

Public Art Reference Group

# Annual Report

2023



[newcastle.nsw.gov.au](http://newcastle.nsw.gov.au)



City of  
Newcastle

Acknowledgment of Country

City of Newcastle (CN) acknowledges its Local Government Area (LGA) sits within the Country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient relationships. We acknowledge the custodianship of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples and the care and stewardship they have performed in this place since time immemorial. We recognise the history of truth that acknowledges the impact of invasion and colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how this still resonates today.

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Published by  
City of Newcastle  
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Cover image: Roe Street Mayfield  
Artist –Jordan Lucky

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## Foreword from the Chair

As we embark on another year, it is with pleasure that I present the 2023 Public Art Reference Group Annual Report for the City of Newcastle.

Over the past year, we have witnessed a remarkable and continued surge in high quality public art in Newcastle, and also positive sentiment and media commentary, both locally and nationally, regarding the burgeoning growth of public art in our vibrant community. You can see it right before your eyes!

The dynamic landscape of Newcastle has become a canvas for creativity, with public art projects

contributing significantly to the cultural richness of our city. The increasing recognition and appreciation for these artistic expressions reflect not only the evolving identity of Newcastle but also the collective spirit of its residents.

In acknowledging this transformative power of public art, it's important to highlight its positive impact on the well-being of our community. The infusion of creativity into our public spaces beautifies our surroundings and fosters a sense of connection, pride, and inspiration among our diverse residents.

At the heart of this creative momentum is the unwavering support of the City of Newcastle and our ratepayers for our local artists. We take immense pride in our commitment to nurturing and championing the talent within our community. By providing genuine support and fostering opportunities, we empower local artists to contribute their unique perspectives, further enriching the cultural fabric of Newcastle.

As we reflect on the past year's achievements and look toward the future, we remain dedicated to the continued growth and integration of public art into all areas of Newcastle. I extend my sincere thanks to every organisation and individual that has

contributed to this work, and the enthusiastic team of subject matter experts, fellow councillors and, critically, our dedicated CN staff who keep the whole show on the road.

It is my firm belief that by supporting, celebrating and promoting the artistic endeavors of our community, we contribute not only to the aesthetic appeal of our city but also to the wellbeing and vitality of its residents.

**Councillor Carol Duncan**

Chair  
Public Art Reference Group







Beaumont Street Mural

# Objectives of the Public Art Reference Group

**The Public Art Reference Group (PARG) acts as an Advisory Committee to the City of Newcastle on public art. Over the last year the key objectives were to:**

- Provide guidance and advice to developers, artists, curators, CN staff and the community regarding public art in the private and public domain.
- Ensure public art reflects the local identity, diversity and community of Newcastle.
- Ensure high standards of public art are delivered in the private domain, by outlining requirements regarding artistic excellence, local character, heritage and culture, invigoration of the public domain, sustainability and materiality, and maintenance.
- Review processes and procedures for public art and make recommendations for improvements and revisions of all documents, procedural or policy based, pertaining to public art.

# Membership

PARG met seven times in 2023 and membership during the period is shown below.



Councillor Carol Duncan

**Chair**

Meetings attended: **4**



Councillor Dr John Mackenzie

**Member**

Meetings attended: **3**



Councillor Peta Winney-Baartz

**Member**

Meetings attended: **4**

The following community members provided leadership and guidance to the development and enhancement of public art in the City due to their varied experience in this area.

Charlotte Hilder

Meetings attended: **2**

Nikolas Orr

Meetings attended: **6**

Edwardo Milan

Meetings attended: **5**

Andrew Smith

Meetings attended: **0**  
Provided input electronically.





Paul McCartney Mural by Mitch Revs

# PARG Meetings

In 2023 PARG provided guidance on a wide variety of art forms in the local government area. This included public art proposed as part of development applications, infrastructure upgrades, festivals and work proposed by local Business Industry Associations or through the Special Business Rate funding. The variety of proposals included murals, statues, video art, temporary artworks, chalk art, sculptures and suspended artwork.

