

LOURDES RETIREMENT VILLAGE

DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY

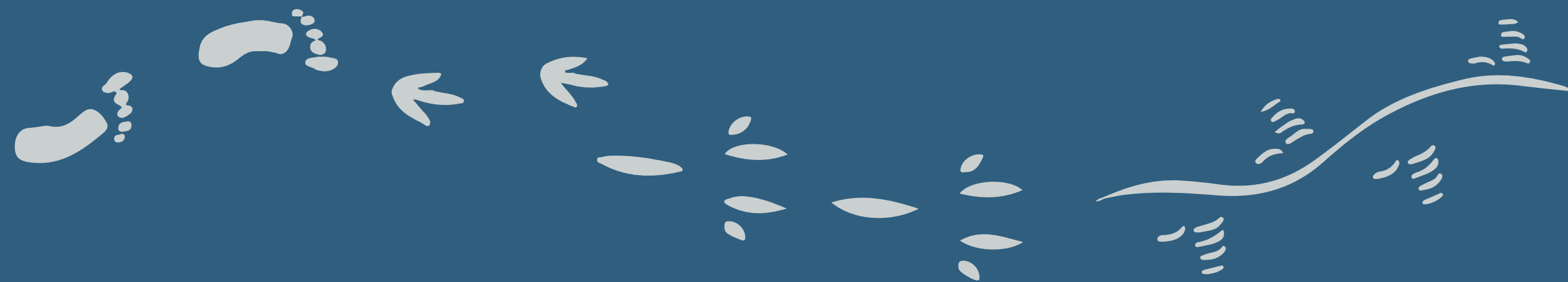
DESIGN REPORT - FINAL | FEBRUARY 2026



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this document may contain voices/images, names of people who have passed away.

We acknowledge the Cultural Landscape that we are working upon, and the Darramuragal peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Country where the Lourdes Retirement Village project is located.

We acknowledge all First Nations people and their ongoing connection to culture, lands and waters and their valuable contribution to the community. We recognise, acknowledge, and extend our respects to many others who have custodial obligations for Country who have been connected to Darramuragal Country for many generations, including their Elders past, present and emerging.



Yerrabingin is an Aboriginal owned design studio. At the core of our work is custodianship and care for Country. Our expertise encompasses Designing with Country, landscape architecture and urban design. We are recognised for our collaborative design approach, bringing together cultural knowledge and sustainable design solutions. We walk together to amplify the powerful language of Country for the betterment of our collective future.

We are guided by the inspiration of Country, the stories and knowledge a place contains and gifts us. We acknowledge its contribution to wellbeing both mental and physical, providing a refuge and safe place to learn and share.

Our Vision is that sensing and caring for Country is something that transcends cultural differences and highlights the many values that are similar across the cultures of our contemporary communities, supporting a socially inclusive, resilient, and innovative community based on, and honouring the wisdom and kinship of all cultures, captured through the lens of custodianship.



Figure.1 - Aerial photo of site location | Nearmap 2025

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AUTHORSHIP

At Yerrabingin, we acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians and ancestors of the lands we walk across.

The terms First Nations, Indigenous and Aboriginal are used interchangeably throughout this report. When referring to a specific group or individual, nation or language group names are used.

This report includes reproduction of words and descriptions in historic quotes written in the past that may be confronting and would be considered inappropriate today.

Permission to publish the graphic materials from archival collections and previous publications has not been obtained as part of this study. Permission should be sought from copyright holders if the report is published with the graphic material or the graphic material is used for other purposes.

Cover Image - Aerial image of Lourdes Retirement Village and it's surrounding topography | Google Earth



Figure.2 - Image of wattle blooming on site | Yerrabingin 2025

GLOSSARY

Key Words and Terms

To better understand key terms referenced throughout the report, please consult the glossary.

The following terms derive from the GANSW (2023) Connecting with Country Framework.

- **Aboriginal Community:** Within the context of Sydney, the Aboriginal Community refers to a range of peoples that often include Traditional Custodians, Knowledge Holders, Elders, RAPs (Registered Aboriginal Parties), LALC (Land Councils), and local Aboriginal members of the community.
- **Built Environment:** Understood as distinct from the natural environment. It includes all aspects of our surroundings made by people. The built environment encompasses cities and towns, neighbourhoods, parks, roads, buildings, infrastructure, and utilities like water and electricity.
- **Country:** Country includes Earth, Waters, Sky and our Non-human Kin. It encompasses tangible and intangible aspects, knowledge and cultural practices, belonging and identity, well-being and relationships. People are inhabited by Country and Country inhabits us.
- **Design:** Design is both a process and an outcome - a way of thinking and a result of making. It involves a combination of creativity and problem-solving skills to generate ideas and concepts, followed by a systematic and often iterative process to develop those ideas into a tangible form.
- **Engagement:** Engagement whereby a particular group is engaged to gather their input in relation to a proposal, challenge, or outcome.
- **First Nations:** Is an encompassing term that acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal Communities, while also communicating that sovereignty was never ceded. This term is growing in preference for First Nations Australians but may also be interchanged with Aboriginal and Indigenous in this report.
- **Knowledge:** Aboriginal knowledge comes from different nations and family groups. Knowledge is multifaceted and may incorporate many different views. It encompasses the information and skills that people accumulate over time, enabling them to comprehend the world, make informed decisions, and solve problems.
- **Peoples:** Peoples is used in plural to reference First Nations peoples, recognising that there are many nations and family groups.
- **Place:** A social and physical concept, a physical setting, point, or area in space conceived and designated by people and communities. In this sense, place can describe different scales of the built environment; for example, a town is a place, and a building can be a place.
- **Practices:** Practice or cultural practice refers to the various customs, traditions, rituals, behaviours, and activities that are collectively shared and passed down within a specific cultural group, serving as a means of expressing identity, values, beliefs, and social cohesion

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report brings together the foundational work completed in 2023 and the insights gathered from the recent Community Feedback Session, held in response to the updated architectural and landscape design for Lourdes Retirement Village. The original Design Jam established a strong direction centred on gardens, comfort, shade, accessibility and Community connection, which guided the revised, smaller and more landscape led masterplan. Residents responded positively to the new approach, noting the improved openness between buildings, the softer architectural forms, and the strengthened role of mature trees, endemic planting and accessible pathways.

The community workshop invited residents to reflect on four key questions, identifying what has been done well, whether Country and culture are represented accurately, where opportunities remain untapped and which elements could be further improved. Feedback highlighted enthusiasm for the overall design direction and offered constructive suggestions including warmer facade colours, textured materials, cultural art integration, balcony planting, terrace gardens and the involvement of Aboriginal suppliers in both construction and long term maintenance. These findings reinforce a shared vision for a village that is calm, connected, culturally respectful and strongly shaped by its landscape.



Figure.3 - Bushland on site | Yerrabingin 2025



DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY

INTRODUCTION TO DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY

Beginning with Country

*Country is our mother, our teacher,
our library and our kin; it sustains
us, inspires us and surrounds us. The
experience of Country is both individual
and collective, both new and familiar.
From her we learn, share and flourish.
Continuing to care for Country is central
to our being and our identity.*

Christian Hampson, Yerrabingin

Country reaches into and across the earth and into the sky. The unique and distinctive elements of Country are connected, and open to everyone. They are the connective tissue, the interstices, the flow between Water, Earth, Sky, our Non-Human Kin, and ourselves. In this way, we are part of the system of Country and have a responsibility to future generations. Our actions must always be Country positive.

Country-centric

We inhabit and are inhabited by Country. To inhabit Country and connect with Country is to be grounded in the landscape and to practice the cultural knowledge stored within it. This encourages physical and emotional wellbeing for people and Country.

The innate symbiosis of being connected to Country moves us into being Eco or Country centric, rather than being Human centric. This connection and position in relation to Country is a central component of Aboriginal people’s ideology. It is a cultural value that places humans within the ecological and landscape system, not as dominators but as caretakers and custodians. This function requires constant interaction and observation, being tuned in to reactive requirements and response.

