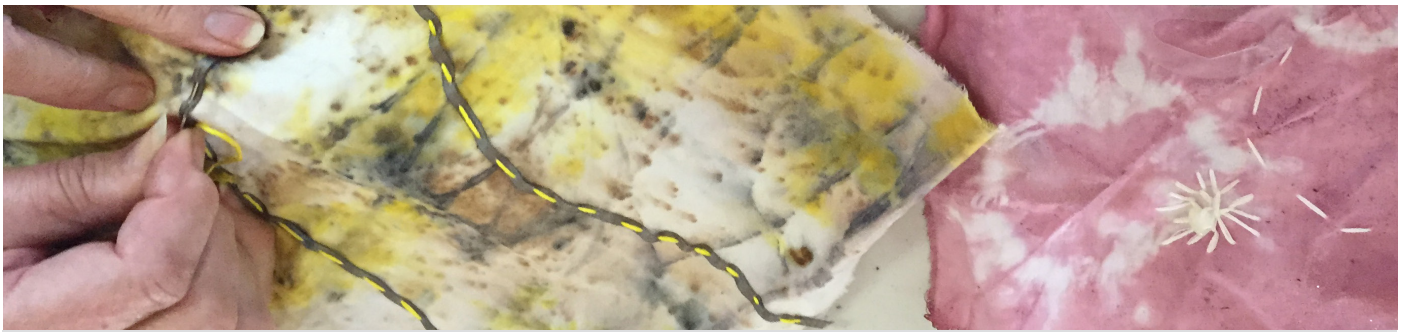




Creativi-Tea

chat.create.connect

**Arts
north
west**



The Project

Arts North West partnered with Carers NSW, The Ascent Group, The Schizophrenia Fellowship, CentaCare New England North West to deliver ten creative workshops across nine councils in the New England North West. Approximately one hundred rural women attended the day held in the community halls of their local villages of Deepwater, Urbenville, Ben Lomond, Ebor, Bundarra, Mungindi, Gravesend, Breeza, Pilliga and Maules Creek.

The workshops focused on experimenting with a range of various ecodying and textile techniques, which included steam bundling, cold dye baths and using embellishments to create an artwork.

The women used this day to connect with old friends and make new ones, learn new artistic skills, be creative, but most importantly openly chat about the hardships for themselves and their families living in drought effected and isolated areas.



“That was the best example of community that I have experienced in quite some time. Excellent”
Deepwater



Benefits and Outcomes

CreativiTEA was developed to build stronger networks for residents in our smaller regional communities.

This project brought rural women together for a full day of conversation, creativity and companionship. In many of the villages, it was the first time that particular group had come together. For a number of communities, CreativiTEA proved to be the catalyst to inspire women to continue to meet on a regular basis to engage in a similar activity, but more importantly, to create the opportunity for much-needed social interaction.

CreativiTEA introduced and engaged the therapeutic benefits of art-making such as freedom of expression and creativity, stress relief and a distraction from the everyday realities of rural life in drought affected areas.

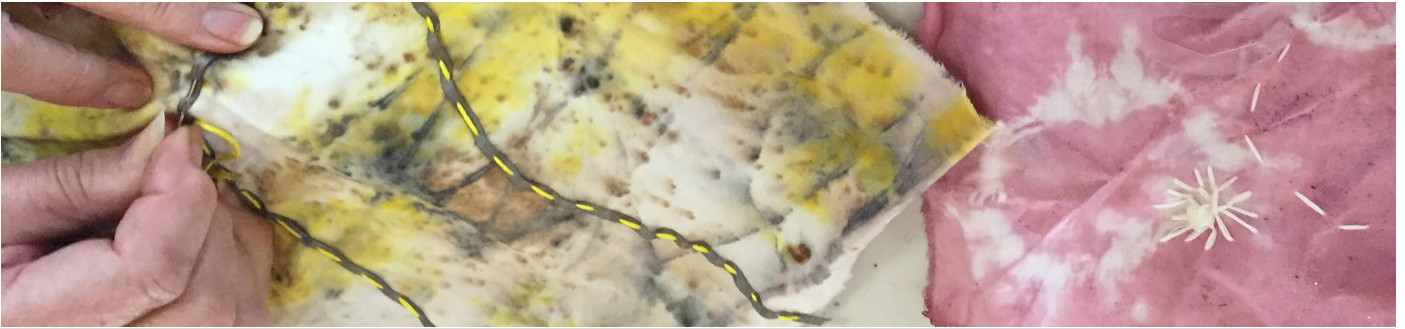
The use of arts and crafts in this context was particularly valuable. Keeping hands busy meant that conversation flowed freely. Participants were able to engage with art-making in a non-threatening and non-intimidating environment allowing participants to express their creativity freely.

