

Case study

EORA JOURNEY: RECOGNITION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



Celebrating Aboriginal culture and heritage in the City of Sydney

Governor NSW Margaret
Beazley, Cr Yvonne
Weldon, Judy Watson,
Lord Mayor Clover Moore,
Aunty Bronwyn Pentrith.

Image: Chris Southwood /
City of Sydney.

Quick facts

Project type:
Public art and cultural
interpretation, education,
employment and training

Location:
Sydney, NSW

**Aboriginal language
landscape group:**
Gadi (Gadigal/Gadigalleon)



Project team:
Artists and projects
Reko Rennie with local
Aboriginal youth
Welcome to Redfern 2013
Tony Albert *Yininmadyemi*
Thou didst let fall 2015
Nicole Foreshew *born into
darkness before dawn 2015*
Judy Watson *bara*
(Monument for the Eora) 2022
Yanamura, *Walking On
Country*

Project collaborators
Nathan Moran, CEO,
Metropolitan Local
Aboriginal Land Council
Dillon Kombumerri,
Principal Architect,
Government Architect NSW

Hetti Perkins, Eora Journey
Curatorial Adviser
Emily McDaniel,
Yanamura Curator
Aunty Bronwyn Pentrith,
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Public Art
Advisory Panel, City of Sydney

Project delivery
City of Sydney:
Indigenous Leadership and
Engagement; City Design;
City Projects; Comms,
Media and Marketing

Key people: Edie Coe,
Tracey Duncan, David
Beaumont, Preston Peachy,
Bridget Smyth, Glenn
Wallace, Brendan Barrett

A program celebrating Aboriginal culture and heritage in the City of Sydney, including a guided walk, public art, a knowledge and cultural centre, a major annual event and an economic development plan.

Key outcomes

Healthy community

Many conversations, with many people over a long period of time, have informed the location and direction of Eora Journey. The project has been led by Aboriginal design advisers, curators, artists and the local community. Throughout the project, connections within community and with place have been enhanced, and have expanded to include the broader Sydney population.

Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage

Design that tells the story of Aboriginal culture needs to be led by Aboriginal designers and artists so Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) can be appropriately used and acknowledged.

Stories of place need to inform the design concept or urban structure, and associated public spaces planned within that context. Cultural 'sitelines' (places that contain and interconnect the stories, memories and histories of Country) are important aspects of Country that need to be expressed in spatial design.

Better places

Non-design decisions, for example, about program, future opportunities, and allowing for cultural practice on Country, are important considerations. This project has involved the creation of an Aboriginal knowledge and cultural centre in Redfern, providing a physical and dedicated space for community to come together and practise culture.

Spatial implications / tips for designers

Allow Aboriginal designers, curators and artists to lead.

Allow engagement to inform spatial decisions.

Connect the stories of place (and sitelines) with key public spaces.

Recognise complementary activities that allow cultural practice on Country.



bara by Judy Watson

Image: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney.



Yininmadyemi Thou didst let fall by Tony Albert

Image: Jamie Williams / City of Sydney.

Eora Journey is a significant program of projects that aims to achieve greater recognition of Aboriginal people and their culture in the City of Sydney. Eora Journey was initially conceived for Sustainable Sydney 2030, as a walk from the site of first contact on Sydney Harbour to Redfern, the home of Aboriginal activism in Australia.

Eora Journey includes 4 pillars:

- recognition in the public realm
- a signature event celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage
- an economic action plan to focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- an Aboriginal knowledge and cultural centre.

To date the City of Sydney has realised 4 of 7 public artworks initially proposed by Hetti Perkins for Eora Journey program, including *Yininmadyemi Thou didst let fall* by Tony Albert, and *bara* by Judy Watson.

The walk is expanding to include cultural projects from the *Harbour Walk Storytelling Report* by Emily McDaniel, including 9 cultural projects along 9 km of the city's foreshore from Pirrama / Pyrmont to Wallamool / Woolloomooloo Bay. Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council has endorsed *Yananurala* (which translates from the Gadigal language as 'walk Country!') as the new name for the harbour walk. In 2022 the City of Sydney installed 11 interpretive markers to create a storytelling thread for *Yananurala* and has recently sought expressions of interest from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and designers for the *Yananurala: Sitelines and Conversations* project to further reinforce the storytelling experience along the harbour.

The public art and storytelling program is extending through work with the community to create a new place for Aboriginal people at the former Redfern Post Office. The City of Sydney, with the community, will soon be embarking on a major public artwork at Ta-Ra / Dawes Point to address the overdue need for recognition of *Patyegarang*, the young Aboriginal woman who granted William Dawes permission to record her language.

Eora Journey exemplifies a collaborative way of transforming the city by working in partnership with Aboriginal community – empowering community with a strong voice in shaping and revitalising the city’s public spaces and institutions.

Eora means ‘the people’ in Gadigal language, so Eora Journey is ‘the people’s journey’. Eora Journey is part of the City of Sydney’s commitment to truth telling. It commits the City of Sydney to taking a holistic approach before making architecture and city spaces. This is a fundamental aspect of how the city is designed – where Country and Aboriginal people have a voice.

