

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Good morning everybody, and welcome to the first day of Artstate 2019. I like to welcome Aunty Yvonne Kent to provide the Welcome to Country.

AUNTY YVONNE KENT - KAMILAROI ELDER:

Can you hear me at the back? Welcome to the wonderful land of the Kamilaroi people, and pay our respect to the elders and the youth. I'll like you to stand and have a moment's silence, and I notice that was missed last night. I always like to pay our respects to our past Elders, because without them, we would not be here today and have what we have. So, thank you.

Thank you. So, let us be informed. Find out what is going on throughout these next four days. Also be involved. Go to as many things as you can. Most of all, be inspired by it and our country. Thank you, and welcome.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS – CEO REGIONAL ARTS NSW (MC):

Thank you, Auntie Yvonne. I would also like to acknowledge we are meeting on Kamilaroi country, and pay my respects. I like to acknowledge all of the Elders that have travelled from other parts of the state, and all Aboriginal and other first nations people that are with us here today.

I would also like to knowledge the chair of Regional Arts NSW, Julie Briggs, and the directors of our boards. The chair of Arts Northwest Anna Watt, and Caroline Downer, and the chair executive directors from the other organisations that make up our unique regional arts network.

We could not deliver this without our principal partner, the New South Wales government. With funding through art New South Wales, and our local Tamworth partners, and the support from the University of New England, I thank them all sincerely for their support for Artstate.

If you remember in March this year, we had a state election. With these challenges, we were fortunate to keep on Don Harwin as our arts minister. I do wonder why it is always everything else and the arts. The arts should never be an afterthought. I know that it is not for The minister Harwin, as this is the third event that he has attended. Please welcome the honourable Don Harwin.

HON. DON HARWIN – NSW MINISTER FOR THE ARTS:

Thank you for that introduction, Elizabeth. I would also like to extend my respects to the first nations people. I pay you my respect as well, and in particular, back to acknowledge Brad Moggridge, who will speak to us in.

Tamworth has music as its soul, and we'll hear from our local members in. I would like to acknowledge Kevin Anderson, our ministerial colleague. I'm sure that you will all agree that last night's opening ceremony was testament to Tamworth's incredible musical heritage and musical future.

Like you, I'm looking forward to a program of Keynote presentations, panel discussions and workshops that provoke, challenge, and stimulate us. As we meet this year on Kamilaroi country, it will shine the light on our interaction with the cultural practitioners and organisations. I'm incredibly moved by what we have heard from Wirradjuri man Jonathan

Jones last year in Bathurst.

I was given the honour of taking on the Aboriginal affairs and heritage portfolio in addition to arts. One of the first places that I wanted to get to was the fish traps. The oldest man-made structure on the face of the planet. Jonathan, really challenged me in what he had to say last year. I'm looking forward to Brad's address as well. I'm sure that will challenge me.

Can I say that I am really pleased with Artstate's strong focus on Aboriginal art and culture, which provides a significant platform to elevate the first nations knowledge and experience. Meeting in this drought impacted region, the second theme, arts in the age of uncertainty, is also especially timely.

Despite uncertainty, I am sure that we are in a time of opportunity with investment in the arts culture of the region. Having delivered \$100 million for 136 projects across New South Wales through our regional cultural fund, our thoughts must turn to the opportunities that these venues will provide for regional artists and creative communities. That is very much on my mind.

I am pleased to say that on top of this investment, more than \$1 million will be invested by the New South Wales government to support regional performing arts touring in 2020. This is more than double what we were spending just two years ago.

Make no mistake, by funding in the structure and redevelopment projects ranging from new performing arts projects to refurbishment of libraries and small community and volunteer projects, we are not only supporting communities, but we are making a real contribution to regional economies that are under stress right now.

The pressure is on every minister to carefully consider what more we can do. We have a responsibility to continually ensure that the support that is provided to the cultural life of the state is effective and efficient as possible.

With the recent move of Create New South Wales, in the machinery of government changes, and following feedback from the sector, an opportunity has arisen to build on our current strengths. At the same time, to meet some of the long-term aspirations of the sector.

So far this year, our reforms to streamline our arts and cultural funding, encourage flexibility for funding applicants, that has provided greater stability for organisations and created funding pathways for organisations previously ineligible. That is particularly important for new and emerging artists in regional New South Wales.

We are particularly committed to having a thriving and vibrant arts and cultural sector. That is particularly in our regions. Let me highlight some of those changes.

So far, this year, we have replaced 26 opaque and confusing eligibility criteria with just four. 14 funding rounds each year have been replaced by a far more efficient two, with clear published timelines to provide certainty.

We are going to align our funding periods with the Australia Council, which we hope will reduce the paperwork. We will expand the scope of our quick response and small grants program with much faster turnaround periods.

We are extending the period of multi-funding for independent organisations, from three to

four years. Funding for council run infrastructure will have guidelines that reward those councils regardless of their population, who are supercharging the cultural life of their regions.

Artform boards are returning confidence and consistency to funding recommendations. And perhaps, the most important, changes to eligibility criteria are already working their magic with previously ineligible but nevertheless outstanding organisations accessing funding opportunities.

Of course, this is also an opportunity to explore how we can do better in regional arts. Even better. In addition to our 136 projects, I'm pleased to announce, of course, that the \$100 million in funding is double what it was two years ago, but will also be expressed right across not only groups that to a from the city, but when the announcements are shortly made, they will also include regional organisations that are touring elsewhere.

There are some fantastic shows, and there will be more opportunity to access these. We are excited to be supporting Artstate for a third year, and a fourth will be in 2020.

My parliamentary sector and I, along with Arts New South Wales will be engaging with you to get ideas on what we are doing well, and what we can do even better. I have to say, this is a wonderful time for the arts in the regions. I am absolutely committed to making sure that the future is bright as well. And that we do even more to support access. The access of people here.

I am a great believer that every community right across New South Wales deserves its fair share of arts and culture. Enjoy the event there, congratulations to all the team here that had a wonderful job. You too Julie, Elizabeth, and the board, have a great weekend.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Thank you minister, and certainly, we are looking forward to the reforms being finalised, and the opportunities that will emerge from there. It is now my great pleasure to introduce Brad Moggridge, as our first Keynote speaker. Everybody recognises that water is the big issue of our day. Without water, there is no life. We are in severe drought, and it shows no signs of ending soon.

There are fires burning across this region. For a country that suffers an ongoing cycle of drought, the big question is how do we manage this vital and scarce resource. Why are we starting this session at an art conference with a water scientist? That is because arts, culture, and language, at the core of Aboriginal identity, and as Aboriginal people have been living on country for tens of thousands of years, could looking at Aboriginal culture as part of the overall water management plan provide some valuable lessons for now and into the future?

As artists into their practice, that amplifies the issues of the day. There must be a role for the arts in examining this theme to deeper knowledge of art and culture on country and in country. Brad describes himself as a proud Murray from the Kamilaroi nation, and he now lives in Canberra. His mother Colleen, Nanna Brenda Bengé, Brad Hazzard 25 years in water and science, including policy development, legislative reviews, applied research.

He is currently a PhD candidate on the topic of incorporating the cultural values and

perspectives of first Nations people into water planning and environmental management. In a time the water is most precious, and its management is so topical, his research shows how modern water planning can accommodate these values. He is currently working with longtime collaborator Uncle Stan Grant, to develop these projects. Please welcome Brad.

(Applause)

**BRAD MOGGRIDGE:**

Thanks. This is not my normal crowd. You could say that I've infiltrated another system. It an honour to be here back on country and this is my mob. This is part of my country. I acknowledge my country. Normally I'm acknowledging everyone else's country but it's actually humbling to be back home. As Elizabeth mentioned, I live in Canberra now, on Ngunnawal country, and grew up in Western Sydney, but this part of the world I always see as home. Thanks Auntie this morning for the welcome and uncle Len yesterday for the welcome to the official ceremony. So it's great to be here.

Then I think I always ask the crowd, have a think about where you're from. Think about your heritage, where you connect to. 250 years ago, if you were living on Kamilaroi country, you are Kamilaroi. If you are not, think about where you're from. 250 years ago. Maybe it's a journey you can go on and you might own a castle somewhere, who knows.

These photos are why I do what I do. Water is a key part. Obviously the kids, the future. My presently now doing what I can, and obviously the people that have gone before us. I acknowledge all Aboriginal people in the room. Brothers and sisters. And obviously our non-Aboriginal supporters who are important for our journey.

I always like to start with a meme. It's been happening since day one. And I suppose that aspect of always taking - we are always giving but it's time to start giving some back. Culture valued water is protected by our law, in our songs, in our dances, in our dreaming stories. It's very strong in the art and you think we are the driest inhabited continent and art and water is going to be a key part of our survival. As Aboriginal people we must connect with our traditional methodologies. How our old people did science. Tell our stories our way, in that space. I suppose my point of view is that I'm filling a space. I'm - I wouldn't say closing a gap. That gap is too big. But I suppose it's filling a space, taking the opportunity.

We also need to be able to feel culturally safe. When we are in those spaces. Validate our science. I don't like validating our science. Our science is proven because we survived. Survived time and time again, drought, sea level rise. Volcanism. You name it we survived it. It's all in the stories. That validation might have to come from a western point of view, but we know our stories. I think we also need to lead, take the space as well in caring for country and water.

There is programs out there now that are doing some magnificent stuff like the ranger programs. They are doing it on a shoestring budget. They are making Australia look great for bugger all. I suppose those sort of challenges are there for us.

This is just - it's simply. Healthy water, you have healthy people, healthy culture, healthy country. It's not that hard really, is it?

I suppose water is - without it we die. So I suppose that's the importance of water. This is in a recent publication looking at having guidance for implementing water quality aspects for - this is in a document looking at culture and spiritual values and water quality management.

So cultural values are important in all aspects of water management. Where is our voice? As I said, we are the driest inhabited continent on Earth. Potentially the oldest living culture on the planet. But we have no water voice. Our voice is absent due to being impacted by decisions that exclude us. That's nonstop. Being an after thought or out of scope. So when governments think about these big projects or research agencies think about these huge questions they want answered, it never includes us. When we start banging the table, knocking on the door, sorry, it's out of scope. That's going to cost too much. And sometimes it's always mentioned as too hard.

It's not that hard.

Obviously I'm tired of hearing what we don't have. We know what we don't have. That's review after review. Especially in the water space, the National Water Commission and now the Productivity Commission, they produce, well, now Tri anal reports and it's just a copy and pace. The NSW has gone backwards. Victoria is on the move. Which says on the number plates. Northern Territory is doing some good stuff. They are influencing away. They have got strategic Aboriginal reserves which gives Aboriginal people a right to the consultative pool. We don't have that in NSW.

Non-Aboriginal voice is telling our stories. If it's people like Uncle Len tells his stories his way. That's important. We need to fill that space as well. But we need our supporters, non-Aboriginal people, to give us that opportunity to tell our stories. And of course we are always up the back. Up the black, I say. Back of reports. Policies, plans. Legislation. We are always up the back. We are starting to see like acknowledgments coming up the front of documents which is great. We have to move beyond. What you do next after that acknowledgment is the important bit.

There is no national strategy for indigenous water. There is no centre of excellence. And I suppose governments cycles delete our programs. Constantly. That cycle, yes, great idea. Excellent, you're doing great stuff. Oh, funding is over. Great idea. Great idea. You know, that cycle . I've lived through it a number of times. I was with CSIRO when the drought broke. It's rained. We don't need water scientists anymore. We are straight into another drought. Obviously I led a Aboriginal water unit, the only Aboriginal wasn't unit in the country at that time, called the Aboriginal water initiative in NSW. Style of leadership come in cut us. I had 10 Aboriginal staff around the state, re-engaged the Aboriginal communities in water. We don't need you anymore. That's quite sad.

So diversity is a big key part of who we are as well. So we are not all the same. That is just what the coloniser does. It takes away your identity, puts you in one basket. Takes away your language, your land, and just calls you one thing. You are all Aboriginal. Imagine, you know, like all Europeans are the same. All Asians are the same. That's what we have to put up with. We are not all the same. Language separates us. Lore separates us. Landscapes. We have got rainforest. We have wet and dry country up north. We have got deserts. 70% semi-arid is Australia. We have temperate forests on the coastal fringes. We have alpine region. We have it all.

Cultural practice is completely different. Capacity. Time constraints. We are all - there is our elders are at the top of that demographic that everyone wants a piece of. And I call it the Kamilaroi convoy, all the government vehicles waiting to engage with the elders waiting to talk. That want that a little bit up the top, I think the demographics say that our population is 75% under 24. Something like that. So we have a young generation coming through. So I suppose I'm in the middle there somewhere but I think it's that next generation that needs to

follow and lead as well.

Obviously status is important. So status like land councils and native title, prescribed body corporates. We are all different in our status. Maybe one day we might have a treaty. Then governance is important as well. So we have got a lot of these status issues like agencies and health services and land councils and native title, governance is important. We are running on shoestring budget as well. It's a hard - for our people we might get an email from government to say, consultation is happening. We don't turn up because we are that busy. But government picks off their box to say that they -- ticks off their box to say think consulted. We are definitely connected. Where is our right to water?

I will give you a history of water management in a few dot points. Our land and water was given away. Our waters were modified over extracted and polluted. Our people were not counted as human until the 1960s. Think about that. That's my mum's generation. That was just a bit before I was born. So I was born as a human. I was lucky. With when we became human all the good land and water was gone. So we were all pushed into these little reserves and missions. My nan, mum left school at year 8 and she learnt how to clean white people as houses. That was a lot of the things that happened to women back then. So it's those sort of things need to be talked about in the history of water as well.

Water and land was separated. I will get on to that in a bit in a second. If we want water as Aboriginal people we have to go to the market and buy it. Think about that as well. That was our water. It flowed through our country. So water sharing, we had water reforms. As I said they separated land and water. Huge reforms in the early 2000s. And now water is market driven. Has a dollar value. Think about now, in some river valleys, water, water when it's a good year, it's about \$80 a megalitre. A million litres. At the moment it is about 800 to 1,000 a megalitre. If you have water, you have serious power. And I suppose the challenge for that is for Aboriginal people if they want to enter the market how are you going to afford that?

We might be land rich but but we are money poor. That's the other challenge. So we have water legislation at federal, state, territory and then we have council of Australian Government agreements. The national water initiatives which drives a lost the water management. That national water initiative was the first time that Aboriginal people were actually mentioned in water policy in 2004. So it's a crucial document. It's a recognition. But not much has changed. Environmental water, we are sometimes our culture is perceived as flora and fauna. Maybe we are back with the flora and fauna. But I suppose we are more than flora and fauna. We are humans. We have an intrinsic value to this water. Traditional knowledge. So story tell saying key part of who we are. That's how we maintain our cultural connection to place and language. But traditional knowledge is a science. And we are more than just story tellers of myth and legend.

Those stories mean something. The mobs in Victoria, when the sea levels started to rise about 7,500, 8,000 years ago, their stories told about moving up to higher ground because the sea level is rising. The mob in Queensland talked about rivers of fire, that was Volcanism. The stories are still alive and well. The battle for water is now. The we got rid of Terra Nullius. The next one is Aqua Nullius. Battle for water. Respecting. I'm always learning culture.

