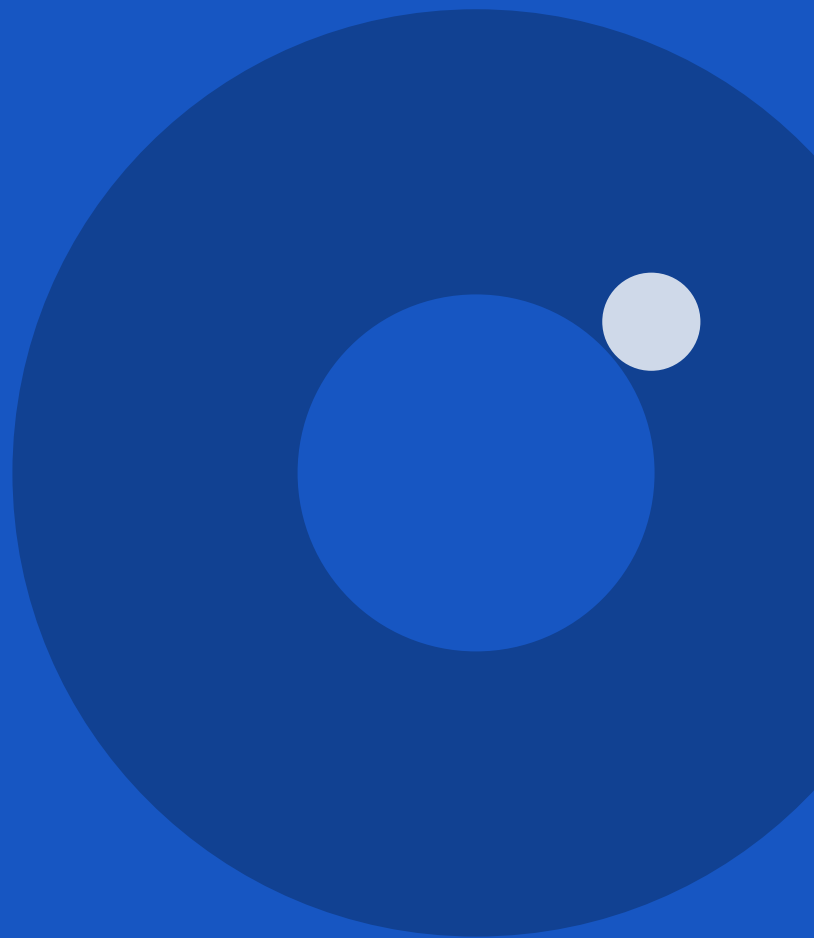


TELOPEA

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY STRATEGY

TELOPEA
21.06.2021
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THE
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FRASERS
PROPERTY



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CONTEXT AND FRAMEWORK

For Connecting with Country

Why Connecting with Country

GA NSW’s “Connecting with Country DRAFT Framework” (Connecting with Country) is an invitation to the property industry to rethink, reimagine and reshape its practice. It’s a call to developers, architects and built environment professionals to take seriously the call by Aboriginal communities to embrace the possibilities for design innovation by putting Country at the forefront of design thinking.

Considering Country need not be mysterious or faced with trepidation. It requires a genuine willingness to listen thoughtfully and respectfully and to embrace complexity and community, rather than simplification and a business-as-usual process. The Connecting with Country design principles and spatial opportunities offered at the Telopea Urban Renewal Precinct are as plentiful as the design team and client aspire and allow them to be. In developing our response to the Telopea Masterplan and Connecting with Country, The Fulcrum Agency (tFA) has identified several preliminary key design principles, a number of spatial opportunities, and importantly a process of discovery and knowledge sharing with Aboriginal people as the project unfolds beyond this point.

We acknowledge that, to date, the sensing of Country at Telopea and the imagination that genuine consideration of this Country can generate has not yet been fully explored by the project team. Like society at large, the design and built environment professions are (belatedly) realising the opportunities of genuine and authentic exchange and the positive benefits that healthy Country and connected inclusive communities with Aboriginal voices being heard can bring to practice and projects. The Connecting with Country Framework challenges built-environment professionals to embed genuine Aboriginal influence and agency into the design process, so that the aspirations described in Connecting with Country are considered not merely as a ‘value add’, but as the very foundation upon which Frasers’ process of delivering capital works will rest.

