

WHERE'S YOUR COUNTRY?

**SCHOOLS RECONCILIATION
CHALLENGE 2017**

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



NEW SOUTH WALES
RECONCILIATION
COUNCIL



We are delighted to bring you the 8th year of the Schools Reconciliation Challenge (SRC). This year's theme, **Where's Your Country?** has inspired primary and high school students from around NSW to create reconciliation-inspired art and writing for the SRC. We continue to be amazed by the talent and insight that these young people, from many different backgrounds, bring to reconciliation in NSW.

We thank each and every school, teacher, principal, parent and student who have taken part, come up with the idea to enter, guided and supported students and each other. Without these dedicated people, we would not have the SRC each year. We are grateful for their hard work and commitment. In 2017, we received 220 artworks and 60 stories from students across NSW, each reflecting the theme and their perspectives on the broader story of reconciliation.

These are themes that challenge many adults and as always for the SRC we have seen a high level of sensitivity, insight, empathy and maturity in the entries.

The quality of both art and writing entries we received made judging hard work. Many of the artworks were developed collaboratively, involving classes or groups of students under the guidance of local Aboriginal artists, parents and community members.

We thank the panel of judges: Jody Broun, Annie Tennant, Jane Waters, John Blair, Karolina Novak and Fiona Britton for their time and expertise in selecting this year's winning entries. Neither of us envy their job!

In 2017 entries came from far and wide across NSW, including Chullora, the Blue Mountains, Barrington and many more places. Following on from the previous year we ran writing workshops in partnership with the Sydney Story Factory. These workshops were facilitated by the inspiring Story Teller John Blair, from the Nuccoorilma group of the Gamilaroi Nation, in conjunction with the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. The workshops were delivered using the Powerhouse Museum's state of the art video conferencing technology which enabled us to reach 22 schools and 720 students across NSW, including places as far away as Goolooga and Coffs Harbour. These workshops encouraged students to explore this year's theme and their own stories using drama games, story development activities and techniques. These workshops helped inspire and support students in developing their own skills as story tellers and artists.

This year we launched the Schools Reconciliation Challenge website www.schoolsreconciliationchallenge.org.au The website provides teachers with resources, an easy way of registering for the SRC, lesson plans and many creative

activities for students to learn about and engage with reconciliation and the chosen theme each year. It also gives students inspiration through their own creative expression through the galleries of past entries.

Our great thanks go to all our partners in this year's SRC: MAAS, Sydney Story Factory, Principle + Co, National Trust, Wingaru Education, Lend Lease and the NSW Government.

This year the SRC was managed by the NSW Reconciliation Council's sole staff member – the awe-inspiring Danielle Cooper. We thank Danielle from the bottom of our hearts and promise her that 2018 will be different! We would also like to thank Robert Migliorino, Tegan Dennehy, Meret Hassanen and students from the University of Technology Sydney who generously contributed their skills and enthusiasm to a variety of projects for the SRC this year.

Congratulations to all those students and schools whose works have been selected to form this year's exhibition that with the help of our partners National Trust will be touring NSW over the next six months. We are inspired and delighted by the quality of the art and the clarity with which our young people express their understanding of the important role of reconciliation in creating a better, more equal Australia for all of us.

Can't wait for next year!

Lindon Coombes
Indigenous Co-Chair


Cecilia Anthony
Non-Indigenous Co-Chair



The 2017 Schools Reconciliation Challenge Exhibition Catalogue showcases the vision that school students have of the developing journey of reconciliation. The work of students represented in this catalogue explores our shared experience, and the status of reconciliation in present-day Australia.

The theme for this year, *Where's Your Country?*, speaks to Aboriginal peoples' special connection to land. The Challenge gives Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students the opportunity to reflect on that connection and ask what it means for their own relationship to the land, and their own history and identity.

The Challenge is an outstanding way to highlight the talents and achievements of students in NSW schools. These are insightful and emotional reflections on the present moment, and the work that still needs to be done.

