

D'harawal

DREAMING STORIES

Maridyulu Gagamari



[Www.dharawalstories.com](http://www.dharawalstories.com)

Frances Bodkin
Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews
Illustrations By Lorraine Robertson

Foreword

Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D'harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D'harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D'harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D'harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.



Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person's worthiness to ownership of that story.

The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D'harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D'harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.

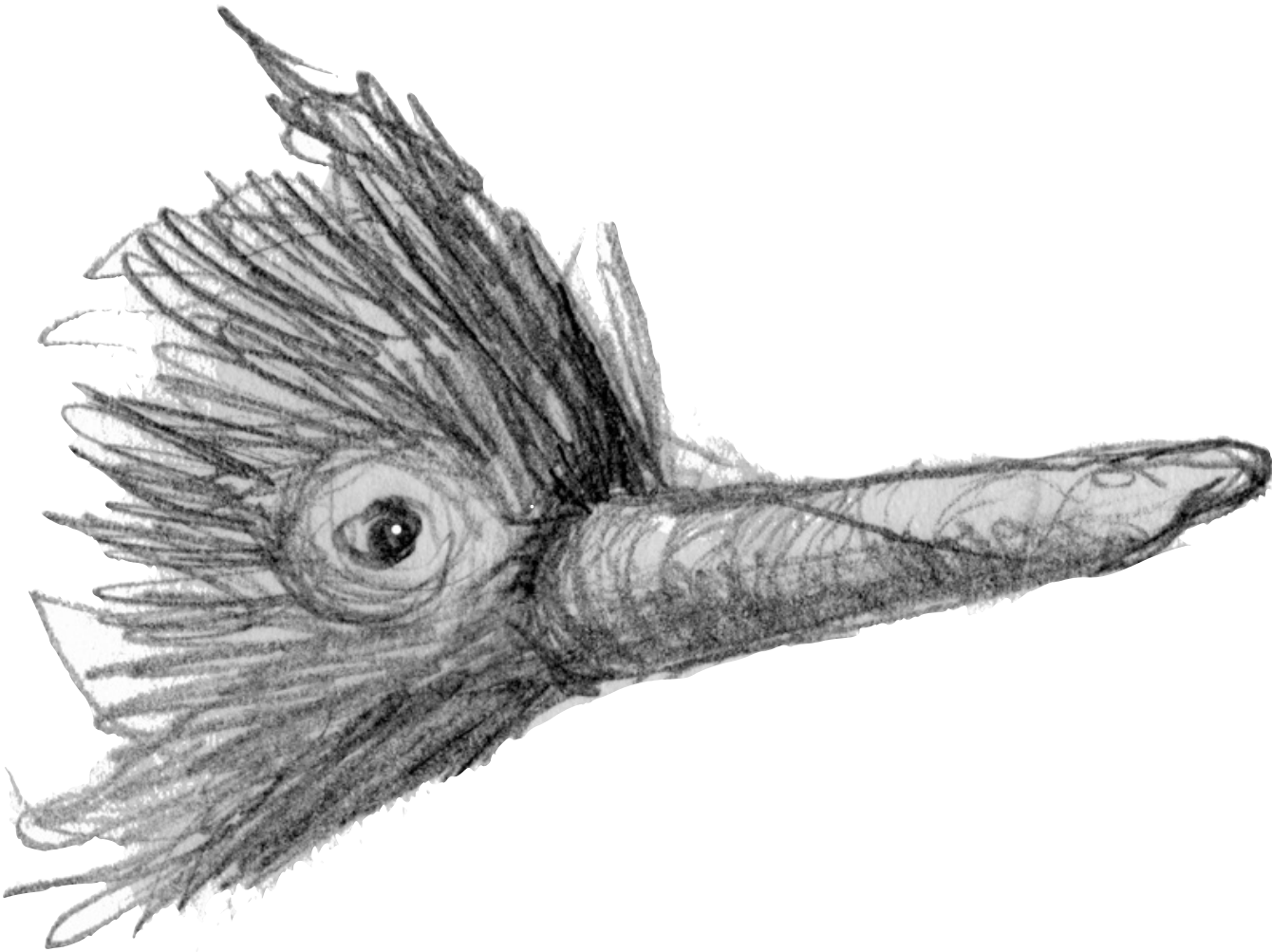
Frances Bodkin

Maridyulu Gagamari



Once long ago the four nations surrounding the lands of the D'harawals decided that they would challenge each other to find out who had the cleverest Gagamari, or Clever Fellow, and that they would invite the D'harawals to join in the competition.

