

**GUNAIKURNAI
AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT
JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**THE KNOB RESERVE
— BRAYAKAULUNG COUNTRY**



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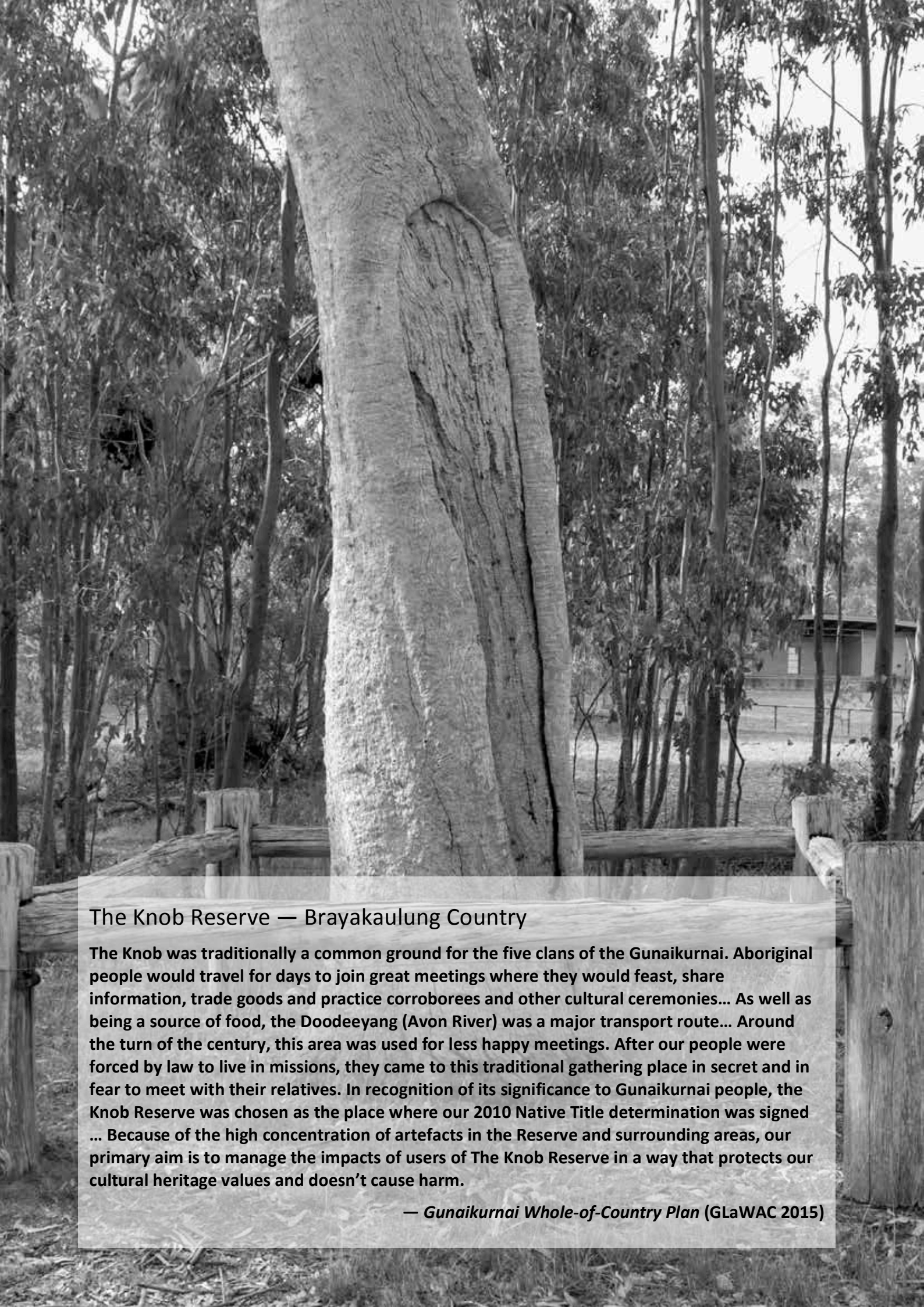
References to Parks Victoria in this plan should be read in the following context:

The *Parks Victoria Act 2018* (Vic.) will commence later in 2018. Under this Act, Parks Victoria will change from being an authority providing park management services by agreement to being an authority with park and reserve management responsibilities in its own right. It will continue to be a Committee of Management of particular reserves under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.).

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The Knob Reserve — Brayakaulung Country

The Knob was traditionally a common ground for the five clans of the Gunaikurnai. Aboriginal people would travel for days to join great meetings where they would feast, share information, trade goods and practice corroborees and other cultural ceremonies... As well as being a source of food, the Doodeeyang (Avon River) was a major transport route... Around the turn of the century, this area was used for less happy meetings. After our people were forced by law to live in missions, they came to this traditional gathering place in secret and in fear to meet with their relatives. In recognition of its significance to Gunaikurnai people, the Knob Reserve was chosen as the place where our 2010 Native Title determination was signed ... Because of the high concentration of artefacts in the Reserve and surrounding areas, our primary aim is to manage the impacts of users of The Knob Reserve in a way that protects our cultural heritage values and doesn't cause harm.

— *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (GLaWAC 2015)*

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BASIS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In a 2010 Native Title Determination, the Federal Court recognised that the Gunaikurnai hold native title rights over much of Gippsland. At the same time, the Victorian Government took additional steps to recognise Gunaikurnai peoples' traditional rights and ownership and entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.) with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. The Recognition Statement from the RSA is reproduced in full in the Introduction to the Joint Management Plan (JMP).

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) is the 'traditional owner group entity' for the purposes of the RSA. GLaWAC is also the Prescribed Body Corporate for the purposes of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth) and the Registered Aboriginal Party for the area for the purposes of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic.). As part of the RSA, The Knob Reserve has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title by the Victorian Government.

These Aboriginal Title areas are to be jointly managed by Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government. The Aboriginal Title grant is subject to the Gunaikurnai giving the State the right to occupy, use, control and manage the land for the same purpose as applied immediately before the grant. In the case of The Knob Reserve, the land continues to be managed as a Recreation Reserve under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.).

This management plan for The Knob Reserve is prepared under Section 82 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987* (Vic) and the provisions of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement 2010. It is consistent with the objects and requirements of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act and the requirements of the regulations made under that Act. (Additional legislation and policies which have been considered in the preparation of the Management Plan are listed in Appendix 4 of the Strategic Plan.)

As these Aboriginal Title areas are within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the RSA, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to The Knob Reserve and the other nine Joint Management parks and reserves. Existing rights and interests in the reserve, held by others, are not affected by the Agreement, but remain subject to management policies and regulation.

