

On the banks of the

Mighty Coquun River



St Patrick's Lochinvar
2025

Hunter Rainforest Revival Project

Restoring and caring for rainforest on Wonnarua Country



Beautiful rainforests used to be part of the Maitland area but things changed when Europeans cleared the land and used it for farming. Rainforests are famously diverse ecosystems, with lots of life forms living together including plants, animals, fungi and lichens. Since colonisation, this type of habitat for native animals has reduced. It has been listed under NSW law as a Vulnerable Ecological Community, which helps protect any remnants.

The Hunter Rainforest Revival project is going to help restore some of our environment back to the way things were. We are planting trees and shrubs in patches across the Maitland floodplain to create a closed forest 15 to 20 metres high with some emergent trees. Once the canopy is established, we will add vines and a ground layer of plants. These patches will be less than 3 kilometres apart so that animals can move between them and spread plant material such as seeds and spores to make patches more resilient. We expect to attract birds such as the regent bowerbird, wompoo fruit dove, powerful owl, mammals such as the eastern pygmy possum, squirrel gliders, swamp wallabies, frogs such as the green thighed frog and red crowned toadlet, bats such as the grey-headed flying-fox, little bent-winged bat, and much more.

We acknowledge the Wonnarua people as the Traditional Custodians of this region and recognise their ongoing cultural connections to the land and waterways.

The Hunter Rainforest Revival project is a partnership between Hunter Region Landcare, Hunter Local Land Services and Maitland City Council and is funded by the NSW Environmental Trust.

www.hunterrainforestrevival.com

On the banks of the Mighty Coquun River

Author/Illustrators: Chris Devorsine, Lilly Carter, Ivy Christensen, Charles Cooper, Campbell Jones, Evie McNaughton, Grayson Parkes, Mabel Richardson, Rhylan Thorn, Madeleine Uren, Sienna Atkins, Lylah Farley, Isaac Firth, Ava Hedges, Jourdan Houldsworth, Willow Lantry, Aston Longbottom, Zepher Longbottom, Jacob Lovell, Rylan Medhurst, Nate Meers, Madden Mason, Mateo Riddle, Alex Taffe, Sam Bonser, Frankie Holmes, Jacob Christensen, Jagger Parkes, Lucy Holten, Indi Yeo, and William Sagorny.

Teachers: Chris Devorsine

Aboriginal Education Worker: Eliza O'Neill

Artist support: Jenny McCracken

School: St Patrick's Lochinvar

The Coquun is one of the First Nations names given to the river that was later to be renamed the Hunter.

This story is based on true events.

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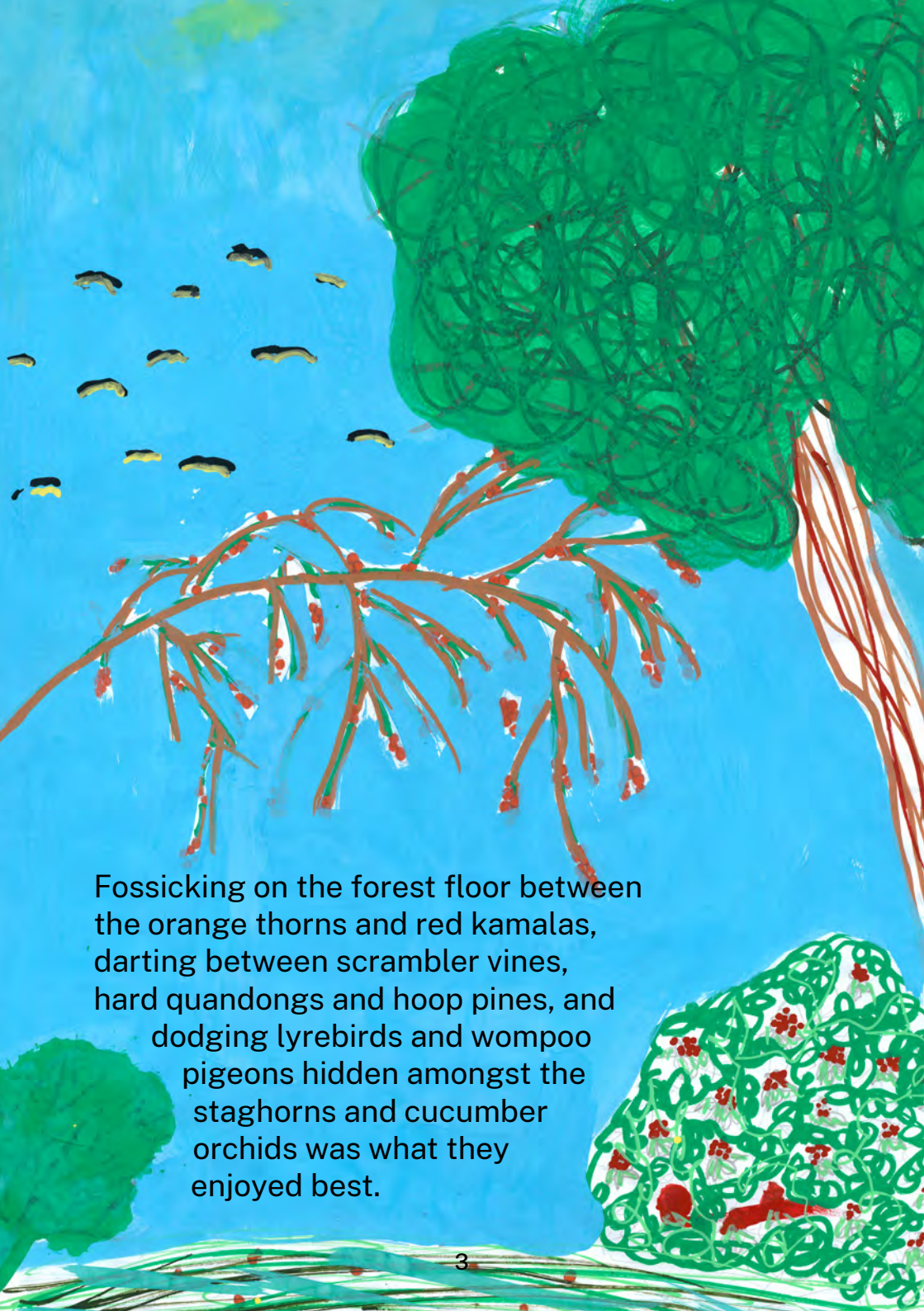
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St Patrick's Lochinvar. 2025. *On the banks of the Mighty Coquun River.*
Hunter Local Land Services, NSW.



