

<sup>6</sup> This historical overview does not seek to contest traditional or current definitions of affiliation with Country and acknowledges that multiple interpretations of such identity may exist. Aboriginal Heritage Office, 2015, *Filling a void: a review of the historical context for the use of the word ‘Guringai’*; Stanner, 1965, ‘Aboriginal Territorial Organization’, pp 1-26. Watkin Tench (1793 [2004], *A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson*, p. 122).

name often associated with a place or resource such as the Cabro (Gabra) gal (people) at modern day Cabramatta. Clan groups moved around a defined area in response to changing seasons and the availability of food and other resources. European observers mistakenly took this as a nomadic lifestyle, when in fact they moved around a 'limited and deeply known' area. There were also forms of more sedentary agriculture and aquaculture, and villages such as those described by early colonial diarists at Kamay-Botany Bay and later accounts of '70 huts' at Bent's Basin on the Nepean River west of Sydney.<sup>7</sup>

Some areas, particularly resource rich ones, had shared boundaries or reciprocal rights with bordering and neighbouring groups. With appropriate permission and protocols, people could travel through and hunt on other groups' lands. On special occasions such as feasts associated with the beaching of a whale; a kangaroo hunt on the open forests of southwestern Sydney; trading or exchanging stone, tools and other items, as well as ceremonial occasions, people would often travel long distances around and from outside the Sydney region.<sup>8</sup>

With several rivers and estuarine coastal areas, the Sydney region sustained a comparatively large population, unlike more arid inland areas. Fish and shellfish were a major part of Saltwater peoples' diets. The *nawi* (tied-bark canoe) was a common sight both day and night in rivers and creeks and was even dexterously paddled off the coast. There are many accounts by early colonists of Aboriginal people in canoes fishing and cooking their catch on small fires on hearth stones within the vessels. Women were the primary fishers from *nawi* (men usually fished with spears). Women were highly skilled with shell hooks and twine fishing lines

and thus played an important economic role in Sydney. They were noted as cradling their children while fishing, as their songs floated across the waters of Sydney Harbour.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 8: Fishing hooks crafted by Aboriginal communities living around Sydney Harbour, John White, 1790.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Gapps, 2010, *Cabrogal to Fairfield City*, pp 26-60; Attenbrow, 2010, *Sydney's Aboriginal past*, p. 78; Karskens, 2009, *The Colony*, p. 36; Gammage, 2012, *The biggest estate on earth*, pp. 281-304.

<sup>8</sup> Gammage, 2012, *The biggest estate on earth*. As Paul Irish notes, Sydney people continued traditional connections to Country through often broader 'affiliated coastal zones' that Irish suggests were based in traditional practices but changed under pressure and over time (2017, *Hidden in plain view*, pp 22-27).

<sup>9</sup> Banks, 1770 [2005], 'The Endeavour Journal'; Attenbrow, 2010, *Sydney's Aboriginal past*, 38. Collins' estimates of the population of the Sydney region as a whole vary between 3,000 and 20,000 (1789, *An account of the English colony*, p. 557).

<sup>10</sup> John White, 1790, *Journal of a voyage to New South Wales with sixty-five plates of non-descript animals, birds, lizards, serpents, curious cones or trees and other natural products*, State Library of NSW, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKJ3NqBBQd/Nwr2GDdJzvE8g>

People living inland across the Cumberland Plain focused on hunting small animals, gathering plants and catching freshwater fish and eels. Banksia flowers, wild honey, varieties of yam and burrawang nuts (macrozamia - a cycad palm with poisonous seeds that require processing to remove toxins) were recorded as important food sources. Xanthorrhoea, also known as the grass tree, had many uses - the nectar was eaten, the stalk used as a spear and the resin as a glue. Small animals such as bandicoots and wallabies were hunted with traps and snares. Watkin Tench noted the skill in cutting toeholds in trees to swiftly climb to hunt possums.<sup>11</sup>

The landscape and environment before Europeans arrived was a finely managed one. In 1790 John Hunter observed people 'burning the grass on the north shore opposite to Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals'. In 1804 Henry Waterhouse described the land around Cowpastures as 'a beautiful park, totally divested of underwood, interspersed with rich, luxuriant grass ... except where recently burnt'. These forests that had been managed by many generations of Aboriginal people through such methods as what is known as 'firestick farming'. Fire was an important tool and also used to open up tracks, to 'clean country', drive animals into the paths of hunters, cooking, warmth, treating wood, cracking open stones and for a place to gather, dance and share stories and knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

The Sydney region was a landscape rich with the imprints of activity, art and culture such as rock engravings and paintings, scarred and carved trees, ceremonial rock and mound structures, cooking ovens, villages of bark huts, stone tool quarries, grinding grooves and tool-making sites, burial and other shell middens, and other artefacts. All this activity had a lasting impact on the landscape, and many elements such as rock

engravings in particular survive, or have been kept intact or cared for by community members. Over time, many Aboriginal pathways were taken up by the colonists and made into roads, some still on the same routes today. 'Kangaroo grounds' became estates, fishing creeks became drains, hills and peaks used for communication became signaling stations and lookouts, and shell middens became the limestone for the bricks and mortar of early colonial buildings.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 9: Carving of Echidna in Ku-ring-gai National Park Image: Stuart Humphreys © Australian Museum<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Tench, 1793 [2004], *A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson*, p. 82, 230; Kohon, 1985, *Aborigines in the west*, p. 9; Attenbrow, 2010, *Sydney's Aboriginal past*, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Hunter, *An historical journal of events at Sydney and at sea, 1787-1792, 1793*, p. 312; Waterhouse quoted in *Historical records of New South Wales* Vol. 5, p. 359; White, 1790 [2003], 'Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales', p. 163; Gammage, 2012, *The biggest estate on earth*, pp 163-185; Griffith, 2018, *Deep time dreaming*, p. 240.

<sup>13</sup> Griffith, 2018, *Deep time dreaming*, p. 241; Gammage, 2012, *The biggest estate on earth*, p. xix; Attenbrow, 2012, *Sydney's Aboriginal past*.

<sup>14</sup> <https://australian.museum/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/australian-archaeology/indigenous-rock-engraving-of-an-echidna/>

The large swathes of Hawkesbury sandstone across the Sydney region were the canvas for what has been likened to an enormous open air art gallery – engravings of the outlines of spirit creatures, marsupials, birds, fish, weapons, footprints and even European boats alongside people, showing a continuity that carried on beyond the arrival of British colonisers in 1788. This Sydney art tradition was distinctive from other regions such as inland New South Wales where carved trees were more prominent, or further south where painting dominates. There are more than 4,000 known rock art sites and more than 3,000 rock shelters with pigment or painted art, often featuring hand stencils. The Sydney Basin has been compared to Kakadu National Park in terms of the vast numbers of Aboriginal sites that remain today.<sup>15</sup>

### 4.3 First encounters

The first encounters between the British colonists and the Sydney people were initially based in curiosity, with both sides attempting to comprehend each other. However, misunderstandings or transgressions of Aboriginal law and protocol soon escalated into violence and retribution. Unarmed convicts outside the encampment at Sydney Cove were increasingly targeted during 1788. However in April 1789, what Sydney Aboriginal people called galgala or smallpox broke out and more than half - possibly even 80 percent - of the population around Sydney Harbour were dead within a month. Captain John Hunter wrote that 'it was truly shocking to go round the coves of this harbour [seeing] men, women and children, lying dead'. David Collins wrote that those who witnessed the Sydney man Arabanoo's grief and agony could never forget either – on being taken on a

boat around the harbour Arabanoo 'lifted up his hands and eyes in silent agony [and exclaimed] 'All dead! All dead!''<sup>16</sup>

### 4.4 Bedia and Boorooberong people (gal)

In June 1789 Governor Phillip and a party of 40 officers and men rowed up the Dyarrubin (Hawkesbury) river from the coast at Broken Bay. They travelled through a deserted landscape. A year earlier, they had seen hundreds of people in Broken Bay. Now they saw only the sick, dying and dead. Galgala or the smallpox disease may have been particularly devastating across the north and west of Sydney. Two survivors, the coastal men Coleby and Ballooderry, told Governor Phillip that the 'Bidgegal' (Bediagal) who lived to the northwest of Parramatta had been completely wiped out.

Still, northwest from Parramatta was not entirely unpopulated. Travelling overland from the Dyarrubin-Hawkesbury, Governor Phillip's party were around ten miles from Parramatta, possibly near present day Dural, when they met Burrowan of the Boorooberong (Burubarongal) clan group.<sup>17</sup>

It is unclear how devastating smallpox was across western Sydney, however there was certainly a very limited Aboriginal presence in the area around modern day Bella Vista. The clan group areas in the north west between Parramatta and the Hawkesbury have been difficult to interpret from poor European understanding at the time as well as transcriptions. Some historians have suggested the Boorooberong were further north, closer to the Hawkesbury, and the Bediagal closer to Castle Hill. It is difficult to piece together the locations of the 'heartlands' of traditional clan groups across western Sydney today. Many survivors moved elsewhere, or joined up with other surviving clan groups. There were strong

<sup>15</sup> Karskens, 2009, *The Colony*, p. 32; Griffith, 2018, *Deep time dreaming*, p. 188; Mulvaney & Kamminga, 1999, *Prehistory of Australia*, pp 284, 376-381; McDonald, 2007, *Dreamtime Superhighway*.

<sup>16</sup> Gapps, 2019, "'They have attack'd almost every person who has met with them'" – Re-reading William Bradley'; Karskens, 2009, *The Colony*, p. 50. Evidence of smallpox, including dead and

sick people, was also found well away from Sydney. See Gapps, 2018, *The Sydney Wars*, pp 55-56.

<sup>17</sup> Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, 93, 96-7. Phillip in Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, p. 340.

traditional relations between many clans and these connections often remain a misunderstood social system today.<sup>18</sup>

## 4.5 Conflict and warfare

As the colony struggled to take more and more Aboriginal land for farming, maize (corn) fields were spreading out across the Cumberland Plain. Small settlements at Prospect Hill and 'The Ponds', 2 miles northwest of Parramatta were established. In mid-1791, the small group of farms at the foot of Prospect Hill came under attack from 'more than one hundred' warriors in one raid, and were attacked several times over the next months, requiring soldiers to be sent out from Parramatta. Between 1791 and 1794 several colonists in the districts around Parramatta were attacked and some were killed by warriors. David Collins noted their attacks and raids had become 'frequent and extensive' and in April 1794, one raid on the Government Farm at Toongabbie turned into a battle between constables and warriors.<sup>19</sup>

The first years of British settlement had little engagement with the northwestern area of the Sydney basin. But in 1794, this changed dramatically. As more farming lands were wanted by the colonists, the fertile river banks of the Dyarubbin-Hawkesbury were an obvious option. In late 1793 Charles Williams and James Ruse were sent there and soon reported back on the 'rich black mould [soil] of several feet depth'. While at first there had been no 'interruptions' from the 'natives', as David Collins noted, this soon changed and in April 1794 when some farmers who had taken Aboriginal land along the banks of the river used firearms against Aboriginal people.<sup>20</sup>

This conflict didn't deter colonists eager for land grants at the river and in August 1794 there was a mini 'land rush' to the Hawkesbury with seventy

colonists and their families occupying Darug and Darkinyung land at Green Hills (Windsor from 1810) and Richmond Hill. Despite claims of lawlessness in this hasty settlement, a road was quickly made 'from Sydney to the banks of the Hawkesbury', almost certainly following traditional Aboriginal routes. It ran along the side of the prominent peak that was to become 'Bella Vista' farm. Any Boorooberongal watching from this hillside that commands sweeping views all round would have seen an increasing flow of British people and their stock and supplies along the road to Windsor below.<sup>21</sup>

In January 1795 they would have seen redcoats. A military detachment was sent to the Hawkesbury and while some Aboriginal people began interacting with the colonists and working on farms, as numbers of Europeans increased, conflict escalated. By mid-1795, farms extended some 'thirty miles along the banks of both sides of the river', several colonists had been killed and Aboriginal people were working in 'large bodies' raiding farms of crops and plundering goods. Acting governor Paterson then sent another detachment to the area 'to destroy as many as they could meet with ... in the hope of striking terror'. He also ordered the soldiers to 'erect gibbets in different places whereon the bodies of all they might kill were to be hung'.

The Darkinyung people to the north and the Darug to the south of the river were now faced with more than 90 soldiers at the Hawkesbury. Throughout 1795 conflict continued around the Hawkesbury and then extended across the Cumberland Plain. It was so intense and raids on farms so great that acting governor Paterson thought it could 'destroy the colony'.<sup>22</sup>

Ongoing resistance warfare came to a head in 1797 when the famous warrior Pemulwuy led a large force of warriors into the township of Parramatta itself. In what has become known as the Battle of Parramatta,

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<sup>18</sup> See 'Clan Names', Aboriginal Heritage Office, <https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/history/clans-of-sydney/>(g

<sup>19</sup> Gapps 2018, *The Sydney Wars*, pp. 96-97, 104-105; Collins 1798, *An Account*, pp. 304-305

<sup>20</sup> Collins 1798, p. 285, 292, 304; Barckley-Jack 2009, pp. 269-277

<sup>21</sup> Collins 1798, p. 414

<sup>22</sup> Gapps 2018, pp. 105-118

at least five warriors were killed and Pemulwuy and others wounded. As he had received 'seven buck shot in his head and other parts of his body', yet soon escaped captivity, it was rumoured by both colonists and Aboriginal people alike that Pemulwuy 'could not be killed' by firearms.

