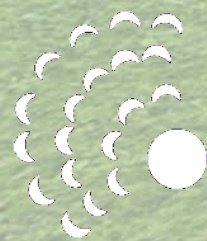


Mark's Forest World

Placemaking strategy for Mark's Country Place



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community. (Macedon Ranges Shire Council, 2024)

PLACEMAKING DEFINITION

“Placemaking is a complex, continuous, place-shaping Process to develop affective bonds between People and place, or topophilia, and through Programming, creates a shared meaning and common sense of purpose, to achieve positive place-based outcomes—love of place, empowerment, social inclusion and cohesion, improved health and overall sustainability. These outcomes will emerge through Place evaluation.” (Mateo-Babiano & Lee, 2020, p.28)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mark's Forest World is a universally accessible natural amphitheatre. It is a placemaking intervention, situated within Sue and Stuart's project, Mark's Country Place, that seeks to unite cultural and social inclusion with environmental stewardship. Our intervention emphasises the interplay between inclusivity, cultural representation and biodiversity, in-keeping with Sue and Stuart's vision for a space that supports individuals with disabilities. The design is a stage with seating, framed by and constructed from crescents of native vegetation. It is intended to function as a sanctuary for community gatherings, performances, and personal reflection, fostering social inclusion whilst emphasising the natural landscape. Our strategy behind Mark's Forest World hinges on community engagement with local government, volunteers and regional artists. The space provides opportunities for local businesses and volunteers to work toward the common goals of environmental care and theatrical performances, cultivating a robust network of connections that can bolster both Kyneton's arts scene and its local economy. To monitor and evaluate our intervention, visitor feedback and environmental monitoring will be used to ensure long-term adaptability and flexibility of the space. Ultimately, Mark's Forest World offers Mark's Country Place, and Kyneton more broadly, an

opportunity to provide visitors with unique theatrical performances, whilst allowing for volunteering opportunities for local workers and actors.

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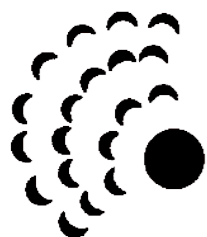
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SECTION 1: STORY OF PLACE

Learning from country: Upper Campaspe (Yelka) River

I am a river that flows from the northern side of the Great Dividing Range into the Murray river (NCCMA, 2017). For thousands of years, I've provided food and medicine to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people who lived in the area (DDWCAC, 2014). They gave me the name 'Yelka', and the upper part of me near modern day Kyneton and Woodend was a major trading place for greenstone, which was used to make axes and other tools (MRSC, 2024a).

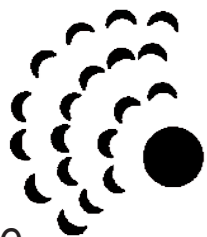
A plant that grows in the plains near my banks is the Murnong, a sweet, grassy tasting yam that was relied on as a staple by many (Ford, 2019). Murnongs are resilient to bushfire, and are easily identified by its flower that grows above ground (Ford, 2019). Apart from food, I am also the centre of creation stories, and a gathering place for ceremonies (DDWCAC, 2014)

The areas around modern day Kyneton are where most of my river water comes from. Woodland plains covered these areas, and water from rainfall is brought to me through overland flow paths (MDBA, 2024; MRSC, 2024b). In these drainage lines, large Manna Gum trees can be found, and native grass such as Basket Grass, Kangaroo Grass and Tuft Hair Grass (MRSC, 2024b)

In 1839, I met my first European person, Major Thomas Mitchell, who thought I looked so beautiful that he named me after one of Alexander the Great's concubines, Campaspe (NCCMA, 2017). But he brought many settlers with him upstream, and used the land around me to graze sheep (NCCMA, 2017). Their livestock led to the erosion of my banks and endangered the vegetation that grows around me (NCCMA, 2017)

When the gold rush came in, settlers destroyed the Manna Gum trees around me for timber to support their mine shafts (NCCMA, 2017). When they ran out of gold, they turned the empty forests into agricultural land, depleting the native grass that once dominated the undergrowth of the woodland plains (NCCMA, 2017). The upstream part of me destroyed the biodiversity around my banks, increasing salinity and erosion (NCCMA, 2017). Settlements and agriculture also captures rainwater that was supposed to flow over the land and into me, diminishing my flow rate (NCCMA, 2017). Finally, gorse, an invasive weed, now takes over the drainage lines, out-competing native grasses (MRSC, 2024b). The Tuft Hair grass is now an endangered species (NCCMA, 2017)

Today, I run about 600 metres east of Mark's Country Place. Mark's Country Place lies on a piece of land that has been cleared for agriculture. Up there, my river banks are only surrounded by a small strip of riparian vegetation. When it rains, water flows through overland flow paths through the site and into me. You cannot see me from the site, but I can feel the water that flows through it.





Being Sensitive To Nature: Grassy Woodlands

I am a habitat that spans across the hills around Kyneton and the Campaspe river. I cover the land with large Manna Gum trees, Eucalypts and Candlebarks , and a variety of grasses (MRSC, 2024b). Although I am a woodland, there are few shrubs and bushes stopping you from walking across me. That’s because kangaroos that traverse between the trees often stop larger plants on the forest floor from growing (MRSC, 2024b).

Something that makes me special is the granite boulders scattered around my undergrowth (MRSC, 2024b). A long time ago, the land east of Kyneton was covered by a lava flow coming from the Central Victorian Highlands (MRSC, 2024b). The granite boulders you see today are the remains of this volcanic flow.

In the Victorian gold rush, the eucalypts and gums in my forest were chopped down to build mineshafts and settlements (Ford, 2019). When there was no more gold to be found, I was cleared to make room for agriculture and grazing (Ford, 2019). There are only a few patches of me remaining here and there, mostly on private land (MRSC, 2024b). The largest remaining part is the Bald Hill reserve northeast of Kyneton.

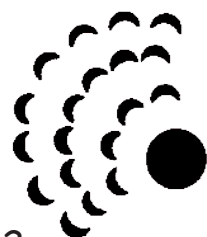
In Mark’s Country Place, my trees have all disappeared, but a few parts of me remain (MRSC,

2024b). A few pieces of granite rock are still scattered around the site, most of which are gathered and used by farmers. But some of the kangaroo and tuft hair grass below my trees are still there, patches of which grow around overland flow paths. But it is not easy for the kangaroo and tuft hair grass to survive. All of the grass on the field is frequently slashed for agricultural uses, and the mulch created from the cut grass covers the soil, preventing seeds of trees and grass from propagating.

Being Sensitive To Nature: Gorse

I’m a flowering plant that came across the sea from Western Europe and Northern Africa (Agriculture Victoria, 2024). You will recognise me by my yellow colour, my spiny leaves and my distinctive coconut scent. The Europeans have brought me to Australia to decorate their gardens. But because I like the dry climate and rocky soil of Australia so much, there is not a lot stopping me from spreading across the country (Agriculture Victoria, 2024). I grow abundantly on the roadsides and fields around Kyneton.

I call Mark’s Country Place my home, and you can find me along the edges of the site. I spread my seed pods around me just like any other plant. But during the hot summers around Mount Macedon, my pods explode and the seeds spread far and wide (Agriculture Victoria, 2024). The seeds can stay in





the soil for a long time, and they can also be spread further by groundwater flow, animals, and muddy tires (Agriculture Victoria, 2024).

Although my flowers may look pretty, people call me a weed, and I am someone who replaced the trees and grass around the upper Campaspe. The Country feels sick because of me (DDWCAC, 2014), and people have implemented plans to destroy me. But the fire just made more of my seed pods explode and helped spread me further (Agriculture Victoria, 2024). If you rip me out and throw me away, my strong seed pods will remain and will spread seeds in the place you dispose of me, even if you mulch my remains up (Agriculture Victoria, 2024). I know that I am not supposed to be here, but using aggressive ways to remove me only makes me stronger.

Listening And Learning From Country: People

The traditional owners of the land around Mark’s Country place are the Taungarung and Djadjawurrung. For the Djadjawurrung, Country is known as Djandak, and everything in Djandak is represented by a name and a song (DDWCAC, 2014). Djandak is bestowed by the creator of the world, Bunjil, the crow. Bunjil originated from the stars and created his brother Mindi (Attwood, 2017). Mindi is a rainbow serpent that shaped the rivers, valleys and mountains of the world, and is responsible for replenishing the water holes. But when it’s disturbed,

it brings in diseases and natural disasters (Attwood, 2017).

The Djadjawurrung took care of the land around Mark’s Country Place for thousands of years, through practices such as cultural burning (Ford, 2019). Today, grazing and agriculture takes advantage of their work. But the Dja Dja Wurrung reaps from the land. The land took care of them, providing fish, Murnong yams, and medicine (Ford, 2019).

In 1788 and onwards, smallpox, spread through trade networks from the north, ravaged the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungarung people well before many of them had even met a European settler (Attwood, 2017). The population of the Dja Dja Wurrung people fell by half. (Attwood, 2017). This was interpreted by the Dja Dja Wurrung as Mindi the Serpent unleashing a dust (Monola Mindi) because it, and Djandak, is disturbed (Attwood, 2017). In many ways, this is true.

In 1836, Major Thomas Mitchell led an expedition through central Victoria, which is Dja Dja Wurrung territory. One year later, pastoralists quickly settled around the Kyneton area and used the land for sheep grazing (Attwood, 2017). In a matter of five years half of all the land around the site has been occupied by White settlers (Attwood, 2017).

Already suffering from the ravages of smallpox, the Djadjawurrung’s livelihoods became threatened when land clearing and draining of rivers destroyed their source of food and medicine (Ford, 2019). The Murnong yam flowers are trampled by the sheep



(Ford, 2019). Consequently, Djadjawurrung are forced to steal food and livestock from the settlers to survive (Attwood, 2017). This led to violence between the settlers and the Djadjawurrung. In 1839, as a result of a White hut keeper being killed, Charles Hutton, a pastoralist settler, with the help of the police, hunted down and killed fleeing Djadjawurrung people near the Campaspe Creek (Attwood, 2017). 40 Dja Dja Wurrung people were killed and this event is known as the Campaspe plains massacre (Attwood, 2017). This event happened not far away from Kyneton and Mark's Country Place. No punitive action was ever taken against Hutton and the police (Attwood, 2017).