On the banks of the mighty Coquun River, in the sanctuary of a dry rainforest, lived a family of regent bowerbirds.





Fossicking on the forest floor between the orange thorns and red kamalas, darting between scrambler vines, hard quandongs and hoop pines, and dodging lyrebirds and wompoo pigeons hidden amongst the staghorns and cucumber orchids was what they enjoyed best.

Each year came the age-old ritual of creating a bower, building a nest and raising chicks, just as many generations had done before.



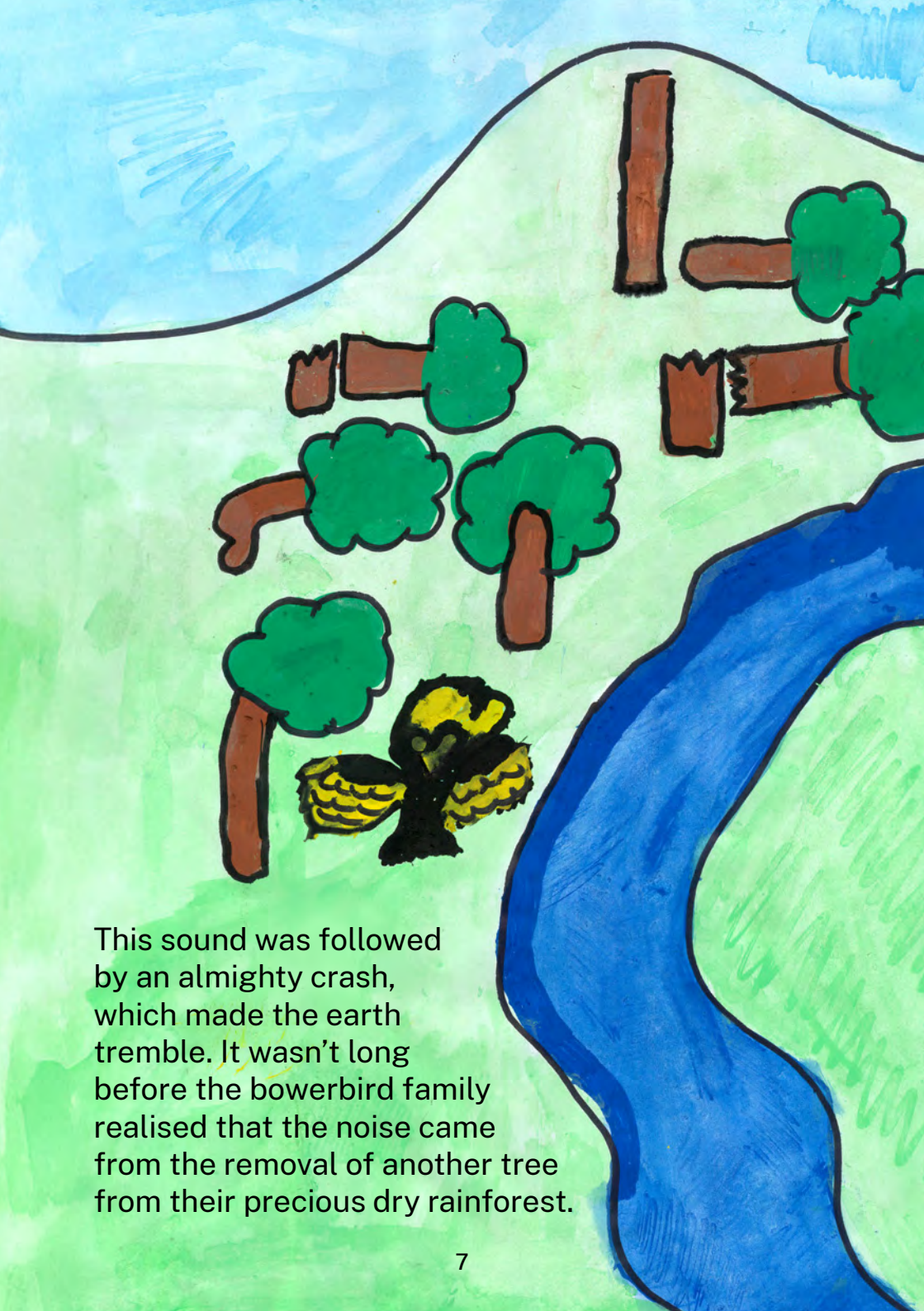


Quandong fruits, snail shells, pebbles and other precious items carefully arranged around the bower normally did the trick.

Soon a new generation would appear, continuing a cycle as old as time.

One day, the bowerbird family heard a strange sound in the dry rainforest on the banks of their mighty Coquun River. It was a sound not heard before, a sound a little like the striped marsh frog's 'tock, tock, tocking' as it announced the arrival of rain.





This sound was followed by an almighty crash, which made the earth tremble. It wasn't long before the bowerbird family realised that the noise came from the removal of another tree from their precious dry rainforest.

As time went by, more
tall rainforest trees
began to disappear,
and a strange new
creature appeared.