Now the D'harawals did not subscribe to the idea that one person was cleverer, or any better than another, for they believed that each person was clever in their own way, and that each person was adept in a skill that was needed in their community.



They discussed the competition amongst themselves, trying to decide whom they should send. Some thought they should send the best hunter, others thought they should send the best medicine woman, others thought they should send the best talker, even others the best teacher.

Finally the **Gorronge**, or Magician, said. “I do not trust the **Daruk**, or the **Gundangurra**, or the **Wandandian**, or even the **Garingai**. They do these things without thinking of the consequences. What is the purpose of this test?”

“To find out who is the best of the five nations.” Suggested one of the women. “If the Gundangurra win the test, then they will boast to everyone that they are the cleverest people of all.”

“All it will prove,” replied the Gorronge, “is that they have one person who is cleverer than most.” He strode around the fire, stroking his beard and thinking.

Suddenly he smiled. “We will send young Burragin. He has been through his initiation, he has demonstrated good sense, and this will be a good learning experience for him. He can observe the clever ones of the other nations, and tell us what he thinks of them.”

Now Burragin was the Gorronge’s apprentice, and although he had been through his initiation, and was now considered a warrior, he looked much younger than others of his age.

Burragin looked up in shock at the pale eyes of the Gorronge, but before he could speak the others all agreed.

“It will show those others that even our youngest warriors are cleverer than the best they have to offer.”

Chuckled old Naali, her white hair glistening in the firelight.

Burragin was not so sure. He didn’t think he was particularly clever, but he didn’t want to disappoint his people. He smiled nervously. “I hope I do not betray your trust in me.” He said. “However, I will try my best.”

The Gorronge placed his hands upon the young man’s shoulders, and looking directly into his eyes, said. “That is all we ask.



Burragin entered the gully where the five had agreed to meet, and found the others already gathered there sitting around a campfire and talking and laughing amongst themselves.

They looked up as Burragin approached, and although the Garingai at least tried to hide his smile, the others laughed outwardly. “So,” said the Daruk man, “those cowardly D’harawals have sent us a boy, they have lost the test before it has begun.”

“Sit down, young man,” said the Garingai, “and tell us your name.”

“I am Burragin, of the Bitter Water Clans.” He replied.

The Daruk snorted his contempt. “The mud people.” He commented disdainfully. “I am Bitiju, Clever Man of all the Daruk Peoples.”

The Gundangurra man got up and stretched himself to his full height. “And I am Wanun, the Clever Man from the Mountains of the Gundangurra.”

The Daruk glared darkly at Wanun, for he was also from the mountains, but more northerly than the Gundangurra, and there were constant disputes between them over who belonged to which lands.

“My name is Borigah, of the Burra clans of the Garingai.” Said the third man.

“And I am Burrenam, Sorcerer of the Wandandian.” Said the fourth man.



“What is this test that we have to accomplish?” asked Burragin.

The four men pointed to a great pile of bones of many creatures accumulated at the foot of a high cliff.