The combination of starvation, disease and violence led to population decline, and the Djadjawurrung were eventually forcibly relocated to Coranderrk, an Aboriginal reserve near Healesville, where the lives of displaced people are heavily regulated (National Museum Australia, 2023). In 1880, plans were made to resettle them into the towns to be employed and 'absorbed into the White community' (National Museum Australia, 2023), away from their land. Although Coranderrk and many Victorian cities were places far away from Mark's Country Place, the stories and connections between these places are strong.

For many years, farmers continued to use land to graze animals, including the land that Mark's Country Place is on (Ford, 2019). The land is managed and regulated by private owners and the Macedon Ranges Shire Council. The Djadjawurrung only has power through the Dja Dja Wurrung Clan Aboriginal

Corporation, who are sometimes consulted by the Council and land owners (DDWCAC, 2014).

In 1972, Dr. John Connell set up an organisation called Windarring in Kyneton, aiming to support families of people who have an intellectual disability (Windarring, 2023). It soon expanded and provided services across Central Victoria and in other nearby towns as well (Windarring, 2023). They consist of a community of disability support workers who organise leisure activities, employment opportunities, and personal support (Windarring, 2023).

Today, there is a rich theatrical scene in Kyneton and the nearby area. In 2012, a bluestone church in town was refitted to become a theatre, which became home to the Kyneton Theatre Company (Kyneton Theatre Company, 2017). Over the years, the theatre casts local members to perform a number of plays, including *The Wizard of Oz* (Kyneton Theatre Company, 2017).

The Central Victorian Highlands is also home to a number of other theatre groups like the Mount View Theatre in Macedon, which has existed since 1972 and had many original productions over the years (The Mount Players, 2024). Mount View Theatre also offers theatre craft workshops at their sites once a week since 2007 (The Mount Players, 2024). Further afield, the Castlemaine Theatre Company is a non-profit theatre company that has been performing for 60 years (Castlemaine Theatre Company, 2024). They are unique in the way they 'respond to the changing times' and are 'responsive to new ideas'

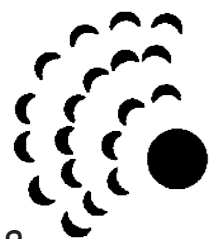


(Castlemaine Theatre Company, 2024).

There is also an Aboriginal dimension to theatre. Many Aboriginal performers and dancers struggle with the need to compromise their work to fit with popular, colonial perceptions of their cultural identity (Dow, 2020). Those who choose to maintain the integrity of their storytelling often struggle for funding. During COVID-19, some professional Aboriginal performers were left homeless (Dow, 2020).

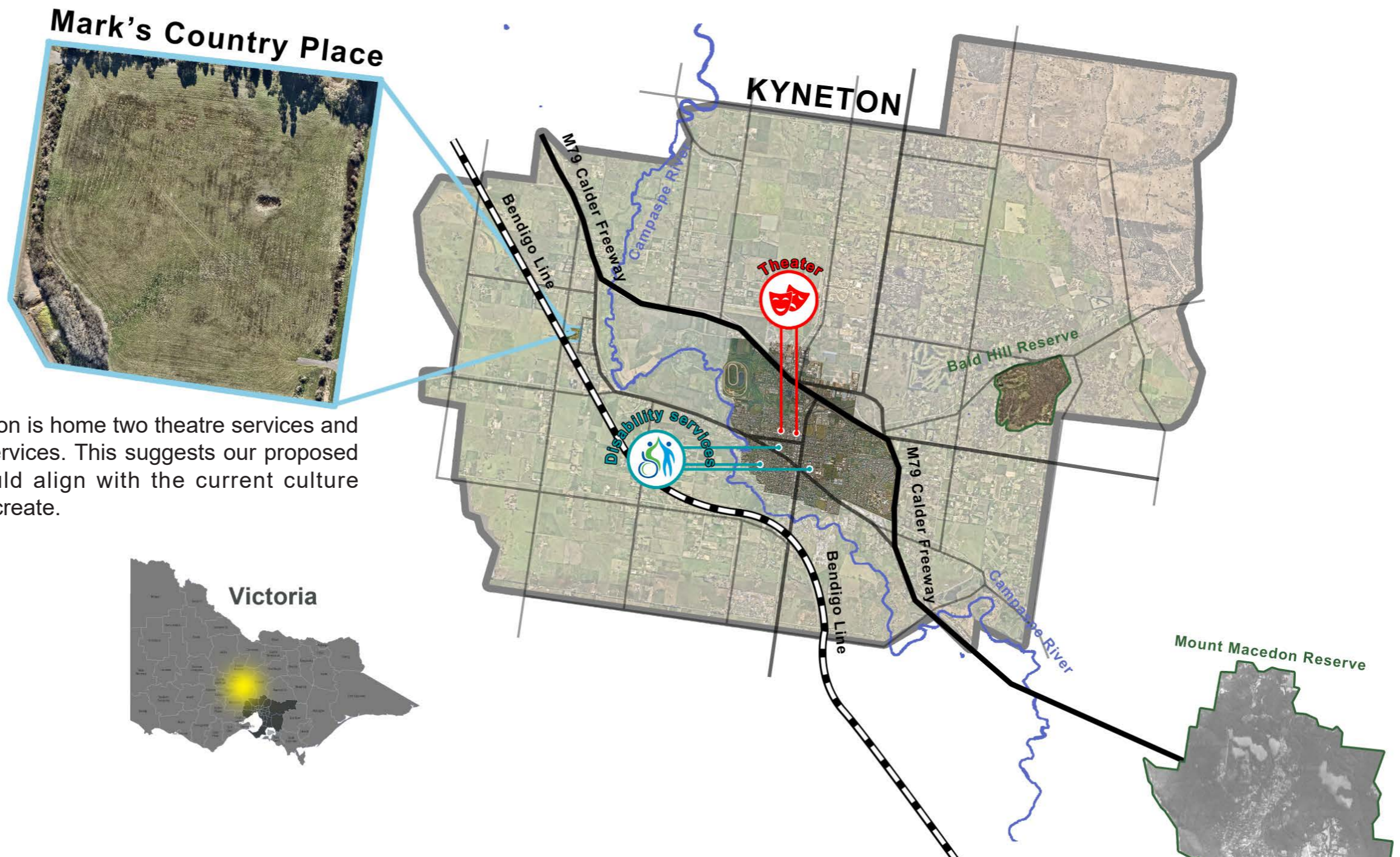
There is a rich, often unknown Aboriginal history when it comes to performing art. Djirri Djirri (meaning Willy Wagtail), for example, is a Woi Wurrung women's only dance group in Melbourne (Djirri Djirri, 2023). Their dances honour their ancestors, family, and Country (Djirri Djirri, 2023). Performances in a contemporary style exists as well, reflected by multi-generational creative development programmes such as Platform (Dancehouse, 2024). Both Djirri Djirri and Platform are led by Woi Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung individuals.

On the 11th February, 2020, Sue and Stuart purchased a piece of land near Kyneton, with the aim of creating a garden facility for people from all ages and with different (dis)abilities. Naming it after their intellectually disabled son, Mark, Mark's Country Place aims to be a 'garden sanctuary for people to rest, learn, enjoy and connect'. Despite a lengthy legal process to get a permit from the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, and opposition from neighbours, Sue and Stuart continue to push forward with their project, hoping to create a place that serves the local community, disabled people, and their families around Central Victoria.

