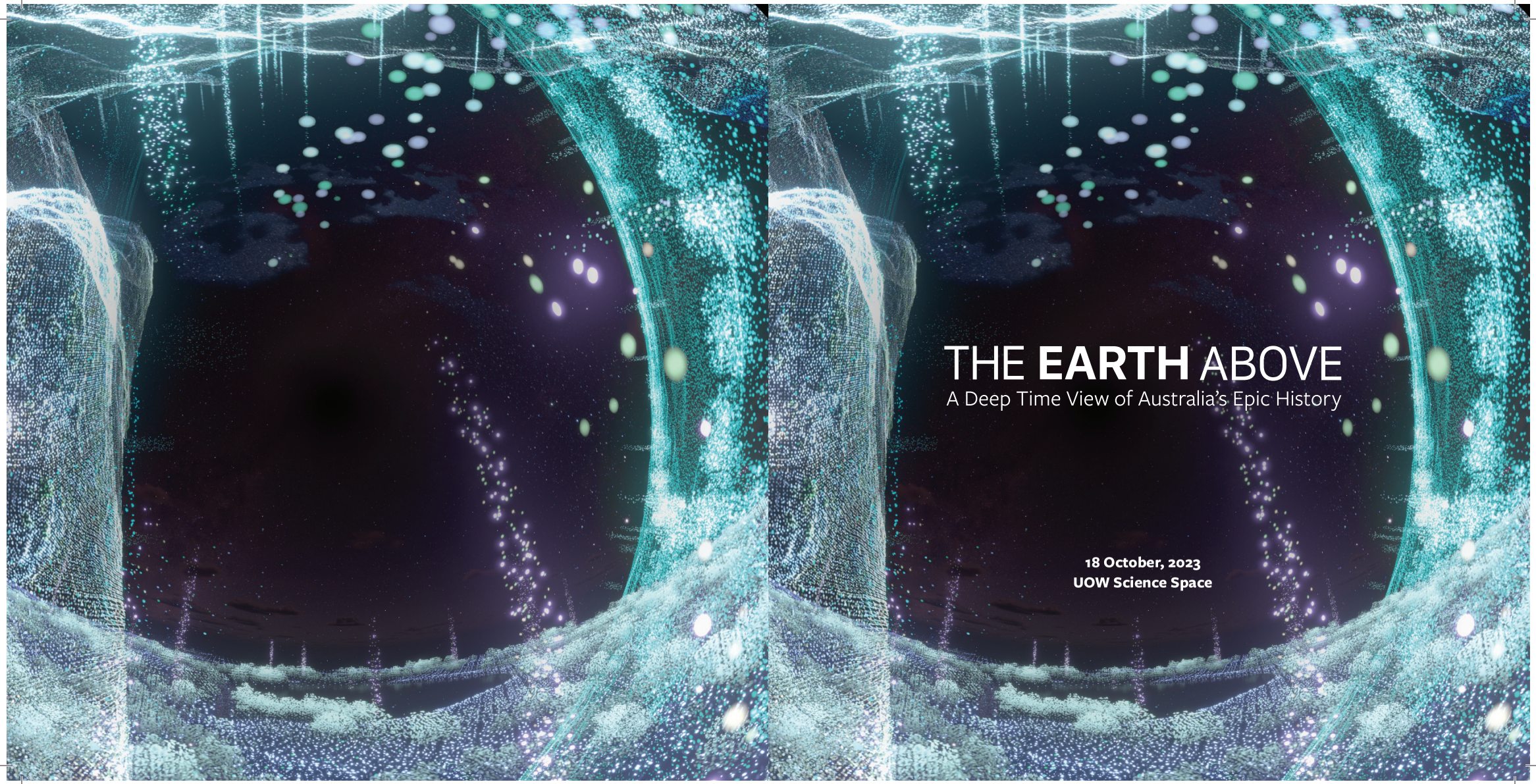
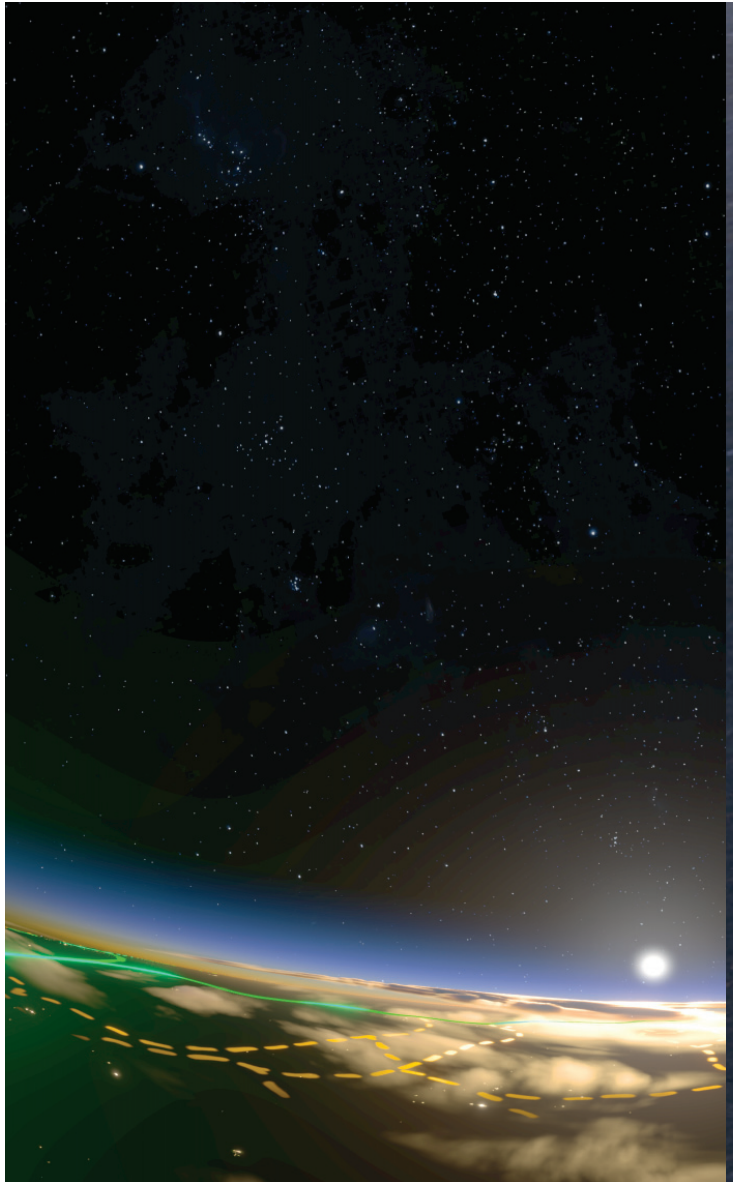


