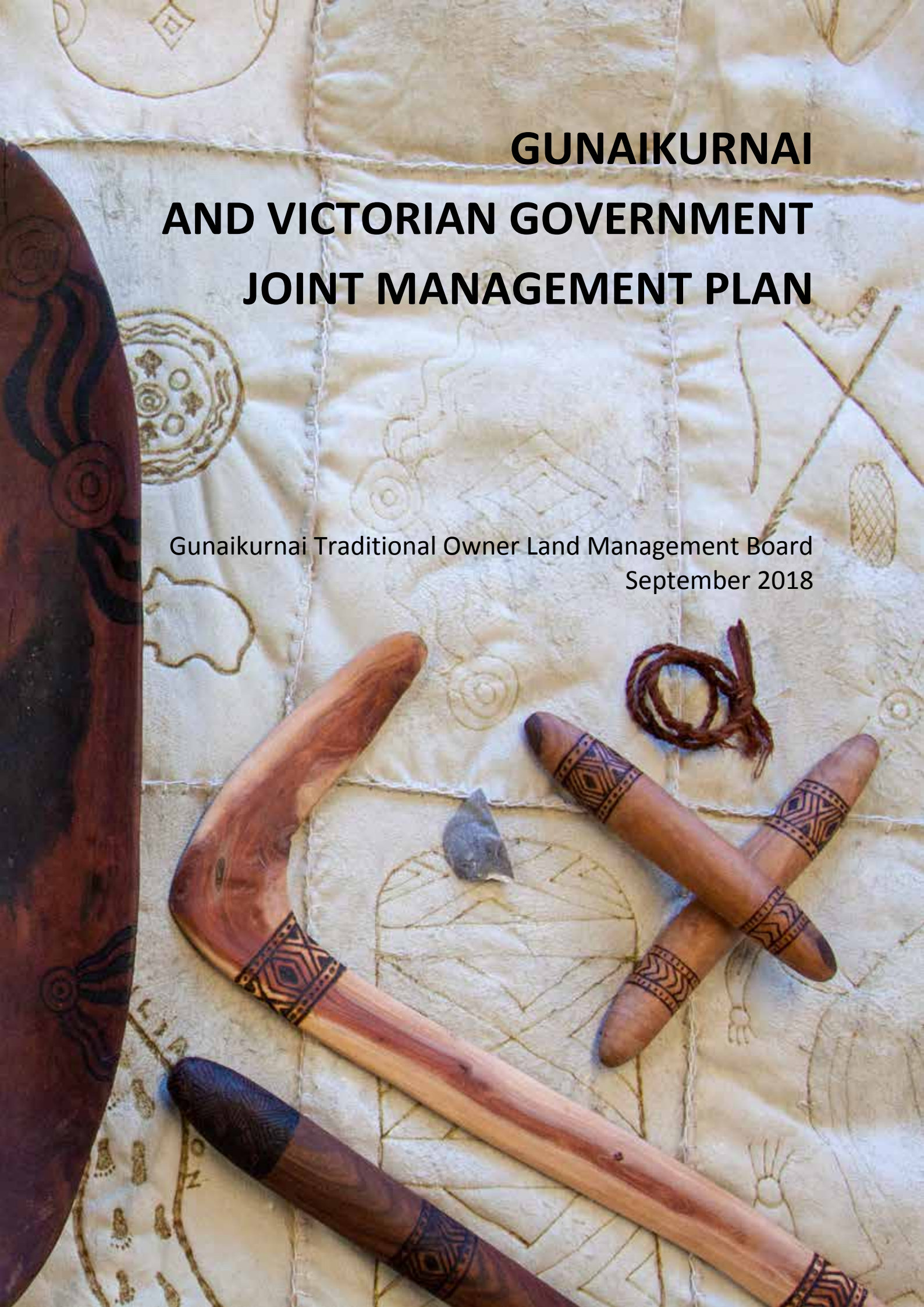


The background of the entire page is a photograph of various traditional Gunaikurnai objects. On the left, a large, dark, curved wooden object, possibly a boomerang or a part of a shield, is partially visible. In the center and foreground, several wooden objects are laid out on a light-colored, patterned cloth. These include a large, curved wooden object with a decorative band, two smaller wooden objects with decorative bands, and a small, dark, pointed object. The cloth has a repeating pattern of circles and diamonds. The title text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board
September 2018



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images, names, quotes and other references to deceased people.

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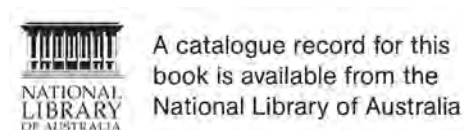
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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this plan is accurate. The Board does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or consequence that may arise from you relying on any information in the publication.

The Board acknowledges that there are differing views about the meaning and spelling of some Gunaikurnai words, and recognise that these may change in the future. The same applies to the telling and meaning of Gunaikurnai mythological stories. Where Gunaikurnai language or stories are used in this plan, the spelling or story contained in the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan* (2015) has been adopted for the purpose of consistency.

Quotations included in this plan are reproduced verbatim, including spelling, punctuation and capitalisation. These may differ from the style adopted in this plan.

Parks Victoria Act 2018

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.).

Acknowledgements

This plan was prepared with assistance from Chris Halstead and Penny Spoelder of TRC Tourism, Simon Faivel and Jonathan Finighan of SVA Consulting, and Brian Doolan of Montane Planning, with input from GKTOLMB members and staff, and partner organisations: Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The Board thanks the following people for providing photographs and images for this plan:

Alfie Hudson, Bradley Hood, Alice Hughes/Pepper, Robbie Farnham, Sean Phillipson, Jessica Shapiro, Rob Willersdorf, David Meagher.

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FOREWORD

I am extremely proud to release Victoria's first Joint Management Plan. The *Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan* represents an important step forward in the reconciliation of the Gunaikurnai peoples' aspirations for, and connections to, the land and waters that constitute their Country (*wurruk*).

This landmark document demonstrates the commitment of the Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people to a collaborative partnership. It establishes a solid framework for the joint management of ten parks and reserves in Gippsland over the next twenty-five years. The plan recognises the important past, present and future cultural and natural values of the parks and reserves to the Gunaikurnai people and the wider Victorian community.

The plan builds on the *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan* (2015) by recognising and respecting the Gunaikurnai culture, use and knowledge in land management decision-making. Its implementation will help the Gunaikurnai people to build skills and capacity, and ensure the well-being of *wurruk* and their people. It will also benefit the wider Victorian community and visitors to the parks and reserves by providing enhanced opportunities for education and enjoyment within the context of Gunaikurnai culture.

The Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people are setting a new direction for working together to manage Country. This plan has been developed through the collective effort of many people and organisations, including the Gunaikurnai community, the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, The Knob Recreation Reserve Committee of Management and the wider community.

The passion and enthusiasm of everyone who has contributed to the development of this plan is fundamental to its strength.

I commend those who have contributed and look forward to seeing this plan being successfully implemented. This is not just a plan of action, but a force for successful joint management and realisation of Gunaikurnai aspirations.



The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

APPROVED JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

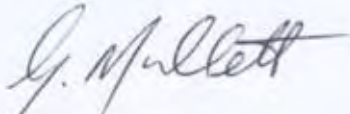
The *Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan* has been prepared in accordance with Division 5A of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987* (Vic.). It includes a strategic plan and individual plans for the 10 jointly managed parks and reserves.

The plan is consistent with the objects and requirements of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.) for the six parks in the plan that are managed under that Act, and is consistent with the purposes and requirements of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.) for the four reserves in the plan that are managed under that Act. This plan meets the preparation requirements of the Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement between Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and the Victorian Government, and is approved for implementation.

The purpose of the plan are to set and guide the strategic direction for the joint management partnership between Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government; to enable the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai people to influence, and be recognised in, the management of the ten jointly managed parks and reserves; and to enable the combined natural resource management skills and expertise of the Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government to be applied in the management of those parks and reserves.

This plan supersedes all previously approved management plans for the ten parks and reserves.

This plan is agreed in accordance with Section 82PG of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.



Grattan Mullett

Chair, Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board



John Bradley

Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

This plan is approved in accordance with Section 82PH of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.



The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

A MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS

We enter this joint management partnership as a consequence of the 2010 Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) between Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), on behalf of the Gunaikurnai People, and the State of Victoria.

The RSA recognises that Gunaikurnai People are the Traditional Owner Group for, and the custodians of, the Country within the agreement area. Further it recognises the substantial impact on Gunaikurnai society caused by the arrival and settlement of Europeans that included interference in the ability of Gunaikurnai People to practise their lore and culture, loss of access to Country and the use of its resources, and disruption to maintaining connection to their Country.

Despite these challenges, the Gunaikurnai People have maintained a strong connection to their Country across generations and have continued to practise their lore and culture, providing a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the identity and wellbeing of the Gippsland region and of the State.

Recognition of the strong Gunaikurnai connection to Country underpins joint management and its intention in seeking an equitable partnership between the Gunaikurnai People and the Victorian Government in the management of ten parks and reserves on Gunaikurnai Country. The partnership to jointly manage these parks and reserves in Gippsland represents an exciting new way to manage *wurruk* (Country) and the important past, present and future cultural and natural values.

The future management of the 10 parks and reserves that are now, or will be, under Aboriginal Title will enable Gunaikurnai people to have real influence on how *wurruk* is managed. The partnership also brings the opportunity for knowledge sharing and the development of employment, education and training. With the partnership comes the sharing of decisions, resources, skills and equal opportunity in all relationships and business. This is the basis of the partnership between the Gunaikurnai people and the Victorian Government.

It will be delivered by the joint management partner organisations working together — the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, The Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc. and the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board. Following a review by the joint management partners, there may be changes to the partnership governance arrangements that will apply during the implementation of this plan.

The broader community and visitors to these parks and reserves will recognise a positive change in the way *wurruk* is managed. Visitors will continue to enjoy access to traditional park activities while experiencing new opportunities to connect with nature and Gunaikurnai culture.

The *Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan* (JMP) will evolve and improve over time, based on knowledge gained through implementing the plan and its scheduled reviews. The plan has been finalised following lengthy engagement and consultation with members of the Gunaikurnai community and a formal, public consultation period in late 2017.

We thank the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board for developing this plan, for their commitment to promoting the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai people and for recognising and encouraging employment and economic development opportunities to support a diverse and prosperous Gippsland region.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is 'Brian Stevens' and the signature on the right is 'John Bradley'. They are positioned above their respective printed names and titles.

Brian Stevens

Chair, Gunaikurnai Land and
Waters Aboriginal Corporation

John Bradley

Secretary to the Department of
Environment, Land, Water and Planning

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION





RECOGNITION OF *WURRUK* (COUNTRY)

We have one of the oldest living cultures in the world, and that culture has been passed on through many generations. Our culture is embedded in our *wurruk*, which is vital to our identity.

We are the new generation of our people. The breath of our ancestors has been passed down from generation to generation, and we are their continuation. We are still here to uphold where our ancestors have come from and fought for. Joint management will contribute to our proud and strong future, and the partnership between Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners and the State of Victoria will bring our combined knowledge and skills together for the best management of *wurruk* and these parks and reserves.

This joint management model is a new way of managing the land and an exciting opportunity for us to have real influence over the future of our *wurruk*.

— Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board

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Artwork by Alfie Hudson, courtesy of Jessica Shapiro



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Joint Management Plan (JMP) guides the Gunaikurnai people and Victorian Government partnership in jointly managing the 10 public parks and reserves that have been, or will be, transferred to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title in accordance with the Gunaikurnai Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) in 2010.¹

The primary audience of the plan is the organisations that are responsible for implementing joint management of the parks and reserves identified in the Gunaikurnai Recognition and Settlement Agreement, collectively referred to as the joint management partners throughout this plan: Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria (PV), The Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc., and the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB).

The JMP has 11 components, including this Introduction. The second component is the Strategic Plan, which describes what the partners want to achieve through joint management and outlines a long-term strategy for getting there. It covers a 25-year period, with an initial focus on the things we plan to do and achieve in the first five years.

The remaining components are the management plans for the 10 parks and reserves to be jointly managed (Figure 1):

- Buchan Caves Reserve
- Corringale Foreshore Reserve
- Lake Tyers State Park
- Mitchell River National Park
- New Guinea Caves (within Snowy River National Park)
- Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island
- Tarra–Bulga National Park
- The Knob Reserve
- The Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park (combined in one plan).

These management plans provide the joint management strategies and actions that are specific to each of the parks and reserves, and have a 10 year planning horizon. They also describe how the aspirations and strategic direction outlined in the Strategic Plan will be translated at an operational level within each jointly managed park and reserve. Each management plan has a standard structure:

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 The park/reserve under joint management
 - 3 Zoning
 - 4 Caring for Country
 - 5 People in the park/reserve
 - 6 Working together
 - 7 Goals and actions
 - 8 Plan monitoring and review
- References
Appendices
Maps

¹ Additional strategic documents that underpin joint management are listed in Appendix 4 of the Strategic Plan.



Figure 1: Location of the 10 jointly managed parks and reserves.

1.2 COMMUNITY INPUT

The preparation of this JMP commenced in 2014. Community engagement during the initial JMP preparation phase focused on members of the Gunaikurnai community through a series of workshops and consultation sessions and events. The purpose of these was to hear and document the Gunaikurnai aspirations for joint management of the 10 parks and reserves covered by this plan. A preliminary draft plan was prepared in response to the Gunaikurnai input, and the input provided by the members of the GKTOLMB and staff from Parks Victoria and DELWP.

This preliminary draft was again canvassed with interested members of the Gunaikurnai community, and briefings were provided to the broader community of park users and stakeholders.

The draft plan was formally released for public consultation from 11 October to 15 December 2017. This release was accompanied by extensive press and social media advertising, along with distribution of JMP information brochures and the conduct of community information sessions in Melbourne and at venues across the Gippsland region.

1.3 COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN

Thirty-nine written submissions on the draft plan were received (see Appendix). Twenty-three submissions were from individuals and 16 were made on behalf of organisations. Many suggestions were also received from the joint management partner organisations.

As well as commenting on the details of the draft plan, these submissions raised a number of significant issues. Table 1 lists these issues and the responses to them, including changes made to the proposal in the draft plan during the preparation of this final plan.

Table 1: Responses to issues raised in submissions.

Issue raised	Response
General	
Support for joint management and Gunaikurnai aspirations.	No change.
Support for strategic directions and proposals of the JMP.	Strategic directions maintained.
Plan language should be simpler and clearer.	Plan language revised where necessary.
Goals, strategies and actions should be more clearly aligned.	Structure and content revised to provide better alignment and clarity.
Actions for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of plan implementation for all Part 2 plans should be described in more detail.	Additional detail provided in 'plan monitoring and review' section of all Part 2 plans.
Implementation responsibilities, funding and resourcing should be described in the JMP.	No change. These matters will be detailed in the Joint Management Implementation Plan being developed in conjunction with the finalisation of the JMP.
Zoning	
The Special Protection Overlay (SPO) in the New Guinea Caves area should be reduced to the area around New Guinea Cave 2.	The extent of the SPO has been reduced to the area between Betts Creek Track and New Guinea Track. The balance of the area is designated Conservation Zone. The proposed Conservation and Recreation Zone corridor along Snowy River is now designated Conservation Zone. (The draft JMP proposed this corridor to allow recreational access outside the SPO.)
Areas of Lake Tyers State Park, especially north of Nowa Nowa township, should be given greater protection.	Core areas of the section of the park north of Nowa Nowa township, as well as areas of riparian woodland and coastal dunes scrub parallel to Gibbs Beach, are now designated Conservation Zone. Key visitor sites are retained within the Conservation and Recreation Zone.
Areas of largely intact and untracked rainforest and wet forest in Tarra-Bulga National Park should be zoned Conservation Zone.	Zoning has been amended to designate areas with these characteristics as Conservation Zone.
The Recreation Development Zone should be extended over horse-riding facilities in the northern part of The Knob Reserve	No change. The Recreation Development Zone applies to substantial structures and developments around the sports ground. Horse-riding facilities in the northern section are recognised through licensing or leasing arrangements.
Maps should be corrected to align with JMP strategies and actions.	An expanded deer hunting area on Boole Poole Peninsula (Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park) is now designated Conservation and Recreation Zone instead of Conservation Zone. Visitor areas with moderate facilities in The Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park are now designated Conservation and Recreation Zone rather than Recreation Development Zone. Areas covered by Hunting (Designated Species) Overlay in the western part of Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park have been clarified and corrected. Zone boundaries over water have been clarified in Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park (Lake Reeve and Back Lake).

Table 1 (continued)

Issue raised	Response
Cultural heritage	
JMP should make greater use of Gunaikurnai names and lore.	More Gunaikurnai language and content has been added to JMP where appropriate. Cultural mapping projects currently in progress are likely to enable further content to be added when JMP is reviewed.
Corringale Foreshore Reserve plan should recognise, as do other plans, Gunaikurnai desire to gather in the reserve for cultural purposes.	The plan has been amended accordingly.
Conservation planning and interpretation of historic heritage in Mitchell River National Park should be identified as an action.	The plan has been amended accordingly.
Raymond Island presents an opportunity to promote and interpret Gunaikurnai cultural interaction with the marine and coastal landscape.	The plan has been amended accordingly.
Land and water management	
Additions and amendments were suggested to significant species lists for several parks and reserves.	Lists have been amended where species have been verified by DELWP biodiversity data.
Climate change should be identified as a key threat.	An expanded discussion of climate change has been added to the plan. Climate change is identified as an intensifier or accelerator of threats recognised in the draft plan, including coastal erosion, invasive plants and animals, and bushfire.
Bushfire management strategies, including fuel management, should be revised.	The plan identifies the natural, cultural and recreational risks and requirements for bushfire management in the parks and reserves. Strategies for bushfire management are established by broader public land bushfire plans and processes.
The control of feral deer should be given greater priority.	The discussion of threats posed by deer has been expanded in the relevant plans, and control actions have been strengthened.
Invasive plant species should be identified for all Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC).	Invasive plant species identified where these are recognised in published DELWP EVC 'benchmarks'. Where no invasive plant species consistently occur in an EVC, priority weed species are identified for the park or reserve as a whole.
Coordination of JMP actions and priorities with Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan is necessary.	JMP amended to require partners to coordinate prioritisation and implementation.
Potential for kangaroos in Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island to become overabundant.	JMP amended to provide for the issue to be recognised and monitoring of any need for management action.
Various issues raised in relation to resolving ineffective boundaries, inliers and park/private land access in Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, Lake Tyers State Park, Raymond Island and Mitchell River National Park.	JMP actions in the relevant plans amended to provide for these matters to be resolved as opportunities arise.

Table 1 (continued)

Issue raised	Response
People in the parks/reserves	
The plan should detail the access status and management approach to all roads, tracks and trails in the parks and reserves.	The plan identifies any significant changes to existing access conditions. Normal variations to access will be managed through existing stakeholder and community engagement processes.
Licensed tour operators in the parks and reserves should be required to complete cultural awareness training.	Provisions have been added to the plan.
The plan should specify that any tourism developments be located outside the parks, as per the Victorian planning guidance note.	The plan includes strategies and actions for the conservation and use of the parks and reserves. Prescriptions in relation to tourism development siting and design are managed through policy and procedures.
Mitchell River National Park	
The extension of Mitchell River Walking Track is supported. Toilets are needed in additional locations in Mitchell River Gorge. A new track to Roaring Mag Falls should be developed. Several vehicle track closures and new tracks were proposed.	The extension of the track is retained in the plan. Managing toilets in isolated locations, including removing wastes, is not feasible. The plan now provides for the investigation of a new track to Roaring Meg Falls. No change to vehicle access actions.
Mitchell River NP deer hunting and control	
The Hunting (Deer) Overlay should be extended to include the area north of Hortons Track, or the whole park. Deer hunting should cease or be phased out in Mitchell River National Park. Recreational hunting is not adequately controlling deer populations. The plan should recognise the need for professional and supervised deer control programs, with recreational hunting as a supporting element. Hunters should be allowed to hunt all deer species, not just Sambar, to reduce total deer numbers. Deer hunters should be encouraged to take female deer, not just stags, to control deer populations. Deer stalking with hounds should be allowed in Mitchell River National park.	The Hunting (Deer) Overlay in Mitchell River National Park is considered appropriate and is retained at its current extent. An action has been added to the plan to seek Government authorisation of hunting of a wider range of deer species in Mitchell River National Park. The existing prohibition on deer stalking with hounds in Mitchell River National Park is retained, in line with Victorian Government policy. Primary importance of supervised volunteer and professional deer control programs, and supporting role of recreational hunting recognised in JMP. The value of encouraging hunters to take female deer is recognised in the plan.
Lake Tyers State Park	
Caving should be permitted in caves in Special Protection Overlay area of Lake Tyers State Park. Opportunities to engage better with park neighbours and tourism business adjacent to Lake Tyers State Park are not adequately recognised.	No change, because of the risk of disturbance to cave fauna and flora. The plan has been amended to recognise engagement opportunities with park neighbours and tourism operators.

Table 1 (continued)

Issue raised	Response
<i>New Guinea Caves</i> Vehicle access tracks should remain open to the public except during winter/spring seasonal closure	The proposal to make access outside the winter/spring closure period subject to permit has been removed. Previous access arrangements have been re-instated.
<i>The Knob Reserve</i> Allowable activities table suggests that horse-riding is permitted only by permit. It is not clear whether camping is allowed in the reserve.	The plan has been amended to clarify that permit requirements relate to horse-riding events, and that permits are not required for casual horse-riding. The plan has been amended to clarify that camping is not allowed except as part of events, where required for security or set-up purposes.
<i>Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park</i> Allow gun dogs for duck hunting to be brought into the park three days before the declared duck season. Expand the deer species that can be hunted on Boole Poole Peninsula to include Sambar as well as Hog Deer.	The plan has been amended to allow gundogs for duck hunting to be brought into the park 48 hours before the declared duck season (up from 24 hours), in line with state-wide regulations. No change. Sambar will be monitored and, if control is necessary, management programs will be initiated.
<i>Corringale Foreshore Reserve</i> Firearms and gundogs are no longer allowed in Corringale Foreshore Reserve.	The plan has been amended to allow transit and camping with firearms and gundogs for accessing Lake Corringale for duck hunting during a declared open season, in line with existing regulations and practice.
Working together	
Additional tourism, recreation and government stakeholders with an interest in the parks and reserves should be identified in the plan.	Additional relevant stakeholders have been identified in the plan.
A number of stakeholders sought opportunities to collaborate with Gunaikurnai and other partners in the implementation of the plan, including environmental organisations, caving groups, hunting groups and other recreation bodies.	Opportunities for increased collaboration have been added to the plan.

The draft JMP proposed some initiatives to improve future management and visitor experiences at several of the parks and reserves, including:

- preparing of a camping and access strategy for Lake Tyers State Park
- improving the camping facilities and the reintroduction of camping fees in the western section of Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
- broadening the interpretations and presentation offering at Buchan Caves Reserve from the traditional caves tours and European history to embrace Gunaikurnai cultural themes.

These initiatives received some support during the consultation period and were therefore considered to have tacit acceptance or support. As a result they have been retained in this approved plan.

APPENDIX

Submissions on the draft plan

Thirty-nine written submissions from the public were received on the draft joint management plan from the individuals and organisations listed below. Two submitters who marked their submission as confidential are not listed.

Individuals	Organisations
Andrew Bould	Australian Deer Association Inc.
Robert Critch	BirdLife East Gippsland
Ken Free	Briagolong and District Pony Club Inc.
Gary Howard	East Gippsland Zone of Pony Clubs
Stephen Koci	Field and Game Australia (Sale Branch)
Trent Leen	Four Wheel Drive Victoria
Cath Noble	Friends of Tarra–Bulga National Park
Nancy Phillips	Friends of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves
Miles Pierce	Gippsland Environment Group
Tracey Ryan	Latrobe City Council
Ross Scott	Raymond Island Koala & Wildlife Shelter Inc.
Helen Sheil and Neil Smith	Stratford Pony Club
Jody Sutherland	The Wilderness Society Victoria
Mick Sutton	Victorian Farmers Federation
Judith Sykes	Victorian National Parks Association
Kim Van Dyk	Victorian Speleological Association
Brian Walters	
Simon Webster	
Nicholas White	
Christine Wrench	
Wendy Wright, Dr Jessica Reeves and Roland Wilson	

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

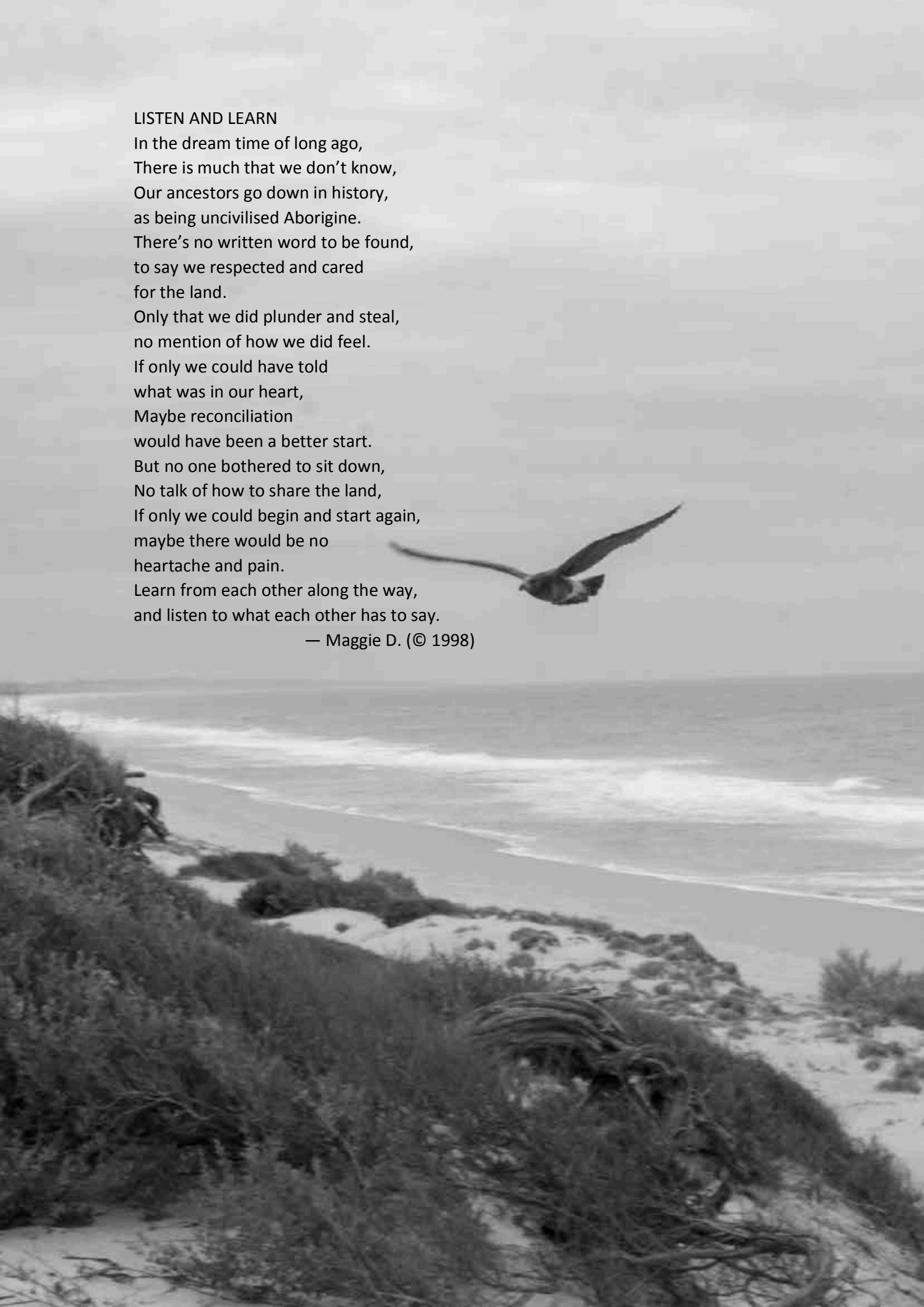
STRATEGIC PLAN



LISTEN AND LEARN

In the dream time of long ago,
There is much that we don't know,
Our ancestors go down in history,
as being uncivilised Aborigine.
There's no written word to be found,
to say we respected and cared
for the land.
Only that we did plunder and steal,
no mention of how we did feel.
If only we could have told
what was in our heart,
Maybe reconciliation
would have been a better start.
But no one bothered to sit down,
No talk of how to share the land,
If only we could begin and start again,
maybe there would be no
heartache and pain.
Learn from each other along the way,
and listen to what each other has to say.

— Maggie D. (© 1998)



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ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Gunaikurnai people are the Traditional Owners of a large area of Gippsland, in Eastern Victoria.

In 2010 the State of Victoria legally recognised the Gunaikurnai people's traditional ownership of and connection to the land and waters of this region through a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA). In the spirit of furthering the RSA's reconciliation, self-determination and social justice objectives, the State of Victoria entered into an agreement with the Gunaikurnai people to jointly manage 10 parks and reserves within the Gunaikurnai agreement area through an equitable partnership.

This Joint Management Plan (JMP) describes how the Victorian Government and Gunaikurnai will do this. It consists of an overarching strategy of what we want to achieve in the long term (the Strategic Plan) and individual plans for each park or reserve describing how that is reflected in day-to-day management.

Figure 1 illustrates what we — the Gunaikurnai people and the Victorian Government — want to achieve through joint management. The Strategic Plan sets out the actions that will be undertaken in the first five years to achieve four high-level goals, one for each of the themes identified in Figure 1: People, Culture, Country, and Working Together. It also maps out a 25-year timeframe to work towards longer-term aspirations through the four themes. While this future extends beyond the 25-year timeframe of the JMP, it is expected to facilitate many intermediate changes that will lay the stepping stones towards this future.

We will achieve these goals by implementing the seven strategic initiatives outlined in Figure 2, along with associated actions in the individual plans for the 10 jointly managed parks and reserves.



Figure 1: Our long-term view of the future we want to see and the path to get there.

We will do these things in the first five years ...

To achieve four interconnected goals



Figure 2: Summary of what we will do in the first five years.

Artwork by Robbie Farnham, courtesy of Jessica Shapiro



1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the structure of the strategic plan and its intended purpose and audience.

1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan is structured as follows:

Section 2: Joint management and the Gunaikurnai people provides the context for the JMP, including the history of the Gunaikurnai, the legislation and scope of joint management, details on each of the joint management parks, and a summary of the partners involved.

Section 3: The future that we want to achieve through joint management sets out where we are coming from and what we've achieved so far; the future that we are working towards through joint management; and the path to reaching that future over the next 25 years. It describes a 'theory of change' for joint management and the goals we plan to achieve in the first five years.

Section 4: What we need to do in the first five years describes what we will be doing to achieve the goals of the first five-year period of the JMP. It identifies seven strategic initiatives, each of which includes a series of activities that the partners will be responsible for implementing.

Section 5: How we will track our progress describes how the partners will monitor progress against the five-year goals, and how the data will be used for continuous improvement and reporting processes.

Section 6: JMP Implementation discusses the implementation phase for the approved JMP.

The strategic plan also contains several appendices that are referred to in each of the above sections, including a glossary of terms and abbreviations used throughout the strategic plan and the individual management plans for the parks and reserves (Appendix 1).

1.2 RECOGNITION STATEMENT

The recognition statement from the Recognition and Settlement Agreement between GLaWAC (on behalf of the Gunaikurnai People) and the State of Victoria is reproduced in full on the next page.

RECOGNITION STATEMENT

The State recognises that the Gunaikurnai People are the Traditional Owner Group for and are the custodians of the country within the RSA Area.

The State recognises that the Gunaikurnai People have made a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the identity and wellbeing of the Gippsland region, and of the State. The Gunaikurnai have enjoyed and continue to enjoy a close religious, cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic connection with the land and waters of their country.

The State recognises the Gunaikurnai People have a special relationship with their country, which is of great significance to them. They are from land, waters and air (collectively, their country), and they belong to their country. Gunaikurnai country forms the basis of Gunaikurnai People's existence and identity and is owned and managed according to traditional lore, laws and customs. The Gunaikurnai see their country and every living thing in it as one. All things that come from Gunaikurnai country are the custodial responsibility of the Gunaikurnai People, as designed by their creator. The Gunaikurnai see the whole of their country as spiritual, life-giving resources, and the basis of their cultural and religious practices. They have developed sustainable economic practices in relation to the land, waters and natural resources in their country based on knowledge that has been handed down from generation to generation.

The Gunaikurnai People expect that all people who live on, visit or use their country will respect it, will respect them and will respect their cultural heritage. The State recognises that this expectation is entirely reasonable.

The State recognises that the arrival and settlement of Europeans in Gippsland from about the 1830s had a very substantial impact on Gunaikurnai society. The policies and practices of successive governments, government agencies, other organisations and individuals substantially interfered with the ability of the Gunaikurnai People to practice their lore, law and culture, to access their country and use its resources and to maintain connection to their country.

