



# **Appendix F Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang**



# Appendix F

## Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang

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# 1. Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang

The Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang contribution was signed off by the Board of Directors of the Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation.



**Figure 1: Mountain Creek**

*Credit: Ngarra Murray*

Nhakai Ngarrinbai Warra-Ngalindha Warrabe  
'Look, Listen and Hear Our Water Speak'

**Dhudhuroa and Waywurru Language (2018)**

## 1.1 Description

### 1.1.1 Our Country

Our waterways and cultural landscapes include pristine peatlands, forest landscape, urban and lifestyle landscapes, alpine and agricultural landscapes that rely on our waterways beginning at the Australian Alps and flowing to the Upper Murray.

### 1.1.2 Our Clans

Our First Nations Clans are classed as Nations and language groups and clans in their own right with Country, language, clans, ancestors and direct descendants, lore and authority, traditions and customs, arts, music, song and ceremony.

### 1.1.3 Corporate Entities (NRM)

- Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation ICN 7181 ABN: 49 376 014 401
- Yaitmathang Indigenous Lands Incorporated ABN: 40774510028

## 1.2 Current or pending agreements

The Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang peoples are working towards their Native Title matter which may include progressing to a Settlement Agreement under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic).

The Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang peoples do not currently have RAP status, however they are working towards their application to be recognised as a RAP for their Country.

## 1.3 Memberships

- MLDRIN
  - Yaitmathang
  - Waywurru
  - Dhudhuroa
- Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group

## 1.4 Partnerships and Projects

North East Catchment Management Authority

- Working together with Complementary Measure project
- Scoping a Dhudhuroa Steering Committee

North East Water

- Working together with Integrated Water Management project

Goulburn-Murray Water

- Working together with Dartmouth Dam project

DELWP

- Working together with Integrated Water Management project
- Biodiversity projects

Parks Victoria

- Working together with Peatlands Project

## 1.5 Preferred means of engagement

- Water Policy Officer
  - Reporting to CEO
  - Reporting to Board of Directors
- Email and phone
- One month's notice
- All First Nation participants engaged in meetings/workshops should be valued for their input and remunerated accordingly on a fee for service basis.

## 1.6 *Dhudhuroa, Waywurru, Yaitmathang First Nations Clans: Water Resource Plan*

### 1.6.1 Introduction

This Water Resource Plan (WRP) is to provide the State and Commonwealth Governments an opportunity to support the *Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang Nations* and the relevant agencies that include Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria (PV), North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA) and provide ongoing funding and resources to assist the implementation of the land and water managers key plans and aspirations of our Nations.

It is in our view that there are funding and resourcing opportunities to establish a permanent water unit and steering committee. A multifunction water and cultural facility is being scoped by the First Nations.

This WRP also provides the State and Commonwealth Governments an opportunity to make a priority to build on our existing community and Government partnerships that improves the physical, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual, economic and ecological wellbeing of both the individual and Nations level.

A water resource plan is the opportunity for our Nations to map out our spiritual and cultural connections to our waterways and cultural landscapes. These waterways and cultural landscapes include pristine peatlands, forest landscape, urban and lifestyle landscapes, alpine and agricultural landscapes that rely on our waterways.

This WRP is about bringing youth and Elders together with GPS, video cameras, high tech drones, and trail cameras assessing and recording the health, monitoring and mapping of culturally significant waterways, medicinal plants, food and fibre plant sources, cultural heritage sites and places that significantly link our Nations to our cultural responsibilities and obligations to environment, community and culture.

It has been identified that while our Nations carry out these assessments, implementing key land and water catchment management plans and providing cultural knowledge we are reconnecting to our cultural and spiritual landscapes from both a cultural and scientific perspective.

Our Nations have the aspiration to ensure that all our waterways are healthy, by working with the relevant agencies under a strategic alliance driven by a fully funded and resourced steering committee that brings both science and culture together that assist the implementation of land and water managers key plans and aspirations of our Nations.

The steering committee must be made up of professional expertise that identify, create and exploit economic development and employment opportunities for all people. First Nations Clans Ownership and management of water is the basis for exerting our priori rights to water and to ensuring a high quality of life for our People.

With an appropriately funded and resourced strategic steering committee in place our Nations can then begin to identify where and when the right water in the right place at the right time will meet the needs of the environment, aspirations and vision of our Nations, land and water managers and the broader community.