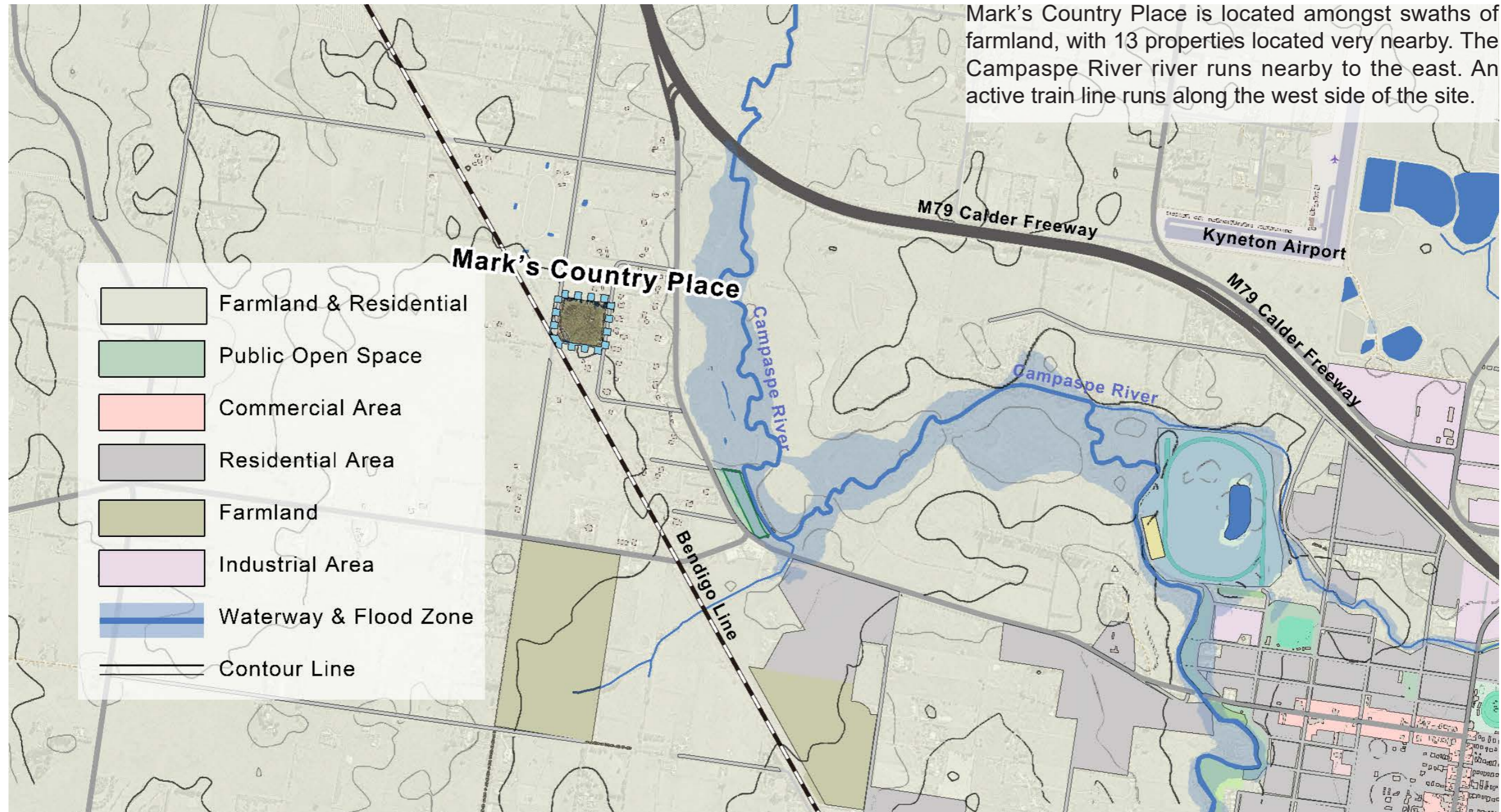




Multi-Scalar Analysis



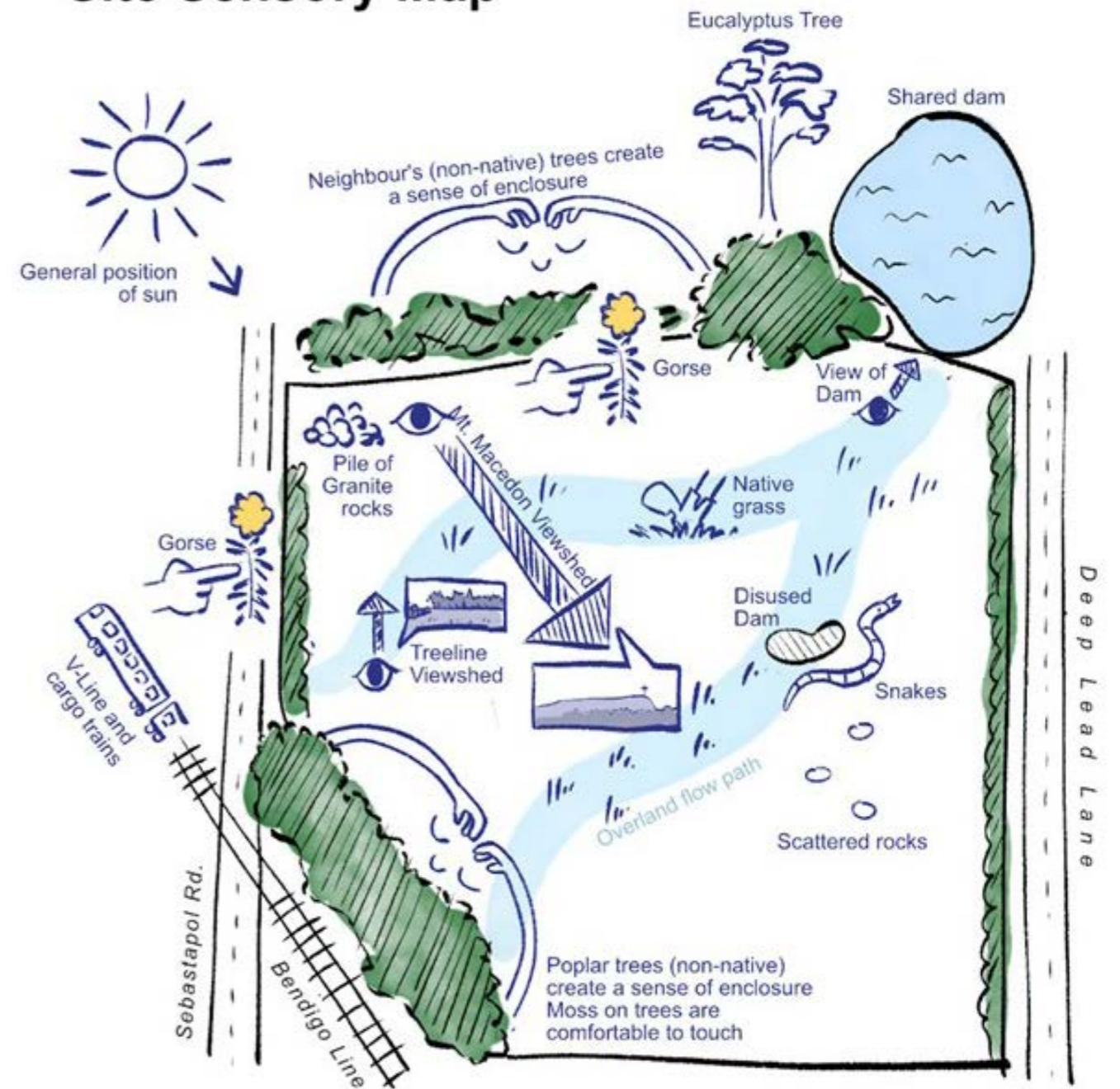
The Kyneton region is home two theatre services and three disability services. This suggests our proposed intervention could align with the current culture Kyneton aims to create.



Listening To Country

Walking around the site reveals the importance of the overland flow paths in fostering the growth of native grass and other sensitive species, the ability of trees to create a sense of enclosure, and the prominence of the view of Mount Macedon.

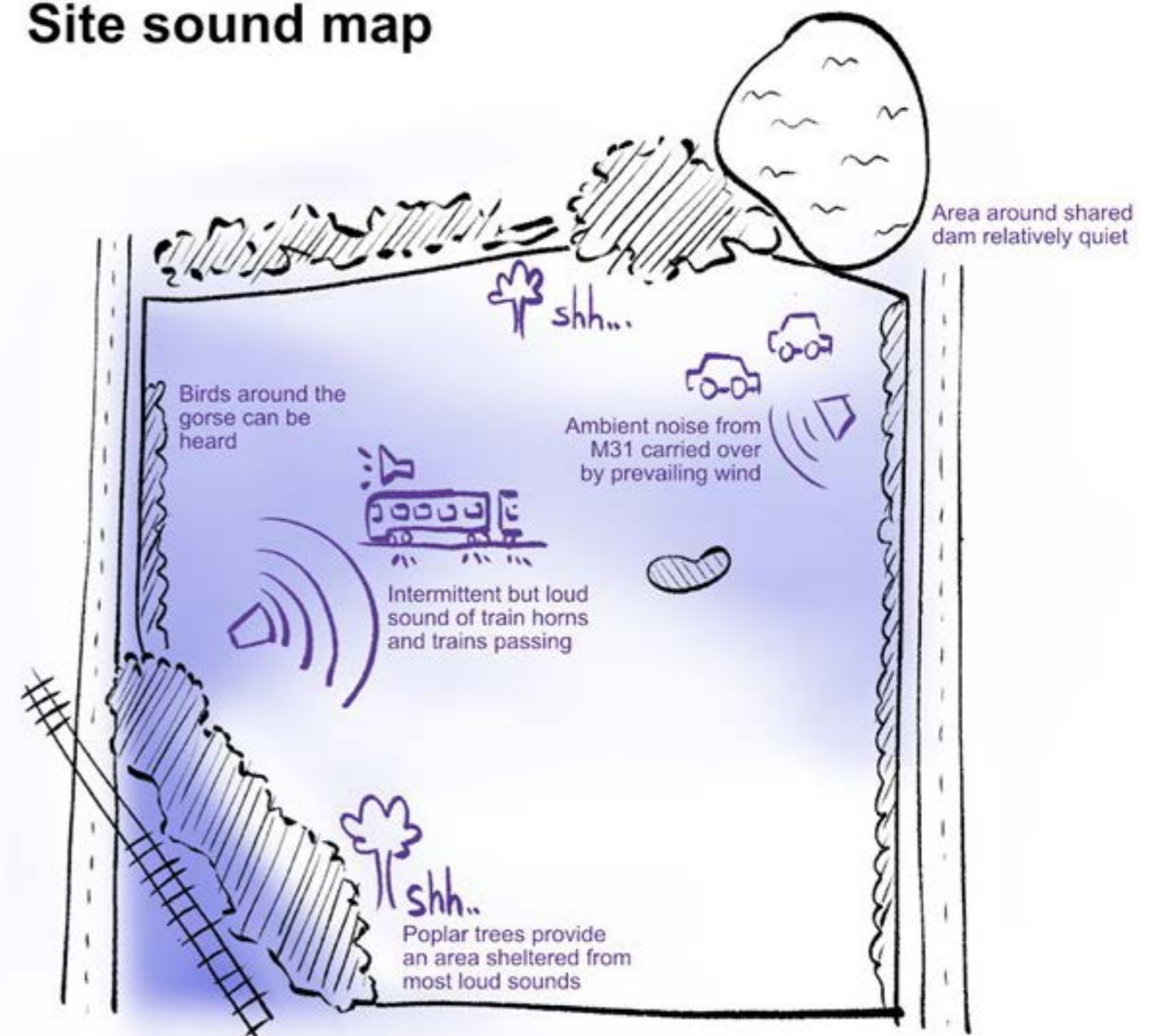
Site Sensory Map





It was found that a lot of noise emanates from the Bendigo Line when trains pass by. Depending on the wind conditions, the drone of vehicles from the M31 can also be heard.

