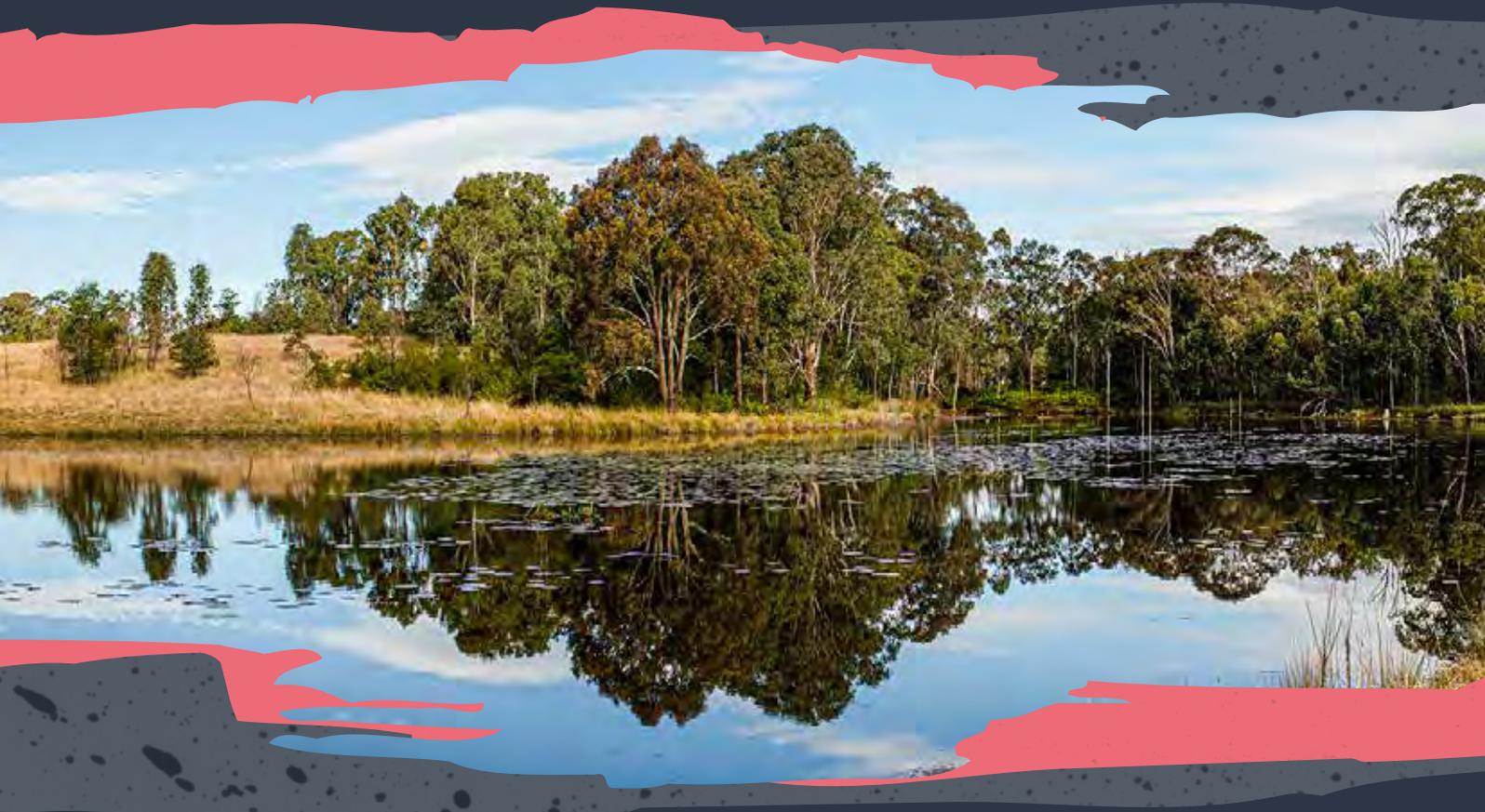


Fernhill Estate



Draft Landscape Master Plan



Greater
Sydney
Parklands



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Darug Country, the cultural landscape that we are working upon. We acknowledge the custodianship of its people and the privilege and responsibility to Connect with Country with them.

Often, words of acknowledgement are given to Country, but to know and introduce yourself to Country you must sense and feel her presence. Hearing her stories, the sounds, the colours, the smells and engage with her spirit. It is not the words as ritual, but the feeling that connects us to her and each other, reminding us of our custodial responsibility.

As a team, we are guided by the inspiration of Country, the stories and knowledge this place echoes and shares. We acknowledge its contribution to wellbeing both mental and physical, providing a refuge and safe place to learn and share for everyone who respects her.

Our Vision is that sensing and caring for Country transcends cultural differences and highlights the many values that we share across the cultures of our contemporary community. We seek to support a socially inclusive, resilient and innovative community based on honouring the wisdom and kinship of all cultures, captured through the lens of custodianship, Connected to Country.

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Prepared by Greater Sydney Parklands NSW Government

Contributors

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Disclaimer

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The next chapter of Fernhill Estate

Fernhill Estate is a magnificent 423-hectare area in Mulgoa Valley, at the base of the Blue Mountains. It is a place of considerable First Nations and Colonial history that was purchased by the NSW Government in 2018, bringing it into public ownership for the first time. In December 2020, Greater Sydney Parklands became manager and custodian of the Estate.

As the newest addition to Greater Sydney Parklands' iconic places, Fernhill Estate will be open for the public to use and enjoy. Importantly, its natural and cultural heritage and idyllic rural surroundings will be protected and celebrated.

Activating Fernhill Estate supports the directions set out in the NSW Government's 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands – which imagines greener streets, higher-quality parklands and more green connections for communities.