The purpose of this WRP is that our Nations have a recognised and legitimate role in water ownership and governance, with genuine consultation and substantive negotiations in policy development and a part in decision-making about our waterways and surrounding flora and fauna.

Under this WRP our Nations must be securing by ownership and management adequate and equitable water rights that meet our social, cultural, spiritual, economic and environmental needs.

Our Nations have expressed their need and responsibility to share our sacred creation stories to teach all Peoples of our cultural, spiritual and economic connection to water in the landscape and how we are all connected to water both physically and spiritually.

We need to build our capacity to be major contributors and beneficiaries into water use in North East Victoria and the Alps. This will include the New South Wales areas connected to our Country.

Our Nations have come together to form a strategic alliance to be a clearly identified group of Nations and Clans with well-defined strategic visions, goals and objectives, authority and leadership structures. A group of Nations that have a strong, well-governed corporation that effectively represents the interest of each Nation. This may also include having each Nations established as legal entities in the own right.

Also have an active and engaged community that participates in all aspects of society. Our Nations have the aspiration to grow our asset base and use it wisely and sustainably to generate socio-economic benefits for our Nations, attract and secure the professional expertise required to create and exploit economic development and employment opportunities.

## **1.6.2 Values and uses**

### ***Cultural Values***

Having access to our natural and cultural resources is a fundamental human right. Our story to water is a cultural place and belonging. Our water is our culture, it is our life, it preserves our ancient stories that continues to give our culture life. Our people have a physical, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological connection both individually and collectively as a Nation. Our culture in this modern world and society is determined by the ways our water is managed and maintained. As a people of this community we also enjoy the recreational activities that bring us together. We need our waterways to be culturally and environmentally safe that integrate the positive perspectives of our cultural knowledge, customs and beliefs.

Our story to water continues to be ignored by others from different parts of our region and communities. Our understanding of our waterways and landscapes need to be respected and resourced in a way that meets our aspirations and cultural obligations that protect our cultural waterways and landscapes while educating others of our culture and history.

We have to be strict in respect to cultural values along the waterways as this is a cultural connection the wider public don't really understand. The communities within a clan or traditional

owner group need to have a say in the local Shire or City Council to set up Cultural Committees for the cultural awareness of that region. We need sustainability through involvement from our people having the cultural integrity and knowledge respected and maintained as long as the rivers flow; we are keepers of the stories and belong as custodial caretakers for the past 60,000 plus years of occupancy.

### ***First Nations Alpine Water and Climate Change Interpretive Centre***

Our Nations have the aspiration under this strategic steering committee alliance with interested State Government agencies to work toward building a unique alpine architectural designed water interpretative centre. This major development will reflect the commitment between key land and water managers and our Nations. The centre can also sustain businesses in industries such as aquaculture and horticulture, as well as ecotourism and cultural tourism.

We need to ensure the healthy flow of water, that it does not become stagnant or poisoned. Water is a rejuvenation for us all. There are 8 to 10 alpine seasons we understand to our water the wider community does not understand, such as when the fish are spawning, when to carry out cool burns and how to manage animals around waterways. There is history whereby the mail could not be delivered unless they had a traditional Aboriginal person to get the mail across the rivers. This cultural knowledge was relied upon by non-Aboriginal society.

We are concerned about the current disconnection to our waterways and not having control over our waterways. It is our dispossession of our land and water that creates a subculture of poverty. The cycle of water and our life is broken and there is a need for us to turn this around through working with DELWP and forming other partnerships so that we all work towards a common goal.

We need cultural spaces for our cultural practices, so we can conduct cultural activities in safe cultural environments. We would like to manage the parks and the water that comes into those areas that will also be ours to manage. It is important we have our own rangers, fisheries officers and game authority officers, forest fire management officers and wildlife protection officers.

### ***Past, Present and Future***

- Our cultural and environmental values are dependent on our people being more involved in protecting our environment.
- We need capacity building toward taking on the roles as environment protection officers, game authority officers, forest fire officers and rangers.
- Our people need to be able to respond to emergency environmental disasters and contribute to community safety and objectives.
- Our Ancestors in the old days-built dams, and parks and reserves that stored and captured water, fish and game for wild harvest.
- We have not been provided with opportunities to work with authorities and Government to identify these places where we can capture our own water, fish and game that we need to survive our culture.
- We should be able to store water, in our own storage facilities or wetlands where environmental flows are captured and used for other Nations.
- We have a right to have our own healthy waterways and develop further opportunities around water and learning from other first Nations around the world.
- We have the right to be funded and resourced to establish a steering committee set up educational centres around sharing our cultural knowledge of the environment and our cultural landscapes.
- We have all of these opportunities now to work together and build all of our capacities to work together strategically for the betterment of all people throughout our communities and Nations.

