

Traditional Owner objectives and outcomes:

Compilation of contributions to
Victoria's water resource plans



Photos

Cover: *Mirring* – Country, DELWPs Aboriginal Cultural Identity

Artwork credit: Tom Day of the Gunditjmara, Yorta Yorta and Wemba Wemba tribes.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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ISBN 978-1-76077-649-7 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76077-650-3 (pdf/online/MS word)

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au, or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.delwp.vic.gov.au.



Purpose of document

This document collates information from the Traditional Owner contributions to Victoria's two water resource plans to provide a resource tool for water resource managers and policy officers. This tool will support the continued engagement of Traditional Owners in Victorian water resource management.

Water resource plans are documents developed in accordance with Chapter 10 of Basin Plan 2012. A component of Victoria's water resource plans was to undertake engagement with relevant Traditional Owners to determine desired outcomes and objectives for water resource management under those plans and also identify opportunities for strengthening engagement with Traditional Owners. This information has been included in the plans in the form of contributions for each Traditional Owner group.

Please note for the purposes of engagement Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan was referred to as the "Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan" and for this reason the contributions from Traditional Owner groups reference the plan in that way.

This document should be considered within the context of the water resource plan comprehensive report documents which can be found here:

<https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/mdbp/water-resource-plans>

Structure of document

Section 1 provides context for engagement with Traditional Owner groups in Victoria's water resource plan areas, providing an outline of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan requirements for consideration of Aboriginal values and uses of water.

Section 2 provides the contributions from Traditional Owner groups in Victoria's water resource plan areas as included in Victoria's water resource plans. This is a modified version of Part 11 of the Wimmera-Mallee Comprehensive Report and Chapter 8 and Appendix F of Victoria's North and Murray Comprehensive Report.

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1. Introduction

This document has been prepared to support continued engagement with Traditional Owners in Victorian water resource management. It summarises the views of Traditional Owners shared through the water resource plan development process.

Engagement with Traditional Owners is guided by Victoria's Aboriginal Water Policy and the content of Victoria's water resource plans outlined in this document.

1.1 Victoria's Aboriginal Water Policy

Throughout 2015 and 2016, the Victorian Government worked with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to develop a new Aboriginal Water Policy which became a cornerstone of the Water for Victoria policy paper released in October 2016. The policy was developed in partnership with Traditional Owners through a specially-formed Aboriginal Reference Group, and supplementary commentary from community sessions and submissions over an 18-month period. The aims were to ensure greater Aboriginal inclusion in decision-making and to incorporate Aboriginal values and uses of water into the State's water management and planning framework.

The Aboriginal Water Policy aims to redress the very limited opportunity Traditional Owners previously had to be involved in water planning and management decision-making. The policy included a \$4.7 million investment to identify Aboriginal water objectives, and a further \$5 million to work in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to develop a roadmap for water access for economic development. The Victorian Government committed to identify seed funding and business finance opportunities to support Aboriginal enterprises investing in water.

The Victorian Aboriginal Water Policy provides a framework to support the preparation and implementation of water resource plans that meet the requirements of the Basin Plan (Chapter 10, Part 14). It provides three broad strategies for addressing risks as identified in the Risk Assessment (Appendix B to Victoria's North and Murray and the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plans Comprehensive Reports).

These strategies are for the Victorian Government to:

- recognise Aboriginal values and objectives
- incorporate Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in Victorian water management and planning
- work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to build capacity to increase Aboriginal participation in water management.



Water for Victoria directs an ongoing partnership approach between Traditional Owners and Victorian Government water managers to:

- support Aboriginal participation in Victorian water planning and management frameworks through collaborative structures that address the rights and interests of Victoria's Traditional Owners
- increase capacity for shared benefits to realise Aboriginal water outcomes through working with water corporations, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder
- build capacity to increase Aboriginal participation in water management.

The above objectives and outcomes reflect the actions identified in Chapter 6 of *Water for Victoria*. Objectives and outcomes identified by each Traditional Owner group are included in the contributions to the plans (Chapter 8 and Appendix F in Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report, Part 11 in the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report, and Section 2 in this document).

For more information on the Aboriginal Water Program visit DELWP's website at <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-values/the-aboriginal-water-program>.

1.2 Development of Victoria's Water Resource Plans

1.2.1 What is a water resource plan

Water resource plans are a key tool for implementing the Basin Plan, which aims to achieve healthy, working rivers that support productive and resilient water-dependent industries, healthy and resilient ecosystems and communities with access to sufficient and reliable water supplies. A water resource plan is required for each water resource plan area in the Basin to improve consistency and transparency in water resource management across all Basin States. The Basin Plan requires all Murray-Darling Basin States, including Victoria, to prepare water resource plans by June 2019.

The Murray-Darling Basin contains 20 surface water and 22 groundwater water resource plan areas, as well as six combined surface water and groundwater water resource plan areas. Victoria has five water resource plan areas—three surface water and two groundwater, and is working on two plans across its five water resource plan areas (see Figure 1).

The Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan includes the Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) water resource plan area and the Wimmera-Mallee (groundwater) water resource plan area which include:

- the Wimmera-Avon, Avoca and Mallee surface water basins
- the Wimmera-Mallee and Avoca groundwater catchments

Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan area includes the Victorian Murray water resource plan area (surface water), the Northern Victoria water resource plan area (surface water) and the Goulburn-Murray water resource plan area (groundwater). These three water resource plan areas include:

- the Mitta Mitta, Kiewa, Ovens, Broken, Goulburn, Campaspe and Loddon rivers connected to the Murray
- floodplain wetlands of the Murray River, such as Hattah Lakes, Lindsay Island and Barmah National Park, and the connected wetlands in the Loddon, Goulburn and Ovens catchments
- all groundwater in the northern Victoria area
- the Sunraysia and Goulburn-Murray irrigation districts

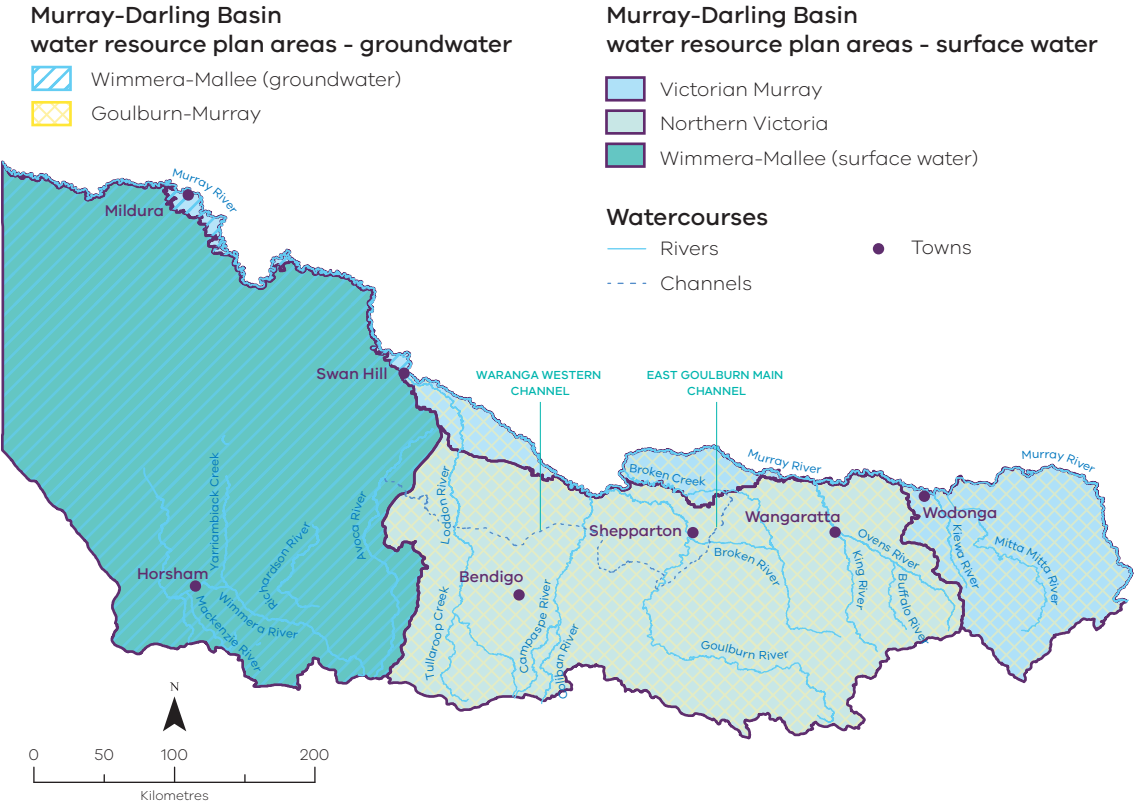


Figure 1: Victoria's water resource plan areas for groundwater and surface water

Victoria submitted the proposed Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) on 22 February 2019, and the proposed Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan to the MDBA on 30 April 2019.

The Wimmera-Mallee and Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Reports are the key documents that provide the supporting information for the Index Table, which is the document that details specific responses to each Basin Plan requirement and specifies the proposed text for accreditation by the Commonwealth Minister. The comprehensive reports also explain how water resources are managed in Victoria. The landscape, people and economy, and key water resources and features of the areas covered by Victoria's water resource plans are described in the comprehensive reports. Refer to Parts 2, 3 and 4 of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report, and Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of Victoria's North and Murray Comprehensive Report.

A digital copy of the full comprehensive reports can be found at: <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/mdbp/water-resource-plans>



1.2.2 Murray-Darling Basin Plan requirements for Aboriginal values and uses of water

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan requires Basin States to identify objectives and outcomes of water based on Aboriginal values and uses of water, and have regard to the views of Traditional Owners on matters identified by the Basin Plan.

Victoria engaged with Traditional Owner groups in the northern Victoria and Wimmera-Mallee water resource plan areas to:

- outline the purpose, scope and opportunities for providing water to meet Traditional Owner water objectives and outcomes through the Murray-Darling Basin Plan
- define the role of the water resource plans in the Basin, including but not limited to the requirements of the Basin Plan (Chapter 10, Part 14)
- identify Aboriginal water objectives and outcomes for each Traditional Owner group
- determine the preferred means of engagement and involvement in the development of the water resource plans for each Traditional Owner group
- provide the timeline for the development and accreditation of the water resource plans
- continue to liaise and collaborate with Traditional Owner groups to integrate specific concerns and opportunities regarding the water planning and management framework beyond the submission of the water resource plans.

1.2.2.1 What engagement was undertaken

Engagement with Traditional Owners has been framed by the Aboriginal Water Policy announced in *Water for Victoria*. The policy is the foundation of Victoria's response to what Traditional Owners have said they want for water on Country in the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan (see [Section 1.1](#)). Engagement with Traditional Owners was a major focus during the development of Victoria's water resource plans. The engagement approach adopted responds to the needs, capacity and interests of each Traditional Owner group, while seeking to remain consistent with the principles and guidelines adopted by Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) for the Basin Plan.

Victoria's water resource plans recognised that identification of Aboriginal water objectives and desired outcomes required a collaborative approach between DELWP and Traditional Owner groups, tailored to meet the needs of individual Traditional Owner groups.

Engagement was mostly through meetings on Country with the provision of support to Traditional Owner groups where requested to support contributions to the water resource plans by Traditional Owner groups. The purpose of engagement was to:

- identify Traditional Owner objectives and desired outcomes for water
- build relationships with Traditional Owner organisations
- discuss opportunities to build community capacity
- discuss economic development opportunities
- support the celebration and sharing of culture and traditional practices with Traditional Owner groups.

The contributions made by Traditional Owner groups are included in Part 11 and Chapter 8 of the Wimmera-Mallee and Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan comprehensive reports respectively, and Section 2 of this document. For more information on consultation with Traditional Owners see Appendix D of both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Reports.

1.2.2.2 Building Capacity and understanding of values and uses

DELWP has responded to the request of Traditional Owner groups to expand their capacity to contribute to Victoria's water management and planning framework by funding and supporting a number of projects and positions to help build understanding of Aboriginal water needs in Victoria's water resource plan areas.

Initial funding for engagement activities with and for Traditional Owner groups was available through to 2019 for development of the Victoria's water resource plans. The availability of funding over a relatively long period maximised the opportunity for Traditional Owner groups to determine their objectives and outcomes for water and their preferred means of engagement with Government. This information was valuable to help Government determine how to best respond to the requirements of each group. This approach recognises that water resource planning and Traditional Owner timelines do not always align. Following the expenditure of the initial funding, DELWP will evaluate the success of the projects and consider the best opportunities to continue to help build capacity of each Traditional Owner group.

In the implementation phase of Victoria's water resource plans, capacity-building of Traditional Owner groups will continue. The ability of Traditional Owner groups to have their say and engage in decision-making regarding water management in Victoria will be improved and the objectives and outcomes they have identified in their contributions to the water resource plans may be met. Water for Victoria and Victoria's water resource plans have improved Government's understanding of Aboriginal values and uses of water, and desired objectives and outcomes for water. This knowledge, including that of the preferred means of engagement of the Traditional Owner groups, will allow Government to support Traditional Owner involvement in water resource management.

1.2.2.3 Aboriginal Waterway Assessments

At the outset of the water resource plan process, Victoria committed to fund six Aboriginal Waterway Assessments (AWAs) in Victoria's share of the Basin. The AWAs were undertaken by MLDRIN in partnership with Traditional Owners, CMAs and other agencies, according to the requirements of each individual Traditional Owner group.

The AWA program was established to provide a consistent method to measure and prioritise river and wetland health through a cultural lens, so that Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Victorians can more effectively participate in water planning and management in the Basin. MLDRIN and Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) authorised the design and implementation of the AWA project. The MDBA's report on an AWA pilot program in 2015 identified the following three key components of the AWA:

- place status – a statement of whether or not the place is an area of cultural significance and whether local Traditional Owners would return to the place in the future
- current use of the place – a measure of the value of a river or wetland to Aboriginal people based on whether food and other resources are available and suitable for cultural use
- cultural stream health – a measure made up of eight stream health indicators such as vegetation, riverbed condition and water quality.

The AWAs are the property of Traditional Owner groups. Traditional Owner groups chose how they use the AWA reports compiled by MLDRIN and how, when or if they wish to share information.



Six AWAs were funded in 2016 by DELWP and co-ordinated by MLDRIN in the Victorian section of the Murray Darling Basin over an 18-month period. Five of the six AWAs that were completed were undertaken within the area for the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan for the following groups:

- Barapa Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners
- Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee.

The Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation received separate funding to undertake an AWA most recently in February 2019. One application was received from a Traditional Owner group and undertaken on surface water within the Wimmera-Mallee water resource plan area. Please refer to the “River Yarns” case study presented in the Wotjobaluk contribution in Section 2.

1.2.3 Who was engaged with

Traditional Owner groups in Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area include:

- Bangerang
- Barapa Barapa
- Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang represented through Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation
- Dja Dja Wurrung represented through Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.
- The Ngintait, Nyeri, Nyeri and Latji Latji Nations represented by the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation.
- Tati Tati
- Taungurung represented through the Taungurung Land and Waters (Aboriginal Corporation)
- Wadi Wadi
- Wamba Wemba
- Weki Weki
- Yorta Yorta represented through the Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation.

Bangerang have identified an interest in engaging in the water resource plan development process. DELWP began engaging with Bangerang representatives to further understand their views on water and water resource management in Victoria during the plan development process. At this stage, there is no formal contribution from the Bangerang Traditional Owner group in the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan. Details regarding consultation taken place to-date are included in Appendix D of the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report. DELWP is committed to continue to engage with Bangerang regarding their objectives and aspirations for water and water management in the water resource plan areas.

Some Traditional Owner groups identified within the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan have Country or areas of significant cultural interest within both the Northern Victoria and Wimmera-Mallee water resource plan areas. These groups include:

- The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee: the Registered Aboriginal Party boundary of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee covers areas of both Victoria’s water resource plans
- Dja Dja Wurrung: the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner Settlement Agreement recognises that Dja Dja Wurrung Country straddles both Victoria’s water resource plan areas

- Wamba Wemba, Barapa Barapa, Tati Tati, Weki Weki and Wadi Wadi Nations have identified objectives and outcomes and expressed interest in water on Country in the water resource plan areas of both plans

Traditional Owner groups engaged only through the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan include the Wotjobaluk peoples (represented by Barengi Gadjin Land Council). Djab Wurrung peoples represented by Martang Pty Ltd were also recognised in the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan, however did not submit a contribution due to other priorities. A summary of the water interests of Martang Pty Ltd are included in Appendix D of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report.

1.2.3.1 Traditional Owner group contact list (current at June 2019)

The contact details of representatives from the Traditional Owner groups engaged with as part of the development of Victoria's water resource plans are detailed in [Table 1-1](#).

Table 1-1: Traditional Owner contact details

Traditional Owner group	How to contact each group initially	Contact Details
Barapa Barapa	<p>Contact North Central CMA and request to speak with the Aboriginal Water Officer who co-ordinates the Wamba Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee</p> <p>Alternatively, contact Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) to request the contact details of delegates</p>	<p>North Central CMA Ph: 03 5448 7124</p> <p>MLDRIN Ph: 0404 163 700 Email: executiveofficer.mldr@gmail.com</p>
Bangerang	Contact the Bangerang Cultural Centre	<p>Bangerang Cultural Centre Ph: 03 5831 1020 Email: info@bangerang.org.au</p>
Dhudhuroa, Waywurru, Yaitmathang	Contact MLDRIN to request the contact details of the relevant Aboriginal Water Policy Officer	<p>MLDRIN Ph: 0404 163 700 Email: executiveofficer.mldr@gmail.com</p>
Dja Dja Wurrung	Contact the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and request to speak with the Aboriginal Water Policy Officer	<p>Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation Ph: 03 5444 2888</p>
First Peoples of the Millewa Mallee (Nyeri Nyeri, Ngintait and Latji Latji)	Contact lawyer at First Nations Research and Legal Services who may be able to distribute information to the First Peoples of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation Board	<p>First Nations Research and Legal Services Ph: 03 9321 5300</p>
Tati Tati Wadi Wadi	Contact MLDRIN for contact details of delegate	<p>MLDRIN Ph: 0404 163 700 Email: executiveofficer.mldr@gmail.com</p>



Traditional Owner group	How to contact each group initially	Contact Details
Taungurung	Contact Taungurung Land and Waters Council and request to speak with the Aboriginal Water Policy Officer	Taungurung Land and Waters Council Ph: 03 5784 1433
Wadi Wadi	Contact MLDRIN for contact details of the delegate who can provide details of a representative of the Wadi Wadi Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation	MLDRIN Ph: 0404 163 700 Email: executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com
Wamba Wemba	Contact North Central CMA and request to speak with Aboriginal Water Officer who co-ordinates the Wamba Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee	North Central CMA Ph: 03 5448 7124
Weki Weki	Contact MLDRIN for details of delegates who can provide details of a representative of the Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation	MLDRIN Ph: 0404 163 700 Email: executiveofficer.mldrin@gmail.com
Wotjobaluk	Contact Barengi Gadgin Land Council and request to speak with the CEO	Barengi Gadgin Land Council Ph: 03 5381 0977
Yorta Yorta	Contact Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and request to speak with the CEO	Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Ph: 03 5832 0222

1.3 Assessing Risks under Basin Plan

1.3.1 Assessing risk to Aboriginal values and uses – a precautionary approach

While Aboriginal values and uses of water encompass a wide range of cultural and environmental benefits, Victoria's Water Resource Plan Risk Assessment grouped these benefits together as 'Aboriginal Water' as the limited information did not support risks to be assessed differently for each sub-group of Aboriginal use.

Aboriginal Water is an emerging term to describe the full range of Aboriginal interests and aspirations in water. It encompasses 'Aboriginal environmental and cultural outcomes' and 'cultural flows' including entitlements. The term identifies improvements in environmental outcomes, and economic benefits for Aboriginal communities.

1.3.2 High and very high risks to the availability and condition of water to support Aboriginal water values and uses

Several high and very high risks were identified with respect to the condition and availability of water to support Aboriginal water values and uses. These risks are identified in Appendix B to both the Wimmera-Mallee and Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Reports.

Due to the historical exclusion of Traditional Owners in water ownership and management, a number of very high risks to the availability and condition or quality of surface water to support Aboriginal beneficial uses have been identified in the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan Risk Assessment (see Part 7 and Appendix B) and the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan Risk Assessment (see Chapter 5 and Appendix B). These risks are identified in [Table 1-2](#).

Table 1-2: Risks to availability and condition of water to support Aboriginal water values and uses

Risk	Availability of water	Condition of water
Surface Water		
Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> climate change government failure to proceed with strategies and programs for improved management of land use practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> climate change government failure to proceed with strategies and programs for improved management of land use practices
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme drought bushfire farm dams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme drought farm dams extreme wet bushfire land use change non-compliance with the Victorian Water Act earth resources development pest and weeds
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme wet land use change increased utilisation of entitlements non-compliance with the Victorian Water Act major asset failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased utilisation of (existing) entitlements flooding and overbank inundation point source discharge major asset failure
Groundwater		
Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> climate change 	N/A
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> earth resources development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> earth resources development
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme drought bushfires land use change farm dams increased utilisation of water access rights increase in the number of entitlements leading to increased take 	N/A

Continued availability of water relates to the ability for Aboriginal communities to access water either at a particular time or in a particular volume. The above identified causes or impacts on continued availability may therefore alter the seasonality of water (i.e. when it is available) or the volume of water available in the system for all users.



Condition of water primarily relates to water quality. Water quality is assessed in terms of whether the water is fit for purpose.

Increases in earth extraction industries were seen to pose a threat to groundwater quality. These risks are outlined in more detail in Appendix B to both the Wimmera-Mallee and Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan comprehensive reports.

The risks to Aboriginal water use were rated as very high to medium in recognition of the very limited information available to determine how Aboriginal water uses might be affected by changes in the water resource. For example, Aboriginal water use may be affected by salinity, pathogens or changes in surface water seasonality, but there was not sufficient information available to determine how these changes could impact Aboriginal water use.

Impacts on meeting environmental watering requirements and maintaining priority environmental assets are also recognised as risks to Aboriginal water values and uses. The relatively high risk ratings are largely due to the lack of understanding and formal recognition of how Aboriginal organisations and individuals may wish to use water and the volume required for those uses.

Aboriginal water use is therefore assumed to have a medium to very high sensitivity to any changes to surface water or groundwater.

1.3.3 Strategies to address risk to Aboriginal water

The Basin Plan requires all medium to high risks to have strategies developed to address them. There are dozens of strategies cited to address risks to Aboriginal values and uses. This is because addressing the cause of the risk – for instance, climate change or non-compliance with regulations – has its own set of strategies to deliver improved management of water resources including Aboriginal values and uses.

Appendix B to Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report describes the risks related to Aboriginal values and uses, and the strategies to address them for each of the water resource plan areas: Table 3.2.19 to Table 3.2.28 for the Northern Victoria water resource plan area Table 3.4.17 to Table 3.4.26 for the Victorian Murray water resource plan area and Table 3.3.5 to Table 3.3.14 for the Goulburn-Murray water resource plan area. Table 4.2.1 contains an explanation of the strategies identified to address these risks.

Appendix B to the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report describes the risks related to Aboriginal values and uses, and the strategies to address them for each of the water resource plan areas: Table 31 to Table 40 for the Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) water resource plan area and Tables 61 to 70 for the Wimmera-Mallee (groundwater) water resource plan area. Table 78 in Appendix B contains an explanation of the strategies identified to address these risks.

As knowledge is shared between the water sector and Aboriginal communities, more targeted strategies can be developed to further lower or mitigate risks to the availability and condition of water for Aboriginal values and uses.

The core strategy for addressing risks to Aboriginal values and uses is Strategy 31 – recognising and managing for Aboriginal values. This strategy is cited for every risk associated with Aboriginal values and uses. Strategy 31 is a reconfirmation of Chapter 6 of Water for Victoria, recognising and managing for Aboriginal values and the four actions contained within that chapter.

Upon accreditation of the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan, the Victorian Government and its agencies are obliged to report annually on compliance or progress with the water resource plan, including strategies to mitigate risk (section 10.43). The MDBA has a role in enforcing compliance with accredited water resource plans across the Basin. Victoria has committed to

review the content of the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan upon any change of policy or statutory instrument to determine whether it is consistent with Victoria's approach to water resource management. If the change of policy or legislation requires amendment to the water resource plan, Victoria is required to undertake consultation regarding the proposed amendment and provide reasons to the MDBA regarding the need for the amendment. These commitments are outlined in Chapter 1 of the Victoria's North and Murray comprehensive report and Part 1 of the Wimmera-Mallee comprehensive report.

1.4 Acknowledging existing legislative rights

Victoria's water resource plans recognize the existing legislative and policy arrangements and tools that provide at least the same level of protection of Indigenous values and uses as existed prior to the Basin Plan. This recognition is stipulated in section 10.55 of the Basin Plan. It was determined following the review undertaken of existing arrangements in 2012 and any amendments to those arrangements since that time that there was no lessening of protections since the commencement of Basin Plan as a result of Victoria's water resource plans. Section 1 outlines these existing legislative and policy tools and arrangements.

While legislative protections have not changed since 2012, Victoria has introduced new Aboriginal Water Policy under Water for Victoria which seeks to improve understanding of Aboriginal values and uses in water and build capacity of Traditional Owners to participate in water resource management.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety website provides current information on the status of Traditional Owner groups: <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/>

1.4.1 Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)

Native title is a recognition under Australian law that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold rights and interests in land and water where they continue to practice traditional laws and customs. These principles are contained in the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993. The characteristics of Native Title vary for each group, deriving from traditional laws and customs of the relevant group. The manner in which Native Title is recognised will depend on what is claimed and what is negotiated between all of the people and organisations with an interest in the area.

The *Native Title Act 1993* does not provide for a right to negotiate over water.

1.4.2 Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010

The *Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* allows the Victorian Government and Traditional Owner groups to make agreements that recognise Traditional Owners' relationship to land and to provide them with certain rights on Crown land.

Under this Act, a settlement package can include:

- a Recognition and Settlement Agreement to recognise a Traditional Owner group and certain Traditional Owner rights over Crown land
- a Land Agreement which provides for grants of land in freehold title for cultural or economic purposes, or as Aboriginal title to be jointly managed in partnership with the state
- a Land Use Activity Agreement which allows Traditional Owners to comment on or consent to certain activities on public land
- a Funding Agreement to enable Traditional Owner corporations to manage their obligations and undertake economic development activities
- a Natural Resource Agreement to recognise Traditional Owners' rights to take and use specific natural resources and provide input into the management of land and natural resources



1.4.3 Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

Under the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, Aboriginal people are recognised as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) have responsibilities under the Act relating to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage. While many cultural heritage sites are near water, the Act does not prescribe how water near or on culturally significant sites is to be managed.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria has provided advice on the existing claims under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic). This information is outlined in Figure 1-2 and is current as at February 2019.

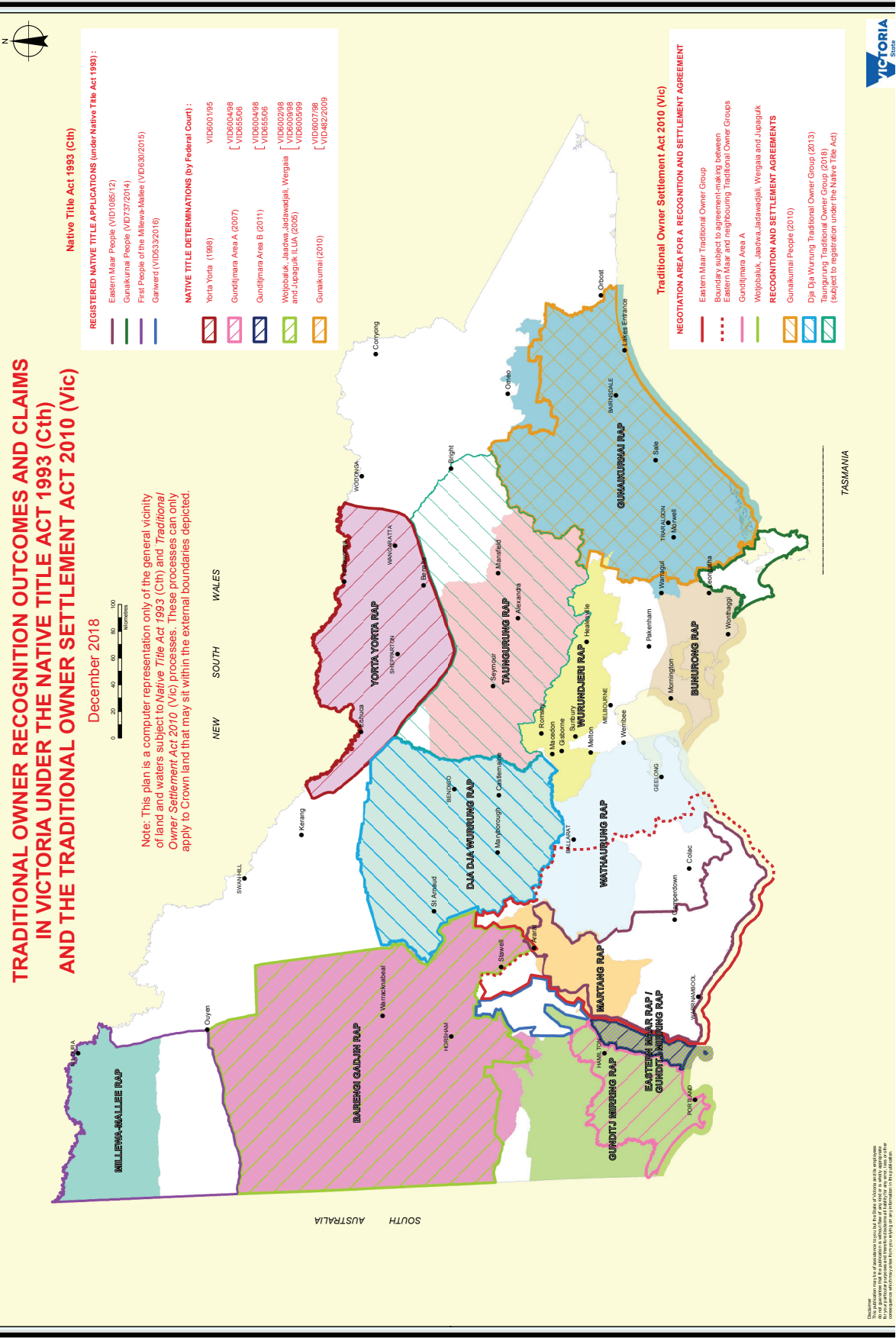


Figure 2: Traditional Owner recognition outcomes and claims in Victoria

Figure current at February 2019 and provided by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety.



