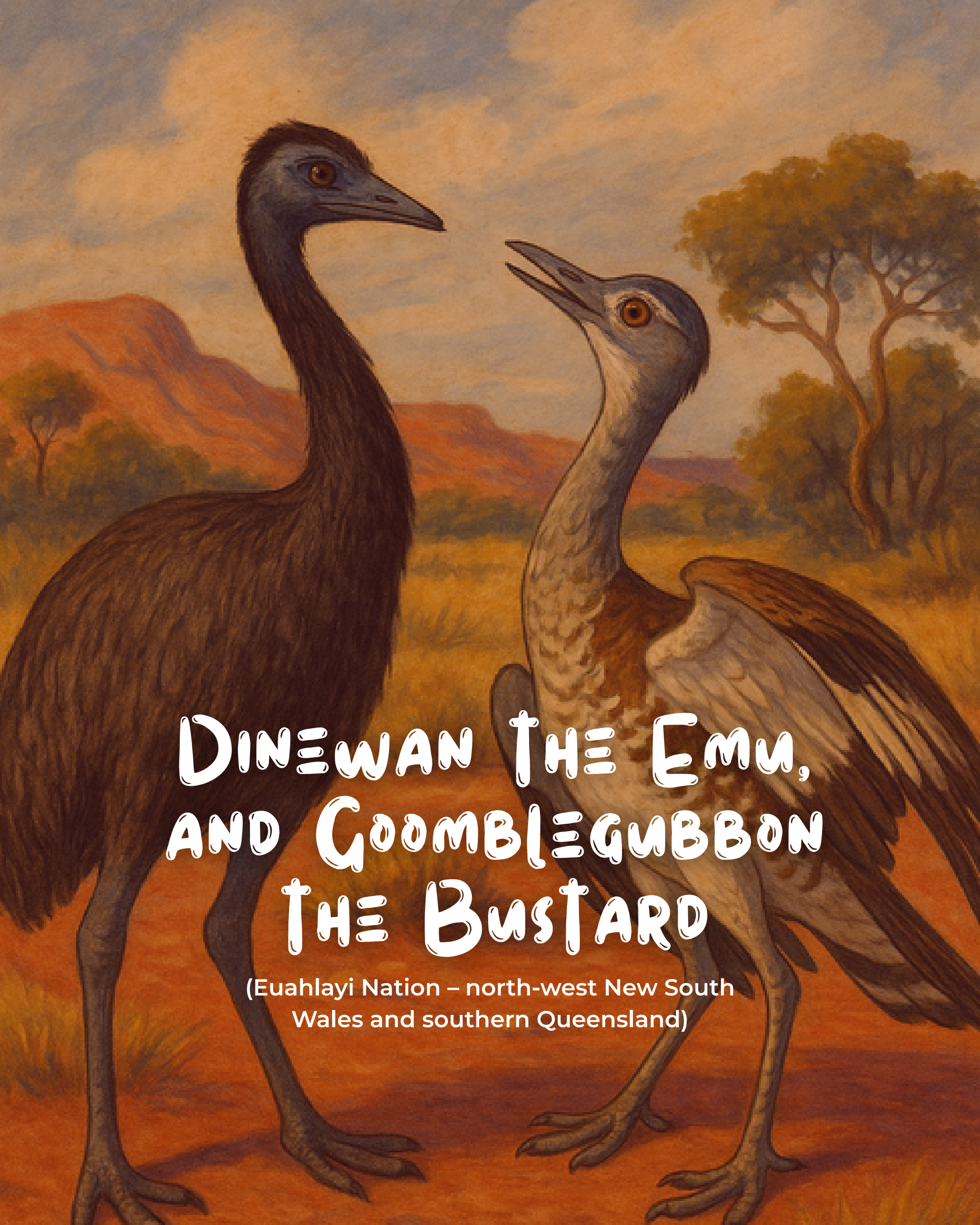

# Dinewan the Emu, and Goomblegubbon the Bustard

(Euahlayi Nation – north-west New South Wales and southern Queensland)

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A long time ago, when the world was still soft and taking shape, the animals were not quite as we see them today. Among them lived two proud birds — Dinewan the Emu and Goomblegubbon the Bustard.

One afternoon, as the sun lowered and turned the sky to gold, Dinewan strutted by the waterhole. He lifted his head high, his long legs stamping proudly.

“Look at me!” Dinewan boomed. “No creature can run as fast as I. I am the strongest and swiftest bird on all the plains.” From the trees, Goomblegubbon tilted his head and chuckled softly. “Speed is not everything, Dinewan. I see what you do not. I find food where others find nothing. Cleverness is greater than running about.”

The emu ruffled his feathers. “Ha! Cleverness will not help you if danger comes. My legs carry me away faster than the wind. That makes me the greater bird.”

Goomblegubbon’s eyes sparkled. “Greater, you say? Then let us test it. We shall race at sunrise. The one who wins will be known as the best among birds.” So it was agreed.



Morning came. The plains were fresh with dew, and animals gathered to watch — kangaroo rats peered from the grass, cockatoos screeched from the trees, and kookaburra sat ready to call the start.

“On your marks!” laughed kookaburra, his voice bubbling with mischief.

Dinewan leaned forward, legs tensed. Goomblegubbon spread his wings wide to catch the morning air.

“Go!” cried kookaburra.

With a thunder of steps, Dinewan shot ahead. Dust billowed behind him as he raced across the open ground. The crowd gasped.

“See!” Dinewan called over his shoulder. “None can catch me!”

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But Goomblegubbon did not hurry. He glided smoothly, wings stretched wide, saving his strength. His eyes watched the ground carefully.
Halfway across the plain, Dinewan slowed. His chest heaved. His long legs, though strong, began to ache. Behind him came a voice. “Careful, friend!” Goomblegubbon called, gliding closer and closer. “The clever do not tire so quickly.”

Dinewan tried to run faster, but his breath came in ragged bursts. Then — thump! — he stumbled over a stone and tumbled headlong into the grass. The watching animals gasped, and kookaburra burst into his famous laugh.

By the time Dinewan scrambled to his feet, Goomblegubbon had swept past, wings shining in the sun. He crossed the line with a graceful bound. The animals cheered, their voices rising over the plains.

Dinewan lowered his head. “I… I have lost,” he murmured. “Perhaps strength alone is not enough.”

Goomblegubbon landed beside him, folding his wings. “And perhaps cleverness alone is not enough either,” he replied gently. “For even as I win today, my wings grow heavier. I will never glide as far again.”

And so it was. From that day forward, Dinewan lost the power of flight — his wings shrank small and useless, though his legs grew even stronger for running. Goomblegubbon could still fly, but only in short bursts, never far or high.

When you see the emu racing across the land, and the bustard lifting carefully into the sky, remember the tale of their race — and the lesson whispered in the Dreaming: that pride fades, but each gift has its place in the world.