CreativiTEA gave women in rural areas the ability to engage in arts and cultural activities which are usually only available in larger centres. Participants learnt new skills such as eco-dyeing and stitching techniques and explored new ways of personal expression.

This was the first time that ecodyeing workshops had been run at any of these locations. Participants were given new skills and techniques in textile art and learnt to experiment with dyes, sewing and being innovative. The workshops had an abundance of materials to use and experiment with. Large contemporary artworks were created by sewing the smaller pieces together, and which were returned to each community.

"I really enjoyed learning about the techniques using natural dyes and products found on most farms! Being part of a communal work was a great way to create a sense of belonging to a group. Also lovely to not worry about bringing your own lunchbox! Yum."

Ben Lomond



Improvements

CreativiTEA was run eleven times across the NENW with over 100 women attending in total. A continual improvement model was established, with new techniques introduced, and changes to the schedule tailored for each venue. It was not always possible for a Rural Counsellor to attend each location, but when one was provided, the day was enhanced considerably.

A success story

As a result of conducting the CreativiTEA workshop in the town of Urbenville in the Tenterfield Shire, a 'task force' was established in response to the significant number of mental health issues that the community is grappling with. Following the workshop, Sandy McNaughton from Carers NSW contacted a number of representatives from mental health, local council, Drought Assistance providers and other organisations to alert them to the fact that here was a community in need of intervention. This resulted in the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program stepping in to ensure that an appropriate response was provided that would offer long-term solutions for the community.

CreativiTEA provided women in rural communities grappling with drought with an opportunity to access pathways to mental health support in a safe, nurturing and inspiring environment.

Furthermore, as a direct outcome of CreativiTEA, an Arts Collective has been established in Urbenville. The Urban Emporium was established following arts and business advice provided by Arts North West in partnership with the New England Business Enterprise Centre.

"wonderful experience to witness what my neighbours have so cleverly achieved for the space of one day. All your own worries are lifted off your shoulders so a big thank you to the organisers for this privilege alone"

"A day like today has given me back the confidence to do the little things I love doing. You lose your confidence, so this has given me a lot."

Urbenville



Feedback

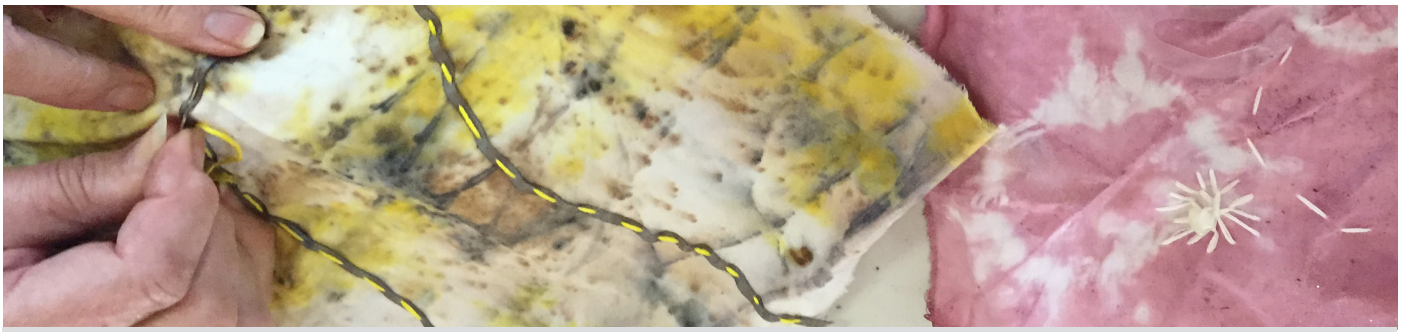
Sandy McNaughton - Carers NSW:

It has been wonderful working with you and I very much appreciate your invaluable input into making CreativiTEA such a success. There is no doubt that the support provided by Carers NSW to the drought affected communities has made a real difference. Hundreds of farming families received support (both for their wellbeing as well as financial) as a result of our efforts which is a fantastic result. You experienced this first-hand through CreativiTEA which was such a wonderful project.

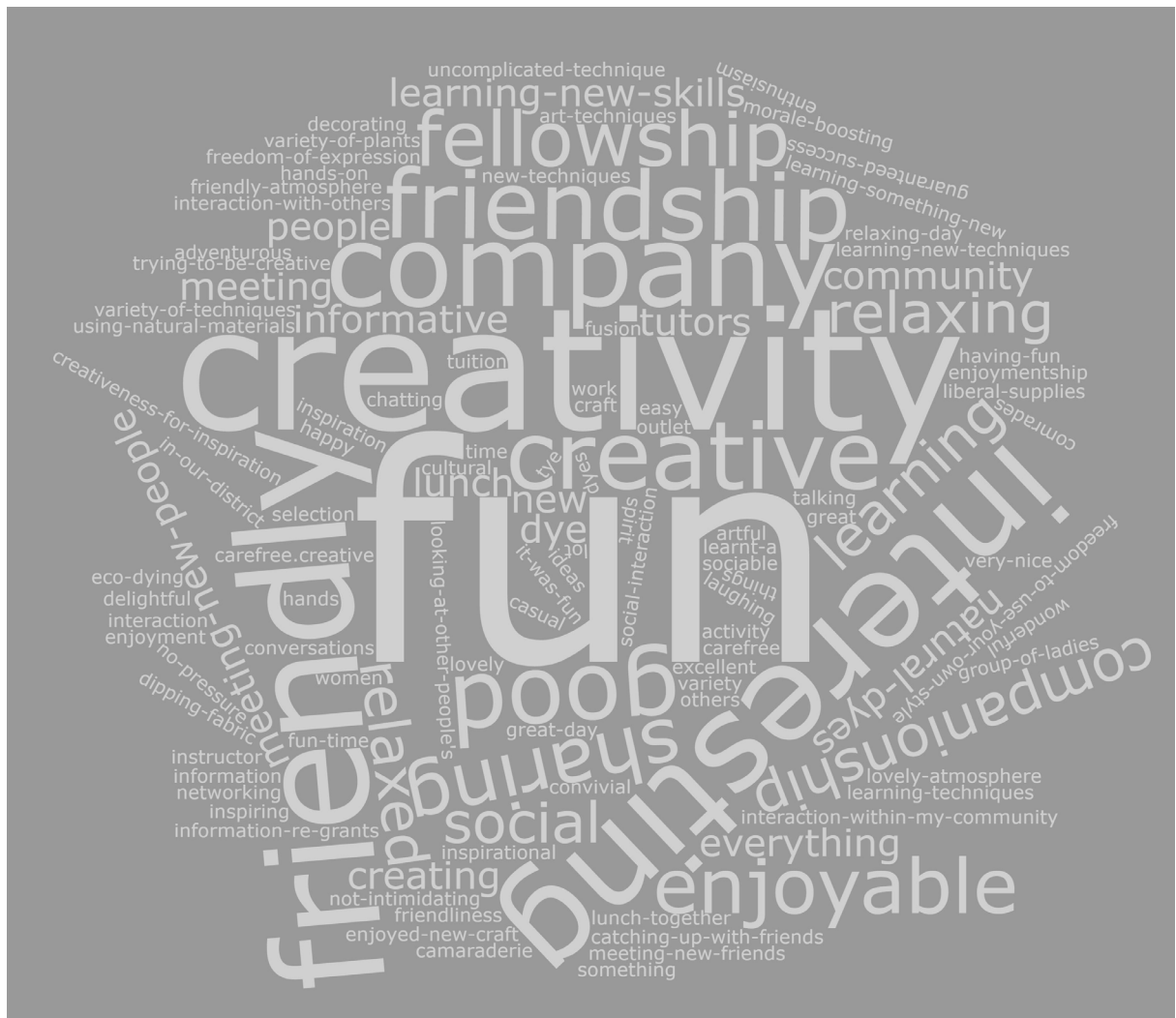
Lauren Broomhall - The Ascent Group:

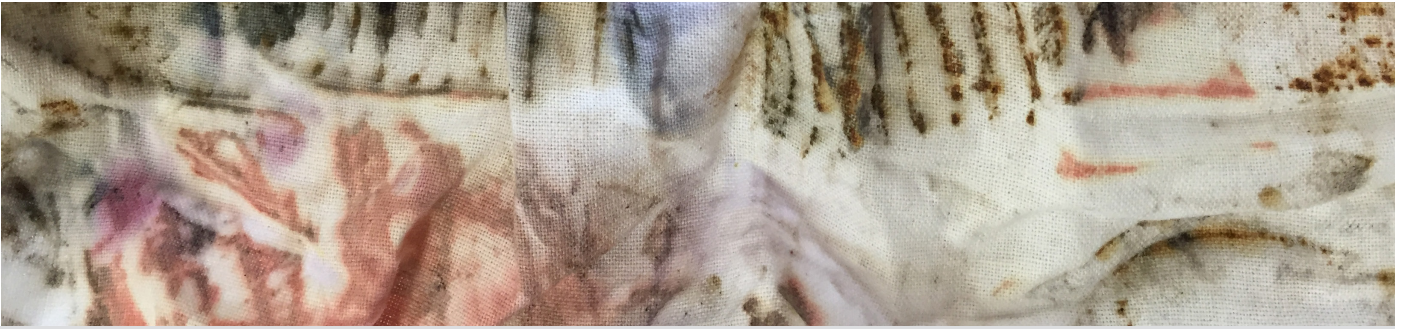
One of our main aims for CreativiTEA was to bring women in small rural communities together to forge social connections, which in turn builds individual and community resilience. We also hoped to use the events as a platform to raise awareness of services and supports that were available to the communities visited and connect individuals to, in particular, mental health support services. CreativiTEA proved to be much more powerful than we could have dreamed. Women arrived at each event in the morning as strangers and acquaintances but left in the afternoon as friends, neighbours and allies. Throughout each day the conversation around the table told of the connections and strengths of each community, but also of the challenges and the resources (if any) to face them. As a result, we were able to connect a number of individuals with the support they needed and also return to some communities for broader follow up support. The success of CreativiTEA in meeting these aims relied heavily on Arts North West providing a non-threatening, accessible format indistinguishable from any other creative workshop but with intentions far beyond the sharing and teaching of new skills.





