

# OUR VOICE OUR PLACE

Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy



AUG 2019

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**OF COUNTRY**

**AFFET**

Warning: This document may contain images of Aboriginal people who have passed away.



Dharawal people walked in harmony with this land, trod lightly and paid respect to the Elders who went before them. They welcomed people from many nations to gather and enjoy the sustenance of their fertile land, the land between two rivers. We acknowledge the Dharawal people, the traditional custodians of this land.

During the time of British contact, the Dharawal people continued to welcome new visitors and made attempts to live in harmony. The Appin Massacre has forever changed the Dharawal people. Many who survived fled to neighbouring country and some have not returned. We acknowledge the ongoing impact of the Appin Massacre.

Today's Campbelltown Aboriginal community is made up of mobs from far and wide. They have made Dharawal land their home and create strength through their connections to each other. In agreeance with the Dharawal people, they welcome all new people to Campbelltown. We acknowledge the strength and welcoming spirit of the Campbelltown Aboriginal community.

Through celebrating culture, both old and new, we look forward to the future of Campbelltown embracing the richness and beauty of the story captured on these pages. We acknowledge the future Aboriginal community of Campbelltown.

Always was, always will be, Dharawal land.



**Our Voice, Our Place has been developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal community of Campbelltown.**

**Campbelltown City Council engaged GHD to work with the community and listen to their values and stories.**

**The importance of building relationships through genuine conversations was a key focus of the engagement approach.**



**Our Voice, Our Place is an opportunity for the Aboriginal community to share their story and for all people who live in and visit Campbelltown to celebrate their culture.**



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# MAYOR'S FOREWORD



**Our Voice, Our Place reflects Campbelltown City Council's commitment to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to reconciliation.**

**As we reimagine the future of our city it is important that we reflect upon the traditional stories of the past.**

**Our Voice, Our Place will guide this process by recognising, respecting and celebrating Campbelltown's traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultures and I look forward to seeing this reflected in the built form of our growing city.**

# 1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

**This Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy is a new approach for Campbelltown City Council. It presents an exciting opportunity to build awareness of and respect for Campbelltown's Aboriginal community and stakeholders, their connections to Country, their heritage and culture, and importantly their aspirations for the future.**

As Campbelltown LGA faces rapid growth and development, this strategy aims to provide a clear pathway for engaging with the Campbelltown Aboriginal community to inform how their cultural values are integrated into the built form.

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- Set out Council's expectations for developers and other stakeholders in reflecting key cultural elements in the built form;
- Reflect narratives and stories from the Aboriginal community and outline a process for how this will create a lasting legacy and support reconciliation through place - making outcomes;
- Guide the design of new or upgraded infrastructure to ensure features are included which resonate with the Aboriginal and wider community;
- Outline preferred interpretation methods and how they could be applied throughout the city;
- Provide guidance for engaging with the Aboriginal community and stakeholders on how to realise cultural values in the built form.

Aligning with Aboriginal storytelling, 'Our Voice, Our Place' has been structured as a narrative which reflects the key cultural values shared by the Campbelltown Aboriginal community during consultations. The narrative is divided into sections which share values about the past, present and future of the community. Each section contains cultural values with rich meaning which can be reflected in elements of the future built form of Campbelltown.

# 2. OUR APPROACH

Engagement was carried out over an intensive four-day program in March 2019 across Campbelltown LGA. The program involved a variety of engagement activities to cater to the different needs of the community and maximise participation.

