



# Green Square Stage 3

Planning and Designing with Country

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# Contact

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## 01 | Executive summary

This report articulates the three community-preferred themes that speak to Country at Green Square:

**GADIGAL COUNTRY AND CULTURE**

**CONTEMPORARY HISTORY**

**COMMUNITY CONNECTION**

These themes provide the structure for rich and nuanced storytelling through a designing with Country process that will equip the project design team with the knowhow to deliver an authentic Country-informed response.

The method involves building on original foundational narratives established in consultation with Traditional Knowledge Holders. These narratives were further co-narrated in a workshop with the Green Square Design team and Traditional Knowledge Holders.

The report offers corresponding high level design responses for the Green Square Design teams to reference in their planning and design.

The report supports how vital it will be for the design team to maintain ongoing consultation within the Traditional Knowledge Holder framework through design development, and to ensure cultural-socio-economic outcomes are achievable with the Gadigal and inner Sydney-connected Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander community.

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## Acknowledgement

Anyngkarrinjarra ki-awarawu\* - being still on Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have always belonged to this place, and cared for it. We acknowledge their elders and leaders, past, present and those who will come through in the future.

\*From the Yanyuwa language of Balarinji's origin community Borroloola NT

# Protocols

## CULTURAL SENSITIVITY NOTE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report may contain names, images or descriptions of people who have passed. These might appear in discussions, images and historical accounts.

Cultural safety in this report aligns with the NSW Government Architects framework position. Cultural safety in this report and in its design outputs 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. (Government Architect NSW 2023)

## CULTURAL SAFETY NOTE

Balarinji strives for cultural safety in our community approach. In a co-design context, we promote the following values:

- shared respect, shared meaning and shared Knowledge
- the experience of learning together with respect and deep listening
- foster environments that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination in decision-making.

## TERMINOLOGY NOTE

There are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups across Australia, many of whom like to be called by the name of their particular group/s. In this report, we refer to cultural groups by their specific names where possible. The terms 'traditional owners/custodians', 'Aboriginal' and/or 'Torres Strait Islander' have been used when general terms are necessary (e.g. to encompass multiple groups) or when specific cultural group names are not known. Other terminology (e.g. 'First Nations' or 'Indigenous') may also be used when quoted or with acknowledgement that these more generic terms also have international meaning and value and should not be used interchangeably with 'Aboriginal' and/or 'Torres Strait Islander'.

## REPORT LIMITATIONS

Limitations in developing design principles through consultation with Aboriginal community:

- 'Designing and Connecting with Country' is generated from community consultations and walking on Country experiences. This interpretation and the corresponding design principles are not intended to bring us culturally closer rather than being prescriptive. They represent a perspective, or collective wish for the ongoing wellbeing of Country and are offered as respected insights from community and Country.
- This report can be considered a living document. It is not a template for design production, rather, a platform for everyone involved on the Green Square Project to collectively approach how we connect with, and care for Country. Collectively, means practicing reciprocity in your design practice – checking with community how your design decisions impact Country. The report is intended as a central cultural reference in the Green Square Project design governance framework and is limited to this project and Country.

# Permitted Purpose

This report has been prepared for Mirvac. The Confidential Information contained within the report remains the Intellectual Property of the locally connected elders, knowledge holders and community members who have co-developed this Report with Balarinji. It is provided as a commercial-in-confidence document.

To observe Intellectual Property protocols, Balarinji and the locally connected elders, knowledge holders and community members engaged on the project confirm that we permit the distribution of this co-developed report for review only (Permitted Purpose), and under the following conditions.

The Recipient may only:

- Use this report for internal review. To share this report publicly the project team must request an anonymised version of the report, ensuring all stakeholders names and personal details are redacted prior to sharing publicly.
- Use Intellectual Property or Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) within the report for the purpose of the Green Square Project and must ensure it is not used or reproduced for another purpose outside of the project; and
- Should the Recipient or others desire to use the Intellectual Property or ICIP provided for purposes other than the Green Square Project must be sought from and given by Balarinji, elders, knowledge holders and community members engaged by the project.

**The Permitted Purpose is to enable information sharing, while at the same time protecting Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property. It promotes the continuation of collaboration with traditional knowledge holders so the project is grounded in the unique culture and narrative of the project site, and knowledge holders specific to the report will continue to be properly engaged and recognised in all future co-design processes.**

## 02 | Background

Balarinji commenced the compilation of an Aboriginal Core Narrative Report for Mirvac's Green Square Town Centre in 2023. This report had two key messages:

**“Gadigal histories and stories along with contemporary narrative are an intrinsic part of Green Square”**

**“Acknowledging and amplifying the voices of the Gadigal and Inner-Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will contribute to placemaking, wellbeing and connectedness to Country and culture”**

Fast forward to 2025 and Mirvac is preparing Green Square Town Centre, comprising Stages 3,4 and 5 for State Significant Development (SSD) submission via the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) approval pathway. Multiple architectural firms are engaged across nine different residential building types (typologies) – Build to sell/rent, affordable housing, and student accommodation. All of these design teams attended the co-narration workshop.

The original Aboriginal Core Narrative Report was established through 1:1 consultation with Traditional Knowledge Holders (TKH). It established three foundational narratives of Country and an accompanying nine Cultural Principles to contemplate the Aboriginal Narratives and connection to Country. These remain core to the conceptualisation of placemaking, wellbeing and connectedness to Country and Culture.

## 02 | Background

This report is setting up the translation of the key themes into designing with Country, to integrate knowledges into structure, meaning into form, and values and narratives of Country into tangible design outcomes. It is a guide to considering how cultural, spatial, and environmental values can be expressed across Green Square through the lens of Country, in preparation for a reimagining of where Place, story and the site's new identity will intersect. Connection and belonging will be a lived experience on the site through a Country-centred approach that is shaped by both community and Country.



## 02 | Background

### 2.1 Country

Two paths cross in a landscape of wetlands and sandhills. One leads from the eastern coast of what is now known as Sydney to the western shores of Kamay and beyond past Dharawal Country and further again to the south coast of NSW. The other leads from Warrane (Sydney Cove) to the northern headland of Kamay (La Perouse). The paths have been used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years and are now known as arterial roads for Sydney traffic. Adjacent to where they intersect is Green Square.

The intersection has changed over time. Originally songlines in a pristine landscape, later an important industrial node which attracted a worker population and corresponding housing. With its arterial accessibility and convenient distance from the city of Sydney the area attracted people from many nationalities as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from across Sydney and Australia. Multiculturalism became synonymous with the Green Square location and the identity of South Sydney as a diverse working-class demographic. Even with gentrification changing the character of the local area in recent decades, the memory of the industrial worker population lives strong through sporting teams, historic activism, and community organisations.