These little digger things behind me, but I'm -- I have these little degrees, and things behind me I'm still only a boy in culture. Language connects water to place. That's the importance of it. Family obviously is important. Uncle, brother, aunty, sister, nan, grandparents. Cousins. We are all so important. My obviously connection to country is another huge aspect as well.

Water, my cultural water or my Gali places and also my cultural species are also important. So they are part of our cultural landscapes. That's part of our cultural infrastructure you could say. It is these places that we need to protect.

And that there may be something for the arts community as well. So this is my place. Bibla lagoon north-west NSW. An old river path. One of my cultural landscapes. There is a really deadly story around that. It had to go through a tough time because it used to have a water skiing park on it and that's where one of our most significant cultural creators and beings is. The Gardia. So the Gardia was there, back in the day, he was - he wasn't probably a nice cultural being, he was chomping on people and taking children. And one of the warriors got upset with that. And he got his spears together, chased him, threw spears at - which upset the Gardia. A huge snake like creature with a crocodile head. Not the most prettiest thing. But when the warrior started running and running up through the landscape, the Gardia was chasing him and obviously made the river path. And then when the warrior got to the Gardia's mother-in-law, which was the bumble tree, the Gardia couldn't come any closer, because he didn't want to upset the mother-in-law. There is maybe a moral to that story.

But those sort of stories live on well. But that's the creation of Bupra lagoon. It is about 5.7km long but hugely significant. It's like sort of like - let's say annual rue. We had water skiers on there, Uluru had walkers on there. It is a similar thing. The cultural places are an important place for us to protect. Cultural species. The Brolga. Our people have watched this bird for a long, long time. And I suppose the importance of that species turning up into our wetlands, tells us it's a good season. And I think that's important as well. So the Wedge Tailed Eagle, it's a magnificent creature. The biggest eagle on the planet. And it's an apex predator right at the top of the food chain. I think if I ever went into witness protection, I would name myself Aquilla Ordax. That's a cool name. Or I was in a gang anyway.

But these sort of species are important. They are indicators for us as well. And so the fish as well. They are doing it pretty tough at the moment. These cultural species. The Goodu Murray cod. Golden perch. Thagai and eel tailed catfish. Gaygay. He got the poor name, unfortunately the lad. He would have voted yes, no doubt. You look at Gaygay and his scientific name is Tandanis Tandanis. A Latin copying to our point, it had a double meaning.

I love this picture. A lad named Robert Zuchs he digitised all the surface water bodies on continent. He's done it for a number of continents. This one is for Australia. And I found it on this thing called the - the internet. And it's a really cool place. You should go check it out. I think this sort of photo exposes - if you are not on the eastern seaboard, you can sort of see the Murray-Darling Basin there. It looks like the lungs of the country. And if you are not in the - if you don't know where these water holes are, you are not going to survive long. I suppose my question always is, why does Australia not celebrate that knowledge? Why? I don't know.

We have a lot to offer. Unfortunately we have a lot of knowledge going to the grave and we need to make sure we pick up some of that knowledge. So there is some resources popping up. We are trying to influence the way we do infiltrate the system, as I said. This was a special edition of an Australasian journal, it was specifically targeted indigenous water management. So indigenous knowledge was coming into - is coming into the science realm. We are starting to influence. I was honoured to co-edit that with a human geographer from Griffith University and obviously all the papers were talking about indigenous water management. That was quite exciting. So we also had an abstract written in traditional language. That's probably a first for a scientific journal.

As I mentioned earlier, the Australian New Zealand water quality guidelines, we are

producing culture and spiritual guidance. So water quarter managers have no excuse now. There is guidance there for you. We also created some principles. So I was on the joint steering committee. I was classed as the indigenous rep and I sat on there with a Maori lad from Rotorua. We got together, it was in 2008, to talk about our water values. A lot of those principles were exactly the same. Our value to water, our connection to water, they were all the same. So that was really exciting. Those principles talk to each other as well.

Our values are strong in the water space. So our creation sites. As I talked about one of my cultural heroes Gadia linking spiritual. Song lines. Dreaming tracks. Language connects place to culture. And water. So if a water hole dries up that language disappears with it. That's quite sad really. Or in some places, the rainbow serpent is quite dominant, especially in the ground water space. The rainbow serpent will do his or her work cruising the landscape, like the Gardia did but also using springs to come in and out of portals. And those stories are still strong. Resource sites are always around water place, men's and women's business is so important. Especially for water places. I need to be careful of being a hydro geologist, a lot of my - a lot of the ground water sites are women's places. I need to be very careful. I don't want a clip on the ears from the aunties.

But see a lot of our places - ceremonial sites. A lot of places where we had ceremonies had to have water. Burial places. We buried - the people gone before us, in soft sand because it was - that's where we buried them. Then they are usually on the edges of rivers or lakes or billabongs or wetlands. And those places now are having high velocity water being pumped through the places, erosion happens of course and then that sort of leads to our old people being exposed. Which is sad as well.

So cultural water landscapes. This is Pirree lake in western NSW. Ground water bubbles away in the foreground. You have surface water in the background. Without that water there had there is a huge amount of Aboriginal occupation at this place. These are our cultural landscapes. If that water is not there, those values aren't there. We need to protect those as well. So more values. They are not - it's not just straightforward. So we have surface water ground water. We also have connected waters.

I was in the Northern Territory and listening to uncle Bill Harney a respected man. He was talking about all these water holes on his country around Katherine. He was saying, there is white water, there is red water. And there is yellow water. No, it was Blackwater I think it that was related to the types of soil. The hot spring country. And he was saying they are all connected. And the Northern Territory government didn't believe him. So they went out and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars drilling. Get what they found? They are all connected. So the old man knew. He knew that. And I suppose that's the thing is that our knowledge needs to be respected for what it is, what it was and what it can be.

Massacre sites are all throughout the landscape. That's the frontier moved across and a lot of those are around water. They are sad places. They are extremely tough places to visit. But they have to be respected. And I suppose if there is fully values around those places if there is any values around those places water dependent we need to look after them as well. Species as I talked about earlier are very important. If the species are turning up to the wetlands that's a good sign. If a certain type of species of dragonfly turns up water quality is good. If the cray bobs are crawling out backwards, that means the water is no good. No dissolved oxygen is gone. We don't drink that water. There is all the indicators as well. Cultural economy is important. The physical, the tangible evidence. That's the stuff is a lot of that stuff is protected under the national sparks and wild fire act. The national parks and wildlife act. We don't have an Aboriginal act in NSW, we are the only state that doesn't have

- that's a challenge for the state minister. Take that back for us. We don't have a Aboriginal heritage Act in NSW. We are still in with the flora and fauna.

Seasonal indicators. They indicate the change. The those seasonal calendars that are becoming more and more prevalent in a lot of Aboriginal communities. Talking about the change of the wind. The turning up of a species. The flow of the certain water at the certain time of the year. That means something. And I suppose those indicators are important to protect as well.

Something for the now. We need to learn from the basin. What's happened in the basin. Don't make those same mistakes. The rule that the Productivity Commission exposed and I suppose the - it was brought up in the South Australian Royal Commission, that there were rules changed that you take low flows. That's just ridiculous. That's the water that keeps the river alive. That is quite sad. And that is purely for profit.

We need to get in the face of government. But we also need to be informed as well. Water language is a very complex language. And it is a challenge to try to get people up to speed. I suppose that's part of that cultural safety as well, is that people need to be informed. Those protocols, the way we do business, it's not how government does business, it's how we do business. Agencies and consultancies and researchers need to start thinking about that. Establish a strategy and governance structure. Be ready for them. I suppose involved up front and to the end is crucial. Free prior informed consent. If we don't know we shouldn't be saying yes or no. And that decision shouldn't happen until we say yes or no. Gender and regional balances. Men's and women's business is crucial. Cultural safety. Cultural values are collected and protected. Intellectual property. A lot of our knowledge, our old people are very generous. They give a lot of knowledge. People go away, get their PhDs. Get their masters, write books. They lose the intellectual property of their own knowledge. I suppose that intellectual property is important as well.

So these are my demands. Sorry, needs to achieve a more than regard. That's all we have in the Murray-Darling Basin plan is regard. That's not much, is it. That's not very - a strong word "Regard". I regard a lot of things. I regard ice-cream. I love ice-cream. But I value ice crime but I have a right to - I go buy it. I suppose Aboriginal people in the Murray-Darling Basin plan only have regard for their values. So I suppose we need a first people's water strategy. We don't have that. We are far from that. We used to have - I used to be on a committee called first people's environment council. The sunset on that in 2014 and is the sunset on the National Water Commission. We don't have any advisory body. River ranges. Giving our young people the opportunity, and I would love topple a river ranger. Protecting country -- I would love to be a river ranger. Protecting country. Look after the species. National first people's water council. We have nothing. Water research led by first peoples. That's one of the spaces I'm trying to fill. Our cultural science. Our traditional science. The way we do science. The way our old people did science.

National First Peoples water centre of excellence. These ray lot of demands. They will not be cheap either. But, if we will move forward and protect this resource called water, I think we need to be at the table. At the table we are not even in the room. We are down the street. Rarely asked.

First Peoples water holder. That's a big dream. I will do that job. Not a problem. That will do me. Actually, I will show you - these are - if this becomes public for you guy, these are resources. I helped write some curricula with Melbourne University for the water aspects. So it's for school years. Astronomy is there and fire is there. These are three important aspects

of our knowledge system. But also part of science as well. And I think I had nothing like that during my schooling. My mum had in her textbook that Aboriginal people are bad. And wild and so she didn't like Aboriginal people. So if we had this sort of stuff, if my kids can have this sort of stuff in their curricula, it becomes normal. Not an elective. And that's - I think the buzzword at the moment is Indigenizing the curricula. It is we need to do that. From day one you are learning about it, thinking about it and hopefully we will get there.

There is some other resources as well. YouTube videos. So the unit I run, the Aboriginal and industry we created a lot of resources of our people talking about their value of water and the opportunities for them. A lot of that stuff was deleted off the website so rewriting himself again. And I suppose we have to try to keep that alive as well. Our water, our country was a document was produced to give Aboriginal people an insight into water. Where it's come from and their opportunities.

The video and then obviously there is just a little bit of BBC which is - was shown by BBC World Australia didn't want to show it at that point but now it's there. ABC showed it. But yes, I think that will do me.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Thank you Brad so much. You can now see why I think it's important that as artists and arts workers we get this extraordinary message of how important Aboriginal knowledge is to our water management. Brad you have given us enormous food for thought. I'm sitting out the back going, Oh, my God, I didn't know that. And would you mind if we put your PowerPoint up on the website so people who want to be able to review it and access those terrific resources, can - will be able to do that. Give us a week or so after this to be able to do that.

I would like to offer you a gift, two small tokens of our appreciation, so once again, please thank Brad for travelling and being with us.

(Applause).

BRAD MOGGRIDGE:

Really appreciate it. Thank you.

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Wow. Okay now for a change of pace. We couldn't come to Tamworth without acknowledging the role of music. And especially country music. Especially the role that country music has played in developing the identity of this city. We have gathered together a panel of three amazing Gamilaroi musicians to discuss the role of music in their culture, lives and livelihoods. This conversation will be led by Peter White. Peter is the senior manager, Aboriginal strategy and engagement at Create NSW. He is no stranger to Tamworth. His home town. He's a proud Gamilaroi man. A Murri who forged a successful career within the creative and heritage sector over the past 29 years. Holding a number of positions in a range of major cultural institutions and government arts agencies, Peter has employed an extensive knowledge and skill base on the strategic development, management, and evolution of complex first people community engagement and development programs.

His passion is to assist and champion the inherent cultural rights of first people communities in both managing and practicing their own culture. And to assist and guide the mainstream cultural sector in effectively engaging with these communities for mutually respected benefits

based on the principles of cultural authority.

Peter was on the board of Regional arts NSW, serving as chair who for the final year of his six year term and has continued to work with us unofficially as an advisor and mentor on all Aboriginal arts and cultural matters. Please welcome Peter who will introduce you to the panel.

(Applause)

PETER WHITE:

Yaama. As Elizabeth said I'm first a Gamilaroi Murri from here. Although my mob is from Manila Bora crossing and it's great to be back home. It's absolutely family to be moderating this panel with such a great, great panel. And I think with this topic of on country and in country, and music on country be and just the panel we brought together, the importance of country but more about connection.

So I'm just absolutely stoked to be here with David Leha who is my cousin. Got that related. Kelsey Strasek-Barker, who I have known her grandparents for almost all my life. Her uncles. And remember Kelsey as a young one. Yugal playing on one of the very first Gamilaroi language books and tapes in 2002, 2003. Long time ago, which I introduced my kids to Aboriginal - Gamilaroi language with that and of course Roger Knox here. Koori king of country music. Black Elvis.

(Applause) .

ROGER KNOX:

You don't call me the black Charlie Pride.

PETER WHITE:

No. Who I remember I think 6 years old when Roger used to come into Hill View and we would be - you know, sitting and listening to Roger play songs. And before the notion of Aboriginal education and cull culture. Roger was there particularly young Aboriginal kids trying to work out their identity and that and hearing Roger come in and sing those songs. So just sort of shows the importance of country but the connection there that once we get driven by our connections and that, that they continue and they always pop up even at a panel at ArtState. So this is going to be more of a general discussion. I always like to think that this is a kitchen table and we are just going to have a bit of a chat. So I guess to start with rocker, can you tell us a bit about yourself for those of you who don't know or who should know.

ROGER KNOX:

Okay for those that don't know, my name is Roger Knox. I'm a descended of the Wayland creek people of the Gamilaroi nation, the Kamilaroi nation. We - the Kamilaroi people, you get – we are a huge nation. And we go ---- we are a huge nation. We go from the upper Hunt and go right into Queensland and language is spoken up around Darling Downs. So we are a huge nation. And I think we all connected to that.

I was born in Moree but I grew up in Tumela. That's the story in itself because there is a town called Gundawindi another 15 miles from Tumela but Aboriginal people weren't accepted in that town or that hospital. So my mother had to go to Moree which is a two hour trip in them days to give birth. And then they come back. Where you know, a long process in them days. And I should have been like - I should have been a Queenslander. Yeah. Sorry. For those people.

Anyway, I grew up in Tumula mission right on the border, NSW Queensland board partnership northern NSW. I went to school there. Only did six class. That's all. When you are 10, 15, in six class, you had to leave because nobody come and approached me or my father and said, "You could be a fireman or a policeman". And because they didn't approach my father, tell him that, my father didn't tell me. Or couldn't tell me that I could be a policeman. So I had to finish school. I mean, I believed today that I was denied an education. Because it only went to 6 class and the same thing as you, 10, 15, you was in fourth class you would be have to repeat 6 class, three years. The same story. Same, you know, history and they give us a crazy history lesson which is you know ---- but to me it was strange because my great aunty, she would tell us when they tell us the (Inaudible) the first men to crew the Blue Mountains. And my old fella said, you know, they are lying. But that's alright. It's good to tell a white lie but not a black lie. (Laughter)

Anyway. Enough from me. That's me. And I spent that 40 years in Tamworth. I raised a family here. We get - Buddy my son, he plays the Blues and he's pretty much well known around the country. And his children -- well-known around the country and his children. They work with him in the band. We get - we come from a long line of musicians story tellers. And I just met my cousin here, one who spoke earlier. He's related. So yes. Thank you. Enough from me.

