

# **Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai**

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the degree of

**Master of Design (Research)**

under the supervision of  
Associate Professor Jacqueline Gothe and  
Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt

University of Technology Sydney  
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## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Giovanni Raniera De Santolo declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Design (research), in the Design Architecture Building at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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# Abstract

*Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai* is a study aimed at understanding the cultural significance of water for Indigenous peoples. Water is life and holds an integral role in the ecologies of nature. Using an Indigenous storytelling approach, this creative research blends film, story, projection and design to create a new immersive sensory experience that raises consciousness of the sacred nature of water and our environment. To explore this, I look at the relational aspect of water, trees and their cultural and historic connections to Indigenous peoples. This draws upon my two cultural heritages, Aboriginal and Māori, as a basis for the work and reflects upon the commonalities between these two Indigenous worldviews. Both knowledge systems share a reverence for water not only as a source of life but continuously integral to the wellbeing of society. Through Indigenous storytelling methodology, design-led research, film design and lighting practices, this study illuminates the cultural significance of water. *Two Waters* uses cinematic practices, storytelling, space, sound design and projection to create and exercise a form of immersive video design for exhibition and exegesis.

There is a need to expand contemporary visual stories to understand and pose solutions that highlight Indigenous viewpoints and our connection to the environment. We face global environmental challenges and Indigenous practices of sustainability offer hope. Showcasing these Indigenous practices of sustainability to wider audiences is essential in raising awareness of water and the environmentally stressful impacts of globalisation. The *Two Waters* concept breaks down nation-state boundaries to reveal the commonalities of two Indigenous knowledge systems and the challenges faced by these ancient societies in protecting water.

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