FULL ARTWORK



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ARTWORK STORY

Women's Business, Women's Way by Lauren Henry

This artwork tells the story of Coordinare and the Women's Business, Women's Way Program and their aim to target cervical screening rates in First Nations women throughout the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. This artwork was created through the stories told by our First Nations women, emulating their strength, experiences, and vulnerability to share their stories and wisdom to help address cervical screening rates.

At the centre of this artwork is a meeting place to represent the safe space that Coordinare and The Cancer Institute (NSW) created for women from community to come together to share their experiences and the barriers they face in accessing cervical screening. The people symbols within (upside-down 'U' shape) represent stories being shared, where each woman's perspective has been valued and listened to, with the hope that systemic changes and recommendations will be taken on board.

At the top of the artwork are four connected meeting places representing key geographical locations and connectedness moving from the Illawarra down to the Shoalhaven. These meeting places represent our women across these areas being supported on their cervical screening journey. Acknowledging that our women's experiences with the health care system have not always been positive, and taking into account that trans-generational trauma has significantly impacted how our women interact with health care systems.

Through three yarning circles hosted by Coordinare, the women who attended represented the voices of our First Nations women across the Illawarra Shoalhaven area. Key areas were highlighted in the hope of lessening the impact of cervical cancer and increase cervical screening participation. These learnings call on our health care systems to understand the complexities that First Nations women face when accessing care. Cultural safety is the most crucial step needed in creating a space where our women feel not only safe but empowered to take autonomy over their health and wellbeing. Noting that a lack of education for young women (in general, but most certainly our First Nations women) contributes greatly to lower cervical screening rates.

At the bottom of the artwork are connected watering holes, which represent the importance of sharing knowledge, stories, and experiences. Like water, knowledge flows from one place to another helping create an informed approach that understands the complexities of why and how these barriers impact access to cervical screening. For our women throughout the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, water is extremely important. It's a part of our Country, but also represents cleansing and the vitality of intertwining health care knowledge with cultural considerations to create positive impact for our communities.

Moving from left to right of the artwork are different layers of Country to represent the different lands that exist between the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. Each layer represents an acknowledgement that this land, Always Was and Always Will Be Aboriginal land and that for a holistic approach to empower our First Nations women to access services for cervical screening, we must understand how important Country, culture, and history are.

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On the left and right side of the artwork are native wattles - these represent our women and their stories. Their ability to blossom and share their experiences are no small feat, each story strong with resilience and power. The wattle also represent growth, growth that in this season, we can identify and understand how our women are interacting with health care services and the need to make changes.

The wattle season is also similar to that of the female reproductive system. Blossoming for a season and shedding to make way for new growth.
At the top of the artwork are stars to represent our First Nations women that have walked this land before us and have walked journeys of cervical cancer. They also represent those that guide us on this journey today to make actionable changes in how our women obtain cervical screening to lessen cervical cancer rates.

Throughout this artwork are the stories of our women in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, our fierceness, our connection to Country, Culture and Community, and our commitment to making positive changes for the women that will journey after us. I thank the women who contributed, for their courage, their trust, and their knowledge in sharing their stories.

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