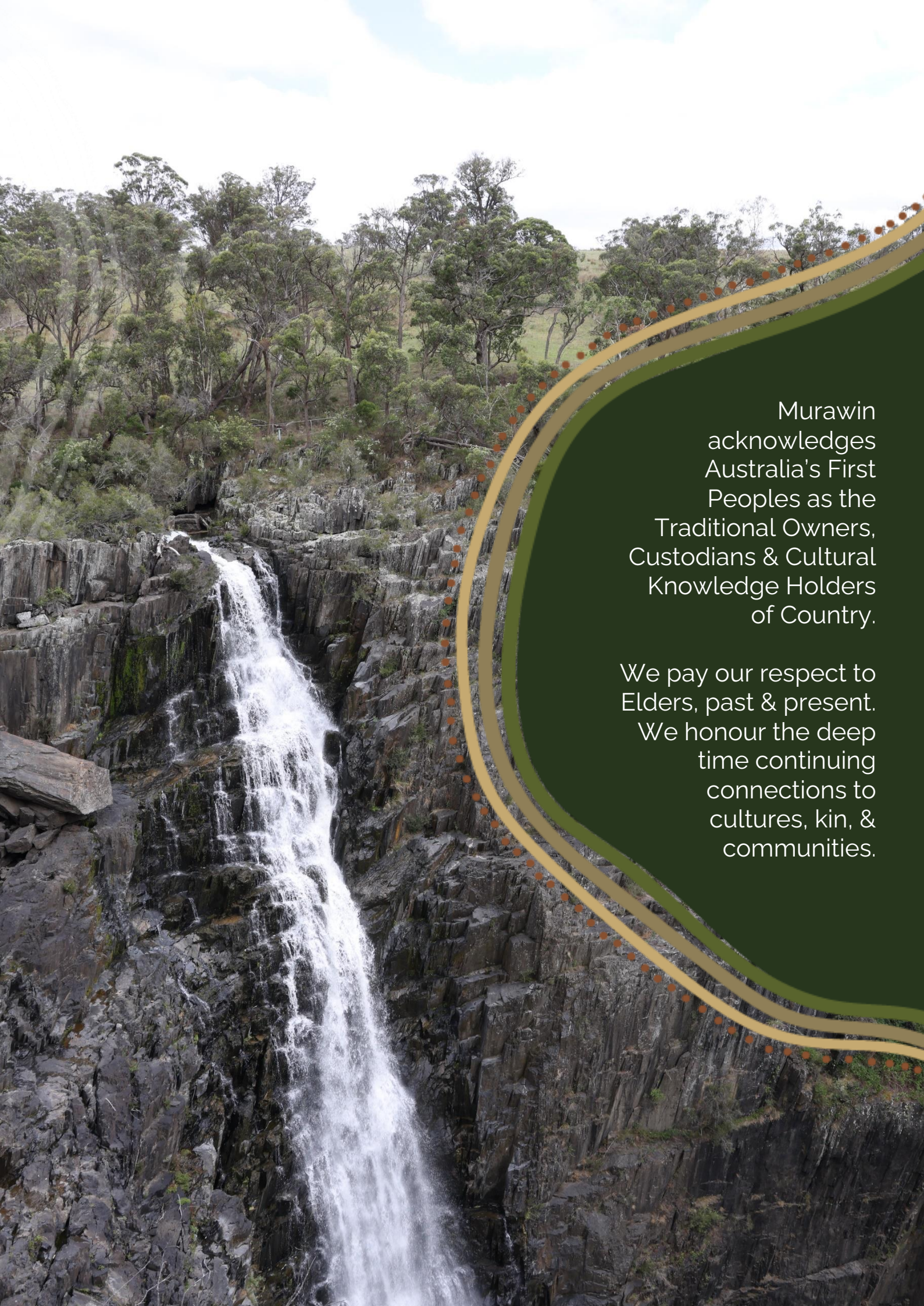


# North Sydney Council

FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

JUNE 2024





Murawin  
acknowledges  
Australia's First  
Peoples as the  
Traditional Owners,  
Custodians & Cultural  
Knowledge Holders  
of Country.

We pay our respect to  
Elders, past & present.  
We honour the deep  
time continuing  
connections to  
cultures, kin, &  
communities.

# Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ABOUT MURAWIN .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>KEY THEMES.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CONNECTION TO PLACE .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>First Nations Recommendations:.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF NAMING .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>TRUTH TELLING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CULTURAL FLOW – STORYTELLING AND TOTEMS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CONNECTION AND CUSTODIANSHIP .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>EDUCATION FOR GENERATIONS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>IDENTIFYING KEY RISKS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Follow the ‘respectful way’.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Outline clear communication strategies.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Remove or avoid colonial naming .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Ensure cultural knowledge sharing does not focus on blame or guilt .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Create an Agreement for disbursement for Cultural Knowledge holders.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<b>IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Preserving First Nations culture.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Consulting Cammeraygal Traditional Owners and Elders .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Including and elevating the role of First Nations staff .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Commemorating milestones of cultural celebration, recognition and reconciliation .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 – AGENDA .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2 – WORKSHOP ATTENDEES.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3 – HANDOUT .....</b>	<b>18</b>

## Executive Summary

This report captures the invaluable insights and recommendations shared by the First Nations community during a pivotal engagement workshop with North Sydney Council. The workshop provided a crucial platform for the traditional custodians of the land, the Cammeraygal people, to guide the development of the Council's 10-year Community Strategic Plan.