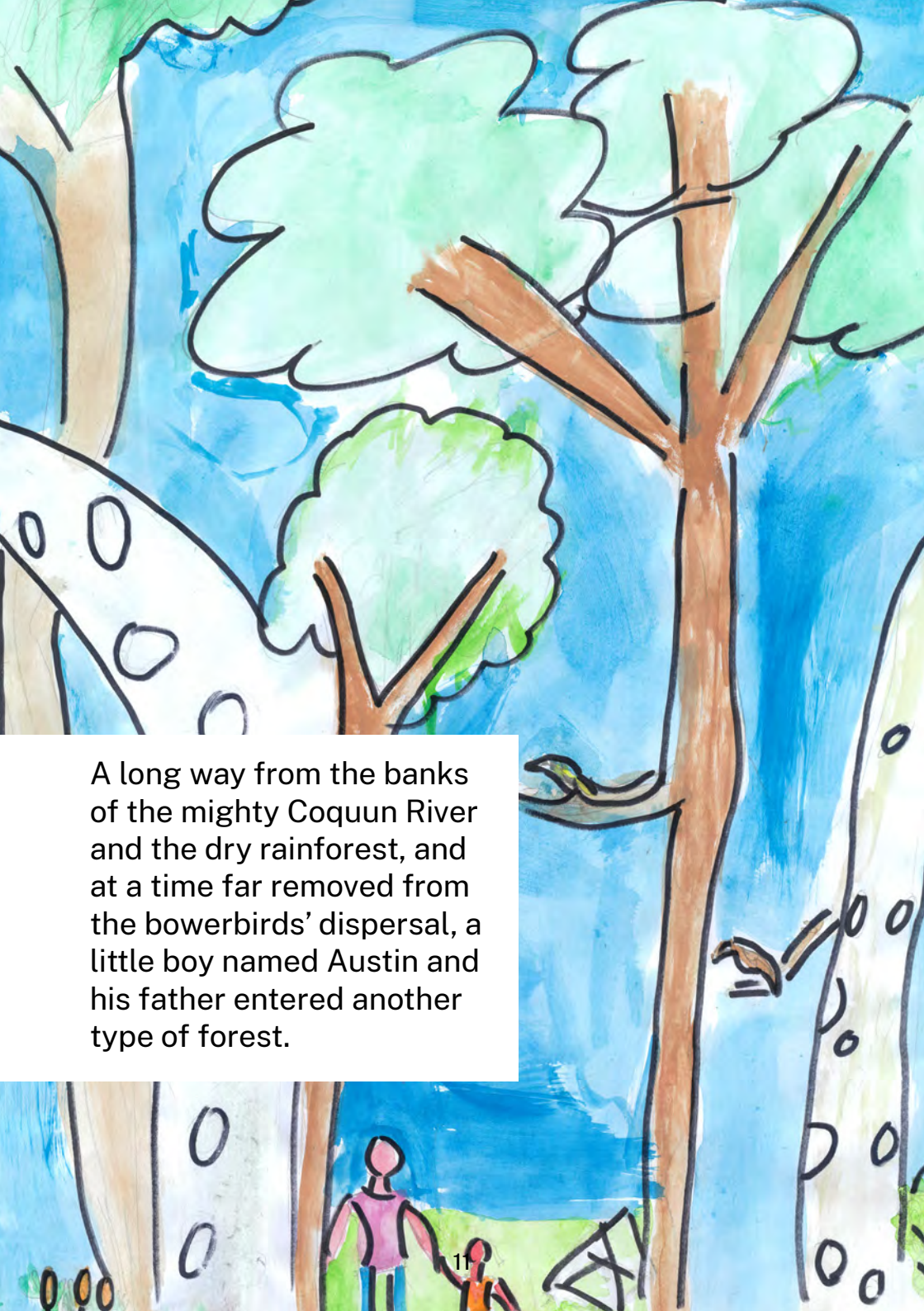


This creature was corralled by odd structures, spoke a language unknown to the other residents of the dry rainforest, and greedily fed on grass, which had now replaced the plants and trees on the banks of the mighty Coquun River.



