

| CONNECTING TO COUNTRY

# Aboriginal Design Principles

88 Waterloo St, Macquarie Park // WSP Indigenous Specialist Services  
// February 2026





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Research by Sian Hromek (Yuin), WSP. Sian specialises in variety of fields relating to Aboriginal Country and landscape design, including Cultural Land Management Practices such as cultural burning, and how these practices might inform built outcomes and inform engagement strategies.

**Please note:**

In order to highlight the use of Aboriginal Design Principles, this document may contain examples from other Aboriginal Countries.

**Warning:**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this document may contain reference to or images of deceased persons.

Front cover: *The City of Sydney, N.S.W. from behind Lavender's Bay, North Shore*, John Skinner Prout, State Library of NSW

*This document acknowledges the Elders, past and present, of the **Wallumattagal clan** from the **Darug language group** as the Traditional Owners of the land and its knowledge.*

/

*"The Ryde area was known as the place where the clever men would meet.*

*The clever men, or Koradgi in the Darug tongue were believed to have special powers and could visit the sky country - the abode of the ancestors and home of the sky father Biامي."*

Chris Tobin, Darug man and artist, 2005.

# Introduction

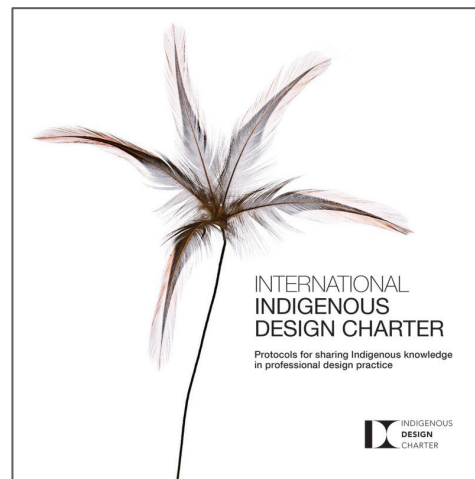
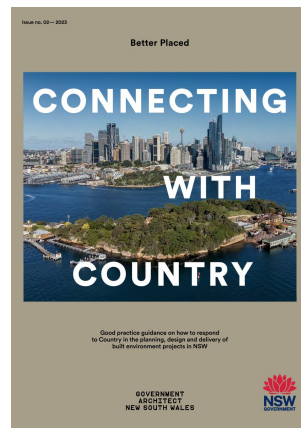
**This Connection to Country report forms the foundation of guidance and knowledge to help architects design appropriately when considering Country, with the aim to influence and inform design making decisions.**

Country to Aboriginal people is complex and our aim is to help designers understand the richness of Country, people and culture to aid the design process to Connect with Country in a genuine and meaningful way. This process has been informed by best practice principles that have emerged from leaders and thinkers in this field.

## This document aims to:

1. Provide further cultural context and competency for anyone with interest in the Aboriginal people of the Macquarie Park area.
2. Propose principles that align with important guidelines, such as the Connecting to Country Guidelines by the NSW Government Architects Office, The International Indigenous Design Charters Principles, and the 3 tenors of the Reconciliation Australia: Respect, Relationships and Opportunity.
3. Consider high level concepts for how this project might engage and co-design with Aboriginal people.

This document has been produced with information sourced from publicly available desktop research on Country, people and culture. Future engagement co-design sessions with Knowledge Holders will further inform the design team to help respond to Country within the design of this project.



## Connecting to Country Statement

**Aboriginal people and the built environment** have had a longstanding relationship as settlements, roads, and railways often cut through and disrupt the connection between people and Country.

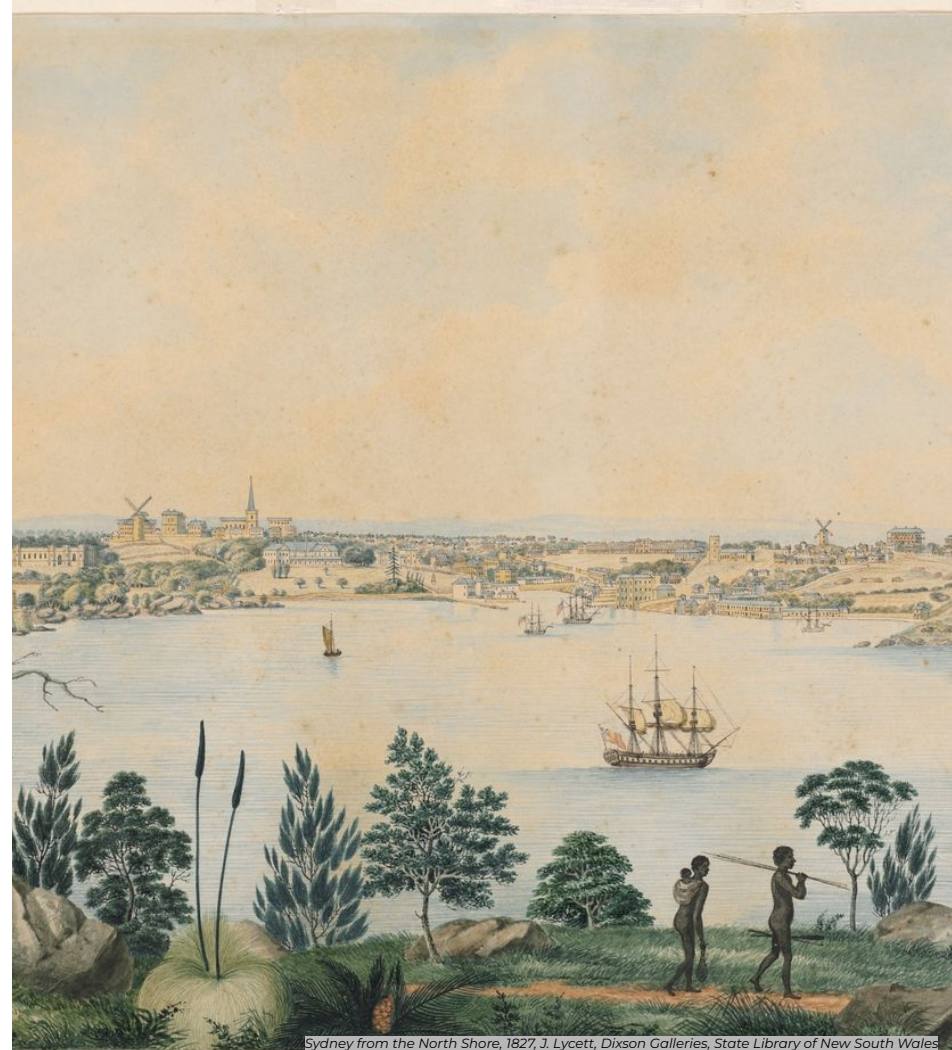
Our projects change the environment in significant, and often positive ways, yet Aboriginal people often ask the following question:

**“How are you going to leave my Country better than when it was before?”**

**How can we reconnect the relationship between Country and people?** Projects offer an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the Aboriginal Country, Culture and people of the land on where the project is located.

Through the project's design elements and our place-based landscape interventions (architecture, infrastructure, art and the like), **we can acknowledge Country** and reveal the site's latent Aboriginal history.

**This document describes the principles we use as a starting point** to engage with Aboriginal people and Country. While more consultation and permission must be sought from the local Elders, the ideas set out in this document should be seen as an introduction to the engagement process.



Sydney from the North Shore, 1827, J. Lycett, Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales

# Indigenous Design Statement

## Aboriginal design principles

**We will follow the following principles:**

**Aboriginal led** / Aboriginal people (designers, Elders and community members) should be leading or co-leading the Indigenous design elements.

**Community involvement** / The local Aboriginal communities will be engaged in a co-design process; where design teams, client and Aboriginal groups design the project together.

**Appropriate use of Indigenous design** / All Aboriginal design elements must be approved by consulted Indigenous Knowledge Holders. If approval is not given, the knowledge will not be used on the project.

## Design approach

**Image - Signage/surface treatment/ walls/art** / Surface treatments using local Indigenous design knowledge, commissioned from artists, or by urban designers with engagement and approval from community. Signage helps to share the story of Country and its people.

**Space - Indigenous space/ landscaping/** A space or landscape where Aboriginal people can have their culture celebrated. Yarning circles, space for contemplation, spaces for non human kin, cultural land stewardship practices, cultural fire, yam daisy propagation, etc. 3D forms, such as sculpture and art.

**Language words-** Using First Nations language in the built environment to use it and keep it alive.

## Country focused design

**Overall, Aboriginal Australia** has a simple but quite different hierarchy when it comes to their connection to nature. Rather than placing humans above all other living entities, we are just as important as everything else, but no more important.

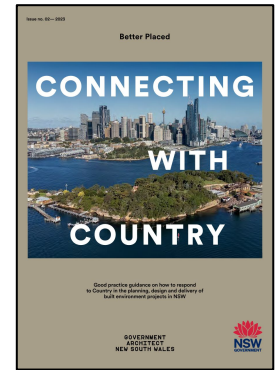
How might this different perspective shift or enhance current practices? Can we improve biodiversity in the built environment through changing the way we think?

**Country, over  
Community, over  
Individual**



Country focused design

# NSW Gov. Architects Connection to Country principles



## Heal Country

Connection to Country should lead to better physical and mental health, including improved diet, more physical activity, lower blood pressure, and reduced psychological distress.

**Site approach:** The above can be achieved through a healing of Country approach, bringing green into the building, opening up long views, calming colours, many spaces for different inhabitation

## Cultural revitalisation

Connecting to Country can help Indigenous people reconnect with their culture, language, family, and ancestors. This can lead to improvements in financial, emotional, and mental health.

**Site approach:** Knowledge, stories and designs can reference Wallumattagal culture through wayfinding, artworks, threshold details, spaces for sharing culture, spaces Aboriginal people feel welcome to share culture

## Strengthened identity

Connection to Country can help Indigenous people strengthen their self-esteem, self-worth, and pride. It can also help them foster a sense of belonging and cultural and spiritual connection.

**Site approach:** Spaces designed for culture can enhance the above, such as an important space in the development where regular smoking ceremonies can be held, or bush tucker / healing gardens

## Empowerment

Caring for Country can empower Indigenous people to become cultural custodians for future generations.

**Site approach:** The site can celebrate local Aboriginal talent in art, landscape care, Indigenous foods, ceremony performance, cultural businesses etc.

## Wellbeing

Connection to Country is a core determinant of health and wellbeing for Indigenous people.