As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I was delighted to be asked to provide a foreword for this catalogue. I extend my warmest congratulations to all the students who took part in the Challenge. Initiatives such as this create understanding and empathic relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. No work is more important as we move forward together.

Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Early Childhood Education
Assistant Minister for Education



**PRIMARY
SCHOOL
ART**



**1st
PRIZE**

THE ILLAWARRA COASTLINE

Taj Puckeridge

Peterborough School (SSP)

First Prize, Primary School Art 2017

I have painted the Illawarra coastline and two of the five islands off the coast of Wollongong. Our school acknowledges the Wodi Wodi and Five Islands people in our acknowledgment of Country. Our teachers liaised with a local Elder and the local Wollongong Aboriginal Education Centre to write our Acknowledgment of Country. Aunty Bev is our lovely Elder who helps us to celebrate NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day, and our annual walk for reconciliation. Aunty Bev also helps us to do the right thing when making art and learning about our local culture. My painting shows our

beautiful coastline, beaches, mountains, bushland and two of the five islands. We sometimes visit Mount Keira and view the sculptures depicting the Dreaming legend of the west wind and his six little daughters. I live in Illawarra and love to learn about our Aboriginal heritage and culture.

Reconciliation means... Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of this land and recognising that this fact is still important today and we do this through the school's Acknowledgment of Country.



**2nd
PRIZE**

THE LANDS THAT MADE ME

L'Keyah Hemopo-Wilson

Oxley Park Public School

Second Prize, Primary School Art 2017

I am shaped by my family. Where my family belongs is home to me. We belong to our past, present and future. I have Indigenous Australian and Maori connections. My country is a combination of places that have been passed down to me. My present is on Darug land. Who knows where my future home will be, but I will always hold a little bit of the past and present in my heart. I have recorded the beauty of my family's countries in my artwork and made a 'record' for the future.

Reconciliation means... People coming together and working as a team.



3rd
PRIZE

OUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

Edward James

Our Lady of the Nativity

Third Prize, Primary School Art 2017

My artwork represents that we are all in this together. This relates to reconciliation because, even though the earth belongs to everyone, we have to respect that this is Aboriginal land. It relates to **Where's your Country** because this is the only earth in the universe, it's the only place where we can survive and it is the only place that we can call home.

Reconciliation means... To let go of something that you desperately want so you can give it someone who desperately needs it.



4th
PRIZE

MOTHER EARTH

Ava Jarman and Lucy Hope

Katoomba Public School

Fourth Prize, Primary School Art 2017

There are lots of animals and they like to be in a place of comfort and isolation. Birds are the guardians because they fly over and sit in trees. It's a place where everyone is welcome and treated fairly. It relates to **Where's your Country** because it's a place we can relate to. Many people and animals also.

Reconciliation means... It is special and about peace for everyone.