Country remains strong at Green Square in 2025 even though it is a modified urban landscape. Recent acknowledgement of this can be seen in the design of the public spaces such as the new Green Square Public School and the waterways of the 'Drying Green'.



Photo: Balarinji 2025

## 02 | Background

### 2.2 Consultation and Design Journey

#### 2.2.1 2023 GREEN SQUARE ABORIGINAL CORE NARRATIVE REPORT

Seven 1:1 consultations contributed to the report's "core narrative". Representatives from the original consultations in 2023 were present at the 2025 Design Narrative Workshop.

List of Gadigal stakeholders:

- **Allen Madden** - Gadigal Elder, Knowledge Holder
- **Matt White** - Inner-Sydney community member and staff member of Babana Aboriginal Mens Group
- **Charles Davidson** - Aboriginal Stakeholder
- **Ray Davidson** - Gadigal Elder, Knowledge holder
- **Adam Byrne** - Aboriginal Stakeholder
- **Sonya Pearce** - Aboriginal Stakeholder
- **Paul Newman** - Aboriginal Stakeholder
- **Donna Ingram** - Aboriginal Stakeholder

Three foundational narratives were established:

- Gadigal Country and culture
- Contemporary history
- Community connection

he foundational narratives were further unpacked and discussed as subthemes:

#### Gadigal Country and Culture

- Custodianship – shared meaning
- Wetlands
- Walking tracks
- Cultural practices
- Language
- Significant animals
- Six seasons
- Change – contemporary history

#### Contemporary History

- Unity, connection and multiculturalism
- Sport
- Activism
- Key Figures

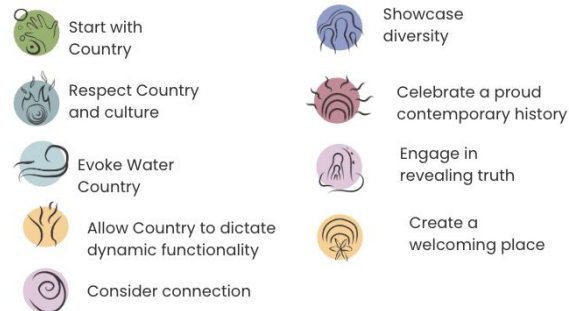
#### Community Connection

- Co-design and continued collaboration
- Art and Storytelling
- Revealing truth and education
- Community spaces
- Cultural safety

#### Additional points of community interest

- Social housing
- Jobs and future employment

The report developed a suite of 9 Cultural Principles as guidelines for interpreting this narrative to contribute to design thinking. They are based on story, philosophy, aspirations and insights from the community for the project:



## 02 | Background

### 2.2 Consultation and Design Journey

#### 2.1.2 2025 FOUNDATIONAL NARRATIVE WORKSHOP

*Who's the author of the story? To some extent we're all writing a new story"*

– Design Team participant

The Foundational Narrative Workshop was presented as a 'collaborative ideation workshop'. Importantly, the workshop was established as being open, exploratory and "not about final answers".

It was noted from the outset that the workshop's intention was to bring different expertise together to 'help shape Green Square'.

The workshop was held over three sessions in a single day. For context with the 2023 report, the three sessions were framed across the nine Cultural Design Principles, while not limiting further story discussions.

The workshop was organised as 3 sessions:

- Session 1 – Culture/knowledge
- Session 2 – Belonging
- Session 3 – Country

The following sections outline and discuss the workshop findings in the context of the Foundational Narratives.



2025 Foundational narrative workshop



A man wearing glasses and a patterned shirt is seated at a table. The table is cluttered with various items including papers, sticky notes, pens, and water bottles. In the background, another person is visible, also working at the table. The scene appears to be a workshop or meeting.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives Connecting with Country

## 03 | 2025 collective narratives – connecting with Country

*We want to create a place of belonging, whoever might live here in the next 5 years, a family who has kids, their kids are born on this Country; they should feel welcome here, they should feel like that's their Country.*

- Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

This Chapter correlates the original 2023 Foundational Narratives in the Aboriginal Core Narrative Report with the relevant content from the 2025 Design Narrative Workshop that was attended by Traditional Knowledge Holders and representatives of the Mirvac design team.

The intent is to establish a contemporary Country-centred story of Green Square, written by the collective voice of Gadigal Traditional Knowledge Holders and project designers who joined together in the co-narration workshop. The following indicates the thinking behind the narratives.



2025 Foundational narrative workshop

# 3.1 Gadigal Country and culture

Gadigal Country and culture began in the Dreaming, the creation time. Today, Gadigal continue to hold cultural knowledge that underpins their connection to Country, protocols and practices relevant to the cultural landscapes of this project.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.1 CUSTODIANSHIP – SHARED MEANING

*“We cared for Country. So how do you bring in care for Country?”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Custodianship is an important Aboriginal protocol to understand where people belong to and care for Country, rather than Country belonging to anyone. Traditional Knowledge Holders are asking the design team to articulate how they will exemplify care for Country through their design practice.



Green Square site

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.2 WETLANDS – WATER COUNTRY

***“It’s all about the water courses, how water flowed through the space. Got to go with the flow”***

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

***“All these buildings and new roadways have changed the environment so much and flow of water. Can’t fish, dilly bags created from trees, plants that provided that material is now gone. How do we bring them back in an environment like this?”***

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Throughout the workshop, water was acknowledged as the ‘sustainer of all life’ and needs to be protected for future generations. Historically, the land where Green Square sits was a wetland area. There was a desire to acknowledge the marshland history of the area which was shaped by water and seasonality and to ‘bring back’ what was once there. Terms like rewilding and representing the ‘spirit’ of water were discussed.

The workshop discussed the concept of ‘rewilding’ as an approach to acknowledging water Country. This discussion ranged from acknowledging deep Country and its ancient water ecologies through to the broader concept of a landscape design aesthetic that provides a naturalistic connection to Country through opportunities to engage with water.