**Site approach:** Create spaces that reflect the local culture to enhance the identity of Country, place, people and kin.

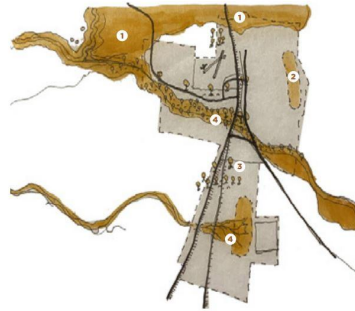
# Our Connection to Country process

**1. Stakeholder identification & engagement:** Identify and facilitate co-design with Aboriginal community members, groups, Knowledge Holders and Traditional Custodians to guide and inform research and interpretation of cultural knowledge and coordinate a Walk on Country with the project team.



**2. Research & mapping of Country:** Outline traditional and contemporary Aboriginal stories of the areas.

Figure 8: Guidelines for the planning of Gamilaroi Country

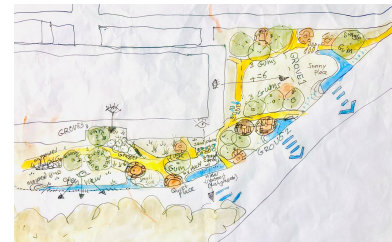


- 1. A flooded area** should be kept aside and used for recreation
- 2. A high point** provides good regional viewpoints and potential site to appreciate the Country
- 3. Endangered growth** a scattering of trees provide what little native vegetation resides on the site and must be protected
- 4. Halls and Clarks Creeks** should be rehabilitated and any future development planned around them

**3. Connecting with Country Design Principles:** Develop a set of Aboriginal Design Principles to inform the concept design. May include concepts, beliefs, heritage or story based ideas that are significant to the local Aboriginal Community and identified stakeholders.



**4. Design input and review:** Work collaboratively with the project team to incorporate the Aboriginal Design Principles into the concept design.



## Our Engagement process

**Meeting 1, Listen:** introduction of the team and the project to the Aboriginal consultants, then listen to initial thoughts, questions and what they have to say about this site and its stories.



**Meeting 2, Show and tell** - design team to present initial ideas, how they have integrated the initial ideas and document feedback.



**Meeting 3, getting it right** - design team to illustrate how feedback from meeting 2 has been incorporated.



**Meeting 4, Endorsement** - Aboriginal consultants verbally endorse the proposed outcomes.



# Country, People, Culture

## Language and clan Groups

The Sydney basin region is traditionally inhabited by people of several language groups, including Darug (Dharug) and Dharawal. Within these language groups it is estimated there were at least 36 clans.<sup>1</sup>

The Wallumattagal belongs to the Darug language group. Their traditional area is on the north side of the harbour, and is sometimes referred to as Wallumattagal Country in this document.

The language name of the eastern groups within the Sydney basin was not recorded due to the fast pace of colonisation and displacement of Aboriginal people in this area. As a result, some prefer to use the term 'Sydney Language' when referring to the traditional language of this area, others like to use the term Coastal Darug, or to refer to the specific clan group.



Artist impression of clan groups within the eastern Sydney Basin, Michael Hromek

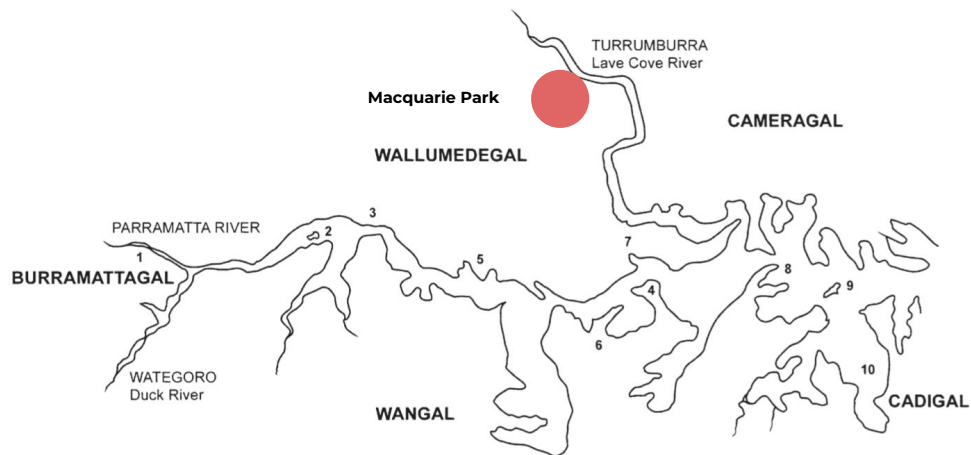
# Wallumattagal Country

Wallumattagal people are understood to occupy the north shore of Port Jackson immediately opposite Sydney Cove and west along the north shore of the Parramatta River, other accounts suggest that Wallumattagal territory commences further west at the Lane Cove River, this account is possibly due to colonial displacement indicating the Wallumattagal people had been displaced from opposite Sydney Cove. <sup>4</sup>

The first known written reference to Wallumattagal Country was made by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1790. Phillip wrote: *The South Side of the Harbour from the above-mentioned Cove [now Darling Harbour] to Rose-Hill, which the Natives call Par-ra-matta, the District is called Wann, & the Tribe, Wanngal. The opposite Shore is called Wallumetta, & the Tribe, Wallumattagal.* <sup>4</sup>

## Country Types

Wallumattagal Country contains a variety of Country types including Freshwater, Bitter water (estuarine) and Saltwater. Saltwater is within the harbour to the south of the Country, and freshwater tributaries feeding into the Lane Cove river which creates estuarine or bitter water in between.



### KEY:

- |                              |                                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Burrumatta Parramatta     | 6. Booridiow-a-gule Breakfast Point |
| 2. Arrowanelly Mud Island    | 7. Tarban Creek Turiban             |
| 3. Mur-ray-mah Charity Point | 8. Yerroulin Longnose Point         |
| 4. Bigi Bigi Abbotsford      | 9. Memel Goat Island                |
| 5. Wallumetta Kissing Point  | 10. Go-mo-ra Darling Harbour        |

## Wallumattagal People

**A First Encounter** between Wallumattagal people and the English occurred in February 1788 when boats from HMS Sirius began to survey and chart the harbour of Port Jackson.

Captain John Hunter wrote:

*'We saw them in considerable numbers, and they appeared to us to be a very lively and inquisitive [people]... they came up with great cheerfulness and good humour, and seated themselves by our fire amongst us, where we ate what we had got and invited them to partake, but they did not relish our food or drink.'*<sup>4</sup>

**Bidgee Bidgee** (ca.1786-1837) had a long-lasting association with the Ryde area. Twenty years after Governor Lachlan Macquarie officially gave him the title in 1816, Bidgee Bidgee was still regarded as 'Chief of the Kissing Point Tribe'.<sup>8</sup>

**Bundle, also called Bandel and later Bundell:** In 1810 Bundle assisted district constable James Squire by tracking armed robbers who broke into the house of Richard Jenner at Kissing Point. Bundle followed footprints left by two nails in the sole of a shoe to a nearby hut.

Bundle was the first recorded Aboriginal man to go to sea. He sailed to Norfolk Island on board the brig Supply on 22 March 1791 and returned in September on the transport Mary Ann.



Bidgee Bidgee, Francois Peron, Louis de Freycinet, Nicolas-Martin Petit  
Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes folio atlas, second edition  
Source: National Portrait Gallery

## Wallumattagal Culture

Aboriginal occupation and other sites of interest are scattered all over northern Sydney. Some of these cultural features can still be seen in the landscape, others have been damaged and removed by colonial actions.

- camp sites,
- social areas,
- shell middens,
- scarred trees: bark removed to makes canoes or coolamon carrying bowls
- carved trees: spiritual markings, often totemic or adjacent to a grave
- ceremonial grounds,
- rock engravings: fishing / hunting areas, tribal markings, spiritual symbols
- fish traps: fish swim in at high tide but cannot swim out
- burial grounds
- grinding grooves: for tool sharpening, often at the edge of streams
- quarries, rock shelters,
- ochre pits: digestive medicine, sunburn protection, insect bites
- seed grinding stones: flat stones worn into bowls for grinding acacia, grass, kurrajong and wattle seeds to make flour for damper
- scattered artefacts,
- paintings and stencils. <sup>8</sup>

An estimated 6,000 Indigenous engravings and assorted artistic pieces were once spread throughout greater Sydney. However, through a combination of vandalism and ignorance, many have been destroyed as industry, infrastructure and houses are built. <sup>8</sup>



Water well at Balls Head. Photo: Daniéle Hromek



Engravings of jumping kangaroos at Glades Bay Native Gardens, Gladesville. Photo: [www.visitsydneyaustralia.com.au/sites-iv.html](http://www.visitsydneyaustralia.com.au/sites-iv.html)



Scar tree at Glebe. Photo: Sian Hromek



A rock shelter in Queens Park. Photo: Sardaka (talk)

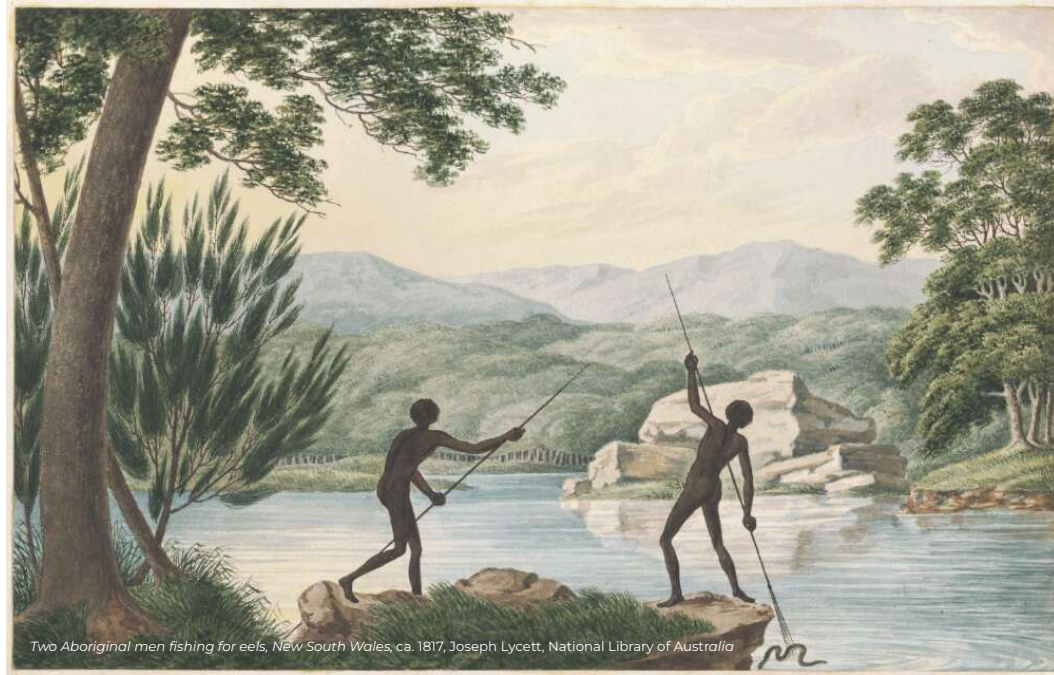
## Wallumattagal Culture

**Sustenance:** Gathering of edible plants, shellfish and smaller animals was usually the task of Wallumattagal women, whilst men were responsible for hunting of larger game.

