

A serene sunset scene over a wide river. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, shimmering reflection on the water's surface. In the background, dark, silhouetted hills rise against the orange and yellow sky. In the foreground, two small boats with people are visible on the water, their figures also silhouetted. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Thriving People and Places

A moment of truth

It's 8.00 pm and the sun is setting on the clay-cracked banks of the Darling River, traditionally known as the Baawan, Barka River, on Ngemba Country in the town of Bourke, in far west NSW. It's March 2019 and the river has not flowed for 230 days. It will continue to stagnate for another 134, part of a state-wide drought that will break all known records.

Earlier that day, in a high school gymnasium, full of community and government leaders a young girl stood to share her dreams for her future and her town. She looked up nervously, digging her nails into clenched fists.

"Can you please just fill up the river?" she said.

Within that one impossible wish a fundamental truth revealed itself. That the wellbeing of people and place are inextricably bound, and that social justice is climate justice.



An opportunity to adapt

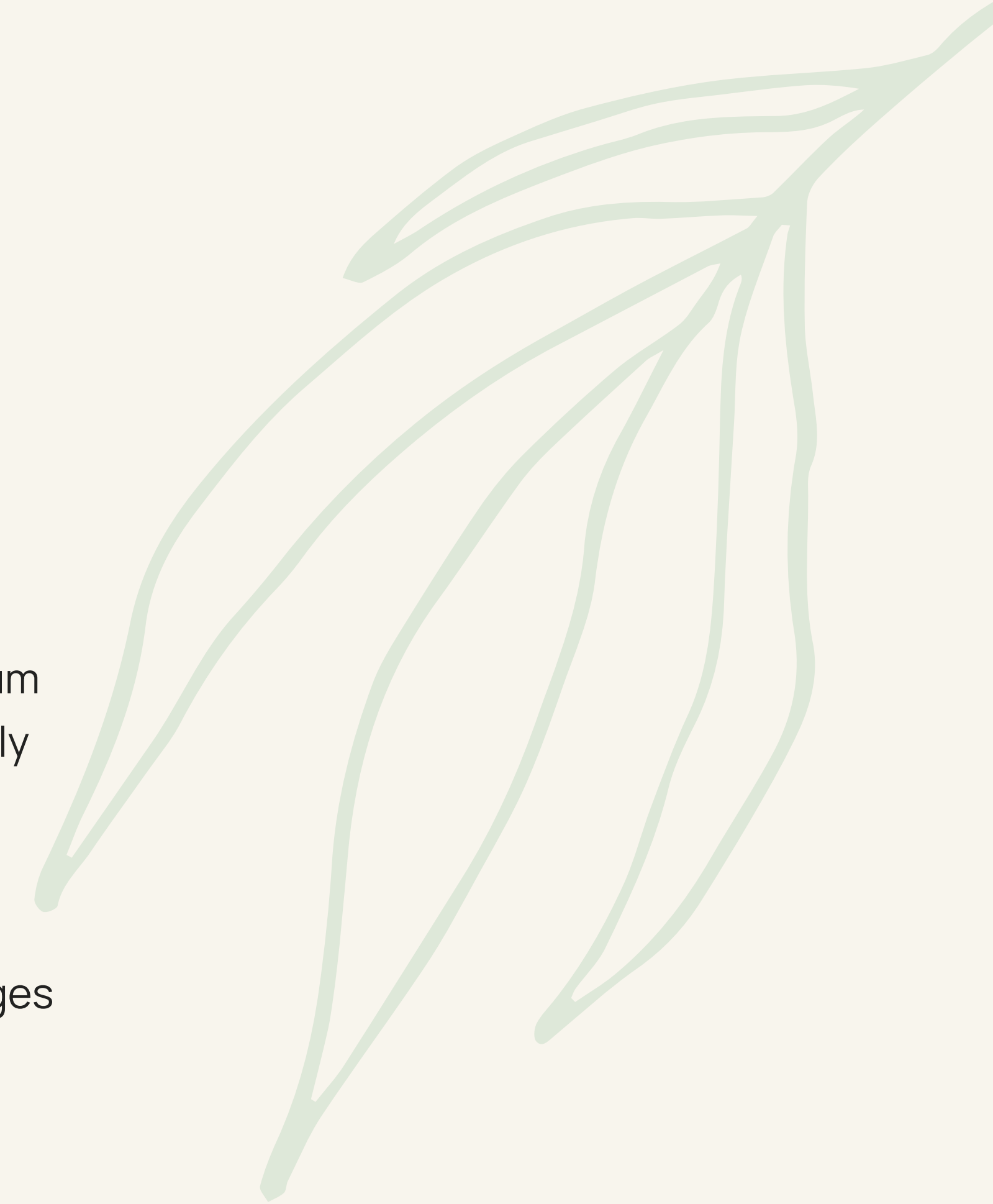
It is 2022 and the world has drastically changed. The COVID pandemic has had a devastating impact on global health, education and economies, driving pre-existing inequality deeper.

