

TIKA

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

EQ

APPIN (PART) PRECINCT – RELEASE AREAS 1, 3 & 4 (PRIMARY FOCUS)
PREPARED FOR WALKER CORPORATION
FEBRUARY 2026

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



We acknowledge the Dharawal and Gundungurra Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways and ridgelines that form the Appin (Part) Precinct. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise the enduring cultural authority, knowledge systems and custodianship that continue to guide care for Country.

Country is not a backdrop to development. It is a living system of relationships between land, water, sky, plants, animals, people, story, and memory. Country holds Law and responsibility. This report seeks to honour those relationships through considered planning, design, and long-term stewardship.

Throughout this report, the terms *Dharawal* and *Tharawal* may be used interchangeably to reflect contemporary spelling variations adopted by different families, organisations, and language custodians. These variations acknowledge the living nature of language and the diversity of representation across Country. No hierarchy or distinction is intended through the use of either spelling; both recognise the enduring cultural authority and custodianship of the Traditional Owners connected to this landscape.



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CONTEXT & FOUNDATIONS



01

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INTRODUCTION



The Appin (Part) Precinct sits on Dharawal and Gundungurra Country within the Greater Macarthur Growth Area. The landscape is defined by ridgelines, shale plains, sandstone-derived transitions, chain-of-pond systems, and remnant woodland corridors that have supported cultural practice, movement, and habitation for countless generations. These ecological and cultural systems pre-date contemporary settlement and continue to shape the character and responsibilities of place.

Release Areas 1, 3 and 4 represent early phases of delivery within the broader precinct. The spatial logic, public domain interfaces, playspaces, water corridors and gathering areas established within these stages will influence the long-term identity of the community. Decisions made at this point will determine how future neighbourhoods understand water, habitat, movement, and shared responsibility.

This report aligns with the NSW Government Architect's Connecting with Country Framework and is informed by the Cultural Values Assessment Report (CVAR) as the primary cultural landscape document. Together, these frameworks emphasise that Country must inform spatial planning, ecological repair, material selection, and public life. The intent is not to overlay narrative onto completed design, but to embed cultural guidance within the structure of place-making itself.

Accordingly, this document:

- Demonstrates compliance with Development Application (DA) engagement requirements.
- Translates CVAR findings into design principles and spatial direction.
- Provides narrative guidance for landscape, playspaces and water infrastructure.
- Establishes a framework for future stages beyond Release Areas 1, 3 and 4.
- Reinforces the ongoing commitment to custodial engagement and ecological care.

The Connecting with Country process undertaken for Appin recognises that koala corridors, riparian systems, endemic planting, and ridgeline sensitivities are not simply environmental constraints, they are structuring elements of identity. Through this lens, public space becomes an opportunity for learning, stewardship, reconciliation, and long-term ecological regeneration.

PURPOSE



The purpose of this report is to articulate how the Connecting with Country process has informed the planning and design of the Appin (Part) Precinct, with particular focus on Release Areas 1, 3 and 4. Through sustained engagement with Dharawal and Gundungurra Knowledge Holders, the project team has sought to ensure that cultural authority shapes spatial outcomes from the outset rather than retrospectively.

This report:

- Provides a transparent record of engagement undertaken to support DA requirements.
- Translates cultural values identified in the CVAR into spatial, ecological, and public domain responses.
- Establishes a narrative framework guiding detailed design refinement.
- Embeds a foundation for continued consultation, governance, and custodial oversight.

The document is narrative-led rather than technically prescriptive. It operates alongside statutory environmental, heritage and biodiversity documentation, ensuring cultural values meaningfully inform, rather than duplicate, technical assessment.



SCOPE



This report applies to:

- The broader Appin (Part) Precinct.
- Release Areas 1, 3 and 4.
- Public domain, open space, playspaces and water corridors.
- Ridgeline and lookout areas.
- Village Green and neighbourhood centre interfaces.

It addresses:

- Cultural landscape narrative translation.
- Ecological systems and habitat connectivity.
- Playspace and educational overlays.
- Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) integration.
- Naming and interpretive opportunities.
- Community participation in habitat creation and stewardship.

LIMITATIONS

This report reflects a staged engagement process. It provides a structured framework to guide planning and design but does not represent a finalised cultural position.

Ongoing consultation will continue to refine narrative, naming and interpretive elements through later stages.

Limitations include:

- Some basin and corridor areas have not undergone detailed ecological testing.
- Biodiversity mapping may evolve at detailed design stage.
- Naming outcomes remain subject to language consultation.
- Cultural narratives are presented at a higher level.

The document therefore represents a living framework rather than a fixed endpoint.

ENGAGEMENT



The Connecting with Country process was undertaken through respectful, place-based engagement guided by Aboriginal Knowledge Holders with enduring cultural authority. The project team adopted a collaborative role, prioritising listening, walking Country and iterative translation of cultural insight into spatial outcomes.