1.4.4 Statutory rights to access water

Some limited recognition of Aboriginal rights to access water was introduced into the *Victorian Water Act in 2013* for Traditional Owners who have a natural resource agreement under Part 6 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

The *Victorian Water Act 1989* provides that members of a Traditional Owner group bound by a land use activity agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* have the right under section 8A to take and use water.

8A Traditional owner agreement for natural resources

If a Traditional Owner group entity has an agreement under Part 6 of the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010, a person who is a member of a Traditional Owner group bound by the agreement has the right to take and use water on the land that is subject to the agreement:

- a. *in accordance with the agreement; and*
- b. *if the water is to be taken from a place from which water may be taken under section 8(1)*
- c. *Section 8A expressly states that this right is to “use water on the land that is subject to the agreement”.*

This leaves agreements being able to authorise water to be taken and used for traditional purposes, as per the definition in section 79 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*. The volumes of water that could be taken are those needed for traditional purposes. There are two types of uses for traditional purposes under section 79 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act*:

- a. *any personal or domestic needs of members of the Traditional Owner group*

This is effectively the same as domestic uses (part of domestic and stock uses) under the Victorian Water Act 1989:

1. *The rights of a Traditional Owner group with a natural resource agreement on land owned by a member of the group to take water and use it would be the same as the domestic and stock rights under section 8 of the Victorian Water Act. This would include irrigation of a kitchen garden and watering of stock. In this respect, section 8A of the Victorian Water Act does not add anything to rights the land owner already has under section 8 of the Act*
2. *the rights of a Traditional Owner group with a natural resource agreement on Crown land would be limited by the nature of the land and the uses to which it may be put under the Traditional Owner agreement*

- b. *any non-commercial communal needs of the members of the Traditional Owner group*

This could include, for example, redesigning parts of a waterway or building fish or eel traps. Section 82 *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* allows “interference” with a “natural resource” which includes stone and gravel. It also allows diverting water to generate food produce for the Traditional Owner group to eat but not sell.

1.5 Cultural flows

Cultural flows are distinct from ‘Aboriginal environmental outcomes’, a term which may be used to describe outcomes chosen by Aboriginal people to achieve cultural benefits from environmental water delivery.

MLDRIN has developed the following definition of cultural flows, which is recognised in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan:

"Cultural flows are water entitlements that are legally and beneficially owned by the Nations of a sufficient and adequate quantity and quality to improve the spiritual, cultural, natural, environmental, social and economic conditions of those Nations. These are our inherent rights."

MLDRIN Echuca Declaration, 2007

As water entitlements, cultural flows may have a commercial benefit where any revenue accrued goes to Aboriginal people, or they may be used for customary practices, environmental outcomes or personal use.

Ownership of water by Aboriginal people can bring many benefits, including:

- improved self-esteem and empowerment as a result of being able to care for Country
- improvements to health and wellbeing through being able to see Country in a healthy state as a result of using cultural water
- potential economic returns.

"As Traditional Owners, our community expectations are to use, develop and control water resources on and under our Country for economic purposes: to support and generate Aboriginal businesses that depend on water allocations; and to generate economic development opportunities through the trading of water resources on the market."

Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations Submission to Water for Victoria discussion paper, 2016

While Aboriginal environmental outcomes can occur as a result of healthier rivers and wetlands, and Victorian Catchment Management Authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder are working to strengthen Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Victorian involvement, any shared benefits are still delivered via environmental water, not cultural flows.

In Victoria, there currently are no specific provisions for cultural flows as Traditional Owner-held water entitlements, although the existing instruments and processes of Victoria's water management framework could be used to purchase temporary water or a water entitlement on the water market.

Traditional Owner groups consulted under Victoria's water resource plans have each indicated a desire for cultural flows for surface water and groundwater.

Victoria's water resource plans have been developed in response to the section 10.54 requirement of the Basin Plan to have regard to the views of Traditional Owners on cultural flows. Views can be seen through individual Nation contributions.

The water resource plans acknowledge that Traditional Owners are seeking cultural flows and the conversation about these flows will continue as Victoria implements the Aboriginal Water Policy.



2. Traditional Owner objectives and outcomes for water resource management

This section presents views of Traditional Owner groups within Victoria's water resource plan areas. The contributions highlight Traditional Owner objectives and outcomes for water resource management with consideration of Aboriginal values and uses of water. This section responds to the requirements under Part 14 of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan.

Country and areas of interest of many Traditional Owner groups span the water resource plan areas of both Victoria's North and Murray and the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plans. Contributions from the same Traditional Owner groups were therefore included in both plans, with the most current contribution included in Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan. Barapa Barapa, Dja Dja Wurrung, Latji Latji, Nyeri Nyeri, Ngintait, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi, Wadi Wadi, Wamba Wemba and Weki Weki are the Traditional Owner groups with interests identified in both plans.

As the nature of this document is to provide a reference guide for material contained in both water resource plans, all Traditional Owner contributions have been included. Where Traditional Owner groups have identified updated material in Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan that material has been included here.

The contributions included in this section have been approved by representatives of each Traditional Owner group for inclusion in the Comprehensive Reports.

The contributions meet the requirements of Part 14 of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan as they detail the objectives and outcomes for water for the respective Traditional Owners. The contributions also outline their views about the values and uses of water. Part 14 of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan requires regard to be had to several matters and the contributions provide views on those matters.

It is intended that the information contained in the contributions can assist in achieving objectives and outcomes beyond the scope of water resource plans.

The following section presents the contributions as approved by each Traditional Owner group. The content of each contribution represents the views of the contributors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Victorian Government. This document is not an instrument to add to the discussion of Country or to give validity to potential claims for recognition or disputes with other Traditional Owner groups.

2.1 Areas of interest to Traditional Owners

Caring for Country is the essence of Aboriginal social, spiritual, economic and physical wellbeing, and the basis of cultural lore. Cultural connections to Country do not follow the boundaries of the area for the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan, or indeed state boundaries, and are not represented in how water is managed in the region.

Country and areas of interest of many Traditional Owner groups span the water resource plan areas of both the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan and Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plans.

The Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan includes the two surface water areas (Northern Victoria and Victorian Murray) and one groundwater area (Goulburn-Murray). The Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan includes the Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) water resource plan area and the Wimmera-Mallee (groundwater) water resource plan area. For detail on the source of water for these plan areas, refer to [Figure 1](#) above and Chapter 2 of Victoria's North and Murray Comprehensive Report and Part 2 of the Wimmera-Mallee Comprehensive Report. The identification of surface water areas for the purposes of developing water resource plans do not reflect Aboriginal connection to Country.



2.1.1 Barapa Barapa

The Barapa Barapa contribution pertains to the areas of both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plans. The Barapa Barapa objectives and outcomes were workshopped in January 2018. The contribution was discussed at a Nation meeting, and signed off at a Steering Committee meeting in January 2019.

2.1.1.1 Description:

“To the Barapa people, the land is our oxygen. We feel the presence of our old people being there. We have a spiritual connection to everything; the animals, the land and the water. We are the custodians of the land for future generations. When you visit our Country, you share this responsibility with us. Barapa Barapa are the river custodians, one of many Nations who are the Traditional Owners of Murray River Country”

**‘Barapa Barapa Cultural Watering Framework’, pub.
North Central CMA, 2017**

Barapa Barapa has a strong association with the Murray River, and its tributaries, including around the area of Gunbower Forest in Victoria, with areas of significance including Reedy Lagoon, Guttrum and Black Swamp. Interests in water extend both geographically and through connection to water sources, to both the Northern Victoria and the Wimmera-Mallee water resource plans.

Barapa Barapa Country continues across the border to New South Wales, to Deniliquin, with several rivers feeding into the Murray being places of interest.

2.1.1.2 Current or pending agreements

The Barapa Barapa peoples are in the preliminary stages of their native title negotiation, along with the Wamba Wemba Nation. Negotiation may include progressing to a settlement agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)*.

Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) (Cultural Heritage)

Barapa Barapa does not currently have RAP status, however, the group is undertaking the required preliminary work to apply to be recognised as a RAP for their Country as part of Native Title negotiations.

Barapa Barapa has spoken about the need for Native Title to include water rights. It is also concerned regarding the requirements for RAP status – for instance proof of occupancy, and the access barriers that preclude that.

2.1.1.3 Existing reference /scoping materials¹

Through the Barapa Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee there are several existing reference documents relating to water. The Barapa Barapa Cultural Watering Framework is the result of a four year project on the Lower Gunbower Forest, that helped determine cultural values and associated watering objectives at a series of sites. Victoria’s water resource plans

¹ Traditional Owner groups may not wish to share these: this can also denote that they exist and Government should be aware of it and respect existing materials.

helped fund the project for several months, as there was a strong alignment with the requirements of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

In 2017, Victoria's water resource plans funded an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment with Barapa Barapa.

Traditional Owner groups may not wish to share these: this can also denote that they exist and Government should be aware of it and respect existing materials.

Barapa Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee with North Central CMA have produced a series of publications and youtube videos: <http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/media-events/videos/barapa-water-country>

2.1.1.4 Barapa Wamba Water for Country Project

The current project builds on the Barapa Barapa Water for Country project, which commenced in 2014 to identify and map traditional values and sites of cultural significance in the Gunbower Forest. The second phase of the project focused on flow objectives and how these will deliver cultural outcomes in the Gunbower Forest. In 2018-19 the project has been extended to gain understanding of the cultural values and aspirations of wetlands on Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba Country.

2.1.1.5 Preferred means of engagement

Barapa Barapa has stressed that any engagement regarding Country needs to have Barapa Barapa people involved from the outset.

The Barapa Wamba Water for Country Steering Committee is the "water arm" of the working group. The committee receives support from a water officer based in the North Central CMA: <http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au>.

Barapa Barapa MLDRIN delegates can be found at <http://www.mldrin.org.au/membership/nations>, and can be an initial form of contact.

While Native Title discussions are underway, the Barapa Wamba Working Group is a key stakeholder and needs to be engaged, as instructed by the full group, to act in the best interests of Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba people. The Working Group receives executive support from the First Nations Legal and Research Services.



Figure 3: Uncle Ron Galway doing a Welcome to Country, Barapa Barapa Water for Country project, Treetops Scout Camp, Gunbower

2.1.1.6 Barapa Barapa and Water Resource Plans

For several months, Victoria's water resource plan team have been talking with Barapa Barapa through MLDRIN delegates, the Water for Country Steering Committee, and the Barapa Wamba Working Group about water – including their objectives, desired outcomes, values and uses, thoughts on water entitlements, and how Barapa Barapa representatives want to work with Government.

Victoria's Water Resource Plans provided funding support for delivering the Water for Country framework (2017) and associated meetings on Country, and held both a community gathering (June 2018) and a Nation meeting (November 2018) to discuss Barapa Barapa's contribution to Victoria's water resource plans. Barapa Barapa is also represented on the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan Technical Advisory Group, and has hosted an Advisory Group meeting on Country at Gunbower to help other members better understand their aspirations for water and what success may look like.

Barapa Barapa has also met DELWP on Country several times to further understanding of water on Country, how current practices can impact on cultural outcomes, and how these changes to the natural landscape in turn have a negative effect on native flora and fauna, and ultimately, erode the ability of Barapa Barapa to connect with the environment in a way that is respectful of both their cultural past, and of current day objectives.

Barapa Barapa people are strong advocates for water returning to Country, and for Country returning to healthy Country. Members of Barapa Barapa have also raised concern in regards to compliance from water users, and that permitted water extraction is still too high. In addition the heavily regulated waterways on Barapa Barapa Country have stopped water from overbank flooding reaching sites of cultural significance - including important story-telling sites many of which now have no water. Barapa Barapa believes water would be better managed if what it supported agriculturally was more sensitive to the landscape, and less thirsty. Lack of flows are

impacting badly on protected native animals – and the way that flows are managed. For instance, regulated flows have destroyed fish populations that have not adapted to the changes in either timing, volume or temperature.

There is an ongoing challenge with salinity and soil health along the Murray and its tributaries, particularly in the past 50 years – Barapa Barapa reports that many lakes and billabongs that were fresh, now have salty water. Other water quality concerns have been raised – and a potential indicator in that deformed fish are being found in the Murray River. The management of public land that adjoins waterways is also a concern, including when land is leased to farms for grazing cattle, which causes degradation of the river bank, and impacts on water quality.

Barapa Barapa also believes Traditional Owners should be involved in, and remunerated for, measuring water quality by using cultural indicators.

Barapa Barapa have been supported by the North Central CMA through a water officer employed, including to provide secretariat support. There is a clear preference for Barapa Barapa to also have a water officer for its Nation to help with work on the ground to get water back on Country, including re-establishing wetlands. For the position to make real inroads, Barapa Barapa suggest funding be for a significant time period, and appropriate funding and resources for the continuation of the Steering Committee, and for cadetships for people starting out, and to facilitate them commencing then moving into a long-term role to support youth. It is also important for there to be women and men, for cultural reasons. Barapa Barapa stressed it wants its people to be employed to work, monitor and manage water on Country – that it is seeking occupational opportunities.

Rights to information, images and culture shared by Barapa Barapa remain the property of Barapa Barapa people.

2.1.1.7 Objectives and outcomes

The following are the objectives and associated outcomes for Barapa Barapa as determined through their work on the Water for Country Framework, meetings with Victoria’s water resource plans over a 12 month period, an open community gathering, and a Nation meeting. Barapa Barapa reserves the right to reflect on and change these as required.

Table 2-1: Barapa Barapa objectives and outcomes

Objectives	Outcomes
Achieving cultural outcomes	
Barapa Barapa wants to be able to care for waterways and wetlands and participate in the decision-making processes that influence the sustainable use of water.	Water management is undertaken in a way that is integral to Barapa Barapa cultural identity.
That water management and water delivery supports the cultural practices for Barapa Barapa women, as advised by women on the Steering Committee, at gatherings, and through Government consultation.	Barapa Barapa women are able to practice their cultural birthing practices throughout the Nation where women are having birthing in special areas. That women have a say in watering regimes to meet their needs.



Objectives	Outcomes
Barapa Barapa and Government work together to improve water quality so billabongs, lakes and wetlands that have become saline are restored to their freshwater status.	Culturally significant water bodies are returned to their freshwater status. Native flora and fauna return or thrive at important sites
Barapa Barapa to participate in culturally informed watering through supported, active participation in the management of environmental water to ensure the consideration of traditional knowledge and delivery of shared benefits.	Shared benefits of environmental water are accommodated, activated and achieved.
Barapa Barapa has an equal say at the table in how to manage rivers and waterways.	Decisions on water management, planning and policy are informed and influenced by Barapa Barapa as an equal partner.
Water is returned to culturally significant sites, as advised by Barapa Barapa.	Habitat on culturally significant sites is restored. Native animals and plants return or thrive.
Water management enables the restoration of traditional harvest activities to enable sharing of cultural knowledge and stories	Water management supports native flora and fauna.
Rights to water	
Recognition and integration of Barapa Barapa custodians' rights, needs, priorities and values in water management. Including increased engagement and participation of Barapa Barapa custodians in natural resource management through internal and external relationship building.	Barapa Barapa are recognised as the custodians on Country.
Working with water	
Resourcing us to participate in water policy, strategy and plans on Barapa Barapa Country.	Barapa Barapa achieves improvements in : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic participation (skills development / jobs) • governance and leadership • health, cultural and social wellbeing
Barapa Barapa is able to access employment opportunities in natural resource management, and is remunerated for its participation in Government.	Barapa Barapa people are employed at water authorities, CMAs, Parks Victoria, Fisheries and there is a Barapa Barapa Water Officer for the Nation.
Government supports training programs for the Barapa Barapa community to explore and implement business opportunities with each other and other communities.	Barapa Barapa is supported by Government, corporations and philanthropical societies to run its own water-based businesses.
Government supports a teaching program for the Barapa Barapa community to share knowledge with each other and other communities.	Barapa Barapa knowledge is shared and recognised, to provide better outcomes for waterways, native flora and native fauna.

Objectives	Outcomes
Government adheres to Barapa Barapa's requirements in regards to participation, including engagement timelines	<p>Barapa Barapa cultural perspectives are sought at the beginning of projects, and responded to in water management on Country.</p> <p>Government acknowledges and accommodates Barapa Barapa requirements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plain English and no acronyms • achievable timeframes • self determination • cultural awareness • equal participation
Cultural monitoring	
Barapa Barapa wants to work with Government to support its own cultural values monitoring program.	A cultural values monitoring program on water is developed, funded and implemented to measure cultural outcomes on waterways.
Barapa Barapa seeks resourcing to undertake ecological surveys for water life – for example crays, freshwater mussels, fish, bugs, turtles, rakali and other important species – for water quality, and monitor cultural hot spots annually.	Species are monitored annually by Barapa Barapa.
Barapa Barapa is resourced to undertake surveys for cultural heritage, to indicate areas of high productivity in the past, as priority watering sites.	Determining priority watering sites for the environment is influenced by areas of cultural importance.
Economic benefits	
Barapa Barapa has access to water entitlements to enable it to make watering decisions autonomously.	Cultural watering entitlement is held by Barapa Barapa.
Yabby and fish farming is introduced by Barapa Barapa at sites and Government works with Barapa Barapa to maintain appropriate water standards to support yabbies and fish at an economic scale.	<p>Water quality and protection is brought to, and maintained at, a standard to support yabby and fish cultivation.</p> <p>Barapa Barapa is able to harvest yabbies and fish for cultural and economic outcomes.</p>

2.1.1.8 Values and uses

Barapa Barapa has mapped the requirements of culturally important flora and fauna, and their water dependencies (see below), and included this in its 'Water for Country' framework.

In discussions with Barapa Barapa, the Nation has repeatedly outlined the interdependencies between Country, culture and water:

"Cultural Heritage cannot survive without water"

Uncle Neville Whyman, November 2018.



Having water reach important sites, water of a quality that supports life, and to be available at times that support cultural values is imperative for flora and fauna, and in turn, vital for activities such as hunting, harvesting native plants for medicine and food, and fishing and yabbying.

Different people specialised in making tools for Barapa Barapa, and there was a big trading route. For Barapa Barapa to make their specialised tools, cultural implements and canoes, there needs to be water in certain places, at certain times, to enable plant and species to thrive in a way that supported the Nation.



Figure 4: History in the making: scar tree created at Reedy Lagoon, Gunbower Island, at the 2018 Bark Canoe Event

2.1.1.9 Flow dependent cultural assets

Table 2-2: Barapa Barapa flow dependent cultural assets

Asset category	Includes	Water dependence	Aim
Plants	Old man weed	Needs seasonal flooding/drying regime - damp soils	Abundant healthy old man weed populations through wetting/drying
	River red gums (piyal)	Periodic flooding that reaches out onto floodplain in winter-spring	Healthy trees with little dieback and new annual growth
	Cumbungi (Gumbung)	Needs seasonal flooding/ drying regime	Some good healthy stands fringing wetlands (leaving open water), burn in winter
	River flax lily	Needs functioning floodplains, mimicking natural conditions	Increase numbers and plants reproducing
	Water ribbons	Clean water, spring flooding	Abundant populations in spring in wetlands and creek.
	Nardoo (talem talem)	Needs seasonal flooding/ drying regime	Abundant healthy populations
	Moonah	TBC	Healthy plants recruiting
	River mint (kapel-kup)	Needs seasonal flooding / drying regime - damp soils	Abundant healthy populations
	Water pepper	Seasonal flooding and a drying regime	Some healthy populations
	Native lettuce	Needs seasonal flooding / drying regime	Abundant healthy populations at the end of spring



Asset category	Includes	Water dependence	Aim
Animals	Fish (yawir) large bodied native	Connectivity and stable flow during breeding (November) - irrigation causing unseasonal variability Traditional ecological knowledge used to inform flow requirements to support species.	Abundant Murray cod and yellow belly in creek. Trout and cod present. Catfish (buk) in permanent wetlands. Carp numbers reduced
	Turtles (toonimum)	Permanent refuges and protection during nesting seasons Traditional ecological knowledge used to inform flow requirements to support species	Increase breeding and survival
	Goanna (tyuling)	Water quality/saline/ water levels and bird breeding supported for food source	Maintain
	Grey Kangaroo (kurre)	Water quality/saline/ water levels	Maintain
	Bardi and Wittchetty grubs	Well watered, healthy forest, and a spring rain	Maintain and protect
	Freshwater mussels	Permanent refuges. Shallow areas. Periodic flooding in wetlands, right flow rate.	Mussels present and breeding
	Crayfish and yabbies	Permanent refuges Traditional ecological knowledge used to inform flow requirements to support species.	Increase breeding and survival
	Water birds - Ducks, Swans (Kunawar), Magpie, Geese	Permanent refuges and protection during breeding (Spring - Summer)	Increase breeding and survival
	Emu (Kawir)	TBD	Support breeding
	Water rats	Permanent refuges and protection during breeding	Increase breeding and survival

Asset category	Includes	Water dependence	Aim
Water	Reedy Lagoon Black Swamp	Permanent refuges with some drying phases	Areas of permanent clean open water
	Gunbower Creek	Right seasonality - lowest in summer, highest in spring	Natural seasonal flows of clean water, some deep holes
	Reedbed Swamp - Guttrum/ Benwell Forests	Periodic flooding (winter - spring)	Restore periodic flooding
People - tangible cultural heritage	Scarred trees (coolamons, shields, shelter, canoes and women's areas)	Periodic flooding	Sites surveyed and recorded. Maintain tree health - no loss of trees
	Culturally significant trees (ring trees, burial trees, boundary trees)	Periodic flooding	Sites surveyed and recorded. Maintain tree health - no loss of trees
	Earth mounds (villages and cooking sites)	Rarely inundated	Sites surveyed and recorded. Record and preserve
	Middens	Rarely inundated	Sites surveyed and recorded - avoid bank erosion
Intangible cultural heritage	Women's sites	TBD	Sites surveyed and recorded. Sites visited and cared for by Barapa Barapa Traditional custodians. No damage by visitors.
	Men's sites	TBD	Sites surveyed and recorded. Sites visited and cared for by Barapa Barapa Traditional custodians. No damage by visitors
	Cultural knowledge	TBD	Participatory water management with cultural knowledge included



2.1.1.10 Flow objectives with indicators

Table 2-3: Barapa Barapa flow objectives with indicators

Name	Objective	Indicator	Measure
Kulayatang (wet)	Maintain permanent water refuges	Open water in Black Swamp and Reedy Lagoon in summer	Presence of remnant pools of sufficient quality water in summer. No further invasion of ruby red gums or giant rush
		Healthy water	Water test kit - salinity and dissolved oxygen levels suitable for plants and animals. Groundwater bore levels appropriate – TBD
		Water enters fish ponds associated with mounds	Presence of water in fish ponds (cultural sites) during flood

Name	Objective	Indicator	Measure
Cultural Plants	Promote and maintain healthy cultural plants at culturally significant sites (Reedy Lagoon, Black Swamp, Reed Bed Swamp - Guttrum Forest)	Old man weed - lots of green in summer	Cultural harvest, plant surveys, seed collection and photo points at designated sites
		River red gums - tree health scores and photo points to observe canopy for new growth annually and water gets to flood mark on trees periodically (inside Reedy Lagoon)	
		Cumbungi (Gumbung) - weaves without breaking, looks fresh and tastes good	
		River flax lily - new plants flowering	
		Water ribbons - abundant in spring	
		Nardoo - plants are present and healthy after flood and look right (not tall and leggy)	
		Moonah - plants flowering and recruiting	
		River mint - plants look healthy and are producing seed	
		Water pepper - plants present and producing seed	
		Native lettuce - enough plants to harvest	
Yumurriki (Dreaming)	Barapa people sharing culture and caring for Country	Cultural and monitoring activities on Country	Number of people and hours on Country People feel good on Country (video/questionnaire)
	Protect and preserve culturally significant sites through appropriate flow regimes	No new erosion or exposure of cultural sites	Photo points at inflow and outfall points
		Dead scarred trees remain standing	Circumference measure/photo points of dead scarred trees
		Live scar trees are healthy	Tree health scores of live scarred trees



Name	Objective	Indicator	Measure
Yawir (fish)	Promote healthy and abundant native fish communities	Murray cod and yellow belly are breeding	Fish survey show range of ages including young of year (less than 1 year)
		Trout cod and catfish	Fish surveys show presence
Tya (soil/land)	Prime wetlands by prewetting soils in autumn	Aquatic plants respond to watering events	Plant surveys and photo prints
Kunawar (Black Swan)	Promote healthy water bird populations	Water birds breeding	Spring-summer surveys for eggs

2.1.1.11 Cultural flows

Barapa Barapa seeks water entitlement so it can make its own decisions about water on Country, and to provide economic outcomes for Barapa Barapa people. Barapa Barapa also seeks cultural outcomes through shared benefits from water held by others, such as through working with Government on how water held as entitlement by the environment is used.

2.1.2 Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang

The Aboriginal Water Officers working under the Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation have been developing a contribution on behalf of the Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang Traditional Owner Groups. The contribution of these Traditional Owner groups pertains to the area of the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan. The Chair and other Board members of the Corporation provided review and guidance for the contribution. The content of the Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation contribution was not finalised and approved in time for inclusion in Chapter 8 of Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan, however was included as Appendix F to the Comprehensive Report. DELWP worked with the Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation to finalise the contribution and ensure further recognition of the objectives and outcomes of the represented Traditional Owner Groups for water resource management in Victoria. Appendix D to the Comprehensive Report has further detail on the consultation process. The final contribution is included below.

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



Figure 5: Mountain Creek

Credit: Ngarrra Murray

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

Dhudhuroa and Waywurru Language (2018)



2.1.2.1 Description

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.

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.

Corporate Entities (NRM)

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

2.1.2.2 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.

2.1.2.3 Memberships

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

2.1.2.4 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

2.1.2.5 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.

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

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.

2.1.2.7 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.

2.1.2.8 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

Table 2-4: Objectives and outcomes

Strategic objectives	Outcomes
Setup strategic water planning steering committee	<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 workshopping 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
Renaming rivers and wetlands	<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>
Protecting the plants and animals that are important to us	<p>Promotes the right species in the right places in a sustainable way</p>
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	<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
Develop funding opportunities for commercial businesses	<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>
Create a Water Trust owned and controlled by our Nations.	<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

Providing cultural awareness training to key land and water managers	<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>
Actively practice our ceremonies on and around our waterways	<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>
Climate Change Objectives	Outcomes
Build a First Nations alpine water and climate change interpretive centre	<p>Creating public space, redeveloped and intergrated 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 Biambi 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>



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 Waywurru 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 Waywurru 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 Waywurru 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 Illim. 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.

2.1.3 Dja Dja Wurrung

The Dja Dja Wurrung contribution pertains to the areas of both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plans. This contribution was developed and signed off by the Dja Dja Wurrung Kapa Gatjin water advisory group, with support from the Dja Dja Wurrung Water Officer, in accordance with the agreement between Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation Chief Executive Officer and MLDRIN delegate, Rodney Carter, and DELWP.

“Dja Dja Wurrung Country is a cultural landscape that is more than just tangible objects; imprinted in it are the dreaming stories, law, totemic relationships, songs, ceremonies and ancestral spirits, which give it life and significant value to Dja Dja Wurrung People.”

Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition Statement

2.1.3.1 Description

The following is the work prepared, agreed and submitted by Dja Dja Wurrung, in a process agreed between the corporation and Victorian Government, to enable Dja Dja Wurrung to prepare its response to Victoria's water resource plans, supported by Government when requested. The format is determined by the requirements of the Basin Plan, approached in a manner that meets the needs of the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation, and the people it represents.

Dja Dja Wurrung people, Country and agreements (TOSA)

On the 28 March 2013, after 18 months of negotiations between the State and Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Government of Victoria and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) entered into a Native Title **'Recognition and Settlement Agreement'**. The Agreement formally recognising Dja Dja Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of their Country and acknowledges the history of disbursement and dispossession that has affected the Dja Dja Wurrung People since settlement. Victoria's northern water resource plan area covers a large part of central Victoria and consists of approximately two thirds of Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Dja Dja Wurrung Country, legally recognised by the 'Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement', extends from the upper catchments of the Bulutjang (Loddon River) and Koliban (Coliban River) to Mount Franklin and the towns of Creswick and Daylesford in the southeast to the Yerrin (Campaspe River) Kyneton, Redesdale and Rochester in the east, Lake Boort in the north, Lake Buloke, Donald in the northwest, to the Avon Richardson River, Navarre Hill and Mount Avoca marking the south west boundary.

The basins within Dja Dja Wurrung Country represented by the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan include the Bulutjang (Loddon River) basin and part of the Yerrin (Campaspe River) basin. The waters of Yerrin (the Campaspe River) and its main tributary Koliban River (Coliban) are highly significant areas to the Dja Dja Wurrung people as well as the main storages within the Loddon System, such as Cairn Curran and Laanecoorie reservoir. Dja Dja Wurrung Country also encompasses the Bendigo and Clunes goldfields as well as the Loddon and Avoca River watersheds. The Northern Victoria water resource plan area scope includes an abundance of wetlands and rivers that are currently of interest to Dja Dja Wurrung, such as Boort Lake, Bullock Creek, Tang Tang Swamp and the Bendigo Creek, and their confluences.



Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises

Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd, trading as 'Djandak', is the commercial arm of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. It is owned wholly by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and is a Supply Nation Certified Business operating since 2012.

Djandak primarily acts as a representative of the Dja Dja Wurrung group regarding natural resource management works. It is also the home of the Dja Dja Wurrung Water Unit and Kapa Gatjin (To Know Water) Advisory Group.