Context

There is growing momentum for recognition of the value of Aboriginal knowledge in the design, development, activation and ongoing care of our built environment and landscapes. In 2013 the NSW Government released the OCHRE plan¹ which sought to grow capacity within Aboriginal communities and organisations, creating opportunities for economic empowerment and to teach Aboriginal languages and culture to strengthen pride and identity. It also supports the Local Decision Making framework between Aboriginal Communities and NSW government funding of projects.

In 2018, the Discussion Paper, “Designing with Country”² was released which outlined a proposed framework for applying the design aspects of Connecting with Country³ and sought feedback from a range of stakeholders. Following community and industry engagement the Government Architect NSW released the Connecting with Country DRAFT Framework as part of the NSW Governments “Better Placed” Policy suite.

Most recently in June 2020 the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment released “Our Place on Country”⁴ outlining a strategy for enabling Aboriginal people and communities to have greater choice, access and control over water, housing, and resources and for growing NSW’s Aboriginal economy. These resources (and several more in development across a range of agencies in NSW) provide useful background information on the value of enabling Aboriginal people and communities to provide deep insight into place and space across New South Wales.

“Country is living, constantly changing, and evolving. Many different ecosystems exist across different realms of Country including both living and non-living elements. Country has purpose, operating at multiple scales from the cosmic to the molecular and everything in between.”

“What is Country – GA NSW, Connecting with Country DRAFT Framework

1 OCHRE Plan - [LINK](#)

2 Designing with Country - [LINK](#)

3 Connecting with Country - [LINK](#)

4 Our Place on Country - [LINK](#)



Engagement as the Primary Consideration

While the Fulcrum Agency (tFA) have reviewed the Telopea Masterplan to find design opportunities that meet the Connecting with Country principles, it must be stressed, that above all else, tFA recommend meaningful, genuine, and ongoing engagement with the appropriate Aboriginal stakeholders for the Telopea site.

In recognising the design decisions that have already been resolved by the Frasers team, while still looking for remaining areas of input within the project, tFA include an Opportunity Plan that clearly identifies remaining areas of the project that would benefit from an open approach to Connecting with Country. This Opportunity Plan considers all governance, strategic and design opportunities. However, it must be stressed that the opportunities highlighted should be considered discussion points that begin a conversation about the project, it is not intended as a checklist of items that can be inserted into the project to meet Connecting with Country obligations. The ultimate outcomes of meeting the Connecting with Country principles should be a result of genuine collaboration between Frasers, its project team and relevant Aboriginal stakeholders to explore the project’s potential.

To begin consultation with appropriate Aboriginal stakeholders Urbis has compiled Registered Aboriginal Parties. It is tFA’s recommendation that Frasers, or its appropriate design team, contact the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council as a first point of consideration.

Fees for Service

In line with Connecting with Country guidance and best practice engagement, tFA recommend that registered parties should be remunerated for their inputs, guidance, and advice. This may be in the form of a flat rate meeting fee, or an hourly rate to allow for follow-up, feedback and/or review. Some of these parties will have their own schedule of rates. An alternative approach may be ‘in-kind’ remuneration of some form. Whichever form payment takes it should be agreeable to all parties, and offered up front as part of the invitation. It is important to remember that many of the Registered Aboriginal Parties are themselves professional Aboriginal cultural heritage consultants, with ABN’s, insurances and other business credentials. Many make either all or most of their income from providing their cultural heritage services, and their advice should be treated with the same consideration as any technical consultant.

Ongoing Engagement

The Fulcrum Agency recommend an agreement between Frasers and appropriate Aboriginal stakeholders as to the ongoing engagement through the project. Such an agreement should establish frequency of meetings, engagement through various project phases and how ongoing feedback and advice will be sought. This goes beyond requirements for meeting relevant approval pathways and presents an opportunity for Frasers to establish and develop long term relationships with key Aboriginal stakeholders in the region. Sharing the tangible and intangible benefits of development is one of the key foundations of Connecting With Country.

