

4 Developing a Connection with Country

4.1 Our Commitment to Country

The area surrounding the Project was originally inhabited by the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal Nation and language group.

Transport for NSW and Fulton Hogan recognise and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing culture, spiritual beliefs and connections to Country.

Many of the transport routes we use today – from rail lines, to roads, to water crossings – follow the traditional Songlines, trade routes and ceremonial paths on Country that our nation’s First Peoples followed for tens of thousands of years.

We are committed to honouring Aboriginal peoples’ cultural and spiritual connections to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Fulton Hogan’s vision for reconciliation is for active, genuine and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples to support social

and economic equality through employment and procurement in their infrastructure projects and operations. This vision builds upon their community foundations of “creating, connecting and caring for communities.”



Figure 32: Celebrations of Country and the sharing of knowledge

4.2 Designing with Country

Infrastructure projects offer an opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the Aboriginal Country, culture and people of the land on which the Project is delivered. We can acknowledge Country and Aboriginal history through project design including built elements, landscape design, signage, artwork, language and Storytelling.

The Project will significantly improve the appearance and function of a key link between Wollongong and the Illawarra region, and will implement elements to better express the unique character of the coast and escarpment in a ‘gateway’ experience. The interchange is an opportunity to create a connection with Country that is unique to this place and to this community.

Establishing a connection with Country through pattern, colour, and pictorial elements, integrated thoughtfully into the built environment will enrich the road user experience and contribute to a better understanding of place and culture. This will also be reflected in the Projects landscape design which will create and enhance a feeling of connect with the surrounding environment.

The Project will deliver an integrated strategy to provide a connection to Country includes working with local Aboriginal knowledge holders and groups to:

- Understand stories, Songlines and topographic elements to inform opportunities to interpret these with artwork in the design of structural elements (including retaining walls, noise walls and safety screens), landscape design and signage

- Identify the colours and textures of the landscape and geology for opportunities to incorporate in structural elements to complement and enhance the experience of the natural environment
- Inform the Project landscape design with consideration of the seasonal landscape, flowering times, sentinel trees and native species.

Worldwide, art in infrastructure has proven its value as a cultural connective tissue; enriching communities, generating identity, stimulating economic development, building cultural capital. In recent years Sydney has joined the growing list of cities realising these benefits from meaningful cultural place-making in infrastructure projects. Projects like Sydney Gateway, M4-M5 Link Tunnel Ventilation Building façade, and the Canal to Creek public art program (M5/M8) which have involved the curation of artwork by Cultural Capital. Cultural Capital have been integrated into the team, and will bring the benefit of this experience to the Project.

Through thoughtful engagement of local Aboriginal artists and designers, Cultural Capital will facilitate a creative co-design process with the urban design team that will ensure connection with Country is embedded through the journey experience and can be enjoyed by road users and the community.

The team will engage with local Aboriginal knowledge holders and stakeholder groups, including but not limited to:

- Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation (IAC)
- Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation (CUAC)
- Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council (ILALC)
- Illawarra Koori Mens Shed (IKMS)
- Wollongong City Council
- Wollongong University
- Landcare Illawarra and Wollongong Botanic Gardens.

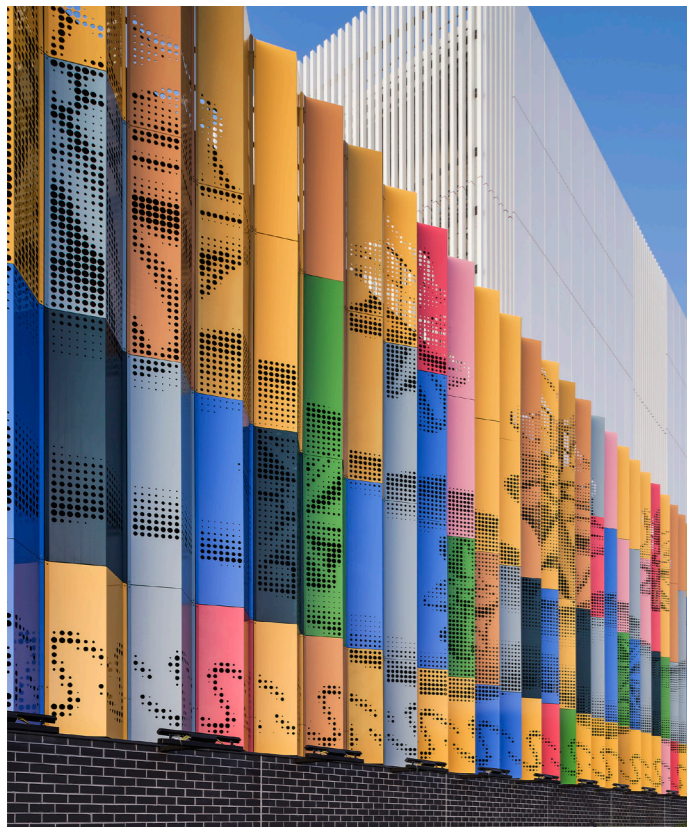


Figure 33: Campbell Road Ventilation Facility (M4/M5)

4.3 Methodology of integration of Connection to Country

To understand the opportunities which may exist on the Project, we initially need to understand - What is Country and how this may be acknowledgement. This includes:

- Listening and learning
- Expression through landscape responses to heal the land
- Understanding about materiality and its source
- Physical expression of ideas, themes and stories

In developing a methodology for imparting a connection to Country it is first necessary to understand what is Country and how its community wish it to be acknowledged and explored. Flexibility in the implementation of the integrated strategy will be important to ensure that it considers project and operational constraints.