Both men and women played a role in catching fish such as snapper, mullet, bream, jewfish and mackerel. The diet of Wallumattagal people was predominantly fish and shellfish, supplemented with birds, game and edible plants.

Traditional Wallumattagal fishing techniques continued after colonisation commenced, as fish was a valuable item to exchange for food and clothing. Over time hunting and gathering declined due to land clearing for crops and buildings which excluded Aboriginal people and depleted traditional food sources.<sup>8</sup>

**Dispossession:** The intrusion of Europeans along the banks of the Turrumburra (Lane Cove River) had an immediate and devastating impact on Wallumattagal people. Faced with assault on their traditional way of life the Wallumattagal had three options: fight, die or flight. While they did not die in battle, various diseases affected many people substantially reducing their population .<sup>8</sup>



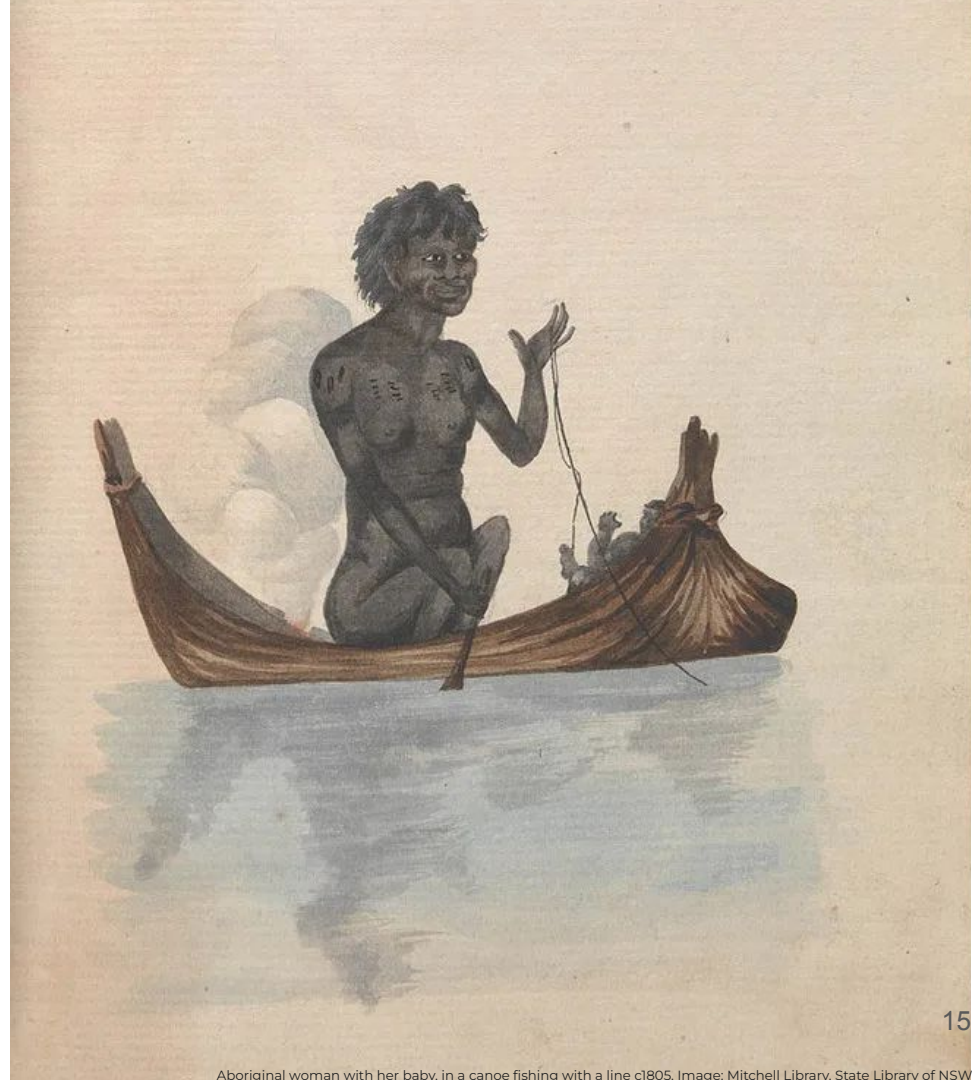
## Wallumattagal Culture

**Coastal Culture:** The waters of the harbour, its creeks, coastal estuaries and lagoons and the artery of the Parramatta River were crowded with men and women fishing and coming and going in their bark canoes.

The traditional nawi or bark canoe is about three to four metres long and one metre wide, shallow and shaped from a straight sheet of bark bunched at each end and tied with vines or cord. Spacer sticks were jammed across the centre to hold the sides apart. Bark for canoes was taken from the stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) or from the goomun or 'fir tree' (*Casuarina* species).<sup>4</sup>

Men would make spears and wooden tools and would spear fish from the rock platforms using a burly to attract them.

Women were the masters of the nawi canoe. The skill of the women in catching the fish and navigating the changeable harbour conditions in their modest nawi was greatly admired by early European observers. They dominated the waters of the harbours, coves and bays, and the coastlines in between. Fisherwomen were a common sight around Port Jackson for generations, singing as they rowed and fished.<sup>9</sup>



## Colonial Impacts on Traditional Life

The traditional life of Aboriginal people in the Sydney region was severely damaged through the course of the early 19th century. The cumulative impacts of colonisation including dispossession of their lands and the effects of smallpox and influenza decimated the Aboriginal population, with individual epidemics killing large numbers of people.<sup>3</sup>

Early colonial settlement of traditional hunting lands deprived Aboriginal groups of sources of food and access to camping and ceremonial sites. Disrupting their way of life and consequently having negative impacts on their survival and culture. This forced individuals to either relocate into the potentially hostile lands of neighbouring Aboriginal groups, partially integrate into colonial society as fringe dwellers, or to resist and face consequences.<sup>3</sup>

Resistance by Aboriginal groups was often met with retaliatory action by white settlers and the colonial administration. A combination of these factors led to the demise of traditional lifestyles and a decrease in the Aboriginal population.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the damage done by colonisation to the various traditional ways of being, an evolution of culture, language and knowledge has survived and now lives on through the descendants of Aboriginal people.



*North View of Sydney New South Wales taken from the North Shore 1822, Joseph Lycett, State Library NSW*

# Geology and Vegetation

**Geology:** The area of Macquarie Park is built on the geological sequence of Ashfield Shale, transitional Mittagong Formation and underlying Hawkesbury Sandstone. The sequence is predominantly horizontally bedded with Ashfield Shale overlying the Mittagong Formation with the older Hawkesbury Sandstone underneath.<sup>5</sup>

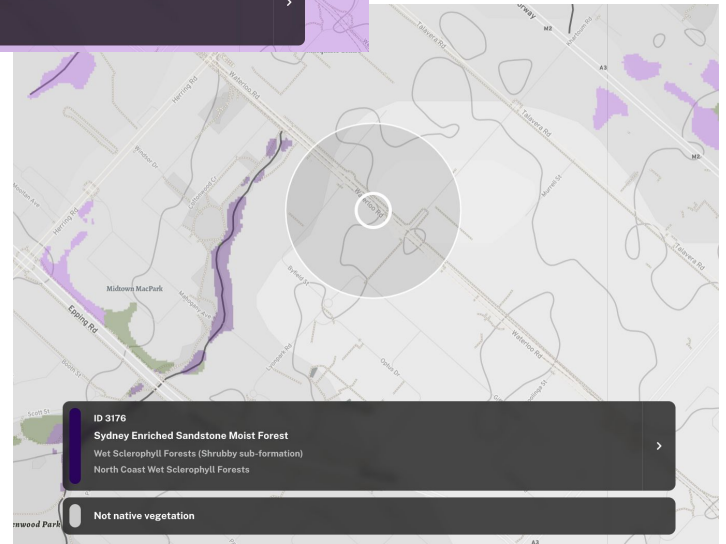
**Vegetative Communities:** The endemic vegetation types that are sustained by the geological substrates are as follows:

- Sydney Coastal Enriched Sandstone Forest
- Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest
- Sydney Enriched Sandstone Moist Forest (in the waterways)

Clearing of vegetation since colonisation has degraded these vegetative communities leaving small remnants within the region. <sup>6</sup>To connect the site to Country we can revive these plant communities by choosing species that belong to this place.



Original native vegetation, Trees near Me



Current day native vegetation, Trees near Me

## Significant Plants

There are many bush foods found and culturally significant plants in these communities. The following are some of the many plants used to sustain Wallumattagal people's needs.

**Angophora costata**- culturally significant womens tree

**Acacia sp.**-seeds used for bread; gum used as glue & waterproofing

**Persoonia levis**- 'Geebung' fruit eaten, a bush lolly

**Brachychiton acerifolius, B. populneus**- edible seeds, bark used for twine

**Banksia integrifolia, B. serrata**- wood used for tools, flowers made sweet drink

**Ficus rubiginosa**- edible fruit, wood for tools, shelter for ceremony

**Melaleuca quinquenervia**- bark used to build shelters, wrap food for cooking, and line containers like coolamons , medicine plant.