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) has been established in accordance with the RSA between GLaWAC and the State with the statutory objective of enabling the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai to be recognised in the management of the ten Aboriginal Title areas, including The Knob Reserve. The Board was responsible for preparing this management plan jointly with GLaWAC, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

There have been few opportunities in the past for Gunaikurnai to participate in the decision-making and management of public land. Through this plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that The Knob Reserve is well managed, its values and assets are protected and conserved, and the statutory requirements for reserve management are fulfilled, through an equitable partnership between the Victorian Government and GLaWAC;
- increase opportunities for Gunaikurnai people to connect with country, foster employment and economic development opportunities and build their capacity and skills to take a central role in joint management with the other management partners; and
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the reserve.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This Plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to The Knob Reserve. The following sections provide:

- a description of values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the Reserve, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values;
- a description of Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the reserve and their uses and activities; and goals and strategies for managing and enhancing those connections and uses;
- identification of government and community relationships and partnerships that are key to managing the reserve; and
- an integrated statement of the actions that will be undertaken over the next 10 years to achieve the goals and implement the strategies described in the plan.

In addition to the specific actions for The Knob Reserve in this plan, the strategic initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to The Knob Reserve.

The *Parks Victoria Act 2018* (Vic.) will commence later in 2018. Under this Act, Parks Victoria will change from being an authority providing park management services by agreement to being an authority with park and reserve management responsibilities in its own right. It will continue to be a Committee of Management of particular reserves under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.).

1.3 THE RESERVE

The Knob Reserve covers 58 hectares and is located on the Avon River or *Dooyeedang*, three kilometres from the town of Stratford.

It was set aside in 1906 as a recreation reserve under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act and has historically been managed for public recreation. It is administered by an incorporated Committee of Management consisting of nominees from GKTOLMB, GLaWAC and DELWP.

The Knob Reserve is a small but very significant place that demonstrates the living culture of Gunaikurnai in the present as well as the past: a traditional gathering place used by five clan groups for thousands of years; a place of clandestine resort in the 19th and 20th centuries to maintain connections with family, separated during the mission era; and the location of the ceremony to confer Victoria's first native title determination in 2010.

The reserve is in the country of the Brayakaulung clan. The *Dooyeedang* was a major travelling route between the high country and the Gippsland Lakes, as well as providing eel, bream, flathead and prawn.

The bluff above the *Dooyeedang* was a significant campsite. Axe heads were sharpened on the sandstone grinding stones beneath the bluff. The resulting deep grooves are rare and significant in Victoria. Evidence of site scatters, scar trees and camps are also present within the reserve.

In addition to its significance for the Gunaikurnai, it is an important place for the local community of the Stratford township and its surrounds. The reserve provides an area of accessible public bushland close to the town which is popular for informal recreation, periodic sports events and cultural events such as outdoor theatre that bring the local community together.

It is an important waypoint on the Bataluk Cultural Trail, a regional cultural touring route through Gippsland that extends from South Gippsland to Cape Conran.

2 THE KNOB RESERVE UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

Under joint management The Knob Reserve will continue to be managed as an area accessible to the community for public recreation. There will be a greater focus on protecting, promoting, appreciating and enjoying the natural and cultural values of the reserve.

The 2010 Native Title Determination and RSA recognised and reinforced the cultural role and importance of the reserve. The Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (GLaWAC 2015) sets out the following management priorities for reserve:

- extending the Aboriginal Title boundary to include sections of the river bank that have a high concentration of important cultural sites
- revegetating the sand dune system to get the river flowing properly and cleanly again
- undertaking careful fire management in a way that is sensitive to cultural values – fuel management rather than burns and doing slashing rather than using earth breaks
- undertaking more cultural surveys, which is particularly important in such a populated area where there is a high risk of damage to sites
- recognising the need for formal agreements with users of the reserve, look at ways to ensure their use does not cause harm to the land or resources
- educating the local community about the sites and culturally appropriate use of them.

While recognising these priorities, this plan sets out actions that are consistent with and limited to the terms of the 2010 Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

Collaboration with the local and broader community and stakeholders will be central to the delivery of the plan.

The proximity of the reserve to Stratford and the interest and connections to the reserve held by numerous community groups provides an opportunity for cooperation between those groups and Gunaikurnai.

Although managed for recreation, The Knob Reserve is very significant as a remnant of Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodland, which has been largely cleared elsewhere. It has had a history of many different activities, including stock grazing and use as a rifle range, and these have left impacts on the landscape.

Joint management provides an opportunity for renewal of the cultural importance of The Knob Reserve, restoration of the health of the reserve, and new opportunities for its enjoyment by the entire community.

3 ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the reserve (see Map 1). These zones will:

- communicate to the community and stakeholders which management aims have priority in different parts of the reserve;
- indicate the types and levels of use allowed in the reserve;
- assist in minimising conflicts between uses, or between those and the protection of reserve values;
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and development proposals.

Zones describe the primary management priority for a designated part of a park or reserve.

Overlays provide additional management direction where a specified value needs to be protected and conserved, or a variation is required to the activities that are allowed in the zone.

Two management zones apply to The Knob Reserve. A Conservation and Recreation Zone covers most of the reserve. The oval/stage facility area is a Recreation Development Zone. Facilities associated with the pony club in the north-eastern part of the reserve are not included in the Recreation Development Zone and will be authorised by a lease or licence. A Special Protection Overlay has been applied to a small population of the orchid Purple Diuris in the northern part of the reserve, because of its 'vulnerable' conservation status.

Cultural heritage and values in the reserve are currently being surveyed and mapped as part of a GKTO LMB cultural mapping project.

The zoning scheme therefore includes provision for a Cultural Values Overlay to be applied in the future. The activation of such an overlay would require a variation to the management plan, and might also require amendment of the description or provisions of other zones and overlays, and integration with the Aboriginal Heritage Act and *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) provisions to ensure compatibility. The purpose of the zones and overlay are described in Table 1, and the location of the zones is shown in Map 1.

Under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as hunting wildlife and game, fishing, and gathering flora and forest produce. No agreement covering The Knob Reserve is in place, and any future agreement could require a variation to the zoning scheme and this joint management plan.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays.

Zone	Description and purpose
Conservation and Recreation Zone	Areas where the management emphasis is on protection of land, water, ecological and cultural values while encouraging dispersed recreation and nature-based tourism. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; dispersed, small-scale facilities are provided, without significant impact on natural processes and landscape character.
Recreation Development Zone	Small areas with a high-level of visitor facility development catering for a high number of visitors.
Special Protection Overlay	Area with threatened or highly significant natural values requiring special protection.
Cultural Values Overlay (future)	Areas where the extent, nature or significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage and/or historic heritage is high. Specific protections and restrictions on use and activities may be applied.