Djandak has a team of cultural and natural heritage experts and project staff who work on a wide range of natural and cultural resource management projects from practical on-ground works through to traditional ecological knowledge gathering and cultural education activities. Their services include natural resource management and conservation works, landscaping projects, environmental policy, strategy development and cultural services.

Djandak's purpose is motivated and guided by the aspirations detailed in Dhelkunya Dja, the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan.

"Hundreds of years ago, our Country was mostly covered in open forests and woodlands, providing us with the plants and animals that we used for food, medicine, shelter and customary practices. Today, though our Country is vastly changed, it still holds many important values. We feel a moral responsibility to care for our Country as it binds us to the past, present and future."

Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan

The Kapa Gatjin (To Know Water) Advisory Group is the water-focused subdivision of the 'Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board'. Its purpose within Djandak is to support and advise the Kapa Gatjin Water Unit on the execution of the 'Rivers and Waterways' chapter of the Dja Dja Wurrung 'Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan'. The Kapa Gatjin Advisory Group is representative of the wider Dja Dja Wurrung community in water-related matters and is to be involved in all decision making and consultation within Victoria's water resource plans.

The function of the Kapa Gatjin Advisory Group is to:

- build on our creation storylines and connection to Djandak (Country) with our mob
- to support and advise the Kapa Gatjin Water Unit in developing and delivering the Country Plan aspirations for rivers and waterways
- work with the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) to identify and care for cultural sites near Dja Dja Wurrung waterways
- promote cultural education between Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners and Land and Gatjin (water) users and the broader community
- compile our cultural knowledge in order to produce resources to share knowledge with our community
- promote and build on partnerships with relevant stakeholders to collaborate on joint projects
- revive and conduct our cultural ceremonies associated with water
- assist with developing and progressing projects from Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) reports

- promote Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination through capacity and rapport building to ensure a legitimate and distinguished role in decision making and management of our waterways.

2.1.3.2 Agreements that influence water policy, partnerships, rights

Through their membership with the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) and the Federation of Victoria Traditional Owners Corporation (FVTOC), Dja Dja Wurrung actively participate in representing the rights of Traditional Owner groups in water policy and governance in Victoria and the Murray Darling Basin. Dja Dja Wurrung has also conducted an Aboriginal Waterways Assessment in May 2017 along the Coliban River and Upper Coliban Catchment Area alongside MLDRIN and North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA), both of whom provided invaluable support to the project.

“The North Central Catchment Management Authority will ensure that the corporation is provided with the opportunity to be actively engaged in regional natural resource management strategic planning processes for which it is accountable in the Agreement area.

NCCMA will partner with Dja Dja Wurrung to develop joint project funding proposals to undertake natural resource management-related projects in partnership where suitable fund sources can be identified.”

Dja Dja Wurrung and North Central Catchment Management Authority Partnership Statement

The Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition Settlement Agreement (RSA) includes ‘Natural Resource Management Participation Strategies’, under which the State of Victoria has committed to provide the Dja Dja Wurrung people (through DDWCAC) with the opportunity to ‘actively participate in the development and review of natural resource management policies and strategic plans, and regional management and action plans’ within the Agreement area, in order to further Dja Dja Wurrung people’s rights and interests in water.

Schedule 16 – Natural Resources Management Participation Strategies of the Dja Dja Wurrung Settlement Agreement includes partnership arrangements between Dja Dja Wurrung and North Central CMA, which commits both parties to further developing a mutually beneficial relationship that will allow the organisations to work proactively together to build capacity, capability and sustainability. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aims to define and further the relationship between the two organisations to deliver on North Central CMA commitments regarding the Dja Dja Wurrung RSA and to deliver outcomes that go beyond compliance with the RSA.

The RSA also includes a draft authorisation order, which authorises the take and use of water from a waterway or bore to meet any personal, domestic or non-commercial communal needs of Dja Dja Wurrung people. This order authorises the taking and use of water from a waterway or bore only where the Dja Dja Wurrung member has access to a waterway or bore in the circumstances set out in section 8(1) of the Victorian Water Act.

A ‘Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement’ is held between the state and Dja Dja Wurrung people and sets out principles to guide Joint Management of six parks that make up the Dja Dja Wurrung appointed land held under Aboriginal title by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans



Aboriginal Corporation. Parks include: Hepburn Regional Park, Paddys Ranges State Park, Kooyoora State Park, Wehla Conservation Reserve, Greater Bendigo National Park and Kara Kara National Park.

Dja Dja Wurrung have also secured freehold titles to three significant sites – Mt Barker (Yapenya), Carisbrook and Franklinford (Lalgambrook) in addition to the six parks jointly managed with the State.

The Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board works in partnership with the Government to develop and implement joint management plans for these sites that consider all nine assets of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan; the Jaara people, cultural practises and customs, cultural heritage, flora and fauna/bushtucker and medicine, rivers and waterways, land and climate, self-determination of Dja Dja Wurrung people, Traditional Owner economy under Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises and joint management.

2.1.3.3 Preferred means of engagement

Dja Dja Wurrung has managed their own consultation processes to engage Dja Dja Wurrung people in the development of the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan, with support and involvement where required from the water resource plan team at DELWP.

Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises were funded through the inaugural Aboriginal water grants program to employ a Water Policy Officer and the Kapa Gatjin (To Know Water) Advisory Group. As a result, Dja Dja Wurrung are in a position where we are able to coordinate consultation independently with Dja Dja Wurrung people, provided appropriate resourcing is made available for consultation activities. Dja Dja Wurrung therefore requests that the Kapa Gatjin Water Policy Officer is to remain first point of contact for all matters relating to the Water Resource Plan, which will then be communicated to the Kapa Gatjin 'To Know Water' Advisory Group for further consideration and endorsement.

This is the preference of Dja Dja Wurrung as it reflects the group's rights to be engaged as an equal partner with the State and its agencies in land and water planning and management.

2.1.3.4 Water resource plan response

During consultation it has become clear that there is an ongoing process of peel back of values and uses of water occurring which will continue to inform Victoria's water resource plans in the coming years. To ensure that this process and the learnings of this process can be captured by Victoria's water resource plans it is proposed that Dja Dja Wurrung be supported by DELWP in the annual review and updating of a Country Plan specific to water in the water resource plan area. This Country Plan will build on the rivers and waterways goal of Dhelkunya Dja and provide guidance as to Dja Dja Wurrung Water Policy, values and uses of water and objectives and desired outcomes for management which will greatly enhance the process and support Dja Dja Wurrung in providing ongoing engagement and input into the water resource plan implementation.

Due to the constant evolution of water management over time, we feel it would be practical for Dja Dja Wurrung to produce a dynamic and flexible document that will, as previously mentioned, refine and review the rivers and waterways chapter of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan to provide more detailed and meaningful input that can better sustain Victoria's water resource plans over their 10 year term. The document will create a firm basis for further planning and development regarding Dja Dja Wurrung values, uses, objectives and outcomes in water, and will allow us to take a progressive and all-inclusive approach in describing and implementing our cultural values into the Water Resource Plan.

We propose that the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan is referenced within Victoria's water resource plans to allow it to remain a 'live' scheduled document that will remain under Dja Dja Wurrung's

control and discretion, allowing for continuous capture and review of Dja Dja Wurrung water policy over time. This will permit us to be ongoing, flexible and proactive with our objectives/outcomes & values/uses without restricting our ideals or compromising how we wish to communicate our priorities and objectives for managing water on Country within Victoria's water resource plans.

We also ask it is acknowledged that it is not possible to include all of Dja Dja Wurrung's cultural water aspirations, uses, values, and places of cultural importance into one perspective, as our values are diverse and complex and can widely differ between family and clan groups. Dja Dja Wurrung request that the naming or identification of specific wetlands in the Water Resource Plan does not compromise the importance of those not listed, and that any cultural values provided in this response do not fully define the interests and beliefs of Dja Dja Wurrung people, which are multifaceted and cannot be defined through a single standpoint or response.

It is also requested that the Dja Dja Wurrung Intellectual Property and Research Policy (IP) protocols are respected and followed. The IP protocols outline measures intended to ensure that the cultural and intellectual property of Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners is protected and respected. This reflects the rights and protections of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage as presented in the 'Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006', and the 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'.

The IP policy necessitates that cultural heritage and cultural knowledge are morally and legally the responsibility of their respective Traditional Owners, and that any cultural knowledge provided by Dja Dja Wurrung in this response is therefore the intellectual property of the Dja Dja Wurrung community. The collection and further use of cultural knowledge provided requires free, prior and informed consent of the Dja Dja Wurrung people, whom hold the right to keep confidential any information concerning their cultural practises, traditions and beliefs.

We feel confident that through this proposed process, we can make a significant ongoing contribution to Victoria's water management and entitlement planning, policy and implementation by working in partnership with DELWP to progress our shared objectives of greater Traditional Owner involvement in water management, while simultaneously supporting self-determination and independence for Dja Dja Wurrung people in regard to water governance.



2.1.3.5 Objectives

Table 2-5: Dja Dja Wurrung objectives

Objectives
<p>Dja Dja Wurrung people see their land and its waterways as central to their cultural identity and aspirations for community and economic development. As stated in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan, the Dja Dja Wurrung people wish to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all of our waterways are healthy, with the right water in the right place at the right time to meet the needs of the environment, Jaara people and the broader community• Have a recognised and legitimate role in water governance, with genuine consultation in policy development and a recognised role in decision-making about our waterways• Secure adequate and equitable water rights that meet our social, cultural, spiritual, economic and environmental needs• Share our creation stories to teach people how water works in the landscape• Ensure that Dja Dja Wurrung cultural and spiritual values for Gatjin are respected, acknowledged and celebrated.• Government to work support Dja Dja Wurrung to continue to develop and unpack the rivers and waterways goal of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan to inform Dja Dja Wurrung values and uses for water• Dja Dja Wurrung to be provided resourcing to develop more Seasonal Watering Plans for Country and to gain resourcing to develop more Environmental Watering Plans for Country• Dja Dja Wurrung seeks the opportunity to access water and achieve visions without Government involvement• Make water accessible for all Dja Dja Wurrung people• Acquire (tradeable) water entitlements (purchase, seek donations from private donors, access surplus water entitlements created through efficiency mechanisms under the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP)) or purchase property with water entitlements attached• Work with Water Corporations to influence their delivery of urban or irrigation water. Use to enhance environmental flows to deliver on cultural objectives• Use Section 8A rights under TOSA to access water• Dja Dja Wurrung to become manager of environmental water• Participation with CMAs and Water Corporations to collaborate to develop and implement plans for the protection and rehabilitation of our waterways• Work with CMA, VEWH and CEWH and other relevant Government bodies so the release of environmental water, when available, can be timed with cultural outcomes and community events• Know how much water is going in/out of Country. Take stance on water consumers and research how much major consumers use. Develop relationships with other water users• Investigate water used on Country for financial/commercial gain. Investigate profits and GST to be shared with Dja Dja Wurrung. Add Dja Dja Wurrung logo to products sold for commercial gain (ie bottled water)• Identify framework to decide which sites need cultural water, and how to identify them, i.e. perform case studies on possible sites, environmental watering plans, aboriginal waterway assessments• Government to ensure Dja Dja Wurrung is invited to elect representatives onto advisory and working groups of stakeholders and partners• Expand our knowledge of water markets and trading to develop guidelines and policies for buying/selling water• Be enabled to follow up on identified sites and their water rights: Mt Franklin, Mt Barker, Carisbrook

Objectives

- Advocate for Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) to participate in water as well as land
- Develop new partnerships and review existing ones. Place measures (ie. partnership evaluation tools) to make partnerships realistic/accountable
- Build cultural competency with partners, ie through cultural awareness workshops
- Dja Dja Wurrung to have more involvement in agriculture, farming, green/recycled water and be involved in Government decision making and planning
- Consult other mobs to compare positions, share insights. Follow precedents that may have worked for them, learn from mistakes that may not have worked. Possibilities to trade water between mobs, creation of new Aboriginal water market
- Make cultural activities more accessible on wetland sites
- Create opportunities to involve the Dja Dja Wurrung community in the development and care of sites by training Jaara in water related matters ie. monitoring
- Develop our economic independence through education and training to build our capacity
- Manage sites to support cultural activity and healing of Country
- Negotiate to develop a framework for access and management of all natural resources i.e. cultural burning
- Government to facilitate for land and water to be managed simultaneously to secure a cultural and holistic approach in water management
- Secure both land and water rights to sites and wetlands
- Increase community involvement at sites; interpretative and educational signage/audio, spiritual/healing places, vegetation (cultural, medicinal), wildlife, tourism opportunities (cultural walks, school programs, tourist attractions)
- Government to resource better weed removal and weed control of sites and for the introduction of native and/or endangered fauna back onto Country i.e. quolls, dingoes, emus, native fish and the removal of aggressive and invasive species that negatively affect the ability of indigenous species to survive
- Revegetate wetlands to allow for food and fibre resources, and native, ecologically and culturally important plants
- Build capacity through employing, procuring and training Dja Dja Wurrung peoples in water management and planning. Increase employment, training and economic development for Dja Dja Wurrung people through water-related projects
- Conduct ongoing monitoring and maintenance of sites and waterways, preferably by Dja Dja Wurrung people
- Employment and training of Dja Dja Wurrung people to undertake cultural monitoring and interpretation
- Restore Cultural Flows and recreate Jaara traditional ecological knowledge to inform management practises that heal Country
- Management of impacts that degrade the natural character/health of sites or alter the natural flow of a waterway. i.e. bridges, fenced areas, rubbish, farming activity (grazing, cropping, runoff), land use upstream
- For Dja Dja Wurrung to be resourced to partner with the City of Greater Bendigo in order to be actively and equitably involved in the restoration of Bendigo Creek.
- For Dja Dja Wurrung to partner with Parks Victoria to actively and equitably be involved in the management and restoration of the Lake Boort complex and surrounding wetlands.



2.1.3.6 Outcomes

Table 2-6: Dja Dja Wurrung outcomes

Outcomes
<p>To empower, improve and promote the physical, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological wellbeing of Country including Gatjin, waterways, individuals, the Dja Dja Wurrung community and wider society. To achieve this, we expect the State to directly engage with the Djandak (through their Water Policy Officer) in relation to water management, delivery and resourcing that supports the maturation of a Dja Dja Wurrung Water Unit through the initial following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• resourcing, including funding for Dja Dja Wurrung• to continue to develop and unpack the rivers and waterways goal of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan ensuring we continue to communicate the importance of Dja Dja Wurrung values and uses for water for the successful implementation of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan• for Kapa Gatjin Advisory Group to provide review and feedback on the Water Resource Plan and associated processes on an ongoing basis• to develop and implement a transition plan within 12 months of accreditation of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan to empower Dja Dja Wurrung to achieve self-determination of gatjin on Country, including delivery of Seasonal Water Proposals and Environmental Water Plans• to develop Seasonal Watering Proposals for Country• to develop Environmental Water Plans, integrating cultural knowledge and western science, initially for all waterways and wetlands with recognised Dja Dja Wurrung names• to maintain an Aboriginal Water Policy Officer position, to implement, develop and inform policy positions, processes and procedures with the support of the State• to deliver Aboriginal Water Assessments (on a seasonal basis) to inform all the above (at least 6 per year)• As per schedule 16.4 of the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement• Meet with relevant State Government investors covered by this plan to develop funding proposals to support the above as well as relevant Dja Dja Wurrung values and uses for water in delivery of this Water Resource Plan (ie VIF, VEWH, etc)• Bendigo Creek is managed to deliver on Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan aspirations including self determination, joint management, healing Upside Down Country and rivers and waterways.

2.1.3.7 Values and uses

The following table shows the association between objectives, outcomes, and values and uses:²

Table 2-7: The association between objectives, outcomes, and values and uses

Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
Continue to develop and unpack the <i>rivers and waterways</i> goal of the <i>Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan</i> to inform Dja Dja Wurrung values and uses for water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-determination• Build on Dja Dja Wurrung water policy• Can be used to inform Dja Dja Wurrung values and uses for water• Better equipped to care for Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social• Economic• Cultural• Environmental• Educational

² Table for accreditation

Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
<p>Gain resourcing to develop more Seasonal Watering Plans for Country</p> <p>Gain resourcing to develop more Environmental Watering Plans for Country</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better equipped to care for Country Can be used to inform management practises Will assist in directly achieving Country Plan aspirations Capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Economic Aboriginal environmental Environmental
Opportunity to access water and achieve visions without Government involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-determination, self-sufficiency Capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Economic
Make water accessible for all Dja Dja Wurrung people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water access for all Dja Dja Wurrung people 'Closing the gap' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Economic
Acquire (tradeable) water entitlements (purchase, seek donations from private donors, access surplus water entitlements created through efficiency mechanisms under MDBP) or purchase property with water entitlements attached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to deliver cultural flows Investment; sell allocations in dry years Donate or sell at low cost to Dja Dja Wurrung community members working land Deliver environmental water to wetlands on private lands Use for agricultural production Deliver Aboriginal environmental water to on site wetlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal environmental Cultural Economic Social
Work with water corps to influence their delivery of urban or irrigation water. Use to enhance environmental flows to deliver on cultural objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to enhance environmental flows to deliver on cultural objectives Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal environmental Cultural
Use Section 8A rights under Traditional Owner Settlement Agreement to access water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural flows Water for cultural purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal environmental Cultural Economic Social
<p>Become manager of environmental water</p> <p>Participation with CMAs and Water Corporations to collaborate to develop and implement plans for the protection and rehabilitation of our waterways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take on management responsibilities that CMAs perform in delivering environmental water Self determination Establish a recognised and legitimate role in water management/planning Development partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal environmental Social Economic Cultural Environmental



Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
Work with CMA, VEWB and CEWH and other relevant Government bodies so the release of environmental water, when available, can be timed with cultural outcomes and community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence delivery of environmental water to best suit our cultural needs • Self-determination • Healing of Country and culture • Development of partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal environmental • Social • Environmental • Cultural
Know how much water is going in/ out of Country. Take stance on water consumers and research how much major consumers use. Develop relationships with other water users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better able to monitor water on Country • Capacity building • Know how much water is going in and out of Country • Better equipped to take a stance on water consumers and their use of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic • Aboriginal environmental • Educational
Investigate water used on Country for financial/ commercial gain. Suggestions that their profits and GST should be shared with Dja Dja Wurrung. Potentially add Dja Dja Wurrung logo to products sold for commercial gain (ie bottled water)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and business benefit • Closing the gap • Capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic • Social • Educational
Identify framework to decide which sites need cultural water, and how to identify them. ie) perform case studies on possible sites, EWPs, AWAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework will allow us to have a consistent approach to watering • Able to manage cultural water more effectively and efficiently • Information gathered can be used to inform future management practises and decisions • Capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Aboriginal Environmental • Cultural • Educational
Elect representatives onto technical advisory groups of stakeholders and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognised and legitimate role in water management • Capacity building • Building partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Educational
Contact a water broker to expand our knowledge of water markets and trading to develop guidelines and policies for buying/selling water. Contact MILDRN for suggestions on how to use it to our advantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building • Will allow us to develop guidelines and policies for buying and selling water • Make it easier to purchase water entitlements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Economic • Educational

Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
Follow up on identified sites and their water rights: Mt Franklin, Mt Barker, Carisbrook. Argue ILC for water as well as land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how we can access water rights as well as land rights Potentially gain access to water Opportunity to manage water and land rights simultaneously (in these areas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Environmental Social
Develop new partnerships and review existing ones. Place measures (ie. Partnership evaluation tools) to make partnerships realistic/ accountable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realistic and legitimate partnerships Governance Make partnerships transparent and accountable Be seen as an equal partner rather than a stakeholder or contributor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social
Build cultural competency with partners i.e. through cultural awareness workshops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and respectful partnerships Equity and respect Reconciliation Raising awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Cultural Educational
More involvement in agriculture, farming, green/recycled water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmentally friendly ways to access and use water Potential economic opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Economic
It would be valuable to eventually consult other mobs to compare positions, share insights. Follow precedents that may have worked for them, learn from mistakes that may not have worked. Possibilities to trade water between mobs, creation of new Aboriginal water market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping cultural water cultural Sharing insights will reduce mistakes and misinformation. Learning from others mistakes Creation of Aboriginal water forum Self-determination The creation of an Aboriginal water market may further improve relationships between mobs, allowing us to mutually work together towards a single united goal – to heal Country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Cultural Educational Economic
Possibility to plan and make cultural activities more accessible on wetland sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased accessibility to sites Able to use wetlands freely for cultural activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Social



Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
<p>Create opportunities to involve the Dja Dja Wurrung community in the development and care of sites by training Dja Dja Wurrung people in water related matters i.e. monitoring.</p> <p>Develop our economic independence through education and training to build our capacity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building and training Involving mob in caring for their Country The more people trained in water, the larger the voice we have. Better able to care for our Country Develop self-determination through economic ventures with water i.e. tourism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Cultural Economic Aboriginal environmental Environmental Educational
<p>Manage sites to support cultural activity and healing of Country. Negotiate to develop a framework for access and management of all natural resources i.e. cultural burning.</p> <p>Find a way to allow for land and water to be managed simultaneously to secure a cultural and holistic approach in water management. Secure both land and water rights to sites and wetlands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent management framework for natural resources that respects cultural knowledge and standards More control over all our natural resources and the benefits of managing them Combining land, water, fire, cultural, societal and economical values to manage and care for Country in a traditional way Managing land and water rights as one entity will allow for a holistic approach in healing Country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Cultural Aboriginal environmental
<p>Community involvement at sites; interpretative and educational signage/audio, spiritual/healing places, vegetation (cultural, medicinal), wildlife, tourism opportunities (cultural walks, school programs, tourist attractions).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community involvement Educates general public Share stories and culture Tourism opportunities Revegetation will allow for resources such as medicinal plants, grasses for weaving etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Social Cultural Economic

Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
<p>Weed removal and weed control of sites.</p> <p>Introducing native and/or endangered fauna back onto Country. i.e. quolls, dingoes, emus, native fish.</p> <p>Animal and pest (including fish) control of sites. Removal of aggressive and invasive species that negatively affect the ability of indigenous species to survive.</p> <p>Revegetating wetlands to allow for food and fibre resources, and native, ecologically and culturally important plants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revegetation will allow for resources such as medicinal plants, grasses for weaving etc • Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge to restore Country and native flora/fauna • Animal, pest and weed control will manage any nuisance plants or pests that may have adverse effects on the environment and other fauna • Promotes traditional practises by allowing Country to provide us with cultural materials our ancestors used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Cultural • Environmental • Aboriginal environmental
<p>Build capacity through employing, procuring and training Dja Dja Wurrung peoples in water management and planning. Increase employment, training and economic development for Dja Dja Wurrung people through water-related projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building and training • Self-determination • Increase in employment and economic development • Involve Dja Dja Wurrung people in the management of their Country and waterways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational • Cultural • Economic • Aboriginal-environmental • Social
<p>Ongoing monitoring and maintenance of sites and waterways, preferably by Dja Dja Wurrung people.</p> <p>Employment and training of Dja Dja Wurrung people to undertake cultural monitoring and interpretation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent maintenance of sites and waterways will improve their health while providing employment and capacity-building opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung people. 	
<p>Restore Cultural Flows and recreate Djaara Traditional ecological knowledge to inform management practises that heal country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of cultural flows • Better able to care for Country • Sharing of stories and knowledge • Healing of Country through traditional methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural • Environmental • Aboriginal-environmental • Social



Objective	Outcome	Values and Uses
<p>Management of impacts that degrade the natural character/ health of sites or alter the natural flow of a waterway.</p> <p>ie) bridges, fenced areas, rubbish, farming activity (grazing, cropping, runoff), land use upstream.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimising impacts such as upstream land use will allow for the natural flows of waterways to be preserved• Assist in returning Country to its natural state, while reducing man-made disruption of natural• flows that undermine both cultural and ecological values• Management of litter, farmer runoff, rubbish, vandalism etc will allow for improved site health and water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental• Cultural• Aboriginal environmental

Values and uses case study no. 1

The Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) is a tool for Aboriginal communities to consistently measure and prioritise river/wetland health so that they are better placed to negotiate for their Country’s water needs. The tool is used to capture and record information about the cultural values, uses, and health of waterways and wetlands to assist Aboriginal people to be more meaningfully involved in water planning processes on their Country.

Out on Country, the assessment teams share information, hold in-depth discussions, observe and closely inspect sites and build on collective data to complete each site survey form with a focus on various aspects of the waterway and its condition. The team hear presentations from key speakers about the site’s condition, history and significance, and record scores and relevant information about cultural values and waterway health.



While conducting their AWA's, Dja Dja Wurrung participants documented feeling a strong sense of connection, healing and spiritual sustenance from their Country and ancestral spirits. The number of the Cultural Heritage sites visited during the AWA's are supportive of this, and evidence a legacy of occupation that shows the important connection between Jaara (Dja Dja Wurrung people) and gatjin(water). Cultural heritage indicators and sites show how and where Jaara have used the waterways in the past, while the AWA tool helps us to record traditional ecological knowledge to continue to inform the management of our waterways today.





Culturally important information	Environmentally important information
Food and fibre knowledge	History of the site
Water flows and regimes that support cultural practices and customs	Water quality and quantity
Traditionally ecological and botanical knowledge used to care for Country	Revegetation needs
Presence of plants and animals used traditionally for food, medicine, shelter and tools	Ecologically important plants and vegetation communities
Oral cultural knowledge about the area	Presence and diversity of fish species
Presence and diversity of native flora and fauna	Presence and diversity of native flora and fauna
Cultural tradition activities such as hunting, fishing and ceremony	Geological and archaeological values
Dreaming stories and storylines	Soil and water health
Intangible heritage (sites and stories) associated with water and water places	Identification of risks and threats to be managed
Tangible cultural heritage sites	Landscape types

“We feel a moral responsibility to care for our Country as it binds us to the past, present and future.”

Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan

The cultural and environmental data gathered from the AWA's assists Dja Dja Wurrung in identifying key cultural and environmental values specific to each area. This provides a clear basis for informed management objectives to be developed that will support these values and ensure their progress, to help further advance Dja Dja Wurrung priorities for managing our rivers and waterways. It also provides opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung to identify how a Traditional Owner group can guide effective use of water allocation, and to assist in the decision making and planning over a range of projects and water policy.

“Water is number 1. Without it trees, birdlife species and vegetation suffer greatly.”

Dja Dja Wurrung participant during an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment at Tang Tang Swamp

Values and uses case study no. 2

The lakes and wetlands of the Boort wetlands are of extremely high cultural significance to Dja Dja Wurrung people. The greater Lake Boort contains the highest concentration of scarred trees in Victoria. Lake Lyndger was an important meeting ground, with groups of cooking mounds along the southern shoreline indicating that people met there in large groups. Kinypanial Creek is an intermittent creek along which numerous scarred trees and other significant cultural sites such as mounds, camp sites and artefact scatters have been recorded.

The Boort AWA results have been used to contribute to a management plan for the Boort wetland complex, which is currently a focus of management activity for Dja Dja Wurrung. It has also been used to inform water planning and delivery of environmental water to the site alongside the North Central CMA.



Tang Tang Swamp was identified by Dja Dja Wurrung AWA team as a highly important place within a wider catchment that is culturally significant to the Dja Dja Wurrung people. It features River Red Gums, significant marker 'ring trees', scar trees, basket weaving grasses and many other interesting cultural features. The Swamp is managed as a Wildlife Reserve is registered on the National Directory of Important Wetlands due to brolga nesting and many other visiting migratory waterbirds. It also contains ecologically important plants and vegetation communities such as Southern Cane Grass, aquatic plants and patches of rare native grassland.

Community perspectives and insights captured in the Tang Tang Swamp Aboriginal Waterways Assessment report will be used to further assist Dja Dja Wurrung people to make decisions about how they would like the Swamp to be managed, and help land and water managers to have greater insight into the cultural values of Tang Tang Swamp.



Today, Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners are actively engaged in recording and preserving these sites. This work includes conducting cultural heritage surveys and salvaging artefacts effected by land use activities.

The Coliban River is an important part of the broader Dja Dja Wurrung cultural landscape. Scar trees, burial sites, artefacts, stone quarries and other cultural heritage sites have been recorded along the waterway.

Large stone tool scatters and significant Tachylite quarry sites can be found along the main channel and adjacent to storages in the Upper Coliban, demonstrating continuous use of the land and resources along the waterway for many thousands of years.

The Upper Coliban AWA has continued to inform a variety of projects, such as the South West Loddon Pipeline project delivered by GWM Water and the Integrated Catchment Management Plan that is being developed for the waterway.



As the AWA provides a consistent method to identify cultural values, assess cultural health of waterways and prioritise water management and regulation it can assist the decision making and planning processes of a range of projects. This is being demonstrated where the AWA's provide the research to inform policy development and infrastructure investment to provide water management in support of cultural values and assets.

2.1.3.8 Cultural flows

Despite parts of the Country being recognised and returned to their Traditional Owners, there is still a strong disadvantage in the liberties of Indigenous people in Australia, as they do not have the same access to water rights as they do land rights. This is due to the introduction of the National Water Initiative (NWI), which saw the creation of property rights to water and tradeable water entitlements as necessary to address environmental damage and poor water management practises at the time. This was exacerbated through land and water rights being separated, this was put into effect in 2005 when the Victorian Water Act was amended to “unbundle” water for land title. Prior to this legislation, water and land rights were one entity and were allocated to people as they need it, at minimal or no cost to users. The uncoupling of water and land rights caused unintended consequences for Aboriginal groups, who, without access points or funds required to buy into water, cannot benefit from market-driven legislation.

There are instances, such as in Dja Dja Wurrung’s case, of gaining access to land, but being excluded in enjoying rights to water on that same land. Dja Dja Wurrung people’s relationship with water is holistic; combining land, water, culture, society and economy - relying equally on rivers, groundwater, wetlands and their Country to access cultural values, regardless of tangibility. Consequently, water and land rights are considered to be interwoven with each other, and it is Dja Dja Wurrung peoples belief that they should be managed as so.

Therefore, it is in Dja Dja Wurrung’s best interests and long-term objectives to gain access and ownership to both water and land rights on our Country, and to enjoy and manage these rights simultaneously to support our ongoing cultural and spiritual connection to our Country and waterways.



