

# Portable local studies collecting: sharing new stories in NSW public libraries

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STATE LIBRARY®  
NEW SOUTH WALES

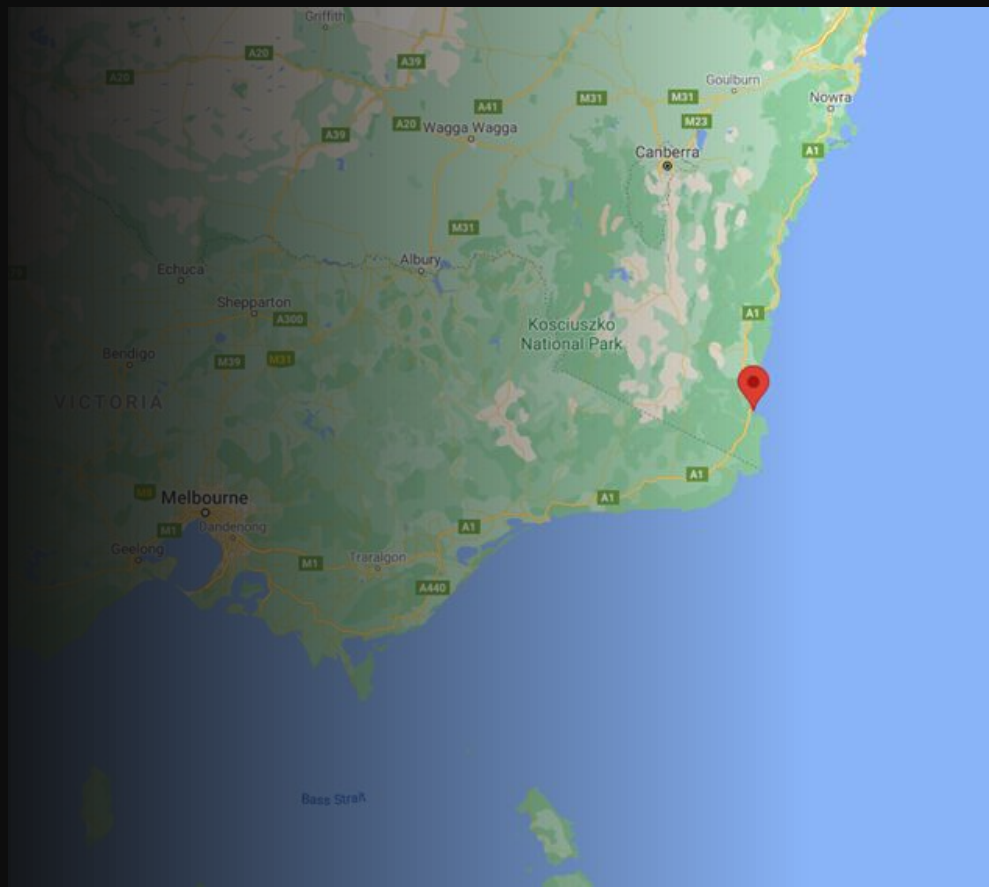


# Bega Valley Shire Library

Cathrynne McLean




Eden is located on Yuin Country, a small coastal down on the Far South Coast NSW, close to the Victorian border



# Background of the project

Initially when we applied for the State Library funding grant we had a project in mind to record the oral histories of First Nations peoples connected with a large photographic collection which had been donated to the library.





# Black Summer 2020

On New Years Eve of 2019 the threat to our area became very real. With the bush extremely dry, a fast moving fire started south of the Victorian border, this fire, which at the time became known as the border fire, raced out of control northwards up over the NSW border to devastate the bush and impact the communities of Wonboyn and surrounding areas

# Creating connections

Following the bushfires a regular library customer told me about an idea for a new book where she was interviewing local residents of Wonboyn about their experience of the bushfires.

