



Australian
Institute of
Architects

Case study: Marrickville Library

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Prepared by
[Acumen](#)

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Cover image. Marrickville Library civic facade as viewed from Marrickville Road. (Image: Tom Roe)

Project summary

Situated on the site of the former Marrickville Hospital in Sydney, NSW, the Marrickville Library and pavilion reuses an important piece of the suburb's history to create a place for Marrickville's diverse community to meet, work, learn and play. The Inner West Council and its community expressed a strong desire for an environmentally conscious design approach to the new library. Accordingly, sustainability became an imperative for the project.

BVN's design sought to embrace the existing hospital building and celebrate it through the design for the new library and adjacent public green space. The site masterplan reinstated historic access routes across the site such as the worn foot path from the nurse's quarters to the hospital. Unsympathetic add-ons to the heritage buildings were removed and the internal hospital spaces such as the verandas and ward areas were restored.

Sustainable elements include integrated design features such as the abundance of natural light, solar shading, the incorporation of natural/mixed-mode ventilation, the use of sustainably sourced timber and recycled bricks. The adaptive reuse of the old hospital building ensures its cultural rehabilitation and represents a responsible and sustainable response to the environmental cost of new construction.

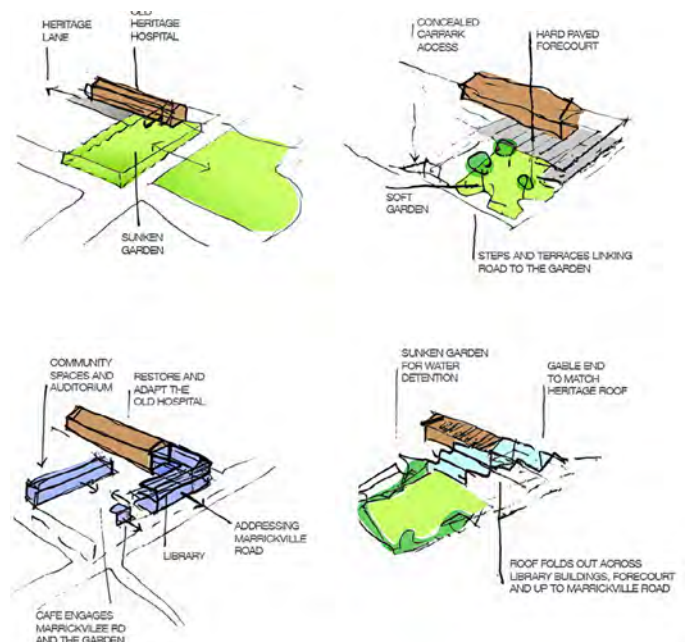
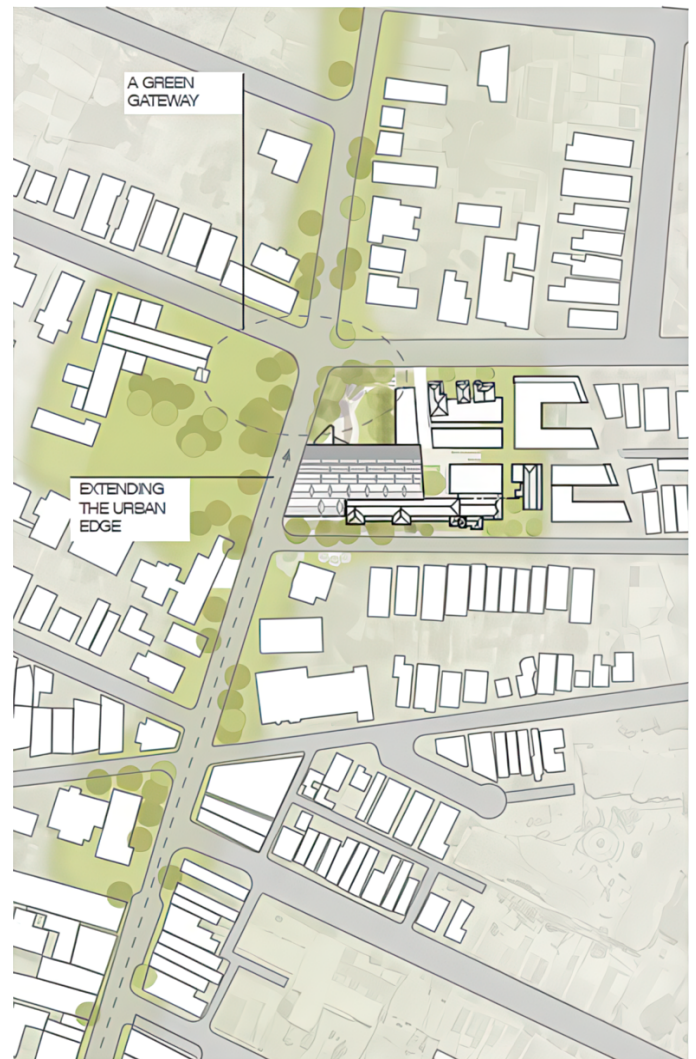


Figure 1. Location on corner of Marrickville Road and Lilydale Street, and concept axonometrics looking east. (Images: BVN)

Project details

Project name	Marrickville Library
Project type	Library
Procurement type	Design and construct
Year of design completion (development application stage)	2015
Year of project completion	2019
Location	• Patyegarang Place, 313 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville
• Land + nation	• NSW Eora Nation
• Climate zone	• Climate Zone 2
• Bioregion	• Sydney Basin
Site area (not including residential portion)	5349m2
Gross floor area m2	3600m2
Useable Floor area m2	2700m2
Number of residents, occupants, visitors	The library services the area of Sydney governed by the Inner West council. The council covers approximately 186,000 residents and an area of 36 square km from Balmain in the north, Newtown in the east, Tempe in the south and Croydon in the west. The library contains 400 seating spaces with additional seating available within the courtyards. In addition, there is a 100 seat conference area and a 30 person staff zone.
Sustainability benchmarks and ratings achieved	A project specific ESD framework was set up for Marrickville Library containing measurable targets and performance indices, to verify and monitor the environmental performance of the building. The framework was developed based on achieving or bettering minimum benchmarks prescribed in Marrickville Development Control Plan and Section J of the National Construction Code (NCC) (2016).