Informed advice

All engagement sessions with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal groups should ensure that Aboriginal representatives are equipped with sufficient and relevant information to be able to make informed decisions on the project. Refer to *Meeting Cycle* for further information.

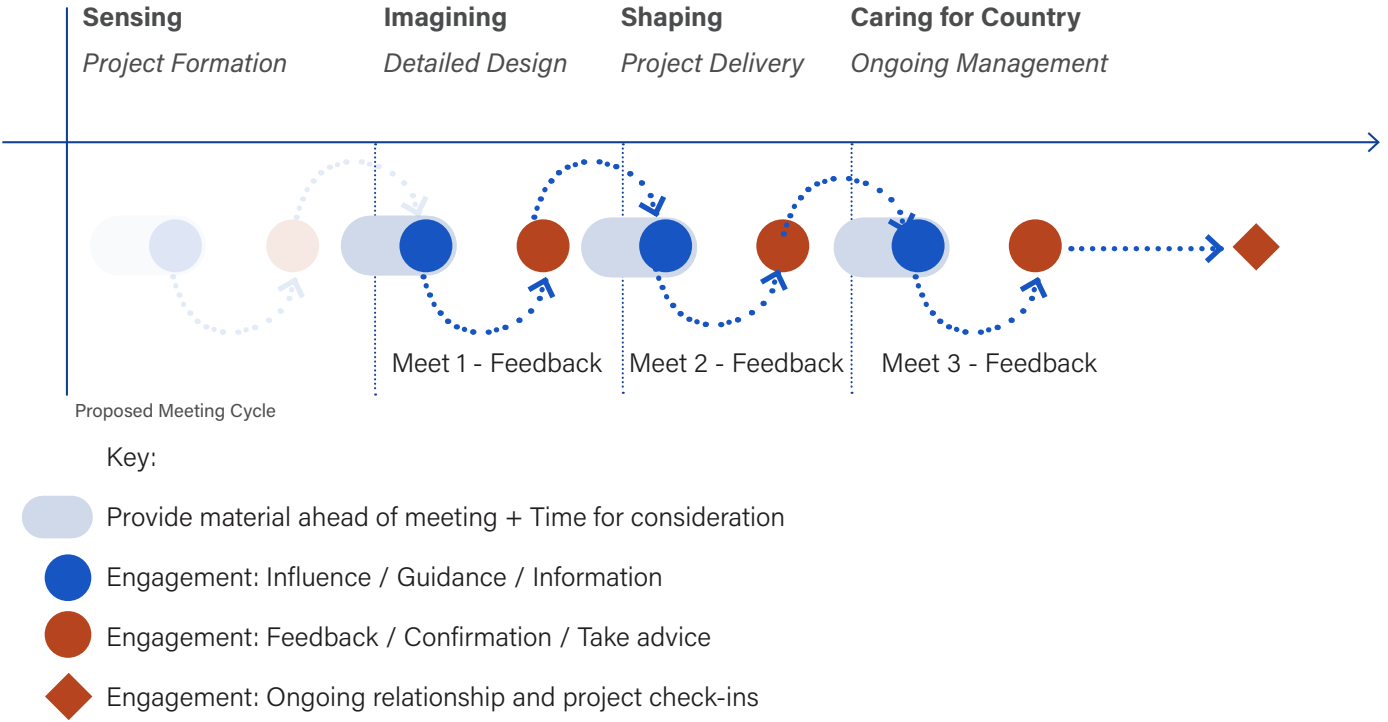
Intellectual Property

Further, these interactions should be an exchange of knowledge and respect Aboriginal intellectual property. Refer to these documents 1 2

Meeting Cycle

Meetings and design sessions should be ongoing throughout the project. Each project phase (project formation or ‘sensing Country’, detailed design or ‘imagining’, project delivery or ‘shaping’, ongoing management or ‘caring for Country’) should include a meeting cycle that provides information to and seeks guidance from Aboriginal stakeholders. Follow up meetings should seek feedback from Aboriginal stakeholders and confirm decisions. This should be undertaken before moving on to the next project phase.

The diagram on page nine demonstrates how this process might work. Note that due to the advanced stage of the project, additional meetings during the Imagining phase are recommended to enhance the relevance of engagement.