By elevating the voices of the Cammeraygal Elders and knowledge holders, this process has the transformative potential to embed cultural wisdom at the heart of North Sydney's future planning. The participants deep connection to Country, rich oral histories, and innovative ideas underscores the immense value of genuine First Nations engagement.

The outcome of the workshop identified several overarching themes as paramount considerations for the future planning of North Sydney Council. These include:

-  **Connection to place** – Recognising the profound spiritual bond between the Cammeraygal people and their ancestral lands and finding authentic ways to honour this sacred relationship.
-  **Significance of Naming** – Celebrating Cammeraygal language, stories, and cultural identity and the use of dual-language for signage.
-  **Importance of Truth telling** - Acknowledging and honouring truth telling and healing to create and nurture a path forward for both First Nations people and the wider community.
-  **Celebration of Cammeraygal stories** - Passing on cultural knowledge from ancient generations to new generations to nurture a deep connection with community.
-  **Connection and Custodianship** – Creating spaces throughout the North Sydney LGA for cultural gatherings, cultural education, healing and honouring a sense of belonging.
-  **Education and Cultural Knowledge** - Sharing and preserving cultural knowledge for both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people for generations to come.
-  **Communication and Consultation** – Ensuring First Nations people are included in meaningful and respectful consultation in both the planning and implementation of the Community Strategic Plan.

The invitation to attend the First Nations Engagement workshop was extended to forty-two invitees who were well connected First Nations people in the North Sydney LGA to encourage inclusivity among First Nations people. This included an invitation to the Aboriginal Heritage Office, who gave a personal apology that they were unable to attend. Four First Nations participants were present at the First Nations Engagement Workshop.

This report reflects the insights and recommendations shared by the First Nations participants present at the workshop and outlines their feedback. They provided insightful and culturally specific recommendations to incorporate in North Sydney Council's Community Strategic Plan. The ideas shared by those present demonstrate a deep understanding of Country and a vision to create a vibrant, inclusive community hub that authentically reflects the Cammeraygal Identity.

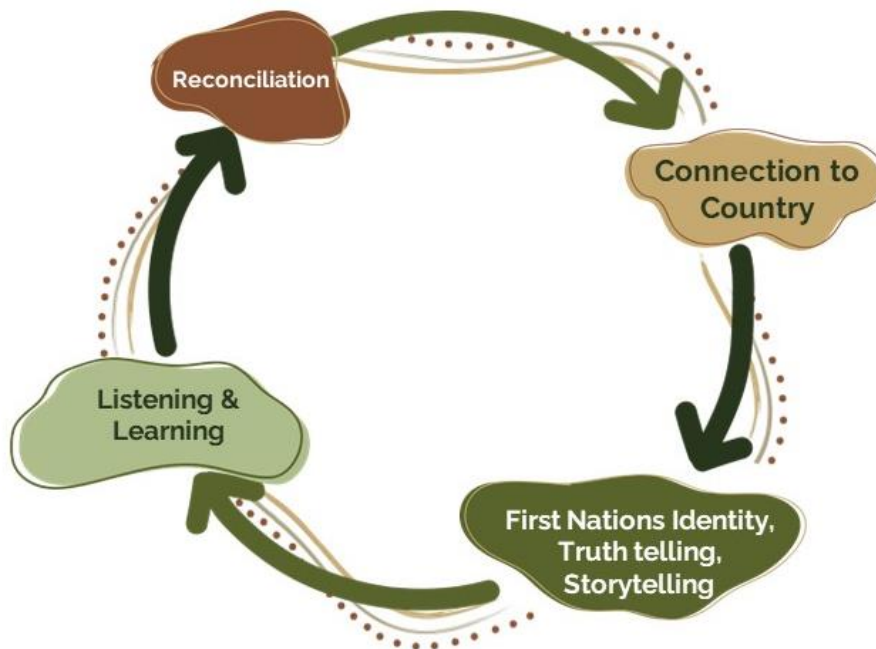
Overall, this report underscores the immense value of genuine First Nations engagement and

the importance of embedding cultural wisdom into the heart of the planning and design by North Sydney Council. By prioritising the voice and aspirations of the Cammeraygal people, this project has the potential to serve as a model of inclusive, Country-centred design that celebrates the rich heritage of the area.

Quote from a First Nations participant:

*Listen to our Elders, listen to story,  
and listen to OUR stories here'.*


## Introduction



As part of North Sydney Council's ten-year Community Strategic Plan for 2025-2035, a First Nations Engagement Workshop was held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in Waverton. The purpose of this workshop was to engage with the local First Nations community at the start of the planning phase to gain their invaluable insights and cultural knowledge to guide North Sydney Council's 10-year plan.

The workshop was facilitated by the Aboriginal led consultancy Murawin, who were contracted by North Sydney Council to lead this important engagement process. Prior to the First Nations Engagement Workshop, the Murawin team was presented with Discussion Papers developed by North Sydney Council outlining their key strategic areas of focus. These focus areas included Culture and Creativity; Open Space and Recreation; Economic Development, Integrated Transport; and Social Inclusion which were used as a guide to frame the workshop.

The workshop followed an agenda developed collaboratively between Murawin and North Sydney Council and included a handout with key questions designed around the areas of focus.



Detailed notes were captured by the Murawin team to document the rich insights and ideas shared by the First Nations participants.

Four First Nations stakeholders attended the workshop, and two First Nations people provided their written input via email. The Mayor of North Sydney Council was present and gave an Acknowledgement of Country, along with two representatives from North Sydney Council. Their presence was vital to provide an understanding of the Council's Community Strategic Plan and answer key questions asked by First Nation Participants.

