

# ARTS PLAN

## Aboriginal Public Art Project

Bennelong Park to Kissing Point Park Putney



City of Ryde

March 2010

prepared by  
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# CONTENTS

			pages				pages
	ARTS PLAN						
1	INTRODUCTION		1	6	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK		
	1.1	Objectives			6.1	Meeting Place	13
	1.2	Outcomes for the Community			6.2	Elemental Shifts	14
	1.3	Previous Instruments			6.3	Between Water and Land	15
2	DEFINITIONS	2	2	7	OPPORTUNITIES		
	2.0	Project Types	3		7.1	Meeting Place	16
	2.1	Intervention			7.2	Wallumai Wind Sculpture	17
	2.2	Integration			7.3	Groundplane Entrance	18
	2.3	Intervention / Integration			7.4	Groundplane	19
	2.4	Art from Community Consultation	4		7.5	Slipways	20
	2.5	Outdoor Gallery			7.6	Markers	21
	2.6	Temporal Projects					
	2.7	Mentoring Emerging Artists		8	LOCATION PLAN	8.1	Plan
3	PROCESSES						
		Implementation of the Public Art Works	5				
	3.1	Stages					
	3.2	Concept Design	6				
	3.3	Design Development	7				
	3.4	Fabrication	8				
	3.5	Installation	9				
4	HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	River timeline	10				
5	SITE OVERVIEW	Bennelong Park to Kissing Point Park	12				

## 1.1 OBJECTIVES

This Plan explores the overlapping areas of Bennelong Park and Kissing Point Park  
This document responds to

- the Aboriginal heritage which overlays the parks
- the natural amenity of the foreshore with mangroves, water views and reforestation
- the circulation of people along the paths
- the recreational usage of the parks
- the allocated budget for artworks
- the engagement of community with their open spaces

This Arts Plan initiates a documentation process which will take prioritised projects through design briefs, to design development, fabrication and installation.

## 1.2 OUTCOMES FOR THE COMMUNITY

The outcomes for Public Art initiatives in Bennelong Park and Kissing Point Park are part of the overall vision for the Riverwalk.

These outcomes include

- response to the rich Aboriginal heritage of the river
- enhanced amenity and wayfinding
- cohesive interface with the river
- celebration of history and cultural diversity
- consideration of an integrated visual signature for the river

## 1.3 PREVIOUS INSTRUMENTS

This Arts Plan was prepared with reference to the following documents

**Ryde River Walk Master Plan Report**

**Aboriginal Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment**

**Draft Ryde Foreshore Natural and Cultural Heritage Study**

June 2007

March 2009

October 2009



## 2 WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?

Public Art is defined as artworks and performance located in the public realm. This includes the participation of artists in the design process of public spaces and facilities.

The term “Public Art” also refers to contemporary art practice that occurs outside of the traditional gallery or museum system, and can include a diverse range of ephemeral artworks and activities such as performance art, electronic, computer-generated and projected artworks.

The engagement of communities, who are the Public, is important for acknowledging collective space and the art inhabiting there. The objectives for Public Space as a democratic site are idyllic. According to age, gender and cultural background, people negotiate different worlds. Public Art has multiple meanings and access for the diverse groups who interact in the locale.

Public Art is usually site specific. Site specificity refers to the articulation of communities through space as much as the context of histories and the built environment. As it articulates this sense of place, the Public Art should engage with the memories and current narratives of social relationships overlaying the site.

Public Art is built from a conceptual framework, interacts with the audience/participant in a shared space, and contributes to the cultural voices in placemaking.

For the success of a Public Artwork, it should be an integral part of its environment.



Artist  
Antony Gormley  
Margate England



Artist:  
James Drake  
Police Dog Attack  
Birmingham USA



Director  
Russell Dumas  
projected prints  
Dee Why Beach

## 2.0 PROJECT TYPES

The following categories indicate the context of artworks within a place. The planning stages of this process should anticipate the approach and the kinds of artworks. It is difficult to separate artworks definitively into categories because of the overlapping of project strategies.

### 2.1 INTERVENTION

Intervention projects transform dramatically the physical or traditional spatial relationships of a site.

- Intervention artworks hold a strong position in the foreground as iconic pieces.
- The sheer size of a public space may require an intervention to assert a significant position
- Sculpture festivals are temporal outdoor exhibition spaces where the work intervenes outside instead of framed within the white cube of a gallery.

### 2.2 INTEGRATION

Integration projects conceive art as a seamless part of a building or the built environment.

- An integrated artwork responds to and engages with site and is a cohesive element of the design.
- The best practice develops integrated artworks in collaboration with architects and consults with the community early in the concept development stage.
- Integration projects engage specifically with the unique character of a place.