PARG meetings have generally occurred on a as needs basis, with several proposals being reviewed via electronic means outside of formal meetings. The Group also considered many donations of public art, enquiries about engaging artists and reviewed procedures. The Group also worked with applicants and artists to ensure proposed artworks are inclusive, culturally appropriate and add value to the city.



# Public Art considered by PARG

In 2023, six proposals for public art in the private domain were reviewed which related to development applications. These included:

- DA2018/01107 – 854 Hunter St, Newcastle West
- DA2019/00711 – 1 National Park St, Newcastle West
- DA2021/01459 – 924 Hunter Street, Newcastle West
- DA2021/01754 – 43 Date St, Adamstown
- DA2022/00796 – 132–140 Brunker Rd, Adamstown
- DA2022/01316 and DA2022/01317 – 711 Hunter St, Newcastle West

The map below shows the locations of these proposals.

## Newcastle West



## Adamstown

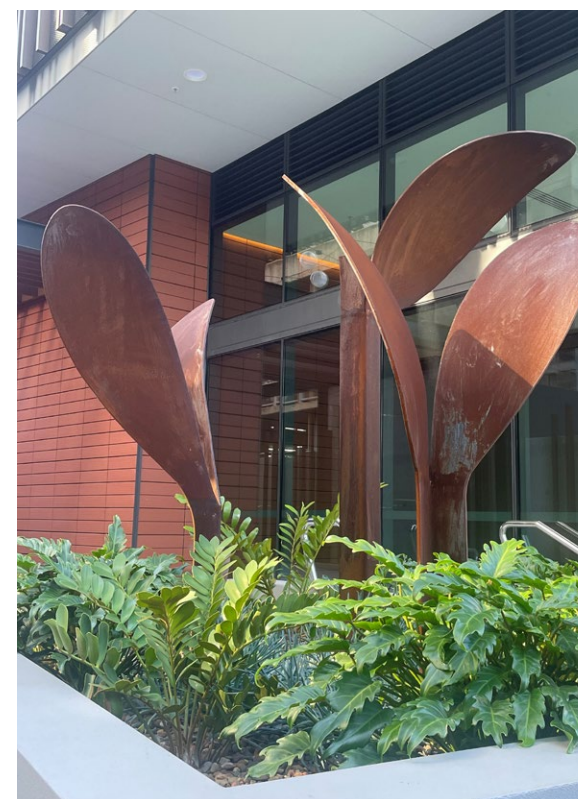




# 723 Hunter Street Newcastle West

Development application (DA2018/005100) for the construction of a commercial building required the installation of public art on the site. A Public Art Curator was selected to manage the proposal and the theme of the artwork was the concept of the Awabakal use of message sticks. The concept has been woven into the architectural features of the buildings. The message sticks are referred to in the vertical fins of the building and in the laneway.

The artworks include two raised garden beds for sculptures, two areas for graphics within the lobby of the building, a laneway feature and a recessed mural. The sculptured artworks reference the industrial nature of the city and recognise the loss of the mangrove, a meeting place for the Awabakal people. The screen fence tells the dreamtime story of the Kangaroo that hides within Nobbys head. The building has been constructed and images of the artworks are shown below.