PETER WHITE:

What about you Kelsey?

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

I am Kelsey. Lightning Ridge. My name is Kelsey. I'm a proud Ualara Gamilaroi Milaroy woman from lightning Ridge. I guess I have been really blessed to grow up in a place like Lightning Ridge in far west NSW, home of the black Opal. My mum she taught me Aboriginal language, Ualarai Gamilaroi language from a young age, when I was about 5 years old. It was through singing on this Ugal CD that Peter mentioned earlier in 2003 where I started singing and that's how I guess through music and singing is how I really connected with culture and language and that's where I first met Uncle Roger and grew up with his grand kids, his grand-daughter is one of my best friends. So I'm very connected to this place and to a lot of the mobs from this community. And like Uncle Roger said we are all connected. Obviously my mob is Gamilaroi down Walgett way which also borders with Ualarai and Mulaway. Our stories and song lines are connected. And I'm really excited to be here today and

SPEAKER ?:

..... can I interject. She was that high and singing language songs. I remember way back, and one particular song, that song goes

# We are one, we are many

# From all the lands on earth we come #

o you remember that?

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

Yes, of course. I remember being bribed with biscuits and lollies during the recording of the CD because I was obviously 8 years old. When you are a kid and your attention span is very short. So they would bribe me with biscuits and lollies. I had to pronounce it right and yeah, so that's - that's me. I have been doing it ever since. Yeah.

ROGER KNOX:

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She's very talented. She's not going to say but she is.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**

You know, we all are. There is a lot of talented mob.

**PETER WHITE:**

Tell us a bit about you Dave.

**DAVID LEHA:**

So I don't know what to say. Just brief. Born in Penrith. My mother, Aboriginal woman, trying to find her identity as an adult. As an Aboriginal person. She took us around the country, me and my young brother. So you know, you are going to hear little bits today about connecting to country. And for me for someone who has lived in many places around Australia you know, with an Aboriginal woman trying to find herself, not so much on country, but for me I guess it's more like a notion, a dream of what would it have been like to not have these values that we all live by today in terms of 9 to 5 is so important because we believe we have got to have money because that's the only way a. And what is the other way. We don't have any other options. But so I believe that there was another way and it is worthwhile looking at and I do question many things in terms of how we living but also how my own people are living on country as well. I see that there lots of change that needs to be happening everywhere across the board.

So in terms of music I only got into it through an indigenous music program in Redfern, late in life. There was quite by accident. But it has changed my mind about a lot of things. It has changed my experiences. Has offered many opportunities. And a connection back to my culture. So through music I've been able to come back too country and help others with music and those who are aspiring to be musicians. But also to learn and reconnect.

**ROGER KNOX:**

I like to say I've related to Dave too through his mother.

**PETER WHITE:**

I think you are seeing a bit of a thread here around connections and country and that. But it's a great - what you have just said, Dave, is what I am wanting to sort of explore next, that just that notion, we are here tam worth, country music capital, but that acknowledgment this is the place of where first - the first music has been practiced and shared and the importance of Aboriginal song and particularly Gamilaroi song and Gamilaroi dance and passing knowledge on and celebrating. That's been for Millenia practiced here.

And the important thing of the continuum of that. That's where this connection comes in. So when we have a - you know, a great to be welcome back to country by aunty Yvonne through this panel here and that connection, but what you were saying David, I will throw it open. How does that connection or the concept of country sort of give you inspiration in your work, whether it is song writing or even performing?

**DAVID LEHA:**

I was inspired, like, I mean, I performed in this town years ago when the country music started - it was just starting up and I was part of that. This town all is where they had awards and it was hot and no air conditioning. People used to get carted out fainting. It's never changed. I'm nothing -- fainting. But yes, until I met - uncle Larry Williams who used to come in put on talent quests in the town hall and he invited Aboriginal people around the district to come along and that was a great concept and we inspired a lot of the young musicians

around today. But it was old uncle Harry Williams who inspired me. He told his story through country music, he told us struggles in the status of Aboriginal people across an old continent. But he included the Aboriginal spirituality in a lot of things he done. Like I did a song called 'The streets of Tamworth' and it was originally uncle Harry Williams song called the 'Streets of old Fitzroy'. But he told me, no matter where you are, it is the streets of the town you are. So I changed it to the 'Streets of Tamworth' it stayed that way. No matter where I go, I have to say streets of Tamworth but I include the town where I am, even if there is only one street in the town. I was inspired by - people like uncle Harry Williams and Col Hardy who performed in this town. I see him put on a great performance.

I came here to Tamworth from Tumela not to be a singer just come here for sports and for a job and I came and see Jimmy - Col Hardy perform and he inspired me. I said, "I wanted to be a singer like that too". I want to inspire and encourage my own kind, like he inspired me. That's my aim and my dream. And to be uplifting inspiring encourage other Aboriginal people and you know, because there is so much talent around. So much untapped talent. All they need - when we talk about this skills, you might have heard this, shame. But I don't believe in the shame factor. It's just the lack of self-confidence, you know. But that shame factor kicks in and we have to deal with it. But yeah, there is so much talent around and.....

PETER WHITE:

I think you mentioned, uncle Col. That particularly being in Tamworth here and we - I think everyone knows the golden guitar awards.

ROGER KNOX: The first annual man.

PETER WHITE:

He is the first Aboriginal but he also won the listeners award which was popular choice. So you know, all of the big awards now with the golden guitar s and of course we have great talent with Troy Cassar-Daley now, an Aboriginal man, 1971, Roger.

ROGER KNOX:

'71.

PETER WHITE:

Won the popular choice for the very first time. That continuum, that I was talking about, you know, back in the old days to the 60s and 70s, to now with these.....

ROGER KNOX:

They were hard times in them days. Coming to Tamworth. We had to sing what people wanted to hear. We couldn't sing about our culture until uncle Harry women Williams come along and he started to -- uncle Harry Williams come along. He started to tell us about his history, and land. That inspired me to do that. So yes, I mean, I could sing anything. I can sing both kinds. I can sing country and western. Rock and roll.

But yes, but that was people like uncle Harry Williams, Col Hardy Jimmy Little who inspired me, telling their stories. So I like to continue that on as much as I can. And talk about our country. I mean, when we talk about country, now we - this is - we Kamilaroi people, we grew up, we have a huge country. And we got so many historical places like Bubra lagoon. I did a song about Bubra lagoon. That's a special place up north on the NSW side. Near gunned windy but a place that's -- Gundawindi. Aboriginal people gathered there for thousands of years and it's a very special place. Very special place. And I did a song about that. And there is other places you go to, you know, we have to tell our stories about that. So

that's my aim or my inspiration. To inspire and try to uplift young black people. Anyone, everyone come and sang my songs and play my songs and ---

PETER WHITE:

Kelsey you mentioned you are three different mobs.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

Yes.

PETER WHITE:

How does that work with you, that country and that - you know, even though all of those, you know, had links back in the old days. And continue to have links today, how does that work for you?

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

Yeah. So for me I was born up the Gold Coast, Tugun area. That's why I got a bit of a connection up that way. But I grew up in Lightning Ridge for about eight years and then in 2002 I think my sister she got into Calrossy Anglican school, so mum and dad didn't want to leave her behind, we made the move to Tamworth for better opportunities because there obviously isn't a lot in Lightning Ridge. It was a massive change from being in such a small community where everyone knows each other and it was like there were all walks of life people from - every single country you could probably think of. That multicultural out there. Everyone came together and you know, it was even the - I guess - I can't think right now. But a lot of the people from Lightning Ridge took in an Aboriginal community and learnt a lot of the Aboriginal language as well. So it was just a very tight knit community. Then I came to Tamworth it was a massive change for me learning language and culture basically every day of my life. And to come to Tamworth it was a bit of a change for me because there was no language or culture in the school like I went to Tamworth Public and I guess it was kind of me going off country and coming to a new - like I'm still Gamilaroi but I'm not from this area, so it was a big thing to come into the new community and you know, but I lived here for about 12 years and obviously Tamworth is one of my homes. I have many places that I call home. And yes, so it was pretty difficult for me but I guess when I go back out home to Lightning Ridge, I always feel a really strong connection to that place. And that's where I do draw a lot of my inspiration from. And I have a lot of wonderful memories in Tamworth and I'm always going to be connected to this place. I just - yeah I feel for me yeah, just home is not just one place. And being connected to so many different countries and tribes I think that just makes - I don't know, it makes me feel like we are all connected. Yes.

And you know, you are always find a connection to someone no matter where you are. Like all through Australia. I think that's also through our song lines. And our stories. And uncle Roj mentioned Bubra lagoon is a sacred spiritual place, that has a connection to the Narren Lake which is a special place for the Ualarai Gamilaroi, Murawari, Wayarawin, Nebah poo people where the fish traps are. There is a creation story right there about the Garia, the crocodile or the snake-like serpent. And that was by Arme he chased this Garia and one of the crocodiles went to Bubra lagoon, that's meant to be that creation. That's why I meanwhile we are all connected. That just makes it more open for - yeah everyone to just come together and yeah, makes you more connected.

ROGER KNOX:

We believe it is the birth and resting place of the rainbow serpent. The story of the creation of Bubra. And Bubra is, it is - you can imagine a lagoon, but it's not that type of imagination, it is 6km long, and it is like a snake type - it's not very wide but it's - there is no rivers or

creeks run into Bupra. There it is not fed by anything, it is fed by the great artesian underneath and never dry in the harshest droughts. In places pretty much bottomless. So it is a great place to be and spend time - I like to say waste some time.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**

Yes.

**ROGER KNOX:**

I think there is a connection too. Bupra and Yarrrie lakes. And I think there is a song line connection somewhere along there yeah. All comes back, yeah.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**

Yes. And I think with mob it is just - I just really can't stress that enough, is that we are all connected. And I guess when you kind of look at it that way with song lines and stories that have been told, they are the same story but they are sung in a different language all throughout Australia. There is hundreds and hundreds of song lines. And that's what makes us connected. And sometimes there will be places that we go to that you feel a really strong connection to them and you don't know why but then you find out, there is a story line, a song line there. I think that's so incredible. That's like really important to - it's hard now because obviously there's a lot that we haven't been told and that's been kept from Aboriginal people but we can find it. I feel like it's never truly lost. I think it will come to you. And knowledge will come to those when it's the right time. And I think it's really important to know these things that we are all connected.

**PETER WHITE:**

Dave has that been the right time for you the last couple of years. I know you have been travelling across country here up Gamilaroi way, as well as working with some of the young ones and passing on some of that knowledge. So how has that - you know, concepts of country and that given you inspiration?

**DAVID LEHA:**

I think timing is important. I think about when we used to have ceremony and how art used to be used. As a way of educating. Our stories because we didn't write them down, like we sit down now.

(Audio lost) means a lot of division in many ways. You heard for example, in the acknowledgment to country today, the welcome, they said Gamilaroi, Gamilaroi. We are not even solid and what we are calling this land. Who is the elder. There is different groups. There is different cultural groups. And for someone who is coming in to country to learn, it can - there is certain barriers. They are real. But I just said it means there is an opportunity for us to change in a positive way, if there is a barrier, if there is something is they are dividing it from each other, there is an opportunity for us to work on ourselves, get past whatever it is that's there in place, dividing us. Whether it's our own bias or some limited opportunities we are all up against each other. Whatever. But I do believe in our dreaming stories, when they talk about survival of the cooperative, as opposed to the survival of the fittest. We are all kind of getting together. As a white fella probably all know the story of Tidalick the frog. There is many indigenous dream time stories that's quite a common one. The way they found that solution was they all worked together to make it happen.

I think when we talk about it starts in the timing, is important it all starts at the beginning. We all came together to make sure that these certain stories are told to our youth.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:  
Yes.

DAVID LEHA:  
That's what I would like to see.

ROGER KNOX:  
We had so many poets and song writers back - every black community you go to, there was always a poet. A composer. But he didn't actually put pen to paper. He said he made them up in his mind. 200 songs, I point out uncle Dougy Young from Willcannia, he had over 200 songs he putting together he didn't write them down. A lot of them songs has gone. And uncle Eric Cragie from up our way, he didn't write them down because I think in them days they weren't allowed to learn to read in them days or write. They had to tell their stories through the messages on the ground and with the wind would blow it away. But the stories like it would come to an end where the system came along and said, you must not continue to tell them stories. Or sing the songs. Or do the dances. And speak that language. So that put a stop to that. We lost a lot of stories and connection there. It's people like uncle Dougy Young and uncle Eric Cragie who came along and started writing about their stories.

And one particular song, I recorded uncle Dougy Young in the 30s and 40s he talked about nuclear politics. So how would he know that? Someone in the bush who couldn't barely read and write, he said these present governments they argue every day they try to start a brawl. If they going to be a nuclear war, what's going to happen to us all?

So I just linger on from when world I'm gone. This will be my last request. Bury me with the crow flies backward and the pelican builds his nest. He talks about nuclear politics. Talk about treaty back in them days. Then again he knocked around with people like Henry Lawson. We all know him. But yeah. Stories like your Dave said, we connected to our stories and our dreaming and there was a point where all stopped. The language, the songs. The story. Bubra like that. The last gathering at Bubra is over 20,000 people. So they used to come - the Kalkadu people used to come down from Mount Isa way. And to gather and go on to the Bunya mountain festival. It was a gathering. They didn't say, it's time we have to go. We go for the big ceremony. But it.....

PETER WHITE:  
It is great that coming back together and reawakening the particularly language.....

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:  
Yes.

PETER WHITE:  
And sharing that. And I will probably - I'm going to take the opportunity to have these three wonderful talents here to share their talents, now. So I will ask you maybe to sing a bit of a song.

(Applause).

PETER WHITE:  
A bit of work. Might start with rocker.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER: He wants me to go first.

ROGER KNOX:  
He should go first.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:  
Always the one to go first.

PETER WHITE:  
While Kelsey is setting up what were you saying Dave and Roger and that, our way of doing things is all about connections. Coming together. I think that's where the solutions. We have had so much placed in front of us through our history, but the coming back together with the other thing of we are always learning. Even back in the old days our senior law man and women and that, you were always learning and that's why we were able to say we have the longest continuous culture. We were - the greatest advocates of sustainability and that. We were able to live through ice ages and continue the disruption of the colonial.

ROGER KNOX:  
The best way to learn is to listen. God give us a mouth that closes and ears that don't.

PETER WHITE:  
Yes. Very important point.

ROGER KNOX:  
I believe my great aunty, instilled in language and medicine and known the whole universe, I believe she would at least 10 degrees of knowledge. So that's listening. Yeah.