Site sound map

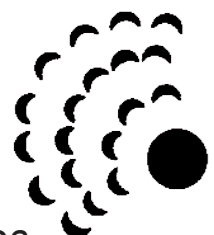
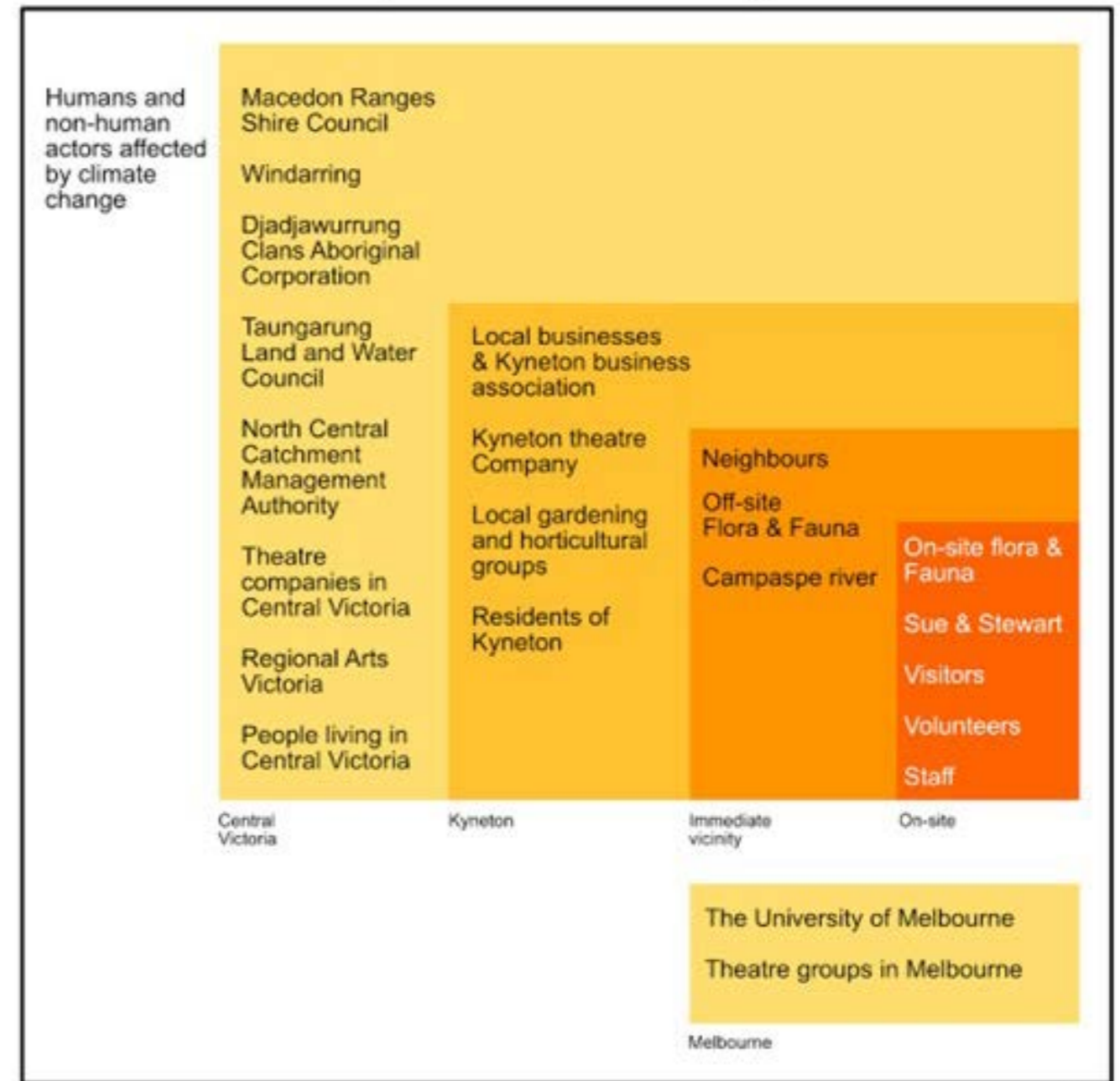




Stakeholder Analysis

The Campaspe, fauna, flora, theatre groups, the Djadjawurrung and Taungarung are stakeholders of this project. However, these stakeholders operate at different spatial scales, as seen in the following diagram:

Stakeholders: Spatial relationships





Besides them, there are also other stakeholders involved. The North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) is the local referral authority for water management. Regional Arts Victoria is an independent organisation representing the arts in regional Victoria. The Djadjawurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) and Taungurung Land and Water Council (TLWC) are representatives of the traditional owners of the area. Local horticulture groups can assist with the horticultural aspects of the project, while local businesses can benefit from the increased number of visitors with the establishment of Mark's Country Place. Students and staff from The University of Melbourne are collaborating with Sue and Stuart in this project. Finally, in light of the climate emergency, there is also a need to ensure that the project plays a role in mitigating climate change.

Our two main concerns are stewardship, and legacy. We want to make Mark's Country Place last, with mechanisms in place to ensure it is handed on for generations with care and growth.

There are three key ways we would like to engage stakeholders to achieve this: One, by encouraging custodianship. Two, by supporting life, in the sense of a collective. And three, by encouraging personal authorship and thereby perceived ownership over the place.

There are many potential stakeholders, though not all have the same part to play in this vision. The core, or the Centre/Loyalists, concern our owners, Sue and Stewart, the local government, and the company Windarring. It is critical that the Centre binds with its Allies. Sue and Stewart, and all these interests, must

be together as one with the immediate neighbouring people, future visitors, staff, and us, representatives of the University of Melbourne. Even simply placating neighbours with responsible limits on sound and light pollution, or remuneration for key staff make for solid, foundational and generative relationships.

The two low-stake groups are either Cavalier, meaning questionably loyal, or not particularly relevant in sway. Local volunteers, community groups, NGOs and businesses are the former, whilst Traditional Custodians, environmental protection groups and Nature itself make the latter. Again, the crucial element is that we do not let Mark's Country place be 'Shattered' by the confluence of these low-stake groups, which would not, of their own accord, stand firm to the vision going forward. Instead, we must focus on offering something in exchange to secure the loyalty of our Cavalier groups, and mass up enough of our low-stake, low-resource groups for it to become a potent ally.

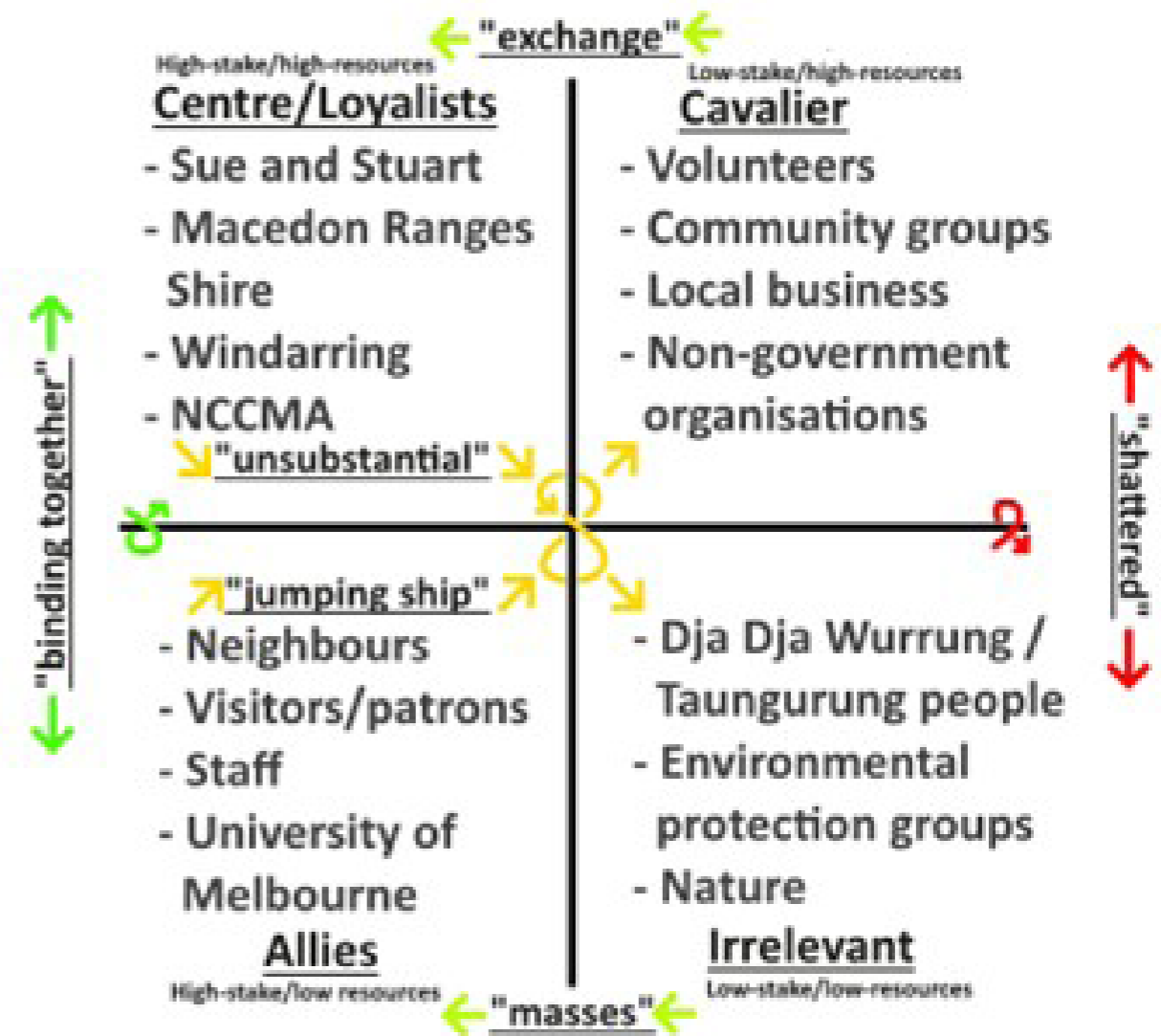
Talking specifically, a vast and diverse enough contribution to nature on the site would become an asset. A monetary opportunity for local business, or one of growth for volunteers, or publicity for community groups (such as the Kyneton theatre company) could make these groups loyal contributors to the vision. Lastly, a market sharing between Windarring and the visitors of Mark's Country Place, as well as the opportunity for Macedon Ranges Shire Council to endorse, publicise and so bring more patronage to the Place are some of our most ideal opportunities.

For that reason, our placemaking intervention intends to integrate diverse, natural space with



value-opportunity in the form of a natural stage that has potential to expand into a municipal attraction, making it an asset to both Windarring and Local Government.

Skeleton Key Stakeholder Analysis



SECTION 2: PLACE STRATEGY, PRINCIPLES AND OUTCOMES

Cultural Representation

What is cultural representation (Mateo-Babiano & Lee, 2019)

- To ZANC, cultural representation is about empowerment, which is operationalised through leadership, value-shaping, and addressing needs
- To enable people from different cultural backgrounds to take leadership
- To allow place and its values to be shaped by a plurality of cultural values
- To ensure that different culturally-mediated needs are met.

Why cultural representation?

--Theatre and performance arts in Victoria are centred in Melbourne. There is a need and demand for gathering places where performing artists can come together.

- In both Kyneton's history and in the history of performance arts in Victoria, Aboriginal voices have been marginalised. Aboriginal values of Country are often not represented, and they are often not given ownership and leadership of their performances and stories, often having to fit a whitewashed narrative.

- Disabled voices and experiences are often excluded from the performing arts. Given Sue and Stuart's aim of disability inclusion and the performing arts context of the local area, an opportunity also exists to include

disabled voices through performance.