- We have the capacity now to collaborate with agencies to better manage and control the numbers and impacts of feral deer and horses throughout our cultural landscapes and waterways.
- We need to create strategic partnerships to protect the living cultural environment and waterways.
- We need to be managing our waterways by bringing both science and culture together as our Ancestors did in the old ways and prospering in the wealth of culture and enriching our health and well-being.
- The non-Aboriginal Australians are widely benefiting from the ways in which our waterways are managed and controlled.
- Our people are not benefiting economically, culturally and productively as our Ancestors did in the past.
- Our people need to be part of the shaping and making of new innovative policies and management plans that allow our people to regain more control over the management and commercial benefits of our waterways.
- Currently we do not have control of our waterways and this directly impacts on our people and depletes the health and wellbeing of our people and communities.
- These current management policies and legislations control the destiny of our people and the future of our culture.
- We should be bought into the economic opportunities and helping to create more healthier and more accessible cultural living environments throughout our landscapes, suburbs and communities for our people's needs.
- Our people need to be helping design new and innovative cultural living environments that will enable us to all benefit commercially, culturally, socially and physically and take more control of our destiny and enjoy accessing our waterways while contributing to the local economy.

### 1.6.3 Cultural flows

The purpose of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) is to provide a tool for our Nations to consistently measure and prioritise peatlands, rivers and wetland health so that we are better placed to negotiate for our water needs.

The AWA tool is intended to capture information about the cultural values, uses and health of peatlands, waterways and wetlands to assist our people to be more meaningfully involved in water planning processes. The survey tool used to conduct our Aboriginal Waterway Assessments is based on the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment developed collaboratively by the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA).

Following a trial of the original AWA tool, the Nations can modify the tool to better reflect our Nations interests and the management and implementation of our water resource plan.

*Objectives and outcomes*

**Basin Plan  
s10.52(1)**

**Table 1.6.1: Objectives and outcomes**

Strategic objectives	Outcomes
<p><b>Setup strategic water planning steering committee</b></p>	<p>Establishment of a natural resource management steering committee that ensures a whole of land and water approach is taken on Country.</p> <p>Ensure our rivers, waterways and cultural landscapes are culturally safe and healthy, with the right water, in the right place, at the right time to meet the needs of our cultural environment, our Nations and the broader community</p> <p>Have a recognised and legitimate role in water governance, with genuine consultation in policy development and a part in decision-making about our waterways in a culturally safe process and environment</p> <p>Secure the right and means to effectively protect and manage our waterways, cultural landscapes and cultural heritage sites</p> <p>Ensures that our full range of rights and interests are legally recognised and reflected in their policies of Government</p> <p>Sharing our stories to the key land and water managers of how water works throughout our waterways and cultural landscapes with appropriate funding and resources</p> <p>Continue building our water officer capacity, identifying further opportunities to be fully funded and resourced appropriately</p> <p>Promotes reconciliation and community engagement</p> <p>Integration of cultural knowledge and science</p> <p>Strategic planning and workshoping between our Nations and the key land and water managers</p> <p>Strategic management plans to eradicate, control and manage pest plants and animals that combine cultural knowledge and science</p> <p>Capacity building in governance and natural resource management</p> <p>Access to all waterways in North-East Victoria</p> <p>Strengthening existing partnerships with key land and water managers</p> <p>Accessible diversified training and employment opportunities</p> <p>Opportunity to develop a climate change management plan</p> <p>Working together strategically for the betterment of all people throughout our communities and Nations</p> <p>Collaborating with key land and water managers to better manage and control the numbers and impacts of feral deer and horses throughout out waterways and cultural landscapes</p> <p>Creating strategic partnerships to protect the living cultural environment and waterways</p> <p>More of our people working on Country and in stable employment</p>