2.1.4 First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee: Nations of Nyeri Nyeri, Ngintait and Latji Latji

Objectives, outcomes and values and uses for water were workshopped, and signed off at separate Nation meetings for Latji Latji, Ngintait and Nyeri Nyeri. The final contribution was signed off by the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Board, the membership of which includes a Latji Latji MLDRIN delegate, Ngintait MLDRIN delegate and a Nyeri Nyeri MLDRIN delegate. This contribution pertains to the areas of both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plans.

2.1.4.1 Description

"We, the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are people of the river and the scrub and desert area to the south and west of it. We are descendent from families whose ancestors are part of this Country; ancestors who cared for it, sang to it, danced on it and kept it strong and fat. The ancestors taught their descendants through each generation about their responsibility to care for their Country, despite the decimation caused by colonisation.

Even when we were taken away, we still belonged. Country is family."

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee have lodged a native title claim under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) over an area in the north west of Victoria, that runs south of the Murray River to the Mallee Highway and west from the Calder Highway to the South Australian border, including the Murray-Sunset National Park. First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are also working through the process towards settlement with the State of Victoria under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) (the Settlement Act) in relation to the same area.

First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC) is the representative corporation formed by First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee for the purposes of their Settlement Act processes. FPMMAC has recently been appointed as a registered Aboriginal party under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) for the northern part of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee claim area. In addition, FPMMAC currently has an application for registered Aboriginal party status before the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council in relation to the southern part of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee claim area.

Eligibility to be part of First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee is not based on language groups or Nations. First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee is comprised of family groups, descended from apical ancestors connected to the area of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee claim.

Individuals within First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee identify as Latji Latji, Nyeri Nyeri and Ngintait, but these identifications are not the basis on which these individuals group together as First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee.

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are connected to all surface and groundwater within their claim area, and in addition have significant interest and have indicated traditional cultural history in areas beyond their claim area, which for Victoria includes Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, Robinvale and the Lake Tyrell area.

First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Country embraces many sites of cultural significance, including ceremonial grounds, cultural heritage such as earth oven remains, scar trees, birthing trees, shell middens, song lines, ancestral resting places, story places, and sorry places of grievous historical trauma. Cultural sites and places in traditional First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Country are a direct link between contemporary First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee people and their ancestors who created and cared for those places.

2.1.4.2 Current or pending agreements

In October 2015, the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee filed a native title determination application under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* in the Federal Court of Australia. The application was accepted for registration in May 2016 and is currently being case managed by the Federal Court of Australia.

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee first lodged a Part A Threshold Statement under the Settlement Act with the Department of Justice and Regulation of the State of Victoria in May 2016. This was revised in November 2016 and further supplementary material was provided in May 2017. The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee lodged a Part B Threshold Statement with the Department of Justice and Regulation in January 2018.

FPMMAC has recently been appointed as a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) for the northern part of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee claim area. In addition, FPMMAC currently has an application for RAP status before the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council in relation to the southern part of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee claim area.

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee's proposed settlement area, native title claim area, and RAP area is geographically included in both the Northern Victoria and the Wimmera-Mallee water resource plans.

2.1.4.3 Existing reference /scoping materials

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are currently preparing their Country and Water Plan.

The Victorian Government funded through water resource plans an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment for the Ngintait Nation, conducted in 2018. The Ngintait Nation maintains intellectual property rights over the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment, but will refer to it as they determine appropriate when working with Government regarding water on Country.



Figure 6: Ngintait Nation Aboriginal Waterway Assessment 2018

Credit: DELWP

2.1.4.4 Preferred means of engagement

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee have informed the Victorian Government through the Water Resource Plan consultation that their preferred means of engagement with Government agencies and Government delivery partners is through the FPMAC Board (the Board).

The Board is comprised of representatives of each of the identified family groups within First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee (as required by its Rule Book), meets regularly throughout the year and is committed to ensure that the “right people speak for Country.”

The Board considers requests for collaboration, participation or consultation, and determines how best to structure First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee’s involvement.

First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee and/or Ngintait, Latji Latji, Nyeri Nyeri representatives who are consulting with Government must have the appropriate permission before sharing knowledge. Through ensuring Traditional Owner representatives to speak on behalf of Nations are approved, individuals consulting with Government are protected from criticism. The approach also provides a record of information provided to Government and when and how that information is able to be cited.

The majority of engagement on the Victorian Government water resource plans has been with First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee as a whole and the Board. Due to the Victorian Government’s consultation requirements, and following discussion with MLDRIN delegates for the individual Nations, separate Nation-level meetings were held with those who identify as Latji Latji, Ngintait and Nyeri Nyeri in November 2018.

Choosing the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Board as the first point of consultation adds to the recognition expressed in consultation:

"We work as a collective. We're strong when we stick together."

Approved at consecutive Nation meetings for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, November 2018

Engagement requirements

As at November 2018, as First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee have a registered native title claim, engagement within the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee claim area should be conducted by contacting the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee legal representative, First Nations Legal & Research Services on 03 9321 5300. In addition, it is expected any matters concerning Country, including water and works on Country undertaken in regard to water management, policy, planning or proposals, be referred to the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee in the first instance, via First Nations Legal & Research Services, with due consideration of the requirements of the *Native Title Act 1993* and objectives relating to engagement contained in this water resource plan, most specifically:

- involving First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee from the outset
- enabling FPMMAC and the right Traditional Owners to be involved as decision makers.

"We want the Government to understand how we see the water. We have to be a part of the conversation everyone else is having about the river."

Approved at consecutive Nation meetings for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, November 2018

As part of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Country and water planning process, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning provided funding towards a film documenting a community gathering to talk about water and Country. Powerfully communicated in the film was the message:

"You Government departments that sit behind us, we are all part of this. We can each and every one of us contribute. We don't stand behind anymore. We walk and work together."

Approved at consecutive Nation meetings for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, November 2018

This message was reiterated and strengthened throughout the engagement process between the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee and the Victorian Government.

In May 2018 First Peoples of Millewa-Mallee held a community gathering at Lake Cullulleraine. This gathering was part of First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee's process to develop a Country and Water Plan and talk about their contribution to Victoria's water resource plans and was supported by the Victorian Government water resource plans in a funding agreement. The gathering saw members from First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee meet and talk about water, hear how water management had changed with current water regulation, and re-connect over why water was important to them, as Traditional Owners.



Figure 7: Water for the future: Lake Cullulleraine community gathering for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee

Credit: DELWP

"Being together like the Lake Cullulleraine weekend gives us energy being together. We've been disconnected.... but together we understand our place on Country and as family."

Approved at consecutive Nation meetings for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, November 2018

2.1.4.5 Water resource plan response

The Victorian Government has taken a source-based approach to its water resource plans and identified that First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee had interests in groundwater contained within the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan. This approach also identified the majority of interests of this Traditional Owner group in relation to surface water – rivers, creeks, wetlands, lakes – related to water being sourced from the Murray River. Engagement with the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee therefore increased in 2018.

This approach, while being logical from a State Government perspective, has at times been challenging and counter-intuitive for Traditional Owner groups, whose boundaries do not replicate those of State Governments, nor boundaries devised within State Governments, such as those of Water Corporations, Catchment Management Authorities, or public land managers.

Water on Country is connected, and State Government boundaries have been expressed by the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee as an artificial concept over a landscape and culture that

spans thousands upon thousands of years.

It has been agreed with the FPMMAC Board and through consultations, that the contribution from the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee for the Northern Victoria and the Wimmera-Mallee water resource plans be consistent.

On January 19th 2018, the DELWP met with the FPMMAC Board to workshop preliminary objectives for water resource plans, specifically at that time, the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan, and agree on an engagement approach for the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan.

At that meeting and at subsequent meetings, the FPMMAC Board endorsed the Department and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations to provide support to the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee to produce outcomes for both a First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Country and Water Plan and considered contributions, based on inclusive consultation, to the Victorian Government's water resource plans. The collaborative program is further documented in the Appendix D Consultation Report.

In discussions with the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee and at the culmination, through several meetings, the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee concluded that as a collective they sought to have a much bigger impact on water decisions, with a priority aim of getting water to Country that either hasn't received water due to changed water management regimes and competing priorities, or has more need than is being catered for to restore or maintain cultural outcomes.

The end goal of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee is a process for input which fosters self-determination. Along the way to this goal, First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee view having an equal say as a necessity. The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee's goal is that there is training for young Aboriginal people in caring for Country, whether in schools, with delivery partners, in negotiation skills and management, through training in plant identification and knowledge of water catchments or through certificates in cultural heritage with strong emphasis on culture related to water.

Similarly, in relation to representation at a leadership level, the First Peoples of Millewa-Mallee seek more representation on Government Boards that make decisions in relation to Country and water.

"There's a lack of communication with us from Government. People are walking all over us, and our Country."

**Statement agreed at Nation meetings
November 2018**

The Victorian Government through its water resource plans being developed in response to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan began discussions with the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee in 2017, initially in relation to the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan, and the Murrayville groundwater aquifer.



2.1.4.6 Objectives and outcomes

Table 2-8: Objectives and outcomes for First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee

Objectives	Outcomes
Restock native fish species in waterways and bodies nominated by the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, including BUT NOT LIMITED TO the Billabong at Berribee Homestead, where the fish will be able to mature and breed without unacceptable risk from predators or unfavourable water management regimes.	First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are empowered to make choices regarding locations and timing of fish releases based on sites that have cultural or historical importance, and areas that mirror fish movements and hunting in the past.
	First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee can spend time looking after Country, fishing, yarning and sharing traditional ecological knowledge.
All Traditional Owners to be able to physically access waterways of cultural significance, and not be impeded by changed land conditions resulting from water and land management, unclear or restrictive access conditions through rules or regulations, or lack of recognition of the needs of Elders and people with more limited access opportunities.	Access to waterways and water bodies of significance are improved for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee through facility upgrades, rights and improved engagement and responsive management to understand and remove limitations.
Access to waterways for other water users, including anglers, boaters, swimmers, joggers, four-wheel drivers and trail bike riders be better controlled to keep people from encroaching on culturally significant sites.	Access to water for both cultural and recreational opportunities is more sustainably managed, protecting Country from erosion and degradation.
	Access to water for recreators is achieved in a culturally appropriate way, protecting culturally significant sites from damage caused by foot and vehicle traffic.
	Access to water for cultural purposes, including fishing, swimming and canoeing, is available to physically impaired Traditional Owners.
Traditional Owner involvement in environmental watering decisions be ongoing and include decisions on site selection, quantities and timing.	Cultural outcomes are identified and catered for when managing water for the environment to achieve shared benefits based on traditional ecological knowledge and cultural values.
Restore songlines as discussed while on Country, and restore them so Traditional Owners can spend time on Country in a place of high cultural significance.	The song lines are restored with access to fresh water via the naturally formed waterholes and Traditional Owners are enabled to make decisions regarding the songlines, including in relation to economic opportunities through tourism and cultural activities.

Objectives	Outcomes
Representatives from First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee sit on water boards, including the Catchment Management Authorities, and Lower Murray Water, and Government supports First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee to be confident, know the rules and requirements, and know how best to share knowledge.	First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are at the forefront of decision making and evaluation, of socio-cultural-economic factors and informing and influencing decision makers of how to plan, manage and accommodate cultural outcomes.
The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee takes a lead role in monitoring and evaluation.	The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are respected, listened to, and resourced to monitor, evaluate and participate in research on Country to determine from a cultural perspective how water management and planning decisions are impacting positively or negatively on Country in regards to water quality, flora and fauna protection and regeneration health in particular in relation to culturally significant species, and the protection of culturally significant sites.
The Victorian Government resources the First Peoples of the Millewa- Mallee to: employ an Aboriginal Water Officer to act as a liaison between the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee and Government and other bodies as agreed by the FPMMAC Board.	<p>Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of cultural outcomes is used to inform decisions regarding when and where to water sites of cultural significance, including but not limited to Lake Walla Walla, Kings Billabong, Brickworks Lagoon, Wallpolla Creek and Lyndsay Island.</p> <p>The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are funded to make their own decisions about when and how it is best to evaluate the health of Country.</p>
Fund and support monitoring and evaluation of changes to Country that occur following different watering regimes, decisions and climatic conditions.	<p>The health of waterways and water bodies on the Country of the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee is improved, providing habitat for fish, birds and an environment that fosters native plant species important to cultural practices.</p>
Funding for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee to conduct Aboriginal Waterway Assessments at times determined by the Nation groups as the best way to gauge measures from a cultural perspective, including based on a seasonal calendar as determined by the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee based on their observations and cultural knowledge.	Self determination to monitor and evaluate river and wetland health from a cultural perspective.



Case study: Involvement in managing groundwater

The Murrayville Aquifer is within the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan area, and is of significant interest to the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee. The Murrayville groundwater management area occupies 1,578 km² centred on the town of Murrayville, between the Murray Sunset National Park and the Big Desert. It supports some irrigation, including potatoes, cereals and olives, and provides some town water use and domestic and stock water supply.

In 2017, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (GWM Water) released a new Groundwater Management Plan for Murrayville, after consultation with the Murrayville Groundwater Advisory Committee. This plan provides a management strategy for the aquifer to ensure it is protected and used sustainably. A representative from the First People of the Millewa-Mallee presented to the Murrayville Groundwater Advisory Committee to provide a better understanding about Traditional Owners' interest in the aquifer, including accessing water for customary practices and commercial interests, and working with the authorities to protect the aquifer. These interests were captured broadly in the plan, through a statement for the future:

"The Local Management Plan (LMP) recognises and acknowledges that the Traditional Owners have a deep connection to their lands and water. The LMP identifies the need to develop a greater understanding of the cultural objectives and values relating to groundwater in the Murrayville area during the implementation of the LMP."

**Murrayville Groundwater Local Management Plan Grampians
Wimmera Mallee Water, 2017**

As a result of gatherings on Country through funding afforded through the Country and Water Plan, and the Victorian water resource plans, the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are now seeking ongoing active discussion with land and water managers to communicate their understanding of the groundwater resource and its significance to Traditional Owners in the past, and into the future.

2.1.4.7 Values and uses

Conversations with the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee regarding values and uses have been generous and insightful, but there is a shared concern that documenting these discussions overtly in a Government plan may have an adverse effect on active and continuing involvement of First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee in policy and planning.

Therefore, Victoria's water resource plans for the First Peoples of Millewa-Mallee will refer to values and uses at a higher level, with the view that each and every conversation and decision relating to or impacting on cultural values and uses will involve First Peoples of Millewa-Mallee.

Values and uses include:

- it's important that water comes to the places we hunt and gather, not just to places others value, such as farms and irrigation
- we need to have our gatherings, our corroborees and our ceremonies

- if you've got no water, you can't regenerate land
- we need to be able to look after Country, preserve Country, water those trees, manage erosion, restock waterways with native fish – native fish look after the waterways
- as late as in the 1950s we still travelled by canoes, trapped, fished, traded with the farmers up and down the river, met friends, and met family.

2.1.4.8 Cultural flows

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee are patently aware that water entitlements provide empowerment to make decisions outside the negotiation of managing and responding to multiple water users.

In addition to achieving cultural outcomes for Country, through water entitlement not bound to shared outcomes or benefactors, the First Peoples of Millewa-Mallee seek water entitlement to build their presence in using water for social, economical, environmental and cultural outcomes. Three case studies to illustrate the relationships and the standard expected by FPMM for engagement on watering decisions include:

- Kings Billabong
- Lake Walla Walla
- Brickworks Lagoon



Figure 8: Cowanna and Brickworks billabongs are nationally significant wetlands at Merbein Common

Credit Lisa Hocking (DELWP)



2.1.5 Martang Pty Ltd

The interests of Martang Pty Ltd pertain to the area of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan. Close to the source of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan surface water area, Martang Pty Ltd represents the Djab Wurrung People. In September 2007, Martang was recognised as a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) by the Victorian Heritage Council under the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the Act). The Act recognises Aboriginal people “as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage”.

The Victorian Heritage Council recognised Martang as an organisation representing Traditional Owners able to demonstrate strong traditional links to the area. Martang’s RAP status is for the south-west of its application area. This includes the upper reaches of the Wimmera River and tributaries such as Spring Creek.

Initial contact with Martang indicated interest in conducting an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment on Lake Lonsdale. While there is no approved RAP for Lake Lonsdale, it has been acknowledged in the Lake Lonsdale Management Plan that there are numerous sites of cultural significance (Lake Lonsdale Management Plan, 2012). The area is now part of a joint Native Title claim from Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Eastern Maar and Gunditj Mirring. It is expected an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment would require agreement by all interested Traditional Owner groups.

The Victorian Government will continue to work with Martang to realise its water objectives under water resource plans, as per the stated objectives of *Water for Victoria*.

2.1.6 Tati Tati Wadi Wadi

The Tati Tati Wadi Wadi contribution pertains to both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plans. Tati Tati Nation meeting participants self-determined they would like to be known as the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi for the purposes of Victoria’s water resource plans. This is consistent with the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Aboriginal Waterway Assessment prepared in 2017 with MLDRIN.

A July meeting at Robinvale in 2018 concluded the people present wished to be identified as Tati Tati Wadi Wadi. In November 2018, the MLDRIN full gathering formally appointed delegates for the Wadi Wadi Nation, that were not part of the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi consultation. These delegates had, from September 2018 led consultation for their Nation (see the Wadi Wadi contribution at [Section 2.1.8](#)).

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi objectives, outcomes and values and uses for water were signed off at a Nation meeting at Nyah. The final contribution was signed off by a Tati Tati MLDRIN delegate.

2.1.6.1 Description

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi First Nation are the Traditional Owners of their Country, river, lakes, creeks and lagoons and respectfully share tribal boundaries with the Mutti Mutti, Latji Latji, Wadi Wadi, Kurenji, Barkinji and Wergaia First Nations.

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi First Nation is represented in the Northern Victoria and Wimmera-Mallee water resource plans through interests around the Robinvale-Swan Hill area, with a focus on the Murray River and its tributaries and floodplains, and in Lake Tyrell, a terminal lake at the edge of the Avoca Basin.

“The Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people have lived on this Country since time immemorial, and we are the Sovereign First Nation of our River and Mallee country. We are the Traditional Owners of land, water, culture, language, ancestral heritage, law, customs, secret and sacred objects, songs, stories and artist impressions.”

**Brendan Kennedy, Tati Tati MLDRIN delegate
May 2018**

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Aboriginal Corporation was established in May 2007.

2.1.6.2 Current or pending agreements

Tati Tati Nation is a member of Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN). It is a strong advocate of MDLRIN as an inclusive and representative organisation for Traditional Owner groups in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people have never ceded their sovereignty, nor have they consented nor authorised any others to govern over their people and Country.

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi in working with the Victorian Government to provide their contribution to water resource plans state that their responses to water resource planning are in no way an admission of traditional ownership of water other than that of the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people. The Nation further emphasised that it does not surrender its waterways nor recognise ownership of their water to any State or Commonwealth Governments or their representatives.

The Nation is not currently in any Native Title, Traditional Owner Settlement Act or Registered Aboriginal Party negotiations.

2.1.6.3 Existing reference/scoping materials

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi received funding through Victoria’s water resource plans to conduct an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment at several sites of significance to the Nation. Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners group whom actually participated in the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment maintains intellectual copyright over the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment report.



Figure 9: Scar tree near Margooya Lagoon (Tati Tati Wadi Wadi workshop)

Credit: DELWP

Back row from left: Toby Kirby, Chris Kennedy & Kob , Jade Kennedy, Brendan Kennedy, Cahill Kennedy, Kathleen Terrick,

Front row from left: Harold Ian Kirby, Robert (Bob) Kennedy, Rebecca Kennedy, Jessica Kennedy (girl), John F Kennedy, Thomas Kennedy & Jaylan Kennedy, Joshua Paul Pep Kirby, Bonney Kirby (girl), Jason Bootsy Kirby

2.1.6.4 Preferred means of engagement

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi asserts that no one person can speak for Country. It's preferred means of engagement with Government is initially through the participating Tati Tati MLDRIN delegate/s, who then determines the most effective way to engage more broadly.

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi has expressed strongly that decisions on how water is managed, including flow regimes, volumes, and structures to manage water, should be made in collaboration with Traditional Owners from both the perspective of improving cultural outcomes and applying cultural knowledge. In addition, Government needs to understand discussions in regards to structures on Country should not be limited to cultural heritage as understood through the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

During consultation for the Victorian Government water resource plans, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi has told Government that it wants to be funded to work alongside the Government to improve cultural outcomes on Country:

"We want to be driving this bus and be able to implement our cultural sciences – at the moment we are not even in the bus, we are sitting at the back of the trailer."

Brendan Kennedy, Margooya Lagoon, 2018

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi seeks ongoing and respectful conversations with Government in a collaborative and co-managed structure, with access to talk directly to people in leadership positions, and not have their voice diluted through gatekeepers or through people with any conflicts of interest on Country.

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi asserts that collaboration should be cohesive across land, fire, biodiversity and water, to produce a shared perspective and better outcomes for Country.

"The Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan will provide the opportunity to build on these objectives and, through deeper engagement, identify specific outcomes for water on Country."

2.1.6.5 Water resource plan response

The Victorian Government commenced discussions with Tati Tati Wadi Wadi regarding water resource plans in 2017, following the funding of the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Aboriginal Waterway Assessment. Tati Tati Wadi Wadi included Victorian Government water resource plan representatives in the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment at several locations, and discussed some of the observations and emerging objectives for water in subsequent meetings in the Robinvale area. Representatives from Tati Tati Wadi Wadi met with the Government and MLDRIN in a planning meeting to map out the formal approach to contributing to Victoria's water resource plans. Through MLDRIN, DELWP provided funding for workshops and gatherings on Country, including a Nation meeting held on October 29 2018 to finalise the Water Resource Plan objectives and outcomes.

Over these meetings, workshops and gatherings on Country, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi has identified key objectives over a series of topics:



Caring for Country

“Tati Tati Wadi Wadi have a cultural responsibility to make sure water that flows through Country is healthy and flows downstream for Traditional Owner groups. We need to be resourced and supported to be able to fulfil that cultural responsibility.”

**Approved at the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Nation meeting,
October 29, 2018**

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi have approved a series of objectives for caring for Country, in relation to water and to land impacted by water use, activities and regimes.

The Traditional Owner group has also outlined a need to work in partnership with Government to be a part of a coordinated approach to monitor annual water flows and the impacts of water management and planning on Country, including rivers, creeks, wetlands, lakes, floodplains and swamps and their associated ecosystems.

Capacity through Government resourcing was an objective raised by many participants in the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi meetings. Government funding was seen as a key to Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to revive cultural sciences, enabling them to use their cultural methods to improve the health of Country, and pass down the knowledge to younger generations.

Connected Country

Meetings on Country with Tati Tati Wadi Wadi included several discussions on infrastructure to change water flows or courses, including structures installed as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanisms.

“Tati Tati Wadi Wadi do not agree and do not provide permission for the construction and operation of structures to regulate water on Country. Tati Tati Wadi Wadi do not agree to Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanisms in replacement for natural flows.

Don’t put structures into land where our ancestors are.”

**Approved at the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Nation meeting,
October 29, 2018**

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi wants environmental water delivered on Country in a way that links the channel of the river to the floodplains, creeks and wetlands, rather than through artificial means or infrastructure. The Traditional Owner group has stated to the Victorian Government through the water resource plan consultation that structures on Country are barriers that impede on their wellbeing and are the equivalent to environmental pollution.

Respect and control

For water on Country, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people seek to be ongoing and equal participants with Government departments and their delivery partners, including Catchment Management Authorities and Water Corporations.

Table 2-9: Tati Tati Wadi Wadi objectives and outcomes

Objectives	Outcomes
Tati Tati Wadi Wadi want more healthy, fresh water to flow through our Country, particularly over winter, every year.	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi determines the level of improvement needed for water quality and quantity, based on our determination of what meets our cultural requirements and outcomes.
	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to assess and monitor whether there is improved water quality and more volumes of water required, and if that satisfy our cultural needs and objectives.
Funding to be provided for each Traditional Owner Nation as identified by MLDRIN in the water resource plan areas to have an Aboriginal Water Officer and water program funded and supported.	We are resourced to work on Country and recognised, respected and remunerated for our expertise.
Aboriginal Waterway Assessments, cultural flows and management plans be resourced by Government, and prepared or conducted on Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Country.	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi be resourced, supported and empowered to conduct Aboriginal Waterway Assessments, manage cultural flows and undertake management plans.
	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to work with Catchment Management Authorities to discuss their water needs and be involved in bids for water for the environment, and the timing of when water is released.
Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to be gainfully employed to use cultural practices in a sequence agreed by Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people to improve water quality and increase cultural outcomes, including traditional burns and de-snagging.	Water quality and volumes support cultural outcomes for water on Country.
Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people to have access to water and waterways on Country for cultural wellbeing, cultural economic purposes, practices including swimming, drinking, canoeing.	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi values and uses for water are supported, encouraged and facilitated.
Cultural values are protected and adhered to by private and public landowners.	Water management needs to be reviewed, to ensure water on land that is privately owned can be managed in a manner that is respectful of cultural values.



Objectives	Outcomes
Ecological restoration and conservation is driven by Tati Tati Wadi Wadi traditional ecological knowledge, with intellectual property retained, expertise fully funded, and support provided.	As equal participants, engagement between Tati Tati Wadi Wadi and Government and agencies is ongoing, resourced and respectful and Tati Tati Wadi Wadi are considered as equal participants in making decisions.
Tati Tati Wadi Wadi have ongoing collaboration and ultimately empowerment with Government and agencies to restore connectivity of wetlands and waterways, and improve the health of water on Country, and on how water is used and managed on Country.	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people work with Government and delivery partners to make decisions to improve the health of water on Country.
We are adequately resourced and given the opportunities, and provided the water, to have control of how and when cultural watering objectives are met.	Tati Tati Wadi Wadi have access to water entitlements, and to have a seat at the table in regard to environmental watering decisions.
Tati Tati Wadi Wadi asserts that Government needs to align its processes across land, water, fire and biodiversity to collaborate with the people to produce a shared perspective. That Government funds Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to prepare a Country Plan, that all Government departments and agencies must refer to.	Collaboration with Tati Tati Wadi Wadi is cohesive and reflective of a shared perspective that is designed to allow Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to go directly to Government.

2.1.6.6 Case study

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi spoke in great detail in consultation with Victoria’s water resource plans about waterways of significance, referring to the lakes and the wetlands as lungs, and a great, inter-connected system hosting many ancestral sites. The people spoke of how water decisions made in isolation of considerations for Country degraded culturally significant sites through poor water quality, loss of flows, pest species dominating landscapes due to changed water management regimes, and of sites being cut off from the rest of Country. As an example of an area of interest, the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi group talked with DELWP several times at Margooya Lagoon.



Margooya Lagoon, east of Tol Tol, is easily accessible to the Robinvale township and supports an abundance of native flora and fauna. The lagoon is important to the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Robinvale community, not only because of its proximity to town, but as an important cultural site.

Concerns around Margooya Lagoon

While the Margooya Lagoon has an Environmental Watering Plan developed by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi are concerned with:

- poor water quality
- degraded habitat for birds, native fish, plants
- The regulator installed at the lagoon, which waters the lagoon from the opposite end from the original feeder creek (dry during consultation in 2018)

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi wants to be involved in the water management of the Margooya Lagoon to achieve:

- revegetation of native plants for cultural practices and as habitat and food for bird, fish and fauna
- re-stocking native fish into the lagoon
- reinstatement of how the lagoon receives water

The Traditional Owner group would also like to have a protected place at Margooya Lagoon for them to visit and camp, without sharing with outside visitors

Margooya Lagoon values and uses

Accessible as it is to town, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi consider the Lagoon to be a significant place to connect with Country. They would like to improve the traditional access of the Lagoon to improve accessibility.

The creation of a culturally safe place would enable Tati Tati Wadi Wadi to re-energise culture and educate younger generations.



2.1.6.7 Values and uses

Consultation with Victoria's water resource plans naturally included considerable discussion around the values and uses water has for Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people, including its importance in the past, how it is valued today, and aspirations for the future.

There was talk about the many scar trees that are on Country and how they need water to survive and stay in the landscape, the ceremonial grounds that are now covered with thistles and not receiving any water, the connection of language, and discussion about many individual waterways and water bodies and their connection to Tati Tati Wadi Wadi.

Values and uses and the relevant waterways and water bodies discussed include but are not limited to:

- Old Camp Creek and Bumbang Creek, both which have cultural values
- Belsar Island which was a place to visit, fish and swim
- fish traps at Hattah Lakes and Belsar Island
- thousands of generations of Traditional Owners, including descendants from Tati Tati Wadi Wadi around Chalka Creek
- Lake Mournpall which is an important part of the cultural landscape
- Murrumbidgee Junction and Wakool Creek, on the border
- Burra Creek, which has no water at all, and includes an ancestral site
- Wood Wood, which needs water for the trees and the ancestral sites
- Nyah-Vinifera, which has a ceremonial site and many ring trees
- Kulwin, as a potential area of significance for groundwater.

Lake Tyrell, which has cultural significance for many clans, including Wergaia which as part of Barengi Gadjin Land Council has Native Title over part of the area. Tati Tati Wadi Wadi believes Lake Tyrell needs a resource assessment to understand when and how the water should flow to the lake. There is a thought that Lake Tyrell was once connected to the Murray, not just the Wimmera- Mallee water system.

Tati Tati Wadi Wadi describes gadini (water) as central to beliefs, culture and survival as a First Nation. As stated in the Tati Tati submission to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (2012), Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people have a "deep relationship with the waters, rivers, lakes, creeks, lagoons, tributaries, wetlands, trade routes, gathering places and sacred sites in our traditional lands, all of which hold great significance to us."

The submission explains water has economic importance as a source of food, fibre, medicine and helps grow the plants used to make tools and cultural implements, and that the decline in the water quality and changes to the way water flows and is distributed has had a corresponding socio-economic impact on Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people.

