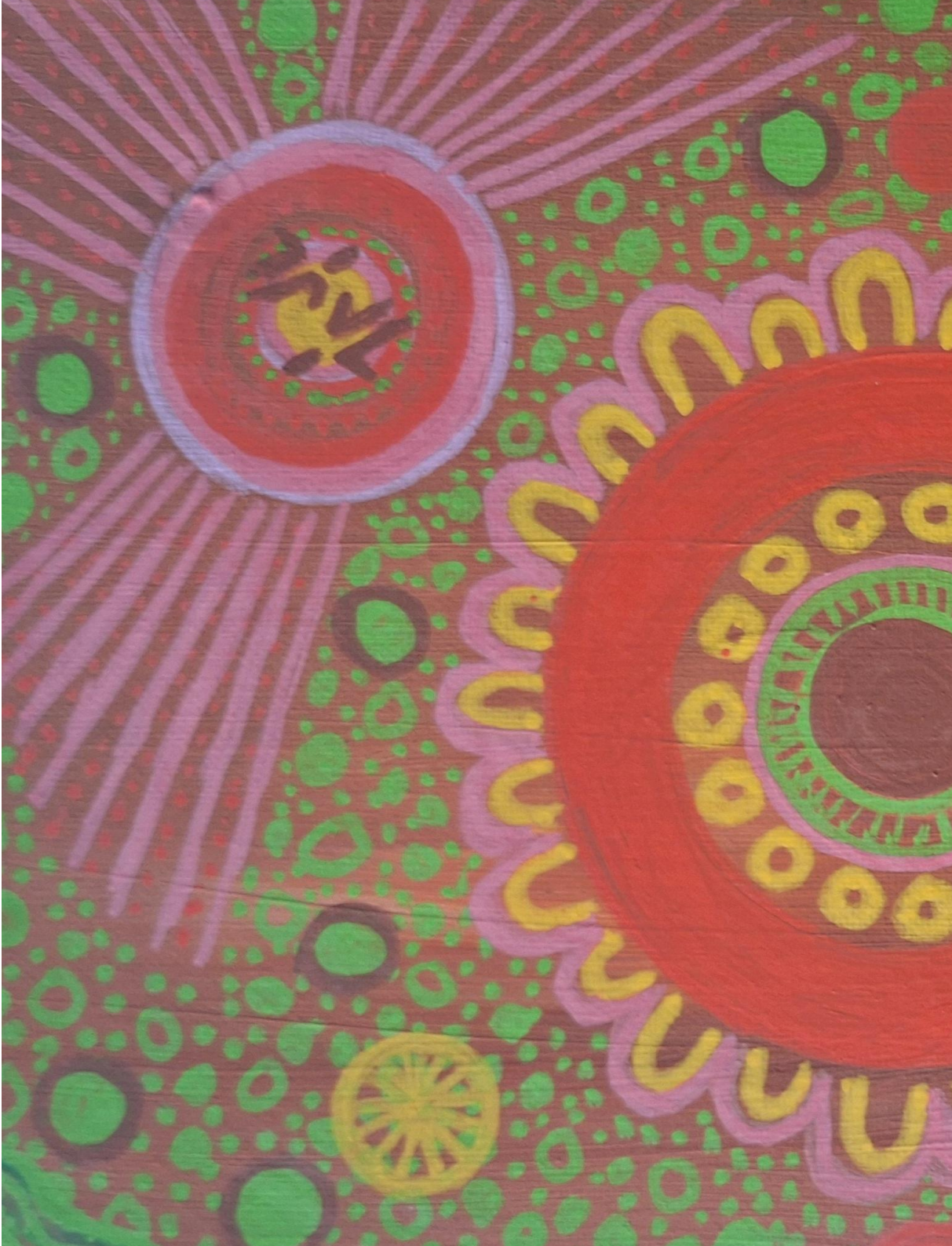




68-80 O'Connell
Street, Caddens

Connecting with Country

Caddens Estate Pty Ltd

Prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment

24 April 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: *Local Connections* (© Kayelene Slater, 2025)
Reproduced with permission.

'My Artwork represents the Local Connections to the new estate housing development which is located at Caddens, which we attended a walk on Country with Artefact and Stakeholders'. Kayelene Slater, 27 March 2025

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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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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Connecting with Country report has been prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment (Artefact) for Caddens Estate Pty Ltd to accompany a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for a mixed-use development (including in-fill affordable housing) at 68-80 O'Connell Street, Caddens, within the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA).

This Connecting with Country report was prepared following guidelines in the Government Architect New South Wales, 2023. *Connecting with Country framework*.

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. An Aboriginal history for the area was developed for section 5 and previous reports were reviewed in section 6.3.

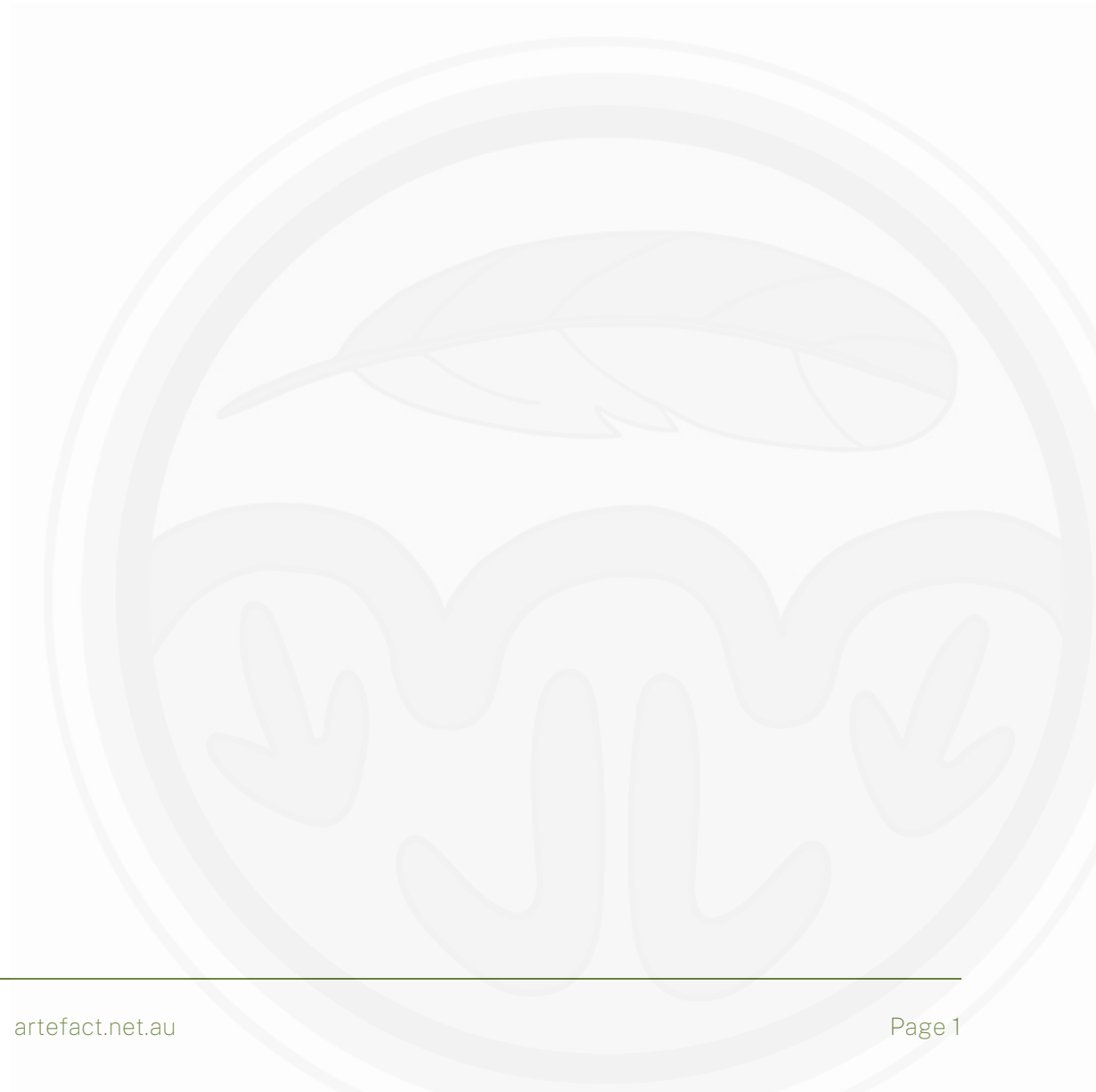
Stakeholders were identified through previous work undertaken by Artefact in the area. A discussion with those stakeholders helped identify additional key knowledge holders who should be included in the consultation process. A walk on Country with stakeholders was held on Friday 7 March 2025 followed by a workshop on Monday 10 March 2025. (section 6).

Based on the consultation outcomes, the following were developed for the report: Aboriginal cultural heritage values (section 1), Design Principles (section 8.2), examples of design realisations (section 8.3) and mitigation measures in the form of actions and outcomes (sections 10 and 11).



Figure 1: 68-80 O'Connell St, Caddens (source Aunty Helen Slater)

2. INTRODUCTION



2.1 Background

This Connecting with Country report has been prepared by Artefact Heritage and Environment (Artefact) for Caddens Estate Pty Ltd to accompany a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for a mixed-use development (including in-fill affordable housing) at 68-80 O'Connell Street, Caddens, within the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA).

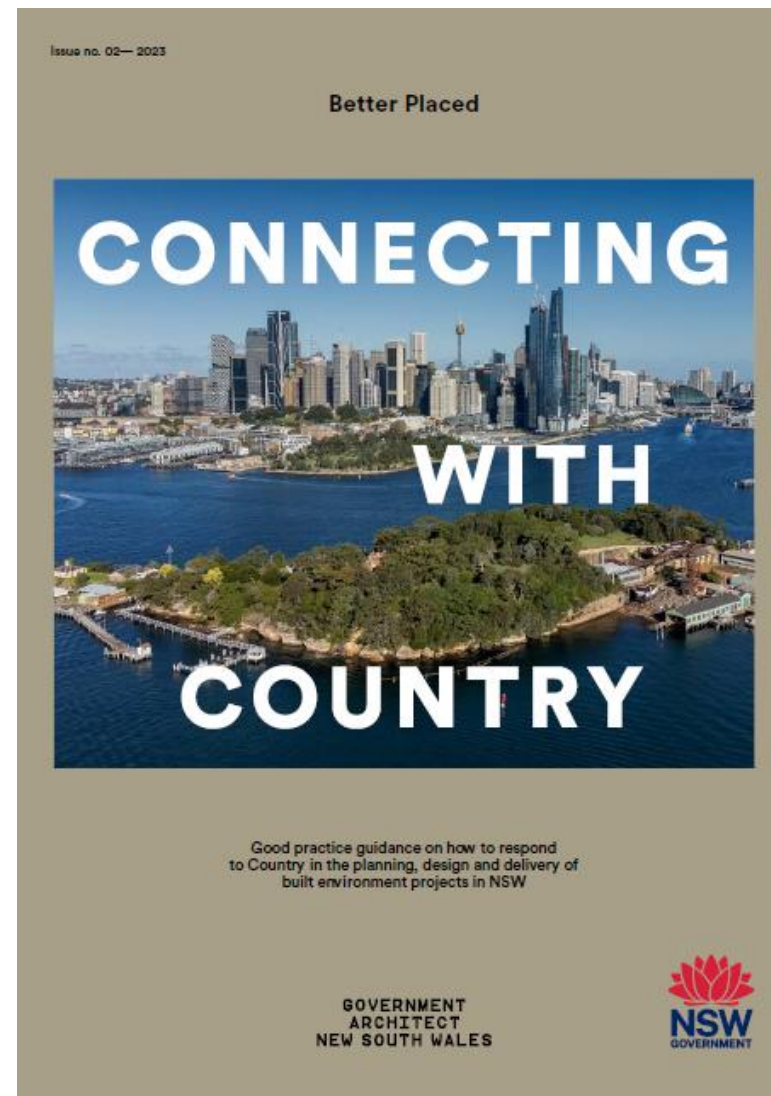
2.2 Scope of report

Artefact Heritage and Environment (Artefact) has been engaged by Caddens Estate Pty Ltd 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.

2.3 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*.



2.4 The study area

2.4.1 Subject site

The site is located at 68-80 O'Connell Street, Caddens, within the Penrith LGA. It is legally described as Lot 1 and 2 in DP 1268507. The site has an area of 54,032m² and is generally rectangular in shape – see Figure 3.

The western portion of the site (68 O'Connell Street) currently comprises an approved commercial shopping centre development and associated carpark, commonly known as 'Caddens Corner'. It is zoned E1 Local Centre pursuant to the *Penrith Local Environmental Plan 2010* (PLEP 2010). This portion of the site is subject to a Concept DA (DA17/0995). A portion of 68 O'Connell Street, that is currently used for at-grade carparking, is subject to this SSDA.

The eastern portion of the site (80 O'Connell Street) is a cleared vacant lot, historically occupied by rural residential land uses. It is zoned R4 High Density Residential pursuant to the PLEP 2010. The site itself is not identified as a heritage item; however, it is located to the east of the 'Teacher's residence (former)' (Item 670), a local heritage item which is identified under Schedule 5 of the PLEP 2010.

High biodiversity value land is present at the site at its north-eastern corner, pursuant to the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

The site is located within the Caddens Release Area within the *Penrith Development Control Plan 2014* (PDCP 2014), and, under the Caddens Release Area Structure Plan, is strategically identified as the precinct centre with adjoining residential areas.

The site is approximately 2.2 kilometres (km) from Werrington Station and 1.8km from Kingswood Station. It is also well serviced by local buses with stops in proximity to the site along O'Connell Street in both directions.

2.4.2 Surrounding context

The site is surrounded by established and newly developed low density residential areas of Caddens, Claremont Meadows, Werrington and Kingswood, as envisioned by the Caddens Release Area plan within the PDCP 2014. See site context in Figure 5.

A staged residential subdivision for 119 residential lots is located immediately to the north of the site at 46-66 O'Connell Street. The area is interspersed with a variety of uses, including Western Sydney University (WSU), TAFE NSW and sporting fields. The site is located 5.5km east of Penrith City Centre and 30km west from Parramatta CBD.



Figure 2: Development site: current carpark at Caddens, 7 March 2025 (source: Artefact)

2.5 Proposed works

The SSDA seeks development consent for a mixed-use development (including in-fill affordable housing) comprising a combination of shop-top housing, residential flat buildings and a commercial premises (shop) at 68-80 O'Connell Street, Caddens. The proposed works include site preparation works, excavation, infrastructure, construction of the buildings and associated landscaping works.

Specifically, the SSDA seeks development consent for:

- demolition of an existing at grade car park
- construction of 4 x 4 - 5 storey shop top housing buildings at 68 O'Connell Street, Caddens, comprising:
 - approximately 160 residential dwellings
 - ground floor commercial, retail and medical uses
- construction of a single storey commercial premises (shop) located at the south western corner of 68 O'Connell Street
- construction of basement carparking to service the shop top housing, ground floor commercial and commercial premises at the southwestern corner
- construction of 11 x 3 - 4 storey residential flat buildings at 80 O'Connell Street, including
 - approximately 290 residential dwellings
 - basement carparking
- internal roads

- associated infrastructure and services
- landscaping and communal open spaces including a 'public square'

The proposal also incorporates 15% affordable housing and seeks to utilise the incentive controls under Chapter 2, Part 2, Division 1, Section 18 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021* (Housing SEPP) to achieve 30% additional building height.

This SSDA also seeks to modify DA17/0995 (pursuant to Clause 4.17(5) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) by amending the description of works and removing reference to the Concept DA and Stage 2 works to avoid inconsistency of the proposed works on the existing at-grade car park and southwestern corner of the site with that approval.

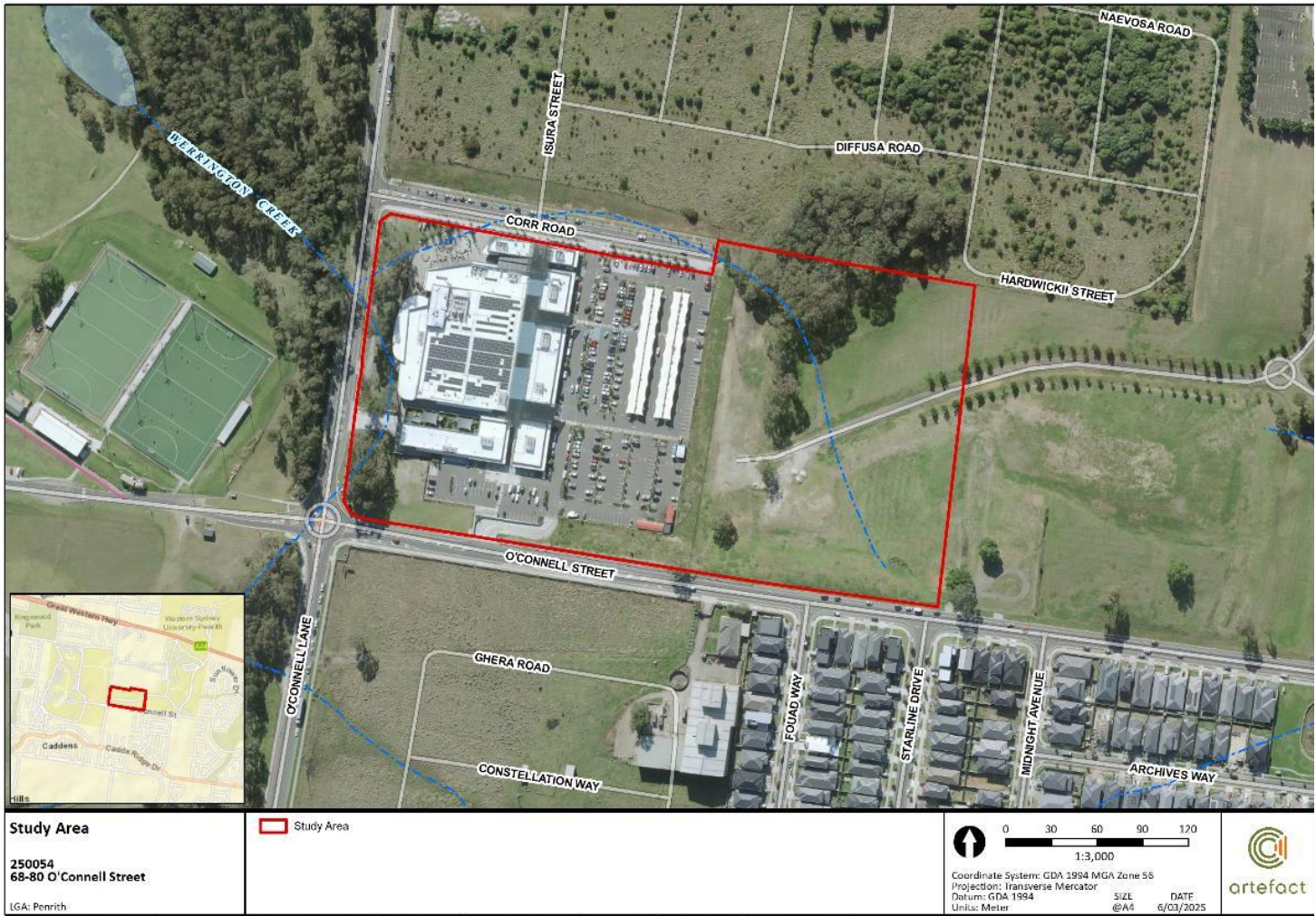


Figure 3: Study area (source: Artefact)

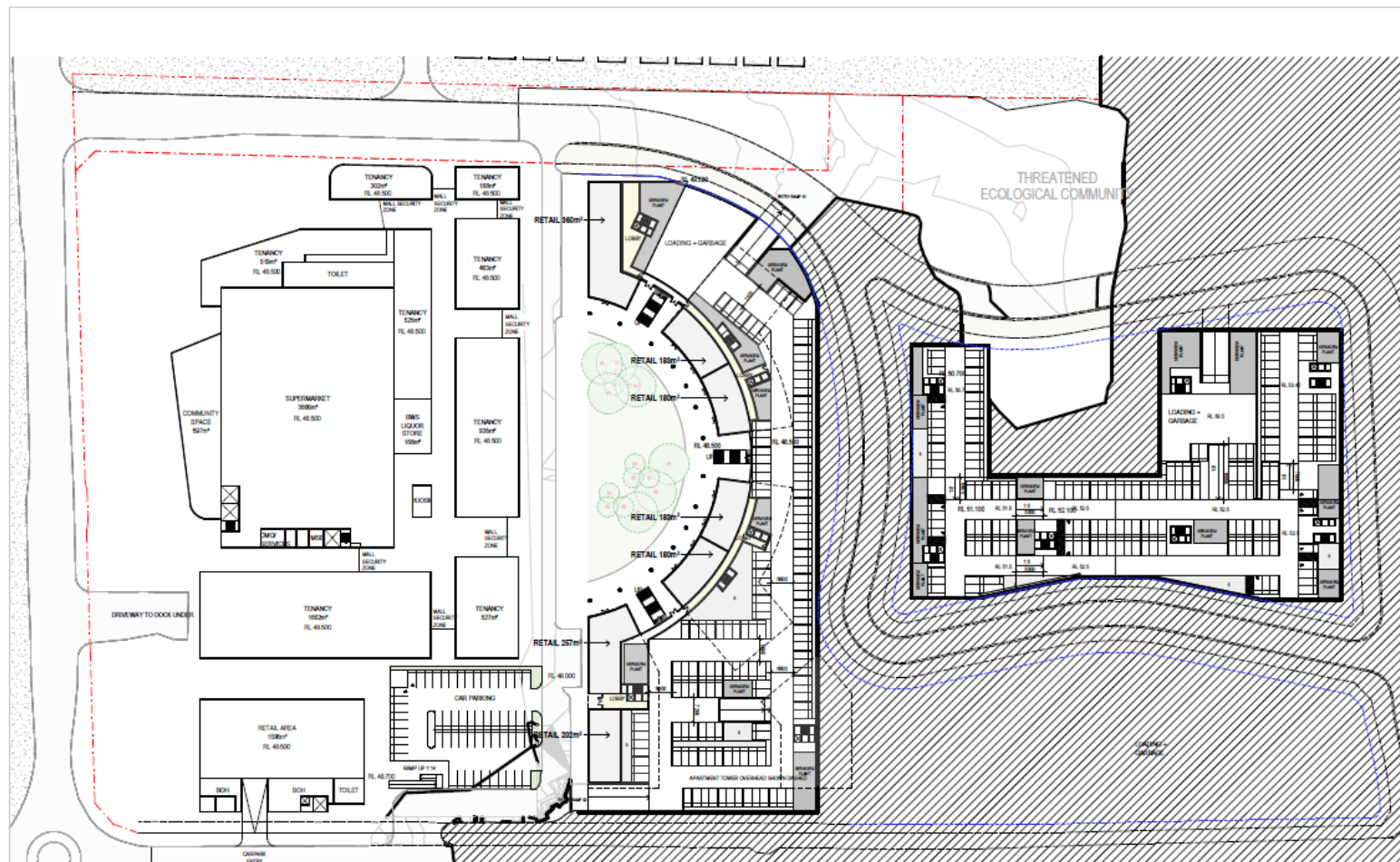


Figure 4: Site plan (source: Group GSA)

