



Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

McKillop Park Coast Walk Public Art

Consultation period: Feb 2022 – May 2023

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1. Summary

This report outlines the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement conducted between February 2022 and May 2023 as part of the McKillop Park Coast Walk Public Art project.

Engagement on this project has consisted of targeted stakeholder engagement with Aboriginal communities and consultation with the broader community.



mili mili undertook extensive engagement with our local Aboriginal communities in the course of this project and this engagement contributed significantly to the final design and siting of the artwork.

The feedback collected during the broader community consultation indicated a high level of support for the proposed artwork. Many people commented on the beautiful and functional design and its potential as “a place for people to come together” and learn more about the Aboriginal heritage of the area.



Respondents who were not supportive of the proposal felt that the artwork would detract from the natural environment and views along the Coast Walk.





Feedback also suggested Council should consider renaming McKillop Park to an Aboriginal name and consider dual naming of sites across the Northern Beaches.

1.1. Key outcomes

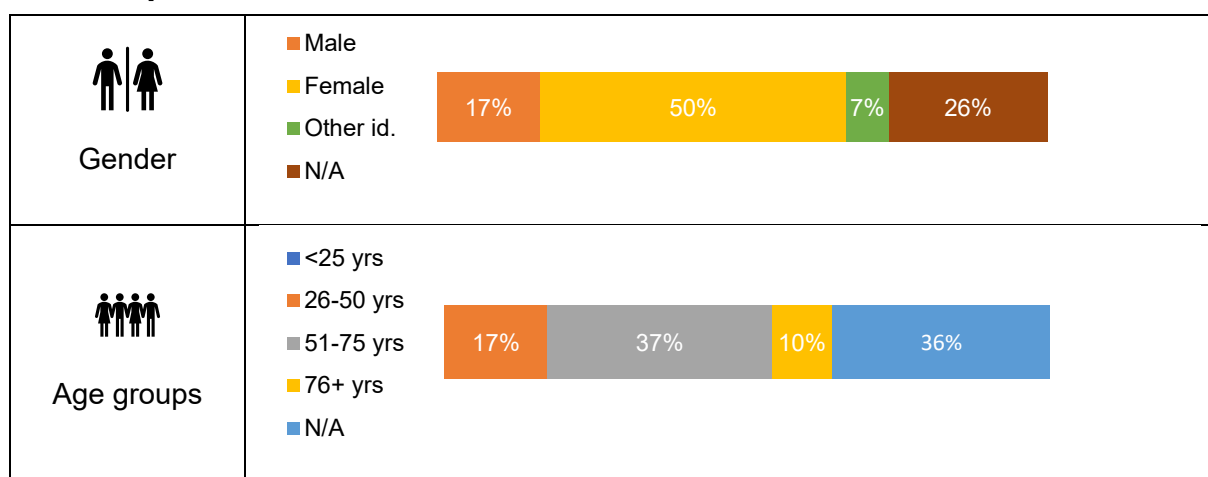
 How responses were received	Online comment form Notes taken at community sessions	Completions: 28
 Feedback themes	Beautiful design Functional and interactive First Nations Culture Art vs Nature	Location Suitability of design Use of space Cost