Reconciliation Action Plan

Frasers' ongoing commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is outlined in its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)¹. Frasers is working towards Reconciliation through the framework of Relationships, Respect and Opportunities. There are significant areas of overlap between Frasers' RAP and the Connecting with Country Framework. tFA recommend that Frasers' project teams work closely with its Reconciliation Working Group to explore these areas of overlap. Such areas include:

- Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning
- Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes
- Demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.

The following recommendations elaborate on the opportunities to integrate Fraser's existing RAP in its response to the Connecting with Country framework.

Appoint Cultural Advisor/s to the Frasers Executive Committee (or other relevant Committee)

To ensure that Aboriginal voices are considered in the design and development of Frasers' projects, tFA recommends Frasers appoint an Aboriginal Cultural Advisor/s to relevant Committees that act at a strategic level in the company.

Develop Protocols for Aboriginal Engagement & Working on Country

So that project team members can more fully and confidently engage with Aboriginal communities tFA recommends Frasers develop protocols for Aboriginal engagement and working on Country that ensure respectful interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the team that are based in cultural knowledge and follow appropriate cultural protocols. The City of Sydney Protocols² cover a range of relevant considerations, such as intellectual property, fees for service and respect for Traditional customs.

Maintain a Library of Key Reference Documents

A reference document, or file of reference that directs Frasers employees and project team consultants to relevant recommended reading and references on Aboriginal cultural, design and development considerations would provide a strong grounding in many of the ideas and issues that are highlighted within this report. Such references might include:

Government Publications

- Connecting with Country (Government Architect NSW, 2020) [LINK](#)
- Designing with Country Discussion Paper (Government Architect NSW, 2020) [LINK](#)
- Our Place on Country (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2013) [LINK](#)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols (City of Sydney, 2012) [LINK](#)
- OCHRE Plan. Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment (NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal affairs, 2013) [LINK](#)

Culture and Aboriginal Knowledge Reference

- Arts Law Information Sheet - [LINK](#)
- Protocols for First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Policy - [LINK](#)
- Supply Nation Database. [LINK](#)
- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSWICC) Aboriginal Business Portal. [LINK](#)

Frasers Property

- Frasers Property Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan Jan. 2021 - Dec. 2022

1 Frasers Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (Jan. 2021 - Dec. 2022)
2 City of Sydney Protocols [LINK](#)



Strategies

The following commentary and recommendations identify opportunities for Telopea at the strategic level. They are not direct design considerations, they are better thought of as principles for the project to adhere to.

Commit to Best Practice Aboriginal Community Engagement

The Connecting with Country framework outlines seven principles for best practice engagement. The principles (refer to Connecting with Country Framework) outline key areas of consideration such as respecting Aboriginal cultural and intellectual property, prioritizing Aboriginal peoples’ cultural protocols and supporting the continuing cultural practice of land management. They also suggest principles for action and ask project teams to consider and commit to how they will meet these principles. tFA recommends that project teams on all Frasers’ developments adopt these principles to commit to best practice Aboriginal community engagement.

Recommendations

- Liaise with Traditional custodians identified by Urbis in the Aboriginal heritage process and connect them with the project design team to identify opportunities that remain in the project for genuine consultation and engagement, given the advanced stage of design for this project
- Commit to adhering to Consent, Do No Harm and First Language priority principles ¹
- Consult with Traditional Custodians to establish clear aims, performance criteria and metrics for the health and wellbeing of Country
- Adhere to best practice Aboriginal engagement protocols, such as the City of Sydney Protocols

Cater to Aboriginal people across the Socio-Economic Spectrum

In providing economic opportunities for Aboriginal people, Frasers should consider the full breadth of the socio-economic spectrum. Frasers should continue to support low income and unemployed Aboriginal Australians through initiatives such as Communities Plus. They should also seek to provide opportunities for Aboriginal owned and operated enterprises and cultural groups. This could be in the form of reduced rental agreements, peppercorn leases and positive targets for Aboriginal training and employment in construction and allied trades. Further, MOUs and agreements between Aboriginal community organisations and commercial building operators should be explored to improve access to buildings and associated public realms.

