

Across the Waters

Inspiring
Environmental
Stewardship through
Eco Arts Collaborations

Dr Laura Brearley

laura.brearley@tlc21.com.au



Supported by Bass Coast Shire Council



Jo Lane - 'listening stones'



Acknowledgement of Country

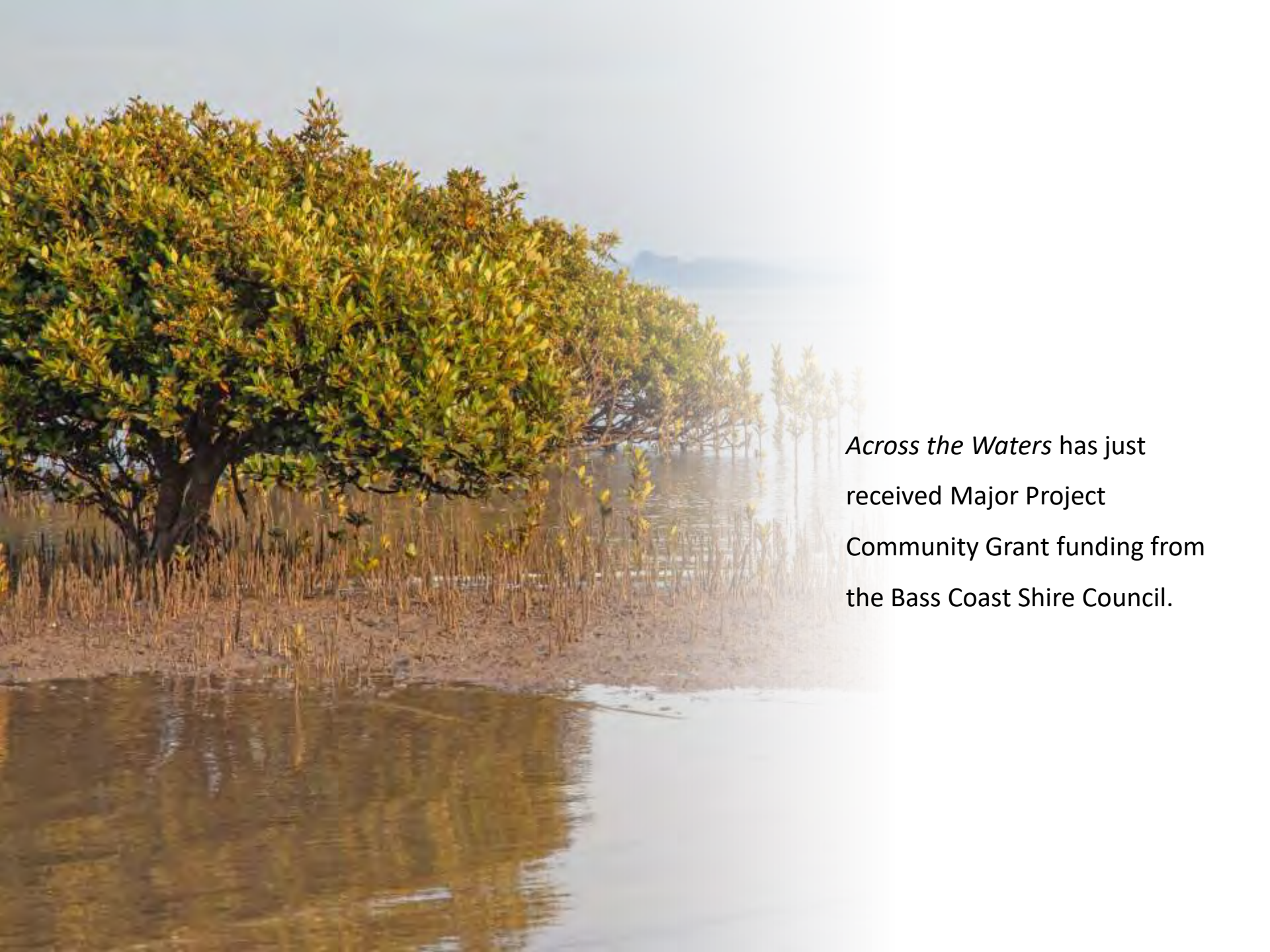
We honour the Boonwurrung of the Kulin Nation who have cared for this Country for thousands of years. We recognise First Peoples' continuing connection to lands, waters, and community.

We pay our respects to the Ancestors and Elders who carry the memories, traditions, cultures, and aspirations of First Peoples, and who forge the path ahead for emerging leaders.

Across the Waters is a program of creative activities designed to strengthen community connections through the facilitation of Eco Arts collaborations, underpinned by the practice of Deep Listening.

Its purpose is to inspire environmental stewardship with a focus on the protection of Westernport (Warn Marin), the Ramsar site within it and the Woodlands adjoining it.





Across the Waters has just received Major Project Community Grant funding from the Bass Coast Shire Council.