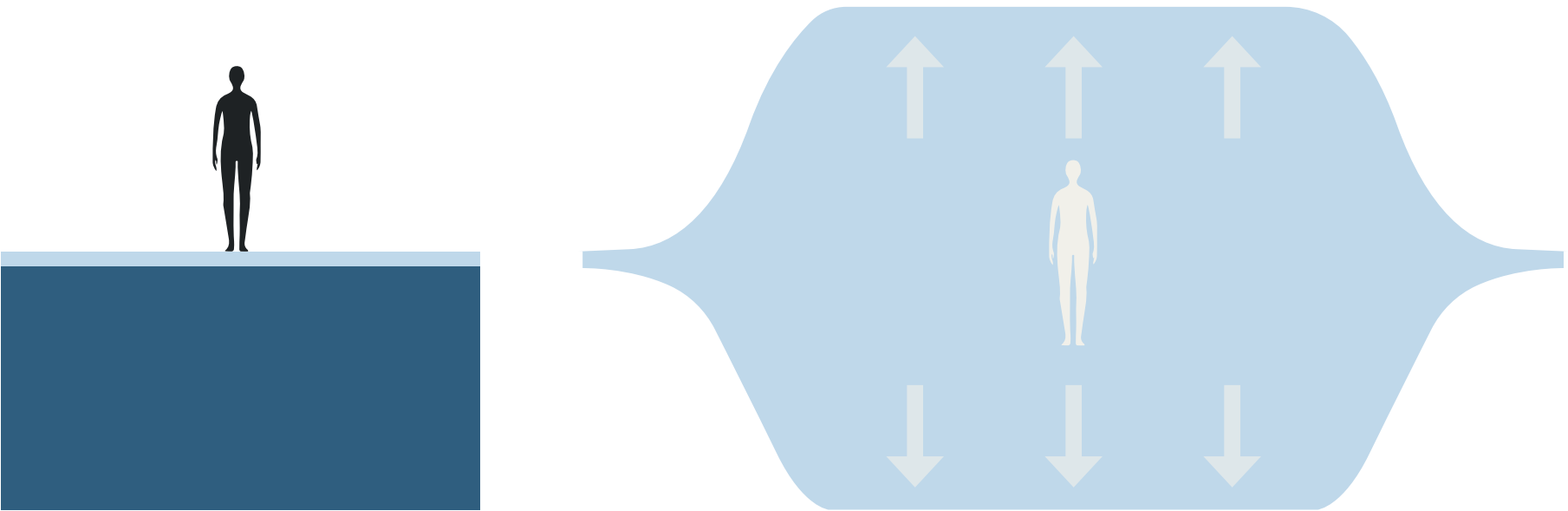


Figure.4 - We inhabit and are inhabited by Country | Yerrabingin

GANSW CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK

Policy Context

In 2023 the Government Architect New South Wales released the Connecting with Country Framework to guide Designing with Country projects in NSW. The Framework covers several areas of Designing with Country work, including:

Practices for taking a Country focused approach

Combining traditional cultural knowledge and practices with a behavioural science approach to create a system of Communing with Country / Thinking, Sensing Country / Feeling, and Being on Country / Behaving to guide projects. The image to the right illustrates this relationship.

Guidance on design considerations

Considering the project scale to determine what design considerations should be factored into decision making and design. This project is precinct scale, therefore we are taking a broad and holistic perspective.

Outcomes for Country

The Framework describes five Outcomes for Country to help project teams focus on their commitment to Country. The outcomes are: Healthy Country, Healthy Community, Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage, Cultural Competency and Better Places.

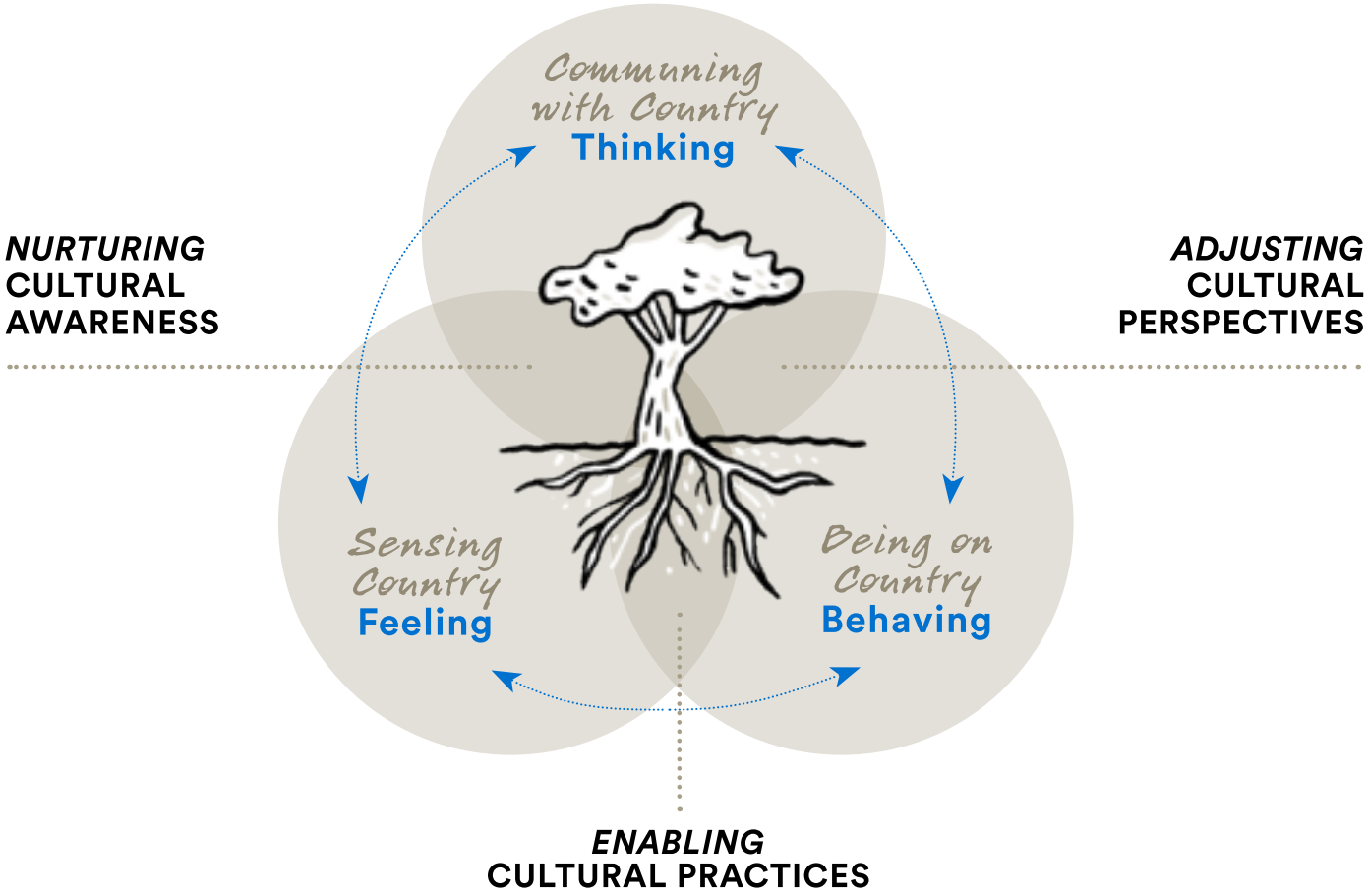


Figure.5 - Combining cultural practice and behavioural change systems | GANSW

YERRABINGIN PILLARS

What guides our work

Yerrabingin has four pillars that guide our work. The pillars link together our values, Country, culture, professional practice, and cultural practice.

Each pillar is one part of the larger task of caring for Country. Together they contribute to a holistic commitment to care and design for Country. The pillars are Custodianship, Innovation, Legacy and Regeneration.

-  **Innovation**
-  **Custodianship**
-  **Regeneration**
-  **Legacy**

Innovation

We are a transformative force for change. We draw on ancient wisdom, guided by ecological kinship, to share the powerful voice of Country and disrupt conventional systems and perceptions. Inspired by Country, we take a holistic view, centring creativity, adaptation and reciprocity. Our work propels us towards a collective future that considers the life of all kin.