## About Murawin

Murawin is an Indigenous-owned and operated entity that demonstrates expertise in delivering culturally responsive solutions through a critical sociological perspective over the last ten years. As a Supply Nation certified business, Murawin places a strong emphasis on focusing on cultural inclusion and initiatives for Australia's First Nations People, that in turn supports the broader Community. This ethos forms the core of their business model as this vision focuses the central role of First Nations voices in decision-making processes.

## Stakeholder Engagement

An invitation to attend the First Nations Workshop was given out to forty-two First Nations invitees. Four First Nations participants attended the workshop which was facilitated by the Murawin team who have deep engagement experience working with First Nations communities. The workshop process was guided by the key principles of inclusion, trust, respect and creating a culturally safe space for First Nations participants to share their ideas. Murawin's key Indigenous facilitator used her cultural knowledge and wealth of experience to guide an honest and meaningful discussion with the First Nations participants. In addition, two First Nations participants provided their written input via email guided by the key questions outlined in the handout. Footnote – Appendix 3: Handout.<sup>1</sup>

The facilitation approach involved a yarning circle discussion which provided a culturally safe space for the First Nations participants and was successful in drawing out their personal stories, experiences, ideas and insights. The key questions on the handout were used as a guide to draw out and capture key themes of the workshop.

The participants were very passionate and motivated to be part of the workshop. Two of the participants have lived on Cammeraygal Country for many decades and shared oral stories of the area and shared their deep understanding of belonging to Country. Two First Nations Elders from neighbouring Gadigal Land also shared valuable insights of First Nations history and lessons from their own lived experiences. All the participants shared the importance of stories of place and connection to Country which have been passed down through generations.

First Nations participant:

***'I've been here 30 years. I've raised my children and I've got grandchildren. I'm raising 6 of them now on land here. I was a single mum, raising 4 children. The land picked me'***

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 3 - Handout

## Key themes



The insights and recommendations shared by First Nations participants were focused on acknowledging the importance of connection to Country, listening to land, and recognising the uniqueness of the Cammeraygal Nation, culture, history and its peoples.

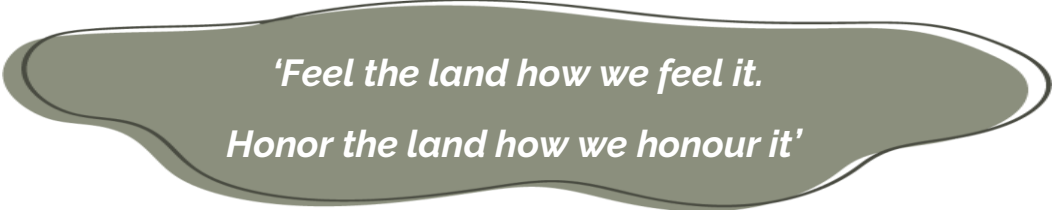
*'The land has stories to share and tell, and to embrace.  
We care for Country like it has been caring for us'.*



## Connection to place

Many ideas and experiences shared by First Nations participants highlighted the importance of acknowledging and nurturing a sense of belonging which is imperative to connection to Country. First Nations participants shared creative and specific ideas for incorporating cultural knowledge and honoring places and ancestors, which is intrinsic to their relationship with ancestral lands.

Throughout the workshop it was clear that First Nations participants have an intrinsic connection to land which has been passed on through generations. They were passionate in sharing the importance of their spiritual connection to land and the uniqueness of the riverways, flora and fauna of the Cammeraygal Country. They also shared frustration at the current lack of acknowledgement and recognition that North Sydney is the birthplace of Tribal warrior Barangaroo, and presented ideas on how to honour her, and nurture a sense of belonging to Country.



*'Feel the land how we feel it.  
Honor the land how we honour it'*

### First Nations Recommendations:

- Acknowledging and educating the wider community that Kirribilli is a women's place
- Giving Barangaroo honour as a Tribal Elder – 'In my tribe there has to be a place for her here, and there's none. She's not recognised here. It is culturally right. It's morally right to bring her back here. She's a Cammeraygal, she's a full blood Aboriginal woman'.
- Highlighting and honouring that Land is spiritual - 'Mother Earth and Father Sky'
- Conducting Walks on Country and guided walks in key nature spaces
- Recognising the importance of Birthing trees – Mosman, Lane Cove at Riverview College
- Highlighting places to tell the stories – e.g. Share the First Nations history of a park, Berry Island Reserve.
- Respecting cultural knowledge and ensuring authenticity in the NSW Koori way
- Providing opportunities to 'touch land, feel land'. 'Gal' means people and land - Cammeraygal





## Significance of Naming

First Nations participants were very passionate about the importance of naming and the use of Cammeraygal language in various ways throughout the North Sydney LGA. They expressed the importance of naming key sights and using dual signage (English and Cammeraygal) to acknowledge Indigenous flora and fauna as an opportunity for cultural recognition and sharing language and culture with the wider community. Participants conveyed that the use of Cammeraygal language throughout the North Sydney area will also play a vital part in reconciliation.