Project team

Owner(s) / client(s)	Inner West Council/Inner West Council Major Projects	
Architect(s): BVN	Principal Architect	Bill Dowzer
	Design Architect	Olivia Hyde
	Project Director	Brian Clohessy
	Project Architect	Andre Callanan
	Project Architect	Kim Small
	Project Architect	Alex Chaston
	Project team	Andrew Buchanan
	Project team	Gianluca Gennari
	Project team	Peter Richards
	Project team	Nikita Notowidigdo
	Project team	Sam Williams
	Project team	Andrew Fong
	Project team	Rose Emerton
	Project team	Chi Tang
	Project team	Jahan Faeghi
	Project team	Marcus Rigon
	Project team	Kerwin Datu
Consultants	Hydraulics	Warren Smith Partners
	Quantity Surveying	MBM Consultants
	Mechanical, lighting, ESD, electrical	Steensen Varming
	Structure, civil and facade	TTW
	Landscape	ASPECT Studios
	Signage and wayfinding	Citizen
	Acoustics, fire protection, AV and ITS	ARUP
	Heritage	GML Heritage
	Planning	JBA Planning
	Access	Philip Chun and Morris Goding
	NCC	McKenzie Group
	Traffic	Parking and Traffic Consultants
	Artists Various	Micke Lindebergh, Ralf Kempken, Joanna Rhodes and Belinda Smith (in collaboration with Jakelin Troy, Nardi Simpson and Joel Davison)
Builder	Mirvac and CD Commercial construction group	

Integration

The inner west of Sydney is experiencing rapid population growth which places public infrastructure including library and community facilities in critical demand. Spaces for children, families, individuals, students, the elderly and entrepreneurs are required to support the ever-growing community.

Contemporary libraries have evolved from repositories for books and places for silent reading into places for communities to meet, work, learn and play.

This project approached the development of this new precinct as not only a new library but also a civic hub; a destination that would be embraced and loved by its community. The primary aspiration for the library was that it would be a place of gathering, connection and joy, integrating the traditional library areas with a range of facilities and services for the community.

The design of the site has created a community precinct that provides street amenity, a large public open space, tactility and a permeable site for the community of Marrickville. The new civic precinct extends beyond the traditional role of the library by incorporating event and conference spaces with an accompanying kitchen, 1200m² of landscaped outdoor gardens, a children's playground and an integrated cafe making it an inclusive and welcoming place for all.

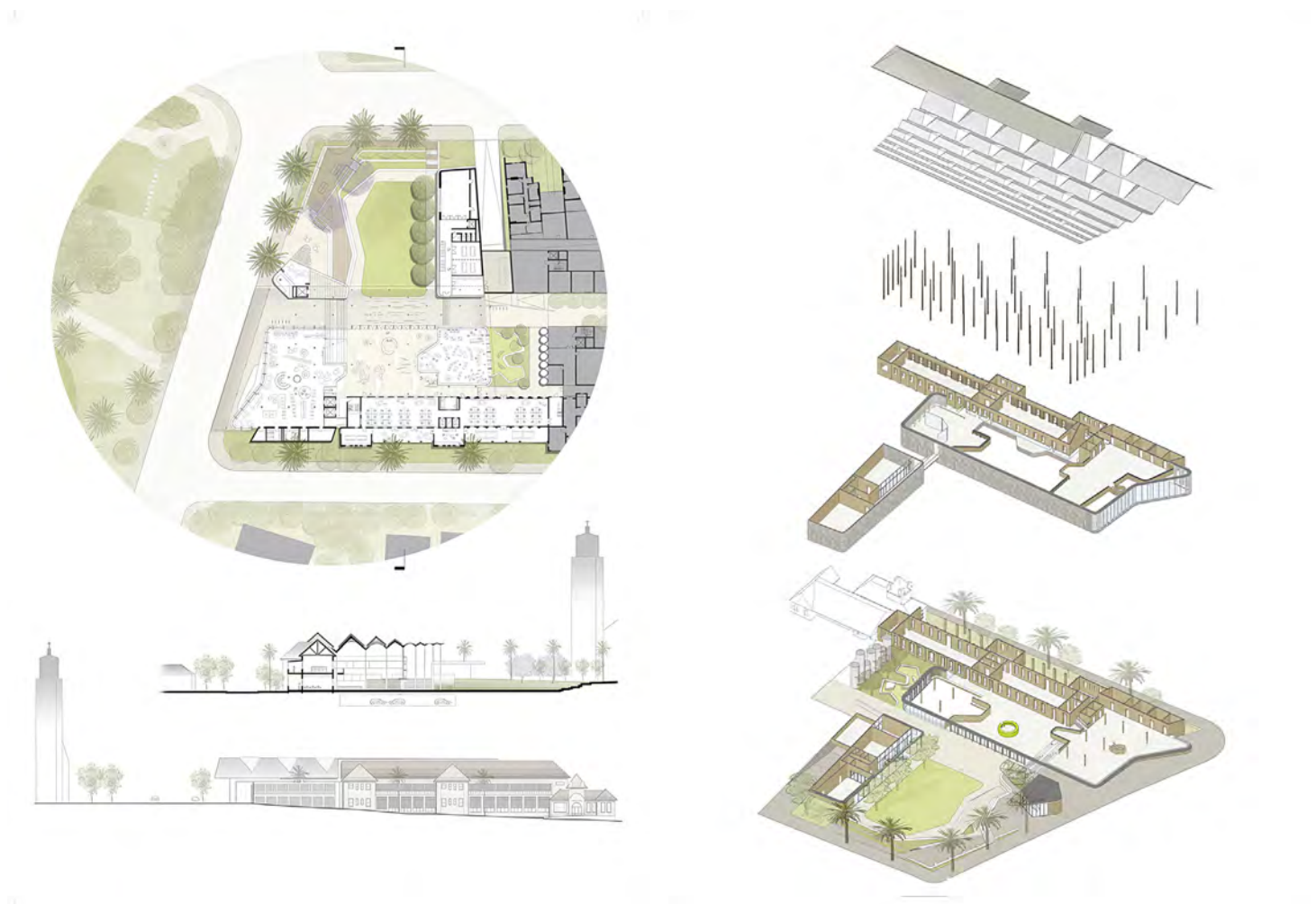


Figure 2. Panels from BVN's competition entry. (Image: BVN)

Community

Community involvement was key to the success of the project. The council undertook a comprehensive process that began with an invited design excellence competition. Following the competition, the inner west community was asked to vote for its favourite designs.