PETER WHITE:  
OK.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:  
That's alright. This song I wrote was actually inspired when I was sitting on the bar won river, home of the people where the first traps are and as you may have been told they are the oldest man made structure in the world. And I just remember sitting on the river, with my brother Ryan known as Dobbie, up coming, not up up coming he's an established incredible rapper and drummer. And this is called River Runs Dry and I just remember sitting on the river and all I could do was just cry and that's just another thing about being on country, and connecting to country and telling our stories. And the importance of us as Aboriginal people telling our stories. And this is what we do. Like it's been passed down for thousands and thousands of years. Through stories and oral learning and listening. And I have been recently doing Warawarri language with my dad. We had my great grandfather Jimmy Barker was one of the last fluent Murawari speakers. If you don't know where that is, it's a bit further west of Lightning Ridge and connects with Nianbah where the fish traps are. That's where my father and grandfather learnt how to make the traditional weapons from the last full blood Mara -- Murawarri. So I have a strong connection to that place. This is 'River runs dry'.

# Ahh my beautiful what have we done --  
# My beautiful what have we done  
# Abused and used you  
# Our selfish purposes  
# They have us consumed  
# You know what's coming next  
# The rivers run dry  
# And I'm crying, I'm crying, I'm crying

# And I cry  
# Because the rivers run dry  
# And I'm crying and I'm crying and I'm crying  
# Crying and I'm crying I'm crying  
# Mmmm  
# I belong to my  
# To the land  
# Trying to find my way back home  
# I want to follow the sunlight where the rivers flow  
# Now the river has run dry  
# And I'm crying I'm crying and I'm  
# And I cry because the rivers run dry  
# And I'm crying I'm crying I'm crying  
# Crying I'm crying am crying I cry  
# The river let it be  
# Let the dreaming requested it to be  
# Let love grow our veins  
# How we live and breathe  
# Let the rivers be  
# Let it be how it's meant to be  
# Now the rivers run dry  
# And I am crying I'm crying I'm crying I cry  
# And I cry  
# Because the rivers run dry  
# And I'm crying I'm crying a I'm crying I cry crying I cry and I cry.

(Applause).

PETER WHITE:  
Roger did you want to?

ROGER KNOX:  
I wonder if I can sit in and remain informal and do it from here, hey.

PETER WHITE:  
It is interesting, we had the keynote with Brad talking about water. And that concept, water is country.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:  
Water is life. Simple as that.

PETER WHITE:  
Water is life. It's so important.

ROGER KNOX:  
Well when the river stops flowing it means something. Because the rivers naturally shouldn't stop flowing until it reaches the sea. But places like Willcannia and the Darling, the great Darling River is dry. And the signs up along there saying save our Barker. Yes. And it makes people sad because along the rivers we have what we call fishing places. We go and sit and fish and feast and talk and yarn. They still have them places but there don't have rivers. So it's sad.

PETER WHITE:

It's great, we just had I think a month ago we had corroboree out on the Barker.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

Yes, we did. Uncle Bruce.

PETER WHITE:

It is great to see that culture or that arts practice, even having you Kelsey go down and sit and write that song. That is still coming through. But more fortunately, the important messages we are still trying to pass on.

ROGER KNOX:

It is sad to see the fish trap, the water stopped flowing there and exposed all the fish traps and that was a big, you know, effort in ingenuity that. That fish trap. Imagine these people, they had great engineers in them days. To separate the fish from - come to where they want them to go. But it's sad to see it dry now. Yes. So I'm going to sing - change it around a bit and sing a song about a song called "Middle camp". At every Aboriginal community they had what he call a camp or a fringes. Outside of town where Aboriginal people went to escape the oncoming - the system, it was taking the kids away. And a lot of them escaped by going to these camps. And my mother was born at a place called the Middle Camp in Moree but she didn't escape. They came and took her 8 months of age. So hard work for some. Why they had the camps because like I said, they a lot of them escaped, you know, with their children. This song is written by uncle Eric Cragie. It is a song about the middle camp where my mother was born.

It goes like this.

# Here is a song I will sing to you  
# It's a dream I like to see come true  
# It's about the middle camp  
# And the days gone by  
# Where I used to wander  
# My dear old pals and I  
# That used to be my home sweet home  
# Until I started out to roam  
# That middle camp is there  
# Not going anywhere  
# I'm going to build the middle of my home  
# Can you tell me where is dear old granny Tay  
# When I hear her name it makes me want to cry  
# Where is aunty Flo to her place I used to go  
# Where is Bill and Pat and Jim and Tim and Allan  
# I will build a little hut down by the dream  
# Stop my heart from aching with pain  
# I'm going to pitch a tent  
# I don't have to pay no rent # I'm going to build a middle camp again  
# Once it was a place so full of fun  
# Now that old middle camp is gone  
# Once there was Coon camp bingo and dice  
# Let me tell you folks that place  
# Really was paradise  
# Yeah I'm going to build a little hut down

# By the dream  
# To stop my heart from aching with pain  
# I'm going to pitch a tent  
# I won't have to pay no rent  
# I'm going to build a middle camp again  
# Once it was a place so full of fun  
# Now that old middle camp is done  
# Once there was bingo and dice  
# Let me tell you folks  
# That place really was paradise  
# I'm going to build a little hut down by the dream  
# To stop my heart from aching with pain  
# I'm going to pitch a tent  
# I won't have to pay no rent  
# I'm going to build a middle camp again #  
# I will try to build a middle camp again #

(Applause)

ROGER KNOX:

Thank you.

I'm not a very good guitar player but I got bad injured hands. I will get by. I will call I will wing it through. I - you sing that? Yeah. Dave seen it. Nobody seen that. That's alright.

PETER WHITE:

I think just in that song we hear a lot of an even more now and even our esteemed minister that's in the crowd here is - you know, saving the importance of truth telling. And those parts of our history that what Roger just sang about. Even here from Tamworth, you know, up at the common on the way to the rubbish tip, the people go past every day. There was that top camp up there where our mob - there is people in the audience here, Jodie, and that, who are descendants from only one generation removed that people were living on those camps. On the fringes and those experiences. And what a lot of our communities are still sort of experiencing on the fringes.

That history, that importance of truth telling. All the history. And getting an understanding.

ROGER KNOX:

It's about self-knowledge as well. You know. To me if you learn as much as you can about yourself, your history, your heritage, and where you come from, because if you know where you come from you know where you are going. Good direction. And to me self-knowledge is self-esteem, self-respect. Self-love. So confidence. And they reckon low self-esteem is like driving around with the handbrakes on.

PETER WHITE:

And the importance of song to pass on.

ROGER KNOX:

Yes.

PETER WHITE:

Knowledge and message.

ROGER KNOX:

It is the international language isn't it.

PETER WHITE:

That's a nice segue for you brother Dave.

I know you are one of the best at passing on knowledge and really getting it. So if you want to share something with us,

David LEHA:

I know we don't have much time I will try to do this as quick as I can.

ROGER KNOX:

I'm looking at the clock too.

DAVID LEHA:

I will share an experience on song writing on country. So first off in terms of writing songs in language, I had to find somebody out of a mob of people I could choose, I chose an uncle name Len Waters in Tamworth. What I loved about that man he gave so much of himself freely. I tried to offer him money to help me and he said, no, thank you. And for me it meant he was doing it with the right intention in terms of passing on what is to me at least very important.

So I have an unwritten song at the moment. And I will maybe do an add lib verse of it, and we will do an collaboration really quickly how to write it. I start with a question and anyone here feel free to answer. So first the reason why I wanted to write this song. Child grows up, common question they get is what do you want to be when you grow up? And basically you have to answer that question with a job. Of some description.

When they grow they end up tending to be whatever they see. You notice singing country and western. Rock and roll and that generation, that's what they saw and the television. Listen to on the wireless. We see many of our young generation now want to be rap singers. I too was that. I grew up with - NWA and Public Enemy. Just one of the things that I grew up trying to copy. So as artists as singers, in my mind, as teachers, there is responsibility that comes with that. So what will I sing? I thought I would sing a song about wanting to be an elder. So within a versus I will try and write in suggestions of how an elder should be. So my question to you all, what should an elder do as an elder? What is something that I could add into this verse.

ROGER KNOX:

I reckon elders should continue to learn. They have elders that's alive, and it's about learning. It's about listening. And that before you go to elders about just below him, I still have to elearn from that.

DAVID LEHA:

Thank you.

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

When I think of elders I always think of my nan and my pop. And I think of the kindness and the way they would always respect everyone no matter who you were or where you came from. And always sharing.

DAVID LEHA:

Thank you. Anyone would like to add to these versus? How should an elder be? It's not just an elder. If an elder has to be a certain way on country, of course they will be teaching you this is how we should be. Respect. Thank you. Okay I try to put a bit of language in this. I'm trying to find language as well. It is quite minimal in terms of what I have been able to find. We have a dictionary now. So the three words that I have put into this song in language, in the chorus is Buarh. Which means when I ask for a word to describe sacred things. When I ask for word for spirit holder, I was told Bundoor. Sounds very much like Bunda. Don't mistake that for Kangaroo. But Bundoor. Finally, Dalwerda which means white ochre which has certain significance. So here is the song. For everyone in terms of what do you want to be when you grow.

# I wish to be an elder  
# An old man of this land  
# I wish to grow old with those and a veil in my hand  
# Number one Bunduh.  
(Sings in language) like an elder of this land  
# Continuing to learn my friends  
# Remembering the past  
# You say respect it is a way the truth that lies within  
# Seek the things  
# Spirit holders  
# Cover a man in over  
# Like an elder of this

There is a verse.

(Applause)

PETER WHITE:

Wow. Wow.

Okay. We have got three minutes and 50 seconds to go now. I am taking my cue from Roger. And that importance that we all should know and act on is how to listen. So with our Gamilaroi song men and women here, I will leave the last few minutes to whatever you want to say.

ROGER KNOX:

We talk about learning. Learning is - but we also must remember that to get on with each other we need to talk with each other. I mean, you can't get good relation with anyone you can't communicate with. You can't get understanding with anyone you can't communicate with. Understanding is both about dialogue, and dialogue is a communication of ideas. So if we - you need to know anything about me, be careful what you read about me if it's not written about me by me or by someone and the Aboriginal community, then you could be misled if it's not. If you are - and listening is important. Every day I wake up and anything I say I won't - I can't learn. The only way I can learn is listen.

We have to have big open ears. Not all the time, there is some negative stuff in there. But most of the time listen. We get two ear, one mouth. So listen more, speak less. So I believe in understanding. I believe in unity and I believe in humanity. I believe in we mull all come together in peace and harmony and all get together and pray for the rain.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**  
Pray for the rain.

**ROGER KNOX:**  
You have to believe, yes.

Someone said to me, you pray for rain you have to expect mud.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**  
Uncle Rog' how did you deal with the negativity or the things that you experienced?

**ROGER KNOX:** If I confront it I turn and walk away. Or I have an open and positive attitude. And think well. Think positive. Hang around positive people. Because the negative ones suck the happiness out of you.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**  
Agree.  
I think that's something a lot of our young people need to learn.

**ROGER KNOX:**  
And need to learn and listen because we have to go out and see things with our own eyes. Hear with our own ears rather than going by what someone else say, because it's important to know and see with your own eyes, here with your own ears and make a decision based on what you see and what you hear. Not what they hear and what they see see.

It's good to go out and see things. I'm looking at the clock there. Look. Crazy.

We operating in Murri time.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**  
I think one thing I want to say is that I think it's really important for our young people now more than ever they have the opportunity to be learning their culture and their language and it's - it's happening here in Tamworth. They have the Gamilaroi academy, cultural academy run by Mark Sutherland. That's just showing that if we are learning our language and our culture the numbers are going to rise for our young people to be finishing high school and to be having that connection to their culture and their country.

**ROGER KNOX:**  
I just want to plug tonight we have the (Inaudible) we have a good show me and Dave. And a few other boys and thank the ArtState for getting us all together here. Great.

**KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:**  
Thank you.

(Applause)

**PETER WHITE:**  
Anything else?

**DAVID LEHA:**  
No, just Yalu. On country. Until we meet again.

ROGER KNOX:

I will say Yulangali Yanae.

PETER WHITE:

I would like to say it's been a real privilege to be on stage with you guys and have that chat. And just amazing the talent here. Gamilaroi talent. And we claim you as well. But also in my role the amazing NSW Aboriginal cultural talent we have here. And all throughout our region. It's great to be able to show case that. So thank you. Thank you as an audience for actually turning up and listening to this.

And I hope you have actually got out something very special through this. As Roger said, Dave and Roger will be playing tonight. Kelsey where you are playing next?

KELSEY STRASEK-BARKER:

Bark Mianjin markets in Brisbane.

PETER WHITE:

We have a whole room of arts people here. So some venues and all of that. You have seen the talent here, make sure you book them in the next a couple of months. Thanks.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Thank you to Peter. To Roger. To Kelsey. And to David. What an extraordinary eclectic mix of music. There is Tamworth is definitely more than country music.

It's morning tea break. Please only take 20 minutes. Because we are going to start back on time. And I would like to let you know that the flautist who will be playing in morning tea is Hannah Carterer from the Tamworth Conservatorium of music. There are a few dinner tickets left. So if anybody still wants to come to the dinner, you will need to get a ticket from Pru at registration.

Thank you everybody. And enjoy your morning tea.

(Applause)

**(Morning tea)**

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Hello, everyone. Welcome back. What an amazing first session. Such a strong message about respecting country and culture and listening. I love Roger's point that we have two ears and one mouth.

So Brad's presentation will be posted on the Art State website, I will say in due course. Let us get over the event first but he's very kindly agreed to share it and those really interesting references he had in his presentation.

For those of you who would like to follow that up further.

Also don't miss Roger Knox and his Durubu Murrays tonight. It starts at 7:00, it's a free concert so round up the Tamworth people as well and Radical sun, David Laha is playing the Festival Club on Saturday night at 10:45. How extraordinary was that performance?

I just need to let you know, because obviously the housekeeping has to take place, I need to let you know that all the plenary sessions are being recorded and will be available on the Art State website. All the recorded sessions and the rapporteur's reports from Bathurst and Lismore are also available, so if people missed Jonathan Jones' keynote last year you can go back and hear it or read the transcripts.

This year we have Lorena Baker and Dr Jason Sosel performing this role and Jason will present a brief summary of his findings at the dinner on Saturday night and a larger written report will be posted over later in the year. Over the four years of this project we will have a great record of the ArtState conversations.

Now I've got a couple of room changes. The echo workshop is at Tamworth regional gallery, not what's on your ticket. And we've had a room change that Lorinda Barker's presentation Haas moved from Lands Building room 1 to Lands Building room 2, so note that. There will be interesting news about what's going to happen in room 1 after this next presentation.

So I have to tell you that I've been trying to get a first nations Canadian speaker since we were planning for Art Lands Dubbo in 2016 as there are so many parallels between the lived experience between Australian and Canadian people. And while I was attending the world summit in Malaysia this year, I met our next keynote speaker, Patrick Shannon, who agreed to travel halfway across the world from his home in British Columbia to speak to us in Tamworth.