THE **EARTH** ABOVE

A Deep Time View of Australia's Epic History

18 October, 2023
UOW Science Space

The Earth Above: A Deep Time View of Australia's Epic History is a feature-length full-dome planetarium show from the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH) produced by the Deakin MotionLab in collaboration with First Nations communities and the University of Wollongong Science Space. The show explores Australia's past 140,000 years, incorporating traditional and scientific knowledge to tell Australia's epic story and transport viewers to four locations: Girraween Lagoon on Larrakia and Wulna Country outside Darwin in the NT; Cloggs Cave on GunaiKurnai Country in Victoria's East Gippsland region; Lake Mungo in NSW on the land of the Barkandji/Paakantyi, Ngyiampaa and Mutthi Mutthi people; and Jiigurru (Lizard Island) on the Great Barrier Reef, which is sacred to many, including the Dingaal community.



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Jiigurru
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Cloggs Cave
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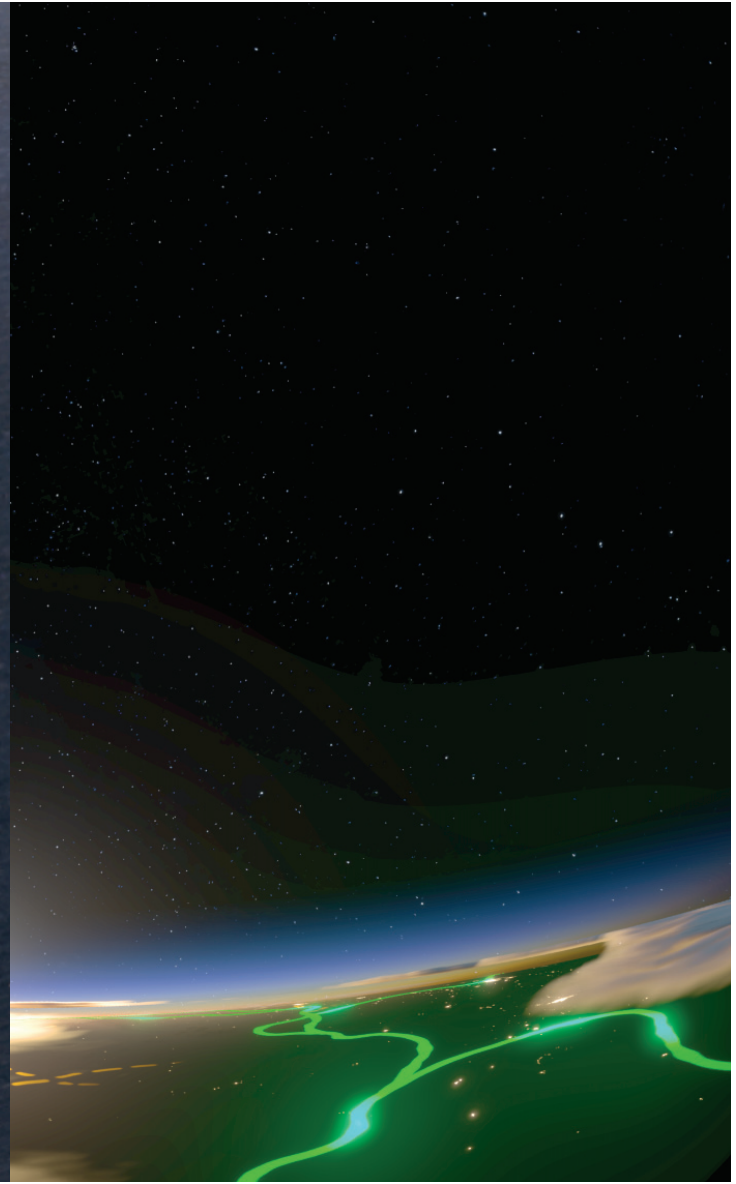
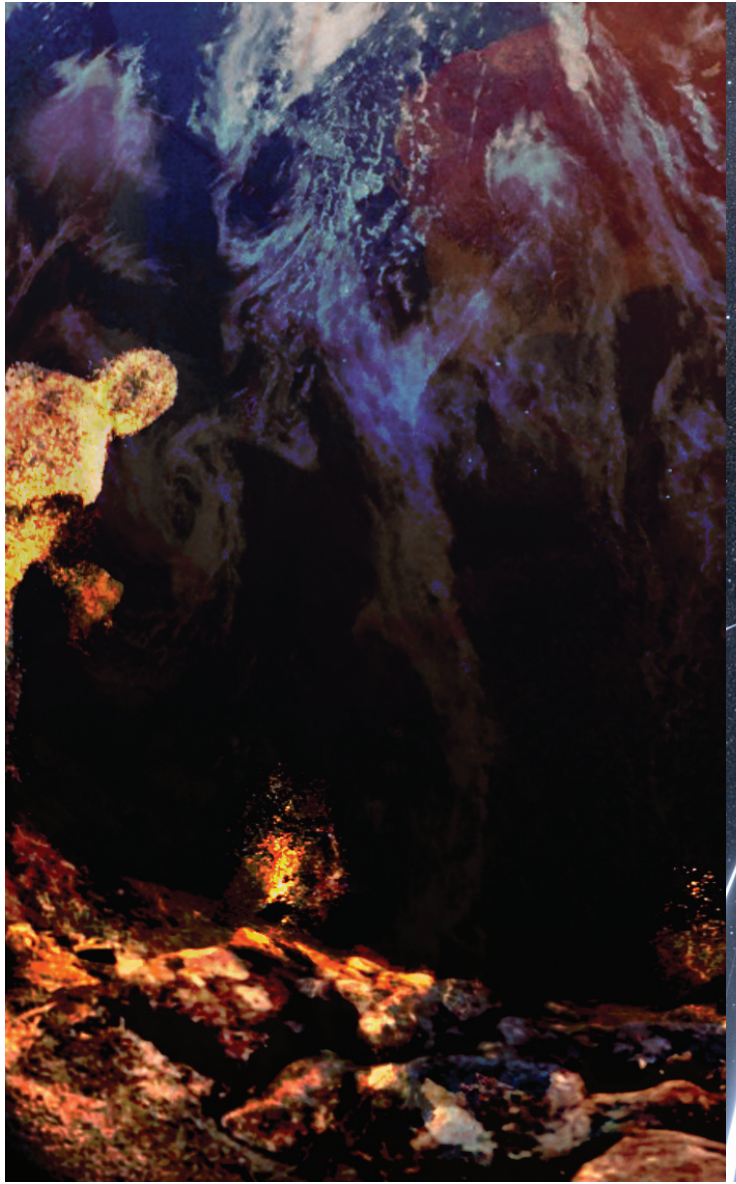


Traditional Owners and key community members from each nation featured in the project co-created the stories - writing, voicing and visualising the work. Nyul Nyul artist Lowell Hunter created a large-scale sand based art work illustrating the journeys across Sahul and Australia on his home country of Beagle Bay, Western Australia. Through this co-creation, *The Earth Above* aims to contribute to a transformation of our understanding of Australia's ancient Indigenous heritage and environmental past and to allow the wider community to engage with the pressing issue of how to protecting our unique cultural heritage and biodiversity into the future.

Creating The Earth Above has been a deeply collaborative experience. Our work together on Country made the stories better. Co-creating these stories also echoes connections being made between archaeology and Indigenous knowledge systems. This project has shown me that deep time is deeply human. It does the opposite of making our life insignificant. It gifts us the significance of being connected to everything and everyone on Earth across all time, and asks - what will we leave behind?

I would like to say a huge thank you to all the people who shared their time, knowledge, creativity and care. Thank you to everyone who has joined us along the way and we hope this work does you proud.