The short-listed designs were then exhibited, and the public voted for the winning scheme.

Community engagement sessions were integral to the early design of the library. The community's vision for the library called for a diverse and accessible community space that demonstrated leadership in technology and sustainability through its design, programs and services.

The Inner West Council and BVN established a process to incorporate the communities' aspirations into the design. To facilitate this, extensive community consultation was conducted from online surveys through the Inner West Council Web portal. 4000 people participated in the community feedback program on the design, the largest ever community response for a Marrickville project (Figure 3).

Workshops were organised, with and without the direct involvement of BVN. From this process it was determined that the new library should feature:

- traditional library functions such as book storage and display, places for study, work and historical research
- audio visual enabled spaces for listening and learning places for the community to meet, congregate and hold events
- places for families and children
- a place where environmental sustainability is on display (Figure 4).

BVN sought to understand what happens in a day of the life of the existing Marrickville Library and how its users typically engaged with the facilities. User group meetings were held to understand the various groups visiting the library, the frequency of their visits and reasons for attending. The example below illustrates the insights provided to the design team (Figure 5).

Raeda the Reader

Raeda, aged 37, is an active library member. She is of Arabic background and a family-oriented person. She has multiple cards including one for each of her children and her mum's family. She borrows heavily (30 to 50 books) every week to share with all her family members. She is big on putting items on hold, especially new release movies and checks them out when available.

She comes with her children every week to grab all her items, to return items and to take some time to browse through the library. Her parents live in Marrickville, and she lives in Bass Hill. She comes by car to Marrickville and then walks to the library. (Figure 5)

Since opening, the visitor numbers have increased by nearly 100% according to feedback provided by the door counter that digitally registers the number of visitors to the library. Over 3000+ new members have joined. In the first three months following the library opening, over 150,000 community members visited the library. By comparison, in 2009, the number of visitors to the previous Marrickville Library was 252,476 for the entire year.

- Visitors to Old Marrickville Library were 158,211 for 2014 to 2015
- Visitors to New Marrickville Library were 468,198 for 2022 to 2023.
 - Data supplied by Library Operations Manager (Inner West Council 2020). Note: Covid negatively affected the new library's numbers.

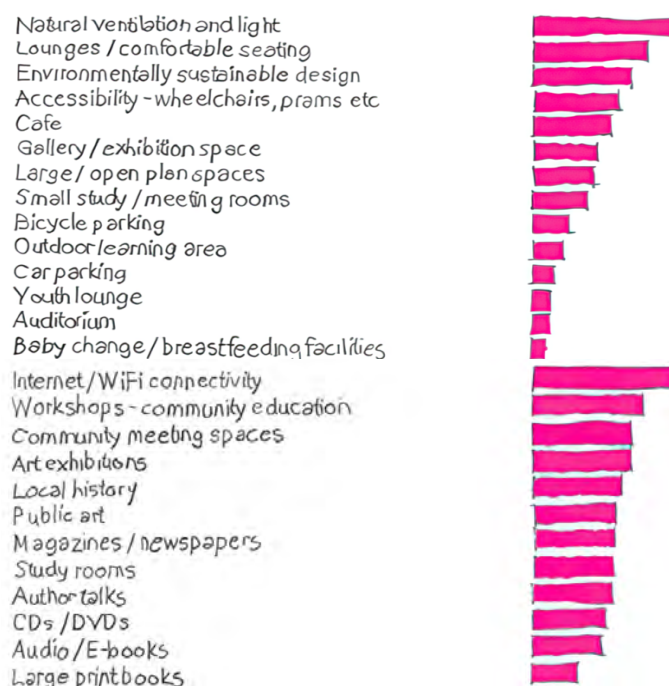


Figure 3. Comments received via the [Inner West 'Your Say' consultation website](#).