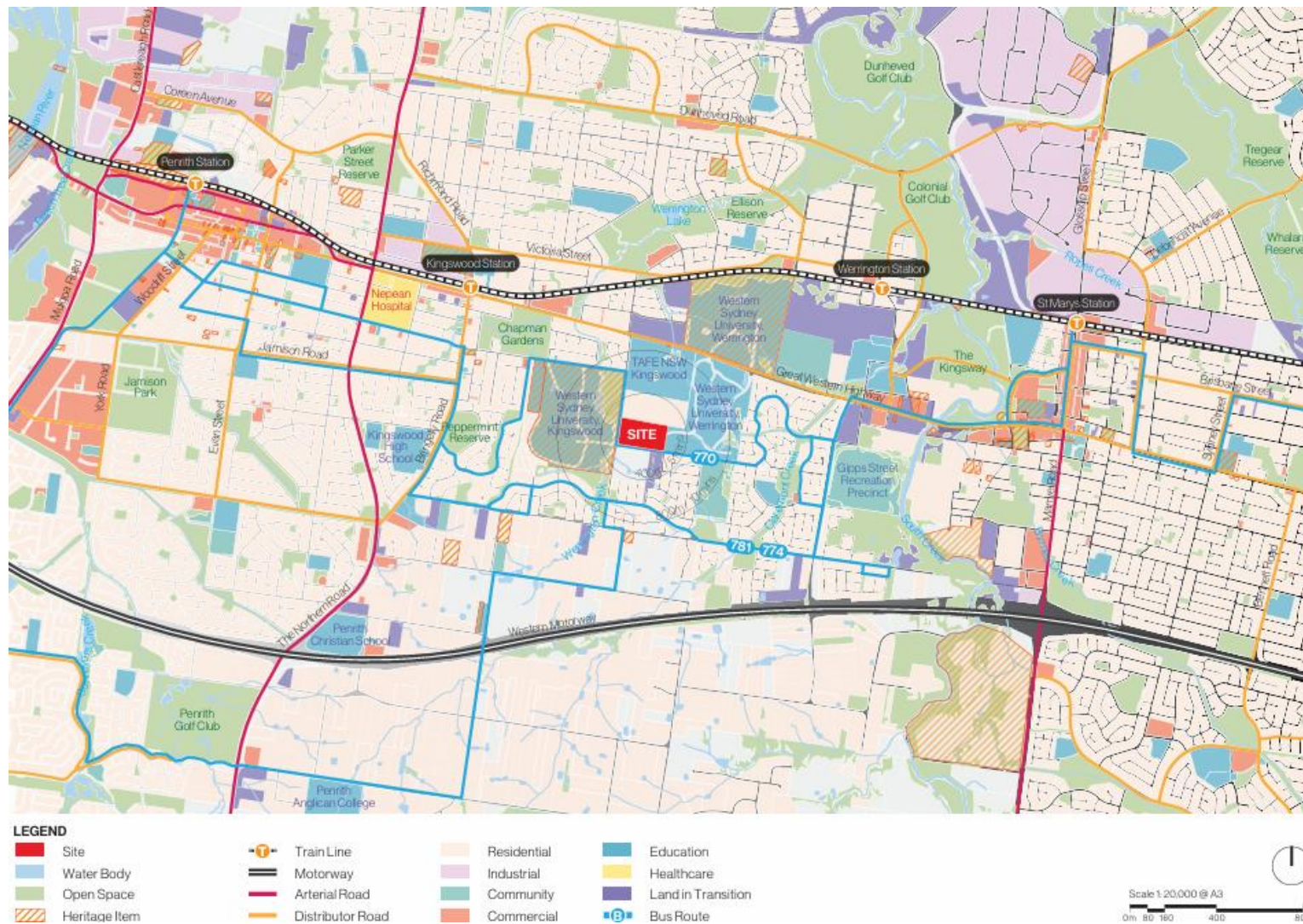


Figure 5: Site context (source: Group GSA)

2.6 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 Dharug and Darug.

2.6.1 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.

Identity: 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.

2.7 Cultural warning

Section 5 provides a summary of the landscape, history and culture of the Aboriginal people of the Dharug area, it includes information collated from colonial sources and should be read with this in mind.

The history has images and names of deceased people and contains words, descriptions and terms which reflect authors' views, or those of the period in which the content was created but are not considered appropriate today.

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

2.8 Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property

Artefact has prepared this Connecting with Country Report for the 68-80 O'Connell Street, Caddens 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 Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) must be protected at all times.

The following best practice ICIP guidelines from the *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (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 ICIP 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, ICIP 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.

2.9 Authorship and acknowledgements

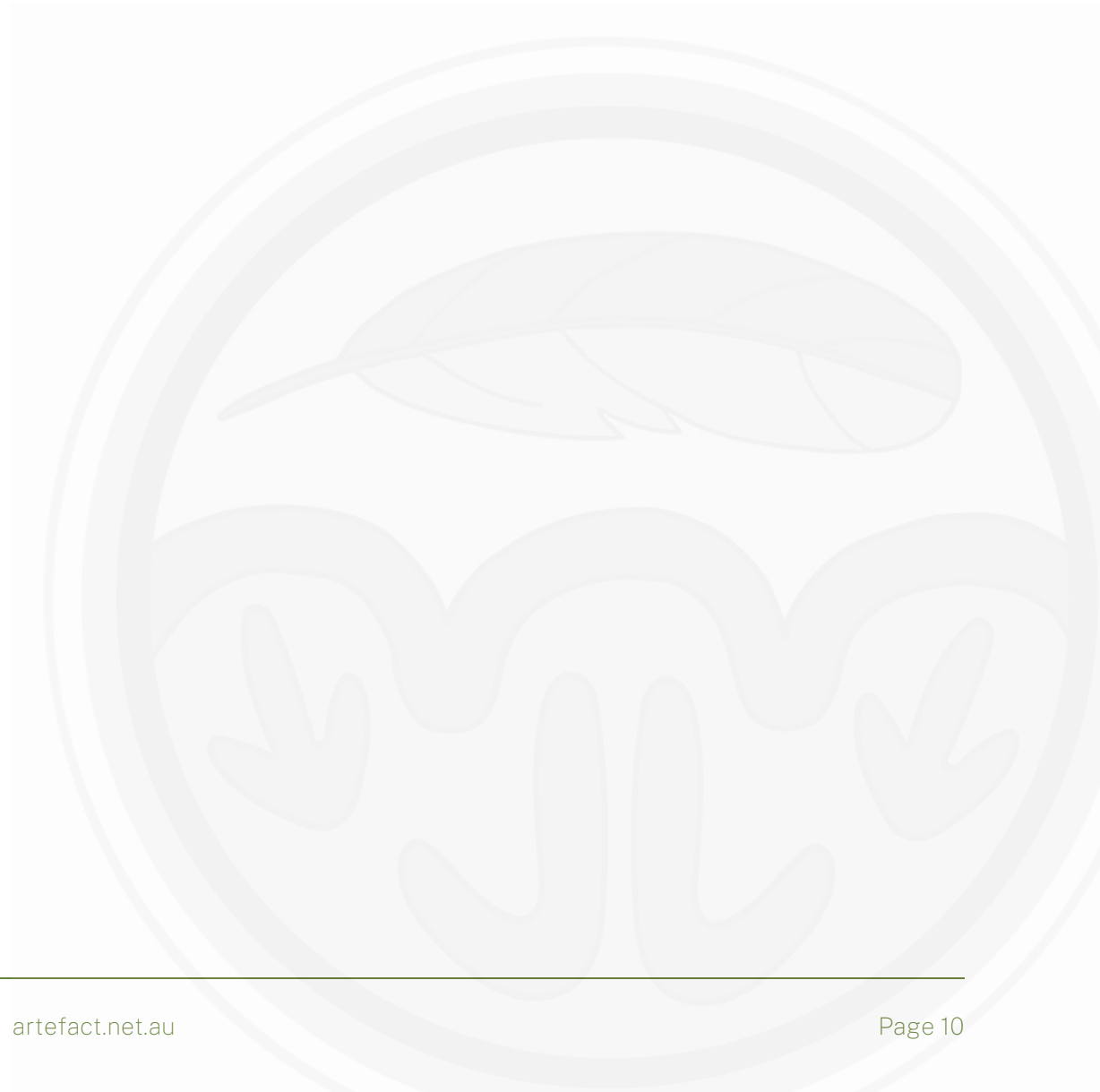
This report has been prepared by Alexandra Gaffikin (Senior Associate, Artefact), Hannah Matagia and Katrina Eckford (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officers, Artefact), and Stephen Gapps (Historian), with input and review from Carolyn MacLulich (Principal, Artefact).

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



Figure 6: Aunty Vicky Slater and Aunty Helen Slater with Lisa-Maree Carrigan, Group GSA, 7 March 2025 (source: Artefact)

3. GANSW CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK



3.1 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.

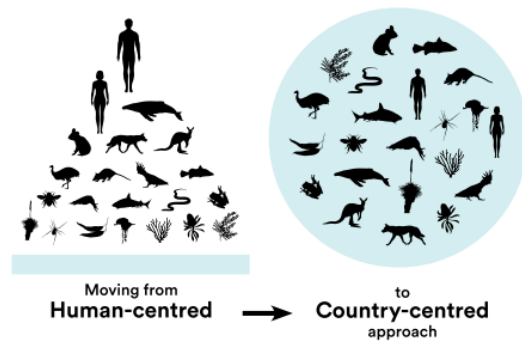


Figure 7: Human-centred or Country-centred approach (GANSW Connecting with Country, 2023)

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 8: 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.

3.1.1 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.¹ 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.

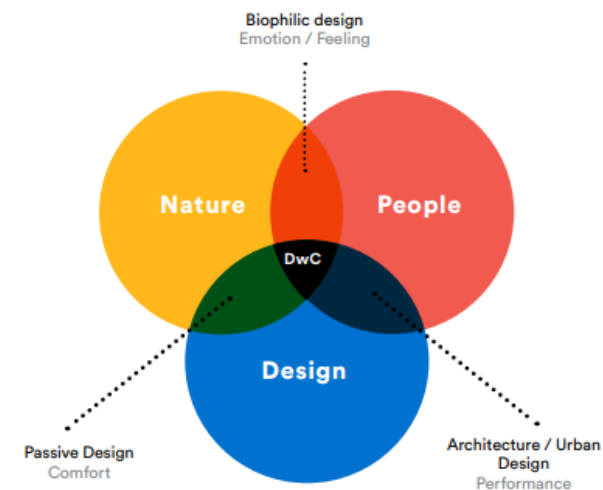
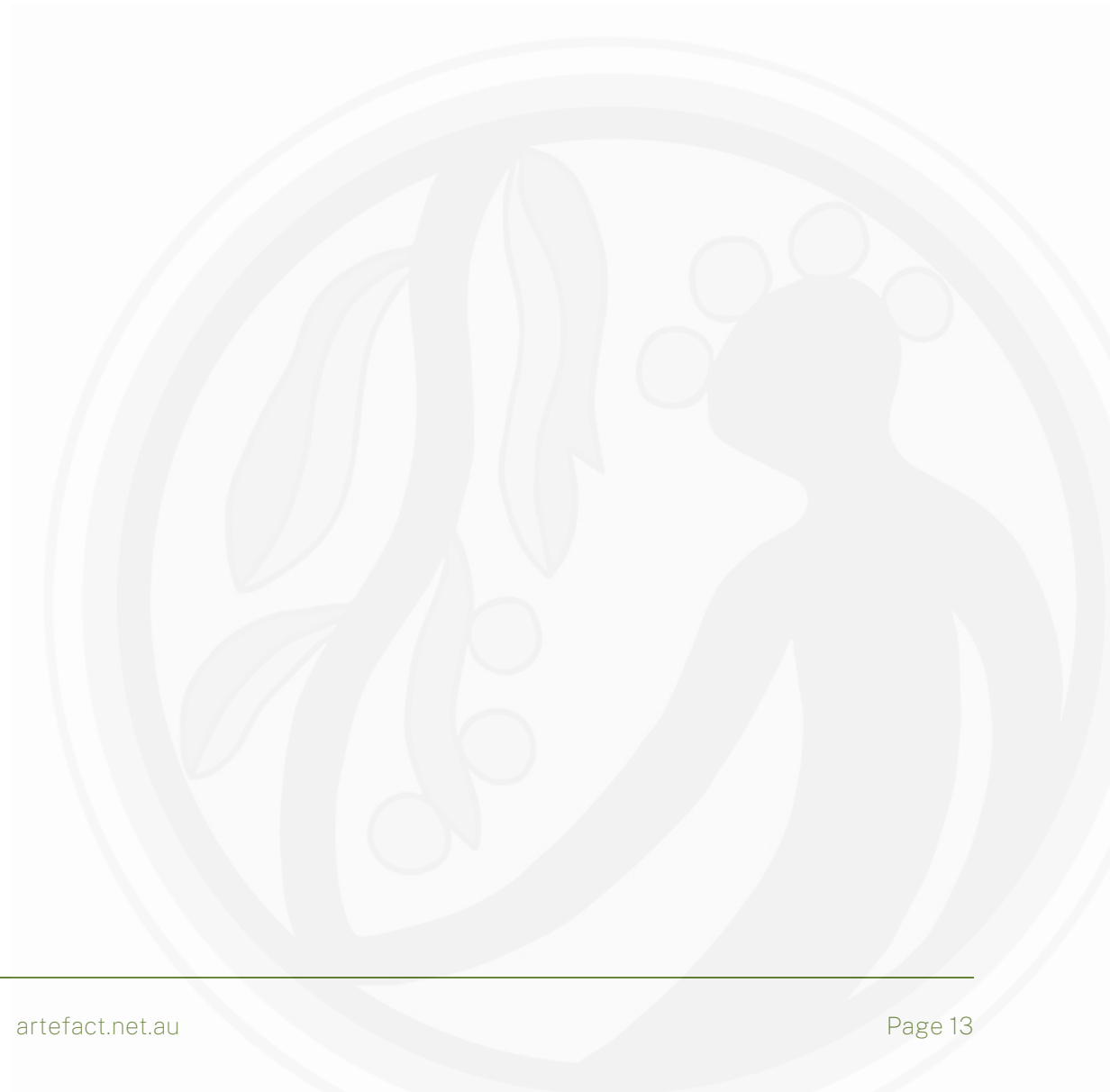


Figure 9: Elements of Designing with Country. Source: GANSW Designing with Country Discussion paper. Considering Country

¹GANSW, 2020b.

4. CONSIDERING COUNTRY



4.1 What is Country?

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

Aunty Vicky Slater, 14 February 2025

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.

Country is everything – all of us Aboriginal people have connection to the waterways and lands. We look back to our ancestors and what they have done and that connection has continued all the way through.

Kayelene Slater, 30 May 2024

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.

'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

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'² Therefore, a person's identity and personal value cannot be separated from Country and is connected to all elements around them. A person's actions can positively or negatively affect all aspects of Country, including themselves.

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

Aunty Helen Slater, 14 February 2025



Figure 10: Interrelationships between Country, community and individuals (GANSW Connecting with Country, 2023)

² GANSW 2023. Connecting with Country Framework

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.

'Country is water, beaches, spiritual connection and the animals that are all entwined.'

Pearl Depoma, visit to Dharug Country 30 May 2024

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.

'Country is home'

Jandamarra Bryant, 14 February 2025

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.

5. ABORIGINAL HISTORIES OF THE AREA

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the history and culture of the Aboriginal people of the Caddens area. This section includes information collated from colonial sources and should be read with this in mind. It shows images and names of deceased people and contains descriptions and terms which reflect those of the period in which the content was created but are not considered appropriate today.

5.2 Aboriginal Sydney

Many Aboriginal people, like other Indigenous or First Nations people around the world, have been living on Country for 'time immemorial' – that they have always been here, and their origins lie in the creation of the land and animals. As Sydney Elder and Wiradjuri activist Auntie Jenny Munro expresses:

'...from time immemorial, we believe as Aboriginal people, Australia has been here from the first sunrise, our people have been here along with the continent, with the first sunrise. We know our land was given to us by Baiami, we have a sacred duty to protect that land'

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.³

³ 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

⁴ 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

Archaeological evidence of Aboriginal people living in the Sydney region from Shaw's Creek west of the Dyarubbin (Nepean) River is dated to around 14,000 years ago and numerous other sites in the area have been dated to 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.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 ago⁵.

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

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).

⁵ 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.

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.⁶

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 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.⁷

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.⁸

With several rivers and estuarine coastal areas, the Sydney region sustained a comparatively large population, unlike more arid inland areas. 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.⁹

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.¹⁰

⁶ 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. A frequently used indication of Country is language identity. However, far more complex factors are known to have often taken precedence over language in determining Aboriginal people's definition of Country. See 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. There is debate on the extent and name for the language itself, some preferring to use 'The Sydney Language.' Watkin Tench observed that though the coastal and inland men he met conversed and understood each other, many words for common things bore no similarity while other words were only slightly different (1793 [2004], *A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson*, p. 122)..

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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).

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ Tench, 1793 [2004], *A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson*, p. 82, 230; Kohen, 1985, *Aborigines in the west*, p. 9; Attenbrow, 2010, *Sydney's Aboriginal past*, p. 41.



Fishing hooks crafted by Aboriginal communities living around Sydney Harbour, John White, 1790.¹¹

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.¹²

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 colonial 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.¹³

¹¹ 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>

¹² 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.

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

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. 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.¹⁴

5.3 Dharug Country

Mulgoa Creek begins near Luddenham and flows generally north, parallel to the Nepean River, passing Wallacia and Mulgoa villages to the west as the Nepean River takes a wide western bend. The creek meets the river at Glenmore Park just south of Penrith. The watershed of a small ridgeline at Luddenham between several north running creeks may have been part of a traditional travel route for Aboriginal people of the area. To the east of Luddenham, Badgery's Creek, Kemp's Creek and Eastern Creek all flow into Wianamatta-South Creek, which flows north through St Marys and meets the Nepean River near Windsor. While not all the creek lines appear to have been directly associated with Dharug groups, many people were later described by Europeans such as the 'South Creek Tribe' or the 'Mulgoa Tribe'.

While the traditional name of the Nepean River upstream from Penrith (as opposed to the Hawkesbury-Dyarubbin north of Penrith) is not certain, it may have been a shared name, Dyarubbin, which is known to have been used by Dharug and Darkinyung people to the north. The area around modern-day Penrith was known as Murru-Murak (mountain pathway). Mulgoa is one of the many surviving Aboriginal place names across the Sydney region. Mulgoa Creek was also transcribed by colonists as 'Mulgoie' and 'Mulgoey' and 'Mulgo' was the 'native name for a swan'. Apparently, Mulgoa 'marked the boundary between the two major linguistic tribes in the area, the Dharug to the north and east and the Gandangara to the south and west'. Gandangara people were often referred to by early colonists as the 'Mountains Tribe' and lived mainly to the south and west of the Nepean River, though there is evidence for shared hunting and ceremonial occasions on the north and eastern side of the river.¹⁵

Dharug people who lived throughout the early 1800s around what is known as the suburb of Caddens today were known locally as the 'Mulgoa Tribe' and to the east near St Marys, the 'South Creek Tribe'. The low-lying valley around Mulgoa Creek was rich with food resources and it is claimed to have been 'the route along which different tribes travelled when attending ceremonies'. In 1914 Gandangara man Werriberrie (William Russell) recalled 'Gundungurra' people travelling to 'Regentville', just north of Mulgoa, to meet with Dharug people. According to a local historian, in 1890 the 'deserted burial place of an Aboriginal tribe' marked by carved trees could be seen on the banks of the creek near Glenmore Park.¹⁶

¹⁴ 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*.

¹⁵ For the suggestion the Dyarubbin may have been a shared name see Karskens et al., 'Dyarubbin: Mapping Aboriginal history, culture, stories' (available online). In this historical overview, the Local Aboriginal Land Council spelling 'Gandangara' is used unless where noted. According to Smith and Jennings, 'the territory of Gundungurra (Gandangara) speaking people encompassed the catchment of the Wollondilly--Cox's River system and some adjacent areas west of the Great Dividing Range ... what is now referred to as the 'Southern Blue Mountains'.

Smith and Jennings, 'The petroglyphs of Gundungurra Country', p. 241. See Gapps, *Cabrogal to Fairfield* pp. 30-33 for an overview of historical information on shared boundaries between Gandangara and Dharug Country. Murru-Murak is noted by Murray and White as the term for the Nepean district, undoubtedly based on Nah Doong's testimony. Murray and White, *Dharug & Dungaree*, p. 20

¹⁶ MPA, *Mulgoa! Mulgoa!*, 1988, pp. 1-2. Russell, 'My Recollections', 1914 p. 1. It has been suggested the Gommerigal-tongarra lived at South Creek and the Boorooboorongal along the Nepean River from Castlereagh to Richmond, and that the Booroogoorang (Burraborang) were

5.4 The colonists and galgala

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. 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'.¹⁷

Like much of the fringes of the Sydney basin, the initial impact of colonial occupation on traditional landowners during the 1790s and early 1800s was (after the catastrophe of smallpox in 1789) minimal, and mainly consisted of transitory 'exploring parties' and pastoral land seekers. The first major impact of colonisation on the people who had lived in and around the Mulgoa Valley for millennia was the granting of Mulgoa peoples' land to NSW Corps officer turned pastoralist William Cox in 1809. Cox had a house built 'half way along the valley on a spur overlooking the creek, sometime around 1811'. After he completed the Western Road to Bathurst in 1815 and took a growing interest in taking stock across the mountains to the Bathurst Plains, Cox's three sons used 'The Cottage' as it was called, to 'develop their own holdings in the valley' including 'Winbourne' in 1824, 'Glenmore' in 1825, and 'Fernhill' in 1842.¹⁸

Gundangarra who may have lived along the southern part of Emu Plains. Murray and White, *Dharug & Dungaree*, p. 20

¹⁷ 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.