Recommendations

- Look for opportunities for Aboriginal community groups and enterprises to receive reduced leases, hiring fees etc for public and retail/commercial/public spaces
- Develop relationships with housing providers Hume to understand tenant need in development of future housing typologies, i.e. culturally appropriate housing
- Ensure procurement policies adhere to the principles outlined in the NSW Aboriginal Procurement Policy and the Indigenous Procurement Policy and to consider the representation of Aboriginal businesses across a range of occupations
- Commission Aboriginal artists for Public art
- Engage local Aboriginal cultural experts in determining use of language and naming in signage and interpretive material
- Implement landscape maintenance contracts with Aboriginal businesses
- Procure contractors in reference to industry standard Aboriginal consultant and suppliers databases, such as Supply Nation and NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSWICC) Aboriginal Business Portal

Explore Opportunities for Cultural Practice

Aboriginal cultural identity and knowledge has been developed over millennia and is practiced and lived daily. Aboriginal culture includes art, sport, music and dance – both traditional and contemporary to encompass a wide range of activities and practices.

Walking Country, Smoking Ceremonies, Welcome to (and Acknowledgement of) Country, Yarning and Dreaming are just a few of these important cultural practices. Providing space for, and where appropriate, giving witness to cultural practice allows these practices to maintain and strengthen their importance to Aboriginal people, and offers an entry point for dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

All Frasers’ developments will present spatial opportunities, if considered early enough, for cultural practice to thrive within the public realm. Engagement with recognised knowledge-holders will determine the appropriate cultural responses.

Recommendations

- Identify project opportunities for ongoing practice. Eg Neighborhood Park,the Gardens, Community Courtyard and Plaza Square with Fire Pits, Welcome to Country, Yarning Circles, dance grounds etc
- Actively encourage Aboriginal community participation in curation of the childcare garden (e.g. plants for food, medicine and craft)
- Mandate Aboriginal participation in brief development for the Community Centre and its facilitation of cultural safety and practice
- Explore and establish educational links between the proposed childcare and Connecting with Country and monitoring health of Country, etc

1 Indigenous Knowledge: Issues for Protection and Management. Australian Government, IP Australia, 2017. P20-24 [LINK](#)



Pre-contact History

The Burramattagal people of the Dharug Nation have occupied Country around Parramatta River for over 60,000 years. The name Burramattagal is thought to have come from the Dharug word for 'place where the eels lie down to breed'. Eels made up part of the traditional Burramattagal diet, along with other fish and local game and flora. To navigate the rivers, the Burramattagal fashioned stable, bark canoes often held a central small fire, built on a mound of soil, to cook up their fresh catch. (1)

Mounting evidence from Bruce Pascoe (*Dark Emu*) and Bill Gammage (*The Biggest Estate on Earth*) indicates that pre-colonial and early colonial Indigenous Australians were active in the management and development of their Country and its resources. Pascoe and Gammage argue that Fish traps, sophisticated fire management, seed production, trade and the construction of shelters were commonplace activities in pre-contact Australia. Burrmattagal would have likely engaged in much of this activity and trade with neighbouring clans was common. 'Fire-stick farming', employed to burn vegetation to facilitate hunting and to change the composition of plant and animal species in the area, was also practiced by the Burramattagal people. (1)

Soon after colonization in 1788, Parramatta was developed as a farming settlement. This led to the immediate and tragic displacement of the Burramattagal people and their neighboring clans. Local Aboriginal groups organized a resistance against the colonists, most prominently, local warrior and Bidjigal man, Pemmulwuy. (1)



- 1. Project Site
- 2. Galaringi Reserve
- 3. Vineyard Creek Reserve
- 3. Old Government House
- 4. Domain Creek
- 5. Third Settlement Reserve, Toongabbie
- 6. Creek System (Darling Mills, Blue Gum, Saw Mill)
- 7. Balaka Falls
- 8. Parramatta River

Galaringi and Vineyard Creek Reserves form part of the City of Parramatta Wildlife Protection Areas. They are home to a diverse range of native animals species such as fairy wrens, honeyeaters, tree frogs, sugar gliders, water dragons, skinks and owls.