Engagement activities, regardless of their delivery format, were based on a set of visual materials. The materials explained how this strategy would be developed and the engagement process. It included visual representations of six key themes relating to Aboriginal culture and values in the area as well as examples of the ways that cultural values can be interpreted in the built form:

- Community
- People
- Plants and Animals
- Places
- Events
- Heritage

In summary, the engagement program included over 150 people across 21 activities including;

- Drawing competition for children and adults
- Interviews with key stakeholders in the community
- Surveys, both face to face and online
- Group discussions with Elders, sporting groups, Council staff, arts and community groups including the Campbelltown Aboriginal Community Reference Group



Artist: Larry Hill



## 3.1 Place of Harmony

**The land within and around what is known as Campbelltown has always been home to the Dharawal people, long before the British arrived on Australia's shores. Their Country stretches south from Sydney Harbour, down past Georges River, and extends to the Shoalhaven River.**

Campbelltown has always been a fertile place. Known as the land between two rivers (the Nepean and Georges Rivers), it provided the Dharawal people with abundant food sources, bushland and wildlife.

A central feature of this landscape was Mount Annan (as it is now known), the tallest of the rolling hills visible in the area. This mountain and the area surrounding it holds great historical significance. Campbelltown's abundant food sources and its welcoming people, the Dharawal, made the area a perfect place for gathering. The area was a meeting place for all mobs to unite, to yarn, to trade, discuss lore and resolve any grievances that may have occurred between them.

Mount Annan and the surrounding lands of Campbelltown were lands of peace and its people were known as the 'peace-makers'.



# 3. PAST

**The land within  
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## 3.2 Lyrebird

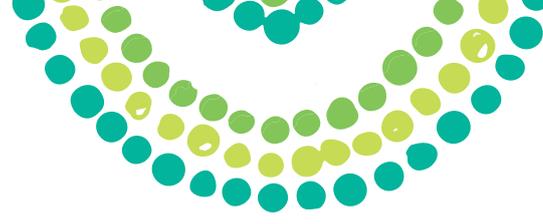
**The lyrebird is native to many parts of southern and eastern Australia. Its unique ability to mimic any sound has made it a prominent character in Australia's vast native wildlife and it holds particular significance to Campbelltown.**

The lyrebird is a totem animal of the Dharawal people, and in alignment with the area being a place of harmony, the bird itself is a symbol of peace and conciliation. The lyrebird is known as the "speaker of many languages," able to speak to all people, to hear them, and to reconcile differences between them.

The lyrebird totem is therefore a representation of the Dharawal people of Campbelltown and provides an enduring symbol of the importance of the area, its people, and their purpose as peace-makers.







### 3.3 Time of Contact

**In the years following the First Fleet landing in Port Jackson, a herd of cattle escaped their enclosures and made their way to graze in the grassy plains around Campbelltown.**

**Upon sighting the cattle, the local Dharawal people etched a drawing of a large beast into the wall of a cave in the nearby bush. Their first encounter with cattle was no doubt a terrifying experience, represented by the disproportionate size of the bull in the drawing. This drawing is an important symbol of the first contact between the Dharawal people and the colonial world (NSW Government, 2017).**

**The fields in which the cattle were found were named the 'Cow Pastures'. The 'Bull Cave' is located in bushland in Kentlyn.**

Initially, when Dharawal people made contact with the British settlers relationships were somewhat peaceful. In those early years, Dharawal men and women assisted the settlers with tracking, hunting,

fishing, and educating them on the ways of the land. Dual, a Dharawal man, accompanied his famous friend Hamilton Hume on an exploratory journey to the Southern Highlands (Morton, 2014).

Cordial relationships did not last however. In April 1816, after two years of ongoing conflict between the settlers and Aboriginal groups, Governor Macquarie ordered an attack on the Dharawal people living in the 'Cow Pastures'. This was the first military ordered massacre of Aboriginal people in Australia and the attack resulted in the loss of a large number of the local Dharawal population (Organ, 2016).

The Appin Massacre was a tragedy for the Dharawal people, not only through the loss of lives that day, but also through the resulting displacement of the few survivors, many of whom fled to other parts of their Country and beyond.

The few remaining Dharawal people and the wider Aboriginal community are still healing from the events of 1816 and the impacts they had on their ways of life, traditions, and stories, which have now largely been lost.

