

djrd
architects

Cowra Hospital Redevelopment

Connecting with Country
Response to Walking Country

May 2022

djrd

GWPM

NSW
GOVERNMENT

Health
Infrastructure

NSW
GOVERNMENT

Health
Western NSW
Local Health District

Afukkari - Artwork by Niwili White Forrest, DJRD

Desktop Research

Preparation for Walking Country

Cowra is located in the southern Riverina, on Wiradjuri Country, the largest Aboriginal nation in NSW. The Wiradjuri People are the people of the three rivers - the Wambool (Macquarie), the Calare (Lachlan) and the Murrumbidgee. The Wiradjuri totem is the gugaa or goanna.

English Explorers Burke and Wills crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813 following an ancient walking trail which became the Great Western Highway. The European settlers that followed commonly built their homesteads and towns on Aboriginal campsites and there became fewer and fewer places for Aboriginal people to live. So started a history of violence and dispossession. From the 1890s many surviving Wiradjuri were placed on reserves and missions and subjected to control by government regulations and bureaucracy.



CITIES & TOWNS

- 1 Cowra
- 2 Bathurst
- 3 Orange
- 4 Dubbo
- 5 Wagga Wagga
- 6 Katoomba
- 7 Sydney

RIVERS

- A Calare / Lachlan
- B Murrumbidgee
- C Wambool / Macquarie
- D Darling
- E Murray
- Great Western Highway

WIRADJURI LANGUAGE

Key Phrases

- Yindyamarra - *respect*
- Yamandhu marang? - *Are you well?*
- Ngawa baldhu marang - *Yes I am well*
- Yanhanhadu mudy - *Goodbye friend*
- Ngadu nguna ngindhubirr
- guambangalang ngurangbangdhu - *I offer you a warm welcome to my Country*
- baladu ngagarra ngindugirr
- yindyamarra ngina garaay baladugirr
- garaaydya - *ask you to respect the land on which you stand*



Desktop Research

Preparation for Walking Country

Cowra means rocks in Wiradjuri.

The Aboriginal community of Cowra and Erambie Researve have a proud history of cultural strength, pride and respect for the Wiradjuri people as custodians of the land.

Erambie Mission, on the banks of the Lachlan River 2.5km from Cowra was a mission started by the residents of Cowra around the turn-of the twentieth century, to remove Wiradjuri people from the vacinity of the town.

Local people with the family names of Murray, Coe, Ingram, Bamblett, Simpson, Williams, Newton, Carroll and Kennedy have traditional links to the original families of Erambie and the Wiradjuri land around Cowra.

The Wiradjuri language is being taught in Cowra schools with traditional knowledge holders sharing their stories and skills.Language is an important and strong link to ancestral heritage.

There are a number of cultural groups in Cowra including the Wagambirra Dance Group and Dinawan’s Connection.

Cowra Local Aboriginal Land Council (CLALC) - 02 6342 32 59

IMAGES

- 1 Rocks on Bellevue Hill
- 2 Mural on the pylons of the Lachlan River road bridge by Kym Freeman
- 3 Wagambirra Dance Group
- 4 Founded by the Erambie community in early 1950s & moved to Cowra in 1987
- 5 People at Erambie in 1937



