



NAIDOC WEEK
50 YEARS DEADLY
5-12 JULY 2026



NORTHERN INSTITUTE AND LIBRARY & ARCHIVES NT
PRESENTS:

DEADLY RESEARCH





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Assoc Prof Tracy Woodroffe
Northern Institute | CDU



Christian Miller-Sabbioni
University of Western Australia



Dr Jodi Cowdery
LaTrobe University



Dr Cat Kutay
Charles Darwin University



Thursday 9 July | 10:00 am - 1:00 pm



Level 2, Library & Archives NT | Danala
Online via Teams Webinar



All welcome | Free event
Complimentary morning tea

Opening Statement



Anna Ingram

Acting Senior Director
Library & Archives NT

Welcome to Country

Sage RJ Birdimba Lee

Larrakia, Wardaman and Karajarri
person

Executive Assistant | First Nations
Leadership



Master of Ceremony

Dr Tracy Woodroffe

Associate Professor in Indigenous
Knowledges

Research Fellow | Northern Institute

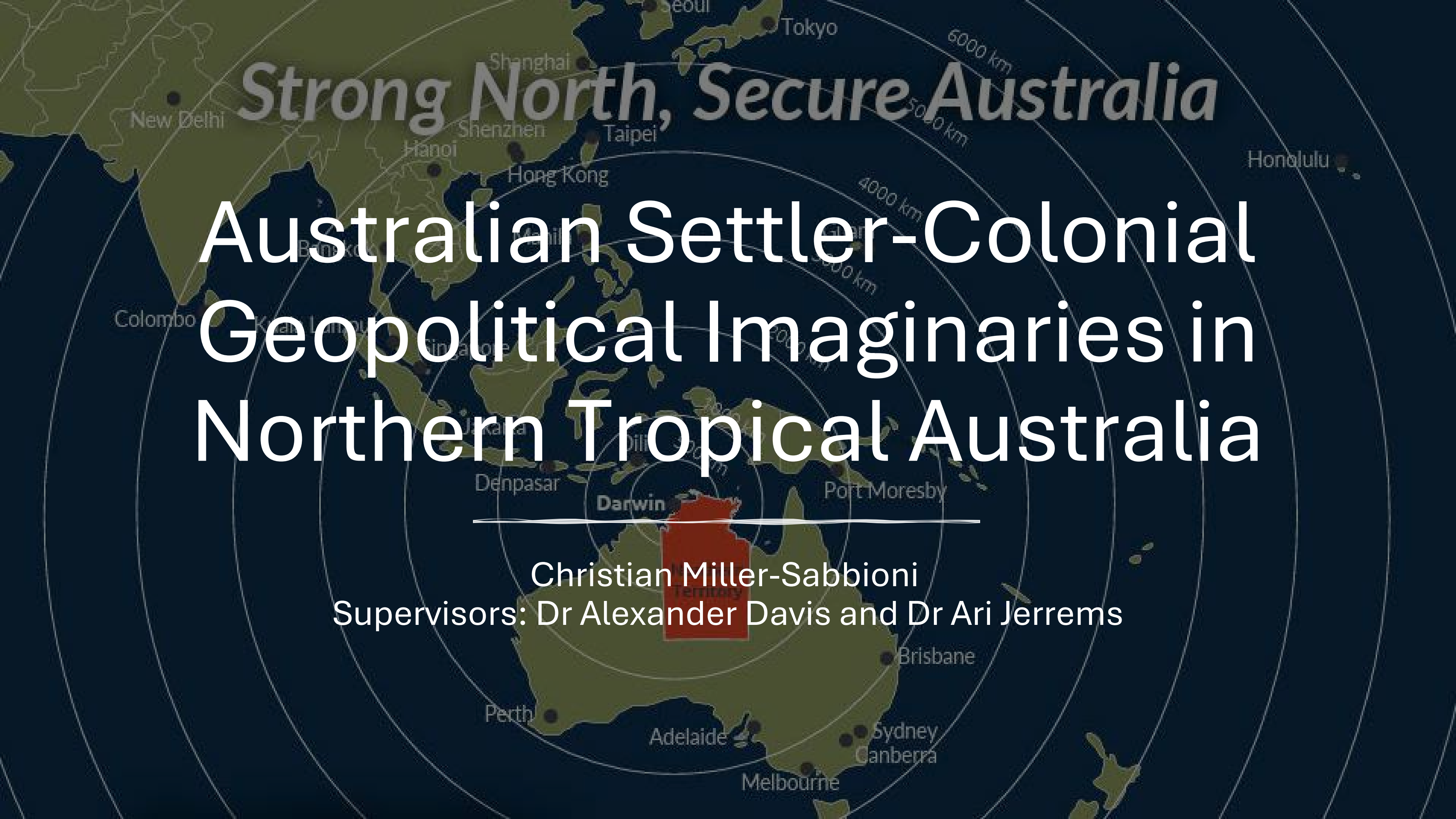


Seminar 1



Christian Miller-Sabbioni

Visiting Academic and Lecturer in
School of Indigenous Studies |
University of Western Australia

The background is a map of Australia and Southeast Asia. Concentric circles are drawn around Darwin, Australia, with labels for 4000 km, 5000 km, and 6000 km. Various cities are labeled, including New Delhi, Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Shenzhen, Hanoi, Hong Kong, Manila, Colombo, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, Denpasar, Port Moresby, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. The title text is overlaid on the map.

Strong North, Secure Australia

Australian Settler-Colonial Geopolitical Imaginaries in Northern Tropical Australia

Christian Miller-Sabbioni

Supervisors: Dr Alexander Davis and Dr Ari Jerrems



House of Representatives 10 September 1902 1st Parliament · 1st Session

- “[The North faces] the triple problems involved in this instance - as in some others - the tropical problem, the racial problem, and the financial problem.”



