



## Healing Country Reflection

When reflecting on 'Healing Country', I hadn't prepared for just how prominent the emotions and thoughts were that came to the surface for me. Dja Dja Wurrung land has been such an important part of my life, when I swim in its waterways and lay in its grassy fields, traverse its topography and marvel at its expanse. It has been a source of profound admiration and sustained appreciation for all that it offers. Upon reflecting I became quite concerned about the way in which we are impacting this land, remembering how in primary school we spent plenty of afternoons planting trees in spare lots of land and clearing the sides of highways of all of the rubbish, but as we got older those practices seemed to become less of a priority, and now it is an almost confounding thing to see someone caring for the land in such ways. We need to aim for a collective mindset of caring for land beyond our own gardens and backyards, for we reap its benefits daily and use it without mindfulness. From the respect we show our land comes a respect shown to each other that we can all grow from. Think of it as one big bedroom, the messier it is the messier our minds are and once we clean it up we finally get some clarity and happiness back in to our lives.

**Jacob Penglis**  
HR Officer



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The theme for NAIDOC WEEK is Heal Country.

NAIDOC 2021 invites the nation to embrace First Nations culturally knowledge and understanding of Country as part of Australia's national heritage and equally respect the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as they do the cultures and values of all Australians.

NAIDOC week is an opportunity for all Australians to come together to celebrate the rich history, diverse cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples as the oldest continuing cultures on the planet.

Melinda has asked staff at Castlemaine Health for a reflection on this year's theme Heal Country.

To me, Healing Country is about recognising that we're living on Aboriginal Country that has a long history. I learn about the histories of suffering that Aboriginal people have suffered and continue to suffer as a result of colonialism and racism. I am open to learning more about Aboriginal cultures and issues.

I was born in the 1960's to a Mum who took me to environmental and social justice rallies as a young child. Mum says I carry the imprint of environmentalism within me. Healing Country is also about reducing my detrimental impact on the planet as much as I can. I spend time caring for my fruit trees and succulents, and appreciating the Country I am lucky to live on.

**Sarah Austin, Administration**



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Naidoc weeks theme 'Healing Country' is timely for all of us.

Pandemic, bushfires, droughts, sacred site destruction, black lives matter.

How do we heal our divides? How do we take care of people, places and spirit?

Listening, understanding and respect.

War veterans are shown patience, understanding and respect. They are celebrated.

And our first nations people deserve the same patience, understanding and respect. The same celebration.

First Nations people too, have suffered traumas, and continue to deal with its after effects.

Our local Mount Alexander Dja Dja Wurrung service is Nalderun (meaning altogether).

I feel moved that they were so well supported to buy land recently. Supported to 'heal country' on their own terms.

This makes me feel optimistic that we can work together to heal our complex cultural divides and start to have an Australian vision of a future where land is cared for, people are respected and culture becomes a united force for healing.

**Lynne Bird**  
**Manager Leisure and Wellbeing**



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Healing Country is the complex dyad of First Nations people and Country; That the health of a land requires the health of a people and vice versa.

Supporting and celebrating NAIDOC week, Healing Country begins with personal humility and respect for all people, those who identify as First Nations, and those who do not yet. Healing Country incorporates valuing voices and perspectives of First Nations People, individually and collectively. Healing Country means protecting natural elements that hold value to First Nations people and granting equal value and protection to culturally significant locations. Healing Country means asking for, listening to and accepting the answers of First Nations leaders.

Supporting Healing Country is acting with kindness and allowing time and space for self-determination, to foster empowerment for First Nations people by creating culturally safe spaces, being mindful of bias and power imbalance that white privilege gifts.

Celebrating Healing Country, to me, from a non-First Nation perspective also means being deeply respectful to this stolen land, to cherish the richness and diversity of landscape, to tread lightly and act boldly.

**Samantha Ward**  
**Midwife**



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The Weethunga training has made me think a lot about what the term 'on country' means.

For me sights, sounds, smells evoke memories. My childhood was spent on a farm so I have many good memories as a small child I could spend hours in the paddocks making daisy chains, sneaking out early in the mornings to watch the baby chickens under their heater in the shed, feeding the calves and eating big yellow peaches that were meant to feed the pigs. I can never walk past a peppercorn tree without smelling the leaves and thinking about my wonderful nana who lived on sheep farm and was a big part of my life.

Aunty Steph made us stop and listen. Listen to the stories that the First Nations people have told, listen to the sound of the country and see the significance of some of the birds and animals based on Aboriginal storytelling that has been passed on through the years.

Walking through the bush now I listen for the birds and sounds and get peace and energy from that. The significance of the land and how we manage this and my grandchildren's destiny is far more important for me as I get older. We can listen and learn from the Aboriginal stories and help the healing that needs to occur with Aboriginal people.

**Di Senior**  
**Executive Director, Clinical and Community**