5.5 Wianamatta

From the early 1800s, some of the new landholders began to employ the Aboriginal people they had dispossessed as workers on their estates. At Samuel Marsden's estate 'Mamre' at South Creek, a 'Black Jemmy' was recorded working for Marsden and in 1809 he was rewarded for help provided during a flood. This was almost certainly 'Creek Jemmy' or Nurragingy, who was later called the 'Chief of the South Creek Tribe'.¹⁹

Although it remains difficult to identify the areas of clan groups around Western Sydney due to the colonists inability to identify them, it has been suggested that the Gomerrigal-Tongarra clans lived around the Wianamatta-South Creek area. According to researcher Jim Kohen, this group had 'rights to the ridges at Plumpton and the gravels of Eastern Creek' and from these areas they used red silcrete rocks to make sharp flaked tools.²⁰

It seems that by the 1820s Aboriginal people who had survived the decimation of smallpox and colonisation in western Sydney, as well as attempts to 'civilise' them at the Black's Town Native Institution, grouped together and found Wianamatta - South Creek to be a useful, resource-rich place to continue traditional living while working on nearby farms.

There were certainly traditional gatherings and ceremonies conducted in the area at the same time farms were being established across Western Sydney. Emily MacLaurin described a meeting place on South Creek at Mamre at a point where '...the Creek takes in a small stream from the west, the right bank of which reaches into the creek in a narrow finger' and

¹⁸ Walsh and Robinson, *St Thomas' Church*, p. 1

¹⁹ Karskens, *People of the River*, p. 240

²⁰ See <https://penrithhistory.com/st-marys/> Kohen initially identified a group 'Wianamattagal' at South Creek but it seems this is an assumption that the place would have had a clan group as there is no further evidence of this. Kohen, 'The Aborigines of Western Sydney', p. 4

apparently gatherings or ceremonies continued to be held here for some time into the early 1800s. The MacLaurin family who lived at Mamre also asserted that the bodies of the dead were not buried, but wrapped in bark and placed on platforms elevated in the branches of trees.²¹



Figure 11: 'Fall on So[uth] Creek near Penrith, N.S. Wales' in Dr Doyle's sketch book, ca. 1862-1863 / John Thomas Doyle & Samuel Thomas Gill (source: PXA 1983, ML SLNSW, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/nQR2plX1>)

Although they had always maintained a camp on or around the Mamre estate, the Rev. Samuel Marsden sought to encourage Aboriginal people to work for him in exchange for food and clothing.

By 1835 the Quaker missionary James Backhouse wrote in his journal after a visit to Mamre that '...the South Creek Natives may be considered as half-domesticated, and they often assist in the agricultural operations of the settlers.' Backhouse was also impressed by the fact that the wife of their unnamed Aboriginal guide (who had been obtained by Marsden) could read, having been 'educated in a school, formerly kept for the Natives, at Parramatta'. The next day, Backhouse travelled on to Penrith, and his next guide was 'another South Creek Black, named Simeon'.

Backhouse reported that Simeon's wife 'was killed, about two years ago, by some of those whom he termed "Wild Natives"'. As Backhouse, who had little idea of Aboriginal protocols when entering others' Country, reported it: 'We tried in vain to persuade this man to accompany us to Wellington Valley; he did not like to go... These people are afraid of other tribes of their own race'.²²

The road to the west across the Blue Mountains had become a significant travel route as the Bathurst Plains were opened up for pastoralists by Governor Brisbane from 1821. The road crossed South Creek and the Nepean River and travellers often noted the groups of Aboriginal people they met at both locations. Another visitor to the area in the 1830s was the famous naturalist Charles Darwin. Darwin passed through Mamre in January 1836, and was impressed by the '...good humour and superior hunting skills' of the Aboriginal people he encountered around Penrith.²³

²¹ See also 'Penrith city history', <https://penrithhistory.com/st-marys/>

²² See Backhouse, 'Account of a Journey from Parramatta Across the Blue Mountains', in Mackaness, *Fourteen Journeys Over the Blue Mountains of New South Wales 1813-1841* (1835)

²³ See <https://penrithhistory.com/st-marys/>; Darwin in Mackaness, *Fourteen Journeys Over the Blue Mountains of New South Wales 1813-1841*, (1836)

Wianamatta-South Creek was also a favoured location for colonial artists such as Charles Rodius and S. T. Gill.

Despite Europeans calling the people who lived there the 'South Creek Tribe', the creek long had a prior name – Wianamatta. According to local historians, the locality of St Marys was 'called Wianamatta by aborigines'. Dharug people today know it as 'mother creek' or 'mother place' - *wiana* meaning mother and *matta* meaning place. In William Dawes notes of the Sydney language, largely given to Dawes by the Aboriginal woman Patyegarang around 1790, *Biana* was the word for father and *Wiana* for mother. While some researchers have pointed out that the 1820s 'Returns of Aboriginal Natives' note 'Wianamatta' as South Creek, it is unclear if, as has been suggested, this was also the clan group name of 'Wianamattagal'.²⁴

The word Wianamatta was later given a very different meaning by Europeans. The geological term Wianamatta shale to describe the rocks that overlie the Sydney sandstone across areas of the Sydney Basin was first used in the 1840s as these rocks could be clearly seen in the South Creek area, and thus the Aboriginal name for the creek was used. This term was taken up much later by geologists in the 1950s, but with no understanding of the meaning of the word Wianamatta beyond that it was the Aboriginal name for South Creek.²⁵



Figure 12: 'Bobby Nirgengay, So[uth] Creek – Windsor' by Charles Rodius in Charles Rodius portraits of New South Wales Aboriginal Australians, ca. 1844 (source: PXA 1005, ML, SLNSW <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/Yr8RqXNn>)

²⁴ 'When St. Marys was "Wianamatta"', Nepean Times, 21 October 1948, p. 2; 'ST. MARYS, ONCE SOUTH CREEK, ONCE WIANAMATTA', Nepean Times, 29 July 1948, p. 1; Nepean Times, 10 August 1961, p. 10; Nepean Times, 17 February 1949, p. 2; 'Wianamatta – mother creek South Creek', Blacktown memories, <https://blacktownmemories.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/745?keywords=> ; 'Wianamatta South

Creek turning', <https://www.oonaghsherrard.com/projects/southcreekwianamattaturning/> ; Dawes, Notebooks, 1791, p. 35; Kohen, Dharuganora, pp. 18-19

²⁵ Lovering, J. F., 1954. 'The stratigraphy of the Wianamatta Group Triassic System, Sydney Basin'. Records of the Australian Museum Number 23 (4), pp. 169-210.

5.6 Resistance wars

Despite many histories of early colonial Sydney that have downplayed resistance warfare across Sydney, Aboriginal people did not simply allow the colonists to occupy their lands. They fought back. As the British colony expanded out from Sydney Cove during the 1790s and early 1800s, conflict that often spiralled into resistance warfare occurred, generally as closer settlement threatened Aboriginal peoples' traditional economies and lives, or colonists committed crimes and 'depredations' on Aboriginal women in particular.

The first signs of major conflict on the Cumberland Plain west of Sydney Cove was when the British colonists moved to occupy Parramatta in late 1788. As historian Grace Karskens notes, Governor Phillip's attitude towards the Dharug people at Parramatta was strikingly different to his more friendly attempts to gain the confidence of people such as Bennelong around Sydney Cove – 'there were no meetings, no dancing, no gifts or high hopes of "living in amity" ...the settlement of Parramatta was a true invasion, with well-organised military defences.'²⁶

The colonists were correct in their fears of conflict and the threat Aboriginal warriors posed to their precious stock and maize crops that were spreading out into other small settlements at Prospect Hill and 'The Ponds', two miles northwest of Parramatta. 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.²⁷

Colonists moved to the fertile riverbanks of the Dyarubbin-Hawkesbury River from 1794 and conflict soon broke out there. Ongoing resistance warfare came to a head in 1797 when Pemulwuy led a large force of warriors into the township of Parramatta itself. In what has become known as the Battle of Parramatta, 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' but 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.²⁸

Even after the death of Pemulwuy, conflict and resistance continued across the Sydney region. In May 1804 conflict erupted once more. At Wianamatta-South Creek near present day Llandilo, some farms were totally stripped of produce by large groups of Aboriginal people and the farms of Robert Cuddy (Cuddie) and William Crumby were burned. Along the Hawkesbury River raids on corn fields were ruining settlers and some were forced to leave. The *Sydney Gazette* newspaper called it 'wanton warfare'.²⁹ Another Government Order banning all Aboriginal people from entering the

²⁶ Karskens 2017; Philip, Journal, 1793, p. 299. For an overview of the military occupation of Parramatta see Gapps, *The Sydney Wars*, pp. 46-48

²⁷ Gapps, *The Sydney Wars*, 2018, pp. 96-7, 104-5. Collins, *An Account*, Vol 1, pp. 304-5

Collins, *An Account*, p. 305; 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.

²⁹ Gapps, *The Sydney Wars*, pp. 160-162

'Grounds of Dwellings of any Settler' was issued in 1805. However there was much resistance to this and Pemulwuy's son Tedbury had united a band that continued to harass travellers, kill stock and raid farms, until Tedbury was shot in 1810.³⁰

Dharug and Gandangara people along the Nepean River to the southwest of Sydney had been relatively immune from closer settlement such as had occurred near Windsor further north along the Hawkesbury in the 1790s. In late 1810, after a tour of the entire fringe of the Sydney Basin, Governor Macquarie declared the districts of Minto, Airds and Appin to the south of Liverpool, open for settlement.³¹

A period of successive dry summers in 1812 and 1813, in February 1814 George Cox's farm at Mulgoa had, according to the *Sydney Gazette* newspaper, been 'attacked several times' by 'mountain natives'. Cox's workers had been 'compelled to defend themselves with their muskets'. Then, just to the south, John Thomas Campbell's workers came under attack at Campbell's property 'Shancomore', near Wallacia, by what was reported as a force of 'nearly 400' warriors. Campbell's overseer William Reardon was 'speared through the shoulder' and died the next day. According to a witness, Henry Sells, every farm along that part of the Nepean River had been robbed of potatoes, pumpkin and peaches in the last month.³²

During 1814 other attacks occurred at Bringelly, Appin and Camden. At the Cowpastures in mid-1814, settlers were deserting their farms and 'sought shelter in securer places'. Rumours had reached the colonists that the Dharawal and Gandangara were uniting forces and wanted to 'kill all the whites before them'. With few soldiers to spare, Governor Macquarie had

ordered 'civilian associations' to be formed and local Magistrates such as Henry Moore at Liverpool established 'corps-de-gardes'.

A major attack by warriors in the region did not eventuate, but conflict continued. In July at Bringelly, settlers Maria Bentley and James Daley had two of their children killed in what seems a retribution attack or 'payback' for a woman and two children who had been killed at Mallaty Creek near Appin.³³

Once more in 1815 on Hannibal Macarthur's farm at Bringelly a convict overseer was speared and killed and his wife wounded. The *Sydney Gazette* newspaper well understood the reasons for growing conflict;

*The kangaroo has almost disappeared ... the opossum long substituted as their chief dependence has at length become scarce ... and whence those evils originated, but in the clearing of the immense forests which formerly abounded in the wild animals they had lived upon.*³⁴

In December, conflict broke out again and continued for several months. Elizabeth Macarthur's Cowpastures farms were under regular attack, with shepherds' huts being burnt and destroyed. At George Pamer's farm at Bringelly, in March 1816 a group of warriors raided and plundered the huts. A party of 7 convict farm workers that was cobbled together to chase and attack them were themselves surrounded and 5 of them killed. Soon after, Fowler's farm on the Nepean was raided and a stock keeper at Cow Pastures killed. At the Lewis farm William Lewis' wife and a convict worker were killed.

At Razorback a scratch force of militia were routed by warriors and a hasty defence organized from Macquarie Grove near Kirkham. When more of the

³⁰ Gapps, *Cabrogal to Fairfield*, 2010, p. 100-101; Karskens *The Colony*, 2010, p. 225

³¹ See Gapps, *The Sydney Wars*, esp. pp. 196-201

³² *Gazette*, 14 May 1814.

³³ *West Memoirs*, 59; James Daley memorial, SARNSW 3017, 4/1823, 382-4. A strong party of constables and armed convicts guided by local bushman John Warby went out in search of the

supposed offenders named 'Goondel, Bettagallie, Murrah, Yellaman and Wallah' but after scouring the area between Appin and Mulgoa for three weeks returned empty handed. See Gapps, *The Sydney Wars*, pp. 209-210

³⁴ Macquarie to Bathurst 24 March 1815 HRA I, VIII, 467; *Sydney Gazette*, 5 August 1815

Macarthur's shepherds were killed, Governor Macquarie was spurred into action and set off the largest military campaign in the history of Sydney that culminated in the Appin Massacre of April 17 1816.³⁵

5.7 Surviving colonial Sydney

By the 1820s resistance warfare had ceased in the Sydney region and Aboriginal people around Mulgoa were reported to be working on the Cox's estates, rather than raiding them.

Although it is difficult to know exact and often fluctuating numbers of people from musters, census material and blanket returns, in 1828 only 15 Aboriginal people were noted as living at Mulgoa. Some were named, such as 'Jenny Mulgowy' (Mulgoa) who was five years old when she went to the Native Institution in 1818, possibly under the urging of William Cox. In 1833 a 'Mulgoa Joe' was described as 'King of the Tribe' then at Wianamatta-South Creek. It seems the area offered for a time a 'semi-traditional' lifestyle with seasonal work on properties such as the Coxes, at least until the 1840s.³⁶

Like Mulgoa, Dharug people who lived in what is now the Luddenham area encountered travellers, land seekers and surveyors from the 1790s to the early 1800s. The Botanist George Caley led an expedition in 1803 that passed through the Mulgoa Valley, Badgerys Creek, Bringelly and South Creek. Caley was guided by the Aboriginal man 'Daniel' Moowattin. Moowattin was born near Parramatta and from the age of 14 he assisted Caley by acting as his interpreter, guide, 'plant getter' and hunter on Caley's botanizing expeditions around Sydney.³⁷

In the 1830s and 1840s, there was still a strong Aboriginal presence in the area that had not ended with the invasion, warfare, massacres and disease that had swept across the region. Aboriginal men were reported showing their boomerang-throwing skills to onlookers in Thompson Square, Windsor. Hawkesbury resident Michael Long recalled 'a fight between two tribes at Yarramundi' in the 1840s. In the 1830s 'large corroborees and initiation ceremonies' were noted at the 'Emu Ferry bora ground.' Corroborees and 'contests' were described as occurring in a paddock opposite Richmond's 'Welcome Inn' during the 1840s. A later 1930 report recalled 'three distinct aboriginal camping grounds at Emu (Plains) – one at Mr Hollier's property, another on the site of Mr Innes's, and another at Mr Cashen's orchard. Another resident, Alfred Smith, recalled Aboriginal people from Putty, Colo and Comleroy Road coming into Windsor for the Queen's Birthday each year and selling 'wild currants' at 'sixpence for a quart'.³⁸

In 1914 a Penrith resident 'Mrs Barlow', recalling the 1830s said 'the blacks were in droves, and held corroborees on the banks of the Nepean ... on, or near "Wilson's Flat", hard by the river. She recalled that it was a boys initiation site. Mrs Barlow also recalled 'Woolloboi' and 'Black Stevey and Nellie', who she recalled as a 'muscular woman'.³⁹

Another recollection from 1899 by a writer in the *Nepean Times* 'Pialli', suggested that 'not far' from Penrith was a 'creek mostly composed of chains of water holes (or gilgais as the blacks call them) in the dry weather.' 'Pialli' recalled a clearing on this creek where there was 'an ancient Boro ground' where initiation ceremonies were conducted and in the water holes lived a bunyip. In the 'vicinity of this particular waterhole used to be the main camping ground' and here 'the writer' had found 'stone weapons such

³⁵ Gapps, *The Sydney Wars*, pp. 209-223

³⁶ MPA, *Mulgoal Mulgoal*, 1988, pp. 1-2; 'The first Killarney Races' *The Hawkesbury and Windsor Gazette*, 11 July 1896 p. 6; Brook and Kohen, *The Parramatta Native Institution*, pp. 71, 74, 89

³⁷ Smith, 'Moowattin, Daniel (1791-1816)', ADB online, 2005

³⁸ Karskens, *People of the River*, pp. 303-5; 'The Blacks at Emu Plain', *Nepean Times*, 24 May 1930, p. 1

³⁹ 'Reminiscences of early Penrith', *Nepean Times*, 23 May 1914, p. 8

as axe-heads and club-heads'. While several creeks could fit the description, Wianamatta-South Creek seems likely.⁴⁰

In 1835 a 'Grand Corrobory' (Corroboree) was reported in *The Colonist* newspaper as having been held on the Nepean River, probably at Emu Plains, as the newspaper report noted the Blue Mountains 'rose in primeval grandeur immediately behind the encampment'. The gathering was an important one. *The Colonist* newspaper reported that it was 'on a scale of extent and magnificence never before witnessed in the colony' with people 'in attendance from all parts of the territory'. The entire performance was undoubtedly addressing the white onlookers, with various characters and scenes critiquing the invasion and colonisation of Aboriginal lands. '

Yellamundy ... from the Hawkesbury ... was in the character of a native mourner, his body being pipe-clayed all over'. According to the reporter he appeared to be 'mourning for the loss of his hunting grounds, and the independence of his nation — the unfortunate but unavoidable consequence of European colonization'. Yellamundy pointedly said that 'White fellow sit down all about; black fellow murry [very] miserable!'

'Jibbinwy' was also from the Hawkesbury and 'was in the character of a native warrior; his face, limbs, arms, and breast being ornamented with streaks of red paint' and his 'military evolutions' reminded the reporter 'a European [military] review'. This performance obviously referred to the resistance of warriors to the colonists.

The next performance was from 'Terribalong, from Broken Bay' who was 'in the character of a colonial Barrister'. In an ironic scene that showed incredible insight into the centre of colonial authority now ruling Aboriginal lives, as the reporter noted;

'His gown was a cloak of bandicoot skins, and his bushy hair was tied up tastefully with native grass, in imitation of a wig. In the whole corrobory there was no character better sustained than this; for Terribalong's powers of imitation were admirable, and he successively and most successfully personated the whole Australian Bar [judges]'.

People had come to the gathering from the Hunter Valley, the Murrumbidgee River and the Bathurst Plains. This incredible theatre seems to have been a traditional gathering, but with a contemporary political critique of colonial society;

Yakabil, from the Murrumbidgee, and Black Boy, from Hunter's River, were both in the character of Colonial Attorneys, and, being somewhat forward, were going to address the Meeting, when Terribalong, personating the Attorney General, and insisting that they had no right to speak since the late division of the Bar, they were silenced, and turned out of the corrobory.

There could have been no misunderstanding of the irony when Windradyne, the Wiradjuri leader who had fought a bloody struggle during the Bathurst War of 1822-1824, next took the 'stage' dressed 'in the character of a free settler'.

Finally, the son of the famous Sydney Aboriginal man Bungaree, 'Young Bungary', donned 'his late father's old military surtout [surcoat] cocked hat and sash' and performed 'in the character of Governor Darling'. The performance on the banks of the Nepean River was a remarkable parody of colonial society. It undoubtedly forms part of the history of Aboriginal people's political struggles that continued through the twentieth century and beyond.⁴¹

⁴⁰ 'Pialli', 'Shadows of the Past', *Nepean Times*, 28 January 1899, p. 2

⁴¹ 'Grand Corrobory', *The Colonist* 9 April 1835 p. 4. ⁴¹ See Gapps, *Gudyarra. The first Wiradjuri War of Resistance – the Bathurst War, 1822-1824*, 2021

5.8 Struggle and survival

By the 1870s a member of the Cox family believed that 'so thoroughly has all trace of them [Aboriginal people] now disappeared'. This misconception was a common thread in local history of the area, noting that the 'last fullblood of the Mulgoa and Nepean people, an elderly lady known as Black Nellie died at Penrith early this [20th] century'. 'An old Aboriginal woman Nellie' was noted in 1896 as the 'last of the Castlereagh tribe' around Penrith. In 1914, the writer, artist and Penrith resident Sara Shand reminisced about Nellie, who in the 1880s had become 'firm friends' with her. However Nellie was patently not the 'last' of her tribe as she brought with her a young girl Angelina. Nellie told Shand that Nellie's 'real name was 'Nah Doongh' and that she was born in Penrith, which was called 'Moroo Moorack'.

Nah Doongh was from the 'Mulgoa Tribe' and in the 1880s she recalled as a young child living in present day Penrith (where in the 1880s the Burke farm was situated) before the Europeans arrived in the area. She then lived for many years with her husband John Budbury at Camden Park, a Macarthur family estate. She returned to Moroo Moorack (Penrith) in the 1860s with her husband and met Sara Shand after that. Shand noted that Nah Doongh used to sing what may well have been an ironic song about the large landowning Macarthurs, how 'All the land belong to Mr McCarthy'.⁴²



Figure 13: Image – Nah Doongh or 'Queen Nellie' (source: Penrith City Library - restrictions apply)

⁴² MPA, Mulgoal Mulgoal, 1988, p. 3; 'Police reports', *SRNSW* 4/7111, p. 23; 'Aborigines Protection Board', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 Jan 1896, p. 7; 'Black Nellie', *Nepean Times*, 18 July 1914, p. 3; Karskens, *People of the River*, pp. 364-5

In 1891 in the Nepean district (Penrith), eight adults were recorded and in the Central Cumberland (Parramatta and Liverpool) census 15 Aboriginal people, as well as 12 identified as 'half-caste' were reported. A number of these people were noted as 'living on a farm at Holsworthy'. It is difficult to estimate how many people were living in the Penrith area and surrounds. Records taken by the Aborigines Protection Board fluctuate year by year during the 1890s, often reflecting people moving around. Others who had married into European families often hid their heritage from the Aborigines Protection Board which, from 1883, had powers to remove children and take titled land away from Aboriginal people. In 1894 there were 51 people recorded at Penrith in 1892 and only 36 people listed at Penrith.⁴³

However these figures did not account for many other Aboriginal people who married non-Aboriginal people, or who managed to survive on the fringes of Sydney, away from the restrictions in more populated areas where racist policies were in place to take Aboriginal children away from their parents. Some were taken to missions far inland such as the Maloga Mission on the Murray River as the APB attempted to rid Sydney of its Aboriginal population. In some cases, the reverse occurred and children were taken from families as far away as Narrabri and Moree in western NSW and brought to Sydney to such places as the 'Children's Home' at Liverpool. Now known as the Stolen Generations, many of these people then grew up in western Sydney and many were never reunited with their parents and families.⁴⁴

Some Aboriginal men were able to avoid the reserves and missions by obtaining work such as shearing. One such was a man reported as 'Bundaburra Jack' who was arrested in Penrith in April 1902 before returning to his sheep station. He was sentenced to three months gaol for

drinking alcohol at a licensed premises – which had been made a crime for Aboriginal people.⁴⁵

By the late 1890s most people in Western Sydney who had survived the devastation of colonisation and then removals of the Aborigines Protection Board had congregated around two reserves – one at Sackville on the Hawkesbury River and the other at Plumpton on Lock family land across from the defunct Native's Institution at Blacktown – land that had been granted to Maria Lock's brother Colebee.