4 CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Knob is culturally significant to the Gunaikurnai in itself and as part of the whole of country story (TOLMB 2014). The bluff above the *Dooyeedang* was an important camp site and meeting place for the Gunaikurnai, providing shelter, food, and water. Around the turn of the 20th century this area was an important meeting point. Gunaikurnai people would walk the 15 km from Ramahyuck Mission, at the mouth of the Avon River, to meet with their relatives.

The reserve also has significance in contemporary times as the site where the Federal Court of Australia issued its Native Title Determination for the Gunaikurnai people and where the Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria was signed. It contains eight known cultural heritage sites, including scarred trees, grinding grooves and an artefact scatter, which are recorded on the Aboriginal Heritage Register (Aboriginal Victoria 2018). There are six registered scarred trees at The Knob Reserve; these are the most commonly recorded cultural heritage values within the Reserve. Axe-grinding groove sites are associated with sandstone outcrops, usually located close to water, and hence are rare occurrences in the landscape.

There is one recorded surface (artefact) scatter site, near the axe-grinding grooves on The Bluff. Surface scatters are signs of past occupation by Gunaikurnai people, and can include materials such as stone, charcoal, bone and shell.

An ethnobotanical analysis (Oates and Frood 2017b) examined approximately 190 plant species in the reserve and identified more than 70 that have been documented in Victorian or Australian ethnographic records as having some Aboriginal customary usage. Of these, 12 species have been confirmed as used by Gunaikurnai people and 26 are considered likely to have been used. The confirmed species are listed below, with the Gunaikurnai name shown where known:

- Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*) — yowan
- Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) — moeyang
- River Red-gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) — gri
- Gippsland Red-gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis* subsp. *mediana*) — gri
- Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*)—- bam-e-rook (the shield made from this tree)
- Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) — ballee, ballart
- Drooping Mistletoe (*Amyema pendula*)
- Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*)
- Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*)
- Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum aviculare*) — gunyang, koonyang
- Rough Sow-thistle (*Sonchus asper*)
- Common Sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*).

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

The reserve is within the Red Gum Plains landscape zone of the Gippsland Plains Bioregion and contains vegetation in a landscape of cleared agricultural land and residential lots and is recognised as having significant biodiversity values.

The vegetation of the reserve has been the subject of several detailed surveys and assessments (e.g. Ethos NRM 2015, Oates and Frood 2017a).

Five ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) have been identified in the reserve, as well as two unclassified vegetation communities (see Map 2). Three EVCs are significant (Table 2).

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in The Knob Reserve.

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)	Description	Bioregional conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Plains Grassy Woodland	Occurs on poorly drained fertile soils of flat to gently undulating plains. A woodland structure, to 30 m tall or more at maturity. A sparse mid-storey is variously present. The ground-layer is primarily grassy-herbaceous in character, and can be quite diverse in relatively intact examples.	critically endangered (EPBC Act)	Over-storey is dominated by Gippsland Red Gum (<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> subsp. <i>mediana</i>). Mid-storey species variously include several wattles such as Black Wattle (<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>), Blackwood (<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>) and occasionally Lightwood (<i>Acacia implexa</i>). Tree Violet (<i>Melicytus dentatus</i>), Shiny Cassinia (<i>Cassinia longifolia</i>)	Introduced grasses, invasion by Burgan (<i>Kunzea</i> sp.)
Flood Riparian Woodland	Occurs on alluvial terraces of floodplains and has a woodland structure, with an understorey including small trees (notably wattles) and shrubs. The ground-layer is characteristically grassy-herbaceous. Wetland depressions are also common. In The Knob Reserve this EVC occurs on the flats adjacent to the Avon River in the central western to south-western section of the reserve.	endangered	Manna Gum (<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>), with Swamp Gum (<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>) sometimes also present. Gippsland Red-gum (<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> subsp. <i>mediana</i>) is mostly restricted to the outer portions of the floodplain. The major woody understorey species present are Tree Violet (<i>Melicytus dentatus</i>) and Silver Wattle (<i>Acacia dealbata</i>).	Common Blackberry (<i>Rubus anglo-candicans</i>) and Blue Periwinkle (<i>Vinca major</i>)
Riverine Escarpment Scrub	Occurs on steep, rocky slopes adjacent to stream courses. The structure varies from tall shrubland to low woodland, with a patchy ground-layer of variable density, including a range of associated grasses, tough-leaved monocots and dicot herbs (forbs). Occupies a restricted area of steeper slopes in the south-west corner of The Knob Reserve adjacent to the Avon River.	endangered	Lightwood (<i>Acacia implexa</i>), Black She-oak (<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>), Tree Violet (<i>Melicytus dentatus</i>) and Black Wattle (<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>). Dense Spear-grass (<i>Austrostipa densiflora</i>), Bordered Panic (<i>Entolasia marginata</i>), Long-leaf Wallaby-grass (<i>Rytidosperma longifolium</i>).	Blue Periwinkle (<i>Vinca major</i>) and introduced grasses

Plains grassy woodland is the most important. Approximately three-quarters of the reserve is covered by this EVC which was the original dominant vegetation throughout this portion of the Gippsland Plains.

While previously extensive, it has been reduced to small isolated remnants as a consequence of clearing and land-use practices. This vegetation type is also recognised as part of the broader 'Gippsland Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis* subsp. *mediana*) Grassy Woodland and Associated Native Grassland Ecological Community (RGGWEC)' that is listed as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act) and the 'Forest Red Gum Grassy Woodland Community', which is listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic).

A total of 304 plant species have been recorded in the reserve, of which 181 are native and 123 species are introduced to Victoria. Seven of the native vascular plants are classified as rare or threatened in Victoria and/or nationally. Plant species identified in the reserve in 2016 and listed as rare or threatened are shown in Table 3. Victorian or Commonwealth Action Statements do not currently exist for any of these species.

DELWP's NatureKit biodiversity data products provide important information for conserving flora and fauna in the reserve.

Table 3: Significant species, The Knob Reserve.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status	FFG Action Statement or Recovery Plan
<i>Dianella amoena</i>	Matted Flax-lily	endangered (EPBC) threatened (FFG)	National Recovery Plan (Carter 2010)
<i>Diuris punctata</i>	Purple Diuris	vulnerable	None
<i>Eucalyptus bosistoana</i>	Gippsland Grey Box	rare	None
<i>Pellaea nana</i>	Dwarf Sickle-fern	rare	None
<i>Calotis lappulacea</i>	Yellow Burr-daisy	rare	None
<i>Desmodium varians</i>	Slender Tick-trefoil	poorly known	None
<i>Eragrostis leptostachya</i>	Paddock Love-grass	poorly known	None

The reserve contains many plant species that have cultural importance (see 'Gunaikurnai Cultural Heritage' section above), but the fauna of the reserve has not been surveyed comprehensively. The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA 2014) holds records of 22 native fauna species at the location, (17 birds, 3 mammals and 2 reptiles). Four introduced animal species have also been recorded (Common Myna, Common Starling, European Rabbit and Red Fox). Grassy woodland vegetation communities generally provide habitat for a suite of woodland birds, ground-dwelling reptiles, mammals and invertebrates.