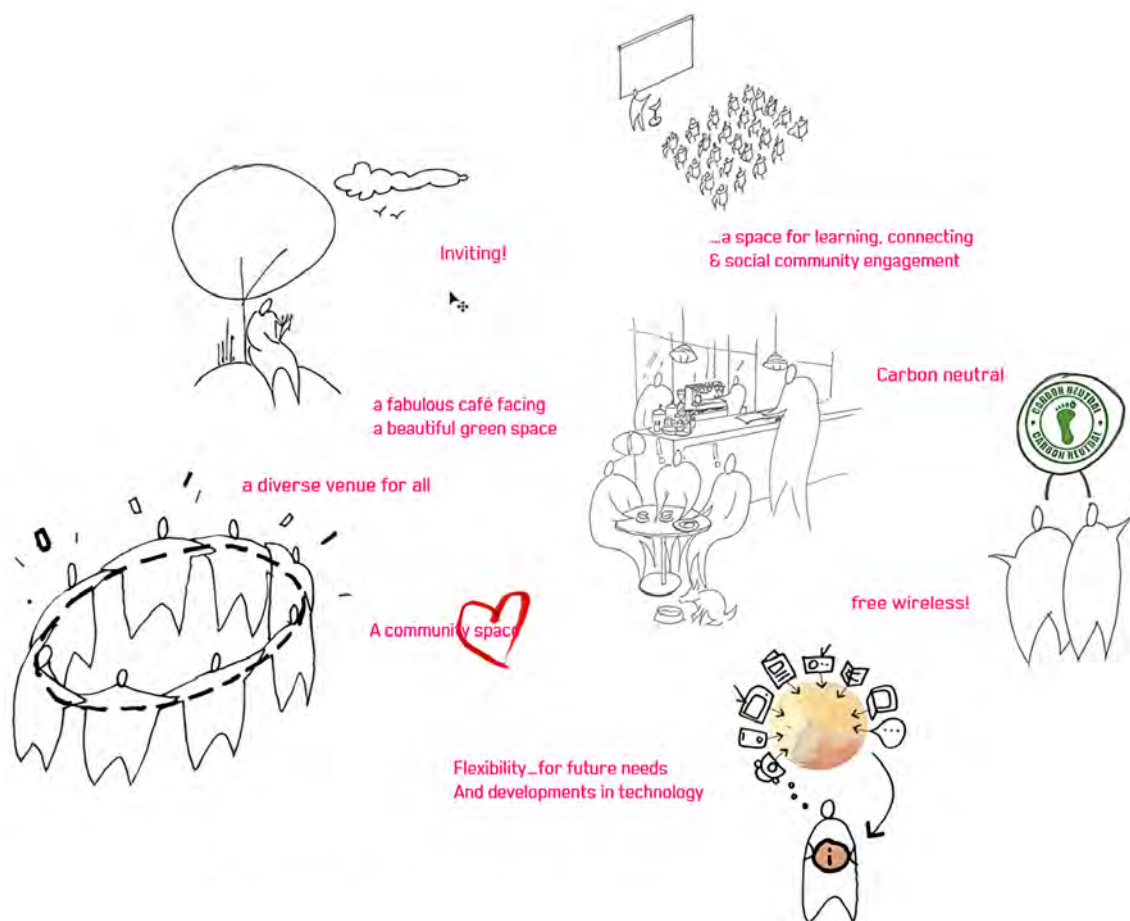


Figure 4. BVN Diagram representing the feedback collected from the community workshops. (Image: BVN)

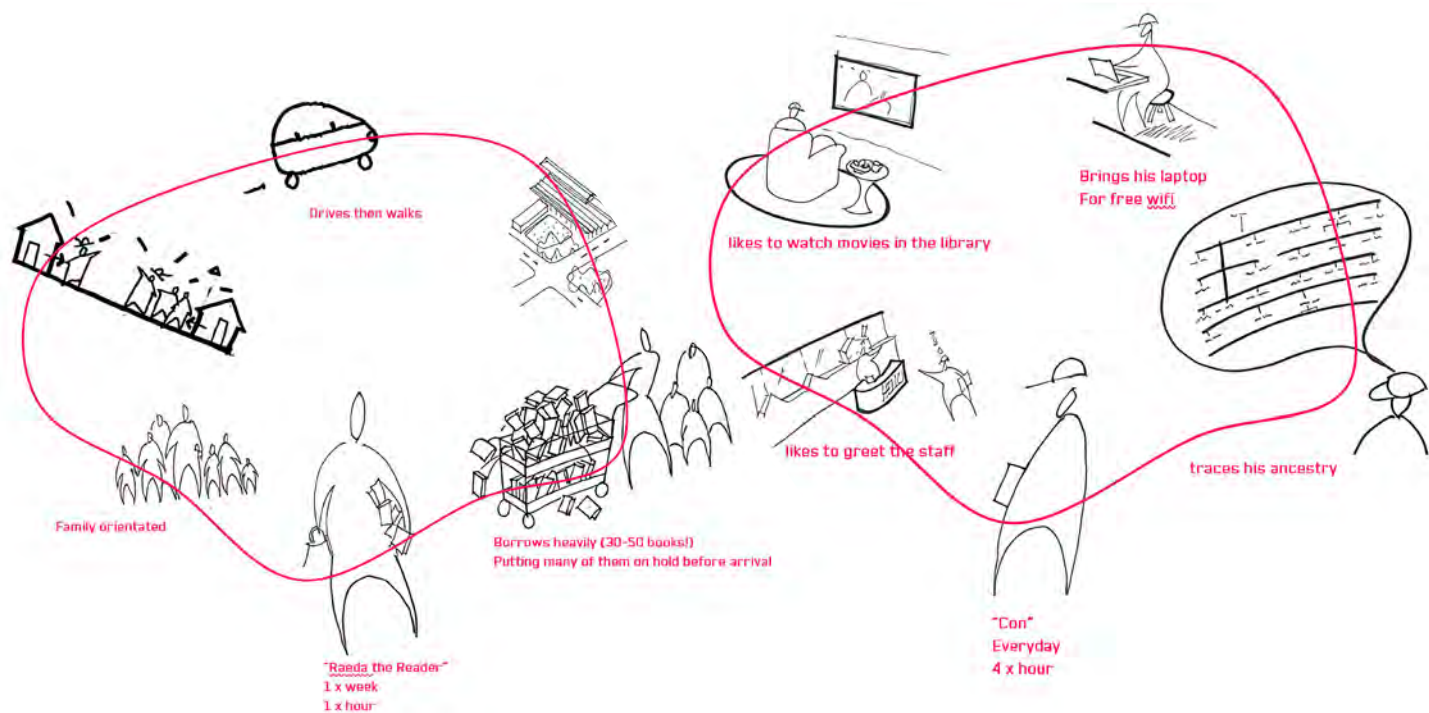


Figure 5. User information supplied by Marrickville Community Hub user group meetings. (Image: BVN)

Public art strategy

To enhance community spirit and opportunities for public engagement further, three artworks were commissioned for public display at the new library. These commissions not only supported local artists, but were integral to the design, historical context and urban revitalisation of the site, paying homage to place and history (Figures 6, 7 and 8).



Figure 6. (1 and 2) 'Navigating Culture' by Belinda Smith represents the story of Patyegarang and was a collaboration with Indigenous community members. The work references star maps and the terms used by the Eora people to describe the night sky, bringing together the shared knowledge systems of astronomy and language. (Images: Brett Boardman Photography)



Figure 7. 'Brickyards Night School' by Ralf Kempken takes its inspiration from the old hospital's original purpose of servicing workers from the brickyards of the late 19th century. During the 1870s, children were removed from schools to work at Marrickville Brickyards. A night school was started so that these children would have a chance to move beyond the brickyards in their adult life. (Image: Brett Boardman Photography)



Figure 8. (1 and 2) 'The Kangaroo' by Joanna Rhodes references the time when Marrickville's large kangaroo population earned it the name of kangaroo grounds by the people of the Eora nation. Centrally positioned inside the children's garden it provides a climbing apparatus for children visiting the library. (Image: Brett Boardman Photography)

Country

The design of Marrickville Library and Pavilion draws upon the rich cultural, environmental, and historical context of the area both in its siting and design. The library site was given the name Patyegarang Place after Patyegarang, a young Gamaraigal woman who is understood to be one of the first people to teach an Aboriginal language to the early NSW colonists. The records of her conversations with William Dawes, an English Lieutenant and astronomer 'remain today as the only known first-hand accounts of the Gadigal language' (Moran A and McAllister J 2020).