In the words of the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi people, water is integral to song lines and creation stories.

2.1.6.8 Cultural flows

Consultation with Tati Tati Wadi Wadi has included discussion on cultural water entitlements, as a means to achieve either cultural outcomes, or provide economic opportunities. The people see that having a say on how environmental water can be used, including where, when and how, will improve cultural outcomes, however having access to water entitlements as a Traditional Owner group would give greater autonomy in how that water may be used. In addition, as First Peoples, Tati Tati Wadi Wadi assert they have an entitlement to cultural water rights. In its submission to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, it was stated that:

“The Tati Tati vision is for the Murray Darling Basin Authority and its partner authorities to respect our right to own Gadini water and to provide direct water ownership rights with an allocation of 10 gigalitres every two years to be transferred – with funding – to Tati Tati. This would enable Tati Tati to ensure that our Gadini water system sustains our traditional, spiritual, cultural, economic and social existence for the present and into the future.

This water will help to replenish and restore highly culturally significant places for Tati Tati people... there should be water allocations for Traditional Owner First Nations to enable us to discharge our cultural responsibilities.”

Tati Tati Traditional Owners Submission on the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan, April 2012

“Water encompasses Country like a living, breathing thing.”

Approved at the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Nation meeting, October 29, 2018



2.1.7 Taungurung

The Taungurung contribution was developed and signed off by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLAWC), with support from the Taungurung Water Officer. This contribution pertains to the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan.

“Waydjak bunbunarik liwik-nganjin yaraga-ngala dhumbali daada gurnap biik-nganjin yulendj-ngajin. Nganga-ngala biik-nganjin yaraga-ngalaburndap gerr ngarrnga buk wilanja-nganjin

(We are the descendants of our old people, and we have an ongoing responsibility to look after inheritance, which is our Country and our culture. We look after our Country because we have an intimate relationship like thousands of generations before us.)”

Taungurung Buk Dadbagi

2.1.7.1 Introduction

Taungurung have strong cultural, spiritual and economic connections to their land, water, and resources (Country). As custodians of their Country, Taungurung have managed their land and waters sustainably over thousands of generations. The process of dispossession has interfered with the connection between Taungurung and their Country, which is vital for the survival/reintroduction of Taungurung culture and traditions. The connection to land, waters, and resources on Country is vital for Taungurung health and wellbeing.

The Northern Victoria Water Resources Plan comprises the full extent of Taungurung Country. The main basins within Taungurung Country include *Boregam* (Campaspe River), *Waring* (Goulburn River), the Broken River, the King River, and the Ovens River. The waters of *Waring* have a special connection with Taungurung, including its tributaries the Yea River, Acheron River, King Parrot Creek, Rubicon River, Jamieson River, Howqua River, and Delatite River.



Figure 10: Taungurung Buk during the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment

Credit: Will Mooney MLDRIN

The area comprises a great number of lakes, small wetlands and swamps; and some small rivers and tributaries such as Lake Nagambie, Lake Eildon, Lake Eppalock, Reedy Lake, Lake Cooper, Horseshoe Lagoon and Gaynor swamp, Back Creek (near Reedy Lake), Hughes Creek and Sevens Creek, among others.

The current water management framework has denied customary governance systems over land and water, as well as the Taungurung's complex understanding of Country as a 'living



entity' and their obligations for taking care of it. Although Taungurung recognise there has been an important procedural shift in water management in Victoria, these initiatives have focused mostly on gathering traditional values and knowledge related to waterways and increasing the participation of Taungurung in water management, but success in the full recognition and expansion of Taungurung water rights, in line with the principles of true self-determination, is still limited.

The Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan (NWRP) contribution recognises that Taungurung people enjoy close spiritual connections with our Country and have developed sustainable economic practices. We had, and continue to maintain, a special relationship with all of our lands, mountains, and waters. We are now immersed in the process of gathering and protecting our values and the customary uses of water and increasing our participation in water management within the region. This process is an ongoing effort supported by DELWP and other Government agencies. It is essential that this process continuously contributes to the NWRP in the future.

Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLAWC) has recently been funded by DELWP to develop its response to the Northern Victorian Water Resource Plan, and update our Country Plan: *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi*, making our water goals and aspirations more detailed and explicit. The Taungurung Buk Dadbagi Water chapter will reflect on our objectives and aspirations related to water, our responsibility of healing our rivers and wetlands; the Taungurung values and uses of water and our expectations to transform the water management in Victoria.

The consultation process has made it clear that Taungurung water management should be evolving over time; thus, Taungurung goals and aspirations can't be fully addressed in this input to the NWRP. Therefore, this document must be considered 'a living breathing tool' in permanent dialogue with the Taungurung Buk Dadbagi Water Chapter which should be referenced in the NWRP. Reference to Taungurung Buk Dadbagi in the NWRP will assure we are reflective and will also allow us to review and revise our priorities and objectives regarding water management.

Following the principles of true self-determination, it is our interest to keep full control over water policy without any restrictions coming from our NWRP contribution.

The *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi* Water Chapter will also assist and guide the *Baan Ganalina* (Guardians of water, Taungurung water knowledge holder group) and strongly support the Water Policy Officer. In this sense, we believe the *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi* Water chapter will enrich and support Taungurung's contribution to the NWRP development and implementation.

2.1.7.2 Taungurung Land and Waters Council - intellectual property rights

As custodians of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, we request the protection of the intellectual property of the information shared in the NWRP, to ensure cultural and environmental knowledge is protected and managed according to the principles of true self-determination. The protection and management of Traditional Ecological Knowledge are critical as knowledge could be misappropriated and disrespected in the future. Intellectual property rights reflect the custodianship and authority of the TLAWC. All intellectual property rights of water knowledge and practices are vested upon TLAWC, who hold the right to keep the cultural and environmental knowledge confidential. The use or reference of this information for purposes other than informing the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan requires free, prior and informed consent obtained through appropriate consultation with Taungurung.

2.1.7.3 Taungurung Buk Dadbagi – key aspirations

Taungurung Land and Waters Council has released *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi* which outlines our vision and aspirations for our community and Country. *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi* guides TLAWC, our partners and stakeholders to implement action in our interest. We can also use

Taungurung Buk Dadbagi to monitor and measure the effects of our actions. We hope *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi* will be used as a 'living breathing tool for action and reflection' that can be refined as we grow as a community and organization.

Taungurung Buk Dadbagi provides six areas of action. Each section contains a key aspiration, required actions, timelines, and responsibilities.

Key areas for actions are:

1. Identity, recognition, and rights: Daabak (Strong)
2. Always were and always will be strong, proud Taungurung, connected and caring for our Country, culture and people
3. Health and wellbeing: (Daanboor Mon)
4. Taungurung people are strong, healthy and happy
5. Cultural heritage: (Yulendj)
6. Our Knowledge is gathered, protected and preserved
7. Taungurung traditional knowledge: (Taungurung Yulendj)
8. Taungurung knowledge is gathered, protected and preserved
9. Caring for Country: (Biik – Nganjin Dabbagi)
10. Guardians of our Country are active and respected
11. Economic development and employment: (Ngi-Agat Munga)
12. Taungurung – Driving ethical economic development and employment for our people and Country

2.1.7.4 Taungurung Buk Dadbagi – water chapter

Taungurung Land and Waters Council has recently been funded by DELWP to reflect on the outcomes of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) they held last year, supported by the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), to inform more detailed goals and aspirations related to waterways to be included in a water chapter of the revised *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi*. As *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi* is considered a 'living breathing tool for action and reflection,' this is an ongoing process. Taungurung advises all goals and aspirations relating to waterways cannot be presented in this document and in no way does this document exclude future aspirations Taungurung may have relating to water. The current high-level objectives are summarised below:

- establish formal recognition of and fully exercise and expand Taungurung water rights, including managing and protecting waterways within Taungurung Country in compliance with the Traditional Owner Settlement Act (TOSA)
- increase recognition of Taungurung knowledge, values and uses of waterways; and incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in water management and sustainable natural resource management achieving cross-cultural transfer
- establish formal partnerships with CMAs, water managers, Councils and other statutory authorities within Taungurung Country to increase our knowledge and involvement in the management of waterways to transform the water governance model in the region towards one of best practice
- obtain a higher level of control over water resources through the acquisition of water entitlements for cultural, environmental and economic development purposes, taking on other statutory authorities' management responsibilities
- implement culturally appropriate mechanisms and means of engagement to act on waterways within Taungurung Country
- build two-way capacity of Taungurung and water management agencies to partner and

- collaboratively manage water resources on Taungurung Country in line with the principles of true self-determination. All this will enable us to be considered an equal partner in water management and raises cultural awareness in the broader community about our role in caring for Country
- achieve ecological restoration of riverine ecosystems and improve the water quality of impacted waterways due to river flow regulation and harmful land-use practices within Taungurung Country
- secure Taungurung access to culturally and spiritually significant sites, and resources related to waterways
- secure the protection of intangible heritage connected to waterways
- Taungurung expect that the State and its agencies will willingly contribute to the progress of these objectives and aspirations about water management in line with Taungurung's right to self-determination.



Figure 11: Taungurung Buk during AWA at Tarcombe – Hughes Creek

Credit: TLAWC

2.1.7.5 Taungurung Land and Waters Council agreements related to water policy and partnerships

Table 2-10: Agreements related to water policy and partnerships

Agreement	Objective(s)
<p>Recognition and Settlement Agreement - RSA</p> <p>(Executed on 2018, waiting for ILUA to be registered on the National Native Title Tribunal)</p>	<p>"Recognises the Taungurung's Traditional Owner Rights and to confer rights as to access to, ownership and management of areas within the Agreement Area; and for the purposes of decision-making rights and other rights that may be exercised in relation to the use and development of land or natural resources in the Agreement Area."</p>
<p>Natural Resource Agreement – NRA</p> <p>(Executed on 2018, waiting for ILUA to be registered on the National Native Title Tribunal)</p>	<p>Taungurung Land and Waters Council is given the opportunity to actively participate in the development and review of natural resource management policies and natural resource management regional strategic plans that affect the Agreement Area.</p> <p>"The Parties agree that the Corporation has the right to participate in the management of the Natural Resources of the land, and the Parties will work together to develop appropriate strategies to enable the Corporation to participate and obtain employment for Members in the management of Natural Resources."</p> <p>Also, Taungurung has 'take and use rights' for personal use of flora and fauna – no licensing is required, but no commercial use of resources is permitted.</p>
<p>Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement – TOLMA</p> <p>(Executed on 2018, waiting for ILUA to be registered on the National Native Title Tribunal)</p>	<p>"Enables the establishment of a Traditional Owner Land Management Board (Board) and joint management of the Appointed Land (12 parks and reserves). This will give effect to the Recognition and Settlement Agreement and enable the knowledge and culture of the Taungurung People to be recognised in the management of the Appointed Land."</p>
<p>Traditional Owner Land Natural Resource Agreement – TOLNRA</p> <p>(Executed on 2018, waiting for ILUA to be registered on the National Native Title Tribunal)</p>	<p>"All Members may carry out any of the following activities on Traditional Owner Land: access, occupy and use the land; as to Natural Resource other than land: access, hunt, take, use or interfere with the Natural Resource; or cut, dig up or remove the natural resource; or sell or give away any of the Natural Resource; or any other similar activity in relation to the Natural Resource; take or use Water from a waterway or bore in accordance with section 8A of the <i>Water Act 1989</i> (Vic); enter, remain on and camp on the land; gather together to conduct non-commercial cultural activities on the land"</p>



Agreement	Objective(s)
Land Use and Activities Agreement – LUAA (Executed on 2018, waiting for ILUA to be registered on the National Native Title Tribunal)	Specifies the types of land use activities that may be carried out on or affecting Public Land in the Agreement area, and the level of consultation or negotiation required with Taungurung (routine, advisory, negotiation or agreement). The LUAA also outlines a formula for the payment of community benefits to Traditional Owners for certain negotiation and agreement activities. The LUAA is legislated, and non-compliance is considered an offense.
Partnership Statements – PS Goulburn Broken CMA North East CMA North Central CMA (not signed yet)	The purpose of this Partnership Statement is to: comply with the provisions and actions in <i>Schedule 11</i> of the RSA, outline the relationship between the GB/NC/NE Catchment Management Authority to deliver on CMA commitments of the RSA, further develop a relationship between the organisations that delivers outcomes that go beyond compliance with the RSA; and contribute to the full exercise and development of Taungurung cultural rights over land and water management, and to fulfill their responsibilities to look after Country.
Registered Aboriginal Parties – RAP (Recognized on July 2009)	Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are organizations that hold decision-making responsibilities under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area. On 16 July 2009, Taungurung Land and Waters Council receives recognition as a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) and the VAHC appoints Taungurung Land and Waters Council as a RAP for much of its application area. Since then the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council has assigned further sections of area to Taungurung Land and Waters Council for which it has sought to be a RAP (See Map 1 and for a more detailed description, including GPS boundary markers, refer to the Taungurung Recognition of Settlement Agreement.
Member of Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC)	Taungurung Land and Waters Council is committed to the progress and expansion of Traditional Owners water rights, the development of water policy and transformation of water governance in Victoria.
Member of Murray and Lower Darling River Indigenous Nation (MLDRIN)	Taungurung Land and Waters Council participates in the development and expansion of Aboriginal water rights and the pursuit of Aboriginal water in collaboration with other Traditional Owners.

2.1.7.6 Taungurung boundaries and Recognition of Settlement Agreement

On the 26th of October 2018, Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the State signed the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA the State of Victoria and, 'as an alternative to the Taungurung seeking a native title determination under the Native Title Act 1993'). As stated in the Agreement, it formally recognises the Taungurung as the Traditional Owners of their Country and confers rights over land and natural resources. By signing the RSA, the State also acknowledges the continued suffering of Taungurung people through the implementation of laws and policies that discriminate against them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the devastating effects of colonisation upon Taungurung and the role it played in dispossessing Taungurung People of their Country.

Taungurung Country has been legally recognised by the RSA, and it extends from the west upper catchments of the Boregam (Campaspe River), starting at the meeting point of the

Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) boundaries of the Taungurung Land and Waters Council and Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc.

The western boundary of Taungurung extends northerly along the *Boregam* (Campaspe River), up to the town of Rochester. From the town of Rochester, Taungurung boundary generally extends south-easterly to the town of Euroa, and generally north-easterly through the coordinated points specified in the RSA until its junction with the centreline of the Ovens River, southwest of the town of Everton. Then Taungurung boundary generally extends south-easterly along the centreline of the Ovens River to its headwaters and following the east branch of the Mount Smythe Creek until its headwaters. Then south-westerly along the Great Diving Range.

The southern boundary of Taungurung Country generally extends westerly along the southern ridgelines of the Great Dividing Range back to the commencement point previously mentioned (for a more detailed description, including GPS boundary markers, refer to the Taungurung Recognition of Settlement Agreement).

2.1.7.7 Taungurung Land and Waters Council principles of engagement

Taungurung Land and Waters Council has recently employed a Water Policy Officer in July 2018, as part of the Aboriginal Water Grants Program funded by DELWP, to continue the collection of Taungurung values and uses of water, increase our participation in water management, build capacity within the corporation and contribute to the development of Taungurung water rights. With this in mind, Taungurung request that the Water Policy Officer must be considered as the first contact for all waterways matters.

Also, Taungurung Land and Waters Council has recently created the *Baan Ganalina* (Guardians of water), a Water Knowledge Holder Group which will support and advise the Water Policy Officer, assist in project development and implementation and plan and conduct cultural activities on waterways. It would be the role of the Water Policy Officer to inform the Water Knowledge Holder Group and prepare consultation processes if required for any future policy development, evaluation or endorsement. By managing any consultation process and the decision-making, Taungurung Land and Waters Council will secure its self-determination and autonomy.

Taungurung consider that the engagement process should be guided by the following principles and practices to be considered as an equal partner in the planning and management of land and water:

- it should take place everywhere Taungurung rights would be affected in compliance with RSA/ TOSA
- the engagement process must start early and must be an ongoing relationship between Taungurung and the institutions involved (free, prior and informed consent) not a mere tick in the box
- the process must be flexible and culturally appropriate regarding timeframes and deadlines that meet Taungurung needs. It is expected to be a consensus within Taungurung, so the process must take into account and respect the organisation structure and ways of decision making (creating Traditional Owner centered governance and operating systems)
- any process must be open to negotiations, not merely to approve things or comment on decisions halfway done (creating the enabling conditions for self-determination)
- the process must ensure the right support and assistance needed by Taungurung to be part of the process (creating the enabling conditions for self-determination)
- full information should be available and accessible to Taungurung (free, prior and informed consent)
- Taungurung Land and Waters Council intellectual property rights must protect any oral or written contribution resulting from this engagement process



- Taungurung feel confident that in adhering to the above principles we can contribute to water management in the region in partnership with DELWP and other state agencies to achieve our water aspirations and objectives in line with the principles of self-determination.



Figure 12: Shane Monk, Matthew Shanks and Michelle Monk at Wicket Hill reserve during Aboriginal Waterway Assessment

Credit: Will Mooney / MLDRIN

2.1.7.8 Taungurung culturally significant sites

We believe a single input to the NWRP can’t comprehensively include all Taungurung values and uses of water, nor its water management goals and aspirations. The complexity of the Taungurung understanding and relationship with water can’t be captured by a single document, so it is stressed that the following report in no way diminishes the significance of other rivers and wetlands not mentioned or listed within the NWRP. In this sense, the following list doesn’t exclude other small rivers, tributaries, and wetlands within the Taungurung Country.

2.1.7.9 Objectives – outcomes – values and uses

The following objectives and outcomes are the accredited text for Taungurung:

Table 2-11: Taungurung objectives – outcomes – values and uses

Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Develop and fully exercise/implement Taungurung water rights and water management according to the TOSA	Self determination	Social, economic, cultural, environmental, educational
	Compliance of the agreements (TOSA)	
	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	

Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Development of the Country Plan, achievement of goals regarding waterways	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations	Social, economic, cultural, environmental
	Self-determination	
	Rivers and wetlands aspirations and goals are explicit on Country Plan Taungurung Buk Dadbagi)	
Establish partnerships with CMA and statutory authorities for project funding and implementation. Develop new partnerships with water holders and corporations.	Project development and implementation on waterways	Social, cultural
	Equal partners in water management	
	Increase Taungurung capacity for project development	
	Strengthening relations with CMAs, Water Corporations, and other agencies.	
Obtain funding to plan and implement Aboriginal Waterways Assessments on significant rivers and wetlands within Taungurung Country	Gathering and protection of Taungurung values and uses	Social, economic, cultural, environmental, educational
	Increase Taungurung health and wellbeing	
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	
	Identify and protect culturally and spiritually significant sites; and intangible heritage related to waterways	
	Reconnecting Taungurung with significant sites	
	Incorporate Taungurung traditional environmental knowledge to water management and sharing knowledge	
	Improve Taungurung's role in water management	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Build two-way capacity for engagement	



Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Named unnamed creeks and wetlands across Taungurung Country, introduce Taungurung names for significant sites	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	Cultural, environmental
	Assist to identify and protect cultural heritage and sensitive areas	
	Protection and revalorisation of Taungurung language and culture	
	Improve Taungurung role in water management and cultural heritage protection	
Reduce and manage the impact of river flow regulation on rivers and wetlands	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	Social, cultural, environmental
	Restore Taungurung Country to a pre-European condition	
	Restore habitats and healing of Country	
Rehabilitate natural habitats in waterways and wetlands preferably by employing and training Taungurung people	Healing of Country	Social, cultural, economic, environmental
	Obtain job positions for Taungurung	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Restore native flora and fauna for cultural purposes	
Reduce and manage the impact of harmful activities and practices	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	Social, cultural, environmental, educational
	Healing of Country	
	Restore Taungurung Country to a pre-European condition	
	Raise awareness of the broader community about the impacts of harmful practices on Country	

Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Continue to reconnect Taungurung people with Country, through assessments and Country visits	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	Social, economic, cultural, environmental, educational
	Self-determination	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management and cultural heritage protection	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Reconnecting Taungurung with significant sites	
	Identify and protect culturally and spiritually significant sites; and intangible heritage related to waterways	
Continue to reconnect Taungurung people with Country, through assessments and Country visits	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	Social, economic, cultural, environmental, educational
	Self-determination	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management and cultural heritage protection	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Reconnecting Taungurung with significant sites	
	Identify and protect culturally and spiritually significant sites and intangible heritage related to waterways	
Continue to reconnect Taungurung people with Country, through assessments and Country visits	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	Social, economic, cultural, environmental, educational
	Self-determination	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management and cultural heritage protection	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Reconnecting Taungurung with significant sites	
	Identify and protect culturally and spiritually significant sites; and intangible heritage related to waterways	



Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Increase Taungurung participation in water management and project implementation	Obtain job positions for Taungurung	Cultural, economic, social
	Self-determination	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	
Increase Taungurung capacity and confidence to engage in water management	Self-determination	Social, cultural, environmental
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
Reduce the presence of weeds and pest preferably by employing and training Taungurung people	Healing of Country	Social, economic, cultural, environmental
	Restore Taungurung Country to a pre-European condition	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Restore native flora and fauna for cultural purposes, allow food and fiber resources and culturally important plants	
	Obtain job positions for Taungurung	
Obtain water entitlements for cultural and environmental purposes (superficial and groundwater)	Potentially manage land and water in Joint Management areas	Social, economic, cultural, environmental
	Obtain a higher level of control of water resources	
	Restore water to significant sites, water delivery to support cultural practices and objectives	
	Make water accessible to Taungurung	
Obtain water entitlements for economic development (superficial and groundwater)	Explore economic opportunities for Taungurung	Social, economic, cultural, environmental
	Expand Taungurung water rights	
	Explore possible participation in the water market, gain water trading experience and obtain economic returns from temporary trading	
	Obtain job positions for Taungurung	
	Self-determination	
	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	

Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Obtain funding for research on cultural flows or Aboriginal water	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	Social, cultural, environmental
	Expand Taungurung water rights	
	Potentially manage land and water in Joint Management areas	
	Identify and protect culturally and spiritually significant sites; and intangible heritage related to waterways	
	Gathering and protection of Taungurung values and uses of water	
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
Raise cultural awareness within the broader community about Taungurung culture, land and water rights	Self-determination	Social, cultural, economic
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
Partner with CMAs for the planning and implementation of seasonal watering proposals. Increase the capacity to become managers of environmental waters in the future	Restore water to significant sites	Cultural, environmental
	Take on management responsibilities for seasonal watering proposals and management	
	Obtain job positions for Taungurung	
	Improve Taungurung role in water management, influence the delivery of environmental water in Country.	
	Compliance of the agreements (TOSA)	
	Build two-way capacity for engagement	
	Incorporate Taungurung traditional environmental knowledge to water management	
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	



Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Obtain funding for research and implement projects for restoring water to disconnected wetlands and swamps due to river flow alterations	Restore water to significant sites	Cultural, environmental, social
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	
	Healing of Country	
	Improve food, fiber and plants sources for cultural purposes	
	Restore Taungurung Country to a pre-European condition	
Participation in rivers and wetlands Advisory Groups in all CMA and statutory authorities, engaging with other stakeholders within the community	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	Cultural, environmental, social
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	
	Incorporate Taungurung traditional environmental knowledge to water management	
	Build two-way capacity for engagement	
	Raise awareness of the broader community about Taungurung culture and participation in water management	
Establish and implement a culturally appropriate way for engagement	Self-determination	Cultural
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
Obtain funding and support to sustain the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> workshops and consultations when needed and maintain the Water Policy Officer position over time	Self-determination	Cultural
	Capacity building	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Increase water literacy within Taungurung	

Objective	Outcome	Values and uses
Obtain funding to research on the Waring pre-European conditions and the effects of river regulation	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations / Caring for Country	Cultural
	Incorporate Taungurung traditional environmental knowledge to water management	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Increase water literacy within Taungurung	
Obtain funding for research and implement projects regarding cultural practices in waterways. Also, research and implement projects regarding sustainable contemporary uses of waterways	Incorporate Taungurung traditional environmental knowledge to water management	Cultural, environmental, economic
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	
	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations	
Build capacity through employing, procuring and training Taungurung in water management and water-related projects	Obtain job positions for Taungurung	Cultural, environmental, economic
	Capacity building, reinforce the <i>Baan Ganalina</i> development	
	Improve the Taungurung role in water management	
	Improve Taungurung health and wellbeing	
	Contribute to achieving <i>Taungurung Buk Dadbagi</i> goals and aspirations	



2.1.7.10 Case study - Taungurung Land and Waters Council – Aboriginal Waterways Assessment 2017

The Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) is a culturally appropriate tool and process that allows Traditional Owners to assess and monitor rivers and wetlands environmental health so that they can provide informed decisions and build confidence about the water management within their Country. At the same time, the AWA tool contributes to the process of gathering information about the cultural values and uses of water, rivers, and wetlands. It was developed collaboratively by the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), adapting the Maori Cultural Health Index to the Australian context.

Taungurung Land and Waters Council has conducted one AWA in 2017 in collaboration with MLDRIN, MDBA and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. The participants of the assessments consisted of six Taungurung members who were part of the planning and implementation of the assessment tool. In total, thirteen sites were visited which included billabongs, wetlands, lakes, river junctions and reaches of the *Waring* (Goulburn River). The reaches and features were chosen within the mid-Goulburn, due to the special connection of Taungurung with *Waring* and its relevance for Taungurung cultural landscape; the high environmental value of *Waring*; and because the river has been highly transformed by river flow regulation.

The sites visited were:

Site name	Description/location
The Breakaway	Billabong near Alexandra
Splitzgerber	Anabranche of Waring just off Wharengawren Road in Alexandra
Molesworth Billabong	Billabong 15km northwest of Alexandra near the Molesworth Nature Conservation Reserve
Ghin Ghin	A reach near the junction of Waring and the Yea River.
Horseshoe Lagoon	Small Billabong near Trawool within the Horseshoe Lagoon Flora and Fauna Reserve
Praeterrissa	A reach near in front of the Horseshoe Lagoon Flora and Fauna Reserve.
The Whitehead's mouth	Waring and the Whitehead's Creek's junction
Homewood	An anabranche near the Homewood Nature Conservation reserve.
Gardiners Road site	Freshwater swamp off Waring.
Wicket Hill Reserve	Reserve located in the Hughes Creek, a tributary of Waring.
Tarcombe	A reach of the Hughes Creek, in the junction of the Stewart Creek and Hughes Creek.
Reedy Lake	Within the Reedy Lake Nagambie Wildlife Reserve, 35 km from Seymour.
Police Paddocks	A reach near within the Seymour Police Paddock reserve in the Waring.

During the AWA, Taungurung shared knowledge about cultural values and uses of water and other linked resources, collected data, measured and assessed through observation and discussions environmental health, and completed the individual surveys for each site. At each assessment site, Taungurung received information from specialists about the river and wetlands environmental conditions and management history. The data collected contributed to identifying the cultural and environmental values for each site and helped Taungurung people develop informed management objectives for each site.



In brief, the AWA identified the impacts of river flow regulation and its effects on habitats and streams. Also, a strong correlation between good environmental health and high cultural significance was found. The most culturally significant sites were located far or disconnected from the main channel of *Waring*. The tool also allowed Taungurung to identify a set of major threats for these waterways including:

- the deep changes in river flow and the impacts of river regulation
- the effects of harmful practices and activities (land clearing, grazing, and farming related practices)
- poor vegetation conditions
- presence of pests and weeds, and harmful introduced species (carp)
- erosion of river banks and soil degradation
- changes in water availability and water quality
- habitats and riverine ecosystems no longer support native flora and fauna
- mismanagement of recreational practices such as camping, 4WD and motorbike access, illegal logging, hunting and fishing, and littering.

The AWA allowed Taungurung to address specific management actions for each site. Also, broader objectives were developed:

- achieve ecological restoration and conservation
- improve water quantity and quality
- improve Aboriginal access to sites and resources
- increase Taungurung influence in water management
- restrict access to some areas and manage the impacts of harmful activities
- develop educational programs for the community
- better regulation and improve management practices (pests and weed control).

Taungurung values and uses of waterways are considered traditional ecological knowledge, highly valued and culturally sensitive. During the consultation process, Taungurung has decided to keep most of this information confidential and will not be shared in any stage of the NWRP implementation. However, it was agreed that part of the information could be briefly informed as follows: Taungurung people have lived on this Country for more than a thousand generations, our waterways are considered as highways or travel routes for Taungurung. In addition, many of these sites are resource-rich, so they are to be considered sources for food gathering, fishing, hunting and gathering medicinal plants. We have a strong spiritual connection with most of the sites assessed in the AWA, they are considered culturally and spiritually significant and proof of ongoing occupation; some of the participants described the sites as gathering areas for Taungurung in the past, but also as current teaching places, good for sharing knowledge and practice cultural activities.



Horseshoe Lagoon – Trawool

Photo Credit: MLDRIN

The outcomes from the AWA 2017 were:

- increased Taungurung's role and involvement in the planning and management of waterways
- increased capacity and confidence of Taungurung in water management
- reconnecting Taungurung with their Country
- strengthen relations with CMA, Water Corporations and other state agencies and authorities
- development of new projects and proposals.

As a result of the assessment, Taungurung Land and Waters Council in collaboration with the Goulburn Broken CMA have planned and obtained funding for two projects in two of the sites assessed: Reedy Lake and Horseshoe Lagoon; also, both institutions have presented proposals for a wetland restoration project in the Goulburn River.

The first project that has been funded is "Taungurung, restoring water, restoring Country," TLAWC is working in collaboration with Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria and Goulburn-Murray Water. The main project goal is to protect cultural and natural resources on Taungurung Country through restoring water to relevant sites, such as Reedy Lake which was pointed out as having highly cultural and ecological relevance for Taungurung.

The project consists of four visits which will be conducted at different times of the year; October, December and March, to allow a more comprehensive assessment of seasonal species and how they respond to changes throughout the year. A total of seven Taungurung men and women have participated in the assessment also, Taungurung Land and Waters Council personnel and representatives from Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, the Department of Environmental, Land, Water and Planning, as well as industry specialists.