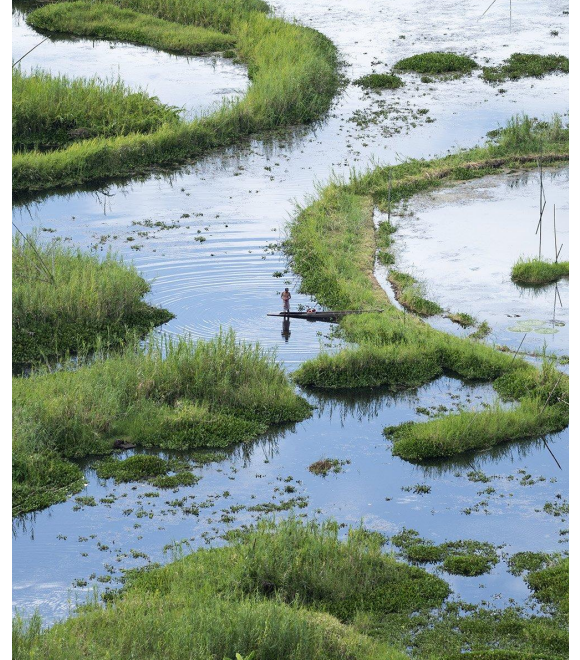


Photo by Kartik Chandramouli/Mongabay.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.3 WALKING TRACKS

*“Song lines are our DNA,  
dreaming is our everyday”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

It was established in both the 2023 interviews and 2025 Workshop that the location of Green Square is at an important junction of walking tracks. The tracks were formed with intention to assist people to respond to Country through seasonal movement. People would have camped, collected food and shared stories along the tracks. It is likely that the Green Square location as a travel intersection node in the landscape would have been a place where people camped.

The laneways and spaces between buildings of Green Square offer opportunities to incorporate concepts of tracks across Country. Working with the design parameters of landscape, vehicle and people movement, moments for engaging with Country can be incorporated into the design of the ground plane and connection with buildings.

The tracks are also a symbol of past ways of being on Country. A slower movement. An intentional action of cultural practice with social protocols.



Jerrabomberra Wetlands, ACT. Image Steve Klein 2023

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.4 CULTURAL PRACTICES

*“Wanting to recreate a space of belonging. If there’s a family who have children. They were born on Country. Hope they recognise that too. You’re born on Country, you have an obligation to respect it and share it. How do we create that? Going away from decolonising a space. But an important concept we have to think about. How do we bring it back to, this country’s history. This is ground zero. This is where it all started for our ancestors good and bad. A story we would always like to share”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Cultural practices were discussed in terms of designing for cultural sharing. This amenity extends to providing space for experiencing culture that acknowledges the needs of multiple forms of cultural practices in the public domain.



Buerger katsota architects

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.5 LANGUAGE

*“Art and storytelling don’t need to be ‘traditional’; they should be seen as living, evolving and contemporary practices. This includes embedding language as it continues to shift and change, and celebrating diverse local stories that have shaped the area.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Language was seen as a vehicle for recognising, maintaining and building Gadigal culture. Traditional Knowledge Holders noted the possibilities of embedding language into the design. They advocated for combining traditional language with contemporary stories of place.



Poem 'De Hemel', also called Floating Poem, by Jan Merx. Placed in 1991 in the North Holland town of Hoorn.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.6 SIGNIFICANT ANIMALS

The Gadigal totems include the sand goanna and the whale. There are no sand goannas around inner Sydney today, but the area was once dominated by wetlands and sand dunes which provided ample habitat for them. There would have also been eel and fish, all good hunting.

Green Square habitat has experienced large modification over time. Heavy industry and incineration of waste still remains in the memory of the people and land. Endemic species of wildlife and animals have for some time not been part of the Green Square environment.

In this project, there is potential to incorporate environments and microclimates to build biodiversity and cultural values through the introduction of endemic plants.



Australian Blue-Banded Bee. Image Magdeline Lum

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.7 SIX SEASONS

*“Land, waterways within the boundaries.  
And significance of that. Fresh waterways.  
Food, fish, plants. Day to day life of  
Gadigal. And resources that would have  
come from that.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

*“Stems from roots to create fishing lines,  
baskets, resins that come from trees,  
spear tips. Basis for survival.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

To understand the expansive notion of Caring for Country, it's important to acknowledge and understand the Six Seasons of Country recognised by Gadigal people (amongst other Aboriginal people and groups too). Seasonal indicators guide when and what to eat and how to live within and manage the natural environment. The dates are not fixed, instead changes in the environment are what's responded to. The opportunity to include a seasonal calendar or use this knowledge in the space in some way was noted as a teaching tool and way to live seasonally.



Artist unknown

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

#### 3.1.8 CHANGE

*“DO rather than just acknowledge.  
Do the things that need to be done  
to care for Country rather than just  
acknowledging through facades  
and art etc.”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

This is a call to action for the design team to embed active ways to care for Country, not only reference its cultural importance. Traditional Knowledge Holders in the workshop indicated ‘change’ means making things happen and not necessarily by following a conventional design process. Change means voices are heard and seen in the design outcomes.

Change is realised by the design team employing practices that embrace and ensure diverse perspectives inform the planning and design.



Built environment design by First Nations kids. 2023. Photo Bradley 2023

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.1 Gadigal Country and Culture

*“How do we decolonise, with the knowledge we’re hyper colonising at the same time?”*

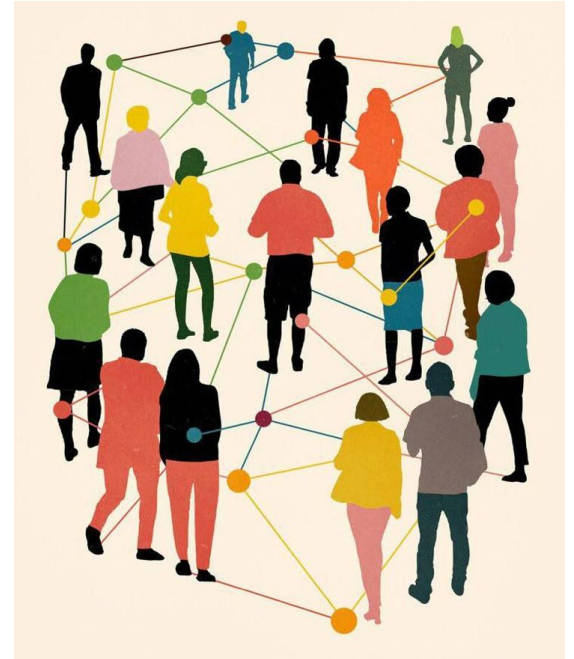
– Design team participant 2025

*“Decolonisation is a practice. It builds identity and it builds belonging. How do we convert that to something we can do? You acknowledge our leaders, past, present, as well as our Traditional Owners. You make the connection between doing things.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

The design teams questioned their practices of designing for Country whilst also, obviously, promoting further colonisation through constructing new buildings.