Patrick is an artist and storyteller of Indigenous Haida ancestry, specialising in filmmaking and photography, to celebrate, empower and tackle important issues both urban and rural. Inspired by his cultural upbringing, Patrick uses technology and media to address essential and cultural challenges that exist within Canada's Indigenous communities. He has a decade of experience in working with the Vancouver film, television and design industries and currently operates a multi-media creative studio based out of Haida in Canada. Apologies if the pronunciation isn't correct.

Patrick's passion is to discover new ways to empower marginalised communities through story telling while developing new self- determined economies using media and technology. This passion continues into his work with youth as Patrick mentors dozens of young Indigenous and their term settler, we would say colonial, film-makers and artists every year. A good portion of his time is also spent travelling as an instructor for the University of Victoria, building design and web-based entrepreneurial skill sets within remote Indigenous communities. So please give a really warm welcome to Patrick Shannon.

(Applause)

**PATRICK SHANNON:**

How is it going, everybody? (Speaks language) That's what we say in our language to say g'day. So as Elizabeth is wonderful to have a great introduction, so I am Haida, which is one of the Indigenous groups in Canada and we live on the north-west coast of Canada, what's known as British Columbia these days. I guess we'll just chat a little bit about some of the work that I do but most importantly what some of the context that we have in our Indigenous communities and in Canada, like trying to build those relationships between settler communities and Indigenous communities.

So the title is something that I was hoping to be a little bit evocative, the power of media in a

systemically racist society. When I say systemically racist society, that's referring to a lot of the legislation and legal practices that are put into play even to this day that still doesn't address the equality issues and still makes life quite challenging for many Indigenous peoples and voices.

So who the heck am I? As Elizabeth mentioned, I'm a film-maker, photographer, do all the sorts of multi-media stuff and something that's kind of been in my life since a young age. In our culture we have art as a very prominent, prominent part of who we are.

So I started as a pencil portrait artist, I've got like tattoos all over me with crests of my family, and so this is art that we're all kind of raised with.

So Hadai... translate to say islands of people. So Haida means people and Gui means islands so the islands of the people. So our islands are roughly half and half settler and Indigenous, and we've got an amazing relationship between our settler and Indigenous communities. Something that I think is unique in Canada, unique in the United States and most countries around the world that I've been able to visit when it comes to the relationships.

We see each other as equals and we're coming at the from a place of equal playing field because usually in most places in Canada, you have the Government, the settler populations that have all the power, all the land, everything, all authority, and the Indigenous communities are typically fighting upward to try and kind of protect our rights, to protect the land. We have a common narrative that I will talk a little bit later that we only see ourselves in the media as portrayed as protesting, or we got killed by a white person. Like those are the common narrative themes that we have.

So there's a complex history that's been going on for the past 400, 500 years, especially the last 152 years that Canada's been around. So we're going to chat a little bit about that.

But my home is somewhere that I'm very proud of coming from. We definitely don't feel like Canada. We've got this unique, amazing environment, this land that we've been connected to for over 15,000 years of continued inhabitation. So it's something that we have a strong connection to and we haven't been severed from that, despite a lot of practices that tried to.

So in Canada, the current state is that we have over 700 Indigenous communities across just Canada alone with more than 50 distinct nations. The Haida is just one of these 50 different nations with over 50 language groups all across the country. And a lot of these languages are completely distinct from one another. So the challenge is in being able to have all these languages and nations represented has been a really big hurdle for a lot of people, especially most well-meaning non- Indigenous folk have difficulties trying to understand the complexities of our societies, even just the languages, and words that we should use in context. So you have cities, let's say, like Vancouver that hosted the Olympics in 2010. It's on the traditional territory of three Indigenous groups. It's been a big fight to make sure that even those cultures are being recognised and for the first time in a long time, actually ever, cultures are starting to be recognised for the traditional inhabitants that used to live there before Canadians showed up.

So there are about 2 million Indigenous people in Canada right now and we're the fastest growing demographic in the entire country. So it's something that's really amazing to see because disease did a huge number in our communes - communities. The Haida people we in the 1800s we had 30,000 living on the islands and by 1900 we were down to less than

600.

When you lose so much of the population you lose so much of the history, so much of the language, and so currently today we're in a very challenging place for my language specifically. The Haida language is there are less than 20 fluent speakers currently on most major dialects and there are young people trying to learn it now but there are so many hurdles when trying to learn our traditional language in an English-dominated society. The biggest challenge I have is as a learner, I have no-one really to talk to and so you can, you know, put labels on everything at home as much as you want but unless it's getting practiced every single day and shown to younger generations that our language still has a place. It's very difficult to continue to thrive and live.

So Canada has had a problem. Canada is coming to terms with the history that it has. A lot of people think of Canada as this beautiful, multicultural, supportive place and especially in comparison to other places, it is but not towards Indigenous peoples. If you're from any culture around the world you're welcomed in with open arms but in Canada, if you're Indigenous, essentially you threaten the existence of Canada, what Canada actually is.

So they tried quite hard to destroy us as peoples. They have father of confederation in Canada, John A McDonald, even put in legislation to replace the Indian act, which is meant to kill the Indian to save the child which was the forced removal of Indigenous children from their homes and brought to Christian boarding schools where they would be beaten if they spoke the language or practiced any culture. So you have generations and generations of this. I've got a photograph here of just kind of what that looked like and many, many thousands of children didn't make it back home from these schools and so the trauma that's kind of happened as a result of this has really caused a lot of challenges in our communities from addictions, alcohol abuse, there's a lot of social challenges that we're trying to overcome still. That's kind of the history that Canada has to deal with.

But the biggest thing is that in spite of all that, in spite of our populations being brought down to the brink and government sanctioned efforts to try and assimilate us, we survived. Yeah.

(Applause)

It didn't dawn on me how important that this was because I was raised in a community, and none of this was ever talked about, residential schools, all these different things that happened over the course of the past 150 years, I didn't realise the extent of how much it impacted us or even the current state of Indian reservations that I currently live on right now. Those are parcels that the Canadian Government sets sides for individuals, we don't own the land, we have wards of the state. I have an identification case that I'm an Indian under the Indian Act. That's still the laws that govern us so we get different healthcare, different education that is usually woefully underfunded compared to most Canadians.

What's amazing, though, is that in spite of all this, in spite of how difficult everything has been, we've survived and we're starting to thrive. We're having a cultural resurgence that is absolutely amazing.

When I was a kid you had to hide the fact that you were Indigenous. Every single time I went to the city I was told, you know, don't play up this, the fact that you're native. It's something that we always had to struggle with. I'd -- identity became a huge issue and something we face every single day is what does it mean to be an Indigenous person living a contemporary life, taking on roles, jobs, things, living in a colonial society but still staying true to those

values, that connection to land, that connection to community, culture, spirit. That's something that we've been having to redefine for ourselves or essentially rediscover within ourselves and our place in our communities.

So recently a human rights tribunal ruled that Canada has been essentially guilty of genocide and that's something that Canadians have - are still in denial of. They're not really willing to accept that and you can tell that by the way Indigenous peoples are represented in media.

As I mentioned earlier, the only time you hear about Indigenous peoples in Canada is a white person shot a native person or we're protesting something again. Very seldom do you ever hear Indigenous voices and when you do, often they're tokenising. We're brought in as that one representative of all Indigenous peoples, despite the hundreds and hundreds of different communities where we're still fighting the concept of pan indigeneity which has been defining us so long. You still see headdresses at Halloween parties. I saw one last night. It's something you see all around the world because our cultures aren't really taken seriously and everyone's still trying to understand what it means to be a respectable ally.

But when I say that, things are changing significantly. Since I was a kid, and, you know, hiding the fact I was native, now we're starting to be prideful of who we are. We're starting to get our tattoos which are clan crests or lineages or histories. These are things that people weren't getting before. Or if they did, they would be marginalised so much and it's amazing to kind of see this massive shift over the 10, 15 years that I've been kind of witnessing it. --- Indigenous peoples are in vogue right now. In the '60s all the hippies wanted to be natives. You're seeing that a bit more today. But I think for different reasons.

I think a big part of it is people are recognising that traditional connection to land, traditional respect for the world around us that's inherent in most Indigenous cultures is the only way we're going to survive. It's the only way we're going to move forward because when you remove that connection to place, that connection to community and community in place holding you accountable, you essentially work in ways that go against our values as Indigenous peoples, as humans in general that destroys the world around us. And so people are starting to recognise that Indigenous perspectives are the perspectives that need to be understood, to be adopted for us to survive as a species on this planet because we're in this climate crisis right now. You're seeing it around the world.

But I think we are an adaptable, we are a clever, we are smart, you know, species, humans, and I think inherently we will figure it out but it's going to require a lot of work in the meantime. It's going to require a lot of sacrifice.

I think a big part of that is making sure that the social justices are tied up with the environmental justice, especially in colonial societies. When you start giving land back to Indigenous peoples, you start noticing that that land now starts becoming taken cared for like it had been for thousands of years and, you know, people are really afraid that what if we give back all the land to the natives, they will boot us off and, you know, that's a valid concern that, well, I don't consider it a valid concern but that's a concern that is really taking over the conversations whenever the idea of reconciliation comes up.

As far as I'm concerned, and many of us, reconciliation begins and ends with giving land back. If you're not willing to give land back you're not willing to reconcile. But that doesn't mean removing people by giving land back. We are currently fighting for sovereignty on Haidagui, the rights and titles of our lands, waters everything and the first thing we said is we

will not evict a single person. Half are not Indigenous but they live with us, become part of our families. You can do that, you can have that relationship between very distinct different cultures that works and I've seen it. It's in my home. I've been so fortunate that I was raised in something like this. Yeah, there may be little bumps in the road here but on the whole I think we're doing amazing.

Media plays such, such an integral role. As I mentioned with the narratives that you just hear on the news, mainstream media, Indigenous voices almost were never told or represented by Indigenous peoples. Usually it was also someone from an urban centre, coming in with their cameras and essentially telling our story through their lens, their perspective and this is something that has gone on for far too long but things are starting to change with it. Media plays such an impactful role, it's a way to build empathy and understanding and I think that's the way we have to move forward is we need to build that understanding, we need to respect one another and media has that power.

So what's so amazing is these days with technology really lowering the barrier of access, it's democratising what we're able to tell these stories that we share and it's so exciting. I've been able, and so lucky, to be able to work with youth all across the country, across the continent, to be able to teach them media skills, to be able to put a camera in their hands, you can even use the phone in your pocket to tell a story.

The stories they're telling are genuine, honest, it's from their lived experiences and there's such a diverse set of voices that are being heard all the time now.

Recently, we made a film called (Speaks language) Which is Edge of the Knife. It's won so many awards. It's a film done entirely in the Haida language. The first film that's ever been done like that. And it's amazing because it was undertaken, the film was done in the Haida language despite none of the principal cast or any of the actors being able to speak the language. The only ones who were able to speak were a handful of elders on set so everyone had to learn their lines phonetically on the day which was a huge fete for people whose primary tongue is English who don't know how to make these sounds.

If I was to introduce myself in my Haida name. I would say (Speaks language) It trance translates to the boss. Usually I say don't act up, because I'm going to lay down the law there. That was gifted from my grandmother, one of the matriarchs in my clan and the person who really shaped who I am.

So I went down to the city, I felt so disconnected from my identity, watch - and it wasn't until I moved back home six years ago to take care of my grandmother, that I started to connect many I culture and community in ways I never had before but I was able to take the skill sets I used in the city, bring them back home and be able to work with youth, young people, to start telling their stories.

That's the biggest thing we have to do is we need to elevate these younger voices. But there have been so many amazing films from Indigenous perspectives that are starting to come to light. Edge of the knife is one, you had... which is a fast runner, it's considered the greatest Canadian film of all time which is the Inuit people, you've got smoke signals, all these classic films that Indigenous people are being raised with, seeing ourselves depicted in film it's so powerful and amazing.

It's allowing us to grow up being proud of who we are, not ashamed, not trying to hide it and finding new ways to kind of move into this new society, move forward. What is our identity.

So I've been able to work with some amazing kids. It's fascinating, though. I used to be the young kid and now I've turned the ripe old age of 30, grey hair and everything. I realised even late 20s, our role is to be lifting up the younger generations every step of the way and that's what it means to build a strong community, a strong society and to really create that positive social change that we want. It doesn't matter what sector, what area. If you want to promote language revitalisation, make sure young people are given the platform and opportunity to learn.

You want to promote arts, music, even governance, you have to be able to provide the opportunities at a young age for that to happen.

And then social media. Social media has been huge. This has been the big tool just as much, if not more, than anything else. There's a lot of voices to be able travel, to go far. You may have heard of Standing Rock that happened a few years ago in North Dakota and you see all these movements. We had -- Indigenous peoples having our voices spread across the world and the country so people couldn't ignore it. The major news outlets, the broadcasters don't want to tell these stories because it's amazing because through things like Facebook, Facebook works so different in Indigenous communities compared to anywhere else because before we used to live in long houses, we would constantly be engaging with each other on a regular basis. That doesn't happen as much. People now work jobs, people have 9:00 to 5:00s, people don't want to leave their homes as much but social media, Facebook, has become that new platform so we can engage in these conversations and so much of the operating of our communities happens on things like Facebook which is super cool to see.

So a common thing that I see is that everyone, especially leaders, say that youth of the future, we need to elevate them, bring them up and usually it's just lip service. We have a descriptor, a name we like to call some of our politicians in Indigenous communities, we call them walking eagles because they're so full of shit they can't fly. And so we have to be able to hold those accountable who are - I think are doing the work, the best they can, but we need to engage with our civic leaders, with our elected politicians, with people to essentially try and force them to make space for young people and we've got something really amazing on Haidagiu, the youth assembly where we bring 200 youth from across the islands, settler or Indigenous, to learn about the government of the Haida nation.

You need to make sure that youth have that opportunity to grow.

So what does this mean in a larger context? What does this mean, you know, in a community of 5,000 people where I'm from but what -- does it look like to bring this to a larger Scale across a massive continue continent. To be equality there has to be equity. We've been marginalised and oppressed in many different ways and for us we need the room, the space, the funding, the ability to redefine what it means to be Indigenous right now. That's something that's constantly happening and everyone's at a different stage.

I'm very fortunate to come from where I'm from, and I'm so fortunate to be able to go into other communities, other neighbouring nations and being able to share some of these skill sets with people.

I think that is when you bring it out to a larger scale, and when a whole country starts recognising and starts hearing these voices, you start seeing real social change, massive movements, and I've been seeing that, you know, in Canada quite a bit. As much as most

Canadians are still grappling with their histories, grappling with the realities of the situation, we still have a lot of those what we consider backwards mentality where they essentially try and reinforce negative stereotypes through, you know, confirmation bias, through trying to ignore all the positive things and just focus on the negatives so they don't have to, essentially, do the next steps to reconcile and become a good ally.

And I kind of wanted to touch briefly on what does it mean to be an ally? What does it mean for someone who isn't Indigenous to maybe occupy Indigenous spaces or to be someone who can be a champion for Indigenous peoples. So this is something that honestly, I don't think gets enough credit because we can't have the social justice that we need to make things better without non- Indigenous people stepping up within their circles and calling out things that otherwise would be detrimental to the greater cause of trying to build a stronger, healthier, more respectful future.