Taungurung during Reedy Lake Assessment – Reedy Lake

Credit: Alejandro Voysest/TLAWC

The project has had two visits, which allowed Taungurung People to reconnect closely with Country and to engage directly with specialists and managers. This experience facilitates the sharing of knowledge between Traditional Owners, managers, and planners; at the same time builds skills and capacity among participants to identify wetland features, flora, and fauna and understand water ecology. Each visit comprised a cultural assessment day where Cultural Heritage surveys were conducted, several heritage sites and features like mounds and scarred trees have been recorded and will be registered for protection shortly.



Waring

Source: Shane Monk/TLAWC

The project “Taungurung, restoring water restoring Country” will help Taungurung Land and Waters Council to improve its participation in land and water management, gain confidence to discuss management of Country in other scenarios; and it will contribute to building partnerships, facilitating engagement and raising cultural awareness among managers and planners.

The second project is the restoration of the Horseshoe Lagoon. Taungurung Land and Waters Council in collaboration with Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria and the local landholders will try to restore water to the billabong. After the first feasibility meeting with the parties involved, the project will look to engage with a consultant to prepare a brief environmental water plan. The plan will outline the features and values (including cultural values) of the wetland and set ecological and hydrological objectives concerning these values. The goal is to include Horseshoe Lagoon in the 2019/2020 wetland Seasonal Watering Proposal to the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. The proposal needs to be completed by April 2019 and if approved and water is available, which is most likely, water could be delivered to the wetland in spring 2019.

The AWA is a culturally appropriate tool that can deliver positive environmental outcomes and contributes to the recognition of Aboriginal knowledge, values, and uses. AWA's contribute to the recognition of the Taungurung connection to Country, triggers the transmission/sharing of knowledge and reinforces the membership to a political community with a specific ethnic and environmental political stance towards water governance and water management. AWA's reflect on the political context where customary authority and management practices are denied and grapple for recognition.

Due to the success of the AWA held in 2017, Taungurung Land and Waters Council is now looking for funding and planning to undertake new AWA's in collaboration with North East CMA and North Central CMA. These assessments will increase Taungurung's engagement and involvement in water management within those two jurisdictions and will allow Taungurung to set specific goals and management objectives in those areas.

2.1.8 Wadi Wadi

Wadi Wadi Country is located just west of Swan Hill, extending west towards Ouyen and south of Robinvale, straddling the Murray River.

A joint consultation was undertaken with New South Wales Department of Industry (DOI Water). This was the first time New South Wales and Victorian State Governments delivered a joint consultation for water resource plans and agreed to adopt New South Wales' approach to engagement. This involved contracting independent Aboriginal consultants, Strategic Small Business Solutions (SSBS), to undertake the engagement to provide a sense of independence, and to safeguard cultural knowledge.

All material in the following parts is First Nations Cultural Knowledge provided by Senior Traditional Owners and Traditional Owners of the Wadi Wadi Nation for this consultation report. Senior Traditional Owners also provided guidance on the consultation process and report draft.

Wadi Wadi contribution was reviewed and signed off by nine senior Traditional Owners who were nominated by the MLDRIN delegates. The Wadi Wadi contribution pertains to both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plans.

There are a group of Traditional Owners who identify as Tati Tati Wadi Wadi. Please refer to a separate contribution at [Section 2.1.6](#).



Figure 13: Wadi Wadi workshop participants on the Murray River in Swan Hill

Credit: DELWP

2.1.8.1 Themes

“Managing water is complex and we need a seat at the table and there are a few seats at the table available now. That is the opportunity for the First Nations people right now. Get your information into the water resource plans to have your say”

Darren Murray, Principal Aboriginal Cultural Liaison Officer, DOI

From the interviews and workshops, it was evident that the following issues emerged as crucial to the Wadi Wadi Nation participants;

- water represents life
- grave concerns over present care of waterways is paramount
- special memories and spiritual and physical cultural connections to waterways are integral,
- accessibility is an issue
- First Nation management or input into waterways is strongly desired
- a firm belief that First Nations people hold solutions to present day waterways problems is collective
- financial assistance is required to repair and maintain damaged waterways under First Nations control and stewardship.



Figure 14: Murray River at Robinvale

Credit: Andrew McMahon, Strategic Small Business Solutions



Water is “Life”

The Wadi Wadi Nation participants said simply that the word water to their people is “Life”.

Water is connected to all aspects of their lives, physically, culturally, and spiritually. It is the actual presence of a body of water that is crucial, as the body of water and the animal and plant life it contains connects to the land and the land connects to the animals and people it supports.

Water for connectivity denotes well-being, in the physical, spiritual and cultural sense.

First Nations views on water for survival in the physical sense differs from the value First Nations people place on water and waterways.

For example, a Wadi Wadi workshop participant noted upon first viewing a digital map of the Nation waterways that a particular lake had taken on the physical form of a very young baby.

The importance of this discovery was evident the next day when it was divulged to the consultants that the baby of the lake had been a discussion topic amongst Nation members at the previous nights’ BBQ and beyond.

Care of waterways

Grave concerns over current care of waterways was a strong recurrent theme emerged across all face to face interviews and during the workshops. That the current care of and for Nation waterways is inadequate, ineffective and damaging to the waterways was/is a collective concern of all participants. The colour and quality of the water in the rivers is not as remembered in the childhoods of the elders and Traditional Owners. There were stories of clear and concise memories of children fishing in the river with mothers and grandmothers and being able to “clearly see the yellowbelly approaching”.

Water clarity is not the case today. First Nations Wadi Wadi people collectively describe the water as murky. Reasons cited for the murky quality of the waterways are pollution from recreational boats, racing boats, paddle steamers with diesel engines, poor stewardship, less native plants, more weeds, erosion and a rapid decline in fish stocks due to lack of breeding space.

There is serious concern for Aboriginal youth and the cultural experiences they miss out on that tie them to family, identity and tradition. Due to the rivers poor water quality, particular memories of Christmas Day celebrations on the river, with everyone swimming to cool down are not occurring as often, or not at all in particular regions as the Traditional Owner’s do not consider the river healthy enough to swim in.

Carp are of huge concern to the Wadi Wadi people, their prevalence and the long-term riverbank damage results in the decimation of fish native to the river system. There is major concern that the premise of sharing water, prevalent amongst First Nation communities is a concept not achievable under current western style governance methodology. First Nations people clearly expressed a belief of favouritism towards farmers in the current water sharing system, and that farmers either do not want to or do not know how to effectively and efficiently manage waterways.

Cultural connections

Special memories physical, spiritual and cultural connections to waterways are paramount to the people. If the waterways are not sustained naturally, the land suffers, the animals and plant life suffer, and the question of survival becomes a real and genuine concern.

The concern for First Nations people is not just one of the survival of the people, but of the survival of the land itself. Healthy water is at the core of the health of the land and the entire eco-system.

Special memories, physical, spiritual and cultural connections are borne out of lived experiences on and around the water and waterways. Memories of Traditional Owner's grandfathers burning bark and placing in the river to draw fish to the area in the then clear waters were shared.



Figure 15: Culturally significant artefacts

Credit: Andrew McMahon, Strategic Small Business Solutions

Historically for Wadi Wadi people the waterways are integral to the stories that are passed down from their ancestor's generation after generation about caring for the water and the land.

Traditional Owners are very deeply concerned that the knowledge held for millennia may be lost as the waterways suffer and the occasions for creating memories connected to water and land decline and the physical, spiritual and cultural connections are lost to Wadi Wadi youth.

Additionally, younger members of the Wadi Wadi Nation expressed a deep yearning to gain more knowledge of the water, the land and the history of their recent and long departed ancestors, so they may be able to continue their inherent culture and pass the lessons onto their children in perpetuity.

Accessibility

Accessibility to waterways is vital to the First Nations Wadi Wadi people. The water, land, plants and animals cannot be monitored for health, quality and cared for, fish cannot be accessed in the traditional way for eating and sharing with family, fish stocks cannot be monitored, and maintenance of the waterways and significant and sacred sites is problematic.

The recognition and accessibility to birthing trees, burial sites, scar trees, artefacts and the respect due to massacre sites is of concern.

Cultural events are less likely to occur due to lack of accessibility and continuity of cultural identity may be at risk.



First Nation management

First Nation management and input into waterways is strongly desired and financial assistance is required to repair and maintain damaged waterways under First Nations control and stewardship. From the workshops emerged a constructive plan to for the Wadi Wadi people to form a committee, register a corporation with ORIC and apply for funding through the Aboriginal Water Unit at DELWP. A DELWP employee presented at the workshop and advised of funding pathways available to successful applicants.

Wadi Wadi people expressed their desire to run a program of waterways monitoring and management, using First Nations rangers to care for the waterways using proven traditional methods. It was noted that in some areas, First Nations people were already attempting to care for waterways by daily walking the banks and removing rubbish, such is their concern for the decimation occurring.

It was identified that funding for a boat, a four-wheel drive and wages are required to begin a program, the concept being that First Nations rangers would act as a conduit to authorities to advise of illegal incidents, but also as a deterrent to potential criminal activity. First Nations people would also act as educators to the public, about caring for the river using sustainable methods of management and control. From this, an income stream could be possible, with culturally appropriate tours of First Nations history being made available to tourists, thus providing funding for the continuation of the caring for waterways program.

Stewardship

A firm belief that First Nations people hold solutions to present day waterways problems is collective. Throughout the consultation journey with the Wadi Wadi Nations Traditional Owners and the Wadi Wadi workshop participants it was clear that there is a common belief that solutions exist for the current problems with the waterways. The consensus presented was that these solutions have been available for all time, there is knowledge accrued over thousands of years and is there for the asking, the First Nations people just need to be asked and more importantly, actively listened to with action taken using the knowledge shared, with continuing involvement and real, genuine and meaningful inclusion of First Nations people.

A First Nations Wadi Wadi Elder described in detail instances of sharing knowledge with water authorities on where to sink drills to access water and being within mere metres or centimetres of the water table as proven when accessed. This ability the First Nations people attribute to is down to being so connected to the land they can read it, from experience, from memories, from oral history and from an innate ability to feel the land and its individual story.

2.1.8.2 Categories of values and uses

Table 2-12: Wadi Wadi - Values and uses

Themes	Categories	Detail
Water is "life"	Connectivity- physical, spiritual and respect for all lifeforms including the land and water itself	The emotive and symbolic thoughts, feelings and ideas evoked by images and visual connectivity with bodies of water such as the "baby of the lake" are representative of the water is "life" ideology. Community gatherings, corroborees, healing properties, cultural identity are all interwoven with the water is "life" theme.
	Animals	Murray cod, river mussels, yabbies, yellowbelly, redfin perch, black bream, tench and catfish, birdlife, kangaroos and rabbits, turtles, turtle eggs, swans, swans' eggs and platypus.
	Plants	Bush medicine (old man weed), burning bark (for fishing).
	Physical and emotional well-being	Participants reported strong feelings of water bodies acting as calmatives, relaxing and destressing them when feeling low or anxious. Older Wadi Wadi Nation members recalled physical well-being when they were able to access waterways and maintain physical activity on a regular basis, for food gathering and recreational purposes.
		In one instance, a member who trained in her youth as swimmer off country and stalled, returned to Wadi Country and built her strength swimming the Murray River where the spiritual connectedness she felt inspired her on to winning gold medals.
		She also recalls the mob swimming alongside her, feeling the connections and enhancing their own physical and emotional well-being.
		Another mob member tells the story of a drug addicted First Nations youth being ordered to spend time on the river at the suggestion of his father. The youth destressed, connected to the water and is now recovered.



Themes	Categories	Detail
Grave concerns over current care of waterways	Inadequate, ineffective and poorly managed waterways	<p>Stories of algae build up and disappearing water bodies and swamps, lagoons and billabongs were common throughout the interviews and workshops.</p> <p>Deep concern over declining and decimation of native fish stocks due to lack of fish breeding grounds and severely polluted and eroded rivers was voiced repeatedly. The empty swamps contribute heavily to the declining fish stocks and they (empty swamps) are directly related to poor water management.</p> <p>To First Nations Wadi Wadi people, water sharing is a duty, it is a resource to take care of all things, past, present and future and it is feared that Western style management systems inherently do not understand how to effectively share water.</p>
Accessibility	Restricted and problematic accessibility to waterways	<p>Restricted access to waterways, through legally enforced restrictive policies allowing farmers excessive access to water or through societal recreational pastimes such as 4WD access destroying habitat for both plants and animals and damaging natural pathways to waterways is causing concern to Wadi Wadi people. They feel they are unable to access fresh food sources, bush medicine or to care for the waterways as required culturally. Lore customs are passed from generation to generation on caring for the land and the water and restricted accessibility is counteractive to that process.</p>
First Nations stewardship over waterways	Custodial First Nations ownership	<p>First Nations Wadi Wadi people see control and cultural ownership of the waterways as integral to the future of water in Australia.</p> <p>To that end, a committee was formed with the intent of forming an Aboriginal Corporation to run a 'Management and Monitoring' Waterways program under First Nations control.</p> <p>Initially funding would be required through the Victorian Aboriginal Water Program.</p>
First Nations solutions to waterways issues	Collective consensus	<p>Across the interviews and workshops was the belief that solutions to restore the water quality and address the water sharing issues are available and positive outcomes are achievable if the Wadi Wadi people can take control of the issues through the implementation of the above-mentioned water management program.</p>

Feedback

Feedback from First Nation Wadi Wadi Members are outlined in [Table 2-13](#) below.

Table 2-13: Feedback from First Nation Wadi Wadi members

Feedback	Source
"Water is Life"	Workshop
"Empty waterholes, swamps, lagoons and lakes are heartbreaking"	Face-to-face interview
"I connected spiritually to the river on my Country and trained in that river and won gold medals in state swimming championships"	Face-to-face interview
"There is no separation of the land from the water - they need each other"	Workshop
"It is Aboriginal lore to protect and care for the water and the land"	Face-to-face interview
"Anyone, no matter where they are from, or animals or plants who are on Country need to be protected and cared for with the land and the water"	Face-to-face interview
"Let the cultural flows come back naturally"	Face-to-face interview
"The river itself is a lifeforce to us"	Face-to-face interview
"Culturally and spiritually the river, the creeks, they are a part of you"	Face-to-face interview
"Us TO's think this is special that we are being asked what we think about water"	Face-to-face interview
"We, the Aboriginal people have already restored (through funding) a dried-out wetland, Perricoota, cause we know how to do it and the birds are back now and breeding. Now it needs protecting but there are no people on the ground to do that"	Face-to-face interview
"Christmas Day celebrations were very special on the river, in those days we (all the kids) could swim in the river with the adults watching over us, but now, we don't think the river is right to swim in. So we don't really have Christmas down here. We drank the river water until the 1980"	Face-to-face interview
"Oh yes, we always drank the river water, it was clear and bright, and you didn't have to take your own water with you like you do now"	Face-to-face interview
"Aunty used to send us kids down to the river to spear fish for our tea. We always got good fish to feed us all. Now I have a boat to fish in and all I can catch is carp"	Face-to-face interview
Ceremonial occasions, one TO and Wadi member reported their grandfather was a Ceremonial Man who would conduct initiation ceremonies in the River	Face-to-face interview
They want to be able to bring these rites of passage back to community, but would not let the young people into the river now as it currently is	Face-to-face interview
"Water is for cleansing"	Face-to-face interview

Feedback	Source
Water connects Aboriginal people, "upstream share with downstream"	Face-to-face interview
"We still get inspiration just being near the water, I live the culture everyday but when I'm near the water I dance"	Face-to-face interview

2.1.8.3 Evaluation

Table 2-14: Wadi Wadi - Risks

Themes	Categories	Detail
Water is "Life"	Connectivity	Poor water quality lessens accessibility that and weakens connectivity. Water is now not drinkable and a bad colour and not good for swimming. Cultural connection to water is integral to identity
	Animals	Less animals, far less native fish, yabbies, freshwater mussels, a finding of 8 netted (1 albino) platypus which all died, less fresh food available for people, carp are devastating the rivers
	Plants	Overgrowth of weeds, less to no bush medicine plant life available
	Physical and emotional well- being	Less physical activity leading to health issues, poor diet lacking nutrients from fresh foods, less access to the calmatve effects of the waterways leading to spiritual anxiety, depression and perhaps drug and alcohol problems
Current care of waterways is inadequate	Waterways damaged	Algae build up, damaged riverbanks, erosion, poor water quality, poor flow, 12 empty swamps, lagoons and creeks, silt has doubled (firestick burning solves silt issue)
Stewardship	Restricted access	Inability to care for water and land as required by First Nations Lore and gather food and plants for traditional purposes
Solutions	Custodial control	Without First Nations control and input, water problems will continue and worsen
	Problem solving for waterways	First Nations Wadi Wadi members collectively agree that they hold the knowledge to solve the current issues and maintain strong, healthy and viable waterways into the future

2.1.8.4 Impacts

Table 2-15: Wadi Wadi - Impacts

Feedback	Source
"There is so much pollution from the boats, there are so many on the river"	Wadi Wadi member

Feedback	Source
"The race in Echuca starts in the wrong place, it is killing the area the fish breed in"	Wadi Wadi member
"There was so much silt from not opening the gates enough, that when gates were opened the river went black"	Wadi Wadi TO
"A farmer let something into the river and the gum trees died"	Wadi Wadi TO
"Uncontrolled tourism causes the river to be unhealthy"	Wadi Wadi TO
We need more of this, this asking us TO's what to do about the water so we can fix it"	Wadi Wadi TO
"The breeding grounds are affected in the river and now the creeks and the off-shoot waterways are wet and dry depending on weir releases, the fish stocks are too low now"	Wadi Wadi member
"We need water put back into the swamps, the bush tucker and medicine are gone"	Wadi Wadi TO
"Water releases are mainly for the farmers, the irrigators"	Wadi Wadi TO

Feedback**Table 2-16: Wadi Wadi - Feedback**

Quote	Source
Government and farmers don't know how to share the water, so our sharing water beliefs are at risk.	Wadi Wadi member
We have no rights, not in this conversation, and we need a licence to be connected to water.	Wadi Wadi TO
Our way is a preserved way of life – and advanced way of looking after Country, that way is at risk of dying out.	Wadi Wadi member
Our storytelling, our gathering on the water, our language has all changed because of a need for secrecy.	Wadi Wadi member
The Government need to realise culture is at risk and needs to be practiced traditionally and we need access for connection to our water and Country.	Wadi Wadi TO
We see illegal fishing and we don't like it.	Wadi Wadi member
Parks and Wildlife have restricted culturally significant areas.	Wadi Wadi TO
Physical and spiritually emotional places are not accessible and are of historical significance.	Wadi Wadi TO
The feelings of safety and healing have been lost because we can't spend time in the water, putting our health at risk.	Wadi Wadi member
When we lived on the river as kids, the river was a shop, we got our food and our water and now we can't, and the young ones can't. We only ever took what we needed.	Wadi Wadi TO

Quote	Source
Drug, alcohol and domestic violence issues are occurring and putting us at risk, because of a lack of access to water, to culture and cultural activities.	Wadi Wadi member

2.1.8.5 Objectives and outcomes

The MDBA Part 14 Guidelines advise the aim of consultation processes should be ‘to identify Traditional Owners’ objectives for water management, and the desired outcomes that the objectives would contribute towards.’

‘Objectives are commonly understood to mean ‘aspirations’ or ‘goals’ and is often expressed as wishes.’

Table 2-17: Wadi Wadi - Objectives

Feedback
To have full “First Nations control of bush and water and that will result in fixing the problems”.
“To every problem there is a solution and Aboriginal people are the solution and have the solution to water problems”.
“Everything be respected, respect everything TO’s have fought for – respect falls under Lore.
“We want Government to engage more with Aboriginal people”.
To no longer feel like we are sharing our knowledge with Government and not being listened to. We are Traditional Owners of the land and should be Custodians of the land”.
To have genuine, real world jobs for Aboriginal people, like water and land rangers. To have MLDRIN advocate for funding so Wadi Wadi can set up a corporation through ORIC and apply through the Aboriginal Water Unit at DELWP for funding for an Aboriginal Water Ranger Program (AWRP) to operate in the Wadi Wadi area.
We want to define our objectives and work towards outcomes.
To stop going around in circles, sick and tired of it, we want to move forward.
To have cultural sites of significance identified and protected.

Table 2-18: Wadi Wadi – Outcomes

Feedback
Carp are controlled, fish are re-stocked and breeding grounds are monitored and maintained, plants and bush medicine thrive again as First Nations control and management programs are implemented.
Rivers flow naturally again, waterholes fill up naturally and swamps will be healthy and full of wildlife. We want to drink the water, swim in the water and heal ourselves and our kids in the water.
Cultural identity, spirituality, connectivity and accessibility to water are all restored and rebalanced through respect for Aboriginal knowledge. Burial sites and sites of historical significance can be monitored and respected. Spirits can rest and not be upset by being disturbed.

Feedback
Good communication with Government and ongoing commitment from Government to respect and act on Aboriginal Lore.
Receive funding with MLDRIN support for funding application to the Aboriginal Water Program and commence Aboriginal Water Ranger Program on Wadi Wadi traditional land, to begin culturally appropriate training and implement traditional methods of managing waterways. The ranger will report to the Wadi Wadi Corporation Committee with the Committee reporting to the funding body. Observation and diligence is the key with the rangers reporting problems to appropriate authorities as required.
Signage will be in place and Aboriginal rangers will be surveying and maintaining and monitoring the rivers in line with the AWRP policies and procedures.
To have moved forward and have ongoing positive outcomes and decision making by water planners.
To have moved forward with the identification of all culturally significant sites and protective mechanisms in place where required.



2.1.9 Wamba Wemba

The Wamba Wemba contribution pertains to both the Wimmera-Mallee and Northern Victoria Water Resource Plans. Wamba Wemba contribution was distributed to the Wamba Barapa Working Group on 11 December 2018 and the 8 March 2019 by the First Nations Legal and Research Services. There were no content amendment suggestions or objections to the report.

2.1.9.1 Description

The Wamba Wemba would like to note that their contribution to the Water Resource Plan is a snapshot in time. The aspirations presented are dynamic and will continually progress and be updated as the broader landscape and context changes. There is an intention to keep this document up to date on a website in the near future and should be referred to for the latest version.

Clans/family groups

The Wamba Wemba Nation is defined by many clan groups that form approximately 16 family groups for the Nation. The clan groups are descendants of Wamba Wemba families.

The Wamba Wemba people were the first Traditional Owner group of this local land and waters and continue to be acknowledged as an important part of this area's history.

Country

Wamba Wemba areas of interest are around the Loddon River, reaching northwards from Kerang, Victoria to Swan Hill, and including the area of the Avoca River, southwards towards Quambatook. In a north-easterly direction, areas of interest is over the New South Wales-Victorian border to Boorrroban and Moulamein, and extended to the vicinity of Barham and Lake Boga in Victoria. The Wamba Wemba also have interest in Lake Tyrell along with other Traditional Owner groups and their contribution has been included in the Wimmera Mallee Water Resource Plan.

They may have other Country of interest that has not yet been identified.

Scope

The Wamba Wemba is a cross-border Nation with areas of interest in both Victoria and New South Wales. This document focuses on aspirations within Victoria. Wamba Wemba's contribution in the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan has been updated since the submission of the Wimmera Mallee WRP in February 2019.

The Wamba Wemba look forward to the engagement for the New South Wales Murray and Lower Darling water resource plans in near future.

Organisations/Working Groups (NRM)

The main organisations and groups that Wamba Wemba people are involved in (within Victoria) are:

Table 2-19: Organisations and groups

Organisation Groups	Brief Description
Wamba Barapa Working Group (through First Nations Legal and Research Services)	They are in the process of progressing their native title claim and have requested that DELWP engages with the group where possible regarding on matters that affect their rights and interests on Country.
Barapa Wamba Water for Country Steering Committee	They are funded through DELWP Aboriginal Water grants and work with the NCCMA to make decisions on the Barapa Wamba Water for Country Project.
Wiran Aboriginal Corporation	They currently have six directors who are focusing on setting up the governance structures.

2.1.9.2 Current or pending agreements

Native Title and Traditional Owner Settlement Act

The Wamba Wemba and Barapa Barapa peoples are in the preliminary stages of their native title matter which may include progressing to a settlement agreement under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic).

Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) (Cultural Heritage)

Wamba Wemba does not currently have RAP status, however, the group is undertaking the required preliminary work to apply to be recognised as a RAP for their Country.

Traditional Owner views regarding arrangements

Traditional Owners noted frustration with the engagement process and advocated to be included at all levels of negotiations. Wamba Wemba Traditional Owners have expressed that the engagement process with stakeholders must be open and transparent and the group is adequately resourced to engage at an equal level with stakeholders. The Wamba Wemba group has noted that there are challenges in acquiring resourcing for the Corporation and to call full group meetings to consider stakeholder proposals.

2.1.9.3 Existing reference materials

Aboriginal Waterway Assessment

An Aboriginal Waterway Assessment was undertaken in 2015 by Wamba Wemba in the Weraï Forest, New South Wales as part of a pilot research undertaken by the MDBA to test the tool in the Australian context.

No AWAs have been done with Wamba Wemba in Victoria. In partnership with the North Central CMA and MLDRIN, Wamba Wemba are planning for an AWA at Round Lake and Lake Boga to link with environmental watering programs (subject to funding). Traditional Owners at the workshop thought before environmental watering is done, an AWA should be conducted on that site.



Use and Occupancy Mapping

In 2009/10 a use and occupancy mapping project was conducted by the MDBA in conjunction with MLDRIN, Yarkuwa and the Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council in the Werai Forest, New South Wales. Many Wamba Wemba Traditional Owners were involved in the project and several Traditional Owners are trained in use and occupancy mapping.

Kerang Wetlands Ramsar Action Plan

NCCMA developed a detailed action plan in coordination with the multiple stakeholders with a role in managing these wetlands. This included Wamba Wemba and Barapa Barapa Traditional Owners who were involved in identifying cultural values and specific management actions to look after the wetlands.

Additionally, the North Central CMA has co-ordinated monitoring and NRM programs in the area in collaboration with Traditional Owners including: weed control, revegetation, controlling rabbit populations and fencing high priority vegetation.

Barapa Wamba Water for Country Project

The current project builds on the Barapa Water for Country project, which commenced in 2014 to identify and map traditional values and sites of cultural significance in the Gunbower Forest. The second phase of the project focused on flow objectives and how these will deliver cultural outcomes in the Gunbower Forest. This project was initiated through the Living Murray Program, giving focus to the Gunbower Forest Icon site.

In 2018-19 the project has extended to gain understanding of the cultural values and aspirations of wetlands on Wamba Wemba Country as well including the Kerang Lakes.

Indigenous Response to the Living Murray Initiative (2003)

The Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) commissioned a report to detail Indigenous responses to achieve its vision of "a healthy River Murray system, sustaining communities and preserving unique values". The report includes responses received during consultation with the Wamba Wemba in 2002. This has been included in the values and uses, risks and impacts and the objectives and outcomes sections of this contribution as it is still highly relevant.

Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes

This project included a case study on the social and cultural heritage landscape of Lake Boga. This has been included in the values and uses section of this contribution.

North Central CMA Waterway Strategy 2014 – 2022

Recognises the knowledge, culture and perspectives of Aboriginal people and the importance of rivers and wetlands for Aboriginal values and uses. Actions in the strategy include:

"The North Central CMA will work with Traditional Owner groups to strongly align the 2014-22 North Central Waterway Strategy and 'Whole of Country Plans' and continue to explore opportunities to work with Traditional Owner groups on the strategy's priority waterways" (p.14).

Mallee CMA Waterway Strategy 2014-2022

Recognises that Traditional Owners continue to have connection with the Mallee's natural landscapes and values near waterways. It outlines the following goals:

"To protect the extent and condition of Cultural Heritage (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) sites associated with waterways; and to increase community capacity for, awareness of and participation in waterway management."

The strategy outlines the following principal *“Traditional Owners – the skills, knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous people will be incorporated into waterway management.”*

Future Funding of \$40 million

In May 2018, the Federal Water Minister David Littleproud announced a commitment of \$40 million over 4 years across the Basin to support the acquisition of water to support Aboriginal cultural and economic outcomes. This is the first significant commitment of funding to purchase water for First Nations in Australia. Traditional Owners at the workshop felt that this funding needs to be distributed evenly amongst Traditional Owner groups in the Basin.

2.1.9.4 Preferred means of engagement

The Wamba Wemba currently have two MLDRIN delegates with New South Wales and Victoria representation. It was suggested that MLDRIN delegates require more resourcing so that they can pass on information from meetings to the wider Traditional Owner group.

The Wamba Barapa Working Group is an interested stakeholder and a point of contact for proponents undertaking work on Wamba Wemba Country. First Nations Legal and Research Services, through the delegated lawyer for Wamba Wemba procedures, is a preliminary contact point for the Working Group. For any substantial and important decisions regarding activities and projects on Wamba Wemba Country, the Working Group will refer these decisions to the full native title group.

Traditional Owners in the workshop requested for Government to engage directly with Wamba Wemba people and not through peak body organisations. Where groups are compliant with Government agencies, they should be contracted to deliver projects. There should be capacity building of Traditional Owner organisations. Government organisations should go directly to Traditional Owner organisations and be the first point of contact.

Wamba Wemba people expect to be reimbursed for their time. They are contributing to the discussion as consultants and should be recompensed accordingly e.g. travel, out of pocket expenses and loss of wages. If meetings are held mid-week, many Traditional Owners are unable to attend without compensation for loss of wages. Additionally, many Traditional Owners no longer live on-Country and appreciate support to be able to travel to the meetings/gatherings/field trips.

During the Nation meeting most people indicated that they preferred receiving information via post rather than email. They also appreciated face to face engagement as it shows respect.

Wamba Wemba have concerns from the lack of consultation from all Government departments and water agencies to date and provided an example that environmental watering decisions seem to be made before the public including Traditional Owners know about them. It would be interesting to know what is being watered; why it is being watered; and how much water is being delivered over how many days. This would allow the opportunity to visit the site or co-ordinate an event associated with the watering. It was also suggested for Traditional Owners to undertake and Aboriginal Waterways Assessment before environmental watering occurs.