ENGAGEMENT & CULTURAL INPUT

This Connecting with Country report process builds upon the extensive consultation and research previously undertaken to inform the Cultural Values Assessment Report (CVAR) and broader Connecting with Country investigations for the Appin (Part) Precinct. This earlier body of work established a foundational understanding of cultural landscape values, movement corridors and areas of sensitivity that continue to guide design refinement.

An initial Walk on Country was undertaken on 31 October 2024 with key members of the First Nations Reference Group (FNRG), including [REDACTED]. This on-site engagement provided an opportunity to ground discussions in lived landscape experience, walking ridgelines, basin systems and identified habitat corridors. A subsequent Walk on Country was undertaken with FNRG members and broader key First Nations community members, including [REDACTED], enabling deeper cultural dialogue regarding landform, water systems, and custodial responsibility.

Previous Walks on Country informing the broader Connecting with Country process also included [REDACTED], both representing the Gujaga Foundation, contributing additional cultural perspective and continuity across stages of engagement.



METHODOLOGY



Engagement has also included facilitated workshops, thematic discussions and design playback sessions that enabled shared exploration of koala corridors, public domain interfaces, and ridgeline sensitivity. In addition, one-on-one sessions have been conducted with [REDACTED] to allow more focused cultural input and clarification of key narrative and ecological themes.

Cultural insights arising from these engagements have informed:

- Spatial sequencing between ridge and creek.
- Koala corridor reinforcement and canopy continuity.
- Basin-edge habitat treatment and water education.
- Material selection and avoidance of culturally inappropriate motifs.

Dialogue has been maintained with the First Nations Reference Group (FNRG) and relevant planners to ensure transparency and accountability. Informing and engagement of broader key community Elders and Knowledge Holders will remain an ongoing commitment throughout the life of the project, extending into detailed design, implementation, and future stages.

RESEARCH & BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

The report draws from the CVAR as the primary cultural document and references the Biodiversity Assessment Report (BAR), Biodiversity Management Plan, Heritage Management Plan and Landscape Architecture Framework.

Mapping analysis supported understanding of habitat connectivity, riparian systems, and ridgeline sensitivity.

ICIP & CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

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RESPONSE TO PLACE



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HISTORY OF PLACE



The Appin landscape forms part of Dharawal and Gundungurra Country, situated within a broader cultural geography that connects coastal saltwater systems to inland plateaus and escarpments. Ridgelines, creeklines and chain-of-pond systems operate not only as ecological features, but as pathways of movement, teaching, and exchange. These landforms structured seasonal travel, resource gathering, ceremony and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

The chain-of-pond drainage systems characteristic of this landscape provided reliable freshwater, supported diverse plant and animal communities, and created sheltered gathering places. Ridgelines offered orientation, visibility, and connection across Country. The spatial logic of ridge-to-creek movement remains legible in the landform today and continues to inform contemporary planning decisions.

Colonial expansion into the Appin district in the early nineteenth century resulted in profound violence and dispossession, most notably the Appin Massacre of 1816. This event remains a significant and painful chapter in the history of the region. Acknowledging this history is essential to understanding the layered nature of place. Despite disruption, Dharawal and Gundungurra cultural connection has endured. Contemporary Knowledge Holders continue to exercise custodial responsibility, guide cultural education and advocate for care of Country.

Planning for Release Areas 1, 3 and 4 therefore occurs within a landscape of deep time, layered memory, and ongoing responsibility. Development presents both risk and opportunity: risk if ecological and cultural systems are fragmented, and opportunity if regeneration, acknowledgement, and stewardship are embedded from the outset.



A native family of New South Wales sitting down on an English settler's farm, by Augustus Earle c.1826

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS



The Appin (Part) Precinct lies at the interface of the Cumberland Plain and the Illawarra escarpment systems. Shale-based plains transition into sandstone-derived ridges and undulating topography, forming a mosaic of woodland, open forest, riparian corridors, and ephemeral basin systems.