Introduction

Greater Sydney Parklands has prepared the Fernhill Estate Draft Landscape Master Plan, which brings to life the key moves for the Estate outlined in the Fernhill Estate Foundation Plan of Management to 2026. One of the main actions identified in the Plan of Management was to develop a landscape master plan for the Estate.

The Fernhill Estate Draft Landscape Master Plan outlines a number of key design moves to deliver a remarkable and sustainable parkland for Greater Sydney's communities. Greater Sydney Parklands will implement these moves over the long term.

Partnering with First Nations designers and community

Fernhill Estate is an exceptional landscape of natural and cultural heritage significance. It is located on Darug Country within the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council, close to Gundungurra Country at the edge of the Cumberland Plain and the foot of the Blue Mountains.

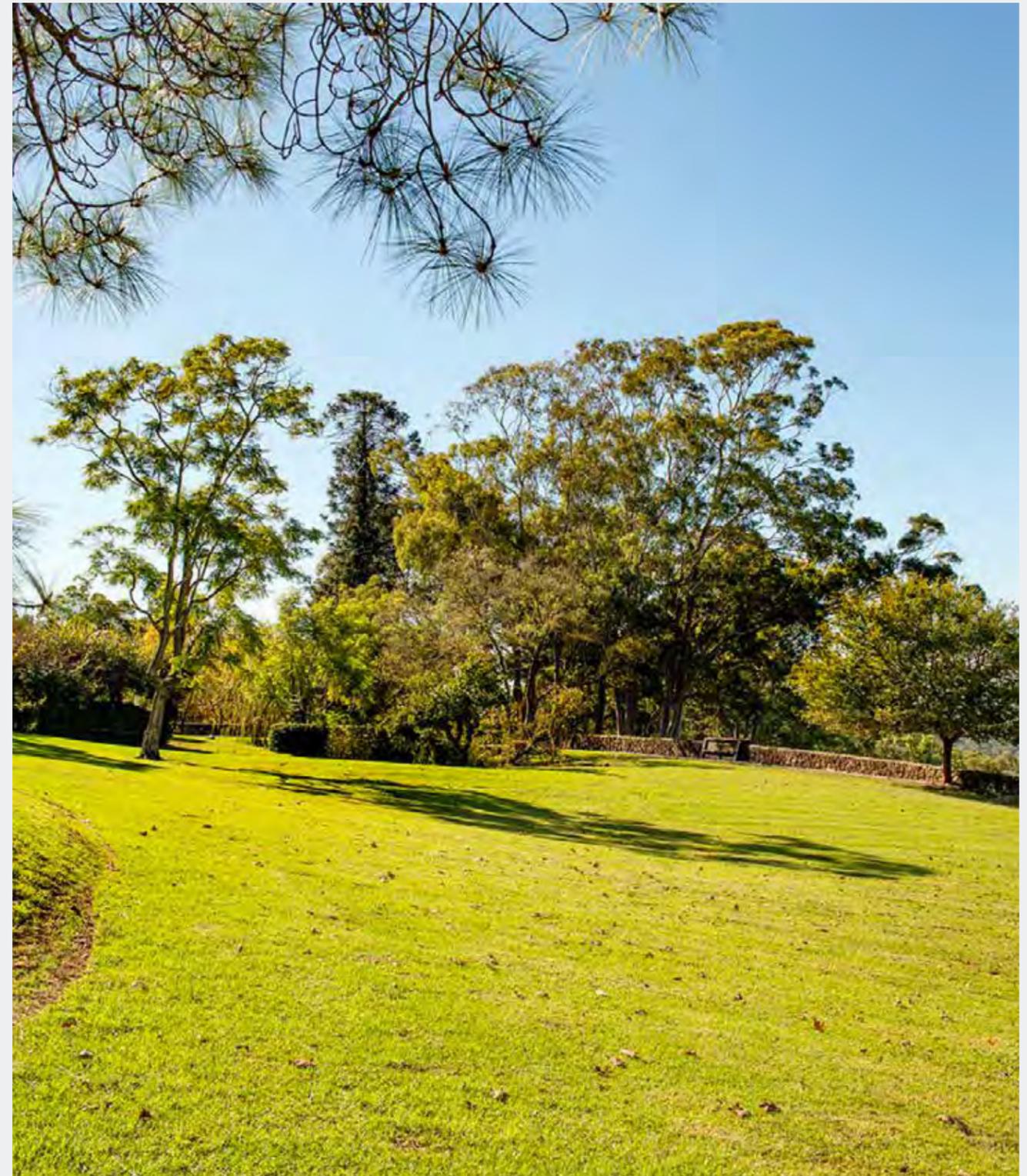
The Draft Landscape Master Plan is strengthened by a co-design to develop design ideas for Fernhill Estate and to incorporate First Nations and contemporary design thinking into the future of this significant landscape.

Taking a leaf from Plan of Management

The four key moves established in the Fernhill Estate Foundation Plan of Management 2026 have informed the development of the Draft Landscape Master Plan. These moves are:

- Estate stewardship
- Opening up the Estate
- Engaging the community
- Sustainable and resilient.

The Fernhill House precinct



I think it's a godsend that government has bought Fernhill. We have to think creatively – not just for now, for us – but for the future.

– Community Member



Fernhill Estate will open its doors to diverse activities from bushwalking to picnicking



“

I'd like to see Fernhill as a place where people can make their own fun – not too done. With a historical restaurant, picnic areas, kids on bikes but not [adult] cyclists. A place for people to relax.

– Community Member



Maintaining Fernhill's rich equestrian history

Bringing the Estate to life

As outlined in the Foundation Plan of Management to 2026, Fernhill Estate will become a vibrant parkland under a five year-plan to transform it, opening its doors to diverse activities from bushwalking to picnicking.