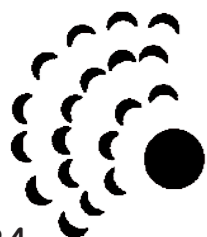
- For stakeholders, Regional Arts Victoria found that the arts are one of the lowest priority for regional councils like Macedon Ranges Shire (Regional Arts Victoria, 2023). Due to the dispersed nature of Regional Victoria, it is hard for creatives to network and grow their connections (Regional Arts Victoria, 2023). Furthermore, it is found that 'capacity nodes' like theatres and schools are important to fostering regional creativity. Finally, an opportunity that exists for Regional Arts Victoria is the increase of representation of 'unfamiliar' works (Regional Arts Victoria, 2023). Overall, this highlights a need for cultural representation through the arts.

Placemaking Strategy: Inclusion And Equity

What is inclusion and equity

- To ZANC, inclusion and equity means to embrace the needs and lived experiences of people with different physical and intellectual abilities. This includes going beyond accessibility, and aiming for universal design, universal enrichment, and directly addressing ableist social structures (Cathro, 2022, Ma, 2022)

- Universal access rejects the idea that there should be a segregated set of infrastructure for people with disabilities. Rather, access for all is integrated and designed for from the very start, countering the





ableist notion of assuming able-bodiedness as a 'default starting point'

- Universal enrichment means to create meaningful experiences that can be accessed by different types of senses. Eg. Performances that are able to be fully enjoyed through listening alone . (Cathro, 2022)

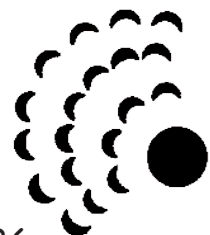
Why inclusion and equity?

- Sue and Stuart's story reveals how ableist exclusion occurs in important facets of everyday life such as socialising, recreation and employment. Their aim is to make a recreational space that is appropriate for intellectually and physically disabled people and their carers. This calls for a design approach that embraces universal access.

- The site and sensory analysis reveals how there are opportunities and challenges when it comes to creating a place that is not too overstimulating for people with an intellectual disability. For example, trains create intermittent but very loud and sudden noises when they pass by. Opportunities should be maximised and challenges should be mitigated.

- Listening to Country and the experience of nature should be a universally enriching experience that is accessible for people of all abilities. Experiences of nature are often restricted for people with limited physical mobility, but also for people with vision and auditory impairments (Cathro, 2022)

- There are also local stakeholders like Windarring who can directly benefit from a universally designed place of recreation, and they can also provide help and assistance to the project as well.



Habitat And Biodiversity

What is nature in place?

- To ZANC, placemaking with nature is to re-integrate nature back into place and foster the connections between ecosystems and humans. It is the goal of putting stewardship at the forefront of placemaking. (Bush, 2019)

- (Re)integrating nature is important for spaces where socio-ecological relationships have been broken, damaging the sense of place. Integrating nature is more than just restoring an ecosystem, but also our meaningful connection with it.

- Stewardship is the idea of nature providing services for us, and we provide something back to nature in return.

Why habitat and biodiversity?

- Although most of the pre-colonial habitat has been destroyed, aspects such as the overland flows and the grass remain. These little remnants can serve as a starting point for re-integrating nature.

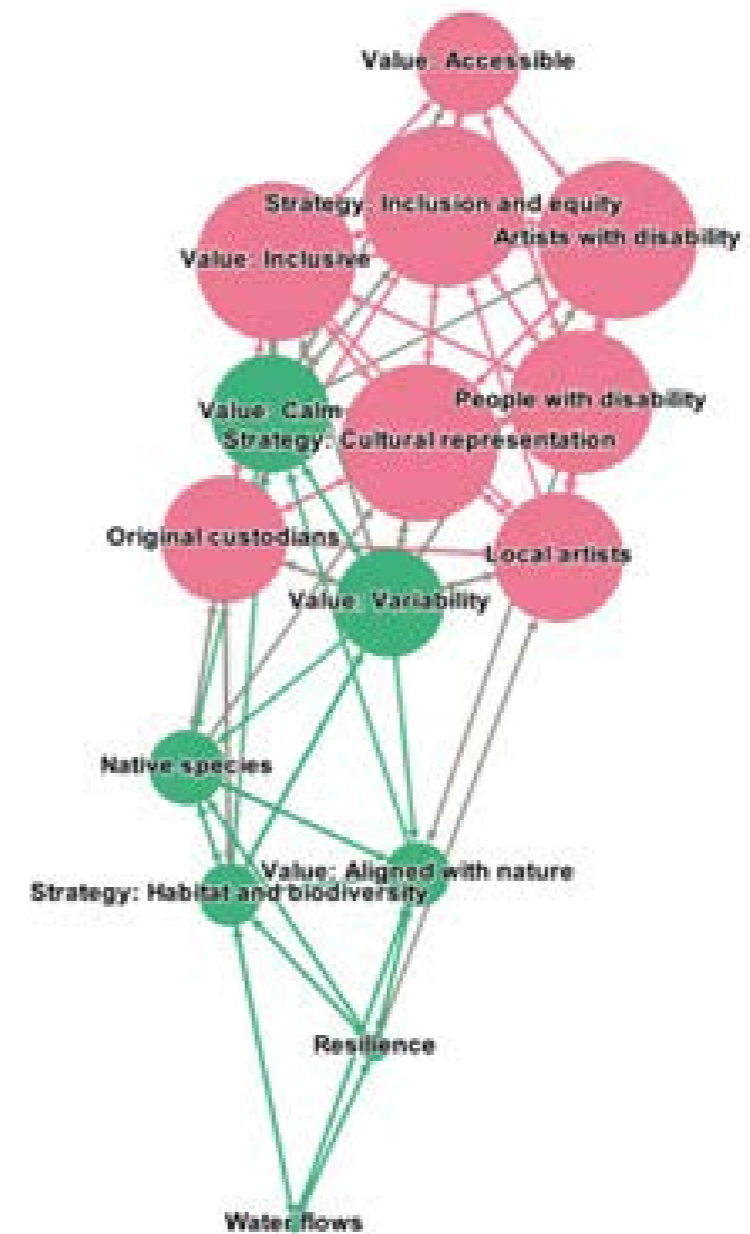
- Stewardship is central to Mark's Country Place. As seen from the story of place, the Djadjawurrung and Taungurung have reaped from the land through its provision of food, but they also took care of it through practices such as cultural burning. Colonisation has damaged this facet of stewardship in place, but also everyone's connection to the site's flora and



fauna, as well as the Campaspe. Efforts have to be made to restore this relationship. There is also an opportunity to re-integrate nature into place through Djadjawurrung and/or Taungurung leadership.

- There are immediately feasible actions on site that can allow for a healthier relationship between humans and the environment. Managing the gorse and preventing the slashing of grass can allow native tuft hair grass and kangaroo grass to propagate easier, and eventually create room for native trees to grow as well.

- Stewardship can be reflected through on-site sensory experiences, especially for people who experience sensory overload. The poplar trees and the neighbour's trees north of the site provide shelter from noise and stimuli. If we enhance the forest, then the forest provides places that shelter us.





PLANTING SCHEDULE

Code	Botanical Name	Common Name	Soil Conditions	Solar Conditions	Slope Tolerance	Size H & W
Trees						
Ec	<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	River Red Gum	Dry, well drained	Full sun, dappled or partial shade	<20% / 1 in 5	15-20 m x 10-15 m
Eo	<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>	Swamp Gum	Dry, Damp, or Waterlogged	Full sun	<20% / 1 in 5	8-25 m x 8-20 m
Ad	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle	Dry, well drained	Full sun, partial shade	<20% / 1 in 5	10-12 x 6-8 m
Shrubs						
Bs	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>	Sweet Bursaria	Dry, well drained	Full sun, partial shade	<30% / 3 in 10	2-6 m x 2-3 m
Ap	<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle	Dry, well drained	Full sun, partial shade	<20% / 1 in 5	2-4 m x 2-5 m
Oo	<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting	Moist well drained soils	Full sun, partial shade	<20% / 1 in 5	1-1.5 m x 0.5-1 m
Sl	<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>	Large Kangaroo-apple	Moist well drained soils	Partial shade	<30% / 3 in 10	1-3 m x 1-3 m
Ground Cover						
Dc	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>	Round-leaved Pigface	Dry	Full sun	<50% / 1 in 2	0.3m x 1-2 m
Ca	<i>Carex appressa</i>	Tall Sedge	Moist well drained soils	Full sun, partial shade	<60% / 3 in 5	0.5-1.2 m x 0.5-1 m
Te	<i>Tricoryne elatior</i>	Yellow Rush-lily	Moist to dry soil	Full sun, partial shade	<30% / 3 in 10	0.3-0.5 m x 0.3-0.5 m
Cc	<i>Caesia calliantha</i>	Blue Grass-lily	Dry, well drained	Full sun, partial shade	<60% / 3 in 5	0.1-0.7 m x 0.1-0.5 m

The selection of Vegetation is based on Victoria's Native Vegetation Catalog, the species were suitable for shallow soil, and narrow streetscapes. The Vegetation species were also selected for their ability to suffer the slope, solar condition, and low irrigation level of the garden. These highly tolerant plants will be able to adapt to the effects of climate change

Shrubs



Bursaria spinosa
Sweet Bursaria



Acacia paradoxa
Hedge Wattle

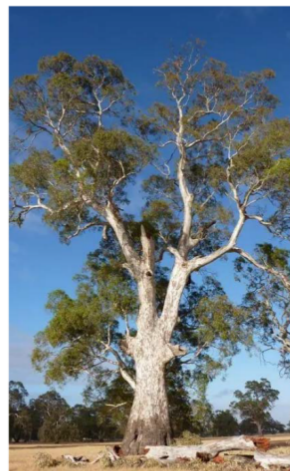


Ozothamnus obcordatus
Grey Everlasting

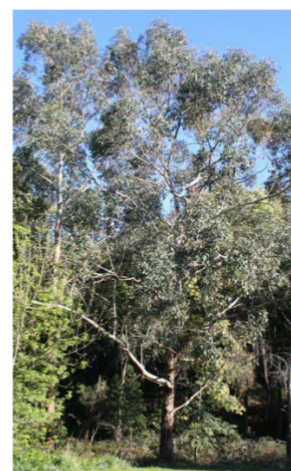


Solanum laciniatum
Large Kangaroo-apple

Trees



Eucalyptus cam.
River Red Gum



Eucalyptus ovata
Swamp Gum



Acacia dealbata
Silver Wattle

Ground Cover



Disphyma crassifolium
Round-leaved Pigface



Carex appressa
Tall Sedge



Tricoryne elatior
Yellow Rush-lily



Caesia calliantha
Blue Grass-lily

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

As part of our public engagement, we conducted a community needs assessment. This took the form of an informal presentation where we let the audience know our project's aim, ideas, narrative, design elements, concept and preliminary engagement strategy. We discussed openly how this placemaking intervention aims to connect guests with local performing artists and plant life to create rich, positive memories. Cultural representation of people with disabilities, locals and traditional custodians is central to this, hand-in-hand with inclusion and equity, which informs the universal design principles of our natural theatre— 'natural' in response to our concern for habitat and biodiversity. At the time, we understood the theatre needed to be much as possible both accessible and grown—as opposed to constructed. We sought to draw upon local groups such as the Kyneton Theatre Company and Horticultural Society with openness to any form of collaboration from the community going forward.