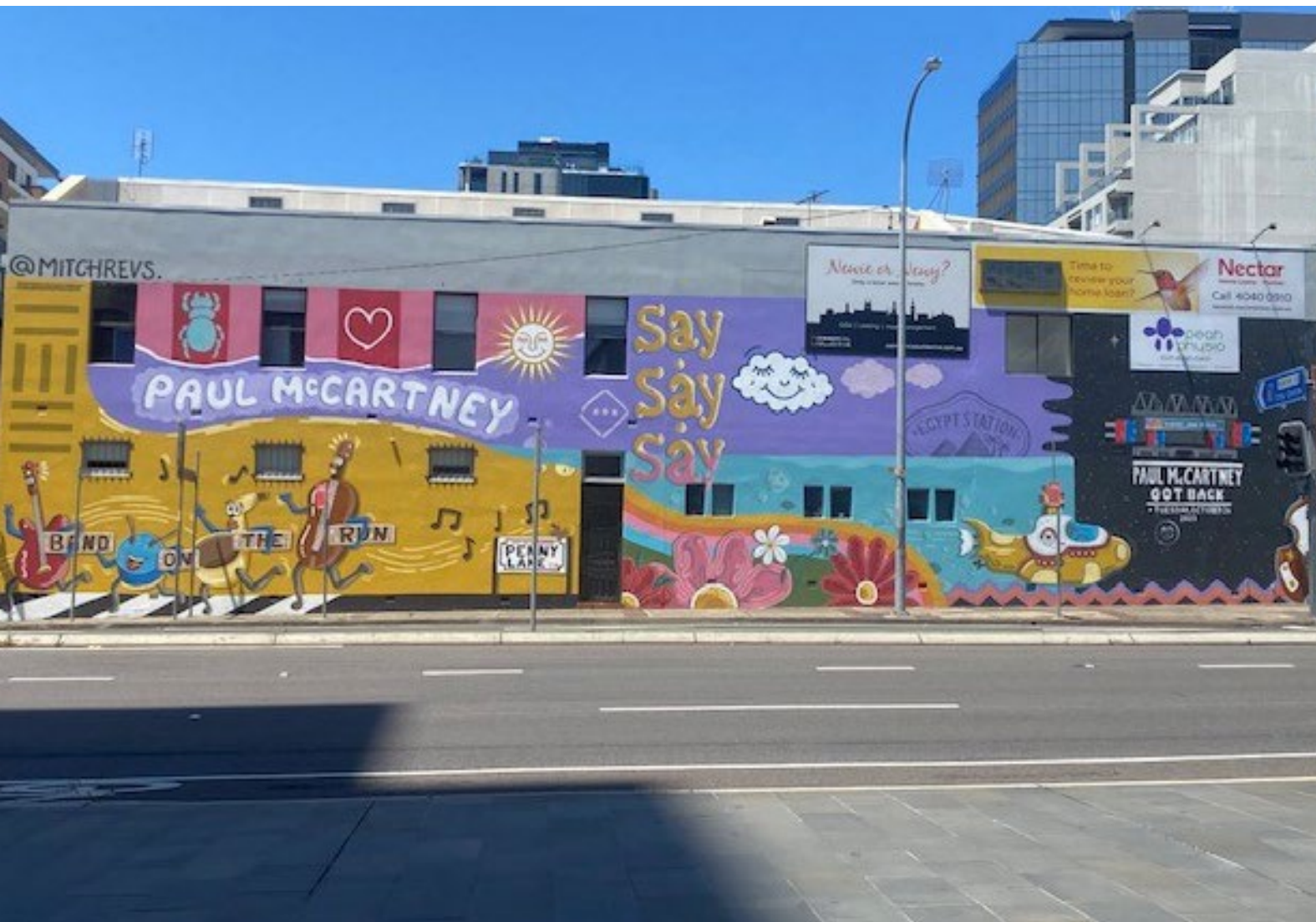
Sculpture: Artist – Jenny Johnstone and Alice Whish  
Screen: Artist – David Parsons



# 826 Hunter Street Newcastle

## Paul McCartney Mural

Local artist Mitch Revs was commissioned by Venues NSW to paint a mural on the western wall of the building to celebrate the fact that Sir Paul McCartney will be performing at McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle. The mural celebrates Paul McCartney and the Beatles and has iconic images intertwined with elements of Newcastle including its beaches and the Stadium. The mural has promoted Newcastle as a major music venue and the location on a prominent intersection also celebrates the importance of art in the city.