The effects of climate change are intensifying with a new report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identifying Australia as suffering greater impacts from climate change than any other advanced economy.

Inflows into the Murray Darling Basin are down 40 per cent on average since 2000; and the CSIRO has found climate change has driven an eightfold increase in bushfires in Australia.

Political polarisation has weakened democracy and is making collaboration on these urgent systemic issues even more difficult.

In these uncertain times we gathered the Dusseldorp Forum Board to explore how our family foundation might lean on the accumulated experience and knowledge from our past to evolve to meet the challenges and opportunities of a yet unimagined future.



An evolution

On Gadigal Land we sat in a circle with an aerial photograph of the river at our feet. The impact of dry riverbeds were front of mind. We reflected on what we had learned from the past five years working alongside communities collaborating on systemic responses to entrenched local challenges.

We agreed that much of what we'd learned would be essential to our work going forward. We each placed river stones along the bends and curves of the river to signify the strategies we wanted to take into the future.

We placed the first stone to keep working with communities leading change. We had partnered exclusively with communities at the forefront of the place-based social change movement. These communities had built local governance bodies and models for collaboration and as a result improved health, education, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for their families and children.

We placed a second stone to reimagine governance. We had seen communities, philanthropy and governments working in partnership, to reform systems in response to what communities say they want and need. We placed another stone on the value

of storytelling as a lever for systems change. Building capacity for community voices to be heard and supporting positive narratives for change are essential for changing the culture that shapes our society.

Our final stone we reserved for ourselves. We acknowledged how we show up matters. We learned that building respectful, trusting relationships through long-term partnerships and deepening connections is what enables us to partner well. That to be responsible custodians we must hold ourselves accountable through our principles of action and measure ourselves against them.

We also discovered opportunities to adapt and strengthen our strategy. With river stones of different colours and textures we began to pave a more direct path to the future we want to see.

We added intergenerational stewardship as an organisational value. This recognises that to be custodians of change for future generations requires a long-term view and the courage to tackle the tough issues. Our founder and Chairman of Lendlease, GJ Dusseldorp had a passion for building things to last. With the addition of two more of his grandchildren to the Board over the past

three years, he would be extremely proud to see the third generation in the Dusseldorp Family take on responsibility as custodians of Dusseldorp Forum.

Most significantly, we understood that we needed a broader vision to take us forward.

Back in 1973, GJ was shining a light on the way forward when he predicted,

“The time is not far off when companies will have to justify their worth to society, with greater emphasis placed on environmental and social impact than straight economics.”

The Forum's focus has firmly been on social impact, to see improved education and health outcomes for children, their families, and communities across Australia. We revisited that vision to ask ourselves would this be enough to create a better society for all Australians.

Using GJ's words as a guidepost we spent time reflecting on the elements of a good society with Professor, Dr Mary Graham, Yugambah Elder. She offers that Australia has an opportunity to develop a new way of thinking about life that is grounded in the wisdom and knowledge of the oldest continuous civilisation in the world.

“There are two relationships. Relationships between people and relationships between people and the land. The relationship between people is always contingent on the relationship between land and people.”

Dr Mary Graham

Just as the young girl in Bourke had revealed a truth, Dr Graham helped us imagine a society of balance and fair exchange between people and place.

After days of sharing, learning and imagining together, the new rivulets and streams of the Forum's work began to form into the vision, values, principles, and work that will take Dusseldorp Forum forward from 2023.



A better society

Our vision is for a just and equitable Australian society that is caring, ethical, and recognises and respects our First Peoples and our responsibilities to the land.

We will support, collaborate, learn and advocate alongside those working towards a good society that is socially, culturally, environmentally and economically prosperous for all. An Australia where communities have the agency to drive the positive change they want to see, where governments collaborate to reimagine more equal and just systems, and together we shape a society in which we are proud to raise our children.

“Our vision is to have our healthy people living and working on our healthy country in the Arnhem Plateau. We want the management of our land to be in our hands now, and into the future.”