The State also recognises that many Gunaikurnai People were massacred or became the victims of introduced diseases. Many were prevented from speaking their language and from passing on their traditional knowledge. Many were removed from their country. Settlers came to be in competition with the Gunaikurnai People for natural resources which the Gunaikurnai People regarded as belonging to them. Many important Gunaikurnai sites were destroyed or damaged.

Despite all these difficulties, the Gunaikurnai People have managed to maintain strong connection to their country across the generations, and have continued to practice their lore, law and culture. The State recognises that this is so and that the Gunaikurnai People have satisfied the connection requirements of the Native Title Act within the RSA Area.

The Native Title Act process took over 13 years from the time the Gunaikurnai claim was lodged. The State recognises that those years were difficult and stressful for Gunaikurnai People, who lost many Elders and family members during this time.

The Gunaikurnai totem animals, fauna and flora need protection and their sites of sacredness and significance need recognition and protection. Their walking trails, knowledge, stories, song lines, songs and dances need recognition and protection. The Gunaikurnai People maintain their continuing dominion over their country, and their right to protect their country according to traditional law and custom. The State understands and respects these matters.

The Parties have made this Recognition and Settlement Agreement as part of the settlement of the Gunaikurnai People's native title claims. This settlement is intended by the Parties to be a means by which Gunaikurnai culture, traditional practices and special relationship with the RSA Area can be recognised, strengthened, protected and promoted.

Recognition, strengthening, protection and promotion of Gunaikurnai culture, traditional practices and special relationship with their country will assist both Gunaikurnai People and the broader population to understand the past, to heal the wounds caused by past injustice, to bridge the gap, to promote reconciliation and to ensure that Gunaikurnai culture is respected by all people, both now and into the future.

2 JOINT MANAGEMENT AND THE GUNAIKURNAI PEOPLE

This section provides the context for the Joint Management Plan, including:

- the history of the Gunaikurnai people
- joint management legislation
- the TOLMA scope of joint management
- the values of jointly management parks
- joint management partners.

2.1 THE HISTORY OF THE GUNAIKURNAI PEOPLE

The Gunaikurnai people are recognised by the Federal Court of Australia and the State of Victoria as the Traditional Owners of a large part of Gippsland (Figure 3). This area, covering some 13 000 square km, stretches from Warragul in the west to the Snowy River in the east, and from the Great Divide in the north to the coast in the south.

There are about 3000 Gunaikurnai people, who come from five major clans: Brataualung, Brayakaulung, Tatungalung, Brabralung, and Krauatungalung. The clan areas depicted in Figure 4 are taken from a map titled 'Sketch map showing approximately the positions of the clans of the Kurnai tribe' in A.W. Howitt's *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, originally published in 1904.

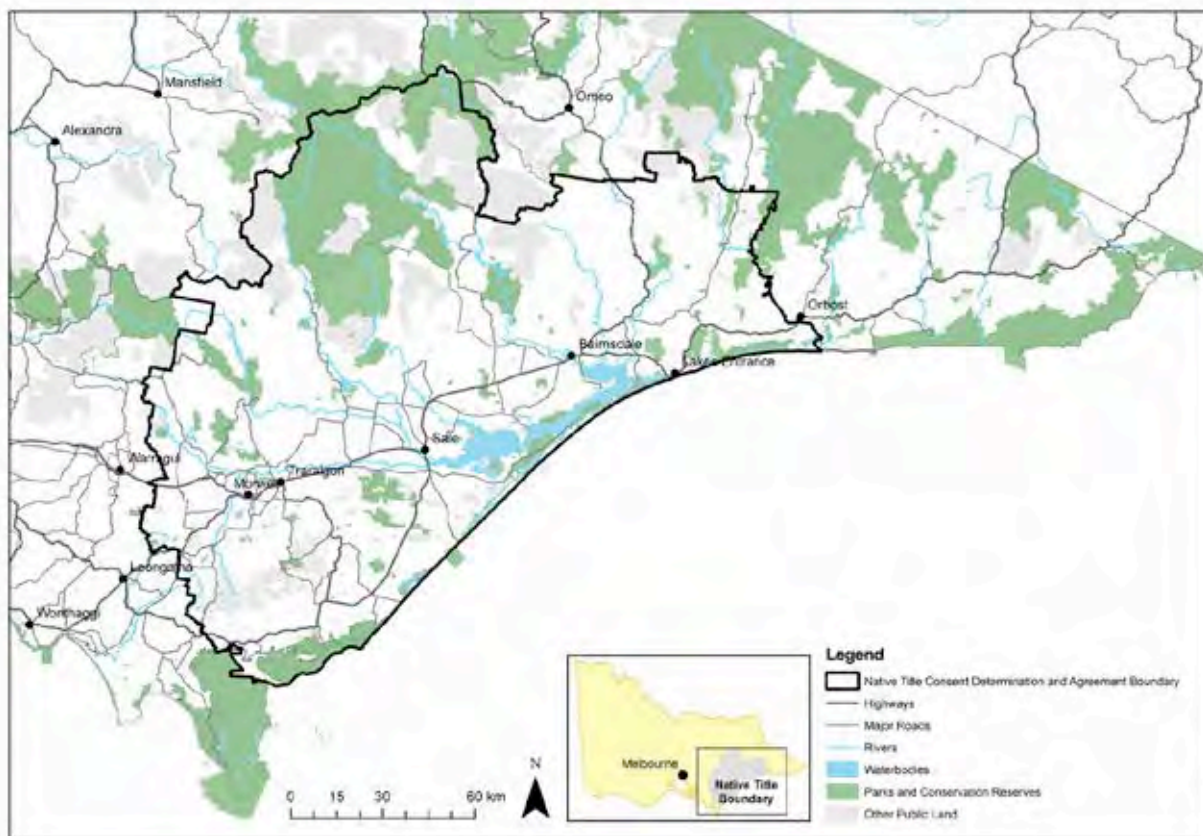


Figure 3: Gunaikurnai Native Title and Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area boundary.



Figure 4: The five Gunaikurnai clan areas.

The Gunaikurnai people have occupied the valleys, fertile plains and mountains of their country for many thousands of years. Their sensitive use and management of their land, water, plants and animals provided food and shelter for their clans and families.

Their spiritual beliefs, social structures, laws and stories were all inextricably linked to the natural environment. Their relationship with country was the source of their physical, social and spiritual wellbeing, and the ownership of their land and ability to decide how to use it provided the foundations for the Gunaikurnai people to live happily and sustainably.

Our Country was created by the spirits — the ancestors who link us to the land and bestow on us identity, rights and responsibilities. They defined our relationship with the land — how it should be used, how to move through it safely and how to care for it. In return, Country provided physical and spiritual nourishment for our people, with plentiful food, medicine, water and natural resources for survival...

...The story of our creation starts with Borun, the pelican, who traversed our Country from the mountains in the north to the place called Tarra Warackel in the south...

The creation story is about the origin of our people. It helps to explain the bonds we have to our Country and reminds us that our ancestors are still watching over the landscape today. It is important for us to be able to walk in their footsteps and follow their journeys from thousands of years ago — it is a powerful, spiritual aspect to our cultural heritage, and fundamental to our recognition and respect. We are guided by the spirits of our ancestors when we walk through this Country.

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



Artwork by Charlotte (Penny) Hood (dec.), courtesy of Bradley Hood

There was the time when the first Gunai, who was Borun the Pelican, came down from the mountains of the northwest and reached the level country. He crossed the Latrobe River near Sale and continued his journey to Port Albert: he was alone carrying a bark canoe (gri) on his head. As he was walking he heard a constant tapping sound but, look as he may, he could not find the source of it. At last he reached the deep water of the inlet and put his gri down. Much to his surprise, he saw a woman sitting in the gri.

She was Tuk the Musk Duck. He was very pleased to see her and she became his wife and the mother of Gunai.

— Adapted from Gunaikurnai–Brataualung Traditional Custodians (2014a)

When European colonists arrived in the 1830s, they brought with them a new culture that took away the Gunaikurnai people's right to use and manage their land. Land clearing and the introduction of European land management practices brought the Gunaikurnai People's ability to maintain *wurruk* (country) to an end.

The colonists forcibly replaced the Gunaikurnai's sustainable natural resource management practices, established over thousands of years, with a new culture based on development and the unsustainable exploitation of the region's natural resources.

Frontier conflict, together with the introduction of new diseases—lethal to the Gunaikurnai—soon decimated their population. Their clan and family groups were broken up, social structures fragmented, and their language and laws were nearly lost. Divorced from their ability to manage and use their land, the once healthy and resilient Gunaikurnai people struggled to survive and have their voices heard in the noisy new society.

Government policy in the 1860s resulted in Gunaikurnai people being moved to mission stations such as Ramahyuk and Lake Tyers, to be educated in European traditions and religions. Through this process of resettlement, families were broken up and traditional practices could not be continued.

Believing that Victorian Aboriginal people were dying out, the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines took over the management of Lake Tyers in 1908. By 1917 reserves around Victoria had been closed and people from communities as far away as Coranderrk, Ebenezer and Lake Condah had been moved to Lake Tyers.

After years of petitioning from Lake Tyers residents, the mission was declared a permanent 4000 acre reserve in 1965 before finally being handed over to the newly formed Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust in 1971. This was one of the first successful Aboriginal Land Rights claims in Australia's history.

Some Gunaikurnai people have thrived in the new society, but many have not. For those the legacy of the past has led to poor health, low education levels, poverty, welfare dependence and little access to the many opportunities for social advancement that most Australians take for granted.

The State of Victoria formally acknowledged this history and the injustice and dispossession that was brought to the Gunaikurnai people in a Recognition Statement, which was included in the State of Victoria's Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the Gunaikurnai People (see page 5).

The Recognition Statement also recognises the special relationship that the Gunaikurnai people continue to have with their country and sets out the intent for joint management to strengthen, protect and promote Gunaikurnai culture, practices and connection to country.

The story of Jiddelek

Long ago there was a big frog and his name was Jiddelek. He went to the river to have a drink. He began to drink the water from the water hole, then from the creek, then the river, 'til there was nothing left.

All the animals were thirsty. There was no water anywhere. The animals called a meeting; they decided that one of them should try to make Jiddelek laugh. Turtle and platypus played leapfrog. That did not make Jiddelek laugh. Duck and bird flew around. That didn't make Jiddelek laugh. Bataluk strutted to and fro puffing out his stomach. Jiddelek was nearly asleep.

Snake said. 'Let me try'. He started a wiggly, squiggly dance. He twisted and nearly tied himself in a knot. Then came a rumbling noise from Jiddelek and it grew louder and louder. His mouth opened and he began to laugh. A mighty gush of water came out of his mouth, all the water came back to the water holes and rivers.

— Gunaikurnai – Brataualung Traditional Custodians (2014b)

2.2 THE LEGISLATIVE SETTINGS OF JOINT MANAGEMENT

In 2010 the Federal Court of Australia recognised the Gunaikurnai's native title rights over much of Gippsland.

At the same time the Victorian Government entered into legal agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.) acknowledging the Gunaikurnai's Traditional Owner rights. The step from this legal recognition to the joint management of 10 parks and reserves in the Gunaikurnai people's Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) area is governed by two pieces of legislation in Victoria:

The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.) allows the State of Victoria to enter into an RSA with a Traditional Owner group entity for an area of public land. The RSA between the Gunaikurnai People and the State of Victoria includes a Land Agreement which provides for the granting of reserved public land as 'Aboriginal Titles' to GLaWAC, to be jointly managed by the Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government.

The *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987* (Vic.) provides the basis for the Victorian Government to establish a Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB) which sets and guides strategic direction for the joint management of Aboriginal Title lands.

The Land Agreement in the RSA between the Gunaikurnai people and the State of Victoria grants the Gunaikurnai people Aboriginal Title over 10 parks and reserves in Gippsland. Collectively these are known as the joint management estate (Figure 5).

Table 1 provides further detail on each of the joint management parks and reserves included in the Land Agreement.

Table 1: Details of the 10 joint management parks held under Aboriginal Title by the Gunaikurnai.

Park or reserve	Area (ha)	Existing management plan that will be replaced by this JMP?	Legislation under which the park or reserve is managed
Buchan Caves Reserve	295	No existing plan	<i>Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978</i>
Corringle Foreshore Reserve	163	No existing plan	<i>Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978</i>
Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park	17690	Yes	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>
Lake Tyers State Park	8687	No existing plan	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>
Mitchell River National Park	14394	Yes	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>
New Guinea Caves within the Snowy River National Park	1153	Yes	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>
Raymond Island – Gippsland Lakes Reserve	216	No existing plan	<i>Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978</i>
Tarra Bulga National Park	2023	Yes	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>
The Knob Reserve	59	No existing plan	<i>Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978</i>
The Lakes National Park	2390	Yes	<i>National Parks Act 1975</i>

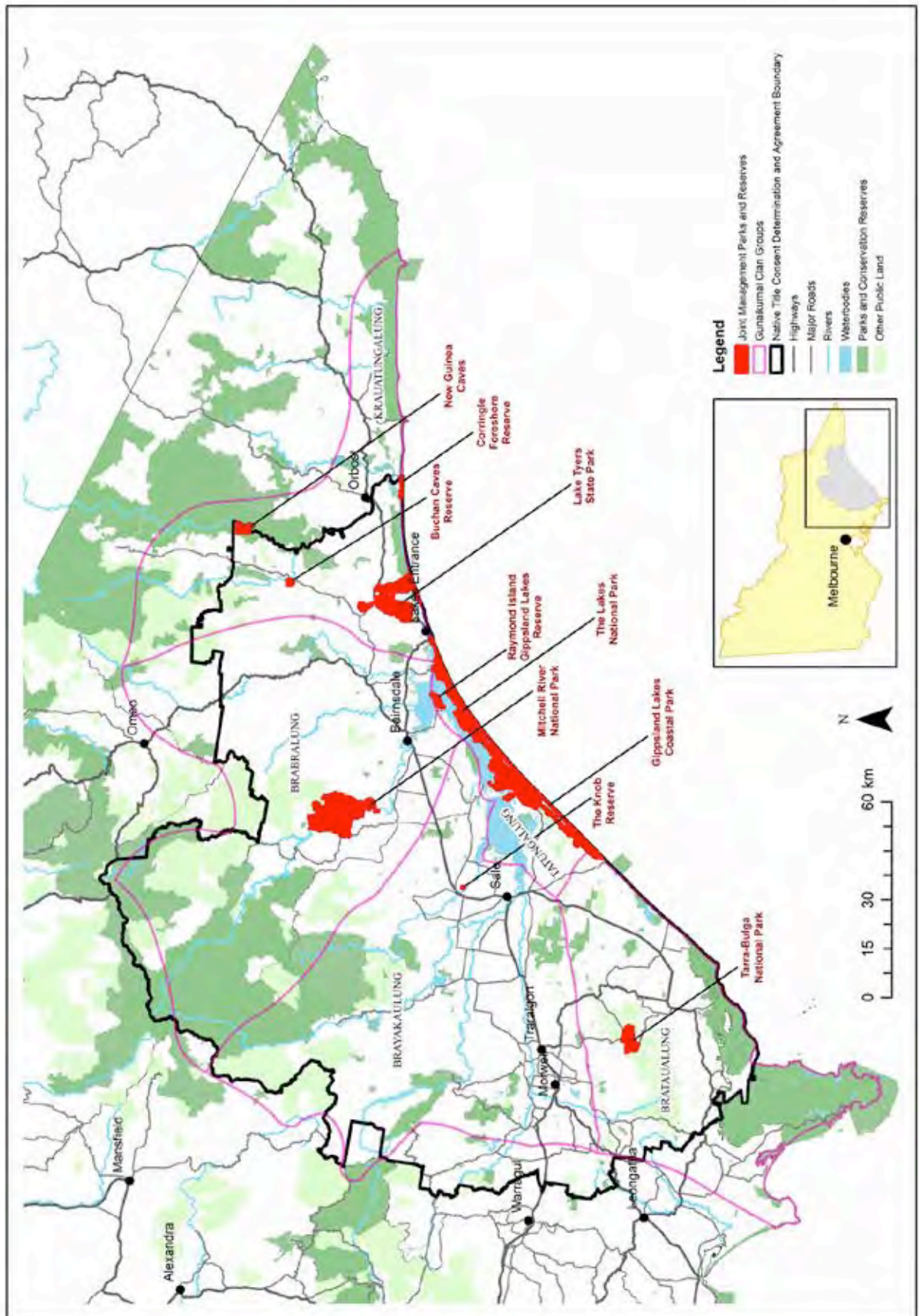


Figure 5: Locations of the 10 joint management parks and reserves.

Parks Victoria is the State's delegated land manager for all of the parks and reserves except The Knob Reserve. For that Reserve a committee of management consisting of representatives of GLaWAC, DELWP and GKTOLMB is the State's delegated land manager.

In addition to the legislation shown in Table 1, the parks and reserves and their protection, management and use are governed by regulations made under those Acts. The National Parks Regulations 2013 apply to parks managed under the National Parks Act. Areas reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.) are subject to specific regulations that apply to individual reserves.

2.3 THE TOLMA SCOPE OF JOINT MANAGEMENT

The RSA includes a Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement (TOLMA) that provides for:

- the establishment of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act*)
- joint management of the Appointed Land to give effect to the RSA
- enabling the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai people to be recognised in the management of the Appointed Land.

The land to which the term Appointed Land applies in the TOLMA is the same land as that to which Aboriginal Title has been granted under the Land Agreement of the RSA. The term 'joint management parks' is used in this JMP to refer to the Aboriginal Title Land or the Appointed Land.

The TOLMA is the agreement between the Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people to enter an equal partnership to jointly manage the joint management parks within the Gunaikurnai RSA Area.¹ It outlines the objectives and principles of joint management and defines the scope of what a JMP can include.

In the spirit of the RSA's Recognition Statement, joint management aims to further self-determination, social justice and reconciliation for the Gunaikurnai people. The objectives and principles of joint management outlined in the TOLMA are presented in the box on the next page.

The TOLMA also specifies that a JMP must provide for the sustainable management of the joint management parks identified in the agreement, and may include strategies for:

- the conservation of natural values and cultural values (including heritage protection)
- managing threatened species
- the recognition and utilisation of traditional Gunaikurnai knowledge and customs
- attracting and managing visitors
- managing authorised and adjacent use (including third party interests)
- community awareness and involvement
- managing public use and access to the land
- plan implementation
- providing operational support to the Board of Management
- promoting, encouraging and assisting Gunaikurnai persons to take advantage of employment, training and contracting opportunities relating to the land
- managing commercial activities
- managing fire consistently with the Secretary's directions
- any additional matters contained in relevant Ministerial guidelines.

The Elders will be happy that their lives' work to achieve recognition and management of their traditional lands has been achieved.

— JMP workshop participant

¹ Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement between the Victorian Government and Gunaikurnai people, 2010.

Objectives and principles of joint management outlined in the TOLMA

- 1 A Joint Management Plan must set out a statement of objectives for achieving sustainable management of the Appointed Land in accordance with the following principles:
 - a recognising, respecting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, use, knowledge and decision making processes
 - b utilising the combined land, coastal, forest and marine management skills and expertise of both the State and the Gunaikurnai people
 - c providing quality educational recreational and other experiences for all park visitors, where applicable
 - d conserving, protecting and enhancing natural and cultural values
 - e recognising and addressing the need for institutional support and capacity building of the Gunaikurnai people
 - f building relationships between the Board of Management and land managers, including catchment management authorities.
- 2 The objective of joint management is to establish an equal partnership between the State and the Gunaikurnai People to ensure innovation and excellence in joint management, including the following purposes:
 - a benefiting the Gunaikurnai people by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating their culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making processes
 - b benefiting the community needs of all Victorians and visitors for public education and enjoyment through quality experiences, services and information
 - c conserving, protecting and enhancing natural and cultural values
 - d enjoying widespread community support
 - e ensuring the wellbeing of country and the wellbeing of people.

The TOLMA also states that a JMP may specify performance measures and targets and strategies for reviews, monitoring and evaluating performance operation and implementation of the JMP.²

Although the above principles, objectives and strategic scope from the TOLMA have helped inform the development of this JMP, they are not the specific objectives or strategies of this JMP.

The goals, visions and outcomes adopted for this JMP are presented in Section 3, and the strategic initiatives and activities to achieve the goals for the first five years are described in Section 4.

There are other legislative and policy influences on the management of the joint management parks in addition to the TOLMA. For example, the *Forests Act 1958 (Vic.)* requires the Secretary of DELWP to carry out proper and sufficient work on public land for the immediate prevention and suppression of fire, and for the planned prevention of fire. The Act requires that the Secretary must not carry out fire prevention work unless the Secretary has consulted with the body responsible for the management of the land concerned. In the case of joint management parks, such consultation would involve GLaWAC as the joint management partner, along with the State's delegated land manager for the particular joint management park.

Through joint management Gunaikurnai young people should know what it means to be a blackfella on our Country, to be part of a living culture and to feel like they belong to a community that is proud and strong.

— Uncle Lloyd Hood (2015)

² Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement between the Victorian Government and Gunaikurnai people, 2010

2.4 THE VALUES OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PARKS

To the Gunaikurnai people all things are connected through the creation story which is about the origin of our people. The creation story helps to explain the bonds we have to our *wurruk* and reminds us that our ancestors are still watching over the landscape today. It is important for us to be able to walk in their footsteps and follow their journeys from thousands of years ago – it is a powerful, spiritual aspect to our cultural heritage, and fundamental to our recognition and respect. We are guided by the spirits of our ancestors when we walk through this country.

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

During the development of the JMP, a wide range of values for the parks and reserves that make up the joint management parks were identified, which reflect what is important and what needs protection.

These values represent the Gunaikurnai peoples' feelings, their strong links to the spiritual aspect of country and their cultural knowledge and aspirations.

They also represent what the broader community values in the joint management parks, and the values embodied in legislative protections. Cultural values complement the other values that the joint management partners and the broader community attach to these places.

The important values of the joint management parks are:

- landforms, features and sites of spiritual significance, and features in the landscape that represent the creation stories fundamental to the pride and strength of the Gunaikurnai people
- the landscapes, sites and the geological features of the wild places that contribute to visitors' enjoyment, health and wellbeing and make these places special
- archaeological sites as a tangible link to ancestors' use of joint management parks in the past
- the continuity of native vegetation found within the parks that contributes to making East Gippsland one of the great reservoirs of biodiversity in Australia
- the many species of plants and animals found within the parks, some of which are absent from or rare in the rest of Victoria and Australia
- 23 fauna and flora species that are listed as rare or threatened under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth) and 52 listed under the Flora Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic.)
- the threatened Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Associated Native Grassland ecological community, which is listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
- populations of Gunaikurnai totemic plant and animals and other species important to Gunaikurnai culture
- habitats and species recognised in national and internationally important conventions including the *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar, Iran 1971), the *China–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement* 1986 (CAMBA) and *Japan–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement* 1974 (JAMBA) and the Republic of Korea – Australia Migratory Bird Agreement 2007 (ROKAMBA)
- watercourses, waterbodies and catchments that sit within the joint management parks which have influence on the adjacent significant waterbodies that are a feature of the Gippsland area
- historic ruins, heritage places and relics of early farming, forestry, transport and tourism
- the natural settings, landscapes and experiences that provide opportunities for environmentally sustainable and economically important businesses.

Custodians

Once more we walk on our sacred land
Where our ancestors walked along the sand.
We are the custodians And must always care.
By looking after Mother Earth
And showing we will always be there,
To make sure that sacred sites Will not be walked upon.
That our culture will be respected By each and every one.
So we can pass on our culture As we were taught along the way.
And hope that someone somewhere, Has listened to what we had to say.

— Maggie D. (© 2001)

Our Country possesses a rich Aboriginal culture. Our heritage is strong across our landscape, and Aboriginal cultural sites and artefacts can be found along our songlines, and trade routes, mountain ridges and waterways. They remind us about the ways of our ancestors and show our close and continuing connection to Country. Some of these sites have been recorded, however many have not yet been found and protected. Our spiritual connection is something that cannot be seen, but nevertheless exists strongly in the places we walk and in the paths of our ancestors.

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

2.5 JOINT MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

Summary of joint management delivery partners and responsibilities

The management of the joint management parks is undertaken by organisations representing the Gunaikurnai people and the Victorian Government. These joint management delivery partner organisations and their respective roles and responsibilities are described in Table 2 on the next page.

Appendix 4 provides further details about the governance arrangements that will guide how the partners work together, and lists other organisations that may play an important role in implementing joint management.

Table 2: Summary of joint management delivery partners.

Partner	Description	Current roles and responsibilities in the joint management partnership (as of September 2017)
Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)	Holds native title rights and interests on behalf of the Gunaikurnai people. The recognised Traditional Owner entity (Prescribed Body Corporate) representing Gunaikurnai people in the Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria. Is the Registered Aboriginal Party under the Aboriginal Heritage Act for the Gunaikurnai native title area.	Signatory to the Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement (TOLMA) on behalf of the Gunaikurnai people. Holds Aboriginal Title for the 10 joint management parks and reserves. Implementing successful joint management with partners across all joint management parks. Employing Gunaikurnai Joint Management Rangers.
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)	DELWP brings together Victoria's planning, local government, environment, energy, suburban development, forests, emergency management, climate change and water functions into a single department to strengthen connections between the environment, community, industry and economy. Land management responsibilities are delegated to the Secretary of DELWP (i.e. land managed under the National Parks Act and the Crown Land (Reserves) Act.	Responsible for managing the TOLMA between the Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people. DELWP's Secretary is responsible (along with the GKTOLMB) for endorsing the draft JMP for public consultation and, after consultation, endorsing the agreed JMP (final version) for the relevant Minister to approve. Administering Victorian Government funding approved for joint management. Providing governance oversight and support to the GKTOLMB and the joint management planning process.
Parks Victoria (PV)	Statutory body that manages 4 million hectares of parks and reserves on behalf of the Victorian Government (DELWP).	Managing nine of the joint management parks as the State's delegated land manager.
The Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc.	Committee of Management appointed under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act.	Managing The Knob Reserve as the State's delegated land manager.
Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB)	Established in December 2012 in accordance with the TOLMA to enable the knowledge and culture of Gunaikurnai to be recognised in management of the joint management parks. A majority of the Board members are nominees of GLaWAC.	Guiding strategic direction for joint management through preparing the JMP. Facilitating partnerships and building Gunaikurnai capacity to implement joint management. Responsible (along with the DELWP Secretary) for endorsing the draft JMP for public consultation and, after consultation, endorsing the agreed JMP (final version) for the relevant Minister to approve.

3 THE FUTURE WE WANT TO ACHIEVE THROUGH JOINT MANAGEMENT

This section describes the strategic direction for joint management. It describes the future that we want to achieve, and the changes that need to happen to make this future a reality. It has three parts:

- Acknowledgement of where we are coming from and what we have achieved so far
- Our shared long-term aspirations for the future for Gunaikurnai people and country and the wider community (beyond the 25-year period of the JMP)
- A description of the path to reaching these aspirations, which we refer to as a 'theory of change'.

3.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SO FAR?

The Gunaikurnai people and Victorian Government have achieved many important milestones since the Recognition and Settlement Agreement in 2010. These include:

2012: Establishment of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) with a majority of Gunaikurnai members.

2012 to present: Partnerships strengthened between GLaWAC, Parks Victoria and DELWP including organisational cultural change.

2013: Gunaikurnai joint management rangers employed by GLaWAC. The rangers started working in joint management parks with the support of Parks Victoria and DELWP staff and are building pride among Gunaikurnai community Elders.

2013 to present: Joint management implemented through Gunaikurnai rangers' work programs and partnership projects across joint management parks.

2013 to present: Gunaikurnai rangers undertaking training including attending a Native Title Conference and Joint Management study tour.

2015: Initial draft JMP prepared by the GKTOLMB following consultation with the Gunaikurnai and engagement with the wider Gippsland community.

2015: New signage recognising Gunaikurnai as traditional owners installed in all 10 joint management parks.

2016: Committee of Management appointed for The Knob Reserve with representatives from GLaWAC, DELWP and GKTOLMB.

2016 to present: GLaWAC led facilities upgrade project at Sperm Whale Head in The Lakes National Park.

2017: Geotechnical investigation of New Guinea Cave II completed.

2017: GKTOLMB released the completed draft JMP for public consultation and submissions.

2018: Minister approved the final JMP.

Through these achievements, the partners have begun to lay strong foundations for implementing the strategic initiatives and activities described in Section 4 of this plan.

3.2 WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

The partners commit to implementing joint management with a view to achieving the following long-term aspirations:

- Gunaikurnai maintain a strong connection to country and culture, are proud, happy and healthy.
- Joint management has contributed to reconciliation, social justice and self-determination for the Gunaikurnai people.
- The wider community respects Gunaikurnai cultural heritage, connection to Country and the right to self-determination.
- Joint management parks are healthier and more resilient as a result of sustainable land management practices.
- Joint management parks are a landmark destination for outdoor recreation, nature-based tourism and cultural and environmental education in Victoria.

Additionally, in the *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan*, Gunaikurnai people express a long-term aspiration to become the delegated land managers for all Aboriginal Title land in the Gunaikurnai Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area. The relevant section of the Whole-of-Country Plan reads in part ‘...to progress through joint management to full management of all Aboriginal Title land’ (GLaWAC 2015: page 30)

In supporting the joint management journey with Gunaikurnai, the Victorian Government recognises that sole management is a legitimate aspiration that both the Government and Gunaikurnai will work towards achieving.

The partners acknowledge that there is an opportunity during the implementation period of this JMP to explore options for an extension of joint management responsibilities. The strategies outlined in this JMP (including capacity building, economic development, partnerships and integration of Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices) will lay the stepping stones that can lead to a future beyond these 25 years where Gunaikurnai achieve greater self-determination through their involvement in the management of the Aboriginal Title land on their country. The following pages describe how these stepping stones will be built, within the current context of joint management.

A lot of people come back now — not just our people. We could learn from them and they could learn from us. Kangaroos and emus would be about and it was a good thing these people could see it, Elders from across Australia would visit and we would share our country with them.

— participant, On Country meeting, Lake Tyers State Park, 2015

3.3 WHAT IS THE PATH TO REACH THIS FUTURE?

Achieving these aspirations will take many years. This subsection provides a long-term picture of what changes will need to happen over time to make this future a reality. This picture is known as a ‘theory of change’.

The theory of change describes the most important changes that we want to achieve for Gunaikurnai people, country and the wider community by implementing joint management. It provides an important guide for all partners on where we are collectively going, and helps us to track and report on our progress to the community, Government and other partners.

The theory of change is presented over the following pages in a series of visual diagrams, and is summarised in Figure 6. It shows that in order to realise the future we want to see, we need to build on everything we have achieved so far by developing four themes of work and changes: People, Culture, Country and Working Together.



Figure 6: Our long-term view of the future we want to see and the path to get there. The items in the boxes are expanded upon in Figure 7.

While Figure 6 offers a broad-scale summary of what we want to achieve through joint management, we need to paint a clearer picture of what our future journey in each of these themes looks like. This is what a theory of change aims to do.

Figure 7 describes how to read and interpret the complete theory of change diagram, which is presented in Figure 8. The theory of change diagram describes the major changes that will happen over a 25-year period. The joint management partners have set themselves a goal to be achieved in the first five years for each theme, and identified long-term visions for later time periods.

The four themes in the theory of change, and their respective goals and visions, are deeply interconnected: achieving each goal depends on achieving all of the others.

Appendix 1 is a glossary of important terms used in the theory of change and in other parts of the JMP.

Tables 3 and 4 provide more detail on each of the five-year goals and long-term visions (Figure 8) by breaking each down into a series of outcomes. For brevity, 'GK' is used to refer to Gunaikurnai and 'JM parks' is used to refer to joint management parks and reserves in these tables. See Appendix 1 for a full glossary of terms used.

An 'outcome' is defined as an observable and measurable change that results from the activities that are implemented through joint management. Like the themes and goals, the outcomes outlined below and on the following page are deeply interconnected. The purpose of defining them is to provide greater detail on the meaning of each goal or vision, and to enable partners to measure and report their progress to different stakeholders. The numbers assigned to each outcome are for reference only – they do not denote any priority or sequencing. The process for routinely reviewing progress and measuring outcomes for the first five-year period is described further in Section 6.

Appendix 2 includes a diagram that represents all outcomes on the theory of change. It also provides further detail on definitions and potential indicators for each outcome in the first five-year period.