5th
PRIZE

COME TOGETHER

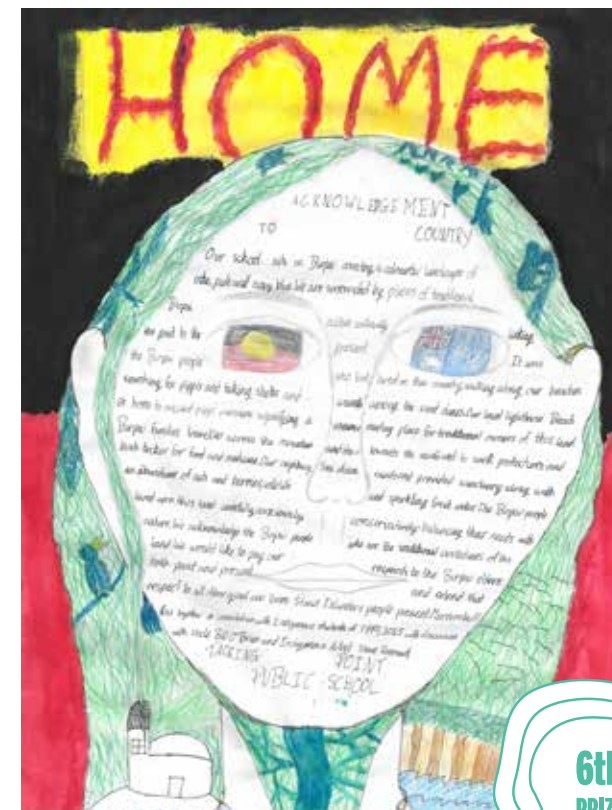
Dimity Lee

Katoomba Public School

Fifth Prize, Primary School Art 2017

My artwork is about where I am from. It shows non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal people coming together on a red, black and yellow background. I was happy as I made it, thinking about where I come from – Namppa Country.

Reconciliation means... People coming together.



6th
PRIZE

MY COUNTRY, OUR COUNTRY

Tess McWilliams

Tacking Point Public School

Sixth Prize, Primary School Art 2017

This artwork is about how Aboriginal people look at our world with it's wildlife and forests. It shows the animals and particular landmarks that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The flags show the coming together of the two different cultures living in harmony on this land today. The animals in the hair of the person are Australian animals, with the jungle as well, they represent our land. In the eyes of an Aboriginal person, their country was taken away from them. Now, they ask, Where's your Country?

Reconciliation means... Reconciliation means to me that different nations, cultures or even people get together, no matter what their differences.



**HIGHLY
COMMEDED**

CLOSE THE GAP

Antigone Marchbank

International Grammar School

Highly Commended, Primary School Art 2017

The meaning of my artwork is based on the Close the Gap moment. The two walls represent the gap and the girl in the middle is trying to pull the walls together. The sentences stringing the walls together are all Aboriginal quotes or sayings. The pile of books she is standing on represents Aboriginal education growing there for closing the gap. The sentences other meaning is that we should listen to the Aboriginal people, rather than just telling them what to do.



**HIGHLY
COMMEDED**

TERRIFIC TASSIE TIGER

Nicholas Cullen

Bangor Public School

Highly Commended, Primary School Art 2017

A Tasmanian tiger with painting inspired by Aboriginal dot painting. I googled Aboriginal painting and enjoyed learning about this. I would like to learn more about Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal painting is very uniquely Australian. There is no other art like it in the world.

Reconciliation means... Mending relationships between Indigenous Australians and the Europeans who took their land.



TOGETHERNESS

Ruby Mitchell

International Grammar School
Highly Commended, Primary School Art

My artwork is about being the same, but different. My artwork relates to reconciliation because there are two people that are not coloured in. This represents the fact that everyone is equal no matter what colour your skin is, what your nationality is, or where you are from. We can all move forward together. My art relates to the theme 'Where's Your Country?' because I was born on Gadigal land, the land of the saltwater people.

Reconciliation means... Acknowledging what has happened in the past and all moving forward together.



**HIGH
SCHOOL
ART**



**1st
PRIZE**

CHANGE IN TIME

Lilian Petrovski

Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School

First Prize, High School Art 2017

The Indigenous Cultures of Australia are the oldest living cultural histories in the world. The land is a fundamental element to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The land is not just soil or rocks, or minerals, but a whole environment that sustains and is sustained by people and culture. The land is the core of all spirituality and the spirit of Country is central to the issues.

Reconciliation means... The coming together of a person or a group of people to create peace.



**2nd
PRIZE**

CREATIVE SPIRITS

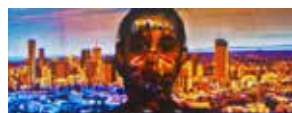
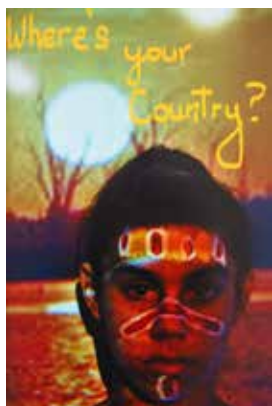
Clifton Cubby

Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School

Second Prize, High School Art 2017

For Aboriginal peoples, Country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water and sky. I have a profound spiritual connection to the land as an Aboriginal person. I love my Country as my Country loves, needs and cares for me.