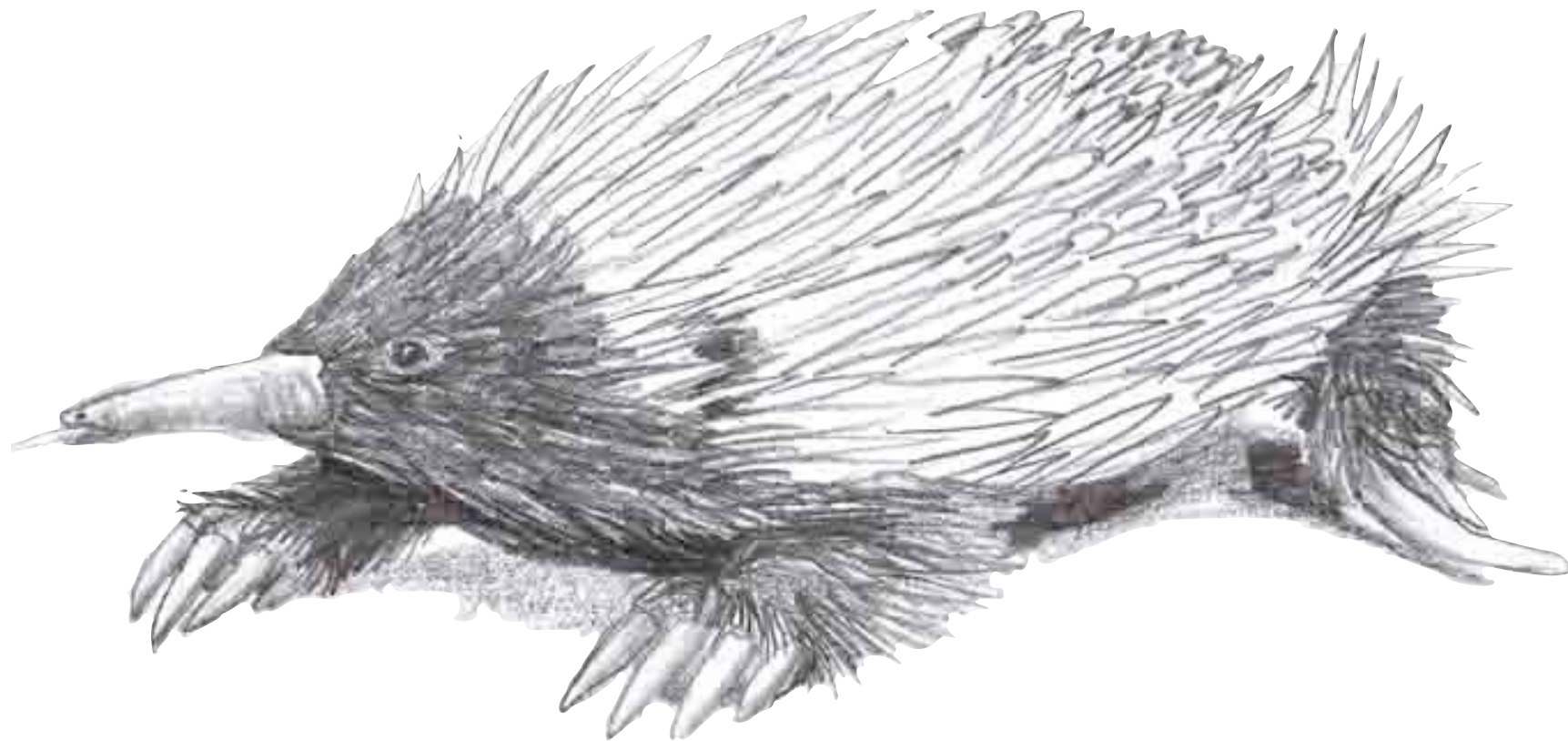
“It is up to us to decide what to do with these bones.” The Garingai said.

