

BONNYRIGG 'SITES OF CONTEMPLATION', 'PLANTLINES' & 'WARALI WALI' PROJECTS

Organisations Involved & Contact Details

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Website:

<http://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/default.asp?iDocID=6562&iNavCatID=6&iSubCatID=82>

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/sync/urban/urban_bonnyrigg.pdf

Aims & Target Group

Aim: The aim of these interrelated projects was to focus on creating intercultural exchange through the use of public space, to engage with the Indigenous population and create sustainable harmonious outcomes through working together.

Project Description & Components

History

Fairfield Council owned some land in Bonnyrigg and the State Transport Authority also owned a corridor of land on which they decided to build. This provided the catalyst for reconsidering what might be done and how best to engage the community in pursuit of their goals for the area which lies close to the Bonnyrigg CBD. There are a number of different places of worship and cultural centres in the area so it was decided that engaging the different faiths would be integral to any lasting harmony strategies, as would be the involvement of the Indigenous community. Bonnyrigg is a multicultural area with over 50 per cent of its residents from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Plantlines Project

The Plantlines Project is a joint horticultural strategy between Fairfield City Council and the Aboriginal communities. It is designed to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals and groups. The project is ongoing as the plantings are continually attended to and it provides a practical context through which Aboriginal people can express traditional, contemporary and spiritual connections with the land, and non-Aboriginal people can better understand these connections in relation to their own.





The project is part of a larger development called the 'Trails of Fire and Water', which will comprise a series of interconnecting cultural landscapes in the new district park in Bonnyrigg. It is also connected, through its environmental focus, to the Warali Wali project (a joint initiative between Holroyd and Fairfield City Councils) and the Hilwa Park project (Villawood). These individual, yet related initiatives symbolise Indigenous cultural continuity across nations and songlines.

The 14 hectare Bonnyrigg Town Centre Park was previously an undeveloped flood-prone area in bad condition. The new park is now a vibrant, shared open space and recreation area. The main area of the new park has been landscaped using native species and traditional Aboriginal land management practices designed to provide a natural system of stormwater drainage. The sustainable relationships between native and non-native flora created in the park are a metaphor for humanity's ability to co-exist.

To promote community ownership, the Bonnyrigg Town Centre Park project has taken shape over a number of years, with much input from local residents, businesses, schools and community groups. A system of paths connects the main park area with a youth area, public transport and the Bonnyrigg plaza. The park has a designated youth area, with a skate park, BMX track, basketball court and close proximity to local food outlets. The youth area was planned with the help of local school students, who designed the seating and tables. There are also picnic facilities, playgrounds and community artworks throughout the park.

Sites of Contemplation

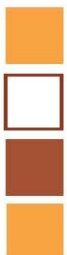
The park borders on many different religious places of worship and cultural centres. These include: the Chinese Presbyterian Church, the Turkish Islamic Mosque, the first purpose built Vietnamese temple, a separate Vietnamese community centre, a Buddhist temple, the Assyrian Club, the Hungarian social club, the Diverse Baptist Church, the Armenian cultural centre and an Aboriginal community centre.

The Sites of Contemplation project in the Bonnyrigg Town Centre Park provides a place of harmony, acceptance and spiritual renewal and, in order to achieve this, local cultural and religious groups were included in the consultation process. The artworks produced by local artists have been placed to indicate sites of contemplation throughout the park while the Indigenous heritage of the area is reflected through the park's Plantlines project. With the Sites of Contemplation, the purpose was not to have a small isolated island of artwork in the park but to provide spaces for the integration of the various religions represented in the community. \

The Warali Wali Project

The Warali Wali project is a project that celebrates indigenous culture and heritage by retelling stories through art. From its commencement through to its final completion, the Warali Wali Project included a comprehensive consultation process with local Indigenous peoples and relevant Local Aboriginal Land Councils to ensure the process was community lead. The Warali Wali Project, in conjunction with the Prospect Creek Plan of Management, was a partnership between Holroyd City Council, Fairfield City Council, Holroyd ATSI Committee and DIPNR, as part of the Georges River Foreshore Improvement Grant Program.

The Warali Wali Project site follows a section of Prospect Creek, approximately 8km in length, which is the boundary between the two local government areas of Holroyd and Fairfield. It contains a series of four art works and path markers expressing stories of the local Aboriginal people, the Darug. The stories tell of the native flora and fauna along the local waterway, Prospect Creek. The artworks were developed by Aboriginal artists with the support of the Darug Elders, the Traditional Custodians of these lands.





Process

Council had a large vacant block of land where old cars were dumped. The Council's Cultural Planning Officer worked with land use planners and the local community to explore what they thought might be a good use for the site. There were also a number of different places of worship and centres in the area, these included:

- Chinese Presbyterian Church
- Turkish Islamic Mosque
- Vietnamese built temple
- Separate Vietnamese community centre
- Buddhist temple
- Assyrian club
- Hungarian social club
- Diverse Baptist Church
- Armenian cultural centre
- Aboriginal community centre

The Cultural Planning Officer wanted to very much focus on the positives of the neighbourhood, emphasising its uniqueness and cultural diversity. He found many interesting stories from the people who had developed the places of worship and the community centres and identified a real sense of strength in the place.

The various places of worship organised lots of festivals and the groups very much wanted to share their cultures with other people. Council felt that there was a lot of social capital within the group, but not much bridging capital, which is what the various groups really wanted to build.

The Cultural Planning Officer subsequently held consultations with planners, shopping centre owners, community members to design the new park.

A park with the theme 'Sites of Contemplation' was chosen to reflect the religions and diversity of the neighbourhood.

Local artists were employed on the project, but it remained a very ground up undertaking. It employed a highly integrated planning approach informed very much by the community.

The purpose of the Sites of Contemplation was not to have little isolated islands in the park but to provide a space where the various religions were integrated.

The Sites of Contemplation project was also very much integrated with other projects such as 'Plant Lines' due to their proximity and having some of the same people involved in the implementation and consultation of the projects.

Outcomes

These projects relied on an integrated planning approach and design process driven very much by the community itself. It is this bottom-up approach that has ensured their success. The community is very diverse but also there is a real sense of strength within it and an interest in sharing cultural practices. Community ownership and pride in the town centre is crucial to the success of the project.

The public consultation and planning for the projects were the first time many of the participants, effectively next-door-neighbours, had met since, although there was a great deal of social capital within the community, there were few bridges between the different cultural groups. Also, interconnectedness between the projects has been made possible because of their physical





proximity to each other and the fact that some of the same people were involved in the consultation and implementation of all three projects.

The projects have really made a difference to the place:

- The various agencies are starting to pay attention to the place
- The market value has gone up and the Dept of housing are starting to do work
- People are starting to make their own good gardens, there is much more community pride.

The Cultural Planning Officer involved on the project felt that what really made it work was that it came from the ground up. He explained that, while you need to create processes, they need to come out of the chaos of the communities.

Challenges & Obstacles

Councils often try to build perfect top down processes and systems but these usually occur away from the chaos of lived community experiences and thus for projects to really work, there is a need for the flexibility that some top down system and processes don't always allow for.

Funding

Fairfield City Council

Images

