

# Disorientation – My Life's Journey



Artist: Mr Douglas Smallwood

## **Disorientation – My Life's Journey is a painting of Doug's life.**

As part of *The transition from hospital to home project*, participants were asked if they would like to share with others the story of their journey following a traumatic brain injury. This is Doug's story.

On the outer edge of the painting are twelve emu eggs, with each egg representing a story from Doug's life. Emu eggs are fragile even though they have these different layers of colours when carving into them.

If you carve too hard on them, they break. Doug sees this fragility in his life.

The emu is a native animal to Australia, with many stories of the emu in Aboriginal people's Dreaming.

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| First egg    | This egg depicts the genesis of Doug's life, including his mother and father who created him.   |
| Second egg   | This egg represents his four brothers who are painted in orange and his three sisters painted in pink.  |
| Third egg    | This is where Doug lived as a young boy near Walsh's Pyramid. The Pyramid is about 30kms south of Cairns at Aloomba, near Gordonvale.   |
| Fourth egg   | This egg tells the story of Doug, his dad and brother Greg cane cutting by hand near Gordonvale.  |
| Fifth egg    | This egg contains the Aboriginal flag. Doug identifies as a proud Juru and Bindal Aboriginal man.   |
| Sixth egg    | This egg represents the bus Doug would catch to school daily to Aloomba Primary School, near Gordonvale.  |
| Seventh egg  | This egg represents Doug's achievements in his football career representing Townsville and winning three finals out of five years during his time in the senior rugby league.   |
| Eighth egg   | This egg tells the story of alcohol and how it has destroyed Doug's life and impacted on him and his family.  |
| Ninth egg    | This egg represents Doug's own family, including the mother of his children, who gave birth to his five children. Doug's four boys are depicted in orange and his only daughter is depicted in pink.  |
| Tenth egg    | This egg represents the damage Doug has caused to himself as well as the damage from others through binge drinking. Binge drinking has contributed to Doug's brain injuries through falling when he is intoxicated as well as fighting with his family. Doug calls the lines on the brain in this egg 'lines of confusion'. |
| Eleventh egg | This egg represents Doug's journey continuing with alcohol, with ambulances coming to his place when he has cut himself and being taken to hospital. It also represents head injuries that Doug has inflicted on himself as well as sustained from other people when he is binge drinking.                                  |
| Twelfth egg  | This depicts the Milky Way, where we go to heal as well as wait for rebirthing.   |

The middle part of the painting, depicted with vivid colours portrays the bright skies before occupation. This is Doug's dreaming where one day he hopes to return, allowing him to have a life again that is simple and without complexities. Returning back one day from the Milky Way, Doug desires to have learnt from his mistakes and make way for new life lessons to be learnt.

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