In 1898 the Aboriginal Protection Board was supplying rations to some of the families living on the Plumpton Reserve including those of Charles Lock. Other families included the Stubbings, Charles, Shaw and Anslicks. At both places, Aboriginal people had managed to hang on to small portions of land in their traditional Country. Christian missions were established at both locations which seemed to keep the APB at bay. However by 1914 the missionaries had ceased and at Sackville, people moved away from the reserve until it was closed in the 1940s.⁴⁶

At Plumpton, after Maria Lock's death in 1878 (her burial registration read 'Last of the Aboriginals from Blacktown') her lands at Liverpool and Blacktown had been divided equally among her surviving children, and were occupied by her descendants until 1920. In a terrible twist, after the Lock's had allowed a mission for Aboriginal people on their property, their freehold land was considered to be an Aboriginal reserve and was revoked by the Aborigines Protection Board. For Aboriginal families that had done everything to survive and be accepted (several of the Locks served in WWI)

⁴³ NSW Aboriginal Protection Board Report, 1891, p.8; NSW Aboriginal Protection Board Report, 1892, pp.8-9. Tobin, *The Dharug Story*, p. 7

⁴⁴ 'Welfare of Aboriginals' in *Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly NSW*, 1892-3, 8, p. 1122. See also 'Aborigines Protection Board Minute Books' SRNSW 1899-1920 and Kohen, *Dharuganora*, p. 38 who lists 26 Aboriginal people taken from Sydney to Maloga.

⁴⁵ 'From my notebook', *Nepean Times*, 5 April 1902, p. 8

⁴⁶ 'Aborigines Mission', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1900, p. 3; 'New South Wales Aborigines Mission', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 1900, 16 April 1901, p. 8, p. 5; 'Aborigines Mission', *Macleay Chronicle*, 9 May 1901, p. 5 'Australian Aborigines Mission', *The Methodist*, January 17 1914, p. 10

this stands as one of the cruellest blows of the racism that underpinned white Australia.⁴⁷

While the Locks and dozens of other families struggled to survive during the mid-twentieth century, in the 1920s and 1930s increasing numbers of people who considered Aboriginal people to have 'disappeared' from the Sydney region were scouring the rivers and creeks around western Sydney looking for 'relics' of Aboriginal occupation. A growing number of amateurs were searching for artwork and stone tools in the area. At the 'Staples estate' at Emu Plains for example, a cave with hand stencils was found by a Mr Bunyan, who had found similar works at Glenbrook. This led the Anthropological Society of Australia to urge Penrith Council to preserve rock art in several places.⁴⁸

During the Second World War, in 1942, 'The Church Missionary Society Home for Half-Castes' was established on Mulgoa Road at Mulgoa. It was set up by the Anglican Church to accommodate children up to 14 years of age who were removed from their Country by military orders issued through the Commonwealth Department of Native Affairs. Some of the children had been evacuated from Croker Island and Groote Eylandt. They were mainly from South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland and some were from far western New South Wales. The Church Missionary Society Home for Half-Castes closed around 1947. Some fathers later joined their wives and children, while some left Mulgoa to settle in Sydney. Most of the children however were taken to another mission – in South Australia. While initially accommodating the wartime evacuees, ultimately the mission did

not help them return to their families and communities. Instead, Mulgoa mission sent them further away.⁴⁹

By the 1940s criticism of government policies on Aboriginal people was growing. In 1949 the Labour Council of NSW voiced 'widespread indignation over the treatment of a number of half-caste children, removed from Mulgoa, NSW, to Adelaide and Alice Springs against the wishes of their parents and themselves'. In what was part of a growing movement for Aboriginal rights, the Labour Council said the 'Mulgoa incident' had 'drawn general attention to the state of oppression imposed on this section of the population'. Indeed, William Ferguson, the only Aboriginal member on the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1949, 'urged that the fight to protect the Mulgoa children should develop into a full-scale fight for a New Deal for all Aborigines'.⁵⁰

One young boy at the Mulgoa Mission went on to become the first Indigenous person to play for an English rugby league club. Born in Borroloola in the Northern Territory in 1933, Wally McArthur was a strong short-distance runner and played in the South Australian and Western Australian Rugby Leagues before taking up a contract in England. Between 1953 – 1959, McArthur played a total of 165 games on the wing with Rochdale, Blackpool, Salford and Workington Town. In 2008, McArthur was named in the Aboriginal Australian rugby league team of the century.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Brook and Kohen, *The Parramatta Native Institution and the Black Town*, 1991, pp. 37-44

⁴⁸ 'The Blacks at Emu Plains', *Nepean Times*, 24 May 1930, p. 1; 'Aboriginal Caves Penrith', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 March 1933, p. 10

⁴⁹ At Mulgoa the children and their mothers were cared for by Mrs Port, Miss Dove and Miss Alder, who had travelled from Roper River, along with Aboriginal women. Some of the younger children and their mothers were sent to Milleewa, an Anglican children's home in Ashfield, for six months in 1942. Others were sent to private homes. 'Church Missionary Society Home for

Half-Castes', <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01041b.htm>; 'Sydney (Mulgoa)', Bringing Them Home Report, <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/node/104>

⁵⁰ Tom Wright, 'Mulgoa Scandal', *Tribune*, 6 February 1949 p. 4; 'Mulgoa Scandal Shows Up Australia's Racial Policy', *Tribune*, 29 January 1949, p. 1; 'Our duty to the Abo', *The Land*, 28 January 1949, p. 1.

⁵¹ 'Vale Wally Macarthur', Men of League, online; <https://menofleague.com/vale-wally-mcarthur/>; 'Wally McArthur Marries in England. The gifted boy of Mulgoa Aboriginal mission', *Nepean Times*, 10 June 1954, p. 1



Figure 14: Image of the Mulgoa Mission (source: <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/objects/ND0000652.htm>)

5.9 Change and continuity in Western Sydney

From the 1960s the political voices of Aboriginal people continued to grow and white Australians began to understand the racism of past government policies and public attitudes toward Aboriginal people. With the lessening of restrictions on movement, especially after the citizenship referendum of 1967, many Aboriginal people came to Sydney looking for work and opportunities. While most went to the established Redfern community in the city, the western suburbs of Sydney also saw a significant growth in numbers of Aboriginal people, particularly with new suburbs such as Mount Druitt offering cheap and assisted housing. While numbers of descendants of Dharug people were also now able to assert their heritage, other

Aboriginal people moving into the area began to form new attachments to places such as Wianamatta-South Creek and the surrounding bushlands.⁵²

Descended from the Yuin people of the South Coast, Syd Cunningham grew up in Redfern and La Perouse, first working selling newspapers and then driving wool carts. He also served in the Army and RAAF in Papua New Guinea during World War II. Syd was moved to help improve conditions for Aboriginal communities and he worked for many years as co-ordinator with the Western Districts Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, based in St Marys. For over 30 years Cunningham encouraged Sydney's citizens to help provide gifts for Aboriginal children in Western NSW. He began delivering gifts to the bush in the 1960s, and became known as 'Black Santa'. At first he was dressed in red overalls with a red pyjama top and pair of gum boots. His 'sleigh' was a helicopter to reach remote communities. Syd recalled how the 'kids eyes shone like diamonds' when he descended from the sky with toys.⁵³

In recent years various Dharug community and employment organisations and cultural groups, such as Murru Mittigar, have been formed. Established in 1998, Murru Mittigar is 'a Dharug-controlled social enterprise' which 'helps people and communities develop and build financial independence and long term employment outcomes'.⁵⁴

Many Aboriginal people across Western Sydney today identify as 'Dharug custodians'. Some are descendants while others have now lived there for several generations. Unlike other communities that live close together, the sprawling nature of Western Sydney often means they live in diverse

⁵² In the early 1990s, Jim Kohen estimated that there were 20,000 descendants of Sydney Aboriginal people in the wider Sydney region and beyond. Kohen, Dharuganora, p. 2

⁵³ Muhlen-Schulte, 'The Santas of Sydney's Christmas Past'

⁵⁴ Murru Mittigar, online; <https://www.murumittigar.com.au/>

neighbourhoods, but a shared culture and history unites Aboriginal communities across Western Sydney today.⁵⁵



Figure 15: NAIDOC event in Penrith (source: Penrith City Council)

Today Penrith sits within the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC). The LALC was formed to develop land and create opportunities and benefits for the Aboriginal community “which in turn strengthen the confidence and self-reliance of Aboriginal people and families”.⁸

The local Dharug language is being revitalised and taught by different groups and organisations. Bayala, Aboriginal Corporation for example, aims

to foster a vibrant community of Dharug dhalang (mother language) learners and speakers, and to share Dharug language, culture, and history with the broader community.

NAIDOC is a big event for the community and events include the NAIDOC sports and dance cup and a NAIDOC day fair at Jamison Park. The popular Penrith Panthers have Indigenous players and each year they engage an Aboriginal artist to design jerseys for the Indigenous round. PCYC NSW hold Indigenous sporting events including the “Nations of Origin” to support young Indigenous players. Local Aboriginal Knockouts are held nearby at The Kingsway, St Marys.

⁵⁵ According to Everett in 2006, ‘of the 120,000 Indigenous peoples in New South Wales, over thirty percent, or 37,500, live in Sydney. Of that thirty percent more than 13,000 Indigenous people live in the Blacktown, Campbelltown and Penrith areas (which are all claimed as Dharug Land). This means, statistically, over thirty-four percent of the Indigenous peoples living in Sydney live in the western suburbs of Sydney, making this the largest population of

Indigenous peoples in any one specific geographic area in Australia’. Everett, ‘Impossible Realities’, 2006, pp. 142-3. See also Aboriginal Engagement Outcomes Report - Greater Penrith Eastern Creek Place Strategy

6. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

6.1 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.

6.2 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.⁵⁶ 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 Charter⁵⁷:

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.

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

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).

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

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.*
-

6.2.1 Stakeholder identification

Stakeholders were identified through previous work undertaken by Artefact in the area. A discussion with those stakeholders helped identify additional key knowledge holders who should be included in the consultation process.

⁵⁶ Australian Heritage Commission, 2002. Ask First: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values.

⁵⁷ Australia ICOMOS, 2013. Burra Charter – The Australian ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance. 3.

6.3 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.

6.3.1 Penrith Aboriginal Sharing and Learning Circle Report (Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, 2010)

Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local (NBMML) coordinated Aboriginal Sharing & Learning Circles within the local community. These 'Circles' were held to work with their Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities to gain insights into their health needs and priorities specific to each Local Government Areas. The following recommendations which appear in the report are relevant to developments focussed on community building;

- Adopt creative means for providing community outreach to engage with and educate Aboriginal communities
- Explore the potential to provide specific services to Aboriginal communities where possible
- Pursue accessible spaces for Aboriginal community meetings
- Establish criteria for transport for Aboriginal community members to access health and other services through public/ private partnerships and working with existing organisations

- Continue to promote cultural awareness and training for all services to improve Closing the Gap awareness and cultural safety for Aboriginal people accessing services
- Ensure services are adopting holistic and whole family approaches to Aboriginal health

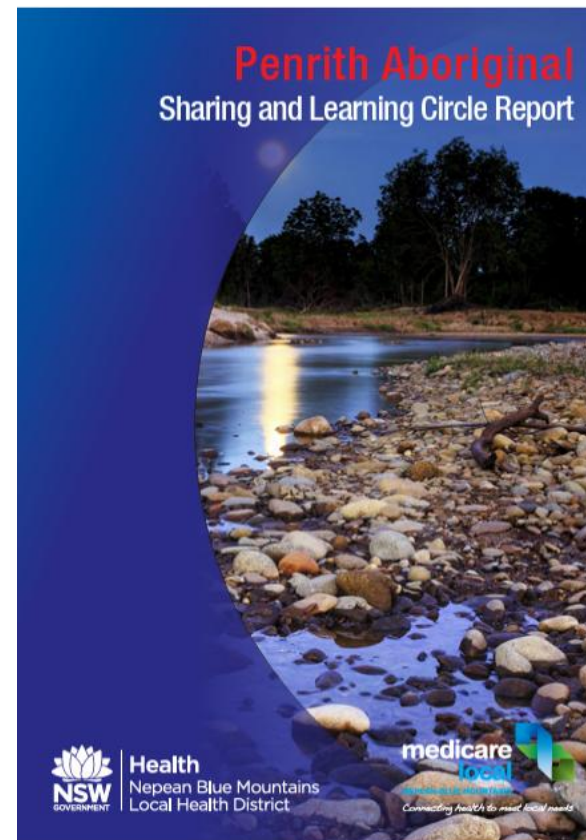


Figure 16: Penrith Aboriginal Sharing and Learning Circle Report front cover

6.3.2 Aboriginal Engagement Outcomes Report - Greater Penrith Eastern Creek Place Strategy (GHD and Zion Engagement and Planning for the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment, 2021)

The *Aboriginal Engagement Outcomes Report for the Greater Penrith Eastern Creek Place Strategy* summarises the outcomes of engagement with First Nations communities carried out by the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment, between July and August 2021 for the Greater Penrith Eastern Creek Place Strategy⁵⁸. The study area included Caddens, St Marys, Penrith, Mount Druitt and Orchard Hills (see Figure 17).

81 First Nations stakeholders participated in 67 engagement activities which consisted of phone calls, emails and online meetings - including online Yarning Circles. Stakeholder groups included Traditional Custodians, Local councils, community and education services and business and employment services.

The outcomes and recommendations informed the Greater Penrith Eastern Creek (GPEC) Strategic Framework.

The key findings and outcomes from the report are relevant to this study and are summarised in Table 1.

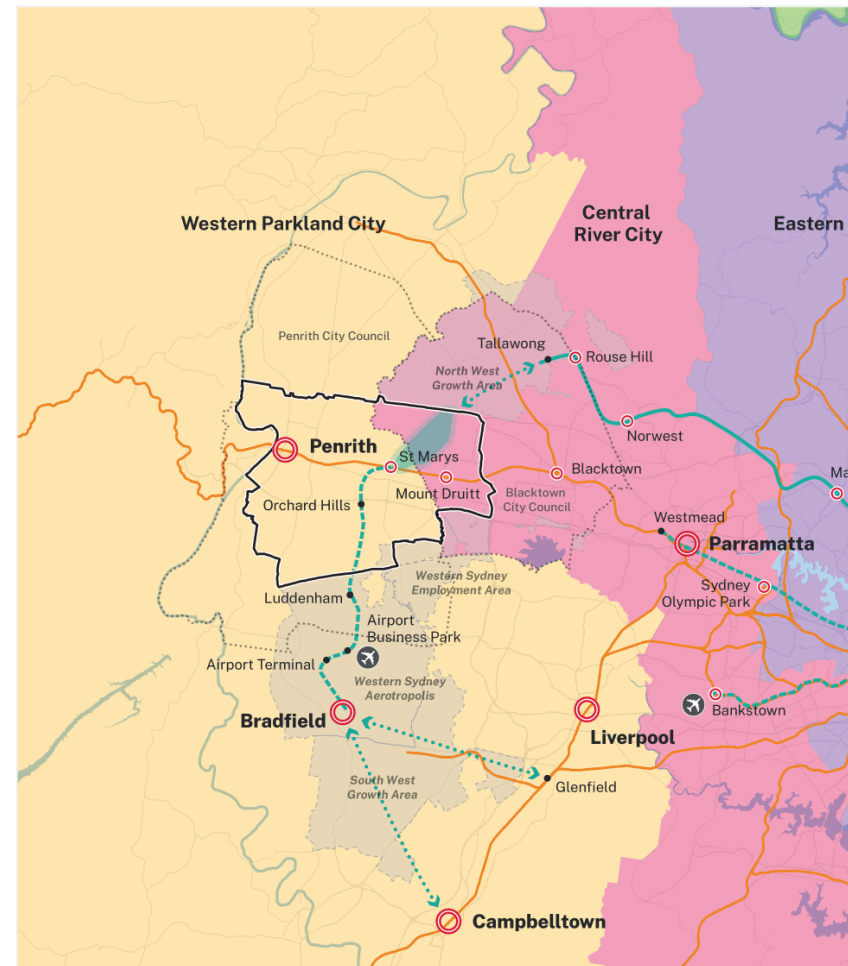


Figure 17: Detail of Greater Penrith Eastern Creek Place Strategy map showing the GPEC in the Context of Greater Sydney (source: NSW Government)

⁵⁸ <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/priority-growth-areas-and-precincts/greater-penrith-to-eastern-creek>

Table 1. Outcomes from the Aboriginal Engagement Outcomes Report (GHD and Zion Engagement and Planning, 2021)

Themes	Outcomes
Country-led	- Waterways, untouched green spaces, Yarramundi, St Marys, Mount Druitt, Penrith and the Blacktown Native Institute site were identified as important places on Country. - Family, employment opportunities, relocation, affordable housing and amenity and character are reasons people live or work in the area. - The community, the environment and natural amenity, Dharug Country and Traditional Custodians, and the location itself were identified as unique characteristics of the area.
Community-centred	- The community was described in different ways including diverse, large, disadvantaged, disconnected, strong, and displaced. - The type of support the community needs to grow includes education and training, cultural infrastructure, housing and employment opportunities. - Changes that would benefit the community include holistic and cultural appropriate services, cultural support, systems reform, and acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians.
Connected to opportunity	- Untouched green spaces and waterways, cultural hubs and meeting places, employment zones and shopping centres were identified as places the community need to connect to. - Public transport is the main method of travel. - Community prefer to connect with each other face to face.
Balanced growth in the right places	In terms of feedback on St Marys and Orchard Hills, it was identified that there is a need for space, revitalisation, and connectivity.

Themes	Outcomes
	- The community highlighted the importance of maintaining social equity when uplifting and improving areas. - Untouched green spaces and the Blacktown Native Institute site are areas that should remain the same. - Culturally safe spaces and training opportunities are areas that need improvement. - Concerns raised related to the area changing include displacement, lack of culturally responsive and affordable housing, population density, and damage to Country.
Opportunities for place-naming	- Returning language to Country - Collaboration with Traditional Custodians - Seek advice from existing processes - Utilise opportunities for naming places or landmarks

6.3.3 Greater Penrith Eastern Creek Investigation Area. Desktop Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (EMM prepared for Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2021)

For the Desktop Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment, EMM undertook a detailed review of the existing environmental data, liaised with key First Nations community knowledge-holders, reviewed an extensive list of previous academic papers and available grey literature reports on the archaeology of the region, and interrogated primary and secondary resources including explorers and colonial diaries, recollections of First Nations people and thematic histories of the region. They developed guiding principles for incorporation into the Place Strategy and future planning activities for the Greater Penrith to Eastern Creek (GPEC) Growth Investigation Area. The general guiding principles across GPEC include:

- Future development activities in Cranebrook terrace formation areas should be minimised and/or constrained to shallow activities (<4 m) to ensure the conservation of these significant deep-time deposits. Where development is proposed, suitable investigation of the archaeological deposit must be recommended.
 - Major river corridors should be maximised in planning designs, and maintained as natural bushland environments, rather than modified drainage channels. Improved access to these corridors is recommended following consultation with First Nations community knowledge holders. Further investigation of any proposed development activities <300 m of these corridors must be recommended.
 - Main road corridors identified as First Nations tracks or pathways should be maintained in their current alignments, with future planning and design considering interpretive opportunities that could be applied to these important past corridors.
 - Planning and development design should seek to maintain any major view-lines and/or viewsheds to ridgelines and elevated areas, including elevations in the southwest around the Northern Road (and to a lesser extent, Mulgoa Road), and extending beyond the investigation area.
 - Post-contact places identified within or near the GPEC area must be maintained in their current form, and any development activities in their vicinity must ensure suitable heritage consideration, as well as First Nations consultation on their potential cultural impacts, prior to implementation.
 - A formal interpretation strategy for the GPEC area or subsequent development precincts is recommended to ensure these ideas and concepts can be explored and suitably integrated.
 - Further First Nations consultation is recommended to identify and understand specific elements and/or locations of value within or near the GPEC area relating to areas and places of contemporary value to First Nations community knowledge holders. This is to ensure suitable integration into future development design.
- Specific areas/themes of interest noted for the general St Marys area included:
- the 'deep-time' deposits at Rickabys Creek Gravel, St Marys
 - that silcrete from a well-known source in St Marys was flaked to make tools, such as the scraper on the throwing stick given to Governor Phillip – this production occurred well into the post contact period (Rhodes 1985).⁵⁹
 - that Penrith and St Marys have thriving First Nations communities living and working in the area, and the community celebrates these suburbs as places with a strong First Nations identity.⁶⁰
 - that an Aboriginal man, Sydney "Doc" Cunningham of the Yuin language group, was a well-known local identity. In 1976 he established the Western Districts Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in St Marys on Queen Street, and was a prominent figure at St Marys railway station, where he was often seen collecting donations from passers-by.⁶¹

6.3.4 St Marys First Nations Heritage Study (Artefact, 2024)

St Marys is a vibrant centre on the lands of the Dharug language group and is a beacon of rich First Nations Cultural Heritage focused around Wianamatta Creek also known as Mother Creek or South Creek. There are many culturally significant sites within the area including the songline route to the Blue Mountains passing through its southern end, the site of the

⁵⁹ EMM prepared for Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2021, p25

⁶⁰ EMM, 2021, p33

⁶¹ EMM, 2021, p33

Western Districts Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs on Queen Street and 27 archaeological sites registered on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS). There are strong cultural values assigned to ecology such as the significant eel and bat populations that are cultural and seasonal calendar indicators. Endemic native grasses play an important role in regenerating the culturally significant Cumberland Woodland landscape.

St Marys has been identified within the Greater Sydney Region Plan 'A Metropolis of Three Cities' and the Western Parkland City District Plan as playing an important role in the future of the Western Parkland City as a Strategic Centre, supporting the growth of Greater Penrith and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis. Artefact Heritage and Environment Services (Artefact) have been engaged by Penrith City Council to prepare a *St Marys First Nations Heritage Study* to inform the *St Marys Town Centre Master Plan* (in development).

The *St Marys First Nations Heritage Study* combines a review of existing studies and literature on the First Nations cultural heritage of present-day St Marys with original historic research and cultural information shared by Dharug descendants and local First Nations custodians who have participated in cultural workshops.