1.2. How we engaged

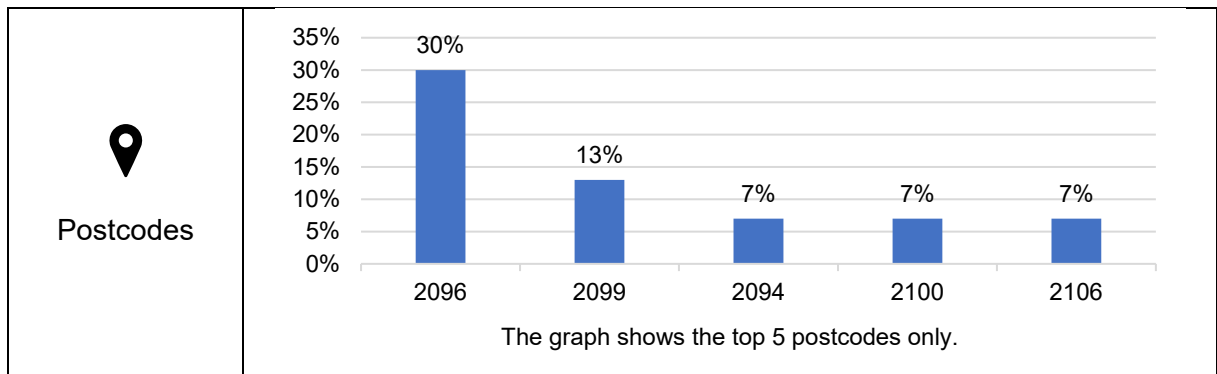
 Have Your Say: visitation stats	Visitors: 1381	Visits: 1728	Average time onsite: 53 secs
 Social media	MAG&M Instagram post: 1 Council LinkedIn post: 1		Reach: 1253 Views: 590 Reach: 2390 Views: 1465

 Videos	Overview: 1	Views: 64
 Electronic direct mail (EDM)	Community Engagement (fortnightly) newsletter: 2 editions Council (weekly) e-News: 2 editions Creative News: 1 edition Stakeholder email: 4 (updates about the engagement events)	Distribution: Approx. 22,000 subscribers Distribution: Approx. 180,000 subscribers Distribution: Approx. 1915 subscribers Distribution: 152
 Face-to-face sessions	Community Gathering event: (1 April 2022 – Harbord Diggers) Online Meet the Artist session (via Microsoft Teams): 1 (31 March 2022 – online)	Attendance: Approx. 110 Attendance: Approx. 20
 Key stakeholder engagement	Individual meetings, emails and phone calls with local Aboriginal custodians and other key stakeholders, including direct engagements with Artist	Attendance: Approx. 20

1.3. Who responded¹



¹ Demographic data was gathered by request only. The data represented only includes those respondents who provided this detail.



2. Background

Public art is coming soon to McKillop Park, a place of significant local heritage and beauty.

In 2021, Council commissioned First Nations public art team mili mili to create a new public artwork at McKillop Park in Freshwater as part of the [Coast Walk Public Art](#) program. mili mili is a First Nation-led public art team.

This commission will be a major artwork for the Northern Beaches Coast Walk, and an iconic destination artwork for residents and visitors. The artwork, to be installed later in 2023, will respond to the natural environment, local history and contemporary communities of Freshwater and the Northern Beaches.

The design has been heavily informed by conversations with and feedback from our local Aboriginal community.

3. Engagement objectives

Community and stakeholder engagement aimed to:

- build community and stakeholder awareness of participation activities
- provide accessible information so community and stakeholders can participate in a meaningful way
- identify community and stakeholder concerns, local knowledge and values.

4. Engagement approach

First Nations public art team mili mili led the engagement on this project. They engaged directly with local Aboriginal stakeholders and local community groups. Aboriginal community representatives were involved in complex and ongoing conversations with the artist team (Nicole Monks, lead artist, and Lotte Hilder, Creative Producer) regarding artwork design development and location.

Throughout the project, the mili mili team have conducted on site meetings with local Aboriginal community members, one-on-one meetings and phone calls, and walks on Country to visit local petroglyphs with the Aboriginal Heritage Office.

Aboriginal community members noted the importance of including both men and women, young and Elders, in all engagement with Aboriginal community members.

Broad community engagement for the McKillop Park Coast Walk Public Art was conducted between 1 March 2022 and 10 April 2022 and consisted of a series of activities that provided opportunities for the community to learn more about the project, ask questions and contribute feedback.

A project page² was established on our have your say platform with information provided in an accessible and easy to read format. The project was primarily promoted through stakeholder email notifications, our regular email newsletter (EDM) channels, and social media.

mili mili and Council also held two engagement events for the broader community. People were invited to join an online Meet the Artist session and an in-person Community Gathering event (rescheduled indoors at Harbord Diggers due to inclement weather). This was an opportunity to hear from artist Nicole Monks and learn more about the planned artwork. People could ask questions and share feedback during the sessions.