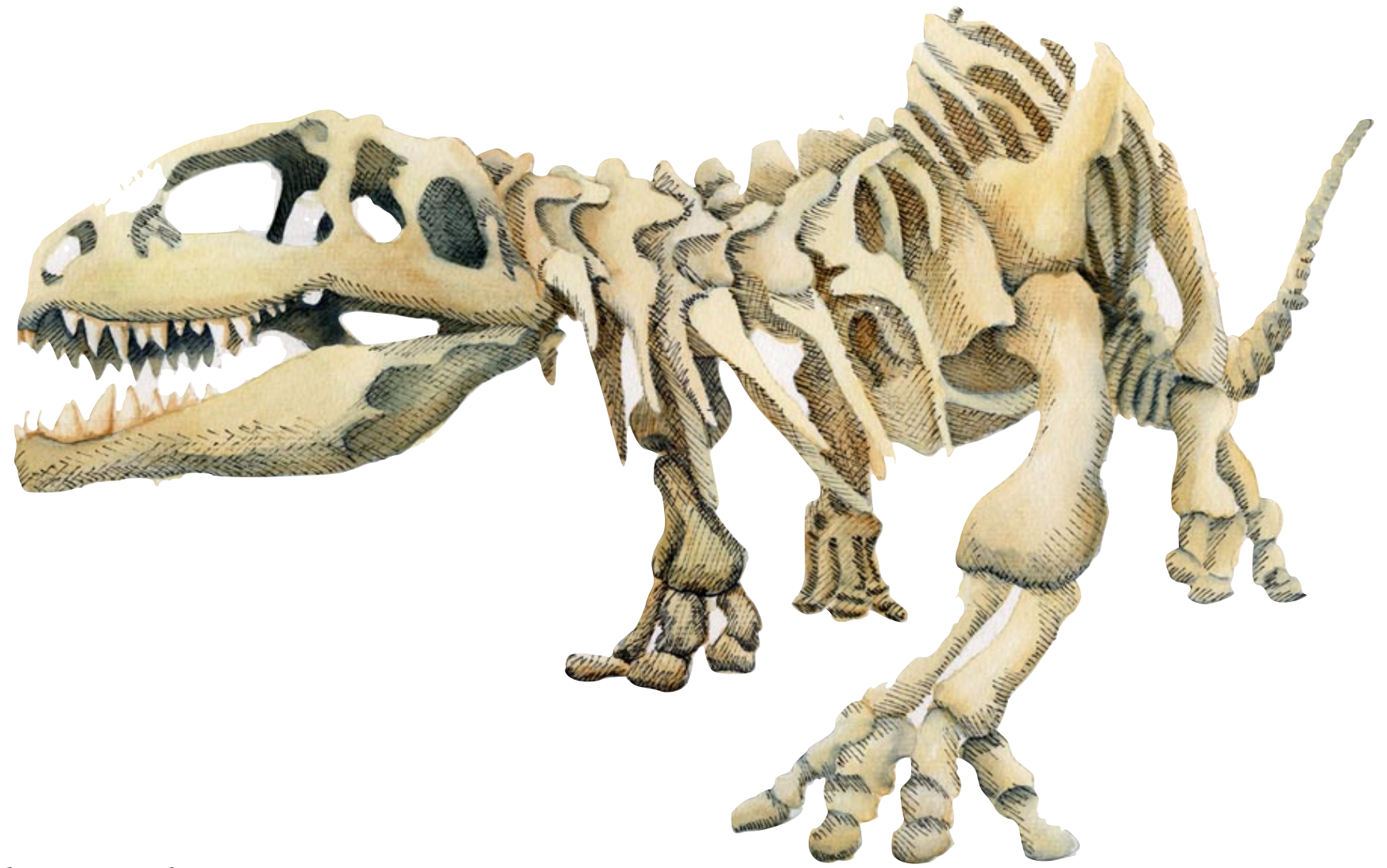
Young Burragin stared at the pile of bones of many animals whose names had been long ago forgotten.

“I can make many tools out of these bones,” he exclaimed, as he picked up one of the larger bones and began to shape it.

The others snatched the bone from him and began to beat him with it.

They beat him so hard, that splinters of the bone flew off and embedded themselves in poor Burragin’s back and shoulders. The force of the blows broke his arms and legs, so that he could no longer walk, but could only drag himself along the ground on his hands and knees.





The Wandandian smiled scornfully at the fallen D'harawal.
"I can put these bones together." He said.
"And I can create a huge, single skeleton."

The Wandandian set about assembling the bones, until he had used every bone in sight, creating the skeleton of a huge beast.

Then he stood back and looked at it, proudly. "See what I have done, I have created a new creature out of the old.
I am as clever as the Great Biame."

Burrakin felt fear as he stared at this creature, thankful that at least it was only a skeleton. "We must not go any further, we cannot make ourselves the equal of our Creator. We must stop this."