The project is structured around three Deep Listening Circles being held at:

1. Coronet Bay Hall 1.30pm – 3.30pm Saturday 14th September 2024
2. Wonthaggi Artspace 1.00pm – 3.00pm Saturday 12th October 2024
3. Berninneit, Cowes 1.00pm – 3.30pm Saturday 9th November 2024.



The Deep Listening Circles are bringing together community members in intercultural, intergenerational and interdisciplinary collaborations. Community members are invited to explore and experience Deep Listening as a way of being and working together, with a particular focus on Westernport (Warn Marin) as a place of connection between people, land, sea, sky and the wider living world.



The objectives of *Across the Waters* are to:

- Actively promote community engagement and commitment to environmental stewardship;
- Demonstrate the power of creative collaborations to bring people together through a shared, protective love of the natural world, with a particular focus on Westernport (Warn Marin);
- Facilitate the creation of new artworks that reveal the importance of listening and being in relationship with the living world; and
- Model and promote Deep Listening as a way of strengthening respectful connections between people and place.

Focus on Westernport Bay (Warn Marin)

Across the Waters has a special focus on the protection of the ecological biodiversity of Westernport Bay (Warn Marin), the RAMSAR site and the Westernport Woodlands that adjoin it.

The project recognises the complexities of the conversations taking place about Westernport (Warn Marin) and the need for informed and nuanced dialogue about the ecological issues currently taking place in the public domain.





Across the Waters is informed by the document known as ‘A Strategic Framework for the future of Western Port Bay’. The Framework recognises that Western Port Bay has long been under pressure from heavy industrial development. The vision of the Framework is to effectively manage, restore, and legally protect the marine and coastal environment of Western Port Bay and establish an ecologically sustainable economy for the future.

Source <https://www.actforwesternportbay.au/>



According to the 'State of Marine and Coastal Environments Report', Western Port Bay (Warn Marin) has the highest number of deteriorating environmental health indicators in Victoria. This includes declining populations of snapper and waterbirds. Exacerbating this is the substantial land use changes that are altering the quantity and quality of river discharges into the bay. These biodiversity and environmental health indicators and projections are urgent signals that action and collaborative management are needed.

Through its intercultural, intergenerational and interdisciplinary collaborations, *Across the Waters* will contribute to these conversations and to the ecological advocacy taking place in the community about Western Port (Warn Marin).





A number of artists, musicians and conservationists are involved in the *Across the Waters* project.

These include Jo Lane, Carmel Wallace, Kate Gorringer-Smith, Gidja Walker, Camille Monet, Mal Webb, Kylie Morigan, Uncle Ron Murray, Uncle Steve Ulula Parker, Susan Hall and Ursula Theinert.

Jo Lane



Across the Waters will feature the work of Mornington Peninsula artist Jo Lane and her collaborative sculpture 'listening stones'. The 'listening stones' sculpture is a metaphor for listening deeply to Country. It honours the community members who have heard and continue to hear the land and sea of this area. It reveals the power of art to express the silent and important concept of listening.



Each 'stone' is made of gypsum rock and cast from the ear and nape of a community member who participated in the successful campaign to protect Westernport (Warn Marin) from the gas jetty and pipeline proposed by AGL.

The sculpture has been created from the ears of those that heard and continue to hear our local environment, fought to protect it and continue to advocate for this area.

In *Across the Waters*, the 'listening stones' sculpture, which was supported by Mornington Peninsula Council, will be extended to include the ears of community members from the Bass Coast side of Westernport (Warn Marin), who share the same commitment to preserving and protecting it from the ongoing threats of industrialisation, thereby completing the circle of 'listeners' around the Bay.





Image Grant Wallace

Carmel Wallace

Carmel Wallace's INSCRIPTION is a 100 metre-long canvas that is laid out in natural environments to absorb the imprint of the landscape.



Carmel Wallace is a printmaker, sculptor and installation-artist. She is interested in the role art can play in strengthening connections to place and developing environmental awareness.

<https://carmelwallace.com/>



In March 2024, INSCRIPTION came to Westernport Bay (Warn Marin) on Boonwurrung/Bunurong Country.

The canvas was rolled out on the mudflats near the mangroves on the Rhyll foreshore on Millowl (Phillip Island).