**Bauera rubioides**- medicinal, roots roasted for bushfood

**Bursaria spinosa**- food, tools, medicine; seeds for flour, wood for tools like boomerangs and waddies, soaked the flowers to create a sweet drink

**Duboisia myoporoides**- fish poison, medicine

**Dianella sp**- edible berries, leaves used for weaving and fibre

**Lomandra sp**- seeds used for flour, leaves for fibre and weaving

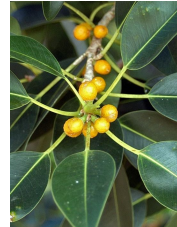
**Smilax australis**- medicinal, licorice-flavored tea, edible fruit and stems used for firesticks and making tough rope and string

**Pteridium esculentum**- rhizome is a staple food, sap used for insect bites

**Microlaena stipoides**- native lawn, seed used for flour, habitat plant

**Themeda triandra**- seed for flour, leaves for weaving & mats, medicine

**Blechnum cartilagineum**- rhizome ground roasted and made into cakes



## Design

Sydney's Aboriginal people express themselves visually across many different mediums: on wooden and stone surfaces, body scarification, painting, incised designs on weapons and tools, and etchings on skin cloaks. Tools made of stone, shell and plant materials were used for making canoes, weapons and to collect food. Ornaments were worn in the hair and scarring of chest and arms served both ornamental and ritual purposes. Initiated men wore a waistband of plaited possum fur.<sup>10</sup>

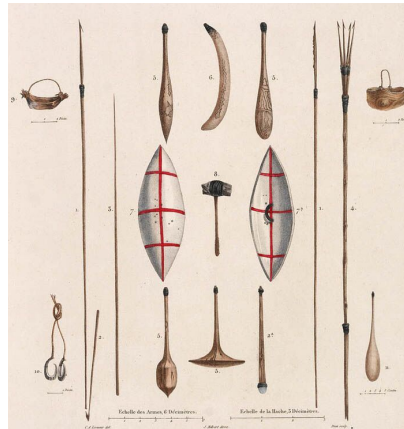
Each clan distinguished itself from other clans having different designs and decorations on their tools and weapons and by different body decorations – eg. painted designs worn during certain rites and ceremonies, and scarification formed during initiation rites, some groups had distinctive hair styles.<sup>11</sup>

French explorer Jules Dumont d'Urville in 1824 describes Sydney groups gathering for ceremony: *'on high ground about two miles from the sea' (between Sydney and Botany Bay) 'were the people from Parramatta, Kissing Point, Sydney, Liverpool, Windsor, Emu Plains, Broken Bay, Five Islands, Botany Bay, and even from the Hunter River. All were distinguished by the designs of their body painting.'*<sup>9</sup>



**Shane Smithers, Darug artist** and academic describes the horizontal lines as representing Wiari, Mother Earth whom, along with Biari Father sky, is held in the highest respect.

Together their generative power is the basis of Darug lore.



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, *Indigenous Weapons - Sydney Region (1802-04)*, Australian Museum



Fish hooks of NSW, detail of plate from John White's *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales 1790*, State Library of NSW

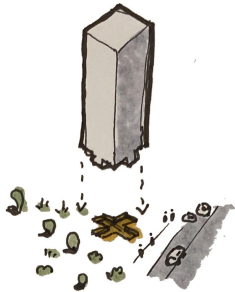
# Connecting the site to Country

## Connecting the site to Country

This Country has been an important place of gathering for Aboriginal people, overlooking two waterways and old tracks to the north, west and south.

How might we honour Country and ensure it's dignity is still intact after the project?

**Any new buildings should honour Country and the culture associated with this land through tangible and intangible outcomes**



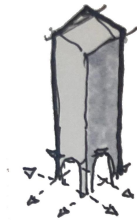
Connect the buildings to Country

## Open up the site

Ensuring the buildings are open and accessible for people.

Preserve and enhance any remnant vegetation to help maintain the health and wellbeing of Country. Consider movement of animals who are using the M2 as a corridor.

**How might we support nature to access the site and allow for safe movement across the site?**



Connect people to the site

## Celebrate Country

This depot can reinforce and maintain the identity of Country through the considered use of locally sourced materials.

Consider neighbours and do not let the building dominate the landscape.

Plant vegetation buffers to shield the building from dominating Country.

**Can the depot provide space to celebrate Country and include design elements that celebrate, such as on the facade**



Connect the buildings to local Design

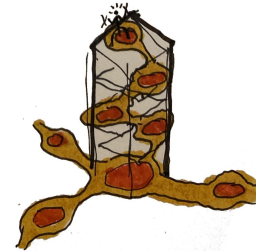


Invite Country into the building

## Tell our stories.

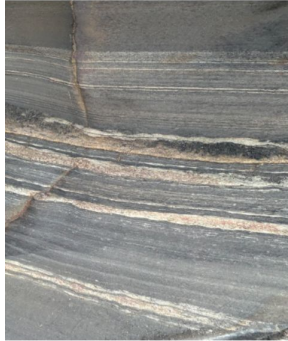
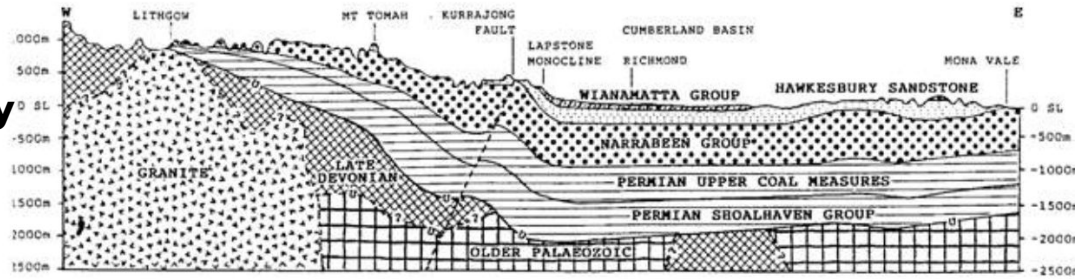
This region is a place of ceremony, lore, and settlement. There are many latent stories associated with this place waiting to be told through place based interventions.

**How might we tell the stories of this Country and its first peoples in the design of this depot? What are the appropriate stories / themes to tell?**



Connect the buildings to Culture

# Connecting the site to geology



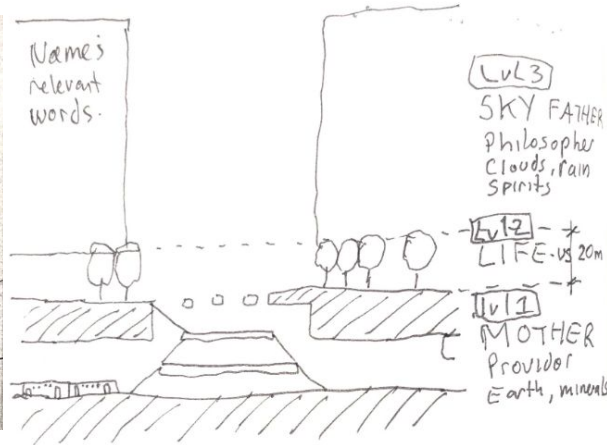
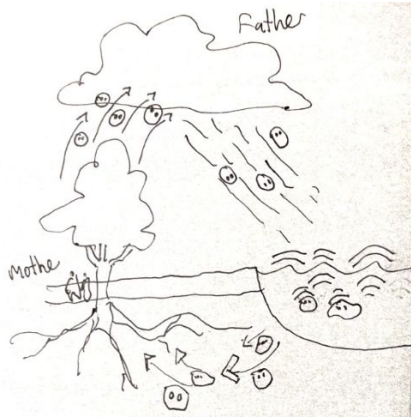
## Key concepts

A place of  
freshwater

A place  
connected to  
sky country  
and mother  
earth

A changed  
landscape

A place of  
totems -  
black  
snapper



# Engagement

# Aboriginal Co-design Engagement strategy

## Who:

We plan to speak to **Relevant Aboriginal Knowledge Holders** who know about stories, themes, landscape, plants, torrents etc which are relevant to the projects scope.

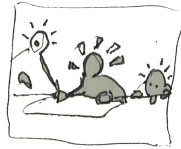
**Muru Mittigar:** a Darug controlled Aboriginal social and cultural enterprise, were identified as meeting the above criteria.

## How:

- Digital Yarns over TEAMS
- Walk on Country / Meetings on site
- Meetings at the site, an Elders place of choice (park, their house etc)

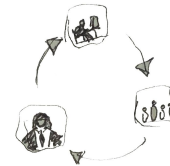
## 1. Engagement

The first step will be to engage with the relevant Aboriginal group (artist / Elder, Lands Council etc), early and often, through a series of 'yarns' or conversations about the potential opportunities to incorporate the theming contained within the document (or other themes) into project outcomes.



## 2. Co Design

To kick of the co-design process design teams are given time to integrate the themes and ideas into the scope of the project



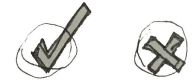
## 3. Co Design workshops

Engagement workshops with the relevant Aboriginal group will everyone gets in the room to co-design cultural solutions to project outcomes, yet Aboriginal voices should be given preference to ensure they are heard.



## 4. Endorsement:

All content that uses local Aboriginal theming will be endorsed by the Aboriginal group.



## 5. Other opportunities:

Should be highlighted and put forward to ensure the local Aboriginal community has opportunities, economic outcomes and better connections to their Country, through the project



## Walk on Country

On 25th of November Dharug Elders Aunty Thelmaree Rudd and Uncle Paul Webb led a smoking ceremony and walk on Country for the design team to help understand the site from a cultural perspective and design new interventions appropriately and with a clear spirit and intent. Below are some notes from what the Elders said about the site and project:

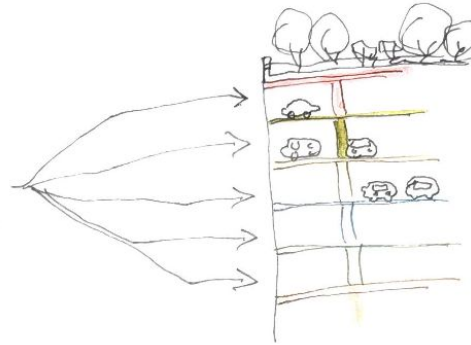
- Care for Country in the project as best you can, care for the plants and totems - bees , cockatoos, the black snapper. Accommodate for them where you can
- Tell the truth where you can about the misconceptions about Aboriginal culture. Macquarie was not well respected, this area had bad things occur, hunting parties etc. This is still traumatic for the mob, so bringing back old place names and changing the built environment back to Country is a good start
- This area was a food bowl, creeks and rivers, salt and freshwater, fish eels, muscles, all were abundant right here
- Middens are everywhere, evidence of life here and thousands of year of occupation by Darug speaking people

