

**EMBEDDING HERITAGE FROM DESIGN TO DELIVERY**  
**HERITAGE INTERPRETATION BEYOND COMPLIANCE**

**Heritage interpretation in infrastructure projects is often treated as a compliance exercise, delivered through signage or artwork at project completion. From the initial design stages, Degnan, TfNSW, SMEC and heritage consultants GML took a different approach, embedding heritage into the station design to create interpretation elements that celebrate cultural, colonial and Aboriginal history while enhancing the experience of thousands of passengers each year.**



**The Heritage Context**

Moss Vale station occupies a site of layered significance. The station and surrounds are heritage listed, reflecting the railway's role in the development of the Southern Highlands during the colonial and early Federation periods. The area also sits within the Country of the Gundungurra people, whose connection to the landscape predates European settlement by tens of thousands of years.

Upgrade works carefully navigated these overlapping values, preserving and celebrating both strands of significance rather than prioritising one over the other.

A Heritage Design Report was developed in consultation with TfNSW, the Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Incorporated (GAHAI), and local First Nations Elders, and embedded into the project design from concept stage. Four presentations were made to the TfNSW Design Review Panel, ensuring the interpretation program was progressively reviewed and refined through design governance processes, as detailed in the Heritage Interpretation Plan.

**Interpretive Paving: The Dreaming Story of Gurangatch and Mirragan**

Working closely with First Nations community representatives and commissioned artists, a series of interpretive paving designs were sandblasted into the Dalys Way pedestrian footpaths leading to the station entrance. The design told the Dreaming story of Gurangatch and Mirragan, a creation narrative deeply connected to the Country on which the station stands.

The story was shared directly with the project team by GAHAI Elders Aunty Sharyn Halls and Aunty Joyce Saunders, ensuring the narrative was culturally authorised, community endorsed and accurately represented

The concrete finish formed a permanent, high-traffic feature of the upgraded station precinct, exposing tens of thousands of passengers each year to a story that would otherwise remain unseen. This interpretation created a tangible connection between place and culture, positioning the station as a site of living Aboriginal heritage rather than simply a transport node.

**Acknowledgement of Country Signage**

An Acknowledgement of Country sign was installed at the main station entrance, consistent with TfNSW requirements and broader cultural protocols supported by the project team. The sign provided visitors with their first point of cultural context, establishing that the station sits within Country that has been cared for by Aboriginal people for generations.

Positioned prominently at the entry, it embedded the Acknowledgement into the passenger experience, ensuring it was received as a meaningful expression of respect rather than a token gesture.

**The Argyle Street Retaining Wall**

Along the Argyle Street retaining wall, a prominent feature of the upgraded station entrance, a large-scale artwork was installed acknowledging the Stolen Generation. The work took the form of a 7.4-metre by 1.4-metre laser-cut steel panel, combining visual impact with permanence. Developed in consultation with First Nations community representatives, it presented a narrative of local and national significance.

The selection of laser-cut steel was deliberate. Durable and low-maintenance, it weathers over time in a way that adds character. It also reflected the industrial heritage of the rail corridor, connecting the Aboriginal narrative to the material language of the railway environment.

**Historical Gallery Wall and Heritage Imagery**

A historical gallery was installed across three station windows, tracing Moss Vale station's development from the early colonial era through to the First World War period. Sourced from archival records, the images were curated to present the station's role in the social and economic history of the Southern Highlands.

Heritage interpretation was extended into everyday infrastructure, with the station water bubbler vinyl wrapped in archival imagery. This reflected a consistent design approach where no surface in the public realm was treated as purely functional, with each element used to communicate aspects of place and history.

**Dalys Way Garden: The Lombardy Poplars**

The garden along Dalys Way was a valued element of the station's historic character, with a row of Lombardy Poplars planted as a World War memorial forming part of its distinctive streetscape. Construction works required their removal. Rather than replacing them with standard landscape species, the project team replanted Lombardy Poplars in the same locations, restoring the visual rhythm of the historic precinct.

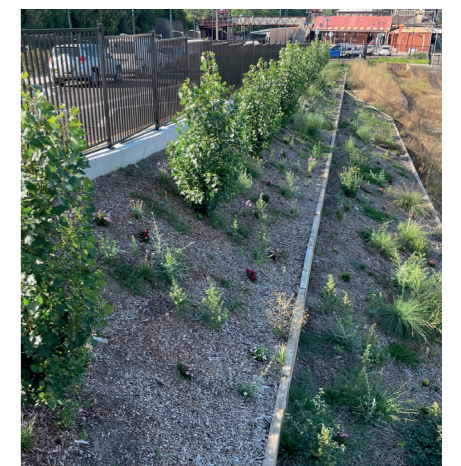
The courtyard garden was similarly maintained and revitalised, with replacement plantings selected to re-establish character as new vegetation matured. This reflected a conservation approach of repair and restoration rather than substitution, ensuring the landscape character is preserved long term.



Interpretive paving, developed with First Nations representatives and artists, embeds the Dreaming story of Gurangatch and Mirragan at the station entrance.



Historical gallery across three station windows tracing Moss Vale Station's evolution from early colonial times to the First World War period.



Preserving the site's historic landscape character, through replanting Lombardy Poplars.