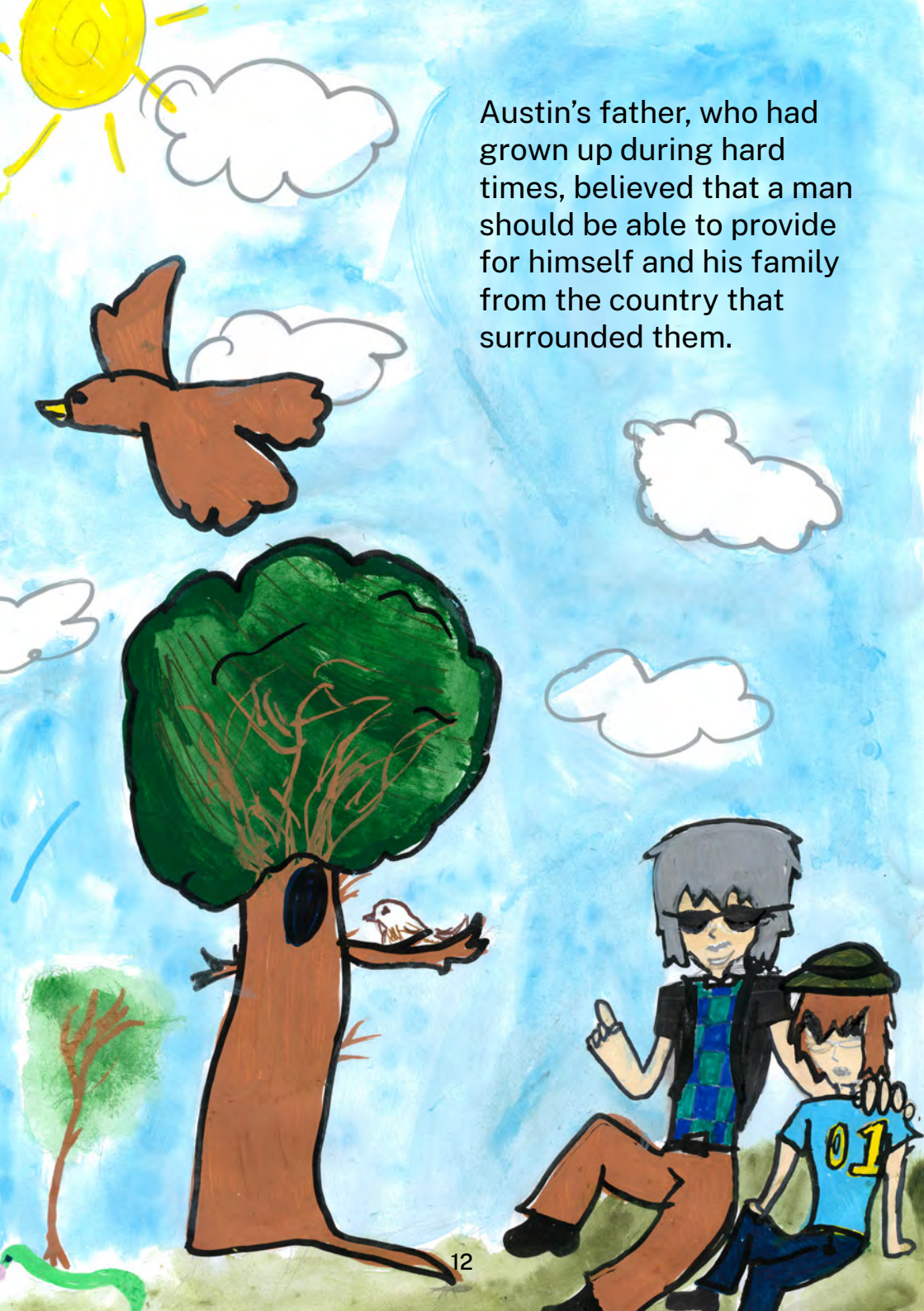
The bowerbird family realised that because their home was slowly disappearing, it was time for them to move to another part of the river, where they would be safe to continue their cycle of life.