The site's location was referred to as the Kangaroo Grounds by the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora nation. It went on to play host to a mill, market gardens, brickworks and then a hospital (Figure 9).

The design of the public domain referenced goals such as:

- Provide public open space that is flexible in use, catering for a variety of user groups
- Respond to existing site conditions including topographic and that are prone to water flooding
- Improve biodiversity and environmental protection through a selection of drought hardy plants, robust surface materials and water sensitive urban design initiatives.
- Ensure crime prevention initiatives including good surveillance, sightlines and appropriate lighting levels.

Central to the design is the creation of green public space. A sunken green courtyard and garden which mirrors the grassed forecourt of St Brigid's Primary School across Marrickville Road, creates a green gateway to the entry of Marrickville Town Centre (Figures 10a and 10b).

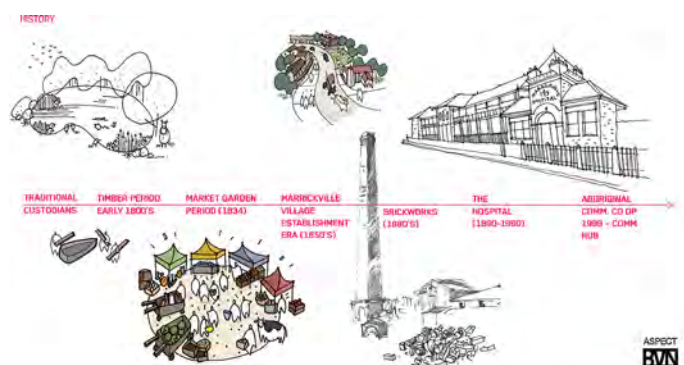


Figure 9. The site's timeline - Marrickville - a suburb history - Marrickville Heritage Society. (Image: BVN)

Situated below the surrounding road levels and sheltered by an arbour, the sunken garden provides a community oasis from the noise of Marrickville and Livingstone Roads. This lawned space creates a special and highly usable addition to the public domain and library as adjacent spaces can spill into the green (Figure 11).

Native plants were used throughout the gardens of Patyegarang place and the courtyards adjacent to the library (Figure 12). An added benefit of the generous green space is the percentage of permeable ground, which responds to the council's water sensitive urban design guidelines. A comparison of pre-existing surveyor's plans and the completed landscaping confirmed that the project achieved an increase in the permeability ratio, from pre to post project.manner in competing structural products.

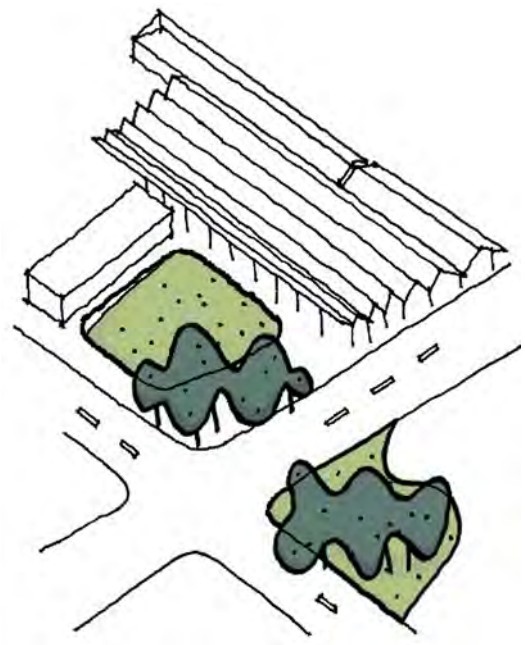


Figure 10a. The green gateway created by St Brigid's and the library across Marrickville Road. (Image: BVN)



Figure 10b. A section looking south west. (Image: ASPECT Studios)



1. Main site entry
2. Sheltered bench
3. Mass planting
4. Sculptural Arbour climbing plants
5. Lilydale Street entry
6. Granite paved Hospital Lane (library)
7. Hospital Lane (Residential)
8. Planted roof to carpark entry ramp.
9. Bicycle parking locations.
10. Substation location.
11. Reclaimed brick area for bins.
12. Ramped entry to leased building.
13. Sunken Library Lawn.
14. Children's Garden design

Figure 11. Design for the Community Hub by ASPECT Studios. (Image: ASPECT Studios)



Figure 12. Plant species from landscape architect's report. (Image: ASPECT Studios)

Water

Rainwater is collected from the library's feature folding roof via a syphonic system and stored in six above ground tanks (10,600 L and 6830 L) within the children's garden (Figures 13 and 14). In this location, the 'building is teacher,' as these elements are showcased to the children as they play in the spaces around them.

The water collected in these tanks is used for irrigation in both the children's garden and the courtyard as well as for the flushing of toilets in the building. Rainwater tanks were sized to meet the requirements of Inner West Council's Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) Guidelines (2011). This report detailed the potable water savings and stormwater quality control measures required on a development site. Overflow from rainwater tanks, sub-soil drainage and discharge from various rainwater outlets are connected to the OSD (On Site Detention) tank.