Pemulwuy's resistance continued, with several escaped convicts apparently joining forces with his guerrilla warband. By 1801, Governor King had had enough and issued orders to the settlers to 'drive back the hordes of natives' around Parramatta, the Georges River and Prospect Hill. In November, rewards were offered including free pardons for convicts. Pemulwuy, wanted 'dead or alive', was shot and killed in June 1802 and his head cut off and sent to England. To this day it has not been returned to his Country (Collins 1798, p. 305; Smith 2020).<sup>23</sup>

Even after the death of Pemulwuy, conflict and resistance continued across the Sydney region. Another Government Order banning all Aboriginal people from entering the 'Grounds of Dwellings of any Settler' was issued in 1805. While some Aboriginal people attempted to negotiate their safety and continued access to the settlements and a 'Conference' was arranged at 'the brush between Prospect and George's River', Pemulwuy's son Tedbury had united a band that continued to harass travellers, kill stock and raid farms, until Tedbury was shot in 1810. By 1814, drought conditions and expanding settlement to the south led to more conflict, culminating in the Appin Massacre in April 1816 which effectively ended resistance warfare across the Sydney region.<sup>24</sup>

## 4.6 1800s Western Sydney

As the Cumberland Plain became more closely settled during the 1800s, Aboriginal people continued to live near their traditional Country where they could. Some managed to live in the centre of the growing city of Sydney such as a groups of families who caught and sold fish at Circular Quay and others at Rose Bay, while other families continued to live on the outskirts of populated areas such as at La Perouse and at Salt Pan Creek on the Georges River. From the 1880s, others moved to or were forced on to reserves such as Sackville in the northwest.

Families such as the Locks, descendants of Maria Lock, continued to live near Blacktown and descendants of Lucy Leane at Liverpool. All carried knowledge of their ancestors and their Country down to this day. During the 1800s many Aboriginal women married European men. Some families knew of their heritage but often kept it hidden. Others only found out much later through family history work from the 1980s.<sup>25</sup>

Much language spoken across the Sydney region was in effect stolen from Aboriginal people who were forced to learn English and not speak traditional languages at school or in public under threat of their children being taken away. Still, a number of early colonial word lists such as those given by Sydney woman Patyegarang to William Dawes, form the basis of language revival today. Some Sydney words became widespread across Australia such as corroboree, dingo, cooee, waratah and woomera. In many suburbs across Sydney, Aboriginal placenames were incorporated into suburbs or street names such as Maroubra, Bondi, Turramurra, Cabramatta and Bunnerong to name a few.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Smith, 'Pemulwuy', 2020, Pemulwuy's head was sent by Governor King to Sir Joseph Banks but has not been identified among the thousands of Aboriginal remains being repatriated.

<sup>24</sup> Gapps 2010, p. 100-101; Karskens 2010, p. 225

<sup>25</sup> See for example Johnson, 2003, *Aunty Joan Cooper*. For family history work see Kohen, 2009, *Daruganora: Darug Country*. As Goodall & Cadzow note, more recent movement of Aboriginal people from outside Sydney into the area has had little attention, particularly investigation of

how they may have related to the Sydney Country and to the people who had traditionally lived there (2009, *Rivers and resilience*, p. 41).

<sup>26</sup> Dawes, 1791, *Notebooks on the Aboriginal language of Sydney*, pp v-vii; Troy, 1992, *The Sydney Language*; Karskens, 2009, *The Colony*, p. 33.

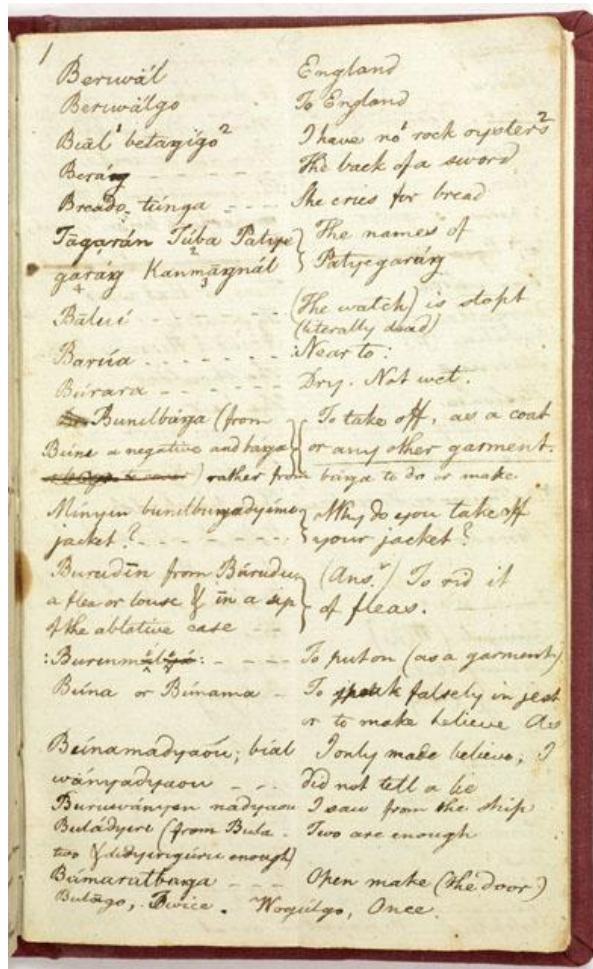


Figure 10: Book B, Page 4 from The Notebooks of William Dawes, (Source: Williamdawes.org).

Many of Sydney's roads and streets today follow the original tracks and pathways that had been used for millennia by Aboriginal people. Indeed, the shape of the city's road networks and the city itself owes a great deal to the early colonists simply taking the easiest and most practical solution in building roads along pre-existing trackways. When the colonists arrived in 1788 and began journeying out from Sydney Cove they often followed pathways, or as Surgeon John White wrote in May 1788, 'we fell in with an Indian path'. As Sydney language expert Jakelin Troy notes, it often made sense the colonists would use established pathways particularly in avoiding dense forest areas and rugged terrain. Troy has noted how these pathways were used for 'visiting family, collecting food or conducting ceremonies'. According to Paul Irish, the Europeans pronounced the local Sydney Aboriginal word for a pathway or track as 'maroo'. Many of these maroo underpin the structure of Sydney to this day. The Old Windsor Road that runs through Bella Vista today, first eked out in 1794 by settlers and convicts, may well have followed an Aboriginal pathway to the river.<sup>27</sup>

Despite such massive death and disruption to Aboriginal lives across Sydney, in 1794 resistance warfare against the colonisers began in earnest along the new settlements on the Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury) River and was to carry on through the 1790s, largely under the leadership of the famous warrior Pemulwuy. This 'constant sort of war' as one colonist described it, continued until Governor Macquarie ordered the now infamous military campaign across the Sydney region that ended in the Appin Massacre of April 17th 1816.<sup>28</sup>

Sydney Aboriginal society was not static and did not cease after contact with Europeans. Both material and cultural traditions of Aboriginal Sydney continued after the devastation to Aboriginal society, sometimes for example, by incorporating non-Aboriginal materials in traditional elements such as using glass and ceramics to make spear points and other tools.

<sup>27</sup> White, 1790 [2003], 'Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales', 30 May 1788; Daniel, 2018, 'Walking in their tracks'.

<sup>28</sup> Gapps, 2018, *The Sydney Wars*, pp 125-155, 226-255.

Twenty-nine engraved and pigment art sites have been dated to the period after European arrival. Some creation and other stories told to R. H. Mathews by Gundungurra (Gandangarra) people in 1901 were carried on for generations and survive today.<sup>29</sup>

in the 'Return of Aboriginal natives' in the area during the 1830s, along with other people who continued to live in or as close as they could to their traditional Country. Indeed, 8 'tribes' were listed in the area in the 1830s – at Pitt Town, Windsor, Richmond, North Richmond, Kurrajong, Mangrove Creek, and Mogo Creek (Upper MacDonald River). At times these groups were noted as having 'visitors' from other areas too such as the Cox's River, Capertee and Putty. The 'Eastern Creek Tribe' and the 'South Creek Tribe' were at Charles Marsden's property at the confluence of the two creeks, and the 'North Richmond' or 'Belmont Tribe' at Archibald Bell's land grant.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1860s the pressures of closer settlement increased in many areas in north-western Sydney. However the Dyarubbin River and surrounds offered some opportunities for Aboriginal people to live and work on farms and maintain connections with their Country. In 1868 a 'Pitt Town Tribe' was noted as still in that area. In fact, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a period where Aboriginal people were able to remain 'hidden' on the edges of the settlements, and this offered a brief window of consolidation after the previous years of disease and conflict. People were noted as hunting ducks in the wetlands near Sackville in the late 1800s. Many families 'banded together' at various points around the Hawkesbury region. With the 1883 formation of the Aborigines Protection Board, people at the Hawkesbury River were not targeted by the Board keen to control Aboriginal people. In fact many were living and working on farms.

<sup>29</sup> Irish & Gowan, 2013, 'Where's the evidence? The archaeology of Sydney's Aboriginal history', p. 61. There are several sites in Western Sydney where flaked glass has been recorded, for example at Prospect and Oran Park (Artefact Heritage, 2022, 'Aspect Industrial Estate', p. 18). See also Goward, 2011, 'Aboriginal glass artefacts of the Sydney region'; Meredith, 1989, *The Last Kooradgie*. According to Smith & Jennings, a site near the Wollondilly River has 'post-contact creation or restoration of a traditional subject by Traditional Owners' (2011, 'The petroglyphs of Gundungurra Country', p. 241).

The Dillon family were living on the reserve site before it was declared, but from 1889, it became home to several other families including the Locks, Coxes, Morleys, Barber and Everinghams. There were around 60 people at one stage. The reserve was quite unusual in that it was not under the control of a manager on the site, as most other Aboriginal reserves were. Some missionaries stayed at the reserve, but residents were not confined there. The brothers Andrew and Harry Barber fished up and down the river and worked at Tizzana vineyard at Ebenezer and on other farms in the area. Children went to the Sackville Reach Public School and some played cricket with local teams. Other young men formed a 'gumleaf band' and played at local concerts. Boats were provided to the reserve for fishing and transport and slab huts erected.

According to historian Grace Karskens, 'when pioneering anthropologist R. H. Mathews visited the reserve in 1897, the people told him they were Badhugal – water people. Mathews was able to record Darkinjung Language from Tilly Clarke and Annie Barber, nee Dillon, as well as a detailed account of the male initiation ceremony, the Burbung, from two initiated men Joe Gobra and Charley Clark.' They told Mathews that this ceremony had still been performed in the area in the 1860s, with people travelling long distances to the ceremony.<sup>31</sup>

In 1895 a new location at Wilberforce was set aside for the Sackville community. However they did not want to move (to land with no river frontage) and with the building of an iron roofed church at the Sackville reserve, it seems they managed to assert their presence at Sackville and, in a rare victory, have their land re-gazetted.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> According to local historian Jack Brook the Eastern Creek people were the Worrewarry or Waa Waaa Ra Waa and the South Creek people the Gomerrigal-tangarra. Brook, *Shut out from the world*, p. 15

<sup>31</sup> Karskens, *People of the River*, p. 512; 'Dorumbolooa: Sacred Zone' and 'Waretja Country', <https://arcg.is/004i19>

<sup>32</sup> Brook, *Shut out from the world*, p. 33

For a period, the reserve at Sackville seems to have flourished. With strong local support from landowners at 'Tinzanna', in 1901 the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* called Sackville 'A model Aboriginal village' and noted that 'they dress well and live well and are infinitely better off and more circumspect than many of the so-called superior white race'.<sup>33</sup>

While it offered some form of security, life on the reserve was difficult. In 1910 many residents were reportedly suffering from consumption (tuberculosis). The reserve's population dwindled over the twentieth century as the old people died and younger people moved away. In 1926, Martha Everingham, known as 'the last of the full blood tribe' of the Hawkesbury died aged 80 at 'Tizanna', Sackville. The last resident on the reserve was Andy Barber, but when he died in 1943, the Reserve was revoked.

A new and growing wave of Australian Archaeology took up the sites such as those around Emu Plains that had been identified in the 1930s, but had not been methodically excavated. Jim Kohen's 1981 excavation at Jamison Creek was so rich with artefacts that other sites along the Nepean River were soon excavated as well. Hundreds of axe sharpening sites with grinding grooves were identified. The evidence being gathered was pointing to sites of industrial scale and a regional centre of tool making.<sup>34</sup>

From R. H. Mathews in the 1890s to Frederick McArthy in the 1950s to Paul Tacon in 2019, and many others, archaeologists and anthropologists have been mapping and identifying hundreds and hundreds of rock engravings in the Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury) River region and surrounds. The AHIMS register includes around 200 sites along the river between Richmond and St Albans on the Macdonald River.<sup>35</sup>

## 4.7 Dharug communities today

In 2012, hundreds of stone tools were found still lying on the surface near Shaws Creek. The area has since been recognised as Shaws Creek Aboriginal Place within the Yellomundee Regional Park. While floods and sand and gravel mining have dramatically altered the site, this area still remains deeply significant to Darug people.<sup>36</sup>

During the twentieth century, Aboriginal people in the region may have lost their rights under British and then Australian law to their Country, but they continued to live and work in the area. Today they are reclaiming and asserting their heritage. People such as Aunty Edna Watson are creating sculptures and other artwork that responds to the histories of the river. Darug knowledge-holders, artists and educators such as Leanne Watson, Erin Wilkins, Jasmine Seymour and Rhiannon Wright have worked with historian Grace Karskens and others to generate the 'Dyarubbin: Mapping Aboriginal history, culture and stories of the Hawkesbury River, New South Wales' project as Aboriginal cultural revival and Language revitalisation gather momentum.<sup>37</sup>

Today the site sits within the Deerubbin LALC boundary. The LALC aims to develop its land to create opportunities and benefits for the Aboriginal community in turn strengthening the confidence and self-reliance of Aboriginal people and families.<sup>38</sup> The LALC is based at Parramatta and has been developing Parramatta Gaol as a facility and heritage site with tours offered of the buildings.

<sup>33</sup> *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 28 Sept 1901

<sup>34</sup> Karskens, *People of the River*, 2020, pp. 52-53

<sup>35</sup> Karskens, *People of the River* pp. 604

<sup>36</sup> 'Bulyayorang', 'Dyarubbin: Mapping Aboriginal history, culture and stories of the Hawkesbury River, New South Wales', <https://arcg.is/004i19>

<sup>37</sup> Karskens, *People of the River*, 522-5

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/DeerubbinLALC/>



Figure 11: Deerubbin LALC staff developing the Parramatta Gaol site in 2021<sup>39</sup>

Dharug language is being revitalized and taught by different groups and organisations. The Bayala website, for example, aims to foster a vibrant community of Dharug Dhalang (mother language) learners and speakers. The Bayala team includes: Corina Norman, Jasmine Seymour, Leanne Watson Redpath, Aunty Edna Watson, Leanne King, Vanessa Possum, Rhiannon Wright, Richard Torning, Lani Barnes, Debbie Smith, Elizabeth Coplin, Samantha Smith and Tammy Baart. They aim to teach Dharug to all ages and share Dharug language, culture, and history with the broader community.