Reconciliation means... Living together in harmony and as one.



**3rd
PRIZE**

THE LAND OWNS US

Lavinia McKellor

Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School

Third Prize, High School Art 2017

We see the world that non-Indigenous people see but we are also seeing a mythic landscape at the same time – cities, parks, headlands, sacred sites and bush food. Country is family, culture and identity. Country is self. No matter where we were born and raised in Australia we stand as one together on Aboriginal land – always was, always will be.

Reconciliation means... Living together in strength and harmony.



**4th
PRIZE**

MOUNTAINS ON MY MIND

Max Gleeson-Stanley

Winmalee High School

Fourth Prize, High School Art 2017

This artwork is about the mistreatment of my country. This artwork is about reconciliation because Australia is a land shared by all. The tears of this figure are trees and he represents a dying landscape. It is everyone's responsibility to care for and nurture this great land. I have included the Three Sisters, an icon of the Blue Mountains where I live. This landmark has meaning for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Reconciliation means... In relation to my artwork reconciliation means the coming together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to make our country a wonderful place.



Reconciliation means... This definition was a result of group work and the class voting for the best definition. The students were asked to use this definition to inform their individual submissions. Reconciliation is the act of making peace through acknowledgment and the recognition of rights and origins. It is about connecting to other individuals or cultural groups or a level of appreciation, it is about apologies and forgiveness.



Reconciliation means... When we all connect together instead of putting people down. We form together as friends not enemies.



**HIGHLY
COMMEDED**

MY RIVER CONNECTION

Cassidy Roberts

Winmalee High School

Highly Commended, High School Art 2017

My artwork shows the connection to my culture through the river and waterways. As I am from the Wiradjuri tribe, (also known as the '3 Rivers tribe'), I connect to culture strongly through the rivers. The connection of my artwork to the theme, **Where's your Country**, comes in the image of the person connecting to the land through water.

Reconciliation means... The connection between two cultures, and those cultures persevering together.



**HIGHLY
COMMEDED**

SISTERS

Karina Fiddling

Winmalee High School

Highly Commended, High School Art 2017

My artwork represents where I live in the world. The Three Sisters are a special place for me. The gumtree leaves and flowers at the top are found at the Three Sisters and are very beautiful flowers, that are found in my community.

Reconciliation means... To me reconciliation is about everyone coming together and accepting everyone no matter who they are.