The Aboriginal community of Sydney planted the seeds for Eora Journey. Since its inception, the program has been guided by Aboriginal people.

Eora Journey demonstrates excellence in community engagement, policy development and implementation. Before the program was proposed, as part of Sustainable Sydney 2030 the City of Sydney responded to community requests for meaningful consultation with the Aboriginal community. In 2007 the council undertook the largest community consultation process by the City of Sydney at that time to address major issues of climate change, housing affordability, transport, and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.

Consultation included targeted Aboriginal community engagement at locations where Aboriginal communities in Sydney lived – in Redfern, Woollahooloo and Glebe. The council engaged young Aboriginal ambassadors to encourage community participation, which involved more than 200 Aboriginal people.

Best practice research

Eora Journey demonstrates excellence in research. Through an open expression of interest, curator Hetti Perkins and architect Julie Cracknell were appointed to undertake a review of international best practice in cultural interpretation, and conduct detailed research and consultation with community members and the City of Sydney’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel. The research identifies projects that respond to stories and sites of significance for Aboriginal people. This supports and extends the vision of linking the site of first contact on Sydney Harbour to Redfern, the heart of Aboriginal activism in Australia.

Research for Eora Journey was extended by engaging Emily McDaniel to produce **Eora Journey: Harbour Walk Storytelling Report**. With historian Paul Irish, the City of Sydney Indigenous Leadership and Engagement, City Design and History teams, this research has laid the foundation for the projects that will form Yananurala.

**Welcome to Redfern, Redfern.
Terrace Street Art Project, Reko Rennie
with local Aboriginal youth**

Image: Adam Hollingworth /
City of Sydney.





**Nicole Foreshew
born into darkness
before dawn**
Image: Paul Patterson /
City of Sydney.

Engaging with community

Following council's endorsement of Eora Journey as part of Sustainable Sydney 2030, the first City of Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel was appointed in December 2008. The panel has been a key touchpoint in developing Eora Journey projects.

The council has appointed Hetti Perkins as Eora Journey Curatorial Adviser to guide and shape projects, engage with Elders, and work with artists and community members. For major public art projects, the Lord Mayor has hosted morning teas for community members to discuss project ideas and provide specific input into the development of project briefs. Council staff have also promoted Eora Journey projects at the Yabun Festival and NAIDOC in the City events.

In addition, individual projects have used various models for engaging community members. For the Redfern Terrace project, artist Reko Rennie conducted workshops with local Aboriginal youth, encouraging the participants to represent themselves as local heroes of the future.

For Yananurula (the harbour walk), the council has engaged Emily McDaniel to guide the project's development. The council convened a forum at the State Library for Aboriginal community members, historians and curators to discuss and inform the development of the project. The council has also established the Yananurula Working Group which brings together senior Aboriginal and other key staff from the organisations and cultural institutions around the harbour to collaborate on and guide the project.



Yananurula, Walking on Country signage

Image: Chris Southwood /
City of Sydney.



bara

Image: Chris Southwood /
City of Sydney.

Further resources

City of Sydney (2019) *Eora Journey: Harbour Walk Storytelling Report*, City of Sydney, <https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/cdn.cityartsydney.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/19080633/Harbour-Walk-Storytelling-Report-November-2019.pdf>.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/-/media/corporate/files/2020-07-migrated/files_6/6645_final-version-community-strategic-plan-ipr-document_fa4-1_low-res.pdf?download=true.

Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/sustainable-sydney-2030-2050>.

Reko Rennie with local Aboriginal youth *Welcome to Redfern* 2013 www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/welcome-redfern/.

Deep listening

Eora Journey has evolved over time and has gained increasing support from Aboriginal community members and organisations in the City of Sydney.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel, Eora Journey Public Art Working Group and Yananurala Working Group are hosting forums for community members to provide advice on the council's cultural programs and other areas of council operations that are of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The attendance of the Lord Mayor and councillors at these forums and other associated events has further demonstrated the City's commitment to listening to and upholding the community's beliefs, values and knowledge.

Reconciliation through meaningful actions

Eora Journey is built on a foundation of respect, acknowledging the important connection to Country that Aboriginal people share, and honouring the council's commitment to ensuring the sustainable enjoyment of this Country for future generations.

The City of Sydney also acknowledges that Country is a term with complex meaning and understanding for Aboriginal peoples. Country includes the water, winds, seasons, constellations, tides, animals and plants. Understanding Country includes acknowledging interconnections between place, stories and memories, as well as acknowledging all who have lived and those yet to be born. Acknowledging Country is not merely a phrase to be repeated, but an action and a responsibility.

The development of Eora Journey projects has been undertaken with respect for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols, and ensuring the benefits are distributed to Aboriginal cultural custodians, artists, curators, and businesses (including caterers and tour operators).

Tony Albert *Yininmadyemi Thou didst let fall* 2015 www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/yininmadyemi-thou-didst-let-fall/.

Nicole Foreshew *born into darkness before dawn* 2015 www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/born-in-darkness-before-dawn/.

Judy Watson *bara (Monument for the Eora)* 2022 www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/bara/.

Yananurala, *Walking On Country* www.cityartsydney.com.au/city-art-public-art-strategy/yananurala/.

Credits

Research and writing:
City of Sydney