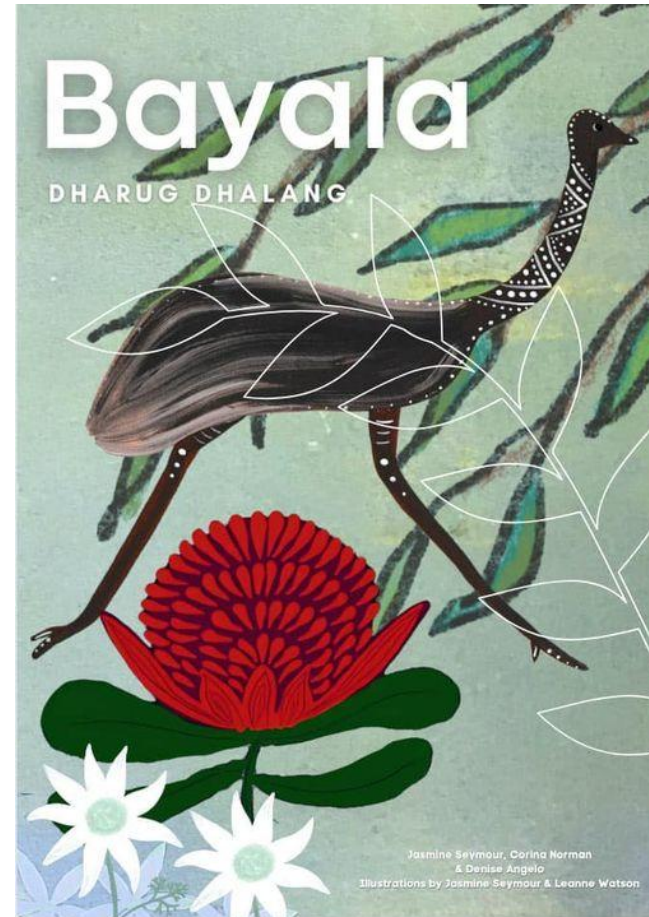


Figure 12: Bayala Dharug Dhalang publication by Jasmine Seymour, Corina Norman and Denise Angelo

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/DeerubbinLALC/>

## 5. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT



## 5.1 Introduction

An understanding of the relevance and importance of the Aboriginal cultural landscape is fundamental to sensitive cultural design development aligning with the Connecting with Country principles. This understanding provides opportunities to explore Aboriginal peoples' unity with the natural environment and their traditional knowledge of spirit, places, land uses and ecology. These understandings are best developed through authentic and sustained consultation with Aboriginal knowledge holders and professionals.

## 5.2 Consultation planning

As the Traditional Custodians of the land, the local community maintains a dynamic connection to Country which informs their identity, culture, language, and ways of living.<sup>40</sup> The depth of this connection requires that appropriate, effective consultation with relevant community members must take place for any archaeological or heritage works occurring on their traditional land.

Under the Burra Charter<sup>41</sup>:

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*Article 12. Conservation, interpretation and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has significant associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place.*

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The GANSW *Connecting with Country (2023)* recommends the following strategy for building relationship with Aboriginal communities:

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*Building relationships with Aboriginal people requires appropriate allocation of time and resources to develop personal connections in ways Aboriginal people recommend and feel comfortable with.*

*Because cultural connections with Country differ between Aboriginal peoples and communities, projects need to be guided by those who are acknowledged by their communities as knowledge-holders for Country, and often in combination with nominated Aboriginal organisations such as local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs).*

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The GANSW *Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* also highlights categories of stakeholders who could be involved:

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*Engagement should be undertaken in an inclusive way, and project teams should be open to diverse groups of people and points of view. In addition to LALCs, the groups that should be invited to join the engagement process include:*

- 1. Traditional Custodians who have ancestral connections to a place*
  - 2. people from surrounding groups/tribes/ mobs/communities/nations*
  - 3. those who have moved to the area since colonisation and are integrated into the community*
  - 4. everyone else who wants a say.*
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### 5.2.1 Stakeholder identification

Stakeholders were identified through previous Connecting with Country and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage work carried out on Dharug Country, including ACHAR consultation work carried out by Apex Archaeology in 2023 for this project.

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<sup>40</sup> Australian Heritage Commission, 2002. Ask First: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values.

<sup>41</sup> Australia ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter –The Australian ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance. 3.

### 5.3 Previous consultation and reports

The *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* recommends the activity ‘research and prepare’ and specifically ‘locate previous Aboriginal cultural heritage and technical studies relevant to the project’ so ‘to avoid consultation fatigue and prevent duplicating time and effort when information is already available.’

This section provides a summary of Aboriginal cultural heritage values discussed in existing resources and reports which consulted with stakeholders.

#### 5.3.1 Traditional Aboriginal Peoples’ names for the natural regions and features in The Hills Shire (2003)

The Hills Shire Council have developed a local studies information briefing about traditional names for the natural regions and features within the shire. The following cultural heritage values appear in the briefing note <sup>42</sup>

- The Hills Shire suggest the “Darug Language Group” as the name of the Aboriginal Peoples language group for most of the Sydney region. Clans within The Hills Shire include the Tuga, Burramatta, Cattai, and Bidji.
- The Aboriginal name for the area of Bella Vista isn’t explicitly recorded but the area of Baulkham Hills to the east is called “Norree” meaning possibly “place of trees to make canoes” and the area to the east at Castle Hill was “Mogoaillee” “mogo” means stone hatchet, “aillee” may be possessive so the meaning possibly the “place of stone for hatchets”.
- The briefing note lists some of the Dharug names for local flora and fauna including: “Derrobarry” meaning Ironbark, “Tarrin’ny” meaning

Scribbly Gum, “Killio’ra” meaning Turpentine, and “Wattungulle” meaning Wattle.

- The briefing note lists some of the Dharug names for local flora including “Budhawa” meaning Night Owl, “Kirrawe” meaning “White Cockatoo”, “Kung-gung” meaning frog and “Ngunun” meaning Flying Fox.
- The briefing note states that many new housing estates developed in the ‘60s and ‘70s were given names that are Aboriginal but not the “Darug inland dialect”.



Figure 13: Cattai Creek named after the Cattai Clan (source: Artefact)

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/v/4/ecm-website-documents/page-documents/library/library-e-resources/traditional\\_aboriginal\\_names\\_baulkham\\_hills\\_shire.pdf](https://www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/v/4/ecm-website-documents/page-documents/library/library-e-resources/traditional_aboriginal_names_baulkham_hills_shire.pdf)

### 5.3.2 The Hills Shire, Community Stories

Aunty Roslyn Fogg, Dharug Elder, was interviewed as one of a series of oral histories called “Hills Voices Online”. Aunty Roslyn talked about cultural heritage values including Dharug heritage and Muru Mittigar<sup>43</sup>. Aunty Roselyn shared some of the following points:

- Dharug culture has been greatly impacted by the fact that people were forbidden to speak language as well as gaps in the stories of culture
- For the Dharug people it isn't just the land that's important, everything is important, the trees, the rocks, sky and animals, everything.
- Dharug people were pushed to the margins because the land was taken from them.
- Land was not just land as the British saw it, as a commodity to buy and sell, or own. It was land that they survived on from 65,000 years of culture and living. It's the oldest continuous culture in the world.
- Caring for country is incredibly important to Aboriginal people.
- Helping to share the Dharug stories and educate people is incredibly important as well, so that people have, again, a deeper understanding and an awareness of whose country this was, and still is, really.
- The British brought smallpox, influenza and venereal diseases. So there were a huge number of Dharug people killed because of these diseases.

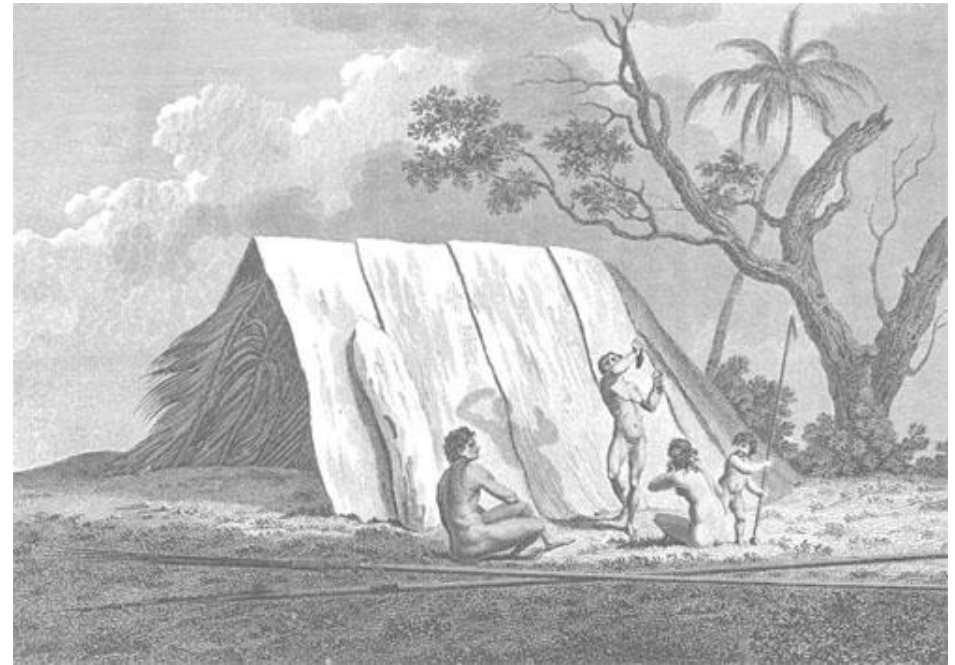


Figure 14: Hut in NSW, *The Voyage Of Governor Phillip To Botany Bay With An Account Of The establishment Of The Colonies Of Port Jackson And Norfolk Island* (1789) Author Phillip (source: Project Gutenberg)

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/Residents/Library/Local-Studies-Family-History/Hills-Voices-Online/Community-Stories>

### 5.3.3 Dyarubbin: The Real Secret River (2022)

The *Dyarubbin: The Real Secret River* (2022) project is a collaborative project exploring Aboriginal history, culture, stories and place names on Dyarubbin, the Hawkesbury River. The collaborators included:

- Leanne Mulgo Watson - a Darug woman and Chair of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation
- Erin Wilkins - Darug woman and an Aboriginal Cultural Educator and a member of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation.
- Jasmine Seymour - Darug woman, artist, writer and teacher, and a member of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation.
- Rhiannon Wright - proud Darug woman and a member of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation.
- Cindy Laws - Darug/Darkinjung woman, artist and children's author.
- The broader project team included Grace Karskens, Jim Wafer, Paul Irish, Gil Jones and Joy Lai.

Elizabeth MacArthur Creek runs into Caddies Creek which runs into Cattai Creek which runs into the Dyarrubin. This means that cultural heritage values for this river are relevant to this Connecting with Country. The following heritage values for the river are included on the project website:

- 'Place names are wayfinders and memory-aides. People need them to communicate shared knowledge of places and how to get to them.'<sup>44</sup>

- 'Place names are as culturally significant as rock art and artefacts. Every place and distinctive feature across Australia had/has an Aboriginal name. Often place names are part of songlines which narrate the mythical journeys of Ancestral Beings in the Dreaming, their creative exploits and activities. Or the names say something about places and why they are important.'<sup>45</sup>
- The project has a map of First Nations place names along the Dyarrubin River: <https://arcg.is/004i19>
- The map includes names for areas around the north western end of Cattai Creek where it feeds into Dyarubbin. Place names include:
  - Tugga Tugga / Dugaduga – an area of brushy scrub
  - Boola / Bula – an area of coachwood
  - Karrowerry / Garuwari – an area of native plum trees
  - Berambo / Birambu – an area named after a war club
  - Cabawn Cattie (Big Cattai Creek)<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.dyarubbin.com/about>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.dyarubbin.com/about>

<sup>46</sup>

<https://portal.spatial.nsw.gov.au/portal/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=82ae77e1d24140e48a1bc06f70f74269>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.dyarubbin.com/story-map>

## 5.4 Project specific consultation

### 5.4.1 40 Memorial Avenue, Bella Vista, ACHAR (Apex Archaeology, 2023)

In 2023 Apex Archaeology developed an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHAR) for a proposed residential development at 40 Memorial Avenue, Bella Vista.

#### 5.4.1.1 Consultation

A total of 20 Aboriginal people and organisations registered an interest in being consulted for the project. The following list comprises the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) for the project:

- A1 Indigenous Services
- Amanda Hickey Cultural Services
- Aragung Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Site Assessments
- Bariyan Cultural Connection
- B & H Consultants
- Corroboree Aboriginal Corporation
- Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation
- Didge Ngunawal Clan
- Gunjeewong
- Gunya Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Services Pty Ltd
- Kamilaroi Yankuntjatjara Working Group
- Murrabidgee Mullangari
- Ngambaa

- Tocomwall
- Wailwan Aboriginal Group
- Waawaar Awa
- Woka
- Wori Woilywa Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation
- Yulay Cultural Services
- Yurrandaali

#### 5.4.1.2 Cultural heritage values

The following cultural heritage values were identified during production of the ACHAR:

- A test excavation undertaken by Apex Archaeology in December 2022 recovered 64 stone artefacts within a 5.25 m<sup>2</sup> area. The artefacts included a recognised tool type and remnants of the tool/implements manufacturing process. The variety of stone material used to make the artefacts was consistent with those found in the portion of the site excavated by KNC in 2015 and were also in an undisturbed context.
- Given the artefact deposit identified within the study area, the site is considered to have cultural significance to the Aboriginal community as a tangible link to their culture and ancestors.
- Comments from RAPs included the importance of the artefacts on the site, taking care when identifying artefacts and undertaking test excavations
- RAPs noted the site was on Dharug Country and therefore the importance of consulting Dharug people

- One RAP noted their decades of experience in helping to preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage and noted their knowledge relevant to the area
- One RAP noted “this area is significant to the Darug people due to the connection of sites and the continued occupation.”
- One RAP “maintaining cultural protocols is fundamental in obtaining knowledge and invoking discussion for Country.”