IF YOU SEE THEM THEY WILL COME BACK

Clare Peters

Winmalee High School

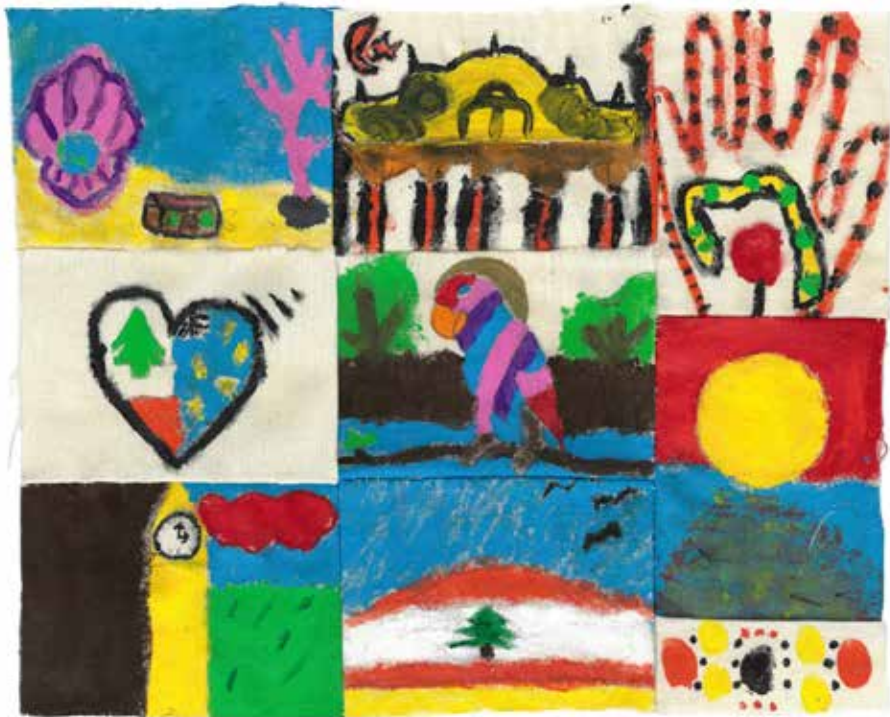
Highly Commended, High School Art 2017

My artwork is about when somebody you loved dearly passes away but the thing that they liked the most comes back even after that person has passed. For the loved ones that are left on this Earth, they see that creature a lot because they know that their loved one has come back as that.

Reconciliation means... The coming together of people of all races as one.



COLLABORATIONS



AMAROO

Condell Public School
School Collaboration Artwork 2017

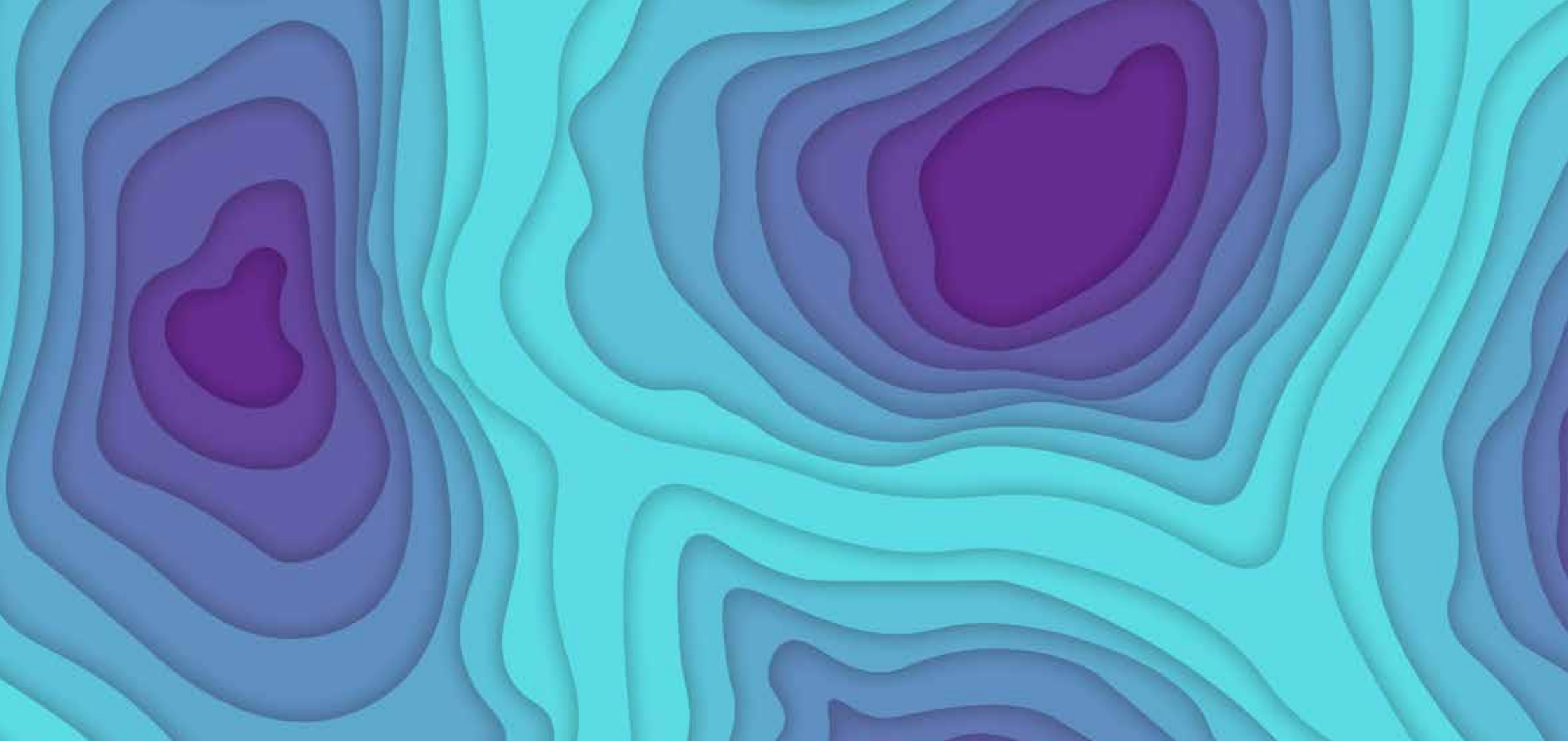
Our combined artwork symbolizes our connection to the land. We each wanted a little part of our cultural heritage to shine through the artwork as we are children with a variety of cultural backgrounds predominately Lebanese, Turkish, Vietnamese and English. We thought it was very important to include the traditional custodians of our land the Dharug, Dharawal and Eora people. Our artwork was created on 100% cotton canvas, using fabric paint including colours traditionally used by