For those who could not attend any of the engagement sessions, feedback was also captured through an online comment form embedded onto the have your say project page. An open-field comments box provided community members a space to share their feedback about the planned artwork.

5. Findings

The main topics of conversations with Aboriginal community members were:

- Connection to place
- Story
- Signal fires on headlands
- Rock art
- Whales and wattle
- Natural materials
- Lived memory
- Disruption of culture
- Language
- Name of artwork
- Placement and direction of artwork

Feedback provided during the community sessions and via the online Your Say comment form revealed a high level of support for the proposed artwork at McKillop Park on Freshwater's headland. Many people commented on the beautiful and functional design and its potential as "a place for people to come together." There was a lot of appreciation for the opportunity to connect with and learn more about the Aboriginal history and heritage of the local area.

Positive comments received via the Your Say comment form include:

- What a beautiful idea. We need more of these sort of things to engage local communities. I wholeheartedly agree with these initiatives.
- Nice idea and look forward to seeing it in real life
- It's great to see functional artwork inspired by First Nations culture

² <https://yoursay.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/mckillop-park-freshwater>

- Just want to say that it is a beautiful design. Listening to the rationalisation for the site and the structure was clear and very supportive of connection with all past present and future.
- This is a wonderful project with brilliant artistic realisation. It will be so important for the community to come together here to reflect on the past and look to the future. An important education resource for all ages.
- Looks fabulous, very interactive
- Love it!
- I'm so Pleased that this is being considered I do hope it goes ahead as I feel that the community would greatly benefit young and old from all backgrounds and cultures. There needs to be more of it on the Northern Beaches.
- So excited to have this amazing Mili Mili studio piece on Freshie headland. I'm looking forward to sitting on the benches watching the sun rise in late 2022
- In awe, perfection materialised. Lost for words.

People who did not support the artwork were mostly concerned about the impact it would have on the natural landscape.

The main issues raised in the online feedback and at community sessions are outlined in Table 1 below, along with Council's responses.

During community engagement on this project, there were also many requests relating to the broader recognition of Aboriginal heritage at McKillop Park and on the Northern Beaches. We heard that the community is interested in renaming McKillop Park to reflect the Aboriginal history and continuing culture of the area. People are also keen to see Council adopt dual naming conventions across the LGA.

Table 1: Issues, change requests and other considerations

Theme	Issues, change requests and other considerations raised	Response from the project team
Impact on natural landscape	How will the artwork enhance our experience of nature?	<p>The Coast Walk public artworks aim to enrich Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's experience of the region, without compromising environmentally fragile and culturally sensitive sites.</p> <p>The main materials of the artwork are timber and steel, and the work creates a space for people to sit and enjoy nature.</p> <p>The artwork will be located back from the headland to allow people to picnic on the headland.</p>

Theme	Issues, change requests and other considerations raised	Response from the project team
	<p>Artworks and manmade structures take over open public space at the detriment of people's enjoyment of the Coast Walk.</p>	<p>Selected artworks will celebrate the landscape and enhance our experience of it, and this artwork will articulate the site without dominating or defining it.</p> <p>The artwork will be located back from the headland to allow people to picnic on the headland.</p>
Unsuitable design	<p>The artwork design is not traditionally Aboriginal. It resembles an American tepee, rather than a gunyah.</p>	<p>The artwork is not a literal representation of Aboriginal architecture, but its design is inspired by gunyahs and by signal fires lit on headlands by Aboriginal people throughout millennia.</p> <p>Aboriginal culture is continuous and ever evolving.</p>
	<p>Most people will not recognise the link to Aboriginal culture and architecture.</p>	<p>Council hopes that visitors learn more about these practices and histories through their experience of the artwork, and by exploring its themes via the artwork webpage, which will be linked to via a plaque onsite.</p> <p>Aboriginal culture is continuous and ever evolving.</p>
	<p>The structure will not provide any shelter from the weather.</p>	<p>The artwork is not intended to provide shelter from the weather, but instead aims to interact with the environment in a more sensitive way.</p>
Location	<p>The size and exact location of the artwork are not clear.</p> <p>How will the location be chosen?</p>	<p>Council will produce a map showing the exact size and location of the artwork, which will be available on the artwork webpage.</p> <p>The location has been chosen through consultation with the local Aboriginal community.</p>
Use of the space	<p>Once the artwork is installed, the community is interested in being able to hire the public art space for events and other gatherings.</p>	<p>Booking requests for this type of space can be made at OpenSpaceBookings@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.</p>