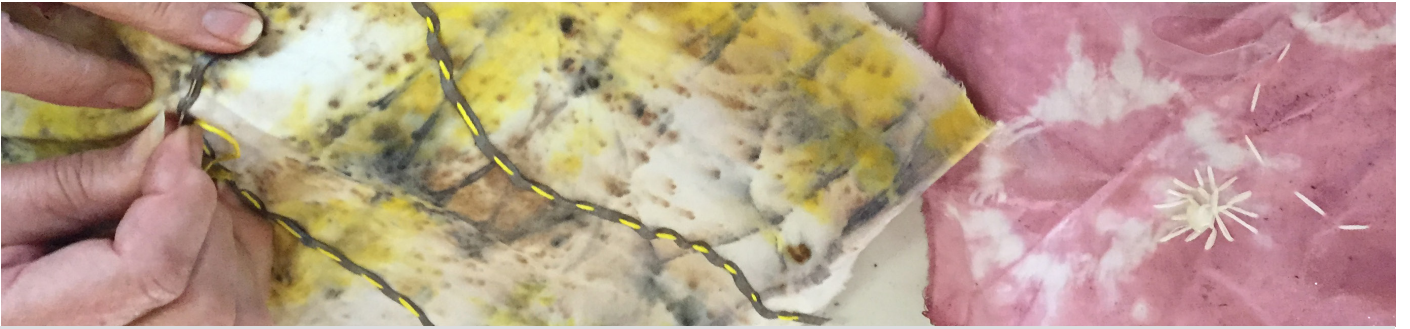
Participants' Thoughts





Ben Lomond

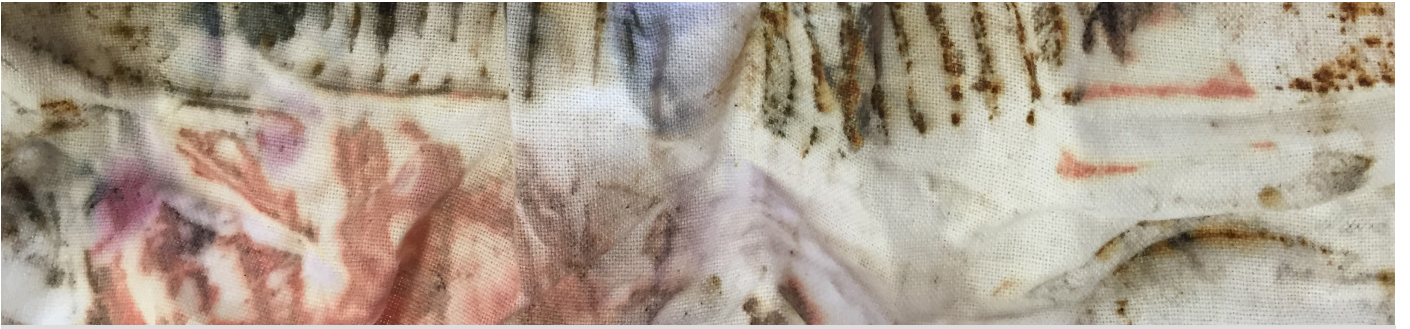




"Great ideas, great company, great food, great fun..."