- Over the next 12 months, Greater Sydney Parklands will complete the Draft Landscape Master Plan and open Fernhill Estate for low-impact and passive recreation uses.
- The focus for the first year includes:
 - opening the Estate for walking, picnics, programs and events, and other activities, and opening Fernhill House as appropriate for tours or special events
 - considering short-term adaptive re-use leasing opportunities for non-heritage buildings
 - hosting an annual event such as a music or equestrian event or outdoor gallery
 - beginning bushland management and restoration.
- Over the next five years, we will focus on restoring Fernhill House and setting the foundation for the Estate to become a major attraction for Mulgoa Valley and Greater Sydney. We will do this by:
 - restoring and refurbishing Fernhill House and establishing a major tourism destination or arts and culture precinct
 - adaptively re-using existing buildings for additional activations
 - continuing to implement the Fernhill Estate Draft Landscape Master Plan
 - working with Penrith City Council on the potential provision of specialist sports
 - creating broader walking and cycling connections with Penrith City Council
 - continuing to make good the Estate, acting as caretaker of heritage buildings and interpreting the heritage stories.



Experience and celebrate native food production



Undertaking the Listen to Country design approach

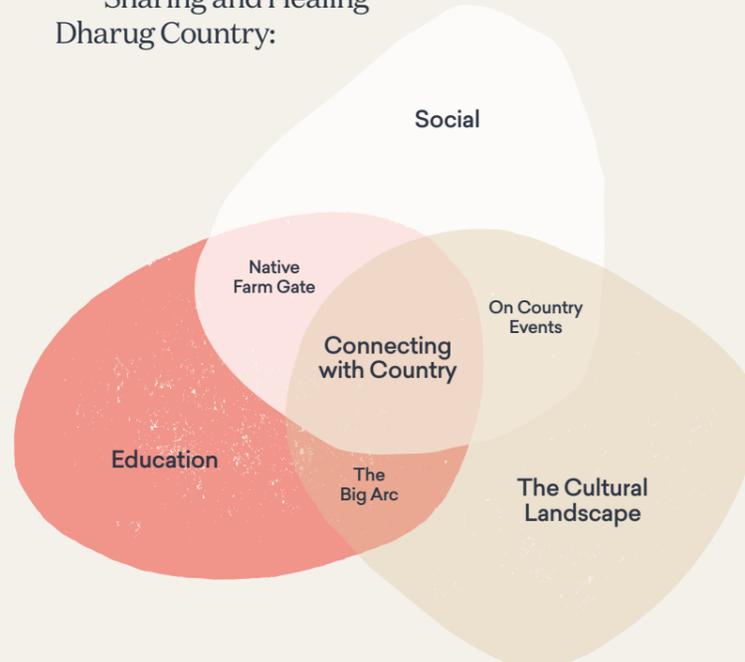
Supporting a vibrant Aboriginal culture

The Wanganni Dhayar (Listen to Country) design methodology used in preparing the Draft Landscape Master Plan follows the principles outlined in the Government Architect NSW's Connecting with Country framework. Under the framework, design and planning projects involve the steps of sensing, imagining, shaping and caring for Country.

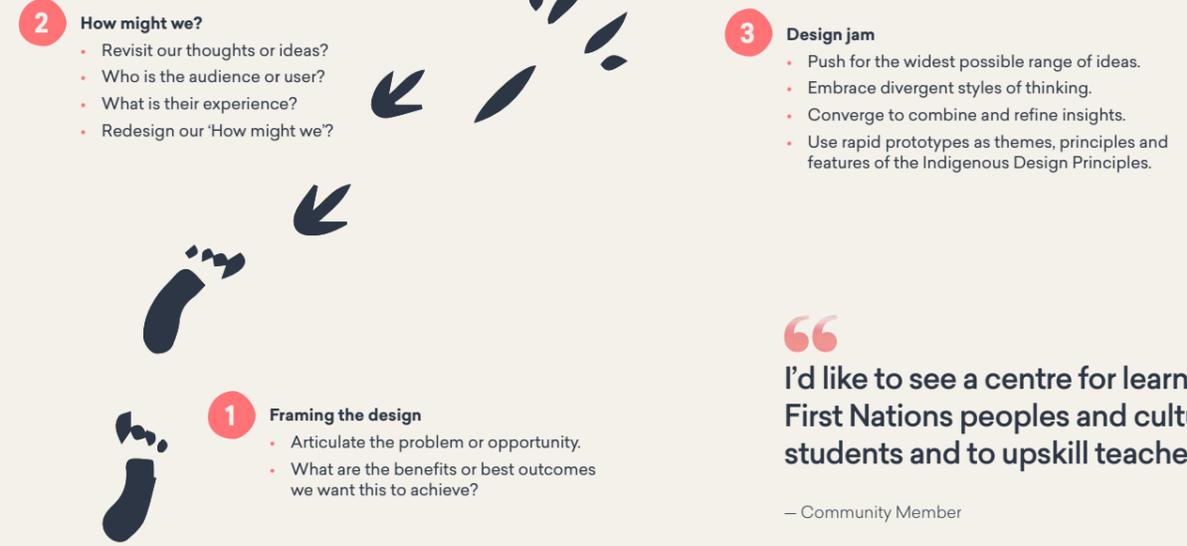
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage as a living memory has been incorporated in the landscape design, considering endemic ecology, cultural resources, land management practices, local language, site features and wayfinding. The Draft Landscape Master Plan process has involved ideation and co-design as part of a designing with Country approach.

Country and its custodians are active co-designers of the Draft Landscape Master Plan through a shared collective voice. Greater Sydney Parklands has engaged with the local Darug community and created authentic biocultural narratives to underpin Fernhill Estate's landscape design.