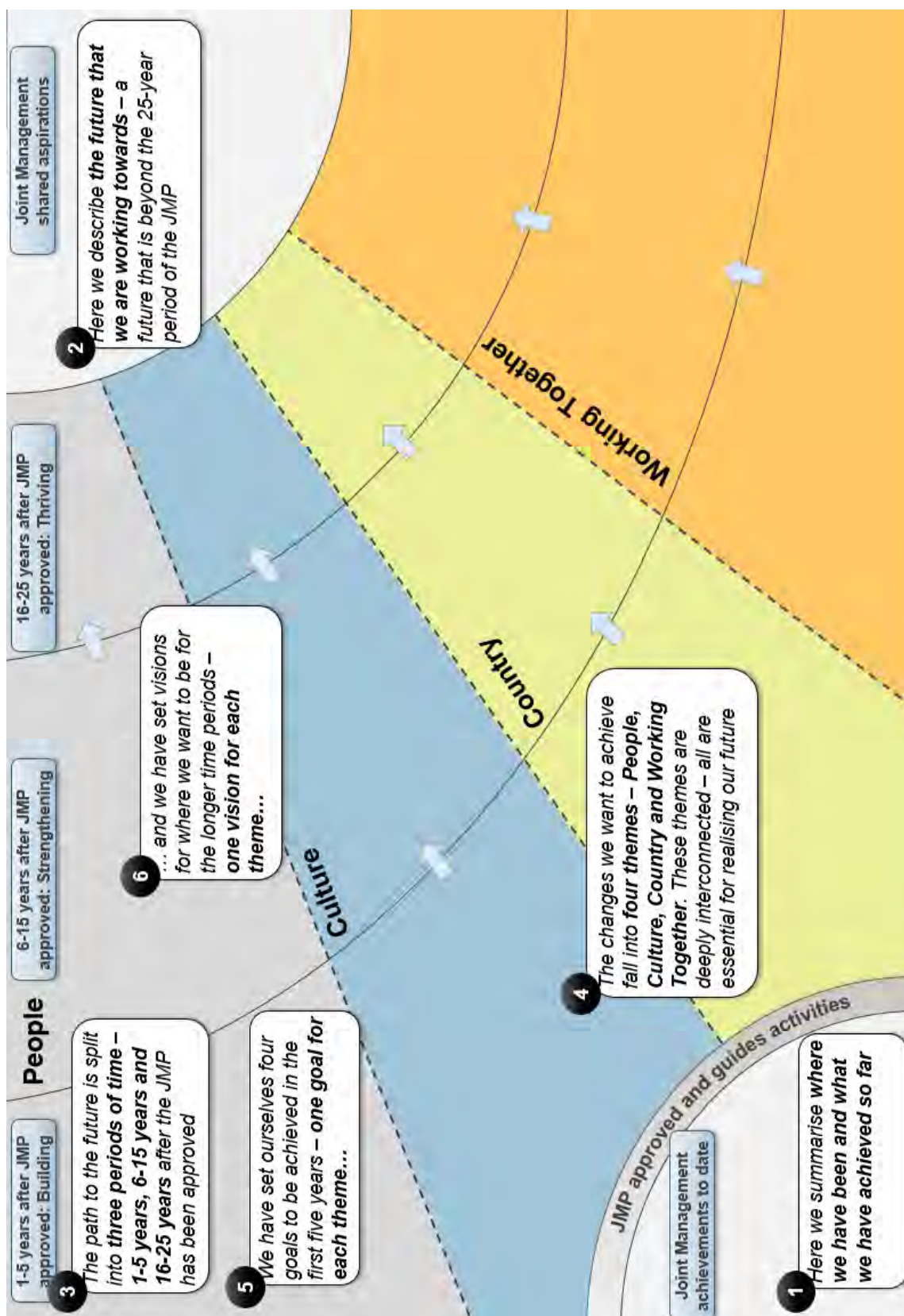


Figure 7: The theory of change for the joint management parks. The six numbered areas are expanded upon in Figure 8.

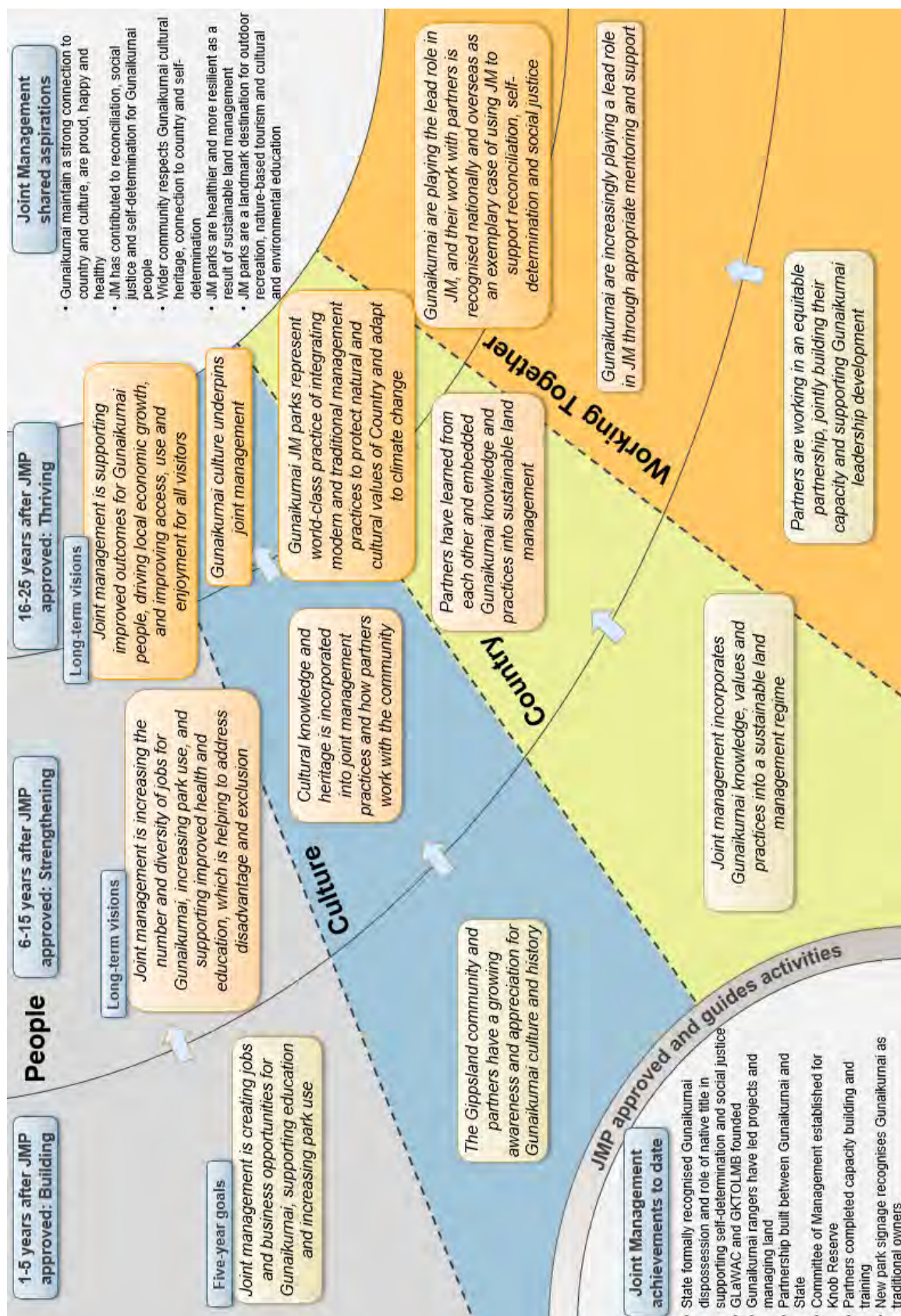


Figure 8: Fine-scale diagram of the theory of change for the joint management parks. This presents a more detailed summary of visions/goals for each theme and time period presented in Figures 6 and 7.

Table 3: Outcomes for the five-year goals and long-term visions for 'People' and 'Culture' themes (see also Figure 8).

1–5 years after JMP approved: Building	6–15 years after JMP approved: Strengthening	16–25 years after JMP approved: Thriving
PEOPLE		
Five-year goal: Joint management is creating jobs and business opportunities for Gunaikurnai, supporting education and increasing park use.	Vision: Joint management is increasing the number and diversity of jobs for Gunaikurnai, increasing park use, and supporting improved health and education which is helping to address disadvantage and exclusion.	Vision: Joint management is supporting improved outcomes for Gunaikurnai people, driving local economic growth, and improving access, use and enjoyment for all visitors.
Outcomes:	Outcomes:	Outcomes:
1 Visitor numbers increase. 2 Outdoor education and cultural recreation programs for GK community implemented. 3 Partners delivering education and cultural programs with GK and non-GK youth. 4 More visitors see, engage with and learn from GK and non-GK workers in parks. 5 More GK people working as rangers, management staff and through associated services. 6 Major barriers that prevent GK from accessing JM parks have been addressed.	1 Gippsland community is supportive of GK role in JM. 2 Cultural heritage education is embedded in local education institutions. 3 JM parks are making an increasing contribution to local economic growth. 4 Greater number and diversity of GK businesses and people are earning an income from JM parks.	1 JM parks are known as a premier destination in Australia for visitor experience and cultural education. 2 JM has demonstrated contribution to improved health, education and wellbeing outcomes for GK people.
CULTURE		
Five-year goal: The Gippsland community and partners have a growing awareness and appreciation for Gunaikurnai culture and history.	Vision: Cultural knowledge and heritage is incorporated into joint management practices and how partners work with the community.	Vision: Gunaikurnai culture underpins joint management.
Outcomes:	Outcomes:	Outcomes:
1 Greater GK cultural presence in JM parks 2 Protections in place for all identified cultural sites. 3 The wider community understand, respect and celebrate GK people and heritage. 4 GK cultural knowledge, management practices and values documented, mapped and interpreted. 5 GK people have greater pride in their identity and cultural heritage.	1 GK cultural knowledge and values embedded into joint management practices. 2 GK people have exclusive access to specific sites in parks to gather and conduct ceremonies.	1 The incorporation of cultural knowledge and values into JM is the norm.

Table 4: Outcomes for the five-year goals and long-term visions for 'Country' and 'Working Together' themes (see also Figure 8).

1–5 years after JMP approved: Building	6–15 years after JMP approved: Strengthening	16–25 years after JMP approved: Thriving
COUNTRY		
Five-year goal: Joint management incorporates Gunaikurnai knowledge, values and practices into a sustainable land management regime.	Vision: Partners have learned from each other and embedded Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices into sustainable land management.	Vision: Gunaikurnai JM parks represent world-class practice of integrating modern and traditional management practices to protect natural and cultural values of country and adapt to climate change.
Outcomes:	Outcomes:	Outcomes:
1 GK traditional management practices identified and incorporated into sustainable management of parks.	1 Value of integrated management practices demonstrated and recognised.	1 Country is healthier and more resilient to environmental threats and climate change.
2 Rangers and management staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to implement sustainable and integrated land management practices.	2 Country under JM has expanded.	2 GK are teaching others about integrated management practices.
3 GK cultural and ecosystem values of parks are reflected in JM.	3 GK have greater access to key environmental resources in parks.	
	4 Partners have piloted GK traditional management practices.	
WORKING TOGETHER		
Five-year goal: Partners are working in an equitable partnership, jointly building their capacity and supporting Gunaikurnai leadership development.	Vision: Gunaikurnai are increasingly playing a lead role in JM through appropriate mentoring and support.	Vision: Gunaikurnai are playing the lead role in JM, and their work with partners is recognised nationally and overseas as an exemplary case of using JM to support reconciliation, self-determination and social justice.
Outcomes:	Outcomes:	Outcomes:
1 Partners demonstrate commitment to JM model even in difficult times.	1 GK are able to enforce compliance with regulations in JM parks.	1 Work of GK and partners is recognised nationally and overseas as an exemplary case of JM.
2 Partners have established a funding model to sustain JM.	2 Alignment and coordination across whole-of-government to support JM.	2 GK are taking the lead role in all JM parks.
3 Joint management decision-making processes embedded.	3 GK are taking the lead role in most JM parks.	
4 Legislative and policy regime is supportive of JM and GK aspirations.		
5 Sharing of knowledge and skills between partners formalised and implemented.		
6 Outcome management implemented to support continuous improvement.		
7 GK community have opportunity to influence JM.		

4 WHAT WE NEED TO DO IN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

This section describes how we are going to achieve the future that we want, and defines seven 'strategic initiatives' that we will implement to achieve the goals of the first five-year period.

The joint management partners have set four goals to be achieved by the end of the first five-year period of implementing the JMP, through the delivery of seven strategic initiatives (Figure 9).

The JMP focuses on the first five-year period because it is not realistic to specify what activities partners should be undertaking in the longer term. The JMP will be formally reviewed at the end of the first five-year period to plan future strategic initiatives. (See Section 5 for further detail on the process for formally reviewing the JMP.)

The activities to be implemented to manage the joint management parks, which are detailed in the individual park and reserve plans, play a critical role in achieving the five-year goals, particularly for strategic initiatives 1–5.

Table 5 describes each of the seven strategic initiatives. Each strategic initiative includes several activities. Further detail of the activities for the seven strategic initiatives is provided in Appendix 3.



Figure 9: Strategic initiatives for the five-year goals.

Gunaikurnai culture is embedded in our Country which is vital to our identity. The stories and song-lines that link Gunaikurnai to their ancestors who travelled across the Country practising the customs are what make the Gunaikurnai People.

Gunaikurnai aspirations are to ensure that the Joint Management Plan is true to traditional laws and customs.

Table 5: Summary of joint management strategic initiatives.

Strategic initiatives	Activities
PEOPLE: Joint management is creating jobs and business opportunities, supporting education and increasing park use.	
1 Create employment and economic sustainability	- a Develop and implement an economic development/business strategy for Gunaikurnai commercial operations. - b Build business management capability in GLaWAC. - c Establish policies to prioritise Gunaikurnai suppliers and contractors in procurement and tenders. - d Increase the number of Gunaikurnai rangers and management staff. - e Implement ranger-led education and visitor experience activities in JM parks. - f Implement an education program with Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai youth about Gunaikurnai culture and joint management.
2 Increase access to and use of JM parks	- a Support Gunaikurnai to overcome barriers to access JM parks. - b Provide facilities for Gunaikurnai people to visit and stay on JM parks.
3 Invest in tourism and visitor experience	- a Develop and implement a tourism and marketing strategy. - b Develop a tourism training and employment program in partnership with industry and tour operators. - c Build partnerships with Victorian Government agencies and local tourism bodies. - d Collect data on visitor numbers, feedback and local spending.
CULTURE: The Gippsland community and partners have a growing awareness and appreciation for Gunaikurnai culture and history.	
4 Protect and present Gunaikurnai culture in JM parks	- a Capture Gunaikurnai cultural knowledge, heritage, stories, language and values in JM parks. - b Develop and implement a cultural heritage interpretation strategy for JM parks. - c Protect cultural sites and important cultural landscapes from damage. - d Implement measures to comply with legislative requirements relating to cultural heritage.
COUNTRY: Joint management incorporates Gunaikurnai knowledge, values and practices into a sustainable land management regime.	
5 Integrate Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices into an innovative, sustainable land management approach	- a Strengthen partnerships to manage land and water and improve resilience to climate change. - b Deliver a capacity-building and knowledge exchange program for Gunaikurnai, DELWP and Parks Victoria rangers and other staff. - c Support Gunaikurnai to participate in relevant land management and cultural heritage courses. - d Re-establish Gunaikurnai fire management knowledge and practices in JM parks.
WORKING TOGETHER: Partners are working in an equitable partnership, jointly building their capacity and supporting Gunaikurnai leadership development.	
6 Resolve key regulatory agreements and policy matters	- a Improve legislative and policy environment for JM and Gunaikurnai aspirations. - b Identify and pursue ongoing protection declarations for significant Gunaikurnai places within JM parks. - c Develop and implement a policy that protects Gunaikurnai cultural and intellectual property.
7 Improve governance, leadership and management	- a Develop and implement a funding model to sustain joint management. - b Establish formalised processes for Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government to share knowledge and jointly build capacity. - c Build Gunaikurnai leadership capacity under joint management. - d Establish an online information network for joint management. - e Develop and implement a culturally appropriate and inclusive model for Gunaikurnai community to provide input into joint management decision-making. - f Engage with park users, neighbours and other stakeholders of JM parks. - g Implement outcome management and continuous improvement process.

5 HOW WE WILL TRACK OUR PROGRESS?

This section describes the processes we will use to monitor and reflect on our progress towards achieving our five-year goals, so that we can report to important stakeholders on how we are progressing and learn how we can do better.

5.1 WHY IS TRACKING PROGRESS IMPORTANT?

We need to track our progress so that we can know if we are being successful. We need to be held accountable to our aspirations to build capacity and contribute to social justice and self-determination for Gunaikurnai people. We also need to show others our progress in order to build community and political support for joint management, secure funding and learn how we can improve the way we work together.

Tracking our progress against the JMP and partnerships will be based on the five principles outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Principles of outcomes management.

Principle	Description
Involve stakeholders	Provides a basis for involving stakeholders in assessing the success of joint management and identifying opportunities for improvement.
Gather useful evidence	Enables the partners to build an evidence base around what is changing as a result of their work together, which can also help spread learnings with others.
Promote learning	Provides the data and information that is necessary for joint management partners to learn about what is working, what is not working, and why, so that the JMP can be improved over time. This is also known as a 'continuous improvement' process.
Accountability	Supports accountability to the community, government and other stakeholders, as well as to each other.
Transparency	Keeps the community, government and other stakeholders informed about the decisions being made on their behalf in the context of joint management, and enables an equal partnership.

Different audiences need information about our progress in implementing joint management for different reasons (Table 7). These reasons can be summarised broadly as 'proving' and 'improving'.

'Proving' is about reporting on our progress, particularly to partners, including GLaWAC, Parks Victoria, the DELWP Secretary and the Minister, and the Gunaikurnai community and the wider Victorian community, all of whose ongoing support is crucial.

'Improving' is about understanding what we're doing well, what we're not doing well, and what we can do to improve how we work together to implement joint management. This is sometimes called 'continuous improvement' or 'outcomes management'.

Table 7: Who needs to know about our progress, and why they need to know.

Who needs to know about our progress?	What will they primarily use this information for?	What are the most important questions they need answered to support these uses?
GLaWAC GKTOLMB DELWP Parks Victoria	To understand our success in achieving the goals and outcomes set out in the JMP. To draw insights and lessons about our progress that will help us to make decisions about how we work together to implement, adapt and improve joint management.	Are we achieving the goals and outcomes outlined in the JMP? Are we successfully implementing the strategic initiatives and activities we have committed to? What has worked well? What has not worked? What can we learn from this? What can we change, adapt or improve?
DELWP Secretary and Minister	To make decisions about the continued support for joint management.	Is joint management delivering on the objectives and principles outlined in the TOLMA between the Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people? Is it achieving the goals and outcomes outlined in the JMP?
Gunaikurnai community	To understand how joint management is contributing to Gunaikurnai aspirations.	How is joint management contributing to realising the Gunaikurnai community's aspirations as identified in this JMP?
Wider community	To understand how joint management is contributing to wider community aspirations for, and interests in, joint management parks.	How is joint management impacting the state of parks, access and usage rights, and local economic development?

5.2 HOW WILL WE TRACK OUR PROGRESS?

We will track our progress by collecting two types of data:

- data on our *activities* — what we are doing under joint management
- data on our *outcomes* — what changes are occurring as a result of what we are doing.

Table 8 provides further detail on both data types, and describes how we will collect each.

To minimise the burden of additional data collection, the methodology outlined below aims to build on existing project management processes and data wherever possible.

This monitoring regime for the joint management parks will be complemented by state-wide monitoring programs conducted across the broader park and reserve estate, including programs that collect data for reports such as the *State of the Parks* and *State of the Forests*.

Table 8: Data used to track progress in implementing the Joint Management Plan.

Data type	Description	Data source and method
Activities	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether we are successfully implementing the projects and activities that we planned. They include: the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of this document the actions described in the ten individual park and reserve management plans.	The activities outlined in the JMP will be tracked, based on the project management tools that the partners will use to guide implementation (e.g. Gantt charts or timelines). 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what we are doing. Tracking outcomes is important for understanding whether we are achieving the changes that we have set out to make, and therefore whether we are achieving our goals for the first five-year period. Outcomes are documented in Table 3 and Table 4.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

Outcomes framework overview

Table 9 provides an example of the data that we will collect on the outcomes of joint management. It is an excerpt from the complete outcomes framework in Appendix 2.

The suggested frequency for data collection for all outcomes is annual (once a year), but this could vary in the future according to each partners' priorities and the availability of data sources.

The initial round of data collected on the outcomes identified in Appendix 2 will be used as the baseline for measuring future changes. This will enable the partners to demonstrate the success and impact of joint management and track progress towards achieving partners' aspirations.

The partners will play an important role in producing this data and making it available, for indicators where the data will be drawn from project management tools, details about the content and structure of programs, or reflections written by program staff.

Table 9: Excerpt of outcomes framework.

Example of outcome <i>The changes we want to see</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will we know the changes have happened?</i>
PEOPLE		
More visitors see, engage with, and learn from GK and non-GK staff in 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). Annual
CULTURE		
Protections 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. Annual
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). Annual
WORKING TOGETHER		
Decision-making processes embedded.	The joint management plan specifies the decision-making processes in the governance structure. Partners will embed these processes 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. Annual

5.3 HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRESS BE USED?

We will use the information about our progress to support the uses and decisions identified in Table 7, by implementing an annual process of evaluation and reflection (Figure 10).

Engaging the support of an independent entity (or entities) to implement this process will be important for ensuring accountability and objectivity. At the end of the five-year period, the partners will formally review the JMP and revise it as required.

Annual evaluation and reflection process

Each year an independent entity will collate and analyse data on our progress and produce an internal report. This will feed into an annual reflection workshop for all partners, which will be hosted by GKTOLMB but facilitated by an independent party. The workshop will be used to review evaluation findings and inform two outputs:

- reports on our progress in achieving outcomes and goals for stakeholders, including the community and the Victorian Government
- insights and lessons for the partners, capturing the changes we need to make in implementing joint management; the insights and lessons that emerge from the annual reflections will contribute to adaptive management and continuous improvement in implementing the JMP.

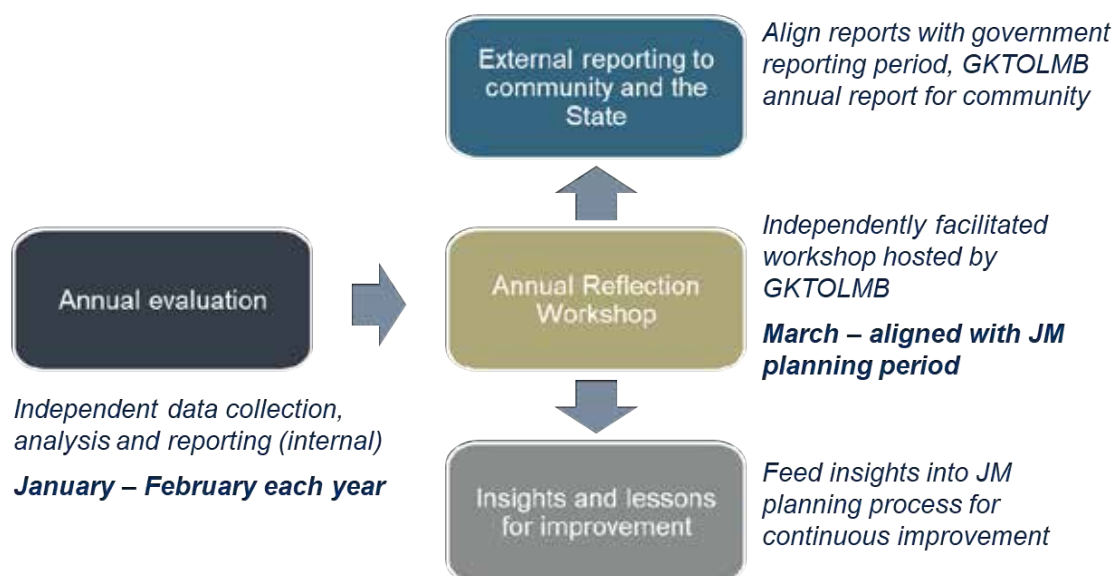


Figure 10: Annual evaluation and reflection process.

In addition to this ongoing process, we may need to review and update the JMP in light of other changes that could affect joint management activities. For example, the completion of a Natural Resource Agreement or Indigenous Land Use Agreement between Gunaikurnai People and the Victorian Government may influence the strategic direction and implementation of the JMP.

The annual reflection workshops will also provide opportunities for us to take a step back and reflect on what we have achieved in the previous 12 months, the challenges we have faced, and what we can learn to take forward as we plan for the next 12 months.

The annual reflection workshops will be a key mechanism for enabling continuous improvement. The workshops should be guided by a simple and flexible process that will create the space for open discussion and inquiry, while focusing partners' attention on what is most important.

The annual review should focus on the priorities rather than attempting a comprehensive overview of everything in the JMP. The following four questions provide a simple frame for reflective and action-oriented discussion around the previous 12 months:

- What has worked well?
- What hasn't worked well?
- What can we learn for the next 12 months?
- What might we change or adapt in the JMP?

These four questions could be used to guide the workshop from different aspects of the JMP, depending on what the partners feel is most appropriate. For example, they may be asked to focus or reflect on each of the four themes (People, Culture, Country and Working Together), each of the seven strategic initiatives, and/or each of the ten joint management parks.

Culture will fade, native title means nothing unless traditional owners can see and experience Country. It is difficult for people to link to the land if they don't know their Country and family connections.

— Uncle Lloyd Hood (2015).

Five-year update of the Strategic Plan

The GKTOLMB will lead partners in formally reviewing the entire JMP at the end of the first five years and revise the Strategic Plan as required for the next five-year period.

The revision of the Strategic Plan will consider reconfirming or amending goals, strategic initiatives, activities and outcomes for the five years ahead.

The individual park and reserve management plans in the JMP will be formally reviewed after 10 years, although they will be reviewed and updated as necessary after the initial five years. Alignment with the revised version of the Strategic Plan will be important at this point.

Artwork by Alice Pepper, courtesy of Jessica Shapiro



6 JMP IMPLEMENTATION

This section discusses the plan implementation phase now the JMP is approved.

To guide putting the JMP into effect, the partners are developing an implementation plan for joint management, which will include implementation details such as allocation of responsibilities, timing, budget allocation, risk management and funding requirements. It will also guide the adoption of effective and efficient arrangements for the coordination and governance of JM implementation.

As well as prioritising and scheduling the advancement of the activities and actions of both the Strategic Plan and individual park and reserve management plans, the implementation plan will include application of the outcomes monitoring regime described in section 5.2 and Appendix 2.

The JMP implementation plan will support endeavours to ensure there is adequate funding to implement the JMP, and become a tool to assist progress reporting.

During the development of this JMP, a number of implementation activities have already been undertaken by the joint management partners. For example, the GLaWAC Joint Management Rangers have been implementing an annual works program of activities and projects in the 10 joint management parks and reserves, assisted and complemented by Parks Victoria, the Committee of Management for The Knob Reserve, DELWP and the GKTOLMB.

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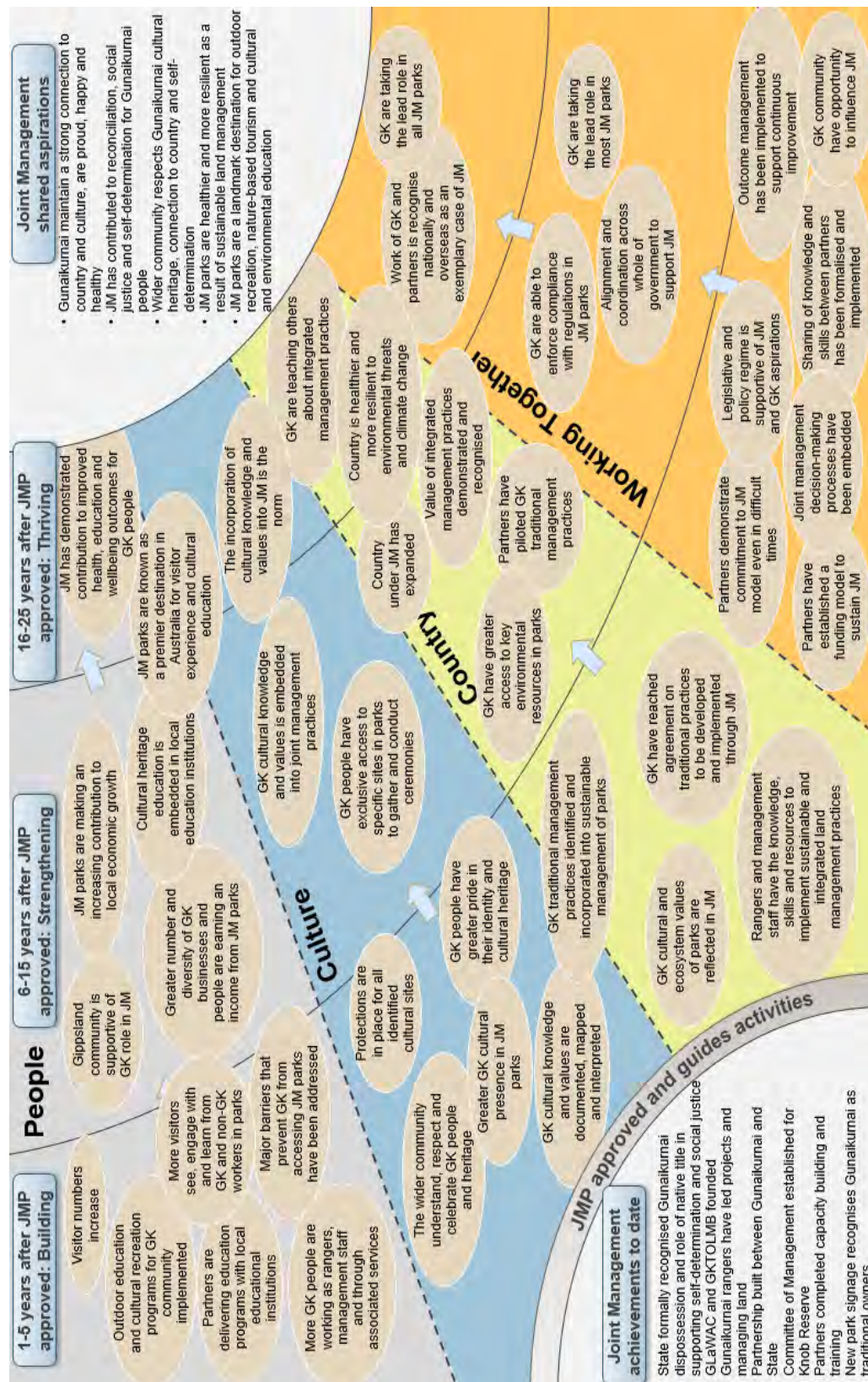
Gunaikurnai – Brataualung Traditional Custodians (2014b). Jiddelek. **In** Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, *Nyernila: Listen Continuously*. Arts Victoria: Melbourne.

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Activities	The activities of the JMP, including those that make up the strategic initiatives defined this Strategic Plan, and also the actions defined for the on-the-ground management of joint management parks that are set out in the individual park or reserve plans.
Aspirations	A shared statement of what the Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government ultimately want to achieve through joint management. This includes the aspirations of the partners, and of the broader Gunaikurnai and Victorian community.
Country	One of the four themes. Country includes land management practices and environmental outcomes.
Culture	One of the four themes. Culture includes heritage, identity, values, education, cultural practices and relationship with broader community.
Delegated land manager	The entity appointed to manage land on behalf of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change or the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).
GK	An abbreviation of 'Gunaikurnai' used in some figures and tables in the document.
Goals	Goals are set for the first five-year period of the JMP. These goals define what the partners want to achieve by the end of this period.
Inputs	The investment required to do to the activities, which should result in the outcomes.
Issue	A problem that the JMP seeks to solve. Issues will be resolved through the activities of the JMP (everyday activities of managing the land, and the strategic initiatives).
JM	An abbreviation of joint management used in some figures in the document.
Joint Management Parks	A shorthand term referring to the ten Aboriginal Title parks and reserves identified in the Land Agreement for joint management, equates to the appointed land referred to in the TOLMA.
MVO	Management Vehicles Only; refers to roads or tracks that are closed to public vehicle access.
Outcome	A specific, tangible and measurable change or consequence that results from joint management activities.
Partners	Organisations that are responsible for delivering joint management in the Gunaikurnai Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area: Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB), Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria (PV) and The Knob Recreation Reserve Committee of Management.
People	One of the four themes. People includes skills, training, employment, health, wellbeing education and reconciliation for Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai people.
Strategic initiative	Key initiatives that will be undertaken to support the achievement of the goals of the first five-year time period.
Theory of change	A description of the material changes that the Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government want to see through undertaking joint management. These will ultimately lead to the realisation of the shared aspirations of joint management.
Theme	The theory of change is structured around four interconnected themes of activities and outcomes. The themes are (in no particular order): People, Country, Culture and Working Together. These four themes are defined in this table.
Time period	The theory of change describes changes over 25 years following the approval of the JMP by Government. This is broken down into three periods: 1–5 years, 6–15 years and 16–25 years. A vision is defined for each time period and across each theme, resulting in 12 vision statements in total. Outcomes occur across all time periods and themes.
Vision	A summary statement for the desired changes in each of the four themes in the theory of change, beyond the initial five-year period.
Working Together	One of the four themes. Working Together includes the governance structure, legislation and equitable partnership underpinning joint management.