Roosevelt to Australia: A warning note

- 1. “Either fill your cradles, or throw open your gates.”
- 2. “Beware of keeping your far North Empty.”
- 3. “The Nation that is opulent, aggressive, and unarmed, invites disaster” (January 5, 1906)

Research Outline

- **Research Question:** How Australian settler-colonial geopolitical imaginaries (SCGI) shape Australian defence and security postures in northern tropical Australia?
- **What I am doing:** Examining how Australian SCGI have developed historically and influenced contemporary Australian Foreign Policy (AFP) elites' perceptions of defence and security in northern tropical Australia.
- **Methodology:** Applying a historical genealogical approach to understand AFP through a post-colonial perspective
- **What I am focussing on:**
 1. Understanding the nature of the relationship between SCGI and Australian defence and security in northern Australia.
 2. Examining key historical periods such as the nature of British colonisation of the continent especially as it relates to Northern settlement in the nineteenth century; Federation; WW1; WW2; Suez Crisis; Vietnam war; Tampa Crisis illustrate how Australian SCGI influence decision-making in relation so Australia's security and defence in tropical northern Australia.

Significance

- **Literature review:**

1. Postcolonial IR: There remains a lack of post- and de-colonial literature that critically examines the historical unfolding of Australian settler-colonialism from an International Relations standpoint.

2. Historical IR turn: there is a disciplinary deficit of historically grounded scholarship and IR scholars continue to draw poorly on historical scholarship to stake their claims (de Carvalho et al., 2011).

Additionally, in Australia minimal Historical IR scholarship exists.

- **My positionality:** There has been an underrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the field of International Relations (Blackwell, 2022). Aboriginal scholarship is minimal and there is a clear lack of Aboriginal scholarly voices (Davis & Blackwell, 2023). As a Whadjuk, Ballardong Noongar – an Aboriginal Australian - I offer an informed critique on Australia's SCGI and will contribute to closing the gap.

Contemporary Issues

- Indigenous Diplomacy Agenda
‘We have a vision for a world where the rights and traditions of indigenous people are respected ... and where indigenous people are participants and beneficiaries of the international system’ (Commonwealth of Australia - DFAT 2021).
- Port of Darwin
2015-16 post-lease Defence Intelligence Review
2021 Morrison Government national security review
2023 Albanese Government PM&C review
- AUKUS
“The UK, Australia and US are natural allies – while we may be separated geographically, our interests and values are shared. The AUKUS alliance will bring us closer than ever, creating a new defence partnership and driving jobs and prosperity.” – Boris Johnson (15/09/21)



Why the Voice referendum failed – and what the government hasn't learned from it

Published: February 2, 2026 6.11am AEDT

case against the federal government over its Darwin Port...
1 day ago

Broken Broadcasting Corporation

Chinese company launches legal action over forced sale of
Darwin

Chinese-owned company which owns Darwin port has launched international legal
action to try and stop the government from acquisition.

1 day ago

com.au

Chinese firm steps up fight to retain control of Darwin Port,
triggers international legal battle

Chinese firm that controls the Port of Darwin has launched an international legal
case against Australia in a dramatic escalation of...

1 day ago

Adelaide Now

China warns Australia against taking back control of key port
of Darwin

Chinese envoy says Beijing will 'take measures' to defend Chinese firm's interests if
Australia takes over Port Darwin.

1 day ago

the West Australian

Chinese firm reportedly sues Australian govt over Port of
Darwin; case tests Canberra's commitment to international
investment obligations: analyst

Chinese-owned company that owns Darwin Port has launched

AUKUS base in secret documents

A labour union has called for transparency after Port Kembla in NSW was identified as
a preferred east coast location for a nuclear...

2 hours ago

The Guardian

As Aukus spending and delays blow out, will Australia's
nuclear submarines ever materialise?

The deal will cost Australia \$56bn but the strongest signal yet has come that the US is
not building enough subs for itself, let alone for...

1 day ago

AFR

Pentagon signs \$276 million AUKUS submarine contract

Welcome to our live coverage this Friday, April 24. Here are the top stories we're
following: US President Donald Trump says he ordered the...

3 weeks ago

Adelaide Now

Super Seven: Australia joins 'elite' subs club to counter
China's power

Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles has lauded Australia joining an 'elite group' of
seven countries by acquiring nuclear-powered...