Regeneration

We deeply understand the connections between all things and work towards balance. We overcome limitations in conventional design thinking by centring the needs of Country and all kin. We create places for people to experience the many ways Country sustains and holds them, to connect them with their role in the system of their place. Learning from Country, we take a long-term view, with the knowledge that health and healing will come, given the right conditions of care.

Custodianship

We are custodians of Country. We draw on cultural knowledge to advocate and care for Country. It is our responsibility to improve the health of Country and our diverse communities through our work. In our role as designers, we listen deeply to the needs of Country and walk together with our partners to foster connection. Country benefits and grows in our care.

Legacy

Our works sits at the intersection of culture and design. We are industry leaders in collaborative design, bringing together First Nations communities and built environment professionals for an enduring conversation. By introducing people to Country, we transform the experience of belonging and connection to place in Australia. We show people that if we care for Country, she will care for us in return. Healthy Country and connected communities are our legacy.

YERRABINGIN COLLABORATIVE DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Our Design Process

Our design methodology is informed by components of design thinking, user-centred design and Connecting with Country design disciplines to create our Country-focused, collaborative design approach.

Country-focused

What sets us apart from conventional built environment design is our recognition of the interconnection of Country with human activity and our imperative to consider the needs of Country in the design solution. Empathetic observation and consideration of Country is central to our approach.

The outcome of our Country-focused approach is that Country is designed for and cared for, allowing Country to care and provide for future generations.

Collaborative

Inspired by the natural processes of fostering and sustaining life on Country, our design methodology follows a cyclical, collaborative process: we collect, plant, nourish and tend.

The Connecting with Country Design Report – Draft contributes to the Nourish / Iterate stage in our methodology. In this stage, we share the outcomes of the collaborative design workshops, then develop solutions and concepts further based on feedback from the design team. We nourish in design workshops with the project

team and community. Our output of this stage is this report – the Connecting with Country Design Report – Draft.

Design Methodology Stages

Collect - First, we collect by empathising with our project partners and with Country. We gather ideas, inspiration, facts, desires, research and limitations. This occurs in the discovery and ‘How Might We’ session.

Plant - After understanding the design challenge, we plant. Collaborative design workshops involve First Nations peoples and the wider team involved to generate diverse and innovative design solutions.

Nourish - Following the collaborative design sessions, we nourish through iteration. We share the collaborative outcomes to develop design solutions and concepts further based on feedback.

Tend - Finally, we tend to our creation. We tend by ensuring that the partnerships and outcomes created are sustainable and have ongoing positive outcomes for Country and communities.

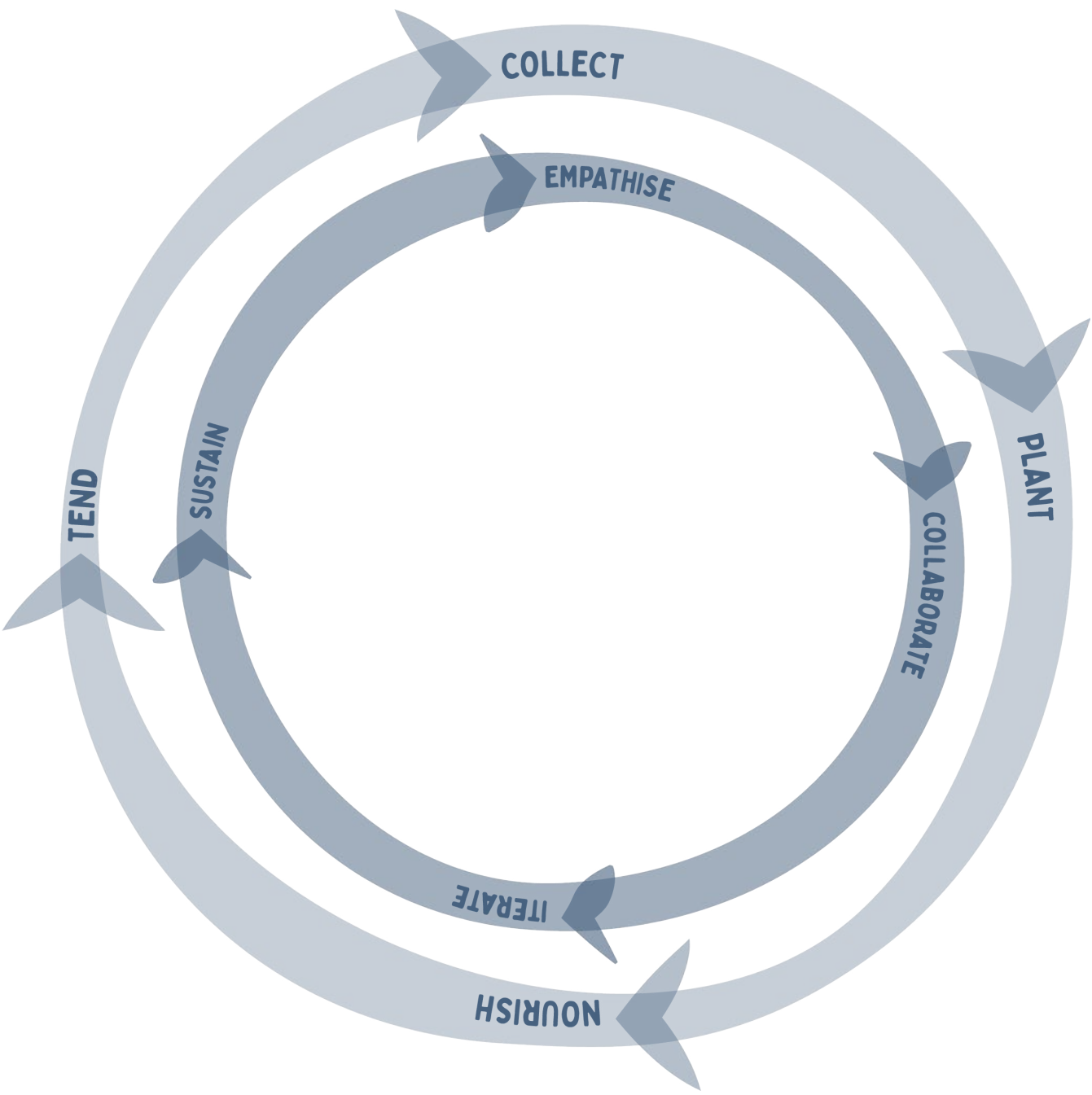


Figure.6 - Methodology Process | Yerrabingin



COLLECT / EMPATHISE
CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Project Overview

Lourdes Retirement Village sits on a large 5.29 hectare site at 95-97 Stanhope Road, Killara, on Darramurra Country. The existing village includes independent living units, serviced apartments, a central clubhouse, Headfort House with its chapel, communal gardens and an aged care facility. With Headforth house construction commenced in 1917 and expanded over time, the site has long supported residential and community life while maintaining strong connections to the surrounding bushland corridors that link into Lane Cove National Park and Garigal National Park.

Levande is seeking to renew and upgrade the village to improve accessibility, safety and amenity for current and future residents while respecting the character of Killara and the ecological values of the site. The 2023 redevelopment proposal established an initial vision however this scheme was withdrawn during the planning process. Levande has since re commenced a new approach in an SSDA application with a new team including architects, landscape architects and Yerrabingin to revise the design response and strengthen alignment with local context, bushfire and biodiversity requirements and the principles of Designing with Country.

The updated 2025 concept condenses built form toward the centre of the site, increases deep soil areas, protects the eastern and southern ecological buffers and places greater emphasis on green connections, walkability and tree retention. Headfort House remains a central anchor for community life, supported by renewed communal facilities, a green spine and landscaped gathering spaces that respond sensitively to the topography.

Yerrabingin has been engaged to guide the integration of Country values into the redevelopment and to host a second community feedback session. This ensures that the revised design continues to draw from the cultural narratives of Darramurra Country, the themes established during the 2023 design jam and the perspectives shared by Community members in 2025.

This report brings these elements together and outlines how Country continues to shape the updated masterplan and its future design direction.