I see - because I'm very white passing, I hear a lot of racist things. I'm in a lot of these circles and I have to kind of decide every time I see or hear something pretty darn racist, whether this is going to be the hill that I die on. Do I have the emotional energy here to put in that labour to be able to try to educate someone and sometimes people don't want to be educated. Some people don't want to know. They have an inherent prejudice that they're not ready yet to let go.

So the word allies, you often get to occupy these spaces but then you also have your voice that is listened to quite a bit. If you have a brown person, a native person telling you something, that I've seen time and time again, the people who are being told this information by a native person will tune it out. That's something that's so common to see. But if an ally says it, someone who looks and sounds like them is stepping up and essentially righting those wrongs, then it tends to hit a lot closer to home and people listen to it.

I have seen people who were so racist, who wanted nothing to do with Indigenous sovereignty or social justice and they're forced to take a cultural sensitivity class at work and then they just come back in the room next time, just swearing "White people are the worst." It's like "What?" It took them hearing it from someone in their own circles to be able to start changing their minds about things and to start working together in a respectful way.

Now that person is constantly defending Indigenous peoples and so when I'm in the room and I hear something racist, I no longer have to get that pit in my stomach and say "I've got to do it again, I've got to have these conversations", someone else is stepping up and having that for me and I can't express how important that is and how powerful it is to know someone has your back.

So the world allies is super important. I see that happen in social media spaces and I hear if someone even shares Indigenous stories through media, you know, that's huge. These things are very important.

So I think that each one of us has a role to play and not just between Indigenous and settler but any marginalised community. I try my best to be allies for anyone in the queer community, especially women as well because men, we have a particular presence and we need to make sure we hold space for other voices that aren't heard as often and we have a responsibility, every single one of us, in whatever capacity and role that we play, I feel has a responsibility to hold space for others and to defend others who can't hold their own in those spaces.

I'm excited for the future and that's difficult to say sometimes. The world's on fire and, you know, you seem to have this huge pendulum swing over to the right, right now, and it's scary. It's scary being next to the United States at this point. It feels like a powder keg. You have a big, orange Cheeto of a president that is emboldening a lot of hate speech and so it's a difficult time right now.

But like I feel that, you know, that perspective, it's the last kind of dying grasps of a mentality that is very, very rapidly disappearing and it's people feeling under attack because for those who have privilege, equality feels like oppression and I see that time and time again. So the big thing is essentially just trying to help people through this transition and approach it with empathy and respect because I feel like in this partisan age where everyone is zero-sum game, constantly yelling, it's causing so much division, so take time, really try to explain the sides and that's where I see the power of media being so amazing.

I've seen a couple of films here recently. Has anyone heard a film from 1984, an Australian film, called Barbecue Area? I loved it. I thought it was so funny. It's essentially a role reversal between Indigenous peoples and settlers. The Indigenous people colonising the settlers in Australia and it's funny because that is so true to what's happening right now in Canada. It's like, what, 35 years on and still so relevant today. So even though we've progressed a lot, we still have a long way to go and so keep up the fight, make sure that we're constantly working towards trying to create a healthier community, healthier future because we have the potential and elevating voices, especially through media, is something that I absolutely believe in and if we can get any support and share anything that's powerful like that, please, do it.

So I just want to say (Speaks language) which is thank you in my language, and I appreciate you coming to spend this time here and listen to these amazing voices. I've been so honoured to be welcomed into this land, to be able to listen to all these important voices and I am so excited for the rest of the weekend here and I hope to have some more conversations and get to learn about what's happening in your communities here so we can kind of take some of those best examples as best practices and take it back home and hopefully I can share a little bit of what we're doing back there and try and support one another.

So thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

So I'm going to say thank you to Patrick and thank you for making this mighty trip across the wilds of Canada to the wilds of NSW.

A couple of small tokens you to take back. I do commission speaker's gifts so I know they have to back in a suitcase. I just think that, you know, the ongoing message is that, again, we do need to listen, we do need to respect and I love Auntie Millie Ingram, the elder who does our welcome to country. She said we need to put the past behind us and walk together into the future and I think that resonates across the globe, that we need to be thinking about that. Thank you.

( Applause)

If you want to see some of the film work Patrick has done we've programmed him at 2:00 in

the Lands Building which is across the road, in room 1. He's brought some films and we will be showing them. There's only two rooms in it so hopefully there are signs and you can figure it out. what is in your programs is incorrect. We've changed the rooms.

We're going to continue our theme for our next panel which is on country/off country. As we're going to meet three Gamilaroi artists. Cathy Craigie is a play right, Mark Sutherland is a dance and Mitch Tambo is a performance artist. During this conversation they will discuss how the arts practices influence by their country and culture whether they are working on country or in other places.

Moderating this panel is the wonderful Shani Jones. Sharni is an Aboriginal woman of south-east Queensland on her maternal side. She spent her formative side in the Illawarra region of NSW where her family still lives. She has deep knowledge of and an extensive engagement in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural sector with specialisations in contemporary visual arts practice, strategic policy development and stakeholder engagement. She's a highly networked facilitator with 20 years of professional practice. She's currently the manager of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection at the Australian Museum in Sydney, and a director on the board of Regional Arts NSW. That's the most important role.

She's a passionate advocate for First People arts-led practice, fostering and championing practice through leadership, excellence and exchange. Please welcome Sharni who will introduce the panel.

(Applause)

SHARNI JONES:

It's almost afternoon, so welcome. Thank you, Elizabeth. I want to begin by thanking Uncle Many for the beautiful smoking ceremony we had last night and the official welcome and Auntie Yvonne for the beautiful welcome this morning.

Thank you to our elders that walked before us. Thank you to our elders who walk beside us today and thank you to our young people who are elders of tomorrow.

So before I introduce the panel, as Elizabeth mentioned I'm a Kubi Kubi Waka Waka woman which is from south-east Queensland. My great-grandmother was born in Gympie, and so I'm a saltwater woman. I work in Sydney and am fortunate to call Maroubra Beach my home so I'm fortunate to call my saltwater home.

As this panel is about working on country and off country, I'm thinking about this morning's panel that Pete convened. What a great panel and for me, just quickly I'm fortunate that I get to see Malabar Hedland from my apartment. When I can, before work, a joy for me is to walk to Magic Point, which is also called the blessings, and that's where I go to ground myself, even though it's not my country. It's the land that I call home and I get to touch that beautiful sandstone, I get to talk to those elders when I'm there and they - I knew I would cry - they give me strength and so I thought that would be a beautiful way just to share a little bit about myself and about what's important to me. Working and living off country and particularly in Sydney.

So moving right along. So our beautiful panel speakers today we have Cathy Craigie is a Gomeroi from northern NSW who I have known for a long time and has worked in the media and arts for a while, I won't say here. Cathy's experience ranges across disciplines and she's

worked in health, housing, environmental, legal, media and the arts so particular interest is in first nations stories and their relevance today and is currently developing a play transforming the traditional story of the seven sisters constellation and a fellow recipient which I was leading, working at Arts NSW now called Create NSW.

So we also have Mitch Tambo is renowned for his skills as a performer, actor and presenter. Mitch has led the procession during the canonisation of Australia's first saint, Mary Makillop as well as traditional dances at the Vatican. I got to see Jean-Paul II so it's amazing going to the Vatican. Mitch's career has taken him to Asia, Middle East, Europe and Melanesia showcasing his skills and the beauty of culture. Performing at the Australian Embassy at Laos. He's opened for social media sensation Makabe. Committed to empowering family and community Mitch completed a bachelor of social work in 2014 and is cofounder of True Culture, an Aboriginal-owned business empowering and engaging people through Aboriginal culture.

True Culture offers interactive cultural performances, mentoring and empowerment workshops for boys and young men. Culture awareness workshops and music performance and song writing workshops.

Not of all least, we have Marc Sutherland is born and raised in Tamworth. We've got all the locals here. Marc believes in the strength of sharing culture and knowledge the way it has been done on Gomeri country. Driven by his love of culture and responsibility to his community, Marc is determined to support the cultural growth and development of young people through creating cultural learning pathways through both formal and informal capacities. Marc is the director of the Gomeri Culture Academy which supports culturally strong leaders in his community. He's founder of a dance company which has been delivering workshops and performances across the State since 2008.

The company has been a driver for the revitalisation of cultural practice across the region and he's proud to host community corroborees with up to 150 local dancers and singers. Marc's passion for language has led him to become a recognised person in his community through working on country and within community to revive old songs and create new songs to share stories both old and new.

As you can see, we've got such a diverse array of practitioner skill sets here and I'm pleased to be able to lead a conversation. It will be informal. I do have a few questions already but you know how these things roll. It will take its own course.

I might start with you, Cathy. I'm going to ask a series of some questions and everybody has an opportunity to respond. It's a bit bright here, so let me pull this a bit closer. So I guess initially, for everybody, what is country and I've just taken a few moments to kind of unpack that just a little bit, not too much because we could be here for 65,000 years. Country is more than an idea of belonging. Country is integral to identity, culture, kin and custodial responsibilities. It's layered and embedded deep within that 65,000 years plus of ongoing cultural practice, sustainability and respect for all beings and all things.

Being on country is being on and in one's homelands, terrains, being with traditional owners and custodians of that specific landscape on that terrain. Being off country is living or residing or travelling through country away from one's homelands and living on another landscape.

So as we know, through our past histories and policies, not everybody has an opportunity to

grow up or be born on country, on their family's country. So being on country can take many different forms for people and what that means.

So just as a bit of background.

So as First Nations people from different homelands, how does our identity and cultural value change when we are on and off country? It's a pretty big one there, Cathy.

**CATHY CRAIGIE:**

I could probably go for 65,000 years on that question.

**SHARNI JONES:**

It will make the panel go quicker.

**CATHY CRAIGIE:**

Those who know me know that I usually don't need a microphone. I think - I mean I live in Sydney and I've lived in other parts of the world and in other parts of Australia over the times but my heart is in my country. I'm a Northern Tablelands girl. My mum comes off... grew up in Moree and it doesn't matter where I'm at I'm back in Moree several times of the year, sometimes longer than a couple of days, funerals things like that.

So that attachment is still there but I think for me the attachment is about - it's the way I conduct myself. It's the way I think, the perspective I have on life, it's very much a Gamilaroi perspective. I've spent a bit of time in the last two years. I've won a fellowship in 2016 and that fellowship was to look at the seven sisters story.

I'd been to Canberra and seen the exhibition at NGA and I thought nobody talks about our seven sisters. I spent the last couple of years, not just the fellowship time but the last five or six years travelling around country, looking at sites, talking to women in the community and working with a lot of young women.

I'm physically not here, although it's always home. The moment I come over those Liverpool Ranges I get a bit teary and I don't come to Tamworth, I turn off and go back to Moree. So just knowing that land and spending a fair bit of time.

We were up here just a couple of months ago on the seven sisters project and we did some fantastic trips. We went up to the top of Mount Kaputa, went out to Wallabada Rock, which I'd never heard of or seen before, because I'm over in the plains country, but the pull of that rock was so strong for all the women. The moment we saw it we realised it was something quite significant.

So, you know, I think, yeah, it would be great to live on country. Unfortunately I can't because I've got work and I've got children. But I've always had this really strong belief. My kids were all born on country. I made sure - I've always made sure that I've got my relatives and that around me. I've got a very big family. In fact, just sitting out the back, I said to Marc, what's your mob, and he told me. I said, "Guess what, we're the same family. We come off the same family." It doesn't matter at my age I'm still meeting cousins and relatives and I made this - yesterday we had a workshop with the girls that were in my in the play for the reading, some were Gamilaroi girls. When we started talking we realised there was about two degrees between all of us in the room.

Pete White's here somewhere and we belong to a Gamilaroi language group. I think at one

stage there was 70 people in our language group. So if you're looking for where the Gamilaroi people are, they're all in Sydney.

It's more a mindset. It's how you think trying to keep - immerse yourself in being from country and learning as much as you can. I guess the big thing is that whole thing about listening, thinking, and really looking.

I found this great quote that I've used in my play, I don't know where I've stolen it from, that says - it was describing a group of people that came to Australia, it said they had vision but they had no sight. That, to me, is exactly - gives you a bit of an angle on the different philosophies of how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people see things because we actually have sight and you can talk all you want about vision but you actually have to see what's happening around you.

**SHARNI JONES:**

Thanks, Cathy. So Mitch, if you want to introduce yourself and talk a little bit about yourself. I will ask you the same question as well and I will just repeat it so everyone knows where we're at.

As First Nations people from different homelands, how does identity and cultural value change when we're off and on country. So you're in Melbourne.

**MITCH TAMBO:**

My name is Mitch Tambo, proud Gomerioi land. Before I speak, I grew up in Tamworth but I'd like to acknowledge all our countrymen, our beautiful elders in the audience today and just thank you for everything that you've done for us so that we could be here today as young people in this position and be able to be on panels and speak openly about country and our experience because without you and your resilience, we wouldn't be able to be here today so thank you and I would just like to honour you and give you all that love and respect.

For me, in addressing the question, I grew up on country. Born in Sydney, but basically moved straight to Tamworth at 18 months old and was here until I was 22. I think in hindsight, looking back, maybe growing up on country you take for granted and you don't realise the significance and importance of growing up on country until you move away for a consecutive amount of years.

So I grew up alongside Marc. We started dancing together and I grew up very much a part of the whole journey of the unfolding of the Gomerioi Dance Academy, which was a real privilege for me. When I whole journey from a young age was just wanting to know who I am and where I fit and belong, which for a lot of our people we don't have the opportunity of growing up on country to explore that first hand. So for me I was fortunate that I could link in really quickly and start to obtain the essence of who we are as Gomerioi people.

I grew up around all the brothers like Marc and Uncle Roger, all the Knoxes that make up 99.9% of Tamworth and was able to learn who I am. I think as a young person, I believe, looking back, that you get called at a certain point in time of your life and when you get called home and get called to get that fire in your spirit ignited and once that is ignited you can't escape it.

For me, from about the age of 15, I would say that spirit in me was lit through song and dance and it's progressed and led me to where I am today.

But in terms of moving away from country, I think it's really easily - it's really easy to move away and become disconnected and forget and it's not until you sort of journey and realise, wow, I actually have to go home. I actually really need to go home and I don't need to go home next month, I need to go home now and I need to reconnect and understand who I am as a 28-year-old person, man.

So I went home, really quickly, and went back out to all our sacred places and started that journey of reconnecting.

In particular this year, I really understood what our ancestors have done for us and more so how we are connected to everything. We're connected to the constellations, the waterways, the land, the wind, the rain, whether we like it or not we're connected to the drought. We're connected to everything, and I remember going back home out Bogga and we camped and I just remember sitting with some of the brothers I was with and just around the fire and looking up into the stars and just like, wow. This is me.

No matter where I walk in this world, all I have to do is look up into the stars and know that I'm not alone. I think that's the power of country. It's the power of our culture and it's everything. And I think for a lot of our young people that live off country, that's the big lack there when we look at those representation and youth suicide and all those crazy things, it's being denied the right to come home and connect to who you are and fill up your cup and understand who you are.