**“This strategy can be an important part of this healing, through understanding the history of the area, respecting it, and moving forward as a community together”**

- Uncle Ivan



## 3.4 The Waratah

The Waratah is an Australian native plant, originating in the coastal area of New South Wales (Australian National Botanic Gardens, 2015). Waratahs are commonly red in colour. They are significant to the Dharawal people, and the Campbelltown area specifically, not only because of the origins of the plant, but because of its stories and meaning.

There are multiple stories from different mobs, including the Dharawal people, about how the waratah turned from white to red. Despite having their own unique portrayals, the belief that all waratahs were once white is shared between groups – waratahs having been turned red from blood that has been spilled on Dharawal land.

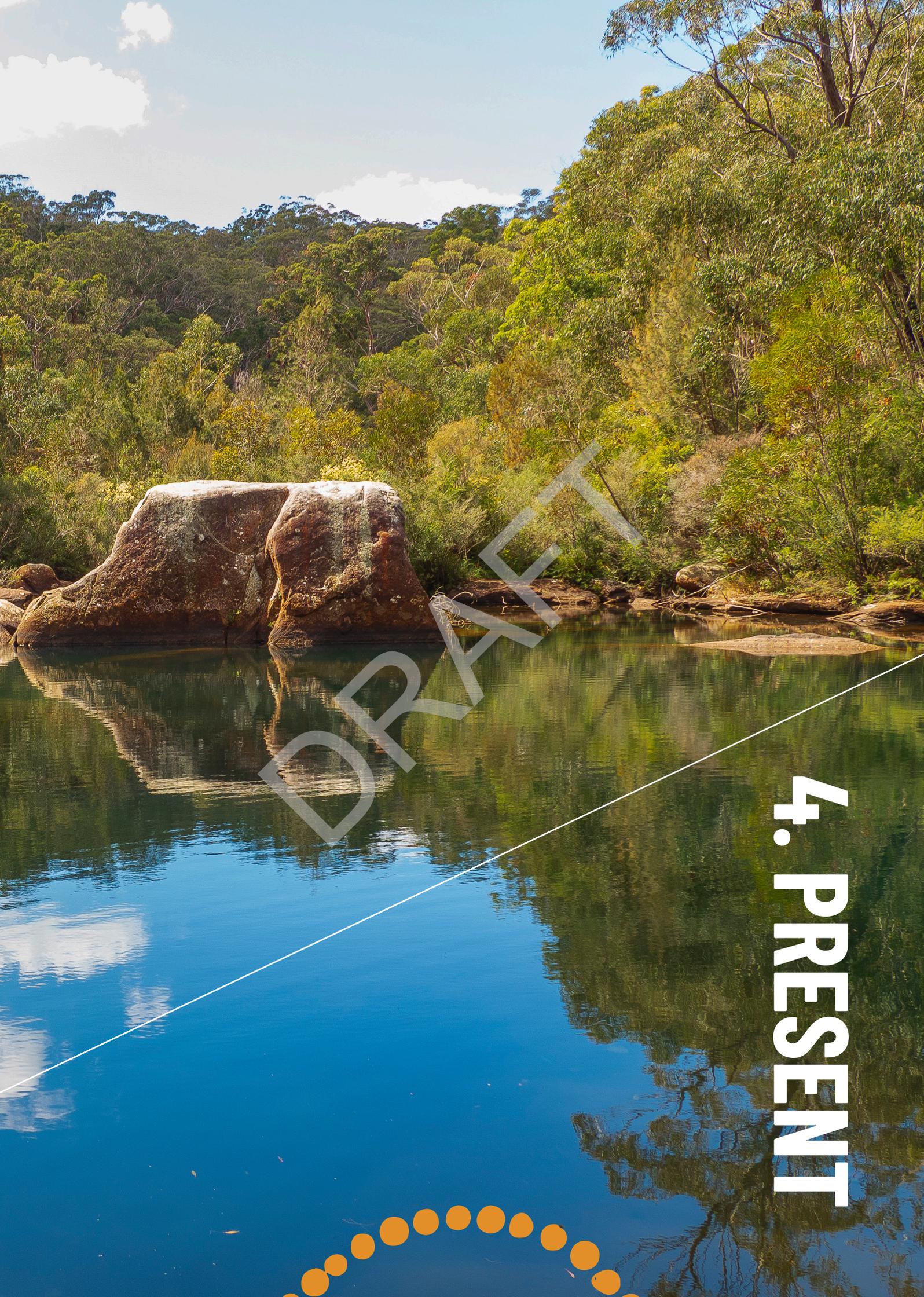
Both the white and red waratah symbolise the bloodshed of the Dharawal people and other neighbours who were visiting Dharawal land during colonial times, and act as reminders of this important part of the area's history.