### 2.3 INTERVENTION /INTEGRATION

The presence of an integrated artwork may still provoke a powerful intervention in a space.

- When the relationship between infrastructure and artwork is blurred, the combined presence is both integration and intervention.
- The relationship of the structure and its attachment is often explored by their difference.
- The benefit of this kind of artwork is its ability to fit easily into a constrained space or a formal structure and yet speak powerfully to its audience.



ARTIST Donna Marcus, *Steam*, Brisbane

## 2.0 PROJECT TYPES

### 2.4 ART FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Artworks which result from a community engagement process are carefully considered to ensure meaningful collaboration informs the ideas and imagery of the artwork.

- It is tangible for the community to directly participate in the physical resolution of the artwork coordinated by a professional artist .
- Their contribution may influence the artist's ideas only.
- The results of Public art from this degree of involvement of the community measure the process of consultation as much as the finished artwork.

### 2.5 OUTDOOR GALLERY

Signature artworks by an individual artist are not directly related to site and can be relocated easily somewhere else. The investment in artist rather than place results in "plonk down " artworks pervading parks all over the world.

- Some of these outdoor gallery pieces are absorbed into collective memory over time.
- The real impact of outdoor gallery works occurs in art festivals.
- Traditional space is transformed into a vibrant community event interacting with artworks,

### 2.6 TEMPORAL PROJECTS

The inclusion of temporal projects partnering festivals or promoting urban renewal is usually an intervention disrupting routine spatial forms.

- The life of the artworks is limited by its exhibition time limit or the use of impermanent materials.
- These artworks can give scope for the expression of local artists
- They require a meaningful recurring budget to ensure quality work and a direct benefit to business and community.

### 2.7 MENTORING EMERGING ARTISTS

A program of mentoring emerging artists brings together experienced artists with emerging artists to provide a collaborative experience for both.

- Artworks can be initiated by the mentored artist, or the project encourages a partnership between artists.
- A more simple approach is to include the mentored artist within an existing project.
- This mentoring process reinforces best practice for emerging artists



RIGHT Puppy Jeff Koons

BELOW Installation Sydney Park  
Milne and Stonehouse



## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ART WORKS

### STAGES

The process of Public Artworks from idea to installation involves the management and co-ordination of this project through the stages of

- 3.1 Concept design
- 3.2 Design development
- 3.3 Fabrication
- 3.4 Installation

These processes for Bennelong Park to Kissing Point Park require some modification to the existing infrastructure to facilitate the inclusion of these works.



*Stages for Art Play Space  
Hunter development Corporation  
Newcastle  
Milne and Stonehouse with Zenscapes Landscape Architects*

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ART WORKS

### 3.1 CONCEPT DESIGN

The concept design stage considers the idea of an artwork in context with the site, the community and its longevity. Council input and feedback will be sought at this point to determine parameters such as material, maintenance and scale.

The artists engaged will work within the agreed conceptual framework. This reinforces the consultative process of the proposed Concept Design. Issues to be raised at this point include engineering, lighting, maintenance and OH&S considerations.

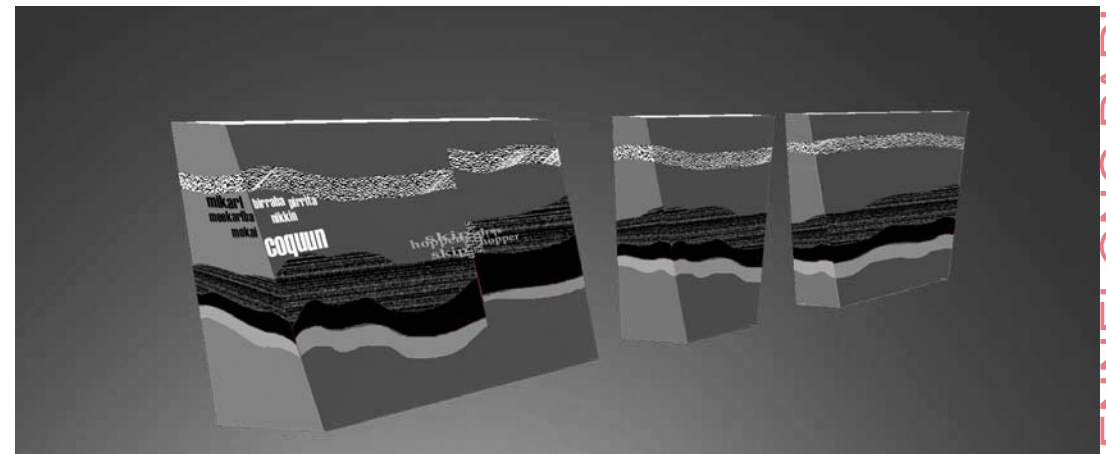
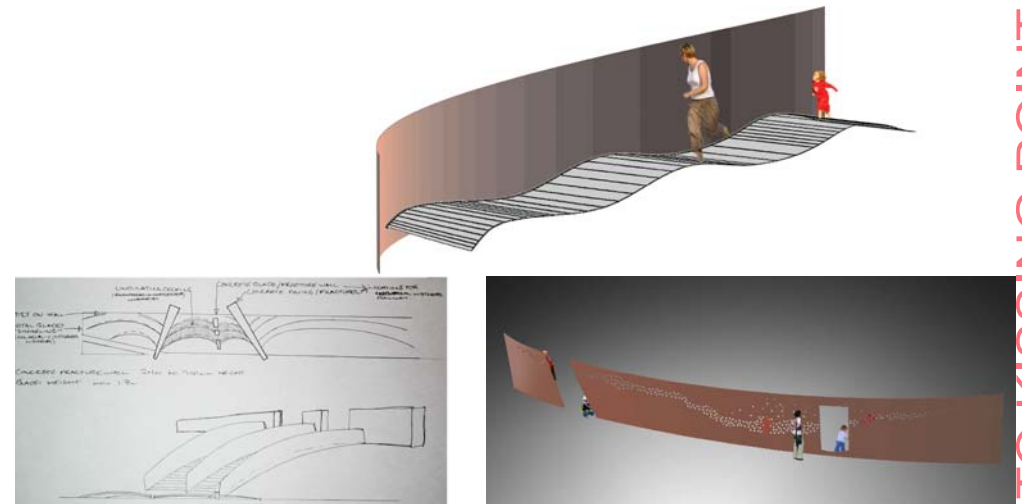
Before the design is initiated, the parameters of the proposed artwork will explore