GEOGRAPHICAL & GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

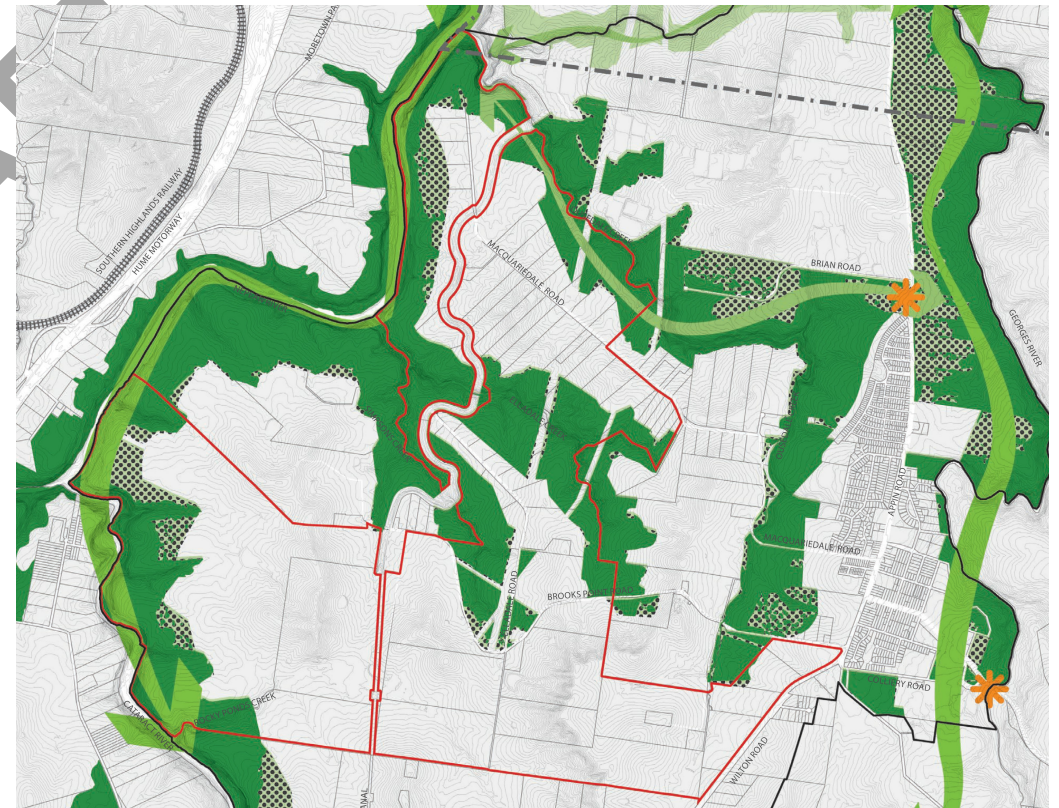
The shale–sandstone transition creates ecological diversity. Soil profiles shift from heavier clay-based substrates to freer-draining sandstone-derived soils. These variations influence vegetation structure, canopy height, understorey composition, and habitat availability. The chain-of-pond systems that traverse the precinct respond to these geological conditions, forming shallow basins and seasonal water bodies that expand and contract according to rainfall cycles.

KEY ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

The precinct supports or interfaces with:

- Cumberland Plain Woodland (Critically Endangered) - Characterised by Grey Box, Ironbark, and grassy understorey, now highly fragmented across Western Sydney.
- Shale Sandstone Transition Forest - Occurring where soil conditions shift, supporting high biodiversity and species overlap.
- Riparian Corridors and Seasonal Basins - Providing essential water sources, cooling functions and habitat for amphibians, invertebrates, and waterbirds.

- Koala Habitat and Movement Corridors - Identified within the Biodiversity Assessment Report and reinforced through CPCP mapping.



ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION & CONNECTIVITY



The ecological systems within the precinct operate relationally. Canopy continuity supports arboreal species movement, including koalas. Ground-layer diversity provides shelter and foraging opportunities for echidnas and small mammals. Riparian vegetation stabilises soils, filters runoff and creates microclimates. Basin systems act as both hydrological infrastructure and habitat nodes.

ECOLOGICAL PRIORITIES FOR DESIGN

Consultation and technical documentation reinforce the following priorities:

- Strengthening canopy connectivity along identified koala corridors.
- Retaining mature trees where feasible, balancing safety with habitat value.
- Protecting root systems and fallen timber as microhabitat.
- Staging works to minimise seasonal disturbance, particularly in sensitive areas.
- Designing pathways and lookouts with minimal cut-and-fill and permeable treatments.
- Integrating feral management and waste strategies to reduce impacts on native species.

Ecology should not be treated as a constraint, but as a structuring framework for spatial planning.



LOCAL FLORA



Situated within Dharawal and Gundungurra Country, the precinct contains remnant woodland, regenerating canopy, and riparian vegetation reflective of Cumberland Plain and shale–sandstone transition communities.

VEGETATION STRUCTURE

Vegetation ranges from open woodland on elevated ridges to denser riparian assemblages along creek lines and basin edges. Ground layers include native grasses, sedges and flowering shrubs that support pollinators and small fauna.

REPRESENTATIVE SPECIES

Species characteristic of the area include:

- *Eucalyptus moluccana* (Grey Box).
- *Eucalyptus fibrosa* (Broad-leaved Ironbark).
- *Allocasuarina littoralis* (Black She-oak).
- *Melaleuca decora* and *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbarks).
- *Lomandra longifolia* (Spiny-headed Mat-rush).
- *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass).
- *Dianella caerulea* and native sedges such as *Carex* and *Gahnia*.

ECOLOGICAL & CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

These plant communities:

- Provide essential habitat and food sources for birds, insects, and mammals.
- Contribute to soil stabilisation and water filtration.
- Form part of long-standing cultural knowledge systems relating to seasonal cycles, resource use, and ecological indicators (subject to ongoing consultation and cultural authority).