**Harnessing this history, the intent of the Dharawal people as peacemakers, their land as a place of conciliation, we move forward to the present, with the symbols of the lyrebird and the waratah bringing with them the stories of the past.**

Image 'Red Waratah', by 2018 Macarthur Nature Photography entrant Doug Hewitt







# 4. PRESENT



## 4.1 Connection to land

**As articulated by members of the Aboriginal community, to feel connected to the Dharawal people is to feel connected to Dharawal land. The ability to connect to the land and the environment is an integral part of Aboriginal culture. By connecting to land, the community is connecting to its ancestors, its past, and physically and spiritually connecting to their culture.**

As well as finding ways to connect to the people of the past, it is also important for the community to find new places to connect with each other.

The Georges River, and the expanses of bushland along the river banks, is a place where people go to do both. There are a number of specific places along the river that are valued by the community such as

Simmo's Beach, a place for families to gather and spend days in the sun, and the Woolwash bushland, where some community go to conduct important ceremonies. Regardless of the location of each specific site, the Georges River and its surrounding bush is a place where everyone can feel connected.

The bushland around the Georges River is home to many native plants that are important to the Aboriginal community. One such plant is the Gynea Lily, which, as is shared through story, grew as it followed the Georges River up from Botany Bay. The Gynea Lily now weaves through Campbelltown LGA and has become an important and symbolic part of the urban landscape.

## 4.2 Connection to people

**Historically, Campbelltown was a gathering place for mobs from around the region to come together, and this is still the case today. Campbelltown, in its contemporary form, is a place where Aboriginal people from Country all over Australia have joined together as one community. Many people have relocated to access housing, education, to be with family, or through training with the armed services. The Aboriginal community continues to grow in Campbelltown.**

Despite coming from different mobs, having different stories, and different connections to Country, the Aboriginal community of Campbelltown is one guided by a deep respect for history and traditional ownership of the land. Together they are creating a new shared culture of contemporary Campbelltown - one that honours the past and its people whilst looking towards the future. It is the way that the community embraces this diversity that makes the Aboriginal community of Campbelltown so unique.

The ability to connect with one another is essential to establishing a sense of community. The connection that community have with each other is strong and at the heart of cultural expression.

The ways that people connect to each other are through yarning and sharing - sharing their own stories and the stories of their mob. To connect to one another through yarning is to also share and pass on knowledge. This sharing of knowledge with each other, knowing where people come from and how they relate to one another, is a big part of the identity of the community. This also means educating one another and in particular the younger generation, about the stories of the Dharawal people, Dharawal land and about how Campbelltown came to be as it is today.



## 4.3 Importance of gathering

**Gathering together to celebrate and connect with one another is an important part of social and cultural life for Campbelltown's Aboriginal communities. There are many informal and formal ways that community come together. Within the community, a number of regular activities provide a platform for gathering along with informal meeting points at frequented facilities and spaces explored in Section 4.4. There are a number of events that the community feel are important to their culture – including local and national events and celebrations.**

### Appin Massacre Memorial

An event where the community meets to remember the history of the area. The community gathers one day every year in April, to remember the men, women and children who perished as part of the Appin Massacre.