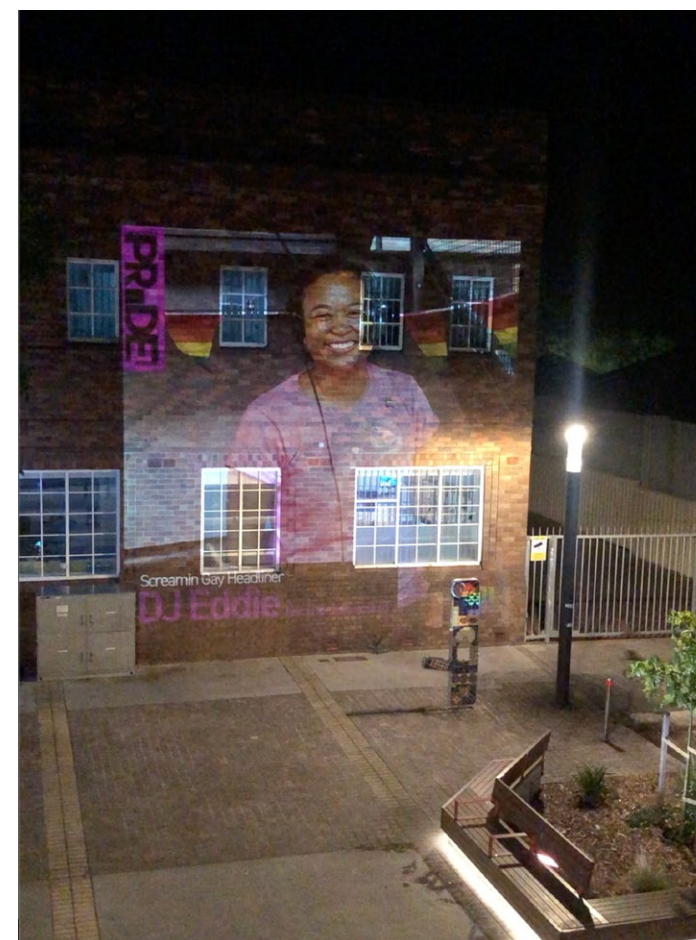
# Community Art

A wide variety of art installations occurred in 2023 and have added interest and colour to local streetscapes. These artworks have been informed by local history, connections, culture and the environment. The artworks have included murals and temporary artworks which have been used to encourage activation and create interesting spaces in many local centres in the local government area. In addition, local Business Industry Associations have been very active in encouraging art in the public domain and have funded many of the projects in conjunction with the City of Newcastle.

## James Street Plaza Hamilton

The James Street Plaza Activation is a project that was created after placemaking research by the University of Newcastle. The project has involved the Hamilton Business Association, Art Thinking and City of Newcastle.

A light animation was projected onto the ANZ building and different multi media displays were projected onto the wall at various times in the year. The project focuses on community engagement and has used local artists.