Figure.7 - Site walk | Yerrabingin 2025

DARRAMURAGAL COUNTRY

Place in Country

The Lourdes Retirement Village site sits within a gently sloping urban landscape shaped by long established water pathways, mature vegetation and pockets of open green space that support shade, cooling and everyday movement across the precinct. The surrounding area is defined by its tree canopy, landscaped gardens and a network of lawn areas, courtyards and quiet outdoor rooms that contribute to the character of place and provide important habitat for local birdlife.

Country expresses itself here through seasonal shifts in light, temperature and rainfall, which influence comfort, planting performance and patterns of use across the village. Existing trees offer natural shade and create a sense of enclosure and orientation, while open areas allow breezes to move through the site. These environmental conditions continue to guide how residents interact with the landscape, how planting thrives and where people gather or seek refuge.

Although the site has been shaped by decades of development, the underlying landscape still holds traces of its earlier form, including the natural fall of land, drainage lines and vegetation structure. These elements form the foundation for enhancing walkability, strengthening garden networks and improving ecological resilience through new planting and water sensitive design.

Recognising these characteristics supports an approach that works with Country rather than over it, reinforcing green connections, improving outdoor comfort and ensuring that future design respects the quiet, restorative landscape values that residents identified as central to the identity of Lourdes Retirement Village.



Figure.8 - Non-human kin on site | Yerrabingin 2025

YERRABINGIN

Site Specific Opportunities

The Lourdes Retirement Village site presents several opportunities to strengthen comfort, connection and landscape quality for residents. The existing tree canopy and garden network create a strong foundation for enhancing shade, cooling and outdoor amenity. These established green areas can be expanded and better linked to support walkable routes, improve accessibility and provide more places for quiet rest and social interaction.

The gentle topography and existing open spaces offer clear points to create stronger visual and physical connections between buildings, courtyards and communal areas. There is potential to reorganise circulation so movement feels safer and more intuitive, with improved wayfinding and clearer links between indoor and outdoor settings.

The site also provides opportunities to upgrade ageing landscape elements, introduce planting that supports year round comfort and increase biodiversity within the village. Enhancing edges, thresholds and arrival points can reinforce a welcoming character and help residents navigate the site with ease.

Together these opportunities support a more cohesive, climate responsive and resident focused environment that builds on what the community already values about the village.



Figure.9 - Site Walk | Yerrabingin 2025

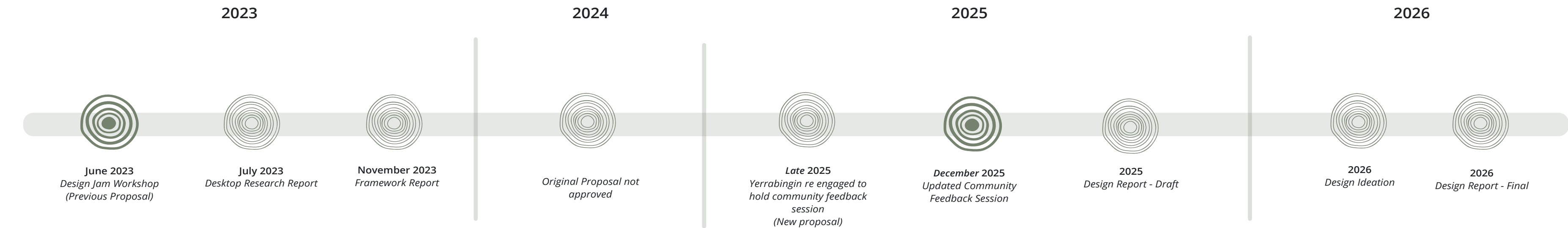


PLANT / COLLABORATE
COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

YERRABINGIN TIMELINE

Designing with Country deliverables

The illustration on this page shows Yerrabingin’s deliverables for the Lourdes Retirement Village project that have been completed and future stages. Deliverables where Community engagement has been undertaken are marked in darker green.



-  – Community Engagement deliverables
-  – Other deliverables

HOW MIGHT WE?

Our Design Challenge

In the How Might We Session, we worked with the project team to learn as much as we could about the aims of the project and to introduce the design team to our process. We created the following How Might We statement for the project:

“How might we draw inspiration from Country to create a culturally meaningful and community focused masterplan?”

We use the How Might We statement to understand the design team’s thoughts on the project users, impact, connection and value. By gaining as much information as we can from the beginning, we aim to ensure that we can direct the project more accurately and generate more impact. We use the How Might We statement to define our design challenge.



Figure.10 - Fauna | Yerrabingin

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN WORKSHOP

Discussion and Findings

The 2023 workshop centred on listening to Country and using its guidance to shape early thinking for the Lourdes Retirement Village masterplan. The session opened with participants being invited to consider Country as teacher, kin and living archive, grounding the design conversation in respect, reciprocity and custodial responsibility. This framing encouraged attendees to think beyond built form and focus on relationships between water, sky, soil, climate, vegetation and community.

Participants explored how the project might move with Country by recognising natural systems, the flow of water and moisture, and the interconnected presence of non human kin as part of the design story. This encouraged teams to think about comfort, wellbeing and the sensory qualities of the site, as well as opportunities for gentle enhancement rather than heavy intervention.

The collaborative exercises prompted participants to rapidly generate ideas, share them in groups and refine them through structured feedback. Discussions revealed strong interest in approaches that strengthen social connection, improve access to landscape, and create spaces that feel calm, safe and meaningful for residents. Many ideas focused on enhancing green networks, improving shade and comfort, celebrating local character, and creating places that support everyday gathering and slow movement.

The sketching and feedback cycles helped participants identify which concepts held the most promise and which required further refinement. Feedback highlighted the need to balance community desires with practicality, clarify ideas that were ambitious or challenging, and focus on design moves that align with the cultural landscape and the lived experience of residents.

- Across the workshop, some consistent themes emerged:**
- Design should be inspired and guided by Country and its systems.
 - Landscape and nature play a central role in resident wellbeing.
 - Movement patterns should feel intuitive, comfortable and connected.
 - Community spaces need to support both social interaction and quiet retreat.
 - The masterplan should cultivate a coherent sense of place grounded in cultural care.

The culmination of the workshop reinforced a shared desire to shape the village as a landscape led environment that respects Country, supports community life and enhances comfort for residents, aligning with the principle that cultural and environmental consciousness should guide future design directions.

The following pages explore the three main Design Jam findings and how they have influence the design.

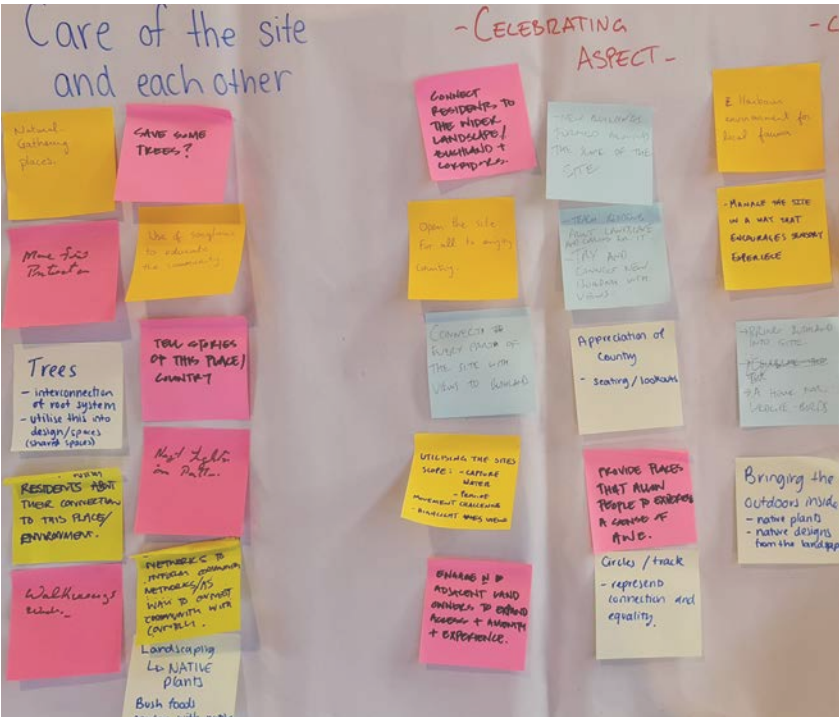


Figure.11 - Design Jam 2023 | Yerrabingin 2023

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Design Jam Findings



SKY COUNTRY CONNECTIONS

“Exploring and strengthening Sky Country connections across the masterplan was a major theme raised during the engagement process.