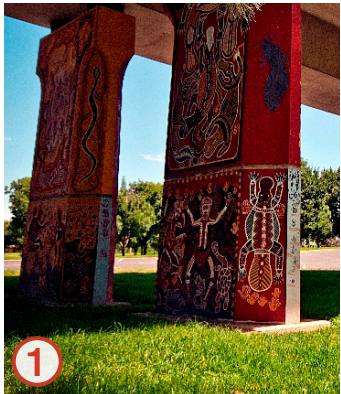
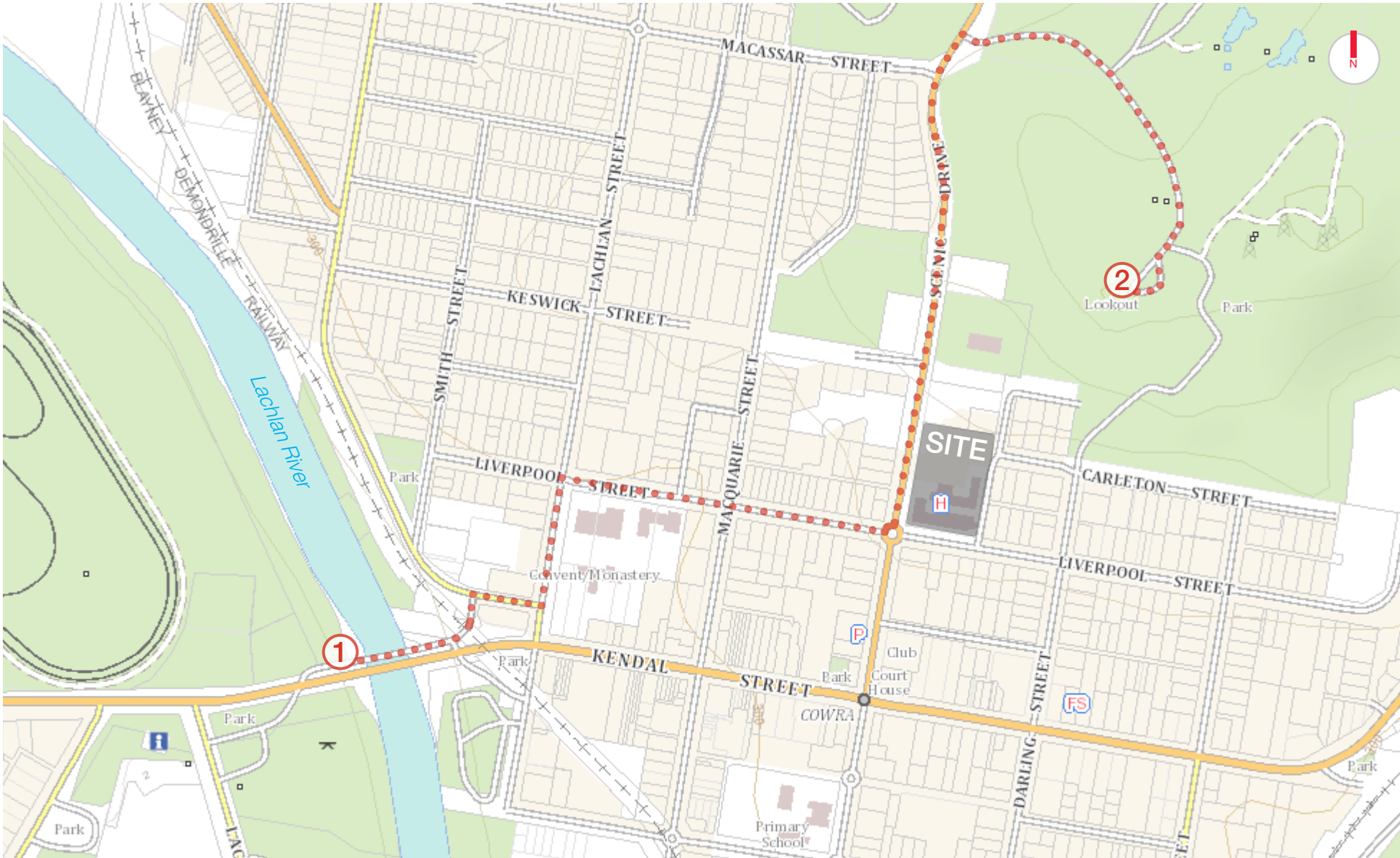
Walking Country

Synopsis

On the 24th of March 2022, DJRD was invited to join Aunty Esther Cutmore, a Wiradjuri elder in Cowra and Albert Murray, a Wiradjuri man and Deputy Principal of Cowra Public School, to walk Country. They were accompanied by two aboriginal health workers, Kelly Ashe & Warren Williams. Also in attendance were Site Image, CWPM and several representatives from HI NSW and Western NSW LHD.

The group met under the Lachlan River Bridge, its pylons are covered in murals by Aboriginal artist Kym Freeman that tell the story of the Wiradjuri people. We walked down towards the river, alongside the old low level bridge and gathered to listen to Aunty Esther and Albert Murray. This discussion covered a range of cultural lessons, including the importance of the river, the uses of local plants, the history of Cowra, the Erambie mission and the treatment of Ingidenous people in the town. These lessons are outlined and explored in the following section.

After this, the group drove up past the existing Hospital building to Bellevue Hill (known as Billy Goat Hill by locals). From the vantage point of the lookout, we were able to speak to the Country in a broader sense, pointing out key locations which sparked conversations on Cowra's history and further back to the Wiradjuri history and the significance of landforms.