Stakeholders were invited to one of two workshops/Walks on Country on 8 June 2023 and 15 August 2023. Submissions were also made by phone and email. Discussion points from that consultation were used to inform this report.

The cultural heritage values for St Marys were developed through reviewing results of previous consultations, and the consultations with key community and stakeholders for this study.

6.3.4.1 Country-led

St Marys is in Dharug Country, an area of floodplains and valley flats with the Wianamatta River and its tributaries running through it. It would once

have been open Cumberland Plain woodland and is today a thriving suburb. The Dharug traditional custodians have lived and continue to live in the area and have strong connections to Country.

6.3.4.2 The 'Dharug' language

The 'Dharug' language is being revitalised and the community are advocating for the 'return of language to Country'. Examples of this could include use of Dharug language on signage or renaming sites and buildings around St Marys. South Creek, for example, is Wianamatta, which means mother place or mother creek.

6.3.4.3 Caring for Country

Waterways, like Ropes Creek and Wianamatta-South Creek, and the remnant green spaces are significant places on Country and so projects which heal Country are important. Bushland should be preserved, and flora and fauna protected and the 'green corridor' between St Marys and Orchard Hills is important to maintain. Activities can include cultural burnings, river clean ups and 'Classroom on Country'. But Country is more than just green spaces, it includes urban areas like Queen Street in St Marys and so future development should take into consideration Caring for Country best practices such as sustainability. Caring for Country can be carried out by all members of the community from trained experts in cultural burnings to school children carrying out net making activities by the water.

6.3.4.4 Local wildlife

St Marys still has a lot of open green spaces and so continues to have populations of kangaroo and emu. There are also microbats, platypus and many fish and birds. Preservation of their habitats is crucial for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of Country. We need to listen to the 'small voices'.

6.3.4.5 First Nations creative outcomes

St Marys has a diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. First Nations families have relocated or been forced to relocate to St Marys over the last few hundred years – recognition of that diversity is important. St Marys should also not be seen in isolation but within a network of family connections to other Countries and Peoples in the broader landscape of the Cumberland Plain, the Blue Mountains, Wiradjuri Country and the Hawkesbury-Nepean. This diversity should be promoted through creative outcomes such as artworks, interpretation and celebrations.

6.3.4.6 Community centred

Development which supports community is important. Growth should be in education and training, cultural infrastructure, housing and employment.

6.3.4.7 The broader landscape

St Marys, around 5km from Caddens, sits within a broader landscape with particular connection to Grose Valley, Appin and the catchment of the Warragamba Dam. The part of Wianamatta-South Creek that runs through St Marys is connected to a much larger waterway catchment area covering multiple LGAs and Dharug clans. Caring for these waterways must be carried out in cooperation with these other groups.

6.3.4.8 Connectivity and accessibility

Waterways and green spaces can be opportunities for places for the community to connect but modern meeting places like shopping centres and libraries are also sites of connection. Having culturally safe spaces is critical and public transport is key to improving connectivity. Accessible yarning circles and healing spaces are needed by the community. Community themselves also run projects which invite experts from other nations and Countries to share their expertise and build up wider networks of knowledge sharing.

6.3.4.9 Sydney Doc Cunningham – Black Santa

St Marys most famous resident was Sydney Doc Cunningham - a well-known and important local figure. In 1976 he established the Western Districts Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in St Marys on Queen Street, and was a prominent figure at St Marys railway station, where he was often seen collecting donations from passersby. For over 30 years Cunningham encouraged Sydney's citizens to help provide gifts for Aboriginal children in Western NSW. He began delivering gifts to the bush in the 1960s and became known as 'Black Santa'.

6.3.4.10 Songlines, stories and totems

There are multiple songlines, stories and totems related to the area including:

- The Great Western Highway Songline – the ancient traditional walking route to the Blue Mountains which was subsequently used by colonisers and is now the Great Western Highway.
- The Bunya tree produces fruit in a three-year cycle and there are celebrations of this seasonal activity from Bunya (Queensland) to Eden (southern NSW). The location of the Bunya indicates the pathway for travel. The Bunya Songline starts in Queensland.
- The Coastal Whale Songline which connects to the changing of seasons.
- The Eel Songline of neighbouring Parramatta
- White Crane - durali Songline – is one of the songlines that will be displayed at St Marys station.

6.3.4.11 Missions

Local missions are important in local First Nations oral histories, especially Plumpton, Sackville and Mulgoa. There are also community connections to missions and other institutions interstate for example, Inverell/ Ashford, Armidale, Grange, and Moree.

6.3.4.12 Resilience and resistance

The Londonderry Women's only area was a paperbark collecting area but later became a Darkinjung camp after colonisation. In the late 60s the local sergeant and fire chief burnt the camp out to move the community on. This was done twice.

Additionally, a set of Design Principles based on these values were developed to inform the project's design phases.

- Acknowledge Country
- Include spaces for connectivity
- Focus on accessibility
- Use language
- Incorporate nature into development
- Acknowledge local First Nations history
- Continue consultation

6.3.5 Caring for country Aboriginal outcomes strategy (Department of Planning, Housing and infrastructure, March 2024)

The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) is a strategic initiative aimed at balancing the development of new housing, jobs, and infrastructure in the Western Parkland City with the preservation of biodiversity. One of the key goals of the plan is to maintain the health and wellbeing of the land, or "Country." The CPCP seeks to ensure sustainable development while fostering cultural, economic, and environmental outcomes that benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Western Sydney. The department co-developed the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33 through extensive consultation

with Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney. This included meetings with:

- Dharug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians
- Gandangara and Tharawal LALCs
- Local councils
- Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)
- local community members
- Aboriginal corporations, businesses and organisations
- Aboriginal service providers.

In total, 32 meetings were held, reaching over 250 community members. The department also engaged through a project newsletter and a community survey, which received 23 responses.

Co-developing actions with Aboriginal communities through partnerships

The strategy focuses on collaborating with Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney to implement actions under both the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy and the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP). It emphasizes ongoing, tailored engagement with these communities throughout the life of the strategy. A key goal is to ensure young Aboriginal voices are included in the decision-making and implementation processes.

Caring for Country

The strategy supports Aboriginal communities in land and biodiversity management under the CPCP. It includes funding for biodiversity stewardship on Aboriginal land, piloting traditional fire management programs, and creating joint management opportunities for conservation areas.

The strategy also explores alternative land management partnerships, supports food security initiatives, and traditional waterway restoration programs. Additionally, it proposes developing Aboriginal Ranger positions and assisting with resolving Aboriginal land claims to achieve cultural and biodiversity outcomes.

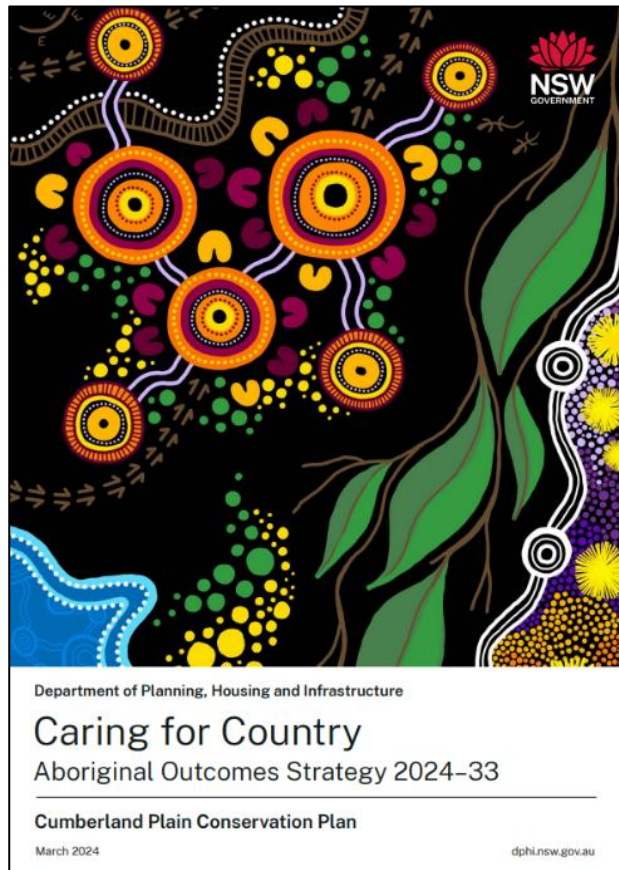


Figure 18: Artwork commissioned by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure by Artist Lua Pellegrini, for the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024-2033.

Honouring Aboriginal culture and heritage

The strategy focuses on supporting Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney by engaging in local language revitalisation, co-leading research with Traditional Custodians on traditional land management practices for conservation, and funding projects to protect Aboriginal culture and heritage. It also aims to extend educational programs by funding cultural competency activities in schools and the community, including hiring education officers

Enhancing Aboriginal businesses, employment and training in the environmental sector

The strategy aims to support Aboriginal businesses by providing funding, training, and resources to ensure they receive at least 5% of expenditure. It also focuses on creating employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people in the environmental sector and encourages Aboriginal businesses to participate in tendering through the procurement framework in the implementation of the CPCP.

The CPCP (Conservation and Protection Program) has a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess its commitments, actions, and outcomes. The framework supports adaptive management and helps in reporting to the government and community. The program tracks progress, collects data, and ensures success through consistent evaluation. Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney will collaborate in developing a monitoring plan to assess the program's impact on Aboriginal outcomes. Key goals include early engagement, collecting relevant data, adjusting the strategy based on evidence, and managing risks efficiently.

The department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Sydney to successfully deliver the Strategy. It recognizes the importance of understanding Aboriginal perspectives and empowering local communities throughout the process.

Key partners include traditional custodians, Aboriginal Land Councils, Aboriginal corporations, peak bodies, service providers, local councils, government agencies, and educational institutions, among others.

Engagement Principles guiding the delivery of the Strategy include:

- Engaging with Country – The health of Aboriginal people is linked to the health of Country, so the department will support access and engagement with Country.
- Empowering Aboriginal Voices – Aboriginal communities will be actively involved in influencing decisions.
- Promoting Aboriginal Voices – The department will elevate Aboriginal perspectives in the Strategy's implementation.
- Cultural Safety – Engagement will respect the cultural context of communities and ensure a safe environment.
- Respecting ICIP – The department will honour Aboriginal people's rights to protect traditional arts and culture.
- Building Relationships – Strong, ongoing relationships with Aboriginal communities are foundational to the program.
- Providing Access to Information – The department will share up-to-date information through various communication tools.
- Being Accountable and Transparent – The department will be transparent and accountable in its actions.
- Prioritising Responsiveness – Regular updates and feedback will be integrated into the process to ensure continuous improvement.

These principles will guide how the department works with Aboriginal communities to ensure the Strategy is effective, respectful, and responsive to their needs.

6.4 Project specific consultation

6.4.1 Walk on Country, 7 March 2025

A walk on Country was conducted on 7 March 2025 attended by Aboriginal stakeholders, as well as representatives from Artefact and Holdmark.

6.4.1.1 Attendees

- Aunty Vicky Slater, Aboriginal Stakeholder, Dharug custodian and descendant of Black Kitty
- Aunty Zona, Aboriginal Stakeholder, Kamilaroi Elder, Education and Arts advocate, connection to Dharug & Dharawal land
- Kayelene Slater, Aboriginal Stakeholder, Kamilaroi, Bariyan Cultural Connections, connection to Dharug and Dharawal land & Aboriginal artist
- Aunty Helen Slater, Proud Kamilaroi woman with connections to Dharawal and Dharug land
- Aunty Karen Owens, Proud Kamilaroi woman lives on Dharug land with family born and raised on Dharug land
- Kym Slater, Proud Kamilaroi Woman and an Aboriginal Community member
- Jandamarra Bryant, Proud Kamilaroi man, living on Dharug Country with connections to Dharawal Country
- Arika Jalomaki, Proud Kamilaroi Woman, living on Dharug Country with connections to Dharawal Country
- Pearl Depoma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, proud Kamilaroi Woman

- Tahlai Saliba, Proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander - Niece of Pearl Depoma
- Taleisha Slater, Proud Kamilaroi woman – Daughter of Kaarina Slater
- Jacob Whebel, Proud Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man – Son of Kerrie Slater
- Chance Armstrong-Mackey, Son of Pearl Depoma
- David Matagia, Son of Helen Slater
- Fayez Habib, Holdmark
- Lisa- Maree Carrigan, Group GSA
- Michelle Ramjan, Group GSA
- Rajat Singh, Group GSA
- Tamara Obradovic, Group GSA
- Additional project team members from Group GSA
- Ross Shepherd, Site Image Landscape Architects
- Hannah Matagia, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer
- Katrina Eckford, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer
- Alexandra Gaffikin, Artefact

6.4.1.2 Agenda

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property protocols
- Introductions
- Briefing
- Walk on Country



Figure 19: Discussing next steps

6.4.1.3 Cultural values

Trees and water

The group talked about the views, the protected trees, the poplars and the water drainage down through the site. The project team shared that the poplar trees are exotic to Australia as they were introduced and so there are opportunities for their removal and replacement with native trees. Aunty Zona Wilkinson and Aunty Vicki Slater shared the value of having a waterflow area which was made by rocks/river pebbles for a calming effect.

Waterways

There is a water drain which takes water down the hill to the trees but the group did not believe it was a normal watercourse. Aunty Karen Owens talked to her community and confirmed that they didn't think there had been a watercourse on the site. However, the drainage area does funnel water down to the trees at the bottom of the site and so it is important for maintaining good water flow over the site and the health of the trees.

Kayelene spoke about the surrounding area and the highly significant Wianamatta-South Creek. She spoke about creek lines that would've been in surrounding areas like Hawkesbury, Oran Park and Nepean.

Aunty Karen and Kayelene mentioned the past creek around Maxwell Street and creeks that went through Jamison town through Regentville and Mulgoa.

Oral history

Aunty Zona talked about the importance of oral history and the potential for oral histories featuring in the design somewhere. The landscape team talked about how the site is in close proximity to the State Archives and so there is a synergy between the Aboriginal Oral histories and State Archives on the importance of information being recorded and transmitted.

Kayelene discussed how Kent Street and the surrounding area is highly significant. Aboriginal people would have travelled from the mountains, going through the site and Caddens. The site at Caddens was a great high view point and there is a potential for camping around the area, as the highly significant Wianamatta-South Creek nearby.

Aunty Karen Owens shared her own family history of the area and recalled going to the drive-thru cinema in the area.

6.4.2 Workshop, 10 March 2025

A workshop was held on 10 March 2025 at the Cambridge Park Hall with Aboriginal stakeholders and members of the project team.



Figure 20: Discussions taking place at workshop, 10 March 2025

6.4.2.1 Attendees

- Aunty Zona, Aboriginal Stakeholder, Kamilaroi Elder, Education and Arts advocate, connection to Dharug & Dharawal land
- Aunty Vicki Slater, Aunty Vicky Slater, Aboriginal Stakeholder, Dharug custodian and descendant of Black Kitty
- Aunty Karen Owens, Proud Kamilaroi woman lives on Dharug land with family born and raised on Dharug land

- Kayelene Slater, Aboriginal Stakeholder, Kamilaroi, Bariyan Cultural Connections, connection to Dharug and Dharawal land & Aboriginal artist
- Auntie Helen Slater, Proud Kamilaroi woman with connections to Dharawal and Dharug land
- Kym Slater, Proud Kamilaroi Woman and an Aboriginal Community member
- Pearl Depoma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, proud Kamilaroi Woman
- Kaarina Slater, Proud Kamilaroi woman, with connections to Dharug and Dharawal land
- Arika Jalomaki, Proud Kamilaroi Woman, living on Dharug Country with connections to Dharawal Country
- Jandamarra Bryant, Proud Kamilaroi man, living on Dharug Country with connections to Dharawal Country
- Cody Slater, Proud Kamilaroi man, Born on Dharug land, living on Dharawal land
- Chance Armstrong-Makey, Son of Pearl Depoma
- Tahlai Saliba, Proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander - Niece of Pearl Depoma
- Jacob Whebel, Proud Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man – Son of Kerrie Slater
- Taleisha Slater, Proud Kamilaroi woman – Daughter of Kaarina Slater
- David Matagia, Son of Helen Slater
- Lisa- Maree Carrigan, Michelle Ramjan, Rajat Singh, Tamara Obradovic, Group GSA
- Fayez Habib and Rhana Fleming, Holdmark

- Ross Shepherd, Site Image Landscape Architects
- Hannah Matagia and Katrina Eckford, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officers, Alexandra Gaffikin, Artefact

6.4.2.2 Agenda

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Introductions
- Discussion of plans
- Workshop of ideas

6.4.2.3 Part 1 designs

In part 1 of the workshop, the group was given plans of the site to discuss with members of the project team. The plans have been annotated and scans are in section 15. Key ideas included:

- Designs to represent water at ground level
- Community gathering spaces and places for market stalls, movie nights, festivals and entertainment
- Including grasses and eucalypts in the landscaping. Consider white waratahs and plants that have scent or are edible. Pepper trees and shade, Illawarra flame trees. Colourful plants: Kangaroo paws, Xanthorea, Gynea Lilly
- 'Productive gardens'
- Viewing areas to the distant views (eg mountains) and to the ecological area
- Sensory paths for families and kids
- Places for water, landscape, sound and language, art and sculpture and light

- Curved paths
- Wind sculptures
- Oral histories
 - Folklore
 - Dreaming
 - Spiritual
 - Family lore
 - Seasons and cycles
- Sustainability and use of natural materials
- Natural systems and connections of natural systems:
 - Water, wind, sky
 - Vegetation
 - Habitat and ecology
- Ceremony
- Kangaroo footprints
- Habitats
- Sculptures
- “Nature play”
- Tactile sensory play – wind tunnels, sounds and speakers
- Rooftop connections to sky



Figure 21: Detail from annotated plan, 10 March 2025

6.4.2.4 Part 2 cultural values

In part 2 of the workshops, the stakeholders were asked to consider important cultural heritage values for the site. Their responses included:

Caring for country

- Filtered plants
- Meeting and gathering spaces
- Shaded tree areas
- Native plants
- Clean water run off - natural run offs
- Identified roles
- Animal friendly, consider homes for animals

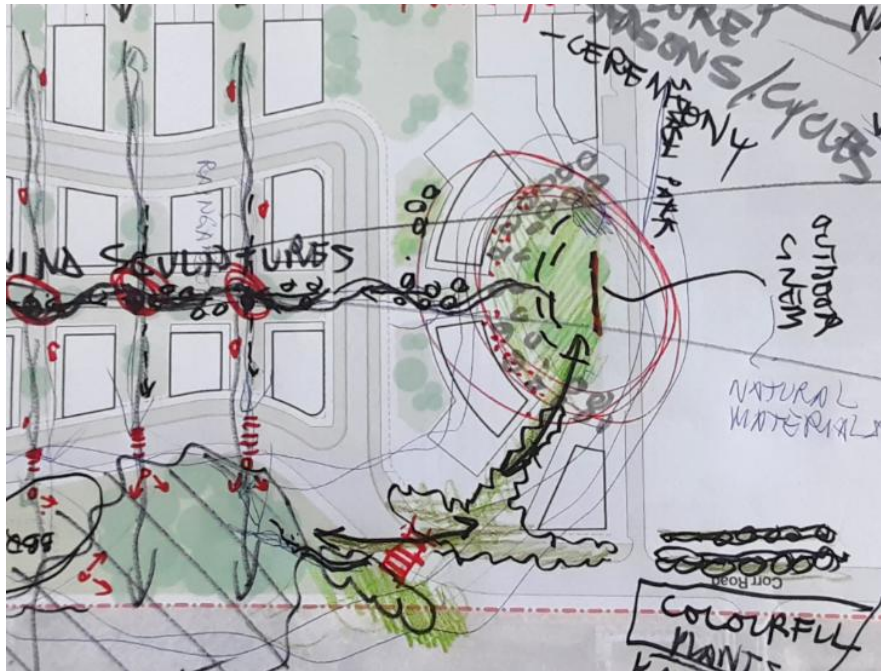


Figure 22: Detail from annotated plan, 10 March 2025

Ideas for art and design

- Dreamtime stories, in consultation with key knowledge holders
- Sculptures
- Names and signage – streets, bridges
- Signage about Aboriginal people from the area, etc someone who was deeply recognised or famous who was from the area
- Possums (totem) – sculptures, night light in shape of possum
- Curved seating including natural wood



Figure 23: Billabong Parklands (source: Campbelltown City Council)

- Water inspired art and designs, eg the Billabong Parklands in Campbelltown which was valued for Including intergenerational play spaces, gathering spaces, waterplay areas, Aboriginal artwork and curved (not straight) lies and pathways,
- Stencilled panels with animals
- Colours are important, light colours
- Green leaves
- Large goanna for interactive playgrounds
- Kangaroo footprints, and native Kangaroo-paw plant)
- Kangaroo designs incorporated into the park area
- Unique designs, but not just coloured murals
- Using metal screens to make an Aboriginal design utilising the sun to create a reflection on the ground

Benefits for the local Aboriginal community

- Bring more people together – connecting community
- Offer housing and gathering spaces
- Cultural heritage and focus
- A welcoming place by incorporating culture through design
- Accommodate Elder groups
- Exercise equipment/walking track
- Meeting site
- Include playgrounds
- Spaces for holding markets



Figure 24: Stakeholders discussion of site plans, 10 March 2025



Figure 25: Stakeholders noting ideas, 10 March 2025

Cultural heritage values connections

- Keep trees, landscape and environmental views
- Importance of flora & fauna
- Water Connections – creek line
- Views to the mountains
- Keep sky views

Important habitats – Plants/animals

- Cumberland Plains vegetation
- Incorporation of native plants
 - Wattles,
 - Waratah,
 - Grass trees,
 - Grevillea's (for bees and insects),
 - Banksia tree
 - Gum trees & Eucalyptus (medicine/healing)
 - Paper bark (bandages/food wrap/food source)
- Animal shelters - Hollow logs for animals (“tree homes”)
- Incorporation of water/grass, watering systems and dry creek beds
- Plants/food shelter for animals and orchards and apples, fruit trees, grapes
- Habitats for kangaroo, rabbit, koala, birds- lorikeet/cockatoo and possums (totem)



Figure 26: Discussion between stakeholders and project team, 10 March 2025

What does country mean to you?