- site characteristics
- safety
- scale
- audience
- budget

The budget may be agreed upon to frame the scale and material resolution for the artist.

The deliverables for this stage will include visual presentation and written documentation that communicates the concept and its situation. There will be a preliminary budget estimate provided to indicate a real context for design scale and materials .

A consultation with community will occur at this stage to allow a meaningful input and response time before committing to the design development of artworks.



Concept Design for Art Play Space  
Hunter development Corporation  
Newcastle

Milne and Stonehouse with Zenscapes Landscape Architects

March, 2010



## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ART WORKS

### 3.2 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The design development stage refines the form, the cost and the material choice of the artwork.

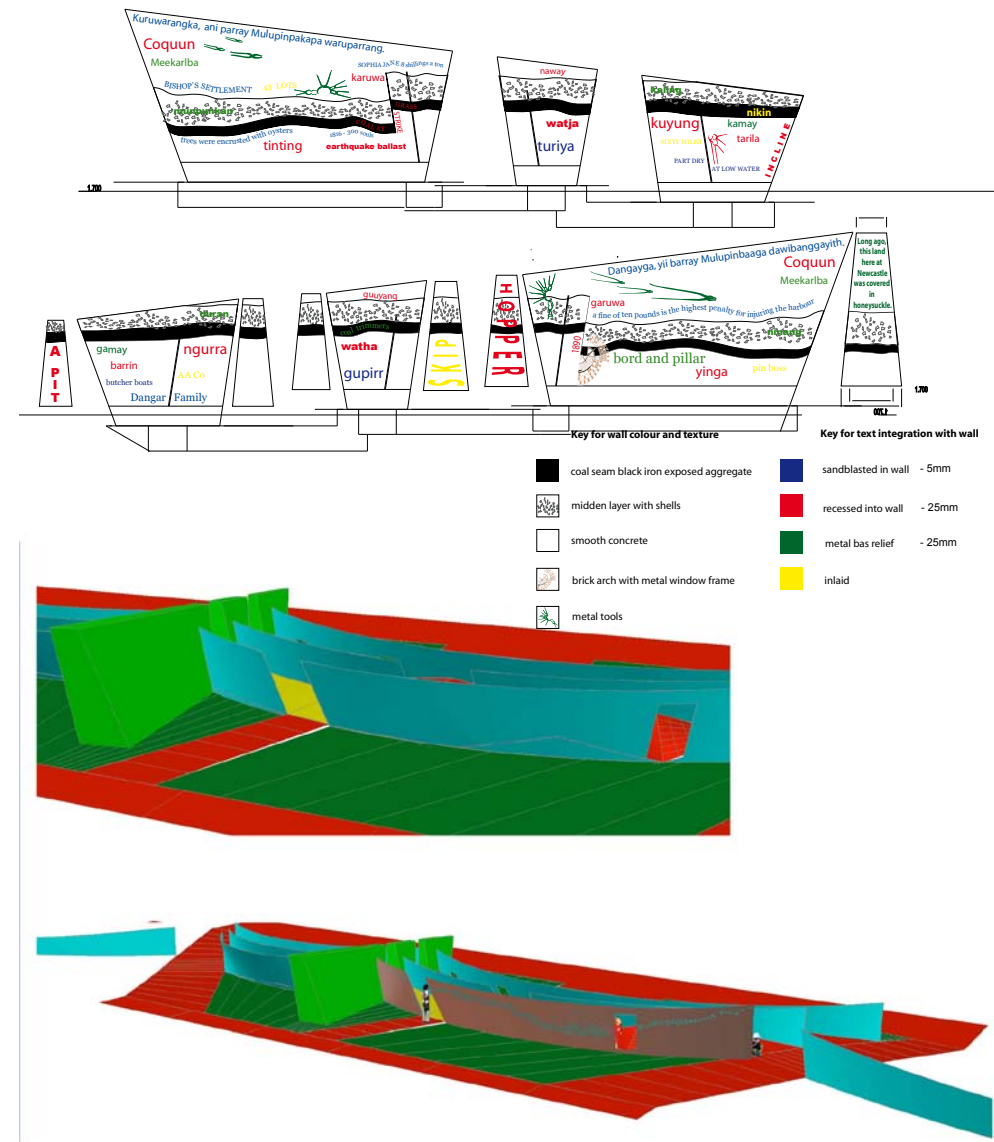
This stage refines the materiality of the proposed work and refines