Burramatta artefacts can be found at **Old Government House**, and the mortar is made of shell grit from Middens.

Third Settlement Reserve, Toongabbie is the site of the 1797 Battle of Parramatta when Aboriginal resistance leader Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal man, led an attack if 100 men on Toongabbie, challenging the garrison of redcoats to battle. Pemulwuy was shot seven times by redcoats after he threw a spear at a soldier.

A section of **Domain Creek** has been rehabilitated to pre-contact conditions by the Western Sydney Aboriginal Landcare Group - in collaboration with the Parramatta Park Trust.



Opportunities Plan

- i Immediate Opportunity (1-2 years)
- s Short Term Opportunity (2-5 years)
- l Long Term Opportunity (5-10 years)

s Tell stories of flora and fauna

i Investigate ways to incorporate walking on Country in to the design of landscape 'rooms'. For example ground material and landscaping. Seek to reflect Burramattagal understanding of seasons

i Welcome and/or acknowledgement of country at eateries

s Seek ways of incorporating Aboriginal narratives and artwork in to food court

i Seek ways of incorporating Aboriginal narratives and understanding of Country, seasons into landscape design

l Mandate Aboriginal participation in brief development for the community buildings (Community Centre, Library) and its facilitation of cultural safety and practice.

l Sign landscape maintenance contracts with Aboriginal businesses

i Include Aboriginal stakeholders in species selection and landscape management to contribute to health and wellbeing of Country (typical)

s Explore and establish educational links between the proposed childcare and Connecting with Country

l Actively encourage Aboriginal community participation in curation of the school garden (e.g. plants for food, medicine and craft). (Various Locations)

Image courtesy of Bates Smart / Hassell



i Leverage relationships with housing providers Hume to understand tenant need in development of future housing typologies, i.e. culturally appropriate housing.

l Look for opportunities for Aboriginal community groups and enterprises to receive reduced leases, hiring fees etc for public and retail/commercial spaces.(Various Locations)

s Commission Aboriginal artists for Public art. (Various Locations)

Geological time opportunities

s Investigate ways to incorporate Aboriginal narratives that intersect with geological time that builds in to the site section. Considerations might include material, design of steps and retaining, water features

s Augment and contribute to Local Government initiatives or develop Country specific studies of biodiversity, such as auditing, surveying and trap and trace programs

l Consult with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal Stakeholders to establish clear aims, performance criteria and metrics for the health and wellbeing of Country. Such aims might consider vegetation, biodiversity and riparian corridors and water health.

Opportunities Plan

Design Opportunities

Project specific comments offered by tFA here are based on the document *013595_RP_210216_TelopeaConceptPlan_Rev7*

While significant scope still exists within the Governance and Process of Telopea to engage fully with Traditional Custodians, opportunities to embed Traditional Custodian input, influence and guidance in the current built form design response are limited. The overall master-planning, built form design and public realm had largely been developed prior to tFA's review, or the release of the Connecting with Country DRAFT Framework. As such tFA has focused this review on aspects of the design that have not yet been fully resolved and are likely to still yield fruitful discussions with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal community groups. These areas are primarily within the public domain and include landscaping (hard and soft), land management, public art, elevational composition, and the broader public domain narrative.

Although tfA has reviewed the Telopea project against the Connecting with Country Framework and identified several areas that might form the focus of the design team's Aboriginal engagement, tFA does not speak for Traditional Custodians or Aboriginal stakeholders. It must be stressed that the following recommendations should be seen as discussion starters and entry points into the project. As a result of best practice consultation and design sessions many of these ideas may be rejected, and new ideas are likely to emerge. However, as significant aspects of the project design are already resolved, the following offer opportunities for Aboriginal narratives, artwork and culture to be foregrounded within the public domain of the Telopea project.