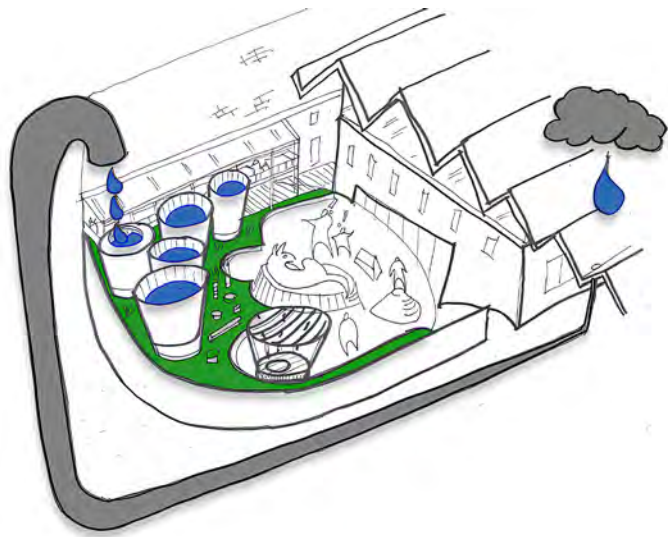


Figure 13. Water capture. (Image: BVN)



Figure 14. Water tanks in the children garden which harvest rain water for the gardens. (Image: Brett Boardman Photography)

Flood potential

While not classified as being 'Flood Liable Land' and not located within the 'Flood Planning Area' based on the Development Control Plan mapping (DCP 2011), the site periodically receives excessive overland flow along its northern boundary.

Subsequently, an overland flow path has been designed through the library site to convey surface runoff from the landscaped area, through the walkway to Hospital Lane where it flows past the residential development out to the northern end of the site (Figure 15).

Care was taken to make sure every building's finished floor levels achieved freeboard* for a 100-year ARI** (Average Recurrence Interval).

** Freeboard is an additional height above the estimated 100 year ARI flood level to allow for uncertainties in design and construction.*

Freeboard provides a safety factor to reduce the risk of flooding.

***ARI is a statistical estimate of the average period in years between the occurrences of a flood of a given size or larger; for example a 100 year ARI flood will occur on average once every 100 years, however there is a 1% chance that it can occur in any year. Note that ARI has been replaced by AEP (Annual Exceedance Probability) in the current NCC.*



Figure 15. Overland flood path down 'Hospital Lane'. (Image: ASPECT Studios)

Economy

The library was funded through an agreement with Mirvac and the Inner West Council. Mirvac was awarded the contract for adjacent development rights on the northern half of the site which included the creation of 225 new apartments and terraces and the provision of 4% affordable housing, ultimately culminating in the residential development named 'Marrick & Co'. The land was retained by council. 'Negotiations and agreements of this type have been the means for councils to deliver new community assets in a time of rapid growth in Sydney' (Raggatt M 2021).

The community hub site alone had an approximate construction value of \$40 million in 2019, constructed at no cost to the council except for the initial library competition and preparatory works. The Marrickville Library was cited as the largest single investment ever undertaken by Marrickville Council to date (Marrickville Greens 2015).

At the time Marrickville Council had a social procurement policy in place. Its aim was to ensure that procurement processes and purchasing power generate social benefits across public, private and not for profit sectors.

Energy

The building envelope is designed to be highly efficient. The library's extensive sheltering roof, designed to emulate Marrickville's old industrial buildings and the existing hospital roof, provides very effective solar shading. On the western facade a timber screen was designed to protect the glazing but preserve vistas to the west (Figures 16 to 18).

Other measures incorporated were:

- the use of rigid insulation that achieved superior values to those required for compliance
- additional roof insulation to address aircraft noise and provide enhanced thermal performance
- a continuous barrier to prevent thermal bridging
- exposed concrete and masonry surfaces to provide thermal mass
- glulam timber framed double glazed argon gas filled window units incorporating a low-e coating to reflect ultraviolet rays and reject infrared light in order to keep the building cooler
- a lighting control system programmed for business and after-hours usage with selective use of switches, motion sensors and daylight sensors.

When the completed building was assessed against the design energy model it consumed less than the maximum allowed energy consumption target set in the Marrickville DCP of 337.5 MJ/m²/annum. The calculated energy density was 300.7 MJ/m²/year, which is 11% lower. The annual energy consumption was calculated based on hourly values for heating and cooling obtained from the dynamic thermal modelling simulation software.



Figure 16. Solar shading of Hospital Lane and main entry by cantilevered roof and western timber solar shade. (Image: Tom Roe)



Figure 17. Example of daylight and linear strip lighting and the fabric shades. (Image: Brett Boardman Photography)



Figure 18. Evening lighting on Marrickville Road. (Image: Brett Boardman Photography)

Lighting

The glazed facade facing Marrickville Road (Figures 16 to 18) allows a large amount of daylight into the library thereby reducing the need for artificial lighting. The lighting system automatically dims in response to available daylight, reducing the lighting load by 60% to areas with high daylight penetration and 30% to areas within the existing building.

Further efficiencies are achieved in the main foyer through the combined effects of large, glazed entry doors and large skylights with protective fabric shades and suspended linear strip lighting (Figure 17).

The colour scheme of the internal fit out is 'light and bright' to further reduce the need for artificial lighting by reflecting light entering the spaces. Light coloured plywood is used to clad the ceiling and much of the joinery; light coloured polished concrete is used for the floor and most walls are painted white. The large volumes of open space in the main building allow light to penetrate unimpeded across the floor plate.

Natural ventilation

The main library building relies on efficient natural ventilation to minimise the demand for air conditioning to the public spaces. The natural ventilation is designed for maximum use of buoyancy flows with air intake through low level louvres in the facades and extraction through louvres in the skylights (Figure 19). Both facade and skylight louvres are controlled via the BMS in response to room air temperature and CO₂ content.

When natural ventilation is being used, all HVAC systems serving the mixed mode areas turn off. Natural ventilation is used when the following conditions are present:

- Outdoor temperature greater than 16 °C
- Room temperature is greater than 20.5 °C
- CO₂-level above 850 ppm.