Environmental Objectives	Outcomes
<b>Renaming rivers and wetlands</b>	<p>Promotes reconciliation and community engagement</p> <p>Reclaim, revive and rejuvenate our language throughout our waterways</p> <p>Increases wider-community awareness of language and culture</p> <p>Promotes our strong connection to Country</p>
<b>Protecting the plants and animals that are important to us</b>	<p>Promotes the right species in the right places in a sustainable way</p>
<b>Understand what plants and animals now exist throughout our waterways and understand what condition they are in, so we can better define appropriate ways to manage and maintain</b>	<p>Increase our understanding of waterways and cultural landscape</p> <p>Better defined measures and more effective management plans that are culturally appropriate</p>
Economic Objectives	Outcomes
<b>Develop funding opportunities for commercial businesses</b>	<p>Employment and economic opportunities</p> <p><i>Develop and sustain businesses in industries such as aquaculture and horticulture, as well as ecotourism and cultural tourism.</i></p> <p>Improve health and well-being of our Nations</p> <p>Rebuilding capacity for our Nations people to care for Country</p> <p>Promotes self-determination</p> <p>Self-governance and management</p>
<b>Create a Water Trust owned and controlled by our Nations.</b>	<p>Employment, training and economic opportunities</p> <p>Secures adequate and equitable water rights that meet our social, cultural, spiritual, economic and environmental needs in a culturally safe way</p>
Cultural Objectives	Outcomes
<b>Providing cultural awareness training to key land and water managers</b>	<p>Advances reconciliation with the broader community by sharing our stories, values and customs</p> <p>Provides economic opportunities and contribution</p> <p>Strengthens existing partnerships</p>

<p><b>Actively practice our ceremonies on and around our waterways</b></p>	<p>Passing on of our cultural knowledge by teaching our people the principles and values of the old ways</p> <p>Consolidating and protecting our traditional knowledge and using it to guide cultural practices and the way our waterways and cultural landscape is managed</p> <p>Advance reconciliation with the broader community by sharing our stories, values and customs</p> <p>Sustaining our culture and environment in a culturally safe and effective way</p>
<p><b>Climate Change Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p>
<p><b>Build a First Nations alpine water and climate change interpretive centre</b></p>	<p>Creating public space, redeveloped and integrated into cultural, economic, educational, social and environmental learning spaces.</p> <p>Diversified training and employment opportunities</p> <p>Promote environmental and economic values</p> <p>Opportunity to develop a climate change management plan</p> <p>Showcase our links to a strong Biami story</p> <p>Sharing cultural knowledge and science together</p> <p>Mending the cycle of water and life – spiritual revival through education</p> <p>Promote the benefits of allowing rivers to flow naturally</p> <p>Celebration of songs and dances to the public, schools and tourists</p> <p>Cultural education on the importance of rivers and having more native wildlife along the waterways</p> <p>Promoting healthy water from the source to the Murray</p> <p>Promote introduced animals off all waterways</p> <p>Promote improved health and well-being of community</p> <p>Provide greater understanding of cultural seasons and water</p> <p>Promote and showcase healthy peatlands</p> <p>Develop community plans with broader community and projects for river changes</p> <p>Environmental and economic water storage in dams and wetlands</p>

## 1.7 Case Study – Aboriginal Waterway Assessment (AWA)

Aboriginal Waterway Assessments have been an important tool for the Alps and Rivers Nations to engage on Country and reconnect to family, clans and the waterways. The Nations strive to have an inclusive and transparent process that is representative of as many interested parties as possible. "The inclusion of representatives from each of the Nations is crucial to the "mental well-being" of all descendants. We need to work together to ensure our waterways are healthy and care and respect each other's Nations."

In 2015 Dhudhuroa and Waywuru representatives were involved in a pilot Aboriginal Waterways Assessment study to assess the AWA process. According to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, "the research from the pilot program found that the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment tool and process is a culturally appropriate, safe and strengthening way to assess the health of river and wetland places.

Additionally, the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment was found to:

- produce accurate, accessible and useful information
- be good for people's health and wellbeing
- increase Aboriginal peoples' confidence in using their knowledge in water planning and management environments
- enable members of Nations with limited knowledge of Country to contribute to river and wetland health assessment
- provide local knowledge of:
  - biodiversity and flow conditions
  - extended time-frames of flow characteristics
  - current observations of the local impacts of water policy and regulation on Nations
- help prevent further loss of Traditional Owners' knowledge of Country by:
  - providing an analysis of river and wetland health relative to cultural uses
  - recording the current state of cultural values and uses of Country
  - contributing to cultural transmission including historical stories
  - providing valid and locally-owned information for caring for Country."