4.2.1 Produce Consultative Integrated Art and Cultural Themes Report

The first step will involve connecting with knowledge holders to listening and learn about the history and culture of the local area and community. Cultural Capital will lead this process.

The team will produce a Cultural Themes Report that summarises the inputs gleaned through consultation with local Aboriginal knowledge holders to clearly document culturally relevant themes, stories, symbols, colours, and textures which are of importance to the community and

may represent an opportunity for interpretation and expression within the Project.

Once themes are recorded a review of these will be undertaken to identify the key themes to be taken forward as part of the design development.

From this point the opportunity to take these ideas and themes forward into the design, their means of expression, and locations will all be agreed. The means of expression forms a critical element of this phase as some ideas and themes may be recorded where others may wish to be implemented as part of the Project in either its built form/elements, landscape design, signage or as an standalone artwork.

4.2.2 Artist Selection and Engagement for co-design process

The team will seek advice from the local Aboriginal knowledge holders and stakeholder groups about potential artists and designers to be invited to tender for this Project. The team will develop a list of local artists and designers through both consultation and independent curatorial research who will be invited to express their interest in the Project by submitting an artist profile and completion a short submission application.

A panel of representatives from the Project and local Aboriginal knowledge holders and stakeholder groups will determine the successful artist/s based on a weighted criteria that is aligned with Project objectives and endorsed by local Aboriginal knowledge holders and stakeholder groups.

4.2.3 Facilitation of Co-design between artists/designers and urban design team

Facilitated by Cultural Capital, the successful artist/s will collaboratively work with the Project team and key stakeholders, using the Cultural Themes Report to develop ideas and concepts that will be the foundations of the integrated connection to Country strategy.

The artist/s will be encouraged to consult with appropriate Aboriginal knowledge holders in the creation of their ideas and concepts. Cultural Capital will assist in this co-design process to ensure alignment between urban designers and the artist/s and champion the artistic integrity of their contributions and the translation of cultural themes from consultation.

The ideas and concepts selected will be handled with a culturally appropriate contract that protects their intellectual property, moral rights and Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP).

4.4 Contextual Opportunities

The team has identified a range of potential opportunities on the Project that may be relevant to the integration of the cultural themes. Implementation of interpretative elements needs to consider a range of scales, speeds, and methods of implementation and expression to enhance the users experience. This includes the landscape or built-form and elements.

The user experience can be perceived in two ways:

1. Driver experience – along the road, that is fast paced, direct movement and a regional scale.
2. Pedestrian / cyclist experience - off the alignment, slow paced, broadscale views, local and regional scales

Potential initiatives include:

- Broadscale landscape treatments seek to re-establish natural communities mitigating impact to natural systems re-vegetating with local communities as an act of respect to Country.
- Interchange planting to explore the use of culturally significant plant species, and colours as part of interpretative process and gateway experience to Wollongong and the Illawarra region.

· Project built elements and landscape present the opportunity to interpret key cultural features incorporating artwork and signage.

· Safety screens present the most flexible element to incorporate artwork without impacting on program, subject to outcomes of stakeholder engagement.

The design team has identified built elements which are visually prominent within the alignment for which a connection to Country could be expressed. These are depicted in the following table.

These potential initiatives are subject to stakeholder engagement outcomes, procurement constraints, and construction program. The use of alternate construction techniques involving integral and applied finishes, will be considered to maximise the involvement of the artist/s in developing the Projects detailed design.

Table 3: Potential Interpretive Art Locations - Visual Prominence Assessment

Location	Built element	Visual Prominence	Installation Method	
Retaining walls				
Main alignment / BR01	RW01A/1B	High	Painted / applied	Face fixed
Mount Ousley Rd	RW02A	Moderate	N/A	N/A
Shared Path/ Service Rd	RW02B	Low	N/A	N/A
Heavy Vehicle Bypass	RW03A/3B	Low	N/A	N/A
Main Alignment (North)	RW04	High	Painted / applied	Face fixed
University Access Rd (Below)	RW05	Low	N/A	N/A
Safety Screens				
	All areas (in general) except over BR03 the heavy vehicle bypass	High	Mesh on mesh/ laser cut system or equivalent	Fixed with tie clips or equivalent
Pathways				
	Shared path areas	High (pedestrian)	Ground plane artworks in pavement, Signage elements	Sand blasting, mosaic, paint etc