### NAIDOC Week

A National event to celebrate the contribution and leadership of Aboriginal people across Australia. For the community this event is important to acknowledge the strength and resilience of Campbelltown's Aboriginal people and to come together and share culture with the broader community. There is a full program of events held across the region celebrating NAIDOC Week.



### Sorry Day

This remembrance event recognises the children who were forcibly removed from their families and acknowledges their shared trauma and loss of culture. These children are known as the Stolen Generation and their removal continues to impact Aboriginal families and communities today.



### Close the Gap Day

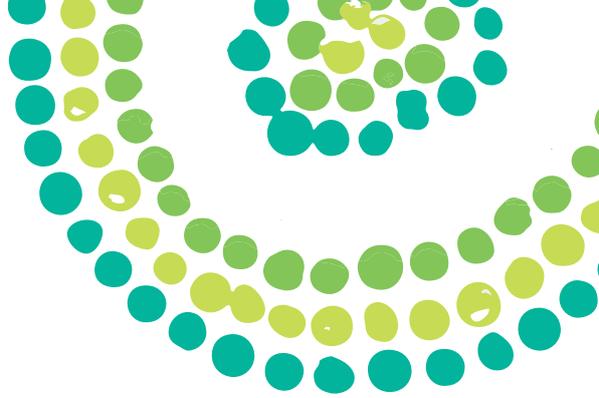
An event held across Australia to acknowledge and work towards improving health disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and promoting better outcomes and treatment paths.



### ANZAC Day

Aboriginal men and women fought in Australia's army and many of these veterans who returned from war remained in the Campbelltown area. This day carries significance to the Aboriginal community of Campbelltown as the area is located near multiple army bases. This has meant that throughout history, Campbelltown has been a place for soldiers to gather both prior to their deployment and where they are taken after their return.





## 4.4 Space to gather

In addition to formal gathering, connecting to one another through informal gatherings is equally important.

The community require accessible and welcoming places and spaces to gather throughout the Campbelltown LGA. Given the diversity of mobs living in Campbelltown and the size of Campbelltown City, it can be difficult to find places that everyone feels they can access.

This highlights a need for spaces designed for gathering which are spread across the city.

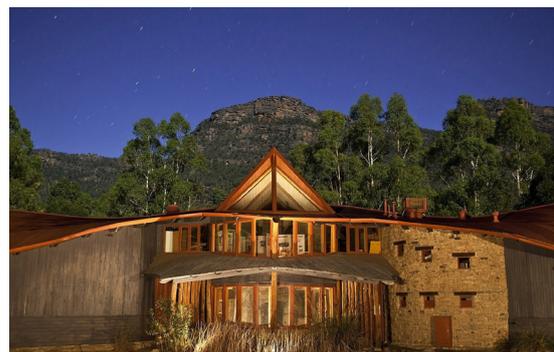
Designing buidings and open spaces for gathering will facilitate social and cultural practices. Therefore, the built form not only has the potential to celebrate the vibrant Aboriginal culture of Campbelltown, it also assists the community to continue to come together to pass on knowledge to the next generations.



Nitmuluk Visitor Centre, NT



Spirit Garden, Thunder Bay, Canada



Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Grampians National Park, Victoria





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# 5. FUTURE

Require high res image

## 5.1 Place based built form

**Campbelltown of the future will be a place where the history and diversity of the Aboriginal community is not only acknowledged, but is celebrated. Non-Aboriginal residents, workers, visitors and tourists, or people passing through Campbelltown will clearly see the Aboriginal community's cultural values celebrated in the built form and design of Campbelltown.**

This will enhance and highlight the Campbelltown Aboriginal community's connection to the area, provide more opportunities to connect with each other to learn about their history and pass this knowledge on to others. Campbelltown will be a place where the non-Aboriginal community and visitors can learn about and appreciate traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture and heritage. Campbelltown will be an area that is leading the way in the journey towards reconciliation.

