**Transcript**

***Neil Fettling – Relics***

Well, I’m based at the Mildura campus and my PhD is connected to the region here. The title of the project is “The Secular Relic”. Now, I’m very interested in how non-religious relics, that is the objects and detritus of our contemporary consumer society, the objects that are thrown away into informal dumps prior to Council formal recycling processes. How those objects kind of reveal aspects of the society or the people that threw them away. So, a lot of my research is, looks into the kind of the levels and the signed value, the symbolic functions of objects as opposed to their utilitarian function. How those objects tell us about the people who had them. I always use the example that when my mother died in 1997 the pair of slippers that were on the floor next to her bed the morning after she died were different objects than they were the night before. So, those objects are imbued with symbolism and aura based on the people who wore them.

Well, this project is based out at Lake Tyrrell which is 200km south of here and I have been exhuming items of footwear, some three, four hundred objects over 70 or 80 years of that communities around Lake Tyrrell have thrown this items of footwear and they’ve degraded in the saline sediments of the lake. So, I will be re-contextualising those objects into an exhibition and writing a thesis to support that which will tell stories through the archaeology of their exhumation and it will be a historical and sociological insight into how rural communities sustain themself.

I think it will challenge community to look at what are sustainable practices, to look at the phenomena of our small rural communities diminishing in front of our eyes. How, what are the indicators that is required to kind of have a community that is sustainable into the long term, and also I think it will be a challenge to people to think about the objects that they have around them in an everyday sense, and their power, not only as aesthetic and functional objects but symbolic, the symbolic potential of them.