- cost implications
- maintenance requirements
- compliance within OH&S standards, engineering specifications and Council guidelines

The artist may be required to further refine the artwork to meet with this quality assurance. Materials and finishes will be finalised in terms of durability and longevity.

The deliverables at the end of this stage will include full documentation such as engineering specifications, materials and installation resolutions and a maintenance manual.

Tenders or quotations will be sought from specialised fabricators or the artist using this documentation. Where possible without compromising the integrity of the artwork, the sourcing of local business enterprises for the artwork's fabrication and installation will be sought to promote local industry.



BENNELONG PARK TO KISSING POINT PARK

Design Development Stage for Art Play Space  
Hunter development Corporation  
Newcastle  
Milne and Stonehouse, with Zenscapes Landscape Architects

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ART WORKS

### 3.3 FABRICATION

The fabrication stage inspects the quality and efficiency of the fabrication using hold points.

Often a number of specialist contractors including painters need to be coordinated to ensure the artwork moves smoothly between operations and timeframes are met.

The artist's role is to comment upon the artistic integrity of the artwork and the detail of fabrication such as welding and finishes. Usually Council's representative will be present or require photographic documentation to confirm the quality of work produced.

The engineer will inspect to ensure warranted specifications are being followed.

At this point, the project manager will implement a method statement for installation after discussion with the artist and contractor. This will ensure proper integration between artwork and the landscaping vision and allows the artist to advise processes for the handling of fragile artwork elements and situating the artwork exactly according to plans.



*Fabrication Stage for Art Play Space  
Hunter development Corporation  
Newcastle*

*Milne and Stonehouse, with Zenscapes Landscape Architects*

March, 2010

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ART WORKS

### 3.4 INSTALLATION

The installation stage delivers a high quality artwork that reflects the previous stages in its integration within place.

The artist's overseeing of the installation is necessary for the integrity of the artwork, however, the methodology and work statement of the contractor is assured by the client or project manager.

The coordination and overseeing of this stage may be carried out by a member of the design team as these stages have been carefully considered.

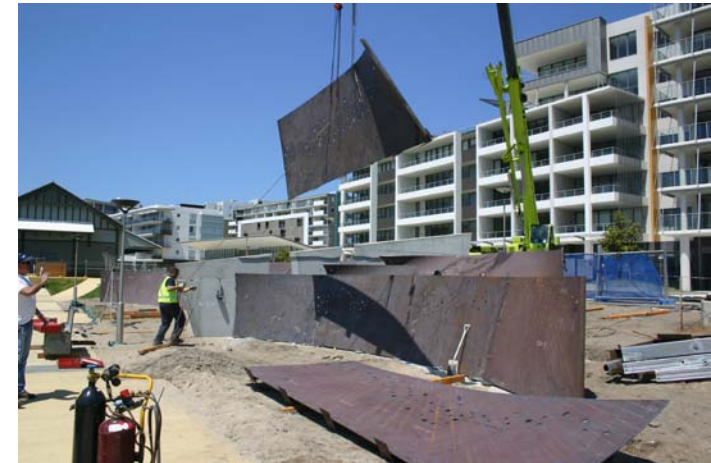
- The engineer will inspect footing details prior to assembly.
- The site manager will ensure best practice is carried out during this process.
- The artist ensures the placement of the artwork is accurate in accordance with the approved plans.

A technical manual will provide full documentation for the artwork in case major rectification of the artwork is required.