We received limited but ultimately very incisive and productive feedback. The community weighed up the initial proposal and gave suggestions to improve our project. Non-national tourists, local neighbours, and the Horticultural Society foregrounded three community perspectives and concerns in our engagement activity. The concern of accessibility—

drawing in visitors to an otherwise unmarked and out-of-the way property—was brought up by the tourist. Their concern was that such a site was ultimately too hard to get to, in terms of public transport, roads, signage and publicity. Our answer comes through an integrating of efforts with local council, which we propose is in a position to aid with the creation of appropriate solutions, as well as marketing and publicity programs.

Disturbance—noise pollution—was the primary concern of one immediate neighbour of the site. This, of course, is a very valid concern for a locale already experiencing rapid change—regardless of the implementation of a local theatre. They raised certain fears of sound from performances carrying across the perimeter of the property, and a general worry that not enough was being done to ensure that the gatherings for such performances wouldn't affect neighbouring properties. Our response was to manage the potential for disturbance by keeping the installation away from the perimeter of the property, within a thick, layered canopy of vegetation. Moreover, it would be limited to quiet uses, such as acoustic music and most especially 'calm' productions—the lowered volume of accessibility-friendly theatre. This is in synergy with our place values of equity and inclusion, as well as habitat biodiversity, since both stand to lose from excessive disturbance. The potential for decibel measuring and the installation of insulating walls remains going forward from the catalyst for iterative solutions and evaluative measures.

The opportunity for collaboration in the design and implementation of seasonal installations, or "living"



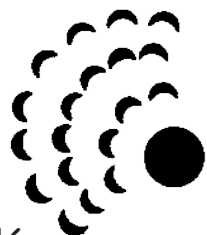
sets of plants around the stage, intrigued one enthusiastic individual from the Horticultural Society. Crucial to our vision is that the stage design doubly functions as a viewing station for nature. Whilst the layered canopy behind the stage is more permanent, much potential lies in the arrangement and alteration of plant boxes and rotational displays. One case study to draw on for this is The Living Stage (Beer et al., 2018). Our collaboration with the Horticultural Society could replicate the mobile, transitory and living set designs made for The Living Stage, a solid precedent for community-engaged, nature-based design in theatre, and so help to make community “an integral part of the work, not just passive observers” (tanjabeer, 2018). In this sense we are offering to experiment with a distributed leadership that gives roles and allows community to contribute to the installation—not only for better resource management, but also to foster genuine engagement.

SECTION 4: PLACE ACTIVATION PLAN

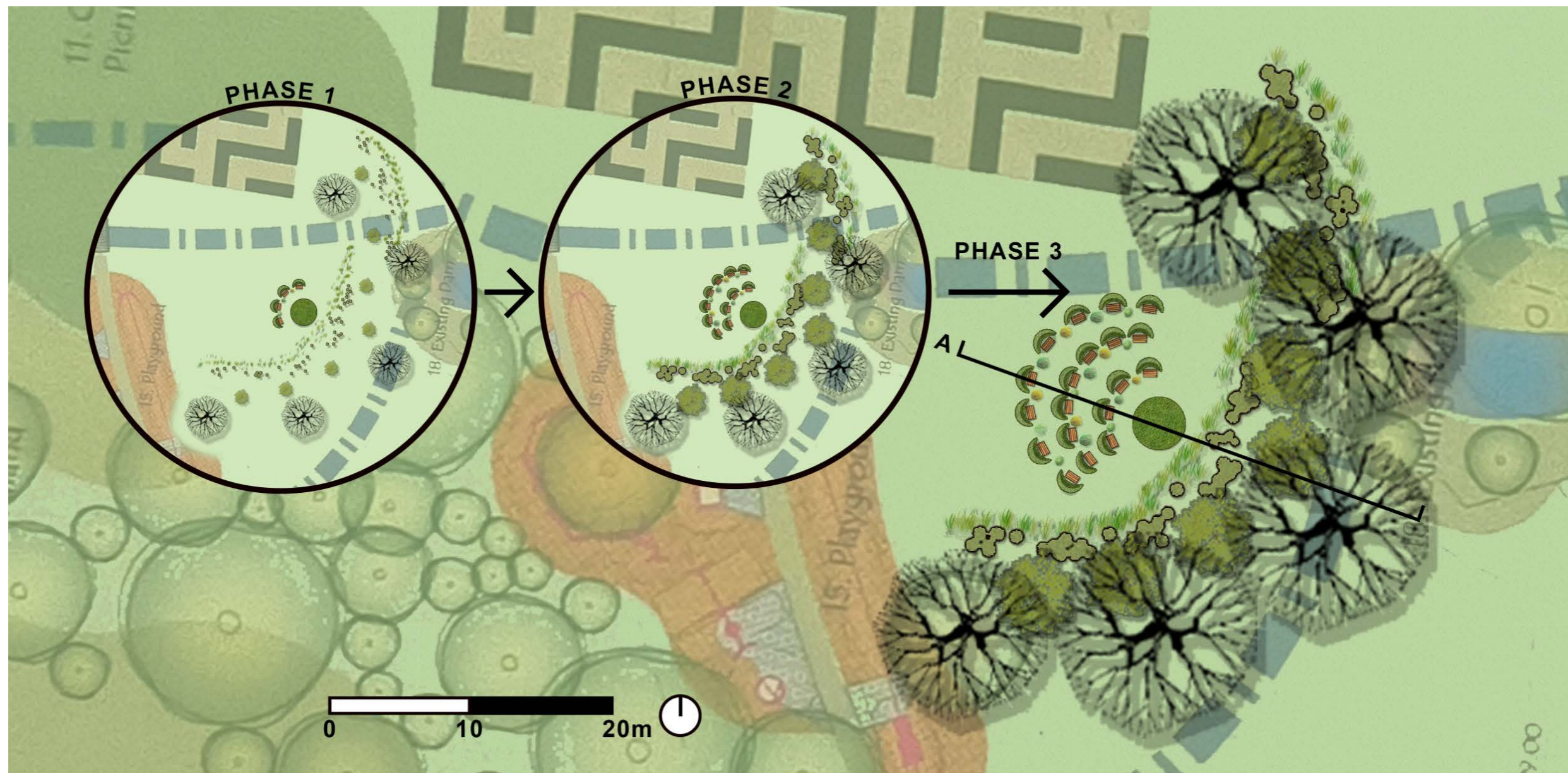
CATALYST TACTICAL PLACEMAKING PROJECT

The catalyst installation iteration is intimate and smaller in scale. It is designed to be modular, meaning it can continue to expand. The flexibility and expandability of the design is such that marquees, temporary platforms, and additional plantings or seating arrangements can be added or removed seasonally, or later down the line. What remains more permanent is the multi-tiered, sloping crescent of plant-life. Ground covers, moving up to bushes, to fast growing, smaller trees, and finally to larger, slow growing species form this complex, diverse forest canopy. The effect is one of a diverse and immersive nature-scape, which will partially enclose a small earth stage, fronted by radiating crescents of plant-life intended to part and frame chairs.

One beautiful way to initiate the place is with an invocational event. The possibility of a fund-raising show of live theatre and music in the catalyst iteration of the stage could function as an opportunity to evaluate the design, finance its potential expansion, and pilot-run the first of what may, one day, be a tradition of collaboration between Mark's Country Place and its stakeholders. Critically, Mark's Forest World is both a forest and an amphitheatre. Ultimately, even when no show is on stage, nature in its beauty remains to be watched from the audience. These aspects take after adaptive design strategies and ensure Mark's Forest World involves transdisciplinary engagement, multifunctionality, incremental change and environmental resilience (Palazzo, 2020, p.136).