Dean Yibarbuk, Traditional Owner of Djinkarr, Arnhem Land.

This strategy reaches for the same outcomes that we all want, addressing social and environmental injustices and inequalities to ensure all Australians can thrive.



A hopeful future

On our most recent visit to Ngemba Country in early 2023, we found an overflowing river, a result of repeated, devastating flooding on the east coast.

Rains that had destroyed entire towns upstream, brought reprieve to the dry riverbeds. Bourke was lush and green in a way few locals could remember. Families were using tinnies to transport children to school over flooded paddocks, weaving through the tips of tree branches, bent under the weight of teeming bird life.

While we are under no illusions about the complex challenges that lie ahead, a free-flowing river can generate optimism and joy, feelings we share about those who are at the heart of our strategy.

As Alister Ferguson, Founder of Maranguka in Bourke, explains, “Together we are forging new ways of collaborating that open up possibilities and unknown potential. We’re doing things differently and demonstrating ways to have stronger relationships. It’s very exciting.”

We look forward to sharing hopeful stories of collaboration, partnership, and progress over the coming years. Stories that help us together, imagine and make real an Australia where people and places thrive.



Dusseldorp Forum Strategy 2023

Our Vision

We are committed to a just and equitable Australian society that is caring, ethical, and recognises and respects our First Peoples.

A good society is one that is socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically prosperous for all. We envision an Australia where communities have the agency to drive the change they want to see, where governments collaborate to reimagine more equal and just systems, and together we shape a society in which we are proud to raise our children.



Rejuvenated ecosystems and reduced carbon emissions



Culturally diverse and equitable social and political life



Redesigned, humane social systems



Inclusive economic opportunities

Our Work

We work collectively to imagine and realise better futures for people and the planet.

Dusseldorp Forum is an independent family foundation with a long legacy of bringing people together to develop shared solutions to complex challenges. We provide long-term funding, make connections, support learning and advocate alongside those working towards a better society.

Our work is focused on these overlapping areas of change.

Work with community.

We support and sustain community-led solutions and partner with those building community agency, wellbeing and system reform capacity.

Reimagine governance.

We connect, advocate and influence to shift power in decision-making about policies, resources and system design.

Change the story.

We build capacity for storytelling and amplify positive narratives for change.

“Our goal is to not make people dependent on us, rather the opposite. It’s to give them the opportunity to do what they can do well.”

June McLoughlin, Co-Founder, Our Place, Victoria.





We are Responsible Custodians.

We are committed to ethical governance and guided by our family's long-held values and our principles of action.

Our Values

These core values reflect our beliefs and practices.

Independence

We are independently funded and governed. We are not politically or commercially aligned and can convene and facilitate across sectors from a non-partisan platform.

Innovation

We value the ability to turn insurmountable obstacles into opportunities and creative approaches. We support those taking risks, challenging the status quo and shining a light on the way forward.

Integrity

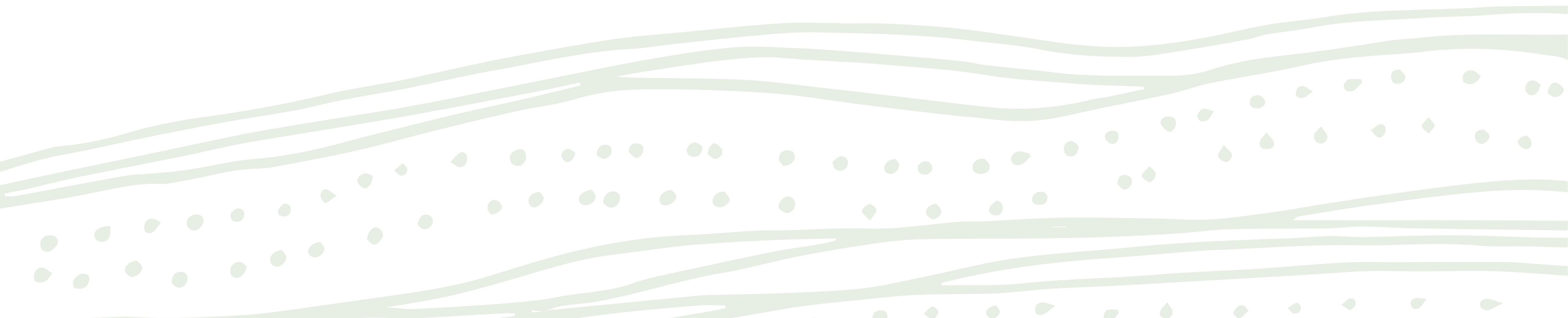
We do what we say we will do. We strive for open, respectful relationships built on honesty, trust and transparency.

