



## Artist Statement – RAP Mural (Benincasa)

The collaborative mural, created by both First Nations and non-Indigenous members of our Siena Catholic College community respectfully dedicated to the Gubbi Gubbi people, traditional owners of the land on which our mural has been created and Elders both past and present.

The mural is a vibrant and joyful community artwork, blending contemporary colours with detailed dot painting motifs. It features rich symbolism from both First Nations and Christian cultures. At its centre is a Dominican cross, surrounded by icons representing the four pillars of the College Charism. A sunburst, inspired by Saint Catherine of Siena's quote, "Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire," illuminates the sky and the Glasshouse Mountains in the background. A magpie flies towards the cross in the midground, while two kangaroos rest calmly on Gubbi Gubbi land in the foreground.

The Dominican Cross, associated with the Dominican Order and Saint Catherine of Siena, carries profound symbolism:

- **Truth and Purity:** The black and white colours of the cross symbolise the triumph of truth over heresy. The white represents the joy and purity of Christ, while the black signifies humility and penance.
- **Spiritual Commitment:** The cross reflects the Dominican commitment to preaching and spreading the teachings of Christ, emphasising their role as preachers.

The Dominican Cross symbolises the order's dedication to truth, purity, and their mission of spreading the Christian faith.

Radiating from the central Dominican cross are the four pillars fundamental to the Dominican charism and our College: Prayer, Study, Community, and Service.

**Prayer:** In the top left quadrant, a central circle is surrounded by connected circles representing places of gathering. The Dominican devotion to prayer connects us in several profound ways at Siena. Prayer allows us to communicate with a higher power, fostering a deep spiritual bond. This connection can bring a sense of peace, guidance, and comfort. When people pray together, it creates a sense of community and unity, promoting a collective sense of purpose and support.

**Study:** In the top right quadrant, a pathway meanders from the centre of the cross to the top right corner of the mural. This path features six pairs of feet, symbolising the six-year educational journey students undertake. These feet represent the hard work of studying and the growth that comes with becoming lifelong learners. The pathway, bordered by six arcs of 'Siena blue' dots, symbolises the six years students spend at Siena developing the whole person.

**Community:** In the bottom left quadrant are symbols representing the community at Siena. Two hands reach towards each other in a gesture of outreach, a feature of our College. The hands are surrounded by five circles, representing the House Groups, central to our Siena community. The number five is also significant in the Bible, it is consistently woven into various biblical narratives, symbolising grace, provision, and divine favour.

**Service:** In this quadrant, the pillar of Service is elegantly illustrated by five figures adorned in vibrant House colours. Rather than emphasising individual House attributes, two focal points on the figures feature radiating dots, symbolising our engagement in Service through both the head and heart. The concept of a Songline is depicted by fluid white lines encircling the figures. Songlines, a significant belief system within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia, serve as vital connections between individuals and their ancestral lands, encompassing intricate geographical, mythological, and cultural information. The Songlines in our mural represent the numerous pathways Siena students traverse during their school journey, engaging in Service to our community.

Flying gracefully down to the point of convergence—the Dominican cross—a bold magpie gently holds a gum leaf branch in its beak. The magpie in the mural conveys multiple layers of meaning. Some believe the Australian magpie is a messenger guide, suggesting the presence of a higher power. The magpie also symbolises success;

known for maintaining their territory and upholding their family unit, they are social creatures forming complex familial flocks with sophisticated interactions, which is particularly relevant to our high school environment. Additionally, in our mural, the magpie can be interpreted similarly to the iconic dove, spiritually associated with the story of Noah's Ark. Representing peace and hope, the magpie with its gum tree branch symbolises hope for successful reconciliation in Australia.

In the bottom right and left of the mural composition are a mother and joey kangaroo. In First Nations traditions, the kangaroo holds deep symbolic significance: The kangaroo is revered for its physical strength and resilience, they have a unique ability to thrive in the harsh Australian environment. Also recognised for their adaptability, the kangaroo is known for their unique mode of movement and survival skills the kangaroo is known for their ability to overcome challenges, these are both characteristics that students are encouraged to embrace at Siena Catholic College. The kangaroos featured also symbolise the nurturing qualities that are evident in many relationships at school amongst teachers and students, in our multi-age House Groups and also amongst peers.

The interpretation of art is often subjective, and depends on the viewer's personal experiences, cultural background, and artistic knowledge. Our mural is not just an artwork to be viewed but hopefully a journey to be embarked upon by the viewer, the destination ever-changing. Please enjoy the process of exploring the mural and deepening your understanding of our Charism and rich connections to First Nations culture both past and present.



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