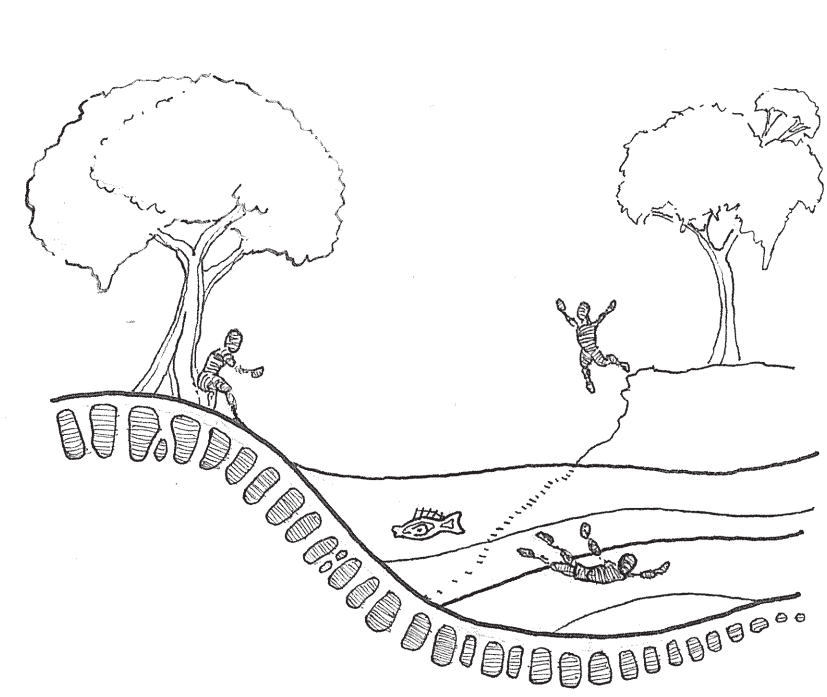


Walking Country

Lessons Heard on Country

The River has always been important

- Wiradjuri means 'people of the three rivers'
 - The Wambool - Macquarie River
 - The Kalari/Calare - Lachlan River
 - The Murrumbidgee - Murrumbidgee River
- In traditional times as a life source, providing fresh water and food.
- Wiradjuri would always set up camp near the river
- Fish and yabbies as a staple of the diet
- In and the past through to modern times, as a gathering place
- The river was also central to trading within and between groups



Swimming Holes

- A place where kids would go and hang out all day
- Kids have always swum in the river, still do today

Language

- Cowra is believed to come from the Wiradjuri word, Ngoura/Coura meaning 'many rocks'
- Language is a key part of culture, carrying stories tradition and lessons over generations.



When the Dam cut the River

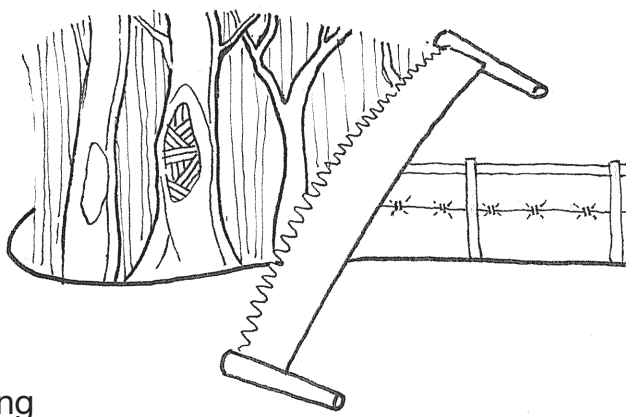
- 1928 - 1935 saw the construction of the Wyangala Dam at the confluence of the Lachlan River and Abercrombie Rivers. The once clear water of the Lachlan River became murky and is often this way today

Traditional Tools

- Evidence of bark removal for the crafting of a Coolamon was evident on a mature gum tree near the Cowra Bridge
- Coolamons are used to carry bush tucker, water, fire. Kangaroo skin is laid in when the are used to carry babies.

Birds

- Cockatoo, and birds generally hold significance



Land Clearing

- Traditionally, aboriginal people have an understanding of balancing the ecosystem, not taking too much from one area so it is able to replenish itself.
- Over time traditional foods were replaced by agriculture and the presence of bush tucker has diminished due to the mass clearing of lands
- Significant sites and scar trees were also likely destroyed by logging and clearing. These marked trees were a significant Wiradjuri tradition - signifying a burial place.