Wildlife known to frequent the reserve that have traditional importance to the Gunaikurnai include the *Munjee* (blackfish), *No yorig* (eel), *Jirrah* (kangaroo) *Borun* (pelican), *Gidi* (swan) and *Goongera* (possum).

Landscape and catchment context

The reserve is part of the West Gippsland Lower Avon sub-catchment. The catchment has a history of significant land clearing, which has resulted in severe erosion following flooding. Catchment management has focused on actions to minimise further erosion, water quality deterioration and potential downstream impacts on Ramsar wetlands.

The reserve consists of older alluvial plains and terraces of Quaternary origin and is part of the South-Eastern Riverine Plains of the Eastern Plains of Victoria. The *Dooyeedang* defines the reserve's south-western border. It is an incised stream and is composed of a loose gravel-bed system that is prone to instability during high flows.

A prominent feature of the reserve is the pebbly, sandstone bluff formed by the Avon River cutting through the Haunted Hill gravels. The brown or yellow sodosols tend to be waterlogged in wet periods and dry out quickly in dry periods during summer (Ethos NRM 2015).

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

There are no registered historic European heritage places within The Knob Reserve. Records of use of the reserve area dating back to 1877 show an early grazing licence (DEPI 2013).

Other early site uses include pasture for police horses, a rifle club, and a sports ground with fenced running tracks (DEPI 2013). Following the reservation of the site for public purposes in 1906, police horses were grazed there until 1949. A Commonwealth Small Bore Rifle Range operated from 1938 until 1973 (DEPI 2013).

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

The condition of native vegetation in the reserve was assessed by Oates and Froid (2017c), who also identified threats to that condition. The majority of native vegetation is in moderate condition. There are disconnected pockets of vegetation in good condition in the north of the reserve, and areas in poor to very poor condition in the central and southern parts. Introduced weed species make up 40% of total plant species and are a key threat.

An analysis of the fire dependency and tolerance of the reserve's vegetation and the need for burning indicated that broad-scale burning for ecological objectives is not necessary or desirable (Oates and Froid 2017c).

Many parts of the reserve are susceptible to closure of the grassy ground layer by introduced grasses and shrubs that outcompete native grasses, orchids and other small plants. This regime may favour rabbits (which are conspicuous in the reserve) over native grazers such as kangaroos. Careful, targeted burning may promote native ground flora and provide better habitat for kangaroos.

A small remnant occurrence of Purple Diuris in the north of the reserve has been fenced off by the Avon Landcare group to exclude rabbits and human disturbance. This plot also contains a number of other rare or threatened plant species.

There are small populations of significant species in the reserve, but the most important focus for nature conservation is maintaining and restoring Plains Grassy Woodland EVC and several other small but high-value areas of other EVCs (see Table 2, page 277). The levels of depletion or disturbance in these areas are moderate to low and can feasibly be controlled and potentially reversed.

Fire management

Small burns have been conducted in the reserve by DELWP in recent years, but the earlier fire history of the reserve is poorly known. The *Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land* (DEPI 2012) provides the framework for public land fire management across the State.

Fire management on public land in non-urban areas is the responsibility of DELWP. The *Alpine – Greater Gippsland Strategic Bushfire Management Plan* (DELWP 2015) sets the direction for fire management in and around The Knob Reserve.

Treatment of fuel risks and ecological fire requirements are considered in DELWP's Fire Operations plan process. The natural, cultural and recreational values identified and prioritised in this plan will inform the Fire Operations Plan process, so that burning and other fuel treatments are prioritised

or modified where necessary. Because of the high natural, cultural and recreational values of the reserve, fuel management methods other than burning should be considered. Although broad-scale burning of the reserve is not needed or appropriate for vegetation health, burning of small areas at low intensity, similar to traditional Aboriginal burning practice, may be useful where specific vegetation responses or weed control is required.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency or severity of extreme events such as storms and fires, and changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes. Changes in vegetation are likely to occur slowly, while more extreme events such as storms, floods and bushfires can occur at any time. Gradual warming and drying may threaten some ecological communities in the reserve, especially where they are already stressed by invasive plants and animals or by disease. Storm events increase the risk of physical damage to trees, cultural sites and visitor facilities, and the risk to public safety.

Threats to cultural heritage

Threats to scarred trees include natural ageing and decay, vandalism, timber-cutting, soil compaction of the root zone, salinity and fire, as well as natural events such as storms and floods (DEPI 2013).

Threats to the persistence of surface scatters include weathering and erosion, trampling by hard-hoofed animals and any human activity that includes surface disturbance or soil movement.

Threats to axe-grinding groove sites include weathering or erosion of the sandstone, trampling by animals such as cows and sheep, construction, clearing of vegetation and other site disturbances. One function of the lookout platform at The Bluff within the reserve is to protect the axe-grinding grooves at this location.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

The key land, water and heritage values, priority threats and conservation strategies to address them are identified in Table 4. Values are identified primarily at the level of EVCs and threatened species, using state-wide datasets. However, it is often more practical and effective to take conservation action by targeting assets at an intermediate level, such as controlling weeds or undertaking planned burning to improve the health of an assemblage of ground-cover plants in a particular EVC or part of the reserve, rather than the EVC as a whole or a single threatened plant species.

Intensive conservation action planning is required to identify the most critical assets in light of the present condition of the reserve and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating. The conservation strategies should therefore be further evaluated through a conservation planning process that takes into account their feasibility, impact and priority in the broader landscape.

Table 4: Conservation values, threats and strategies.

Threats	Priorities	Strategies
Plains Grassy Woodland EVC		
Incremental clearing and other disturbance	Grazing by rabbits, weed invasion,	Maintain and enhance condition consistent with recreational uses of the reserve.
Critically small populations and lack of recruitment of a range of species	firewood collection, overgrowth of shrubs and trees.	Control grazing by rabbits.
Impacts of horses and vehicles		Protect hollow-bearing trees and coarse woody debris.
Impacts of rabbits		Restrict shrub invasion to promote ground-layer vegetation.
Impacts of weeds, notably a range of introduced grasses		Consider targeted low-intensity burning to promote ground-layer species.
Potentially insufficient grazing by kangaroos		Monitor Burgan and control with small-patch burning or mechanical removal.
Inappropriate application of fire		Control recreational access to prevent trampling and weed dispersal.
Firewood collection		Maintain fenced protection of Purple Diuris remnant and monitor associated flora.
Riverine Escarpment Scrub EVC and Escarpment Woodland EVC		
Critically small populations and lack of recruitment of a range of species	Weed invasion, grazing by rabbits, erosion, trampling	Control access and impacts and undertake careful conservation works where necessary.
Impacts of weeds, especially introduced grasses		Control Bluebell Creeper, Blue Periwinkle, African Love-grass, African Box Thorn, Kikuyu and Perennial Veldt-grass. Control rabbits. Control access and management operations to avoid soil erosion and impacts on ground layer species, especially Yellow Burr-daisy and Dwarf Sickle-fern.
Impacts of rabbits		
Erosion and informal tracks		
The Bluff — artefact scatter sites and axe grinding grooves		
Damage from works or development on the site	Controls on works and access	Implement processes to minimise and control works and operations in The Bluff Area.
Erosion or damage to the site caused by visitors, including removal of artefacts		Maintain fenced closure; control visitor impacts through education and regulation.
Scarred trees in the reserve		
Tree damage or death of live trees	Controls on pruning works, earthworks and activities affecting tree health	Establish tree guards as needed. Ensure staff, contractors and burn planners conducting works in the reserve are briefed on values.