A decommissioning manual will be provided for each artwork. This anticipates a minimum life for the artwork and promotes a mutually respectful approach for the owner, the community and the artist.

A maintenance manual will be provided for each artwork which includes a timetable of appropriate cleaning and retouching to ensure both artwork integrity and warranties are met.

Hand over responsibilities will be finalised at this stage including a regular maintenance schedule to be supplied to Council. Items such as graffiti removal and retouching will be a part of this schedule.



*Installation Stage for Art Play Space  
Hunter development Corporation  
Newcastle  
Milne and Stonehouse with Zenscapes*

## 4 RIVER TIMELINE

When the Marines explored the river around Ryde in 1788, they were experiencing for the first time a land already inhabited and enjoyed continuously for thousands of years by the Aboriginal people of Wallumedegal country. Wallumai is the name of the snapper fish from which the clan group of that area takes its name.

The survival of sites of occupation such as rock engravings, axe grinding grooves, middens and the smoke stains on rock overhangs attest to the extent and amenity of the first people's lifestyle along the waterfront.

Prior to contact the whole district was forested in various species of trees such as iron-bark, black-butt, box, turpentine and stringy-bark.

Waratah, flannel flower, Christmas bush and orchids also were prolific within the understorey while the creeks were sheltered by large old growth angophoras and rainforest species. The natural resources utilised efficiently by local indigenous peoples was depleted after European arrival.

Although the 1789 epidemic decimated the local population, the traditional cultural practices of clans continued through the 1820s as filtered through the white historical records and diaries. The agricultural exploitation of land and forced removal of the traditional owners which compelled radical changes in the traditional life for indigenous peoples, also enabled the Western economic growth of the fledgling colony. As a transport hub, the river was an artery contributing to the economic sustainability of Sydney while its wilderness preoccupied the wealthier settlers with notions of Eden and the primeval Antipodes. Early paintings placed Aborigines within an Arcadian landscape juxtaposing a harnessed wilderness with white chimneys billowing ordered smoke into a colonial sky.

Bennelong, after whom the park was named, was a Wangal man from the South side of the river and was famous for his role as intermediary between the restless colonial juggernaut and Aboriginal politics. Kidnapped by Phillip in 1789 he holidayed with the governor in England in 1793, returning in 1795. His appearance in most historical records and diaries show his influence within colonial circles but his status within the changing nature of post contact Aboriginal culture is not clear. He died in 1813 and was buried in the orchard of James Squire, the local inn keeper and close friend.



*drawings and stencils from Sydney area*

## 4 RIVER TIMELINE

Early colonial development utilised the soil to grow a variety of crops and the river to supply the colony. Ryde's elevation afforded river views and contributed to a sense of isolation for early farmers while the Field of Mars proved difficult ground for marines ill equipped for the skills of farming. James Squire's successes with maize and citrus reflected the strong work ethic of farmers and the quality of land for cultivation. The continued harvesting of existing food supplies such as native fruits and fish by settlers declined as the foreshore industrial practices affected the fish stocks and the population growth outpaced the resources.

### Rowing

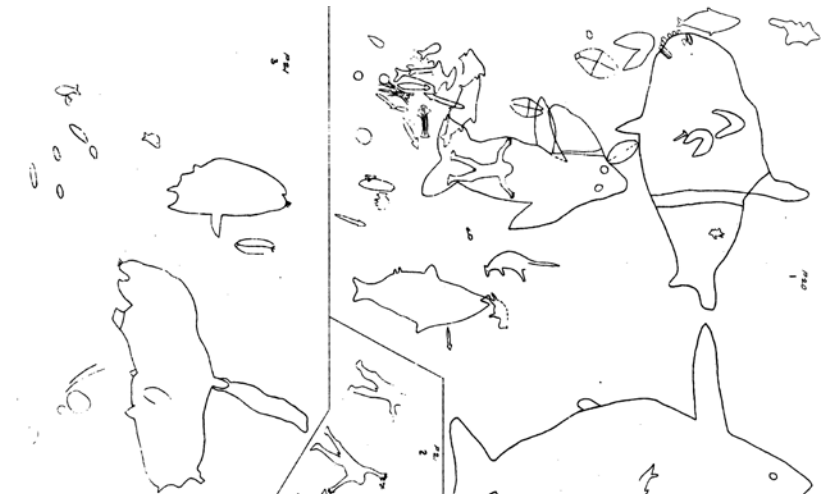
The spectacle of the Anniversary Regatta with an international audience for rowing at its height attracted 50,000 spectators lined along the course. The rowers were lionised and wagers increased public interest. By this time the river's focus was more on its potential for leisure than its transport access. Today the rowing continues but the swimming baths have disappeared as the harbour's water quality declined.