Walking Country

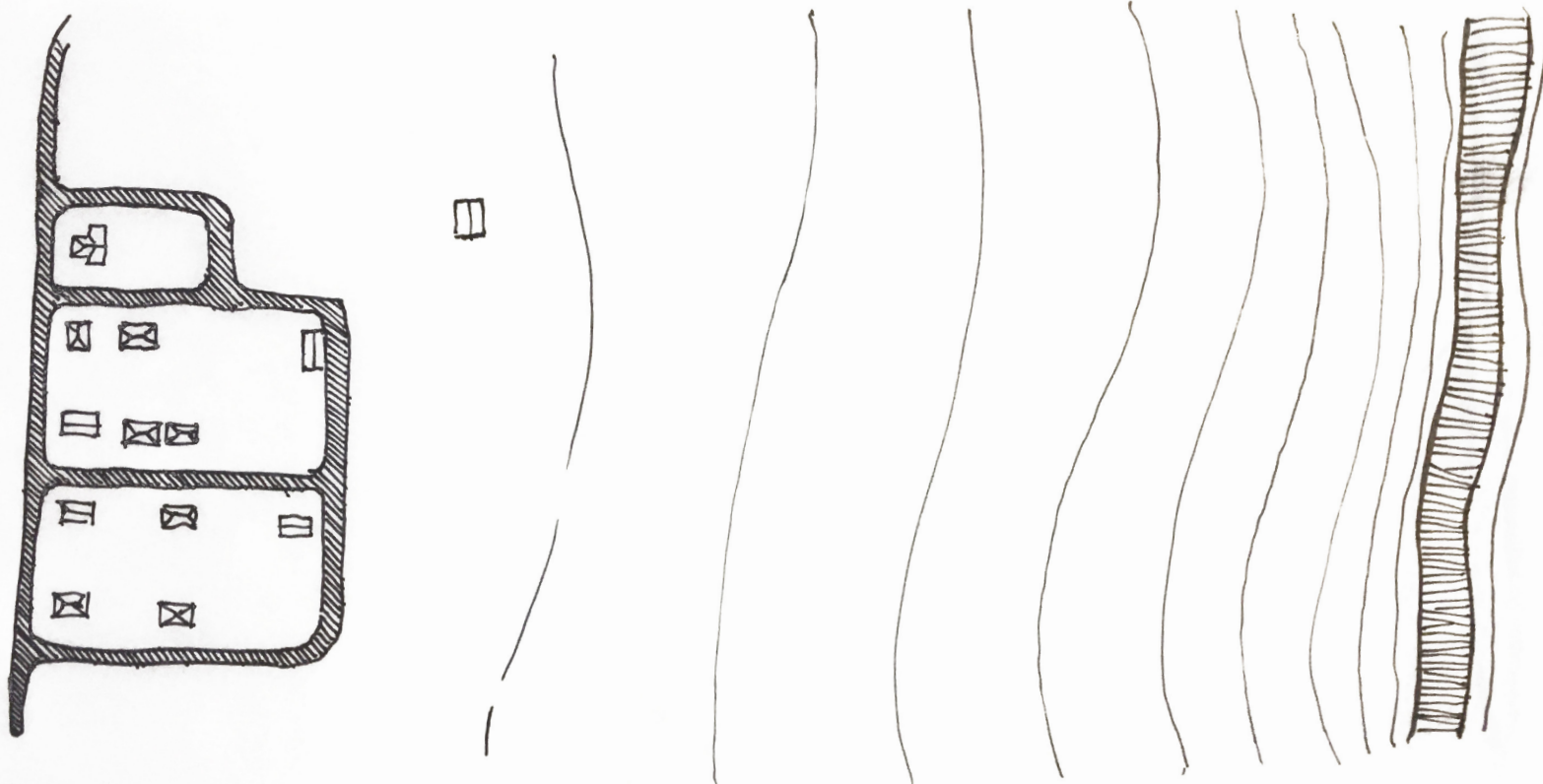
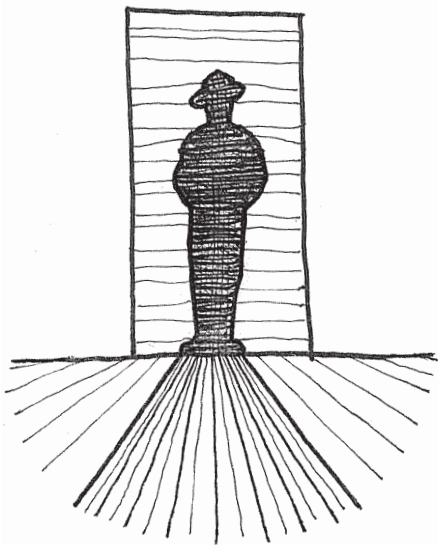
Lessons Heard on History