I've been blessed because I've looked back and I thought wow, I was so blessed to grow up and have access and be part of the growth of the dance academy with Marc and all the brothers because that set the foundation. I was lucky to have a mother that pushed me into that. You need to know who you are because it's really stepped me up fundamentally to be in this position today.

My whole position today as an artist is to bring that, bring our culture, bring country into the now, bring it into 2020, if you like, and honour the essence of our law, honour the essence of our old teachings, but bring that into the contemporary space so we can sell brait - celebrate that so we can reach our youth.

Unfortunately our youth are influenced by America and very much Americanised. So I think for me, I feel like a part of our purpose is to bring culture into the now to engage and captivate our youth to go wow, that's - all of that's me. Those beats, those rhythms, that sound is me but that language, like that's me. And how can I do that? Well, the only way for you to do that my young brother or sister is to go home and know who you are comp you can learn that, that's yours, that's your birth right and you can make that whatever you wish it to be.

So in answering the question, you know, I think in order for us to function in a healthy way off country, we have to, at some point, go home and know what it's like to be on country and unfortunately not all of us as first nations people have that opportunity, to access language, to access law, access all those things. But we're really fortunate that we can come home to country, that our elders have been so resilient to keep our language and then give it when it's safe to give it so we can have dictionaries, phone apps and on country we can sit in community groups and learn our language. And access our culture. So we have the currency to be able to exchange with our youth and to fill their cup and to create a strong foundation so that when they do move away to pursue degrees in university, to become doctors, lawyers, to become artists, whenever they choose, they've got a strong foundation of who

they are and they know who they are at the essence, they know their identity, their belonging and connection and I think that's the foundation for our youth. Once you know that then you can go out into the world and be fruitful in whatever else you choose. So that's kind of what I'm about. Whether I answered the question or not, I'm sorry you had to sit through that.

(Laughter)

Marc, talk, brother.

SHARNI JONES:

We're always learning about who we are and our identity and that's exactly right, Mitch. We know for our young ones they need to be able to see that elders can come in many different forms and different ages and that reciprocity about knowledge sharing and giving and valuing our intellectual property and working with our old people to know who we are is what will take us into the future in being able to continue to grow and thrive and to have great role models such as yourself for young ones to look up and say I can have a life, this is about myself determining my future. My family may not have had that opportunity but I certainly can do that and that's great to have that inspiration and that aspiration. It's really important that they can see that there are other ways of being, knowing and doing in this world which is pretty hectic, as we know.

Before I move on to the next question, I'd really like, Marc, for you to talk about your own experience, how your identity and cultural value changes when you're on and off country.

MARC SUTHERLAND:

Thank you. I would like to start by (Speaks language) . following on from what everyone said, making sure I acknowledge the country we're on, the homelands of the Gomeroi people and pay my respects for everyone who has cared and continue to care for our country, including other elders here, other community members here and everyone who travelled and special mention to the elders from Wagga. I was able to dance at a corroboree down there last week. That was beautiful country. Thanks, everyone, for coming.

I've been fortunate to have been born on my country and lived majority of my life here too. So Mitch also touched on the point that for the first time in my family's history over the past few centuries, I have the freedom to access my culture. My parents didn't, my grandparents didn't, you know, so I'm really fortunate. We're benefactors of the tenacity and resilience of our families that have gone before us because without them, we wouldn't have this opportunity to get in the car and drive off missions and reserves and to leave town. It sounds absurd but our grandparents never had that opportunity. So I'm fortunate to be able to sit here today and share my opinions and have to pay that respect.

For me, being on country teaches me who I am. Uncle Roger sat down before and said the importance of listening. Sitting still and learning and we can - from observing and hearing our old stories and travelling country, we learn who we are, what our core values are, what does it mean to be a Gomeroi person. It means to be respectful, it means to show love and care for everything and it means to be humble. These three core values we can take them wherever we go.

Our stories, our different sites, every lesson, every dance, every song that we sing reinforces cultural values. Those values make us who we are and so we have the freedom to travel off country and still connect to our core identity. Because we're acting within integrity. We're acting knowing with our strong sense of self. Like Mitch was saying, you build that strong

foundation gives us the ability to be able to strive in a lot of different pathways. And that foundation is crucial and we learn that foundation by being on country.

In Gomeroi we have a word for home. But we have another word called (Language) which is our home. Isn't it curious that we have a different word for house than what we do for home. So when we're talking about country, we're talking about our (Language) our home country. It's not restricted to our house. We're talking larger than this. And that ba suffix, so any locals across the region might like know towns that end in that sound. In Gomeroi it means the time of or the place of without any reference to tense.

So it's not once was the place of, it's not is now the place of or is going to be the place of, it is the place of, forever. (Language) it's a our word for connection, our word for country. When we talk about our connection to country, how it's timeless, it's reflected in our language and the strong sense of self is taught through culture. So being on country or being off country shouldn't change the way that we act but I also pay respect that my family, my connection is around Tamworth.

Cousin is here, around New England too, but when I travel across country I make sure I contact the people in the community that are there and they take me out. So although Gomeroi country is big, Uncle Roger mentioned it earlier, it's bigger than Switzerland. So it's a big land mass so whenever I travel I call up the people that live out at Boggabilla and say we're coming up, can you take us out, even though I'm Gomeroi person and that's on country. Even though I'm on country it's making sure our cultural values shape our behaviour every day.

For me, it's a blessing to be able to have that benefit, to live on country and to pass that knowledge on because we're seeing the growth in young people every day and it really is creating positive change across community.

SHARNI JONES:

So leading on from you're talking about going on country with your traditional owners, with your knowledge, and that leads me to segue into what degree are we bound by protocols when we're on and off country? Do you want to continue with that, Marc?

MARC SUTHERLAND:

Yeah, for sure. Keep it rolling.

(Laughter)

So when we're talking about protocols, we're talking about rules. Important to understand that we have law, we have rules and these rules really ensure two things - environmental sustainability and social cohesion. And all of our rules are put in place to make sure that these things are always, and someone is responsible for these things and that everybody is accountable for these things. And it sounds crazy but Gomeroi country, it's all based around things on Gomeroi country. So we don't have any laws on Gomeroi country about octopus or sharks. Why wouldn't we have laws around sharks? We don't have sharks. So why would we fill our brain trying to attach positive behaviour to the things that we can't see or feel?

So everything that we can see and feel on Gomeroi country gives us our law, gives us our rules. So protocol is the behaviour we do to follow those rules.

So some protocols that we follow now throughout the community to make sure that safety is

always there. That acknowledgment and respects are paid and the right process is always followed. And these rules come from our country.

It's really important when we talk around Aboriginal culture and Gomeroi culture, we did not make it up, it was given to us so we can't change it. So this whole idea that our culture across the country is the law of the land, it has been given to us through ceremony, but it is not man made.

So, again, it puts this whole new perspective on this is the way that it is and it's been created so smart, who are we to change it? This is how cultures continue, this is how protocols have always been followed. So when we're on Gomeroi country it's important that we follow these protocols because these protocols aren't made up, they're extensions from the law that's always been given. Does that make sense?

CATHY CRAIGIE:

There are consequences for breaking the law.

SHARNI JONES:

Cathy, you wanted to add something.

CATHY CRAIGIE:

So just what Marc was saying. You know, in terms of protocols, it's not something that's set down on a piece of paper. It's not something that you are taught at school, it's something you're taught in your family and even, like, I have - I'm related to nearly everyone at Toomelah, but I still ask elders to come out, can I go, get permission. The same at home.

And I think if you've got that strong family connection, and as I said before, that we're about two degrees. So nearly every community in Gamilaroi you're going to find a Relo, your mother's cousin's sister's brother, that kind of stuff.

Something I was taught a long time ago and it's about respect. It's about respect in Aboriginal philosophy, the three sort of core things that I follow, or believe in, is respect the past, respect the future and respect the present. I said that the wrong way around but when I'm talking about that, respect is not just about each other and individuals, respecting the past is both understanding and respecting your cultural practices, your stories, your beliefs, your ancestors. You're also in respecting the present, it's about the way you relate to each other, your family, and how you live your life at the moment and respecting the future is about what are you going to do for the future. So things like the environment and that, you've got a responsibility in the present to move forward to the future and for our kids.

And it's unfortunate we're up here in a town that is on big water restrictions, Tamworth, and growing up in this area, the rivers used to be full. And it really is a shame that that has changed and Indigenous voices aren't being heard at all. And, yet, we sustained a country for thousands of years.

I think that's the point that I want to make is that when you - when they first - first contact happened in Sydney, and that that boat came up around the harbour, it was incredible because there were the Sydney people, the Dharug people were lined up along the cliffs singing out (Language) which means, go, piss off in other words. And yet they came in. Within the first couple of days, the first three days of the settlement there in Sydney Cove there was a real indication of how different these two peoples were. And the ones that really stuck with me was the first one in that first couple of days all the people, you know, the

people on the First Fleet were put into group, some had to go fishing, some had to go and start building shelter, so they all had roles.

And when they were chopping down the trees, this really loud whaling sound started m -- coming out of the bush and it was the women and the women were crying because their brother cousin sisters were being cut down. The English couldn't understand that. They got a little bit scared but couldn't understand. It didn't stop them from cutting anymore down. When it was explained to them you're cutting down my relatives they had no idea about that concept.

The other one happened a couple of days, not long after, actually . The fishermen brought in over 4,000 fish on a boat, Sydney Harbour would have been absolutely chockablock with fish. So they came in with 4,000 fish. For Aboriginal people that was a no-no. For someone like Barangaroo, who was a senior woman fisherman, it was an insult. But it was always a sign that their livelihood was about to go. This was the beginning of the end. In many ways a woman like Barangaroo objected to Western culture. She wouldn't wear clothes when she went to Government House. She went so there was those sort of things.

In fact, it was the women who kept the staunchness of trying to the protocols, the culture and the rules going.

The same with Gamilaroi. What I find is a lot of our people, and I'm not - I can't say names but I do have names in the back of my head, and it's not just Gamilaroi people. I'm not going to tell you but what they forget is this country is matriarchal. It follows a women's line and too often our women in Gamilaroi don't get heard. It's not their stories heard.

One of the reasons for that is when the explorers and different people came up through this country they were all men. They didn't talk to the women, they only talked to the men. So what they got is a male perspective and they took that to being similar to their patriarchal life or system where they came from so they followed that on and unfortunately a lot of our people have followed that on. When you see the state of some of our communities now with things like domestic violence, all these social things, they're not things that we brought about. They are things that were impacted on us by the difference in the way that he with -- we saw life.

It's that philosophy of life, when you say I want to immerse myself in Gamilaroi, you have to start going back to that and you have to start thinking.

One of the first things they did is we have to take male surnames. We never did that. You followed that mother's line. And Gamilaroi was very strong about that and, you know, in my stories, you know, and I was very lucky. I had a fluent - my grandmother was a fluent Gamilaroi speaker with Uncle Roger around, he grow -- knows, it's his aunty too. I also grew up in a very strong Aboriginal family and my family, the Cuttmores actually come from the... area and we actually roll all the way up to around Walcha because unbelievably, a white convict came out, a British convict came out in 1813 for stealing a hanky or something, married two Aboriginal women up there around Glenn Ines and had seven children and out of that seven children, ten years ago there was 3,500 Aboriginal descendants of that white convict. Today there's probably about 10,000, because our mob are big breeders. That's Marc's side too.

So, you know, if you're going to keep yourself on country you have to learn your history. You have it know your own history. I remember sitting in school in Moree being told that Captain

Cook discovered Australia. I went home and Mum said, "What did you learn today?" When I told her she used a few words I can't repeat here and she was up the school the next day telling them that was total bullshit.

So if you're going to live it, you have to live it. It can't be just a thing you do 9:00 to 5:00. It can't be just to do it to get money if you want to perform or speak, you've got to immerse yourself in and it's about that respect and I look around now today and I see - and this is no thing on young people but I see a lot of our elders being demoted in their wisdom because we have people that go to Uni's, we have people that go to this and they think that after three years they've got it all.

You can't tell me that social worker that can go to uni for three years, can come out and work with people on the street, that have been on the street for, you know, a long time or are drug addicts because three years is not enough. It's about wisdom and wisdom comes with age.

We've also got to remember the role of women in Gamilaroi and a lot of our men don't. They take the role as the leader and that, in our culture - when you hear these stories about women weren't allowed at the Bora, it was the women in Gamilaroi who prepared the men who chose the boys, prepared the men. They were the ones who led them there and then they were the ones who when they came out of that, they were the ones who looked after them. They also chose who they married. So the women played a significant role and sometimes we get a little bit carried away with that patriarchy system and think that - and a lot of our men do this - hope there's none in the room. I hope all your Gamilaroi men are very strong about your sisters but that's the sort of stuff I see and I think that's the stuff that we have to keep putting back to our kids to learn that respect.

With all the policies, government policies that have been put on our people, and they start at day one. When that fishing boat came in, a new law was made and that was so Aboriginal people couldn't do that fishing. So right from the start that's happening.

You come up here to country and you see the rivers with no water and yet you know they were always full. My mum told me the river in Moree used to flood every February, it was like clockwork and every couple of years there would be a big flood to clean out the river. Those things don't happen anymore.

Your local politician, your federal one, that man who is, you know, informing us all about the drought by text, mind you. Did anyone read that? He hasn't actually put a report in, it's all been on text.

But one of the things I laugh about this Australian Government, I wonder where Australians are going. One of the answers is let's put dams in. And I looked at my old aunties and they all went "You've got to have water to have dams." So when you start to think in a different way, and this is what I was talking about, you have to immerse yourself in this way of thinking, it's hard to do sometimes because the comforts of Western culture and that we all love it. I don't know if I could go without my heater, there's a few things I couldn't go without, including nice shoes. Can't have it all.

But we've got to get back to that sort of thinking and my thinking, and if you look at Indigenous history throw the world and you look at world history, we're in a crisis. And it's not just about climate change, we're in a cyclic crisis between good and bad or right and wrong and you have to go back to those people who really knew how to look after the land and Bruce Pascoe book, Dark Emu, through all the they came here from somewhere else or they

didn't have fences, they didn't have - they didn't look like an English town so that was the reason why they said we didn't have - there was no-one here and they said terra nullius.

But when you look at Bruce Pascoe's book, when you read it, this happened all around here, we actually were. We were already nurturing the land, we were already practising agriculture but in a different way. And, you know, when with you were talking before, I thought of Uluru and I thought of all that ridiculousness that has gone on in the last couple of months once it was announced that Uluru was going to close. That decision was made years ago.

But look at all those idiots who turned up there in droves. They were like little ants going up a mountain and then you had the biggest one of all going up and then she fell over. But, you know, and that to me was the Murrays were telling them, doing something.

But when you look at that, they don't see the significance because it wasn't man built. If we went down and started climbing over the beautiful church down here in West Tamworth, or went up to St Mary's in Sydney, look at that when any of the climate activists climb the Opera House, the criticism that goes on. Yet, non-Aboriginal people felt it's OK, because what was one man actually said I have a birth right. And it's that arrogance, because for me, people think it's confidence but sometimes confidence is actually arrogance or it's ignorance and it's that stuff that has made this country a bit of an unhappy place for Aboriginal people.