Understanding the natural topography of Country to create harmony between landscape and built form will encourage and facilitate such connections to sky.”



COMMUNITY CENTERED

“Community sits at the heart of this project.

Looking to create places and spaces that function for residents and the wider community, this theme explores a range of opportunities across site to improve social, environmental and wellbeing outcomes.”



LANDSCAPE LANGUAGE

“Landscape functions as the conduit between Country, culture and residents, providing a way for the community to interact and engage with nature and non-human kin.

Highlighting the diverse and rich species living on site, this theme reiterates the importance of landscape in deepening experiences of Country.”



NOURISH / ITERATE
IDEATION DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SESSION

Discussion and Findings

The Community Feedback Session brought residents together to review the updated design direction for Lourdes Retirement Village and share their priorities for the next stage of planning. The session began with a recap of the earlier collaborative work completed in 2023, outlining how key ideas from the Design Jam, along with the lived experience of residents, have shaped the current approach.

Participants engaged in open discussions around access, comfort, safety and the quality of outdoor spaces. Residents consistently expressed the value of the existing landscape character, noting that greenery, mature trees and quiet outdoor areas are central to life at Lourdes. Many emphasised the importance of maintaining and enhancing shaded gardens, walkable paths and places for gentle gathering.

Feedback highlighted opportunities to improve wayfinding and circulation across the site, with a focus on making movement clearer, safer and more accessible. Participants also expressed interest in strengthening communal areas where social activities can occur while retaining smaller

nooks for privacy and rest. Concerns raised included managing construction impacts, ensuring continuity of care during staged works and maintaining the peaceful atmosphere that residents value.

Across all groups, participants supported design updates that reinforce a calm, connected and landscape led village. They appreciated seeing how previous feedback had been incorporated and welcomed the opportunity to clarify priorities for the next phase. The discussion reaffirmed that future design should continue to enhance comfort, community connection and the restorative qualities of the site while respecting what residents already love about Lourdes Retirement Village.

The following pages discuss these findings and response to our key 4 questions

- What has been done well?
- Is Country and Culture represented accurately?
- Are there any missed opportunities?
- Are there any elements that could be improved?



Figure.12 - Community Feedback session | Yerrabingin 2025

Attendees:

- 9x Local Aboriginal Community members
- 1x Levande
- 1x Sinclair Brook
- 1x Elumni
- 2x Architect - PBD
- 1x Landscape - Site Image
- 3x Yerrabingin staff
- (Kerrie Shepherd, Simon Trick, Mat Roy Ford)

When: Wednesday 3rd of December, 2025

Where: Lourdes Retirement Village:
95 Stanhope Rd, Killara NSW 2071

COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS:

“What Has Been Done Well?”

Community members were asked a series of four questions during the feedback session. The first question focused on identifying what has been done well within the new design. The following summary captures the key points raised in relation to both Architecture and Landscape.

Architecture

Residents responded positively to several aspects of the revised architectural approach. The low rise scale was seen as more comfortable and more fitting for the village than previous proposals, and the introduction of curved building forms helped soften the overall character. Community members also noted that the deliberate gaps between buildings improved openness, light and airflow. Large windows were particularly appreciated for increasing natural light and views to the gardens. Improvements to level access and more intuitive circulation were also highlighted as important benefits for residents with varying mobility needs.

- Low rise scale feels more suitable, comfortable and less imposing than earlier designs
- Curved forms soften the appearance of buildings and create a more welcoming atmosphere
- Gaps between buildings improve light, ventilation and a sense of openness
- Large glazing increases natural light and visual connection to garden areas
- Level access and clearer circulation routes support mobility and ease of movement

Landscape

Residents expressed strong appreciation for the landscape direction, noting that the design builds upon the village’s established garden identity. The retention of mature trees was a key positive, along with the generous green spaces that contribute to a calm and restorative environment. Paths designed for mobility scooters and safe walking were well received, as were smaller outdoor rooms that provide a choice between social and quieter spaces. Lush planting and the commitment to using endemic species only also aligned closely with what residents value.

- Retention of mature trees supports character, shade and continuity
- Vast gardens and generous planting areas enhance the calming atmosphere
- Raised and widened paths improve safety and accessibility for walking and mobility scooters
- Outdoor rooms and smaller landscaped pockets provide varied social and quiet spaces
- Focus on endemic species supports resilience and reinforces the established garden feel



Figure.13 - Community Session | Yerrabingin 2025

COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS:

“Is Country and Culture represented accurately?”

Architecture

Residents felt that the architectural response showed early steps toward acknowledging Country, particularly through the inclusion of open air spaces that connect residents more directly to the landscape. However, they noted that the colour palette and materiality did not yet feel reflective of place. The current emphasis on white and grey was viewed as too neutral and disconnected from the tones found in the surrounding environment. Community members recommended integrating warmer colours such as ochres, browns and soft pinks, drawing inspiration from nearby trees and soil. They also encouraged the use of texture, suggesting rougher concrete finishes with stencilled patterns or motifs referencing local fauna and plant life to strengthen cultural and ecological expression.

- Warmer colours recommended such as ochres, browns and pinks to reflect surrounding landscape
- Current white and grey palette perceived as not strongly connected to Country
- Interest in adding textured materials, including rough concrete with leaf or animal stencils
- Open air rooms seen as a positive way of strengthening connection to the environment
- Desire for materials and finishes that communicate a stronger sense of local identity

Landscape

Community members expressed confidence in the landscape direction as a strong grounding for representing Country. The commitment to endemic species was seen as accurate, respectful and effective in supporting local ecologies, especially bird life. Residents appreciated that this approach aligns with the natural character of the area and encourages ongoing relationships with non human kin. Suggestions were made to build on this by introducing bird feeding zones or nesting boxes to attract native species and create regular moments of engagement. Many also supported including bush tucker gardens within the overall planting strategy, seeing these as opportunities for education, cultural presence and sensory experience.

- Use of endemic only species seen as an accurate and respectful representation of Country
- Appreciation for planting that supports local bird populations
- Interest in bird feeding areas and nesting boxes to strengthen daily ecological interaction
- Suggestion to include bush tucker gardens for cultural learning and connection
- Landscape approach viewed as a strong foundation for embedding Country meaningfully



Figure.14 - Community Feedback session | Yerrabingin 2025

COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS:

“Are there any missed opportunities?”

Architecture

Community members saw several opportunities to deepen cultural presence and long term value through how the project is delivered and maintained. In addition to gardens throughout the project and balcony planters, residents felt the project could more actively support Aboriginal participation by engaging Aboriginal owned businesses in the procurement and construction process. This includes opportunities for sourcing materials, finishes or artwork elements through Indigenous suppliers, as well as building ongoing maintenance partnerships that continue well beyond the initial build. Residents noted that this approach would not only reinforce cultural representation but also ensure the project meaningfully contributes to local economic and community outcomes over the life of the village.

- Engage Aboriginal owned suppliers for materials, facade treatments or detailed finishes
- Explore procurement partnerships with Indigenous contractors during construction
- Include balcony planter systems or small garden opportunities for residents
- Consider elevated terraces as additional places to connect to Country and Sky
- Establish ongoing maintenance or service agreements with Aboriginal businesses where feasible

Landscape

In the landscape, community members again identified procurement as a key opportunity. While the design strongly supports endemic planting and ecological connectivity, participants suggested that sourcing plants, soil products, bespoke furnishings or art elements from Aboriginal businesses would strengthen cultural alignment and social outcomes. This could extend into long term agreements for garden care, seasonal workshops, bush tucker stewardship or cultural programming. Integrating Aboriginal artists into wayfinding and screen treatments was widely supported, and residents noted that using Indigenous suppliers for fabrication and installation could extend cultural authorship throughout the project lifecycle.