Fernhill —
Sharing and Healing
Dharug Country:



Laying out the design process



- 1 Framing the design**
- Articulate the problem or opportunity.
 - What are the benefits or best outcomes we want this to achieve?

- 2 How might we?**
- Revisit our thoughts or ideas?
 - Who is the audience or user?
 - What is their experience?
 - Redesign our 'How might we'?

- 4 Logic and assumption testing**
- Close the feedback loop with internal and external stakeholders.
 - Check cultural logic.
 - Is Country appropriately represented in the design?

- 3 Design jam**
- Push for the widest possible range of ideas.
 - Embrace divergent styles of thinking.
 - Converge to combine and refine insights.
 - Use rapid prototypes as themes, principles and features of the Indigenous Design Principles.

- 5 The pitch**
- From a somewhat chaotic start, we now have a feasible, viable and desirable solution to share.

“I'd like to see a centre for learning about First Nations peoples and culture for students and to upskill teachers.”

— Community Member

2021 Yerrabingun Pty Ltd ©

The Design jam led by Yerrabingun



Indigenous foods





The Fernhill House precinct



Community drop-in session at The Hayshed in Fernhill Estate

We want to hear from you

In May 2021, Greater Sydney Parklands spoke with over 300 community members and stakeholders at a community open day at the Estate to find out what they would like to see happen at Fernhill Estate. This feedback informed the preparation of the Draft Landscape Master Plan. This feedback included:

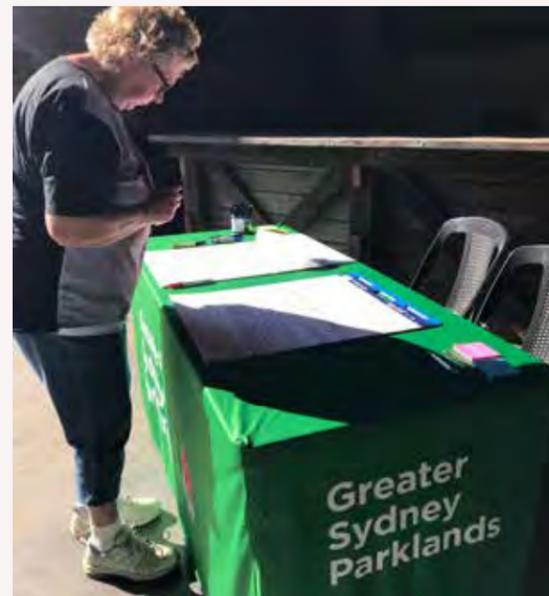
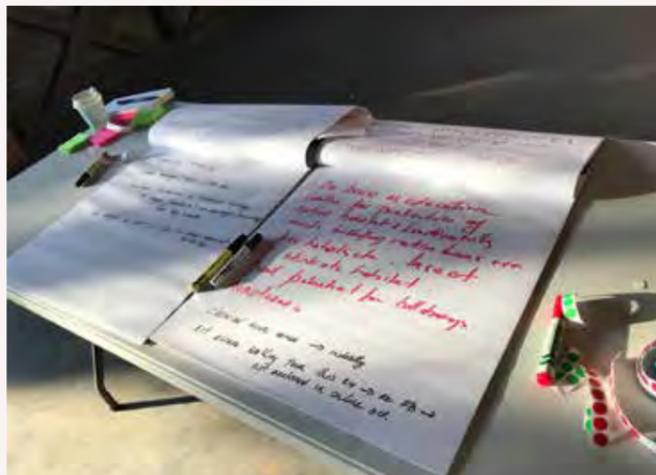
- A low impact and sensitive future use and activation of the Estate including passive recreation facilities such as picnic facilities and children's play.
- Access to and around the Estate for walking and cycling for the enjoyment by people of all ages and abilities.
- The importance of celebrating First Nations, early Colonial and shared culture and stories.
- The importance of protecting, respecting and enhancing the natural environment including bushlands, waterways, bird and animal life.
- A desire for a range of appropriate adaptive reuse of existing buildings and small-scale commercial, social and community uses.
- A need to consider the types of equestrian facilities and activities available for the community.
- Safe access to the Estate for cars off Mulgoa Road.

Now, we are seeking your feedback on the draft landscape master plan. Your thoughts and comments on the future of Fernhill are valuable and will inform the final master plan.

“
It's layer upon layer upon layer.
Let's help keep it layering.
The conservation is important.
Accessibility is important. We need to think about where the parking is located. It's a retreat. For mental wellbeing people need these places.

— Community Member

A drop-in session in May 2021 helped prepare the draft plan



Nearly 300 community members shared their thoughts on Fernhill's future

Key

- 1 Northern Drive
- 2 Fernhill House Gardens
- 3 'Ngunyul' – The Big Arc
- 4 Mulgoa Scenic Road
- 5 Moving around Fernhill
- 6 Hayshed & Orchard
- 7 Northern Dam
- 8 Native Farm Gate
- 9 Fernhill Drive
- 10 Wetland Discovery
- 11 Littlefields Precinct

Legend

- Vehicle access roads
- Main pedestrian / Cycle circulation
- - - Walking tracks
- P Car park
- A Amenities
- Woodland conservation
- - - Biobanking boundary
- Recreational bushland
- Recreational paddocks – mown
- Paddocks
- Equestrian area



Draft Landscape Master Plan

Exploring Fernhill Estate as part of Mulgoa Valley

Fernhill Estate is situated within Mulgoa Valley, on the edge of the Cumberland Plain at the base of the Blue Mountains. It is a place of many stories – from the ancient Aboriginal people who lived on the plains and foothills of the mountains in what is now Western Sydney, to the early British colonists in the Mulgoa Valley.