Erambie Mission

- The Erambie mission was set up by the NSW Aborigines Protection Board by 1937
- Three streets make up the mission, positioned on a hill near the western bank of the Lachlan river - home to a large portion of Cowras roughly 700 aboriginal people
- Originally the mission was made up of three houses, corrugated iron, dirt floors, two windows and one shared tap which families would use to do their washing

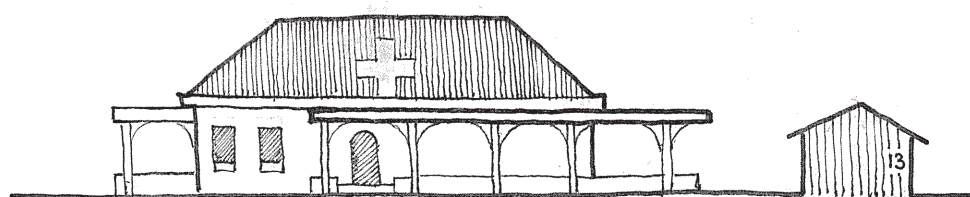
The Manager

- The everyday life of Aboriginal families was controlled until 1964
- A weekly inspection was undertaken by the Manager of the mission
- Wages, Pension and Child payments were controlled by the Manager
- The manager controlled the distributuion of rations; flour, sugar and tea - meat once a week
- To leave the mission, people needed an exeption from the Manager - a pass out
- Needed permission to play sports & expected to come staright back to the mission afterward, 'loitering' was punished



Room 13

- In the old Hospital, room 13 was the indigenous ward, segregating them from non-indigenous patients. White and black babies were also separated.

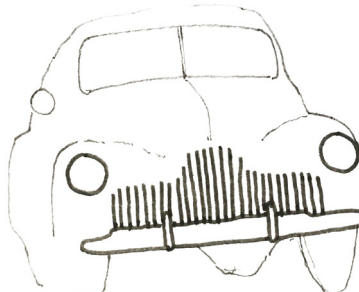


Town

- In town, the Publican could choose who to serve
- Police harrasment of Wiradjuri people wosened in the mid 1950's as they were seen as a threat to the established order (Wiradjuri Heritage Study)