- Home
- Family connection
- Gathering places – shopping, parks, markets, family events
- Culture – family, heritage, home
- Heritage
- Land, grass, waterways, sky, environment, trees
- Spiritual connection
- Continuous connection – conversation with place
- Replace/heal the landscape – land connection, green spaces, natural areas

Landscaping + important landscape features

- Bush tucker, roof top gardens, and trimmed hedges in shape of Indigenous design
- Curved pathways – represent waterways, rainbow serpent, eel dreamtime story throughout Dharug country
- Walkways with plants, Lomandra (weaving), bushtucker
- Paths with animal footprints
- Signage explaining what the native plants are and what they were used for
- Native plants – kangaroo paws, wattle, grass trees, bottle brush, mature plants, Cumberland Plains vegetation, natural landscapes and greenery.
- Grevilleas – colour, attract bees, butterflies and dragon flies
- Mist spray
- Incorporating/using rocks into designs and river stones incorporated into the garden
- Smell / touch – sensory experiences
- Views from the hill tops
- Water connections to Wianamatta (South Creek) in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment

Stories

- Creek lines (like Wianamatta) are found in the broader landscape area which are significant to the Aboriginal community as they were and remain essential for spiritual and cultural practise.



Figure 27: Rhana Fleming and Kayelene Slater discussion, 7 March 2025

- Kangaroos are native and are seen in the area and were spotted on the walk on Country.
- The Possum is the local totem that could be represented through a gateway sculpture symbolising the local fauna and connection to land.
- Birds and lizards such as goannas, cockatoos, galahs are native species that could be interpreted in design and interpretation signage
- The mountains and the nearby Kent Street are places of high significance, therefore a high point offering a visual compass can allow people to appreciate these places.
- Kingswood drive-in cinema on Bludgers Hill once operated on the site between 1966 and 1984. To this day it remains a cherished place of memories for many locals.



Figure 28: Penrith Drive-in at Kingswood (now in Caddens) (source: Penrith Press)



Figure 29: Aunty Zona and Fayeze Habib, 10 March 2025

6.4.3 Colours of country

Stakeholders would like to see the development have a natural look with unique designs reflecting the colours of Country. The inspirational images below were sourced by Kayelene Slater.



Figure 30: Kayelene Slater and Auntie Karen Owens at the protected tree area

6.4.4 Feedback from Craig Kerslake, SDRP, 3 April 2025

Craig Kerslake attended the State Design Review Panel (SDRP) meeting on 3 April 2025 where this project was discussed. Craig is an architect and Wiradjuri man. He offered recommendations from the point of view of a Wiradjuri architect but also shared some Knowledges that he had permission to share from Dharug Elders. Key points from Craig included:

- Ensuring that Connection to Country doesn't just reflect traditional culture but includes modern Aboriginal cultures from the area as it is 'a living culture'.
- Craig felt that some of the fencing and barriers could feel unwelcoming but at the same time he understood the issues of safety. He asked the team to consider design options which softened the abrasive nature of fencing between public and private areas.
- Craig emphasised the connections to the broader landscape mentioning Wianamatta and it's connecting to women's business. He described the area as 'sweet water Country'.
- He repeated a phrase 'bagi bugi'⁶² which correlates a person's skin to the bark of the tree – effectively meaning 'we are the same thing'. He emphasised how Aboriginal people 'belong to nature' and that they are custodians.
- Craig noted the opportunities with the ephemeral creeks and how water need not be 'piped away' but could be celebrating the past.
- 'Magic moments of Country' was a quote from Craig to describe the opportunities, particularly with water. He suggested focussing on habitats and mentioned frogs, ants, dragonflies, and water lilies.

- The protected tree area is a special area, and Craig was keen that it wouldn't be fenced off but instead could be a place for people and the community. He wanted people to be able to have a relationship with that space.
- Craig asked for the project team to review the communal spaces – to make them less 'transactional' and more 'destination' spaces.

6.5 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. 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 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) in potential archaeological and heritage work.

⁶² Dharug words and meaning <https://www.timeout.com/sydney/things-to-do/10-darug-words-and-their-meanings>

7. ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES



7.1 Introduction

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

7.2 Values

7.2.1.1 Dharug Country

Dharug Country encompasses the traditional lands of the Dharug people, located in the greater Sydney region. Stretching from the Blue Mountains to the Pacific coast, this area includes parts of modern-day Sydney, the Hawkesbury River, and surrounding regions. The Dharug people have inhabited the land around Caddens for tens of thousands of years, maintaining a deep spiritual connection to the landscape through complex social structures, intricate knowledge of the environment, and rich cultural practices. A key habitat of Dharug Country is Cumberland Plains forest, a rich resource that is under threat today.

7.2.1.2 Waterways and creeks

Wianamatta-South Creek, located in Western Sydney, is a significant waterway that holds deep cultural importance for the Dharug people. For thousands of years, this creek was a vital lifeline, providing water, food, and spiritual connection for local clans. For Aboriginal people the waterways of the area are important for supporting complex traditional practices, including fishing, gathering, and ceremonial activities. Today, Aboriginal communities who live in and around Caddens and the Penrith area are custodians who continue to advocate for the environmental management of waterways that respects traditional ecological knowledge and the interconnectedness of water, land, sky and community.

7.2.1.3 Artefacts as evidence

A large number of artefact sites have been recorded in the area (see 6.3), particularly along the waterways in the landscape, providing evidence of long past occupation and use of several locations in the area.

7.2.1.4 Local stories and oral history

Oral history is one of the key processes of Aboriginal cultural transmission, preserving knowledge, law and spiritual connections across generations. The area of Caddens sits within the broader Cumberland Plain Forest area and the landscape rises to a hill from which there are views all the way to the mountains. The sites proximity to Wianamatta-South Creek and the hillside would have made this a good camping place, and the top of the hill a 'visual compass' for navigation. In more recent history, the site was used as a drive-thru cinema, remembered well by Aunty Karen Owens.

7.2.1.5 Local habitats

The remnant trees at Caddens are part of a critically important ecological landscape within the traditional Dharug Country. Despite urbanisation, the area is still home to kangaroos and other wildlife. Important Cumberland Plains forest trees include Grey Box, Forest Red Gum, Grey Ironbark, and Narrow-leaved Stringybark.

7.3 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 the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) database was completed on 4 March 2025 for a search area measuring approximately 2km x 2km surrounding the study area.

A total of 53 registered Aboriginal sites were identified within the wider search area. There are no registered Aboriginal sites within the study area. The closest AHIMS site identified in the search is located approximately 239 metres east of the study area (AHIMS ID 45-5-5704).

Of the 53 sites in the wider area, 23 have been 'destroyed' and were all identified as 'Artefact', while one site a 'Potential Archaeological Deposit (PAD)' was identified as 'partially destroyed'. As such, only 29 sites in the search area are still considered 'valid'. The majority of these 'destroyed' sites are associated with infrastructure work conducted in the area – such as the construction of the M4 and Gipps Street. Additionally, 'destroyed' and 'partially destroyed' sites were also identified in construction zones and residential areas where the ground has been considerably disturbed.

While there was a general correlation of sites being concentrated near waterways including, creeks, tributaries and water bodies, there was a stronger pattern of identified sites around the infrastructure areas/corridors indicating sites have been recorded as area has been developed and the ground increasingly disturbed.

There were two 'closed sites' identified in the search area – AHIMS ID 45-5-5575 in the southwestern portion of the search area and AHIMS ID 45-5-5595 in the northeastern. While these were classified as 'closed sites' they

are located in low lying, small areas of bushland or grassland which is unusual as 'closed sites' are associated with rock shelters which have not been identified in the search results.



Figure 31: AHIMS ID 45-5-5704 (source: AHIMS ID 45-5-5704 site card)

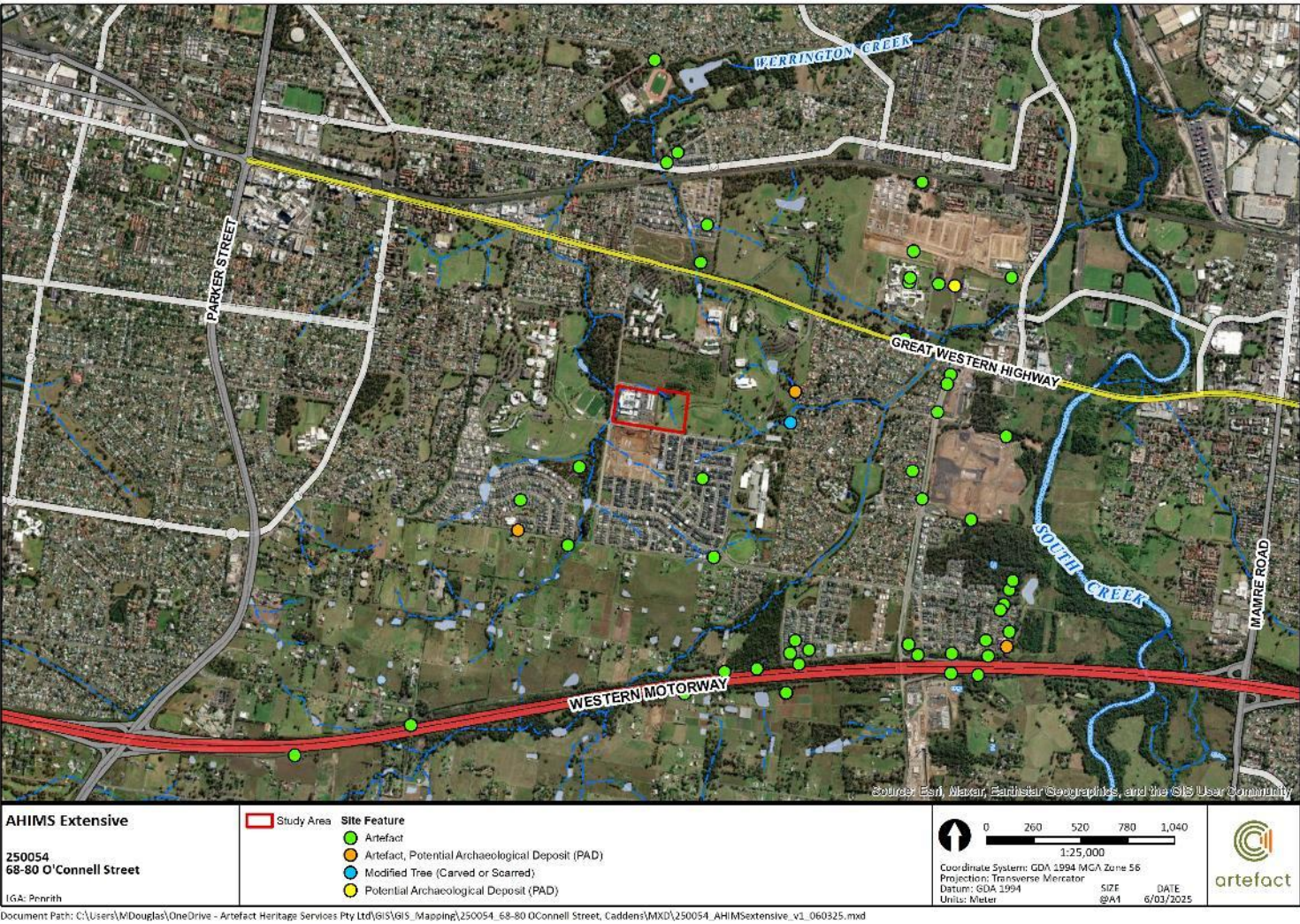


Figure 32: AHIMS extensive search results

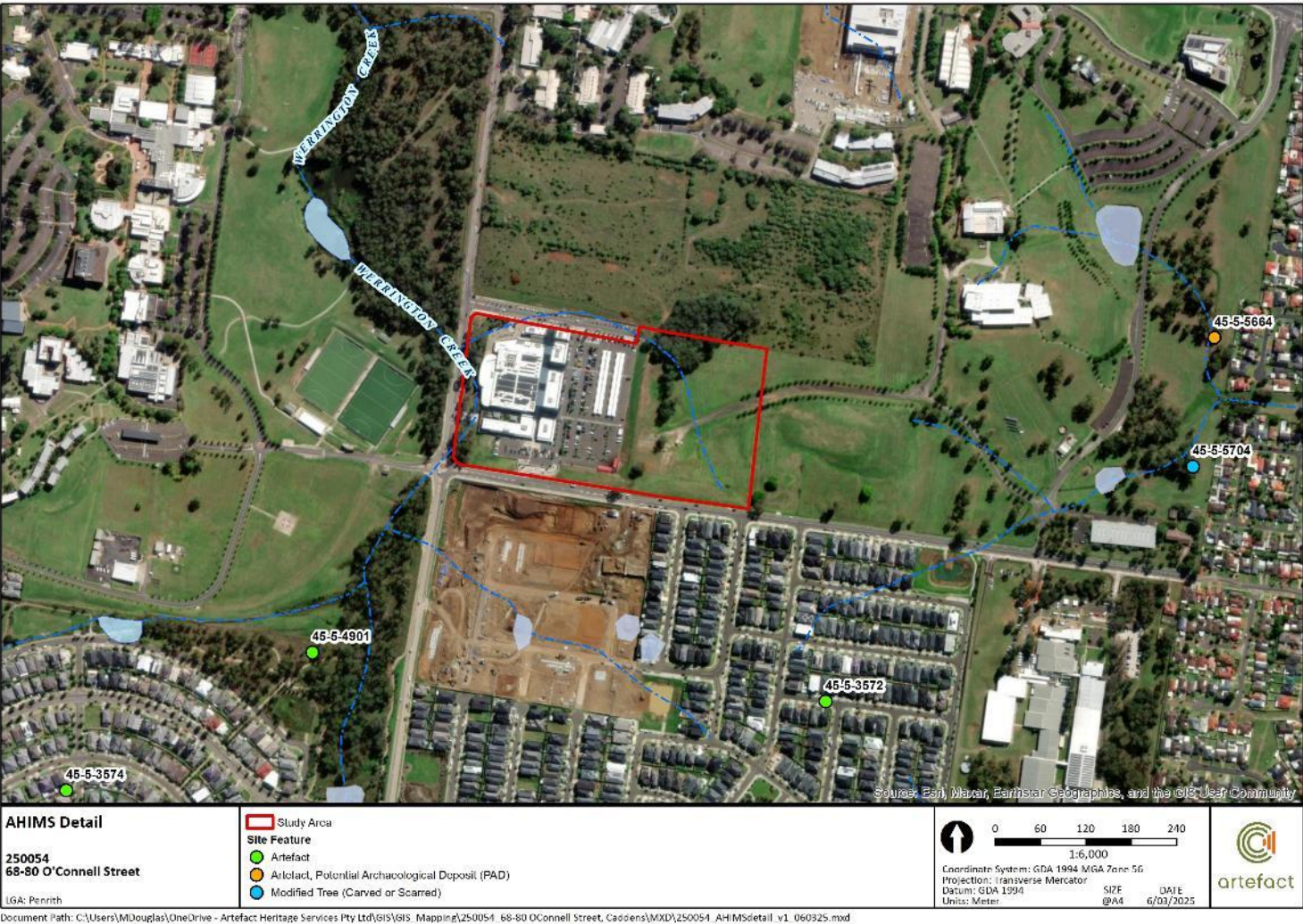


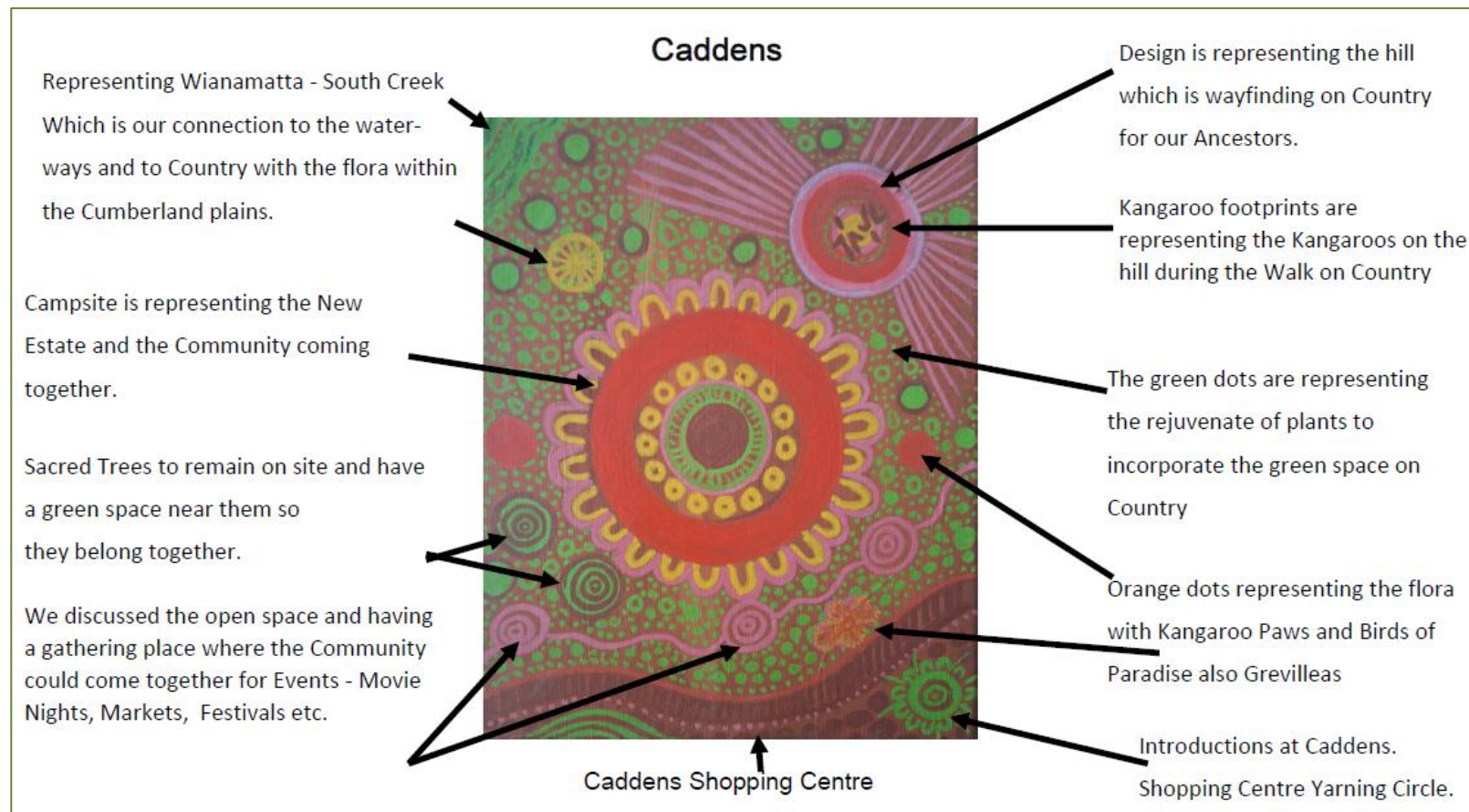
Figure 33: Detailed view of AHIMS sites near the study area

7.4 Local Connections by Kayelene Slater – Kamilaroi/Dharug artist

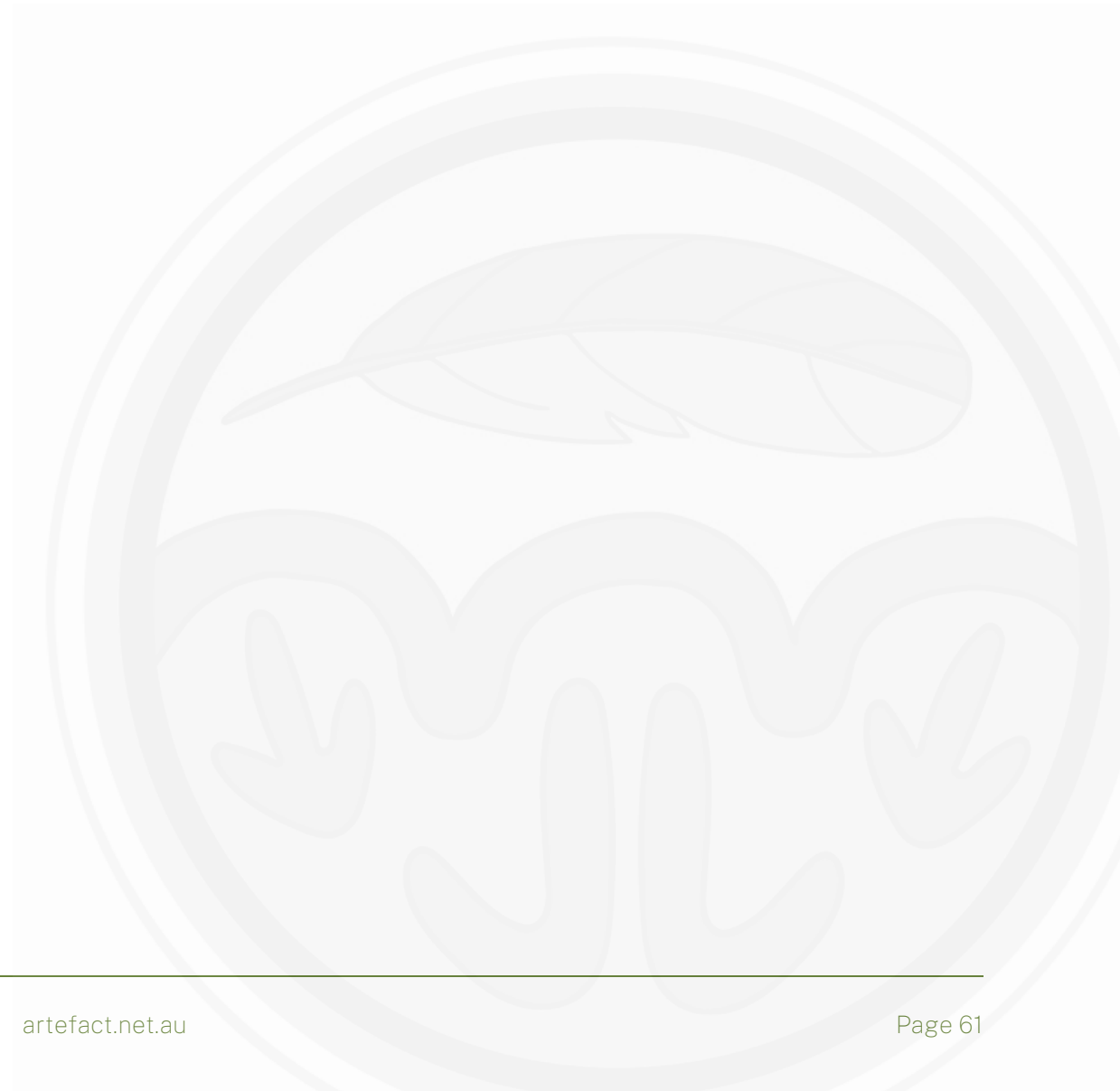
The front cover is *Local Connections* (Kayelene Slater, 2025). The artwork was developed following the Walk on Country and Workshop and specifically for this project. It is reproduced with permission.