An Elder explained that 'decolonising' isn't just about the final design results. Instead, it should be seen as an ongoing practice that requires intentional consideration by designers of how they approach their own work and apply it to new developments like Green Square.



Artist unknown

## 3.2 Contemporary History

*“We know Redfern and surrounding areas were a hub for people from other Countries. Housing, work, those sorts of things (brought them here). We’ve got to look at how we ensure that’s a part of this story. So they belong here too”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.2 Contemporary History

#### 3.2.1 UNITY, CONNECTION AND MULTICULTURALISM

*“These fellas understood what we were going through, because they came from countries that had been doing that for hundreds of years to their people. There were a lot of friendships made.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Alongside the traditional pre-colonial history underpinning Green Square, there is also a strong contemporary Aboriginal Torres Strait Island narrative integral to the site. Local elders shared stories and memories of inner-Sydney life during the mid-late 20th century period where the community came together to fight for land rights and social justice. As a result, inner Sydney became home to one of the most important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diaspora communities in Australia. As a result of this, the Green Square development has the opportunity to acknowledge the connection that both Gadigal descendants and broader inner-Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to the site.

Connecting with Country also responds to this Aboriginal post-contact history. Along with Aboriginal community and political identity, positive multicultural relationships defined the character of the area around Green Square throughout the 20th century. Green Square has an opportunity to tell a unique story of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal harmony by referencing the bonds this community formed.

The shared plight of Aboriginal people and immigrants and the comradeship and sense of unity emerged as a unique quality of the local area around Green Square. Including these diverse histories and all the different backgrounds of people who worked alongside each other in the area, can shape and better service the diverse community that’s being shaped now.



Workers at the Eveleigh Railway Yards in Redfern

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.2 Contemporary History

#### 3.2.2 SPORT

*“Sport! unity, pride, passion”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Green Square is located centrally to the rugby league teams Redfern All Blacks and South Sydney Rabbitohs. Both teams are linked with Aboriginal culture, local community pride and social gathering. Sport brings people together across cultures and opportunities exists to consider the sporting story of the site and its inspiration for social gathering and belonging.



South Sydney Rabbitohs players Alex Johnston and Latrell Mitchell

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.2 Contemporary History

#### 3.2.3 ACTIVISM

*“Green Square has changed a lot and acknowledging the working-class neighbourhoods, activism, and everyday stories helps bridge the gap between pre-colonial narratives and the present.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

South Sydney has a strong history of Aboriginal rights and cultural activism. It is a story that can be positively acknowledged through recognising community-based organisations in the South Sydney area from which much of the Aboriginal activism came. A sensitive design approach is vital so that any reference or spatial outcome is genuine and not tokenistic.



Land Rights March from Legal Service Redfern to Parliament, Sydney 1981

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.2 Contemporary History

#### 3.2.4 KEY FIGURES (MUM SHIRL)

*“I’d love to see our young ones be able to see their families be hero’d. I was with her the other day (daughter), and she saw this coloniser statue. Why aren’t we seeing our black fellas that have been in history, there should be more of them. Heroing – why aren’t their statues of Patyegarang? There needs to be a balance throughout Sydney, not just in our hubs. Our kids need to see it and be proud of it!”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

*“White pioneers are talked about enough, we need to talk about the black pioneers, Mum Shirl for example, people who have had a big impact on community. How do we do that? Dual naming, different things like that. Linking to that past, present, future. Which could be integrated into today’s schools. Black names, that we all know that have done so much, their legacy lives on. Make things more visible through the masterplan”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025



Elaine Syron's photo of Mum Shirl

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.2 Contemporary History

#### 3.2.5 SOCIAL SCENES

*“Telling the stories of the First Nations pioneers. Those stories of the black leaders, and singers, dancers”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

‘Social Scenes’ is an additional sub-narrative established through the 2025 workshop. South Sydney had a very rich Aboriginal music and culture scene. Traditional Knowledge Holders spoke of various famous bands that were popular in venues near Green Square.

Design team members picked up on this through the workshop and started ideating pockets of “scenes” allocated to buildings to have (local) music – dance – art across the site.



Tiga Bayles with No Fixed Address at the People for Nuclear Disarmament rally on Palm Sunday, 27 March 1983

## **3.3 Community connection**

The background of the slide is a solid orange color with a complex, organic pattern of lighter orange wavy lines and dotted lines, resembling a topographic map or a natural texture.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.3 Community Connection

Community Connection is an integral part of the Green Square development and can be achieved through the underpinning of Gadigal knowledge alongside the contemporary history shared amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. By integrating these two histories in our shared spaces and embedding our natural theme of rewilding (which draws on the Gadigal principals of Caring for Country), we will be able to create a place of belonging for everyone.

Gadigal principles underpinning traditional life were brought up in the workshop as a way to help bring about connection and belonging in the following ways. Eora – meaning from this place, from here, is about belonging, but shared with everyone. Incorporating language and possible dual naming draws on this deep Gadigal knowledge that everyone can know and be a part of. ‘Slowing down’ was raised as a concept that could be embedded in the entire precinct. ‘Creating places for reflection, rest, reconnection and gathering to give it a sense of place. A place to share stories and knowledge and to create community.’

In the workshop, community members spoke of many ways in which design, art integration and community spaces can create connections for community and foster wellbeing and connection for all into the future. That whoever might live here in the next 5 years, whether it’s a family who has kids, that their kids being born on this Country should allow them to feel welcome here and feel like it’s their Country too. Being a welcome and open place, having outward-facing spaces and open view lines was discussed as an important element, designed to invite people in. By drawing on our past histories, we can create a place for the diverse community we’re building now, for generations to come so that they can know this Country and be a part of it.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.3 Community Connection

#### 3.3.1 ART AND STORYTELLING

An important take-away from the workshop is to develop a considered/nuanced approach to working with art and storytelling. Traditional Knowledge Holders advocated for contemporary tellings and practice so that it has its roots in the traditional but embraces change.



Digital Bricks installation as a means of storytelling, Science Gallery, Melbourne Connect.