Physical Implementation Elaboration

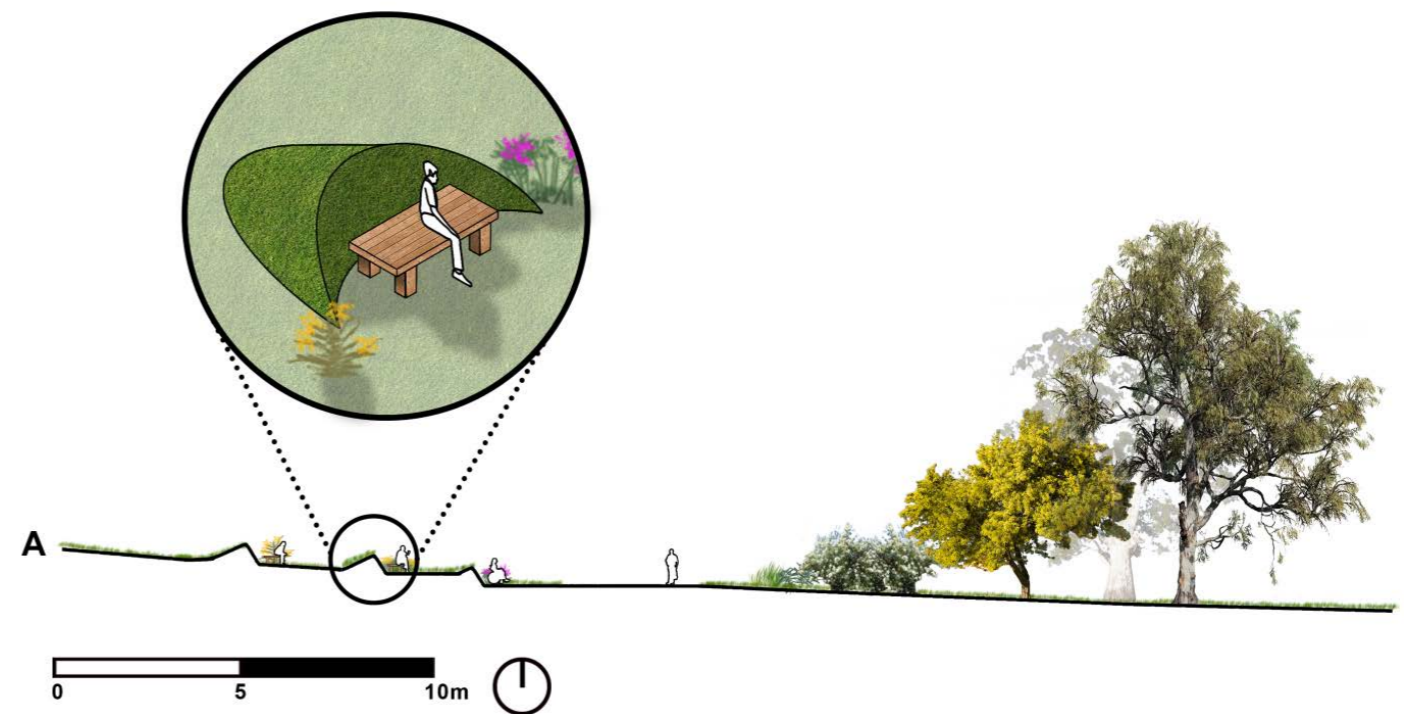




Following the existing landform, the design of the amphitheatre was designed carefully, aiming to minimise soil movement and reduce the extent of earthworks for reducing construction cost. The approach ensures that all audiences could have a direct view of the stage while keeping the natural landscape behind. Besides, the site's gentle slope offers help on irrigation and maintenance. With several surface runoff existing, the design managed to optimise this natural flow. We have arranged the plants in a semi-circular pattern, strategically positioned to capture maximum storm water.

Considering the diverse needs of the various forest canopy covers, the lower vegetation including shrubs and grasses has been carefully designed. The plants are placed slightly away from tall trees, facing north, aiming to ensure they get enough sunlight while avoiding competition between them. This arrangement not only supports the health and growth of all layers of vegetation, allows the design to last longer, but also contributes to the overall aesthetics of the amphitheatre. The greenery will serve as a backdrop for the performance, enhancing the audience's visual experience while acting as a natural sound barrier to reduce noise pollution.

In addition to using fast-growing tree species like acacia dealbata etc, the design primary selections of lower vegetations are that can absorb carbon quickly and mature within five years. Those rapid growth plants not only contribute to helping create rich habitats and food sources for local wildlife once vegetation is restored and having the functions of the place come out sooner. As the diverse vegetation flourishes, we will have the opportunity to reintroduce



native animals to the area, restoring the natural balance and biodiversity.

Vegetation selection throughout the amphitheatre is guided by Victoria's Native Vegetation catalogue. We have carefully selected species that are well suited to the site's specific soil conditions, solar condition and low irrigation needs. The approach ensures that the plants in the background require less maintenance than the radiating crescent shrubs in foreground. By selecting native plants that could survive in their natural environment, we not only enhance the ecological value of the site, but also ensure sustainability and support human activities and local wildlife.

The radiating crescent of plants and seating arrangements inside the amphitheatre are



deliberately designed to be flexible and dynamic. While they are used to frame and support a variety of activities and functions, such complex designs require more maintenance and resources at all stages of their life cycle. Regular care is necessary, including trimming to maintain shape and health, applying garden mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds for the stage and seating area, and the use of fertiliser to ensure growth. In addition, soil treatment may be required from time to time to provide nutrients and improve soil quality.

This commitment to step-by-step design moves reflects our ambition to create a vibrant and functional space that ADAPTS to the needs of its users and communities. By investing in these resources, we not only ensure the placemaking is long-lasting and stay active, but also support the various events that take place within the amphitheatre. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, initiate the place with an invocational event, we try not to define its function and the activities that take place, the most fundamental point behind the design is the flexibility of using space.





Engagement Strategy

Our engagement strategy, first and foremost, addresses certain principles. Cultural representation, through a distributed leadership, ensures that the needs and values of local community, traditional custodians and those with disabilities shape this place. Inclusion and equity, both through and beside such representation, aims for universal design, enrichment and the addressing of ableism in society. Finally, habitat and biodiversity, by fostering stewardship and re-integrating nature, move towards a strengthened, more-than-human vision for representation and equity within Mark's Forest World. Relationships are the core of our engagement strategy and underlying principles—they are central to any placemaking initiative. In our section on stakeholder analysis, we discuss the importance of binding the centre with its allies. One way this would take form is through market sharing with Windarrang through theatre events and workshops, such that the families, communities and support workers tied to the organisation might experience the site (so drawing more patronage). Another way, as the community needs assessment alludes to, would be to more actively involve Macedon Ranges Shire Council. The council is in a position to give publicity and accessibility for nonlocal tourists and as such could work well with Mark's Country Place—

especially since Regional Victoria is a hard place for the arts. We must remember that the placemaking efforts of community organisations help to “bridge the gap between aspirational visioning [and] on-ground action... effectively extending the capacity of local governments to achieve place quality objectives” (Creagh et al., 2020, p.112). It is this appeal to the interests of local government, which might then seek to “tap’ into the energy” (Creagh et al., 2020, p.119) of Mark's Country Place, which cements Macedon Ranges Shire Council as a possible ally to going forward.

Although nature may be, strictly speaking, a more ‘irrelevant’ stakeholder, a vast and diverse enough contribution to nature may turn it into an ally—and that is what our engagement strategy seeks. Habitat and biodiversity is one of the principles of Mark's Forest World. For that reason, our suggested planting pool consists of native species, and the arrangement in layers of canopied vegetation, all amassing into one potent emulation of an ecologically (as well as aesthetically) successful nature space. The wellbeing-promoting, sense-of-place-creating and ‘biophilic’ interconnecting power of nature (Masterson et al., 2017; National Trust (UK), 2017; Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Hes & du Plessis, 2014; Bush et al., 2020, p.43) turns the ‘forest’ half of our ‘amphitheatre’ from something irrelevant into a place in and of itself—an asset.

Of the cavalier stakeholders, such as community groups, theatre companies and volunteers, something needs to be offered in exchange to entice commitment to our vision. Our engagement strategy thus seeks to offer volunteers skills, outdoor plays,



classes and community, letting them carve a place of their own in the performing and creating of plays as part of a fruitful exchange —perhaps, in one example, by the horticultural society selecting plants or designing of sets. It is in this way that the distribution of leadership can come to the fore. As in *The Living Stage*, the magic of Mark’s Forest World is to create “a world where the distinction between installation and performance; spectator and creator; and intention and outcome were blurred” (tanjabeer, 2018). People visiting Mark’s Country Place could be both performers and spectators, leaders and followers, co-creators and experiencers of this ongoing placemaking process. Specifically, performing artists with a disability may find community here. One strong opportunity is to involve one particular theatre company known as No Strings Attached:

“a professional theatre company that... works exclusively with disabled performers.... We challenge perceptions and barriers associated with disability. Our theatre skills [and] development workshops... [create] life skills. As people find their voice and develop their craft, ... we challenge expectations and educate society towards true inclusion. Our work showcases the power of diversity and acceptance... [by] amplifying disabled voices” (No Strings, 2024).

This ties in powerfully with the principles of Mark’s Forest World, to create cultural representation and inclusion and equity. Our placemaking initiative, combined with the ethos of No Strings, echoes our

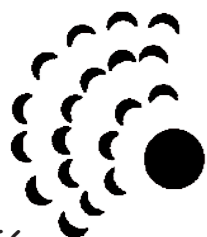
“the role of art is to educate and spread awareness about significant social and political issues and to actively partake in exploring solutions to these problems” (tanjabeer, 2018).

That is what Mark’s Forest World can do.

Financial Activation

The thematic core of our initiative is the space’s capacity to create positive memories for guests through an intersection between stage performance, social engagement between guests, and close proximity to the natural environment. As established, this initiative comprises a singular development within the broader context of Mark’s Country Place that we anticipate will grow and change dependent on how visitors and performers interact with it in relation to the broader site. As the space will require ongoing maintenance, it will need consistent care and attention that will capitalise on local resources. Additionally, it will provide opportunities for local artists to gather exposure. As such, we have designed a space that will, through its tactical realisation and upkeep, reinforce and engage with local community assets, actors, and resources through promoting the arts (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

The space consists mostly of naturally occurring flora elements that will be planted and cared for in a long-term maintenance strategy. To integrate the space seamlessly into the surrounding natural landscape,



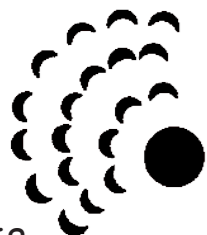


the intervention comprises a flattened, grassy ‘stage’ area, small mounds of grass that house wooden benches, several plants that line the seating area, and large-scale trees and plants that flank the back area of the ‘stage’. The space’s devotion to natural plantlife and small wooden structures, coupled with the minimal nature of the stage and seating, reduces the quantity of assets and space to be considered in the tactical realisation of the project, making it financially achievable. Additionally, as we intend this space to increase in size with the addition of extra seating and plantlife, the natural composition of the intervention allow it a great deal of flexibility. That is, none of our structures are permanent and can be rearranged, like a garden, depending on the feedback we receive through our evaluation measures. Due to the intervention’s intended evolving nature, it is important to consider the potential ongoing cost that will come with the maintenance and upkeep of the plants, trees, and the gradual introduction of a greater quantity of seating spaces. We expect most of the cost to target the initial development of the area, with much of the upkeep being dealt with by volunteers, whose inclusion and capacities will likely be decided by Sue and Stuart.

Implementation and Monitoring

To ensure our efforts are actionable and measurable, some sort of implementation framework is necessary. The core demographic of this intervention are visitors to Mark’s Country Place, and the most overt goal is to provide these guests with an accessible theatrical experience framed by the natural landscape. Thus the feasibility and success of our intervention is predicated largely on two factors: the environmental beauty of the space and the performance-oriented capacities of the space. If implemented to the best standard, these two dimensions will together provide opportunities for visitors to create strong, positive memories predicated on the blending of performance and nature. Social inclusion (social bonds), and care for place (place bonds) are the core factors that must be adhered to in the monitoring of our strategy (Greedy et al., 2022). If we can create a space that is both socially inclusive and environmentally appealing, we will have succeeded (McMillen et al., 2016).