#### 5.4.2 Online briefing, 4 February 2025

An online briefing was held on 4 February 2025 by Artefact and attended by Aboriginal stakeholders and the Project Team. The Project Team introduced the project, and the group discussed a Walk on Country.

##### 5.4.2.1 Attendees

- Aunty Vicky Slater, proud Kamilaroi with Ancestral Connection to the Darug Clan Black Kitty Colebee c1800.<sup>48</sup>. Works in Culture & Heritage in protection of Aboriginal Culture. Been Working over 20 years lives and works on Darug lands.
- Aunty Helen Slater, Heritage Consultant, proud Kamilaroi woman with connection to Dharug and Dharawal Land
- Aunty Karen Owens, proud Kamilaroi woman, lives on Dharug Land with family born and raised on Dharug Lands
- Amanda Owens, daughter of Karen Owens and works for Aboriginal medical health
- Kym Slater, proud Kamilaroi woman and Aboriginal community member
- Kaaria Slater, proud Kamilaroi women with connections to Dharug and Dharawal land
- Talesha Slater, Proud Kamilaroi women with connections to Dharug and Dharawal land, daughter of Kaarina Slater
- Pearl Depoma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, proud Kamilaroi woman
- Tahlai Saliba, niece of Pearl Depoma
- Jandamara Bryant, Kamilaroi man living on Dharug land
- David Matagia, proud Kamilaroi man with connection to Dharug and Dharawal Lands
- Arika Jalomaki, proud Kamilaroi woman living on Dharug Country with connections to Dharawal Country
- Kayelene Slater, Bariyan Cultural Connections, proud Kamilaroi woman, family born and grew up on Dharug Country, children born on Dharawal Country and lived in Penrith region for over 20 years
- Kerrie Slater, lived on shared Country for over 40 years, daughter of Vicky Slater, Wurramay Pty Ltd
- Jacob Whewell, Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri man. Proud of his culture & loves being out of country with his family.
- Adrian Balatinac - Impact Group
- James Lauman, James McCarthy and Tomas Moore - Turner
- Omar Salahie and Oscar Saunders - Landan Dev No 8 Pty Ltd

<sup>48</sup> <https://historyandheritage.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/research-topics/aboriginal/significant-aboriginal-women-kitty>

- Hannah Matagia, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer - Artefact
- Alex Gaffikin - Artefact

#### 5.4.2.2 Agenda

- Acknowledgement / Welcome to Country
- ICIP and housekeeping
- Introductions
- Briefing on project by Turner
- Logistics for the Walk on Country on 14 February 2025

#### 5.4.2.3 Discussion points

##### Cultural heritage values

- Aunty Vicky Slater spoke about how important the creek is for Aboriginal people and said how it would be interesting to go and view the creeks, waterways and landscape.
- 
- 'The waterways and creeks are very important to Aboriginal people, that's our food bowl.'*
- Aunty Vicky Slater, 4 February 2025*
- 
- 'The creek on site runs into the Hawkesbury River. The Hawkesbury River is highly significant to Aboriginal people from early days. When the First Fleet came in - they found Aboriginal settlements there'. – Aunty Vicky Slater
  - 'Middens can be found along creeks'. – Kayelene Slater
  - 'Artefacts are mostly found around creeks; people would sit there and make their tools to hunt and gather and all types of flakes can be found along the creek'. – Arika Jalomaki

- 'Yams and other food sources as well as tools used to crush seeds and sharpen things can be found along creek lines'. – Aunty Vicky Slater
- 'Mangroves and types of woods and trees around the creek were used for hunting and gathering, while Lomandra plants for weaving fishnets and traps are found along the creek lines' – Kayelene Slater
- 'There are still a lot of Aboriginal people today still making tools from the trees along creeks' – Kaylene Slater

#### 5.4.3 Walk on Country, 14 February 2025

Following on from the meeting on 4 February, a Walk on Country was conducted on 14 February 2025 and attended by Aboriginal stakeholders, as well as representatives from the project team.

##### 5.4.3.1 Attendees

- Aunty Vicky Slater
- Aunty Zona Wilkinson
- Aunty Karen Owens
- Amanda Owens
- Pearl Depoma
- Kayelene Slater
- Kym Slater
- Taleisha Slater
- Tahlai Saliba
- Kerrie Slater
- Kaarina Slater
- Jandamara Bryant

- Aunty Helen Slater
- Arika Jalomaki
- Taleisha Slater
- David Matagia
- Jacob Whebell
- James Macarthy, James Lauman, Ophelia Wu, Edwin Tung, Katy Zang and Tomas Moore -Turners
- Jenelle Ranine – Land and Form
- Adrian Balatinac – Impact Group
- Omar Salahie and Oscar Saunders - Landan Dev No 8 Pty Ltd
- Nichola Cavallo -Knight Frank
- Hannah Matagia, Rebecca Bryant, Alex Gaffikin - Artefact

### 5.4.3.2 Agenda

- Acknowledgement of Country by Aunty Zona Wilkinson
- Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Protocols
- Introductions
- Discussion about Country
- Briefing on the development
- Group 1 visited site and group 2 discussed cultural heritage values at entrance to site
- Next steps



Figure 15: Briefing at the start of the Walk on Country

### 5.4.3.3 Cultural values

The following comments and cultural heritage values were discussed during the Walk on Country:

#### Terminology

Aunty Zona Wilkinson requested the use of the word ‘Aboriginal’ rather than ‘Indigenous’ with respect to Cultural and Intellectual Protocols. The report has been updated with this protocol in mind.

## Country

Aunty Zona spoke about Australia being ‘all Aboriginal Land’ in her Acknowledgement of Country.

The Stakeholders talked about Country and what Country meant to them. For many it meant a connection to waterways, land and sky, for others it had strong associations with family and home. ‘My connection to Country here would be the waterways; the Georges, The Nepean and the Deerubbin, Hawkesbury’ – Kayelene Slater. Aunty Karen Owens talked about her sense of ‘belonging’ and Jadamarra Bryant spoke about feeling at ‘home’.

## Creeks

Elizabeth Macarthur Creek was identified by the group as being significant. Kayelene Slater noted the connections that the creek and its network of linked waterways make to neighbouring Darkinjung and Gandangarra Countries.

The group asked about cleaning up the river and the removal of weeds. The discussion centred about the importance of removing non-natives like the bamboo and encouraging the natives including the rushes. The group were also advocating for the planting of plants that can be used for weaving, for example kangaroo grass and Lomandra.

The group asked more generally about biodiversity and Nicholas Cavello spoke about the biodiversity report which had been commissioned.

## Bush tucker gardens

Kerrie Slater mentioned the positive experience of multi-sensory bush tucker gardens to enhance the landscape. The garden could include interpretation signage about how the plants are used in cooking or for native medicines. Aunty Helen Slater recommended scented bushes like native mint and eucalypts.

## Play spaces

Aunty Vicky Slater noted the importance of catering for small children. The group also discussed play spaces – especially for small children - so that they can play outside in safe areas. They discussed how outdoor place is particularly important in high rise units.

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*‘The building design team needs to evaluate their design for children living in confined spaces units.’*

*Aunty Vicky Slater, 27 February 2025*

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## Buildings

The group asked about the number and heights of the buildings and the project team discussed heights and the gaps between buildings. The group wanted to make sure that there was space between buildings to have comfortable, light spaces that wouldn’t be too windy. The group asked about the potential for views across the Country – as it is called ‘Bella Vista’. The group were shown a model of the construction.

Aunty Vicky Slater noted that it is important for buildings to have a small footprint with large open spaces between them.

## Access

Aunty Vicky Slater noted the importance of creating sensory experiences which are accessible.

## Calm community spaces

Aunty Vicky Slater talked about community spaces – and the importance of designing open settings with a peaceful sitting area for adults to meet, or to have a community gathering. She recommended plantings with colourful plants and trees. Other calming elements include a water feature. Aunty Vicky also talked about the calming effects of a building’s designs and patterned elements.

### Green corridor

The project team talked about the broader landscaping and the green corridor which is designated to run along Elizabeth Macarthur Creek. The stakeholders noted that the creek pathway is good idea and they were supportive of the concept. They had the following suggestions:

- Aunty Helen asked for the inclusion of seating
- While there are going to be road bridges, the group also suggested smaller pedestrian bridges that allow people to criss-cross over the creek in more areas
- Kerrie Slater recommended pathways that are naturally waving like a natural watercourse, rather than pathways in long straight lines
- The group discussed opportunities for artwork embedded into the ground plane elements
- Kerrie Slater talked about having sensory experiences as you walk along the pathway; eg. plants that you can touch and smell.
- The group also suggested using natural materials where possible

The group were asked about best practice examples they had seen for riverside walkways and public spaces. Aunty Helen Slater discussed the Campbelltown Billabong Parklands which the group noted as being particularly successful. The Billabong was noted as being successful because it includes:

- Lots of intergenerational play spaces
- Waterplay
- Aboriginal artwork
- Spaces for gathering
- Wavy pathways next to the water



Figure 16: Billabong Parklands (source: Campbelltown City Council)

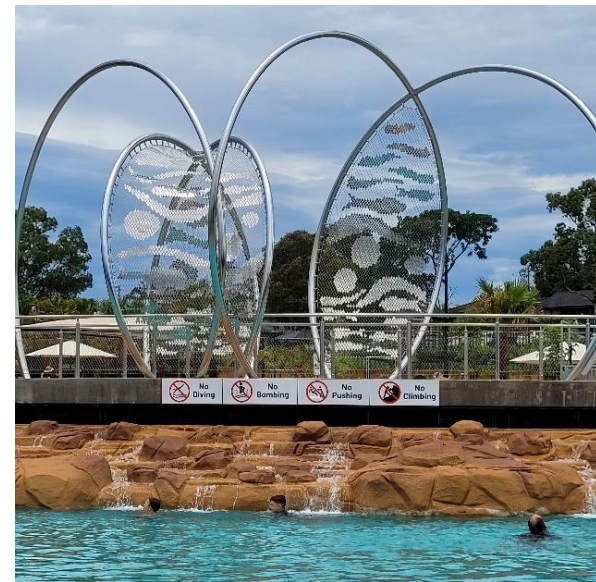


Figure 17: Bridge design at Billabong Parklands (source: Helen Slater)

A second example of good practice in landscaping parks noted by the group is the Nurranginy Reserve in Doonside. The group discussed this as having the following positive aspects:

- A yarning circle
- Artwork running along pathways (see Figure 19)
- Waterplay
- Spaces for gathering
- The connections to Colebee and Nurranginy and naming of spaces after these important historical local Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal heritage garden
- Ease of access for large families
- Artwork engravings on scar trees



Figure 18: Plant labels in the Aboriginal heritage garden Nurranginy Reserve in Doonside, (source: Artefact)



Figure 19: Example of ground plane elements at the Nurranginy Reserve in Doonside, by Jamie Eastwood (source: Artefact)

## Trees

On the walk the group noted the tagging of trees and asked if the existing mature trees could be kept.



Figure 20: Tagged tree, Bella Vista site walk, 14 February 2024 (source: Artefact)

## NAIDOC

The group talked about the importance of nurturing young people and specifically mentioned the NAIDOC theme this year. The 2025 theme is “The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy”.



A number of early career heritage officers and young people attended the briefing on the 4 February 2025 and the Walk on Country on 14 February 2025. These engagement activities offer an opportunity to young people to learn more about their cultural heritage from the Elders and Knowledge Holders in attendance, but it also gives the young people an opportunity to learn more about the processes of planning and development and help them to understand more about how their Country is changing.

Arika noted about her niece Taleisha Slater:

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*'It is a great opportunity for her to get some knowledge from the Elders and walk on Country with us.'*

Arika Jalomaki, 14 February 2025

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Jacob Whebell mentioned how attendance at cultural activities like this is counted as part of his school education, similar to work experience.

### Economic benefits to community

The stakeholders talked about their skills and expertise. The project should consider how development projects can employ or contract Aboriginal businesses and people to work on projects. Examples of skills and expertise within the group include:

- Cultural heritage and archaeology
- Community work
- Curatorial and museum work
- Art
- Aboriginal health

Additional skills and businesses can be found in the wider Aboriginal community and the project team should consider how they can use more Aboriginal-owned businesses, for example, through Supply Nation

<https://supplynation.org.au/>

### Artefacts and heritage

There are a large number of artefacts in the broader landscape and so the group reviewed the AHIMS search results. The group discussed the significance of the artefacts in the landscape and of particular interest was the scar tree which isn't on the site but is further to the north in Bella Vista.

Arika Jalomaki mentioned that the group had talked about what would happen to artefacts that are found during construction and the possibility of reburials in the green corridor and areas that have not been earmarked for development. Arika talked about the importance of 'Country staying on Country'. Arika also cautioned about overt interpretation, fencing or

marking of artefact burial sites as that can cause vandalism – even if it is just through curiosity.

One of the discussion points that came up was the importance of alerting site owners and security staff to Aboriginal stakeholders and Aboriginal archaeologists coming on site to do cultural or heritage work. Stakeholders noted that it often happens that they face confronting situations when turning up on sites to do cultural or archaeological work.