Martin Potter
Producer, The Earth Above

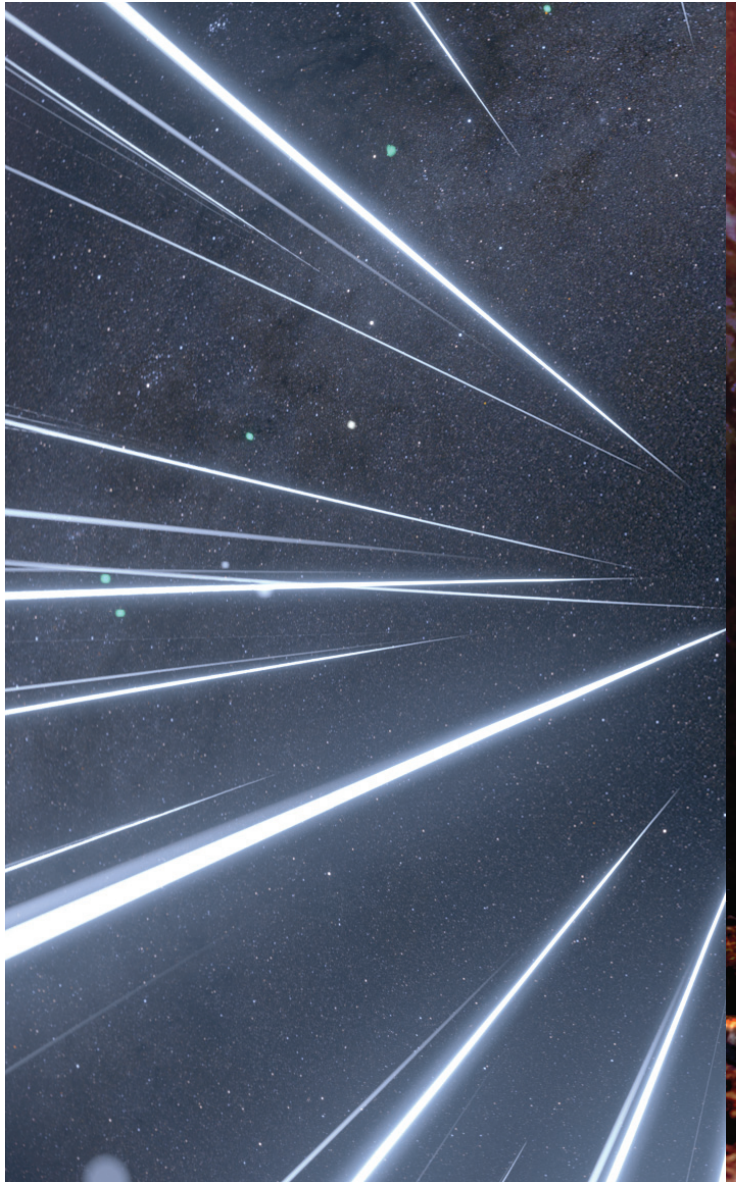


Deakin MotionLab (DML), situated within Deakin University, delivers groundbreaking participatory and immersive screen experiences, cutting-edge research into screen creations and cultures, and inventive digital solutions that address real-world challenges. The DML works closely with industry and communities on innovative screen experiences providing expertise in emerging screen technology, co-creative strategies, motion capture, game animation and sound design.

DEAKIN MOTIONLAB

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL
Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage

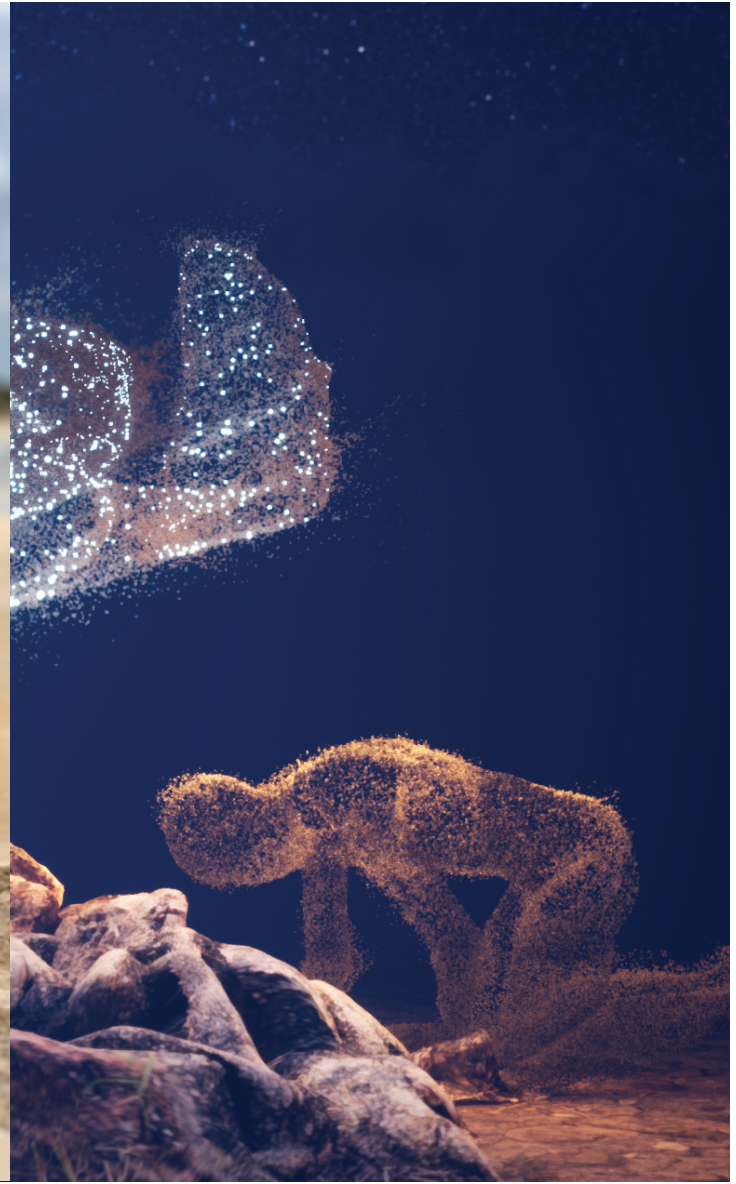
Headquartered at the University of Wollongong, CABAH is enhancing our understanding of Australia's unique cultural and natural history. Working with our Indigenous partners, we explore diverse locations, from remote tropical islands to ancient windswept lunettes, boggy swamps, and the arid interior to tell a culturally inclusive and globally significant history of our region. We call this 'our epic story', and our intent is for the cultural and scientific narratives developed through our transdisciplinary research to guide efforts in preserving and managing Australia's biodiversity and cultural heritage for the present and future. *The Earth Above,* part of CABAH's Education and Engagement program, shares cutting-edge research on Australia's history and traditional knowledge with non-academic audiences.



The Earth Above: A Deep Time View of Australia's Epic History tells the remarkable story of Australia's rich cultural heritage and environmental past, drawing on the outcomes of research by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH) and the traditional knowledges of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners. The seed of an idea for a CABAH planetarium show was