Theme	Issues, change requests and other considerations raised	Response from the project team
Anti-social behaviour	The artwork will attract vandalism and graffiti.	<p>The artwork will be constructed from robust materials and vandalism will be discouraged through lighting and passive surveillance.</p> <p>Once completed, the artwork will become a Council asset and will be included in Council's regular maintenance program for its assets.</p> <p>The artwork will come with a maintenance manual with instruction on how to address any vandalism /graffiti, this will also be rectified in a timely manner.</p>
Unnecessary expenditure	The artwork is a waste of ratepayer's money and does not provide benefit to the wider community.	<p>The artwork will be constructed from hardwood and steel and will be robust and hard-wearing.</p> <p>The artwork will form part of Council's assets and will be included in Council's Asset Management Register and schedules of works.</p> <p>The artwork will provide significant community benefit, providing a place for the community to come together, to share conversations and their experiences of this place.</p>
	A children's playground elsewhere would be more useful.	Council has a number of current playground projects, including upgrades to local playgrounds, as part of the Freshwater Masterplan implementation.

Appendix 1 Verbatim community and stakeholder responses*

A. Online comments

Number	Comment
1	Please stop placing obstrusive 'artworks' along our beautiful natural coastline. They obstruct the beauty of the natural 'artwork' and detract from the enjoyment of the coastal walk. This pile of sticks should not be placed here or anywhere else on the coast.
2	Why do we need to put up art when we're looking at nature. The clue should be in the title shouldn't it - it's a Coast Walk, not a gallery walk. We will have just another man made object right slap bang in the middle of what should be natural coastal views.
3	Just want to say Nicole Monks that it is a beautiful design. Listening to the rationalisation for the site and the structure was clear and very supportive of connection with all past present and future. I hope everyone else feels the same.
4	It was wonderful to be included in the evening, to be given the opportunity to learn more from the Local Custodians . Nicole's vision for the future gatherings on this important land is refreshing and inclusive. Such passion It will be amazing to see it erected with the story of signal fires being acknowledged. Thanks to Caroline mili mili Christiane Public Art and the councillors who were informative & making sure everyone was seated and comfortable . Great event Thankyou
5	This is a wonderful project with brilliant artistic realisation. It will be so important for the community to come together here to reflect on the past and look to the future. An important education resource for all ages.
6	Thank you for the opportunity to watch the artists talk with Nicole Monks last night it was very enlightening. I will be unable to attend the artist talk and presentation tonight however wanted to share my thoughts that all the key stakeholders may not be aware of. I grew up in the Northern Beaches there were certain members of our Community who though not First Nations are considered elders and knowledge bearers followed by generations and a generation preceding them. Streets in Freshwater are named after these families and memorials throughout the lower half of our LGA. McKillop Park is indeed iconic, there are memorial plaques on chairs installed by their families of these Community Elders that sit above McKillop Park where fathers/grandfathers use to stand at sunrise/evenings to determine the tides/winds who were also lifetime members of Freshwater/Curl Curl. As they do when someone passes just last May, we as a Community stood at McKillop Park at one of the elders passing's as the boats rowed out beyond the wave line and raised their oars in honour while hundreds lined Freshwater Beach and planted their oars in a row along the beach. It might not be known to the committee of this public art work but a older group of men still stand at the same spot every morning to determine tides etc and have witnessed climate change

*Personal details and inappropriate language have been redacted where possible. Spelling and grammatical errors have been amended only where misinterpretation or offence may be caused.