There are a number of ways this vision of the future can be achieved and cultural values celebrated and incorporated into the built form. The key suggestions from community are highlighted in this document, however the breadth of potential interpretation will grow and develop during further consultation with the community around specific projects.

Place based outcomes:

- Cultural Centre: The community has expressed a strong desire to see a cultural centre in Campbelltown. The centre would provide a space for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to learn, feel connected, celebrate their own histories, and the history of the Dharawal people. This may also act as a keeping place for any artefacts discovered during archaeological investigations and as a place for performance and informal gatherings.
- Yarning Circle: A number of Yarning Circles spread throughout the LGA would provide places for the community to gather, to socialise or do business. Currently there are some Yarning Circles throughout the LGA however these are mostly located in schools and not accessible to everyone.
- Entry and Exit signs: Currently there are no signs at the entry and exit points of the city which acknowledge Dharawal Land, the Dharawal people or the Aboriginal community of Campbelltown today. The community feel it is important to have these signs at all major entry and exit points to the city.
- Places for Events: There is a need for more places spread throughout the city so that each suburb can access spaces for events and informal gatherings.

image: yarning circle example



## 5.2 Design based outcomes

The engagement activities revealed several ideas that could be incorporated into the design of a project.

These ideas include:

- Native or bush tucker gardens
- Street art or murals
- Art installations, statues or sculptures
- Footpaths that incorporate artwork, or are personalised

Cultural values are easily celebrated or recognised by incorporating any of these aspects into a plan or design, or even into existing infrastructure. The most important message from the community is to first and foremost acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Dharawal people, and to celebrate the diversity of the Aboriginal community in Campbelltown today.



Street art, Greater Shepperton City, Victoria



Bush tucker garden, WA Museum

### Bringing it all together

It is important that all celebrations of culture are visible to the Aboriginal and broader community. In order to bring all the elements from across the city together, and to make sure that everyone can enjoy the outcomes of this Strategy, the following ideas suggested by community could be explored by Council and other stakeholders:

**Heritage and cultural trail:** A trail weaving throughout the city which identifies the places that are important around the area, provide information about native plants and animals and connect any places where the Strategy has been implemented.

**Development of an App:** An app which provides an online map of the city, incorporating the outcomes of the Strategy, as well as stories, history and background information about the area and its people. Similar to ANU Aboriginal Heritage Trail App, this app could also be a platform for the community to connect with each other, or post information about gatherings and events. The app could be used by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members, as well as tourists interested in learning more about the history of Campbelltown.

# 6. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**A key message from community during the engagement activities was that places must be accessible for everyone, and should provide opportunities for education.**

**These overarching design principles should be applied to every built form outcome responding to this strategy.**

## **Accessible**

Given the diversity of the Aboriginal community, it is important to create places that are welcoming and accessible for everyone. The ability to access spaces and places should be inclusive and not specifically aligned with any one organisation, family or group in the community.

It is also important to consider the geographical distribution of the outcomes of this Strategy. Campbelltown City covers a large area therefore built form cultural interpretations should be spread across all suburbs to ensure fair and equitable access.

Given the value placed on Elders in the Aboriginal community, all spaces and places should be universally accessible. Elders can be limited in their mobility and therefore it is important to ensure that they are able to visit places and celebrate culture with the entire community.

## **Educational**

The planning, delivery and activation of any new built form is an opportunity to weave in education and knowledge sharing. Many community members expressed the importance of yarning, storytelling, and sharing the history of the community and its

people, all of which should be incorporated into the future of Campbelltown. This should go beyond tokenism by providing meaningful and innovative education opportunities for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.

A connection between all the stories and narratives should be developed to avoid fragmentation and piecemeal outcomes.

The meaning and connection between stories need to be aligned across all implementation methods. This could be achieved through a heritage and cultural trail, or an app (see section 5.2).