APPENDIX 2: JOINT MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

This appendix provides further detail on the outcomes framework for the JMP. The figure below represents all outcomes that are identified in Table 3 and Table 4 within the theory of change diagram. The outcomes framework itself is presented in the tables on the following pages.



Outcomes framework

The following tables present the outcomes framework for the JMP. The outcomes framework includes further detail on the meaning of each outcome; potential indicators for collecting data on all outcomes; and suggested timing and frequency for data collection. The suggested frequency for data collection for all outcomes is annual (once a year), however this could vary in the future as depending on partners' priorities and the availability of data sources. The outcomes framework focuses on the outcomes of the first five-year period only. Outcomes in later periods will not be monitored during this period because they are not expected to occur in the first five years.

Theme: People

Five-year goal: Joint management is creating jobs and business opportunities for Gunaikurnai, supporting education and increasing park use.

Outcomes <i>The changes we want to see</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will we know the changes have happened?</i>
Visitor numbers increase.	The number of visitors to JM parks is expected to increase as a result of investments in cultural interpretation, business development and a tourism strategy. This includes Gunaikurnai people, non-Gunaikurnai people from the Gippsland community, and tourists from across Victoria and beyond.	Number of park visitors broken down by location of residence and whether they are Gunaikurnai or non-Gunaikurnai <i>Annual</i>
Outdoor education and cultural recreation programs for GK community implemented.	Partners aim to implement programs in the JM parks for the Gunaikurnai community to get outdoors and connect with culture on country.	Detail on programs implemented: e.g. how many programs, number of participants, content, participant feedback <i>Annual</i>
Partners are delivering education and cultural programs with GK and non-GK youth.	Partners aim to work with schools to educate children about Gunaikurnai culture, country and the JM parks.	Detail on programs implemented: e.g. how many programs, number of participants/schools, content, school and student feedback <i>Annual</i>
More visitors see, engage with and learn from GK and non-GK staff in 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 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>
More GK people working as rangers, management staff and through associated services.	New jobs will be created for Gunaikurnai through ranger and management staff roles, and through procurement policies that favour Gunaikurnai contractors and businesses – for example, NRM services and tourism.	Number of GK people working as rangers and management staff Number and percentage of GK people/businesses contracted by JM parks Percentage of total contract value with GK people/businesses <i>Annual</i>
Major barriers that prevent GK from accessing JM parks addressed.	Some Gunaikurnai people face barriers in accessing JM parks, such as lack of transport. This may particularly effect people who live far away from Gunaikurnai country or older people.	Details on programs implemented (e.g. type of barriers addressed, number of GK people visiting parks with support of access programs) <i>Annual</i>

Theme: Culture

Five-year goal: The Gippsland community and partners have a growing awareness and appreciation for Gunaikurnai culture and history.

Outcomes <i>The changes we want to see</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will we know the changes have happened?</i>
Greater GK cultural presence in JM parks	Gunaikurnai language, knowledge, heritage and values will be increasingly visible and reflected in park and reserve signs, flyers, guides, interpretative installations and other media.	Number of JM parks with GK language, knowledge, heritage and values reflected in all communications and media <i>Annual</i>
Protections are in place for all identified cultural sites.	Measures will be put in place to protect all culturally important sites from erosion, harm from visitor impacts and other threats.	Percentage of identified cultural sites that have protections in place <i>Annual</i>
The wider community understand, respect and celebrate GK people and heritage.	Education, visible presence and stakeholder engagement programs will lead to the wider, non-Gunaikurnai community coming to understand, respect and celebrate Gunaikurnai people and cultural heritage.	Awareness and perceptions in non-Gunaikurnai community about Gunaikurnai people and cultural heritage <i>Annual</i>
GK cultural knowledge and values are documented, mapped and interpreted.	Joint management will involve measures to capture Gunaikurnai cultural knowledge and values, conduct archaeological works, identify important cultural sites and songlines, and incorporate this into interpretation.	Detail on programs implemented: e.g. knowledge and values covered, programs completed, percentage of park/reserve area covered, use in interpretative products and installations <i>Annual</i>
GK people have greater pride in their identity and cultural heritage.	Gunaikurnai will feel more proud of their identity and heritage as a result of joint management activities.	Perceptions of Gunaikurnai people <i>Annual</i>

Theme: Country

Five-year goal: Joint management incorporates Gunaikurnai knowledge, values and practices into a sustainable land management regime

Outcomes <i>The changes we want to see</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will we know the changes have happened?</i>
GK traditional management practices identified and incorporated into sustainable management of parks.	Joint management will involve identifying Gunaikurnai traditional management practices and incorporating them into current sustainable management regimes.	Manuals for GK traditional management practices have been produced and are being used for park management. <i>Annual</i>
Rangers and management staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to implement sustainable and 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 programs: e.g. content, forms of capacity building implemented, number of rangers completing capacity building initiatives. <i>Annual</i>
GK cultural and ecosystem values of parks are reflected in JM.	Park management practice reflects protection or enhancement of Gunaikurnai cultural and ecosystem values of those parks.	The extent to which the activities identified in individual park and reserve plans are successfully put into practice to protect and enhance Gunaikurnai cultural and ecosystem values in JM parks. <i>Annual</i>

Theme: Working Together

Five-year goal: Partners are working in an equitable partnership, jointly building their capacity and supporting Gunaikurnai leadership development

Outcomes <i>The changes we want to see</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators, timing and frequency <i>How will we know the changes have happened?</i>
Partners demonstrate commitment to JM model, even in difficult times.	Partners will have shown their sustained support for the joint management model throughout the five-year period.	Reflection on how effectively the partners have worked together in the previous 12-month period in commitment to the intentions of joint management and strategic direction laid out in the JMP <i>Annual</i>
Partners have established a funding model to sustain JM.	Partners aim to build a model to raise funding from government and other sources to support JM into the future.	Partners have successfully secured funding to implement the JMP <i>Annual</i>
Joint management decision-making processes have been embedded.	The joint management plan specifies the decision-making processes in the governance structure – partners will ‘embed’ these by demonstrating that 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>
Legislative and policy regime is supportive of JM and GK aspirations.	Partners will work together to address emergent legal and policy issues that pose challenges to joint management and the aspirations of Gunaikurnai.	Reflections on legal and policy risks to the success of the JMP and partners’ efforts to address these in the previous 12-month period <i>Annual</i>
Sharing of knowledge and skills between partners has been formalised and implemented.	Partners will develop and implement processes to share knowledge and skills between them.	Details on formal processes established by partners to share knowledge and skills: e.g. type of processes, content, partners involved, reflection on success <i>Annual</i>
Outcome management has been implemented to support continuous improvement .	Partners will implement the outcome management processes outlined in this JMP.	Reflections on success, challenges and lessons learned in the previous 12-month period in implementing outcome management and continuous improvement <i>Annual</i>
GK community have opportunity to influence JM.	Partners will develop and implement processes to seek appropriate input from the Gunaikurnai community in the decision-making around the JM parks.	Details on processes implemented to enable Gunaikurnai community to influence joint management: e.g. type of processes, topics where community input sought, number of people involved <i>Annual</i>

APPENDIX 3: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

This appendix provides detail on each of the seven strategic initiatives summarised in Table 5, including an indication of the relevant partners and other organisations who would be involved in some capacity in implementing each activity within the five-year period. GKTOLMB would be involved in implementing and/or monitoring all activities across the strategic initiatives. GKTOLMB will lead a collective exercise with all partners to develop an implementation plan and business plan that will build on the details in this appendix to assign roles and responsibilities and define timeframes and budgets for each activity.

Strategic initiative 1: Create employment and economic sustainability

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Develop and implement an economic development/business strategy for Gunaikurnai commercial operations.	The economic development/business strategy should: Include a plan for developing Gunaikurnai land management and tourism services across JM parks. Enable revenue earned through commercial operations in joint management parks to be returned to Gunaikurnai by implementing new business initiatives and reviewing existing policy.	GLaWAC
b Build business management capability in GLaWAC.	The business manager would support: The development of commercial business Mentoring and training for entrepreneurs Assist with business identification, planning and establishment on joint management parks.	GLaWAC Regional Development Victoria (RDV)
c Establish policies to prioritise Gunaikurnai suppliers and contractors in procurement and tenders.	Implement any required changes in procurement policy and practice. Develop an information pack/e-hub for Gunaikurnai startup enterprises to support development of service supply/delivery. Mentor and support new and existing businesses. Draft clauses prepared for inclusion in DELWP and Parks Victoria tenders. Weighting of contracts and tenders includes Gunaikurnai benefit.	Parks Victoria (PV) DELWP GLaWAC DoJR DTF
d Increase the number of Gunaikurnai rangers and management staff.	Increase Gunaikurnai full time positions in partner departments, agencies and related organisations to support joint management. Identify opportunities to increase the number of full-time Gunaikurnai ranger positions in GLaWAC, above the current eight funded positions.	GLaWAC DELWP PV
e Implement ranger-led education and visitor experience activities in JM parks.	Implement Gunaikurnai knowledge sharing and understanding of culture through Elders and Gunaikurnai ranger-led activities in JM parks.	GLaWAC PV The Knob Reserve Management Committee Inc. (KRRMC)
f Implement an education program with Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai youth about Gunaikurnai culture and joint management.	Develop pilot program with DET, DELWP and Parks Victoria, and with Gunaikurnai Elders and rangers. Pilot program could involve educational activities in joint management parks, or technological platforms.	GLaWAC PV Department of Education and Training (DET)

Strategic initiative 2: Increase access to and use of JM parks for Gunaikurnai and others

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Support Gunaikurnai to overcome barriers to access JM parks.	Develop an annual program of activities and events with a focus on families and youth within the joint management parks.	GLaWAC PV DELWP KRRMC
b Provide facilities for Gunaikurnai people to visit and stay on JM parks.	Develop day and overnight accommodation for Gunaikurnai people to visit and stay on joint management parks. Consult with Gunaikurnai community regarding needs Establish environmental planning and funding including maintenance approvals. Align with development of economic development/business strategy (Strategic initiative 1) and the development of the funding model (Strategic initiative 7).	GLaWAC PV

Strategic initiative 3: Invest in tourism and visitor experience

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Develop and implement a tourism and marketing strategy.	A tourism and marketing strategy should include: alignment of marketing with the Cultural Heritage Interpretation Strategy (Strategic initiative 5) consideration of new visitor experiences and nature-based tourism investment proposals on a case-by-case basis to ensure they are compatible with park values provisions to ensure all future and renegotiated tourism operations are discussed and jointly assessed to determine if the activity is acceptable and of benefit to Gunaikurnai identification of key tourism operators and industry/statutory bodies identification of opportunities to invest in increasing the level of service and quality of management in joint management parks in order to improve visitor experience and tourism opportunities.	GLaWAC PV
b Develop a tourism training and employment program in partnership with industry and tour operators.	Develop an industry training and employment program. Seek out existing and new tour operators who wish to partner with Gunaikurnai to develop skills and future employment opportunities. Provide cultural awareness information, advice, training or accreditation for tour operators working on joint management parks.	GLaWAC PV Destination Gippsland
c Build partnerships with Victorian Government agencies and local tourism bodies.	Work with the Victorian Government and regional tourism organisations to coordinate tourism initiatives, advance Gunaikurnai cultural tourism aspirations and complement broader tourism opportunities in Gippsland.	GLaWAC PV Destination Gippsland
d Collect data on visitor numbers, feedback and local spending.	Develop a joint approach to visitor monitoring and feedback collection.	PV GLaWAC KRRMC

Strategic initiative 4: Protect and present Gunaikurnai culture in JM parks

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Capture Gunaikurnai cultural knowledge, heritage, stories, language and values in JM parks.	This would involve two separate activities to feed into the Cultural Heritage Interpretation Strategy: an oral history project with the Gunaikurnai community and Elders to capture the song lines, lived experience and contemporary stories related to JM parks an archaeological site survey in JM parks.	GLaWAC AV
b Develop and implement a cultural heritage interpretation strategy for JM parks.	The strategy should provide general principles to guide cultural heritage interpretation activities at the individual park level, including: cultural image and support guidelines that reflect Gunaikurnai connection to the JM parks changing the names of JM parks signage and exhibits within parks publications, imagery and logos an online presence for parks ranger-led activities within JM parks.	GLaWAC PV Office of Geographic Names KRRMC
c Protect cultural sites and important cultural landscapes from damage.	Document and record sites across JM parks that are at risk of damage from visitor activities, land erosion, development or other disturbances. Provide appropriate resources to undertake site protection works.	GLaWAC DELWP PV AV KRRMC
d Implement measures to comply with legislative requirements relating to cultural heritage.	Make sure that capturing cultural knowledge and heritage, cultural interpretation and the protection of important sites complies with legislative requirements.	DELWP PV GLaWAC AV KRRMC

Strategic initiative 5: Integrate Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices into an innovative, sustainable land management approach

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Strengthen partnerships to manage land and water and improve resilience to climate change.	Strengthen partnerships with the agencies responsible for landscape natural resource management, where this concerns JM parks, including: catchment management planning climate change mitigation (including mitigating carbon emissions from management activities) and adaptation, in accordance with adopted climate change strategies building resilience to the intensifying effects of climate change.	DELWP GLaWAC EGCMA WGCMA KRRMC PV
b Deliver a capacity-building and knowledge exchange program for Gunaikurnai, DELWP and Parks Victoria rangers and other staff.	Capacity building and knowledge exchange should include: incorporation of Gunaikurnai traditional knowledge and practices into mainstream practices competencies for animal and plant control and habitat restoration cultural interpretation and presentation to support visitor experience and education.	GLaWAC DELWP PV
c Support Gunaikurnai to participate in relevant land management and cultural heritage courses.	Provide financial and/or in-kind support for Gunaikurnai rangers to participate in courses, including Aboriginal Victoria's Cultural Heritage Management Course, other park management courses, conferences and other educational opportunities relevant to fulfilling joint management.	GKTOLMB GLaWAC DELWP
d Re-establish Gunaikurnai fire management knowledge and practices in JM parks.	Within JM parks, this could include: - engaging in planning, research partnerships, knowledge sharing and practical application and monitoring of trial burning - developing a Gunaikurnai fire team and building its capability - exploring opportunities for GLaWAC to establish a fire suppression and fuel management capability to secure fire management contracts.	DELWP PV GLaWAC KRRMC Country Fire Authority (CFA) Federation University AV

Strategic initiative 6: Resolve key regulatory agreements and policy matters

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Improve legislative and policy environment for JM and Gunaikurnai aspirations.	Remaining legislative and policy issues include: clarifying ownership of infrastructure on JM parks under Aboriginal Title exploring avenues to enable joint management rangers to have the legal authority required to enforce compliance with regulations which govern park access and use ensuring that regulations for managing and protecting JM parks and reserves are in place and kept current, and that regulatory provisions are harmonised where practical across the JM areas, recognising differences in land status. ensuring that the JMP is revised as required in light of an NRA and/or ILUA being finalised resolving issues related to the ability of Gunaikurnai to retain revenue earned through JM parks, and procurement policies that give preference to Gunaikurnai businesses exploring options for introducing evolving models of management for all Aboriginal Title land that reflect self-determination aspirations.	DELWP GLaWAC PV GKTOLMB KRRMC
b Identify and pursue ongoing protection declarations for significant Gunaikurnai places within JM parks.	Identify and pursue ongoing protection declarations under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 for significant Gunaikurnai places within JM parks. Work in partnership with AV. Identify potential areas for declaration (e.g. New Guinea Cave).	GLaWAC PV KRRMC AV
c Develop and implement a policy that protects Gunaikurnai cultural and intellectual property.	Review legislation and examples from other jurisdictions to define scope of project. Develop a policy and embed this in relevant processes.	GLaWAC AV

Strategic initiative 7: Improve governance, leadership and management

Activities	Description	Relevant partners and organisations
a Develop and implement a funding model to sustain joint management.	Develop an implementation plan that includes resource requirements, associated costs and revenue, and develop a business case. Negotiate funding requirements. Secure funding for implementation.	GLaWAC DELWP PV GKTOLMB
b Establish formalised processes for Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government to share knowledge and jointly build capacity.	Establish suitable projects with Parks Victoria, GK Elders and rangers/NRM team. Develop a project funding and management model.	PV GLaWAC KRRMC
c Build Gunaikurnai leadership capacity under joint management.	Capacity building should include: identifying priority areas for capacity building for Gunaikurnai to take on management roles in all levels developing a plan to meet these needs that includes resource and funding requirements, partnerships, and capacity building models (e.g. placements, traineeships or mentoring) formalising agreements with partner agencies to mentor Gunaikurnai.	GKTOLMB GLaWAC DELWP PV
d Establish an online information network for joint management.	Establish a website and databases for information storage and retrieval to support learning, information exchange and capacity-building for joint management.	GKTOLMB GLaWAC DELWP PV KRRMC
e Develop and implement a culturally appropriate and inclusive model for Gunaikurnai community to provide input into joint management decision-making.	These processes could include: including Gunaikurnai clan representatives in decision-making ensuring Gunaikurnai are included in assessment, participation and approval of research applications in JM parks (as per the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006) establishing a process for Gunaikurnai input into the negotiation and approvals for licences, leases and permit applications in JM parks.	GLaWAC DELWP PV KRRMC
f Engage with park users, neighbours and other stakeholders of JM parks.	Continue to liaise with neighbours and local groups to involve them in relevant aspects of joint management.	PV DELWP GLaWAC KRRMC
g Implement outcome management and continuous improvement processes.	Implement the data collection and annual reflection process outlined in Section 5 of this Strategic Plan.	GKTOLMB GLaWAC PV KRRMC DELWP

APPENDIX 4: GOVERNANCE, STAKEHOLDERS, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

This appendix provides further details on:

Joint management governance arrangements: a description of decision making processes and other governance arrangements that will inform the joint management partnership between Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government

Other important stakeholders: a list of other agencies that may play a role in implementing the JMP

Relevant strategic documents: a list of policy documents, strategies and legislation relevant to the JMP.

Joint management governance arrangements

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.), the State of Victoria entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with the Gunaikurnai people in 2010. The RSA formally recognises the Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Owners of the agreement area (see Figure 3 in section 2.1 of this plan). The RSA includes a Land Agreement that provides for the granting of Aboriginal Title to the Gunaikurnai people over 10 parks and reserves that are to be jointly managed by the Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government.

The governance arrangements to apply to joint management by the Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government take into account:

- that the Victorian Government recognises Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) as the Traditional Owner Group Entity that represents the Gunaikurnai people in relation to the RSA (and hence joint management)
- that the TOLMA (section 3.4 (b)) states the objective of joint management is to establish an equitable partnership between the Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai People to ensure innovation and excellence in joint management
- that there are provisions in the Traditional Owner Settlement Act that prescribe the land management legislation that applies to Aboriginal Title land following its granting and the rights to occupy, use, control and manage the land. These provisions are discussed in the following paragraph.

Section 20 of the Traditional Owner Settlement Act provides that granting of Aboriginal Title is made subject to an agreement by the Traditional Owner entity to transfer to the State a right to occupy, use, control and manage the land. This Act further provides that, upon the transfer of this right to the State, the land is taken to be managed under the (land management) Act, and for the same purposes, as applied to the land immediately prior to the grant of Aboriginal Title. So notwithstanding the granting of Aboriginal Title, the right to control or manage the land is transferred (back) to the State.

The Victorian Government exercises its responsibilities for this land through a number of statutory entities. The (land management) Act under which each of the 10 joint management parks and reserves is managed is indicated in Table 1 in Section 2.2 of this plan. Because the 10 joint management parks and reserves are managed under either the National Parks Act or the Crown Land (Reserves) Act, the ultimate responsibility for managing these areas on behalf of the Victorian Government rests with the Minister responsible for these Acts, being the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and in turn the relevant Department, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). For each of the 10 joint management parks, the relevant Minister, or the Secretary of DELWP, has entered into delegated land management arrangements, whereby a Committee of Management has been appointed for The Knob Reserve and Parks Victoria is the State's designated land manager for the other nine joint management parks under a management agreement with the Secretary.

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) has been appointed by the Minister:

- to set and guide strategic direction for the joint management of (the 10 parks and reserves that comprise) the Appointed Land of the Board;
- to collaborate with the State and relevant State land managers in the management of the Appointed Land and enable the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai People to be recognised in the management of the Appointed Land; and
- to foster employment and economic development opportunities for Gunaikurnai People in relation to management of Appointed Land.

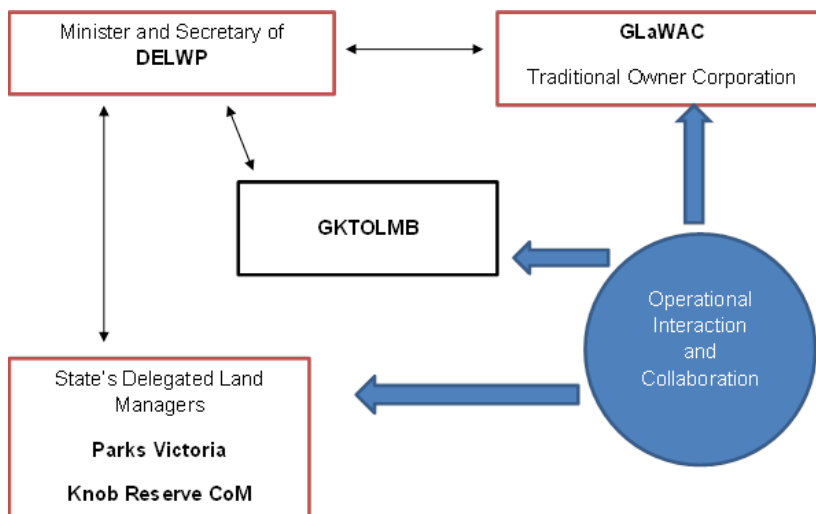
Based on the Recognition and Settlement Agreement, the Department of Treasury and Finance allocates annual funding to DELWP to distribute to support joint management and achieve the outcomes agreed to within the RSA. DELWP currently funds Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and the GKTOLMB for various aspects of joint management.

Thus, in its partnership with the Victorian Government regarding joint management of the Aboriginal Title lands (the Appointed Land of the GKTOLMB), GLaWAC needs to variously engage with DELWP, Parks Victoria, The Knob Reserve Management Committee Inc., and the GKTOLMB (collectively referred to as the joint management partners). Depending on the issue at hand, it may be that more than one of the Victorian Government statutory entities needs to engage simultaneously with GLaWAC.

The following governance and decision-making principles will apply to joint management dealings between GLaWAC, the Victorian Government or its delegate(s):

- 1 Joint management is a new way of managing the multiple values in Aboriginal Title land, and all partners need to be open to new approaches to managing this land.
- 2 Joint management is a partnership and all parties will be respectful of one another's values, perspectives, roles, and culture.
- 3 Communication and negotiation will be conducted in a manner that recognises and furthers the objectives of joint management.
- 4 Via GLaWAC, Gunaikurnai will be involved at all levels of joint management, including planning, priority setting, resource allocation and implementation, as equal decision makers.
- 5 Building the capacity of Gunaikurnai to equitably participate in decision making is an essential part of joint management.
- 6 Partners will ensure the appropriate joint management participants are involved in discussion and decision making taking into account the issue at hand and the respective roles of the partner entities;
- 7 Channels of communication between partners will be initiated and conducted between representatives with appropriate delegations and in accordance with preferred protocols adopted by each partner.
- 8 Where decisions are agreed to between partners, they will be formalised through verbal or written agreement by the respective partner's representative with the delegation to do so on behalf of the partner organisation.
- 9 In instances where agreement on decisions cannot be reached between partners following initial engagement and negotiation, each partner may elect to refer the matter up their respective chain of command until agreement is reached following further negotiation if required.
- 10 The dispute resolution provisions of the TOLMA (sections 3.8 and 5) will be followed in applicable circumstances.
- 12 In other instances, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change is the final arbiter where agreement regarding decisions cannot be reached between GLaWAC and the Victorian Government or its delegate.
- 13 In keeping with the Appointment Determination of the GKTOLMB, the Minister may seek the advice of the GKTOLMB on matters affecting or concerning the use or management of the Appointed Land.

Current relationship diagram



Other important stakeholders

Other organisations that may play a role in support of joint management include:

- Department of Justice and Regulation, Victoria
- Aboriginal Victoria (AV)
- Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VAHC)
- Office of Geographic Names
- tertiary institutions and Gippsland universities on Country
- Regional Development Victoria (RDV)
- Destination Gippsland
- East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
- West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
- Department of Treasury and Finance
- Department of Education and Training
- Country Fire Authority
- Game Management Authority
- local government authorities
- Victorian National Parks Association
- Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust
- Heritage Victoria
- licensed tour operators
- community-based heritage and conservation groups
- recreational peak bodies in the caving, bushwalking, four-wheel driving, fishing, hunting, mountain biking and other outdoor activity sectors.

Relevant strategic documents

The following are important legislation, policies and strategies relevant to implementing the JMP.

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation plans

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) Corporate Plan 2017–22 outlines the priorities and activities that GLaWAC will focus on during the next five years, in response to the Gunaikurnai community's aspirations outlined in the *Whole-of-Country Plan*.

Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (GLaWAC 2015) communicates the aspirations of the Gunaikurnai People for their country. The 10 joint management parks sit within the country and the Whole of Country Plan provides a whole of landscape approach to Gunaikurnai aspirations and views regarding culture and land management.

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation Economic Development Strategy 2017–22 provides a short to medium term focus for GLaWAC's economic and business development program.

Victorian legislation

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and regulations
Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 and regulations
Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and regulations
Emergency Management Act 1986
Firearms Act 1996
Fisheries Act 1995 and regulations
Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
Forests Act 1958 and regulations
Heritage Act 2017 and regulations
Land Act 1958 and regulations
Land Conservation (Vehicle Control) Act 1972 and regulations
National Parks Act 1975 and regulations
*Parks Victoria Act 1998*³
Planning and Environment Act 1987
Road Management Act 2004
Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010
Water Act 1989
Water Industry Act 1994 and regulations
Wildlife Act 1975 and regulations.

Plans, strategies, policies and guidelines

East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2013–2019
West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2013–2019
Our Catchments, Our Communities: Integrated Catchment Management in Victoria 2016–19
Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land
Gippsland Strategic Bushfire Management Plan
Emergency Management Manual Victoria 2008
Land Conservation Council, Environmental Assessment Council and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council recommendations accepted by Government
Policy for Sustainable Recreation and Tourism on Victoria's Public Land 2002
Protecting Victoria's Environment — Biodiversity 2037
Victoria's Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2008–2012
Victorian River Health Strategy
*Shaping Our Future*⁴ presents Parks Victoria's active approach to working with the community and partners, and explains how to consider, plan and implement Parks Victoria's vision for the future.

Commonwealth legislation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
Native Title Act 1993

International agreements

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention, 1971)
China–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (CAMBA, 1986)
Japan–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (JAMBA, 1974)
Republic of Korea – Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (ROKAMBA, 1974)

³ To be superseded by the *Parks Victoria Act 2018*.

⁴ <http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/vision,-purpose,-values>

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

**BUCHAN CAVES RESERVE
— KRAUATUNGALUNG COUNTRY**





Buchan Caves Reserve — Krauatungalung Country

Buchan Caves were traditionally an important meeting place for our people. The area connects to the high country and was a place of refuge during the seasonal migrations to and from the mountains, where our mob would go to chase the Bogong Moth and other food sources...

Although Gunaikurnai people did not traditionally venture very deep into the limestone caves, there is evidence going back more than 18 000 years of the important role they played in the lives of our old people, including burials in the caves and ceremonial rings all through the Buchan area.

— *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, Buchan Caves Reserve has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title by the Victorian Government and will be managed jointly 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 Buchan Caves Reserve, the land continues to be managed as a reserve for public purposes and the protection of natural features, under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.).

This Management Plan for Buchan Caves Reserve has been 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 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.) It also recognises and is consistent with the Buchan Caves Reserve's listing on the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) for its aesthetic, scientific and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Because Buchan Caves Reserve is within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the RSA, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to the reserve. Existing rights and interests in the reserve that are held by others are not affected by the RSA, but remain subject to management policies and regulation.

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) was established in accordance with the Recognition and Settlement Agreement between GLaWAC and the State of Victoria, with the statutory objective of enabling the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai to be recognised in the management of 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including Buchan Caves 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 Buchan Caves 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
- 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 THIS PLAN

This plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Buchan Caves Reserve. The following sections:

- describe values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the reserve, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values
- describe Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the reserve and their uses and activities, and the goals and strategies for managing and enhancing those connections and uses
- identify government and community relationships and partnerships that are key to managing the reserve
- state 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 Buchan Caves Reserve in this plan, the strategic initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan chapter of the JMP may include actions that relate to Buchan Caves 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

Buchan Caves Reserve covers 295 hectares on the Buchan River at the township of Buchan (population approximately 150), 57 kilometres north of Lakes Entrance. Most of the reserve is covered by forest and woodland. Prior to the grant of Aboriginal Title the reserve was set aside for public purposes and the protection of natural features.

Some of the best cave formations in Victoria are found in the Buchan Caves (See Section 4.2). The caves are part of the Buchan–Murrindal cave system, a large outcrop of cave and karst-forming limestones extending beyond the reserve boundary. This is one of the most extensive cave systems in Victoria, containing between four and five kilometres of stream passage cut at several levels and in some places widened into caverns by block collapse.

There is evidence of Gunaikurnai burials dating from the Pleistocene era in some cave entries in the area around Buchan, outside the reserve.

The reserve is also significant for its modern history and the development of cave tourism. It is one of East Gippsland's major tourism attractions, attracting a large number of visitors from interstate and overseas.

2 THE BUCHAN CAVES RESERVE UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

The Buchan Caves Reserve is on the Country of the Krauatungalung clan. The Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (GLaWAC 2015) sets out the following management priorities for the reserve:

- establishing cultural business and training enterprises around tourism and education
- ensuring that all non-Gunaikurnai people working in the Buchan Caves area undertake cultural awareness training
- taking a more active role in the administration of visitation and receiving commensurate income from camping and other fees.

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.

Parks Victoria operates well-developed tour and accommodation booking systems and cave guiding services, and also sells food and merchandise.

The main changes that will take place as part of joint management of the reserve will be:

- the establishment of Buchan Caves as a primary training and development location for Gunaikurnai people to acquire and build skills in tourism, hospitality, and commercial business operations
- the development of new programs and activities for visitors that are built on Gunaikurnai cultural heritage themes, as part of ongoing improvements to the visitor services and experiences in the reserve.

The partner agencies will explore how the revenue from these operations can be applied within the overall resourcing of joint management.

3 ZONING

A simple zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the reserve. The zones will:

- communicate which management aims have priority in different parts of the reserve
- indicate the types and levels of use allowed
- 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 use proposals.

The location of the zones is shown on Map 1, and their purposes are described in Table 1. The developed areas of the reserve along Caves Road and the Northern Arm Track are zoned as Recreation Development. This includes the Parks Victoria office, visitor centre, cabins, camping area and Wilderness Camp tents. The areas outside this zone, in the headwaters of Spring Creek, are zoned as Conservation and Recreation.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays, Buchan Caves Reserve.

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.
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.

Cultural heritage and cultural values in the reserve need to be systematically surveyed and mapped. The zoning scheme therefore includes provision for a future Cultural Values Overlay to be applied if cultural values locations requiring conservation are not within the Conservation and Recreation Zone.

This overlay would be activated by means of a future amendment to the Management Plan. Implementation of this overlay may require amendment of the description or provisions of other zones and overlays, and integration with *Aboriginal Heritage Act* and *Heritage Act* provisions to ensure compatibility.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.), natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as hunting wildlife and game, fishing, and gathering flora and forest produce.

No agreement over Buchan Caves Reserve is in place. A future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

4 CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

Buchan Munji, the Buchan Caves area, was used by the Gunaikurnai as a place to camp and meet during seasonal migrations to and from the high country. Although the Gunaikurnai people did not venture far beyond the cave entrances (caves were places thought to be inhabited by wicked creatures such as the Nargun and the Nyols) the caves are of high spiritual significance, which has been maintained through traditional stories.

Archaeological evidence of Gunaikurnai use of the area remains in and around cave entrances, along the Spring Creek valley and in artefact scatters throughout the reserve.

Four quarry sites and three artefact scatter sites have been recorded. Evidence in the broader Buchan region indicates the important role of caves to Gunaikurnai going back thousands of years, including burials inside caves and ceremonial rings.