Figure 21: Discussion on Country, 14 February 2025

## 5.5 Ongoing consultation

It is recommended that consultation be carried out by current and future project teams throughout the lifetime of the development of the site, during the planning stage and post-planning stages. Consultation and engagement could include:

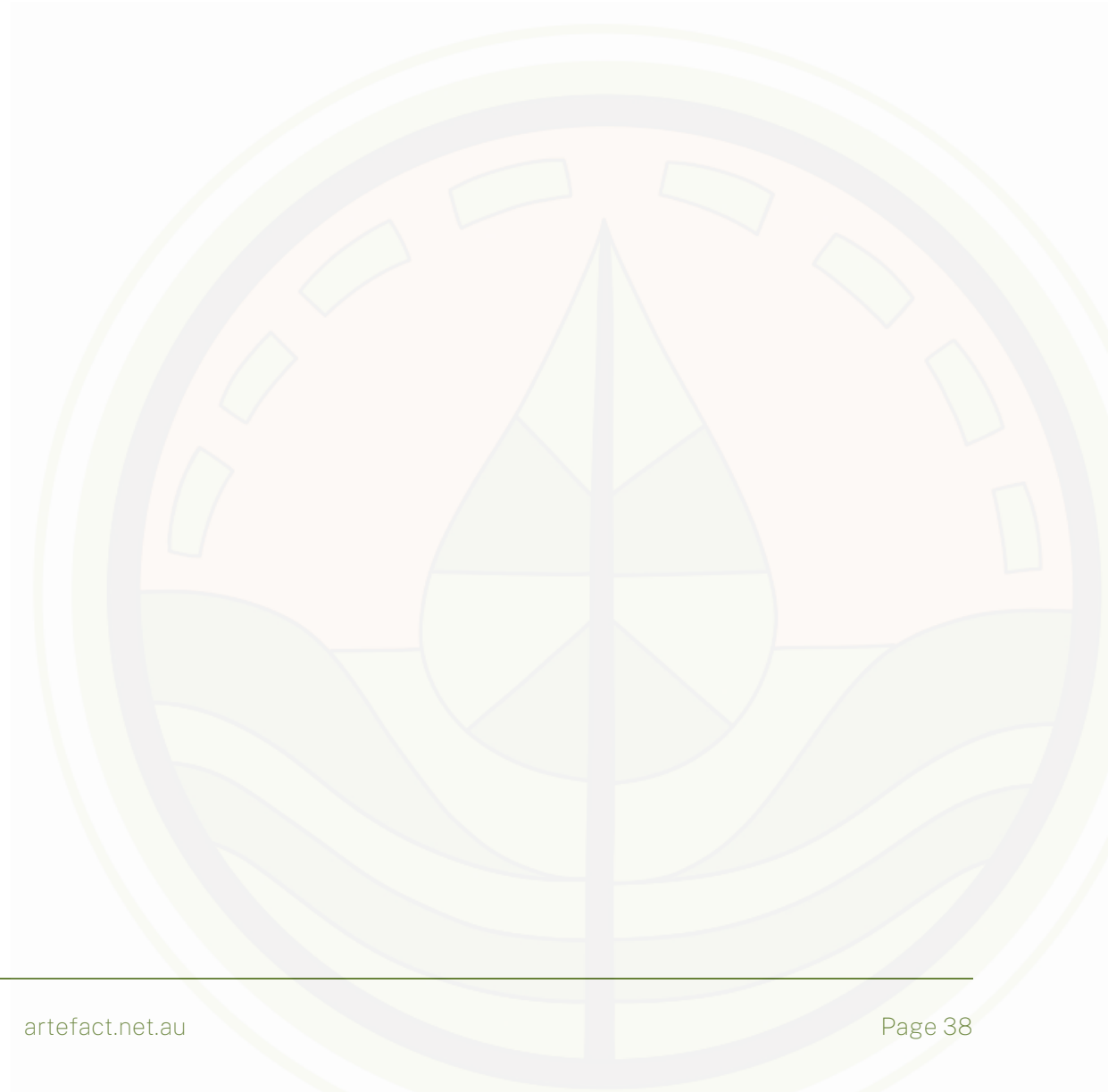
- Engagement of Aboriginal owned businesses and organisations.
- Training and internships for early career Aboriginal professionals and students.
- Commissioning of artistic works from locally connected Aboriginal artists and in collaboration with Aboriginal Artist Cooperatives such as Eora Centre & Boomalli Artists Cooperative.
- Ongoing approvals from Aboriginal traditional knowledge holders.
- Consult with local Elders.
- Cultural tours and walks on Country.
- Involvement of RAPs in potential archaeological and heritage work.



Figure 22: Discussion on Country – viewing the model, 14 February 2025

## 6. ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES

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## 6.1 Introduction

A summary of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values from historical research, previous consultation and ongoing consultations is provided in this section.

## 6.2 Values

### 6.2.1 Dharug People

This is Dharug Country and the Dharug people are the traditional custodians of the Country. Local clan groups include the Bediagal/Bidjigal and the Boorooberongal. As people at the forefront of the British invasion, these clans suffered immensely due to colonisation, war and disease. But Aboriginal people of the area survived to continue to pass down cultural knowledge and Dharug people today have an ongoing connection to the Country and especially its creeks and waterways including Parramatta River, Wianamatta (South Creek), and Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury River).

### 6.2.2 Caring for Country

Caring for Country is important to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people advocate for retention of mature trees and natural habitats, whilst encouraging the clean-up of waterways, removal of non-natives, and development which gives increased access to Country.

### 6.2.3 Elizabeth Macarthur Creek and Dyarubbin

Elizabeth Macarthur Creek runs into Cattai Creek which flows into Cabawn Cattie (Big Cattai Creek) and into the Dyarrubin (Hawkesbury River). It is part of an important network of rivers and tributaries on northwestern Dharug Country. The creeks connect Dharug Country to their neighbours in Gandagarra and Darkinjung Countries.

### 6.2.4 Cultural heritage

The area is rich in tangible cultural heritage with many artefacts found particularly along the waterways. Aboriginal heritage sites around the area of Bella Vista include modified trees, grinding grooves and art sites. In 2015, 2,859 stone artefacts were found during an excavation in an area which extended into the site. Stone artefacts and tools were made, used, traded and exchanged within the Sydney region. Today the community recommends that if artefacts like this are uncovered that they are reburied in sites which are nearby but unlikely to be developed. 'Country should stay on Country' Arika Jalomaki, 14 February 2025.

### 6.2.5 The next generation

Passing on Cultural Knowledge to the next generation is a key value for Aboriginal people. The importance of educating young people in Aboriginal cultural values and knowledges is crucial. Cultural and heritage activities are often inter-generational with young children, teens and young adults attending events with their Elders. Public, social spaces which are designed for large Aboriginal gatherings are popular.

### 6.3 Registered Aboriginal sites

The location of Aboriginal sites is considered culturally sensitive information. It is advised that this information, including the AHIMS data appearing on the heritage map be removed from this report if it is to enter the public domain.

A search of Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) was made on the 28 January 2025 for a search area measuring approximately 5 km x 5 km surrounding the study area. The search found 110 registered Aboriginal sites were with the 5 km<sup>2</sup> area.

An archaeological investigation by KNC in 2015 identified a ‘Potential Archaeological Deposit (PAD)/Artefact’ as extending into the boundaries of the study area. Their subsequent test excavation of the site recovered 2,859 stone artefacts from the PAD. The distribution of recorded sites within the AHIMS extensive search area is shown in Figure 23.

As the map shows, there is a concentration of AHIMS registered sites along the edge of waterways and within less developed areas of bushlands. ‘Artefact’ sites were the most common, with ‘Potential Archaeological Deposit (PAD)’ being second. These sites were found mostly in areas of reserved bush or parklands, such as Caddies Creek Reserve and Bella Vista Farm Park, and close to minor tributaries such as Elizabeth Macarthur Creek or Caddies Creek. Furthermore, sites were also located in areas that have been highly disturbed for major works – such as the development of Old Windsor Road and Northwest Boulevard.

Two ‘Modified Trees (Carved or Scarred)’, one ‘Art (Pigment or Engraved)’, and a ‘Grinding Groove, Art (Pigment or Engraved)’ site were also found in the wider search area. These are significant as these types of sites are rarer in more developed, city areas due to the high level of disturbance.

Furthermore, there are outcroppings of sandstone within the area, which was a material used as a grinding platform for grinding axes. This indicates the extensive use of this area by Aboriginal people over time.

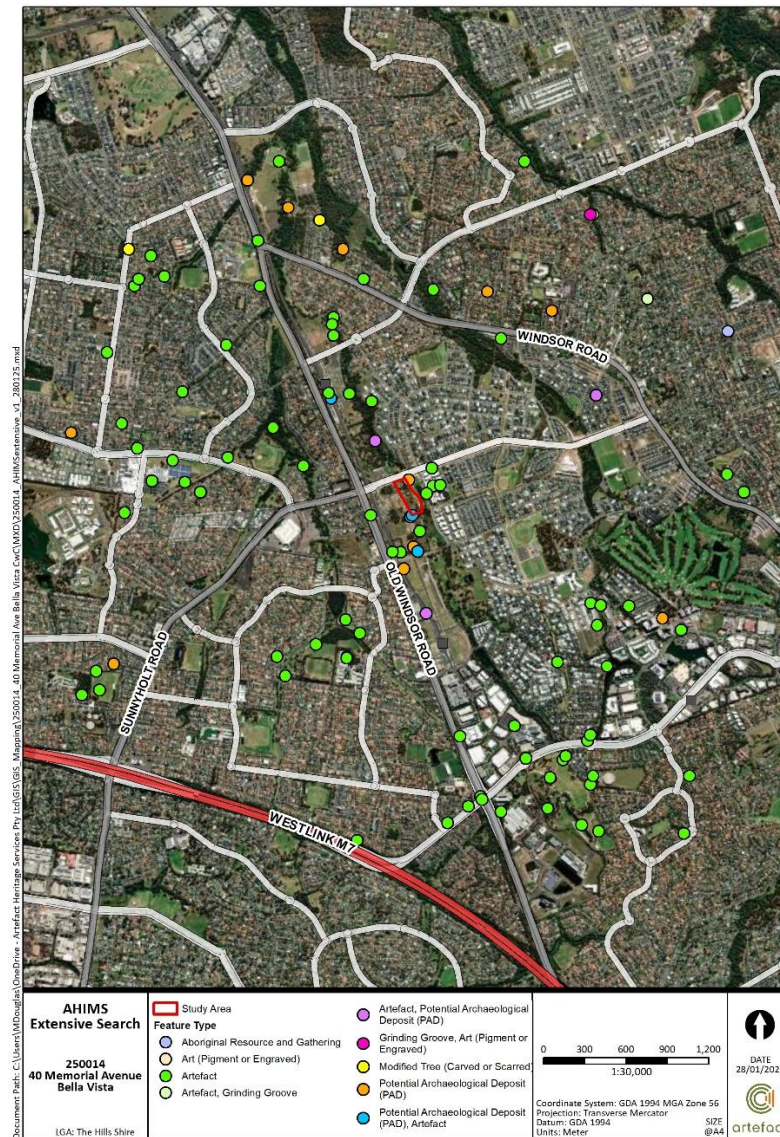
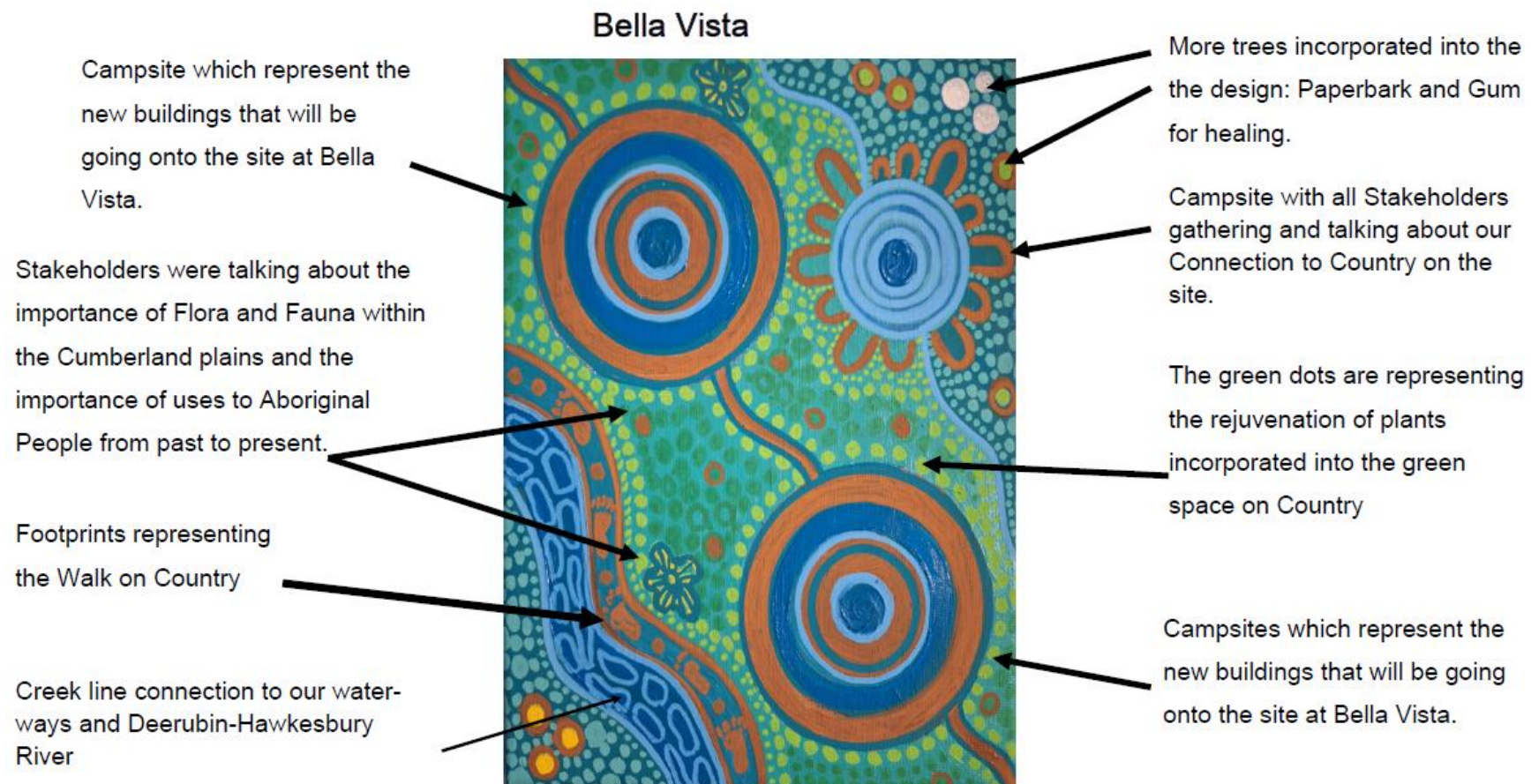