Shelter with midden from Sydney



The championship rowing course in the 1880s



Engravings surveyed by Campbell in the early 1900s from Sydney

March, 2010

## 5 BENNELONG PARK TO KISSING POINT PARK

The park is a place of ancient history, a gathering place for countless generations in continuum that is enacted today by the fisherman, the rowing sculls, the cyclists and those just absorbing the view.

It was the little lone midden (collection of a variety of shell refuse left over from meals undertaken at a place accumulated over a great period of time) protected by the small surviving remnant mangrove trees and other native flora that has suggested the conceptual framework - one of family gatherings, feasting, fishing and other leisure activities that living by the water invites.

As part of the Riverwalk, the circulation of people along the water's edge with intimate spaces for contemplation are essential ingredients for an immersive experience.

For the Wallumedegal people it was their country and their use of the land and water responded to seasons and shifts in food sources. The strong relationship between land and the river is explored here. A number of wharves extend over the water and the path towards the western end of Bennelong Park becomes a boardwalk in the mangroves.

The establishment of the Riverwalk encourages the circulation and exercise of locals and visitors along the edge of the river. These parks offers a pause in the rhythm of walking and cycling, nodal points of rest and a purpose built space for gathering.



BENNELONG PARK TO KISSING POINT PARK

## 6.1 MEETING PLACE

A collective space is the concept for a circular campfire design as an organic reference to the generations of local Aboriginal families who collectively met, ate and talked. This place above the ancient midden affords spectacular views over the water and punctuates the rhythm of the path as it ascends from the water level.

Aboriginal occupation and use of space was an organic, informal arrangement and yet adhered to cohesive cultural mores. The social interaction which is unobtrusively encouraged at this point re-enacts the Aboriginal approach to gatherings. This landscape reshapes the space as a precious meeting place drawn from cultural tradition.

The choice of materials is carefully considered in terms of the natural palette of wood and stone which was utilised by the first peoples. A reference to the matrix of shells concentrated in the midden will be a part of a concrete conglomerate expressed as a seat or in the groundplane.

The notion of a meeting place honours the central focus of the fire and radiates its warmth outwards. The use of symbolic language of this motif is combined with the integration of functional elements such as seating and low walls to reinforce an ongoing amenity and give a meaningful layer to the place as a gathering of family and friends.

This concept is essential for the Aboriginal renewal of the park. The configuration of Aboriginal space near regrowth native vegetation reoccupies the space within a more inclusive geometry and welcomes locals and visitors from the position of custodians.



## 6.2 ELEMENTAL SHIFTS

The gliding action of the rowers across the surface tension of the water upsets the mirrored sky and the bow waves of passing vessels refract along the shoreline eroding its edge. This park is subject to the components of wind, water and tide and has been weathered, shaped and distorted by their actions. These shifts have altered the tree shapes, sandstone forms and drawn debris as tidal markers and flood flotsam.

As a conceptual framework for artworks it acknowledges the Aboriginal sensitivity to these primal elements. Given the perceptions of the shrinking planet, this concept is contemporary and timely.

Artworks which respond to the natural patterns already expressed in sandstone, water and buttress roots of the mangroves and figs are powerful in this site.





# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## 6.3 BETWEEN WATER AND LAND

This park explores the edges of the land and the intertidal flushes. In geological time where the sea has risen, these edges are in flux, an ephemeral landscape. While Aboriginal clans were active in the landscape, their usage was custodial rather than exploitative.

This concept reinforces the River Walk Project Objectives which include ecological values, cultural vitality and public health benefits. This edge is influenced directly by the ebb and flow of the tides while the water acts as receptacle for the land such as fishing, launching and unfortunately pollution.

The wharves and remnant submerged walls reflect the river's lifeline for the community and the flotsam washes up the detritus of contemporary consumer culture.

This concept is already expressed in the sensitive touch of the timber boardwalk in Bennelong Park. For artworks their placement on the edge can explore the tensions of water and land, the marine growth on materials, the micro environments of salt marshes and mangroves, and the exposure and inundation of the tidal movement.



BENNELONG PARK TO KISSING POINT PARK

## 7 PROJECTS

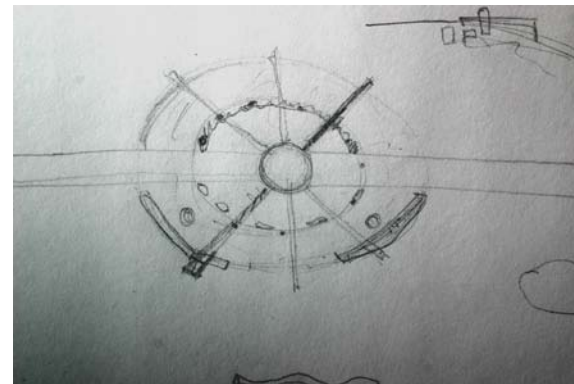
### 7.1 INTEGRATED ART LANDSCAPE MEETING PLACE

This project articulates a circular meeting place above the pathway within the trees.