5 PEOPLE IN THE RESERVE

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

In addition to taking a greater role in the management and conservation of the reserve, Gunaikurnai people will take opportunities to gather in the reserve, pass on lore and cultural knowledge between generations and undertake traditional practices.

Unlike a number of the jointly managed parks and reserves, The Knob Reserve is easily accessible and has good facilities for communal gatherings and events. The reserve is an important waypoint on the Bataluk Cultural Trail, a regional cultural touring route that extends from South Gippsland to Cape Conran, developed jointly by the Far East Gippsland Aboriginal Corporation, Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, Moogji Aboriginal Council, Ramahyuck Aboriginal Corporation, East Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council.

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai people. The reserve provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to country in a place that has been a traditional gathering point for thousands of years.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for community gatherings in the reserve, to pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations and meet cultural obligations to care for Country through conservation and restoration work.

GLaWAC joint management rangers and works crews undertake conservation and maintenance works in the reserve. There is scope to build capacity and expertise through this program. As far as possible, the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories to visitors, schools and by working with tour operators and the tourism industry to ensure that the promotion of the cultural heritage of the reserve to the public is accurate, rich and maintained.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE RESERVE

The Knob Reserve is an important recreational site for the local Stratford community and special interest groups, and as a touring waypoint on the Bataluk Cultural Trail.

The topography of the reserve (particularly the views from the viewing platform on the escarpment) and its connection to the *Dooyeedang* make it a site of interest for tourists and a popular location for the local community.

The reserve is identified in the Stratford Community Plan (WSC 2015) as an important site on the Bataluk Trail and a highly valued resource for the town. The reserve provides a valuable outdoor gathering place for the Stratford community for events such as the annual Shakespeare festival.

The reserve contains recreation and visitor infrastructure including walking tracks, shelters, undercover barbecues, seating, a playground, toilet block and an oval with a performance stage. These facilities provide opportunities for picnicking, social gatherings, community events, horse riding, bushwalking, bike riding and dog walking.

Public access to reserve is via Old Redbank Road. The reserve is closed at sunset to prevent illegal or inappropriate activities. There is a simple network of unsealed roads within the reserve. Unsealed roads and tracks within the reserve are becoming increasingly popular with mountain bike riders. There is a small network of pedestrian-only tracks leading to the viewing platform and around the base of The Bluff.

The main areas for recreational use are around the sports oval and associated infrastructure in the south-western part of the reserve and the pony club site in the north-eastern section.

Local schools and junior sporting associations use the reserve for events such as cross-country runs, orienteering and field sports. Other activities, including weddings and equestrian events, operate under permit and may require the erection of temporary infrastructure.

Some recreational uses and unauthorised developments have created undesirable impacts in parts of the reserve. Informal tracks have been developed by the pony club when setting up events, and by others for trail-bike riding and general walking and riding. Firewood collection in the reserve, which has been permitted for use in the designated solid fuel fireplaces on site, has had an impact on the ground cover.

Several visitor sites are close to each other but provide for distinct and different visitor activities and experiences. The sporting oval and associated facilities in the southern part of the reserve are used for periodic sports events and community events and performances.

The pony club site in the north east of the reserve is the focal point for equestrian activities at the site and through the remainder of the reserve.

The Bluff area provides tracks and views over the river, and tracks through the reserve provide for walks and other dispersed activity.

Although the historical purpose of the reserve as a public recreation area will continue, its cultural role and importance will be given greater recognition and reinforcement by joint management.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

The goal and strategies for recreation and visitor experience in the reserve is described in Table 5.

Table 5: Visitor experience goals and strategies.

Goal
Improve the reserve as an important place for the community and visitors to gather, and enjoy its land, water and heritage.
Strategies
Manage the reserve for a range of public recreation activities, with increased recognition, protection, promotion, appreciation and enjoyment of its cultural values and ecological health.
Provide well-maintained, high-quality visitor facilities, and reduce the impacts of recreation use and unauthorised activities.
Increase the role and attraction of the reserve for regional tourism as part of the Bataluk Cultural Trail.
Collaborate with the community and stakeholders to establish this renewed approach.

Uses and activities in each zone will be managed in accordance with Table 6. However, this does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

Table 6: Recreational activities allowed in Management Zones.

Activity	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Recreation Development Zone
Camping	No (except for events and subject to permit)	No (except for events and subject to permit)
Community events	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (subject to permit)
Competitive events	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (subject to permit)
Cycling	Yes (only on public roads; not permitted on walking tracks)	Yes (only on public roads; not permitted on walking tracks)
Dogs	Yes (only on lead)	Yes (only on lead)
Education activities	Yes	Yes
Campfires	Yes (solid fuel permitted only in designated fireplaces; liquid or gas fuel stoves permitted)	Yes (solid fuel permitted only in designated fireplaces; liquid or gas fuel stoves permitted)
Firewood collection	No	No
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)
Guided activities	Yes	Yes
Horseriding	Yes (subject to permit for events and large groups)	Yes (subject to permit for events and large groups)
Hunting	No	No
Orienteering or rogaining	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (subject to permit)
Picnicking	Yes	Yes
Walking or hiking	Yes	Yes
Vehicle use (including two wheel drive, four wheel drive and trail bikes)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on MVO roads and tracks)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on MVO roads and tracks)

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS — COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT, GLaWAC, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The reserve is administered by an incorporated committee of management, currently consisting of nominees from GKTOLMB, GLaWAC and DELWP. GKTOLMB and GLaWAC staff and regional technical specialist staff from DELWP provide expertise and support to manage the reserve. GLaWAC has an agreement with the Committee of Management to undertake works in the reserve.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land, and also provides legislative and policy support and advice to the GKTOLMB and the Committee of Management. The GLaWAC works crew has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The Committee of Management, GLaWAC, DELWP and GKTOLMB have identified the potential for these partnerships to expand and evolve significantly over time through mentoring, training, information sharing, and employment and contractual opportunities.