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.3 Community Connection

#### 3.3.2 REVEALING TRUTH AND EDUCATION

*“Decolonisation is a practice, it builds identity and it builds belonging. How do we convert that to something we can do. Acknowledge our leaders, past, present, as well as our Traditional Owners. You make the connection between doing things”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025



Artist unknown

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.3 Community Connection

#### 3.3.3 COMMUNITY SPACES

*“Play areas – there’s not many – creating shared spaces and spaces for community. We need to look outward, we need to start to look “out” a little more. The laneways, are our opportunity, they’re the things we control. They become our play spaces, connectors, community spaces. They can teach people about the history of the site, you can go visit a friend there, it would be great to get a play space there, and they do connect across buildings.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Significant discussion in the workshop related to who would be living in Green Square and what space and quality of spaces would support a rich social life. The discussion between designers and Traditional Knowledge Holders gravitated to families with kids and then the spatial qualities of an interesting and healthy life for kids. The laneways were identified as holding opportunity for kids to mix with nature – to explore or kick a ball with a parent or a group of friends. The nature of the conversation was what was lost from childhood and what kids these days are missing out on. There was a genuine sense of possibility from the design team that the spaces between buildings may become learning and nature play areas on Country for kids.



Melbourne laneway

## 03 | 2025 Collective Narratives – Connecting with Country

### 3.3 Community Connection

#### 3.3.4 CULTURAL RESPECT

*“We talked about proud contemporary history and understanding history, to understand the background. Why do we need your own medical service, because they don’t let us in in other places. We don’t want to make ourselves separate, that separation was hoisted on us. That cultural safety and cultural awareness of why we want this stuff to happen. White Australia has a black history, at the end of the day it’s Australian history.”*

– Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

Ways to reflect cultural respect will be an ongoing conversation in co-design with Traditional Knowledge Holders and the Mirvac design team.

The workshop highlighted the need to understand the history of segregation and “othering” that Aboriginal people faced in the area, in order to understand the desire for integrated belonging for all. A challenge was identified for this project to design ways Aboriginal people can access Green Square and feel and be welcomed.



Textiles from Spain 2012, Vasava Studio



## 04 | A design lens on the foundational narratives

*"Listen to Country - this could be the classroom of life"*

- Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

## 04 | A design lens on the foundational narratives

*“As custodians of the building of this new space how can we bring this into the place design and leave a legacy for the next generation. Embed this legacy into the physical and social landscape.”*

- Design team participant

This section applies a design lens to insights from the consultations and workshopping to date framed under the Foundational Narratives.

Following the NSW Government Architect’s Connecting with Country Framework, we consider the project in the context of a relationship with Country. This is applied at the scale of ‘Precinct’ as Green Square being part of an understanding of ‘South Sydney’ and ‘Site’ scale referring to the immediate site and its surrounds.



PRECINCT  
SCALE

## 4.1 Precinct scale – South Sydney

*“At the moment, Green Square is a place of movement, how can we create a space of slowing down, rest, encourage slowing down, reconnection, yarning circles, feel the breeze, get to know your neighbours. Green Square doesn’t feel like it has this sense of place, so how do we bring that in now. Sky and land connection, how do we bring that in. Bring the sky to ground could be a way to make all of those moments, stop people and pause”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holder 2025

## 04 | A Design Lens on the foundational narratives

### 4.1 Precinct Scale - South Sydney

#### **Gadigal Country and culture**

Gadigal Country and Green Square converge at the site's adjacency to traditional walking tracks. It is likely that Green Square and its surrounds were a camping place as people moved across Sydney. The notion of dwelling for a while continues in the area's current urban surrounds, and also in Mirvac's proposed development.

The water ecologies are prominent in the collective memory of the Traditional Knowledge Holders who attended the workshop. Water ecologies refer to Deep Country - what was there before and how it can be represented as part of a wider ecological lens.

#### **Contemporary history**

Contemporary history is defined here as Green Square being part of the old "South Sydney". The co-narrative workshops emphasised 20th Century South Sydney's multicultural connections, social inclusivity for Gadigal and Gadigal-connected community, and industrial character.

#### **Community Connection**

The Aboriginal community identifies with the site as a location that has seen socio-political protest/resistance, deep need for, and support from Aboriginal legal/health organisations, and sport - especially sport. The qualities of being part of community are often felt at the threshold of leaving your building of residence and how you join outside life on the street. Opportunities through the lens of Country can be found in the design of welcoming, well-lit spaces at the entries of buildings that blur transitions by offering rich social experiences with a nod to place-based culture, and also a residential entry.

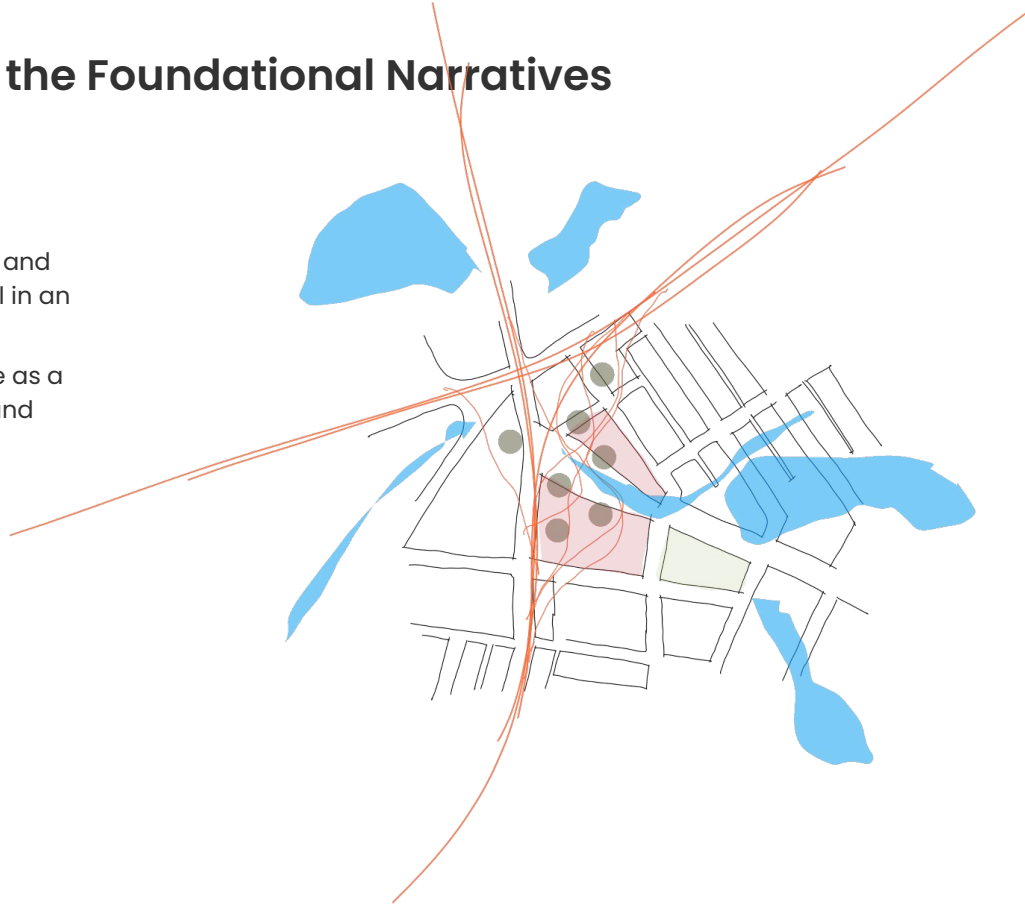
## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.1 Precinct Scale - South Sydney

#### Design Opportunities:

Consider ideations of traditional paths and places of camping/dwelling of Gadigal in an authentic urban interpretation.