- Darug Country at Fernhill Estate is rich and diverse with open woodlands, sandstone soil forests, rainforest gullies, grassy meadows and riparian corridors. This diversity of habitat provides for a diversity of wildlife at Fernhill Estate including koalas, wallabies, kangaroos, goannas, echidnas and woodland birds such as the Regent Honeyeater.
- The 423-hectare Estate includes significant open rural parklands, large reserves of natural bushland and creeks, as well as an early Colonial stables building, 20th century farm estate outbuildings, equestrian buildings and race track. Much of the Estate still looks as it once did in the early days of the British colony, when it was established by the early pastoralist Cox family through a series of land grants to William Cox and his sons.

Key

- 1 Glenmore Park Open Space Corridor
- 2 Cox's Track / Mulgoa Creek
- 3 South Creek cross connections
- 4 St Thomas' Church link
- 5 Littlefields Link to Mulgoa Village
- 6 Nepean Creeks Trail
- 7 Blaxland Creek Bushland Reserve
- 8 Warragamba Pipeline OS Corridor
- 9 Proposed Active Transport link
- 10 East west connection – Northern Road to Nepean River Walk
- 11 The Great River Walk
- 12 Lookout to Nepean River link

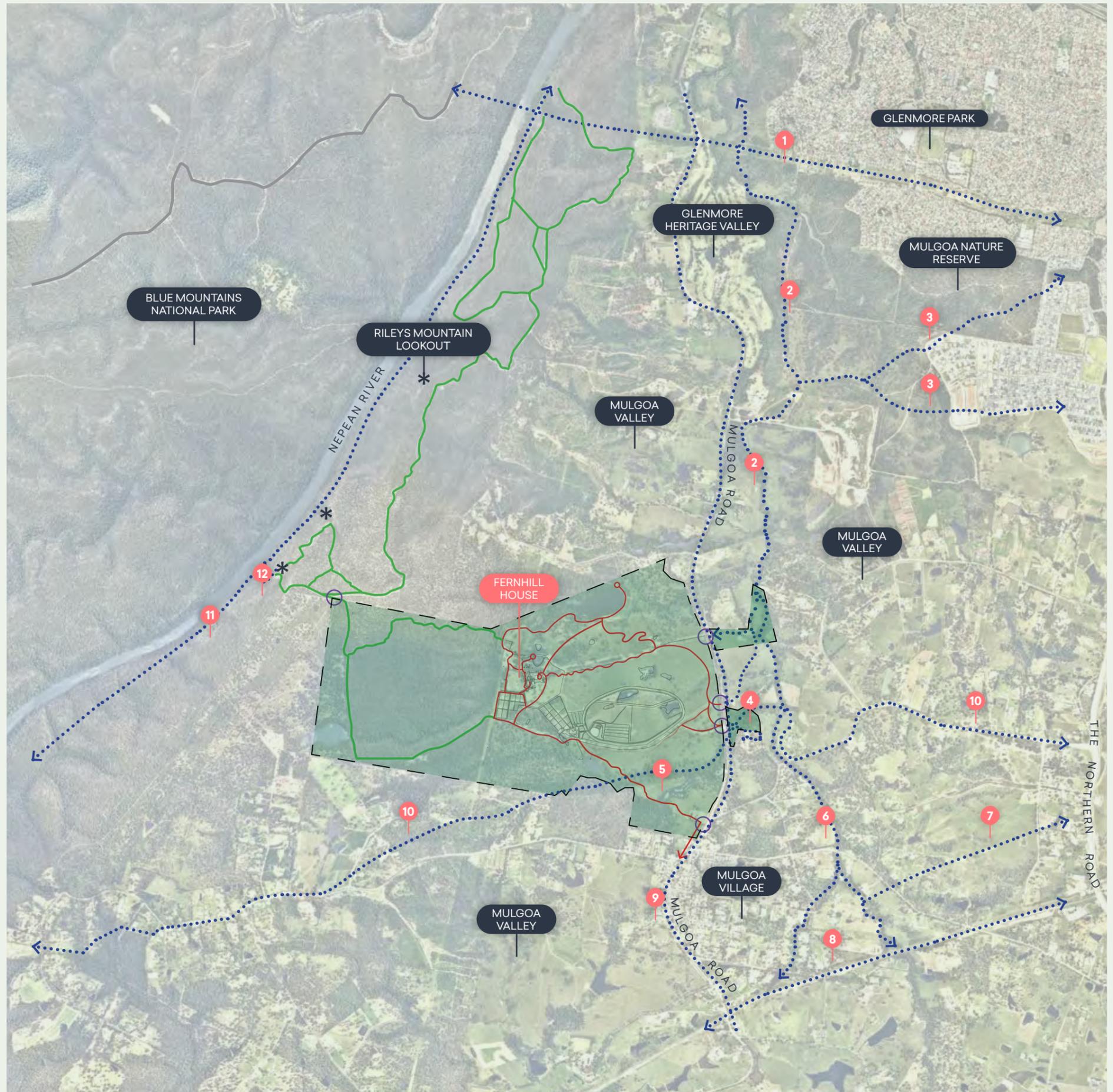
Legend

- > Potential future open space link
- Existing walking / cycling trail
- Proposed path connection
- Fernhill Estate
- Estate entry point
- * Existing lookout

Numbers 1, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 11 are located from the Government Architect New South Wales, Sydney Green Grid 7, West District Plan (2017).

Number 2 is located from mapping provided by Mulgoa Land Care – Lisa Harrold (2021).

Numbers 9 and 10 are located from the Penrith Green Grid Strategy.



Key design moves

The Draft Landscape Master Plan identifies ten design moves or ideas to help achieve the vision for Fernhill Estate and deliver on the Foundation Plan of Management to 2026. These two important plans set out a series of actions to bring Fernhill Estate to life over the next five years, contributing to this important attraction in Mulgoa Valley and Greater Sydney.