Representatives from Wamba Wemba indicated that they would like to be aware of NRM projects across the sector and it was suggested to meet more regularly as a Nation to learn about and have input on various projects across the relevant teams/organisations.

Representatives felt that Government do not have a clear understanding of the Aboriginal social structure (Nation Groups, clan groups, family groups) and how to engage effectively. There was a suggestion that there should be a representative from each family group involved.



2.1.9.5 Values and uses

The following statement was prepared by Ken Stewart and shared during the workshop receiving support by other Traditional Owners to include it in the Water Resource Plan as an explanation of why Country is important.

"OUR LAND and WATER

As a person of Aboriginal descent with close ancestral links to both Murray River Country and the Mallee/Wimmera Country there are many materials as well as ethereal markers in the present landscape that connect us to our People's long history of association with the Landscape.

With the passing of time since European colonisation there has been a rapid decline in the practice of cultural traditions that have been passed from one generation to the next since time immemorial.

This makes all archaeological sites highly significant to firstly our Elders as some of them witnessed our Ancestors living the cultural practices that created these sites, secondly to me and my generation as this is how and where the Elders pass on to us the knowledge and wisdom of our culture, thirdly to our children and the future generations as this is our Ancestral Legacy.

While this holds true for all material culture sites such as mounds, middens, scarred trees and artefact scatters our burial places and the skeletal remains they hold are sacrosanct and are the most sacred sites we know because these are the resting place of our Ancestral families.

I and many others of my Aboriginal Countrymen and Countrywomen feel that we have been entrusted with the care and protection of these sites and song lines until it is time to pass this responsibility to the next generation.

Kenneth Stewart

Workshop and field trip

During the first workshop, an open discussion was had about why water is important to Wamba Wemba people with consideration of environment, social, economic and spiritual aspects. Aboriginal values and uses of water were also spoken about more informally during the field trip. The main themes that emerged included:

Lifeline

During the workshop water was described as *"a lifeline – without it we have no fish or animals"*. Another person mentioned *"looking after the environment is looking after culture"*. The presence and quality of water is the largest influential factor on the cultural health of the rivers, lakes and wetlands. Water itself is a cultural value simply by its presences and its' wide-ranging effects on other cultural resources.

Identity

There is an inextricable connectivity between identity, spirituality and water.

"land and water are important to maintain identity and spiritual connection" – Wayne Firebrace

Wamba Wemba identity is bound through their connection to land and water and includes: totems, language, stories, beliefs and values. Creation stories are part of the river and it is important to maintain fish passage to protect creation (MDBC, 2003). There is the legend of the Bunyip in Swan Hill.

"Our lives are connected to the river as well as our emotional wellbeing" (MDBC, 2003).

Plants and Animals

There is a spiritual, cultural and ecological connection between water and the animals and plants that depend on water. During the workshops and field trip there was mention of plants used for bush medicine, food, craft such as basket weaving and ceremony artefacts. Native plants such as native mint and flax lily were predominately used. Scar trees are valued as a historical reminder of traditional harvesting techniques. Floodplains were noted as important and box trees, red gums, she-oaks and acacias communities need to be maintained (MDBC, 2003)

Animals commonly discussed included: turtles, black swans (including swan eggs), fish, Murray cray, yabbies and mussels. The red tail black cockatoo and brolga were noted as being important. It is culturally important to preserve these animals to hunt and fish and continue a social/spiritual connectivity to the waterways.

"Murray cray is a delicacy food used in ceremonial occasions like weddings... Only take the big ones, not the ones with eggs. Aboriginal people only took what they wanted to use".

Stephen Morrison

During the field trip, the North Central CMA proposed to do a project with Traditional Owners on Murray Crays and a joint application for funding was submitted in February 2019. Traditional Owners recognise that the water regimes and river patterns are linked with seasonal activities for communities along the river.



Livelihoods

It was mentioned that waterways support livelihoods whether it's through providing food sources to eat, sell or to enjoy hunting as a customary activity. A lot of Traditional Owners caught and sold rabbits and fish for income. Communities used to drink from the river and resources were shared in times of hardship.

It was also recognised that there are potentially economic opportunities through aquaponics etc.

Lake Tyrrell

During conversations with one Traditional Owner, they highlighted Lake Tyrrell as a sacred place for men to navigate at night time "sky reflection".

Literature

Further Wamba Wemba values and uses are listed below based on a literature review.

Social and Cultural History of Lake Boga

Lake Boga has a rich social and cultural history and has a case study prepared on it to demonstrate Victoria's heritage (Heritage Council, 2018). The Aboriginal values for Wamba Wemba people identified in the case study include:

- stories associated with the formation of the landscape, explaining the lack of trees around the lake, features associated with the lake and the river, the local fauna and the moon (the formation of ancestral landscape)
- Evidence of numerous campsites and middens containing food remains of bone and fresh water shellfish, earth ovens used to cook meals, surface scatters of stone artefacts and burial sites (aboriginal economy, resources and customs)
- The Wamba Wemba occupied a wide area within the Kerang Lakes system including Lake Boga and nearby Lake Mannaor as well as land up to the banks of the Little Murray River (Barne Mille) and the Murray River.
- European settlement placed pressure on the Wamba Wemba populations as pastoralists were threatening their land, resources and cultural traditions. The Moravian Mission was established in 1851 and closed in 1856 unable to attract many Aboriginal people.
- In the late 19th century, land selectors moved into the area and water supply was formed to supply the new agricultural settlement. The town of Lake Boga developed to include railway station, shops and a school.
- Many Wamba Wemba people worked on rural land selections or worked on pastoral or agricultural properties e.g. seasonal work including delivered mail, worked as shearers, stockmen or within the town itself.

During the field trip it was evident that Traditional Owners maintain a close association with Lake Boga and the township. This included the primary school and the cemetery and memories of spending time with family along the edges of Lake Boga.

Traditional Owners also mentioned seasonal work such as grape picking as well as working at the stockman station, loading bales of hay and cutting wood for the paddle steamer.

Kerang wetlands

The Kerang Wetlands Ramsar Site Action Plan (State of Victoria, 2017) highlights Aboriginal values (for both Wamba and Barapa) including:

- mounds, scar trees, middens, burials, hearths, surface scatters and isolated artefacts
- the wetlands continue to function as places of spiritual and cultural connection

- the wetlands provide habitat for flora and fauna that are important resources for food and medicine.

There is an abundance of cultural heritage sites with many recorded on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System (ACHRIS). There are also sites that are not registered as a means of privacy and protection from the public including:

- important places for ceremonial or spiritual purposes
- places of gathering and social meetings
- camp sites
- fishing or food gathering sites
- places of trade
- women's and men's sites
- burial and ceremonial sites.

2.1.9.6 Risks and impacts

During the workshop, Traditional Owners were asked "What are some of your concerns about water management and its impact on Aboriginal use and values?".

"If you don't look after the bush it will impact the river – everything is connected. Water affects everyone and influences multiple systems (economics, food, etc.)"

Richie Kennedy Junior

The main themes raised included:

Water quality decline from land clearing, erosion of the river banks, blue green algae and blackwater events. The decline in water quality is reducing the cultural health of waterways by rendering the water unusable for humans and impacting plants and animals.

Inappropriate recreational use such as jet skis, boats and 4x4 produce pollution and destroy habitat and impact on ability to swim.

Water regulation has completely changed the flow regime and near Swan Hill the river drops to very low levels impacting on social use and enjoyment of the river. Additionally, many wetlands in Wamba Wemba Country were noted to be drier than normal and a general comment that trees look stressed and cultural resources that would normally be expected are absent. Natural flows have been removed (MDBC, 2003). The environmental flows are not coordinated to Indigenous practice (MDBC, 2003).

Water oversubscribed creating a barrier for Aboriginal people to enter the water market and sustain a livelihood with one person commenting "land is worth nothing without water". There is also recognition that water needs to be respected, conserved and it is important for keeping Country healthy. Water tends to be in the hands of individuals and multi-national companies (MDBC, 2003).

Over fishing of the rivers and people not following good fishing practices "only take what you need – that's what we have done for generations". Additionally, there were comments that now the river is full of carp and there was also concern releasing the carp virus and what the side effects will be.



Lack of involvement of Aboriginal people in water management has been detrimental to environmental and cultural health of waterways. Traditional Owners feel like a minority, are not adequately engaged and noted a lack of transparency the way water is managed and where the funding is going. Science of natural resource management does not incorporate cultural knowledge (MDBC, 2003).

Decline of spiritual connection to waterways: The spiritual connection of Indigenous peoples is not recognised (MDBC, 2003). Traditional Owners feel they are losing their spiritual connection to the living world (MDBC, 2003). It was mentioned that people are not spending as much time on Country anymore and are losing the understanding of the landscape, where things are and why. One person mentioned that there is particularly a lack of women involved. “Compensation should be made available for loss of livelihood and disruption to enjoyment of our spiritual and cultural life” (MDBC, 2003).

Un-named Waterways: during the workshop it was raised that there are many un-named waterways that have Aboriginal values and uses and may not be included in plans/ conversations.

2.1.9.7 Objectives and outcomes

The Wamba Wemba people have had a living connection with the rivers and wetlands for tens of thousands of years and are recognised as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage. They have an interest in managing waterways to protect cultural heritage due to long connection to the land and resources.

During the workshop, Traditional Owners were asked “How would you like the water in rivers and groundwater managed?” and “what is your vision for water management in 5 or 10 years?”. The responses have formed the objectives and outcomes for the WRP.

Table 2-20: Wamba Wemba objectives and outcomes

Objectives	Outcomes
Encourage kids to stay in school and provide opportunities such as water sampling to start engagement	Clear pathways for youth to work in the water sector and go into leadership positions
Provide a pathway for employment for youth in the water sector	
Set-up cadetships for youth	
Provide training and mentoring to promote leadership	
Every CMA to have a dedicated Aboriginal position or identified role (meaningful position that is supported with ongoing training, clear positions description, long term contract and structure).	
Government agencies to have direct engagement with Traditional Owners especially regarding job opportunities e.g. water quality monitoring, fish and bird monitoring, weed control, fencing, revegetation, fish habitat/fish ladder construction, installation of fish screens, etc.	

Objectives	Outcomes
Building strong networks between Aboriginal people, Traditional Owners and Government for forward progression. Suggested on-going engagement (hold forums twice a year with waterway units, CMAs, Parks, TO's etc.)	Working in partnership with Government organisations
To secure ongoing project funding for the Water for Country project	
For the Wamba Wemba to directly receive funding and resourcing from Government to manage their own projects (and not go through peak bodies)	
For MLDRIN delegates to receive resources and support so they can report back to the broader Wamba Wemba group	
Traditional Owner Involvement in environmental watering decisions to look for opportunities for cultural outcomes and to minimise the impact on cultural values. For example, watering should be high in winter and low in summer. Floods should occur every 3 months and floods should last for 6 months.	
To influence decisions on how the \$40M is distributed amongst Traditional Owner groups in the Murray Darling Basin	
Improve communication and engagement across all Government departments and other agencies	
To develop a project between NCCMA and Traditional Owners to restock Murray cray and yabbies	
Replenish fish stocks (good for culture/ traditional practices)	
To link outcomes from Aboriginal Waterway Assessments and Use and Occupancy Mapping to inform environmental watering programs	
Manage recreational users of waterways (jet skis, boats and 4X4)	
Work together with other Traditional Owner groups to create change.	
Management plans need to incorporate Traditional Owner perspectives at the local level	
Inclusion of Traditional Owner interest within policy, framed in legislation	
Undertake full assessment of waterways in the Country. Document Elders, knowledge as we go, build the information over time. We are unable to tell the Government everything in a day	Document, learn and share knowledge to preserve culture
Do a skills audit across Wamba Wemba to understand who can contribute to what projects. A few Traditional Owners are trained in cultural mapping.	
Consideration of Aboriginal values and uses for unnamed waterways as well as named waterways	
Dual naming system in place with the Aboriginal name and history of the site	
Learn cultural knowledge to pass onto the younger generations. Teach language of everything related to land and water. If Aboriginal people do not work together the culture will be lost	



Objectives	Outcomes
Reinstate more natural watering regimes wherever possible	Protect and manage culturally significant sites
Manage flows to restore habitat and protect wildlife especially for species of cultural and iconic significance e.g. black swan, Murray cray, yabbies, red tail black cockatoo and brolgas for example	
To build and manage a local fish hatchery to restore populations of native fish in the waterways	
Improve management of tourism to minimise damage of cultural sites	
Joint management of waterways through funding and job positions (rangers, fisheries positions)	Work towards self-determination
Build a cultural centre to share history and cultural significance of Lake Boga. It may include a conference room, tourist information and sells arts/crafts.	
Secure land for cultural learning and set-up livelihoods on-country. Secure water licenses and have the opportunity to trade.	
Develop activities/program to support women to connect with waterways such as: collecting reeds for basket weaving, collecting eggs etc.	
Restore and maintain vegetation with bush medicine, craft, ceremony artefacts and food sources (for example, native grasses, common nardoo, old man weed, cumbungi, common reeds).	

The ultimate goal is for healthy bush, healthy rivers and healthy people.

2.1.9.8 Environmental and cultural flows

During the workshops and field trip there were many discussions regarding cultural flows and environmental flows. A couple of people even questioned why there is any difference between them at all, given that healthy community is so closely related to healthy country, and environmental water is delivering healthy Country.

Subsequent to this, Traditional Owners thought there needs to be more collaboration between environmental water managers and Aboriginal groups, so that there is greater understanding of each other's objectives. One example was highlighted during the engagement that some environmental water targeted breeding and movement of Murray Hardyhead (which some Traditional Owners couldn't see the value in), yet environmental watering managers are trying to discourage Redfin (which is a favoured fish to eat for some Traditional Owners). This conversation highlighted the difference between environmental flows and cultural flows – cultural flows should be something that Aboriginal groups have complete control over, and not be bound by restrictions that apply to environmental water. While there will be large crossovers between environmental and cultural flows (e.g. looking after river-red gums, Murray Cod), there will also be difference (e.g. environmental flows would target Murray Hardyhead while Aboriginal groups may want to farm Redfin), which is why cultural flows are needed in addition to environmental flows.

Another point that came up repeatedly was that there was inadequate cultural assessment during environmental watering events. An example given was of watering at Hattah Lakes could impact on burial sites or scar trees, yet there was no Traditional Owner on site to make sure the significant sites were not affected.

During the consultation, representatives from the Mallee CMA and North Central CMA were keen to listen and work together to scope meaningful projects with cultural outcomes through the environmental watering program.

Other concerns raised about cultural flows were about the National Cultural Flows Research Project. Some Traditional Owners were wondering how it could be endorsed when they had not been consulted.

2.1.9.9 References

Murray Darling Basin Commission (2003) *Indigenous Response to the Living Murray Initiative*

State of Victoria, Mallee Catchment Management Authority (2014) *Mallee Waterway Strategy 2014 – 2022*

State of Victoria, North Central Catchment Management Authority (2014) *North Central Waterway Strategy 2014 – 2022*

State of Victoria, North Central Catchment Management Authority (2017) *Kerang Wetlands RAMSAR Site Action Plan*

State of Victoria, Heritage Council (2018), *Case Study 6: Lake Boga, Social and Cultural Heritage Landscape*

2.1.10 Weki Weki

The Weki Weki contribution was distributed to all Weki Weki people who attended the Nation meetings. There were no content amendment suggestions or objections to the report. The contribution was signed off by the Chair and Director of the Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation and by both MLDRIN delegates.

The following is the current contribution for the Weki Weki Nation for both the Northern Victoria and Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plans. It is important to note that Weki Weki identified areas of interest in the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan area including Lake Tyrrell, particularly around Sea Lake.

2.1.10.1 Description

Area of interest

Weki Weki has strong association with the Murray River and its tributaries and surrounding lakes and wetlands nearby Robinvale, Boundary Bend and Piangil. On the Victorian side, Weki Weki's area of interest extends south to Lake Tyrrell. Weki Weki Country continues across the border to New South Wales with several rivers feeding into the Murray being places of interest such as the Murrumbidgee River and the Edwards River or Kyalite River.

The Weki Weki identify as river people (mille gounditch) and have ancestral links with other river tribes from Echuca to the South Australian border historically known as N'erget Nation.

Organisations

Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation

Memberships

Weki Weki currently have two MLDRIN delegates.

2.1.10.2 Current agreements

Native Title, Traditional Owner Settlement Act and Registered Aboriginal Parties

Weki Weki are not currently pursuing Native Title and do not currently have RAP status.



Figure 16: Weki Weki Elders (from left): Joyce Kennedy, Richie Kennedy Senior, Greg Kennedy, Ray Kennedy

2.1.10.3 Preferred means of engagement

Weki Weki would like to work co-operatively with Government agencies and see it as important to save the river "How can you help us, help you, save the river?". The preferred means of engagement are:

- contact the Chair of the Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation
- for full group gatherings broaden the invitation to notify as many people as possible. Allow adequate notification of upcoming meetings
- the only way to run a meeting is to let the Elders run the meeting. Elders sitting at the front of the room and leading the meeting
- Weki Weki would like the same fair process that other Nations are receiving
- to recognise Weki Weki as a cross border Nation in Victoria and New South Wales
- to be reimbursed for the sharing of cultural knowledge. Traditional Owners are similar to consultants and consultants are typically reimbursed for their time
- to consider signing a Memorandum of Understanding to work with Government. There is an expectation that Government will deliver on its promises
- Government should notify people a couple of months in advance prior to environmental watering events.

2.1.10.4 Risks and impacts

During the workshop, Traditional Owners were asked "What are some of your concerns about water management and its impact on Aboriginal use and values?".

The main themes raised included:

Decrease in water quality: Water was clean and clear decades ago. You could see the bottom and could drink the water. There used to be platypus, you can't go yabbing anymore and there are not as many fish. Noticed that pelicans have unusual behaviour sitting in the branches of a dead tree almost too scared to go in the water.

- concern over recent fish deaths at Menindee Lakes due to blue-green algae
- concern over black water events – years ago the water turned black, yabbies were crawling out of the water; fish were dying; it smelt bad
- concern over the sprays from agriculture/horticulture infecting the water.

Highly regulated flow regime: Limiting access to natural flows needed for a healthy environment. Inadequate flows and pipelines mean fish can't migrate anymore and they are dying. There is no longer water in many of the waterways and noticed the animals and plants are no longer present. It impacts Traditional Owners' cultural connection and ability to spend time in these places, to catch food, to practice ceremony and to continue sharing knowledge.

Imbalance of power: MDBA and the National Party, National Farmers Federation are the most powerful people in Australia and control the water. Aboriginal people do not have the same level of influence. Weki Weki also feel like they are on the "B list" of Traditional Owner Groups and noted the lack of funding allocated to groups in the north west of Victoria.

Water theft: Farmers get away with what they are doing. Stealing water today is common and farmers need to be held more accountable. Irrigators have been caught out cheating the system by manipulating meters.

Overall allocation of water: Farmers have a license to pump the lake dry (e.g. Lake Benanee, New South Wales) – this shouldn't happen. The future seems to be based on continually draining the basin rather than thinking of alternative solutions.



Large water users with little local benefit: A lot of agriculture is exported overseas e.g. almonds. It doesn't benefit locals and uses large amounts of water. Grapes are another example of profits leaving the area with massive amounts of water use and pesticides. Cattle and dairy industry also use large quantities of water. Sand mining is causing environmental damage. All are profiting from our land.

Badly degraded sites of significance: Difficult to restore especially with competing demands for water. This has an impact of people's connection to Country and understanding of Country.

Lack of understanding of Traditional Owner interests: Environmental watering have a history of flooding areas without consulting Traditional Owners. It's hurting the Country and animals. Traditional Owners have also been cautious about sharing cultural knowledge.

"Some plants such as special medicine plants are dying out. The land is sick and we need to fix it. When the land gets sick, we get sick."

Tourism: Boat races are destroying the river banks and impacting on habitat, fish eggs etc.

2.1.10.5 Values and uses

During the workshops, an open discussion was had about why water is important to Weki Weki people with consideration of environmental, social, economic and spiritual aspects. The main themes that emerged are shown in the table below.

Table 2-21: Values and uses

Theme	Detail
Home – spiritual and cultural connection	<p>"We grew up on the river with large families."</p> <p>"Rivers and beaches in Thailand and Philippines means nothing to me. I think of the Murray River and I can't wait to get back. The cultural and spiritual connection is more important than their beaches and rivers. It is where we were born and brought up."</p> <p>"Our rivers and waters draw us back home. We won't live far from the river."</p> <p>"Where I've been for the last 38 years, I have not put my hands and feet in the river. I say it is not my river. My river is the Murray River. Every time I go back home, I reconnect to the river because of the 38 years of loss that I've had."</p> <p>"Granny and grandad knew where to camp on island to avoid flood waters. The family still uses that camping spot. Old camp, momo's, artefacts, family gatherings. But there is no more water down there. It's all dried up. No yabbies, we want water back there."</p>
Ancestral connection	<p>"The river is our ancestors' bloodstream. Without the river we can't survive, the river without us can't survive."</p>
Health and wellbeing	<p>"When the river is sick, we get sick. When my kids are sick I get them in the water like a cultural baptism. When the river is healthy we are healthy."</p>

Theme	Detail
Role as caretakers	<p>"Our role is to care for the land."</p> <p>"Water doesn't have a monetary value to us, it has a sentimental value. All we are worried about is looking after it. We want to make it healthy again. Because the water has sentimental value to us, only we can protect that water."</p> <p>"Our cultural activities shouldn't be used for economic activities."</p> <p>"We can use tourist activities. Re-stock the rivers with more native fish but do not sell the fish and deplete the rivers – to me that's wrong."</p> <p>"There was a legend, the population on the river got too big and they couldn't feed everyone. One group had to move down the river and move away. One mob stayed on the south and the other mob had to move to Narangirri. They were sent down there because tribes got too big. We did take care of the rivers when the tribes got to big people had to move away. Look at the documentation, there may have been 80-100 never more than 300-400 people. It wasn't sustainable."</p>
Knowledge of Country	<p>"Our people knew where to camp because they knew that creek bed, when it would fill up. They knew what we read in our books now. That's what I want to be, where I want to get to. Especially with women's business. We are losing the knowledge. How will I teach the next generation women's business?"</p> <p>"In Robinvale where it has flooded, a lot of the non-Aboriginal people look at us about what is going on. We've got stories for thousands of years. They know we have the answers."</p>
Food	<p>"The river was our life blood for food – hunting and fishing. We didn't know any other way than living on the river."</p> <p>"You only took enough fish from the river to feed your family. You didn't take it to take to town to make a quid from it."</p> <p>"Even in flood time, we used to walk to the billabong and catch yabbies... especially down at Randells creek. It was a regular thing and now there is no water there. We can't enjoy our cultural connection."</p> <p>"Now you can't go fishing and guarantee you'll catch anything. Food sources are dying off there."</p>
Animals	<p>Fish, crustaceans, birdlife, animal life, humans, kangaroos.</p> <p>There used to see platypus in the river.</p> <p>Remember seeing pelicans along the river around Robinvale, now you don't see many pelicans.</p> <p>"There's birds that migrate here. If their area is messed around, they won't come back. When we put water in a mini lake, birds from Darwin came back and breed. If you muck around with waterways, you muck around with the bush and everything related to it. It's all connected. It's like a jigsaw and you take one piece out...."</p>
Plants	<p>Medicine plants: old man weed, salt bush..... (and many more not listed here).</p>



Theme	Detail
Trading	<p>"Traditionally trading of goods has been done. People still go hunting. People bring fish around.... kangaroo, whatever you get your hands on, especially during sorry business."</p> <p>"We had trade and economics going back thousands of years. We invented trade and economics in this country. Our way is someone's daughter married someone's son."</p>
Ceremonies	"A lot of our ceremonies used to happen down on the rivers - that's not happening anymore."
Transport	"Our mob built massive 20 foot canoes to help [foreigners] cart their wool around Euston/Robinvale."

2.1.10.6 Objectives and outcomes

During the workshop, Traditional Owners were asked "How would you like the water in rivers and groundwater managed?" and "what is your vision for water management in 5 or 10 years?". The responses have formed the objectives and outcomes for the Water Resource Plan.

Table 2-22: Weki Weki objectives and outcomes

Objectives	Outcomes
Develop programs to involve young people to look after Country. Involve kids early so we can move forward. For example, during school holidays kids could work with us and learn from us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work experience for young people • knowledge passed on to the next generation • give young people the chance to have a say • pathway to employment • improved health and wellbeing
<p>Funding for training and employment of 20-30 people from each tribe to look after the Murray River and other important rivers and lakes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Funding could be generated by taking 5% off water bills.</p> <p><i>"Instead of spending money on us being sick, this will make us healthy. Everyone wins. You don't get sick when you're out bush. You don't get sick when you're working either. Everyone likes working and getting an income."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased employment on Country • reduced water theft • empowerment • self-determination • social and emotional wellbeing
<p>To co-ordinate a State-wide meeting for Traditional Owners from all over Victoria to meet together to discuss water resources as a whole.</p> <p>To co-ordinate meetings for the Murray River mob to see if we are thinking the same way and heading in the same direction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural knowledge shared between tribes • empowerment and strength • strengthen network • workshop and bounce ideas around • unity and collaboration between mobs so we're on the same level • work together and support one another

Objectives	Outcomes
To revive cultural practices of Weki Weki women especially related to waterways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusion of Weki Weki women in water management decision making • protection of sacred sites • revive cultural practices • pass on knowledge to next generation • more time on Country • empowerment • improved health and wellbeing
Slowly releasing water so that creeks and other waterways/cultural areas of significance are maintained in a more natural way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a slow release will keep the water clean and healthy. It will lead to improved food sources, fish migration, breeding, laying eggs, birthing etc. Animals will have a natural way of life • improved health of culturally significant sites
<p>For Weki Weki to be involved in decision making processes and influence the sustainable use of water. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventing overallocation of water from lakes that are at risk of drying out • conserving water rather than continually draining this precious resource • developing long term alternative management strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved health of waterways and wetlands • decisions are influenced by Weki Weki as an equal partner
To protect cultural heritage and sites of significance – we need to look after medicine plants, animals, bird migration sites, women's birthing tree, for example. Certain places cannot be disturbed. Ancestral burial places must be respected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection of cultural heritage and sites of significance • more abundance of animals and birds and ground covers and bush medicines. • enhance cultural knowledge and connection to country • improved health and wellbeing
To redirect unused water allocations to an Aboriginal Water Bank, that is inclusive of Murray River Nations. Aboriginal delegates to choose where the water goes based on needs (refer to cultural flows section below).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-determination • empowerment • inclusion of traditional knowledge in watering • improved cultural and environmental outcomes • improved health and wellbeing
Weki Weki has access to water entitlements to lease and trade and generate income to manage Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage water autonomously • develop an income stream to fund activities to care for Country



Objectives	Outcomes
To recruit our own water officers so we can understand the business of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-determination • empowerment • improve communication between Weki Weki people and Government agencies • influence decision making • more funding for projects on Country
To maintain and monitor waterways back to health. We need to look after plant and animal populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase understanding of changes of animals and plants on Country • monitoring provides evidence to inform further projects • improve health of plant and animal populations around waterways.
To own and operate nurseries and fish farms to foster endangered species and reintroduce them to the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase population of native fish and endangered species • Aboriginal owned business that increases training and employment for Weki Weki people • self-determination • empowerment
To share our cultural knowledge to save the river. If we don't tell Government agencies how they are damaging the river and our culture they'll never understand us. We need to see eye to eye with the Government agencies and come up with other solutions to water management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusion of traditional knowledge in water management • improved river health • improved cultural health • improved health and wellbeing
To celebrate our culture through art, photography, presentations, etc. We need to show our customs, traditions, preserve life. Art is the way culture is documented. How water links to creation stories. Knowledge is contained in art. Art reflects past, present and futures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artwork to document and share history and culture around waterways • improved understanding of Weki Weki culture and knowledge
To educate ourselves about water management. For example, undertake an AWA on Weki Weki Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved knowledge and understanding of water management • improved partnerships • more influence of decision making • better integration of traditional knowledge with western science

2.1.10.7 Cultural Flows

The only way is through an Aboriginal water bank where we can determine where to allocate water. We need to own and maintain cultural water and decide when and where its released for the benefit of the river. Water cannot be sold or leased to anyone because that creates corruption. We'd sit around a conference table and decide. Like tribal days where we decide what area needs help first. We would only hold water that can be released to the environment for the benefit of the environment. We need to have cultural seasons and knowledge of when to release water for the environment. Aboriginal people need to own water and say where and

when it should be released. It doesn't matter if it's a mob in New South Wales. They would submit a plan for us and we would consider it.

We want to see areas of cultural heritage and sites of significance flourishing. There should be an abundance of animals, birds, ground covers and bush medicines. That's how we are going to learn and model what our ancestors did.

We cannot leave it up to Government to look after cultural flows as they are easily corrupted to those who pay dollars for the election.



Figure 17: Members of Weki Weki and DELWP staff at Nation Meeting in December 2018, Tooleybuc.

Back Row: Stuart Lovejoy (DELWP), Jerome Kennedy. Second Row: Marty Robinson (DELWP), Richie Kennedy Junior, Georgina Davis, Kathleen Terrick, Jessica Freame (DELWP). Front Row: Jade Kennedy, Jarrod Kennedy, Richie Kennedy Senior, Ray Kennedy, Joyce Kennedy, Greg Kennedy



2.1.11 Wotjobaluk Peoples (represented by Barnegi Gadjin Land Council)

The contribution of the Wotjobaluk Peoples pertains to the area of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan. The Wotjobaluk People's updated contribution was signed off by the Barnegi Gadjin Land Council Board in February 2019.

2.1.11.1 Description

The Wimmera River, the Avon-Richardson and the lakes and woodlands of the Wimmera and Mallee plains have sustained the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples for thousands of years.