In particular, the 2015 AWA established that the Dhudhuroa and Waywuru people wanted to spend more time on Country to learn more about it. "Before we fill out surveys and that, reconnect to Country!"

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority report noted that most of the Dhudhuroa and Waywuru Nations of the Alps are city residents who had not spent much time in their Country. The Aboriginal Waterways Assessment Program report mentioned that two members of the team who knew the Country well were able to share their knowledge. "As the team travelled up and down the Ovens and Kiewa valleys, they gathered knowledge from the research team of how the valleys had been used since occupation. This helped them understand the condition of the rivers, and they could then imagine how the places might have been used traditionally: 'I really enjoyed it today. I got a better understanding of how events like the dredging have affected the river. And I can visualise how the last place wouldn't have been a camping site, because the water wasn't flowing fast enough.'"

According to the report when asked what they had got out of the week, every member of this assessment team said: 'I've got more connected to my Country.'

This theme was also reflected in the results of a second AWA process carried out in February 2019 by representatives from the Waywurru, Dhudhuroa and Ngurai Illum. Yaitmathang were also invited however were unable to send a representative at this time.

Through funding secured from MLDRIN, the AWA team enjoyed being able to reconnect to Country and engage with the natural resource managers from the region. The sheer expanse of the region and access to all the numerous waterways made an audit of the whole Country a difficult prospect and participants decided that more time is needed just to "sit on the land to feel the country, language and culture."

The group also recognised that as peoples removed from their land so early in Victoria's history, a lot more historical research is required to reconnect people back to Country.

"We want more information about what our families and People would have been doing in those actual areas – more research into what was done at each area."

The group acknowledged that there was no reference at all to Traditional Owners throughout the area and a significant research and signage project needs to take place.

The February AWA team visited 10 very diverse sites in an effort to understand many components of the waterways system in the Victoria's north and north east. In general, the team found most of the sites to have average waterway health with higher results associated with cultural values and uses. It was apparent, however, that river health and cultural values and uses have a direct relationship.

None of the sites were considered to be in very poor condition however the group believed that more time was needed to investigate each site properly, especially in terms of assessing the cultural health of the waterways.

The team also noted that assessment should be carried out in the different seasons to get a better picture of the overall health of the waterways. Some of the sites were compared with the 2015 AWA results and the seasonal variation was believed to have had an impact on the results.

The following table shows the assessment data for each site:

Site Name	Place Identifier	Part 1: Waterway Health (%)	Part 2: Cultural values and uses (%)	Values and uses supported?
Mitta Mitta	D1S1	67.53%	76.56%	Yes: 61.5% No: 30.8%
Kiewa River, West Branch	D2S1	47.4%	62.2%	Yes: 26.7% No: 60%
Kiewa River, Mongan's Bridge	D2S2	48.65%	58.49%	Yes: 15.4% No: 69.3%
Kiewa River, Killara	D2S3	51.52%	61%	Yes: 8.3% No: 83.3%
Stony Creek	D3S1	77.2%	65.33	Yes: 93.3% No: 6.7%
Snowy Creek	D3S2	58.7%	62.2%	Yes: 23% No: 76.9%
Washbed Creek	D4S1	74%	67%	Yes: 84.6% No: 2%
Pretty Valley	D4S2	57%	68%	Yes: 46.7% No: 46.7%
Reedy Creek	D5S1	52%	70%	Yes: 21.4% No: 78.6%
Reedy Creek 2	D5S2	47%	68%	Yes: 8.33% No: 91.7%

The values, threats and objectives were considered for each site and themes of removal of pest species, Traditional Owner signage and Traditional Owner involvement were prevalent across the sites.

Participants expressed a strong interest in conducting the assessments more regularly and engaging with DELWP, CMAs and MLDRIN to progress actions and project ideas.

The outcomes of Alps and Rivers Nations February 2019 Aboriginal Waterway Assessment are as follow:

- more involvement in management of waterways
- cultural and educational centre and spaces
- signage
- protection of heritage sites
- weed and pest control
- native revegetation programs
- more people on Country
- historical research and connection.