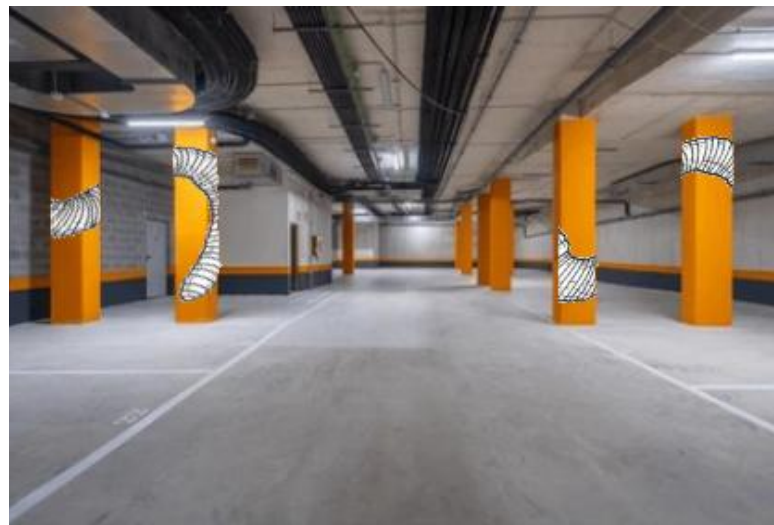
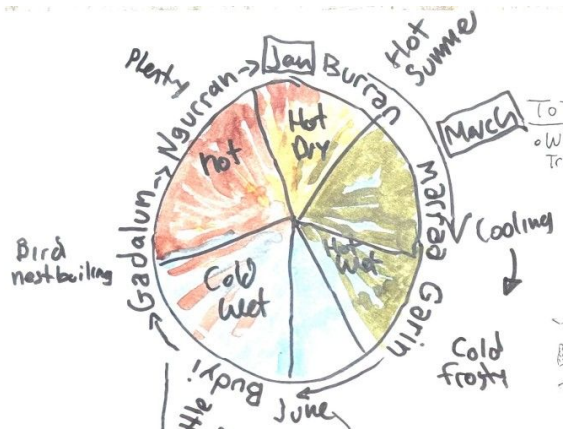
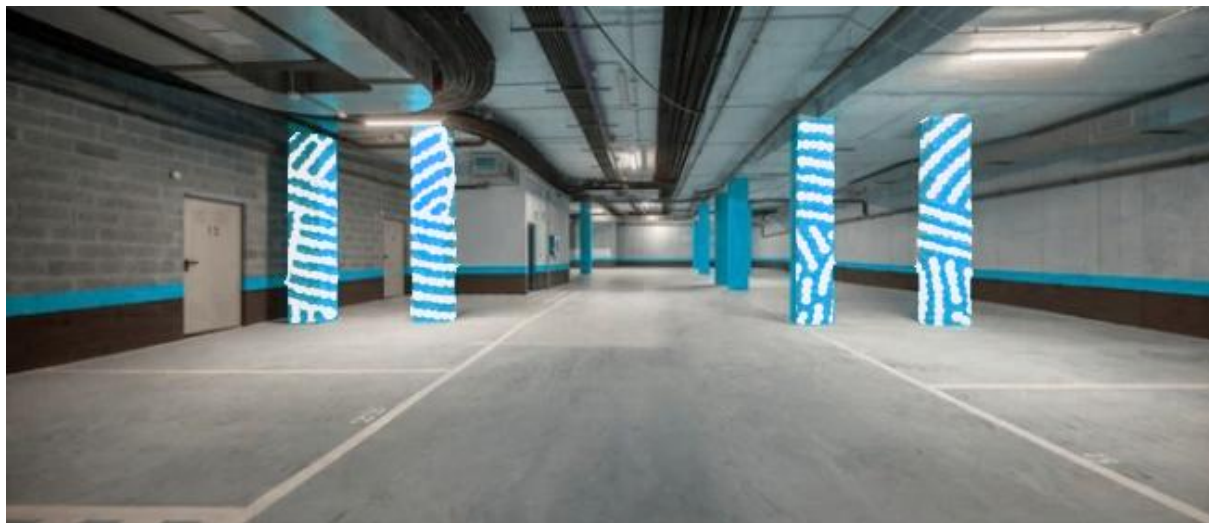


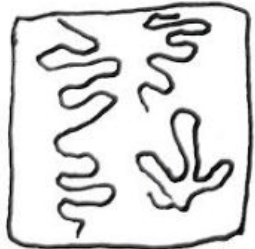
## Walk on Country cont.

- This was a connected site, people from different clan groups would meet here, and this was a travel corridor. It was said that people who lived here were connected to the sky, and held onto culture staunchly
- Form a community through the procedure of meeting new people. Make it spatial with thresholds, first you let yourself be known, wait to be invited, get feed and have water, then you were invited into the private areas of the settlement. From gum trees, walk past animals, back to quiet area
- Refer to water connection near here, Shrimptons creek still has a spirit and is quite beautiful
- Endemics plants should be included on ground floor and on level 4 community zone, . Plant native tyme, lemon myrtle etc, this will bring the bees back, and residents can use them

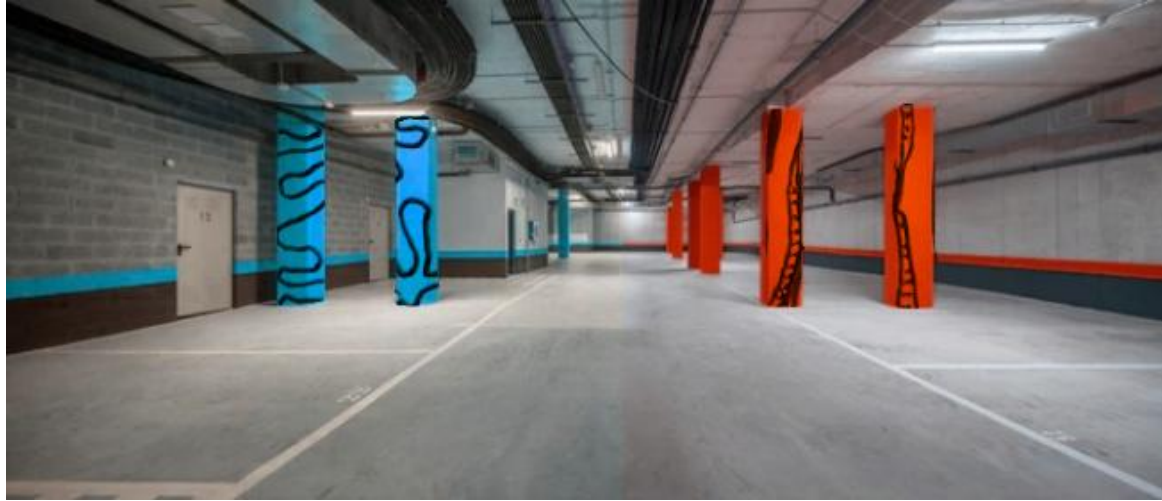
Car park colours and levels to follow 6 Dhaurg seasons







Castlereagh  
scribbly gum  
woodland



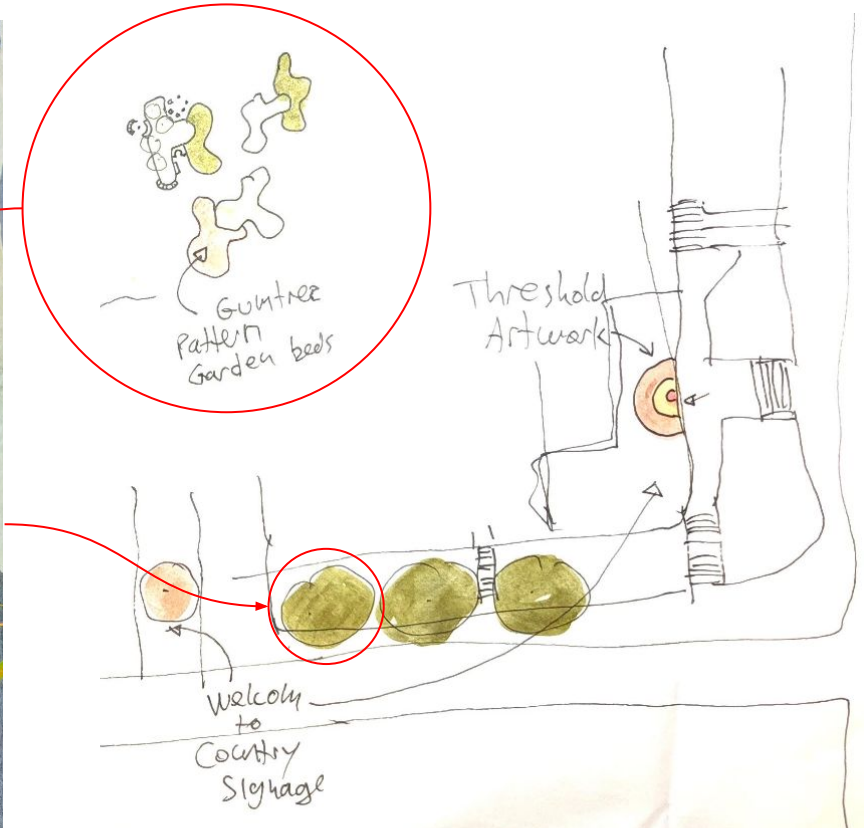
• Castlereagh  
Ironbark  
Forest  
• Ironbark  
• melaleuca  
• eucalyptus

## Walk on Country cont.

- Add permeable pavement so gum trees can drink groundwater flowing past. The trees here look thirsty and need more water.
- Totems were important, scales, feathers and fur, this land had all totems and they can be used in the design
- Re-use material on the site as much as possible , and sandstone dug up should be kept on site. Mulch and trees being cut down. Don't destroy another site to make this one better,
- Make seats face each other so people get to know each other
- Native bush tucker gardens on level 4
- connect the tall building to Sky Country - be able to see the dark sky at night