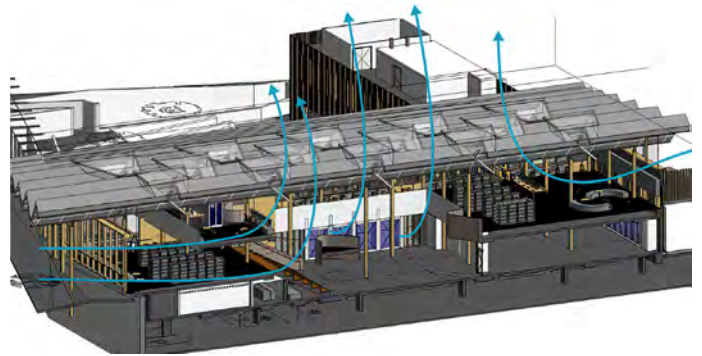


Figure 19. Diagrammatic illustration of natural stack/buoyancy ventilation. (Image supplied by Steensen Varming)

Marrickville hospital's Nightingale wards, retained as part of the library design, had existing high and operable windows as well as french doors leading out to verandas. This allowed for continued airflow in the interior spaces as well as access to external areas for respite, considered an integral part of the patient health and recuperation process.

The new building further encourages the circulation of fresh air, as cooling breezes are drawn through the louvred walls within the facade and up through the louvred skylight hoods (Figure 20).



Figure 20. Diagram of natural air movement through the main spaces of the library. (Image: BVN)

The air conditioning system was selected to be capable of dehumidifying air to prevent mould. The supply air temperature/off coil temperature is set point to 12°C saturation when relative humidity levels exceed 70%.

Well-being

The project aspired to create a place where people want to be and enjoy being, in turn supporting good mental health. The library provides a place of respite within a suburb where houses are small and cramped and good quality space is limited. The spaces provided in the building allow a variety of flexible uses, welcoming users and providing them with a feeling of safety and security.

The use of natural ventilation and natural light along with openness and connections to the outdoors all work together to create a friendly and relaxed ambience.

Timber finished stairs, joinery, acoustic panels and furnishing details provide a warm and calming background to the buzz of activity in the library. Products specified were to be third-party certified, to have low-VOC and low formaldehyde emissions. Connected outdoor spaces such as the children's play area encourage children and families to enjoy the outdoors.

The new building complies with AS1428.1 (2009) with special measures taken to enhance accessibility in line with the access consultant's recommendations. Best practice measures were followed including:

- shaded areas for walking or sitting
- car or bus drop-off points near to the entrance
- adequate safety lighting, and emergency phones.

Resources

In transforming the former derelict site into a community landmark, the project had to represent the sustainability commitments put forward by the council.

The selection of building materials sought to maximise reuse, recycling and low embodied carbon materials as outlined by Inner West Council in its 'Consultant Brief for the New Marrickville Library' (August 2011). The approach was developed in line with the criteria specified in the 'ESD framework' including the implementation of the following strategies (each further discussed below), to ensure efficient use of materials:

- Building reuse
- Materials
- Modular and standardised design
- Adaptability and deconstruction
- Envelope durability
- Off-site fabrication
- A waste management plan.

Building reuse

The reuse of the heritage-listed former hospital building and the adjacent leased building involved structural stabilisation, full restoration of their existing fabric and retention of many original elements. This process of restoration not only made them suitable for public use but achieved reductions in embodied carbon. All components of the old hospital building were given a new life forming the administration areas, small meeting rooms, collection, and study areas with outdoor reading areas.

25,500 bricks from demolished buildings on the hospital grounds were reused in the new building and to repair parts of the ward building. This provided a beautiful patina and history of site use, as well as considerable embodied carbon savings (Figure 21).



Figure 21. Recycled brick from demolished buildings on the site. (Image: BVN)

Reclamation of existing brickwork from the demolished buildings involved careful demolition and assessment of each brick's suitability for reuse. Once the number of bricks was established, BVN assessed where they could be integrated into the design. All new bricks were sourced to match the existing heritage building.

Materials

Many elements of the building envelope were able to be procured from sustainable sources with examples noted below.

The timber used in the new library is either recycled or The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) certified.

[Australian Sustainable Timber](#) has FSC certification for the timbers utilised at Marrickville library.

The columns holding up the roof of the new library have been specifically designed for construction using forestry approved glulam (glued laminated timber) columns (Figure 22) ([Theca Timber, Net Zero Buildings](#)).

Metromix™ concrete was used to help reduce the quantity of Portland cement and Bass Point manufactured sand was used in the concrete mixes used on site.

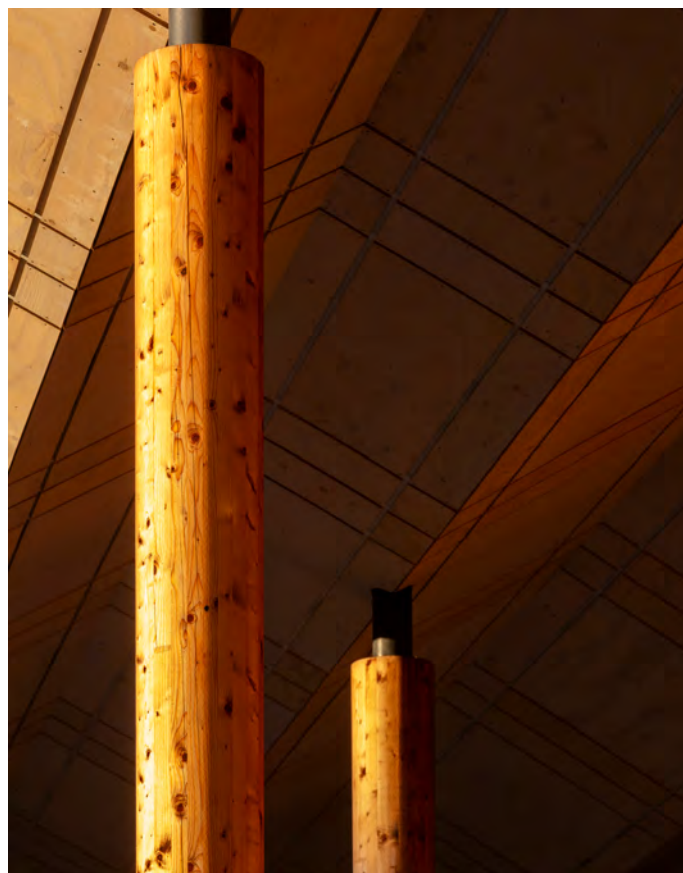


Figure 22. Glu-Lam structure uses less embodied carbon. (Image: BVN)

Modular and standardised design

Whilst being a bespoke design, the timber facade was constructed using industry-standard sizes in a modular arrangement that could be applied to most of the external facade sections of the new main library. The timber batten panels were created individually using consistently sized members and then installed to create a single facade system.