This process should involve a sharing of expertise and knowledge of public land management by the Committee of Management and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise by GLaWAC. The GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic reserve management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

A range of community groups and individuals have a close association and interest in the reserve. They include the Stratford Community Hub, the Stratford Pony Club, the Avon Landcare Group, Maffra and District Landcare Network, St Patrick's School in Stratford, and former members of the Committee of Management. There is significant potential to further build partnerships and collaboration between the Committee of Management, GLaWAC, GKTOLMB and community groups and volunteers.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the reserve. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's area of responsibility includes the reserve. It provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic coordination of catchment restoration investment. The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.

Wellington Shire is responsible for local planning regulation, road maintenance and traffic management around the reserve, as well as other municipal responsibilities. Destination Gippsland is an important partner in marketing and promoting the Bataluk Cultural Trail.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

Formal or organised uses of the reserve must be licensed or permitted to ensure that there is no conflict with normal use by the general public or significant impacts on the reserve values and environment.

The issue of exclusive possession leases in the reserve is inappropriate because they create an exclusionary interest in the leased area that is inconsistent with native title.

Before the appointment of the current Committee of Management, a number of licences were issued by DELWP under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act for uses in the reserve. These include licences issued to the Stratford Pony Club for club and interschool equestrian events, the Easter

Victoria Pleasure Harness Club for horse trialling, and local schools for cross-Country running events, as well as licences for a regional camping event and a Stratford outdoor cinema event.

Multiple licences have been issued to the Pony Club for single events. This is unsatisfactory for all parties involved, and a more effective arrangement for authorising events and the club's building occupancies in the reserve needs to be considered.

6.4 RESERVE BOUNDARIES

The State Government has committed to considering further additions to the Aboriginal Title area where that is desirable.

The western boundary of the reserve is complex because of movement in the bed and banks of the Avon River over the last century. There have been proposals to enlarge the reserve on the western side to establish a linking trail along the river bank to Stratford township.

The establishment of a trail might not necessarily require additions to the reserve (which would probably be complex and costly), as it might be feasible by means of lease or other form of authorisation by adjacent landholders for a trail corridor. A trail alignment that avoids these challenges may be an attractive alternative.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with goals and actions for the Joint Management Area as a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural heritage of The Knob Reserve are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, the Committee of Management, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action
-----	--------

- | | |
|----|---|
| K1 | Apply the zoning set out in Table 1. |
| K2 | Protect and restore the reserve's key land, water and cultural heritage values by implementing the priorities and strategies detailed in Table 4. |
| K3 | Complete and publish vegetation mapping for the reserve. |
| K4 | Work with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to protect reserve values from weed invasion by controlling pest plants and animals, in accordance with the <i>West Gippsland Invasive Plants and Animals Plan</i> . |
| K5 | Work with DELWP to manage fire in the reserve and to undertake fuel management and burning as required under the conservation actions in Tables 3 and 4. |
| K6 | Implement revegetation programs to stabilise the river bank, including fencing around The Bluff and other sensitive areas to minimise disturbance by visitors. Minimise stream crossings to reduce road runoff and weed invasion. |
| K7 | Develop a seed bank for plant species used in restoration programs. |
| K8 | Include the area in the development of a comprehensive conservation action plan aligned to the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan and broader East Gippsland park landscape conservation. |

Cultural heritage

No.	Actions
-----	---------

- | | |
|-----|---|
| K9 | Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural connection to the reserve through <i>Welcome to Country</i> and other appropriate signage, based on the Brayakaulung clan at key points of entry and visitor nodes. |
| K10 | Redevelop the entry gate area and replace the existing lions with emblems that reflect Gunaikurnai culture. |
| K11 | Establish a Gunaikurnai language name for the reserve through the Office of Geographic Names' naming rules process. |
| K12 | Implement Gunaikurnai knowledge-sharing and understanding of culture through Elders and Gunaikurnai ranger-led activities on Country. |
| K13 | Establish Gunaikurnai interpretive space (e.g. at the end of a potential trail from Stratford township). |
-

-
- K14 Undertake mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values and sites in the reserve and implement a cultural values overlay as part of the management zoning scheme, based on the outcomes of the mapping.
 - K15 Map the social values of the reserve for the Stratford community and user groups.
 - K16 Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the reserve and undertaking community cultural activities and events.
 - K17 Develop a cultural hub area to enable educational programs and functions.
 - K18 Implement the provisions of any Natural Resource Agreement that may be established for the reserve under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and vary the management plan as required.
-

People on the Reserve

Goals

Gunaikurnai increase their connection with the reserve through management, operations and the opportunity to undertake cultural practices.

Visitor and community enjoyment, experiences and understanding of the reserve are enhanced by joint management.

No. Actions

- K19 Manage visitor activities in accordance with Table 6. Generally, maintain existing regulatory settings for activities and uses in the reserve, apart from changes set out in this plan (including approved variations) or changes arising from statutory requirements.
 - K20 Significantly increase the interpretation of cultural and natural values in the reserve through signs, displays and online/printed information to present a more comprehensive story of the reserve and its natural and cultural heritage.
 - K21 Identify and map the recreational and social values of the reserve.
 - K22 Develop an access and facilities plan for visitor use and recreation in the reserve based on the permissible activities identified in this plan, which pedestrian and vehicle access, facilities and services.
 - K23 Progressively improve the condition of recreational facilities in the reserve. Ensure maintenance of existing toilets and installation of new toilets as required.
 - K24 Standardise the approach to licences in the reserve.
 - K25 Establish effective compliance and regulation of the reserve to control illegal activities and impacts. Maintain the sunset closure of the reserve to prevent illegal activities after hours. Lock vehicle access gate that is furthest east from the main entrance gate along Old Redbank Road.
 - K26 Monitor resilience of vegetation to impacts from horse riding events and work with the Pony Club to reduce impacts. Review horse-riding activity in consultation with the club, following mapping of cultural values and vegetation.
 - K27 Investigate the feasibility of establishing of a recreational trail from Stratford to the reserve.
 - K28 Initiate discussions with Gippsland schools as well as school camps such as those in East Gippsland to offer a program of cultural awareness and guided activities.
 - K29 Establish a Gunaikurnai junior ranger program for schools in the local area.
 - K30 Ensure all tour operators undertake cultural awareness training conducted by Gunaikurnai, to enhance knowledge and protection of cultural heritage, and to improve interpretation of Gunaikurnai culture to visitors.
-

Working Together

Goals

Joint management of The Knob Reserve operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai have the capacity to play the central role.

Community and stakeholders support and contribute to the care and operation of The Knob Reserve.