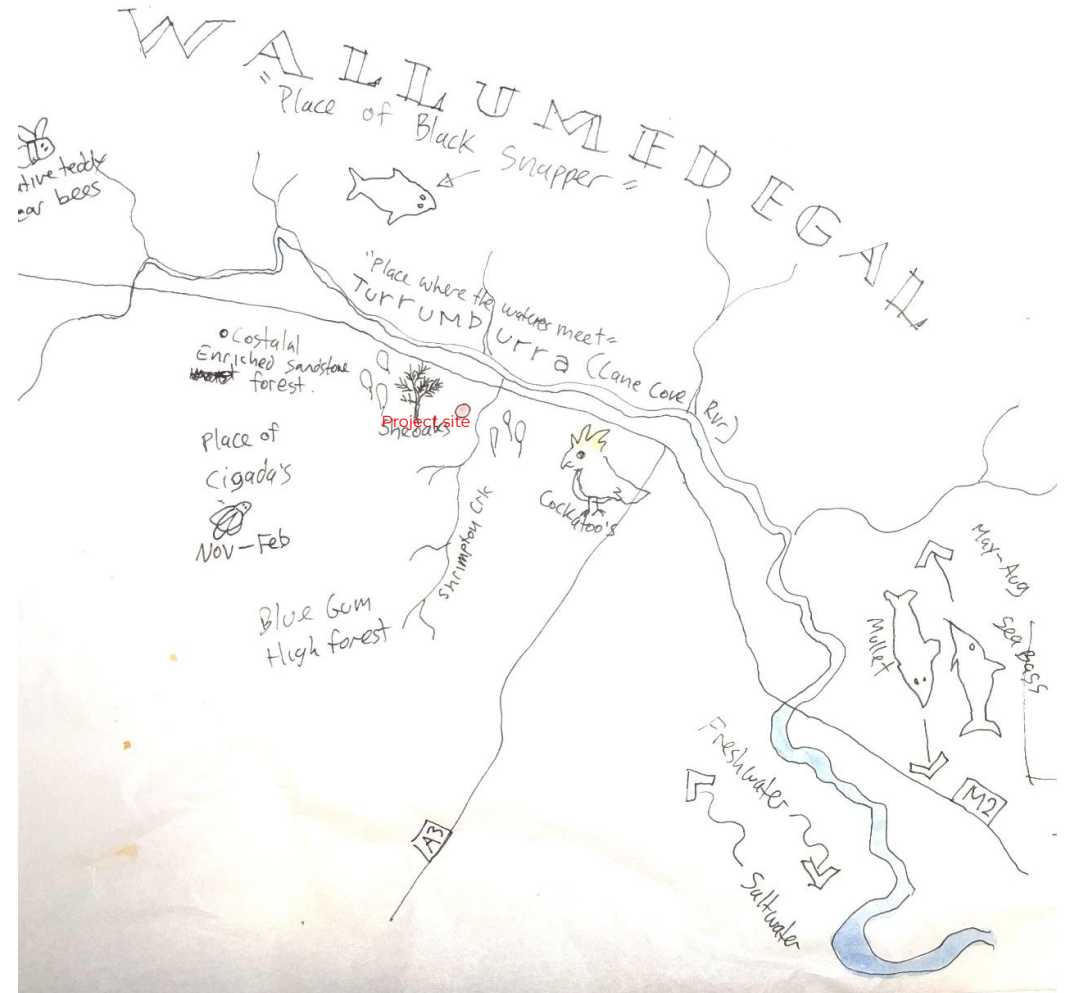


## Sketches from Walk on Country



## Cultural Mapping

A cultural mapping done by Michael Hromek (WSP) based on what the Elders said during the Walk on Country, showing some of the important aspects of Country and culture on this site, totems, plants, creeks, meaning of language etc.



## Cultural Plant Palette



Some bush food plants to include in the gardens. Images show plants from the list below- in a clockwise direction.

- Magenta Lilly Pilly *Syzygium paniculatum*
- Lemon Tea Tree *Leptospermum petersonii*
- Lemon Myrtle- *Backhousia citriodora*
- Acacia sp. belonging to the area such as: *A. ulicifolia*; *A. pubescens*
- Appleberry- *Billardiera scandens*
- Native Thyme *Prostanthera incisa*
- Native oregano *Prostanthera rotundifolia*
- Native mints *Prostanthera scutellarioides*
- Native River Mint *Mentha australis*
- Bush Mint *Mentha satuireioides*
- Midyim Berry *Austromyrtus dulcis*
- Native Vanilla Lily *Arthropodium milleflorum*
- Geebung- *Persoonia linearis*; *P. nutans*
- Kangaroo grass- *Themeda triandra*
- Flax lily- *Dianella longifolia*; *D. caerulea*; *D. revoluta*



# Darug Cultural Seasons

Darug peoples have a cultural obligation to care for Country. They have used cultural stewardship practices based on a deep knowledge of and respect for the environment for many millennia.

This approach allows them to create a sustainable ecological system that provided people with the food and raw materials they needed to make medicine, tools, shelters, and other items for daily living.<sup>12</sup>

An integral aspect of caring for the land is a thorough understanding of the cultural seasons of a place.

A cultural seasonal calendar was based on observations of environmental indicators involving plants and animals, weather patterns, and the position of the stars, which was passed down through the generations.<sup>12</sup>

*“Our Dharug Ancestors observed subtle indicators of seasonal change such as in temperature, clouds, wind, flora and fauna which assisted in knowing when to burn Country, hunt certain foods and to live in harmony with the Land.”* — Naa Nora (to see Country) Dharug exhibition book 2012.<sup>13</sup>

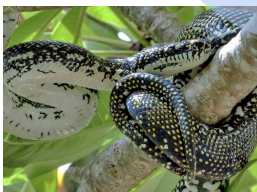


**Bayin Gura - cool getting warmer** Around November – December

*Bayin* (cool) *Gura* (warm)  
Dianella blooms-. flower has a blue/purple and yellow pattern. Leaves used to weave into string, nets, bags, baskets and traps. Berries are bush food

**Dugara Guwara - cold and windy** Around September – October

*Dugara* (very cold) *Guwara* (windy) Diamond python wakes from hibernation and seek a mate. Common in the Western Sydney plains. They are a known food source for Dharug, but mainly when other foods are unavailable.



**Bunul Marray - warm and wet** Around January – February  
*Bunnul* (sunshine) *Marray* (wet)

Warmer days bring the blue tongue lizard who carry energy and new life. They are passive creatures, when threatened, they stick out their blue tongue. They have strong jaws that crush slow moving prey such as beetles and snails.



**Yuruga Burra - hot and thirsty** Around March – April  
*Yuruga* (hot) *Burra* (sky)

The annual migration of barra (eel) from the rivers to the ocean indicates the beginning of this season. This is a signal for people from all over to gather. Barra mimic colours of their environment, such as browns, greens and yellows.



**Bayin Dyarra - wet and cooler** Around May – June  
*Bayin* (cool) *Dyarra* (red)

During this time, dyarraba (firestick) cultural burning is the sustainable fire practice used to manage and heal ngurra (Country).

During dyarraba, buru (kangaroo) run from the burning grass.



**Dagara - cold and frosty** Around July – August  
*Dagara* (cold)

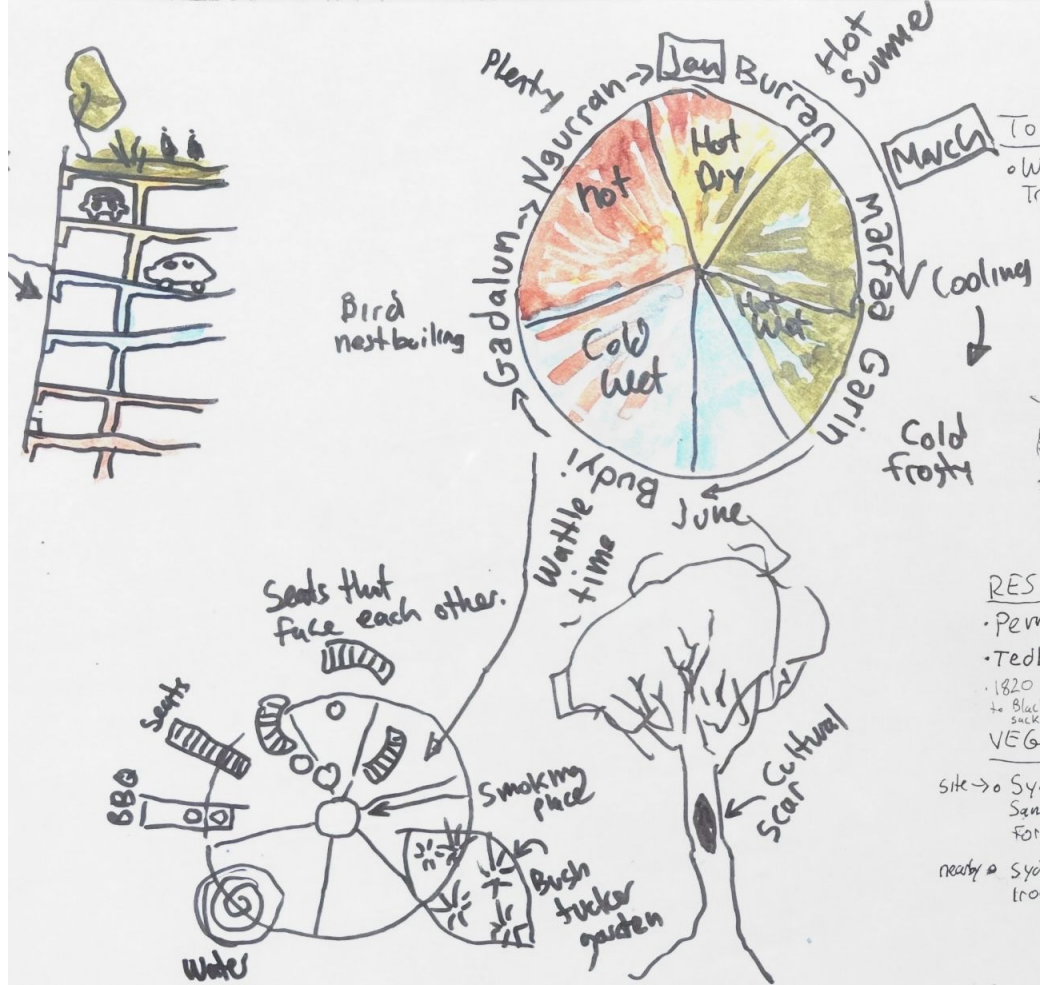
The distinctive call of garad (black cockatoo) signals the coming of rain. Their presence reminds us our Ancestors are part of Country and still with us. The decisions we make today need to align with the values of our Ancestors.



# Darug Cultural Seasons

A sketch indicating how the Darug seasons may be integrated into the basement levels.

Suggest each level can share express each season, starting with the hottest season (Bunul Marray - warm and wet) and transitioning to the coolest season at the bottom to correlate with the environmental conditions in the basement levels.