The approach to glazing was similar in that the size of each glazing suite is consistent and is integrated into the facade timber batten system to become part of the whole facade.

Adaptability and deconstruction

As the external facade element is modular, this enables its elements to be adapted and or re-used.

Each timber batten facade panel is made from a sheet of external plywood with timber pegs fixing the battens to it. This system can be dismantled and adapted if required.

Other timber elements such as the glulam columns could be repurposed in the event of the building being demolished.

Envelope durability

The integration of the timber batten panels and the glazing modules were the product of collaboration between BVN, the façade engineer, the builder and the suppliers of each system. This process focussed on the cost, buildability and durability of both the architectural and structural elements of the facade. Timber species were selected on the basis of availability in the specified sizes and their ability to satisfy sustainability, strength and durability criteria. The diameter of the glulam columns was a product of their strength and an increased char level for fire protection, which in turn enhanced durability. All external timber elements were finished with a penetrating stain with UV protection.

Offsite fabrication

Whole building components that were fabricated offsite included the external prefabricated timber suites (Queensland) and glulam timber columns (Italy). Council's commitment to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification limited the number of potential suppliers from which the builders could source timber and components. The glulam columns were supplied by Rubner Group, a specialist timber engineering company who was able to source sustainable timber and undertake the necessary design and fabrication.

Waste Management Plan

To conform with the Inner West council's requirement for waste management during construction, the head contractor was required to implement a 'Waste Management Plan' to achieve a minimum of 80% re-use or recycling of construction waste (except hazardous waste and soil) by mass. The contractor for the library engaged subcontractor Grasshopper Waste Management Services to meet the above requirements. Common materials and re-uses included:

- bricks and concrete used for clean-fill
- structural timber salvaged for reuse and timber waste ground into mulch or garden compost
- crushed concrete used as road-base
- plasterboard crushed for soil conditioner or for use in the manufacture of new plasterboard
- steel, aluminium and other metals for recycling
- foam insulation and packaging for recycling
- pallets for re-use
- carpet and ceiling tiles returned to the manufacturer for reconditioning/recycling
- light fixtures for re-use where still functional
- furniture for refurbishing and re-use, and
- crushed tiles for paving or landscape decoration.

Change

The new library is configured to provide adaptive spaces in response to community requests for a range of types and sizes of rooms to accommodate different activities. Some of these spaces are large and open, but dividable with operable walls and provided with access floors for servicing. The Pavilion and its ground floor can be hired out for events with sliding doors connecting to the adjacent lawn space.

In the refurbished hospital, former toilets and shower blocks were adapted to make perfectly proportioned quiet rooms for study (Figure 23). All of these spaces may see further adaption throughout the life of the library as the design does not intentionally preclude their re-purposing for other uses.



Figure 23. Former hospital toilets repurposed to quiet rooms. (Image: BVN)

Discovery

The project was a success for the council, Mirvac, the people of Marrickville and BVN. An authentic community consultation process identified what was desired and a committed client delivered exactly what was requested. The building is loved by the community, evidenced by the level of patronage and a stream of positive comments on its Instagram. The facilities and their design were derived from a detailed understanding of the needs of the Marrickville demographic, enabling them to engage in activities many struggle to find the technology, space or privacy for at home. Being warm, welcoming and comfortable, for many it is a genuine extension to their homes.

Despite delivering the desired outcome, the innovative procurement process proved to be somewhat convoluted. When presented with a tender that was double its budget, but unwilling to make changes, the decision was made by council to contribute underutilised land in order to pay for the building.

In order to focus on the apartment construction, Mirvac engaged a second builder for the library and the consultants were divided into base building and fitout teams, working for different clients. Reconciling the requirements of each whilst adhering to the established brief and design principles required skill, diplomacy and a level of commitment beyond expectations. Despite these challenges, the library would not exist without this process. The residential development that provided the funding is in no way a negative, providing a mix of housing types, activating the precinct and enhancing the safety of public spaces through casual observation.

The design process reinforced the importance and effectiveness of community consultation, which in this case expanded and reshaped the brief for a public library.

BVN has applied these learnings to other public libraries and extended them into education projects.

The process of creating the new library has been one of discovery for the client and design team, through which the history of the site and the building fabric have been major influences on the design. The Marrickville community can engage with this history while embarking on their own journeys of discovery. The reflection below illustrates how the repurposing of the old hospital stimulated memories for an ex-nurse, affirming the importance of design and the contribution of a carefully designed building to the community.

Reflection

Many stories emerged once the building opened. A former nurse, Barbara Emslie (nee Hosking) provided an example of how parts of the building evoked memories of her former life.

I was a trainee nurse at Marrickville District Hospital between 1962 and 1966. I reconnected with the hospital site through the building of the new library. The library that has been created on the old hospital site is incredible. All care has been taken to preserve parts of the old hospital and butt it against the new structure.

When I entered the old part of the building and walked on the original floorboards it took me back to many memories of these boards being polished daily and the four years I walked on these boards. I was pleased to see the old windows, doors and rooms restored and utilised, the old mixture room, bathrooms, pan room that have now become offices, quiet rooms, and storerooms. The front entrance hall, the facade, terrazzo tiles a few of the front stairs and part of the wooden banister, a few of the original slate tiles these are all parts of the old that have been preserved.

The lane that we as nurses walked up and down each day has been utilised and named Hospital Lane.

The new library is an amazing structure which has been created for the community of today and the future with its natural light, ventilation, water storage, children's outdoor activities area which is built on the old children's ward suite. Obviously, a great deal of thought, consultation, planning and consideration have been involved in building this magnificent library.



Figure 24. (1 and 2) Old Hospital Ward building as it was. (Image: 'Marrickville Cottage Hospital', [Marrickville Heritage Society](#). Image courtesy of Inner West Council Libraries and History).

Further resources

- [Marrickville Library virtual experience](#)

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