Number	Comment
	and the changing landscape of our gentrified Harbord. Im just wondering if any of the Harbord Community have been included in the collaboration. I appreciate from the talk last night that Nicole lived for some time in Collaroy/Narrabeen however the culture of Harbord is very unknown unless lived, of which I saw Council members on last nights call would entirely understand. The proposed structure represents the fires that the First Nations people and that is wonderful. Is there any allowance there not be a proposal for and collaborative sculpture which incorporates the traditions of the First Nations and Non Indigenous community of Freshwater?
7	Likely to be a target for vandalism and not providing benefit to wider community More community benefit to provide more children's playground facilities in Freshwater reserve
8	Looks fabulous very interactive
9	I love it!
10	Love it!
11	<p>You are not showing a map of which part of that beautiful, spacious, grassy headland this structure will be constructed, and taking over this open space. Also, the size is not indicated.</p> <p>The concept is lovely, but not at the detriment of what is peacefully there now. If you were to clear a section of the bush to create it, perhaps that would be important, as the surrounding bushes would provide protection from the wind, when you go to sit there at night, as proposed.</p> <p>The existing circle of sandstone seat/wall there now is a great seat, uncluttered, and definitely available for many small groups of people at the one time without feeling one encroaches on other's use of space.</p> <p>This structure would eliminate that. If I saw a group in the Gunya, already, I would not feel inclined to intrude on their use this space which has a very personal atmosphere about it.</p> <p>Sorry, but I am concerned the grassy headland will be taken away.</p> <p>Please provide a series of map location options for the community to comment on best choice of position, because we use this space all the time, and we do honour the indigenous heritage, deeply, so we don't want this great idea of a community art work to be misplaced and cause a sad feeling due to good intentions not well researched.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to voice considerations.</p>
12	This is a wonderful sculpture but needs to be tucked in between the bush and the path at the northern end of the Park. It seem to be fairly tall so maybe just a bit shorter.
13	<p>I like coastal walks because they bring me close to nature and make me feel far away from any man made objects.</p> <p>Having less or no man made sights along the way would be the best, especially if you are trying to promote the area as a place of local significance and beauty. Maybe it is perfect in its natural way.</p> <p>Why do we need to build things in nature to enhance our experience in nature? Let it be raw and it's beauty will shine.</p> <p>Build an attraction and the beauty is hidden.</p> <p>We are forever building in places of great significance and losing more and more natural sites.</p>

Number	Comment
14	<p>Even though I believe this is quite a nice work of art, I have over the years seen abominable art placed in public areas. - at rate payers expense!</p> <p>Art is a very personal, subjective issue and I believe for this reason should be confined to art galleries where one can pay and choose to go, or have and enjoy in private homes.</p> <p>Our coastal walk is beautiful in its own right and does not need abstract sometimes vile artwork to supposedly improve it.</p> <p>I object to using my rates to fund subjective 'artwork' in public areas and the natural environment ie. coastal walk.</p>
15	<p>While it's great to bring native art to the fore, can council leave some parts of the beautiful landscape as it is without adding more and more signs, advertising, road art, graffiti and visual displays. In particular this installation looks remarkably like an American teepee. Maybe a local business could cover the poles with an advertising tarpaulin and hold morning yoga classes ? That could be a real earner for a local business.</p>
16	<p>I cannot understand why this Council will play with this sort of Venue whilst we have pot holes, lawns in need of mowing everywhere, roads with holes in the everywhere, trees to be cut down in streets where people have to duck to walk along the foot path, with Meecham Park on Dee Why Beach so uneven with ground levelling and flooding and idiots parking on single lined streets on every corner in and around Dee Why and the beach area and you persist with a dumb Arts Venue only for a minority of Art lovers who counts to about 50 who actually care!</p> <p>Wake Up you lot in the Council sphere, we did not vote for you to be idiots of a minority but saviours for the majority of residents on the Northern Beaches!</p> <p>Christ your an upsetting lot!!</p>
17	<p>I do love ART, I also love Nature but choose Nature anytime over ART . WHY do we need to destroy Natures vista by artificial objects that have to be accepted whether you like it or not.</p> <p>I do object to any permanent features that take away the natural setting especially a coastal view. Totally against it.</p>
18	<p>I'm so Pleased that this is being considered I do hope it goes ahead as I feel that the community would greatly benefit young and old from all backgrounds and cultures. There needs to be more of it on the Northern Beaches.</p>
19	<p>So excited to have this amazing mili mili studio piece on Freshie headland. I'm looking forward to sitting on the benches watching the sun rise in late 2022</p>
20	<p>The shape is very interesting, and I like that it is inspired on an Aboriginal gunya, but at the end of the day this is a shelter that does not provide any actual shelter against the sun, wind or rain. The whole purpose of a gunya is to provide shelter and that point has been missed. So now it is just art, pointless really.</p>
21	<p>Where is Mckillop Park? If I type 'McKillop Park, Freshwater' into Google maps it doesn't find anything. Knowing where it is would be useful.</p>
22	<p>I like the design.</p> <p>Could there be a short audio installed to inform more fully?</p>