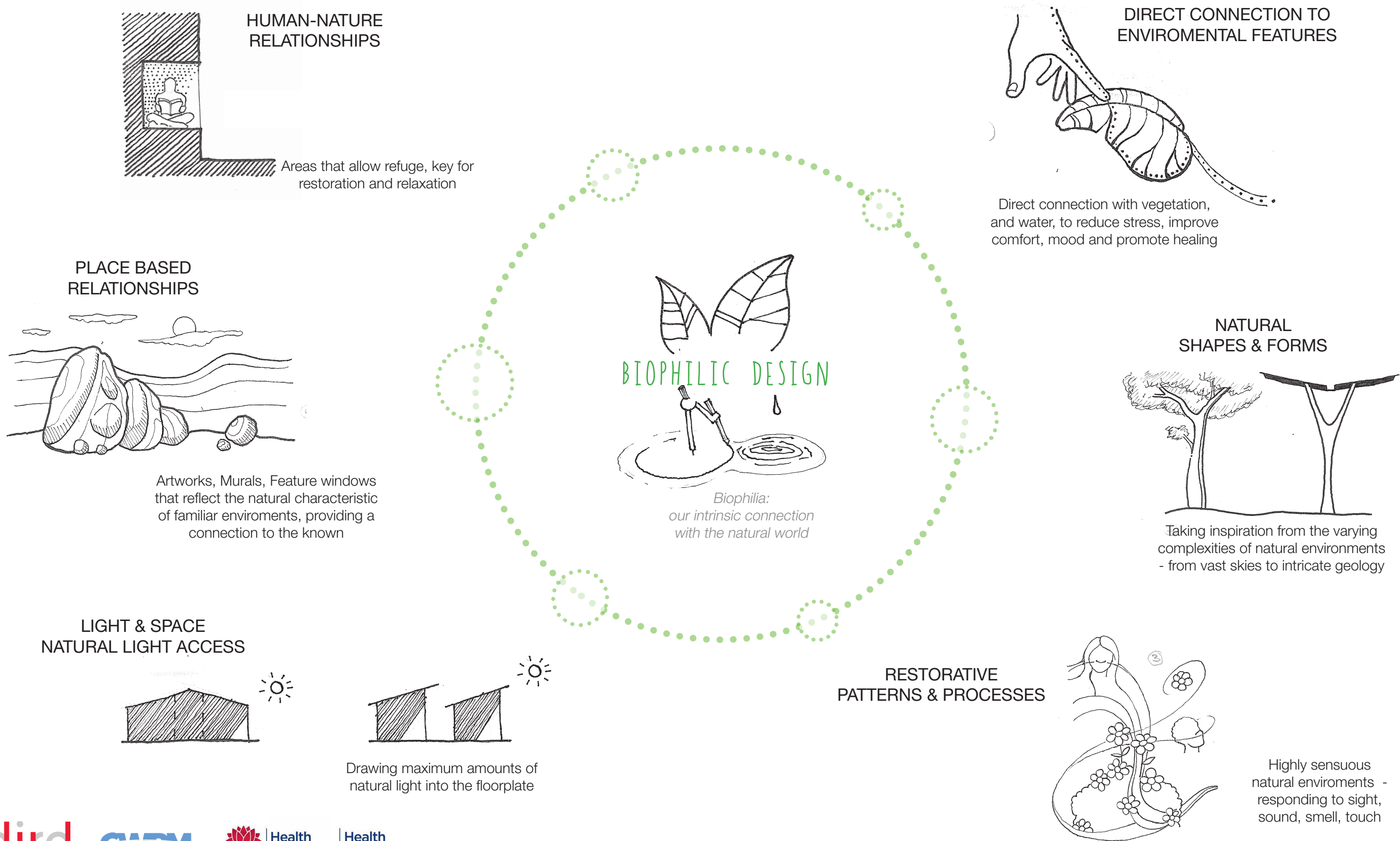
The Black Car

- Children were forcibly removed from their families under the white Australia policy - a part of the Stolen Generation
- Families would hide their children when the Black Government car approached
- Childrens from Cowra were taken to Cootamundra 120km or Bomaderry 330km and had their names changed to prevent families from tracking them down
- Parents who were serving during the war would return to find their childrn missing, never to be seen again