A long way from the banks of the mighty Coquun River and the dry rainforest, and at a time far removed from the bowerbirds' dispersal, a little boy named Austin and his father entered another type of forest.

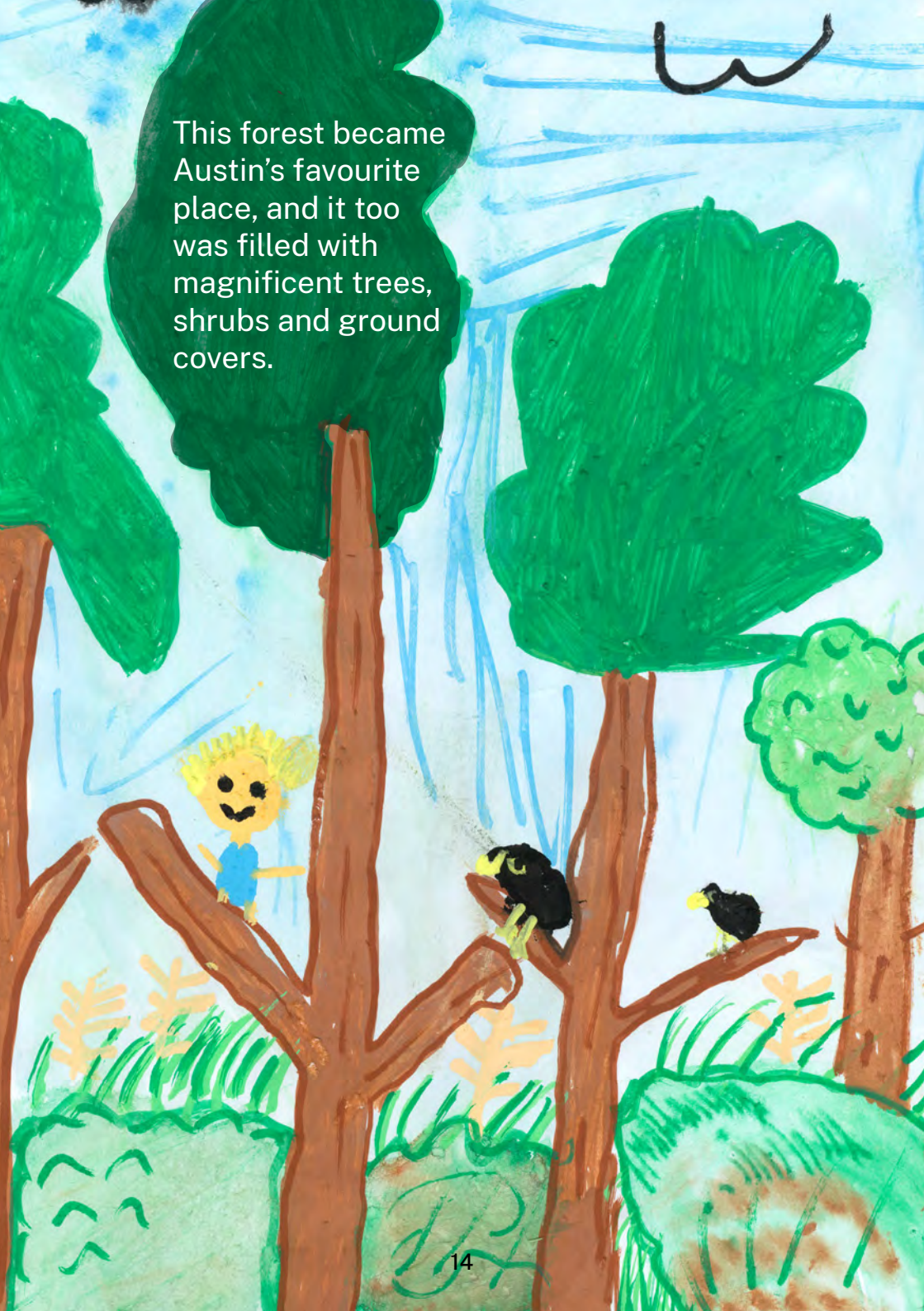
Austin's father, who had grown up during hard times, believed that a man should be able to provide for himself and his family from the country that surrounded them.

