



## Report on Creeklands Bus tour with members of the local Aboriginal community

November 16, 2019

The not-for-profit association Visions for Armidale Creeklands Inc hosted a short bus tour so that members of our committee could learn something of the views about the creeklands held by some in the local Aboriginal community.

Those attending included Aboriginal representatives Steve Widders (also a member of our Visions association), Dalliss Ramage, Reba Ramage, Hilton Naden (Senior Manager, Aboriginal Culture & Connections with PATHFINDERS LTD in Coffs Harbour), Rose Lovelock (Chairperson of ACCKP), David Harney, Izabel Soliman (member of Visions) and Visions committee members Don Hardman, Jim Scott, Hani Soliman and Martin Levins.



Pathfinders kindly provided the bus for the tour - it was much appreciated.

The President of the Visions for Armidale Creeklands Association Jim Scott, welcomed all to the bus tour which started at the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place.

Jim mentioned some of the inspirations the association has taken from various other towns and cities including Centennial Park in Sydney which is enjoyed by so many people. A recent tweet from Centennial Parklands stated: "For Thousands of years, Aboriginal Communities in history have been gathering in [Centennial Parklands](#) (Twitter @CentParklands) for ceremony & Birthing grounds. Yesterday we had the pleasure of walking with local Aboriginal Mums & Bubs group from La Perouse. Sharing stories, laughs & new ideas through the area". Maybe we can do likewise along our creeklands?

Hilton Naden read out a statement about how Aboriginal communities are connected in an inseparable way to the land and environment:

*Aboriginal communities have a connection and sense of ownership of the land. The land and water and its biodiversity values are the centre of Aboriginal spirituality and contribute to Aboriginal peoples' identity. Aboriginal heritage and nature are inseparable from each other and need to be managed in an integrated manner. Management of cultural heritage should accordingly focus on conservation across the whole landscape and recognise the role of people in the landscape. Natural resource use remains an important part of Aboriginal people's lives in NSW. It is associated with the use and enjoyment of valued foods and medicines, caring for the land, passing on cultural knowledge and strengthening social bonds. The Armidale Creeklands provided the local ANAIWAN people with a rich variety of foods, medicine, resources, shelter and utensils.*

Hilton works with the Pathfinders organisation (based in Coffs Harbour) and told us of his previous work with NPWS and his knowledge of some of the sacred sites history and cultural material relating to the creeklands.

Dalliss spoke of his work with local Aboriginal people with disabilities; they often visit the creeklands and special places along it. He is particularly committed to native species and the need for a healthy creek and water. He feels that the willows that still exist along the creek use more water than native species.

Rose Lovelock, Chairperson of the ACCKP, told us about a conference in the mid to late 1980s on water shortages; she suggests that we need to revisit the messages that came out of that conference. She also mentioned Charles Lynch who helped develop feasible and affordable ideas for the creeklands. She is very much in favour of improving the creeklands including the area on the southern side of the ACCKP.

Hilton mentioned that there was a big rock with grinding grooves at the ACCKP and that this would have necessarily had to have been close to water before it was brought to the ACCKP. Rose also mentioned that there is an arsenal of weapons held by the ACCKP that needs to be put on display so it attracts visitors.

On our tour we visited three sites nominated by the Aboriginal representatives:

1. East of Taylor Street along the creeklands walking towards O'Connor High School. We saw a site in amongst the weeds with a very large tree adjacent to a very large rock that Dalliss believes might be a sacred site. Dalliss often brings his Aboriginal people with him to spend time at this rock and tree and share stories about Aboriginal culture and other issues. It may be possible to get UNE archaeology people such as Wendy Beck to comment on the Aboriginal archaeological sites along the creeklands.



2. The old wooden footbridge near the TAFE where Steve Widders spoke about how it was such a lovely water hole for swimming back in the 1960s. He suggested it would be a good site to improve as it would make a good place for social gatherings and there could be involvement from TAFE staff and students. Another person mentioned that there may be an endangered frog species found in the vicinity of the creek near TAFE.
3. Under the Widders Bridge (on the Armidale bypass), which crosses over Dumaresq Creek. Steve Widders told us that when the bypass was built, he put forward the names of Widders and Anaiwan for the two bridges as his family had always been building bridges between the first peoples and the European settlers. Steve believes there could be a small area developed in this location with tables and facilities for people to meet and socialise.

At the end of the tour, we gathered for lunch near the Stephens Bridge picnic area and reflected on what we'd learned and seen. We noted the bridge was used for the Reconciliation walk. There was positive feedback from all participants about the value of this short bus tour.

We handed out feedback sheets for any participants to fill out - see feedback below:

From Hilton Naden - Can you please acknowledge Pathfinders for use of the bus? More cultural signs along the creek lines. Plant natural resources such as Bush Tucker. Signs that identify plants and animals. Carved or rock totem poles or carved rocks. Koori stepping stones that lead to another story sign.

From Rose Lovelock - Research material addressing Aboriginal perspectives on water management and sustainability. Offer of ACCKP knowledge and ideas for creekland beautification. Getting access to larger Aboriginal people resources.