### First Nations Recommendations:

- Creating dual signage – Naming on headlands, train stations, Council/library, Coal loader, major walkways such a Miller St which used to be a major walkway between two creeks
- Acknowledging the Mothers of the First Referendum – Faith Bandler and Patyegarang language teacher, and acknowledging Fathers of First Nations history
- Recognising that naming can draw spirit and provides a safe journey for others
- Utilising a language expert for Sydney – Professor Jakelin Troy
- Considering the use of renaming landmarks e.g. Patyegarang station or Milson's point to Birthplace of Barangaroo

*'A name is everything. A name is identity  
A name can draw spirit'.*

## Truth telling

It was evident throughout the workshop that truth telling was paramount to First Nations participants. The workshop provided a safe cultural space for participants to share painful and important oral stories which have been passed down through generations. They conveyed how integral it was for North Sydney Council to facilitate listening and the teaching of these stories to the wider community.

*'The stories have to come out to educate everybody.  
We are on a path of truth telling. I'm going to make my  
voice loud and proud'.*

### First Nations Recommendations:

- Acknowledging a history of dispossession of the Cammeraygal people – 'standing on a battlefield here, with guns and smallpox';
- Recognising the tragic story of Arabanoo – no Knowledge people left on the North Sydney side; Story of Black Mary - bushranger
- Exploring old maps in Stanton Library for oral history information
- Educating the wider community of stories of survival
- Share truth telling in schools of both sides – 'black and white'
- Facilitating the need for bodies found at Balls Head Rd in 2006 to be returned to their resting place
- Ensuring truth telling is right for each land



## Cultural Flow – Storytelling and Totems

The beautiful blue riverways surrounding the workshop location evoked First Nations stories of the unique waterways and the flora and fauna of the Cammeraygal Nation. Storytelling is a powerful means of passing on cultural knowledge from ancient generations to new generations and weaves a deep connection with community. Participants shared the importance of celebrating these stories and the Council's role in preserving these stories for future generations.

*'All this river here is unique. They all have a story to tell.'*

### First Nations Recommendations:

- Featuring QR Codes with First Nations stories in key areas with a high volume of traffic to share and educate the wider community e.g. station, parks, key landmarks- Milson's Point
- Celebrating the unique riverways and learning about the unique song lines
- Highlighting the totems of the eel, whale and shark dreaming and boomerang on Berry Island
- Sharing cultural stories which highlight Indigenous flora e.g. Indigenous bush on the riverbank used to numb fish as an ancient fishing practice
- Sharing tribal stories of land, water and sky – 'We are the energy in the middle. We have Mother Earth and Father Sky'
- Emphasising North Sydney Council's role to preserve First Nations stories
- Creating a space for ancient and contemporary storytelling. An example given of contemporary storytelling was sharing the journey of reconciliation and highlighting momentous events such as the loss of The Voice Referendum

### Storytelling in Design

- Creating an immersive living and rotating art space using LED technology where artworks can be easily showcased and rotated
- Showcasing First Nations stories for the wider community in key public spaces e.g. Depiction of a statue of Barangaroo and a canoe with women and her babies e.g. Lit up all the way to Parramatta for Vivid
- Creating opportunities for artists to talk directly to an Elder following cultural protocol – 'Follow the respectful way'- feature grass roots artists
- Ensuring the stories they use are right for the land by engaging with First Nations Elders
- Incorporating Cammeraygal totems- whale; eels; and symbolism of the canoe
- Featuring First Nations truth telling in local exhibitions

*'Stories have been preserved, they've survived, and they will continue to survive. How we make the stories strong for my kids and grandkids, that's where we are at now.'*



## Connection and Custodianship

First Nations participants expressed the importance and need for Yarning Circles and the creation of Meeting Places throughout the North Sydney LGA. Participants conveyed that these cultural spaces are key to creating a sense of community, facilitate knowledge sharing and create a setting for truth telling and healing.

### First Nations Recommendations:

- Creating areas for a Sand Circle for smoking ceremonies and cultural fire for First Nations to perform
- Designing spaces for Yarning Circles in different areas e.g. Under the Harbour Bridge
- Creating a Soundgarden – highlighting old and new cultures
- Inviting Elders to citizenship ceremonies
- Creating spaces for First Nations to foster creativity – e.g. First Nations only art classes
- Holding First Nations music, culture markets and festivals (such as the Gai-mariagal festival) outside of recognised Indigenous calendar events
- Featuring an Acknowledgement of First Nations at key North Sydney hubs e.g. library

## Education for Generations

First Nations participants emphasised the importance of sharing and preserving cultural knowledge for both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people for generations to come. They provided innovative and specific ideas for Council to engage, educate and connect the wider community with Cammeraygal Country and culture.

### First Nations Recommendations:

- Creating opportunities for a 'Walking Classroom' e.g. connect with ancient lands on a Berry Island Walk
- Providing opportunities for First Nations to share oral history e.g. library, events, exhibitions
- Collaborating with schools to ensure inclusion of First Nations stories and culture – creation of a bush tucker garden/s
- Creating opportunities to 'Listen to Country, Listen to Elders'
- Creating an online project for storytelling e.g. link maps/places with First Nation stories on Council website



## Identifying key risks

The workshop provided a safe cultural space for First Nations participants to share some key insights into possible risks to be aware of in the planning process of Council's Community Strategic Plan. These learnings and deep insights were shared based on their lived experiences.

Recognising these risks and identifying key strategies to mitigate these risks will be integral for the Council's planning strategies.

### **Follow the 'respectful way'**

Recognising and following Cammeraygal cultural protocols is essential in the planning and design of Council's community strategic plan. Consulting with First Nations Elders will ensure that Council is honouring and respecting the traditional owners in all aspects of their project implementation. An example given to ensure cultural protocol is followed, is to make sure artists sit down with a First Nations Elder to discuss their artistic vision ensuring that their designs and storytelling are honouring the First Nations people and the Cammeraygal Nation. In addition, it was recommended that the Council create a Reconciliation Action Plan and include it in their Community Strategic Plan, which embeds cultural protocols.