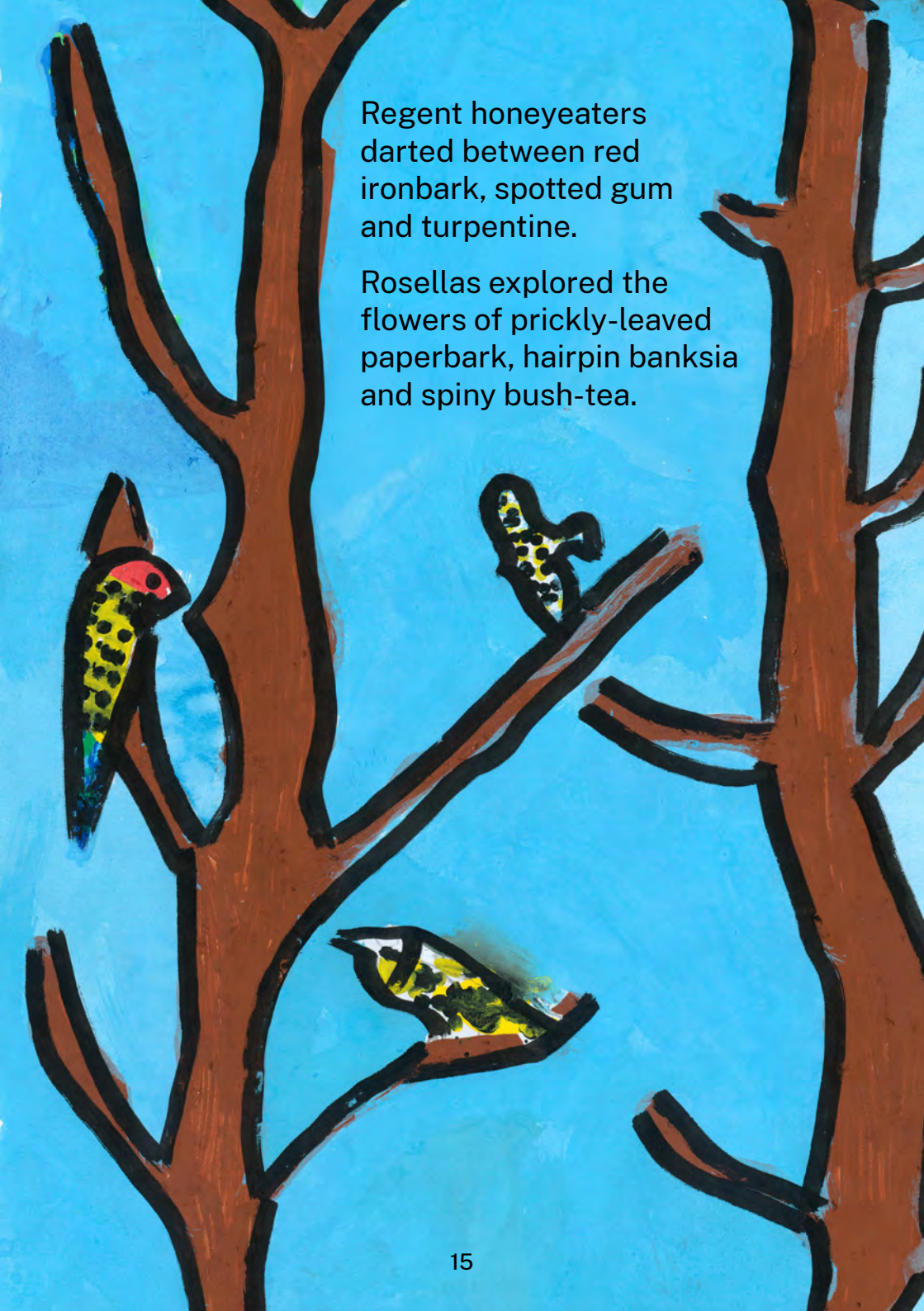




Gathering wood to make a fire and cook damper, collecting water from crystal-clear creeks for a billy to make a cuppa, or hunting kangaroos, rabbits and other forest dwellers were lessons to be learned.