## **Informed through engagement**

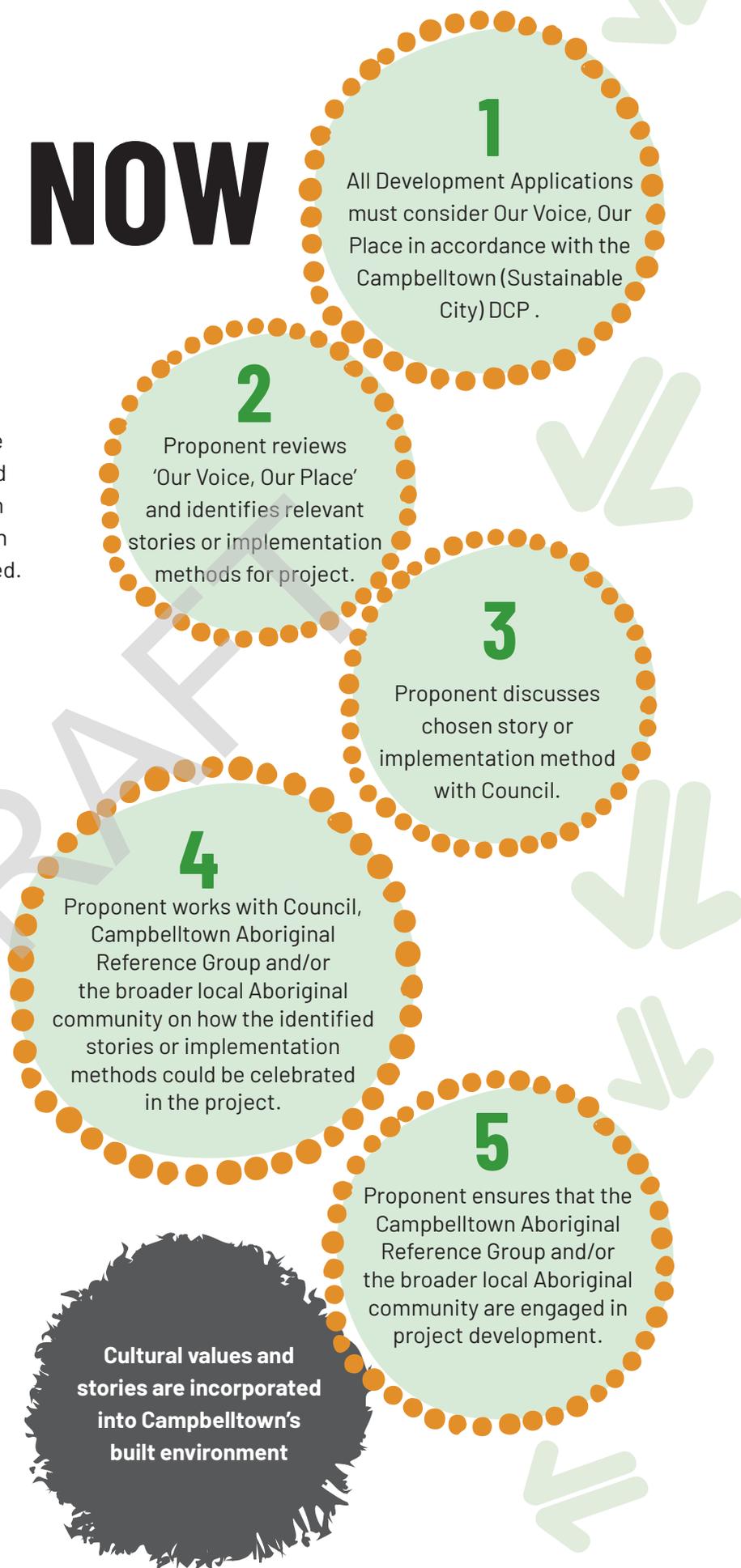
The incorporation of cultural values into the built form should be driven by the community through ongoing engagement. Engagement is crucial to prevent misinterpretation, tokenism or cultural appropriation. All interpretations of the narrative expressed in this Strategy should be re-confirmed with the community prior to incorporation in any design projects.