1

Northern Drive

The Northern Drive will be a place where people can enjoy picnics and strolls, featuring a pedestrian path and seating connecting Fernhill House to the Hayshed and Orchard. Its meandering path will offer places to stop and enjoy sweeping views of the landscape.



2

Fernhill House Gardens

The gardens surrounding Fernhill House will reflect the 1840s agrarian setting of open grassed slopes and elements from the Sorensen era, such as the northern pergola and secret garden. Plants will add to the beauty of the planter beds around the house.



3

'Ngunyul' - The Big Arc

The Big Arc - Ngunyul restores the primacy of Country and First Peoples' cultural landscape experience. This arc of indigenous garden planting extends from the hilltop of Fernhill House to the edges of the Northern Dam, and will feature a place for cultural activities.



4

Mulgoa Scenic Road

Providing access to Fernhill Estate, this rural thoroughfare will help to slow traffic, creating a safer environment for vehicles and pedestrians entering the park. The entry to the estate will be attractive and welcoming, and will provide enhanced pedestrian connections from the park to Mulgoa Village, Mulgoa Creek precincts and St Thomas's Anglican Church. This road in a park will strengthen the Estate's appeal as a special and scenic village corridor that is part of the community.



5

Moving around Fernhill

Getting around the Estate will be easier with a new park road that will link the reinstated historic entry directly to the Northern Drive, new walking track connections and proposed visitor amenities at the Hayshed and Northern Dam.



6

Hayshed and Orchard

The Hayshed will be a place for Community events, with a café and space for events. It will feature improved amenities, parking and an inclusive play space in the nearby Orchard.



7

Northern Dam

The Northern Dam will be a place where visitors can enjoy diverse activities, from participating in cultural events and activities to walking alongside the dam wall, picnicking, and kayaking with friends and family.



8

Native Farm Gate

The western slopes behind Fernhill House will become an indigenous garden abundant with bush tucker, and will offer opportunities to experience food production.



9

Fernhill Drive

The existing drive will become a controlled access road for service vehicles only. Along the tree-lined edge of the drive, a meandering pedestrian path will offer opportunities for walking, with bench seating and small picnic spots for everyone's use and enjoyment.



10

Wetland Discovery

The Estate's network of dams will provide an ecological zone with tree and edge plantings. From the Hayshed and Orchard, visitors will be able to enjoy views to Fernhill House and activities like birdwatching from a dedicated boardwalk.

1 Key Design Move

Northern Drive

Creating space for recreation

The Northern Drive will be transformed into a place where people can stroll or stop and enjoy a picnic. It will feature a pedestrian path connecting Fernhill House to the Hayshed and Orchard. This meandering path will offer magnificent views across the landscape and include seats and rest places. The one-way road will provide safety and convenience through passing bays for buses and cars for greater convenience.



Fernhill Estate should be a family-friendly place where you can come and be safe.

— Community Member



The Northern Drive, 2021



Artist Impression of the Northern Drive meandering path and seating rest areas



Artist impression of the reimagined 1840s agrarian grass slopes at Fernhill House

Current Fernhill House setting



2 Key Design Move

Fernhill House Gardens

Enhancing the parkland's natural beauty

The 1840s agrarian setting of open grassed slopes will be restored to the east and south of Fernhill House. Gardens and elements from the Sorensen era, such as the northern pergola and secret garden, will be conserved and revitalised, while planter beds around the house will be brought to life with plants. New landscape trees will be added to enhance the garden's natural beauty and revive the 1840s Carriage Loop.

“

I would like to see farmers markets, cheese or wine festival, concerts ... People need great outdoor places like this more.

— Community Member

Ngunyul – The Big Arc

Restoring indigenous landscape

Ngunyul is a powerful gesture of indigenous landscape. It disrupts Fernhill's Colonial agrarian landscape while restoring the primacy of Country and First Peoples' cultural landscape experience. Taking the overall form of a lyrebird, the Big Arc is a 1,000 metre long arc of indigenous garden planting that extends from the hilltop of Fernhill House to the shores of the Northern Dam. A meeting place for community gatherings and cultural activities will be located close to the Mulgoa Black Swan Garden, on the shores of the Northern Dam, featuring both aquatic and terrestrial plantings.

“

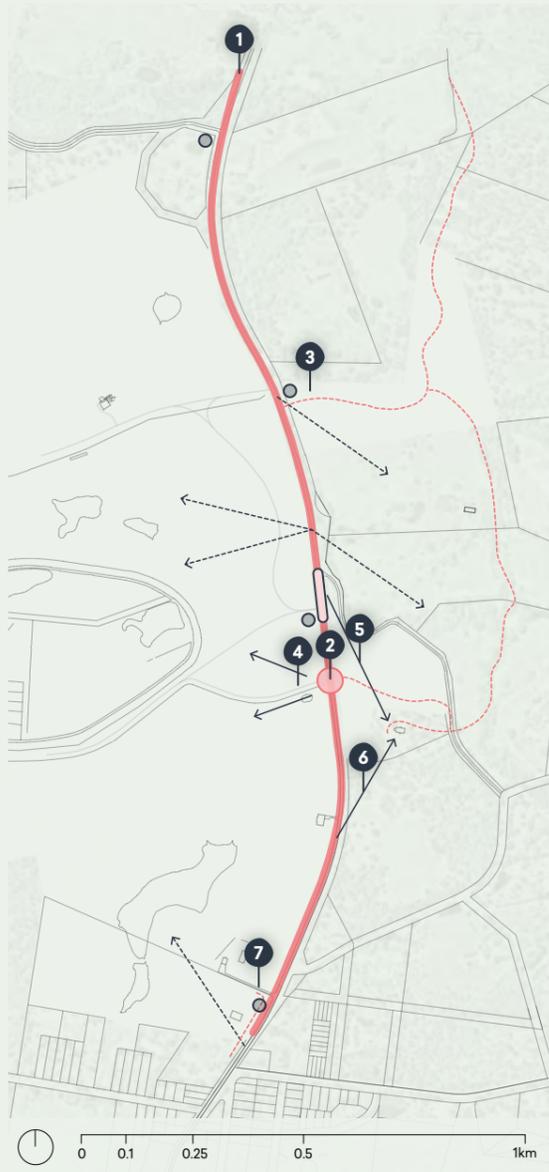
Fernhill has value for people as a place for wildlife. It's not just an oasis for Mulgoa people (like me). It's also a place for other members of the community.