Two evaluation methods will be used to monitor the consistent success of the space in appealing to both its social and spatial dimensions respectively. The first of the two will measure the quality of the physical environment we will be developing. While many nature-based paradigms exist that guide efforts to create biodiverse landscapes, they rarely provide a necessary place-keeping strategy that conditions and





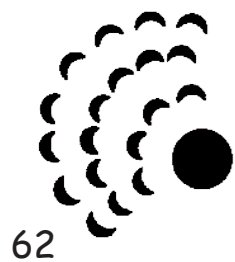
ensures the retention of healthy and diverse plant life (Salizzoni & Pérez-Campaña, 2019). While nature-based monitoring strategies are often applied at a large scale, due to the scope of our initiative, we have developed a small-scale method of caring for the space's plants. Once the place has been 'made', that is, the performance space has been levelled and the initial plants and seats have been implemented, we must ensure that we deliver on the promise of well-kept natural surroundings (Burton et al., 2014). Records, in the form of photographs and written reports measuring the long-term health of the flora will be used to ensure the physical dimensions of the space are well kept and healthy. A clear and consistent care schedule, detail on which weekdays plants must watered, and how much water is required, will be kept on site and administered to volunteers responsible for plant care. Specific types of fertiliser required will be detailed in these plans and appropriate application of them will be made clear to volunteers through training. Places are never static, they are always evolving and changing, particularly if they are nature-based (Burton et al., 2014). Volunteers will therefore be consistently briefed on how the area's plants should be developing, and care schedules will be updated accordingly. The key concern in monitoring the plants is communication between us, as the facilitators, and the volunteers, as the long-term carers of the space in a literal sense. This level of communication will create pleasant conditions and a strong dynamic between volunteers (Bush et al., 2020).

Additionally, successful place-keeping is equally predicated on a place's ability to successfully

facilitate social inclusion and safety (Gehl, 2007). Surveys can provide a rich exchange of ideas between facilitators and users of a space that can improve creative placemaking projects (Morely & Winkler, 2014). The social success of the initiative will be evaluated through short, qualitative individual surveys administered to visitors and performers who use the space. Visitors and performers alike will be administered respective short surveys comprising no more than ten multiple choice questions that will measure their satisfaction with the space provided. Questions will ask of visitors how much they enjoyed the performance, if sounds or sights were overwhelming, and if they were physically comfortable and enjoyed their surroundings. Questions can be answered on a five-point multiple-choice scale ranging from Not At All Satisfied to Very Satisfied. Performer surveys will be structured the same and will ask them how well the space accommodated their performance needs, how safe they felt, with a short answer response where they can suggest additions to the site. Surveys will aid us in identifying how the space accommodates the sensory and social requirements of guests and performers, which produces feedback we can integrate (Daniel et al., 2020). These surveys will be administered to three performers and three guests respectively after each performance for the first three years of implementation. We will use a 10% increase in average satisfaction for both respective groups with each passing year as an indicator of success. Creating an evaluation plan that includes monitoring both the spatial and social elements of a place can strengthen a place's resilience and applicability to its



TYPE	Plants	Common Name	Size	Quantity	Cost	Total
TREE	Eucalyptus camaldulensis	River Red Gum	15-20 m x 10-15 m	2	240.00	240.00
TREE	Eucalyptus ovata	Swamp Gum	8-25 m x 8-20 m	3	190.00	570.00
TREE	Acacia dealbata	Silver Wattle	10-12 x 6-8 m	7	90.00	630.00
SHURB	Bursaria spinosa	Sweet Bursaria	2-6 m x 2-3 m	16	30.00	480.00
SHURB	Acacia paradoxa	Hedge Wattle	2-4 m x 2-5 m	18	24.00	432.00
SHURB	Ozothamnus obcordatus	Grey Everlasting	1-1.5 m x 0.5-1 m	Seed	3.95	39.50
SHURB	Solanum laciniatum	Large Kangaroo-apple	1-3 m x 1-3 m	Seed	4.20	4.20
GROUND	Disphyma crassifolium	Round-leaved Pigface	0.3m x 1-2 m	26	14.95	388.70
GROUND	Carex appressa	Tall Sedge	0.5-1.2 m x 0.5-1 m	Seed	3.20	64.00
GROUND	Tricoryne elatior	Yellow Rush-lily	0.3-0.5 m x 0.3-0.5 m	40	8.95	358.00
GROUND	Caesia calliantha	Blue Grass-lily	0.1-0.7 m x 0.1-0.5 m	Seed	2.50	30.00
TOTAL PLANTS						3236.40
OPTIONAL BELOW GARDEN CARE (Amphitheater)						
	Fertilizer			5 - 10 g. per square meter	31 per kg	900
	Mulch			0.1 m depth	280 per cubic metre	1120
	Topsoil			0.6m depth	55 per cubic metre	660
	Lawn aeration				340	340
TOTAL COSTS						3020





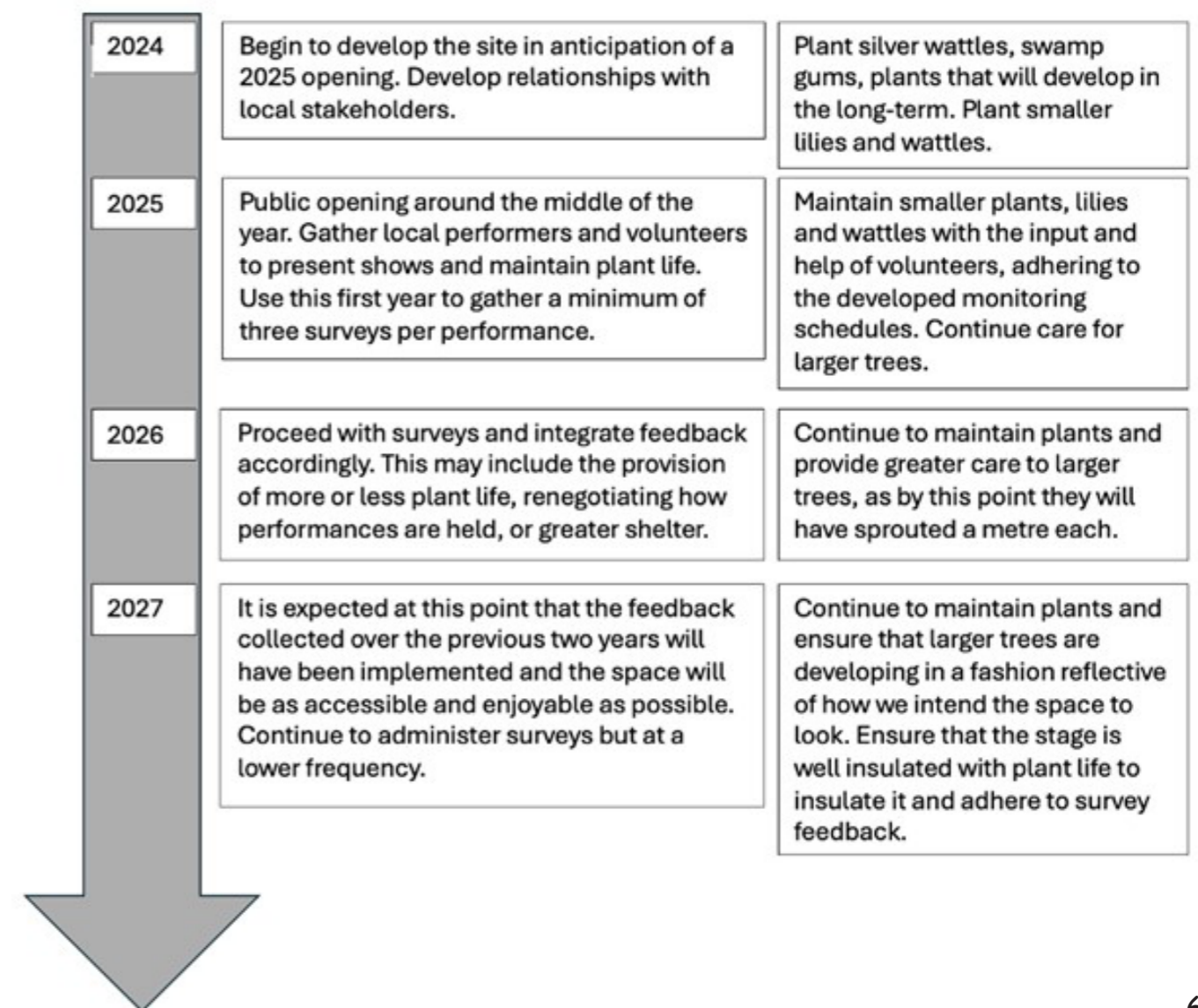
intended audience (McMillen et al., 2016).

The physical dimensions of our project are largely constructed from flora, meaning much of our timeline and the development of the space is dependent on the duration it will take for our plants to grow. Below is a timeline that indicates how we expect the initiative to develop over the coming years in-keeping with the evaluation plans proposed.

Funding efforts for the initiative will incorporate key high-resource stakeholders. This will ensure our intended outcome of providing those who struggle for funding a place to perform their work. As the practitioners of the initiative, we will make our vision and intended placemaking outcomes clear to our stakeholders and volunteers. This will establish a mutual agreement and trust between ourselves, Sue and Stewart, NGOs, and local businesses that will support and thrust the funding and practical realisation of the project until its completion (Mackintosh, 2020).

Attachments to place are embedded with individual and collective memories that are informed by and contribute to a community's character and identity (Ghavampour & Vale, 2019; Ganzevoort & van den Born, 2019). The space has the potential to provide many social, environmental, and economic benefits for both visitors and the Kyneton area more broadly in both the short and long term. We hope the space can invigorate interest and awareness of the theatre scene in Kyneton, whilst providing Kyneton residents with opportunities for work. We believe our intervention is in-keeping with Sue and Stewart's vision for social inclusivity and its intersection with

the natural environment. We hope this initiative will contribute to and reinforce Kyneton's character as a beautiful, nature and arts-oriented place that is open and welcoming to all.





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