

Synopsis from entry form:

Cowra Voices

Cowra Voices is a geolocative storytelling app, documenting the unique peace and reconciliation story of Cowra. This NSW town is the site of the famous Cowra Breakout – the only armed confrontation with an enemy on Australian soil during World War II. Four Australian guards and 234 Japanese died. Despite this violent history, Cowra has forged a close friendship with the people of Japan. Now the home of the Japanese Gardens, the Japanese War Cemetery, and Peace Precinct, Cowra is one of the few peace tourism destinations in NSW. Yet the stories of grassroots reconciliation remain virtually unknown. Cowra Voices attempts to harness the the intimacy of audio storytelling to share these stories.

The Project Team has had a long-standing collaborative relationship with the Cowra community, having worked together on historical research projects, arts and cultural programs. The idea for the app grew out of this relationship. With the 75th anniversary of the Cowra Breakout due to be commemorated in August 2019, a decision was made to launch the app at this significant event.

Planning, securing funds, and conducting research began in 2016.

From inception until completion, the Team worked closely with

community members, Cowra Tourism, Cowra Council (copyright holder of the app), as well as the Wiradjuri people, the traditional custodians of the land.

Other aims of the project were to explore new narrative connections between Australia and Japan. To this end, Japanese university students visited Cowra on a study tour in 2018, and contributed design ideas for the app. Interview recordings, sound design, app development and testing were all completed between January and July, 2019.