Conceptually; thinking of Green Square as a place of individual places of dwelling and moving between your neighbours in a neighbourly way.



## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.1 Precinct Scale - South Sydney

**Design opportunities:**

Consider spatial amenity of social and cultural gathering.



South Sydney watch party



## 4.2 Site Scale – Country as connector

Connection to Country will come from 'rewilding' of the spaces between buildings, experiencing the place's original Gadigal language, view lines to significant surrounding Country, incorporating colours and textures of Country, slowing down to listen to natural and curated sounds of Country, being replenished by water, and providing opportunities to access Country for all.

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

*“How do we rewild the space and find a way to bring it back to what it was? Not tokenistic, but resonates with the people who use it.”*

- Design team participant

#### Design Opportunities:

Seek out opportunities of rewilding between buildings for families and kids to engage with and feel a sense of being on Country.



Reclaiming the ground plane



Designing spaces with an intent for Country

# 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

## 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

### Design Opportunities:

Spaces of Refuge — Design for safe, shared spaces that allow for gathering of all cultures, ages and genders.



Pause nodes



Informal gathering spaces



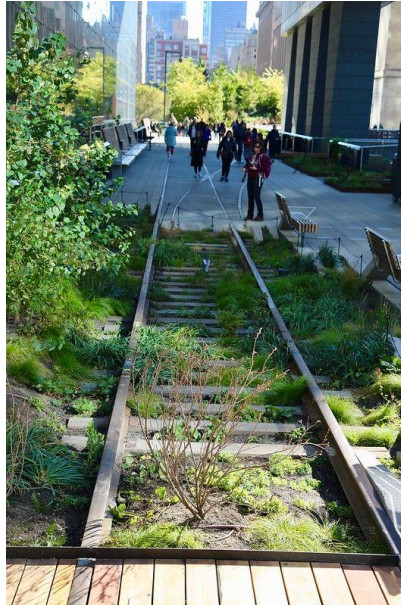
Continued storytelling through spatial and interior design

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

#### Design Opportunities:

Preservation of significant sightlines across Country. Buildings as well as landscape are part of the story of Country.



Reclaiming past histories and Country



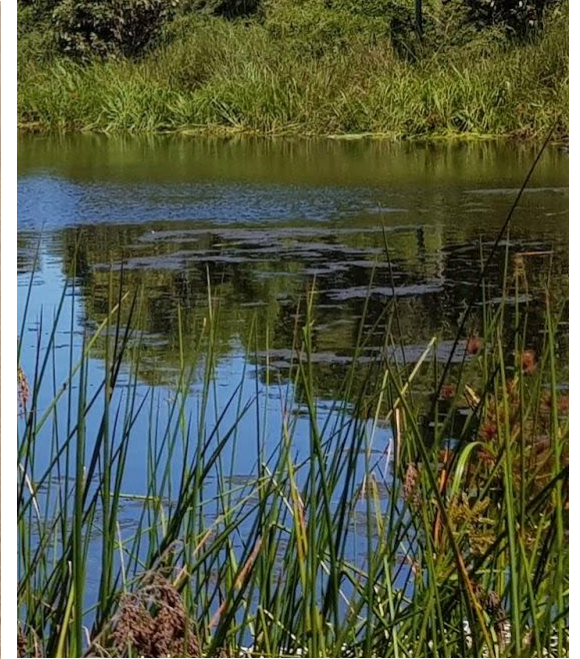
Landmarks at Green Square. Balarinji. 2025

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

**Design Opportunities:**

Consider colours and textures of Gadigal Country.



Sand and wetlands as colour and material inspiration

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

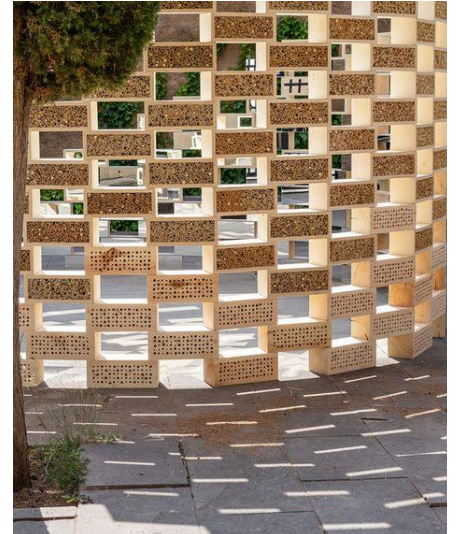
### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

**Design Opportunities:**

Reference historic ecologies to reconnect with Country and Gadigal culture.



Rooftop planting, Art Gallery of NSW



Ground plane insect sanctuaries & pollinators

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

*Create sensory ways to experience wetlands, even when unseen*

- Traditional Knowledge Holders 2025

#### Design Opportunities:

Design for water as physical installation or metaphysical reference, that offers an array of spatial and experiential qualities.

Design for human and animals.

Explore elements of micro-climates as well as sensory learning spaces linked to water stories.



River inspired tracks & earth



Rippling texture and reflection



Pattern at scale to mimic a sense of Country



Transformation of water through light

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

#### Design Opportunities:

Green Square is unique in its industrial history and identity.

Consider elements of an industrial aesthetic through form, materials and scale to reference Contemporary Country.



Taking inspiration from Green Square's industrial past into contemporary form

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

*“A living library! — Intergenerational and circular stories, celebrating Indigenous and working-class histories alongside Country.”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holders 2025

*“Be authentic with truth-telling but also move through to celebrating culture bringing it into the now and future.”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holders 2025

#### Design opportunities:

Explore contemporary renderings of place based on collective Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal memories multicultural social cohesion.