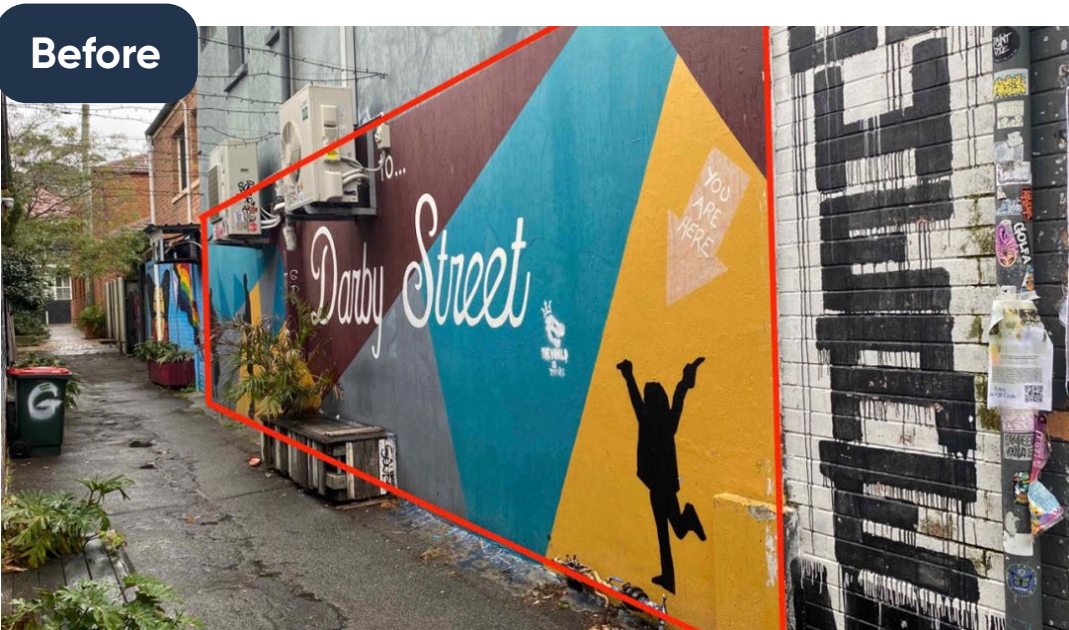
# Roe Street Mayfield

Artist Jordan Lucky painted a mural on a blank wall in Roe St Mayfield. This artwork was instigated by Playstate and the Mayfield Business Industry Association assisted with funding. The artwork brings the corner to life and has brightened up the local area.



Roe Street Mayfield  
Artist - Jordan Lucky

# 141 Darby Street Cooks Hill



Artist - Nick Fintan

An existing mural was painted over with a new mural to improve the visual appearance of the laneway. The mural was created by Nick Fintan and includes solar LEP strip lighting, that is activated by sensors when visitors walk past.



# New Lambton library

The Alma Street wall on the New Lambton library received an uplift in the form of a new mural. The artwork was created by artists from UP&UP Inspirations and includes a collection of leaves, flowers, a butterfly and a yellow tail black cockatoo in a mixture of bright colours. The bright contemporary colours symbolise hope and add interest to the local streetscape.





# Special Business Rates Funding

Special Business Rates are collected from businesses in Newcastle City Centre/Darby St, Hamilton, Mayfield, New Lambton and Wallsend and are reserved for the promotion, beautification and development of these business precincts.

A number of art events in 2023 were sponsored by the Special Business Rates funding by City of Newcastle, including EASEL'D and Chalk the Walk.

The EASEL'D program was held in September 2023 and over 100 artists took to the streets to create temporary activations. It included live painting, artist residencies, activations and workshops between Newcastle West and Newcastle Beach. The program was managed by the Wall Station.

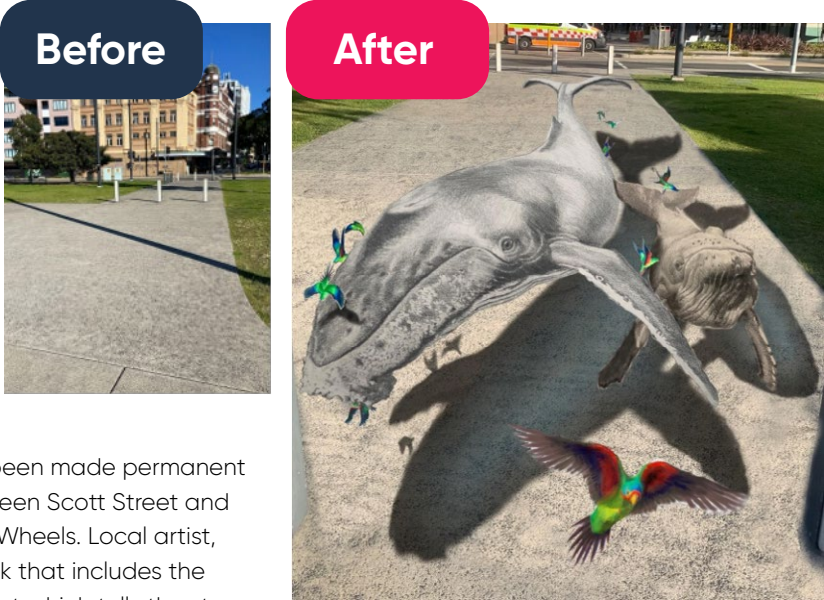


The Wall Station, [www.thewallstation.com](http://www.thewallstation.com)

The Chalk the Walk festival was part of the New Annual Festival in September, managed by Zest Events International. It involved artists creating temporary 3D art work in the form of chalk drawings where the community could watch the artists that were located on a walking trail around the city.