- Source plants, soil mixes, garden materials or furnishings through Aboriginal owned suppliers
- Partner with Aboriginal artists for wayfinding, screening and integrated cultural elements
- Engage Indigenous nurseries or horticultural businesses for ongoing garden maintenance
- Explore bush tucker stewardship programs delivered by Aboriginal enterprises
- Consider long term service or care contracts that keep Indigenous participation active over time



Figure.15 - Site walk | Yerrabingin 2025

COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS:

“Are there any elements that could be improved?”

Architecture

Residents noted that while many aspects of the architectural approach were moving in the right direction, there were areas that could be strengthened to improve comfort, identity and day to day usability. Some felt that the facade palette and materials could be further refined to introduce more warmth, texture and character. Others suggested that the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces could be enhanced through deeper shading, better weather protection and more defined transitional areas. A few residents also raised the importance of ensuring consistent accessibility across all entries and pathways, noting that even small differences in levels or door thresholds can affect ease of movement.

- Greater warmth and texture in the facade materials
- Improved weather protection at building entries and outdoor transition points
- More pronounced shading elements to support comfort in summer
- Ensuring full accessibility across all thresholds and circulation routes
- Opportunity to refine building edges to create clearer indoor outdoor relationships

Landscape

In the landscape, residents discussed opportunities to improve clarity, comfort and ecological performance. Wayfinding was a recurring theme, with suggestions to make circulation patterns easier to understand through clearer signage, planting cues or integrated artworks. Some residents also recommended increasing seating options in shaded areas and ensuring that paths maintain a comfortable width throughout the site. There was interest in reviewing drainage and irrigation to ensure that planting remains healthy year round, particularly during periods of heat or heavy rain. Additionally, a few community members expressed interest in enhancing night time lighting to improve safety while maintaining a soft and unobtrusive atmosphere.

- Clearer wayfinding through signage, planting structure or integrated art
- Additional shaded seating in key gathering or resting points
- Ensuring consistent path widths and surface quality for mobility devices
- Review of drainage and irrigation to support plant health during variable weather
- Improved night time lighting that enhances safety while remaining subtle



Figure.16 - Site walk | Yerrabingin 2025



TEND / SUSTAIN

TOWARD FINAL DESIGN - LOURDES RETIREMENT VILLAGE

IDEATION DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Discussion and Findings

Following the Community Feedback Session with local Aboriginal community members and the project team, we held an Ideation Development Workshop with the project team to review the summary of outcomes of the Community Feedback Session and investigate ideation opportunities, expand thinking, understand constraints and limitations and together develop the next stages of the Connecting with Country design work.

The discussion and findings under the topic areas were guided by re assessing the 4 questions posed to community and then sharing precedents and new design ideas that adress these.

1 - What has been done well?

2 - Is Country and culture represented accurately?

3 - Are there any missed opportunities?

4 - Are there any elements that could be improved?

When: Tuesday 20th January, 2026

Who:

- Belen Rivera
- Oliver McGreachie
- Claira Kratochvil
- Milan Bogovac
- Thang Tran
- 2 x Yerrabingin staff
(Jordan Ardler and Mat Roy Ford)



Figure.17 - Curtin University Yarning Circle | UDLA

Figure.18 - Woodleigh School | Sam Cox



Figure.19 - Aldinga Payinthe College Imprint | Mantirri Design

1. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE WELL?

Discussion and Findings

Participants acknowledged that the project has made strong progress in embedding Country led thinking across both architecture and landscape. In particular, the integration of landscape as a primary organising element was seen as a strength, supporting connection to nature, seasonal change and everyday sensory experience for residents. The use of planting, outdoor spaces and outlooks was recognised as contributing to wellbeing, comfort and opportunities for social interaction, especially within a retirement living context.

The ideation highlighted appreciation for the considered response to topography, access and movement, with clear legibility across the site and a strong emphasis on walkability. Participants also noted that the project demonstrates care in balancing density with amenity, creating spaces that feel calm, grounded and human scaled while still functioning efficiently as a contemporary retirement village.

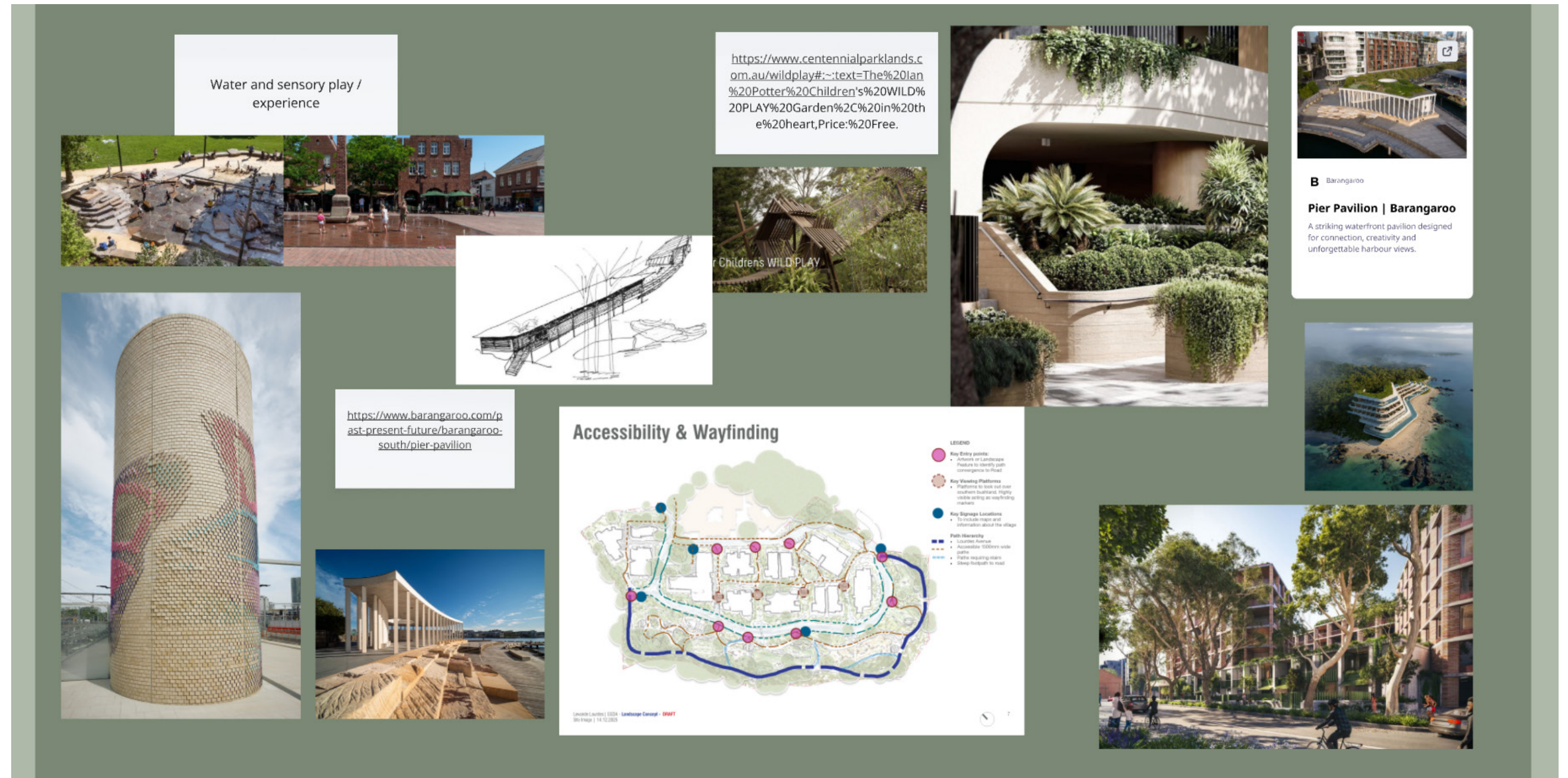


Figure.20 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin

2. IS COUNTRY AND CULTURE REPRESENTED ACCURATELY?

Discussion and Findings

The ideation discussion focused on the importance of ensuring that representations of Country are respectful, grounded and informed by ongoing engagement, rather than symbolic or superficial. Participants felt that the project is on the right path, particularly through its emphasis on landscape, natural systems and materiality that responds to place.