planted by Stuart Creal, Director of UOW Science Space, in May 2019. Martin Potter from Deakin MotionLab then took up the creative reins with Indigenous communities to create this unique experience of Indigenous Australia.

We're thrilled to be launching *The Earth Above* today, and honoured to have so many project contributors here for the occasion.

Richard 'Bert' Roberts
Director of CABAH



Jiigurru (Lizard Island) on the Great Barrier Reef is sacred to many, including the Dingaal community.

Almost 1500 stone arrangements made by the ancestors have recently been re-discovered, the most densely packed field of stone arrangements ever found in Australia, indicating the importance of Jiigurru as a cultural site. Analysis of a shell midden reveals a record of 6500 years of human occupation. In the shell midden a number of important artefacts have been identified including the first traces of Indigenous-made Lapita style ceramics, dated to 2500 years ago that provide evidence of ancient trade links across the Coral Sea.

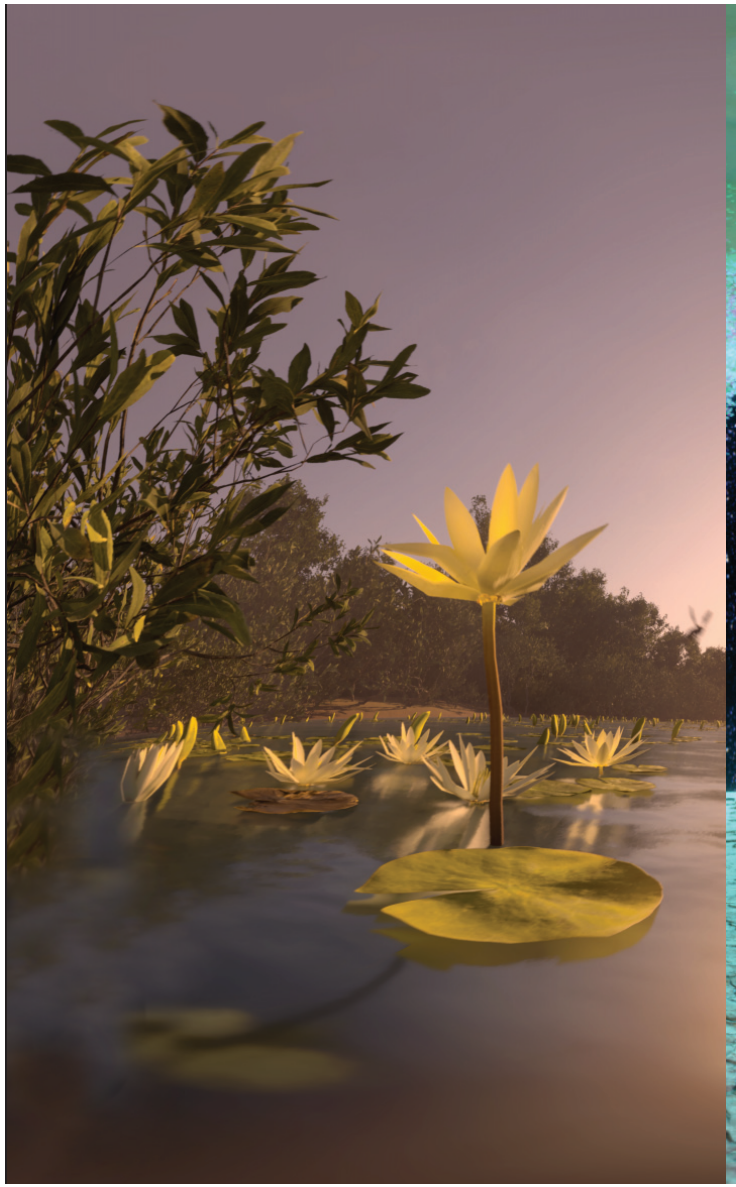
The Jiigurru Story, created in collaboration with the Dingaal and Ngurrumungu communities, offers an extraordinary view of the islands and trade routes voyaged long ago.

