Charlotte Roberts:

(Singing) Welcome to Murmuring Walk. My name is Charlotte. Before we leave this car park and begin our journey, let's stop here a moment and acknowledge the original custodians of the land we are standing on. What an honour to be here on land that has neighbouring clans of the Wurundjeri, Taungurung, and Dja Dja Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. Let's take a moment to acknowledge their ancestors, past, present, and emerging.

The history of this land, babies born, and families created. Let's acknowledge the rich stories and histories told, the ceremony and sacred cultural practices that have existed and thrived for thousands of years. Let's take a moment to acknowledge that despite the devastating impact of colonization and genocide on our First Nations people, their spirits remain strong. Their stories remain in the ground and sky, and in this place we visit. Always was, always will be.

I've created this audio track with fellow musician, Ria Soemardjo, and writer Sandra Fiona Long to share with you this magnificent place close to where I grew up and live today. Feel free to take your time, and pause the audio whenever you like. We recommend having a look at the map before you start, then relax. We'll give you some directions along the way. You'll also notice some suggestions or places to pause on the map. Okay, let's start walking.

You'll notice as we walk, sometimes we'll be quiet. That's because we are leaving space for the trees, the air, the leaves, the rain, the birds, the grasses, the wind. This section of the walk is regrowth forest.

Speaker 2:

Came up here only a few days after the fires. Everything was virtually blackened pencil leads right up through here. But, funnily enough, couple of the little patches of… [audio fading out]

Charlotte:

Springing back to life after logging and pine plantations, which didn't survive the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires.

Speaker 2:

... wattles are now senescing, so they're getting old now. The wattles move in first.

Charlotte:

Up ahead, take the path to the left towards Sanatorium Lake Forest.

Speaker 2:

Bracken growing in disturbed soils.

Charlotte:

Bracken. Acacia. Blackwood. [inaudible 00:03:52] Inhale. Exhale. The old wattle that sprung out after the fires The tussock grass, dlderberry panax, tiny little creamy white flowers and clusters, followed by a purply black berry. Wonders of the earth.

Speaker 2:

What's it called Forget-Me-Nots, forget me nots [inaudible 00:04:44]

Charlotte:

Up ahead. You'll pass the remains of a big old tree that's been cut down. If you're not there yet, pause this audio until you arrive. Take your time. This tree must have been at least 500 years old when it was cut down. Standing in its center, I love reaching out and touching its edges. Imagine I'm standing right in the heart of the tree. As we go further, you'll see many survivors, pockets of old growth, ancient trees, pre-colonial. Some fallen, coalescing back into the earth, senescing into soil, others still thriving.

Charlotte:

Home to so much life.

Speaker 3:

Mountain pepper the leaves and the berries are spicy.

Charlotte:

Victorian Christmas Bush the sweet minty smell of leaves.

Speaker 2:

Blaze Of white, tiny little purple spots inside to throw to the flowers.

Charlotte:

The daisy musk bush, the main understory to the Mountain Ash. They will become giant woody daisies with a slightly musky smell. Velvet grass, velvet tussock grass.

Charlotte:

(singing)

Speaker 3:

Look up. Discarded bark like snakes.

Speaker 2:

Mountain Ash.

Charlotte:

Mountain Ash competing their way to the sun's. rays,

Speaker 2:

The tallest flowering plant in the world.

Charlotte:

Branches opening up to the light. Crack, bark, bark. Healing lungs of the planet, separating lungs of the planet, the cathedral of trees, rising to the sun, breathing in. Look out for the large bulge coming out of the tree. It's a burl, like a pearl in an oyster. It starts as a tiny growth from some kind of infestation, then gradually grows. Some people say its false advertising to call it a lake. More Like a dam than a lake. Lung shaped. Memory lake. Breathing lake. Feel free to meander along the lake's edge. Murmuring lake, breathing lake. From mud, rising up through silt, still escaping with a pop through leafy film. Murmuring lake, breathing lake still rising up. Built in 1973 to provide water to the sanatorium. A place for tuberculosis patients to heal. Might see some plump magpies hanging around the picnic tables. (chirping) Escaping. Bubbling past tadpoles.

Speaker 3:

Gas escaping.

Charlotte:

Fly buzzing to the bubbling, cracking, bubbling, buzzing, buzzing. Bubbles bubbling, buzzing.

Charlotte:

When You're ready, start part two of the audio. It begins near the bridge.