Gunaikurnai oral history holds that Frank Moon's party, which made the first documented exploration of the caves (see Section 4.3), was guided by local Gunaikurnai people, who were not acknowledged.¹

Today the caves remain important to Gunaikurnai as a meeting place with spiritual significance that holds important stories to be shared with young people.

There are other culturally important cave sites in the vicinity that are not within the reserve. Cloggs Cave, located on private land about four kilometres south-east of Buchan Caves Reserve, was used as a shelter, and contains highly important Gunaikurnai archaeological deposits.

The roof of the rock shelter outside this cave is heavily blackened, evidently from campfires. Some of the artwork is extremely rare, particularly the drawings done in animal fat (GLaWAC 2015).

The cave has an undisturbed cultural sequence recently dated to around 30 000 years, with bone and stone tools being uncovered in excavations. It is closed to the public.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

The Fairy–Royal–Federal–Dukes cave system within the reserve is approximately one kilometre long and contains spectacular stalactite and stalagmite formations, pillars, shawls, rim pools, cave sediments and a permanent flowing stream (Rosengren and McRae-Williams 1981). It is part of a large outcrop of cave and karst-forming limestones known as the Buchan–Murrindal cave system, which extends beyond the reserve. This is one of the most extensive cave systems in Victoria, containing between four and five kilometres of stream passage, cut at several levels and widened in places into caverns by block collapse.

The limestone rock at Buchan was laid down about 380 million years ago under shallow seas that covered much of East Gippsland. Vertical joint lines across the layers of limestone allowed water to seep through the rock, dissolving the limestone to form the caves. Water dripping from the ceiling of the caves and then evaporating, deposited calcite, forming stalactites and stalagmites. There are numerous fossils in the limestone.

Bats inhabit some caves in the reserve. They are known to use caves in the area for overwintering and roosting, but recent survey and monitoring data is limited.

Cave invertebrates were surveyed in the 1980s (Yen and Milledge 1990), but there is no current data on their presence and condition.

¹ Gunaikurnai Elder Auntie Rita Watkins (deceased)

The reserve includes four Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), the standard categorisation of native vegetation used in Victoria. Around 40% of the reserve is covered by Shrubby Dry Forest, which is relatively common in the East Gippsland uplands bioregion.

Grassy Woodland and Valley Grassy Forest, both of which are depleted in the East Gippsland bioregion, cover approximately half of the Reserve area, and there is a small pocket of endangered Warm Temperate Rainforest on Spring Creek.

The reserve contains a variety of native and introduced vegetation, including several species listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) such as Limestone Blue Wattle and Leafy Greenhood Orchid.

Buchan Caves Reserve supports significant wildlife, and over 100 species of birds have been recorded there. King Parrots, White-winged Choughs and currawongs are commonly seen in the reserve, along with Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Brush-tailed Possums. Platypuses inhabit the reserve's waterways, particularly at Moon Cave, which is an important breeding location and has management guidelines in place to control disturbance. They are also present in Dukes Cave.

There are records of several species rare or threatened fauna species in the reserve. They include two endangered species (Spot-tailed Quoll and Growling Grass Frog) and three vulnerable species (Australian Grayling, Powerful Owl and Speckled Warbler) and the near-threatened Hooded Robin. However, it is not certain whether these species are still present in the reserve.

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

Table 2: Significant species in Buchan Caves Reserve.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status	FFG Action Statement
<i>Prototroctes maraena</i>	Australian Grayling	vulnerable	57
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	vulnerable	92
<i>Melanodryas cucullata cucullata</i>	Hooded Robin	near threatened	—
<i>Chthonicola sagittatus</i>	Speckled Warbler	vulnerable	—
<i>Dasyurus maculatus maculatus</i>	Spot-tailed Quoll	endangered	15
<i>Litoria raniformis</i>	Growling Grass Frog	endangered	—
<i>Acacia caerulescens</i>	Limestone Blue Wattle	vulnerable	222

Landscape and catchment context

The reserve lies within the Far East Catchments landscape program of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA). The program aims to maintain the condition of significant and relatively undisturbed landscape of these catchments with their large and continuous extent of natural ecosystems, from the mountains to the coast.

The Regional Catchment Strategy (EGCMA 2013) identifies the broad landscape objectives for public land as:

- maintenance and targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and integrity of natural ecosystems and the status of threatened species and communities
- maintenance of soil condition and stability on public land.

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

Buchan Caves Reserve is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) for the aesthetic, scientific and historical significance, notably the spectacular caves and geological formations that comprise the underground features of the reserve.

The caves were known to the Gunaikurnai for at least 30 000 years. The earliest known post-settlement reference to the caves was in 1840, and the earliest known tourist reference is in a Gippsland Lakes guide from 1886, but the caves were probably a visitor curiosity before then.

The first government reservation was a camping reserve of 19 acres in 1887 along the line of the Buchan–Gelantipy Road, while the caves continued to be used unofficially for picnics and functions.

In 1889 a government party reported on and photographed Duke's Cave, Wilson Cave, Spring Creek Cave, Dickson's Cave, O'Rourke Cave, and Moon Cave. The first regulations for the protection of the caves were promulgated and between 1903 and 1910, when the Shire of Tambo was appointed as Committee of Management.

In 1906 Frank Moon explored Moon's Cave, and Moon was subsequently appointed to officially search for new caves. This led to exploration of Kitson's Cave in 1906 and Fairy Cave in 1907.

By the time of the First World War the area was being promoted by the Victorian Railways and other organisations, and the caves had become a very popular tourist attraction. Infrastructure works in the caves before this time included some lighting and barriers. After the war an electric lighting plant was installed, and a tunnel was dug to link Fairy Cave with Royal Cave.

The Statement of Significance in the Victorian Heritage Register notes a range of elements that contribute to the importance of the reserve:

- The Buchan Caves Reserve, part of the outstanding Buchan–Murrindal cave system, set aside in 1901 for public purposes and the protection of natural features and landscaped in the 1930s, is of State cultural significance:
 - as an example of an early tourist attraction in Victoria based on natural themes; the ongoing use of the caves for tourist purposes is an important aspect of this significance, as is the tradition of guiding and transmission of oral history; early attributes of the reserve include the caves and their entries, caretaker's residence and the landscaping of the 1930s
 - aesthetically and scientifically, for the spectacular caves and geological formations which comprise the underground features of the reserve; these natural features have been exploited by human intervention, especially the use of light and the use of barriers to protect formations; this last attribute is part of the careful work of Frederick Wilson from 1907 onwards and is now rare on a national and even international basis
 - as a mature example of the landscape work of Hugh Linaker, a pioneering designer of public landscapes; the 1930s landscaping at Buchan has been carefully tended and sympathetically augmented in subsequent years and is exemplified by the mature trees in the reserve, the high proportion of deciduous exotic species, the road layout and small rustic rotunda
 - for the manner in which the reserve demonstrates the influence of contemporary 1930s National Parks landscape ideals; here represented by the incorporation of recreational facilities such as the swimming pool and tennis courts and the use of a self-consciously rugged design idiom (such as the bold log structures at the entry gateway, the rugged stone construction of the kitchen and the log construction of the kiosk)
 - for its high aesthetic values, including the exploitation of seasonal contrast by the use of deciduous trees, the contrast between exotic trees with the surrounding landscape, the manner in which the roadway winds up the Spring Creek valley, and for views within and out of the reserve
 - for the manner in which in the Caves Reserve and Buchan township demonstrate the development of tourism within Gippsland, and the demands of that tourism on the natural environment.

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

Visitor impacts

Visitor impacts on the cave system can include changes to the physical structure of the cave, water movement, cave hydrology, air movement and microclimate, as well as the effects of artificial light, compaction of floors, changes to cave biota and surface impacts such as erosion and vegetation change. These effects can be independent of one another, cumulative, or synergistic. They can also be related to the number of visitors to the cave at any one time, and the frequency of visits.

A number of tools are available to ensure tourist visits and other uses of the caves are sustainable. These include the *Buchan Caves Guiding Resource Manual*, resources on the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association's website (<http://www.ackma.org>), and *Principles for Guided Cave Interpretation* (Davidson and Black 2007).

Victorian and international management guidelines provide general guidance on management and conservation of karst and caves (Davey and White 1986; IUCN 1997). More detailed management guidance for the substantial cave complex at Buchan Caves is needed in the form of a Cave and Karst Plan, incorporating input by speleological bodies and Parks Victoria's Cave and Karst Advisory Group. This plan should include:

- an inventory of all known caves and other karst features
- information on all natural and cultural values associated with a feature or group of features, including significance levels, condition, threats and visitor use of caves in the reserve
- management regimes for each karst area and cave based upon the establishment of acceptable limits of disturbance
- tailored monitoring regimes to measure disturbance within karst catchments and at individual karst features including caves
- general and feature-specific management responses to disturbance
- environmental management practices that will ensure the ongoing protection of the reserve and its significant karst formations
- records of management works and operations carried out in each karst area and at individual karst features
- cave search and rescue protocols
- a register of karst and karst management specialists
- records of all past and ongoing karst research undertaken in the reserve
- research priorities for individual karst areas and features.

Invasive plants and animals

Weeds have the potential to affect the significant vegetation communities and some of the reserve's important habitats. The challenge is to maintain the relatively intact nature of the vegetation within the reserve and protect it from new introductions.

Browsing and soil disturbance from introduced herbivores such as deer and rabbits has a significant impact on the reserve's plants and animals.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and severity of extreme events, changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes.

Changes to the hydrology would threaten the karst and those caves and cave biota that have a continuing relationship with water levels or water quality. Changes to the karst system may also have hydrological affects.

Changes such as vegetation alteration are likely to occur gradually, while more extreme events such as storms and floods could occur at any time. Storms increase the risk of inundation and damage to physical assets and public safety. The Reserve has a relatively small catchment, but the

main visitor areas and facilities are in the bottom of the valleys. Flash flooding is an unlikely but high-consequence threat that needs to be considered in access and facility design and emergency preparedness.

Fire management

Parts of the reserve were burnt by a bushfire in 1983 and a small fire in 2014. Planned burning was undertaken in the western part of the reserve in 1992, and in most of the northern section in 2016.

The *Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land* (DEPI 2012) provides the framework for public land fire management in Victoria. 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 the reserve.

The detailed 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 that process so that burning and other fuel treatments are prioritised or modified where necessary. In particular, the planned burning strategy for the Reserve needs to be focused on identifying areas that require burning and working with DELWP to prioritise burning in these locations.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

The strategies detailed in Table 3 have been developed to protect, conserve and (where relevant) restore the natural and cultural values of the reserve.

Table 3 Land, water and heritage conservation strategies.

Threats	Priorities	Strategy
Cave and karst formations		
Changes in local hydrology	Cave protection and preservation	Develop a Cave and Karst Plan for the reserve (with input from speleological bodies and the PV Cave and Karst Advisory Group) that identifies known caves and karst, and specifies management and monitoring protocols.
Visitor and development impacts: wear, changes on temperature and humidity, vandalism	Cave monitoring program for show cave system and other caves within the Buchan Cave Reserve. Security, access and visitor management procedures.	Implement monitoring system using photo plots within the cave system. Finalise and publish cave access guidelines. Train staff in cave monitoring and impact management. Ensure sustainable use through: • education and Interpretation • ensuring guiding standards and delivery are maintained to a high level. Undertake periodic geotechnical assessment of rock stability.
Bats and cave Invertebrates		
Knowledge of condition Human disturbance	Assess temperature and humidity conditions, and bat acclimatisation and roosting Manage caves access	Develop a bat monitoring program for Buchan Caves Reserve Review existing research on the caves' invertebrate fauna, and consider additional research and monitoring.

Threats	Priorities	Strategy
Other rare or threatened species (presence to be confirmed)		
Various	To be resolved when survey is completed	Implement relevant parts of FFG Action Statements and National Recovery Plans.
Aesthetic, scientific and historical significance of the Caves		
Royal, Fairy and Federal Caves	Cave Restoration Program Schedule of cave cleaning regimes for show cave system	See strategy for Cave and Karst Plan above. Continue to implement the Reserve Conservation Plan.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage		
Visitor impacts	Burials and ceremonial rings in the vicinity of Fairy Cave and Moon Caves, and other cultural heritage in the reserve	Implement cultural mapping and use the data to inform management actions.
Linaker plantings		
Plant diseases and senescence Dispersal of introduced plants through the reserve	Central reserve area	Ensure the Linaker planting is protected, conserved, and where necessary replaced with reference to the original design.
Historic buildings		
Deterioration	All buildings and structures	Revise the existing 2002 Buchan Caves Reserve Heritage Action Statement.
Reserve vegetation and habitat		
Invasive plants and animals	Eastern Grey Kangaroo abundance	Determine the required fire regime for reserve values. Protect Warm Temperate Rainforest EVC from fire and invasive plants and animals.
Fire outside tolerable fire intervals	Fire regimes	

5 PEOPLE IN THE RESERVE

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

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 an inspiring landscape, characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to hold community gatherings on Country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for Country through conservation and restoration work in the reserve. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories.

GLaWAC Joint Management Rangers undertake conservation and maintenance works in the reserve cooperatively with Parks Victoria, including Greenhood Orchid monitoring and weed control. There is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program.

Unlike the other nine jointly managed areas, the management of the Buchan Caves Reserve includes significant commercial and hospitality functions, currently delivered by Parks Victoria. These functions are integral to the operation of Buchan Caves Reserve as a major tourism attraction that draws interstate and international visitors. They include tour and accommodation booking processes, cave guiding services, and food and merchandise sales.

Buchan Caves Reserve provides an opportunity to pursue the goals and strategic initiatives set down in the Strategic Plan for capacity-building, economic benefits and employment by functioning as a training and development location for Gunaikurnai people to build skills in tourism, hospitality and commercial business operations.

In addition to taking a greater role in the management and operation 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. A potential Keeping Place would provide a focus for this activity.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE RESERVE

The Buchan Caves system is one of the most extensive and best-decorated cave systems in Australia. They are considered second only to the Jenolan Caves in New South Wales in terms of contemporary popularity, impact on local and regional development, surviving attributes and historical significance. Historically, the limestone show caves in the reserve (Royal and Fairy) have been a major attraction for the Buchan and wider East Gippsland region.

Buchan is located at the gateway to the upper Snowy River National Park and Alpine National Park. The area features spectacular high-country scenery, river gorges, tall forests, rainforest and dry rainshadow woodlands. Popular activities include remote camping, wild caving, bushwalking, rafting and scenic drives. Buchan is also within easy access of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, The Lakes National Park, Cape Conran Coastal Park and the tourism destinations of Lakes Entrance, Metung, Paynesville, Marlo and Orbost.

The reserve is an important attraction for visitors to the region and contributes significantly to the local economy. Around 120 000 people visit the reserve annually, and 65 000 take a cave tour. The reserve is used intensively during peak holiday periods and long weekends, and there is little capacity for additional visitor numbers at these times. In summer the caves receive heavy day visitation when wet or cold weather leads holiday-makers around the Gippsland Lakes to seek alternative experiences.

The caves have fewer visitors in the shoulder periods in autumn and spring, despite good conditions for camping and outdoor activities. Commercial cave tours are the most popular

activities in the reserve. Royal Cave and Fairy Cave are the most popular caves, with commercial tours running daily. In recent years Federal Cave has also been developed to allow for guided commercial visits. Current visitor information and education focuses on the spectacular cave formations, but other features, including the reserve's cultural heritage and fossil remains of pre-historic megafauna, could be included in future.

The locations of visitor sites and facilities in the reserve are shown in Map 3. Camping is available in the campground at 40 powered and 19 unpowered sites. Twenty-six of these sites are suitable for caravans. Built accommodation on site includes two cabins and Wilderness Camp (also called Caves Camp), which is a series of elevated weather and insect-proof tents with large sun decks.

Tents sleep up to six people, and an additional tent is fitted out as a kitchen for the camp. The tents have access to shared public amenities and are available for individual hire when not in use as a camp.

Built accommodation consists of Caves House One, which sleeps up to eight people in higher standard accommodation, and Caves House Two, which provides accommodation for up to six in a budget setting.

The Wilderness Camp tents are ageing and have high maintenance costs during winter and early spring in order to prevent mould and deterioration. They need to be replaced by a more effective facility. The cabins receive very high year-round use.

The reserve has a waste water treatment plant to treat wastewater from day and overnight visitors. The management of the plant is licensed by the Environment Protection Authority.

Parks Victoria provides a successful commercial outlet providing visitor merchandise and a small range of packaged food and drinks from the visitor centre. The opportunity to establish a café in the reserve has not been pursued, as part of a deliberate strategy to work in synergy with the local community and the nearby food and beverage outlets in the town.

There is a system of walking tracks through the reserve, ranging in distance from half a kilometre to four kilometres in length. This is reasonably well used but has potential to be better promoted and interpreted. There is also potential to broaden the range of visitor experiences such as night time activities for overnight visitors and canoe trips on the Buchan River.

The entrances to several 'adventure caves' are within the reserve and provide opportunities for recreational cavers. Most of these entrances are gated and locked, and access requires a permit from Parks Victoria. Several speleological groups regularly visit Buchan and explore wild caves, both in the reserve and off reserve within the local area.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

The goals and strategies for managing visitor experiences and services in the reserve are described in Table 4.

Table 4 Visitor experience goals and strategies.

Royal, Fairy and Federal Caves

Goals

Provide show-cave experiences for a wide range of visitors and abilities, based on high-quality interpretation and education of the natural and cultural values of the caves and broader reserve, and wider caves and karst.

Strategies

Extend training of staff in interpretation, customer service and protection of cave values.

Increase the interpretation of Aboriginal cultural values in the reserve, using Gunaikurnai guides where possible.

Plan and progressively implement maintenance and renewal programs for cave infrastructure including completing the implementation of the existing lighting and access plan.

Maintain cave security and access controls.

Main Reserve

(Includes camping areas, cabins, houses, visitor centre and nearby walks.)

Goals

Provide information, arrival and orientation services for day and overnight visitors.

Provide highly accessible, serviced camping and roofed accommodation for all abilities in a cultural landscape.

Increase the variety of visitor experiences based on cultural activities and education.

Strategies

Improve visitor facilities and experiences within the Recreation Development Zone.

Progressively replace Wilderness Camp tents with cabins or a more appropriate facility to attract high occupancy all year round.

Investigate the development of a cultural hub or keeping place in the area, and increase Gunaikurnai participation in the delivery of commercial operations and interpretation and guiding services.

Maintain a high-quality convenience food service.

Progressively implement maintenance and renewal programs for infrastructure, including road resealing.

Spring Creek – Northern Arm Walking Circuit

(Includes Tea Tree Walk, Kanooka Track, Granite Pools Track, Reserve Track, Northern Arm Track and Moon Hill Walk.)

Goal

Provide short to half-day walks in the quieter area of the reserve for more active visitors.

Strategies

Maintain tracks and signage in good condition.

Increase the promotion of the walking circuit to visitors.

Provide more interpretation of the reserve landscape, plants and animals, bush tucker and cultural materials.

Recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 5. This table does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

Table 5 Recreational activities allowed in the management zones.

Activity	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Recreation Development Zone
Camping — designated areas	No	Yes
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	No	No
Camping — dispersed other	No	No
Campfires — solid fuel	No	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)
Campfires — liquid or gas fuel stove	No	Yes
Caving	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (in designated caves and subject to controls)
Competitive events	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)
Cycling	Yes (on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)
Dogs	No	No
Education activities	Yes	Yes
Firearms	No	No
Firewood collection	No	No
Fishing	Yes	Yes
Fossicking/prospecting	No	No
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)
Guided Activities	Yes	Yes
Horseriding	No	No
Hunting	No	No
Orienteering and rogaining	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (subject to permit)
Picnicking	Yes	Yes
Swimming	Yes	Yes
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes
Vehicle use (two-wheel drive, four-wheel drive and trail bikes)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks)

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS — GLaWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The reserve is assigned to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. A range of staff make up the Parks Victoria Buchan Caves operations team that is based in the reserve.

GLaWAC joint management rangers also undertake management functions in the reserve. Other regional and state-wide technical staff provide specialist services from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land and provides legislative and policy support to GKTOLMB and Parks Victoria. The GLaWAC Ranger Team has commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The partners 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 operate in several directions, with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC.

GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

Several significant caving stakeholder groups have a strong interest in the reserve. The Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association (ACKMA) is a professional association for those responsible for, or interested in, the planning and management of limestone landscapes and caves in the Australasian region. The Victorian Speleological Association is an organisation of caving enthusiasts who explore and map caves, promote cave conservation and ethical caving, and organise caving trips and activities. These groups provide nominees to Parks Victoria's Cave and Karst Advisory Group.

The Buchan township has a strong social and economic interest in the management of the caves and their successful function as a visitor attraction. Local community members and others constitute the Friends of Buchan Caves and provide volunteer support and knowledge in managing and conserving the reserve. The Buchan Business and Tourism Association represents the interests of the town's commercial sector and has a major stake in the effective operation of the reserve. The Buchan school, kindergarten and local community groups frequently use the reserve.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the reserve. The Country Fire Authority is responsible for fire management on private land surrounding the reserve, and Victoria Police and supporting emergency services are responsible for search and rescue.

Destination Gippsland undertakes marketing and promotion of regional tourism experiences and services. Aboriginal Victoria is the primary government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic coordination of catchment restoration investment. It also provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.

East Gippsland Shire Council manages road access to the reserve and traffic management, and regulates planning and development in the shire and general municipal services.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

Many tour operators bring groups to the reserve, frequently as part of wider High Country and Snowy River tours. This includes a large number of coach tour operators. East Gippsland Water maintains an emergency water supply pipeline within the reserve under authorisation from Parks Victoria. A number of cleared areas of the reserve, adjacent to the Buchan township, are leased for grazing.

6.4 RESERVE BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the reserve are clear and effective, and no changes are required.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with the goals and strategic initiatives set out in the Strategic Plan for the Joint Management Area as a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural values of the reserve are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action

BC1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.

BC2	Protect and conserve the reserve's natural values by implementing the conservation strategies detailed in Table 3, including:

- developing a cave and karst plan for the detailed conservation of the caves
- implementing standards and procedures for guiding and visitor impact management
- monitoring and research on bat population and other cave fauna
- implementing action statements and recovery plans for threatened species.

BC3	Work with East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, neighbouring landholders and other stakeholders to control pest plants and animals, including foxes, rabbits, deer, cats and environmental weeds, in accordance with the East Gippsland Invasive plants and animals plan.

BC4	Work with DELWP to protect the area, assets and communities from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect fire-sensitive values of the reserve.

BC5	Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for reserve ecosystems and habitats, and seek to have burns programmed and implemented as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.

BC6	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

BC7	• Protect and conserve the reserve's cultural heritage by implementing the conservation strategies detailed in Table 3, including:

- conservation of the Linaker planting and historic buildings
- mapping of Gunaikurnai cultural heritage in the reserve, including burial sites and ceremonial rings.
- Implement the cultural values overlay as part of the management zoning scheme, based on the results of cultural mapping.

BC8	Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the area through <i>Welcome to Country</i> and other appropriate signage, based on the Krauatungalung clan at entry points and visitor nodes.

Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the reserve.

BC9	Seek opportunities to implement traditional cultural burning practices as part of planned burning programs through liaison and partnership with DELWP fire managers.

-
BC10	Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors and others working in the area.
BC11	Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the area in accordance with the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> .
BC12	Implement the existing provisions of the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the reserve.
-

People in the Reserve

Goals

- Gunaikurnai increase their connection with the reserve through management, operations and the opportunity to undertake cultural practices.
 - Visitor and community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the reserve are enhanced by joint management.
-

No.	Actions
-
BC13	Manage visitor experiences in the Reserve in accordance with the goals and strategies set out in Table 4, including: • increasing the variety of day and overnight visitor experiences based on cultural activities and education • increasing Gunaikurnai interpretation and guiding services • progressively renewing cabin accommodation and other facilities • investigating the development of a cultural hub/keeping place open to visitors • increasing promotion and potential guided walks in the western part of the reserve. • finalising the marketing plan for the reserve.
BC14	Manage recreational activities in accordance with Table 5. 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.
BC15	Develop a business plan to maintain and improve the Buchan Caves Reserve visitor and commercial operations as part of business planning for the joint management parks and reserves as a whole.
BC16	Establish a program for Gunaikurnai training and development in the reserve focusing on commercial operations, visitor services, cave guiding and potential cultural tourism products.
BC17	Increase opportunities for Gunaikurnai community members to visit the reserve and undertake cultural practices and gatherings, using a potential cultural hub/keeping place as a base.
BC18	Support a junior ranger program at Buchan Caves to complement the school's program and to provide a new experience for visitors to the reserve.
BC19	Maintain current public access arrangements on roads and tracks in the reserve. Implement changes to improve road safety, including re-alignment of the road away from the visitor centre entrance.
-

-
- BC20 Control risks to visitor safety especially in relation to bushfire, flooding and cave rescue.
 - BC21 Ensure ongoing management of the wastewater treatment plant and compliance with EPA licence requirements.
 - BC22 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.
 - BC23 Use education and enforcement under relevant regulations to ensure that cave security, access conditions and other visitor management requirements are complied with.

Seek to have more specific regulations established by Government over the reserve.

Working Together

Goals

- Joint management of the reserve operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.
 - Community stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the reserve.
-

No. Actions

- BC24 Implement a structured program to place Gunaikurnai employees in visitor and commercial operations of the reserve to gain experience and development of tourism and business and skills.

Complement these placements with parallel tourism and business training through recognised providers.
 - BC25 Establish Gunaikurnai workshop and storage space in the reserve.
 - BC26 Collaborate with Destination Gippsland and Buchan tourism and community groups to promote the reserve with a particular focus on improving visitation during non-peak periods.
 - BC27 Maintain and build strong links with the Buchan community to develop support for reserve management directions and collaboration on projects.
 - BC28 Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria employees in the area to interact with other parks and partners in the Settlement Area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
 - BC29 Maintain close collaboration with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the area landscape.
 - BC30 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 Area, 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 6 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 6: Data used to track progress in implementing the Joint Management Plan.

Data type	Description	Data source and method
Activities	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. the actions described in this management plan for Buchan Caves Reserve.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

Table 7 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 7: Excerpt of outcomes framework from the Strategic Plan.

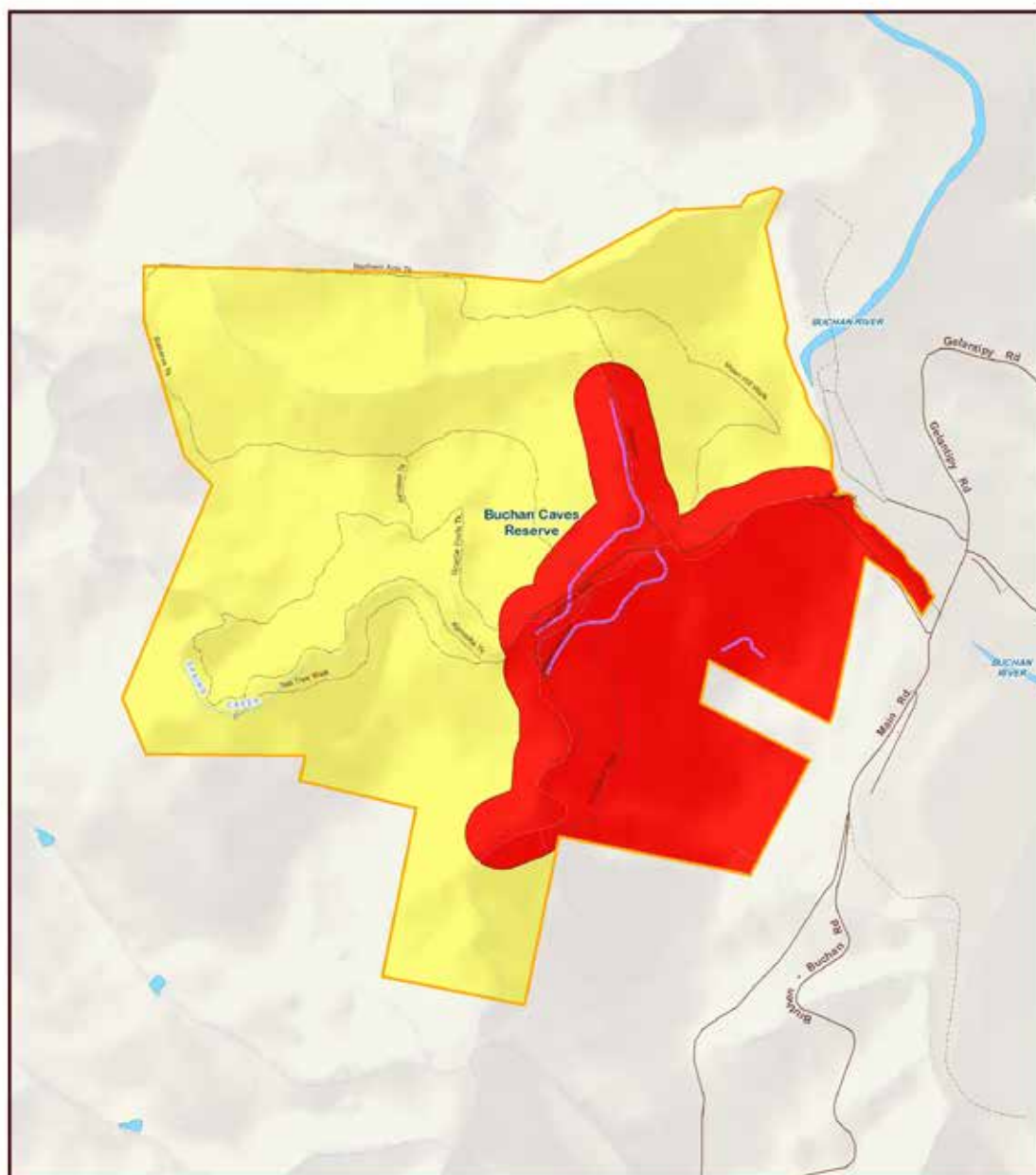
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the change be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff on parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other 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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- EGCMA (2013). *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2013–2019*. East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority: Bairnsdale.
- GLaWAC (2015). *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan*. Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation: Bairnsdale.
- Yen A.L. and Milledge G.A. (1990). *Invertebrates of the Buchan–Murrindal area cave systems*. Department of Conservation & Environment: East Melbourne.



Buchan Caves Reserve Joint Management Plan

23/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRD94

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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- Walking track
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only

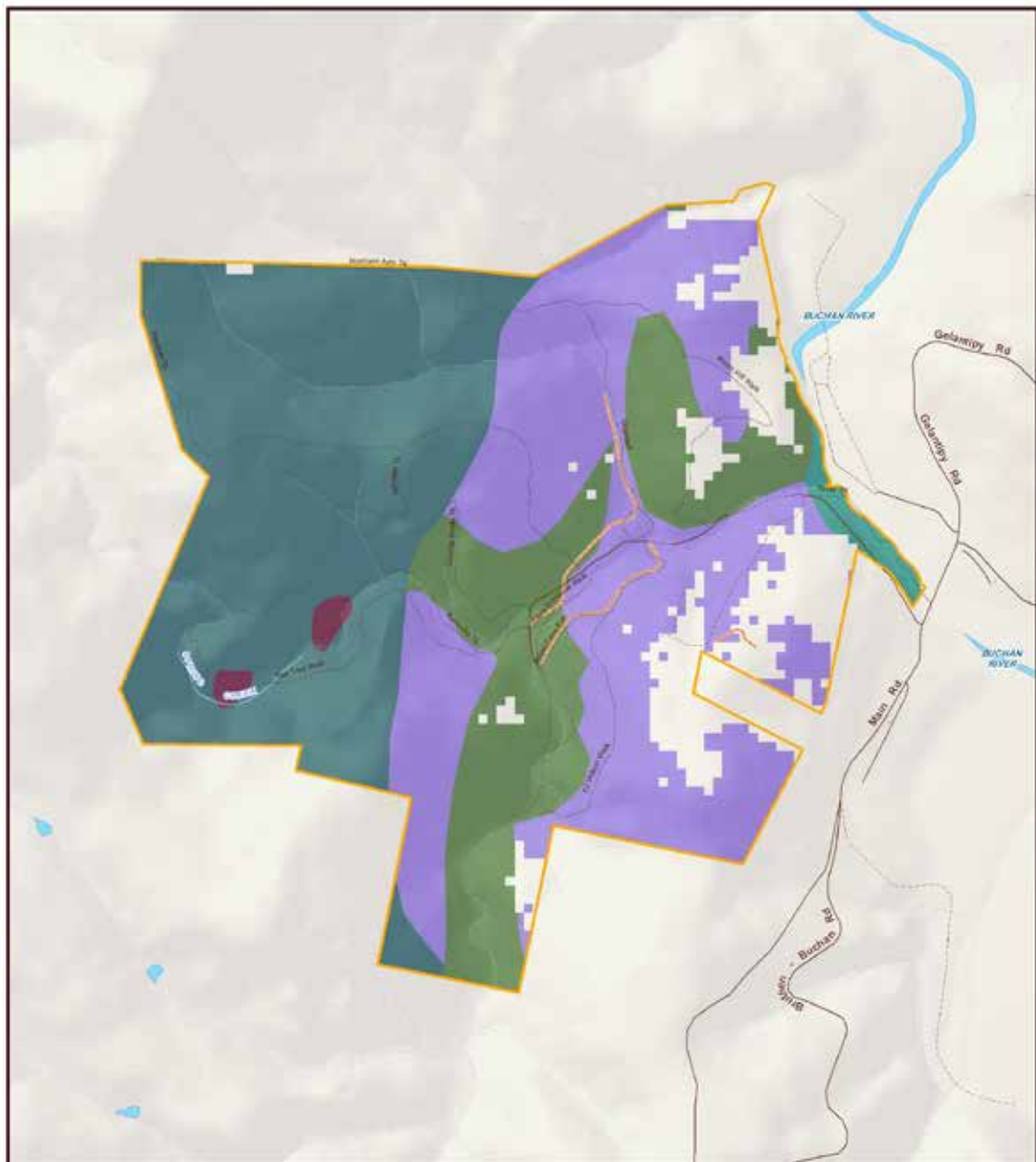
- Joint Management
- Park and Reserve

Management Zones

- Conservation & Recreation Zone
- Recreation Development Zone



Map 1: Management zones and overlays, Buchan Caves Reserve.