3 days ago

The West Australian

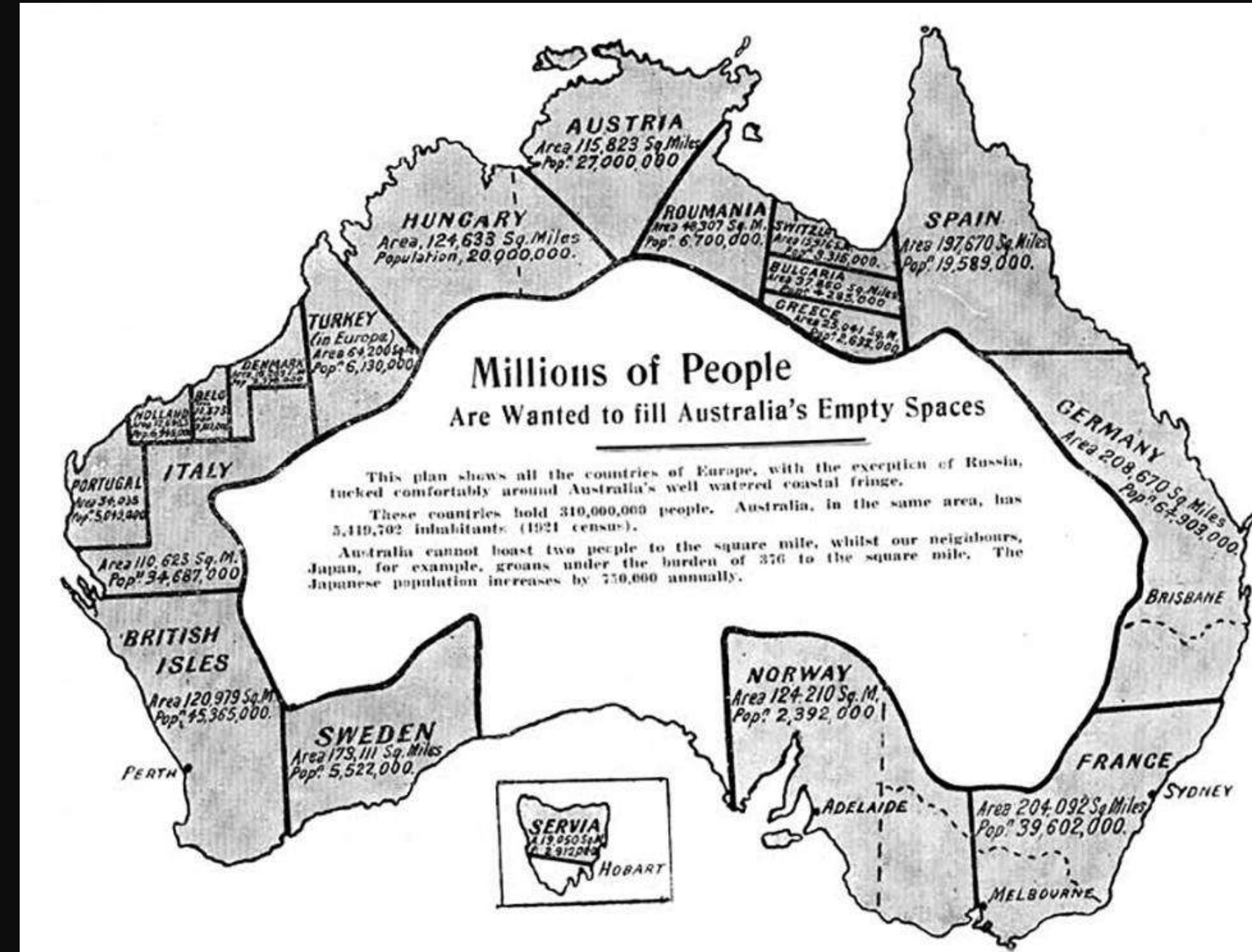
WA to lose 100 high-tech AUKUS jobs to Adelaide

Complex work to prepare Australia's future AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines will be
completed in Adelaide, with the Albanese government...

