

The Aboriginal Design Working Group provides the Aboriginal community with a seat at the design table and offers opportunities to inform and shape the new John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct (JHHIP) through a cultural lens.

The JHHIP will serve all communities including the local Awabakal People and Aboriginal nations and communities across the health district. It is important that all communities who use the JHHIP feel welcome, safe and able to access compassionate care.

The JHHIP project team would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who shares their views and contributes to the project.

Aboriginal consultation

The JHHIP team recognises Aboriginal people as important stakeholders in the design and build of the new health precinct.

To date the project team have undertaken consultation with a number of local Aboriginal groups and stakeholders. This consultation will continue throughout the design and delivery of the JHHIP project. Activities have included:

- A yarning circle to inform the emotional design brief for the precinct
- Presentations and discussions with the HNELHD Aboriginal Health Board committee
- Aboriginal representation on Project User Groups
- Activities to inform the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment as part of the Environmental Impact Statement for the State Significant Development Application for the project.

An identified Aboriginal Engagement position has been confirmed as a key role within the project team. This embedded role will focus on ensuring Aboriginal views and voices in the community are heard and considered as part of the JHHIP project.

Aboriginal Design Working Group session summary

Wednesday 31 March 2021

The JHHIP project team held an Aboriginal Design Working Group session on Wednesday 31 March 2021.

The session included a presentation by the lead architect from BVN, about the progression of the master plan for the JHHIP. Feedback was sort on the design and opportunities were explored on how to create lasting connections with country through landscaping, design, arts and language. The workshop also provided opportunities to ask questions and engage with the project team.

Key feedback themes

Below are eight key themes that were identified by the Aboriginal Design Working Group as opportunities to inform the design of the JHHIP. These themes are being taken into consideration by the project team to help create a culturally safe and welcoming environment for the Aboriginal community.

1) Engage with the landscape and bring it into the building

The natural landscape around the JHHIP is stunning, situated along the ridgeline the site provides opportunity to incorporate coastal, river, bush and hinterland views and themes into the design of the building.

The **topography, geology, botany and hydrology** of the area are central elements in designing the new health precinct and BVN will continue to integrate these into the project.

Key principles of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is centered around two key principles:
Access and Connection.

Access:

- Access to the precinct
- Access through the precinct
- Access to landscape
- Access to nature

Connection:

- Connection to precinct partners
- Connection to landscape:
 - Provide a lens for the architects to think about country within this project, focusing on the surrounding spaces
 - The further development of a framework to consider designing with country.

Applying the key principles to create a Designing with Country framework

- **Caring:** Sustainability, carbon and waste neutrality, regenerating and caring for the site and the landscape.
- **Settings:** Physicality of the space, the building itself and the elements within the building.
- **Palette:** Considering the context and colours that surround the site, inform building and development.

2) Connection and welcome through indigenous language

A key talking point at the Working Group was the recognition of indigenous language of the local Awabakal People and the languages of the Aboriginal nations and communities across the health district.

Discussion focused on how language could be incorporated at the main entrance and throughout the precinct as a sign of welcome to people from all nations using indigenous language.

It is believed there is likely over 40 indigenous languages across the catchment for the JHHIP.

✓ This is a key area for further conversation and discussion as the project progresses.

3) The arts program

The group would like to see art and the use of local materials gathered from the site to be considered as part of the arts program. Art and the use of interior and external artwork is a key area of interest with many opportunities identified regarding how art could be incorporated across the precinct. These could become

symbols of welcome, wayfinding, creating connection with storytelling, landscape and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

“The area is a big basket, there is potential for a focus on traditional weaving.”

✓ The architects and the project team will be looking to engage with the Aboriginal Design Working Group on these opportunities as the designs progress.

4) Landscaping and connection to the physical landscape

The Master Plan incorporates engagement with the surrounding landscape, drawing it into the building through accessible outdoor spaces. The inclusion of courtyards across the different levels of the building provide amenity and light, access to fresh air, and areas for family gathering, calm reflection and contemplation.