Symbolic of the collective warmth of the fire and the sun, this place takes the core of the meeting at the centre and draws concentric arcs facing inwards. This geometry emphasises the gathering of people rather than the meditative view of the river.

The situation of this artwork above the ancient midden continues the Aboriginal traditions away from the protected heritage area and yet acknowledges the social interactions around the sharing of food.

The geometry uses the existing pathway as the centre of the “campfire” and radiates concentric circles from this point. At the widest point towards the river, a small retaining wall made of sandstone or concrete with inlaid text and patterns will maintain the constant level. The elements will work around the existing trees.



*overlaying of sketches to explore the scale and position in context with the path and the water*

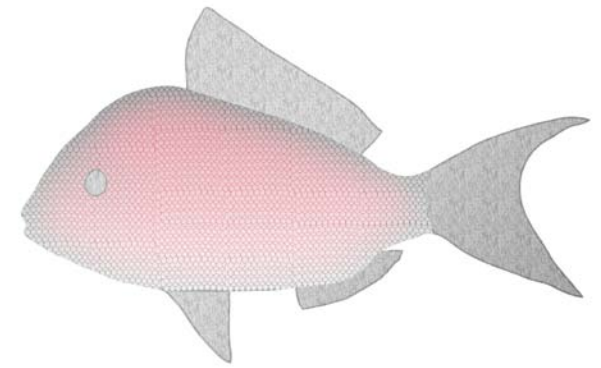
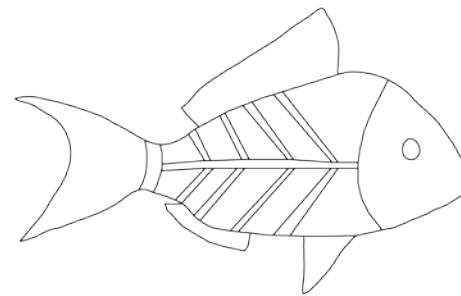
## 7.2 WALLUMAI WIND SCULPTURE

The use of the snapper or Wallumai is derived from the Wallumedegal clan who inhabited this area. We have drawn from the Aboriginal engravings and drawings which simplify the characteristics of the snapper still retaining its characteristic bump and its skeletal structure. It becomes a symbolic fish referring to the local identity of Aboriginal people, their fishing practices and the rich marine life migrating and feeding here.

The artwork consists of a number of sculptural wind vanes one side with sequins as fish scales and the other revealing the skeletal structure of the fish. Placed together as a school of fish at different heights and scales, their facing into the wind will offer differing views from the water and land.



montage exploring the sculptures in situ

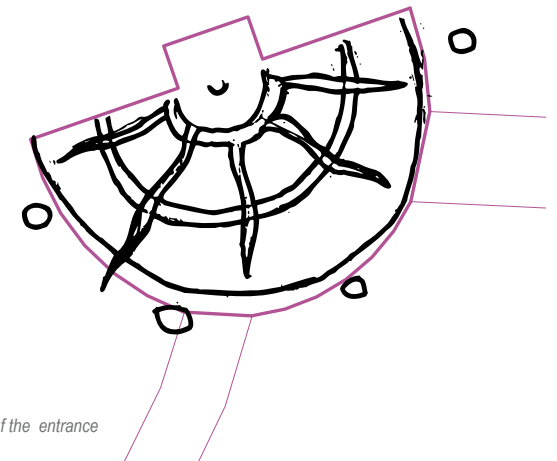


montage showing the sequins on one side and the herringbone pattern on the other side

## 7.3 GROUNDPLANE ENTRANCE BENNELONG PARK

The threshold for the park echoes the geometry of the Meeting Place further east. The user chooses the intimate path towards the river or a more direct route to the fig tree grove. The fanned shape of the design reinforces the welcoming gesture of the entrance.

This symbol will be etched or painted into the concrete semi circle.

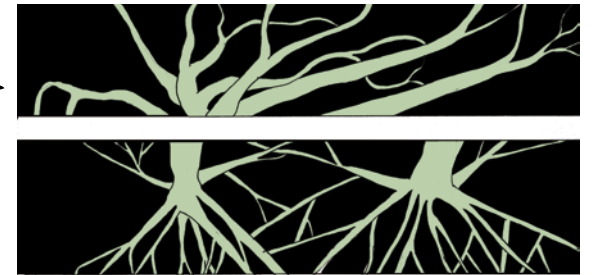
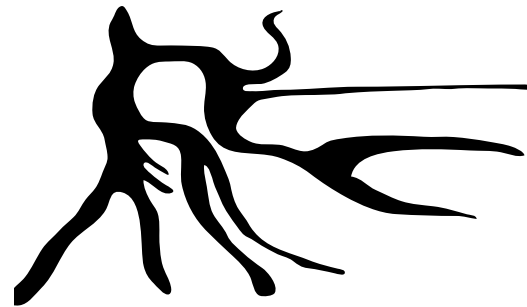