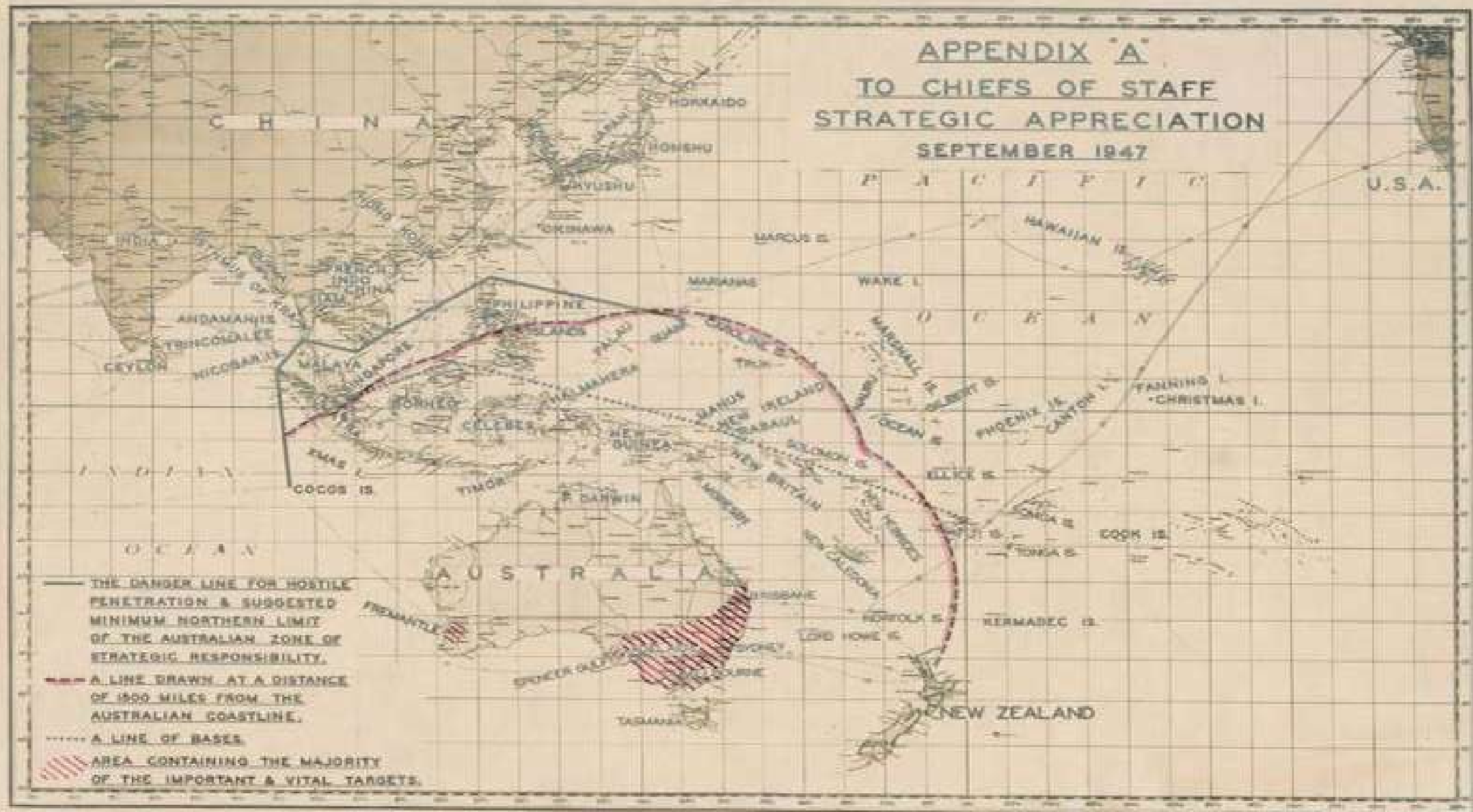
1 day ago

Preliminary Findings and Research to Date

- Historical Chapter:
The Australian settler-colonial geopolitical imaginary is constituted through three recurring strategic narratives:
 1. **Contamination:** tropical degeneration, racial anxieties, fears of Asian migration, disease, miscegenation...
 2. **Abandonment:** our allies that defend our vulnerable northern approaches will withdraw, the north is empty, underdeveloped, unsettled...
 3. **Invasion:** empty space invites external penetration, first frontier anxieties, collective memory from Japanese bombing of Darwin...



(Immigration Encouragement. "Million Farms" Campaign. Sir Joseph Carruthers Scheme., 1921)



(Frühling, 2009, p. 135)

Conclusion

Australian strategic thought has long imagined the north through the recurring settler-colonial narratives of abandonment, contamination and invasion. This thesis proposes to develop an argument that these imaginaries continue to shape how northern Australia is governed, secured, militarised and developed in the present.

Image: Waggle
and Yondock
Story, by artist
Shane Pickett



Bibliography

Australia, House of Representatives, Debates, 10 September 1902, viewed 22 October 2017, <http://historichansard.net/hofreps/1902/19020910_reps_1_12/>.

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de Carvalho, B., Leira, H., & Hobson, J. M. (2011). The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths That Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919. *Millennium*, 39(3), 735–758. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829811401459>

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Seminar 2



Dr Jodi Cowdery

Adjunct Research Fellow | Northern
Institute
LaTrobe University



Unearthed: Indigenous women's experiences working in mining in the Northern Territory

Dr Jodi Cowdery - Adjunct Research Fellow

Northern Institute Charles Darwin University



**NORTHERN
INSTITUTE**
People. Policy. Place.



Why was this research needed?



What were the findings?



What was learned?





Thank you!

jodi.cowdery@cdu.edu.au



Intermission

Join us in-person for a cuppa and some treats. We will be back in 30 minutes (11.45 AM)

Don Manjeridju Wilton with his Sea Country by *Sam Williams*



Seminar 3



Dr Tracy Woodroffe

Associate Professor in Indigenous
Knowledges
Research Fellow | Northern Institute

Disrupting the Axis

**A Warumungu Luritja Standpoint on
Educational System Reform**

By Assoc Prof Tracy Woodroffe

tracy.woodroffe@cdu.edu.au



Reframing Knowledge

- Knowledge begins with Country, people and story
- Indigenous knowledge systems are longstanding
- Research must reflect these foundations

Research as Advocacy

- Research is not neutral
- It shapes systems and decisions
- Indigenous research is advocacy



System Shift

- From being researched
- To leading research
- To reshaping systems



Theoretical Framework

- Western systems positioned as central axis
- Indigenous knowledge disrupts and reshapes
- Transformation not inclusion
-





Standpoint & Method

- Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory
- Presentation Feedback Methodology
- Cultural authority and data sovereignty



Practice to Policy

- 20+ years classroom experience
- Links pedagogy to systems
- Translates to national policy impact

Workforce Pathways

- VETDSS to Bachelor of Education
- Strengthening First Nations teacher workforce
- Removing structural barriers





The Challenge

- Fragmented research pathways
- Limited Indigenous-led HDR structures
- Gaps between community and academia

IREP Model

Indigenous Research
Education Program

Whole-of-university
approach

Pipeline from community
to leadership

IREP Pathway

- Community knowledge holders
- Micro-credentials and coursework
- HDR and research leadership
- Policy and community impact



Impact

- Strengthens Indigenous research capacity
- Embeds culturally grounded methodologies
- Positions CDU as national leader



Standards & Accountability

- AITSL 1.4 and 2.4
- From tokenism to systemic reform
- Culturally safe curriculum





Big Idea

- Indigenous knowledge redefines excellence
- Not an add-on
- Essential to the system

NAIDOC Message

- 50Yearsof Deadly
- Celebrating Indigenous excellence
- Continuing leadership in research