### **Outline clear communication strategies**

It is imperative to ensure that lines of communication are clearly outlined among various parties involved in the planning process. Workshop participants shared that they have been involved on past projects where organisations have used bullying tactics to take over a project, which creates confusion in leadership and distrust among First Nations. Clear and regular consultation with First Nations organisations and Traditional Owners will assist in strengthening relationships and facilitating meaningful dialogue.

### **Remove or avoid colonial naming**

First Nations participants were very passionate about the significance of adopting Cammeraygal language in various ways throughout the North Sydney LGA. Participants shared that they find it profoundly distressing when they drive on roads named after colonial slave traders, for example Ben Boyd Road. They also shared the importance of their children and grandchildren embracing Cammeraygal totems or language for their school teams rather than colonial rulers to honour First Nations culture. Facilitating connections between Cammeraygal Traditional Owners and school leaders will provide the opportunity for learning of Indigenous knowledge among the wider community.

### **Ensure cultural knowledge sharing does not focus on blame or guilt**

First Nations participants were adamant that sharing and promoting the cultural knowledge of the Cammeraygal Nation is not grounded in blame or guilt. They expressed determination in focusing on the path to reconciliation through storytelling, truth telling and celebrating the uniqueness of the Cammeraygal people and its land.

### **Create an Agreement for disbursement for Cultural Knowledge holders**

North Sydney Council has already demonstrated that they acknowledge the unique and important contribution of First Nations Traditional Owners by providing a disbursement to First Nations workshop participants. However, it is recommended that an Agreement for Disbursement is created to ensure equity among all First Nations for their Cultural Knowledge in the Community Strategic Plan. This can be achieved through consultation with First Nations Elders, Land Councils and key organisations. It is imperative that First Nations people continue to be recognised for their invaluable cultural knowledge in an equitable and respectful way.



## Identifying Next Steps

By recognising the importance of First Nations cultural input, North Sydney Council has the unique opportunity to embed recommendations and aspirations of First Nations community into the design and planning of their ten-year Community Strategic Plan.

### **Preserving First Nations culture,**

By listening to First Nations oral stories and facilitating ways to highlight these stories to the wider community, Council will fulfil the vision of First Nations people to preserve the rich and ancient Cammeraygal culture for future generations. Highlighting song lines, totems and honouring truth telling will facilitate healing and strengthen the sense of belonging among the First Nations community.

### **Consulting Cammeraygal Traditional Owners and Elders**

Establishing a clear communication strategy between Council and the First Nations community encourages meaningful dialogue and will foster an open and genuine relationship. Elders that have taken time to provide their cultural knowledge around design and planning should be included and consulted at key points of the planning process.

**Create a Reconciliation Action Plan** – It was suggested that the Council create a Reconciliation Action Plan. The establishment of a RAP demonstrates a commitment to support First Nations People and creates a framework to advance reconciliation.

**Establish a First Nations Advisory Group** – could be set up to specifically inform the Community Strategic Plan and Council in relevant matters. This will also create a clear communication channel to follow cultural protocols and strengthen relationships.

### **Including and elevating the role of First Nations staff**

It was recommended by workshop participants that Council may have First Nations representation among their own staff. This important inclusion will assist in embedding First Nations needs into Council planning. It is also an important opportunity for Council to show their commitment to ensure that First Nations culture and representation is considered in short term and long-term planning within the Council, even beyond the ten-year plan.

### **Commemorating milestones of cultural celebration, recognition and reconciliation**

First Nations participants recognised the significant opportunity and impact the Community Strategic Plan can have to implement the vision of First Nations people and celebrate the unique culture of the Cammeraygal Nation. Participants expressed the importance of recognising and celebrating these important milestones of cultural celebration and reconciliation among the First Nations community and the wider community. Suggestions were made to celebrate these milestones through community events, markets, music and cultural performances and exhibitions.

## Conclusion

Conducting the First Nations Engagement workshop was a pivotal step in ensuring that the cultural knowledge, experiences, and aspirations of the Cammeraygal people are at the forefront of North Sydney Council's Community Strategic Plan. Through open dialogue, participants shared their invaluable insights and innovative ideas that have the transformative potential to provide a true reflection and recognition of this land and its traditional custodians.

The recommendations put forth by the First Nations participants underscore their deep connection to Country. By incorporating Cammeraygal language and totems, honouring truth

telling, and highlighting the significance of preserving the unique Cammeraygal culture, the Council has the ability to foster a profound sense of belonging and pride within the local Indigenous community.

Integrating these culturally grounded recommendations into the Community Strategic Plan will not only honour the rich heritage of the Cammeraygal Nation but will also create a lasting legacy that educates and inspires both Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members alike.

Paramount to the successes of elevating the Cammeraygal Traditional Owners voice is to implement strategies which continue to facilitate and nurture meaningful consultation and elevate First Nations role in both the planning and ongoing implementation of the Community Strategic Plan. By nurturing this partnership, North Sydney Council has the power to become a model of inclusive and culturally responsive placemaking.

The true measure of success will be the degree to which the aspirations and cultural knowledge shared by the First Nations community are authentically reflected in the short term and long-term planning strategies of the Council. This workshop has laid the groundwork for an ongoing, meaningful collaboration—one that must be nurtured to ensure the Community Strategic plan remains true to the spirit of the land and its people.