## Online engagement session

On the 17th December an online engagement session was held with Darug Elders Aunty Thelmarie and Uncle Paul Webb. The design teams shared their progress so far, the following notes summarise how they are integrating advice from Elders:

### Landscape Design

The landscape design team was inspired by the Walk on Country, specifically the significance of the local waterways. Water to be captured in the landscape, allowing water to flow into the landscaped areas to recharge the trees and plants.

Looking to reuse sandstone from the site into the landscape features. Accents of sandstone dotted into the landscape.

Engravings in the pavement could include the Black Snapper in the pool area- looking at including the Black Snapper or Darug art as mosaics.

Shade structure could include perforated panels eg. Emu in the Sky

Bush tucker gardens to be integrated into the garden plantings. Restoring the original ecology into the landscaping.

Planter boxes with plants overflowing to soften the podium. Plant screening to provide shade and protect from winds.

Looking at local plant communities to include significant species in the Waterloo Rd and Cottonwood Crescent garden areas.

### Building:

Inspired by the Walk on Country- the geological layers to inform the podium area.

Cockatoo and Black Snapper are species that may be included into the building identity, through materials and colours.

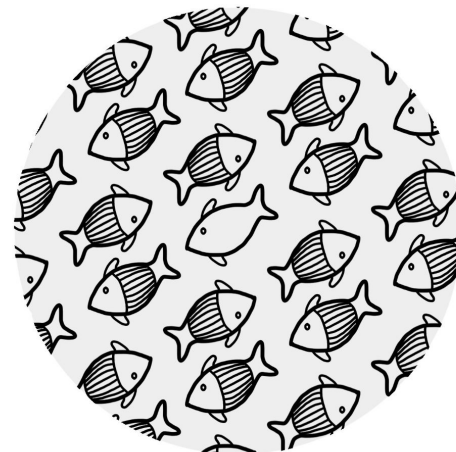
Interpreting how life exists in the top 20m of the space between Sky and land.

Entry: Sandstone as a facade on the entry point of the building, could include engravings of Cockatoo / Snapper story. Granite on the ground plane

Basement: Six Seasons to be explored as themes in the six basements. From warmer to colder on each level going down.



Reuse sandstone from the site in landscape features



Patterns of the Black Snapper can feature near the pool area.

## Online engagement session

### Elders Feedback on Connecting with Country progress:

Aunt and Uncle like the plans so far.

Aunt suggests to share the story of the cultural themes such as totems and art somewhere in the building so that people can understand their significance. Could be done in art for- or etchings on concrete. She appreciates the ideas from the Walk being integrated.

The themes from each building could connect back into Country through the plants and water. E.g Ground plane connects to water and the podium could connect to the sky.

Aunt suggests the flora and fauna can connect to Country and educate people through that connection.

Uncle reminds us that the Grass Tree is a local species that was often found in this area.

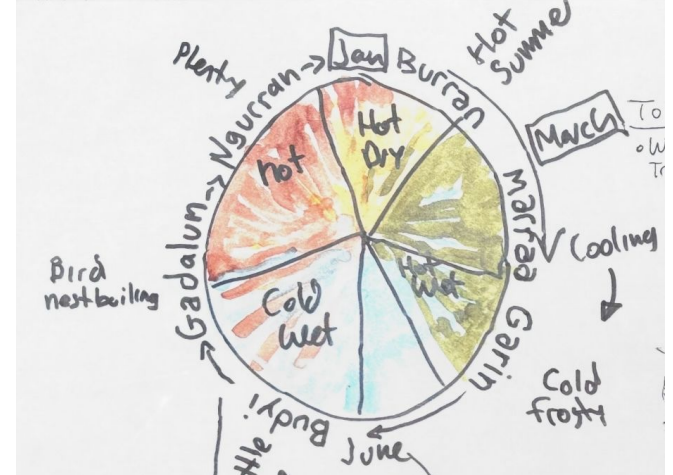
Aunt shared language names and spelling for the totems: **GIRRAWI** is the **White Cockatoo** name. **WALLUMAI** is **Black Snapper** name in the Darug language.

Aunt asks about where the sandstone would come from? Suggest reusing any sandstone excavated from the basement areas.

Would the basement area have sandstone left natural? They are planning to keep the sandstone exposed.

Colours of sandstone from the excavation can inspire the other colours used in the buildings. The bark of gum trees could be used as the colour of the white building and the yellow on top is the cockatoo in the tree.

Look at giving art opportunities to young Darug artists, FN or non FN via a mentorship process guided by Darug people.



^ Darug six seasons to feature in the basement area- from cold to hot ascending



> Example of a bee hotel, suggested by Uncle Paul. Made by Wild BnB [wildbnb.com.au](http://wildbnb.com.au)

# Design ideas

This section covers high level ideas for how Darug knowledge and design might be implemented into the project to be considered by the design team and included where appropriate

# Potential use of Aboriginal design



## 1. Acknowledge Country-

Entry statement, significant site marker, sculpture referencing Country.



## 2. Building Identity

Activate the building envelope with patterns and motifs that belong to Country.



## 3. Gathering spaces

A place to rest, enjoy Country, design can include local vegetation, seating, landscape art., signage



## 4. Care for Water-

employ water sensitive urban design elements to reduce stormwater flows and provide a sponge area for water to recharge soils.



## 5. Landscape

prioritise local endemic plants; create habitat for kin; maintain the local identity of place and Country.



## 6. Wayfinding / Ground Plane

Enhance wayfinding through colour, patterns, treatments and signage that respond to Country



## 7. Material use

the choice of materials can reduce impacts on Country and it's resources. Prioritise recycled; repurposed locally sourced materials.



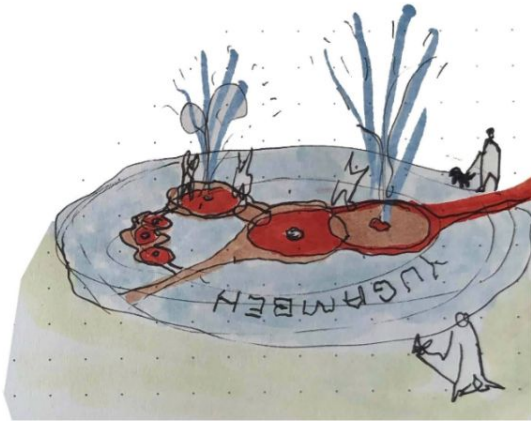
## 8. Language

identify opportunities for sharing language within the project.

## 1. Acknowledge Country

**Artistic sculpture by a First Nations artist** can provide a sense of arrival and identity to the building complex.

The opportunity to develop an artwork will give a First Nations artist with connections to the area a platform and recognition that may help develop their career further.



# 1. Acknowledge Country with Patterns and Art

**Art and patterns inside the building** can lighten up areas.



**Celebrate Darug design** through iconic art integration in key arrival spaces



**Design Vernacular** should be understood, upheld and honoured in this project.



**Connect to Country** through nature using native plants that thrive indoors



**UNSW Alumni Green**  
Aboriginal art on bench seating

# 1. Sense of Arrival

**Entry to the site can be a welcoming experience** by providing users of the place a sense of arrival when entering the site. Create a sense of arrival by providing Acknowledgement of Country signage at the entry point.

**Explore the possibility of creating a cultural gathering space.** This could be a rest area, a place to eat, relax and share a meal, or other type of space that people can use at all times of the day.



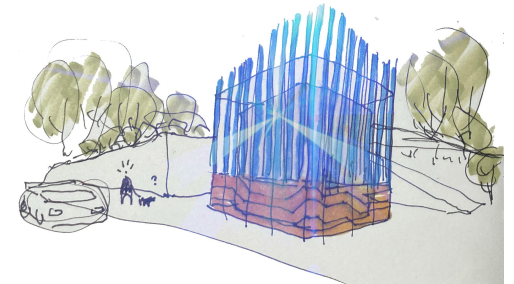
**Create an interesting mural** on a building wall that references Wallumattagal Country.

Providing a landmark for commuters to use in wayfinding, while enhancing the identity of Country and the depot.



**Hide the service areas:** Public facing infrastructure, like offices and service areas, can enhance the built environment with contemporary Aboriginal design using old designs and patterns distinct to this Country, but in new materials and ways.

The diagram here shows how Aboriginal artist Shane Smithers work is used as an example of a spatial interpretation of his art onto an otherwise boring service area.



## 2. Building Identity

The building envelope can be activated with patterns and design that enhance the sense of place and identity of Country.

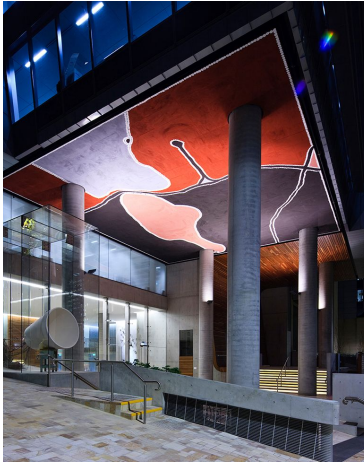
Colours, patterns and motifs can be included to express themes emerging from engagement with Aboriginal consultants.