### Roundabout Heritage Integration: Archaeological Discovery

During construction of the Dalys Way roundabout, sandstone roadways from early settlement were uncovered. Rather than treating this as a construction constraint, the project team worked with heritage advisors to incorporate the material into the final design.

The result was a functional transport asset that also operates as a tangible piece of living heritage. Early settler stonework is now experienced directly by users of the roundabout, transforming a potential heritage conflict into a defining project feature and enabling reuse of archaeological material that would otherwise have been stored or discarded.

### Revitalisation of the Governors Platform

Moss Vale Railway Station is the only station in Australia substantially designed and modified for regular Vice-Regal use. From the late 1860s to 1946, NSW Governors used Moss Vale as a summer retreat, leading to progressive adaptations including the 1889 Governor's Waiting Room and the distinctive island platform arrangement linked to Governor Strickland's request for road access for his daughter. This legacy underpins the station's State Heritage Register listing and its significance within NSW rail history.

Prior to upgrade works, the former Governor's platform area had significantly deteriorated. The works removed degraded elements, reconstructed a brick retaining wall, and reconfigured landscaping to better frame the surviving platform. Archaeological monitoring also uncovered a brick platform footing beneath Dalys Way, believed to date to the original c.1867 layout, which was conserved in situ beneath the upgraded public realm.

### Waiting Room Timeline / Historical Context / Archaeology

A heritage interpretation installation was delivered in the Building C Waiting Room, presenting a chronological timeline of Moss Vale Station from its opening in 1867 through its Vice-Regal period, wartime use, and ongoing operation as a regional hub. The location provided high visibility and allowed integration of digital displays and artefacts.

The Heritage Interpretation Plan covered both the station and stabling yard, ensuring internal narratives connected with broader site heritage, including the Lackey Road entry and footbridge interpretation strategy.

Key archaeological finds included a c.1920s 75-foot locomotive turntable, 22-metre inspection and ash pits, c.1867 carriage shed footings, a timber-lined drain, interlocking rod system, and sandstone road base beneath Dalys Way. The cast iron turntable pivot was conserved, and artefacts such as NSW Government Railways crockery were catalogued for potential display. Collectively, these finds confirmed the stabling yard as an exceptionally intact example of 19th and 20th century regional rail infrastructure.

### Sustainability Dimensions of the Heritage Program

The heritage interpretation program contributed to sustainability across multiple dimensions not always captured in standard environmental metrics. Cultural sustainability was demonstrated through the preservation and transmission of Aboriginal and colonial heritage, delivering outcomes of lasting significance.

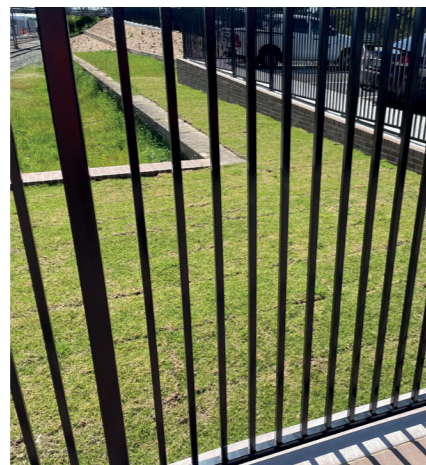
The program also contributed to TfNSW SDGv4 Innovation and Project Legacy criteria, with interpretation outcomes exceeding minimum requirements and delivering a lasting community benefit beyond construction.

From a circular economy perspective, salvaged sandstone from archaeological works was incorporated into the roundabout design, creating a direct reuse outcome and avoiding both disposal of heritage material and procurement of new resources.

Engagement with First Nations Elders and community representatives in designing Aboriginal interpretation elements also strengthened social sustainability, building relationships between TfNSW, Degnan and the Gundungurra community with value beyond a single project.



Archaeological sandstone laid by early settlers uncovered during construction was incorporated into the Dalys Way roundabout as a heritage feature.



Former Governor's platform at Moss Vale Station, now fenced off and not in use, preserved for its role in NSW Vice-Regal railway history.



Key archaeological finds included a c.1920s 75-foot locomotive turntable.



**The heritage interpretation programme at Moss Vale Station demonstrates that infrastructure delivery can act as a platform for cultural expression, community connection and the preservation of shared memory. Through early collaboration with First Nations communities, heritage consultants and the broader public, Degnan and TfNSW delivered outcomes that will continue to serve passengers and the local community for generations, long after construction is complete.**

## KEY OUTCOMES

### HERITAGE



Landscape restoration  
Lombardy Poplar replanting  
and courtyard garden  
revitalisation

Historical gallery across three  
station windows documents  
the station's colonial and

### CULTURAL



Aboriginal Dreaming story  
of Gurangatch and Mirragan  
embedded permanently in  
paving, co-designed with Elders

Stolen Generation  
acknowledgement laser-cut  
steel artwork installed at the  
Argyle Street entrance

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL



Archaeological sandstone  
roadways incorporated into the  
Dalys Way roundabout, creating  
a living heritage feature

### INNOVATION



Innovation outcomes are  
achieved through embedded  
interpretation within the  
project scope. Seven heritage  
interpretation devices are  
delivered across the station  
precinct, exceeding minimum  
requirements and reflecting  
integrated delivery across  
design and construction.