Landscape Narratives

The relevant Design Reports¹ successfully outline the landscape design approach, leveraging pre-contact forest and historical agricultural development of the landscape into a narrative of its new role in the public domain. The project could benefit from overlaying a consideration of pre and post contact Aboriginal history and culture over the site. This could be incorporated to give further depth to the public domain narrative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seek Aboriginal knowledge of land management practices in the remediation of riparian area around Shrimptons Creek and species selection
- Talk with Aboriginal knowledge-holders to understand historical narratives of site to overlay on landscape plan. This narrative could inform species selection, hardscape materials, wayfinding and public art
- Seek intersections of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal narratives to inform landscape

Caring for Country

Large scale developments offer great opportunities for embedding longer-term approaches to care and maintenance of landscape and the public realm. These moments can be shared and facilitated by local Aboriginal people, providing opportunities to fulfill cultural responsibilities to Country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Engage Aboriginal community groups for the cultivation and maintenance of community gardens
- Engage Aboriginal contractors for maintenance of publicly accessible private open spaces
- Seek Aboriginal stakeholder input in to how to manage cultural practice spaces. See *"Recommendations for Foreground Contemporary Aboriginal Culture in Public Spaces"* on this page
- Look for opportunities to use local materials and colour palettes in buildings and hard landscaping

Foreground Contemporary Aboriginal Culture in Public Spaces

There are many aspects of contemporary Aboriginal Culture that Traditional Custodians and other Aboriginal Stakeholders might want to foreground within the project. These might be quiet spaces for Yarning, facilities that promote walking Country or natural auditoriums for dance, music, and official ceremonies, such as Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies. There are still many opportunities within the design of the public domain that could incorporate these facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement strategies and design features that present Aboriginal culture as a living, thriving culture with enduring links to its past
- Engage with Traditional Custodians to understand how contemporary and traditional culture can be expressed in the public spaces at Telopea. This could include fire pits, Yarning Circles, dance grounds, Welcome to Country and/or Smoking Ceremony facilities. The small scale and refelective design intent of The Gardens could be suitable locations
- Explore opportunities for a dance circle or small auditorium and stage might be beneficial to the project. The active and vibrant intent of the Plaza Square, surrounded by retail and community buildings might be leveraged for small cultural events

1. Stage 1 SSDA Design Report (7)



Telopea Design Considerations

Aboriginal Art

Aboriginal art offers an entry point into an engagement with and understanding of Aboriginal culture and knowledge. Art is a readily accessible form of expression and understanding and is commonplace in many contemporary Australian contexts. While typically non-Aboriginal people are typically more familiar with the Western Desert dot painting style, Aboriginal art finds its expression in many forms and styles. These forms should be explored by engaging Aboriginal artists in the production of public art.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collaborate with Aboriginal artists and furniture makers to identify opportunities to incorporate art into landscape and the public realm
- Seek different forms of expression for different scales and contexts. Art at the Plaza Square, The Gardens, the Community Courtyard and various parks might find different expression based on their contexts
- Enact minimum percentages of aboriginal art procurement across the project. Engage with Aboriginal stakeholders to establish a minimum percentage
- Engage an Aboriginal art coordinator to provide an overall strategy to the procurement of Aboriginal art across the project
- Look for opportunities to embellish building facades with designs by Aboriginal artists

Wayfinding and Placenames

The incorporation of Aboriginal placenames and Dharug words into the space may offer a reminder to residents and visitors of the enduring relationship between site and Country. It will also be seen as a sign of respect, acknowledgement, and acceptance of the Traditional Custodians of this land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Facilitate discussions with Traditional Custodians to foreground Dharug words and narratives that can be incorporated into placenames for the Telopea project
- Seek opportunities for dual-naming of places and spaces within the Telopea development
- Be particularly sensitive to Aboriginal engagement protocols and Aboriginal intellectual property

Economic Opportunities

A range of income generating possibilities present themselves within the spatial responses identified above. These range from the commissioning of artists, engagement of specialist knowledge-holders, Aboriginal businesses, construction jobs and ongoing maintenance and management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Public art commissions for Aboriginal artists
- Engage local Aboriginal knowledge-holders in determining use of language and naming in signage and interpretive material
- Engage Aboriginal owned businesses for Landscape maintenance contracts
- Leverage relationships with the housing providers (Hume at Telopea) to understand tenant need in development of future housing typologies, i.e. culturally appropriate housing
- Consider the entirety of the socio-economic spectrum
- Commit to fair fees for service in the engagement of Aboriginal consultants and community representatives

Telopea Design Considerations



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