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as some of our favourite colours. We decided to use these materials as we thought they had an authentic feel to them. The title of our artwork is AMAROO which is the Aboriginal word (in some Aboriginal dialects) meaning 'a beautiful place', because we believe we live in a beautiful country that is unique and special in so many ways. As an art club, we collaborate to create and make artwork. We believe our artwork relates to reconciliation because we created our artwork



together. The entire artwork signifies our unity, values, beliefs and celebrates our differences. We created individual patches that portray our personal interpretation of reconciliation, our link with our cultural background, heritage, the land and Aboriginal people. We sewed each artwork together to create a larger art piece to solidify our understanding of reconciliation and the unity of our country. Our artwork relates the theme **Where's your Country** as we created images of specific areas of

the land such as Uluru, The Great Barrier Reef and The Royal National Park. We also painted images that are iconic to our specific cultural background such as Big Ben and a Mosque. When we discussed our artwork we wanted to represent our cultural and spiritual relationship to the land and pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their custodial, cultural and spiritual relationship with the land.



HIGH SCHOOL WRITING

THE SWINGS

Alyssa Chen

Chatswood High School

The swings are a fading dream.

They sway:

So I sit, and I sway, and in and out of the dream I go.

The wind, heavy as it was, continued to fly. Tiredly, but persistently, it walked across the sky: this was a wind that the world didn't need, that it didn't quite want, but that was, and it floated quietly. It was a wind that smelt like destiny, and although it was bitter, it was warm. To me, that is the wind: coffee, a darkness.

Silver, like the traces of an old sound left forgotten.

It stops at the swings, and it rests. Someone has fallen in love.

The wind, leaden as it was, continued to dance. Smiling, but wet, it stumbled into the haze.

A wind that didn't really know what it wanted to say, a wind that the world needed but that the world ignored: it floated a little bit aggressively, and was little bit resigned. It was a wind that smelt like death, and it was smiling, and it was cold.

To me, that is the wind: rain, and emptiness.

The wind, today smells dark blue, like cold soup.

It stops at the swings, and it rests. Someone has died.

The wind, cold as it was, continued to breathe. Crying, but placid, it came and it surrendered.

A wind that held a thousand memories, that had seen more than it cared to see. It was a wind that smelt like reminiscence, like oranges, and it looked tired.

To me, that is the wind: a shard of a broken dream.

The wind, today, smells yellow, like rusting memory.

It stops at the swings, and it rests. Someone has smiled.

How many winds have I seen?

How many winds have the swings seen?

They pass by, like seasons, and they carry the dreams of a thousand children.

But the winds stop. They fade. The winds see, they live, and then they die

The swings: always they sway.