These groups, often referred to collectively as the Wotjobaluk Peoples or Wotjobaluk Nations and represented by Barnegi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC), were recognised in the 2005 Native Title Consent Determination, the first in south-eastern Australia. The Wotjobaluk Peoples were recognised as having non-exclusive Native Title rights over some Crown reserves along the banks of the Wimmera River, between a point north of Lake Albacutya to the junction of the Wimmera River with Yarriambiak Creek, including Lake Albacutya & Lake Hindmarsh. This does not include the waters of the river. The *Native Title Act 1993* also does not provide for a right to negotiate over water.

BGLC also entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with the Victorian and Australian Governments in 2005. Under the ILUA, related agreements provide for the grant of freehold title to three parcels of land over which the Native Title holders have demonstrated a strong cultural and historic connection (including land near the former Ebenezer Mission site).

Representatives of the peoples of the Wotjobaluk Nations, as of January 2019, are in negotiations with the State to assess what benefits may be available through the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act*.

BGLC is a Registered Aboriginal Party over a large part of Wotjobaluk Country under the Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act*.

The 'Growing what is good' Country Plan outlines what Wotjobaluk Nations peoples want for Country, including land, flora, fauna and water. The Country Plan is seen as an important reference document for anyone wanting to work with Wotjobaluk Nations peoples, including Government.

The Wotjobaluk and Wergaia Nations are members of MLDRIN, and Barnegi Gadjin Land Council, as a foundation member, is represented on the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations Board.

Barnegi Gadjin Land Council is represented on the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline Wetlands Environmental Watering Advisory Group coordinated by North Central CMA. It also has representation on the Mallee CMA Aboriginal Reference Group.

2.1.11.2 Preferred means of engagement

Barnegi Gadjin Land Council has confirmed the preferred engagement for Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples with government is via Barnegi Gadjin Land Council. Individual Wotjobaluk Nations people cannot speak on behalf of the community. BGLC asks that those looking to engage with Wotjobaluk Nations peoples take the time to review the 'Growing what is good' Country Plan before commencing engagement with the corporation.

Barnegi Gadjin Land Council also requests that as its recognised boundaries include Lake Tyrrell, that it is informed if Government engages with any other Traditional Owners in regards to water matters and Lake Tyrrell.

Introduction

Wotjobaluk Nations peoples and Water Resource Plans

"We are part of Wotjobaluk Country. It links us to our ancestors and spirits and it is the foundation of our future. If Country is treated with respect and care, and we can act on our responsibility for Country, then Wotjobaluk Country will continue to provide for us."

'Growing what is good' Country Plan, 2017

Discussions between Barengi Gadjin Land Council and DELWP commenced in 2016, with a discussion that a lack of resourcing was a major impediment to progressing their water aspirations, and participating in Government planning and policy discussions.

As a result, in 2016, the Victorian Government, together with Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and the Wimmera CMA, funded an Aboriginal Water Officer position, based at the Wimmera CMA. The funding also provided for the Wimmera River Aboriginal Water Project, to improve recognition of Aboriginal cultural connection to waterways and wetlands and support Traditional Owner aspirations in the lower Wimmera River system. The project represented a grassroots, localised approach to identify Wotjobaluk Peoples' water resource objectives for a specific part of the Wimmera. It will be used to improve cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions, and to identify management options to achieve these objectives.



Figure 18: River Scene by Aunty Nancy Harrison, painting showing the pathways and Wimmera River coming from a cultural camping area

"We have a huge connection to the Wimmera River; it is a creation story path and has a very special place in our hearts. It is a major part of who we are as people."

Aunty Nancy Harrison, Yanga Track Wanjab, Gadjin and Murnong 2012



A collaboration between DELWP, Barengi Gadjin Land Council and the Wimmera CMA, the Wimmera River Aboriginal Water Project was extended in 2017 for a further 12 months to provide increased evidence for Aboriginal watering outcomes based on Traditional Owner values and uses in relation to managing water. The project also increases capacity and support for Traditional Owners to effectively participate as water users, and raises awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal cultural and customary interests in land, water and natural resources. The project has included:

- engagement and foundational work to prepare for watering of the Billabong and other significant cultural places
- participation in governance training with Aboriginal Victoria to increase capacity for Aboriginal community representation on boards
- introduction of cultural awareness training for Wimmera CMA staff and board
- support for Barengi Gadjin Land Council business development, and training at Wail Nursery
- participation in community events in partnership with BGLC and Goolum Goolum to recognise Closing the Gap Day and Reconciliation Week
- A bark canoe event on the Wimmera River, at Dimboola

The Water Resource Plan funded and DELWP staff attended the lower Wimmera River Aboriginal Waterway Assessment, after which representatives from BGLC and the Aboriginal Water Officer briefed DELWP on Country on the outcomes. Attendance and support of a community Bark Canoe Event, and attendance at an Earth Oven event, provided further input.

Barengi Gadjin objectives and outcomes

As a result of meetings, workshops and community gatherings attended and facilitated during 2016 and 2017, and as a strong reflection of the *Growing What is Good Country Plan*, Barengi Gadjin Land Council has developed the following water objectives and desired outcomes for accreditation:

Table 2-23: Objectives for Barengi Gadjin Land Council

Objective
1. Have the ability to manage and protect Wotjobaluk Country and culture through recognition of our traditional rights, respect for our knowledge and cultural obligations, understanding of our aspirations and understanding of our history before and since colonisation.
2. Develop our economic independence through education and training to build our capacity, so we can contribute to our Wotjobaluk community and the wider Australian community, and assistance to develop self-determination through economic ventures with water, including tourism and enterprise.
3. Participation and partnership with State Government in water policy and strategy formation, development, implementation and management to strengthen Traditional Owner communities' involvement and turn policy into effective management on the ground.
4. Partner with catchment management authorities and water corporations to collaborate, develop and implement plans for the protection and rehabilitation of waterways and wetlands on Wotjobaluk Country.
5. Our involvement is adequately resourced to ensure participation in the formation, development and management of water policy, strategy and plans impacting Wotjobaluk Country.
6. Build capacity through employing, procuring and training Wotjobaluk Peoples in water management and planning. Create enterprises around Wotjobaluk cultural water practices.

Table 2-24: Outcomes for Barengi Gadjin Land Council

Desired outcomes and priorities for Barengi Gadjin Land Council	
1. Gurru, Ngalpakatia Ngelpagutya and surrounds: ancestral connections	• a cultural survey around Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh)
	• restore cultural water flows and recreate the full breadth of Traditional Owner ecological knowledge to inform management practices that heal Country
	• review Ngalpakatia/Ngelpagutya (Lake Alpacutya) Ramsar Wetland Management Plan
	• restore cultural water flows and re-create the full breadth of Traditional Owner ecological knowledge to inform management practices that heal Country



Desired outcomes and priorities for Barengi Gadjin Land Council	
2. Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River): the lifeblood of the Wotjobaluk Peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop the River Yarns event, to share and re-create cultural knowledge about the River using the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment tool to help with this
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate alignment between environmental watering and cultural objectives, and advocate for environmental and cultural flows
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase awareness and appreciation of Wotjobaluk culture and customary interests in land, water and natural resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase protection and rehabilitation of significant cultural places
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> restore native vegetation so there is a continuous corridor re-established along the length of the River
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase employment, training and economic development for Wotjobaluk Peoples through water-related projects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> install fish and bunyart (eel) ladders at each of the weirs along the River
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the Catchment Management Authority, Victorian Environmental Water Holder and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and other relevant Government bodies so the release of environmental water, when available, can be timed with cultural outcomes and community events.

Desired outcomes and priorities for Barengi Gadjin Land Council	
3. The Ranch, the Common and the Billabong: historical connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a management committee of Traditional Owners to oversee implementation of the management plan for the Ranch, including water requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restore indigenous plant and animal habitats, with particular attention to controlling priority weeds in the Ranch and the Billabong
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • renovate the Ranch, including the Billabong, to provide facilities for meetings and short- term accommodation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restore a natural flooding regime to the Billabong
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with the Catchment Management Authority, Victorian Environmental Water Holder and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and other relevant Government bodies so the release of environmental water, when available, can be timed with cultural outcomes and community events
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore the impacts of land use change and non-Wotjobaluk settlement on natural hydrology.

Values and uses

Barengi Gadjin Land Council has stressed that all waterways and water bodies on Country as outlined through the Native Title agreement and the RAP, and any identification of Country through further processes, including extensions of boundaries, are important to Wotjobaluk Nations peoples.

The Water Resource Plan objectives and outcomes for the Wotjobaluk Nations peoples are a clear indicator of the importance water has, traditionally, historically and economically. The following case study is an example of water values and uses for the Wimmera River.

River Yarns

In March 2017, we held our first of many River Yarns. This is stage one of the Wimmera River project that was allocated to BGLC and the Wimmera CMA to implement. The project is about Traditional Owner aspirations and values of the Wimmera River.

With BGLC and MLDRIN, we had a five-day project where the Traditional Owners of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples went along the Wimmera River starting from Horsham at one of our sacred sites named Wopert Bungandilar (Place of Feathers), the last resting place of our dreamtime story Tchingal the emu, through to our Ramsar wetlands site, Lake Albacutya. The Traditional Owners on the way had to fill out an assessment form called an Aboriginal Waterway Assessment. They had to reflect on how the landscape has changed and how can we get it back to the way it was, whether it be where they used to fish or swimming holes or just social, recreational and cultural uses of the water. It was a great week where Traditional Owners got to go back to where they grew up and tell the stories of what was around and what they used to do and also an emotional week for Elders to visit their past.

– Ben Muir, Aboriginal Water Officer Wimmera CMA



Aboriginal Waterway Assessments were undertaken at many sites along the Wimmera River in 2017 by Traditional Owners as part of River Yarns with BGLC, MLDRIN and Wimmera CMA – supported by Water Resource Plans. At this time Traditional Owners collectively agreed that re-watering and rehabilitating the Ranch Billabong would be highly beneficial for Country and Community. BGLC successfully applied for a grant under the Victorian Government \$4.7 million cultural objectives program to restore flows to the Billabong, at the Ranch in Dimboola.

The ‘Come along and we will re-water The Billabong’ project, approved mid 2018, included the employment of an Aboriginal Water Officer within BGLC. It was recognised that surveying, planning and on-ground works programs for the nominated site would benefit the Ranch Billabong, however the learning and capacity building from the project would benefit the whole community and inform future projects identified, including Ebenezer, Antwerp and Goyura, all of which are adjacent to the Wimmera River and/or its tributaries (Datchak Creek and Yarriambiack Creek) and many more billabongs along the Wimmera River where Native Title is held.

The employment of an Aboriginal Water Officer was vital to provide the resourcing for BGLC to manage the project, and will build the internal capacity of BGLC to engage in the water entitlement and planning frameworks, for this project and into the future.

Cultural flows

Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation has indicated a desire for cultural flows as defined by the Echuca declaration for surface water and groundwater.

The Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan acknowledges that Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation is seeking cultural flows and the conversation about these flows will continue as Victoria implements the Aboriginal Water Policy.

BGLC has expressed its strong interest in accessing water to support farming of indigenous plants as a commercial enterprise.



2.1.12 Yorta Yorta

The Yorta Yorta contribution was developed by the Aboriginal Water Officer and signed off by the CEO of the Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC). The Yorta Yorta contribution pertains to the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan.

2.1.12.1 Description

Yorta Yorta Nations Country and People

Yorta Yorta Country radiates out from the Murray River on both sides in all compass directions, roughly from Cohuna in the west to just outside Albury/Wodonga in the east to a northerly point in New South Wales approximately 20-30 km past Finley and extends south into Victoria just short of Nagambie. Yorta Yorta Nations region includes the lower Goulburn River, and towns such as Echuca, Cohuna, Shepparton, Benalla, Corowa, Wangaratta, Glenrowan, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wahgunyah, Thoona, and Violet Town.

The people of the Yorta Yorta Nations are comprised of 8 different clan groups, where the Yorta Yorta language is spoken by all of the Yorta Yorta clans.

The Yorta Yorta Nation is comprised of people with undeniable bloodlines to the original Ancestors of the land of the Yorta Yorta Nation. These bloodlines link our past, present and future to one another, with traditional laws, customs, beliefs and sovereignty intact.

We have continued to exercise our natural rights as the indigenous occupants and owners of Country. Our social, spiritual, economic and cultural links with the area have never been broken, in other words our relationship with our Country has continued since time immemorial.

The survival of the ancestral lands, waters and all its children are equally important for the continuity of the Yorta Yorta Nations timeless connection with our inherent right. For us – the land has a spiritual connection; it's our mother. The human spirit is born from our land and creator and returns to it upon death. The land supplies us with everything that we need for living. We must look after it, so that it looks after us in return.

Organisations

The main organisations and groups that Yorta Yorta people are involved in are:

Table 2-25: YYNAC groups

Organisation/Group	Brief Description
Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC)	<p>YYNAC was established, amongst other objectives, to represent the members of the family groups who are descendants of the original Ancestors of the Yorta Yorta Peoples; to make decisions and act on any matters of significance to the Yorta Yorta Peoples; and to enter into agreements with any person, Government agency or authority in relation to the protection of Yorta Yorta Country.</p> <p>YYNAC is governed by a board of seven (7) Directors with one of those Directors being an Elder's Representative and the Council of Elders comprised of 16 Yorta Yorta Family Group Representatives. The Chief Executive Officer manages the day-to-day operations of the organisation, cultural heritage officers, water policy officer, The Living Murray officer, researchers and administrative personnel.</p> <p>The water policy officer is funded by DELWP. The purpose is to assist in prioritising and streamlining Aboriginal water opportunities, building networks through engagement, consultation and collaboration with agencies.</p>
Woka Walla Natural Resource Management Crew	<p>Woka Walla is a Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation's owned and operated enterprise that provides meaningful employment and training for Yorta Yorta and other Aboriginal people. Our employees are committed to learning, working and caring for all aspects of Yorta Yorta lands, water, cultural heritage and the environment.</p>
Traditional Owner Land Management Board	<p>Jointly manage the Barmah National Park with Parks Victoria (refer to following section for more information)</p>

Existing References

- Yorta Yorta Nation whole of Country Plan (2012)
- Water Plan
- MOU with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
- Membership of MLDRIN (two delegates)

2.1.12.2 Current Agreements

The Yorta Yorta Nations' struggle for land justice has a long history of oral & documented evidence of Yorta Yorta Nations attempts to gain land justice with the encroachment of European occupation of the Traditional land and water of the Yorta Yorta Nation area since 1860 to present day.

Yorta Yorta Nation is well recognised across Australian Indigenous Nations and will continue to fight for recognition of and self-determination for our people and Country.

Native Title

Yorta Yorta v Victoria was a native title claim dismissed by Justice Olney of the Federal Court of Australia in 1998. Appeals to the Full Bench of the Federal Court of Australia in 2001 and the High Court of Australia in 2002 were also dismissed.



The determination by Justice Olney in 1998 ruled that the 'tide of history' had 'washed away' any real acknowledgement of traditional laws and any real observance of traditional customs by the applicants.

An appeal was made to the full bench of the Federal Court claiming, "the trial judge erroneously adopted a 'frozen in time' approach" and "failed to give sufficient recognition to the capacity of traditional laws and customs to adapt to changed circumstances". The Appeal was dismissed in a majority 2 to 1 decision.

The case was taken on appeal to the High Court of Australia but also dismissed in a 5 to 2 majority ruling in December 2002

Traditional Owner Settlement Act (TOSA)

The YYNAC is currently considering/negotiating a TOSA with the Victorian State Government and looking at areas of interest and considering the values that will benefit the Yorta Yorta Nations people.

Registered Aboriginal Party (Cultural Heritage)

The YYNAC has been designated as a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) by the State Government representative body the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council since 14th of September 2007.

This gives the YYNAC the rights to manage and protect their Cultural Heritage in their respected Country.

Yorta Yorta Co-operative Management Agreement

While the Yorta Yorta were found by the Federal Court not to meet the legal standard of native title under the **Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)** the State recognised that the Yorta Yorta have a connection to their Country.

On the 10th of June 2004 the State of Victoria went into a Co-operative Management Agreement with YYNAC establishing the Yorta Yorta Joint Body. The State and the Yorta Yorta implement the objectives of this agreement via direct engagement between Yorta Yorta, Parks Victoria and DELWP.

Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement

In October 2010, the State entered into a Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement with the Yorta Yorta. This agreement established the Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board (under section 82B of the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 (Vic). The key role of the Board, as set out in the Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement, is:

"To enable the knowledge and culture of the Yorta Yorta people to be recognised and incorporated into the management of Barmah National Park through the carrying out by the Board of its functions, powers and duties."

2.1.12.3 Partnerships and projects

YYNAC are custodians of our Traditional Lands and it is important to look after Country including all the plants and animals that make up Culture and Lore. YYNAC are in high demand

to represent Yorta Yorta interests in project planning, approvals and cultural heritage management. As YYNAC are under-resourced, we rely on working in partnership with NRM agencies to deliver projects and achieve outcomes. The following is a brief overview of YYNAC's involvement with projects across various NRM agencies.

Integrated Water Management Plans

Integrated water management is a collaborative approach to planning. It brings together organisations that influence all elements of the water cycle including: waterways, wastewater management, alternative and potable water supply, stormwater management and water treatment.

YYNAC are at early stages of involvement with the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA), Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) and North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA). They are currently developing a feasibility study for Traditional Owner engagement.

Through the Coliban Integrated Water Management Plan one of the project's is to do a AWA along the Campaspe River from the head waters to the Murray River which will be inclusive of Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung. This is at early stages of development and may provide a good example of Aboriginal Nations working together on a common cause.

The Goulburn Broken Integrated Water Management Plan is also looking at shared project with Taungurung along the Seven Mile Creek and the Upper Owen River reach, which is also at early stages of development.

Environmental Watering Proposals

Each year, CMAs meet with community members to develop their regional seasonal environmental watering proposals for the coming year.

The GBCMA are keen to involve YYNAC in watering proposals for areas such as Loc Gary, Kanyapella Wildlife Reserve and Barmah National Park.

The Living Murray Project

The Living Murray program is funded by the Commonwealth (MDBA) and aims to improve the ecological condition of significant forests, wetlands and lakes along the River Murray. The Living Murray program focuses on maintaining the health of 6 icon sites, chosen for their high ecological and economic value, and their cultural and heritage significance to Aboriginal people. The sites encompass areas of high conservation value — the floodplains, wetlands and forests along the Murray, the Murray's estuary and the river itself.

The sites relevant to the Yorta Yorta include Gunbower Forest and Barmah-Millewa Forest. There is the Living Murray Indigenous Partnerships Project that aims to ensure Indigenous community knowledge, values and perspectives are considered in each of the icon site management plans. There is The Living Murray (TLM) Facilitator employed through NCCMA for Gunbower Forest and a TLM Facilitator employed through YYNAC for Barmah-Millewa Forest. Part of their role is to maintain and enhance a professional approach to YYNAC's involvement in the program.

As the program is very broad, there have been a lot of investment and studies done or are in progress for the Gunbower Forest and Barmah-Millewa Forest.

Lower Ovens Conservation Action Plan

The Conservation Action Plan is an International standard for planning and monitoring conservation projects. NECMA facilitated workshops with community members to discuss the local environment and to share knowledge. The plan identifies natural assets of high value and



the threats currently affecting them, and outlines and prioritises a series of evidence-based conservation strategies to address these threats.

The Aboriginal Water Policy Officer has provided initial comments regarding cultural significance of various sites and suggestions to include Traditional Ecological Knowledge and cultural watering (not just environmental flows) with a presentation to the Council of Elders for consideration.

Floodplain Management Strategy

NECMA Floodplain Management Strategy (FMS) is a single, regional planning document for floodplain management; and a high level regional work program to guide future investment priorities to address existing and future flood risks in the north east region. It provides a starting point for councils and other stakeholders to identify priority flood management activities to address local needs.

YYNAC will contribute to the FMS to highlight significant cultural sites to ensure there is no undue harm. It is recommended for a representative from NECMA to present at the Council of Elders meeting so they have input and understanding of the outcomes regarding Traditional Owner engagement.

NCCMA Projects

NCCMA has worked with the Woka Walla crew around cultural value monitoring project and up skilling in areas bird surveys and water bugs.

The NCCMA would like to consult with YYNAC on several water related projects:

- potential CEWO bid from NCCMA and looking at whether YYNAC would like to assist in the bidding process
- River Tour April 2019 looking at having YYNAC and Elder's inclusiveness and input to the boat tour around Campaspe to Echuca & Gunbower area
- Gunbower TLM program for 2018-2019 including seeking Yorta input into seasonal watering proposal and understanding Yorta preferences for how to direct the cultural monitoring funding
- Gunbower Cockatoo Lagoon - NCCMA will provide an update on the project and seek Yorta feedback on preferred option for improving the water regime for the lagoon
- offer of Gunbower tour with Council of Elders to better understand water management and seasonal watering of Gunbower and looking at what project NCCMA are investing in
- native fish recovery project: planned to undertake concept designs for two fishways on Taylors Creek (upstream Ghow Swamp) to link Gunbower and Loddon systems for fish passage. NCCMA are seeking YYNAC input to the proposal if the funding bid is successful to update the fishway concept is and how it helps to look after Country.

Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA)

New South Wales Parks & Wildlife Services in conjunction with the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nation (MLDRIN) funded and co-ordinated an Aboriginal Water Assessment (AWA) to look at the Cultural Values of Millewa National Park with the Traditional Owners. This was completed on November the 5th - 9th of November 2018 with Traditional Owners from Country.

It was a great week out in the field with the outcomes of naming the project that is a representation of the people from the Nations called the Woongi which means 'The People'.

After the week-long assessment MLDRIN will assess the finding and will schedule another meeting to talk about the results and will inform the Traditional Owns on what the result are and

then it will be up to the group to determine on what information that they agree to share with State Government departments.

Ghow (Kow) Swamp Conservation Management Plan

Ghow (Kow) Swamp is a large, artificially modified swampy wetland used as an extensive water storage facility by Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) as a component of the Victorian Mid Murray Storages and Torrumbarry Irrigation Area.

Ghow (Kow) Swamp has long been recognised at State and National level as an area of high archaeological and cultural significance. The complex archaeological landscape at Ghow (Kow) Swamp is recognised as not only one of Australia's most significant Aboriginal burial places, but the largest single collection of ancestral remains dating the late Pleistocene in the world.

Aboriginal Victoria (AV), in association with the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) have commissioned Dr Vincent Clark & Associates to provide a Cultural Landscape Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Ghow (Kow) Swamp, Victoria. The CMP aims to address gaps surrounding the understanding of cultural heritage at the swamp, and to propose conservation management measures. Artificial alteration of water levels at Ghow Swamp has caused erosion of the banks and threatens to destroy cultural heritage sites. It is important to create a CMP to help address threats to the landscape and cultural heritage and suggest conservation policies to implement to protect this important site.

Ghow (Kow) Swamp Land and On Water Management Plan

The Land and On Water Management Plan is facilitated by GMW and is developed and implemented by the community. They are relying on community ownership and the ability to attract funding. Activities include planning and sourcing funding for initiatives that address a range of land and on-water issues such as:

- increasing community awareness and involvement;
- community safety
- recreation and tourism
- maintaining healthy ecosystems
- cultural heritage
- the operational management of lakes, dams, etc..

2.1.12.4 Preferred means of engagement

The YYNAC exerts the right to Free Prior Informed Consent when engaging within the YYNAC Traditional lands of the nations; the right of their Traditional Ecological Knowledge and places of significance; and the right to the protection of their cultural heritage sites.

YYNAC has the rights to:

- Own, manage and control their Indigenous Knowledge;
- Be consulted about use of Indigenous Knowledge;
- Give or withhold consent around use of Indigenous Knowledge (the free, prior informed consent right);
- Make self-determined decisions about Indigenous Knowledge.

YYNAC has a Council of Elders (CoE) – Elders hold a wealth of knowledge about language, history and culture. They are consulted on projects in local areas, and on specific historical topics on which the group may have expertise.



For this reason, the Elders group are important to the consultation and consent for the use of Indigenous Knowledge, which gives direction and advice on approvals to the use of our TEK and decision on Cultural Heritage protection.

The CoE meets bi monthly and at times have full agendas and getting agenda items to be presented may take 4 – 8 weeks in advance so planning and timelines from the department or agencies should take that into consideration when looking at meeting with the CoE.

When engaging the YYNAC as it has various levels of governance make sure you are focus on the right officer for the project at hand.

When engaging with YYNAC make sure all information is clear and transparent and time for response from YYNAC is adequate without short timelines.

YYNAC has a schedule of fees for various services which it administers, so please take into account when consulting, planning and budgeting projects.

2.1.12.5 Values and uses

All of Country is significant because of the rich, diverse and aquatic nature of Yorta Yorta lands and resources, the Yorta Yorta were largely fishing people.

YYNAC has strong interest in the water industries as water is the symbol of life and major part of the spiritual and cultural connection to Country.

The rivers, lakes, lagoons, anabranches, rushlands, billabongs, and creeks, which are all central features of the area, provided them with an abundance of fresh water foods and a sustainable economic base.

They also supplemented these by hunting and collecting other foods from the surrounding woodlands and plains. The area fits into the concept of a broad based economy (smorgasbord theory) one that is capable of producing a wide variety and abundance of food which requires a minimum energy input.

This created the conditions in which more time could be devoted to kinship and maintenance of cultural connections with the ancestral lands.

As indicated water is not only essential for the continuation of Yorta Yorta culture and traditional rights, but is also important for the replenishment of natural resources and the survival of the ancestral lands themselves. In this context the Yorta Yorta don't make any distinction between water and land but see them as one whole system.

Black Dog Creek has particular cultural significance as a pathway to the high Country. There was the trading of Greenstone (from the Howqua near Mansfield) by Taungurung with Yorta Yorta Nations people and there are significant and historical place in the Lower Ovens;

Ovens/Blackdog Ck was once a large wetland: now altered, what's left in wetlands and Billabongs still are important gathering/cultural sites; most of which have been significantly altered but nevertheless important sites.

2.1.12.6 Objectives and outcomes

YYNAC has requested a community gathering to develop a whole of Country Plan which includes consideration of water objectives. The Yorta Yorta Water Policy Officer had led the engagement to date and highlighted the following aspirations.

Table 2-26: Objectives and outcomes

Objective	Outcome
To expand YYNAC to have a well-resourced water unit including a water manager for high level negotiations; a water officer to meet on ground deliverables and a water policy officer to help co-ordinate the projects.	Resources including funding to keep YYNAC highly functioning organisation and to proactively keep up with demand in the water/NRM sector.
To develop a consultancy to service the NRM industry and to secure funding to resource projects, for example: boats, GPS, computers, software and other relevant equipment to put us in pare with other consultant groups working in this space.	Change in paradigm in the way Government is working with Aboriginal organisations.
<p>To be on the front foot of negotiations with industry. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To proactively manage and work with Government departments To work to our own timelines, not Government timelines; To prepare our own reports instead of relying on short-term, last minute funding. We can choose and control what studies are done and how they are done. To hire consultants to do aspect of the work as we require. To have direct access to funding and not go through an intermediary organisation To have clear transparency of where money is coming from and going to. Instead of sitting fees etc. allow Yorta Yorta people to decide how they would like to work. 	Pathway towards self determination.
To secure funding to undertake a whole of industry proposal on better governance and ways of working within Aboriginal organisations.	
To teach industries to recognise the importance of Yorta Yorta people's connection to the environment through their custodianship.	Increased awareness, understanding, respect and protection of Yorta Yorta interests and custodianship.
To protect, preserve and raise community awareness of the importance of Aboriginal Heritage at significant water sites like Ghow Swamp.	Healthy Country and economic outcomes for Yorta Yorta people.
To look after Country through Land and Water management to restore and maintain our wetlands, rivers, waterways, tributaries, and lagoons which in turns looks after our flora and fauna that make up our Cultural Lore.	
To have decision making in the water planning process, water sharing and distribution,	<p>Equal influence "at the table" with other representatives from the water industry.</p> <p>Increased integration across the industry.</p>
To develop a cultural flow that will complement the current water management process and have input to the current water flows that goes through Country.	Watering Country for healthy Country and achieving economic outcomes for Yorta Yorta people.



Objective	Outcome
To build TEK into strategies where appropriate e.g. red gum thinning, protection of wetlands, links with cultural lore, bring back native animals and plants etc. and involve Elders onsite to discuss TEK.	"Bring people back, bring Country back". It will provide a better living culture, better caring for Country and better outcomes for Country.
To have the opportunity for customary practices on-Country. This includes Identifying different cultural practices for men and women's business	
To bring youth groups back on Country and give the next generation opportunities to get out on Country and work on-Country.	

2.1.12.7 Cultural flows

As already emphasised in this document, Yorta Yorta people are predominantly water-based people whose lifestyle focuses on and around waterways.

The provision of natural water flows is therefore fundamental to the continuation of our culture and traditional rights because of its fundamental role in replenishing our natural environment and ensuring the survival of our ancestral lands. In this context, we have never made a distinction between the terrestrial and aquatic environments within our lands but have always seen them as part of one, holistic system.

The Yorta Yorta lands include some very large wetland systems whose natural functions, survival and productivity depend entirely on regular flooding from the bigger rivers such as the Ovens, Goulburn, Murray and Edwards.

Unfortunately, as has been well documented, the aquatic environments within the Yorta Yorta lands have been just as modified as the terrestrial environments.

The major changes to the natural water regime have been as follows:

- significant reductions in the frequency, extent and length of floods, resulting in far fewer wetlands being flooded than formerly
- fundamental shifts in the timing of flooding from late winter and spring (as a consequence of winter rainfall and snow melt) to summer and autumn (as a consequence of controlled releases from dams for irrigation)
- the artificial creation of permanent wetlands from what were once intermittent wetlands because of summer releases of excess water
- changes in the temperature regime of regulated rivers, because of releases of cold water from storage dams
- massive increases in nutrient and sediment runoff as a consequence of agriculture and vegetation clearance throughout the catchment
- the creation of barriers across most of the major waterways, so preventing the movement of instream wildlife
- the removal of thousands of logs from the streams to 'facilitate' stream flow in time of flood
- the introduction of exotic species of fish.

From these issues YYNAC would like to have the opportunity to develop a cultural flow that will complement the current water management process and have input to the current water flows that goes through Country.