Buchan Caves Reserve Joint Management Plan

23/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICCRD94
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- Walking track
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only

Joint Management

Ecological Vegetation Classes

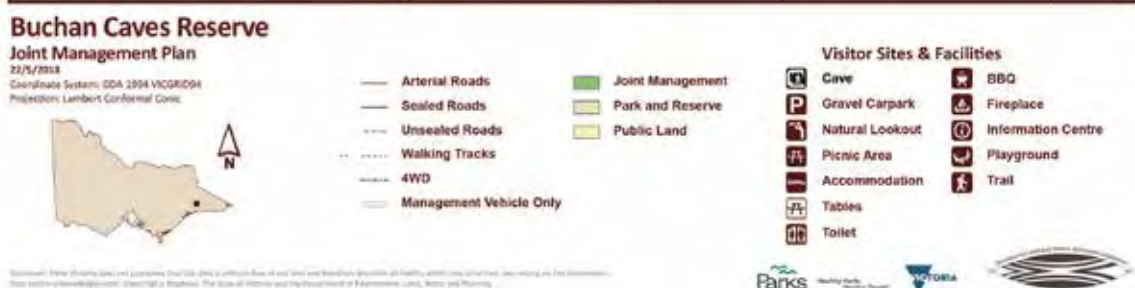
- Grassy Woodland
- Riparian Forest
- Shrubby Dry Forest
- Valley Grassy Forest
- Warm Temperate Rainforest



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



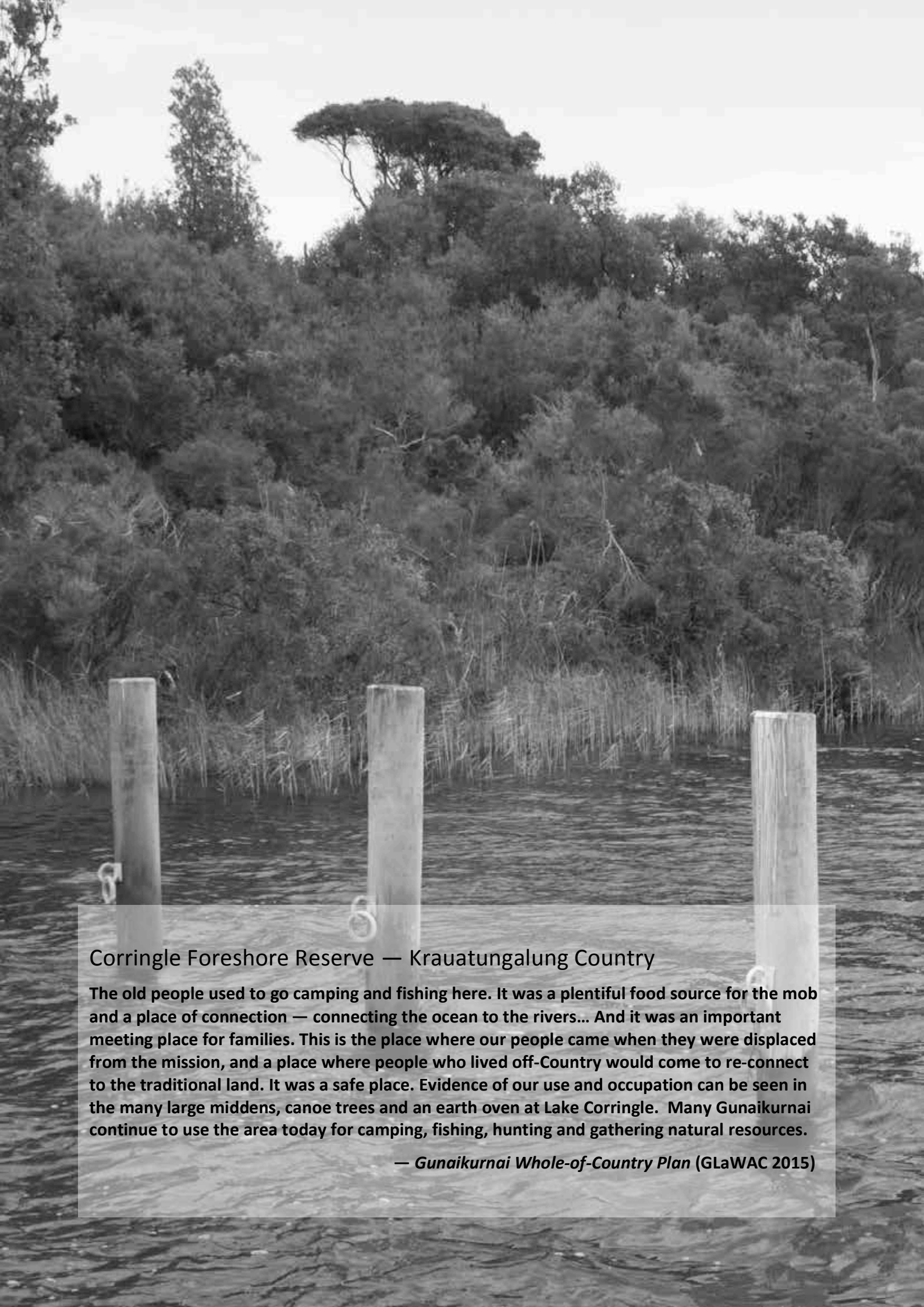
Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Buchan Caves Reserve.



GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

CORRINGLE FORESHORE RESERVE — KRAUATUNGALUNG COUNTRY





Corringle Foreshore Reserve — Krauatungalung Country

The old people used to go camping and fishing here. It was a plentiful food source for the mob and a place of connection — connecting the ocean to the rivers... And it was an important meeting place for families. This is the place where our people came when they were displaced from the mission, and a place where people who lived off-Country would come to re-connect to the traditional land. It was a safe place. Evidence of our use and occupation can be seen in the many large middens, canoe trees and an earth oven at Lake Corringle. Many Gunaikurnai continue to use the area today for camping, fishing, hunting and gathering natural resources.

— *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 Strategic Plan.

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, Corringale Foreshore Reserve has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title by the Victorian Government and will be managed jointly 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 Corringale Foreshore Reserve, the land continues to be managed as a public purposes reserve under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic).

This Management Plan for Corringale Foreshore 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.)

Because this Aboriginal Title area is within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the RSA, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to Corringale Foreshore Reserve. Existing rights and interests in the reserve that are 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) was established in accordance with the RSA between GLaWAC and the State of Victoria, with the statutory objective of enabling the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai to be recognised in the management of 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including Corringale Foreshore 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 management plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that Corringale Foreshore 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
- 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 THIS PLAN

This plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Corringale Foreshore Reserve. The following sections:

- describe values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the reserve, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values;
- describe Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the reserve and their uses and activities, and the goals and strategies for managing and enhancing those connections and uses
- identify government and community relationships and partnerships that are key to managing the reserve
- state 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 Corringale Foreshore Reserve in this plan, the strategic initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan chapter of the JMP may include actions that relate to Corringale Foreshore 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 Corringale Foreshore Reserve covers 163 hectares near the mouth of the Snowy River estuary, 20 kilometres south of Orbost. It is commonly referred to as Corringale Slips and is a popular camping, boating and fishing location with good access to the estuary. The reserve has a long frontage to Bass Strait and looks across the estuary to the township of Marlo.

Before the grant of Aboriginal Title the reserve was set aside for public purposes, including a land parcel on the western end of the reserve set aside for road access and preservation of native vegetation.

The reserve is a quiet coastal camping destination with relatively easy access.

2 CORRINGLE FORESHORE RESERVE UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

Corringle Foreshore Reserve is located on the country of the Krauatungalung clan.

The *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan* sets out the following management priorities for the reserve:

- making arrangements for Gunaikurnai rangers and natural resource management staff to do all the management roles, including maintenance, interpretations, cleaning and bookings
- Increasing the number of rangers working on the ground
- putting in place an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of this arrangement and build the case for the transfer of full management responsibility
- looking at creating or reserving certain campsites for use only by Gunaikurnai.

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.

Under joint management, Corringle Foreshore Reserve will be enhanced as a coastal camping, boating and fishing destination, while its natural and cultural values will be protected, conserved and interpreted.

There is an opportunity to improve the standard of the camping facilities, and for Gunaikurnai people to increase their role in management with a view to managing the reserve in the future (see the Strategic Plan).

3 ZONING

A simple zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the reserve. These zones will:

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

The location of the zones is shown on Map 1. The reserve camping and boat launching area is zoned as Recreation Development Zone, and the remainder of the reserve is zoned Conservation and Recreation Zone. An area of littoral rainforest is covered by a Special Protection Overlay. A Heritage River Overlay over the Snowy River Estuary lies adjacent to, but outside, the Reserve zoning scheme. It is established under the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992* (Vic.) to protect significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic and cultural attributes.

Cultural heritage and cultural values in the reserve need to be systematically surveyed and mapped. The zoning scheme therefore includes provision for a cultural values overlay to be applied if cultural values locations requiring conservation do not correspond to the conservation-related zones.

This overlay would be activated by means of a future amendment to the management plan. Implementation of this overlay may require amendment of the description or provisions of other zones and overlays, and integration with *Aboriginal Heritage Act* and *Heritage Act* provisions to ensure compatibility.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays, Corringale Foreshore Reserve.

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	Areas 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.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.), natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as hunting wildlife and game, fishing, and gathering flora and forest produce.

No agreement over Corringale Foreshore Reserve is currently in place. A future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

4 CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

Corringle Foreshore Reserve is significant to Gunaikurnai people as a place for fishing and camping and a plentiful source of food. It was a place of connection, joining the ocean to the rivers, connecting along the coastline to Lake Tyers.

It was an important on-Country meeting place for Gunaikurnai families. It was a place Aboriginal people came to when they were displaced from the Lake Tyers mission, and a place where people who lived away from country would come to reconnect to their traditional land, as it was considered a safe place.

Today many Gunaikurnai continue to use the reserve for the same reasons, enjoying camping, fishing and gathering of natural resources.

The Gunaikurnai cultural values of the reserve have not been systematically surveyed and mapped, but key values are known to include large middens.

Members of the Gunaikurnai community currently conduct educational programs for local school groups in the reserve.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

The reserve is adjacent to the Lower Snowy River Wetlands, which are registered on the Australian Government's Directory of Important Wetlands — Lake Corringle, Lake Wat Wat, Lake Curlip, Cabbage Tree Lagoon, and numerous other small wetlands on the floodplain of the Snowy and Brodribb Rivers.

The area consists of extensive saltmarsh flats and reed beds, paperbark thicket, mud flats and seagrass beds, and supports a diverse faunal assemblage. The Lower Snowy River Wetlands are highly valuable for their ecological, recreational, scientific, educational and scenic values.

Approximately half of the reserve area comprises the coastal dune scrub/grassland mosaic ecological vegetation class (EVC), the standard approach for categorising native vegetation in Victoria (Table 2 and Map 2). This includes the camping area. Just over forty per cent of the area is coast banksia woodland EVC. Both EVCs are common in the East Gippsland Lowlands Bioregion.

Small areas of Coastal Saltmarsh and Littoral Rainforest also occur in the reserve, both of which are listed vegetation communities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act). Littoral Rainforest is classified under the Act as critically endangered nationally, and Action Statement 258 under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.) applies to this EVC.

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in Corringale Foreshore Reserve.

Land and water values	Description	Conservation status	Character species	High-impact threats
Coastal Saltmarsh (3% of the reserve)	Restricted to flats on low-energy coastlines subject to daily inundation and exposure to salt water and poor drainage. It is most extensively developed immediately inland from the major ocean beaches. Ranges from a low succulent herbland to shrubland to rushland and sedgeland.	EPBC-listed	Beaded Glasswort (<i>Sarcocornia quinqueflora</i>) Australian Salt-grass (<i>Distichlis distichophylla</i>) Creeping Brookweed (<i>Samolus repens</i>)	Buck's-horn Plantain (<i>Plantago coronopus</i>) Sow-thistle (<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>) Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)
Littoral Rainforest (< 1% of the reserve)	A complex of rainforest and coastal vine thickets. Typically occurs within two kilometres of the coast or adjacent to a large saltwater body such as an estuary, and thus is influenced by the sea. It is naturally distributed as a series of disjunct and localised stands on a diverse range of landforms derived from coastal processes. Canopy species are well adapted to coastal exposure, and protect less tolerant species and subsequent cohorts in the understorey. The canopy height varies with the degree of exposure to extreme or persistent coastal conditions, ranging from < 1 m to 25 m high	critically endangered (nationally)	Coast Banksia (<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>) Common Boobialla (<i>Myoporum insulare</i>) Seaberry Saltbush (<i>Rhagodia candolleana</i>) Bower Spinach (<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>) Coast Beard-heath (<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>)	various (scramblers, climbers and ground cover species)
Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic (49% of the reserve)	Includes the vegetation succession from grasses and halophytes of the foredune to the closed scrub on the secondary dunes behind ocean beaches.	depleted	Coast Tea-tree (<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>) Coast Wattle (<i>Acacia longifolia</i>) Long-hair Plume-grass (<i>Dichelachne crinita</i>)	Sea Spurge (<i>Euphorbia paralias</i>) Bridal Creeper (<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>) Dolichos Pea (<i>Dipogon lignosus</i>) Spiny Rush (<i>Juncus acutus</i>)

Rare or threatened species

A significant number of threatened species, including some of state and national significance, have been recorded in the reserve or the nearby estuary and coastal waters. These include the Hooded Plover, Little Tern, Fairy Tern, Ground Parrot, and White-bellied Sea-Eagle (Table 3). It is not known how many of the faunal species are regularly present in the reserve, given its small area. Several significant orchid species occur in the reserve.

Table 3: Significant species, Corringale Foreshore Reserve.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Victorian Advisory List	FFG Action Statement
<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	Grey-tailed Tattler	critically endangered	—
<i>Anthochaera phrygia</i>	Regent Honeyeater	critically endangered	41
<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot	endangered	—
<i>Cryptostylis erecta</i>	Bonnet Orchid	endangered	—
<i>Cryptostylis hunteriana</i>	Leafless Tongue-orchid	endangered	—
<i>Egretta garzetta nigripes</i>	Little Egret	endangered	120
<i>Pezoporus wallicus wallicus</i>	Ground Parrot	endangered	89
<i>Sternula nereis nereis</i>	Fairy Tern	endangered	51
<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Terek Sandpiper	endangered	—
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	Eastern Great Egret	vulnerable	120
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	vulnerable	60
<i>Lewinia pectoralis pectoralis</i>	Lewin's Rail	vulnerable	—
<i>Lissolepis coventryi</i>	Swamp Skink	vulnerable	—
<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>	Fairy Prion	vulnerable	—
<i>Prasophyllum lindleyanum</i>	Green Leek-orchid	vulnerable	—
<i>Sambucus australasica</i>	Yellow Elderberry	vulnerable	—
<i>Sternula albifrons sinensis</i>	Little Tern	vulnerable	51
<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>	Hooded Plover	vulnerable	9
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	near threatened	—

Fire management

A small area of the reserve was burnt by bushfire in 1992. There are no records of planned burns in the reserve since 1990. The *Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land* (DEPI 2012) provides the framework for public land fire management in Victoria. 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 the reserve.

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.

The planned burning strategy for the reserve in particular needs to focus on identifying areas of Country that require burning, working with DELWP Fire Management to prioritise burning in those locations.

Snowy River estuary levels

A semi-permanent entrance to the estuary is maintained through the dune barrier at Marlo. Decisions to open the barrier are made by the East Gippsland CMA in consultation with Parks Victoria, which undertakes the opening operation when the water level reaches 0.9 m on the Marlo Jetty gauge.

In the 11 years between 1998 and 2007 the estuary closed on eight occasions. The closures have typically occurred in autumn as a result of low summer flows.

The main effect of the closure of the estuary is the inundation of agricultural land. Depending on estuary fill rates, about 5000 hectares (including 1850 ha of private land) can be inundated when the water level reaches 0.9 m.

During high flood levels, access to the reserve via Back Corringale Road can be affected, and some campsites, the jetty and the day-use area may be inundated.

Landscape and catchment context

The catchment surrounding the reserve largely comprises public land and native vegetation. It lies within the Far East Catchments landscape area and program of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA 2013).

The program is focused on maintaining the condition of significant and relatively undisturbed landscapes of these catchments, with their large and continuous extent of natural ecosystems from the mountains to the coast. The Regional Catchment Strategy identifies the broad landscape objectives for public land as:

- maintenance and targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and integrity of natural ecosystems and the status of threatened species and communities
- maintenance of soil condition and stability on public land.

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

Corringale was a thriving rural community at the turn of the 20th century. Evidence of slipways used for repairing and building vessels, which gave the location the name Corringale Slips, still exists today. The slipways were built when the Orbest Shipping Company was operating, but were washed away in the 1893 floods. They were reassembled in the late 1890s.

A school was built in the reserve area in the 1920s, and another in the 1940s. The school is now closed, and the buildings and houses were removed in 1986.

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

Invasive plants and animals

Browsing and soil disturbance from introduced animals, including pigs, Sambar Deer, Hog Deer and European Rabbits has a significant impact on the reserve's values. Predation on significant fauna species by introduced animals such as Red Foxes and Feral Cats impact the reserve's fauna population.

Weeds such as Bridal Creeper, Cape Ivy and Sea Spurge can affect the significant vegetation communities and some of the reserve's important habitats. Control programs for Sea Spurge,

which is widespread in the reserve and has invaded many areas of the adjacent coastline, are focused on sites of high ecological value.

The small patches of Littoral Rainforest in the reserve are vulnerable to fire as well as disturbance from Sambar Deer and smothering by scrambling weeds.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and severity of extreme events, changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes.

Climate change and severe weather such as drought and storms can alter freshwater inflows, create shoreline erosion, and impact cultural sites. Extensive climate modelling and impact assessments have indicated a likely increase in sea level, coupled with an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms in Gippsland Lakes (EGCMA 2013).

Changes such as sea-level rise are likely to be 'slow-onset' changes while more extreme events such as storms, floods and bushfires can occur at any time. Potential impacts include physical damage to shorelines, vegetation and assets; as well as increased inundation. Storm events increase the risk of inundation and physical damage, which can affect native vegetation diversity, threatened species habitat and waterbird feeding. The Snowy River is prone to flooding from time to time which impacts on visitor facilities in the camp ground and picnic area. Shoreline erosion affects the habitat for several threatened species including wading birds. The shoreline contains stabilising plants that protect the shoreline from erosion and contribute to important fish breeding and nursery areas.

Visitor impacts

Protection of the dune system from unmanaged recreational access is required to minimise the risk of erosion and disturbance to significant cultural sites. Loss of protective vegetation through fire and trampling by visitors and vehicles can expose sand to high-velocity coastal winds and wave action often resulting in erosion.

Foreshore habitats in the reserve include the beach, dune system and estuary areas. Unstable low-nutrient soils, consisting largely of sands that hold little water, interact with wind and salt to provide the critical influences on coastal vegetation. Soil compaction caused by vehicular access and firewood collection can affect the role these species play in soil stabilisation.

Bushfires caused by illegal or unattended campfires threaten the reserve.

Cultural values

Knowledge and understanding of cultural sites is limited. The challenge is to establish a better understanding of the location of sites, and to protect sites while ensuring visitors understand the cultural importance of the reserve and contribute to its protection.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

Strategies to address the threats identified in Section 4.4 are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Land, water and heritage conservation strategies.

Threat	Priorities	Strategy
Coastal Saltmarsh		
Browsing and soil erosion caused by pigs and deer; predation of nesting birds by invasive animals; erosion and vegetation fragmentation caused by visitor movements	Extent and cover of saltmarsh vegetation; wading bird populations	Control invasive animals. Ensure visitor compliance with access, boat launching and activity controls.
Littoral Rainforest		
Weeds, Sambar Deer, bushfire	Weeds (scramblers, climbers and ground cover species), Feral Pigs and Sambar Deer	Prevent disturbance. Control weeds with an emphasis on surveillance and eradication of new and emerging infestations. Increase Feral Pig and Sambar Deer control. Work with DELWP Forest Fire Management to ensure adequate risk reduction on surrounding areas using burning and other measures. Prevent fires starting inside the area through visitor education and regulatory enforcement. Implement relevant actions in FFG Action Statement 238 (DSE 2009).
Coastal Dune Scrub/Grassland		
Vegetation loss leading to dune erosion	Uncontrolled visitor access	Control visitor impacts on the dune system by providing designated, signposted tracks and minimising informal track formation through education and interpretation.
Coast Banksia Woodland		
Vegetation loss caused by browsing and disturbance by invasive animals	Feral Pigs and Sambar Deer	Minimise Feral Pig and Sambar Deer numbers through periodic control programs.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage		
Incomplete knowledge of values and sites in the reserve	Sites and artefacts, especially in areas subject to potential disturbance	Undertake cultural mapping of the reserve.

5 PEOPLE IN THE RESERVE

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

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 an inspiring landscape, characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to hold community gatherings on Country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for Country through conservation and restoration work in the reserve. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories.

GLaWAC Joint Management Rangers undertake conservation and maintenance works in the reserve, co-operatively with Parks Victoria, including facility maintenance and weed control. There is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program.

There is an opportunity to improve the standard of the camping facilities and for Gunaikurnai people to increase their role in management with a view to taking responsibility for the management of the reserve in the future (see the Strategic Plan).

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

5.2 VISITORS TO THE RESERVE

The reserve is a very popular destination for recreational fishers and boating enthusiasts, particularly during summer months and school holidays. It offers a quiet, natural coastal camping experience and is the only camping area that provides access to the Snowy River Estuary.

The reserve has a boat ramp suitable for launching of small boats up to five metres long by two-wheel-drive vehicles. A landing in the campground allows boats to tie up, and is heavily used in holiday periods.

Several walking tracks provide access to the ocean beach for beach walking and fishing, but the beach is not recommended for swimming because of strong rips and currents.

The reserve has basic facilities in a camping area and day visitor area adjacent to a small inlet off the estuary. These include three pit toilet blocks (only one with disabled access), picnic tables and a 24-site unpowered camping area serviced with a limited supply of untreated tank water.

There are a number of short walking tracks from the day-visitor picnic area to the nearby Ninety Mile Beach and Snowy River Estuary. Camp sites are generally fully booked during holiday periods. The location of visitor sites and facilities is shown in Map 3.

The Snowy River Estuary provides good fishing for Estuary Perch, Black Bream, flounders and Yellow-eye Mullet and Sea Mullet during the summer. Other species commonly taken are Australian Bass, Trevally, Luderick, Congoli, Tailor, Short-finned and Long-finned Eels, Australian Salmon and Mulloway in some years.

Beach fishing is popular; the most common species caught are Australian Salmon, Tailor and Gummy Shark. Water and boating activities, including kayaking and paddle-boarding, are also popular at nearby Mots Beach, Sampsons Beach and Marlo and Snowy River backwaters.

Tourism is very important to the economy of nearby towns such as Orbost and Marlo. Marlo is easily accessed by boat from Corringle, but road access to the township requires a long circuit through Orbost. Duck hunting is permitted on Lake Corringle, several kilometres upstream of the reserve, during declared duck seasons.

There is an opportunity to provide improved camping facilities at Corringale, including better toilets and sheltered cooking areas. The construction of an additional jetty in the day visitor area should be investigated. There is also a significant opportunity to facilitate commercial services to campers, including the sale of camping supplies, firewood, ice, bait and other items.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

Visitor experiences and facilities will be managed in accordance with the goals and strategies in Table 5.

Table 5: Visitor experience goal and strategies.

Goal
Provide highly accessible coastal bush camping and day visit experiences for a wide range of visitors including boating, kayaking, fishing and swimming, supported by comfortable facilities and services.
Strategies
Improve visitor facilities and services for campers and day visitors, including appropriate commercial services.
Increase interpretation of natural and cultural values and joint management.
Control public access in the dune system and areas with sensitive land, water and cultural values.

Recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 6. This table 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 the management zones.

Activity	Recreation Development Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay
Boating — motorised, sailing	Yes	Yes	No
Boating — rafting, canoeing, kayaking	Yes	Yes	No
Camping — designated areas	Yes	Yes	No
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	No	No	No
Camping — dispersed other	No	No	No
Campfires — solid fuel	Yes (only in designated fire places where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans.	Yes (only in designated fire places where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	No

Activity	Recreation Development Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay
Campfires — liquid or gas fuel stove	Yes	Yes	No
Competitive events	Yes, with permit, if activity type is allowed	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)	No
Cycling	Yes, on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks. Not allowed on walking tracks.	Yes (on open public roads and MVO roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	No
Dogs	Yes (only on lead)	Yes (only on lead)	No
Education activities	Yes	Yes	No
Firearms	Only allowed while transiting or camping for the purpose of accessing Lake Corringale during gazetted hunting season	Yes (only while transiting for accessing Lake Corringale during gazetted hunting season; firearm regulations apply)	No
Firewood collection	No	Yes (for visitor use within the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use)	No
Fishing	Yes	Yes	N/A
Geocaching	Yes, no excavation allowed.	Yes (no excavation allowed)	No
Guided activities	Yes	Yes	No
Horseriding	No	No	No
Hunting (see also 'Firearms' conditions)	No	No	No
Orienteering and rogaining	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (subject to permit)	No
Picnicking	Yes	Yes	No
Swimming	Yes	Yes	N/A
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vehicle use (two-wheel drive, four-wheel drive and trail bikes)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads and tracks)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on MVO roads and tracks)	No.

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS — GLAWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The reserve is assigned to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Orbost. Regional and state-wide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the reserve from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne.

Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to provide park management services in the reserve and other jointly managed areas. The agreement has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land and provides legislative and policy support to GKTOLMB and Parks Victoria. The GLaWAC ranger team has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The partners 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 operate in multiple directions, with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC.

GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

The Orbost and Marlo communities have a substantial interest in the successful management of the reserve. Moogji Aboriginal Council, which is a community health organisation based in Orbost, conducts training and educational programs in the reserve. Orbost Rotary Club also visits for large annual events.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training operates the Snowy River campus of the School for Student Leadership at Marlo, offering a residential education experience for Year 9 students. The school undertakes outdoor activities on the estuary.

The Sporting Shooters Association Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the reserve. The Country Fire Authority is responsible for fire management on nearby private land. Aboriginal Victoria is the primary government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is responsible for catchment and land protection, and for implementing the Victorian Coastal Strategy in East Gippsland to achieve integrated management, conservation, and sustainable use of the coastal zone.

Parks Victoria manages the Corringale Slips boat ramp and jetty, while navigational aids are the responsibility of Gippsland Ports.

Corringale Foreshore Reserve is in the East Gippsland Shire. The Shire is responsible for local road and traffic management, planning regulation and other municipal functions.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

A number of tour operators are licensed to undertake activities in the reserve. A substantial gas processing plant associated with the Bass Strait gas fields is located on private land just west of the reserve, but there are no authorised uses associated with this plant within the reserve.

6.4 RESERVE BOUNDARIES

The Corringale Foreshore Reserve previously formed part of the broader Marlo Foreshore Reserve.

The Aboriginal Title area includes three Crown land parcels including a road reserve.

There is a discrepancy between the total area of land registered as Aboriginal Title and the area data held by Parks Victoria and DELWP, as well as the area specified in the Recognition and Settlement Agreement. This discrepancy needs to be resolved and the boundaries of the reserve need be clearly established.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with the goals and strategic initiatives set out in the Strategic Plan for the Joint Management Area as a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural values of the Reserve are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and Water

No.	Action
C1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
C2	Protect and conserve the reserve by: - controlling Feral Pigs, Sambar Deer, Hog Deer, and Red Foxes - controlling Bridal Creeper, Cape Ivy, Sea Spurge and other invasive plants - managing threats to Coastal Saltmarsh and Littoral Rainforest as detailed in Table 2 - implementing action statements and recovery plans for threatened species - controlling unrestrained domestic stock.
C3	Work with DELWP to protect the reserve, assets and communities from bushfire, including through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect migratory bird habitat and other fire-sensitive values.
C4	Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for reserve ecosystems and habitats, and seek to have burns programmed and implemented as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.
C5	Include the reserve 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

C6	Ensure the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the reserve through Welcome to Country and other appropriate signage, based on the Krauatungalung clan, at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the reserve.
C7	Undertake mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the Reserve and implement the cultural values overlay as part of the management zoning scheme based on the results of the mapping.
C8	Seek to rename places in the reserve using traditional Gunaikurnai names through the Office of Geographic Names.
C9	Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the Reserve and undertaking community cultural activities.

C10	Incorporate cultural values information into inductions for contractors and others working in the reserve.
C11	Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the Reserve in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
C12	Implement the existing provisions of the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower-impact authorisations in the reserve.

People in the Reserve

Goals

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

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

No.	Actions
C13	Manage visitor experiences in the reserve in accordance with the goals and strategies in Table 6.
C14	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.
C15	Develop and implement a plan for improvements to visitor and boating facilities in the reserve.
C16	Identify a group of campsites within the Recreation Development Zone for community use by Gunaikurnai, with arrangements for booking by others when available.
C17	Ensure that access, visitor activity, waste disposal and other regulations are complied with through education and enforcement. Review the adequacy of the Reserve Regulations to enable and enforce the directions of this plan.
C18	Explore the opportunity for increased educational and tourism experiences in the reserve and around the estuary, especially with local Orbost and Marlo schools, Moogji Aboriginal Council and other organisations.
C19	Ensure that all tour operators undertake cultural awareness training conducted by Gunaikurnai, to enhance knowledge and protection of cultural heritage and improve the interpretation of Gunaikurnai culture to visitors.

Working Together

Goal

Joint management of the Reserve operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the Reserve.

No.	Actions
C20	Increase the participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP fire management programs in the Reserve.
C21	Investigate sharing by GLaWAC of DELWP work centre and depot facilities in Orbost.
C22	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the reserve to interact with other parks and partners in the Settlement Area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
C23	Collaborate with Destination Gippsland and other tourism and community groups to promote the Reserve and improve tourism services for visitors.
C24	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 Area, 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	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan • the actions described in this management plan for Corringale Foreshore Reserve.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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 Table 3 and Table 4 of the Strategic Plan.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

Table 8 provides an example of the data that we will collect 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.