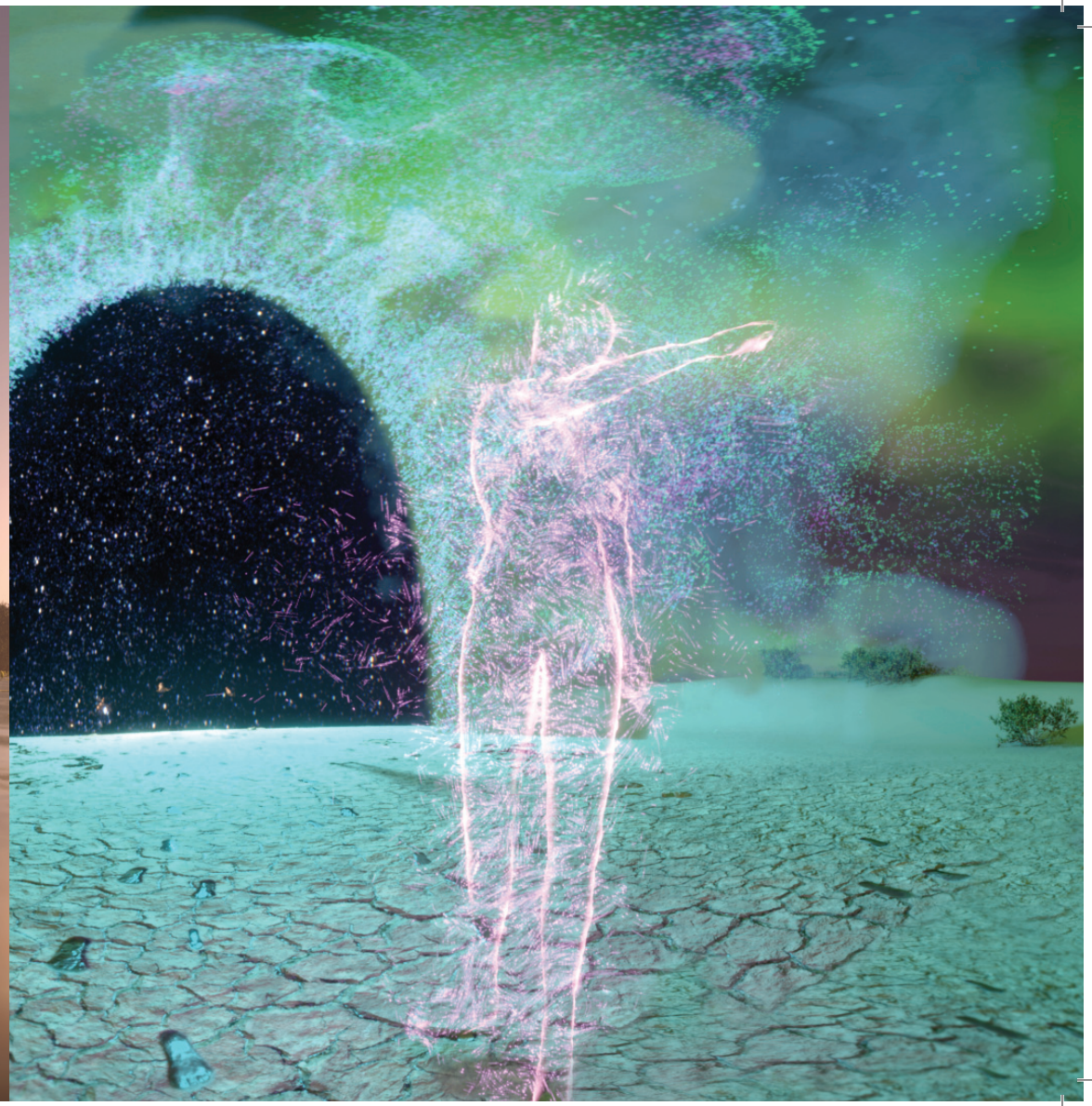
Nyul Nyul Artist Lowell Hunter Beagle Bay, Western Australia

Girraween Lagoon, 35 kilometres southeast of Darwin, is known as the 'place of flowers'.