We partnered to combine her local connections with my training and equipment for recording oral histories



## **Recording on-site**

**I travelled out to the community to conduct the interviews on-site. Driving the 40 minutes it takes surrounded by an unending charred landscape, to interview community members in their homes, and for one couple, the undercover area out the front of their shed after they had lost their home.**



Paul and Oksana



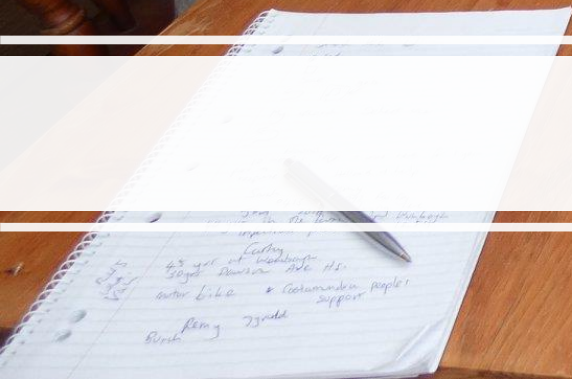




Sarah Burch



Remy Burch



# Challenges

- Needed to establish procedures and protocols for the interviews
- ensuring that we had the correct permissions
- Ensuring that we recorded enough data at the time of the interview ie. not giving people advance notice that we would like to take a photo of them to accompany the recording
- Internal procedures for adding a new format of collection material to the catalogue

## From here

Seek more oral histories regarding bushfire experiences – but at the same time we are also conscious of time needed to heal and recover

We will also be pursuing our original oral history concept

## Take home ideas

Capturing that sense of place and time

Being responsive



# **COVID 19 Oral History Project**

**Central West Libraries  
Julie-Anne Sykes**





[www.cwl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cwl.nsw.gov.au)

# Central West Libraries

- Blayney (Blayney Shire)
- Canowindra (Cabonne Shire)
- Cowra (Cowra Shire)
- Forbes (Forbes Shire)
- Manildra (Cabonne Shire)
- Molong (Cabonne Shire)
- Orange (Orange City Council)



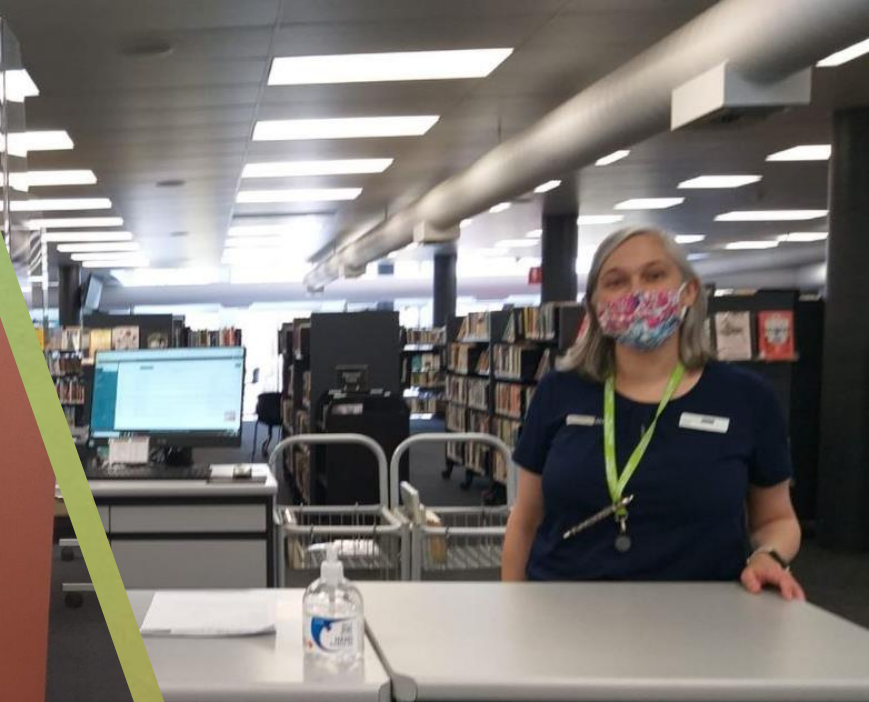
# CWL project

- Interview CWL staff in range of roles
- Public Library staff sharing their experiences of the COVID 19 pandemic
- Focus on changes to library services and community needs