PLANTING STRATEGY DIRECTION

Landscape design prioritises:

- Biodiverse endemic planting reflective of local ecological communities.
- Avoidance of monocultures.
- Reinforcement of canopy species within mapped corridors.
- Integration of weaving-supportive and culturally significant species where appropriate and endorsed.
- Educational signage explaining relationships between plants, soil systems, cultural practices, and fauna.

Planting becomes both habitat infrastructure and interpretive layer.

LOCAL FAUNA



The precinct supports a diversity of terrestrial, arboreal, and aquatic fauna. Habitat value is linked to canopy continuity, ground-layer integrity and water quality.

MAMMALS

- Koala
- Echidna
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo
- Swamp Wallaby
- Grey-headed Flying Fox

BIRD LIFE

- Waterbirds including heron species and ibis.
- Woodland birds such as cockatoos, magpies, and currawongs
- Raptors migrating along escarpment corridors.

REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS & AQUATIC SPECIES

- Freshwater fish and long-finned eel.
- Frogs associated with basin systems.
- Reptiles inhabiting woodland and riparian edges.

ECOLOGICAL & CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

Consultation reinforced that species should be understood relationally rather than symbolically. The koala corridor provides a spatial organising framework. The heron signals water health. The echidna reflects the importance of undisturbed ground and root systems.

Design responses therefore prioritise:

- Canopy continuity and safe passage for arboreal fauna.
- Basin-edge habitat niches and vegetated banks.
- Retention of fallen timber and root balls where feasible.
- Waste management strategies to discourage opportunistic species from displacing native fauna.
- Household education initiatives supporting coexistence with wildlife.

DESIGN NARRATIVE



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OVERARCHING NARRATIVE OF PLACE



The overarching narrative positions water as origin and connector. The chain-of-pond systems are understood as both ecological infrastructure and cultural memory, shaping how landform, vegetation and movement have evolved over time. These drainage lines do more than manage stormwater; they reveal how Country breathes, expands, and contracts seasonally. In this way, water structures ecological processes, spatial sequencing, and community movement across the precinct.

Ridge-to-creek transitions provide a legible framework linking Ground, Water and Sky Country. Elevated ridgelines offer orientation and long views across the landscape, while lower basin areas collect, filter and slowly release water through vegetated systems. This vertical and horizontal layering establishes a clear spatial logic: movement begins on higher ground, descends through woodland, and converges at water. The design framework follows this existing order rather than imposing a new one.

Rather than treating open space as isolated parcels, the precinct is understood as an interconnected landscape system. Streets, parks, basins and playspaces are linked through ecological corridors and visual connections. Movement pathways respond to topography, tracing lines that echo natural drainage and root networks. Public spaces are positioned to reveal ecological processes rather than conceal them. Materiality responds directly to underlying geology, timber and earth-toned finishes reinforcing continuity with landform. Lighting is carefully calibrated to respect Sky Country, minimising spill into habitat corridors and maintaining the integrity of night landscapes.

This narrative establishes open space as a continuum rather than a collection of amenities. Play, gathering and ecological function occur within the same system.

Residents experience gradual transitions from canopy to clearing, from dry ridge to damp basin edge, from open sky to filtered woodland shade. These transitions reinforce awareness of seasonal change, water movement, and habitat interdependence.



A LIVING FRAMEWORK



Three interdependent layers guide design and are expressed spatially rather than symbolically:



GROUND COUNTRY

Soil systems, root networks, endemic planting, and low-impact pathways. Design decisions prioritise permeability, retention of microhabitat and visibility of ground-layer processes. Fallen timber, root balls, and undisturbed edges are treated as assets where safe, reinforcing the importance of life that exists beneath the canopy.



WATER COUNTRY

Basin systems, riparian restoration, WSUD integration and microclimate cooling. Water infrastructure is expressed through vegetated swales, soft edges, and seasonal planting variation. Educational overlays interpret filtration, detention, and habitat creation, reinforcing the chain-of-pond logic as a defining identity of place.



SKY COUNTRY

Canopy continuity, migratory pathways, and controlled night lighting. Tree planting reinforces movement corridors for arboreal species and creates layered shade. Lighting design reduces ecological disturbance and acknowledges the importance of darkness as part of Country's cycle.

Together, these layers position the precinct as a living system. The narrative does not sit on top of infrastructure; it has always emerged from landform, hydrology, and ecology. By aligning spatial planning with these systems, the precinct establishes a coherent identity grounded in Country, ensuring future stages continue to follow the same ridge-to-creek logic and interconnected ecological framework.

SITE NARRATIVE - TREE CANOPY PLAY AREA



CANOPY OF LEARNING

The primary play space is conceived as an immersive canopy environment shaped by koala corridor logic and the vertical layering of Ground and Sky Country. Elevated elements reference tree movement and branch networks without literal representation, encouraging children to experience shifts in height, perspective, and light. Curved paths echo root systems and water flow patterns rather than rigid urban geometry, reinforcing organic movement through space.

The play environment is structured to reflect ecological relationships. Canopy planting provides dappled shade, habitat cues, and seasonal change, allowing children to observe flowering cycles, leaf fall, and bird movement. Timber structures are designed to feel integrated within woodland settings, using natural textures and tones that respond to the surrounding landscape.