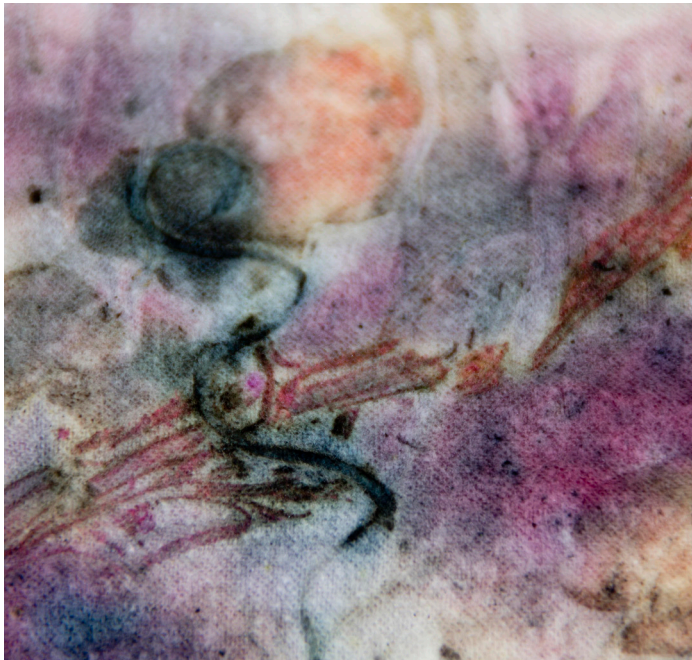
Breeza

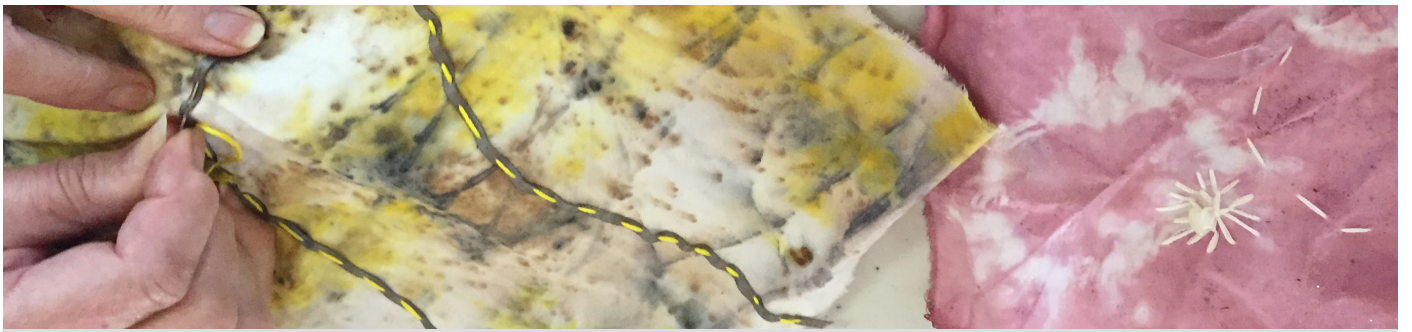




Bundarra

“great day, fun and creative, awesome chance to get away from everyday life”