It's a unique site: a waterbody where the seven seasons observed by the Larrakia people manifest clearly on the surface of the lagoon and surrounds, and where evidence of past environments is preserved deep below the water's surface. The flowers of Girraween mark the arrival of each season of the Gulumoerrgin seasonal calendar, and they also hold the key to 140,000 years of environmental history uncovered through recent scientific research

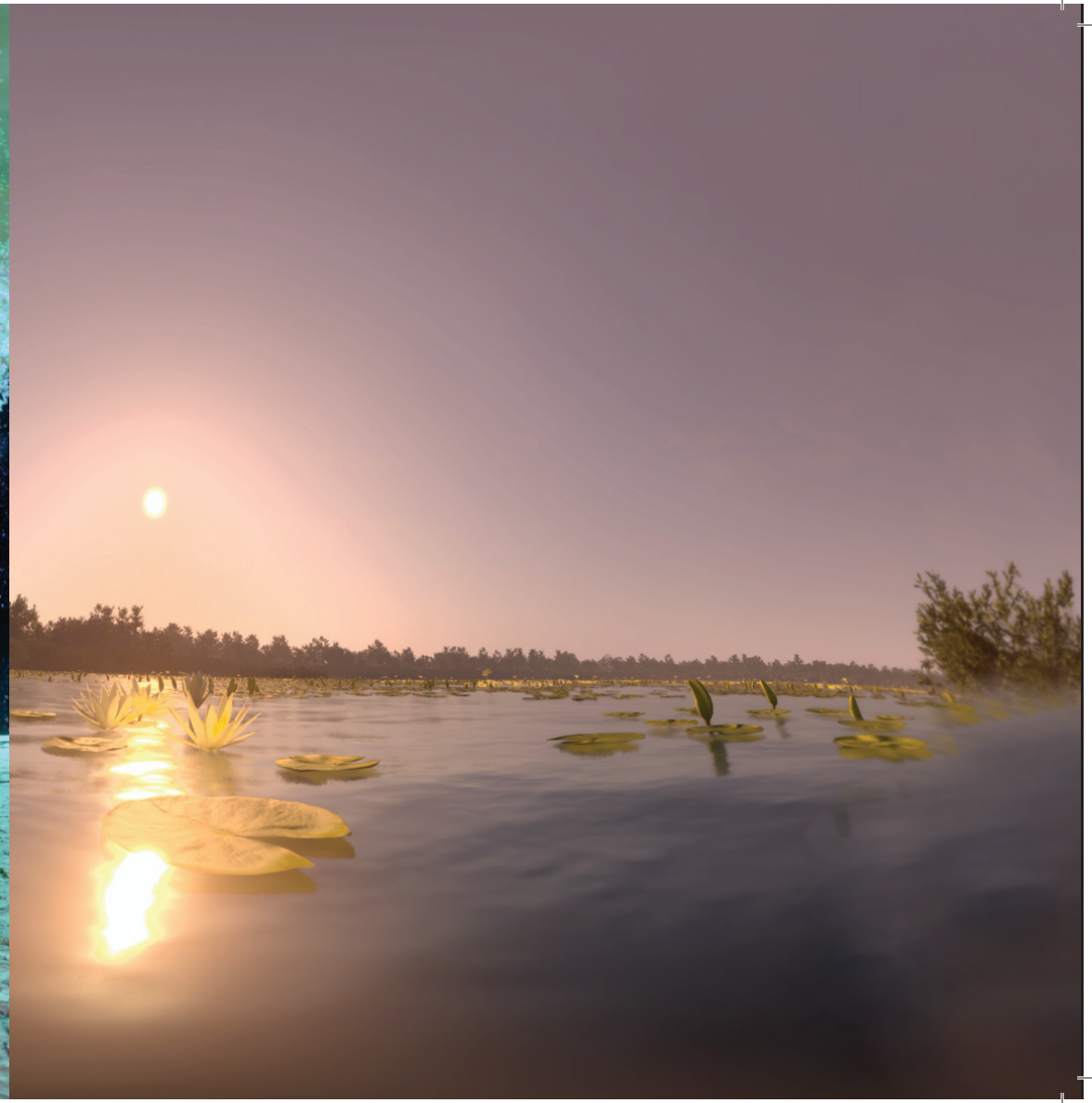
The *Girraween Lagoon Story* was created in collaboration with the Larrakia and Wulna communities.