Design intent includes:

- Framing canopy awareness as a central educational theme, highlighting the importance of tree corridors for koala movement and biodiversity.
- Encouraging children to move between ground and elevated perspectives, fostering spatial awareness and connection to vertical habitat layers.
- Integrating interpretive elements explaining habitat connectivity, seasonal cycles, and the interdependence of species.
- Providing shaded gathering zones for carers and intergenerational exchange, ensuring the space supports social cohesion as well as play.

- Creating moments of quiet refuge within active play, acknowledging that learning also occurs through observation and stillness.

Play becomes experiential learning grounded in ecological systems. Rather than isolated equipment, the space operates as a living classroom where children encounter textures, shade, sound, and movement that reflect the woodland character of the precinct.



SITE NARRATIVE - INTERCONNECTED WATERWAYS



WATER AS ORIGIN

Basin systems and riparian corridors are reinterpreted as both ecological infrastructure and community learning landscapes. The chain-of-pond logic is expressed spatially, allowing residents to understand how water is captured, filtered, detained, and gradually released through vegetated systems.

WSUD elements are intentionally visible rather than concealed. Swales planted edges and seasonal basins demonstrate how landscape can perform hydrological functions while supporting biodiversity. Planting variation reflects fluctuations in moisture and seasonal change, reinforcing the dynamic character of water.

Design priorities include:

- Vegetated basin edges supporting amphibians, invertebrates, and waterbirds, creating layered habitat zones.
- Habitat opportunities within retaining structures where appropriate, including textured surfaces and planting pockets.
- Signage and interpretive overlays explaining above-ground and below-ground water processes, including filtration and root interaction.
- Seasonal variation in planting reflecting water fluctuation and microclimate cooling.
- Minimising hard engineering where soft-edge solutions are feasible, prioritising naturalistic profiles and permeability.

- Integrating seating and lookout points that allow passive observation without disturbing habitat systems.

Water corridors therefore operate as connective tissue between neighbourhoods, reinforcing cooling, biodiversity, and stewardship. They encourage residents to recognise water as a living system rather than hidden infrastructure.



SITE NARRATIVE - VILLAGE GREEN



GATHERING ON COUNTRY

The Village Green functions as a civic and cultural heart within Release Areas 1, 3 and 4. It supports daily recreation, informal gathering, community markets, as well as potential truth-telling or commemorative events acknowledging the layered history of Appin.

The spatial arrangement balances openness with defined edges, allowing flexibility for events while maintaining connection to surrounding ridgelines and ecological systems. Material selection responds to geology, with natural timber seating and restrained palettes reinforcing continuity with the broader landscape.

Design intent includes:

- Maintaining sightlines to surrounding ridgelines and culturally significant landscapes, preserving orientation and connection.
- Integrating timber seating and low landscape walls that double as informal gathering points and storytelling edges.
- Providing flexible infrastructure for cultural programming, community markets, and Indigenous enterprise opportunities within the neighbourhood centre interface.
- Embedding interpretive elements subtly within walls, edges, or planting transitions to avoid overt theming.
- Managing lighting and waste to protect adjacent habitat systems and minimise ecological disturbance.
- Creating shaded zones that encourage lingering, dialogue, and intergenerational exchange.

As part of the trilogy of Play, Water and Gathering, the Village Green reinforces social cohesion within an ecologically responsive framework. It represents the point where cultural narrative, community life and environmental responsibility converge.



IMPLEMENTATION



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SUMMARY OF KEY CULTURAL AND DESIGN INSIGHTS



Together, these insights establish a cohesive framework where cultural narrative, ecological regeneration and community life operate as interdependent systems. The Appin (Part) Precinct is therefore positioned not as a conventional suburban expansion, but as a landscape shaped by ridge-to-creek logic, living water systems and long-term custodial responsibility. Cultural authority remains central to refinement, naming, interpretation, and long-term stewardship, ensuring the precinct continues to evolve in alignment with Country.



1. CULTURAL NARRATIVES CENTRED IN COUNTRY

- Water as Living System.
- Koala as Corridor Guide.
- Relational Species Understanding.
- Ridge to Creek Logic.



2. DESIGN ELEMENTS INFORMED BY CULTURAL & ECOLOGICAL GUIDANCE

- Movement as Ecological Story.
- Layered Public Domain Framework.
- Canopy of Learning (Play).
- Interconnected Waterways (Water).
- Village Green (Gathering).
- Material and Lighting Restraint .



3. EMERGING STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY THEMES

- Habitat Protection as Priority.
- Endemic Biodiversity.
- Education & Stewardship.
- Shared Responsibility.
- Cultural Governance.

1. CULTURAL NARRATIVES CENTRED IN COUNTRY



WATER AS LIVING SYSTEM

The chain-of-pond networks are understood not only as hydrological infrastructure but as living ecological systems that shape identity, memory, and movement. Water is positioned as origin, teacher and connector, structuring both environmental performance and community experience.

