

SIMONE THOMSON

Jeltchering Murrup, Fighting Spirit

We are people of earth. We are people of Country.

Our stories and spirit lie in the rust red soil that nurtures our grandfather trees that line the riverbanks and fill our forests that provide for us. Our ancestors sing to us in the winds of the leaves that float to the soil to regenerate tomorrow's seeds. Our knowledge is in the songlines of these memories that imprint to the land and waterways. We are custodians, we have always been wealthy.

Birrarung, the majestic river of mist and shadows weaves gently across country from its birthplace at the southern slopes of the Great Dividing Range, Wurundjeri Country – to the saltwater Bay in Naarm, the place known as Melbourne. This significant and sacred waterway was a vital food source and means of travel, and the meeting place for visiting Clans for cultural business, inter-clan trade and ceremonies for thousands of years.

Birrarung, known as the Yarra River, represents deep respects for the traditional lands and waterways in which Alchemy's head office is situated, Wurundjeri Country, and acknowledges the profound and deep-rooted connection all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have with their traditional lands and waterways across the land we know as Australia.

Two oceans merge.

They meet in the middle and become one. These mighty salt waters represent the coming together of non-Indigenous people and immigrants to Australia, with its First Nations Peoples and symbolise Alchemy's strength and belief in social justice, equality and human rights and its foundational dedication and determination to disrupt and open pathways for minority groups within construction.

Arched shaped mounds line the waterways. The motif for campsite; these symbols represent homes and communities throughout Victoria and signify Alchemy's core beliefs of putting community at the heart of everything they do and giving back to the communities they serve.

Mountainous ranges frame the surrounding landscape. To the south-east, they symbolise Mt. Baw Baw; 'echo' or 'ghost' in Woi-Wurrung. To the east is *Corhanwarbul*, the Dandenong Ranges – the richly dense rainforests and fern gullies in which Birrarung flows and feeds the land. The culturally significant You Yangs are to the west, and *Geboor* – the Macedon Ranges are to the north-west. These mountains represent Alchemy's strength in commitment to building the foundations of an inclusive culture and their commitment to voice, recognition, truth telling and inclusion of First Nations communities in all that they do.

Cross hatchings along these mountains represents our scar trees which bear the fingerprints of yesterday's tools and items that were used in maintaining cultural protocols and living in harmony with the land. These markings signify Alchemy's commitment and responsibility in educating their team to these important practices by instilling deep respects to the lands and Country in which they build, recognising First Peoples have lived on, cultivated and worked on these lands for millennia.

When Country is unsettled, when it has been injured or there is sickness – we conduct traditional smoking ceremonies to cleanse the area, to release negative energy and to promote healing. Medicine leaves and special plants are used to create a small fire to wash the smoke through the air or over visitors and people to ensure Country remains cleansed. Gum leaves and manna gum flowers symbolise Alchemy's commitment to sustainability and the environment, and their recognition of First Peoples guardianship of these traditional cultural practices and ongoing unique protocols for caring for Country and healing.

The Gathering Circle is a place of meeting and discussion. In the traditional way, Elders and Senior Leaders and Lore men and women would gather to discuss matters of importance and cultural business. It is a place of community and communication and takes the circular form from the bird's eye view and signifies welcoming and belonging for those in Alchemy. Repeated arcs around its perimeter detail the recurring campsite-homes of the diverse Victorian community requiring Alchemy's services and symbolise its inclusive support and commitment to all communities promoting high performing public service.

From the bird's eye view, a person is symbolised by the 'u' or 'n' motif representing a person sitting on the ground with their knees crossed. Thin strokes accompany these symbols within the centre of the circle. In the traditional way, the stroke represents a shield and spear for the male, and a digging stick and coolamon for the female; items and utensils made from the silhouetted grandfather trees marked along the riverbanks once used to defend and protect, to nurture and cultivate. These symbols represent Alchemy's defiance to ensuring equal rights, and their diligence to build their female workforce as an industry leader. Small, connected circles around the outer circle symbolise Alchemy's journey tracks and commitment to reconciliation with Australia's First Peoples which is central to their ongoing mission as a business.

Fire circles link across Country.

Lit by the bright yellow flame that is Alchemy, these connected circles symbolise Alchemy's fire in the belly spirit, and their allyship in voice to the less empowered. The fire circles connect through pathways to the Alchemy Gathering Place along with kangaroo journey tracks that represent Alchemy's commitment to engage with First Nations communities and to continue to be builders of true impact with a strong heart and sense of justice and equality for all.

This is Alchemy's fighting spirit – this is *jeltchering murrup*.

Simone Thomson
Wurundjeri, Yorta-Yorta, Wiradjuri

I am a proud Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung, Yorta-Yorta and Wiradjuri woman, and I pay my respects to my mother, my Elders, my ancestors, and to all First Nations peoples living on their traditional lands and waterways across the land we know as Australia.