Figure 23: AHIMS extensive search results

## 6.4 Our Country Connections

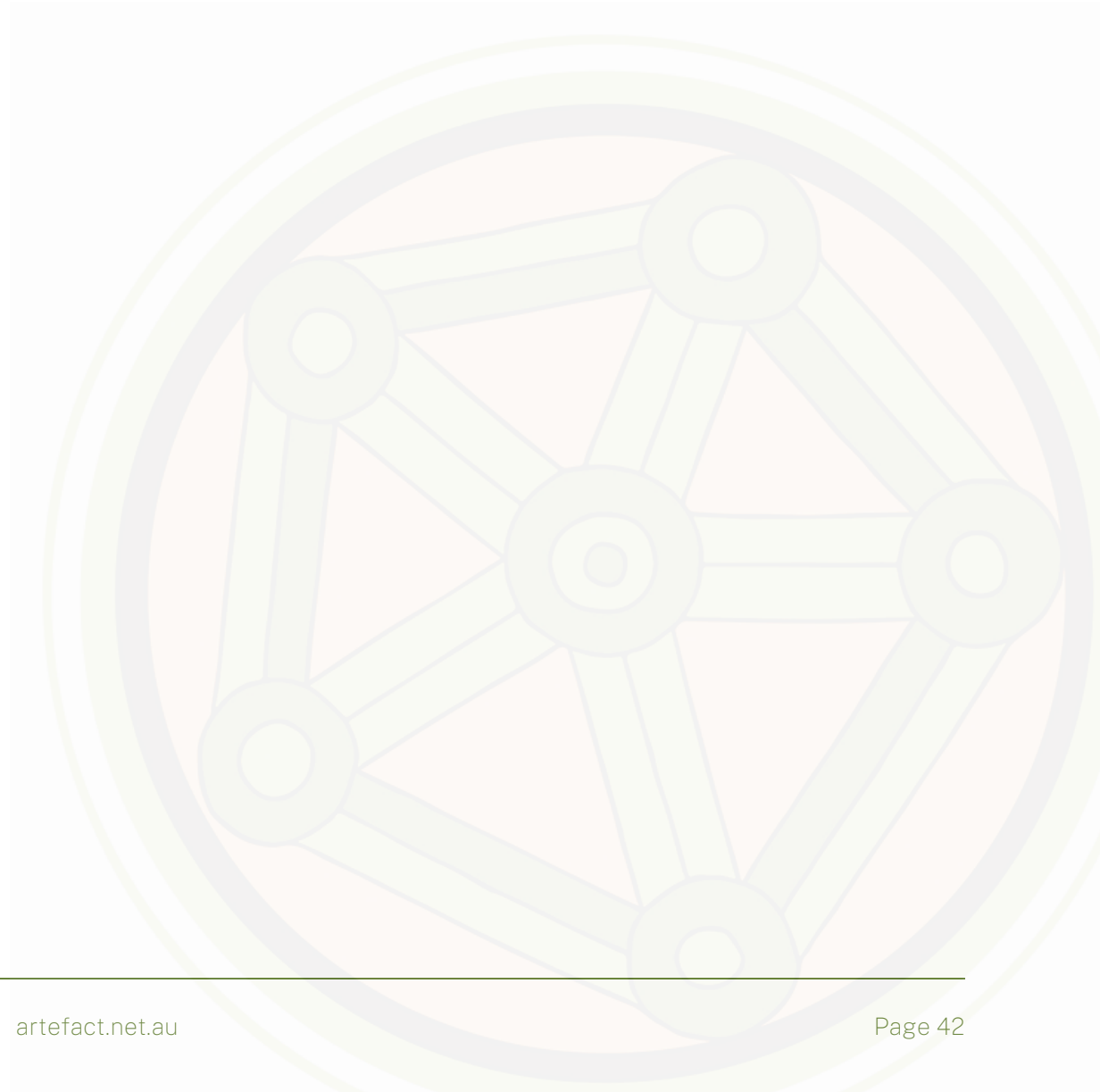
The artwork *Our Country Connections* (2025) was designed by Kamilaroi/Dharug artist Kayelene Slater in response to the Walk on Country for this project:

*My Artwork represents the connection to the Waterways and Country. We attended a walk on Country with Artefact Heritage Services and Stakeholders. The site was located at Bella Vista and the new housing developments is connected to the Country and waterways.*



## 7. DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY

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## 7.1 Introduction

The *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* provides direction on ways to explore opportunities for design process and practices to support connection to Country in built environment projects. Bringing an understanding of Country into these processes can help improve project outcomes.

## 7.2 Design principles

These broadly applicable set of design principles are a useful tool for designers and developers to create places that reflect Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Icons are by Dharug artist Adam Laws

### Acknowledge Country



Provide acknowledgement, interpretation and resources about the Dharug people. Meaningful interpretive signage and artworks can acknowledge the Dharug and Dharug Country while Elders could be invited to give a Welcome to Country at events.

### Take inspiration from nature



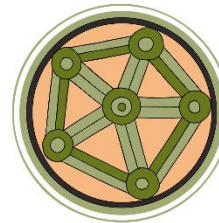
Take inspiration from the shapes of Elizabeth Macarthur Creek, views across Country and the colours of Country. Use local materials and consider designs which bring nature inside.

### Connect with Country



Reconnect site users and local communities to Country through initiatives like access paths, inclusion of bush gardens, native plantings in proposed landscaping. Focus on healing the living landscape, particularly Elizabeth Macarthur Creek, and encourage the return and flourishing of local wildlife. Give opportunities for people to touch grass, soil and water.

### Acknowledge connections



Acknowledge the connections in the broader landscape; the views and the creek system that leads from Dharug to Gandangarra and Darkinjung Countries.

### Continue to consult



Continue consultation throughout the life of the project with Elders, Knowledge holders and Aboriginal people who have a connection to the area.

### 7.3 Examples of design realisations

#### 7.3.1 Introduction

This section showcases some possible ways that the Design Principles could be realised in the architecture, landscaping and interpretation of the site. Please note that these examples are from a range of Aboriginal heritage interpretation from different Aboriginal Countries.



Design on perforated metal (Source: Kayelene Slater)

#### 7.3.2 Acknowledgement of/Welcome to Country

A key method of communicating the importance of Country is by providing a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country message. A Welcome to Country is given by the traditional custodians/knowledge holders of the area welcoming people to their land, while an Acknowledgement of Country is a sign of respect to the traditional owners of the land stated by the asset holder. The examples below demonstrate eye-catching ways to Acknowledge Country through graphics, language, and sculpture.



Left: Marrickville Library Acknowledgement of Country; right: University of Sydney Acknowledgement of Country



Left: Parliament of NSW Acknowledgement of Country. Artists: Alison Page, Rowena Welsh-Jarrett and Simon Reece. Right: NRMA Acknowledgement of Country

### 7.3.3 Views and visual links across Country

Placemaking is enhanced by vistas and viewpoints which allow visitors and users to get a holistic sense of the landscape. High points allow for sightlines across rivers and urban areas. Walkways can give access to viewpoints to allow residents and users a chance to immerse themselves on Country.

Creating visual links to nearby green spaces connects people with Country and can significantly contribute to their well-being. Built design that facilitates experiences with nature, allowing people to see, hear, and physically connect with the natural environment enhances this connection. Incorporating elements like large windows, open spaces, and utilising natural light can seamlessly integrate the built environment with the surrounding landscape.



Example of signage interpreting views



*'The redevelopment of the Mount Canobolas summit visitor precinct in 2021/22 was founded on the collaborative involvement of the Wiradjuri community in the project. They considered this an appropriate opportunity to share publicly for the first time the Three Brothers Creation story describing the mountain's formation. An artwork depicting this story was created especially for the project by Mick Crook. This artwork and the story is displayed prominently at the summit entry. Alongside it a special pavement treatment derived from the original painting was installed in collaboration with the artist.'* (source: nature tourism services)<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.naturetourismservices.com.au/indigenous-interpretive-signs.html>

### 7.3.4 Colour schemes

Incorporating colour schemes that reference local materials and plants in new building designs provides an opportunity to design in harmony with Country. By drawing inspiration from the natural hues of ochre, sandstone, and bark, spaces can resonate with the cultural and environmental heritage of the area. This approach not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of new developments but also fosters a deeper connection to the landscape and its history. Embracing these design principles allows for the creation of environments that respect and celebrate the traditional knowledge and practices of local Aboriginal communities, ensuring that new structures are both beautiful and meaningful.

'Colours of Country' photographs from the site visit, 14 February 2025, are below:



After the Walk on Country Aunty Helen Slater suggested some additional 'Colours of Country':



Left: Bottle brush, right Gymea lily



Left: Giant spear lily, right: native violet

### 7.3.5 Incorporating local materials

Incorporating materials into the building and broader domain design which are prevalent in the Bella Vista area, including sandstone, timber and quartz, can help connect the new development to the natural landscape and cultural heritage of the region.



*Timber paneling on façade at Centre for Nyoongar Culture and Environmental Design (iredale pedersen hook architect)*



*Meandering brick paving contrasted by natural sandstone blocks and native plantings at Bendigo TAFE, Six Degrees Architects.*



*Barangaroo Reserve, with sandstone walls. (source: Janna Schreier Garden Design)*

### 7.3.6 Reuse of salvaged material

Reuse of materials salvaged throughout the project aligns with the value of keeping Country on Country. Elements of the landscape such as rocks and trees that had to be removed to enable construction could be reused as functional elements such as seating and shelters,, or could be reinterpreted as sculptural pieces.

Reusing material is not only sustainable but is a physical reminder of acknowledging the cultural values of the Aboriginal community. The condition of any such materials should be assessed to ensure that the material is safe to re-use.



Salvaged timber seat in Pyrmont Sydney



Strong families, Strong community - scar tree artwork by Scott (source: Towney, Forbes); Chainsaw carving by Brandon Kroon, Condoblin



Nowra based Warwick Keen's contemporary dendroglyphs<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.warwickkeen.com.au/revive-lost-practice-carved-trees/>

### 7.3.7 Play spaces

Play spaces act as focus points, drawing people, especially families, to a space of recreation, safety and relaxation, a key element in placemaking for a new development. A well-designed multisensory play space providing a rich and diverse play opportunities allows children to engage with heritage in new ways. By incorporating heritage interpretation in a play space in creative and subtle ways, both children and parents can encounter new ideas and integrate educational experiences into everyday play.

Play equipment and topography can be customised to express Country, with local materials, and natural shapes creating a strong sense of connection to the land. Visual/tactile design features and simple text could be incorporated into the play space to support play-based learning.



Gosford Leagues Club Park (Source: Guy Wilkinson, Good Design<sup>51</sup>)

<sup>51</sup> <https://good-design.org/projects/gosford-leagues-club-park/>



Wawai Ngurra inclusive adventure playspace by Leanne Mulgo Watson and Blacktown City Council (Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and Blacktown City Council)



Yirran muru (Many pathways) - Dharawal Interpretive Play Space, Shellharbour Civic Centre<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> <https://letschatshellharbour.com/aboriginal-interpretive-play-space>

### 7.3.8 Landscape geometry and ground plane elements

Incorporating curved and rounded lines, rather than straight lines, within the geometry of public domain landscaping creates a close connection to Country.

Ground plane elements of public domain spaces are a subtly effective heritage interpretation medium that can be fully integrated into a public domain space. Paving colours, metal inlays or sandblasted patterns may be installed into ground planes, forming artworks, tracing the footprints of former structures or containing small 'bites' of textual information, quotes or dates and creating a narrative as paths are traversed.

Embedding Aboriginal design elements into the ground plane of a site can connect a new development directly to Country, providing a tangible aesthetic reference to significant physical, social or spiritual features of the land.



Byron Bay Transport Interchange, by DesignInc.



Ground plane designs at Campbelltown Billabong (source: Kym Slater)

### 7.3.9 Interpretive panels

Well-designed and written interpretive panels are an excellent media for conveying key stories and rich narratives in an effective, accessible manner. If integrated into the design of a site, they can be strategically located to gain appropriate exposure. Interpretive panels, as text-based media, are ideally suited to tell more details of site-specific stories providing contextual information in a succinct and engaging manner.

Panel text can encourage visitors to look more closely at their surroundings or text can pose questions to stimulate conversations. They should be located in spaces which allow for a longer dwell time or in natural pause points such as public squares, parks or seating areas. Interpretive panels can also work as trail markers on walks or bush trails, highlighting different aspects of the site. When used across a site, panels should have a consistent 'look and feel' so audiences know they are encountering heritage information.



Tiddalik story panel, West Kotara (Terri-Lee Darcy, Aunty Phyllis Darcy, Donna Gayford McLaren)



Panels in the landscape, Cadi Jam Ora Garden (Royal Botanical Gardens)

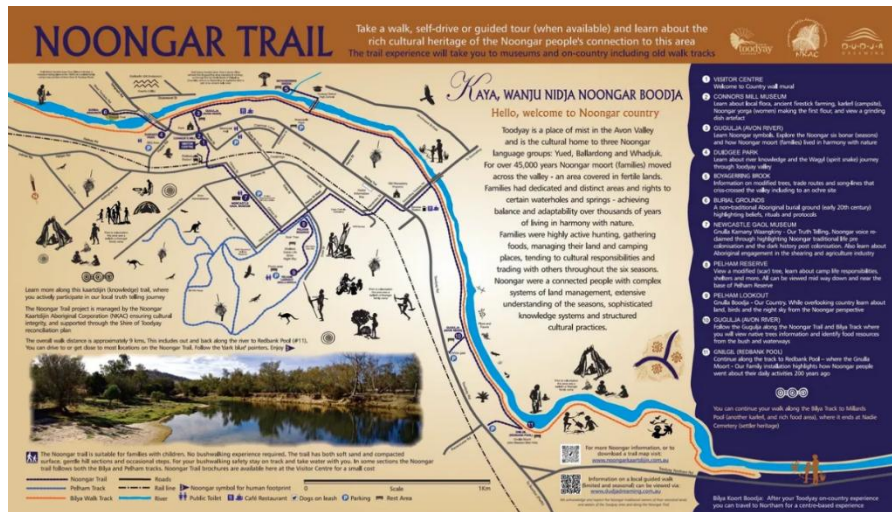


Centennial Parklands Bady Ngura Trail.