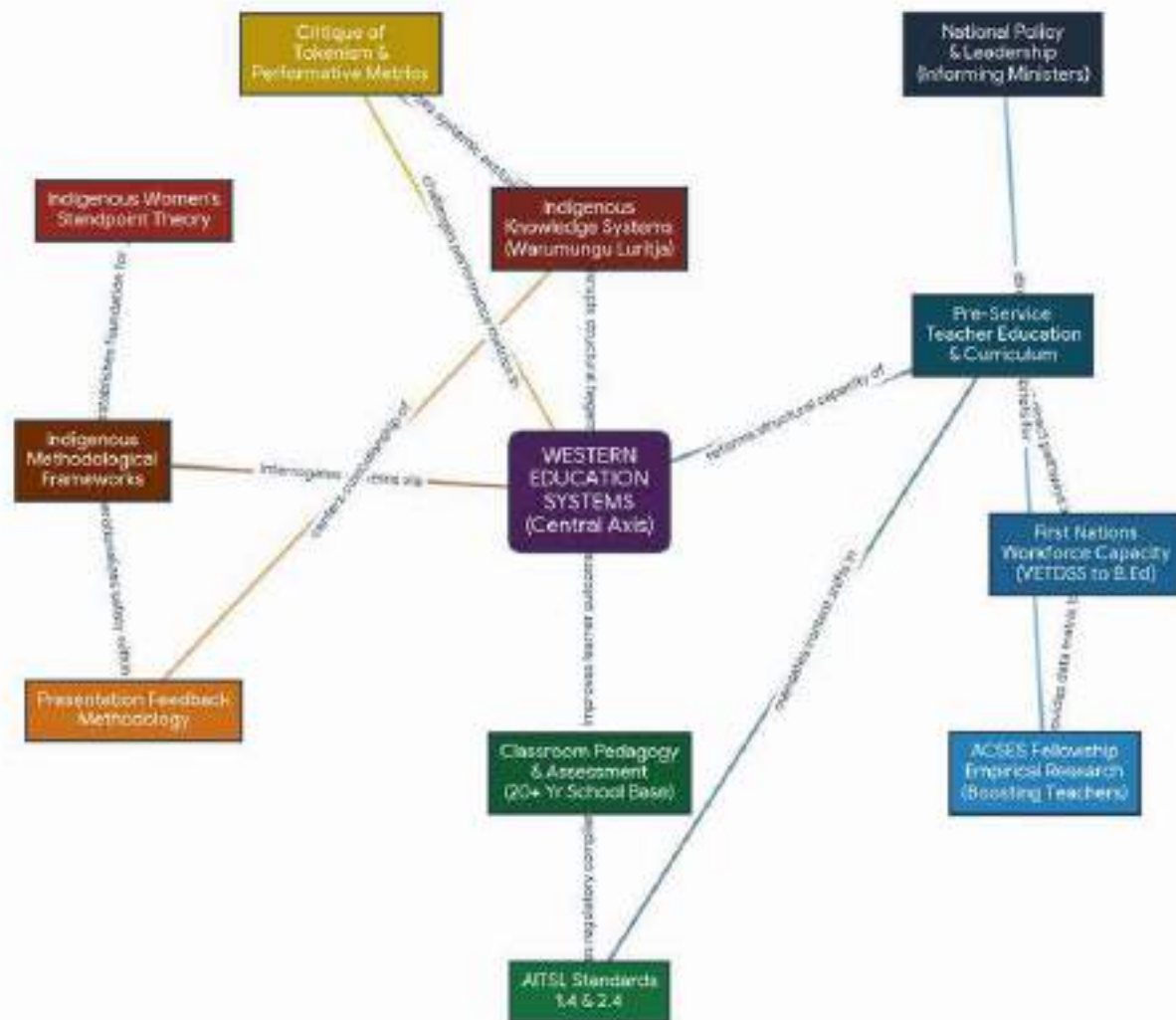
Call to Action

- More Indigenous researchers are needed
- Your knowledge matters
- Leadership in research is essential



Assoc. Prof. Tracy Woodroffe — Charles Darwin University | NAIDOC Excellence Session

THEORETICAL ARCHITECTURE & SEMANTIC RESEARCH NETWORK





In closing...

- We are transforming systems
- We are leading research
- We are disrupting the axis