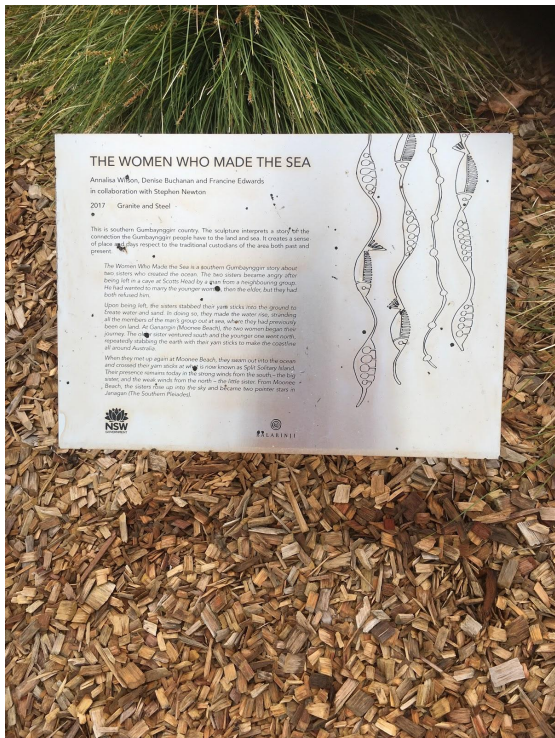
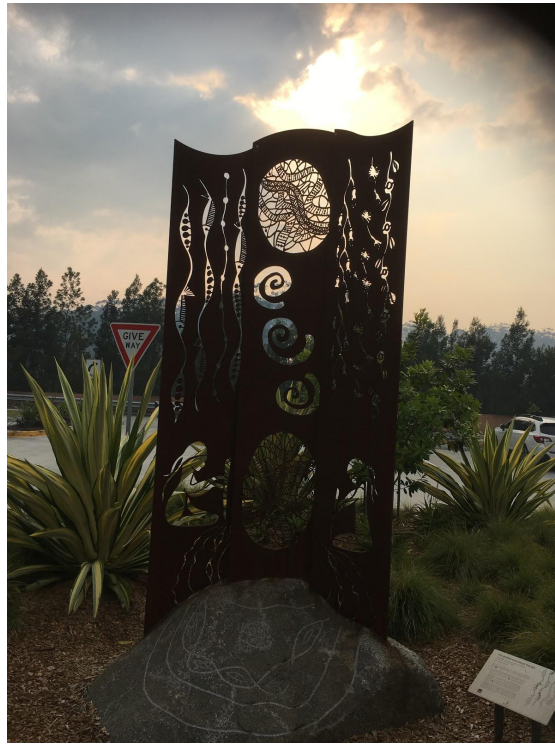
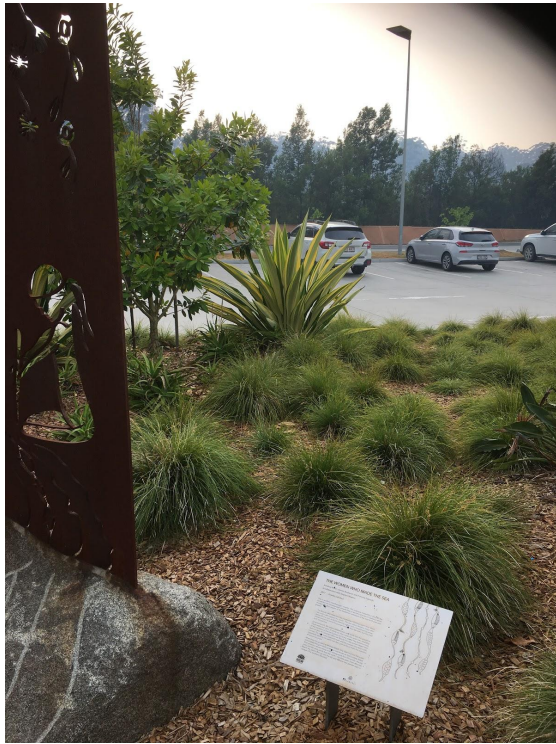
Dalliss Ramage - is interested in joining our association. He is happy to be involved in the future.

From Steve Widders - Lisa Waters might be interested in hearing about our tour. She is the chair of the local Land Council.

After the tour, the images below were provided by Hilton Naden as an example of a coastal site that has recognised Aboriginal history together with a story (THE WOMEN WHO MADE THE SEA) about the connection with land and sea. No doubt, we could emulate some of these examples below along our Armidale creeklands. And perhaps we might even consider renaming Dumaresq Creek to an Aboriginal name to recognise its significance to the Aboriginal



people of this region. Who knows what that might be? The catchment of the creek starts up near the iconic mountain Duembandyi (or Mt Duval).



Images of an installation on the NSW coast acknowledging the story of “THE WOMEN WHO MADE THE SEA” (images supplied by Hilton Naden).

Report prepared by Jim Scott, President Visions for Armidale Creeklands Inc.