### 7.3.10 Walks and trails

The proposed Elizabeth Macarthur Creek Walk offers significant opportunities for public art, movable heritage displays or signage which explains points of interest along the way; both along the walk itself and along access pathways between the buildings.

Heritage walks can be achieved in a number of ways, with brochures, maps, QR codes, a smartphone app system or websites as possible delivery methods, integrating the various histories of the area into a comprehensive, engaging narrative.



Noongar Trail, Western Australia (source: <https://noongarkaartdijin.com.au/noongar-trail>)

Soundtrail Myall Creek is an app which is an audio walk geolocated to sites along the Myall Creek Massacre memorial. As a person walks through the site and arrives at the “spots”, a new audio recording is activated. Visitors can move back and forth along the route to listen again to each recording.



Myall Creek App (source: <https://soundtrails.com.au/myall-creek/>)

### 7.3.11 Bush tucker gardens

Integrating bush tucker into rooftop gardens, community gardens or the broader landscape design promotes sustainability and creates learning opportunities about Aboriginal cultural heritage and native flora. Bush tucker plants offer unique flavours, nutritional benefits, and resilience to local climates. In rooftop gardens, bush tucker plants can thrive, offering fresh, local produce. In landscape design, these plants can create aesthetically pleasing, low-maintenance green spaces that support local wildlife and celebrate Indigenous culture. Plantings can be accompanied by labels which provide information about the Aboriginal names and traditional uses of the plants.



All images - South Eveleigh Native Rooftop Farm, South Eveleigh, Sydney, by Yerrabingin and collaborators

### 7.3.12 Gathering spaces and seating

Creating communal and gathering spaces within the landscaping of new developments can foster connections between people. Incorporating circular designs in landscaping and seating arrangements can especially support social interaction and exchange.

Embedding heritage interpretation elements within the seating, ground plane, and shade structures within gathering spaces provides a rich context and points of engagement and conversation. Patterning, text, or graphic image-based seating inserts can be strategically positioned to engage people who have some time to pause, read and reflect absorbing messages and stories about the site. Similarly, utilising overhead elements such as canopies, roofs, shopfront awnings or shade structures for portraying images or Aboriginal designs are opportunities for unique expressions of a destination's heritage.



*Communal meeting places, IGLU Student Accommodation, Summer Hill.*



*South Everleigh Native Rooftop Farm, yarning circle.*



*UQ Reconciliation Garden Multhana*

### 7.3.13 Artworks

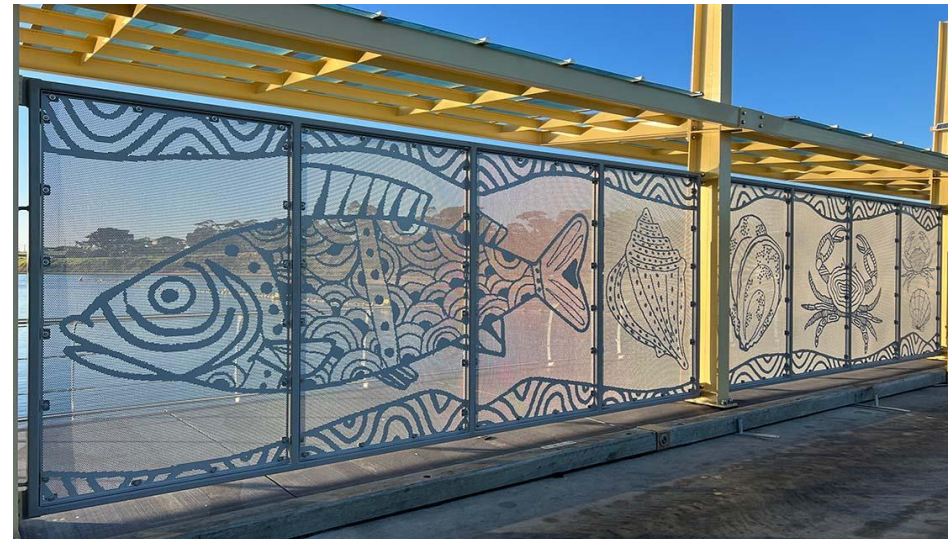
Eye-catching, large-scale artworks are an effective method of interpreting and expressing Aboriginal heritage values. Public art is a powerful tool of cultural expression, with strong graphics able to tell stories and visually communicate cultural messages to a large audience. This type of interpretive media creates a visual statement about the cultural heritage of an area and is important in place-making.



Left: *Earth, Wind, Fire, Water* glasswork, by Bronwyn Bancroft, Royal North Shore Hospital. Right: *Murri totems* by Reko Rennie at Monash University



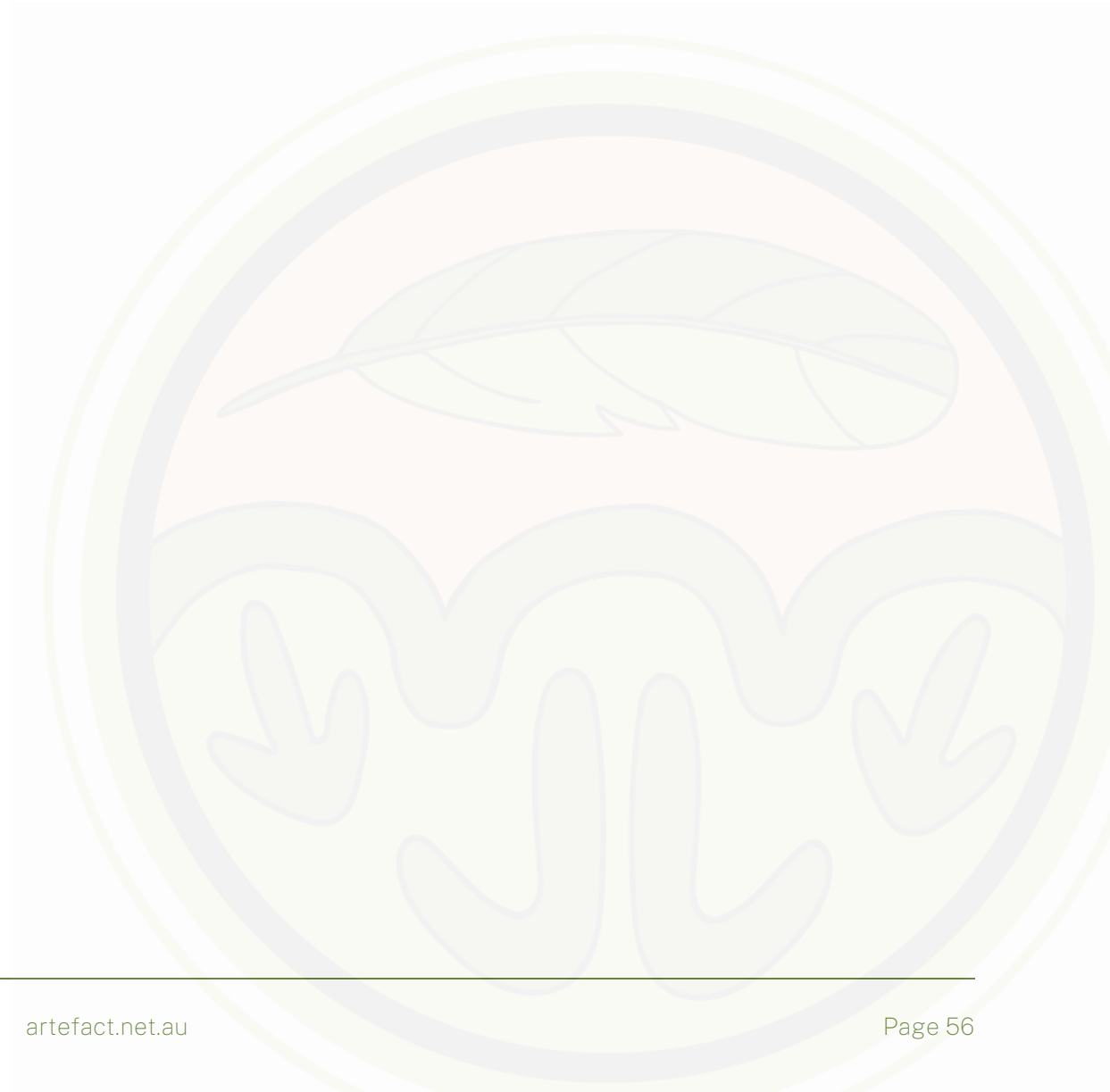
Left: Artwork at Bankstown Art Centre by Jane Cavanough; Right: *'Ancient Highways'* lift foyer by Maddie Gibbs at Stanmore Station;



Custom metal imagery screen (source: Helen Slater)

## 8. PRACTICES

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## 8.1 Introduction

This section explores how key elements of Aboriginal knowledge systems can be aligned with cognitive concepts of thinking, feeling and behaving, which are fundamental in the Connecting with Country design process, and provides examples of actions that can be undertaken by project teams to reframe their design approach to be Country centred.

### 8.1.1 Thinking

‘Communing with Country’ describes a cultural practice used by Aboriginal people to connect with Country through their mind and spirit. The word ‘communing’ has been selected to convey a specific meaning: being in deep and intimate conversation with Country but not in a religious sense as some may understand it. Communing with Country is presented as an invitation to explore the deep connection Aboriginal people have with Country, demonstrated through various forms of cultural expression. Project teams can learn about cultural practice as a way to deepen cultural understanding, guided and mediated by Aboriginal people.

#### Activities

- Engage in cultural awareness training,

### 8.1.2 Feeling

Understanding how emotions and feelings shape our responses to experiences and knowledge is an important step towards changing our approach. Where guided by Aboriginal people, being immersed in Country can awaken our senses and feelings and inform a deeper understanding of Country.

#### Activities

- Walk on Country
- Participate in appropriate ceremony

### 8.1.3 Behaving

Being on Country refers to the experience of being connected to and living in harmony with Country. Being on Country requires an understanding and balancing of complex systems of knowledge sharing, interrelationships, protocols and behaviours.

For many Aboriginal people, being on Country is also an important part of their identity and sense of belonging. It provides a connection to their ancestors and other living entities, to their cultural heritage, and to the broader community of humans and living beings that inhabit Country. A vital part of being on Country is through knowledge-sharing practices to support the health and wellbeing of Country. Knowledge is contained and shared within the cultural expression of many Aboriginal peoples.

#### Activities

- Ensure Aboriginal people retain authorship and control of their cultural knowledge and intellectual property, and how it is shared with others.
- Invite Aboriginal people to co-design and co-manage projects rather than just being asked to provide their cultural knowledge, stories and insights to help develop projects.
- Respect Elders and family
- Listen and observe closely, and be modest
- Ensure the design process is collaborative and inclusive.

## 9. ACTIONS

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## 9.1 Introduction

This section discusses actions which can be undertaken throughout the lifecycle of a project to facilitate the shift from Human-centric to Country-Centric development. It is presented under the four categories: Form (Starting with Country), Design (Imagining with Country), Deliver (Shaping Country) and Maintain (Caring for Country).

The preparation of this Connecting with Country report is fundamental to shifting to the Country-Centric design approach, as it identifies Aboriginal cultural values and provides practical means of ensuring these values are reflected in the development. The table below identifies actions that have been taken in the preparation of this report which demonstrate how the Country-centred approach has been achieved and provides recommendations for further actions required to start with Country.

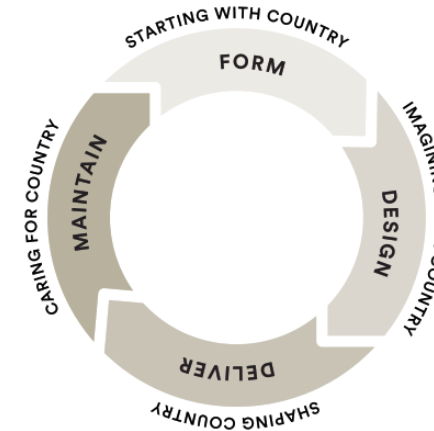


Figure 24: Project lifecycle from an Aboriginal perspective (GANSW Connecting with Country)

## 9.2 Form - Starting with Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Research and prepare	Locate previous Aboriginal cultural heritage and technical studies relevant to the project.	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See previous consultation and reports in section 5.3</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All project team members should review this <i>Connecting with Country</i> report</li> </ul>
	Considering undertaking cultural awareness training, including identifying the Aboriginal stakeholders you will be working with	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project team members attended the online briefing on 4 February 2025 and Walk on Country on 14 February 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural awareness training should be undertaken by all future project team members</li> </ul>
Allocate time and resources		<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artefact has organised consultation with key stakeholders at a suitable time and location for attendees – both online and in person at the site</li> </ul>

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
	Allocate sufficient time and resources for community to participate, ensuring there is flexibility with timing and location of meeting	<b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project teams should ensure that project timelines and budgets account for consultation that are flexible</li> </ul>
Collaborate	Follow established community engagement protocols	<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This process has engaged with stakeholders who were identified through previous work in the area and through self-identification as people with a connection to Country.</li> <li>Stakeholders were asked how they would like to be addressed</li> <li>Cultural and intellectual protocols and other protocols were discussed at the start of the discussion during the online briefing on 4 February 2025 and Walk on Country on 14 February 2025. It was noted that Aunty Zona Wilkinson recommended use of the word 'Aboriginal' rather than 'Indigenous' w.r.t Cultural and intellectual protocols and the report was updated to reflect this</li> </ul> <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Protocols guidelines outlined in section 1.7 should be followed in future consultation – particularly in development of public art and Aboriginal heritage Interpretation.</li> </ul>
Share knowledge	<p>Discuss with all involved how historic events and cultural narratives will be supported</p> <p>Listen to community concerns about building development and how it will affect Country</p>	<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through consultation and historical research this CwC has identified key historical and cultural narratives. Examples of how these narratives can be interpreted are described in Section 7.3</li> </ul> <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The preparation of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Plan would assist in identifying and conveying key cultural events and historic narratives</li> </ul> <b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns, questions and opportunities were discussed at the online meeting on 4 February 2025 and Walk on Country on 14 February 2025</li> </ul> <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project team should review and respond to the discussion feedback outlined in section 5.4</li> </ul>
Respect Cultural and intellectual property protocols	Establish Cultural and intellectual protocols that will ensure knowledge and other intellectual property (e.g. artwork) is protected and appropriately credited	<b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cultural and intellectual property protocols guidelines are outlined in section 1.7</li> <li>Stakeholders were remunerated for their participation</li> </ul>