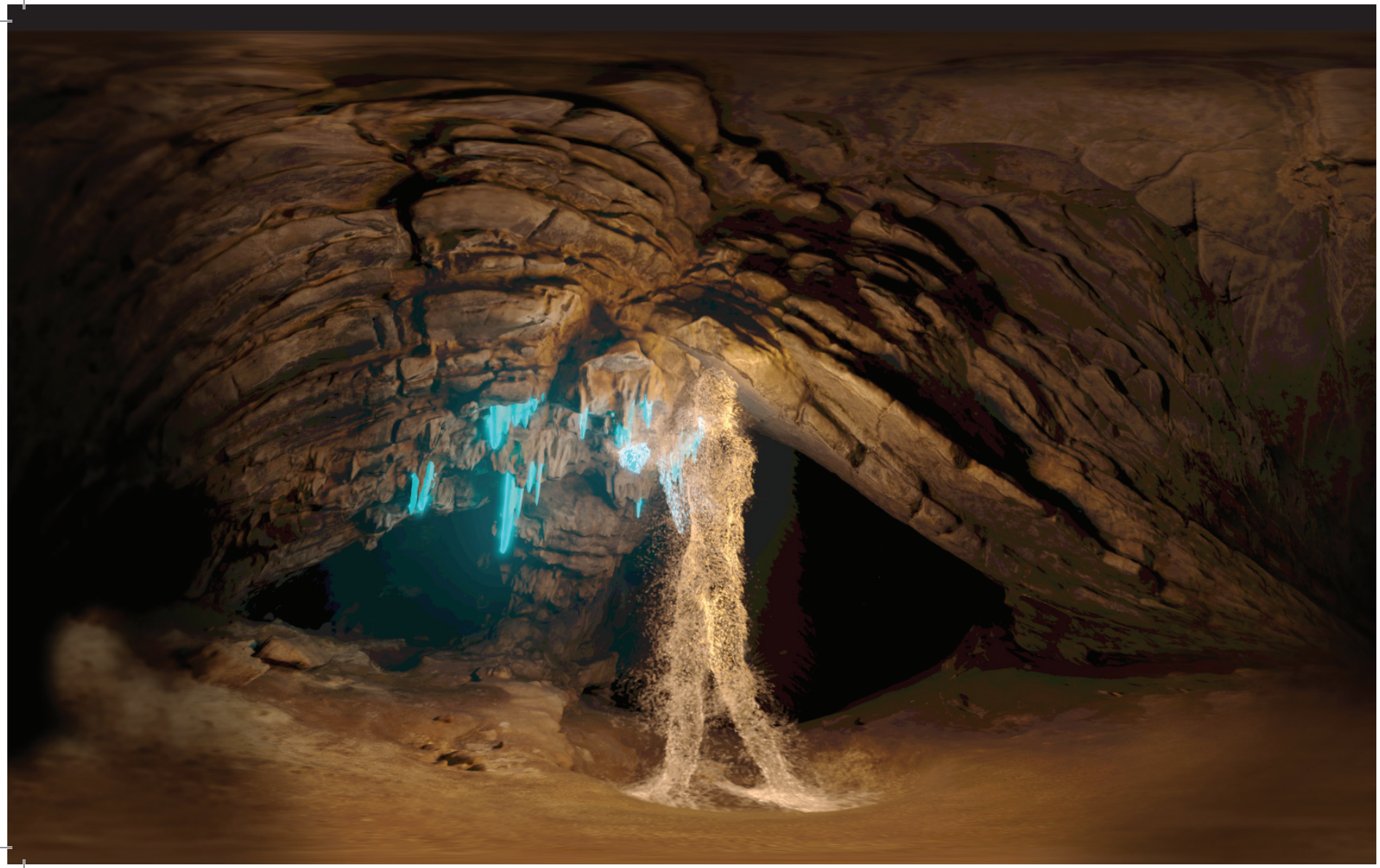




Once a lake brimming with life, now dry for almost 20,000 years, Lake Mungo in the Willandra Lakes Region in southwest New South Wales is one of Australia's most significant environmental and cultural landscapes.

It is where evidence of past environments and megafauna fossils can be found. It is home to Mungo Lady and Mungo Man, the oldest known human remains on the continent. It is also where hundreds of fossilised footprints made by people some 20,000 years ago are preserved. The story etched in these footprints was deciphered by a group of expert trackers—a group of Pintubi people from the Western Desert—and is brought to life in *The Lake Mungo Story,* created in collaboration with the Barkandji/Paakantyi, Ngyiampaa and Mutthi Mutthi communities.





Archaeologists once thought Cloggs Cave on GunaiKurnai Country in East Gippsland, Victoria, was primarily a place for shelter. However GunaiKurnai always knew this was a place of medicine and magic.

By combining GunaiKurnai cultural knowledge and cutting-edge archaeological methods, a more accurate story of the cave is being told. This story transports viewers back through time to show two different medicine ceremonies undertaken by a Mulla Mullung (a GunaiKurnai healer) that took place in the cave 13,000 and 23,000 years ago, and the archaeological evidence that details these ceremonies.

The *Cloggs Cave Story* was created in collaboration with the GunaiKurnai community.