The majority of the artworks are temporary. One of the artworks created in the festival has been made permanent and is located on the footpath between Scott Street and Wharf Road, close to Harry Café de Wheels. Local artist, Jenny McCracken created an artwork that includes the Humpback Whale and the Swift Parrot which tells the story of recovery for the whale species with that of the struggling Parrots due to the wild population dwindling. The artwork is a way to connect people and create links between the human and the natural environment.

The artwork also includes a reflection of the story of the whale and the parrot.



## UBI VITA, SPES EST Where there is life, there is hope.

For every one that breathes there is hope.  
Humpbacks follow the ancient currents south to  
Antarctic summers, then cycle up to winters north of Capricorn.  
Each new life brought forth woven from songs,  
music of creation returning from the brink of silence  
to harmonize the deep,  
weaving blue and green with shafts of light, in sound.

For every one that breathes there is hope.  
Swift parrots sense seasonal shifts  
leaving Lutruwita as the Fagus leaves fall.  
Do they hear the Humpbacks call from the sea?  
Following the leviathans on their journey  
north over land, then straight and land again.  
Once abundant flocks diminished, now rare travellers indeed.

Two great migrations touching the shores through millennia.  
Once resilient and reliable in their repetition,  
Now experiencing the threat of existential elimination,  
an after effect of anthropocentric entitlement.  
On a revolving trajectory ever more humpbacks return,  
humans finally grasping the paradoxical fragility of lives so large.  
While smaller lives still slip through the cracks.  
Swiftest of the species, rainbow jewels of the air, hurtling towards  
oblivion on our watch.

Their breeding trees taken, north and south,  
burned and cut as once the whales were hunted to the edge.  
This tide needs to turn to see survival and revival.  
Two great journeys intertwined in time and tide:  
for every one that breathes there is hope.



# Hamilton Station Graffiti Management Project

The City of Newcastle's Hamilton Station Park Graffiti Management project was undertaken by UP&UP Inspirations and supported by a Graffiti Management Grant from the Department of Communities and Justice. The aim of the project was to reduce the incidence of graffiti vandalism on the walls and improve the visual appearance of the area.

In August and September community engagement sessions were held to encourage a diverse range of community members, residents, asset owners, business, youth and people from different cultures and backgrounds. Islington Public School students were also involved in the project. The community provided input and ideas for the mural designs.

Each design aligns with Safer by Design principles and an element of Graffiti art, which in itself is a deterrent to future tagging. The murals send a message to the viewer which is linked to the place. They are located in the Hamilton Park Station area, bordered by the train station, Beaumont St and Eva Street.

## Hamilton Park

The mural at the rear of Hamilton Station captures the history of trains in the area, with images of four iconic locomotives: a steam engine, an old diesel engine, an electronic commuter train of yesteryear and a sleek new electric commuter train. The murals border plays homage to the station's architecture and transports onlookers into the evolution of how things have changed in the train world and the stories they hold, and the connections people make where people from all walks of life come together.