## 2. Building Identity- internal



**Burwood Brickwoods** soffit art by Wurundjeri artist Mandy Nicholson



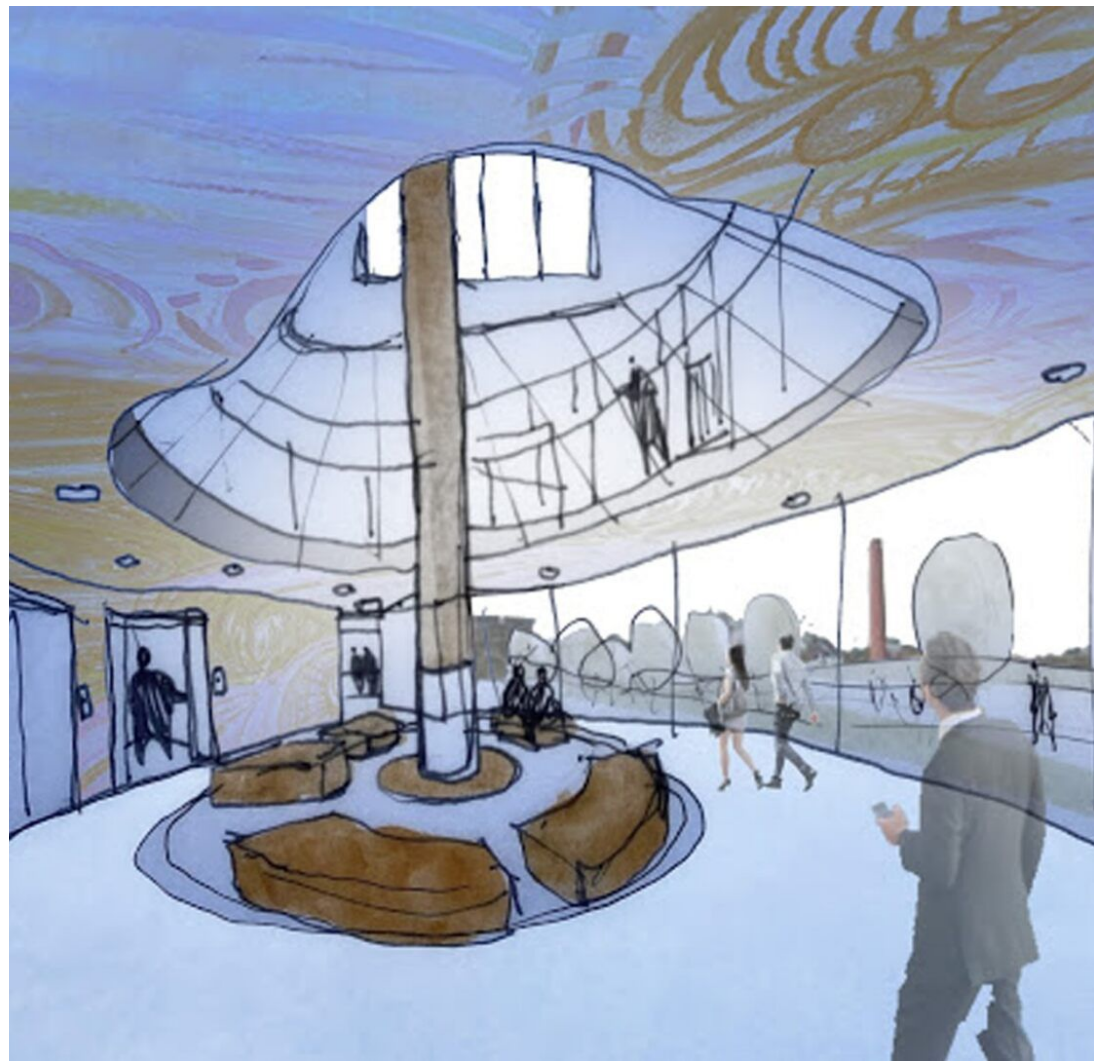
**Coca Cola Place, Nth Syd** has an amazing soffit art piece that, with the generous triple space height, provides an affective (in that it affects those who see it) example of a building and Aboriginal art integration.



### 3. Gathering spaces- internal

**Create a culturally inspired gathering area** inside the building providing occupants with a meeting place, rest area and orientation point.

(Following page) **Outdoor gathering areas can be designed to capture views of Country**, and provide access to Sky Country during the day or night. Consideration of materials, landscaping elements and creating spaces that can be activated with culture and gatherings provide an opportunity to celebrate First Nations culture.



### 3. Gathering spaces - external

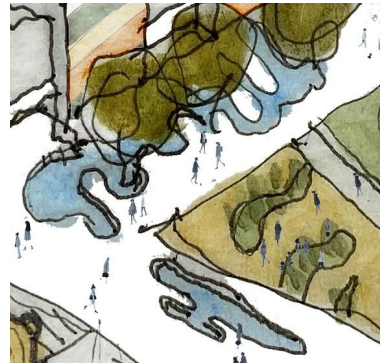
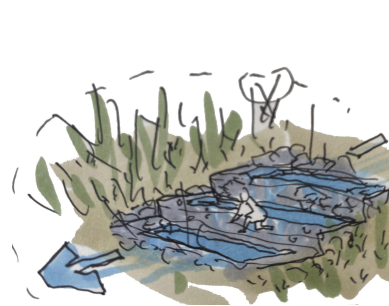
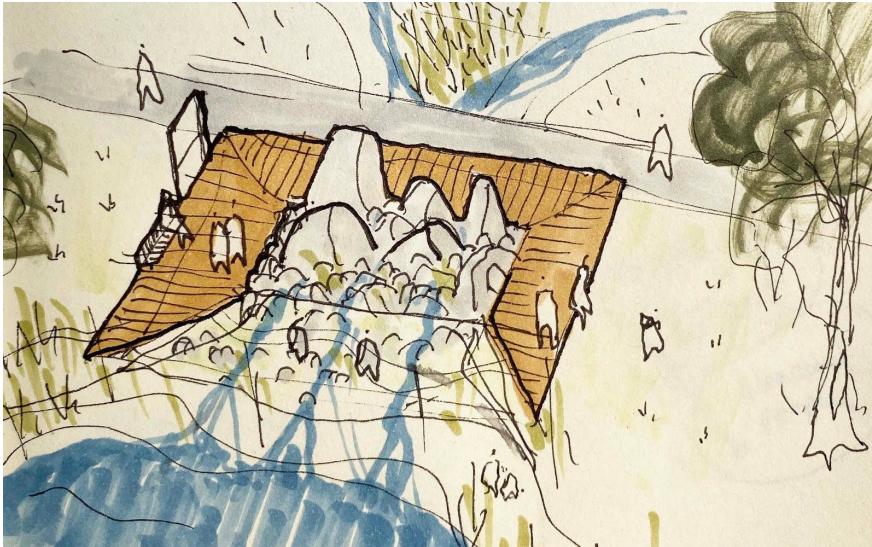
Outdoor gathering areas can be designed to capture views of **Country**, and provide access to Sky Country during the day or night. Consideration of materials, landscaping elements and creating spaces that can be activated with culture and gatherings provide an opportunity to celebrate First Nations culture.



## 4. Care for Water

**Allocate space for water**, consider how stormwater can be cared for using WSUD, natural filtration, sponge areas, detention basins and rain gardens.

Create a water feature for gathering and education about the waterways.



## 5. Landscape

Creation of a variety of spaces in the landscape to facilitate recreation, rest, and appreciation of Country.

Use plants that belong here to reinforce the identity of Country.

Rooftop gardens provide views and repose. Access to bush tucker foods creates connection with place.



South Eveleigh Native Rooftop Farm by Yerrabingin



## 5. Landscape

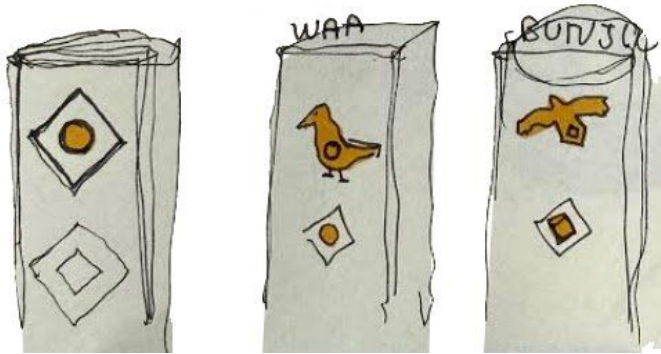
**The creation of dwell spots that facilitate education and appreciation of cultural practices** such as weaving and culturally significant plants.

Activating areas within the park with a cultural layer can provide opportunities for visitors and occupants to learn, engage and appreciate traditional and contemporary First Nations culture.



## 6. Ground Plane / Wayfinding

**Art, patterns, cultural mapping and signage** can activate the ground plane providing users with useful wayfinding devices.

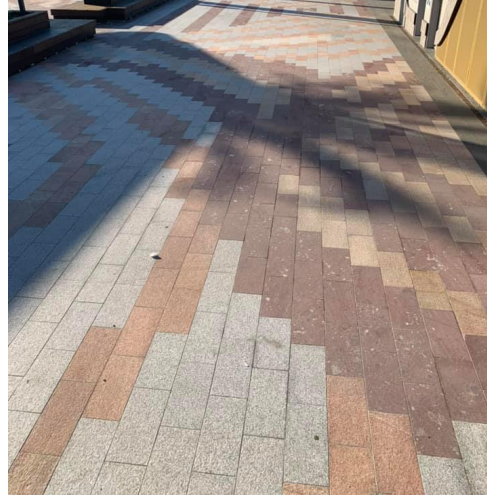


## 7. Material use

### Preference locally sourced recycled / repurposed materials.

Increase permeability on the ground plane through material use such as crushed sandstone, permeable paving.

Materials from Country can contain colours of place- eg. colours of the Wianamatta and Sandstone geology.



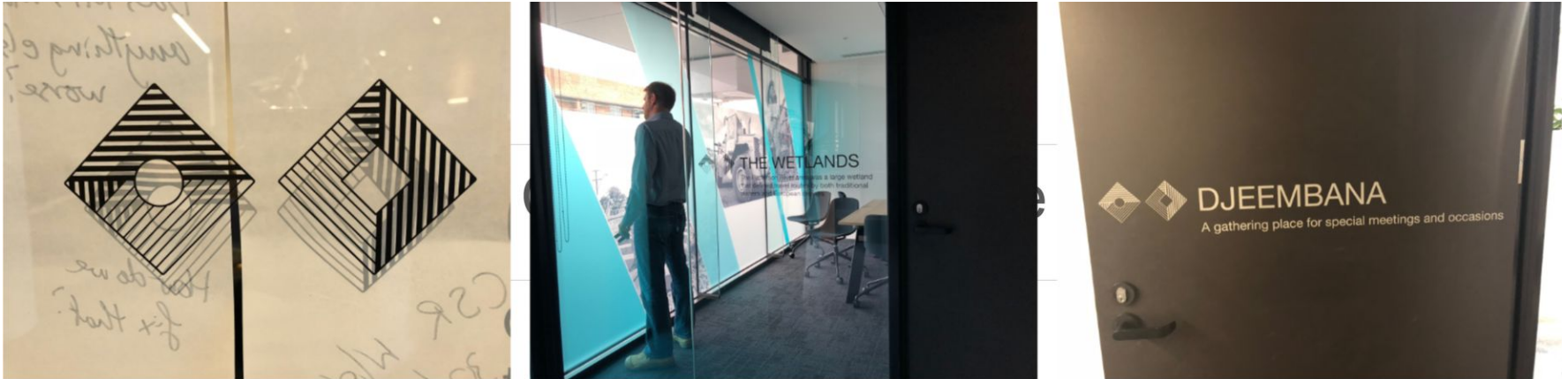
## 7. Materials and precedents



## 8. Language

**Language** can be used to name rooms, places, spaces, object etc. it can tell a story and educate people by stealth.

Example below of Mentone project office for SPA, LXR of Bunurong cultural patterns and language



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