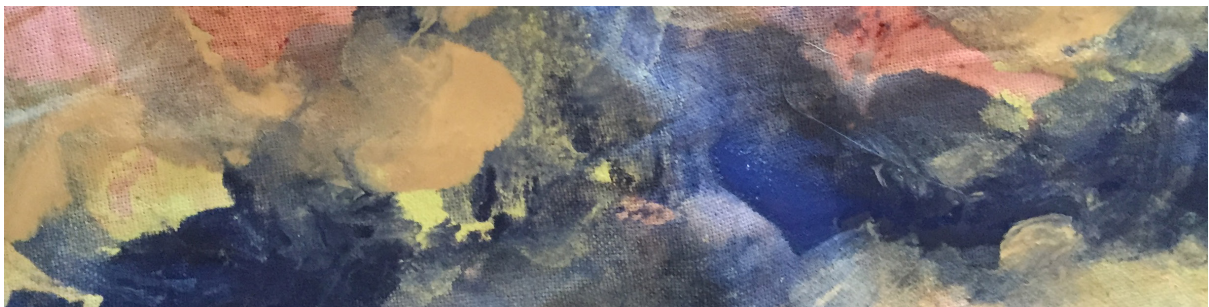
Deepwater

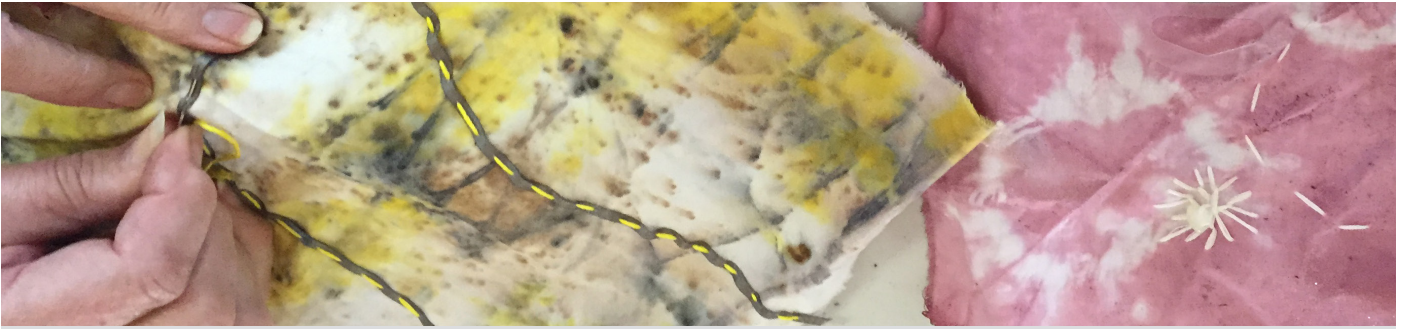




Ebor

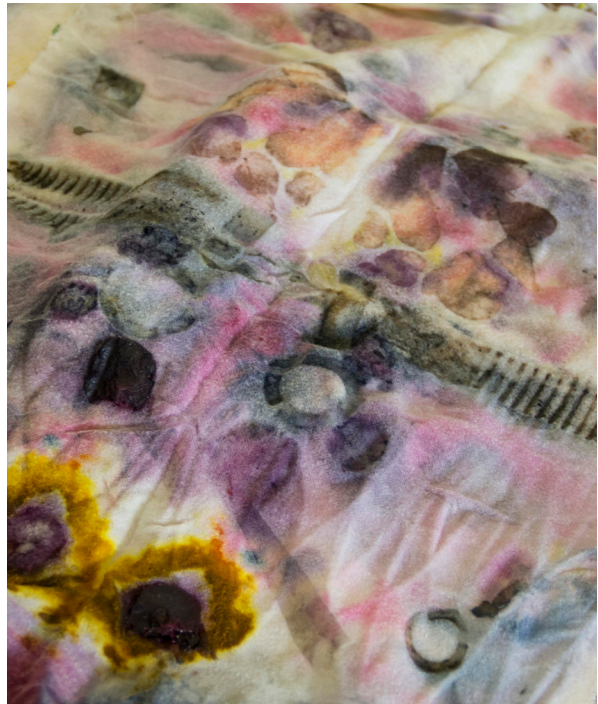
“Love the hands on ability to chat informally, see who lives in my community, what services are available within the region..”

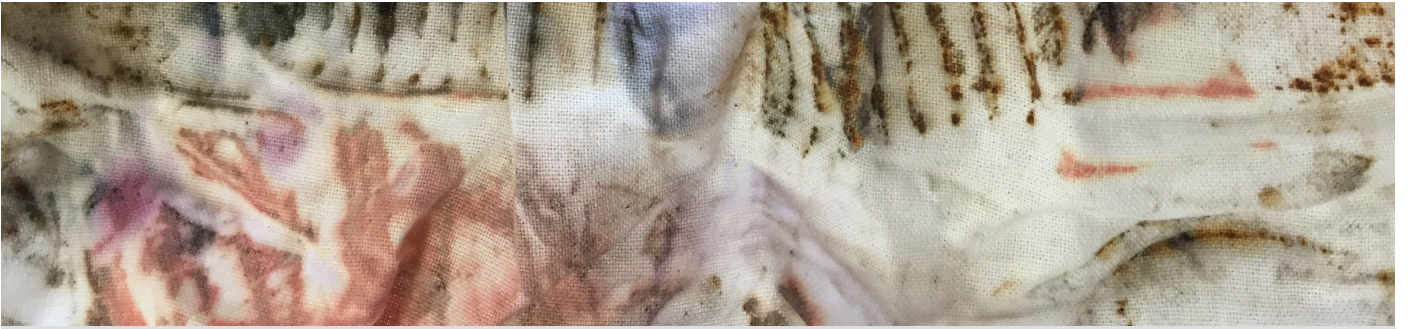




"The girls had everything covered and I loved every bit of it (with love hearts)"