There was discussion around how cultural narratives can be embedded more quietly and meaningfully, through spatial experience, planting, orientation and everyday use, rather than overt or didactic gestures. The group reinforced the value of collaboration with Aboriginal knowledge holders and artists to ensure cultural elements are authentic, locally informed and appropriately integrated across wayfinding, landscape features and shared spaces.



Figure.21 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin

3. ARE THERE ANY MISSED OPPORTUNITIES?

Discussion and Findings

Participants identified several opportunities to further deepen connection with Country across both the built form and the life of the village. This included exploring roof spaces, terraces and balconies as productive or sensory landscapes, offering residents access to sky, vegetation and seasonal change. The potential for expanded community gardens, bush food planting and small scale stewardship activities was also raised as a way to strengthen daily connection and social engagement.

The ideation also highlighted opportunities beyond initial construction, particularly in procurement and ongoing operations. Participants noted the value of engaging Aboriginal owned businesses not only during delivery, but across maintenance, landscape management, art, signage and programming over the life of the development, reinforcing long term custodianship rather than one off interventions.



Figure.22 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin

4. ARE THERE ANY ELEMENTS THAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

Discussion and Findings

Discussion under this theme focused on refinement rather than fundamental change. Participants suggested further strengthening wayfinding and accessibility through landscape cues, material changes and tactile elements that support ageing in place and intuitive navigation. There was also interest in continuing to soften built edges through planting, shade and seating, particularly along key paths and gathering spaces.

The group noted that continued testing of materials, detailing and interfaces between architecture and landscape will be important to ensure durability, comfort and maintenance outcomes are aligned with the project’s values. Overall, the ideation reinforced that small, carefully considered adjustments could significantly enhance the lived experience while staying true to the project’s existing intent.

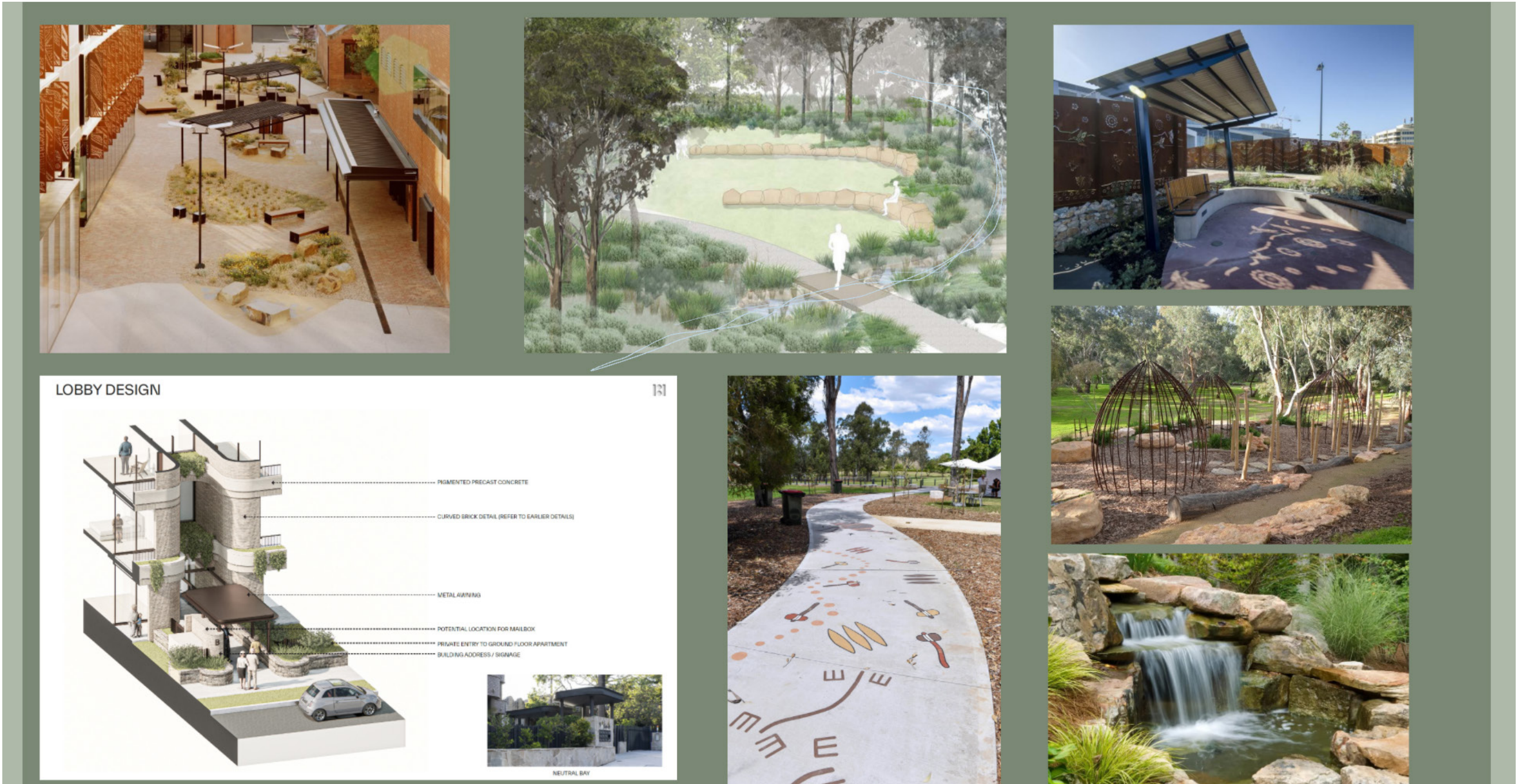


Figure.23 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sky Country Connection

Ideas centred on reshaping built form to strengthen the experience of sky across the site. Accessible viewing points and seating areas can create gentle moments to look up, pause and observe seasonal shifts, light patterns and the presence of neighbouring bushland and its inhabitants. Sightlines should guide design development so that views to canopy, horizon and sky remain open and intentional.

elevated, accessible communal locations with bushland views can offer a shared place to celebrate and enjoy Country. Planting, aspect and material choices should maximise sunlight and create a calm transition between interior spaces and the natural qualities of Killara Country. Interiors can subtly echo these patterns so that the feeling of sky, light and openness is carried through the whole building.



Figure.24 - Indicative image | Yerrabingin 2025

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Community Centered

Design should support strong social bonds, create opportunities for intergenerational exchange and contribute to health and wellbeing. Spaces can draw on surrounding Country to foster a sense of belonging for residents and visitors, creating gentle connections across the site and to the broader landscape.

A variety of communal areas can be explored, such as a natural play space, a native garden and a small cafe. Clear wayfinding and educational signage can link these places together and help people understand the stories, ecologies and cultural layers that shape the site.



Figure.25 - Indicative image | Yerrabingin 2025

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Landscape Language

A thoughtful landscape approach can create a rich sensory experience, shaped by an understanding of how natural elements move and interact across the site. This may include working with existing water flows to form a gentle water feature, and selecting planting that aligns with traditional cultural fire practices. Emphasis should be placed on showcasing the unique endemic species of Killara and strengthening their presence throughout the site.

Pathways and landscape connections can extend toward the neighbouring bushland and Swain Gardens, improving access to Country and creating a continuous, intuitive movement between places.



Figure.26 - Indicative image | Yerrabingin 2025

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY DESIGN

Answering the How Might We Question

The Connecting with Country opportunities presented in the preceding pages together form the answer to our How Might We question.

“How might we draw inspiration from Country to create a culturally meaningful and community focused masterplan?”