Before



After



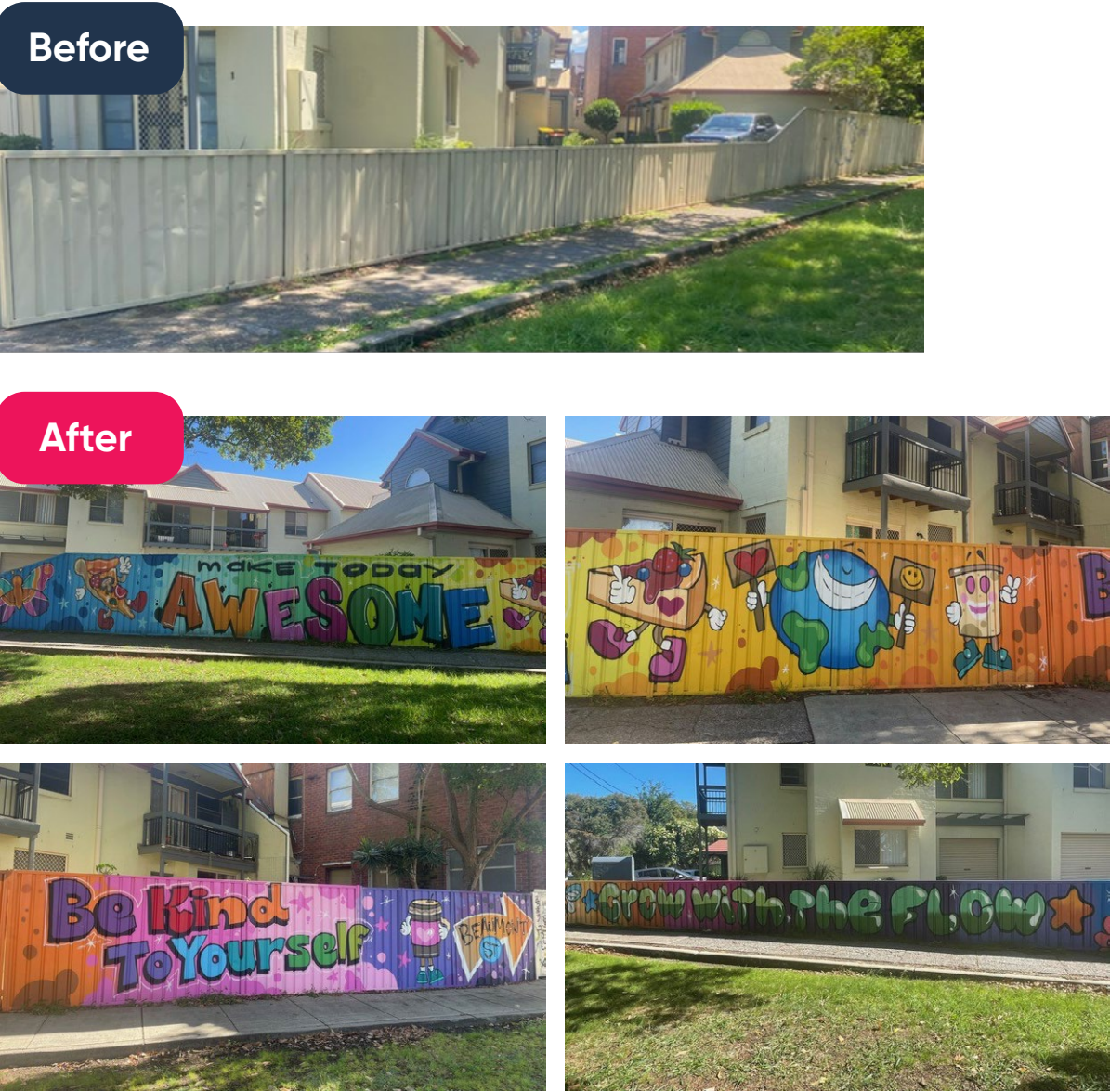


# Beaumont Street



The community sought a mural that paid homage to the Gallipoli Club in a unique graffiti style. The artwork has joined together the silhouette of soldiers, rosemary sprigs and poppies, the words 'Lest We Forget' and a mixture of graffiti letters. The mural commemorates the heroes of the past and aims to encourage positive engagement with public art. The graffiti style pieces celebrates the local street art culture and aims to bridge the gap between the past and present.

# Eva Street



The theme the mural on the fence is 'colours of connection'. The community requested a mix of flowers, butterflies and dragons that represent beauty around them as well as reference to the local area. As the Hamilton shopping district is close by, the mural includes pictures of food and coffee. It also contains a number of positive messages, that have transformed the fence into a playful and fun piece of street art. The Eva St fence is also highly visible when the trains move past so the kindness affirmations are prominent.



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