Number	Comment
	Compare the one in the former radio structure in Dr H J Foley Park, Cnr Pymont Bridge Rd and Glebe Rd, Glebe.
23	In awe, perfection materialised. Lost for words..
24	It's great to see functional artwork inspired by first nation culture.
25	Doesn't do it for me though I appreciate the thought behind the commission. Nothing traditionally Indigenous about it though it is meant to be a salute to Indigenous culture. Doubtful if many will recognise any "gunyah" connection in this modernist structure. Call me an old- fashioned representationalist but I long for a Dreamtime serpent or something, anything, similar. Something with meaning.Nothing attractive about this stark collection of sticks which doesn't even double as a shelter, but successfully interferes with a glorious view.
26	Looks fabulous
27	What a beautiful idea. We need more of these sort of things to engage local communities. I wholeheartedly agree with these initiatives.
28	Nice idea dn look forward to seeing it in real life

B. Emailed comment (received outside the consultation period)

Number	Comment
1	<p>Many members of the Friends of Freshwater had the recent good fortune to attend a briefing (convened by Council) on the "Wuruna" Aboriginal Artwork that is to be installed on Freshwater's northern headland in the latter part of 2022.</p> <p>At this briefing, we were impressed with the fact that this artwork will respond evocatively to the site's natural landscape, environment conditions and its local history (including pre-settlement).</p> <p>It is obvious that the site is redolent with aboriginal history and will become more so with both this artwork installation and the passing of increased pedestrian traffic, generated by implementation of the Council's Coastal Reserves Master Plan.</p> <p>One discordant fact is that the crown land on which the art work is located is known as McKillop Park. Apparently it was named after an Alderman McKillop of an early Warringah Shire in 1860. Not much is known about this gentleman nor are his contributions to the establishment of our community. In fact, most people think that the Park is named after Saint Mary McKillop.</p> <p>Along with the installation of the art work, we think there is a golden opportunity for a Park name change to retire the name "McKillop" and start afresh with a new name that corresponds to the aboriginality of the Headland. We favour the name "Wuruna Park" which will bring it into the storyline of the proposed artwork.</p> <p>Freshwater as a suburb has a proud aboriginal history with many middens in existence as evidence of a long term presence. It is also the location of the Aboriginal Heritage Centre.</p>

Number	Comment
	<p>It is fitting to recognise and highlight this lived, millennial, experience.</p> <p>--</p> <p>Best regards</p>

Document administration	
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Approval	<p>Content provided by Art & Culture Team.</p> <p>Responsible Manager: Josephine Bennett</p>
Related Projects	<p>Freshwater Coastal Open Space Masterplan</p> <p>Northern Beaches Coast Walk - Public Art Strategic Plan</p>
Notes	<p>Community and stakeholder views contained in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Beaches Council or indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.</p>