The swings have seen a thousand lives: time and time again they have seen two shards of fate drawn together, that have seen old and beloved grandmother after old and beloved grandmother breathing as her final hour unfolds, they have seen children grow up, walk away, and become people worth knowing. The swings have been there for all of that. They have given people what they have lost in the times where they needed it most.

The winds, and all the memories they carry, fade into the swings, and the swings: they move.

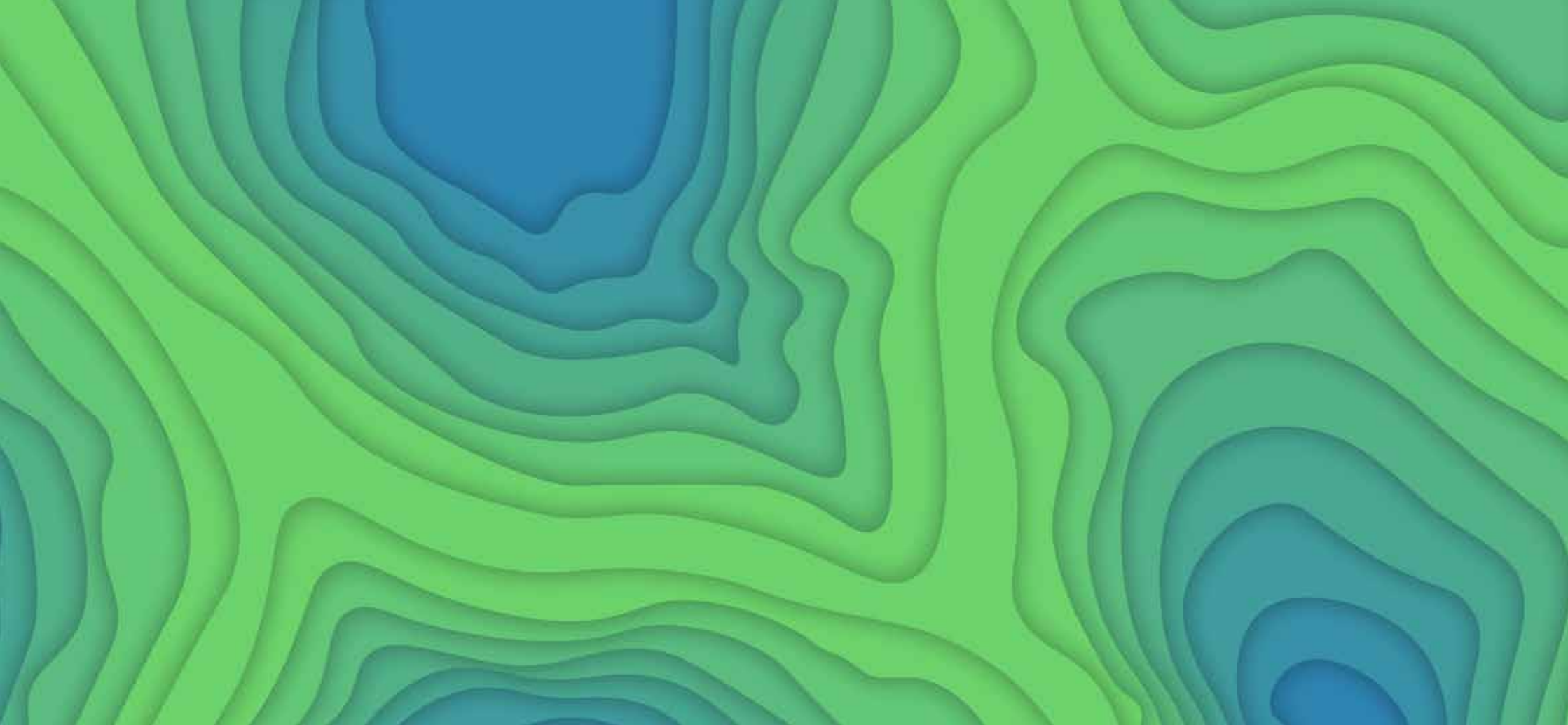
So the swings, heavy as they are, the stand. They fly, they dance, they breathe.