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
		<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The guidelines outlined in section 1.7 should be followed in future consultation – particularly in development of public art and Aboriginal heritage Interpretation.</li> </ul>
	Keep confidential records of all engagement sessions. Report back to community on how ICIP is being used and seek permission before sharing information	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural and intellectual property protocols and other protocols were discussed at the start of the Walk on Country</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redact sensitive information when reports are made publicly available.</li> <li>This report and notes from the discussion on the 14 February 2025 will be shared with stakeholders to check they approve of their knowledges being shared</li> </ul>

### 9.3 Design – Imaging with Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Design basics	Use first place names	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Traditional owners of the Country were identified as Dharug people and specifically Bediagal and Boorooberongal</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start incorporating Aboriginal place names into reports</li> <li>Use Dharug language in wayfinding and interpretive signage</li> </ul>
	Connect to broader landscape settings	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders noted the height of the buildings and the potential for views across Country</li> <li>The project team is already considering how the site will work with the broader project to connect walkways along Elizabeth Macarthur Creek</li> <li>Stakeholders recommended additional pedestrian bridges across the creek</li> <li>Consider an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Plan to assist planning for connecting with the landscape and history of the area</li> </ul>

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
	Protect Aboriginal cultural heritage	<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The production of this report is a key step in identifying Aboriginal cultural values, and provides information for future developments about means of celebrating and protecting Aboriginal heritage</li> <li>An ACHAR for the project has been produced by Apex Archaeology. The recommendations should be followed.</li> <li>There is a significant amount of artefacts already on the site and the stakeholders have identified the need for ongoing discussions about the artefacts</li> </ul>
	Acknowledge shared history	<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This report includes a section on the history of Bella Vista see section 4</li> </ul> <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Plan to assist in presenting the different historical narratives</li> </ul>
Design opportunities	Learning from traditional Aboriginal architecture	<b>Outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples of good practice in incorporating Aboriginal design into development are given in section 7</li> <li>The stakeholders identified some recent parklands developments which they liked</li> </ul> <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The stakeholders could be updated on development of designs</li> </ul>
	Supporting living systems: Earth, Water and sky	<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider recommendations by stakeholders included in section 5.4.3, especially with regard the cleaning up of Elizabeth Macarthur Creek</li> </ul>

### 9.4 Delivery – Shaping Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Construct with Country	<p>Consider how the building of the place will become part of Country once completed.</p> <p>When significant items are discovered during subsoil investigations, collaborate with local Aboriginal community to determine culturally appropriate handling, repatriation and reburial of any ancestral remains or artefacts</p>	<b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the recommendations in the ACHAR and additional Aboriginal archaeology reports being prepared by Apex Archaeology.</li> </ul>

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
	Undertake a skills audit of the community before construction	<b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training and employment opportunities for community</li> </ul>
Celebrate	Plan for ceremony. Look for opportunities to involve the community throughout the development process, such as -Invitations to perform a Welcome to Country ceremony at important milestone events, noting that a Welcome to Country needs to be done by Traditional Custodians -Invitations to attend official openings	<b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission a Welcome to Country ceremony at important milestone events</li> </ul>

### 9.5 Maintain – Caring for Country

Activity from framework	Action from framework	Outcomes and recommendations
Provide access to Country	Support the return of community to Country by providing access to sites where projects are being developed and delivered	<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The designs include access to Elizabeth Macarthur Creek for the public.</li> </ul>
Monitor and evaluate	Undertake post-occupancy evaluations to establish project success and areas for improvement	<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake post-occupancy evaluations</li> </ul>
	Maintain ongoing relationships with community	<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For developments that arise from the masterplan, ensure a condition of approval is Aboriginal engagement</li> </ul>
	Continue to develop and strengthen cultural awareness	<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop cultural awareness projects which can be implemented throughout the development to the non-Aboriginal community</li> </ul>

## 10. OUTCOMES FOR COUNTRY

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## 10.1 Introduction

The outcomes of a Country-centred approach to planning new developments are presented in this section as practical indicators of success. The five categories are taken from the *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (2023)*.

## 10.2 Healthy Country

Healthy Country describes healthy, interconnected natural ecosystems, supported by regenerative practices based on Aboriginal knowledge.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and Recommendations
Healthy Ecology	High biodiversity includes a wide variety of plant and animal species, including those that are rare or endangered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The stakeholders noted the importance of removing weeds and non-natives like bamboo from the area</li> </ul>
	Ecological systems are resilient to impacts from drought, floods and fires, as well as human-induced disturbances such as habitat destruction and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project team are considering mitigation for flooding</li> </ul>
The physical form of Country remains recognisable and restored where possible	Interference with natural water systems is minimal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project has consideration for Elizabeth Macarthur creek including walkways and access to the creek.</li> </ul>

## 10.3 Healthy community

Built environment projects can provide opportunities for employment and capacity building within the Aboriginal community, and support Aboriginal communities' connection to their cultural identity, which supports positive health and wellbeing.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and Recommendations
Strong cultural identity, connected to place and community	Aboriginal community sees their cultural heritage appropriately reflected in the design of places where they live and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders recommended ideas for interpretation which have been expanded in section 7.3</li> <li>Consider the development of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation Public Art Plan</li> </ul>
Cultural safety	Aboriginal people feel safe, respected, and supported in how they express their cultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretive ideas and training have been included into this report</li> </ul>
Training	Training is provided to develop communities' spatial design skills and understanding of planning and design processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of young people and early career heritage officers took part in the Walk on Country on 14 February where they learnt about the cultural heritage of the site as well as planning processes</li> </ul>
Employment opportunities	Jobs are created that allow people to stay connected to community and Country, Employment opportunities are provided throughout all stages of project life cycles Aboriginal businesses are supported in the project procurement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A short list of Indigenous owned companies has been included in section 14</li> </ul>

### 10.4 Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage

It is critical that Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected in the built environment, both through the design and development of projects, and by acknowledging and respecting the rights of Aboriginal people and community over their cultural intellectual property.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Aboriginal cultural advisers guiding project teams and clients to better connect with Aboriginal community	Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected and celebrated within planning and design outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the recommendations in the Aboriginal archaeology reports being prepared for this project by Apex Archaeology</li> </ul>
Project teams and processes for project delivery respect ICIP	Aboriginal community endorses the project outcomes and behaviour of the project team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes from the Walk on Country and this report will be shared to stakeholders for comment</li> </ul>
Aboriginal language placenames are used	Aboriginal placenames are used for parks and streets. Dual naming, or returning the original name, is used for natural features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration could be given to use of Dharug language</li> </ul>
Access to Country is provided	Access to Country enables community to practice ceremony and undertake obligations to care for Country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project is already considering public access to Elizabeth Macarthur Creek</li> </ul>

### 10.5 Cultural competency

Implementing the *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* through built environment projects provides educational opportunities for project teams, clients, and the public, to develop a deeper cultural awareness and respect for Aboriginal people and culture.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Cultural competency ongoing cultural awareness training develops skills and competency in delivering Country centred design projects	Workplace culture supports training, immersion and learning for built environment professionals, including individuals, project teams and across agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project team took part in a Walk on Country</li> <li>Future cultural awareness training should be encouraged in future project team members</li> </ul>
	Cultural awareness training is embedded into continuing professional development. Requirements	
	Proof of cultural awareness training is required in procurement contracts	

## 10.6 Better places

Adopting a Country-centred approach creates better places, informs sustainable designs, integrates with the broader landscape to form place-based design responses, and promotes strong community engagement to create welcoming and accessible places.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Planning and design projects create places that are connected with Country	Where possible, locally sourced, sustainable building materials are used; they have a relationship with and belong to the Country they come from.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The stakeholders recommended designs which included local materials</li> </ul>
	First placenames guide design and planning outcomes: placemaking, dual naming and wayfinding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider use of Dharug language in signage</li> </ul>
	The memory of significant cultural, historic and natural events can be read and traced within Country's landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider development of a Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Plan</li> </ul>
Planning and design outcomes support Living cultural practices	Projects support ongoing opportunities for on-Country tours, ceremony, and sourcing Indigenous food and materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program in ceremonies at important milestones</li> </ul>

## 11. CONCLUSION

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## 11.1 Conclusion and recommendations

This Connecting with Country report for 40 Memorial Drive, Bella Vista has been prepared to align with the principles and guidelines of the *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* and associated best practice documents. It has been prepared in consultation with key Aboriginal stakeholders from the area and provides a vision and design principles to embed Country into the future development of the site.

It is recommended that the project team consider key elements from this Connecting with Country report within the future planning for the site including:

- considering the Design Principles within the design stages for the current Planning Proposal and future development of the site – see section 7.2
- actioning appropriate recommendations from the Outcomes for Country – see sections 9 and 10
- facilitating ongoing consultation and design workshops with the Aboriginal stakeholders during subsequent key development stages.
- integrating meaningful interpretation/artwork/landscape elements within the design development stages of this project, through the development of a Heritage Interpretation and Art Strategy that requires consultation with key stakeholders.
- arranging Cultural Awareness Training for current and future project team members.
- updating Aboriginal stakeholders on the progress of the future development of the site.

Artefact would like to thank all stakeholders for their generosity in sharing their expertise and cultural knowledge during this



Figure 25: Team on Country, 14 February 2025

## 12. REFERENCES

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## 13. APPENDIX A: CONSULTATION LOG

Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
Aunty Karen Owens	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Aunty Helen Slater	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	21/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent some additional recommendations for 'Colours of Country'
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
	25/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Reviewed draft report – no changes required
Kerrie Slater	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country

Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Aunty Vicky Slater	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Emailed notes and recommendations
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Kym Slater	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	20/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Request for image use for Kym's images of the Billabong
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Pearl Depoma	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review

Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
	14/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Review of notes. Report updated following comments.
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Arika Jalomaki	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Kayelene Slater	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Tahlai Saliba	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
David Matagia	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing

Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	25/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Reviewed draft report – no changes required
Jandamarra Bryant	28/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to project
	30/1/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to briefing and Walk on Country
	4/2/2025	Artefact	Online	Briefing
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
Aunty Zona Wilkinson	4/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Amanda Owens	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
Kaarina Slater	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
	27/2/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent notes and images for review
	19/3/2025	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Jacob Whebell	14/2/2025	Project team	In person	Walk on Country
Neane Carter, Teri Janke Lawyers	6/3/2025	Artefact	Online	Discussion about ICIP protection for Aboriginal cultural knowledges on the project. Report updated.

## 14. APPENDIX B: SELECTION OF INDIGENOUS OWNED BUSINESSES

A list of examples of Aboriginal businesses operating in and around the Sydney area. For more businesses, see Supply Nation: <https://supplynation.org.au/>

Category	Company	Contact	email	website
Cultural awareness training and learning				
Museum and cultural awareness training	Aboriginal Heritage Office		<a href="https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/">https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/</a>	
Museum	PHIVE Keeping Place	Karen Maber	<a href="https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/phive/about/keeping-place">https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/phive/about/keeping-place</a>	
Cultural tours	Konanggo Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Services	Robert Young	<a href="http://www.konanggo.com">www.konanggo.com</a>	
Cultural awareness training, native nursery, caring for Country	Muru Mittigar	Uncle Wayne Cornish	<a href="mailto:info@murumittigar.com.au">info@murumittigar.com.au</a>	<a href="https://www.murumittigar.com.au/">https://www.murumittigar.com.au/</a>
Cultural Education / cruises	Tribal Warrior			<a href="https://www.tribalwarrior.org/">https://www.tribalwarrior.org/</a>
Architecture and art				
Architecture	Bangawarra	Shannon Foster	<a href="mailto:shannon@bangawarra.com">shannon@bangawarra.com</a>	
Architecture / interior design	BlackandWhite Creative Pty Ltd	Nicole Monks	<a href="mailto:nicole@nicolemonks.com">nicole@nicolemonks.com</a>	
Artist cooperative	Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative		<a href="https://boomalli.com.au/">https://boomalli.com.au/</a>	
Graphic Designers	Mumbulla	Charmaine Mumbulla	<a href="mailto:charmaine@mumbullacreative.com.au">charmaine@mumbullacreative.com.au</a>	<a href="http://mumbullacreative.com.au">mumbullacreative.com.au</a>
Artist		Kayelene Slater	<a href="mailto:bariyan.culturalconnections@gmail.com">bariyan.culturalconnections@gmail.com</a>	
Construction				
Commercial or industrial construction	Barpa Construction Services (Barpa Pty Ltd)	Jeremy Clark	<a href="mailto:jeremy.clark@barpa.com.au">jeremy.clark@barpa.com.au</a>	<a href="http://www.barpa.com.au">http://www.barpa.com.au</a>

Category	Company	Contact	email	website
Skip Bin Supplier	Boomerang Skip Bins	Jessica Clarke	boomerangbins@outlook.com	
Litter & rubbish removal	Bundjil Construction Services Pty Ltd	Holly Edwards	damien@bundjil.com.au	
Civil construction materials & services	CE Construction Solutions	Michael Dixon	michael@cecsgroup.com.au	<a href="http://www.cecsgroup.com.au">http://www.cecsgroup.com.au</a>
Plants and nurseries				
Nursery, Cultural immersion and development programs	Indigigrow			<a href="https://indigigrow.com.au/">https://indigigrow.com.au/</a>
Gardening / landscaping	Jiwah	Clarence Slockee	admin@jiwah.com.au	<a href="https://www.jiwah.com.au/contact">https://www.jiwah.com.au/contact</a>
Bush regeneration and nursery	Wildflower	Roman Deguchi	roman@wildflower.org.au	<a href="http://www.wildflower.org.au">http://www.wildflower.org.au</a>
Dance				
Dance	Jannawi Dance Clan		jannawi@ymail.com	
Dance	Wagana Dance		jo.clancy@bigpond.com	



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