No. Actions

- K31 Implement a staged approach to Gunaikurnai management of The Knob Reserve.
 - K32 Communicate the role and work of the Committee of Management and engage with community, stakeholders and local government to build collaboration.
 - K33 Build capacity among the partners to undertake Committee of Management roles through mentoring and succession planning.
 - K34 Implement preferred tender status for GLaWAC or other approved Gunaikurnai businesses for reserve restoration and management activities.
 - K35 Promote the opportunities for GLaWAC, and the community groups active in the reserve to collaborate and share skills and knowledge about the reserve and its management.
 - K36 Increase participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP fire management programs in the reserve and undertake burning using traditional practices (consistent with actions for 'Country')
 - K37 Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the reserve in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
 - K38 Where appropriate, promote Gunaikurnai cultural sites by developing a series of site-specific policies that will outline the level of public access, infrastructure requirements and culturally appropriate interpretive themes.
 - K39 Consider the need for changes to the reserve boundary, including cooperative arrangements with adjacent landholders in lieu of land transfer or acquisition.
 - K40 Ensure that regulations for managing and protecting the reserve are in place and kept current, and that regulatory provisions are harmonised where practical across the joint management areas, recognising differences in land status.
-

8 PLAN MONITORING AND REVIEW

An annual rolling plan will be used to implement the actions in Section 7. The progress and effectiveness in implementing these actions will be tracked by collecting two types of data:

- data on *activities* — what is being done under joint management
- data on *outcomes* — what changes are occurring as a result of what is being done.

Table 7 provides further detail on both types of data, and describes how they will be collected.

To minimise the burden of additional data collection processes, the methodology outlined below builds on existing project management processes and data wherever possible. Progress on actions that apply to more than one of the joint managed parks (for example, Gunaikurnai capacity building) will be reported under the Strategic Plan actions while tracking the initiatives in specific parks that contribute to that broader action.

Table 7: Data used to track progress in implementing the Joint Management Plan.

Data type	Description	Data source and method
Activities	<p>Activities are the things we are doing under joint management.</p> <p>Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include:</p> <p>the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan.</p> <p>the actions described in this management plan for The Knob Reserve.</p>	<p>Tracking the activities outlined in the Introduction and Strategic Plan of the JMP will be based on the project management tools that the partners use to guide implementation.</p> <p>Existing project management tools should provide sufficient evidence and information on how implementation is progressing, what has been completed, any bottlenecks or issues to be addressed, and the staff responsible.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done.</p> <p>Tracking outcomes is important for understanding whether the intended changes are being achieved, and therefore whether the goals for the first five-year period are being achieved. Outcomes are documented in Tables 3 and 4 of the Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection.</p> <p>Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.</p>

Table 8 provides an example of the data that will be collected on the outcomes of joint management. It is an excerpt from the complete outcomes framework, which is contained in Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan.

Table 8: Excerpt of outcomes framework from the Strategic Plan.

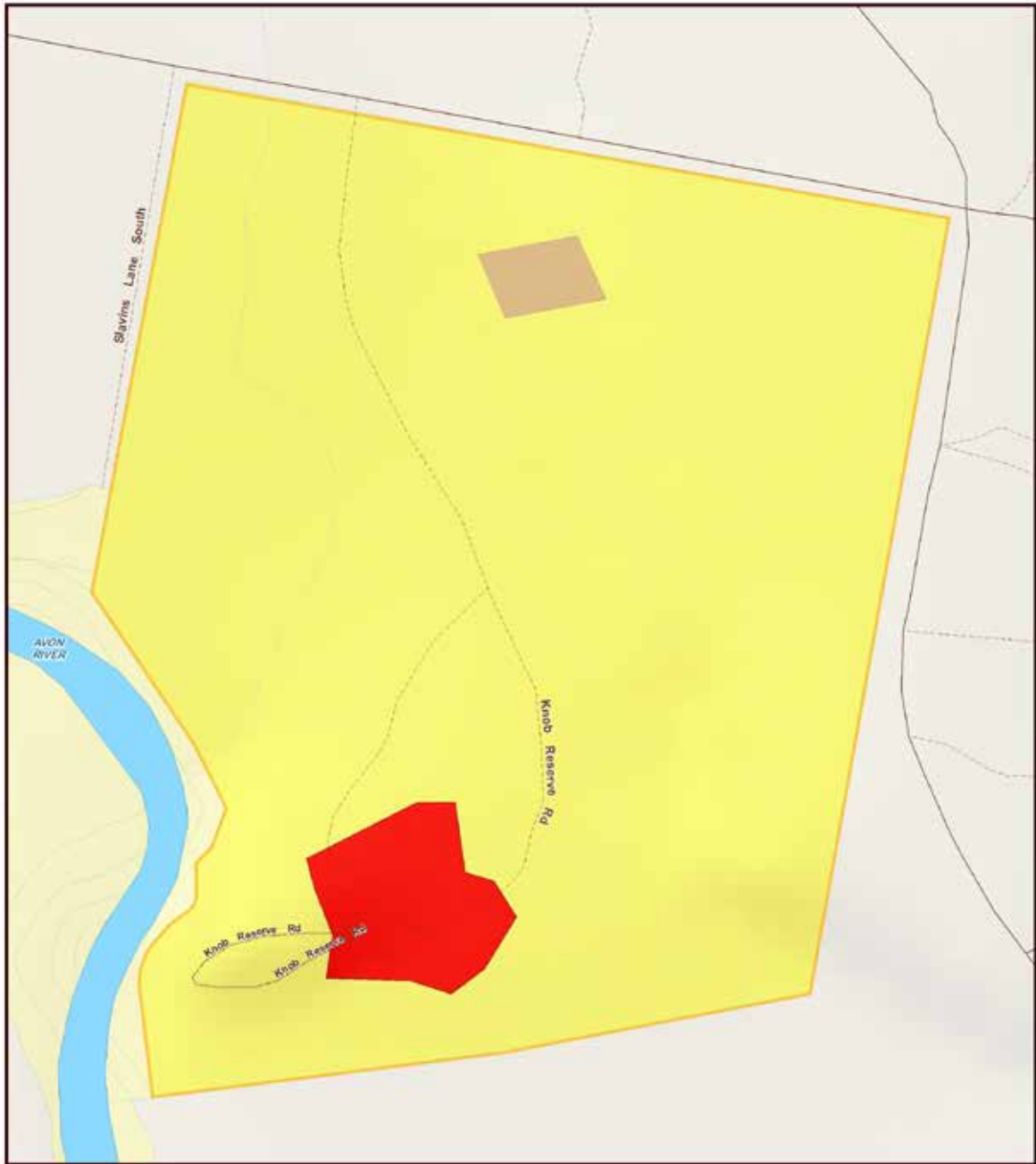
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the change be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff on parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other management staff will be more visible in parks, engaging with visitors and educating them about park values and Gunaikurnai heritage.	Number of rangers and other staff working in roles such as guides and educators. Detail on programs implemented to build capacity of rangers and staff as guides and educators (e.g. number of participants). <i>Annual</i>
Culture	Protections are in place for all identified cultural sites	Measures will be put in place to protect all culturally important sites from erosion, park use and other threats.	Percentage of identified cultural sites that have protections in place. <i>Annual</i>
Country	Rangers and management staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to implement sustainable, integrated land management practices.	Partners aim to continue capacity-building and training programs for rangers and other management staff in sustainable land management practices that integrate Gunaikurnai traditional practices with modern conventional practices.	Details on program (e.g. content, forms of capacity building implemented, number of rangers completing capacity building initiatives). <i>Annual</i>
Working Together	Decision-making processes are embedded.	The JMP specifies the decision-making processes in the governance structure. Partners will embed these by demonstrating they have put them into practice and are using them to make decisions.	Reflection on how decision-making processes and governance arrangements have been followed and complied with in the previous 12-month period, and lessons for the future. <i>Annual</i>