My Artwork represents the Local Connections to the new estate housing developments which is located at Caddens where we attended a walk on Country with Artefact Heritage Services and Stakeholders. On the site and at the workshop stakeholders discussed how to incorporate Connection to Country and involve the local and community.

Kayelene Slater, 2025



8. DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY



8.1 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.

8.2 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.

Respect Country, landform and micro-climate



This is Dharug Country in an area which is part of the Cumberland Plain. Respect and work with the landform of the site to maintain integrity of the site's natural forms and waterways.

Consider how the design can regulate the micro-climate of the area and provide cooling.

Care for Country



Protect and restore significant native vegetation communities especially caring for the protected trees. Integrate bush tucker plantings, and plant native plants to help restore local habitats.

Maintain vantages and vistas



Connecting to the broader landscape is an important Aboriginal cultural heritage value. Maintain the visual connections from the hilltop to significant sites in the local area and beyond including the Blue Mountains and visible waterways.

Make waterways visible



Connection to waterways especially Wianamatta (South Creek) is very important for local Dharug people. Allow water to flow across site and be visible. Integrate flow paths into nature play and dry creeks. Naturalise existing waterways.

Care for “non-human kin”



The project team spotted a mob of Kangaroos on the site visit, while we were watched over by crows. Caring for “non-human kin” is an important responsibility for Aboriginal people. Design should maintain and restore critical habitats and include native and endemic plants to encourage animals to return to Country.

Community and culture



Provide places for community gathering and celebration and spaces for sharing Aboriginal knowledges, heritage interpretation, art, and cultural trails. Make Aboriginal culture visible to non-Aboriginal residents and users of the space.



Figure 34: Protected tree area with water runoff (source: Aunty Helen Slater)

8.3 Respecting Country

Group GSA have designed a plan to demonstrate “Respecting Country” which includes recognition of local landscape features, prevalent wind direction, important view locations and habitats.

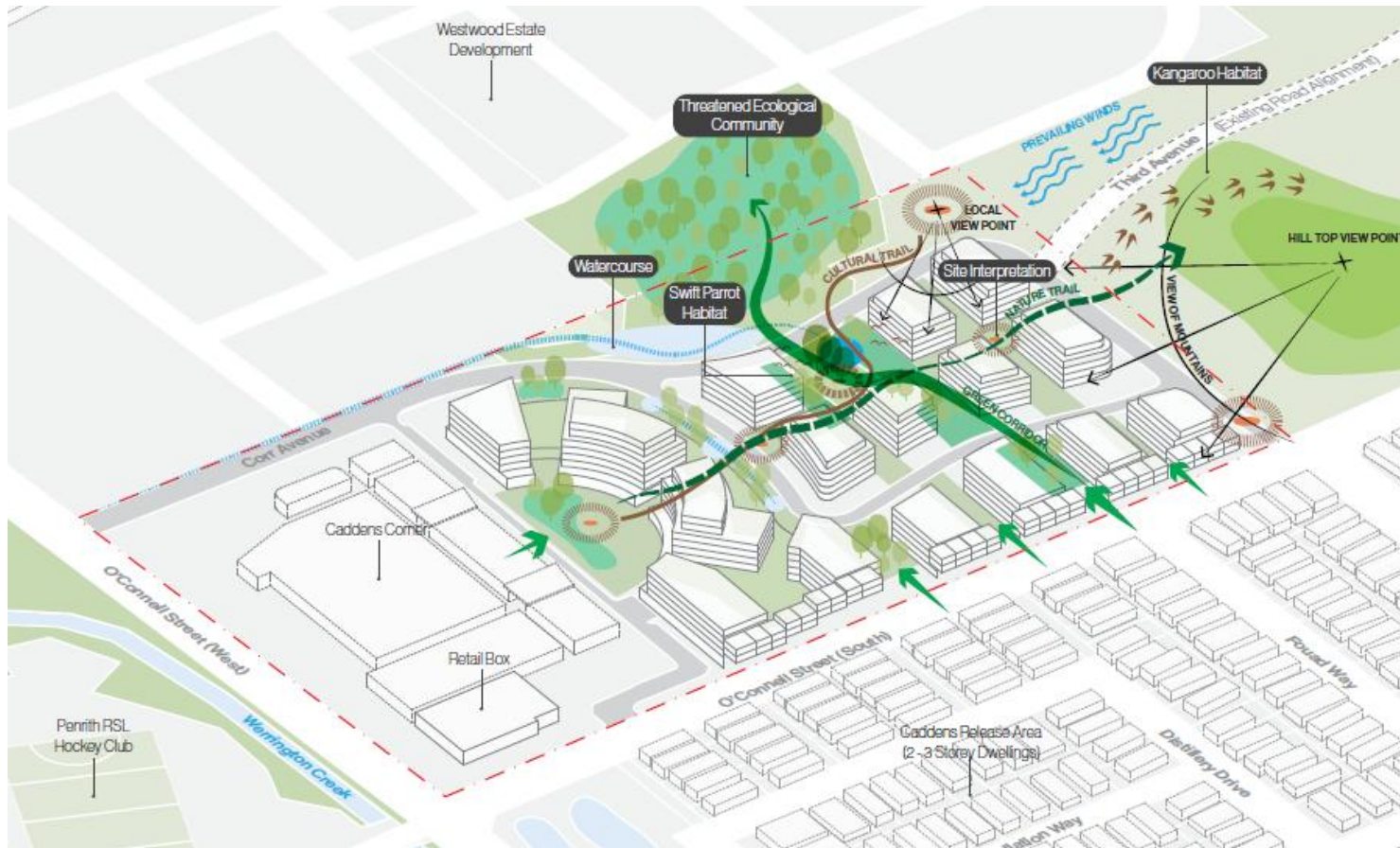


Figure 35: Respecting Country (source: Group GSA)

8.4 Examples of design realisations

8.4.1 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.



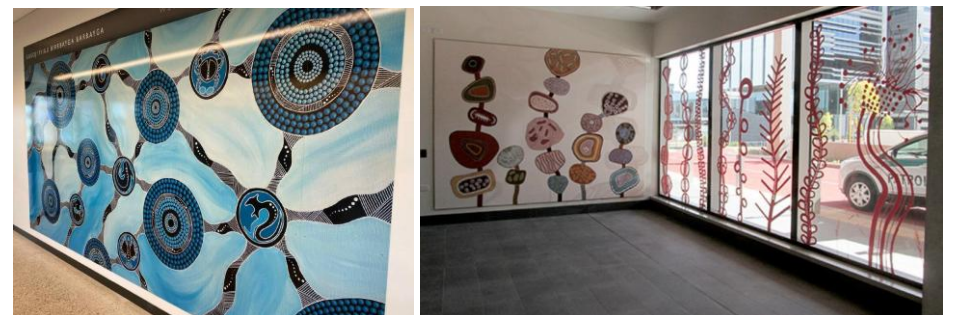
Figure 36: Design on perforated metal (Source: Kayelene Slater)

8.4.2 Acknowledgement of/Welcome to Country

A key method of communicating the importance of Country to audiences at a site 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.



Left: Acknowledgement of Country, Marrickville Library (source: Inner West Council) right: 'Garabara' Robert Andrews, 2018 (source: University of Sydney)



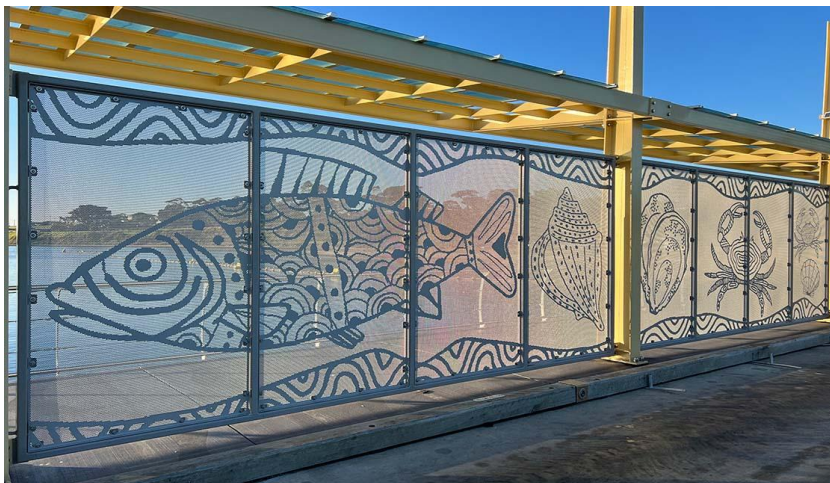
Left Birrpai Welcome by Angela Marr-Grogan at Port Macquarie Airport (Source: Port Macquarie-Hastings Council) right: Fiona Stanley Hospital foyer welcome wall

1.1.1 Public artwork

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

Public artwork can be incorporated into the fabric of a building using patterning or materials, or it can be applied as a mural for internal or external walls. Sculptures can be tactile and playful as well as thought provoking. Sculptures can also be part of a sculpture trail which encourages exploration of Country.

Aboriginal artwork should be developed by Aboriginal artists in consultation with Knowledge Holders or Elders of the area who can speak for Country.



Custom metal imagery screen (source: Helen Slater)



The Way Home, by Joe Hurst, Gibbons St, Redfern



marri ngurang, Redfern, by Nicole Monks



Left: Walert the Possum (Source: NGARGA WARENDJ). Right: Artwork at Bankstown Art Centre by Jane Cavanough;



Nowra based Warwick Keen's contemporary dendroglyphs



Eucalypt Canopy installations (source: Balarinji)



Miri, by Reko Rennie, Pt. Leo Estate Sculpture Park

8.4.3 Water features

Water is an important element of connection to Country for Aboriginal people, and connections to nearby Wianamatta (South Creek) were raised as important in the stakeholder consultation. Water features could be incorporated into play spaces or public domain areas to strengthen the connection to the nearby waterways.

Hydraulic play equipment, such as hand-operated pumps and water wheels, could mimic the movement of water, misting systems could create a soft environment for play, and features representing creeks and rivers and their associated fauna could be integrated into play equipment.

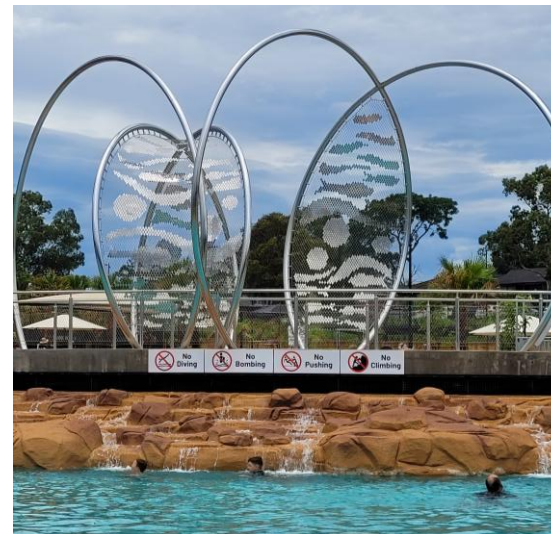
.Campbelltown Billabong Parklands was noted by stakeholders as particularly successful at integrating water into a public space



Water feature, Yagin Square, Perth



Billabong Parklands (source: Campbelltown City Council)



Bridge design at Billabong Parklands (source: Helen Slater)

8.4.4 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.

Viewpoints are also an opportunity for interpretive panels which interpret the broader landscape which is an important point reiterated in the GANSW Connecting with Country framework (2023). Given the height of the hill at Caddens it is an opportunity to offer views across the Country and to point out important landscape features and cultural heritage values in the area. Views from the hill on the Caddens site could offer views across to mountains, waterways, the protected woodlands areas and also could be an opportunity for the public to spot wildlife like kangaroos.



Top: Birubi Point Aboriginal Place (source: NSW National Parks). Bottom: Signage at George Phillips lookout (source; The Interpretive Design Company)

8.4.6 Plantings

Plantings of local species that were in the area prior to European arrival, and therefore part of the Indigenous landscape experienced by the Aboriginal community, are part of a powerful interpretive approach for landscape design. Support and restoration of local ecosystems and planting patterns, where trees and understory plants are clumped rather than planted in lines, landscaping features with curved rather than straight lines, are preferred to enhance the naturalistic feel and reflect / echo Country.

Community gardens, garden care and planting, and bushland restoration activities are an opportunity to engage and educate local communities. Aboriginal gardening businesses and cultural heritage educators could be engaged to encourage wider community to understand and care for the local environment, learn about Aboriginal plant use.



Barangaroo Reserve: 84 different species that were native to the Sydney region at the time of European settlement were incorporated. (source: Janna Schreier Garden Design).



Feature Garden at The Foundry South Eveleigh (source: Jiwah)



Cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*) landscape design. (source: Shades of Green Landscape Design Architecture)

8.4.7 Productive gardens / 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 uses of the plants.



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

8.4.8 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

8.4.9 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 Aboriginal cultural heritage in new ways. By incorporating Aboriginal cultural heritage interpretation in play spaces in creative and subtle ways, both children and parents can encounter new ideas and integrate educational experiences into everyday play.

Play equipment and playground 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 play spaces to support play-based learning.

Nature play using natural materials is an important way for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children to connect to Country and touch land, water and sky.



Yirran muru (Many pathways) - Dharawal Interpretive Play Space, Shellharbour Civic Centre⁶³



Pipemakers Park Nature Playground (source: Maribyrnong, Victoria)

⁶³ <https://letschatshellharbour.com/aboriginal-interpretive-play-space>

8.4.10 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)

8.4.11 Naming/Use of language

For Aboriginal peoples, connection with Country is intrinsically connected to identity through language, cultural practices and long held relationships between people and the land. Using Aboriginal words or phrases in as elements in the paving, to name key features in new developments, as dual naming for streets and public spaces or in audio recordings is an interpretive option that recognises Aboriginal cultural heritage values. All language usage should be done in consultation with Aboriginal knowledge holders.



Aboriginal language on interpretive panels, Cairns foreshore



Dharug language in paving Macquarie University



Aboriginal language and tactile fish sculpture, Elizabeth Park

8.4.12 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.



Centennial Parklands Bady Ngura Trail



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



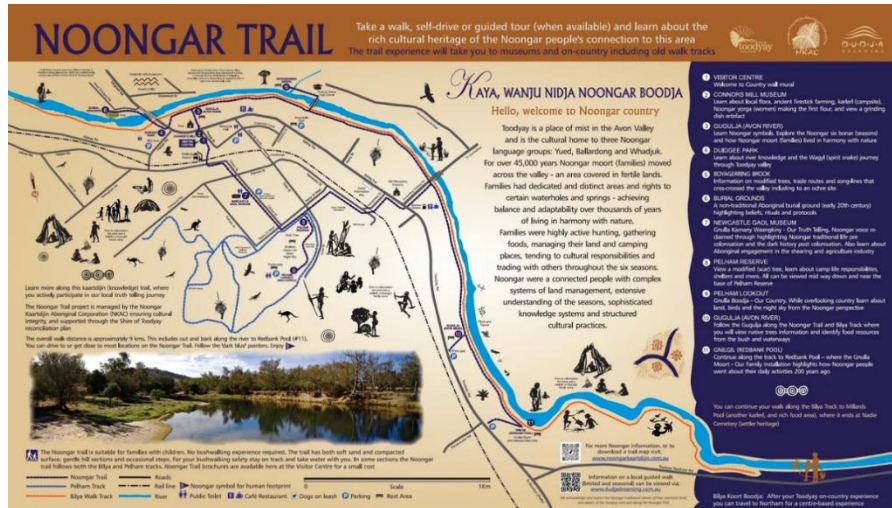
Parnkalla Trail, Port Lincoln (source: Artefact)

8.4.13 Walks and trails

The size of the new development and the addition of walkways though public domain areas offers significant opportunities for walks and trails along access pathways between the buildings, and up to view points.

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

An example of a QR code/App is *Soundtrail Myall Creek* - 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", an audio recording is activated. Visitors can move back and forth along the route to listen again to each recording.



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



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

9. PRACTICES



9.1 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.

9.1.1 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,

9.1.2 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

9.1.3 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.

10. ACTIONS



10.1 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.

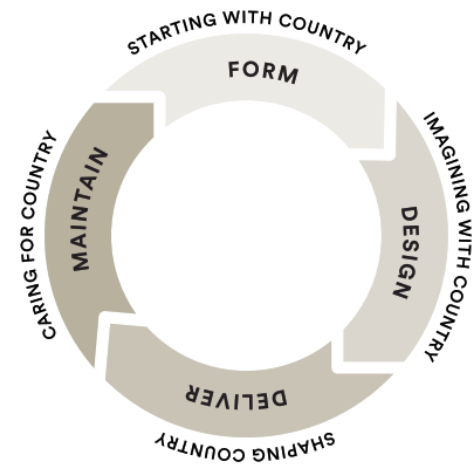


Figure 37: Project lifecycle from an Aboriginal perspective (GANSW Connecting with Country)

10.1.1 Form – Starting with Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Research and prepare	Locate previous Aboriginal cultural heritage and technical studies relevant to the project.	Outcomes See previous consultation and reports in section 6.4
		Recommendations All project team members should review this <i>Connecting with Country report</i>
	Considering undertaking cultural awareness training, including identifying the Aboriginal stakeholders you will be working with	Outcomes - Project team members attended the Walk on Country on 7 March 2025 - The Holdmark project team members have attended cultural awareness training.
		Recommendations - Cultural awareness training should be undertaken by all future project team members - Establish on going relationships with Aboriginal communities, Elders, educators, and businesses

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Allocate time and resources	Allocate sufficient time and resources for community to participate, ensuring there is flexibility with timing and location of meeting	Outcomes - Artefact has organised consultation with key stakeholders at a suitable time and location for attendees Recommendations - Project teams should ensure that project timelines and budgets account for knowledge sharing workshops that are flexible - Community should be kept informed of project milestones, especially where they relate to recommendations in this report
Empower	Enable Aboriginal community to lead and guide the project from the outset and throughout the project lifecycle, including financial decision making	Outcomes - Aboriginal stakeholders shared their expertise on the Walk on Country on 7 March 2025 Recommendations - Schedule in additional opportunities for consultation - Establish on going relationships with Aboriginal communities, Elders, educators and businesses
Collaborate	Follow established community engagement protocols	Outcomes - This process has engaged with stakeholders who were identified through the ACHAR process and through self-identification as people with a connection to Country. - Stakeholders were asked how they would like to be addressed - ICIP and other protocols were discussed at the start of the discussion on the Walk on Country on the 7 March 2025 Recommendations - The ICIP guidelines outlined should be followed in future consultation – particularly in development of public art and Aboriginal heritage Interpretation
Share knowledge	Discuss with all involved how historic events and cultural narratives will be supported	Outcomes - Through consultation and historical research this CwC report has identified key historical, cultural and environmental narratives that could be interpreted and explored through design and on-site interpretation. Examples of how these narratives could be interpreted are described in Section 7.4 Recommendations - The preparation of a Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy would assist in identifying and conveying key cultural events and historic narratives
	Listen to community concerns about building development and how it will affect Country	Outcomes - Concerns and opportunities were discussed at the workshop on the 10 March 2025 Recommendations - The project team should review and respond to the feedback outlined in section 6.4.2

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Respect ICIP	Establish ICIP protocols that will ensure knowledge and other intellectual property (e.g. Artwork) is protected and appropriately credited	Outcome - The ICIP guidelines are outlined in section 2.8 - ICIP and other protocols were discussed at the start of the workshop on the 10 March 2025
		Recommendations - The ICIP guidelines outlined in section 2.8 should be followed in future consultation – particularly in development of public art and Aboriginal heritage Interpretation. - Renumerate key stakeholders for the sharing of cultural knowledge
	Keep confidential records of all engagement sessions. Report back to community on how ICIP is being used and seek permission before sharing information	Outcomes ICIP and other protocols were discussed at the start of the workshop on the 10 March 2025
		Recommendations - Redact key information when reports are made publicly available. - Establish protocols to communication is maintained with community - This report and notes from the workshop on the 10 March 2025 will be shared with stakeholders to check they approve of their knowledges being shared
Create Employment Opportunities	Consider engaging an Aboriginal cultural advisor who has spatial design skills	Outcomes The Aboriginal Stakeholders had opportunities to contribute to the architectural and landscape plans at the workshop and through development of this report
		Recommendations Collate a list of Aboriginal owned business and services in the area who can contribute to this project at all stages

10.1.2 Design – Imaging with Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Design basics	Use first place names	Outcomes - Recommendations regarding use of Dharug language within the development have been provided in section 7.3 Recommendations: - Start incorporating Aboriginal place names into reports - Incorporate place names into design concepts - Use Dharug language in wayfinding and interpretive signage
	Connect to broader landscape settings	Outcomes - Engage local Aboriginal landscaping companies for the project's landscape design implementation. - Place themes are being devised in response to landscape and historical themes and ideas suggested by the Aboriginal Stakeholders Recommendations - Consult with Aboriginal knowledge holders when conducting and developing environmental management recommendations to encourage the maintenance of this knowledge and improve the health of ecosystems
	Protect Aboriginal cultural heritage	Outcomes - 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 - An ACHAR for the project has been produced (Artefact 2024) - Interpretation opportunities for local Aboriginal Cultural Values have been identified in section 8.3 Recommendations - Consider the development of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy
	Acknowledge shared history	Outcomes - Opportunities to interpret and acknowledge shared histories have been identified through design realisation and interpretation opportunities in 8.3 Recommendations - Preparation of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy would assist in presenting the different historical narratives
Design opportunities	Learning from traditional Aboriginal architecture	Outcomes: - Examples of good practice in incorporating Aboriginal design into development are given in 8.3 Recommendations - Further consultation needs to be organized to ensure the Aboriginal community approves of design concepts

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
	Supporting living systems: Earth, Water and sky	Outcomes Consider recommendations by stakeholders included in section 6.4.1 with respect to landscaping, places of healing, access to the sky, and access to water and soil.
		Recommendations Environmental assessment recommendations and design concepts should be prepared in light of knowledge shared by community that promote healthy Country
	Reawakening memory	Outcomes Consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders has fed into the CwC report
		Recommendations Consider the preparation of an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy

10.1.3 Delivery – Shaping Country

Activity	Action	Outcomes and recommendations
Construct with Country	Consider how the building of the place will become part of Country once completed	Recommendations - Prior to construction commencing, an Unexpected Finds Protocol should be developed which should include a condition regarding consultation - Consult with project RAPs, LALC and key stakeholders about the caring and storage for any Aboriginal objects that may be found.
	Undertake a skills audit of the community before construction	Recommendations - Provide training and employment opportunities for community - Consider engagement of Aboriginal businesses
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	Recommendations - Commission a Welcome to Country ceremony at important milestone events - Organise a smoking ceremony at the beginning and completion of the project. - Invite key stakeholders to perform and participate in any Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies.