Even, I mean the sort of rules and policy, what about in the Territory in the last two weeks, they wanted to put a fine over people who didn't bury their people in a cemetery or didn't have a license. Where did that leave Aboriginal people?

So you can see how we are always working against a system that is trying to always put us down and there's reasons for that. There's big legal reasons and there's cultural reasons, but if everybody that lives in this country should be a custodian because you're living here. So it shouldn't just be about Aboriginal people. You have a responsibility to follow those rules and I think it's one of the reasons why I wanted to pursue the seven sisters story.

I know all you men have got stories but to me the seven sisters story is the key story. It's the main story. It's the only universal story in the whole world. Every continent has it, every Indigenous group has a story about what the seven sisters did. So in my research over 20 years, what I found is it's a guide for women, of how women should live their life.

That's probably the point I want to make to - my first point is - with this is to educate Gamilaroi women, not the world. The world should come in later. But we've got a responsibility to start healing our own and to do that we've got to go back to culture.

So, you know, I mean there's protocols and stuff, they're so complex there's always different sort of ways -

SHARNI JONES:

I opened a can of worms here.

CATHY CRAIGIE:

You did, I was getting angry. Everyone knows when a black woman gets wild...

SHARNI JONES:

I done won't know, Mitch, if we want to continue on with the protocols, but what I want to do ask you is how is your professional practice influence ed by working away from home, so

working on country and off country, and you spoke a bit about this earlier, how do you nurture your own wellbeing when you're living off country, especially for long durations of time.

MITCH TAMBO:

Am I speaking now? OK.

CATHY CRAIGIE:

It's your 20 minutes now.

MITCH TAMBO:

I'll make it quick. As an artist and someone that lives away, for me, what I was saying before you live away and then you feel called to come back. I think also when you make the choice to make culture your life and the really is you're going to make money off it, I ask myself the question straight away and that was are you going to be authentic or not because if you're going to be authentic you have to go home and you have to go home regularly and make sure you're home at ceremony, certain events, corroborees, every, you have to go home. You have to be there present to learn and understand who you are first and foremost.

In our teaching we have (Language) that is you have to self-love, self-care, understand who you are and let that flow out into your family and let that flow out into your community and the only way to do that is to go home and heal and understand who you are.

As an artist, or just as a person, I knew I have to go home. I can't be writing songs and I certainly can't be in school educating kids and staff and lecturer s about the importance of culture if I'm not first and foremost going home and upholding our protocol.

I think as someone who has grown up very much culturally, but also in the Western world, we have so many different protocols and ways of being and it's how you articulate that in an authentic way.

For me, I think once you go home, and you continually go home and you understand that, and you reconnect with self, you carry that anywhere with you in the world. As I said before, you can look at the stars but you also start understanding how to self-care and self-manage and keep connected.

For me, when I go home, I always bring (Language) back and that's what we smoke with, it's our sandalwood. So I make sure if I'm going through things and feeling down and disconnected, that I might not necessarily feel to smoke myself but I will have it burning in the backyard and sit and smell country and put myself back home and top myself back up.

In terms of staying connected, for me that's about writing. I write about country, I write about my experience. I do that because I feel called to do that, that's how my writing happens.

I put out a song recently I did on TV and it was all in language and the essence of the song was written all about country and my interpretation of country and how I carry that with me and I feel like country is the only place I go where I feel my heartbroken open and my sort of healing in my life happening. As the cockatoos sing on sunset, the skies light -- stars light the sky with different stories. And the chorus and break my heart open, break - break my heart open set my spirit free with love.

The essence of country is love, it's an abundance of unconditional love. When you go and sit

on country and you hear it all the time with our people, people that were stolen or people that never got to grow up on country, it's also the same dialogue. It's just this feeling I can't describe. When I'm on country or when I first went back to country it's just this feeling I can't describe it. I can't tell you what it is.

Even for me, I grew up in Tamworth, but as soon as we start driving out to bog a and I get to a certain place, something in my spirit changes. I have this unsaid, unconscious connection to my country out there. My spirit, all of a sudden it's just like I exhale. Wow, I feel at peace and it's crazy because I grew up in Tamworth. Tamworth's my home, it's where I spent all my years but when I go to Napa, something else happens to me and I think in being able to travel onto country and experience that, that's where you carry with you when you're off country.

Carry that with you off country in a deeper respect and regard and the way I talk about country and feel about country when I'm off country is totally different to when I'm on it because when I'm on country I feel it's a self-care, self-healing journey and the way my spirit here is way different. When I'm off country, I'll talk about country like you wouldn't believe it. When I'm here I find myself being really still and quiet. I'm really appreciating the cockatoos singing, really appreciate ing seeing the... up in the Warrnambool.

There's a deep thing that happens in my soul. When I'm off country I'm like you wouldn't believe it. But it's how you carry the two and that's the only way I can describe. I don't think there's a one-fix answer. I'm sure Marc's answer and aunt's answer is different to mine because how we experience country is totally different and I believe we're guided in different ways to receive different levels of healing off country at different points in our life.

Marc felt what I felt at 29 when he was 10. You don't know because we're called at different times when we're ready.

**SHARNI JONES:**

Marc, I wanted to ask you, particularly with your work working with young people, how do you fulfil your cultural - your custodianship responsibilities and that intergenerational relationship you have? Sorry, it's a loaded question.

**MARC SUTHERLAND:**

With great pressure. The fact that cultural knowledge has been able to be passed down to me and my generation is remarkable. We've touched on it before. The fact that we've still got this makes it so much particular -- more value in that sense and something to be shared with me or be shared - Mitch does a lot of work working with young people also and Aunt too. There's a lot of people in this space that are working with young people and the pressure is that we do things the way it's always been done. That we stay authentic, we stay true. That we don't try to obscure things and when we're working with young people that, you know, for me, I've worked in this space working with young people, the call really is to go into a school or a place for half an hour and work with 400 kids and expect some kind of impact. I'm sure a few people have received the same kind of weird scenario. That everyone's going to get a small taste of Aboriginal culture once a year and it's going to change their life.

It does give them a little bit of an understanding but what we're able to do here in Tamworth, we start up our own program called the Gomeri Cultural Academy where we take a group of young people who are really keen and spend every week with them and invest as much time, love, effort and energy into that small group as we can. That way we can guarantee that that integrity is never faltered. We can make sure that when we want to talk around the

lagoon we drive them out and they talk to people there. When they want to talk about Kaputa we drive there.

When Kelsey was on the panel, we go out and see Tom Barker, her dad, who teaches how to wood carve. It's about getting on the bus and making sure we learn this - things the way it's supposed to be taught. We want to create a space where this is happening in an authentic way, some things need to change. We need to be able to motivate and create that change because we know the way that things are happening at the moment isn't quite having the impact that we really desire.

Unfortunately, in a lot of that space, Aboriginal people have been left out of the planning for the way that it's been programmed and the community are saying "We know how this work - works". It's been working for a long time. So now it's great to see we're able to get in the space to advocate and create that change, to create the programs that we know work because it's the way that it's always been.

Whenever we're working with young people I think that integrity is core and central to our motivation.

SHARNI JONES:

Thank you. So, Cathy, because you're probably - because you're probably the one as well ---

CATHY CRAIGIE:

Don't get me going.

SHARNI JONES:

We live in a global society where life in the fast track can be pretty tough and we all desire at the end of the day our chai lattes. How do you find balance when you're off country. You've lived a significant part of your life in Sydney, off country. So what nurtures you, who nurtures you?

CATHY CRAIGIE:

I think it's family. I have a huge family. Every second person I meet is my cousin. But, yeah, I think that's what sustained -- sustains you and that's how I learn. It's about sitting around and listening to other people in your family and you learn a whole lot of stuff.

There's obviously family I don't know. Because our families are so big. But that's what nurtures you and brings you back. When I go home to Moree, you know, and we've known each other for a long time, I've headed up government departments and stuff, but when I go home I'm just another person, another part of the family. I'm not that person who is making the decision on where the money goes or stuff like that.

So it's really - it's quite humbling. And you go home and you know that, you know, your brothers and sisters are going to treat you like they treated you when you were a kid, shit. I mean, it's great, it's happiness because you're in a comfort zone and you feel like this is it and it's what you were saying, when you come home it's a different feeling than big anywhere else.

So, you know, I guess that's what it is. It's knowing that you've got people there who have got the same connections as you, have got the same histories, . Probably had a lot of the same problems as you, there's so many commonalities. I love going home.

I think the older you get, the more you see a lot of things that you didn't see and you want to sort of come back and look at some of those things that you might have been shown when with you were a kid.

I grew up in such a fantastic family. They're not all fantastic but my grandparents were. My old nan, well, you know, I've got some - from your side. But, yeah, no, my nan and pop, you know, on my dad's side and my on my mum's side, when they pass you down that information. And my mum was one of those people who always made sure we knew who we were and who your cousins were, who your relatives, you know. In other words, you can't marry anyone here, you've got to go to Western Australia.

SHARNI JONES:

That's right. Thank you, Cathy . I've got lots of family all over Australia and my mum has two remaining sisters, one of the eldest is 86 and the other one is in her early 70s and I've been fortunate to go to the festival in the last two years and I have to see the aunties.

I'm there and I didn't have a lot of time and I went to see one aunty and the next one because it's such a joy to be connected to family, even if you're across distances because of what has happened through the evolution of, you know, colonisation and settlement.

When my aunty rings me out of the blue and she's like just know that I love you and I'm thinking of you and we're there for you. Family is important to the soul.

Mitch, before we have that last couple of minutes, is there anything else you wanted to comment on about country and being away from home or about what else it means to you?

MITCH TAMBO:

I'd just say for me, in particular, you know, country is everything and that's really it. And although as a young person I may have took it for granted, in hindsight, I look back and go it was the best childhood whatever because I got to grow up every day and look at those clouds and that sunset. I had a mother that nurtured and supported my whole journey and pushed me to engage in all those things.

So I think it's a beautiful thing but I was so privileged to take it for granted. As you all know, so many of our young people don't have that opportunity at all. They come from long lines the stolen gen and grew up in --- suburbia and won't know for a long time who they are.

For me, it's been everything, and because I had that foundation, thankfully after being away from home for four or five year, I felt it in my spirit to come home and engage with that. When I came back I was like - I swear the family and everyone is looking at me like a big tourist. People want to know what this looks like, this is amazing. It was funny because all of a sudden you appreciate everything to the max. You're reconnecting with brothers like Marc, Marc, do you think you can bring me some ochre to take back. That's what we do, trade ochre out of the back of the car.

It's like I'm on Wurundjeri country in Melbourne but that ochre is not mine. I need to wear that when I dance because that's from my country. We don't smoke with gum leaves, so no point me burning that in the backyard. So as an artist or even if I wasn't doing this, to sustain ourselves we must be connected to country, so let our spirits sing and let our spirits soar and let it heal we must have an understanding of who we are, where we come from and let it fit. That comes from our elders, our family, our law keepers, our old people who hold those stories. To access them it's not a phone call, "I'll tell you but I'll tell you when you're back on

country."

I was that hungry to come back and the uncle said, "The thing about you is you're greedy." I was like this is left field, I thought I was alright. He said, "Because you want everything yesterday. It doesn't work that way."

**CATHY CRAIGIE:**

That's called young people.

**MITCH TAMBO:**

But it's called the Western world 2019-20. Everything is yesterday. Unfortunately for us as young people we're pushed and under these pressures but our lore doesn't work that way. We're only given things when we're ready and we're only ready once we start to make that journey back home and we start to sit and be still and we start to listen.

I didn't realise I was being watched and then it was ages after all the boys "Yeah, bro, you've come such a long way, we were all talking about you. You weren't ready yet." Not talking about the coat, not superficial. All in the heart and spirit and the old people watch that and they watch how you move and how you feel and where you're at. It just blew me away because sometimes you may feel alone in the journey or whatever but the thing is, us as young people we are all being watched and our journey's all being totally documented and when you make that journey home, things happen that you just - it just blew me away out of this world.

So at the end of the day, in summary, it's just country's everything. Our community's everything, family's everything. That's what makes up who we are. And I know that in my journey, it's not about me. There's nothing about the journey that is to do with me. It's about everything that's brought into me, everyone that supports me and been patient and loving and kind and caring to me and more often than not that's my immediate family and all my countrymen that have been on the journey and supported it. And that comes from me being blessed to grow up on country. It probably didn't make sense but that's what it is to me.

**SHARNI JONES:**

They're with us always.

(Applause)

We are over time. Unless Marc wants to make a final comment ----

**MARC SUTHERLAND:**

A quick shout out to Amy Hammond. She's my fiancée. And the women at... who wove that turtle when we all walked in. I've had that in the backyard being sewn together for a couple of weeks. To see the amount of women from across the region who have contributed their first piece of weaving for generations and to look at that now is really special. Wanted to make sure I gave a shout out to them women.

**SHARNI JONES:**

Please thank all of our panel members, Cathy, Marc and Mitch. Thank you.

**ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):**

Thank you, Sharni. Thank you, Marc, thank you, Cathy, and thank you, Mitch. I think it's been this morning the theme of on country/in country respect for country that deepens

knowledge of arts culture and regional practice, I think has been really, really thoroughly covered. I hope we have all learned, I know I have learned heaps and enormously thankful and grateful to all our speakers in this first plenary session who have shared their stories and such personal stories from their lived experience.

Just to let you know that Cathy Craigie will be presenting her creative development in collaboration with Katie Leslie later this afternoon at the Chapel Theatre and that's in the Tamworth Conservatorium of Music at 3:45. This is the epic seven sisters song line that she said she's been working on.

The afternoon sessions will commence promptly at 2:00. There are still tickets available if you want to have one-on-one conversation - a small conversation at the author's cafe for both today and tomorrow. A reminder that the echo dying workshop is at the Regional Gallery which will take you a few minutes to walk down Peel Street. It's the shadiest walk to get there.

Break with Bach is a string quart either and they will be playing in the lunch hour today with musician Iris Redmond and Eden Waters. We thank the Tamworth Conservatorium for providing our musical interludes --- interludes.

The dinner is now sold out. You will not be admitted to the bus or on to the site unless you have one of these orange tickets. This is to do with the security and us doing a road closure and having an event in a public space. If you have registered online and you have an Eventbrite ticket you will need to exchange it for one of these orange ones. I'm going to tell you every break. Need to have one of these. If you don't have one of these you don't get in.

Please be aware the wonderful people wearing yellow T-shirts are our volunteers. Please be nice to them. We could not stage ArtState without them.

Finally a reminder the exhibitions at the gallery will be officially opened at 5:15 this afternoon by the parliamentary secretary for the arts, the Honourable Ben Franklin.

Please enjoy the arts program this evening. If you are planning to go to Kinky Boots, show your delegates tag at the box office to get your discount if you haven't already booked online.

So that's the end of our first session. Enjoy lunch. We'll see you - enjoy your afternoon program. We'll see you all back here starting on time at 9:00 tomorrow morning. So don't stay too late at the festival club. Thank you all very much.