The swings are governed by the wind, but they sway long after the wind has died.

They sway, they sway, and so I sway with them, in and out of that one long lost dream.

The swings are gone now. The men who took them away apologised to me, and I smiled at them. I am sad, but I am not angry.

The swings are gone. But the memory stays.



PRIMARY SCHOOL WRITING

THE UNTOLD STORY OF MY COUNTRY KAY-YE-MY

Summer Lockwood

Manly West Public School

The waves slap softly against my feet
as I wade through the sand and water
searching for fish to cook for dinner tonight.
Flashes of silver swerve through the seaweed but my callarr soon finds its mark.

Some women are in the rock pools gathering oysters and mussels
while others drift across the water in bark canoes, catching small, shining fish.
Later we will hunt with our clubs and spears for kangaroo
to roast over the flickering fire.

Tonight the Gayamagal will eat well.
Our country, Kay-ye-my, is generous and will give us all we need.
We will eat and tell stories under the starry night sky
as our voices float across the harbour to the towering cliffs of Garungal.

What a strange country this is.
Dotted with tall, white, droopy trees.
I must find fresh water or the colony will fail.
This is not England but I will work hard to make this harsh land our home.

Fierce, proud men line the shore.
As we paddle closer they push through the shallows towards us.
These men are not afraid, they are strong and fearless.
Is there room in this country for both them and us?

I have heard stories that these people are weak
but no, this group is not.
This place seems to have no name so I shall call it Manly,
just like the men that live here.

They have been calling this place Manly for a few years now.
As if it didn't have a name.
We have known it as Kay-ye-my forever.
They took our name just like they took our friends Arabanoo, Bennelong, Colebee.

The people that came in on the huge ships
and took over our country.
The people that approached us in their long boats.
The people with skin as white as the salty ocean foam.

Now the streets of Manly are packed with people.
Umbrellas, towels, surfboards and toys cover the golden sand.
Shops, buildings and houses replace our sacred sites.
The Manly ferry carves a continuous path through the crowded cove.

Manly is my country.
I love to find the secrets spots and throw myself into the ocean's arms.
I float there for hours gazing up at the serene blue sky
then diving down to watch the sea creatures go about their busy lives.

I love my country Manly.
But I know who was here first, the Gayamagal, Cadigal, Wangal.
I have gazed into their rock pools, I have seen their shell-encrusted middens
and I know that their story is forever waiting to be told.

A SHARED CONNECTION IN A MODERN WORLD

Kate Suttor

Ballimore Public School

Each morning, in this holiday break, I walk across parched paddocks towards our shearing shed. The early morning rays colour the landscape in rich reddish hues. As my feet touch the ground I feel the spirits resonate beneath me and I hear the sounds of whispering voices from long ago. These paddocks were home to so many before me. Their scars mark our trees and their battles flow into the soil.

My connection to our land is strong and fierce; a steady beat simmering beneath my skin. When I am away from our farm I ache to feel the ground beneath me, and yearn to hear the steady breeze through the trees.

The ancient gum trees grow without rules on our lands; covered with scented leaves and home to a hundred white cockatoos that evaporate into the air with their thundering screeches.

Near the shearing shed, home to five generations of sheep and hard times, there stands my favourite eucalypt. Its huge base anchoring it to its home. The scent of its soil laden leaves drench the air. When I am lost I return to this hero to regain my footings and recharge my energy and I wonder if my ancestors did the same?

How did they feel when they moved silently across country and what did they say when ghosts outnumbered them? I close my eyes and imagine sensations caused by strange visions, alternate smells and screams of anguish and despair.

I feel this as I leave my home to venture into reality. A life consumed by working, earning money and paying bills. I think – to what end and for what meaning...

What holds me together is any chance to return home; to walk the paddocks and feel the echoes of voices around me. I share and cherish this connection with land and people.



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Sydney Story FACTORY

PRINCIPLECO.



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