— Community Member



Ngunyul –
A celebration
of landscape.

To be curated by the Darug people, Ngunyul will boast a diverse and artful pattern of plantings. It will offer a variety of experiences, ecologies and traditional cultural land management practices and provide opportunities to share knowledge and celebrate Country.



Mulgoa Scenic Road

Key

- 1 Northern slow-down zone
- 2 Fernhill House new main vehicle entry
- 3 Fernhill Precinct – Cox’s Cottage
- 4 St Thomas Church cycle/ pedestrian entry
- 5 Recovered southern view to Parish
- 6 Recovered northern view to Parish
- 7 Littlefields Creek cycle / pedestrian entry

Legend

- New slow-down zone
- ▭ Widened road with turning lane
- ↔ Existing view to be retained
- Potential new key view
- Visual ‘stimuli’ location (signage/lighting/planting/paving etc.)
- Pedestrian signal (on demand)
- New pedestrian crossing point

4 Key Design Move

Mulgoa Scenic Road

Enhancing access to the park

Flanked by trees, Mulgoa Road is a rural thoroughfare that provides access to Fernhill Estate. The aim is to slow traffic and create a safer environment for vehicles and pedestrians entering the park. The entry to the Estate will be attractive and welcoming, and will provide enhanced pedestrian connections from the park to Mulgoa Village, Mulgoa Creek precincts and St Thomas’ Church.

Increased safety is important for local schools with safe bus zones and crossings to be designed along Mulgoa Road.

With new pavement and road embellishments and additional tree planting, the scenic qualities of this road will blend with the parkland. Access to and circulation within the park will be transformed by restoring the main vehicular access off Mulgoa Road to the Estate’s original entry point, providing heritage resonance, a new park entry arrival experience and increased road safety.

5 Key Design Move

Moving around Fernhill

Enhancing connections to open space

A new park road will directly link the historic entry with the Northern Drive, proposed visitor amenities in the Hayshed and Orchard and Northern Dam. Enhanced low-key bus access and parking will be provided at Fernhill House. Active transport will be prioritised with a network of walking and cycling paths that connect to the Blue Mountains National Park and to Mulgoa Village, Mulgoa Creek and St Thomas’ Church.



Hayshed and Orchard

Offering opportunities for play, leisure and movement in one place

The Hayshed will provide a place for community gatherings, with a café and space for events. It will feature improved amenities, parking and a new inclusive play space in the nearby Orchard. New walking track connections to the Big Arc and the Northern Dam will provide a circuit walk from the Hayshed to Fernhill House.



I'd like to see a family-friendly picnic spot with a café nearby ... Fernhill Estate is a beautiful place.

— Community Member

The Hayshed and Orchard



The community will be able to enjoy a café, community events space, play areas and walking track connections as well as improved amenities.





7 Key Design Move

Northern Dam

Incorporating diverse cultural and recreational activities

The Northern Dam will feature a cultural meeting place, walks adjacent to the dam, picnic places, and access for kayaks and watercraft. A 300-metre long boardwalk around the dam wall perimeter will provide access for walking, picnicking, swimming and canoeing, while the edge of the dam will be integrated into the landscape of the Big Arc, with a dramatic sweep of aquatic planting.



It's such an asset. Nice walks, a really good playground for kids, picnic areas – there are so many kids around here.

— Community Member

The Northern Dam



Native Farm Gate

Offering a place to experience and celebrate food production

The western slopes behind Fernhill House will be transformed into an indigenous garden in the future, with productive and foraging themes built on the principle of 'Coolamon to hearth'. Abundant with bush tucker, the garden will offer places to grow food and opportunities to experience food production. It will incorporate pathways to take visitors around the site to forage for native ingredients.

The Native Farm Gate features a landscape containing endemic food, cultural resources and medicinal species. This creates a balance between cultural and environmental sustainability and fosters a reciprocal relationship where both people and Country thrive and are resilient.

The space will provide resources and the opportunity for the Darug community to flourish on Country and to re-establish custodial practice and ideology, supporting the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. It will support the community's design and delivery of education programs for regional schools and offer 'Coolamon to hearth' food and beverage experience, narrated by the Darug.

The western slope behind Fernhill House will transform into a native farm gate



Connection to the building through seating spaces, small native kitchen garden beds and areas for events such as 'long table' dining experiences and 'farm gate' markets. Spaces for large and small gatherings, where visitors can cook using native ingredients. A kitchen and dining experience for visitors.





Fernhill Drive

9 Key Design Move

Fernhill Drive

Providing safe access and scenic views

The existing driveway will become a controlled access road for service vehicles only. Along the tree-lined edge of the drive, a meandering pedestrian path will offer opportunities for walking and exercise, with small picnic spots and benches to be provided for everyone's use and enjoyment. More trees will be grown around the area to enhance and encourage habitat for woodland birds.