Then the Garingai smiled, ignoring Burragin's plea, "I can give this skeleton flesh." He said. Then he set about creating flesh for the fearsome creature from the mud of the gully floor. When he had finished he stood back and admired the work he had done. "There you are, look at the form I have created for this creature, it is indeed fearsome, is it not?"

Burragin looked in fear towards this monster. We must leave he now and never return." He said.

“Ha!” said the Gundangurra Clever Man, “Watch this, I can make this creature a skin that cannot be pierced by a spear.”

Burragin’s fear mounted. “We should not be doing this,” he said. “Maybe we shall create something that is not good.”

But the Gundangurra man gave him a contemptuous glance, and set about making a skin for the creature from the bark of a nearby ironbark tree.

When he had completed his task, he stood back and admired his work.

“There, as you can see, I have proved that I am the cleverest, because this creature is truly indestructible.”





But the Daruk man stepped forward, an evil grin on his face. “But I am the cleverest of all the Clever Men, because I have the power to give it life.”

Burragin pleaded. “You must not do this.” He said. “You do not know what you are doing. It is not our place to create life.”

The others all laughed at the young warrior. “The D’harawals have always been cowards.” Said the Gundangurra. “They would rather hide than fight.”

Burragin rolled in the mud of the valley floor, so that only the splinters of the bone distinguish him from the Earth, and sat there, watching silently as the others laughed and teased him, whilst the Daruk sang the creature to life.

Suddenly the creature stood up on his hind legs, and with a mighty roar grasped the four men in its forelimbs, tearing them apart before devouring them.

Burragin, who had dug himself deeper into the mud, stared into the terrible eyes of the monster as it bent its head and looked straight at him.

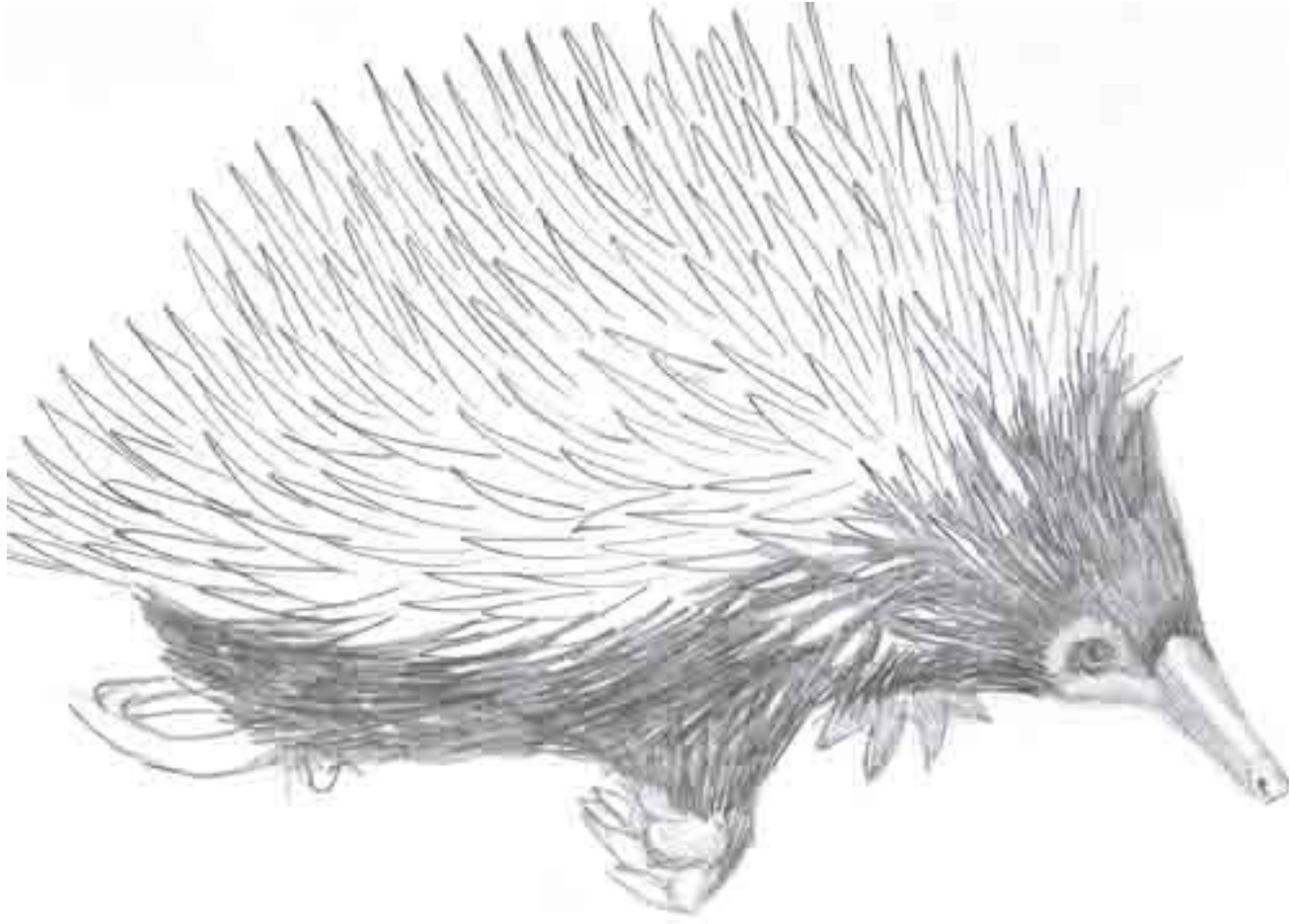
But it did not see him, it saw only a pile of muddy sticks. And it could not smell him for the creature could not distinguish its own odour from the smell of the bones covering poor Burragin’s back.