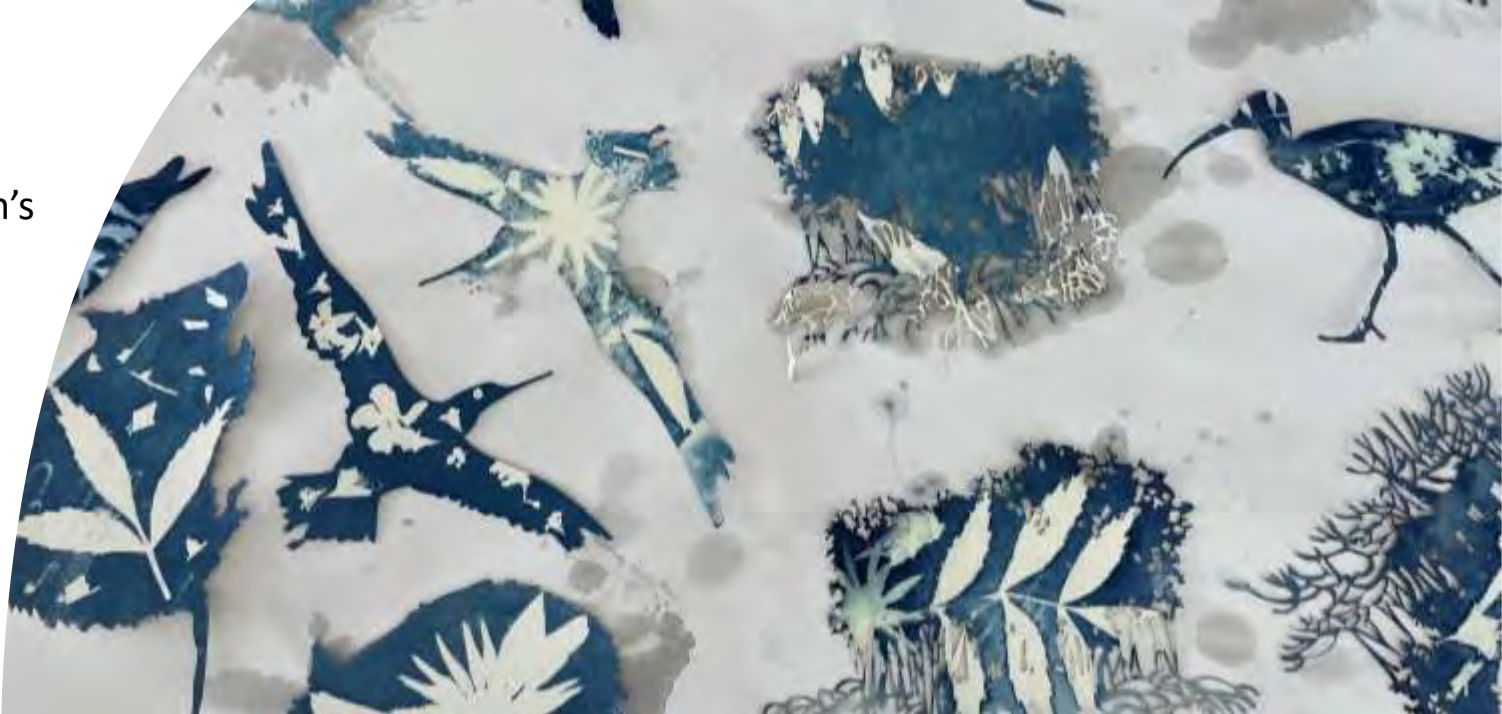
Kate Gorringe-Smith

Kate Gorringe-Smith is well-known for her Wall of Wings from the Overwintering Project.



Kate works in contemporary and traditional print media in 2D and 3D form and installation. Her art investigates our relationship with the environment: the threats we create as well as our connectedness with it. Kate's work often references migratory shorebirds to illustrate the environmental connections that link us individually and globally.

Kate Gorringer-Smith's
cyanotype prints of
flora and fauna





Across the Waters builds of many years in of working in an Eco Arts Framework underpinned by Deep Listening.



The project extends the successful project *For Our Future* which was conducted in partnership between the Bass Coast Shire Council and the Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS) (2022 – 2023).

<https://picsvictoria.org.au/for-our-future/>



Artists, cultural advisors, conservationists, educators, children and other community members from the *For Our Future* project have a great deal to bring to *Across the Waters*.

For Our Future: The Launch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vCa-tObeGo&t=1009s>



Daniel Church

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XeDhbem13o&t=12s>

Susan Hall: Artist-In-Profile

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aH8x4Y23d9Q>

Uncle Steve Ulula Parker: Artist-in-Profile

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdxEI9Ght_M



Ed Thexton: Conservationist-in-Profile

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNIZobjAygQ&t=6s>

Aunty Sonia Weston: Artist-in-Profile

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MRURO6Q-Nc>











Conclusion

Across the Waters uses Eco Arts and Deep Listening to inspire environmental stewardship in Bass Coast and beyond. Bringing people together through intercultural, interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaborations, the project draws on a shared love of place and a deeply felt desire to protect it for the future.



Through Eco Arts collaborations underpinned by the practice of Deep Listening, the project strengthens our relationships and resilience as community members.

All activities and events are an invitation to listen more deeply and respectfully to the Living World and to recognise ourselves as part of it.



With its focus on Westernport (Warn Marin), *Across the Waters* connects us to each other and to the ancient lineage of the people who have cared for this Country for thousands of years. It also connects us to the generations to come and to our responsibilities for taking collective action to protecting and preserving the living world for the future.



More information about the *Across the Waters* project is available at <https://picsvictoria.org.au/events/>

and from the Project Coordinator Dr Laura Brearley laura.brearley@tlc21.com.au

For background on Eco Arts in Action <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PNOb8-b3jo&t=805s>