Integration

We value bringing together diverse individuals, communities, governments and organisations around a common interest to create sustainable approaches to complex problems.

Intergenerational stewardship

We build things to last. We recognise that to be custodians of change for future generations requires a long-term view and the courage to tackle the tough issues.



How we Partner

Our principles of action guide how we partner with others.

Respect First Peoples self-determination

We listen and learn from First Nations perspectives. We invest in First Peoples driving change.

Develop authentic relationships

We take the time to build relationships of trust and reciprocity as a foundation for generating positive change together.

Connect the dots and untie the knots

We take a holistic view and bring together diverse perspectives to work collaboratively and generate impact greater than the sum of their parts. We lean into complexity and work to unravel challenges alongside our partners.

Add meaningful value

We provide flexible resourcing and share our time, connections, platforms and skills. We are adaptive and responsive in our processes to changing contexts and needs.

Learn and evidence for impact

We listen, learn and demonstrate what works. We partner with curiosity and adjust our work based on new insights. We are open source and share what we learn.



Our Strategy



A just and equitable Australian society where people and places thrive

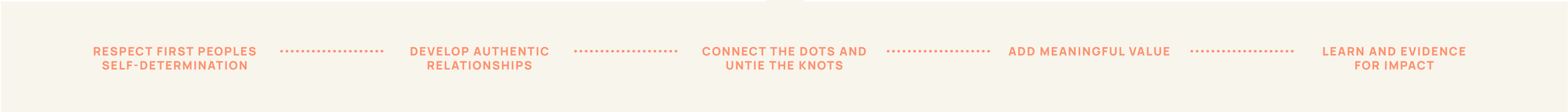
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO



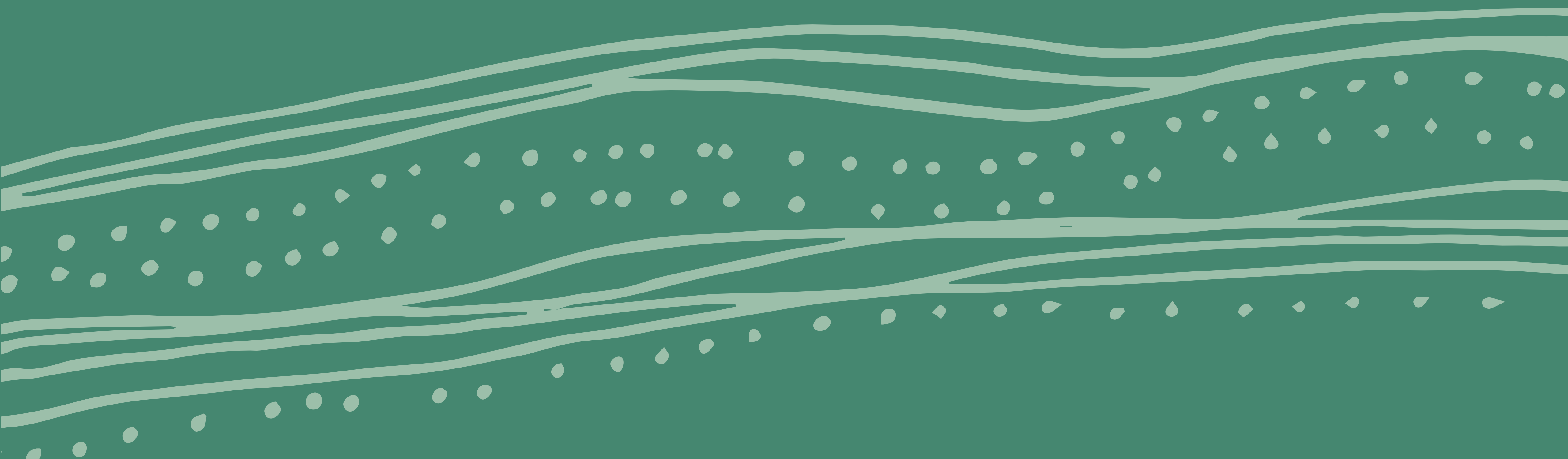
TO GENERATE RESULTS ACROSS INTERCONNECTED AREAS OF IMPACT



AND WORK COLLECTIVELY



WE OPERATE FROM OUR PRINCIPLES OF ACTION



Dusseldorp Forum acknowledges the First Peoples of Australia and the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which we work and live.
We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.