Seminar 4



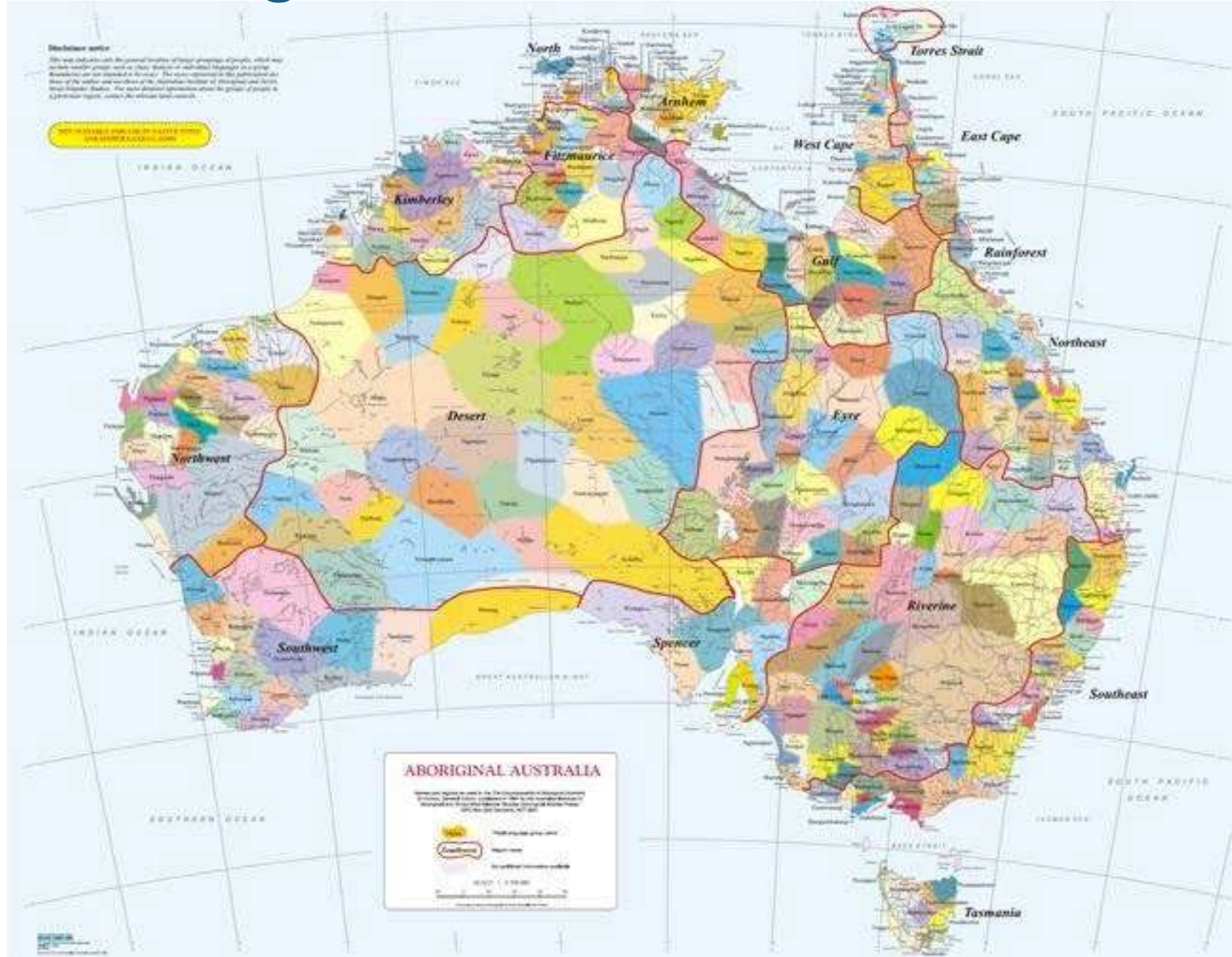
Dr Cat Kutay

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Science and Technology

Charles Darwin University

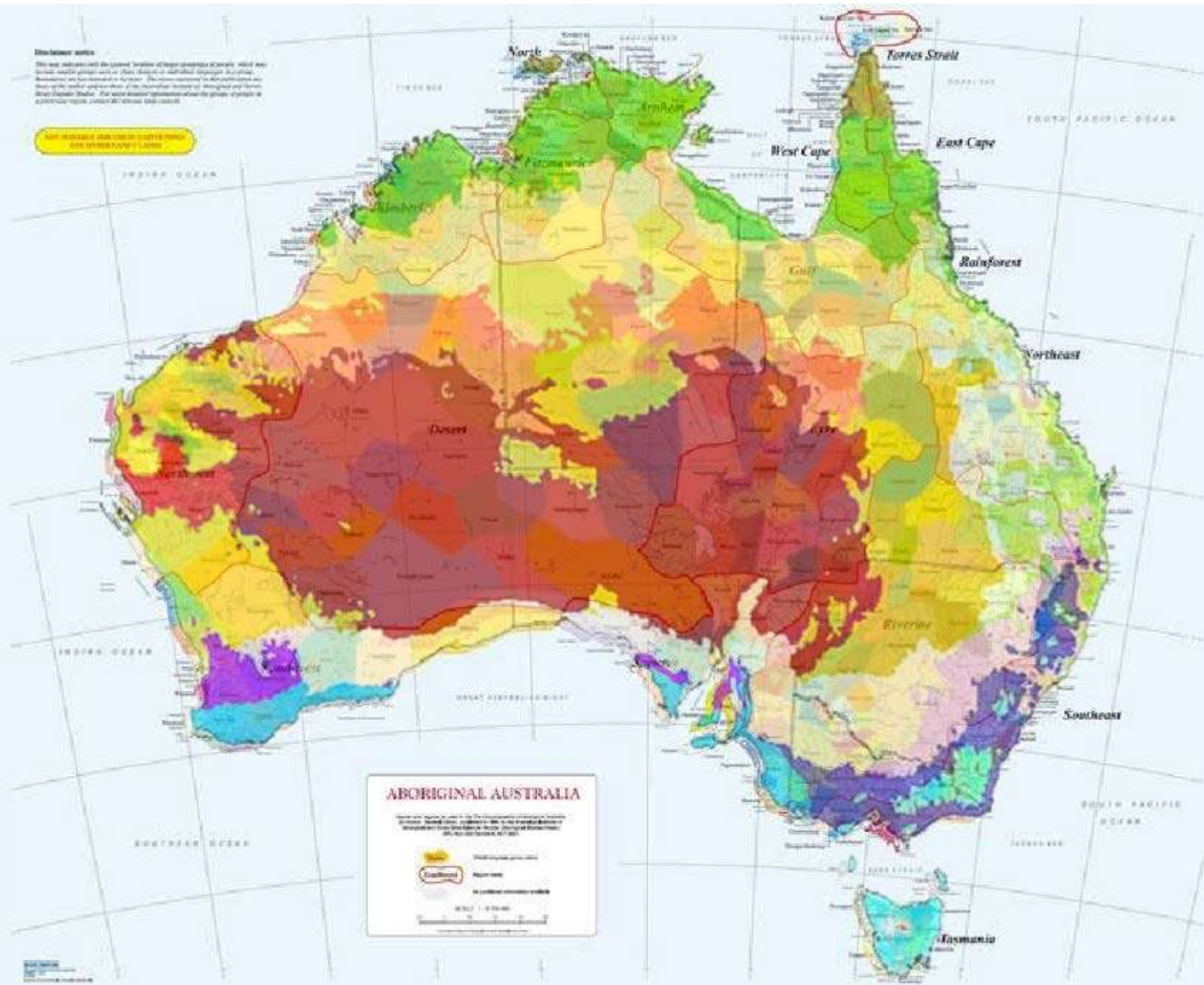
Acknowledgement



Disclaimer notice:

This map indicates only the general location of major Aboriginal groups, which have been divided into groups such as those shown in this map. It is not intended to show the boundaries of the various groups, which are often fluid and change over time. The map is intended to show the general location of the various groups, which are often fluid and change over time. The map is intended to show the general location of the various groups, which are often fluid and change over time.