Through Yerrabingin’s engagement process, key opportunities to explore this question have been identified and represented left by a collaborative design by both Site Image Landscape and PBD Architects

Inclusive

- 1. Celebrate the colours of Country in facade and walling
- 2. Integrated knowledge sharing spaces within landscape
- 3. Retain existing trees for canopy and their history
- 4. Lighting which considers nocturnal fauna and dark sky

Sensory Experiences

- 5. Integration of running water
- 6. Endemic planting species
- 7. Tactile materials
- 8. Exposure and protection from wind

Healthy Community

- 9. Capture, treat and reuse water on site
- 10. Increased vegetation to improve soil and create habitat
- 11. Re-use site materials

Connection with Country - Opportunities

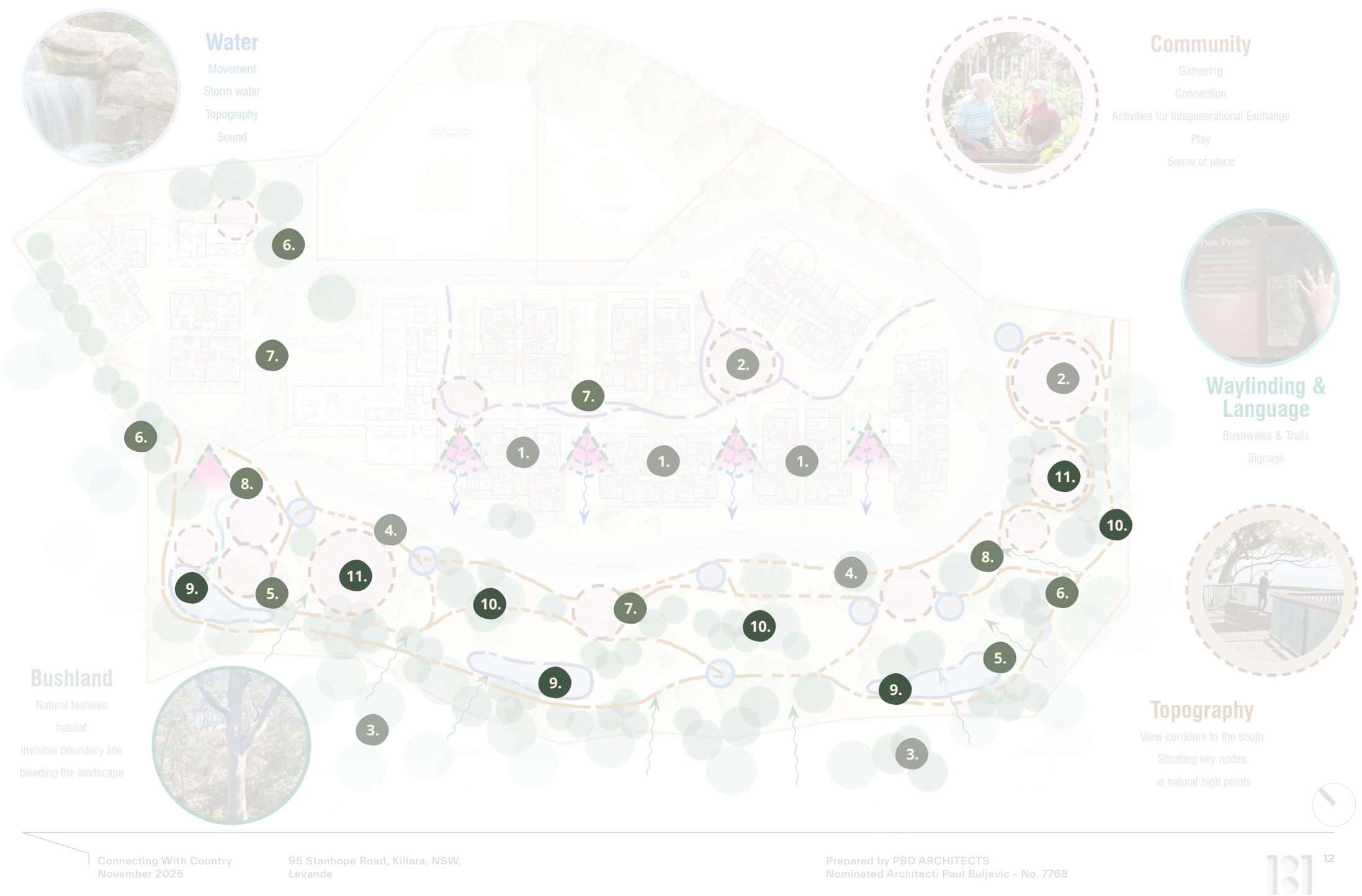


Figure.27 - Site Master Plan | Site Image Landscape and PBD Architects

GANSW CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES

Outcomes for Country

GANSW Outcomes for Country	Opportunities
1. Healthy Country	- Reintroducing locally native ecologies onto the site through the prioritisation of Non-Human Kin. - Re-use of materials to ensure resources of Country are not removed from the site.
2. Healthy Community	- Strong cultural identity through design elements of Country. - Cultural safety and an invitation to appreciate Country.
3. Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage	- Engagement with First Nations community to ensure connecting with Country engagement is informed by Traditional Custodians, Registered Aboriginal Parties and First Nations community stakeholders. - Seeking information and approval from local First Nations community when integrating particular cultural stories, graphics or interpretation
4. Cultural Competency	Cultural competency developed in residents and visitors through passive and active interaction with Country and culture.
5. Better Places	- Planning and design teams apply the community driven opportunities in this report to ensure design is connected with Country. - Planning and design outcomes informed by the community driven opportunities in this report support living cultural practices. - Original landscapes are repaired and restored through the re-establishing of locally native ecologies.



Figure.28 - Flora | Yerrabingin

PROJECT LEGACY

Future of Connecting with Country at Lourdes Retirement Village

The Connecting with Country process for Lourdes Retirement Village has been guided by a commitment to listen, reflect, and respond to Country through genuine collaboration with the project team and Aboriginal community members. Through a series of workshops and iterative design conversations, the project has moved beyond a single moment of consultation toward a shared understanding of how Country, culture, and care can be meaningfully embedded within a retirement living environment.

From the outset, the opportunity was identified to bring the pillars of Regeneration, Custodianship, Innovation and Legacy into the design in a way that supports both the immediate needs of residents and the long term relationship between people, place, and Country. The process has focused on translating cultural knowledge and community insights into tangible design outcomes across architecture, landscape, and ongoing site stewardship.

Together, themes of grounded connection to place, everyday encounters with nature, and respectful acknowledgement of Country will continue to shape the lived experience at Lourdes. These outcomes are intended to support wellbeing, foster a sense of belonging, and create moments of reflection and learning throughout daily life. As the project evolves, the legacy of Connecting with Country at Lourdes Retirement Village will be carried forward through both the physical environment and the ongoing care, management, and use of the site, ensuring that Country remains visible, valued, and nurtured into the future.



Figure.29 - Flora | Yerrabingin

FIGURES LIST

Figure.1 - Aerial photo of site location | Nearmap 2025

Figure.2 - Image of wattle blooming on site | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.3 - Bushland on site | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.4 - We inhabit and are inhabited by Country | Yerrabingin

Figure.5 - Combining cultural practice and behavioural change systems | GANSW

Figure.6 - Methodology Process | Yerrabingin

Figure.7 - Site walk | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.8 - Non-human kin on site | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.9 - Site Walk | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.10 - Flora | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.11 - Design Jam 2023 | Yerrabingin 2023

Figure.12 - Community Feedback session | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.13 - Community Session | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.14 - Community Feedback session | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.15 - Site walk | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.16 - Site walk | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.17 - Curtin University Yarning Circle | UDLA

Figure.18 - Woodleigh School | Sam Cox

Figure.19 - Aldinga Payinthe College Imprint | Mantirri Design

Figure.20 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.21 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.22 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.23 - Ideation snip | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.24 - Indicative image | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.25 - Indicative image | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.26 - Indicative image | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.27 - Site Master Plan | Site Image Landscape and PBD Architects

Figure.28 - Flora | Yerrabingin 2025

Figure.29 - Flora | Yerrabingin 2025

REFERENCES

Government Architect NSW. (2020). Designing with Country discussion paper. [https:// www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country](https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country)

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YERRABINGIN

WE ARE YERRABINGIN. WE WALK TOGETHER.