Burragin painfully made his way towards his clan to warn them of the creature. But when he arrived at the camp the creature had already been there, and the torn and broken bodies of his sisters and brothers and aunts and uncles lay scattered around.

His felt as if his heart would break with grief, but he noticed that there were no bodies of the children. He stood up, painfully, and looked around, not wanting to call to them in case the sound of his voice attracted the beast.

Instead, he began to search for sign of them, in ever widening circles around the camp.

Finally, he found them, hidden beneath a low overhanging rock, and helped them out, one by one, turning their faces away from the camp so that they would not see the bodies of the adults.



With a heavy heart he took them to the neighbouring clan and explained what had happened, asking them to care for the children. He then warned them not to camp in the open, but to camp in caves with the entrance disguised by sticks and branches.

The clan insisted on helping him, tending to his wounds, but try as they may, they could not remove the splinters of bone that had healed themselves into his back, nor could they heal the terrible wounds to his arms and legs.

When he had recovered as best as he could, he set off to seek help in hunting and destroying the creature.

But that is another story.

However, when we see Burragin, the Echidna, wandering through the woodland, we must remember that when we try to create something, we must also make ourselves aware of the consequences.

And we must remember, it is not wise to create anything just for the sake of showing others how clever you are.



For all the cleverness in the land will not help you if you do not use common sense.



Information about Burragin:

Buh-roo-gin Short-beaked Echidna

Scientific Name: *Tachyglossus aculeatus*

The Short-beaked Echidna is easily recognised by its sharp spines, short legs and long snout.

Size range - 40-55 cm

The Short-beaked Echidna is found throughout Australia, including Tasmania. Although it is found all over Australia, it is not as common in Sydney as it once was.

Habitat: The Short-beaked Echidna lives in forests and woodlands, heath, grasslands and arid environments.

Feeding and Diet: Using its pointed snout and sharp claws, the Short-beaked Echidna breaks into ant and termite nests and catches its prey by flicking its long sticky tongue in and out. It also catches a lot of dirt in the process and this is expelled in the droppings.

Life cycle: Like the Platypus, the Short-beaked Echidna is an egg-laying mammal or monotreme and lays one egg at a time. The eggs hatch after about 10 days and the young, emerge blind and hairless. Clinging to hairs inside the mother's pouch, the young echidna suckles for two or three months. Once it develops spines and becomes too prickly, the mother removes it from her pouch and builds a burrow for it. It continues to suckle for the next six months.

The Short-beaked Echidna has few natural enemies, but it may be killed by cars, dogs, foxes and occasionally goannas, and cats may take the young.