

**Jerrinja Song**  
for cello [1999]

In preparing to compose this piece I came across the following statement by Delia Lowe, Co-ordinator of the Jerrinja Land Council:

A Gentle Reminder from the Owners of the Land

For thousands and thousands of years, Koories have lived and hunted around Beecroft Peninsula and Wreck Bay, and down in the valley submerged by the ocean that is now called Jervis Bay.

For all those years we have cared for our land and its sites, for it is Koori belief that the land falls into ruin if the sites are not properly cared for.

Now we, the Jerrinja people, have put in a claim on our traditional land on Beecroft Peninsula. Gubbahs - even our friends - come and ask us what we will do with the land when it is ours once again.

That is a Gubbah question! Land is not always something to be used or something that you do things to. Sometimes it is special land and it is enough to be part of it, to be one with it.

We sometimes look in wonder at the way Gubbahs rush around organising everything. Sometimes they even take upon themselves the responsibility of talking on our behalf without coming and consulting with us first.

We do not doubt their good intentions and we value their support. But Gubbahs, without being aware of what they are doing, have a way of trying to take from Koories what belongs to us - our struggle for our land! Over the years, we have seen this happen time and time again.

Perhaps what Gubbahs do not understand is that all things happen in their own good time. There is a time to move quickly, and a time to rest with the land while you learn what it wants of you next.

The Land and the sea, and all they hold, move with their own rhythm. The wattle blooms and the salmon travels. Koories move in much the same way.

What we expect of Gubbahs is that they recognise that the land is ours and Jervis Bay is ours - and that they learn to work in harmony with the land and sea - and us!

KOORIES: The word we use for ourselves, the people who came here first, in the Dreamtime.

GUBBAHS: The word we use for the people who started coming here 200 years ago.

This piece, which was written to accompany an exhibition of photographs of Jervis Bay by Belinda Webster, and wood sculptures by Ole Nielsen, reflects a Gubbah's appreciation of this stunningly beautiful area on the New South Wales south coast. The main motive came from Belinda's photographs of undulating sand patterns.

Martin Wesley-Smith