

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Engaging with Indigenous concepts in the VOID exhibition

The exhibition VOID deals with many different aspects of Indigenous culture. This guide seeks to provide you with basic building blocks to create a culturally safe, authentic base for starting a wonderful learning experience for your students. Please read through the following themes to help you begin this process.

### Key themes

#### **Indigenous culture is still living and present today**

- These resources are designed so that all students can engage in reconciliation and respect the world's oldest continuous living culture that belongs to Australia (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). It is important to recognise through these artworks that Indigenous art is vibrant and living today and constantly evolving while also remembering the past.
- Draw out the students own experiences when looking at the art, seeking to demystify many different ideas around Indigenous art. Finding connections can be a powerful tool to engage students from all cultures.

#### **Indigenous culture is layered and diverse**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art cannot be defined just by one art form or movement; it is very complex and area-specific to whichever region or community it belongs to.
- We have included artists' quotes in this resource to emphasise the artist's voice in talking about their works. It's important to pay attention to the language they use for certain aspects of their culture and art making, particularly when it describes ancestral narratives. For example Mabel Juli uses Garnkiny her language word for the moon that relates to the broader ancestral stories 'Garnkiny Ngarranggarni', while Jonathan Jones titled his work *dhawin-dyuray (axe-having)*.

### **Creating culturally safe spaces within your classroom**

- Contemporary Aboriginal art can help teach Indigenous knowledges in all Key Learning Areas. The cross curriculum priority in the Australian syllabus uses key concepts to meet these outcomes. The key concepts are Country and Place and secondly Culture and People (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). The teaching resource is designed to be used across a variety of Key Learning Areas.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is important to teach in order to create a culturally safe classroom. This body of knowledge is taught as key elements because they are linked to a deeper knowledge and a holistic worldview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). The key goal for non-Indigenous students is that they will understand that identities and culture are a source of strength and resilience of Aboriginal people against the contemporary impacts of colonisation (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014).

### **Connect with local Indigenous groups and knowledge holders in your community**

- If talking about Indigenous culture is new or daunting to you, we encourage you to learn with your students, when questions come up that you are unable to answer utilise the opportunity to research and learn alongside your students. Your local Aboriginal Land Council, Indigenous Seniors and families in your community can be rich resources of knowledge and stories
- What we have included in this resource are ideas to consider and guide you and your students, they are not intended to be finite ways of exploring the artists' work. We encourage you to use the artists' voices where possible, taking their creative expressions of connection to Country as a way for you and your students to also connect to the Country you are on. As Bruce Pascoe says in his introductory essay:

*"These images and objects are not to be glanced at, one more demand on our crowded attention, they are to be looked at, considered, absorbed. They are of country, our shared country. We share this country now."*

- Bruce Pascoe