NOT A MAP OF ABORIGINAL LANDS
AND TERRITORIES



First Nations Adaptions



Housing





Clean Energy



Bilingual Education

	tongue			
	nose			
	eye			
	mouth			
	ears			

ngalyanu mankirrkirr paniya

jirrji lirra

	ngalyanu	ngalyanu
	jirrji	jirrji
	paniya	paniya
	lirra	lirra
	mankirrkirr	mankirrkirr

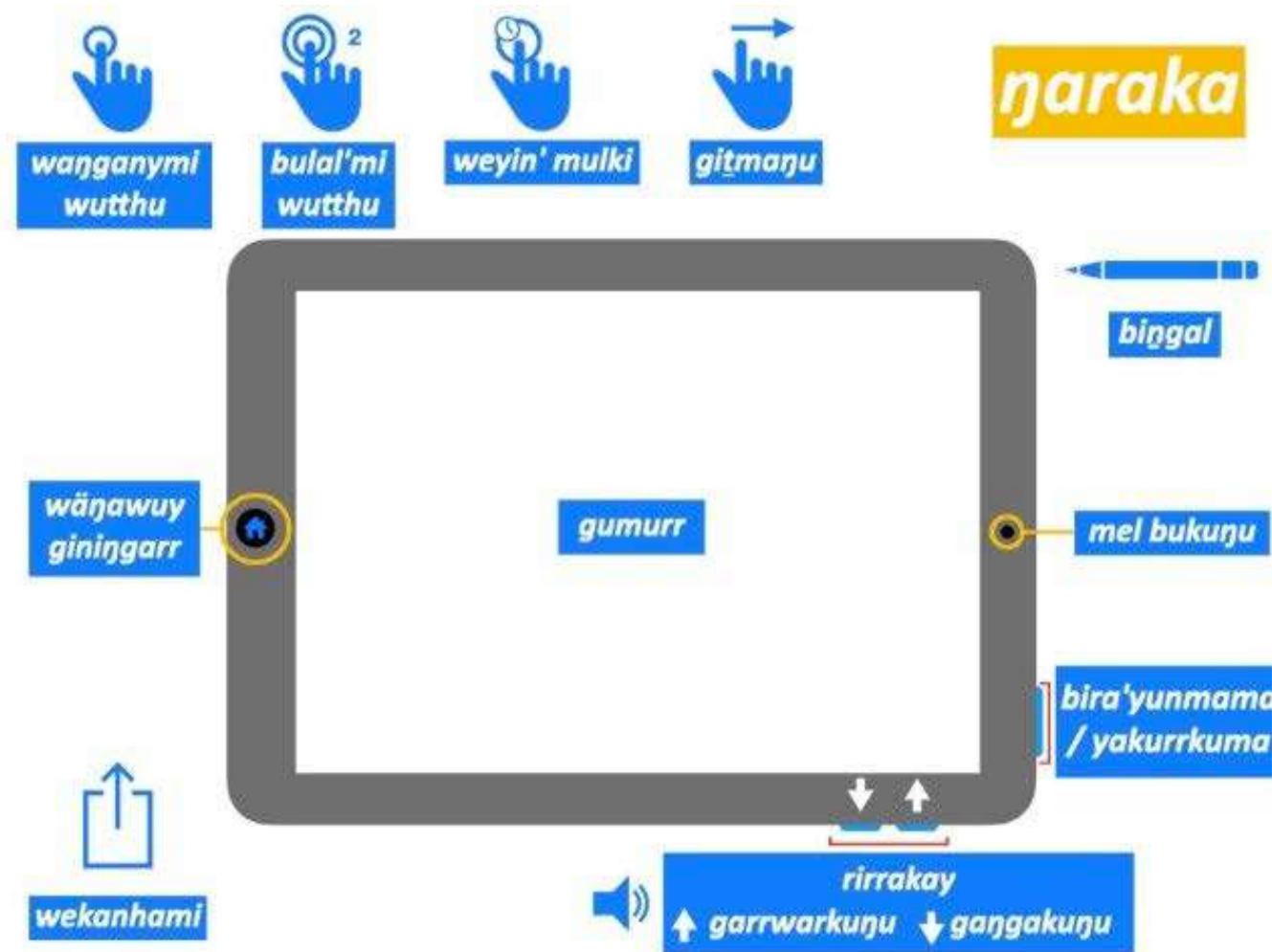
	Galah			
	Emu			
	Pelican			
	Bachman's Duck			
	Duck			

Walany Kirlinykirliny Karnanganyja

Tirrarn Nyiman

	Kirlinykirliny	Kirlinykirliny
	Karnanganyja	Karnanganyja
	Walany	Walany
	Tirrarn	Tirrarn
	Nyiman	Nyiman

Language and technology



<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352448757>

Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Development of an Early Literacy App in Dhuwaya

Emojis



What are our stories

Introduction to culture and country

Four levels:

- For children: Moral tale set on location to describe navigating country
- For youth: Expand indicators with detail of living on country
- For adults: Expand how local country fits in large environment and how society relates to country
- For elders: Spiritual knowledge of country

Stories are located

- Stories are shared with those who have a relationship to the story
- This keeps the knowledge robust
- Unless the different story holders get to share on country they will not hear the whole story
- It is these collated stories that provide a clear understanding of the knowledge

Storytelling

Stories

Show all



Billy Woods

Passing Knowledge to the New Generation



Ted Carter

Learning Country Through Family Work



Eric Pamunka

Work, Archives, and Remembering Country



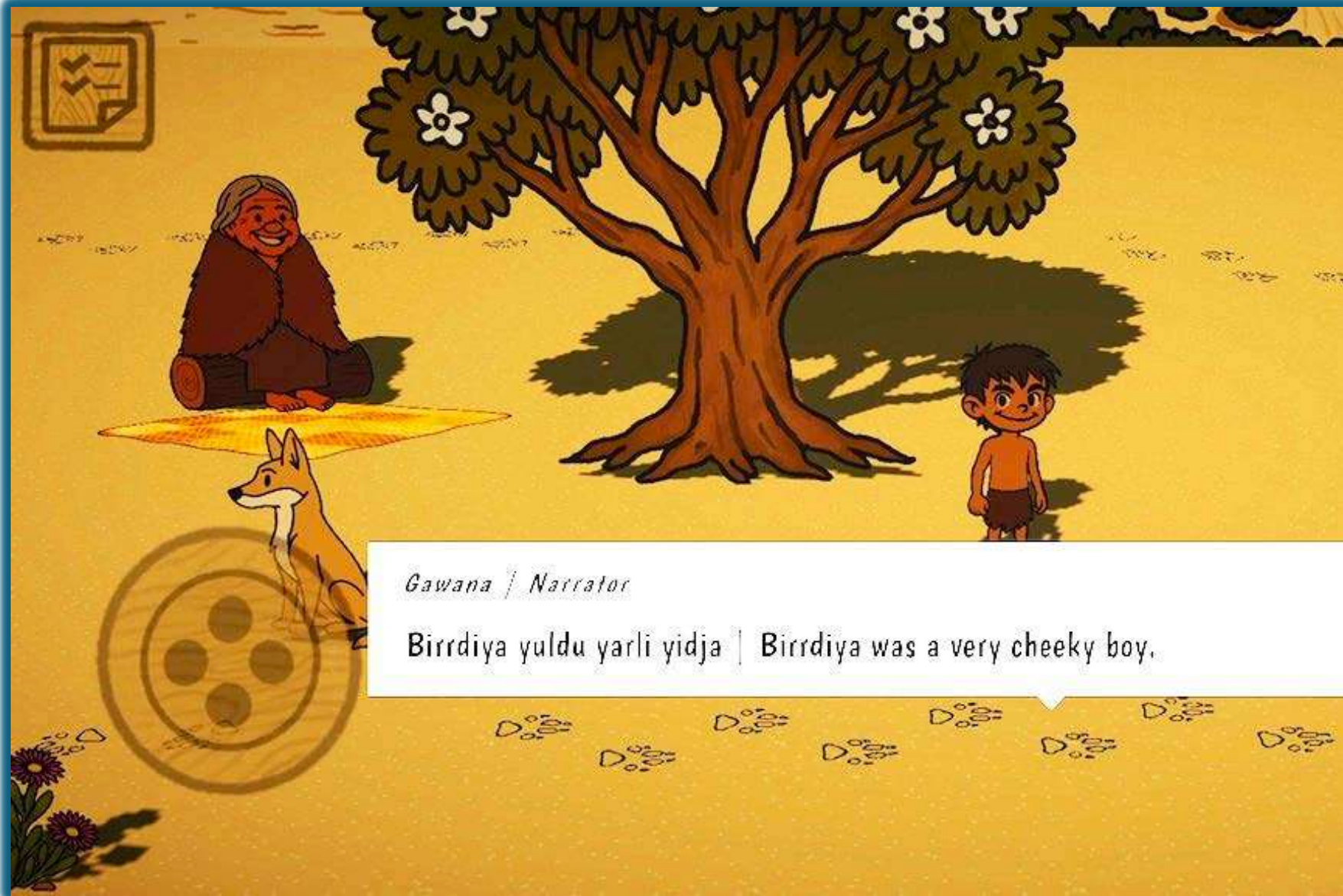
Map of country



How are they told

- location is our country
- language used is the language of that country
- indicators are the important aspects of caring for that country
- moral story is our cultural values for that community
- animals and plants are metaphors for our people and our totems
- the overarching narratives is expanded by people who know part
of the local story

Storytelling in games



Gawana / Narrator

Birrdiya yuldu yarli yidja | Birrdiya was a very cheeky boy.

Gaming is relevant

- Start with a moral tale
- Metaphors are common way of teaching
- The genuine location is preferred for sharing
- Indicators on landscape for further stories
- Community are experienced in this media
- Community have skills in images and gamification

Gaming template

Game engines provide:

- Physics for moving objects
- Set up interactions between objects

Includes plugins to:

- extract area from satellite
- avatars that are suitable
- Write text interactions

AI tools such as:

- animation extracted from video
- text to speech with voice adopted from recorded segment

Topics: Engineering



Dry stone walls



Thanks for Coming! Keep in Touch

You can find details about this event and others on our Northern Institute website – www.cdu.edu.au/northern-institute or by following NI on social media. Scan the QR Code below to join our mailing list

Thank you to the Library and Archives NT for sharing your space and for making this event such a success. And we'll see you all at our next event



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