


# First Nations history



ELIZABETH



# Martin Place pre-colonial and local Indigenous history



Aboriginal people have lived in the region of Sydney for millennia. Prior to colonisation, there existed a vast and diverse array of communities and languages in the area collectively known as the Eora Nation – the number of these communities and spread of these languages still being debated today. The Gadigal – Gadi meaning tree and the suffix -gal meaning people – lived on the southern side of Sydney Harbour.

## The area we now call Sydney was born in a valley named Warrane.

Warrane was created by the ancestral hero Baiame, who brought to life Warrane's rivers, mountains, forests, the seashore, and many other natural sacred areas. Aboriginal people view humanity as an extension of Country, and as such moved across the land consciously and with care whilst occasionally meeting with other groups to trade, hunt, fight, resolve disputes and share information.

Warrane existed as wetland country, its harbour-side location providing an abundance of natural resources through a freshwater stream that flowed from today's Hyde Park into the Harbour, granting a space for gathering and nourishment used by the Gadigal. Europeans chose to colonise this area due to the freshwater benefits the stream possessed, naming it 'The Tank Stream'. Today, this stream runs underneath the city, below Martin Place.



Fig 3: View of the town of Parramatta from May's Hill, ca. 1840. Painting attributed to G. E. Peacock (Supplied by the State Library of New South Wales).



# Aboriginal civic history of Sydney/Martin Place

The British occupation of Aboriginal land fundamentally changed the Gadigal's way of life, transforming Warrane's landscape.

Trees were cleared for roads whilst undergrowth was plowed for farming and temporary shelters, progressively dispossessing the Gadigal from their Country. The impacts of these foreign influences were made starkly clear in 1789 when an outbreak of smallpox spread through the community. To survive, communities relied on their extensive tribal networks to regroup and form new bands across the coast, one of the many examples of the Aboriginal peoples' "long honed ability to adapt to change". In an exercise of self-determinism, Aboriginal people settled just outside the town of Sydney to control when and how they interacted with the Europeans.

By the 1800s, Aboriginal people became frequent visitors of Sydney, establishing themselves as part of the town's life when Governor Macquarie joined the colony in 1809. Macquarie marked the beginning of a paternalistic approach by the British towards the Gadigal, the Governor endeavouring to amalgamate these communities into the administration through assimilationist and militaristic methods. One of these methods was the kidnapping of Aboriginal individuals to learn about their way of life – one of these individuals being an elder named Bennelong. Bennelong and Macquarie established a strong rapport over time learning about each other's way of life, this leading to Macquarie building Bennelong his own residence on the site that now houses the present-day Sydney Opera House.

Over time, Martin Place and the wider Sydney area has borne witness to the gradual establishment and strengthening of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander civic presence and rights. The first demonstration of this was the formation of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association, founded in 1925 in protest against injustices against Aboriginal communities. These injustices included the 1909 'Aborigines Protection Act', used to expel Aboriginal people from towns or reserves, and the 1915 amendment giving the government the power to remove Aboriginal children from their families – this now being known as the Stolen Generations.

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1937 marked the formation of the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) in western NSW, which quickly gained support in Sydney. The APA spoke out against enforced movements being imposed on Aboriginal communities, demanding equal rights and an end to the Aborigines Protection Board designed to control the lives of First Nations people; a notable achievement being staging the first 'Day of Mourning' conference in 1938. Following the end of World War II, Martin Place housed various civil rights rallies including the first public Aboriginal demonstration in 1959 of over 2,000 people. Aboriginal people voicing and rallying against mistreatment continued to increase, leading to the 1967 Referendum amending the Australian Constitution to allow Aboriginal people to be counted in the census and to vote. Decades later, Martin Place hosted several thousand people to watch then-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations – which marked a defining moment in Australian history.



A person waves and Aboriginal flag amid the large crowd that gathered at Martin Place in Sydney to listen to an official apology by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd given in Parliament to indigenous members of the Stolen Generation over their forced removal from their families. The speech was broadcast live on Australian television, with large viewing screens placed in public places around the country, 13 February 2008. (Supplied by SMH Picture ; photograph by Peter Rae)

# Cultural design principles overview

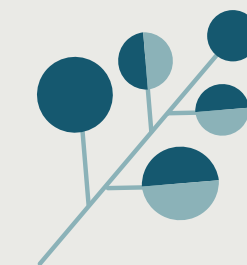
A central focus throughout the development of 1 Elizabeth has been to create a space that is reflective of the area's rich cultural and historical narrative.

Macquarie took a precinct-wide approach, understanding the importance of reflecting on the major changes that the area now known as Martin Place has been witness to.

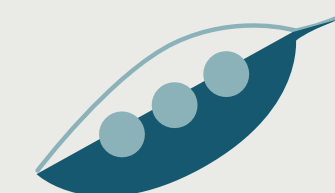
As part of this commitment, Macquarie Group engaged with Balarinji, an Indigenous design and strategy studio. The collaboration ensured a best-practice methodology founded in community engagement and facilitated by community-led design elements and initiatives. By focusing on inclusive storytelling and representation within the space, consultation with local Aboriginal communities led to the development of cultural design principles, summarised as follows:



Connection to Country



Country dictates dynamic functionality



Aboriginal culture is a living culture



Replacing landmarks



Importance of language



Custodianship



These principles provided a framework that elicited a representation of Aboriginal peoples' voice and connection to Country. The design of the Precinct embodies these principles in the following ways:

### The Warrane Exhibition

This exhibition, located on the ground floor of 50 Martin Place, explores the Gadigal perception of colonisation changing Warrane's identity over time, and emphasises the importance of custodianship and connection to Country. The exhibition features a Welcome to Country by Gadigal elder Ray Davison and members of his family, including local language spoken by Joel Davison.

These prominent features of the precinct are part of Macquarie Group's wider vision for reconciliation, aiming to:

“ build a better and more equitable future grounded in respect, recognition and celebration of Firsts Nation people and cultures.”



View of the Warrane exhibition: Brett Boardman





### Landscaping strategy

As an acknowledgement of the Warrane environment prior to colonisation, the Precinct's landscaping will largely be comprised of native plants, providing a tangible connection to Country through the inclusion of around 48 different species throughout the tower and workspace above. A period of trialling native species indoors was undertaken to ensure the best outcome.



Ngalga Dyi, Duba, Nura and Garrigarrang, Debra Beale, 2024



Giba (Stone), Jamie Eastwood, 2024

### Art commissions

A number of artworks have been commissioned from First Nations artists and featured throughout the Precinct. In the public domain integrated into the seating, the floor and the wayfinding totems, Gamilaraay/Wonnarua and Wiradjuri/Boonwurung/Palawa/Yorta Yorta artist Debra Beale's depictions of shells tell the story of the middens along the Tank Stream, with fish and whale designs alluding to fauna that would have been present in area prior to colonization.

Within the workplace, Darug artist Jamie Eastwood has created unique and beautiful carvings to sandstone boulders excavated and returned to site after the building was completed. Gomeroi artist Suzy Evans has also created a dramatic artwork comprised of 28 suspended sculptures lit from within, representing Aboriginal astral knowledge.



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