KOALA AS CORRIDOR GUIDE

The koala corridor provides a spatial and ecological framework for the precinct. Rather than functioning as a symbolic reference, it should inform canopy continuity, subdivision structure, and long-term habitat resilience. Movement through trees becomes both ecological necessity and organising principle.

RELATIONAL SPECIES UNDERSTANDING

Fauna such as heron and echidna are understood relationally. The heron signals water health and wetland integrity, while the echidna reinforces the importance of undisturbed ground, root systems, and microhabitat. Species narratives therefore translate into measurable ecological design actions.

RIDGE TO CREEK LOGIC

The landscape narrative follows existing landform transitions. Elevated ridgelines provide orientation and outlook, while lower basins collect and filter water. This vertical sequencing reinforces the interdependence of Ground, Water and Sky Country.



2. DESIGN ELEMENTS INFORMED BY CULTURAL & ECOLOGICAL GUIDANCE



MOVEMENT AS ECOLOGICAL STORY

Pathways follow topography and natural drainage patterns rather than rigid geometries. Circulation networks echo root systems and creek lines, allowing users to experience gradual ecological transitions.

LAYERED PUBLIC DOMAIN FRAMEWORK

Open space is structured as a trilogy of Play, Water and Gathering. Each space performs ecological, social, and interpretive roles rather than functioning as isolated amenities.

CANOPY OF LEARNING (PLAY)

Playspaces are conceived as immersive woodland environments where canopy awareness, vertical movement and habitat education are embedded within the play experience.

INTERCONNECTED WATERWAYS (WATER)

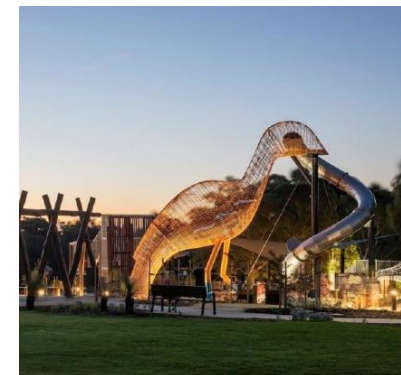
Basin systems integrate WSUD performance with habitat creation and educational interpretation, revealing rather than concealing water processes.

VILLAGE GREEN (GATHERING)

Civic space balances activation with reflection, enabling community markets, cultural programming and informal gathering while maintaining connection to surrounding ecological systems.

MATERIAL & LIGHTING RESTRAINT

Timber, natural finishes and subdued colour palettes reinforce continuity with landform and vegetation. Lighting strategies respect Sky Country and minimise ecological disturbance.



3. EMERGING STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY THEMES



HABITAT PROTECTION AS PRIORITY

Strong support for reinforcing koala corridors, retaining mature trees where feasible and protecting root systems and fallen timber.

ENDEMIC BIODIVERSITY

Preference for biodiverse, endemic planting reflective of Cumberland Plain communities and avoidance of monocultures.

EDUCATION & STEWARDSHIP

Integration of layered educational tools, including signage and interpretive overlays explaining water cycles, soil systems, and wildlife coexistence.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Recognition that residents play an active role in protecting habitat through waste management, respectful recreation, and ongoing care for planted corridors.

CULTURAL GOVERNANCE

Continued involvement of Knowledge Holders in naming, interpretation, and future design refinement to ensure authenticity and custodial authority.



INDIGENOUS DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Implementation must translate narrative intent into measurable, long-term outcomes. The following recommendations extend beyond conceptual direction and establish principles for detailed design, delivery, maintenance, and governance.

Implementation should:

- Reinforce koala corridor continuity by prioritising canopy connectivity across public and private interfaces, ensuring planting palettes support long-term habitat viability, and avoiding fragmentation through unnecessary clearing or lighting intrusion. Corridor reinforcement should be embedded within subdivision layouts, street tree strategies, and open space planning.
- Integrate habitat niches within basin edges through layered planting, textured embankments and microhabitat opportunities that support amphibians, invertebrates, and waterbirds. Basin design should balance hydraulic performance with ecological value, allowing soft edges and vegetated transitions wherever feasible.
- Prioritise endemic planting and restrained material palettes that reflect local ecological communities and landform character. Species selection should support biodiversity resilience, seasonal variation, and pollinator networks, while materials should remain subdued and responsive to context rather than visually dominant.
- Protect ground-layer habitat by retaining root systems, fallen timber and undisturbed soil zones where safe and practicable. Construction methodologies should minimise compaction and unnecessary disturbance, recognising that ecological integrity often depends on what occurs below canopy level.

- Maintain cultural governance and language validation through continued consultation with Knowledge Holders, ensuring naming, interpretation and future adaptations include custodial input. Cultural oversight should extend into implementation stages, including signage development, public art integration, and community programming.

In addition, implementation should consider:

- Staging works in accordance with ecological advice to minimise seasonal impacts.
- Embedding educational initiatives within community onboarding materials.
- Establishing maintenance protocols that respect habitat zones and interpretive elements.
- Monitoring ecological performance over time to ensure corridor and basin objectives are achieved.