Council can connect proponents and interested parties with community members who have expressed an interest in staying informed of the outcomes regarding this Strategy.

# 7. WHAT NOW

Our Voice, Our Place has been developed to celebrate culture in the future of Campbelltown City. The following flowchart illustrates how this Strategy can be implemented. Further consultation with the community is a vital step in this process and will provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussions to ensure cultural appropriation or the misrepresentation of values is avoided.

Council will guide the application of this Strategy and help to connect proponents and interested parties to relevant people in the community to engage with. Council will administer this Strategy and ensure that outcomes are documented and consistent across the City. Council will also pursue and realise opportunities to implement the Strategy across Council's operations and developments.



# Terms used in this strategy

The terms below have been developed for the purpose of this document, and help to provide context or additional detail.

## Accessible spaces

Accessibility does not only refer to places that are physically accessible, but culturally accessible. Places could be more accessible to community if they are:

- Close to public transport and car parks
- Open to community (i.e. not dependent on organised events or programs)
- Not affiliated with one particular Aboriginal organisation or family group

## Conciliation

Conciliation is the act of mediation between two groups. Despite the term reconciliation being more commonly used in our society, the act of conciliation is more appropriate in some cases and accepted by the Campbelltown community.

## Country

Country describes everything within the landscape, which is intrinsically linked to identity, spirituality and culture. When Aboriginal communities refer to their Country, it usually expresses a custodial relationship (i.e. the land where their community originated from and cares for).

## Cultural appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the act of adopting, using or 'borrowing' aspects from another culture that is not your own without demonstrating that you understand or respect the original culture and context. In many Aboriginal cultures, strict and ancient protocols dictate who can sing certain songs, perform certain dances, tell certain stories and therefore non-Aboriginal or modernised renditions of these aspects of their culture is highly disrespectful.

## Education

In Aboriginal culture, education largely takes the form of yarning, or sharing stories with one another. The continuing education of Campbelltown Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal community is important. The opportunity to educate the wider community about the Aboriginal history of Campbelltown and about Aboriginal culture, is also important.

## Mob

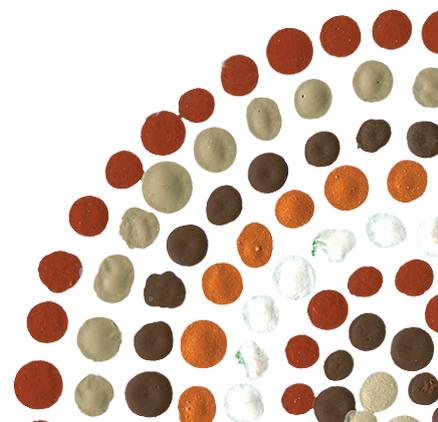
"Mob is a colloquial term identifying a group of Aboriginal people associated with a particular place or Country. It is used to connect and identify who an Aboriginal people is and where they are from." (Deadly Story, 2018)

## Totem

A totem is a natural object, plant or animal that is inherited by members of a family as their spiritual emblem. Totems define peoples' roles and responsibilities, and their relationship with each other and creation (Australian Together, 2018).

## Yarning

Yarning is the act of talking with one another, either formally or informally. Yarning is often synonymous with sharing stories, and can be one-on-one or in large groups. When occurring in a group setting, yarning is often done in a circular shape.



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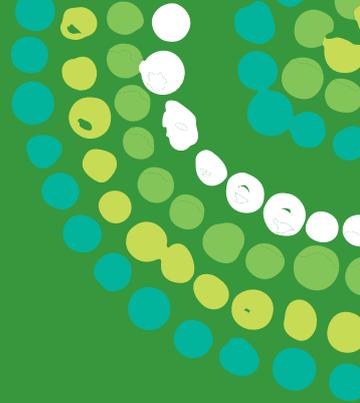
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