Multicultural scenes of South Sydney, State Library

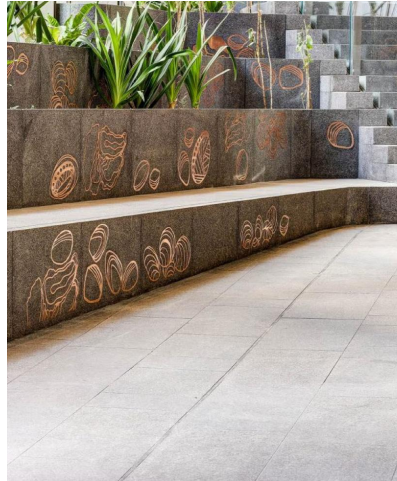
## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

#### Design Opportunities:

Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-framed approach to any art installations to reflect collaborative, iterative storytelling.

Art can offer opportunities for education and revealing truth of Aboriginal history.



Balarinji integrated art & storytelling examples

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

*“Wayfinding & Diversity – Use multiple languages (Indigenous, English, Chinese, others) and explore Sky Country as a wayfinding system.”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holders 2025

#### Design opportunities:

Through co-design with Traditional Knowledge Holders, explore Country-centered wayfinding that links with multiple cultures and kin.

Design of wayfinding should look beyond conventional notions of A-B and include multi-cultural and Sky Country references.



Multilingual pedestrian signage, Brisbane City



References to Country

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

#### Design Opportunities:

Utilise language as a way of inclusiveness. Integrate Gadigal language and references as cultural connections to place.



Sensory knowledge play



Language naming and dual naming of streets or locations

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

*“The laneways, are our opportunity, they’re the things we control. They become our play spaces, connectors, community spaces. They can teach people about the history of the site, you can go visit a friend there, it would be great to get a play space there, and they do connect across buildings. There could be two different play spaces, sandstone rocks, streams (water), sculptures in there, rock engravings, that’s one concept. Then the usual play area with swings and other things. But those kids who want to get back to nature and learn from nature, is just those rocks. Nature play”*

- Design team participant

*Landscape & Play – Organically weave nature play and layered landscaping into design to strengthen everyday belonging.”*

- Traditional Knowledge Holders 2025

#### Design Opportunities:

Laneways as cultural spaces of gathering, belonging and play.



Totems integrated into play spaces



Pocket parks

## 04 | A Design Lens on the Foundational Narratives

### 4.2 Site Scale - Country as connector

#### Design opportunities:

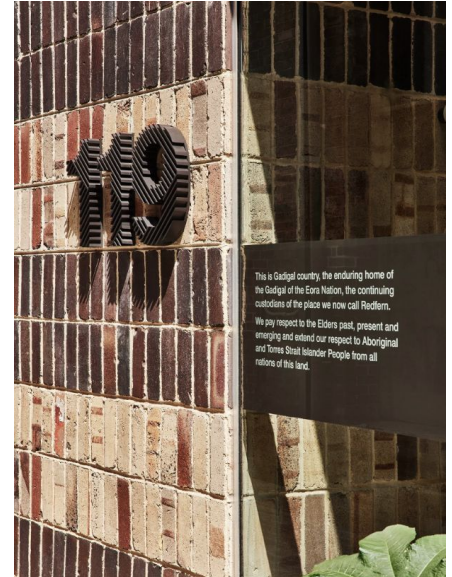
Design a strategy so relevant build typologies cater to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a co-designed, culturally-competent, socially/economically inclusive way, for instance, but not limited to, build to rent, affordable housing and student accommodation.