The monitoring regime, especially for Caring for Country and People in the Parks actions, will use measures and data specified in regional Conservation Action Plans and state-wide monitoring programs conducted across the broader park and reserve estate, including the *State of the Parks* and *State of the Forests*. This will be particularly important for monitoring outcomes, which are often complex and can only be monitored efficiently at selected locations rather than in every park.

This management plan has effect for 10 years and will be formally reviewed and renewed at the end of that period. After the five-year review of the Strategic Plan, any consequential variations to this management plan will be made at that time through a consultative process.

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**The Knob Reserve
Joint Management Plan**

21/05/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRSD04
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Walking track
- - - Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Joint Management
- Public Land

- Management Zones and Overlays**
- Conservation & Recreation Zone
 - Recreation Development Zone
 - Special Protection Overlay

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Map 1: Management zones and overlays, The Knob Reserve.



The Knob Reserve Joint Management Plan

28/10/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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- Walking track
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Joint Management

Ecological Vegetation Classes

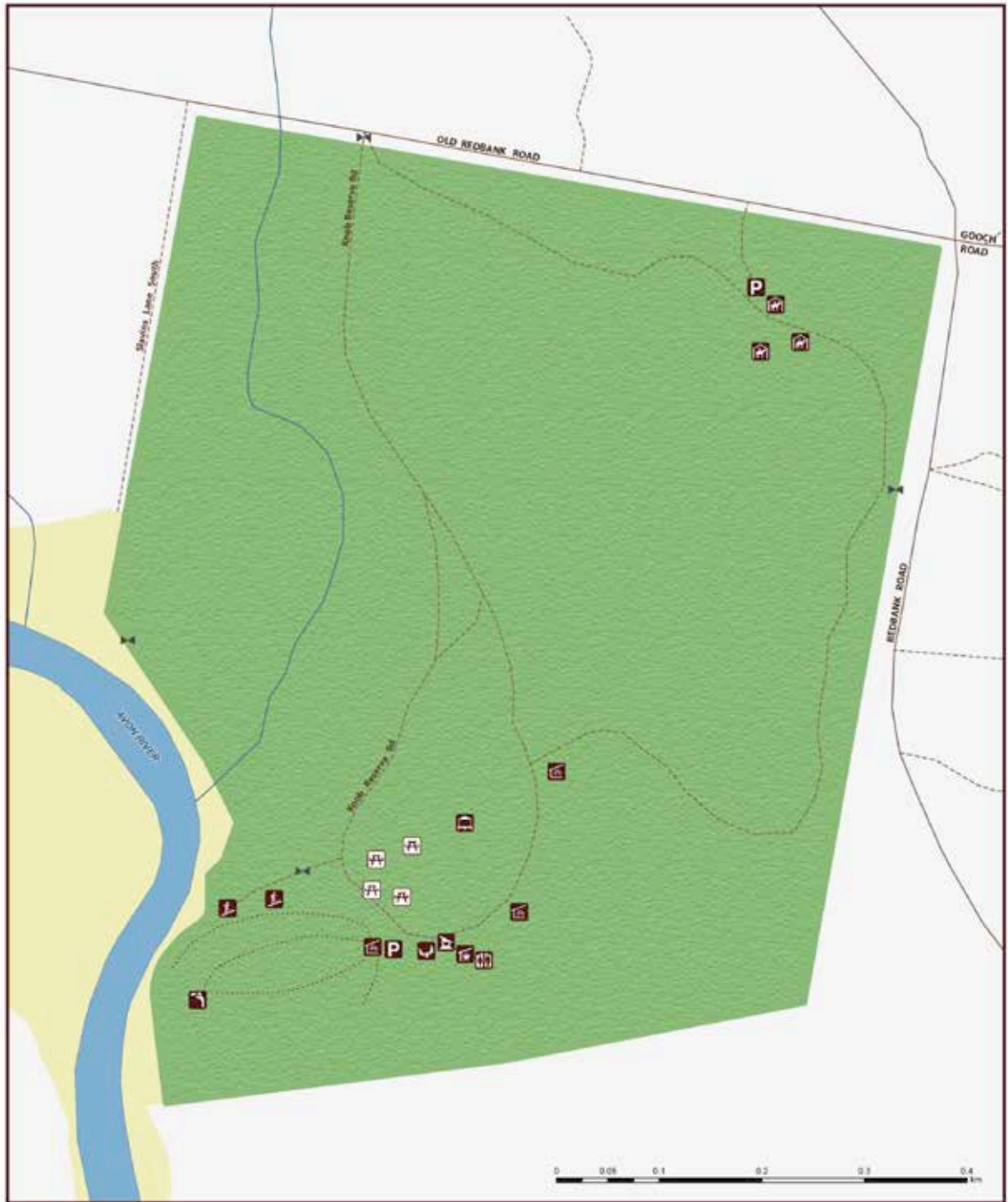
- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| | Avon River channel | | Plains Grassy Woodland |
| | Aquatic Sedgeland | | Ripenne Excavpment Scrub |
| | Creekline Scrubby Woodland | | Riparian Shrubland |
| | Escarpment Woodland | | Swamp Scrub |
| | Floodplain Riparian Woodland | | Tall Marsh |



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, The Knob Reserve.



The Knob Reserve
Joint Management Plan

23/5/2018
 Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRD054
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Arterial Roads
- Sealed Roads
- - - Unsealed Roads
- Walking Tracks
- 4WD
- Management Vehicles Only
- Joint Management
- Park and Reserve
- Public Land

Visitor Sites & Facilities

- Carpark
- Natural Lookout
- Picnic Shelter
- Multipurpose Building
- Tables
- Toilet
- BBQ Shelter
- Stage
- Horse-riding facility
- Playground
- Stairs
- Gates

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Map 3: Visitor sites and facilities, The Knob Reserve.