10.1.4 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	Recommendations • Ensure culturally safe access to garden resources for community use eg. leaves for Smoking Ceremonies, art/craft activities • Ensure the design concept includes spaces where community can gather/have access, meeting rooms, other social spaces • Stakeholders for gallery/display space for art, cultural displays/exhibition
Monitor and evaluate	Undertake post-occupancy evaluations to establish project success and areas for improvement	Recommendations: • Undertake post-occupancy evaluations
	Maintain ongoing relationships with community	Recommendations: • For developments that arise from the masterplan, ensure a condition of approval is Aboriginal engagement
	Continue to develop and strengthen cultural awareness	Recommendations: • Develop cultural awareness projects which can be implemented throughout the development to the non-Aboriginal community • Project teams to attend local cultural events and celebrations.

11. OUTCOMES FOR COUNTRY

11.1 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 below are taken from the *GANSW Connecting with Country Framework (2023)*.

11.2 Healthy Country

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

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Recommendations
Healthy Ecology	High biodiversity includes a wide variety of plant and animal species, including those that are rare or endangered	Incorporate native and endemic plants within the project design to create healthy eco-systems and micro-habitat.
	Ecological systems are resilient to impacts from drought, floods and fires, as well as human-induced disturbances such as habitat destruction and pollution	- Implement native planting schemes that are resilient to or thrive in the environmental conditions, based on advice from Aboriginal community members - Use endemic and climate resilient plant species and re-introduce plants that were present at the site prior to colonisation.
The physical form of Country remains recognisable and restored where possible	Interference with natural water systems is minimal	- Design with minimal impact to natural landscape lines and water courses; protect and restore the environment via landscape design - Monitor and assess flow lines and run off around sites, local environment

11.3 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	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	Consider the development of a Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy
Cultural safety	Aboriginal people feel safe, respected, and supported in how they express their cultural identity	- Ensure consultation is ongoing - Ensure ICIP protocols are followed
Relief for Aboriginal communities who are fatigued by the workload	A strategic plan or register is established to identify technical and cultural skills of Aboriginal community	Maintain list of community skills and businesses

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Recommendations
imposed on them by project teams seeking their advice on Country	Community is involved early in the decision-making about which projects they are best placed to work on	Stakeholders were invited to promote skillsets, recommend Aboriginal businesses, and say how much involvement they wanted to have on the project
Training	Training is provided to develop communities' spatial design skills and understanding of planning and design processes	- Identify opportunities for training for Aboriginal trainees, interns and students as part of the development - A number of early career heritage officers attended the Walk on Country and Workshop as a development opportunity both in terms of learning about planning procedures and design from the project team, but also learning about Culture from Elders
	Financial supports including scholarships encourage community to pursue a career in built environment professions	Consider opportunities for scholarships for Aboriginal trainees, interns and students
Employment opportunities	Jobs are created that allow people to stay connected to community and Country,	- Consider designated Aboriginal paid traineeship/s within core businesses of the project - Support and celebrate Aboriginal staff; ensure employment conditions that allow time off for cultural work and commitments to community.
	Employment opportunities are provided throughout all stages of project life cycles	
	Aboriginal businesses are supported in the project procurement strategy	

11.4 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.	- Acknowledgement of Country incorporated into sites - Community will have the opportunity for input into Connecting with Country reports through review of the draft.
	Aboriginal community actively participate in shared decision-making processes related to precinct/regional planning or program workstreams, particularly those that significantly impact Country they are responsible to care for.	- Establish and maintain relationships with Aboriginal community partners through existing links to individuals, representative community organisations and businesses. - Invite community to significant site milestones, eg. art installations, planting programs, dedication and opening of spaces etc.

What it looks like	Indicators for success	Outcomes and recommendations
Project teams and processes for project delivery respect ICIP	Aboriginal community endorses the project outcomes and behaviour of the project team.	- This report will be sent to stakeholders for their feedback and input - Any Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy should draw on the expertise of local knowledge holders and artists - Any community contributors, artists etc. must have credit / acknowledgement
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	- Contribute to reviving Dharug dialect by using local language within the project. - Consider the development of a Heritage Interpretation and Public Art Strategy
Access to Country is provided	Access to Country enables community to practice ceremony and undertake obligations to care for Country.	Opportunities should be sought for appropriate ceremonies (e.g. smoking ceremonies and Welcome to Country ceremonies) during the development/ opening of the project

11.5 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.	- Cultural awareness training should be undertaken by all future project team members - Encourage cultural awareness for new building owners and residents - Promote / celebrate / reward staff engagement in cultural learning and attendance at Aboriginal cultural events
	Cultural awareness training is embedded into continuing professional development.	
	Requirements (e.g. NSCA) Proof of cultural awareness training is required in procurement contracts	

11.6 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	Project sites are connected to broader landscapes beyond property or project boundaries	• Incorporate colour schemes connected to the local landscape into final design. • Incorporate local materials into landscape design • Consult with Aboriginal knowledge holders when conducting and developing environmental management recommendations to encourage the maintenance of this knowledge and improve the health of ecosystems
	Where possible, locally sourced, sustainable building materials are used; they have a relationship with and belong to the Country they come from.	
	First placenames guide design and planning outcomes: placemaking, dual naming and wayfinding.	• Contribute to reviving Dharug dialect through use of local language within the project. This can include use of language in building name or spaces within the building or landscaping
	The memory of significant cultural, historic and natural events can be read and traced within Country's landscape	• Landscaping reflects local Indigenous plantings and ecological systems. • Attempt to incorporate seamless views across landscape and towards local waterways • Consider interpretation elements that support understanding of Country
Planning and design outcomes Support Living cultural practices	Projects support ongoing opportunities for on-Country tours, ceremony, and sourcing Indigenous food and materials.	• Community spaces can be used by local communities for cultural practices and workshops
Original landscapes are repaired or restored	Landscapes are regenerated.	• Landscape plans should be developed which incorporate endemic flora and support natural habitats

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 Conclusion and recommendations

This Connecting with Country report for 68-80 O'Connell Street, Caddens has been prepared to align with the principles and guidelines of the GANSW *Connecting with Country Framework (2023)* and associated best practice documents.

This document 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 8.2
- actioning appropriate recommendations from the Outcomes for Country – see section 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 Public 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 project.



Figure 38: Pearl Depoma, Kayelene Slater and Kerrie Slater Walk on Country, 7 March 2025

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14. APPENDIX A: CONSULTATION LOG

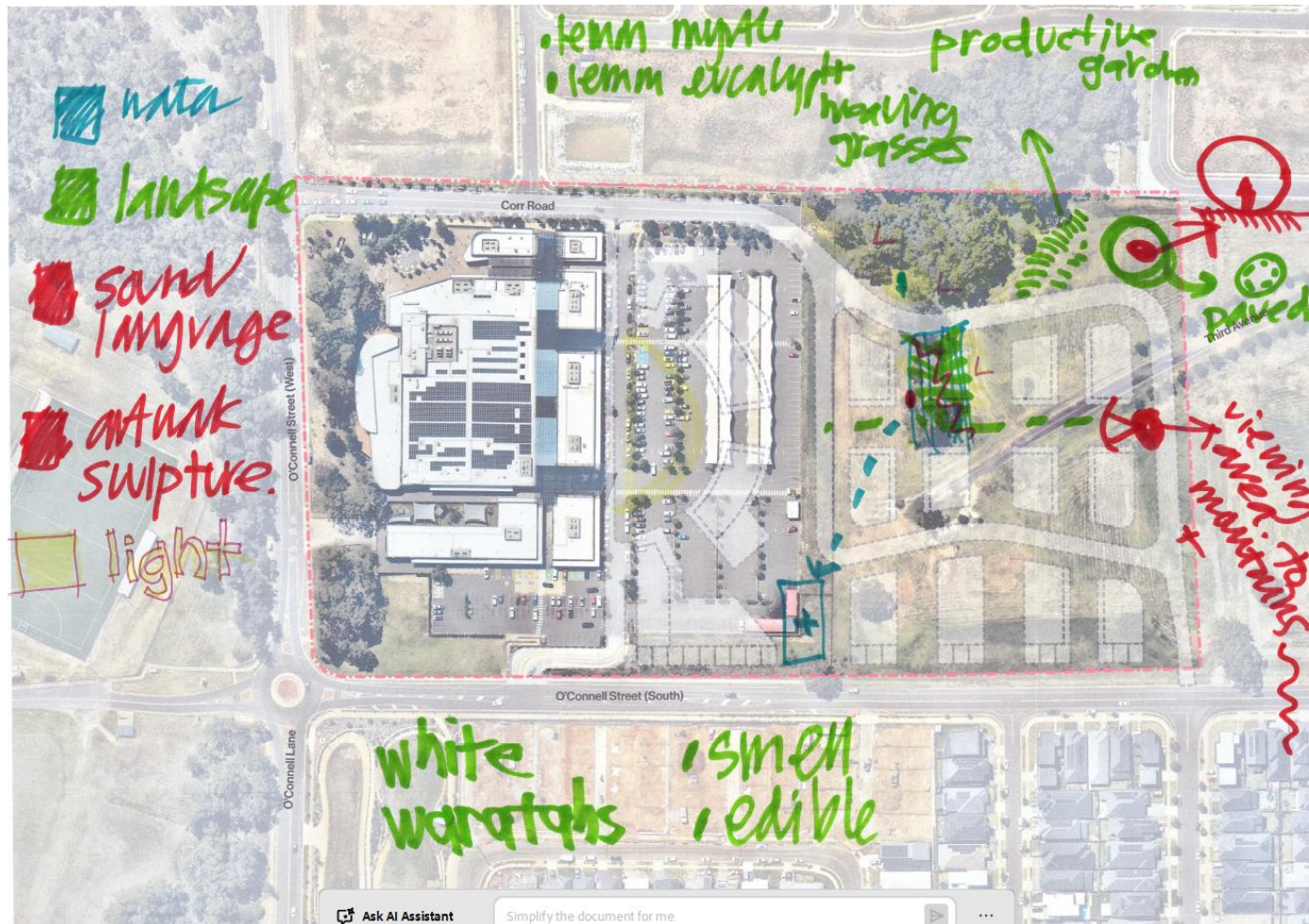
Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
Karen Owens	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
	16/4/25	Artefact	Email	Responded that had no comments on report
Vicky Slater	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Kym slater	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Pearl Depoma	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review

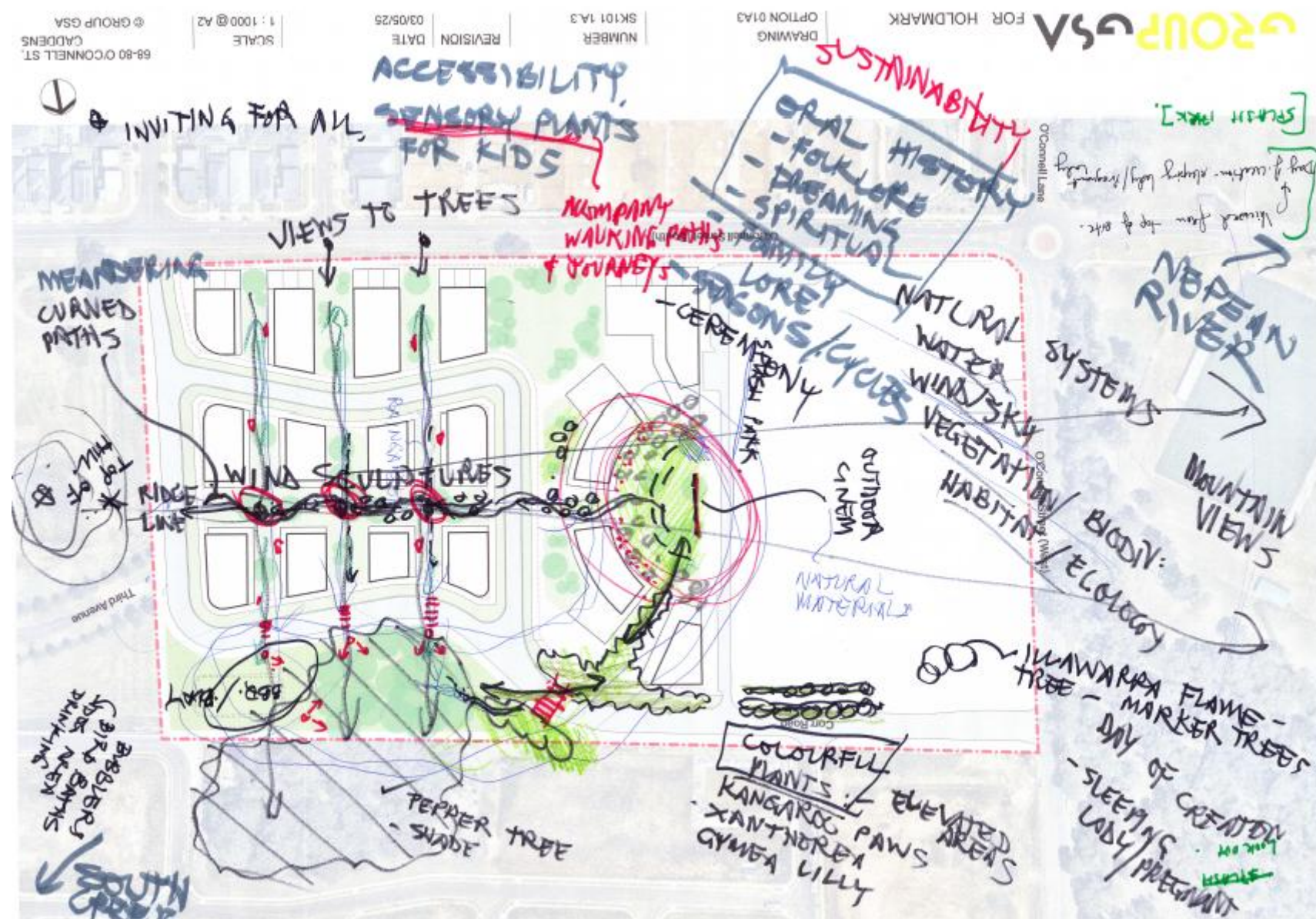
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Zona Wilkinson	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Arika Jalomaki	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Kaarina Slater	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Kerrie Slater	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Helen Slater	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review. Helen responded with no further comments to add.

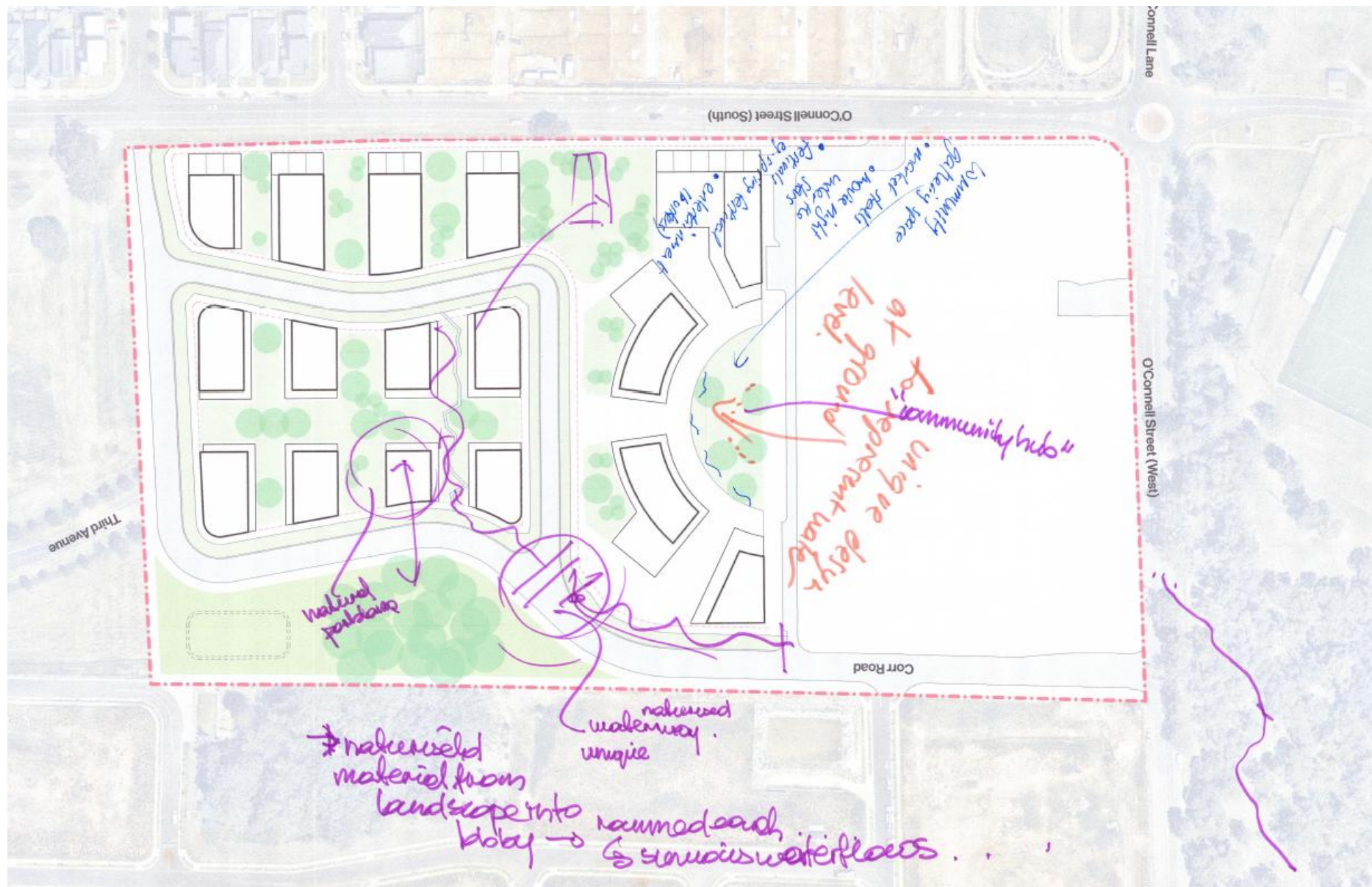
Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
David Matagia	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review. David responded with no further comments to add.
Kayelene Slater	4/3/25	Artefact	Email	Invitation to participate
	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review. Kayelene responded with a comment to update an image caption: report updated.
Neane Carter, Teri Janke Lawyers	6/3/25	Artefact	Online	Discussion about ICIP protection for Aboriginal cultural knowledges on the project. Report updated.
Jandamarra Bryant	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Cody Slater	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Chance Armstrong-Makey	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review

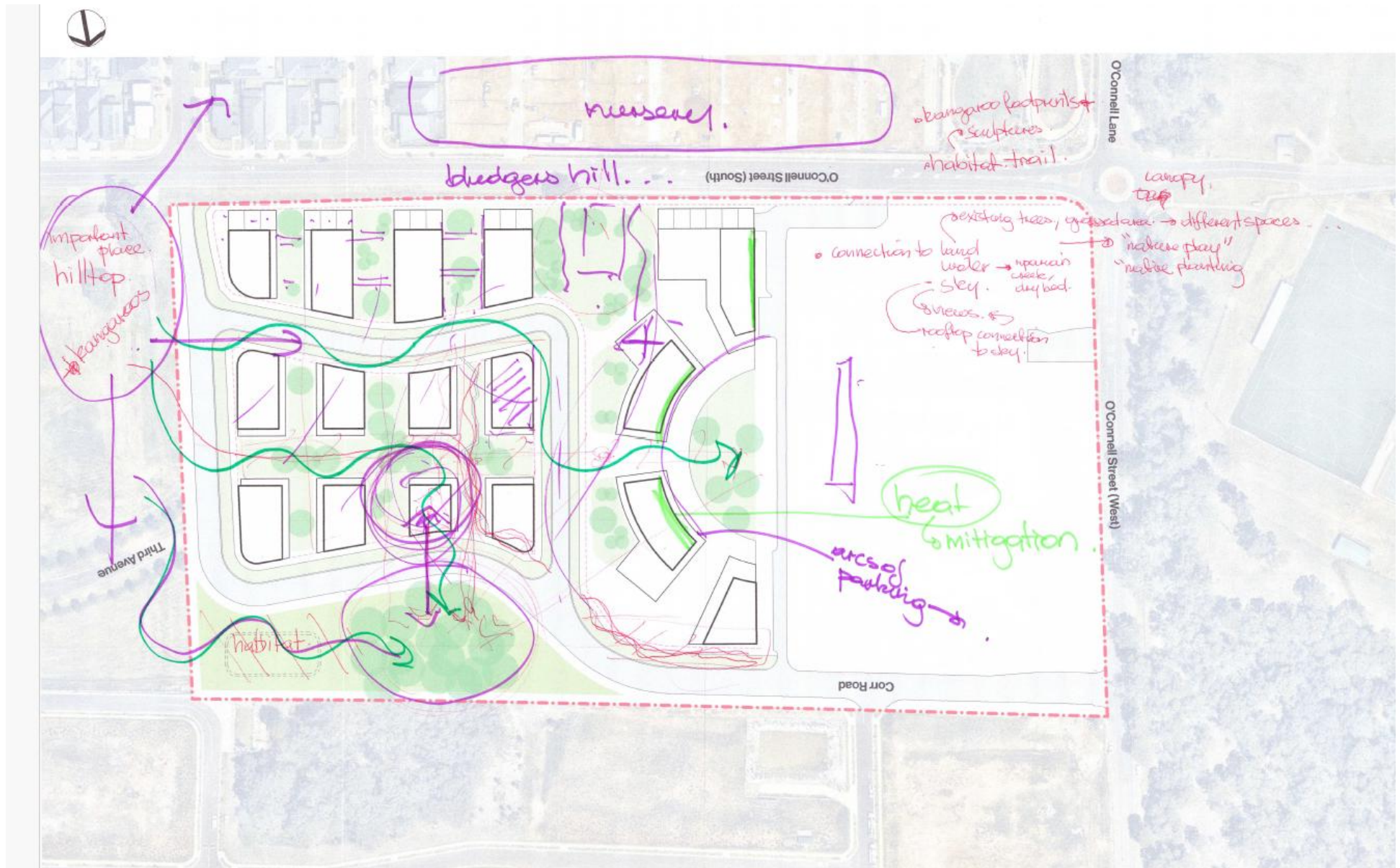
Person / organisation	Date	Contacted by	Mode	Topic
Tahlai Saliba	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Jacob Whebel,	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review
Taleisha Slater	7/3/25	Project Team	On site	Walk on Country
	10/3/25	Project Team	On site	Workshop at Cambridge Park Hall
	15/4/25	Artefact	Email	Sent draft report for review

15. APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED PLANS













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