Aboriginal Legal Service



Koori radio station building, TZG

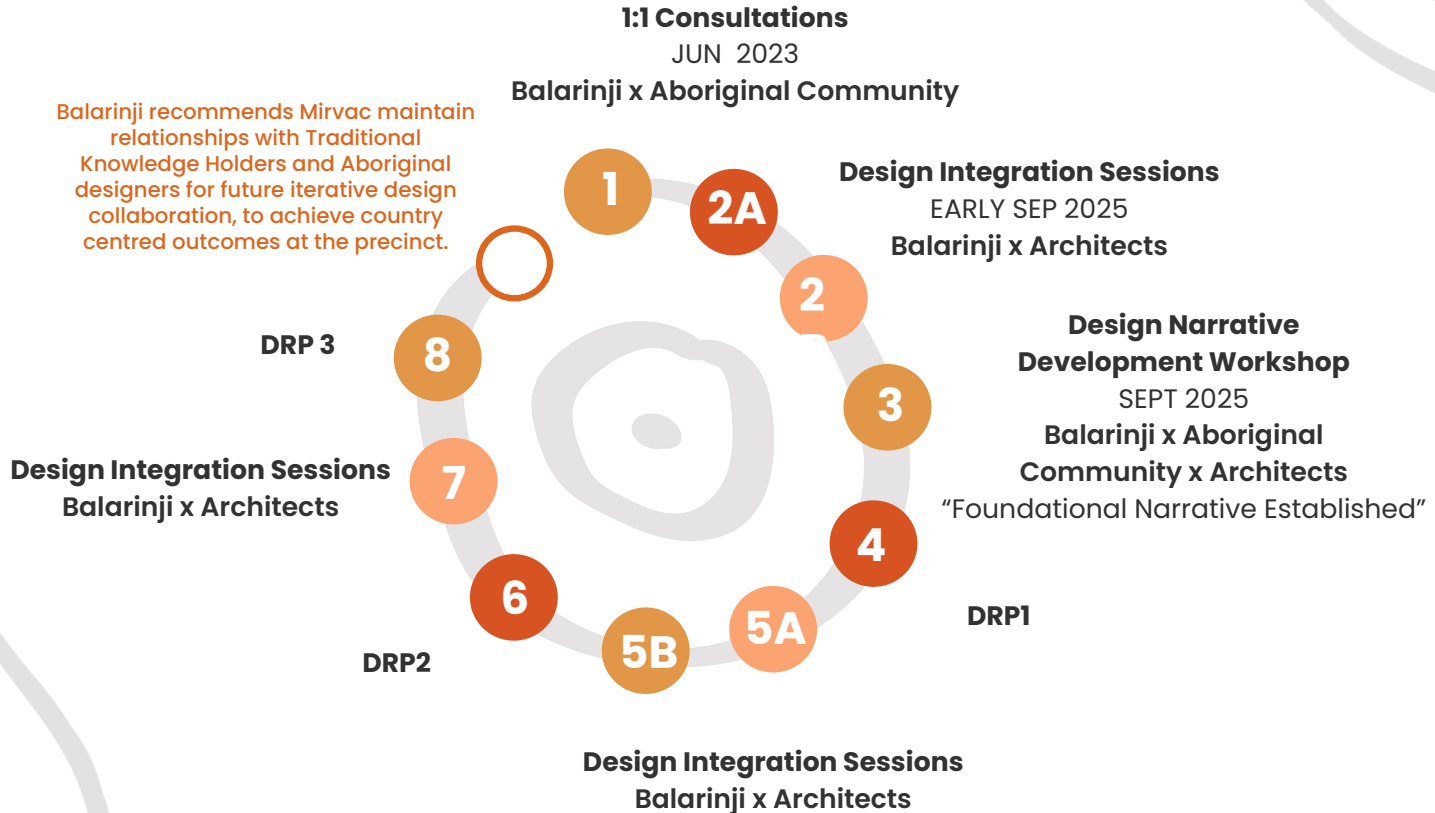


119 Redfern St, Community Centre

# 5. Design integration

The background of the slide is a solid yellow color with a pattern of light yellow, wavy, organic lines and dotted lines. The lines are irregular and flow across the page, creating a textured, topographical-like appearance. The dots are small and arranged in lines that follow the curves of the wavy lines.

# Country Centered Approach



# Overview of Designing with Country

## FOUNDATIONAL NARRATIVES



## COUNTRY-CENTRED GUIDING PRINCIPLES



## Milestone 3

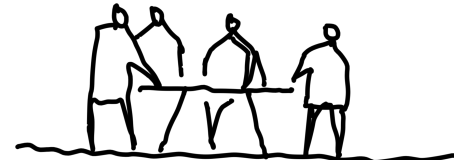
### Planning & Designing with Country report

- 2025 Collective Narratives - Connecting with Country
- A design lens on Site and Precinct scales
- Underpinning Country-centred guiding principles.

## Milestone 5A & 5B

### Design Integration Sessions

- Precinct to Site co-design
- Applying a country centered design approach to concepts



# Gadigal Country and Culture

Authentically reflect Gadigal Country, history and culture

Reflecting Gadigal Country and culture through the community-established themes can be realised through landscape, facades and materiality. This could include, for example; art, urban furniture and language. Viewed on approach and from within Green Square, building facades can reference the colours, materials and textures of Country.

\*Proposed locations are provided as a guide only. The Architectural teams will develop the concepts further through their Design Reports.

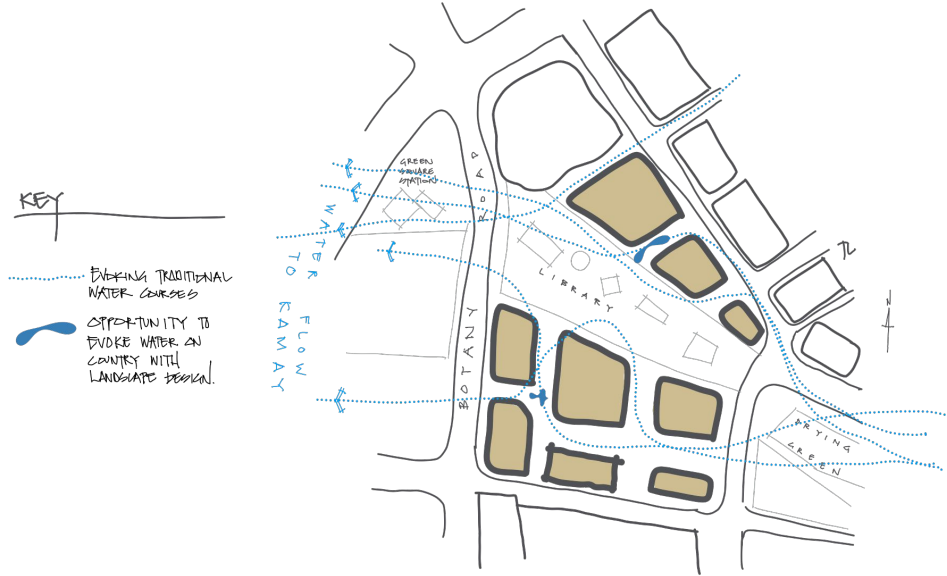


# Gadigal Country and Culture

## Evoked Water Country

Water Country is very significant in the Green Square location. Previously a wetland with sandhills, acknowledgement of water ecology can be made through the implementation of water features and narratives within the landscape design.

\*Proposed locations are provided as a guide only. The Architectural teams will develop the concepts further through their Design Report



GADIGAL COUNTRY & CULTURE - EVOKE WATER.

# Contemporary History

Celebrate diverse roots and a proud contemporary story

Green Square has a unique contemporary history of Sydney Aboriginal communities and other cultures.

Design can support contemporary history by acknowledging and making available stories to residents and visitors of Green Square.

There is also opportunity to promote social connectedness and collective history through a cohesive relationship between the buildings (people's residences)

\*Proposed locations are provided as a guide only. The Architectural teams will develop the concepts further through their Design Report



CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

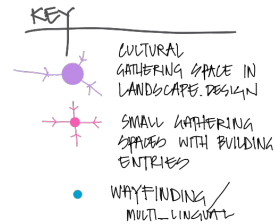
# Community Connection

Create a connected, welcoming place of inclusive belonging

Community connection could be represented on the ground and between buildings. Spaces of different scales for people to gather can be incorporated into the landscape design. Placement of these spaces to correspond with building entries can offer social connection associated with place of residence.

Multilingual signage including Gadigal language provides an inclusive orientation to Green Square.

\*Proposed locations are provided as a guide only. The Architectural teams will develop the concepts further through their Design Report



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

## 06 | Conclusion and next steps

This report, building on the Foundational Narratives from 2023, presents the three strong Gadigal community-preferred themes from 2025 workshoping as the basis for progressing site-specific Country-centred design – connecting Country and people across building typologies, landscape, social infrastructure and cultural design.

GADIGAL COUNTRY AND CULTURE

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

From those themes, it refines the 9 cultural design principles of 2023, to 4 underpinning Country-centred guiding principles that reflect design opportunities:



**Authentically reflect Gadigal Country, history and culture**



**Evoke Water Country**



**Celebrate diverse roots and a proud contemporary story**



**Create a connected, welcoming place of inclusive belonging**

After this, it's important to continue community collaboration and co-design along the life of the project to evolve exceptional cultural design contributions. It's essential to maintain connection with Country for all future generations.

***“The 80 year old man who planted the tree, who doesn’t get to see it fully grow. The immediacy of life. What is it like in day one but also what is it like way down the line. The practice of what we’re doing, what are the practical manifestations of the experience or senses that we’re trying to evoke.”***

– Design team participant



**Thank you**

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