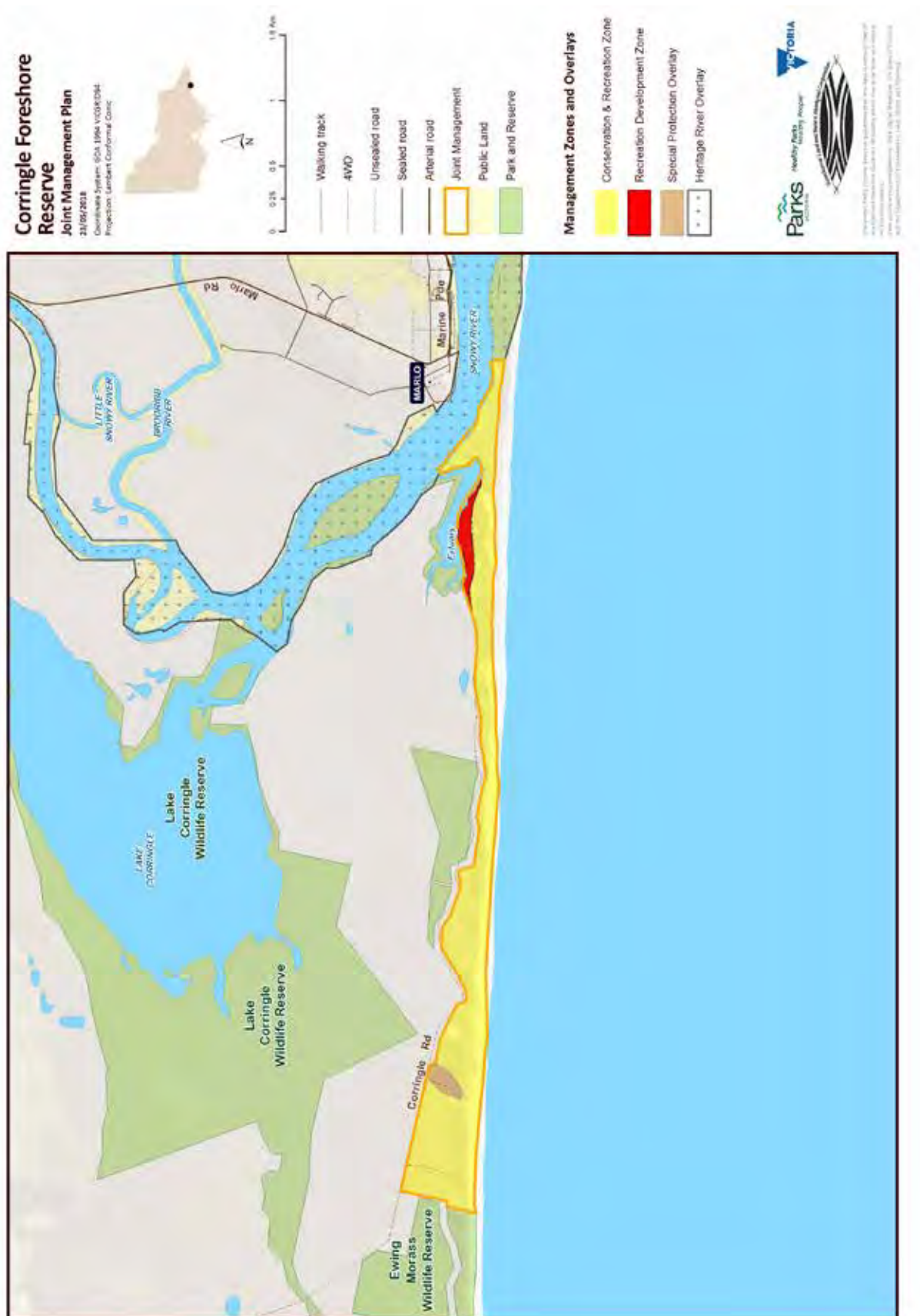
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the changes be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff in parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other 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.

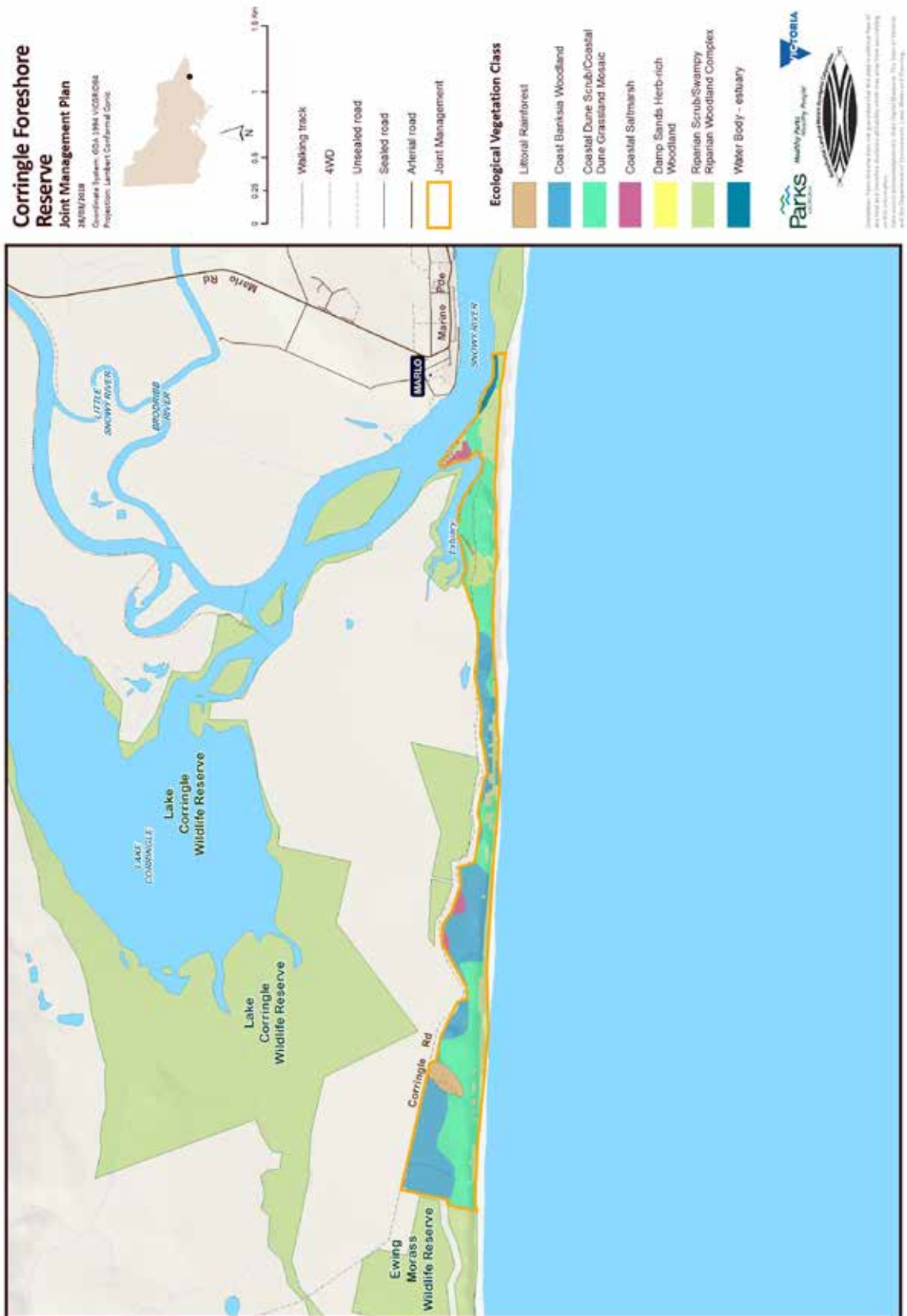
This management plan has effect for 10 years and will be formally reviewed and renewed at the end of that period. After the five-year review of the Strategic Plan, any consequential variations to this management plan will be made at that time through a consultative process.

REFERENCES

- DSE (2009). FFG Action Statement No. 238. Department of Sustainability & Environment: East Melbourne.
- EGCMA (2013). *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2013–2019*. East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority: Bairnsdale.
- GLaWAC (2015). *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan*. Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation: Bairnsdale.



Map 1: Management zones and overlays, Corringale Foreshore Reserve.



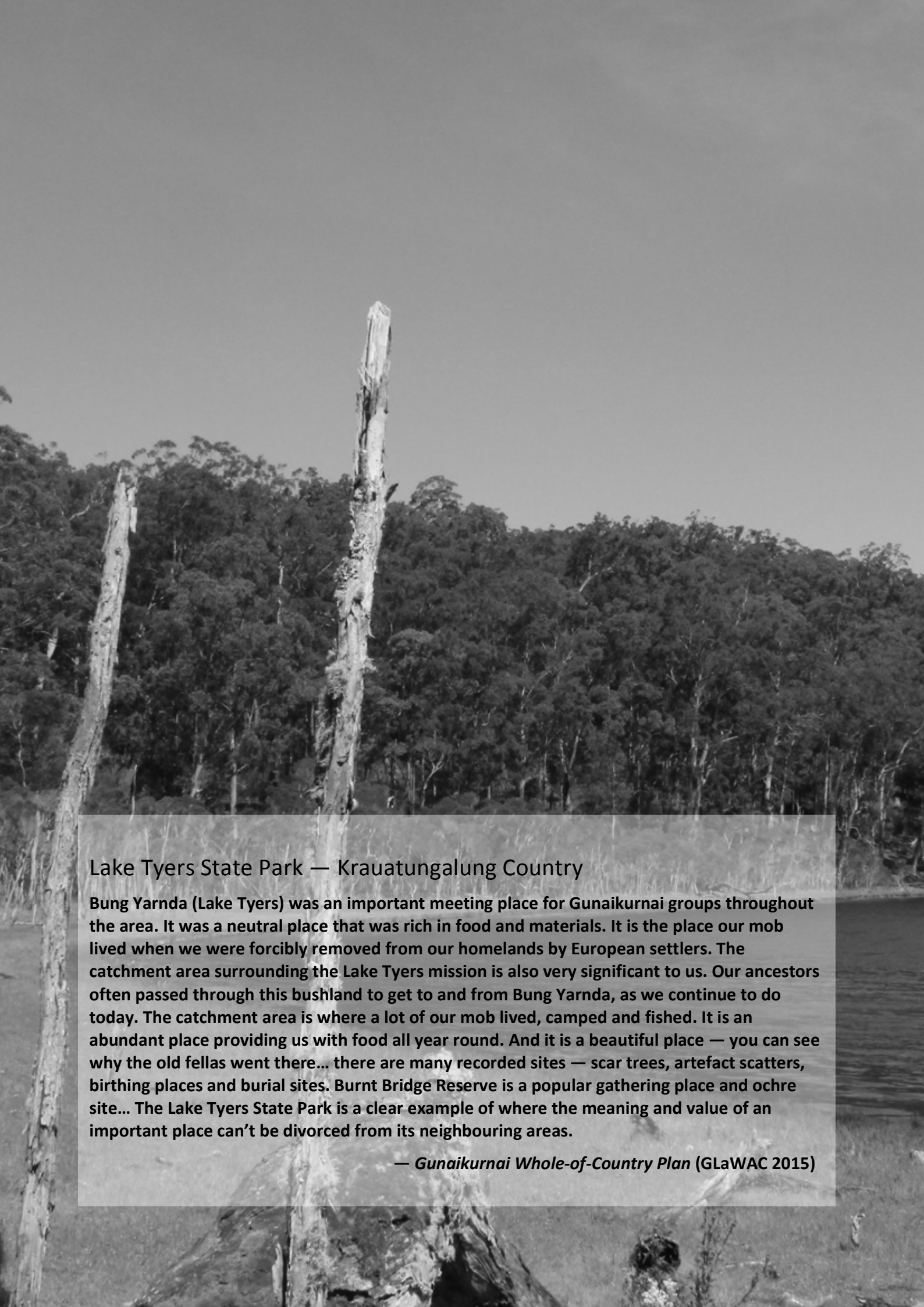
Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Corringale Foreshore Reserve.



GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

**LAKE TYERS STATE PARK
— KRAUATUNGALUNG COUNTRY**





Lake Tyers State Park — Krauatungalung Country

Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) was an important meeting place for Gunaikurnai groups throughout the area. It was a neutral place that was rich in food and materials. It is the place our mob lived when we were forcibly removed from our homelands by European settlers. The catchment area surrounding the Lake Tyers mission is also very significant to us. Our ancestors often passed through this bushland to get to and from Bung Yarnda, as we continue to do today. The catchment area is where a lot of our mob lived, camped and fished. It is an abundant place providing us with food all year round. And it is a beautiful place — you can see why the old fellas went there... there are many recorded sites — scar trees, artefact scatters, birthing places and burial sites. Burnt Bridge Reserve is a popular gathering place and ochre site... The Lake Tyers State Park is a clear example of where the meaning and value of an important place can't be divorced from its neighbouring areas.

— *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 Strategic Plan.

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, Lake Tyers State Park has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as 'Aboriginal Title' by the Victorian Government and will be managed jointly 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 Lake Tyers State Park, the land continues to be managed as a state park under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.).

This Management Plan for Lake Tyers State Park has been 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 *National Parks Act 1975* and the requirements of the Regulations made under that Act. (Additional legislation and policies that have been considered in the preparation of the Management Plan are listed in Appendix 4 of the Strategic Plan.)

Because Lake Tyers State Park is within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the RSA, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to the park. Existing rights and interests in the park that are 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 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including Lake Tyers State Park. 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 management plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that Lake Tyers State Park is well managed, its values and assets are protected and conserved, and the statutory requirements for park 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;
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the park.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Lake Tyers State Park. The following sections provide:

- a description of values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the park, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values
- a description of Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the park 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 park
- 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 Lake Tyers State Park in this plan, the strategic initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to Lake Tyers State Park.

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 PARK

Lake Tyers State Park is about 20 kilometres north-east of Lakes Entrance and comprises 8680 hectares of land, extending from Lake Tyers Beach to Mount Nowa Nowa.

The park was proclaimed in 2012 on land that had largely been previously reserved under the *Forests Act 1958* (Vic.) as a forest park. It consists of undulating, densely forested country surrounding two tidal estuaries, the Toorloo Arm and the Nowa Nowa Arm, as well as a narrow spit of land between the Lake and Bass Strait. Additional land was added to the park in 2014.

The park borders substantial areas of private land on the western side of the Nowa Nowa Arm, including the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve, which is owned by the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust. The western and eastern boundaries of the park border State forest.

2 LAKE TYERS STATE PARK UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

This joint management plan is the first management plan prepared for the park since its proclamation in 2012. The Plan reflects both the new arrangements and goals of joint management, as well as the change in legislated objectives for the park under the National Parks Act.

Lake Tyers has long been an important place for the local community and for visitors especially for fishing, boating and camping in a forested setting. It is highly accessible to Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale and travellers along the Princes Highway but feels remote and natural. A large array of important bird species and other animal and plant species inhabit the waters, forest, dunes and rainforest of this special place. The richness of the land and water underpinned the use and occupation of the park by Gunaikurnai.

In more recent times recreational use of the park has been intensive and relatively informal with numerous vehicle tracks, camping areas and minimal facilities. That pattern of use has brought problems including off-road driving, uncontrolled boat launching and camping on the shoreline of the Lake in both the park and on the land of the adjacent Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, as well as rubbish dumping and other impacts.

Lake Tyers is on the Country of the Krauatungalung clan. The *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan* (GLaWAC 2015) sets out the following management priorities for Lake Tyers State Park:

- reducing public access points to the river
- undertaking compliance activities in the park to protect significant and vulnerable sites
- planning and developing sustainable use areas, including building playgrounds in the park
- working with authorities to help manage for sustainable fisheries
- clarifying resource extraction rights including firewood for Traditional Owners
- developing an agreement for the many significant areas that lie just outside the (Aboriginal Title) area.

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

The plan aims to ensure that Lake Tyers State Park continues to be a place for many visitors to enjoy for camping, fishing, boating, walking and sightseeing, but to reduce the impacts of that use on the land, water and cultural heritage of the park. To achieve this, the design and quality of visitor areas and facilities will be improved, and vehicle access and boat launching will be controlled in sensitive areas.

The plan also emphasises the broader landscape of Lake Tyers especially the links between the park, the Lake Tyers Trust Land and Nowa Nowa township. Lake Tyers, the place not just the park, is a very significant location in the history of Victoria and the interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The plan aims to conserve, interpret and promote these links.

3 ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the park. These zones will:

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

The location of the zones is shown on Map 1, and their purposes are described in Table 1. Much of the park between Toorloo Arm and Nowa Nowa township, (and adjacent to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust land) is designated within the Conservation Zone in recognition of important vegetation communities and its cultural heritage as an area traditionally used by Gunaikurnai people living at the Mission and Reserve. The coastal dunes and hinterland vegetation parallel to Gibbs Beach in the south of the park, and the core areas of the section of the park north of Nowa Nowa township are also designated in this zone, to provide protection of their significant natural values.

The areas west of Toorloo Arm, including Burnt Bridge and Cherry Tree Creek day visit sites, are designated within the Conservation and Recreation Zone. Popular visitor areas on the east side of the Nowa Nowa Arm are also designated with this zone, including camping areas adjacent to the Arm, Lake Tyers, The Glasshouse and Pettmans Beach, as are key visitor areas in the northern section of the park. A key action in the plan is the development of a Camping and Access Strategy for the park. The zoning in this plan provides guidance for that Strategy based on the current pattern of access, use and facilities.

The strategy may identify the need for changes in access, activities and facilities that requires the zoning to be modified in certain locations through a future variation to this plan. Any variation to the zoning will be subject to community consultation.

Table 1: Management Zones, Lake Tyers State Park.

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	Areas 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.

The Cultural Values Overlay is proposed as a future overlay in all parks and reserves which would be applied through a formal variation to the plans, using the results of the TOLMB cultural mapping project when completed.

The implementation of this overlay may require amendment of the description or provisions of other zones and overlays, and integration with the Aboriginal Heritage Act and the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) provisions to ensure compatibility.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.) natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as hunting wildlife and game, fishing, and gathering flora and forest produce.

No agreement over Lake Tyers State Park is currently in place. Any future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

4 CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

Lake Tyers State Park is on the country of the Krauatungalung clan. The landforms, features and sites of spiritual significance, and features in the Lake Tyers landscape represent stories fundamental to Gunaikurnai culture.

According to the Gunaikurnai creation story for the area, *Nark Abundhu*, the Sea, was tired from playing with fish, rushing over rocks and rolling backwards and forwards on the sand. She searched the coast until she found a quiet place with tall, shady gum trees and soft earth. Here she wriggled about and made herself comfortable before going to sleep. Lake Tyers, known as *Bung Yarnda* or 'Big Water', represents the resting place of *Nark Abundhu*.

The land and water of the park and its surrounds remain important to Gunaikurnai for fishing, collecting mussels, catching eels, hunting animals, collecting swan eggs, and gathering of various plants for food and medicine. The foreshore and forest are rich with materials for basket weaving, grinding stones, ochre for ceremony, and bark for canoes.

Over 40 Gunaikurnai cultural heritage sites have been recorded in the park, most of which are artefact scatter sites, burial sites as well as scarred trees and shell middens. However, the park has only been partially surveyed for cultural evidence. Morgans Landing and the Glasshouse area are places within the park, amongst others, that have significant traditional and contemporary Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values.

Many plants and animals are culturally important. Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) flowers were soaked in wooden bowls to make a sweet drink. The young leaves of noon-flowers (*Carpobrotus* spp.) were eaten raw or sometimes cooked with meat. The red fruits were also eaten. The hard wood of the wattle Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), was prized for spear throwers and shields. Its bark was heated and soaked in *yarnda* for bathing rheumatic joints. Samphire and Sea Asparagus (*Sarcocornia* spp.) are important bush food plants. The strong innermost fibres of the bark were woven into string for fishing lines. Grass-trees (*Xanthorrhoea* spp.) provided a hard, waterproof resin that when softened by heating, was used to fasten axe heads and spear points and for many other purposes.

The Europeans renamed Lake Tyers after Charles Tyers, the Commissioner of Crown Land for Gippsland in the 1840s. The Lake Tyers Mission was first set up in 1861 as a reserve for the accommodation of Aboriginal people who had been forcibly removed from their families and homelands.

It was part of the colonial government's policy of the 'protection of Aborigines' and became home to Indigenous people from all over Victoria. Unlike many other Aboriginal reserves, Lake Tyers Mission provided some freedom and independence for its Indigenous residents. The Aborigines Protection Board took over the management of Lake Tyers in 1908, and from the 1930s began to force people off the reserve. This process continued in the 1950s under the government's assimilation policy.

The Bung Yarnda people fought to retain management of the land and control was handed over to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust in 1971 under the newly established Aboriginal Lands Act. This was one of the first successful Aboriginal land rights claims in Australia's history. Today the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve is the private property of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (see 'Community and Other Partners' below).

Lake Tyers State Park and the Lake Tyers Trust land together form one of the most significant cultural and historic places in Victoria for Aboriginal people. The Mission site was chosen in part because it was known as a traditional Gunaikurnai gathering place, and it remains one of only two mission locations where Aboriginal people continue to live in the present (Context 2009). An information shelter on the western edge of the park, adjacent to the Princes Highway, is one of the waypoints on the Bataluk Cultural Trail, a regional cultural touring route through Gippsland that extends from South Gippsland to Cape Conran.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

Lake Tyers was formed as the sea rose after the last Ice Age and flooded the valleys of Boggy and Stony creeks, with a dune barrier forming at the entrance. A thin sand spit divides the lake from Bass Strait. The lake is characterised by many small inlets and fingers of land that descend to the lake from the higher ridges.

The lake and its shores contain a variety of terrestrial and aquatic habitats that support a diverse array of plant and animal species and communities. The islands, mud banks, shoreline vegetation and saltmarsh communities found in Lake Tyers are home to a number of species including migratory birds and waders. Coastal salt marsh communities occur mainly around the southern shoreline of the lake, including The Glasshouse.

Tall eucalypt forests surrounding the northern shores of Lake Tyers, and small pockets of nationally listed Littoral Rainforest communities, shoreline vegetation, fringing wetlands and the coastal barrier dunes between the estuary and Bass Strait, are of particular significance.

There are several recorded caves in the park, one of which is substantial and is used by Eastern Horseshoe Bats and other bat species. Outside but adjacent to the park, stands of seagrass cover substantial areas of the estuary, particularly the southern part of the lake, and Nowa Nowa Arm. Seagrass and salt marsh communities provide important habitat, feeding and nursery grounds for a range of aquatic biota, including fish species.

The predominant ecological vegetation classes (EVCs: the standard categorisation of vegetation communities in Victoria) are Lowland Forest (67% of the park), Limestone Box Forest (21%), Damp Forest (4%) and Blackthorn Scrub (3%). Small areas of rare Warm Temperate Rainforest and critically endangered Littoral Rainforest also occur in the park. Table 2 describes rare or threatened ecological vegetation classes in the park.

Rare or threatened species

Lake Tyers combination of estuarine, wetland, dry forest and rainforest habitats makes it a very rich location for significant plant and animal species.

A large number of rare or threatened plant and animal species have been recorded in the park (Table 3), including 44 threatened animal and plant species listed under the Commonwealth *Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC) and Victoria's *Flora Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG).

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

Landscape and catchment context

The catchment surrounding the park largely comprises public land and native vegetation. It lies within the 'Far East Catchments' landscape area and program of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. The program is focused on maintaining the condition of significant and relatively undisturbed landscape of these catchments, with their large and continuous extent of natural ecosystems, from the mountains to the coast.

The Regional Catchment Strategy identifies the broad landscape objectives for public land as:

- maintenance and targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and integrity of natural ecosystems and the status of threatened species and communities
- maintenance of soil condition and stability on public land.

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in Lake Tyers State Park.

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)	Description	Bioregional conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Limestone Box Forest (21% of park)	Occurs on generally well - developed terra rossa soils derived from Tertiary limestones that outcrop around coastal streams, gullies and lakes. Open eucalypt forest to 20 m tall with a tall shrub layer understorey and a grass and herb-rich ground layer on sheltered aspects but may be almost completely bare on drier aspects.	vulnerable	Southern Mahogany (<i>Eucalyptus botryoides</i>) Blue Box (<i>Eucalyptus baueriana</i>) Coast Grey Box (<i>Eucalyptus bosistoana</i>) Red Ironbark (<i>Eucalyptus tricarpa</i>)	Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)
Warm Temperate Rainforest (0.6% of park)	Closed forest to 20 m tall occurring along gullies and river flats. Dominated by a range of non-eucalypt canopy species above an understorey of smaller trees and shrubs and usually visually dominated by ferns and climbers.	rare	Blackwood (<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>) Lilly Pilly (<i>Acmena smithii</i>) Muttonwood (<i>Rapanea howittiana</i>) Yellow Wood (<i>Acronychia oblongifolia</i>) Kanooka (<i>Tristaniopsis laurina</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.)
Littoral Rainforest (> 0.1% of park)	A complex of rainforest and coastal vine thickets. Typically, occurs within 2 km of the coast or adjacent to a large salt water body, such as an estuary and, thus, is influenced by the sea. It is naturally distributed as a series of disjunct and localised stands occurring on a diverse range of landforms derived from coastal processes. Canopy species are well adapted to coastal exposure, and protect less tolerant species and subsequent cohorts in the understorey. The canopy height varies with the degree of exposure to extreme or persistent coastal conditions, ranging from under 1 m to 25 m in height.	critically endangered (nationally)	Coast Banksia (<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>) Common Boobialla (<i>Myoporum insulare</i>) Seaberry Saltbush (<i>Rhagodia candolleana</i>) Bower Spinach (<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>) Coast Beard-heath (<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>)	Scramblers, climbers and ground cover species, including Lantana (<i>Lantana camara</i>) Bridal Creeper (<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>) Cape Ivy (<i>Delairea odorata</i>)
Coastal zone EVCs	Includes Coastal Saltmarsh, Riparian Scrub/Swampy Riparian Woodland, Wet Swale Herbland.	vulnerable/depleted	various	various

Table 3: Significant species, Lake Tyers State Park.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status ¹	Relevant legislation	FFG Action Statement
<i>Uperoleia martini</i>	Martin's Toadlet	critically endangered	FFG	265
<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>	Australasian Bittern	endangered	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Cardamine tryssa</i>	Dainty Bitter-cress	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Coturnix chinensis victoriae</i>	King Quail	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Dasyurus maculatus maculatus</i>	Spot-tailed Quoll	endangered	FFG, EPBC	15
<i>Egretta garzetta nigripes</i>	Little Egret	endangered	FFG	120
<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	Grey Falcon	endangered	FFG	83
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Swift Parrot	endangered	FFG, EPBC	169
<i>Pseudoraphis paradoxa</i>	Slender Mud-grass	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Sternula nereis nereis</i>	Fairy Tern	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Tyto novaehollandiae novaehollandiae</i>	Masked Owl	endangered	FFG	124
<i>Acacia caerulescens</i>	Limestone Blue Wattle	vulnerable	FFG	222
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae novaehollandiae</i>	Grey Goshawk	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	Eastern Great Egret	vulnerable	FFG	120
<i>Caladenia peisleyi</i>	Heath Spider-orchid	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Caladenia tessellata</i>	Thick-lip Spider-orchid	vulnerable	EPBC	National Recovery Plan (DSE 2010)
<i>Calamanthus pyrrhopygius</i>	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami</i>	Glossy Black-Cockatoo	vulnerable	FFG	253
<i>Grantiella picta</i>	Painted Honeyeater	vulnerable	FFG	193
<i>Grevillea celata</i>	Colquhoun Grevillea	vulnerable	FFG	211
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	vulnerable	FFG	60
<i>Lewinia pectoralis pectoralis</i>	Lewin's Rail	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Litoria aurea</i>	Green and Golden Bell Frog	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	Square-tailed Kite	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	vulnerable	FFG	92
<i>Olearia viscosa</i>	Viscid Daisy-bush	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Porzana pusilla palustris</i>	Baillon's Crake	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Rhinolophus megaphyllus megaphyllus</i>	Eastern Horseshoe Bat	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Sternula albifrons sinensis</i>	Little Tern	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	51
<i>Thinornis rubricollis rubricollis</i>	Hooded Plover	vulnerable	FFG	9
<i>Tyto tenebricosa tenebricosa</i>	Sooty Owl	vulnerable	FFG	not numbered
<i>Anseranas semipalmata</i>	Magpie Goose	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Cercartetus nanus</i>	Eastern Pygmy-possum	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	near threatened	FFG	—

¹ DELWP's Victorian Advisory List.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status ¹	Relevant legislation	FFG Action Statement
<i>Isoodon obesulus obesulus</i>	Southern Brown Bandicoot	near threatened	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Melanodryas cucullata cucullata</i>	Hooded Robin	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Potorous tridactylus tridactylus</i>	Long-nosed Potoroo	near threatened	FFG, EPBC	254
<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	Diamond Firetail	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Acronychia oblongifolia</i>	Yellow-wood	rare	FFG	—
<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>	Common Bent-wing Bat		FFG	—

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

The park contains the ruins of the Glass Factory, which was established in 1908-09 to manufacture glass telegraph insulators. There are only three such furnaces left in the world and this was the only one fuelled entirely by wood. The finished products were transported to Lakes Entrance by bullock dray when Lake Tyers entrance was closed.

When the lake was open they were taken by boat to Cross's Landing and then to Lakes Entrance by road, loaded on to a steam-ship and taken to Bairnsdale, and then finally to Melbourne by train.

The Lake Tyers Hotel was built on the eastern side of the Lake in 1886 and Lake Tyers House was established as a grand guest house on the southern shore of the lake.

The Mt Nowa Nowa Fire Tower in the northern section of the park is considered to be historically significant as a rare surviving example of an early form of timber fire tower, similar in design and appearance to many others that were erected throughout Victoria in the 1940s (Bannear 1997).

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

A number of environmental factors and human activities pose threats to country and heritage values of the park.

Invasive plants and animals

Sambar and Hog Deer wallowing, trampling and browsing are a significant problem in the park that appears to be escalating. Feral pigs are having impacts in some sections of the park, damaging soils, wetlands and vegetation by rooting and wallowing. The extent of the pig population and the location of impacts need to be assessed in detail, to develop effective control programs.

Predation by foxes is a continuing threat that needs to be controlled as part of landscape-wide programs. Rainforests within the park are susceptible to fires of high intensity and frequency. Introduced Eastern Mosquito Fish pose a threat to the Green and Golden Bell Frog population in the wetlands along the coastal strip of the park.

The most threatening invasive plant species in the park are Ragwort, Cape Ivy, Bridal Creeper and Blackberry.

Visitor impacts

Longstanding patterns of visitor use has brought problems including off-road driving, uncontrolled boat launching and camping on the shoreline of the Lake in both the park and on the land of the adjacent Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, as well as rubbish dumping and other impacts.

The extensive road and vehicle track network in the park, especially a number of parallel tracks on the eastern side of the Nowa Nowa Arm, fragments the park and creates opportunities for dispersal of

invasive plants. Although most roads and tracks are open to public access, there is a high incidence of vehicles being driven off-road, especially to access the shoreline. This has created significant damage to soils, vegetation and cultural sites in the saltmarsh areas around The Glasshouse, in the coastal dunes and wetlands around Gibbs Beach and Pettmans Beach, and along the Nowa Nowa Arm.

Off-road vehicle use is often part of attempts to access the shoreline to camp, fish or launch boats in locations away from designated visitor sites and boat ramps. In addition to direct impacts, this problem can disturb wildlife breeding sites, increase sediment flows into the Lake, spread weeds and increase bushfire risk from unsafe campfires.

The most significant cave in the park is located close to a minor visitor use area. The risk of visitor disturbance to the bat populations that roost in this cave needs to be managed.

Fire management

The park area was burnt by bushfires in the early 1970s on the western and eastern sides of the upper Nowa Nowa Arm, and near the coastal boundary of the park around Gibbs Beach.

A major bushfire in 2011 burned public land to the east of the park between the Princes Highway and the coast and was contained along Pettmans Road. Since the 1980s, planned burning has focused on the areas on the western and north-western flanks of the park for risk reduction objectives, including numerous burns in the area north of the Toorloo Arm and east of the Princes Highway.

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 Lake Tyers State Park.

The detailed 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 targeted or modified where necessary.

Alteration of estuary flows

The Lake Tyers estuary entrance is subject to strong currents and wave action, and sand supply along the beach has frequently closed the entrance.

The area of land subject to inundation when the estuary closes is small. Inundation occurs at boat ramps, jetties, and fishing platforms at Nowa Nowa during periods of extended closure.

There may also be restricted access to boat ramps and walking tracks at Lake Tyers. For the period between 1983 and 2011 the estuary was closed for 75% of the time, including one closure lasting for over four years.

Strong west and south westerly winds that generate storm waves at an oblique angle to the beach appear to be the major factor influencing closures, transporting large volumes of sand across the entrance.

The East Gippsland CMA considers there to be no pattern of closures directly related to rainfall (and resultant flows), possibly due to the size of the waterway compared to the size of the catchment. The CMA and Parks Victoria have regarded a natural opening of the entrance, rather than an artificial opening, to be the preferred management approach.

Recently published traditional Gunaikurnai knowledge about the estuary reinforces this approach. It suggests that allowing floodwaters to remain in the Lake for longer periods washes food from the higher parts of the shoreline and attracts larger numbers of saltwater fish into the estuary once the sand bar is finally breached, promoting fish diversity in the lake (Thorpe 2017).

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and/or severity of extreme events, changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes.

Climate change and severe weather such as drought and storms can alter freshwater inflows, create shoreline erosion, and impact on cultural sites and visitor access and facilities. Extensive climate modelling and impact assessments have indicated a likely increase in sea level coupled with an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms in Gippsland Lakes (EGCMA 2015).

Changes such as sea-level rise are likely to be 'slow-onset' changes while more extreme events such as storms, floods and bushfires can occur at any time. Potential impacts include physical damage to shorelines, vegetation and assets; as well as increased inundation. Storm events increase the risk of inundation and physical damage, which can affect native vegetation diversity, threatened species habitat and waterbird feeding.