## **‘Elevate the voices and vision of the Cammeraygal people’**

It takes leadership from Government bodies and Council to create change by rethinking the way they approach a project: a responsibility to lead by example. By incorporating the suggestions put forward by Murawin, and First Nations community members, Council are not only showing respect for First Nations People, but they are also showing that they embrace the First Nations philosophy that if “we care for Country, Country will care for us”.

This workshop has laid the groundwork for a meaningful and ongoing partnership between Council and First Nations people, one that must be nurtured to ensure their Community Strategic Plan remains true to the spirit of the land and its people. With this guiding principle at the heart of the process, North Sydney Council has the power to become a groundbreaking model of inclusive and culturally responsive placemaking.

Quote from a First Nations participant:





.....  
***It's a celebration of happiness and joy. North Sydney Council  
now, comes into that celebration.***

***It's a celebration of walking with North Sydney Council.***

***When all this is done, that's a celebration of reconciliation'***  
.....

# APPENDIX 1 - Agenda

## Workshop Agenda: North Sydney Aboriginal Engagement Coal Loader Station – 2 Balls Head Drive, Waverton

<i>Aim of day</i>	The aim of the project is to establish how Aboriginal cultural values can contribute to North Sydney Council’s new Community Strategic Plan.	
	 <a href="#">Culture and creativity discussion paper DRAFT.pdf</a>  <a href="#">Integrated Transport discussion paper DRAFT.pdf</a>  <a href="#">Social Inclusion Discussion Paper DRAFT.pdf</a>  <a href="#">Open Space and Recreation discussion paper (DRAFT).docx</a>	
<i>Participants</i>	Participants confirmed, Caroline Glass-Pattison, Clair Jackson, Jean Moran, John T Moriarty, (plus 1) and Neil Evers.	
<i>Location</i>	Coal Loader Station – 24 Balls Head Road, Waverton	
<i>Date and time</i>	Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 – 10.00am - 2.00pm	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Content covered</b>	<b>Time</b>
<i>Meet</i>	Morning Tea on arrival	10.00am
<i>Networking</i>	Networking discussion over tea/informal chats/informal introductions	10.00am - 10.30am
<i>Acknowledge Country</i>	Acknowledgement of Country	10.30am – 10.35am
<i>Introductions</i>	Facilitators – Donna Ingram & Kiran Hutchinson – Murawin North Sydney Council	10.50am - 10.55am
<i>Welcome from Council</i>	Mayor – Zoe Baker	
<i>Introduction to workshop</i>	Introducing the key aims of the workshop (Murawin)	10.55am - 11.05am
<i>Introductions</i>	<b>Participants:</b> Name: Country: What’s your interest/ passion?	11.05am - 11.30am
<i>Discussion</i>	Facilitated by Murawin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture and Creativity Discussion Paper – key points</li> </ul>	11.40am - 12.20pm
<i>Next steps</i>	What happens now? (Council)	12.20pm
<i>Workshop ends</i>		2.00pm



## APPENDIX 2 - Workshop Attendees

PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER
First Nations	4
First Nations responses via questions presented on handout	2
Murawin	2
North Sydney Council Staff  *Note several staff were present to welcome participants, but did not stay for the workshop Mayor for North Sydney Council Mayor was also present to welcome participants and give an Acknowledgement of Country	2
Forty-two First Nations people were invited to participate in the First Nations Engagement Workshop, including the Aboriginal Heritage Office.	
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	10

## ***APPENDIX 3 – Handout***

Insert handout distributed to participants

[North Sydney Handout.pdf](#)



**What does feeling welcome and a sense of belonging in our community mean to you as a First Nations person?**

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ANDERSON PARK

How can we foster a greater sense of belonging for First Nations community members?