# Staff interviews

- Jan Richards, Manager of Central West Libraries
- Sean Brady, Orange City Librarian
- Ruth Bingham, Library Officer, Blayney
- Jasmine Vidler, Reading Writing Coordinator
- Trudi Mayfield, Heritage Research Librarian
- Alex Gibb, Librarian, Orange City Library





# COVID 19 pandemic

- 25 March 2020 Central West Libraries closed to public
- 1 June 2020 reopened to public
- Volunteers – unavailable. Returned - October

# What staff said

- Shock
- Fear, unknown, uncertain
- Stress
- Events cancelled
- Service methods changed quickly
- New skills
- Limited services offered



# What staff said

- Upended way of working
- New way of delivery
- Staff skills improved
- Communication methods changed
- Online services increased
- Orange Library refurbished upstairs administration area



# Problems

- Solo interviewer – multitasking
- Inexperienced at interviewing
- Shy subjects



# Problems

- Timeliness
- Transcription
- Accessibility

# Take home

- Process
- Staff resilience
- Agility

**Population:** 31,554

**LGA:** 3,223 km<sup>2</sup>

First inland city

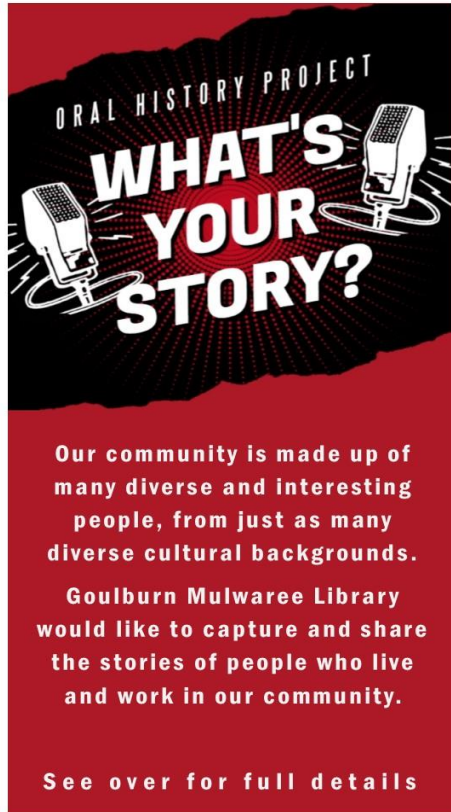


**Traditional Countries:**  
Gundungurra  
Ngunnawal  
Wiradjuri



@goulburnaustralia #rightnowingoulburn

Maria Daly  
Fran O'Flynn



ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

# WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Our community is made up of many diverse and interesting people, from just as many diverse cultural backgrounds.

Goulburn Mulwaree Library would like to capture and share the stories of people who live and work in our community.

See over for full details

## Local Studies Team

Strategic Policy: contemporary collecting; diversity; representation

## Oral History Project

- Perfect timing!
- Oral History Team
- Our focus
- Promotion & activities
- Highlights & setbacks

Alfie Walker

Proud Wiradjuri  
and Yuin man



*Photo by Micah Boerma.*



My Great Grandmother's country





Family



Community





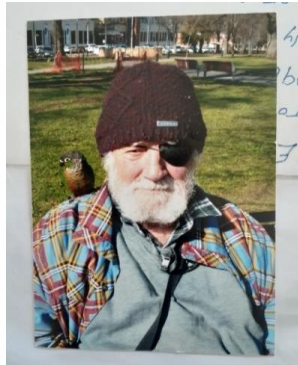
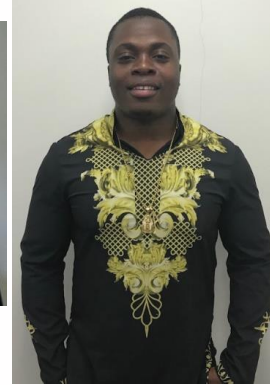


Photo by Micah Boerna.