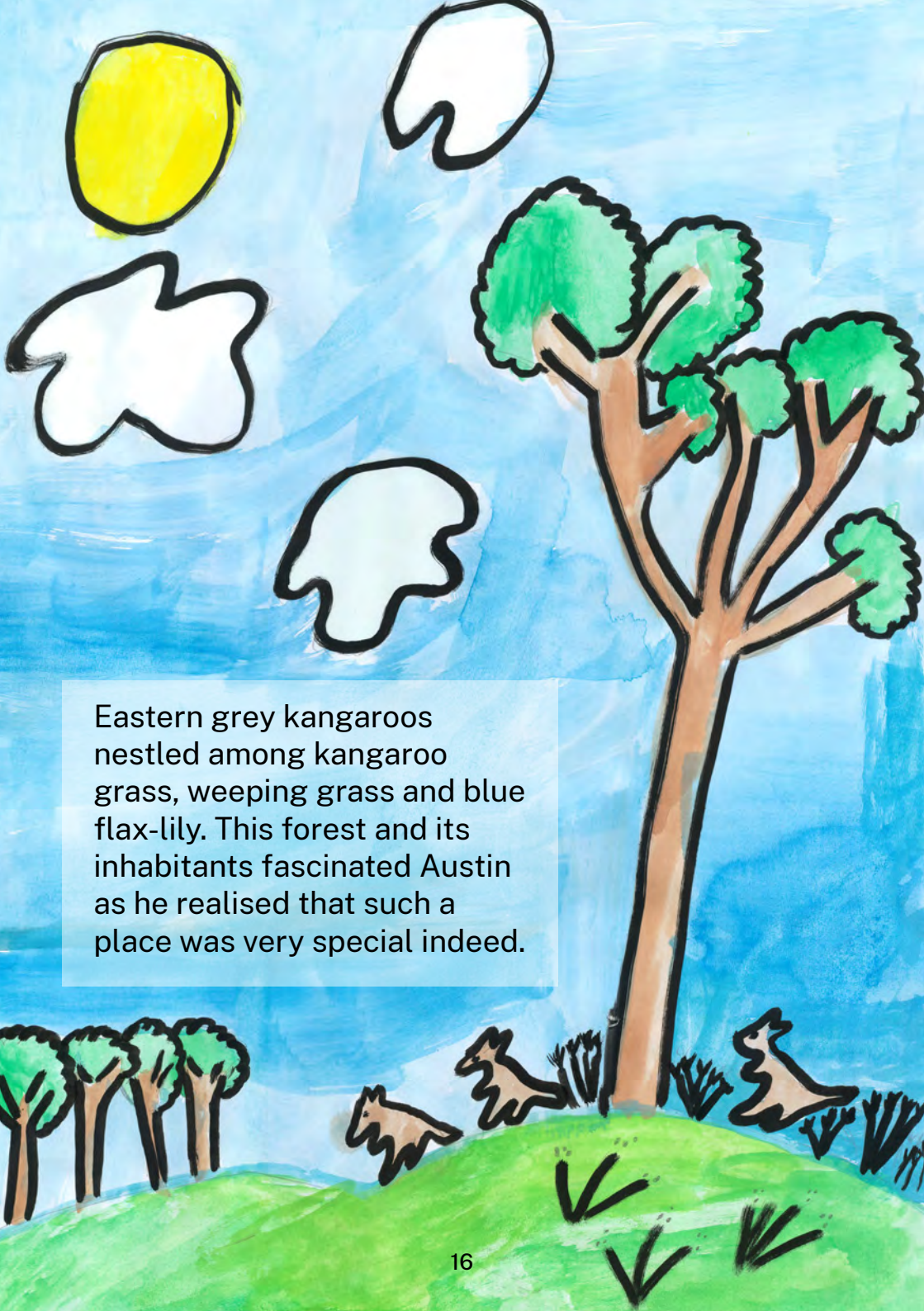
This forest became Austin's favourite place, and it too was filled with magnificent trees, shrubs and ground covers.



The illustration shows three regent honeyeaters perched on the branches of a tree. The tree's trunk and branches are painted in a thick, expressive brown style with prominent black outlines. The background is a solid, vibrant blue. The birds are depicted with bright yellow bodies covered in black spots, a distinctive red patch around the eye, and a black cap. One bird is on the left, facing right; another is higher up in the center, facing left; and a third is lower down on the right, facing right.

Regent honeyeaters
darted between red
ironbark, spotted gum
and turpentine.

Rosellas explored the
flowers of prickly-leaved
paperbark, hairpin banksia
and spiny bush-tea.



Eastern grey kangaroos nestled among kangaroo grass, weeping grass and blue flax-lily. This forest and its inhabitants fascinated Austin as he realised that such a place was very special indeed.

Time went by and, many years later, in the company of some friends, Austin decided to revisit the magnificent forest of his childhood memories. However, the forest where his father had taught him to feed off the land and respect all living beings had disappeared.