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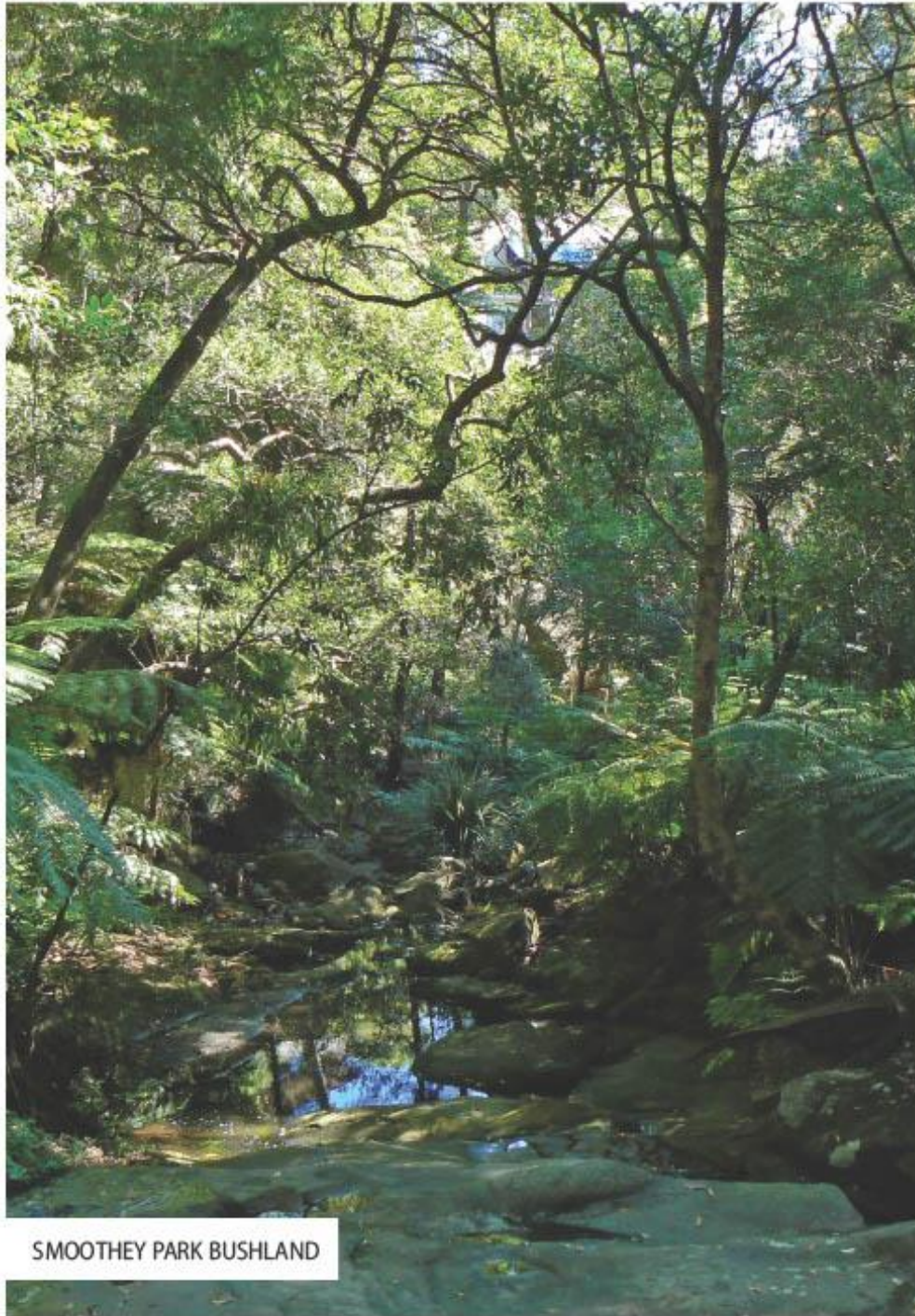
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SMOOTHEY PARK BUSHLAND

In what ways can we ensure that all communities have the opportunity to connect with First Nations heritage, living culture and people in our community?

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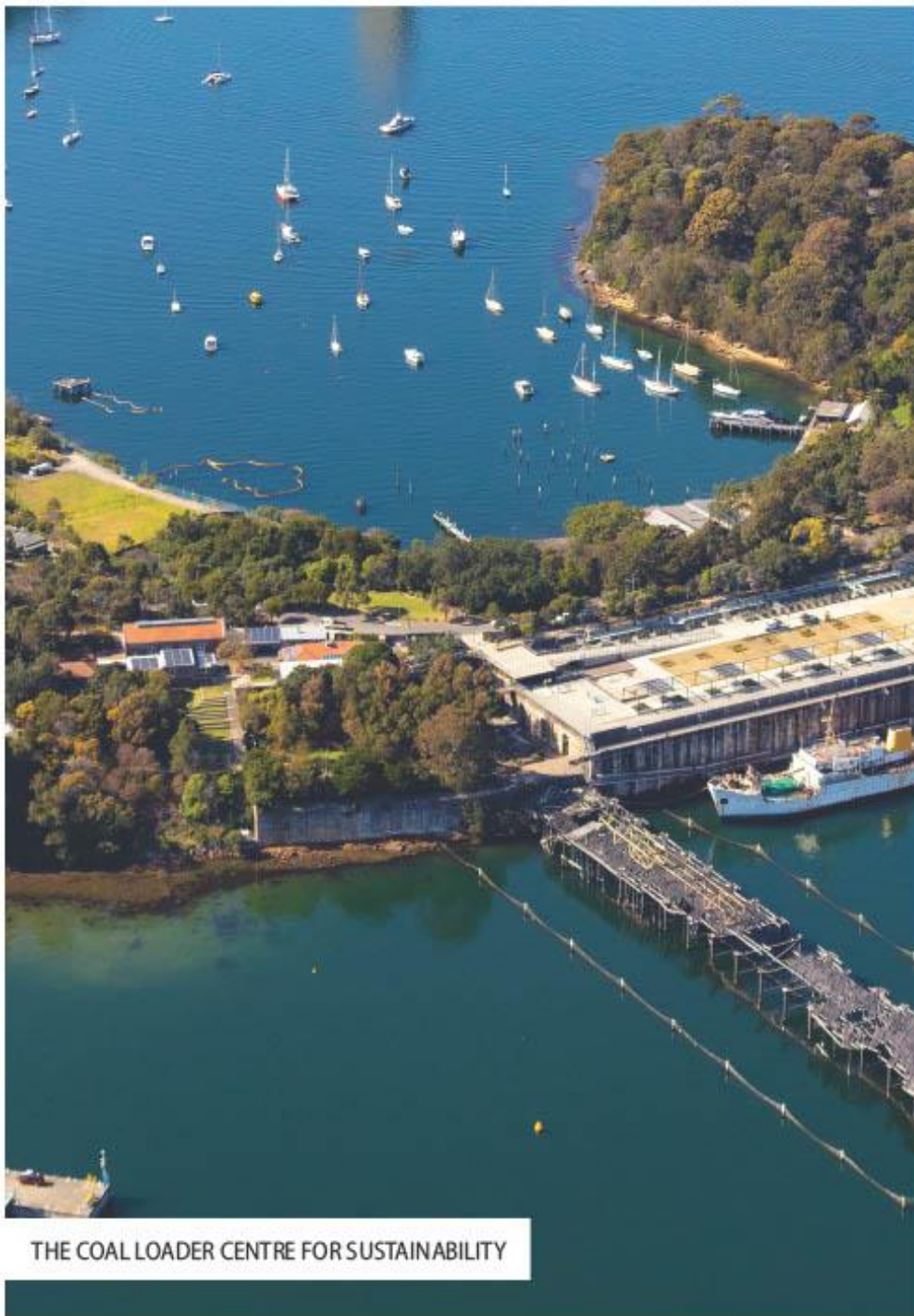
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**What does culture and creativity in North Sydney mean to you as a First Nations person?**