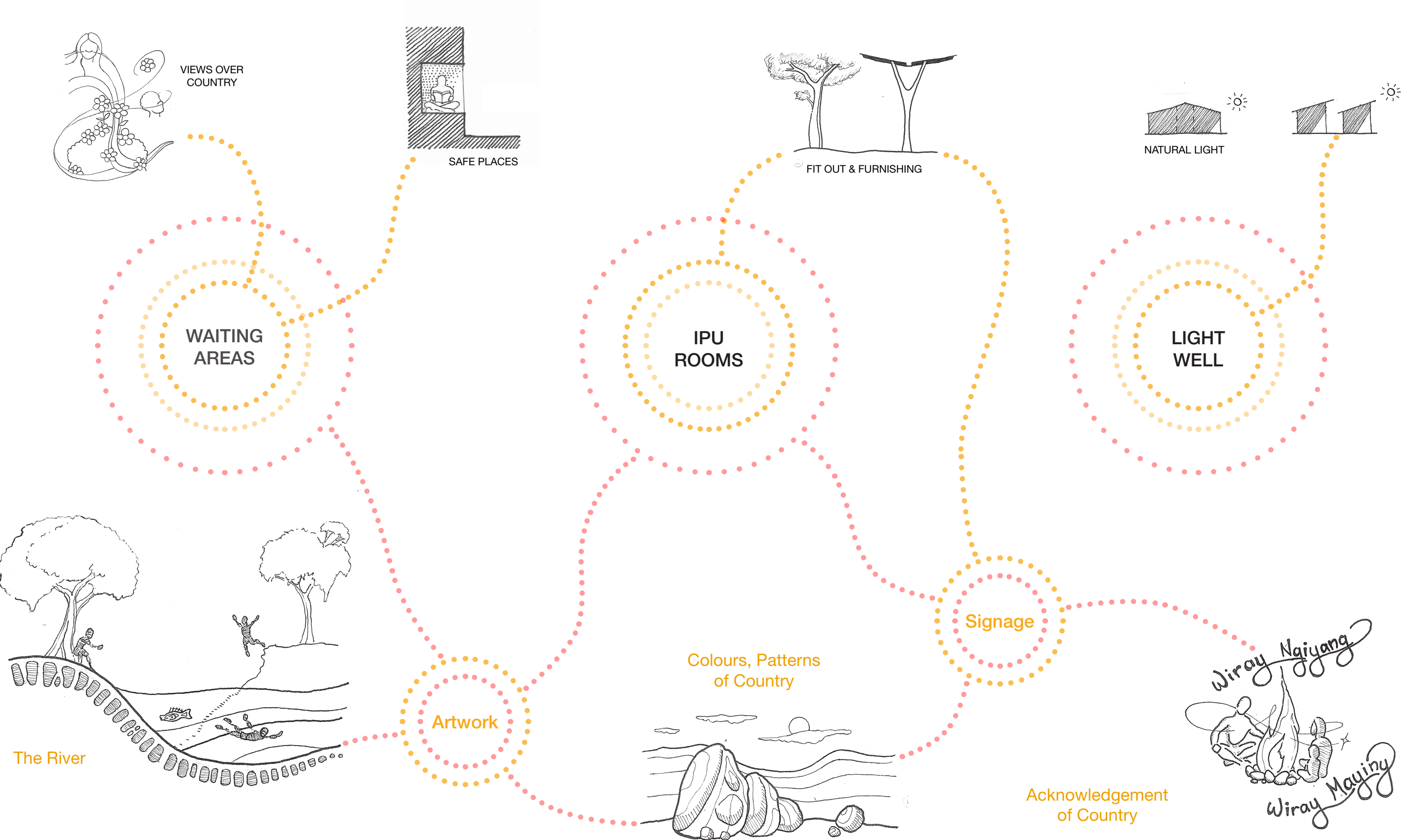


Connecting with Country

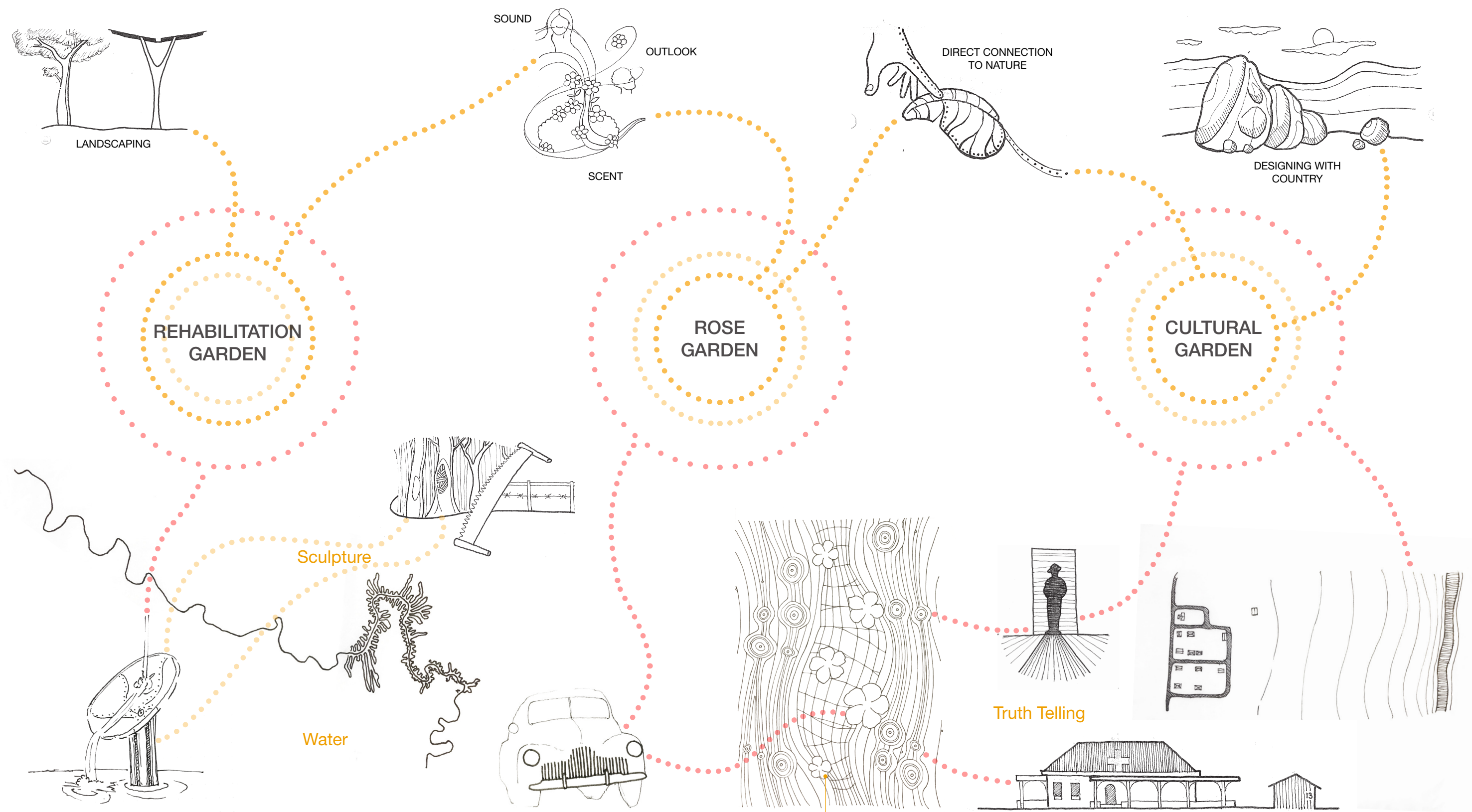
Biophilic Design



Connecting with Country
Conceptual Approach - Interior Spaces



Connecting with Country
Conceptual Approach - Landscape Spaces



Connecting with Country

Presenting back Lessons Heard

Aboriginal Design Reference Group

SESSION 01

Cowra Information & Neighbourhood Centre

2pm - 3pm, Thursday 21st of July, 2022

Attended by:

DJRD, Hospitals Infrastructure, Western NSW LHD

Aunty Esther Cutmore, Warren Williams, Kelly Ashe

(Apologies: Albert Murray)

- Welcome to Country from Aunty Esther (Cowra LALC)
- Introductions, DJRD explained their framework, where we are at in the process and what the intended outcome of Connecting with Country work is.
- Explained that the package was a working document to be commented on and edited by these members of the community
- DJRD presented Connecting with Country package including background research, walking Country, lessons heard and first thoughts.
- Overall, a positive response to the work presented from both Aunty Esther and Warren
- No futher additions to the package were recommended
- Aunty Esther approved of cover artwork used in package
- Due to the distressing nature of the topic, we discussed the idea of including the Native Hibiscus as the commemorative flower for the Stolen Generation. Aunty Esther, Wayne and Kelly supported this idea

SESSION 02

Online meeting - Microsoft Teams

10am - 11am, Tuesday 13th of September, 2022

Attended by:

DJRD, Hospitals Infrastructure, Western NSW LHD

Caroline Bamblett

(Apologies: Beatrice Murray)

- Introductions, DJRD explained their framework, where we are at in the process and what the intended outcome of Connecting with Country work is.
- Explained that the package was a working document to be commented on and edited by these members of the community.
- DJRD presented Connecting with Country package including background research, walking Country, lessons heard and first thoughts.
- Caroline was happy with the quality and the content of the work presented.
- Caroline suggested looking at the role of sport in Cowra, in particular the Erambie All Blacks - a Rugby League team from the Koori Knockout which has been a part of the community for 100 years.
- Caroline noted that the Indigenous servicemen and soldiers of Cowra are another group who should be acknowledged.
- The Cowra Local Aboriginal Land Council on Fishburne Street was noted as a good reference for the design team.
- Opened in 1987, Yalbillunga Boori Childcare Centre was noted as another important organisation in the community for its services which also include health, employment, education and welfare programs. The name means “to teach the children in our language”
- Language and dual naming is an important part of the part of Connecting with Country, Beatrice Murray was mentioned as a contact for this.
- Music and dance have also played an important role in Cowra's Indigenous history, their influence could be another means for inspiration.



ABOVE: 1922 - The original Erambie All Blacks



RIGHT: The Native Hibiscus, chosen as the commemorative flower for the stolen generation