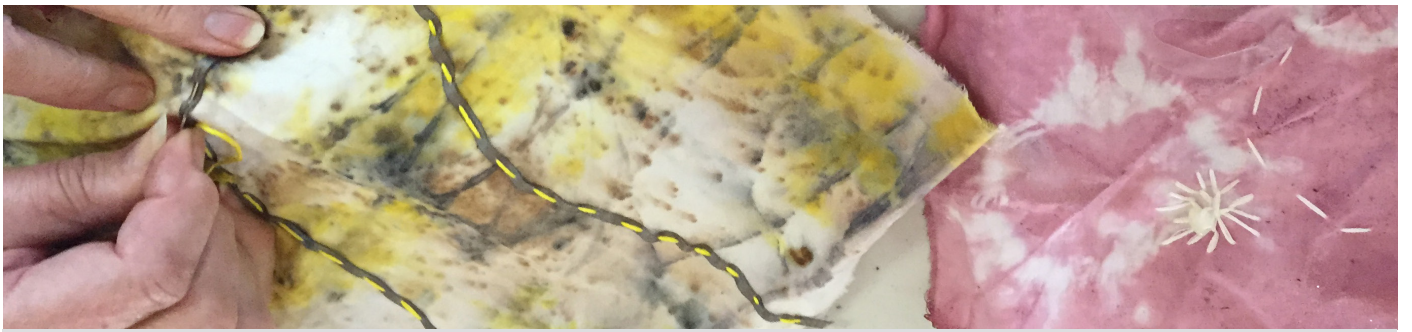
Gravesend





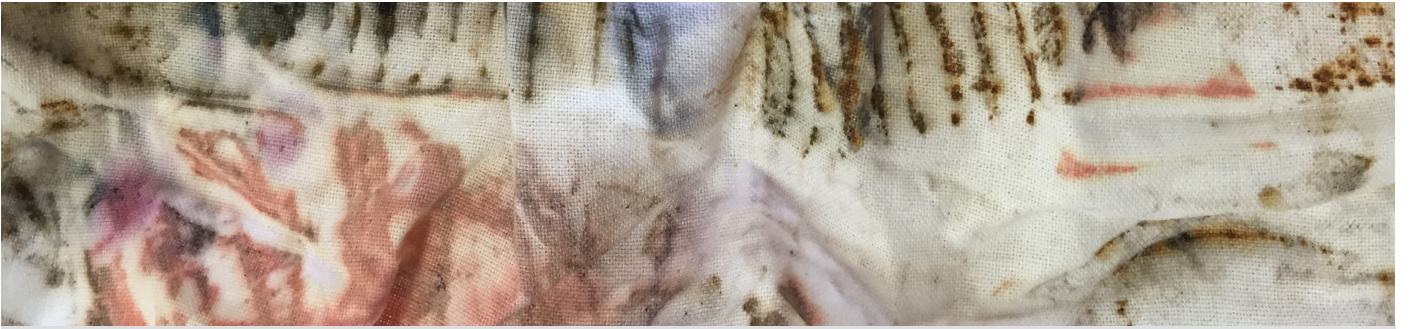
Maules Creek





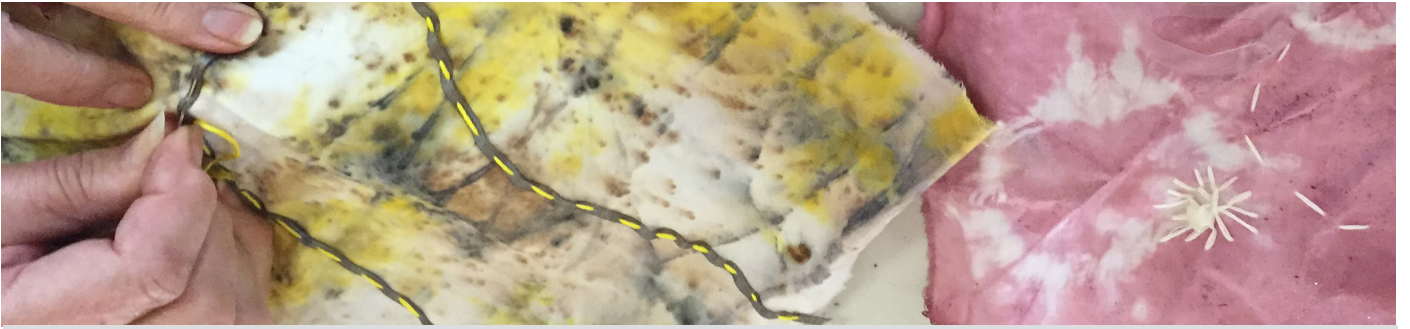
Mungindi





Pilliga





"Extremely refreshing and stimulating. An opportunity to socialise with other local women, great to learn new skills.."

Urbenville



Arts north west



connections
creativity
communities

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