

# Aboriginal Cultural Landscape Workshop

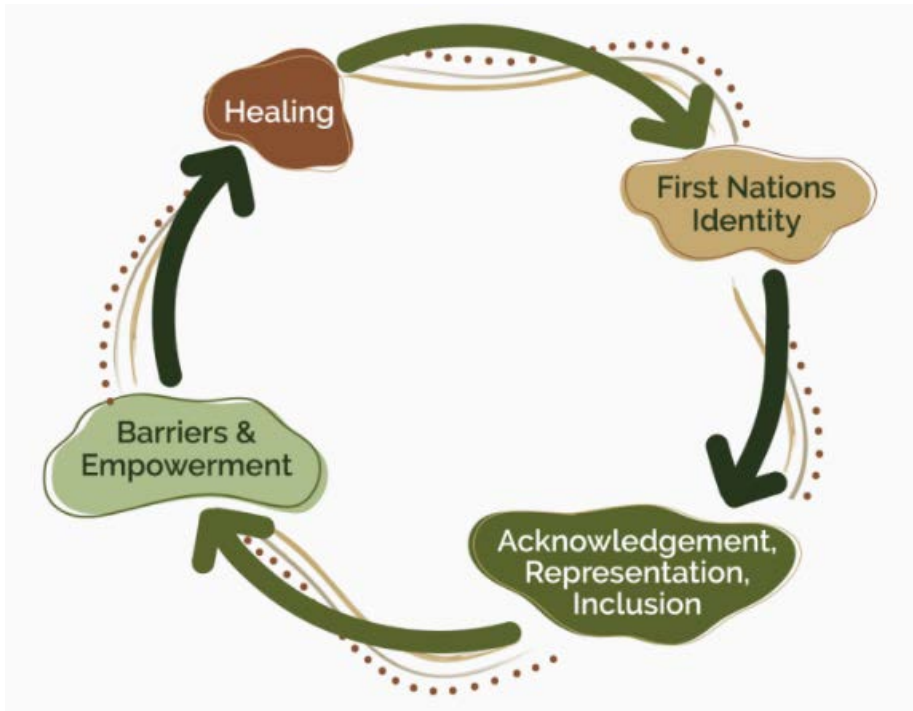
The Environmental Trust, NSW organised a workshop to inform their policy. The workshop took place at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Sydney on the 28th of February 2024. Fourteen participants took part. The workshop was facilitated by a Senior Aboriginal Consultant of the Aboriginal led consultancy – Murawin.

The Environmental Trust and Murawin together developed an agenda to inform discussions.

But Aboriginal participants had other ideas and took the workshop in directions that were more meaningful and powerful

## What we spoke about

Many things were talked about from cultural burns to Healing Country. Murawin collected many of these statements and found that they fell into four themes. These themes are shown as a never-ending circle as they are intertwined, interacting with each other in a web of meaning. And each area, in turn, emerged with people's experiences on Country and working with government to improve Country and to heal from the injustices of the past.



## First Nations Identity

First Nations identity is grounded in a powerful connection between people and Country

*Foundation is the spiritual connection to Country and where people are from and the obligation to protect land and story.*

*The culture is about responsibility to place including **songlines** and totemic species. They are a part of who we are. Culture is the foundation and our relationship to look after Country. Everything is intertwined.*