10 Key Design Move

Wetland Discovery

Greening the dams

The Estate's network of dams will be restored into an ecological zone with tree and edge plantings to create habitat for wildlife and improve water quality. A dedicated boardwalk and path will offer access to this area from the Hayshed and Orchard, offering a great spot to enjoy birdwatching and the sweeping views to Fernhill House.

“

The wildlife is so incredible here too, considering we're so close to Sydney.

— Community Member

A wetland discovery area will be a great spot for birdwatching and enjoying sweeping views to Fernhill House



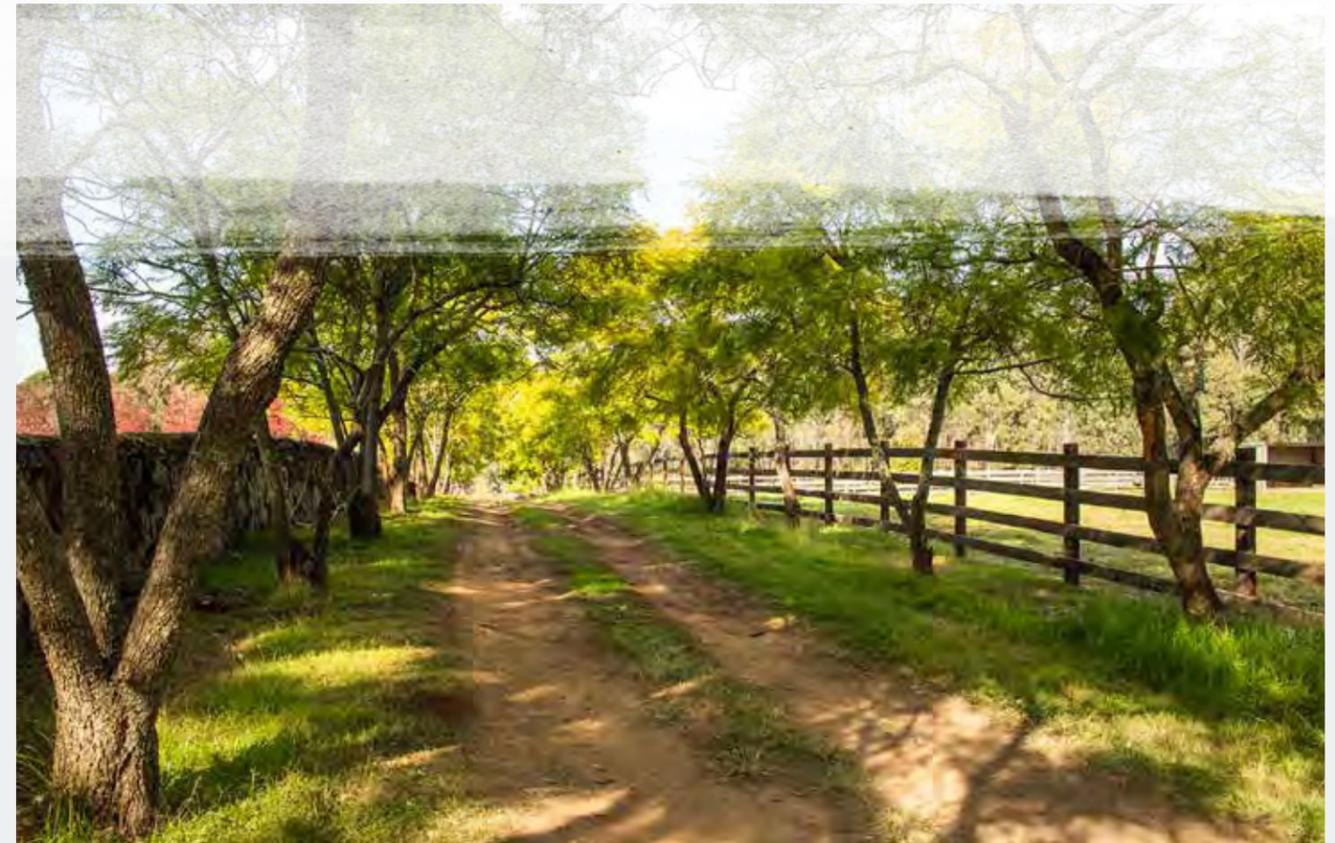
Opening up Fernhill Estate

The next five years will see the Estate develop into a place for relaxation, recreation and community life, where natural and cultural heritage is promoted and protected.

The next chapter of Fernhill Estate is a significant opportunity for the community to experience this remarkable place, with the Draft Landscape Master Plan seeking to provide a considered foundation for its progressive opening. In time, the Estate will become a place for diverse activities such as bushwalking, cycling, specialised sports and events, as well as cultural and artistic programs, attracting the local community, Sydneysiders and visitors from further afield.

“
Over the next five years, Greater Sydney Parklands will look to find more ways for the community to access and enjoy the Estate while completing a range of key assessments and plans.

— Fernhill Estate Foundation Plan of Management to 2026



Next steps

Greater Sydney Parklands will:

- 1 **Finalise the Draft Landscape Master Plan**, incorporating feedback from the community and stakeholders.
- 2 **Work with the community and stakeholders**, Penrith City Council and state government agencies to deliver the Draft Landscape Master Plan.
- 3 **Set priorities and projects** to deliver the opportunities outlined in the Draft Landscape Master Plan.
- 4 **Prepare detailed designs** for key design moves in consultation with community and stakeholders and commence the rollout of new activations.
- 5 Continue to **conserve, enhance and engage** with the heritage assets, cultural landscapes and sensitive environmental areas.
- 6 Continue to **engage community members and key stakeholders**.

“
I'd like to see a space to have an art show or hold exhibitions. It would be great to have day- or week-long seminars at Fernhill with conference accommodation. A nice restaurant would be good. Have a section of the site that shows people 'what to grow to support the local environment'.

— Community Member

For all



Greater
Sydney
Parklands