

Celebrating Connection to Country at Prince of Wales Hospital

The new Prince of Wales Hospital Acute Services Building aims to engage, enliven and inspire our community through a celebration of our shared stories, history and environment.

Exposure to the arts has a profoundly beneficial impact, improving patient health and wellbeing and through its use in health promotion and messaging, improving health literacy for individuals and the wider community.

The new Acute Services Building at Randwick includes a range of arts experiences themed on **STORYTELLING: Yarns and Tales – a narrative of people and place**. Inside and out you can discover a range of artworks, historical and archaeological displays, such as the Aboriginal Garden in the main forecourt of the new Acute Services Building that celebrates the strong and enduring connection to Country.

Three unique and distinct art and cultural displays at the main point of entry to the new hospital building create a distinguished Welcome to all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, providing a true reflection of continued culture on Country.

8,000 year old hearth stone display

Evidence that Aboriginal people were living in this area hundreds of generations ago, a series of 8,000 year old hearth stones were uncovered by archaeologists and several others in 1995, and again during excavations for the new hospital in 2019.

These stones formed an ancient fireplace, also called a “hearth”, that were used by Aboriginal people who lived in this landscape long ago. Where the hospital stands today was once a landscape of enormous sand dunes, creeks and swamps.

Aboriginal people fished the swamps for eels, yabbies and turtles with traps and spears, gathered plants, and hunted and prepared other animals in the dunes.

Families sat around the fire burning in the hearths, talking and laughing as they cooked and ate their meals.

The permanent display of these stones in the forecourt of the Acute Services Building represents the hospital's commitment to celebrating and preserving the unique cultural heritage of the site.



We acknowledge Prince of Wales Hospital is on the traditional lands of the Bidiagal people of the Dharawal Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

‘Gum leaves’ – sandblasted pavers to Welcome all visitors to the hospital

The eucalyptus leaf, a symbol of Welcome, healing and cleansing, leads you to the Acute Services Building in a major public artwork by Artist and long-term patient of Prince of Wales Hospital, Dr Peter Yanada McKenzie (Eora/Anaiwan) and Artist, Jonathan Jones (Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi).

The artwork, etched into the pavement, mimics the bush floor with an array of gum leaves scattered across the forecourt as if they have fallen from above or are left over from an ancestral ceremony.

“To be made ‘Welcome’ in terms of Aboriginal cultural practice is a most important and significant act of mutual acceptance to greet new friends and visitors to Country or other significant places such as this new icon of healing.”

– Dr Peter Yanada McKenzie (La Perouse Aboriginal Community)



Buriburi (the humpback whale) sculpture

Buriburi is a significant spiritual figure for Aboriginal people from coastal Sydney to the Shoalhaven (Dharawal people). It was buriburi’s barangga (large vessel) that the people stole to travel across the sea to Dharawal Country in the Dreaming.

Rock engravings were traditionally carved by senior Aboriginal men on outcrops of sandstone by joining an outline of pecked holes to form a carved line. As they weathered away over time, senior knowledge holders re-grooved the carved lines.

The carving of a buriburi that features in the hospital’s forecourt was created in 2019 by members of the La Perouse Youth Haven, under the supervision of Elders from the La Perouse Aboriginal community. The stones will be re-carved over time, creating an opportunity for Elders to continue to pass down knowledge and skills to young Aboriginal men.

The stones used for the carving were part of the building foundations of a nineteenth-century homestead that once stood on the site, known as The Willows. The large sandstone blocks were uncovered by archaeologists during excavations for the Acute Services Building.