

Media Release**31 May 2021**

Aboriginal interpretive design project to share greater cultural significance of the Parramatta River catchment

The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) is privileged to be working on a *Designing with Country* project for the Parramatta River catchment.

The purpose of the project is to bring to life the connection between Aboriginal culture and the waterways and land in the catchment through interpretive design elements for the community to understand and enjoy. It also aims to strengthen ties with local Aboriginal communities to foster opportunities for collaboration and partnership on projects related to waterway health and management.

The project is funded through a grant under the Metropolitan Greenspace Program, which supports councils to deliver projects that improve regional open space and community liveability as part of the NSW Government's vision for a 'Green Grid' across Greater Sydney and the Central Coast.

The PRCG will work closely with a panel of Aboriginal representatives and their communities, local councils and Sydney Water to develop a catchment-wide design guide that specifies standards around the use of language, art, landscaping and other elements. The guide will also identify locations for future interpretive design projects that may include murals, sculptures, tree plantings and heritage trails.

A research document on the cultural significance of the waterways and surrounding places as well as the lived experiences of Aboriginal people within the catchment will also be produced, based on oral histories and other input in consultation with panel members and their communities.

The PRCG is an alliance of local councils, state government agencies and community groups who, through the *Our Living River* initiative, is working to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025. In October 2018, the PRCG released *DUBA, BUDU, BARRA: Ten Steps to a Living River – the Parramatta River Masterplan*, which details the steps required to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025.

The *Designing with Country* project supports the objectives of the Parramatta River Masterplan to recognise the traditional owners of the Parramatta River and their important cultural ties to Country. It also aims to increase Aboriginal leadership in waterway governance by strengthening relationships between local and state government agencies, Aboriginal groups and community members, to facilitate ongoing management and business opportunities.

PRCG Chair, Cr Mark Drury, said that the *Designing with Country* project provides a significant opportunity to work more closely with Aboriginal communities to increase knowledge and awareness of the cultural significance of the land and waterways in the catchment.

"The use of the title DUBA (Land), BUDU (Water), BARRA (Sky) for our Masterplan reflects the holistic approach we are taking to the restoration of the Parramatta River and acknowledges the important custodial role that Aboriginal people play in managing these natural elements," Cr Drury said.

"We look forward to collaborating with local Aboriginal communities and our member councils and state government agencies on this important and worthwhile project."

The PRCG will be releasing an Expression of Interest in early June, inviting eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community organisations to provide consultation services for the *Designing with Country* project. For more information, please email the PRCG Coordinator, Nell Graham, at: nell.graham@canadabay.nsw.gov.au.

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