*Aboriginal wisdom is the core practice to look after Country*

*People and Country are one.*

## Acknowledgement, representation and inclusion

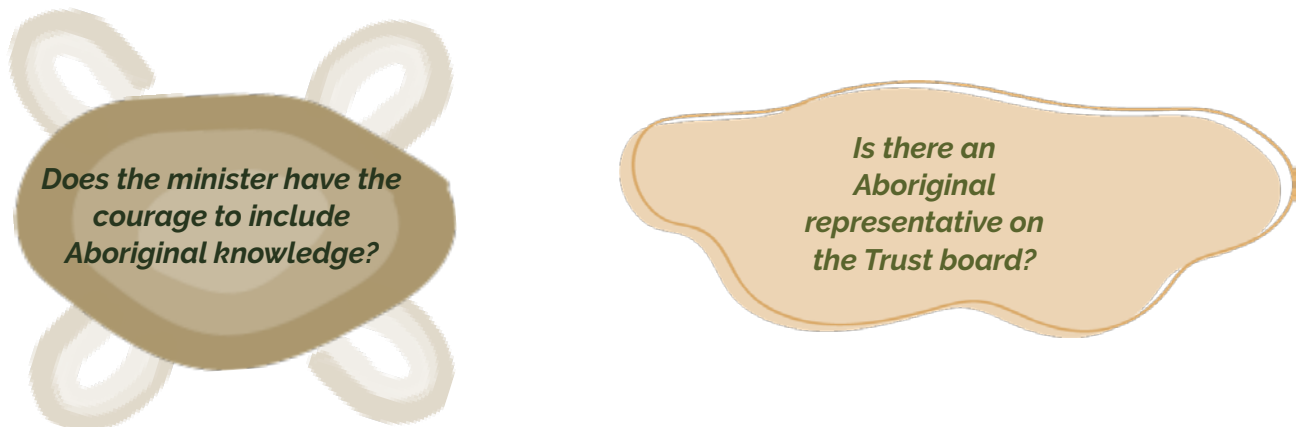
There was a strong sense amongst participants that they lacked acknowledgment, were not valued and that there was a failure to recognize Aboriginal experiences and wisdom.



Participants also spoke of their resilience and strength. And suggested spaces to shift this narrative and take their rightful place as custodians of the land.



At other times changes suggested were specific, practical, and truthful.





# Barriers and Empowerment

Many barriers facing Aboriginal people were raised. Many of these barriers lay in accessing funding to **heal Country**, to **heal people**:



We're jumping through hoops to work out which department to go to.

If a cultural species is under threat, you can't get funding. Capacity of community to fill out applications [is a barrier].



Changing government funding cycles — (an expressed priority within the group).



Politics aren't helping us.

The challenges of the political system in particular were noted:

But with each barrier, suggestions were made to overcome them. Despite the pain and challenges of the past, workshop participants were eager to share strategies to maintain cultural knowledge and strengthen culture in the future.

The Green new day is coming, and we need to be prepared and be proactive. We have to create our own voice. We've got to provide an alternative to government to how they do business with us.

How do we integrate Aboriginal culture into government strategies? (note taken during the workshop)

Employment opportunities were raised as an issue:

Lack of sustainable employment related to caring for Country (note taken during the workshop)



And there was also a recognition that government needed help to see that their economic benefits in Aboriginal led programs (and an economic cost in not working with Aboriginal people).

Social outcomes from Country programs.

What is the cost of not engaging Aboriginal

# Healing

The final theme connects all the other themes. It is healing of culture and of people;

## How do we unify our cultural knowledge?

On practices to connect people with culture;

*Connecting kids to wetlands, to Country – seeing, feeling, touching*



*Connecting to totems for kids*



*Curricula – enabling kids to be proud in ancestry.*



On healing divisions between groups;

*We need projects to unify us, not divide us. We have knowledge, resources*

*All going for small pieces of the pie to fund specific projects rather than connecting mobs and undertaking a collaborative approach.*

*We want to look after our land in a meaningful way, not competing with one another (note taken during the workshop).*

And reclaiming Aboriginal ways of being;

*Our generation Healing, reclaiming needs value and respect for peoples social and emotional wellbeing Healing Country and healing people are connected.*

And there is a sense in all of this that this journey to healing is not simply for Aboriginal people alone but rather a journey done together. As one Aboriginal Elder in the workshop mentioned

*This is the time we need to come together.*

## Acknowledgement

Murawin and the NSW Environmental Trust would like to thank all workshop attendants for their input.

Prepared by Murawin Pty Ltd for Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

### DISCLAIMER

This report was prepared by Murawin in good faith exercising all due care and attention, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the relevance, accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of this document in respect of any particular user's circumstances. Users of this document should satisfy themselves concerning its application to, and where necessary seek expert advice in respect of, their situation. The views expressed within are not necessarily the views of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and may not represent department policy.

© Copyright State of NSW and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