Connecting with Country is not a single milestone but an ongoing relational commitment. Delivery must remain adaptive, responsive, and grounded in continued custodial guidance.

CASE STUDIES & REFERENCES



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CASE STUDY 1: THORNDON PARK PLAYGROUND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA



The Thorndon Park Playground in South Australia exemplifies the successful integration of nature-based play within an urban parkland setting. Designed to support children's sensory, social, and physical development, the playground sits harmoniously within a broader wetland environment. The design prioritises inclusive play experiences for children of all abilities, while also embracing natural materials such as timber logs, water channels, and stone. The site demonstrates how carefully planned interventions can encourage connection with nature and enhance the ecological and recreational value of a park without overwhelming it.

What makes Thorndon Park particularly relevant to the Appin development project is its attention to landscape-led design principles. The playground is woven into the existing topography, vegetation, and water systems, resulting in a place that feels like an extension of its natural setting. The use of planting for sensory engagement, water play that references the site's stormwater functions, and sculptural elements that reflect local flora and fauna provide a valuable model for integrating environmental storytelling into play experiences. The design was developed through consultation with local communities, including children, resulting in a park that responds to diverse needs and encourages stewardship of place.

Importantly, the Thorndon Park project illustrates how nature play spaces can double as community gathering and educational platforms. By embedding interpretive signage and loose parts play that encourages creativity and problem-solving, the park fosters environmental learning and imagination. This aligns closely with the Tree Canopy Play Area Playspace's goals of fostering a deeper connection with Country, encouraging cultural and ecological literacy, and offering a space that supports intergenerational learning.

Thorndon Park serves as a benchmark for designing inclusive, culturally aware, and environmentally integrated play environments in Australian parklands.



CASE STUDY 2: SYDNEY PARK WATER RE-USE PROJECT, SYDNEY



The Sydney Park Water Re-Use Project in New South Wales exemplifies the successful integration of large-scale water infrastructure within a public parkland setting. Delivered by the City of Sydney, the project transformed a former industrial and landfill site into an ecologically functioning wetland system that captures, filters, and reuses stormwater from the surrounding urban catchment. Rather than concealing water treatment processes underground, the design expresses them through a sequence of interconnected ponds, wetlands and vegetated terraces that operate visibly within the landscape. The project demonstrates how carefully designed water systems can enhance biodiversity, support climate resilience, and create a highly valued recreational destination without overwhelming the character of place.

What makes Sydney Park particularly relevant to the Appin (Part) Precinct is its landscape-led approach to water-sensitive urban design. The wetland system is shaped by topography and gravity, allowing water to move naturally through a series of bio-retention zones and planted basins. Native vegetation supports habitat creation while reinforcing seasonal variation and ecological succession. Boardwalks, paths, and lookout points are carefully positioned to allow visitors to observe water levels, filtration processes, and birdlife, embedding environmental education within everyday experience. The project illustrates how hydrological infrastructure can become a structuring identity element, guiding spatial sequencing and public movement in a way that feels intuitive and grounded in natural systems.

Importantly, Sydney Park demonstrates how infrastructure, ecology and community life can coexist within a unified framework. The wetlands provide irrigation supply and water quality improvement while simultaneously supporting bird habitat, passive recreation, and interpretive learning.

This integrated approach aligns closely with the objectives of the Appin (Part) Precinct, where basin systems and chain-of-pond networks are envisioned not as residual engineering spaces but as visible, biodiverse, and educational landscapes. Sydney Park serves as a benchmark for expressing water as living infrastructure; shaping identity, reinforcing stewardship, and embedding long-term ecological regeneration within the public domain.



Reference: Better Future Awards - Sydney Park Water Reuse Project (2016) - <https://betterfutureawards.com/govaus16/project.asp?ID=14663>

CASE STUDY 3: KOALA CORRIDOR PROGRAM, GUNNEDAH



The Gunnedah Koala Corridor Program in New South Wales exemplifies a landscape-scale approach to koala habitat protection integrated with regional planning and community participation. Recognised as one of the strongholds of inland koala populations, the Gunnedah region has implemented coordinated corridor mapping, targeted revegetation, and infrastructure controls to maintain canopy connectivity across agricultural, peri-urban and township areas. Rather than treating koala habitat as isolated patches, the program identifies movement routes between feeding trees, water sources, and refuge areas, reinforcing the importance of continuous canopy and safe passage across roads and cleared land.

What makes the Gunnedah program particularly relevant to the Appin (Part) Precinct is its emphasis on corridor logic as a structuring framework for development decisions. Habitat mapping informs subdivision layout, road alignment and planting strategy, ensuring that urban growth does not sever ecological connectivity. Street tree selection, setback controls, and targeted revegetation initiatives are aligned with preferred koala feed species, creating an expanded network of usable habitat rather than ornamental planting alone. Community education programs further support coexistence, providing guidance on pet management, vehicle awareness, and reporting of injured wildlife. This integration of spatial planning and stewardship reinforces that corridor protection extends beyond mapped green space into everyday neighbourhood design.