Sketch by Chris Tobin overlaying their plan and image of the entrance



## 7.4 GROUNDPLANE

Further exploration of the natural rhythms expressed in the sinuous fig tree roots, the mangrove bayonets and the light play along the water surface can be etched into the pathway or used as the skin of sculptural works. These lines and shapes respond to all of the concepts and as a primal layer, are sympathetic to the Aboriginal experience prior to contact.



*Exploration of existing natural forms and patterns*



*montage exploring the renovation of the pocket space*

## 7.5 SLIPWAY

A powerful history of boat building and travel on the river is documented from the fishing canoes of the Wallumedegal People to the ongoing shipbuilding marinas upstream. The push of oars from the varied sculling teams accompanied by the coaching megaphone continues this tradition on the river's surface. The echoed construction of fish skeletons with the skeletal frames of the boats combines the nautical with the natural.

At Kissing Point where a good vantage point stretches the eye in both directions along the river, an iconic sculpture with reference to the rich maritime stories situated on the point will mark the site from river and land. References to the flawed wooden boat building exercise which constructed only two vessels or the rich rowing tradition of the Anniversary Regatta are the most visually powerful stimuli for artworks.

The retrofit on existing wharves or a sensitive floating sculpture over the tidal zone will make a powerful impact upon the point.



Exploration of an existing slipway with an artwork acknowledging the action of rowing and a montage of an iconic prow on the point

## 7.6 MARKERS

The rhythm along the foreshore can be punctuated by interpretive markers which creatively engage with the environmental, cultural and historical layers. They prompt an emotive response as artworks and pique curiosity as interpretive responses to the distinctive qualities of each individual site. Made from robust materials, these markers reinforce a cohesive design language for the whole River walk.

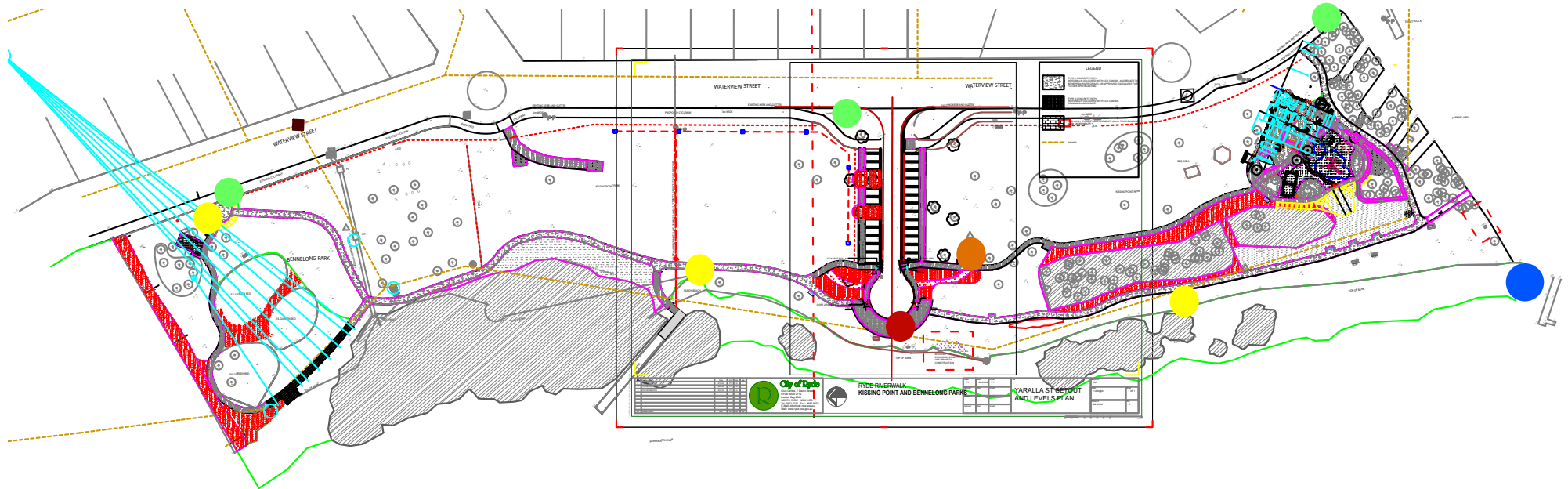


Marker - interpretative information



March, 2010

## 8.1 PLAN



### LOCATION

Meeting Place



Groundplane



Wallumai



Markers



Slipways