The landscaping design reinforces the concept of a journey connecting buildings, spaces and zones through a series of internal and external pedestrian linkways and as key wayfinding elements.

✓ There is opportunity for the Aboriginal Design Working Group to contribute to planning these, including selection of the types and varieties of plants such as traditional medicinal plants, as well as access to and use of spaces.

5) Aboriginal cultural spaces

Internal and external cultural spaces have been identified and considered as part of the design process. The types of spaces discussed were areas for larger groups of people to congregate, inclusion of song lines and references to saltwater and freshwater people.

✓ There is opportunity for input from the Aboriginal Design Working Group and groups from across the community into the detailed design of the spaces.

6) Restoration of landscaping

The Working Group noted it is important that Aboriginal people are involved in the restoration of landscaping across the site. They understand the variety of trees that should be planted, spacing, bushfire risk and other points that need to be considered to ensure the site is restored as effectively as possible.

✓ The project team will come back to the Working Group to seek further advice as this aspect of the project progresses.

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7) The colour palette

The choice of colour and use of green throughout the JHHIP received positive feedback. The colour palette considers the size of the building and its setting in the landscape.

✓ The colours and palette will continue to evolve based on feedback as the project progresses.

8) Connectivity with the new Newcastle Inner City Bypass

The Newcastle Inner City Bypass is not part of the JHHIP works but provides an important element in accessing the precinct.

The Master Plan provides a significant increase in car parking, separated pedestrian links and improved vehicle traffic flows.

The Bypass will provide alternative ways to access and exit the campus. It will also provide better access to public transport, which will help reduce car movements on the hospital campus and in the surrounding streets.

✓ The workshop attendees requested a presentation from Transport for NSW as part of a future meeting.

The status of the project (planning approval)

Health Infrastructure will lodge the State Significant Development Application (SSDA) with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in May 2021.

The SSDA seeks approval for the construction and operation of a new multi-storey building and refurbishment works to certain elements of the existing John Hunter and John Hunter Children's Hospitals buildings.

The SSDA requires the development of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to detail the project activities, any potential environmental impacts, and proposed mitigation measures to manage these impacts.

✓ When released, the EIS will be available to view electronically on the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's major projects website at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects.

The public exhibition process provides opportunity to review detailed documentation on the planning

for the JHHIP and have your say through the formal submissions process.

✓ The project team will also be out and about during the public exhibition period. This will include information booths at a range of locations the region, the communications hub at the Hospital and presentations to key stakeholder groups.

Employment opportunities for Aboriginal workers during construction

The project will provide significant opportunities for Aboriginal employment, apprenticeships and training. This will be an ongoing area of focus as the project progress.

The Aboriginal Participation in Construction Policy (APIC) will be applied to the JHHIP. The objective of the APIC policy is to create opportunities for Aboriginal owned businesses and encourage Aboriginal employment and training through the supply chain of NSW Government contracts.

Application of the NSW Aboriginal Procurement Policy was also flagged as a key mechanism to use Aboriginal skills and know-how, increase Aboriginal, economic participation and support Aboriginal owned businesses by driving demand via government procurement of goods and services.

✓ There is considerable opportunity to provide input into key groups and organisations who should be contacted to support this aspect of the project.

More information

Information is available via the project website: www.johnhunter.health.nsw.gov.au

Questions and feedback can be sent through to the project team via the project email address: HI-JHHIP@health.nsw.gov.au

About the John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct

The NSW Government's \$780 million John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct will transform healthcare services for Newcastle, the greater Hunter region and northern NSW communities. Infrastructure will deliver enhanced and expanded facilities with a new seven-storey Acute Services Building providing additional capacity at the John Hunter and John Hunter Children's Hospitals.

The John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct is being delivered in partnership with Health Infrastructure and Hunter New England Local Health District (LHD).