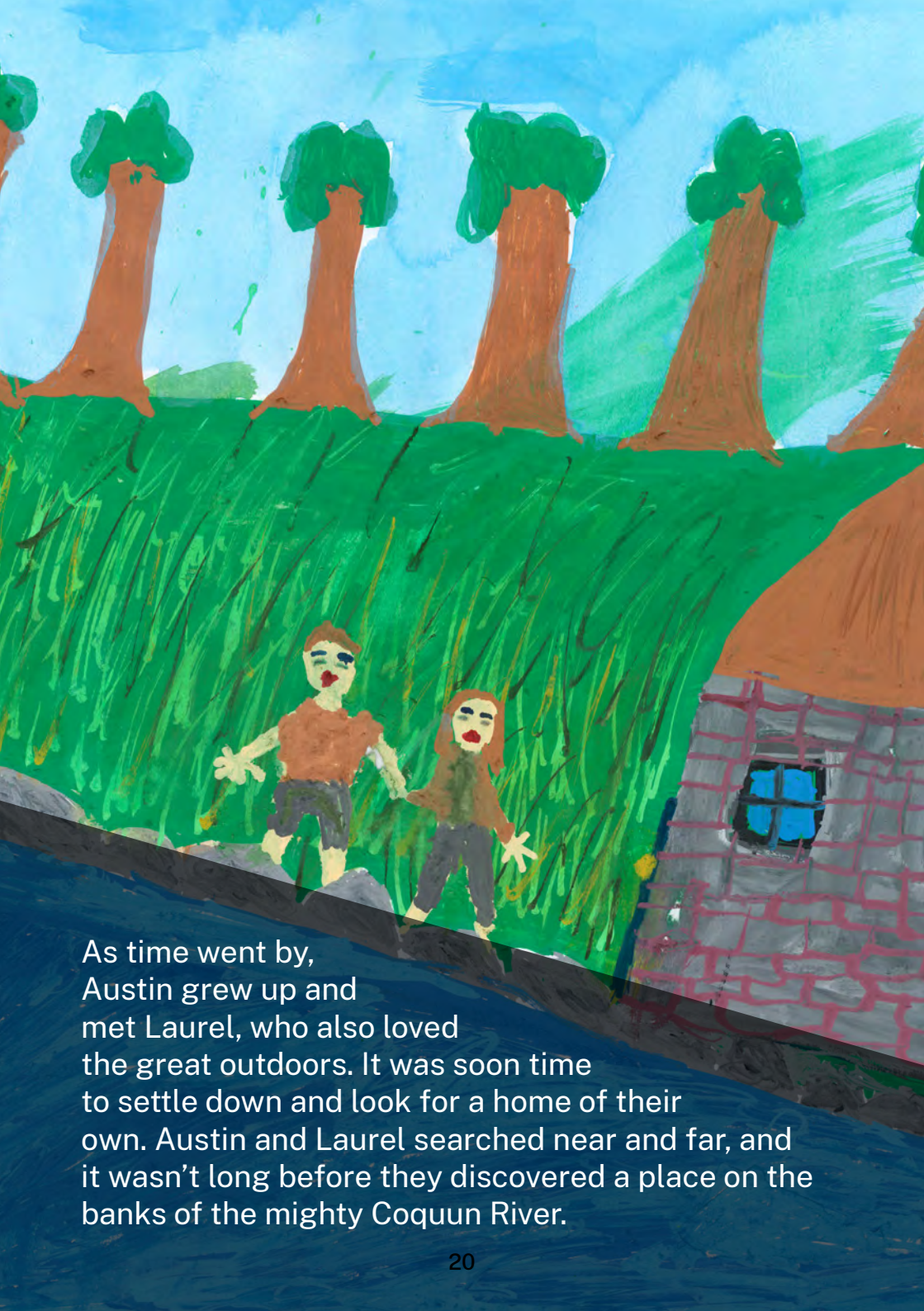


Instead, roads, farms and paddocks had replaced the dry sclerophyll forest, and sheep country now covered Austin's favourite place and its original habitat.



It was at that moment
that Austin vowed he
would one day plant
a forest of his own to
replace the one that had
disappeared.





As time went by,
Austin grew up and
met Laurel, who also loved
the great outdoors. It was soon time
to settle down and look for a home of their
own. Austin and Laurel searched near and far, and
it wasn't long before they discovered a place on the
banks of the mighty Coquun River.

This place wasn't much and even looked as though the very soil had been eaten by some large mechanical being, which had left behind hundreds of old tyres.



Undeterred, Austin and Laurel simply knew that this would be a perfect home, as Austin remembered the promise he had made long ago to plant a forest of his own.





Together, Austin and Laurel planted eucalypts on the border of their property. Eventually, more planting occurred, and on a hill adjacent to their home, a dry rainforest began to emerge.

Fig trees, silky oaks, hard quandongs,
orange thorns, brittlewoods, native hibiscus,
sandpaper figs, brush bloodwoods, hoop pines
and red kamalas grew taller each day as they
raced towards the sun.



As time went by, a canopy appeared and, within its shade, strangler vines, bird's-nest ferns, staghorns and cucumber orchids began to emerge.





The revival of this dry rainforest did not go unnoticed and soon wompoo pigeons, yellow-tailed cockatoos, diamond pythons, green tree frogs, lyrebirds and insects galore began to visit.





With them, more seeds arrived to fill the spaces underneath the forest canopy and, little by little, Austin and Laurel's forest continued to grow in diversity, creating an ecosystem that had not been seen in generations.



One sunny morning, while walking in the shade of their dry rainforest on the banks of the mighty Coquun River, Austin and Laurel caught a glimpse of a yellow and black bird darting from branch to branch. Looking at each other with smiles on their faces, they simply asked, "Could this be a male regent bowerbird?" Finally, it had returned!

Indigenous students from St Patrick's Lochinvar visited Austin and Laurel's property on Wonnarua Country, along the banks of the Hunter River, to view the regenerated rainforest and undertake hands on experiences in looking after Country. They helped to continue the revegetation work by planting another patch of rainforest species and discovered how the plants help protect river water quality and soil health. Using tweezers as beaks, the students built a bower, an elaborate structure built by the male bowerbird to attract females for mating purposes.





Indigenous students from St Patrick's Lochinvar at Austin and Laurel's property with representatives from Hunter Region Landcare, Maitland City Council, Local Land Services and artist Jenny McCracken.

