



ROCK ON

A word from the stonemason, Ian Marr

I've been working with this Mintaro slate for many years because it's a beautiful stone for hand letter carving which has been my craft for 20 years.

Mintaro is a small village near the Clare Valley in South Australia. The quarry has a history of its own. The stone there was discovered there by an English stonemason named Thomson Priest in the early 1850s. He recognised it as a wonderful material for both construction and transcription. Within 20 years they were building wine vats and floating floors out of great big pieces of stone. Thomson also started carving beautiful hand-cut memorial stones for people all over South Australia and western New South Wales.

If you travel in SA, the floors of old flour mills and wineries are made of this stone, it's everywhere. It's one of the beautiful unique regional architectural materials of Australia. It gets better the more it's walked on as it gets polished by the shoes.

It's a 900 million year-old metamorphosis stone, deposited layer upon layer in a lake, perhaps volcanic, formed deep in the earth's crust. Then it's been subject to extreme heat and pressure — cooked.

I found this 3000kg rock in the Mintaro quarry a few years ago and brought it and some other monumental stones back to New South Wales. When some members of the Two Fires Festival came to our farm one day they realised that this stone was special and could be used for this public monument.



JULIA GREEN CHECKS THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE EL IN 'RECONCILIATION' BUT IAN MARR HAS IT ALL UNDER CONTROL.

The Dhurga rock

A timely public sculpture for Ryrie Park writes Julia Green.

The Two Fires Festival Committee conceived the Dhurga Rock project in January 2014. Braidwood was gearing up to celebrate its 175th anniversary and the lack of public reference to the long Aboriginal history of the area was a stark oversight it seemed to us.

The Festival Committee had been told by descendants of local Aboriginal people that Braidwood was considered an unsafe place, with the result that after early dispossession people stayed away and have not felt welcome to return.

We checked the idea with Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison, traditional elder for the Two Fires Festival, and his family. They were enthusiastic. We consulted with the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council (which includes Braidwood), and they also expressed enthusiastic support.

Most importantly we consulted with key individuals and groups in the Braidwood community, and we were most heartened by their early responses. Without this local support and involvement, the project would not have progressed at all. The Dhurga Rock is a community expression acknowledging the rich and long history of people living on and caring

for this land way before the first white settlers arrived.

There are very few community-driven public acknowledgements in other towns in Australia. Whilst there are monuments in places where known massacres of Aboriginal people have occurred, it is rare to see a monument acknowledging and addressing the general dispossession and resulting trauma affecting Aboriginal families and tribes.

The Dhurga Rock will stand strong as a very beautiful work of public art, placed in Ryrie Park in the centre of town. It is a step towards healing past dislocation, and, over time, teaching us about the rich Aboriginal history and culture of our place.

"We know we can't live in the past, but the past lives in us"

Charles Perkins

"This to us is a huge step forward in creating social harmony in this community"

Noel Butler, Indigenous artist with family links to this area