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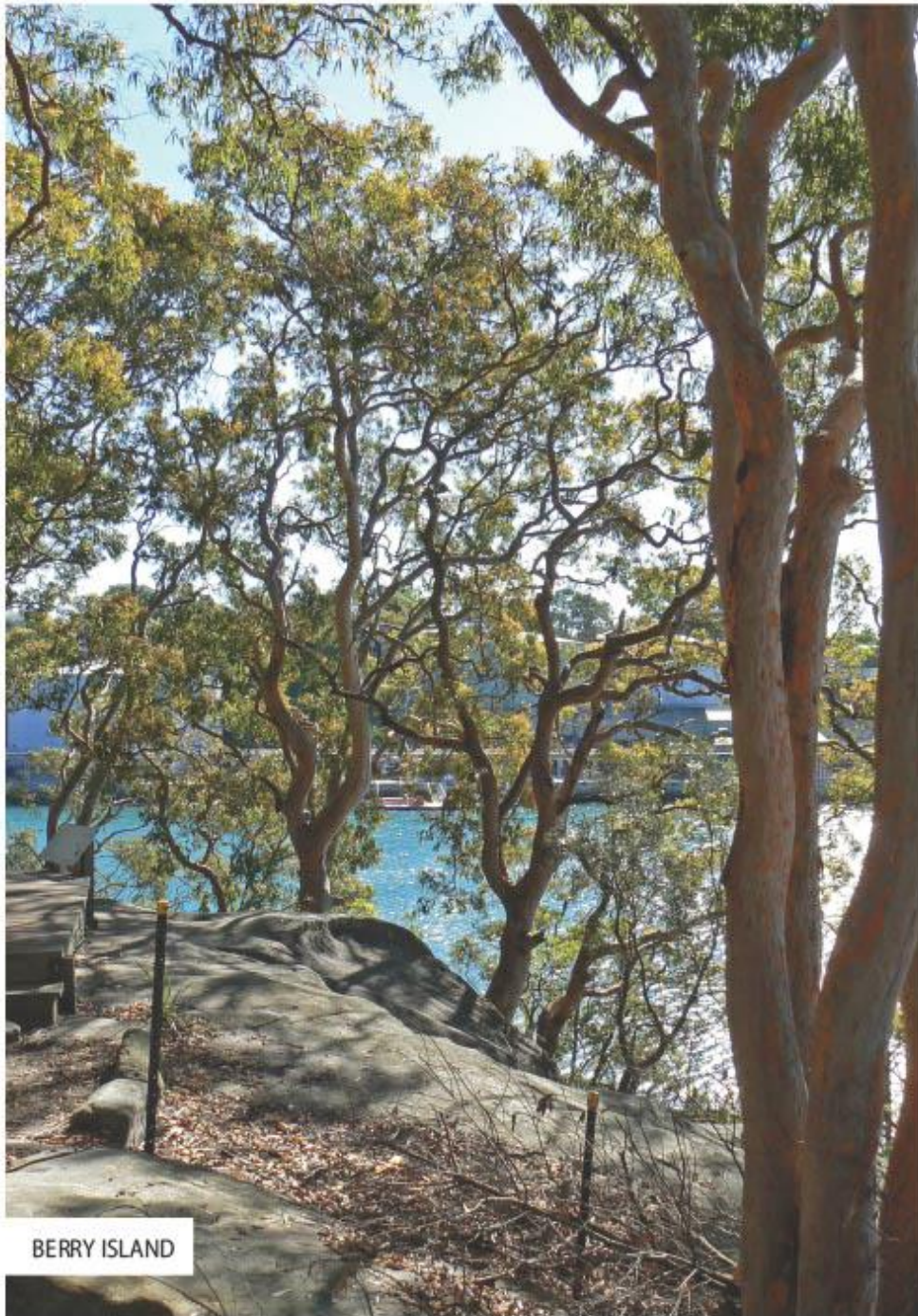
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THE COAL LOADER CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABILITY



BERRY ISLAND

Are you aware of any stories or oral histories that relate to the North Sydney local government area?

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PRIMROSE PARK

Do you have any ideas for programs to preserve and share First Nations cultural heritage, and how do you see them?

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Do you have any ideas for programs to support and increase visibility of First Nations living culture?

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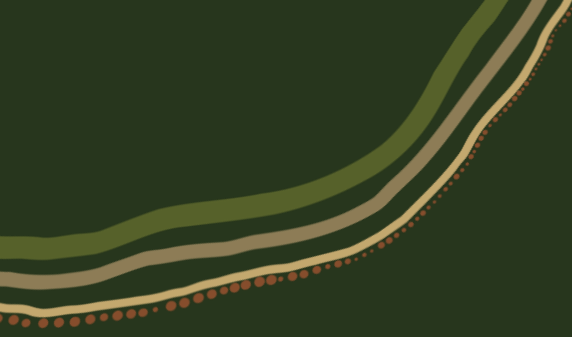
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ERNEST PLACE, CROWS NEST





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