Importantly, the Gunnedah Koala Corridor Program demonstrates that long-term habitat viability depends on governance, monitoring, and adaptive management. Ongoing data collection, collaboration with ecologists and community involvement in planting and maintenance ensure that corridors remain functional over time.

For the Appin (Part) Precinct, the precedent reinforces the need to embed koala corridor continuity within canopy planning, public domain interfaces, and private lot landscaping controls. It illustrates how corridor protection can shape identity, inform education, and foster shared responsibility, positioning habitat connectivity as a defining characteristic of place rather than a regulatory constraint.



Reference: Koala Corridors: A Pathway to Reconnection (2023) - <https://wwf.org.au/blogs/koala-corridors-a-pathway-to-reconnection/>

CASE STUDY 4: BARANGAROO RESERVE & HEADLAND PARK, SYDNEY



The Barangaroo Reserve and Headland Park in Sydney demonstrate how a cultural lookout and civic gathering space can be successfully integrated within a broader commercial and mixed-use precinct. Delivered on a former industrial harbour site, the project reconstructs a naturalistic headland form while embedding public promenades, lookouts and open gathering terraces that connect directly to adjacent retail and dining areas. The design balances large-scale civic activation with subtle cultural interpretation, allowing the landscape itself to frame views, tell stories and anchor identity.

What makes Barangaroo particularly relevant to the Appin (Part) Precinct is its handling of elevated lookout spaces as places of gathering rather than monuments. Carefully curated sightlines frame significant harbour views, while seating terraces, low walls and planted edges create informal places for pause, conversation, and reflection. Cultural narratives are embedded through naming, interpretive elements, and ongoing First Nations collaboration, without relying on overt symbolic structures. The transition between parkland and commercial frontage is seamless, demonstrating how neighbourhood centre interfaces can coexist with culturally sensitive landscape design.

Importantly, Barangaroo illustrates that civic space, economic activation and cultural acknowledgement can operate within a unified spatial framework. The headland's reconstructed landform guides movement from higher ground to waterfront edge, reinforcing topographic logic similar to ridge-to-creek sequencing at Appin. Public events, markets, and everyday recreation occur alongside quiet lookout moments, allowing the space to adapt to multiple community needs. As a precedent, Barangaroo provides a benchmark for integrating lookout opportunities, gathering space and neighbourhood centre interfaces in a way that is landscape-led, culturally responsive and enduring in character.



Reference: The creation of Barangaroo Reserve (2015) - <https://www.barangaroo.com/past-present-future/barangaroo-reserve>

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS



These documents collectively establish the cultural, ecological, statutory and governance framework within which the Appin (Part) Precinct Connecting with Country process has been undertaken.

CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY & INDIGENOUS DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Connecting with Country, Government Architect NSW
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/connecting-with-country.pdf>
- Designing with Country (Discussion Paper), Government Architect NSW
<https://www.aidr.org.au/media/7760/designing-with-country-discussion-paper.pdf>
- Engaging with Country: Aboriginal Cultural Values – An Approach for Engaging with Country, Dr Danièle Hromek
https://djinjama.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Engaging-with-Country_Danièle-Hromek.pdf

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE & GOVERNANCE (NSW)

- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW) – Aboriginal Objects and Places Provisions
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1974-080>
- Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW)
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1983-042>

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents (ACHCRP), NSW Government
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/aboriginal-cultural-heritage/consultation-requirements>
- Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/aboriginal-cultural-heritage>

BIODIVERSITY & KOALA PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS

- Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW)
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2016-063>
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/epi-2021-0722>
- NSW Koala Strategy (current update), NSW Government
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/programs-legislation-and-framework/nsw-koala-strategy>
- Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan, NSW Department of Planning and Environment (2022)
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-legislation/strategic-conservation-planning/cumberland-plain-conservation-plan>

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WATER, STORMWATER & LANDSCAPE PERFORMANCE GUIDANCE

- Managing Urban Stormwater: Soils and Construction (Blue Book), NSW Government
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/publications/managing-urban-stormwater-soils-and-construction-volume-1>
 - Greater Sydney Water Strategy, NSW Government
<https://www.water.dccew.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/greater-sydney-water-strategy.pdf>
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DPHI STATE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- Greater Macarthur Growth Area, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-your-area/priority-growth-areas-and-precincts/greater-macarthur-growth-area>
- Greater Macarthur 2040 (Update), NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-03/greater-macarthur-2040-update.pdf>

- Appin (Part) Precinct – Planning Proposal / LEP Decision (Planning Portal)
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/ppr/lep-decision/appin-part-precinct>

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Proudly located on Gadigal Ngura
Bay 5-7 North, 2 Locomotive Street
Eveleigh NSW 2015

Call 1300 932 820
Email connect@tikaeq.com
Visit www.tikaeq.com