Other threats

Dumping of rubbish in the park is a significant problem and creates risks of soil and water contamination, weed dispersal as well as visual impacts.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

Strategies to address threats to key land and water values (Tables 2, 3) are described 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 values at an intermediate level, for example improving the health of an assemblage of ground-cover plants in a particular EVC through weed control, rather than treating the EVC as a whole or taking action that is focused on a single threatened plant species.

An intensive conservation action planning process is required to identify the most critical groups of values given the present condition of the park and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating within it.

The strategies in Table 4 should therefore be further evaluated through a conservation planning process that takes account of their feasibility, impact and priority in the broader landscape.

Table 4: Land and water conservation strategies.

Threat	Priorities	Strategy
Littoral Rainforest Community and Warm Temperate Rainforest EVC		
Weeds, Sambar Deer, Bushfire	Weeds (scramblers, climbers and ground cover species), Feral Pigs and Sambar/Hog Deer	Prevent disturbance. Control weeds with an emphasis on surveillance and eradication of new and emerging infestations. Increase Sambar Deer control. Work with DELWP Forest Fire Management to ensure adequate risk reduction on surrounding areas using burning and other measures. Prevent fires starting inside the area through visitor education and regulatory enforcement. Implement relevant actions in FFG Action Statement 238 (DSE 2009)
Coastal strip EVCs, including Coastal Saltmarsh, Riparian Scrub/Swampy Riparian Woodland, Wet Swale Herbland		
Off-road vehicle use, boat launching and camping encroachments Invasive animals	Off road vehicles Feral Pigs, Sambar and Hog Deer	Control off-road vehicle use, boat launching and camping through access and site design and enforcement. Increase control of Sambar and Hog Deer and Feral Pigs.
All EVCs		
Invasive animals	Monitoring of deer and goat populations and impacts	Monitor size and distribution of deer and goat population and implement appropriate control programs.
Invasive plants	Ragwort, Cape Ivy, Bridal Creeper and Blackberry	Control current occurrences and prevent invasion into new areas as far as practical.
Habitat fragmentation	Road and track network	Rationalise road and track network to reduce excessive fragmentation of habitat (see Camping and Access Strategy Table 5).
Rare or threatened species		
Lack of knowledge of current condition and conservation requirements	Eastern Horseshoe Bat	Minimise disturbance to the caves and prevent entry during winter period when bats are in occupation. Investigate as part of Camping and Access Strategy the termination of vehicle access in vicinity of caves to provide a disturbance buffer.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values		
Physical damage to sites by off-road vehicle use, boat launching on shorelines and dispersed camping. Lack of comprehensive knowledge of sites and condition.	Protection of known sites and values Cultural survey and mapping	Identify known sites and values and implement protective measures through Camping and Access Strategy. Complete GKTOLMB Cultural mapping project and develop appropriate protection and conservation measures, including application of a Cultural Values Overlay.
Culturally important plants and animals		
Lack of knowledge of species and conservation requirements	Cultural knowledge and current status	Obtain knowledge through Joint Management Plan strategic initiatives.
Historic heritage		
Physical damage to sites by off-road vehicle use, dispersed camping and removal of objects.	Monitoring and protection of The Glasshouse and other known sites	Implement protective measures through the Camping and Access Strategy.

5 PEOPLE IN THE PARK

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai people.

The park provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to Country in an inspiring landscape, characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to hold community gatherings on Country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for Country through conservation and restoration work in the park.

GLaWAC joint management ranger team members undertake conservation and maintenance works in the park, co-operatively with Parks Victoria and there is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories.

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

Lake Tyers State Park is one of the most important of the ten joint management areas for this reconnection and obligation to care for Country.

Many Gunaikurnai families have a recent historical experience of living in the area, at the then Mission or, later, the Trust land. The area that is now park was familiar land and water, where people practised traditional customs in the modern era, gathering, hunting and fishing.

In addition, the proximity of the park to the tourism centres of Lake Entrance and Metung provides opportunities for Gunaikurnai-operated tourism businesses that add to the range and diversity of current tourism services.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE PARK

The park offers opportunities for picnics, bush walks and forest drives, bush camping and fishing in the lake and on the ocean beach. Surf fishing is popular at Pettmans and Gibbs Beaches. Pettmans Track is a popular point of access to the ocean beach, particularly for surf fishing and other beach activities.

Basic camping with limited facilities is provided at five camping areas in the park: Pettmans Beach, Glasshouse, Camerons Arm (No.1 Track), Ironbark and Trident Arm. Of these four, only Pettmans Beach has toilets. It is a popular place to camp for anglers accessing ocean beach beyond the park and hunters accessing Ewing Morass Wildlife Reserve.

Boat-based recreational fishing in Lake Tyers is predominantly from small powered boats that are launched from boat ramps throughout the estuary, including Number 2 boat ramp located in the township of Lake Tyers Beach, Mill Point, Fishermans Landing, Nowa Nowa and an informal boat ramp at Trident Arm. The two main target species are Dusky Flathead and Black Bream. Substantial stocks of Estuary Perch and Mulloway were released into Lake Tyers by the fisheries authority in 2016.

Under the current pattern of visitor use and deployment of facilities, the main opportunities for day visits are located on the western side of the park, around Toorloo Arm while the main camping opportunities are located on the eastern side of the park, east of the Nowa Nowa Arm and along the coastal strip between The Glasshouse and Pettmans Beach.

This pattern has the inherent benefit of providing the primary day visitor sites closest to the tourist accommodation in and around Lakes Entrance, while the camping experiences are provided in the more distant parts of the park. However, there are a number of problems with the current type and

location of access and facilities. Pettmans Beach is the only one of the four camping locations in the park with toilets.

There are no boat ramps or landings provided in the eastern part of the park, leading to problems of uncontrolled shoreline access by boats and vehicles described in 'Threats to Land and Water' above.

Actions to better control off-road vehicle use and rationalise and improve the road and track network are essential management priorities.

The eastern side of Nowa Nowa Arm has numerous parallel vehicle tracks leading along spurs from Tyers House Road. These tracks contribute to fragmentation of park vegetation and draw on park maintenance resources. They are not well linked to boat launching facilities, leading to illegal off-road driving and shoreline impacts.

Uncontrolled vehicle use occurs in the coastal section of the park between The Glasshouse and Pettmans Beach and damages saltmarsh, dune and swale vegetation, middens and other cultural sites. Some roads and tracks in the Toorloo Arm section of the park also require management attention, such as South Boundary Road which is in poor condition due to erosion. There are instances of inappropriate use of the park as a vehicle access route to freehold land, where alternative on-title alignments exist.

One track on the eastern side of the Nowa Nowa Arm extends close to a cave containing a colony of Eastern Horseshoe Bats; the feasibility of closing the last section of this track to buffer the cave from disturbance needs to be assessed in the Camping and Access Strategy.

There is scope for new visitor experiences and facilities in the park. The Gunaikurnai community is seeking opportunities to develop ecotourism accommodation businesses in or adjacent to the joint management parks and reserves. Lake Tyers State Park provides a potentially viable location, given the accessibility of the Park and the large range of potential visitor experiences in the park and nearby. There is potential to improve visitor opportunities and services in the section of the park north of Nowa Nowa that was added in 2014. The Nowa Nowa Gorge short walk on Boggy Creek is a scenic experience that is very accessible to the Lakes Entrance-Bruthen-Nowa Nowa regional travel route. The Mt Nowa Nowa Fire Tower is a historic heritage asset of potential visitor interest.

The townships of Lake Tyers Beach and Nowa Nowa are important service centres for visitor accessing the park. There is a proposal by members of the Nowa Nowa local community to construct a bike trail from Nowa Nowa to Lakes Entrance through Lake Tyers State Park via Burnt Bridge. The proposal is based on using minor existing public roads and tracks that run throughout the park. It would require the addition of several sections of track and two bridges.

Some cycling currently occurs in the park. Mountain biking is well catered for in the Nowa Nowa Mountain Bike Park adjacent to the northern section of the park, and the East Gippsland Rail Trail runs east-west through the Nowa Nowa township, providing good long-distance cycling and walking opportunities. Any new bike trail in the park should take account of these existing opportunities and complement, rather than duplicate, them.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

Detailed assessment and planning of access, visitor experience and facility improvement opportunities are needed in the park. A camping and access strategy is being developed by GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria and GLaWAC. This work will be guided by the broad goals and strategy for visitor experiences and management that are set out in Table 5.

Specific recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 6. This table does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

The proposed camping and access strategy may require changes to the allowable activities in the zones by means of a future variation to the Management Plan.

Table 5: Visitor experience and management goals and strategies.

Lake Tyers State Park — General

Goal

Ensure that Lake Tyers State Park continues to be a place to enjoy camping, fishing, boating, walking and other activities in a natural setting while significantly reducing the impacts on land, water and cultural heritage of the park.

Strategies

Develop and implement a Camping and Access Strategy taking into account visitor use patterns, protection of cultural and natural values, and operational management needs to:

- improve the provision, design and quality of visitor areas and facilities, and pursue opportunities to improve the range of experience, activities and supporting facilities
- determine the appropriate number and location of day visitor sites and camping sites
- review vehicle access and define a sustainable road and track access network through the park including track rationalisation and improvements, and closure of unauthorised routes
- improve opportunities for boat access
- review the non-vehicular track network and identify areas requiring control of weeds affecting visitor access
- identify visitor opportunities and service requirements in the northern section of the park, added in 2014.

Increase education and enforcement to ensure compliance with the adopted access and facility approach. Work with Nowa Nowa and Lake Tyers Beach service providers to offer information, education and interpretation to visitors prior to their visit.

Toorloo Visitor Experience Area

(Includes Burnt Bridge, Cherry Tree, Marsdenia Rainforest Walk, Chrystal Bay and other sites.)

Goal

Provide highly accessible visitor experiences in a natural setting including short walks, cycling, canoeing, fishing, cultural and environmental education and other activities while protecting the land, water and cultural heritage of the park.

Strategy

Improve the provision, design and quality of visitor areas and facilities, and pursue opportunities to improve the range of experience, activities and supporting facilities. Plan and design access, sites and facilities to minimise impacts on special protection zones. Increase education and enforcement to ensure compliance with the adopted access and facility approach. Define and implement a satisfying and sustainable network of non-vehicular tracks for walking, cycling and other activities.

Eastern Visitor Experience Area

(Includes The Glasshouse, Trident Arm, Camerons Arm No. 1, Gibbs Beach and Pettmans Beach.)

Goal

Provide accessible camping and day visit experiences in a natural setting including short walks, boating, canoeing, fishing, cultural and environmental education and other activities in a natural setting while significantly reducing the impacts on land, water and cultural heritage of uncontrolled vehicle and boating access.

Strategy

Improve the provision, design and quality of visitor areas and facilities, especially boating launching and toilets. Formalise and rationalise the road and track network and improve links between the network and designated visitor sites. Plan and design access, sites and facilities to minimise impacts on special protection zones. Pursue opportunities to improve the range of experiences, activities and supporting facilities. Increase education and enforcement to ensure compliance with the adopted access and facility approach.

Table 6: Recreational activities allowed in the management zones.

Activity ¹	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay
Boating — motorised, sailing	Yes	Yes	No
Boating — rafting, canoeing, kayaking	Yes	Yes	No
Camping — designated areas	Yes	Yes	No
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	No	No	No
Camping — dispersed other	No	No	No
Campfires — solid fuel	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	No
Campfires — liquid or gas fuel stove	Yes	Yes	No
Caving	Yes	Yes	No
Competitive events	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)	No
Cycling	Yes (on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	No
Dogs	Yes (only on lead)	Yes (only on lead)	No
Education activities	Yes	Yes	No
Firearms	No	Only allowed in Pettmans Camping Area, for the purposes of accessing Ewings Morass State Game Reserve during gazetted hunting season. ²	No
Firewood collection	Yes (for visitor use in the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use)	Yes (for visitor use in the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use)	No
Fishing	Yes	Yes	No
Fossicking/prospecting	No	No	No
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	No
Guided activities	Yes	Yes	No

Activity ¹	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay
Horseriding	Yes (on open public roads)	Yes (on open public roads)	No
Hunting	No	No	No
Orienteering and rogaining	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes (subject to permit)	No
Picnicking	Yes	Yes	No
Swimming	Yes	Yes	N/A
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vehicle use (two-wheel-drive, four-wheel-drive and trail bikes)	Yes (on open public roads – not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads & tracks.	Yes (on open public roads – not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads & tracks.	Yes, on open public roads – not allowed on MVO roads and tracks.

¹ Camping, vehicle access and other activities will be reviewed as part of the proposed Camping and Access Strategy.

² Firearms may not be discharged in the Lake Tyers State Park and must be unloaded within 100 metres of the camping/picnic area, and remain unloaded and concealed while being carried in vehicles.

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS — GLaWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The park is assigned by the State to Parks Victoria to jointly manage as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Bairnsdale.

Regional and state-wide technical specialist staff from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to assist management of the park.

Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in the Lake Tyers State Park, and other jointly managed areas, which has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land and provides legislative and policy support to the GKTOLMB and Parks Victoria. The GLaWAC joint management ranger team has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP 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 operate in multiple directions with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC. The GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

Lake Tyers Reserve (Bung Yarnda) is the most significant neighbouring property to the park. It is managed by the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust which is constituted under the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* (Vic.). The Trust owns the Reserve as freehold land for Victorian Aboriginal people who were originally removed from their homes to the then Lake Tyers Mission and who continued to live, or came to settle later, at the Reserve. Gunaikurnai and other Aboriginal people were residents at the Mission.

The reserve and the park share an extensive common boundary. People on the then mission and later the reserve moved between the two areas to travel, fish, hunt and for other purposes. In the present day, the park and the reserve have common interests in land management as well as the management of visitors.

Much of the reserve land is still forested and is in a similar condition to the park. The Trust accepts visitors to the reserve but requires them to obtain the consent of the Trust and observe a code of conduct.

Park visitors, particularly boating visitors, are known to sometimes land on the shoreline of the reserve without consent, to fish or for other reasons. A number of other private landholdings abut the park and these landholders are likely to have an interest in park operations such as fire management and invasive plant and animal control. They may also potentially wish to provide services to park visitors.

There is a need to work with the Trust to manage this issue through signage, pre-visit information and others means, and to collaborate where possible on management of land, water and cultural heritage.

Fishing clubs and other organised groups that frequently camp in the park are important stakeholders. The Sporting Shooters Association Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the Park including:

- Aboriginal Victoria is the primary Government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria
- The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic co-ordination of catchment and land protection, and restoration investment. The CMA is responsible for implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy in East Gippsland to achieve integrated management, conservation and sustainable use of the coastal zone. It also provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.
- Fisheries Victoria manages the Lake Tyers Fisheries Reserve with the aim of achieving sustainable habitat and recreational fishing
- DELWP manages State forest to the west and east of the Park and VicForests manages timber harvesting within these areas
- Destination Gippsland co-ordinates marketing and promotion of tourism in the region including nature-based and cultural tourism

The area is situated within the Shire of East Gippsland which is responsible for local planning regulation, road maintenance and traffic management around the area, as well as other municipal responsibilities.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

Access to private property enclosed within the park occurs via the extensive road network. One utility lease (telecommunications) and a large number of apiary licences operate in the park. A number of licensed tour operators undertake activities in the park.

6.4 PARK BOUNDARIES

The park boundaries in the area between Nowa Nowa and The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust land are complex due to interfaces with a number of areas of private land. There are several significant inlying landholdings between Trident Arm Track and the Glasshouse. Where opportunities arise to simplify boundaries through acquisitions or management agreements these will be pursued.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

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

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural values of Lake Tyers State Park are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action
LT1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
LT2	Protect and restore the area by implementing the land, water and cultural heritage conservation strategies detailed in Table 4.
LT3	Implement action statements and recovery plans for threatened and endangered species in the area as detailed in Table 3.
LT4	Work with East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to control invasive plants and animals as identified in Table 4.
LT5	Assess the extent of the deer and feral pig population in the park and its impacts to inform control programs.
LT6	Undertake stabilisation and restoration of shorelines, marsh and dune areas affected by erosion.
LT7	Work with DELWP to protect the area, assets and communities from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect rainforest and other fire-sensitive values.
LT8	Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for park ecosystems and habitats and seek burns to be programmed and implemented as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.
LT9	Ensure collaboration between East Gippsland CMA, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and Gippsland Ports to maintain a natural opening regime as far as practical for the Lake Tyers estuary.
LT10	Work with caving groups and researchers to identify and record caves in the park, and monitor bats and other cave fauna and flora.
LT11	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

LT12	Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the area through <i>Welcome to Country</i> and other appropriate signage, based on the Krauatungalung clan at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the park.
LT13	Undertake mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the Park and implement a cultural values overlay as part of the management zoning scheme, based on the outcomes of mapping.
LT14	Increase the protection of cultural sites from off-road driving and other visitor disturbances by

	developing and implementing a Camping and Access Strategy and increasing visitor education and regulatory enforcement.
LT15	Build knowledge and undertake surveys and mapping of plants and animals of cultural importance to the Gunaikurnai.
LT16	Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the park and undertaking community cultural activities.
LT17	Interpret and promote the historic heritage of the park and its surrounds to the public and facilitate further research.
LT18	Seek opportunities to implement traditional cultural burning practices as part of planned burning programs through liaison and partnership with DELWP fire managers.
LT19	Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors and others working in the area.
LT20	Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of applications to undertake research in the park in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
LT21	Implement the existing provisions of the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the park.

People in the Park

Goals

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

Visitor and community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the park are enhanced by joint management

No.	Actions
LT22	Prepare and implement a Camping and Access Strategy for the park consistent with the goal and strategy in Table 5.
LT23	Manage visitor access and activities in accordance with Table 6. Generally, maintain existing regulatory settings for activities and uses in the park, apart from changes set out in this plan (including approved variations) or changes arising from statutory requirements.
LT24	Assess proposals and opportunities for ecotourism, bike riding and other experiences and facilities in or adjacent to the park as part of the Camping and Access Strategy.
LT25	Increase education and enforcement to ensure that access, visitor activity and rubbish dumping restrictions are complied with. Pursue opportunities to relocate vehicle access for freehold land from informal routes in the park to on-title alignments, as development applications are made, or in response to changes in park facilities or requirements.
LT26	Control risks to visitor safety especially in relation to campfires, surf fishing and safe boating.
LT27	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.
LT28	Establish Gunaikurnai interpretative information for visitors along park tracks about culturally important plants, animals and features.

Working Together

Goal

Joint management of Lake Tyers State Park operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community and stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the park.

No.	Actions
LT29	Work closely with the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust to manage the cultural and natural values of the Bung Yarnda landscape, and visitor access in an integrated way.
LT30	Collaborate with tourism and community groups and businesses in Nowa Nowa, Lake Tyers Beach and Lakes Entrance to promote the park and provide services to visitors.
LT31	Collaborate with the Victorian Fisheries Authority and recreational fishing groups to ensure the sustainability of fish populations in the lake and arms, and to manage shoreline impacts.
LT32	Increase participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP fire management programs in and around the park.
LT33	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the area to interact with other parks and partners in the Settlement Area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
LT34	Extend existing partnerships with recreational hunting groups to implement feral animal control programs, especially pigs and deer.
LT35	Maintain close collaboration with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the park landscape.
LT36	Maintain effective neighbour relations.
LT37	Monitor opportunities to simplify boundary interfaces of the park through land exchanges or acquisitions.

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	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether we are successfully implementing the projects and activities that we planned. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan • the actions described in this management plan for the Lake Tyers State Park.	The activities and actions outlined in both parts 1 and 2 of the JMP will be tracked based on the project management tools that the partners will use to guide implementation. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what we are doing. Tracking outcomes is important for understanding whether we are achieving the changes that we have set out to make, and therefore whether we are achieving our goals for the first five-year period. Outcomes are documented in Table 3 and Table 4 of the Strategic Plan.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked by using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

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

Table 8: Excerpt of outcomes framework.

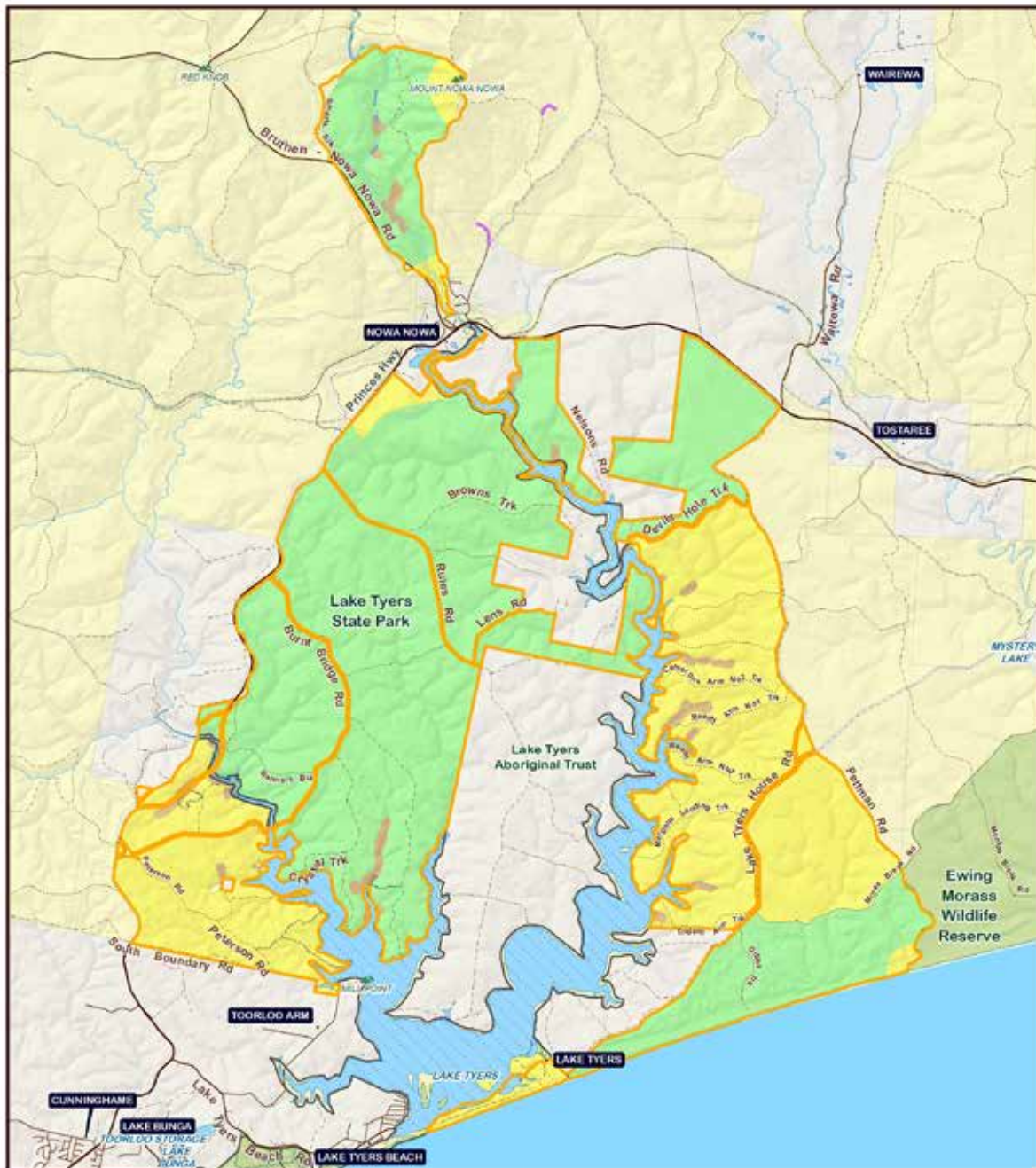
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the changes be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff on parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other 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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Lake Tyers State Park

Joint Management Plan

24/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICCRD94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Km

Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without error. It is provided as a guide only. Users should verify the accuracy of the data before use. Parks Victoria is not responsible for any loss or damage arising from the use of this data.

- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Highway
- Management Vehicles Only

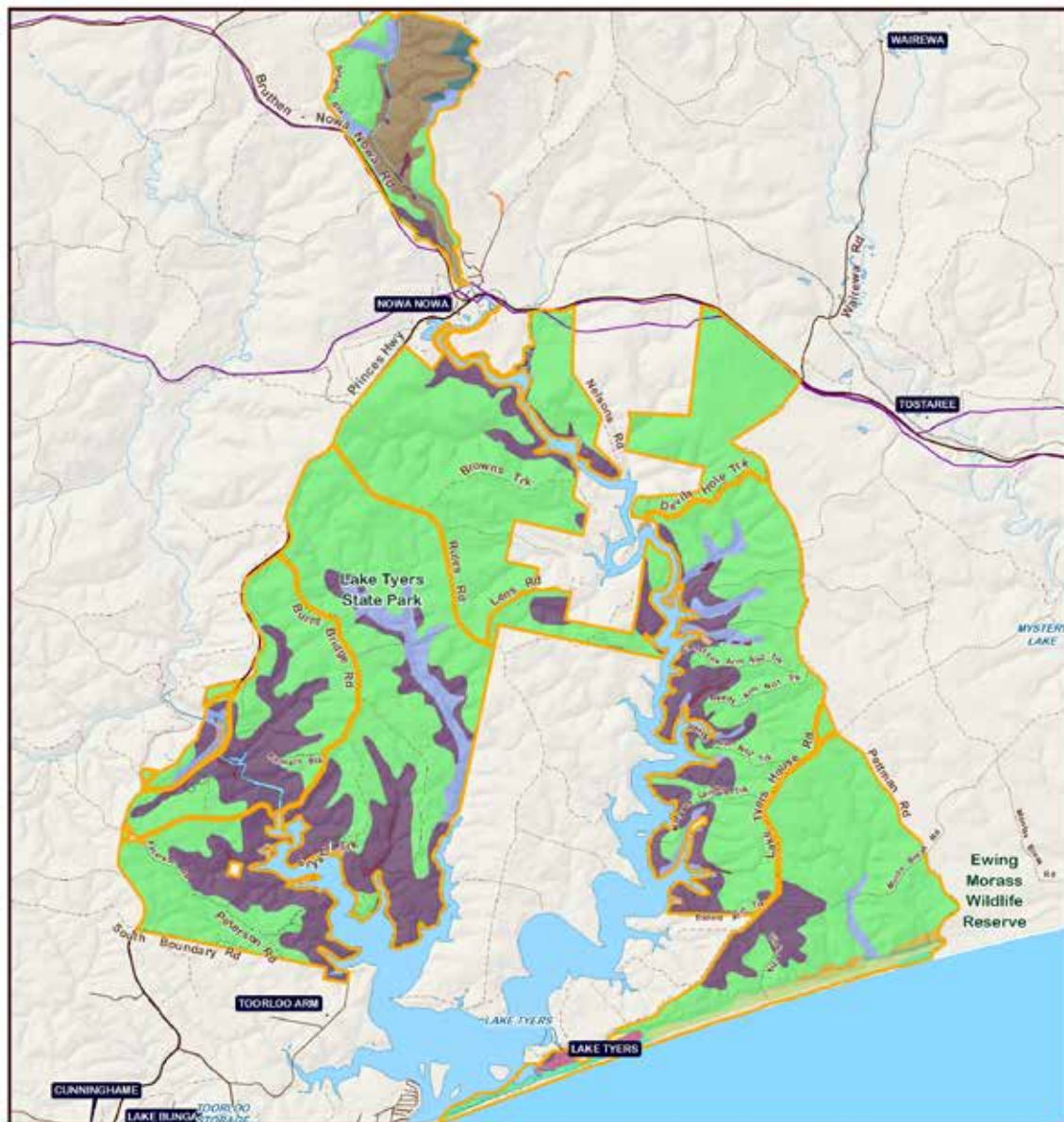
- Joint Management
- Public Land
- Park and Reserve

Management Zones and Overlays

- Conservation Zone
- Conservation & Recreation Zone
- Special Protection Overlay
- Ramsar Wetland



Map 1: Management zones and overlays, Lake Tyers State Park.



Lake Tyers State Park Joint Management Plan

28/03/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRD94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic

- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Highway
- Management Vehicles Only
- Joint Management



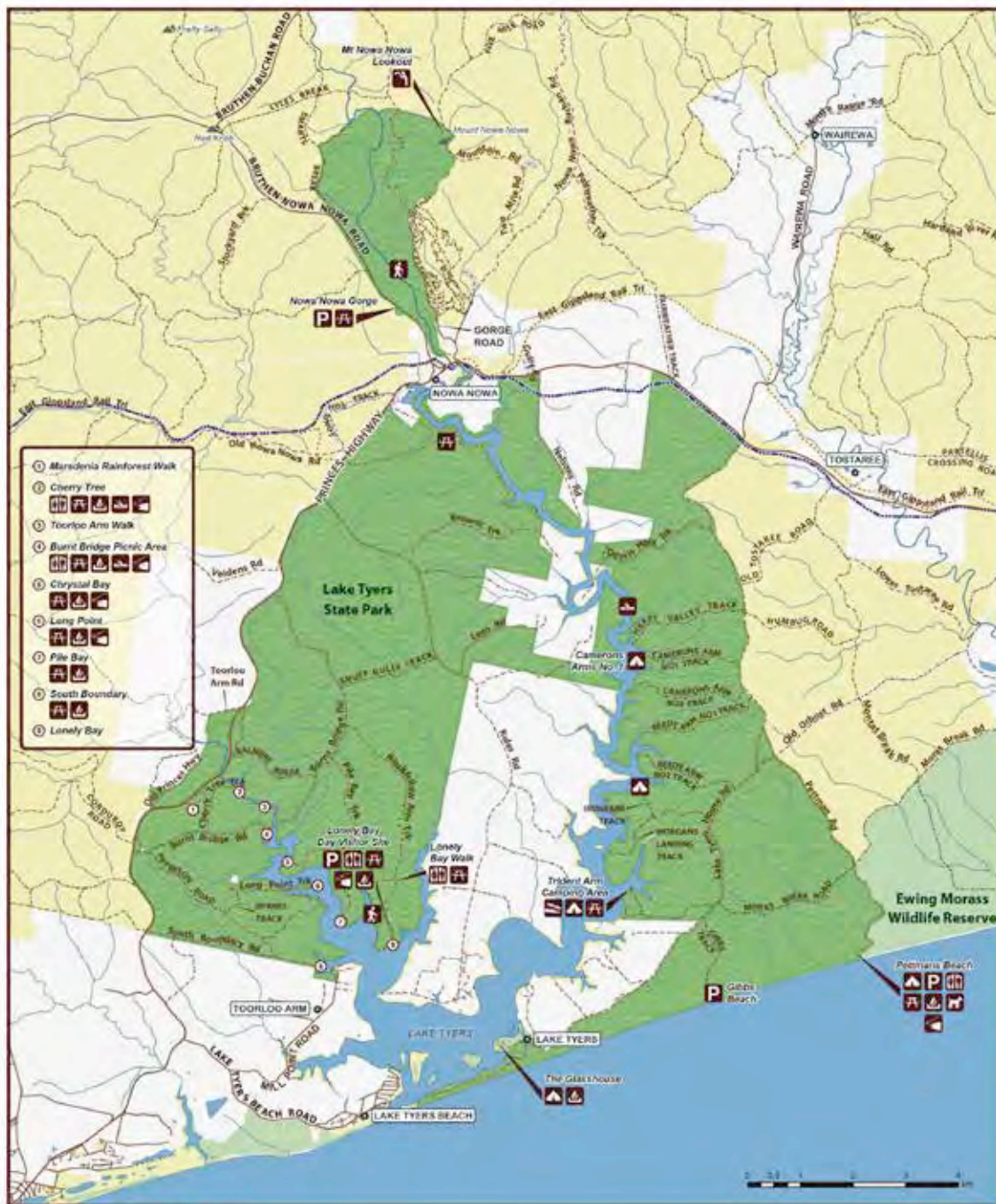
Disclaimer: This map is a general representation of the data and does not constitute a warranty of any kind and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning does not accept any liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of this map.

Ecological Vegetation Class

Littoral Rainforest	Damp Sands	Riparian Scrub/Swampy
Blackthorn Scrub	Herb-rich Woodland	Riparian Woodland Complex
Clay Heathland	Dry Rainforest	Shrubby Dry Forest
Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic	Estuarine Wetland	Warm Temperate Rainforest
Coastal Saltmarsh	Limestone Box Forest	Water Body - estuary
Damp Forest	Lowland Forest	Wet Swale Hermland
	Riparian Forest	



Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Lake Tyers State Park.



Lake Tyers State Park

Joint Management Plan

18/5/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1984 VICGRD94
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	Lookout
Fireplace	Trail
Picnic Area	Dogs
Boat Ramp	Canoeing
Toilet	Camping
Fishing	

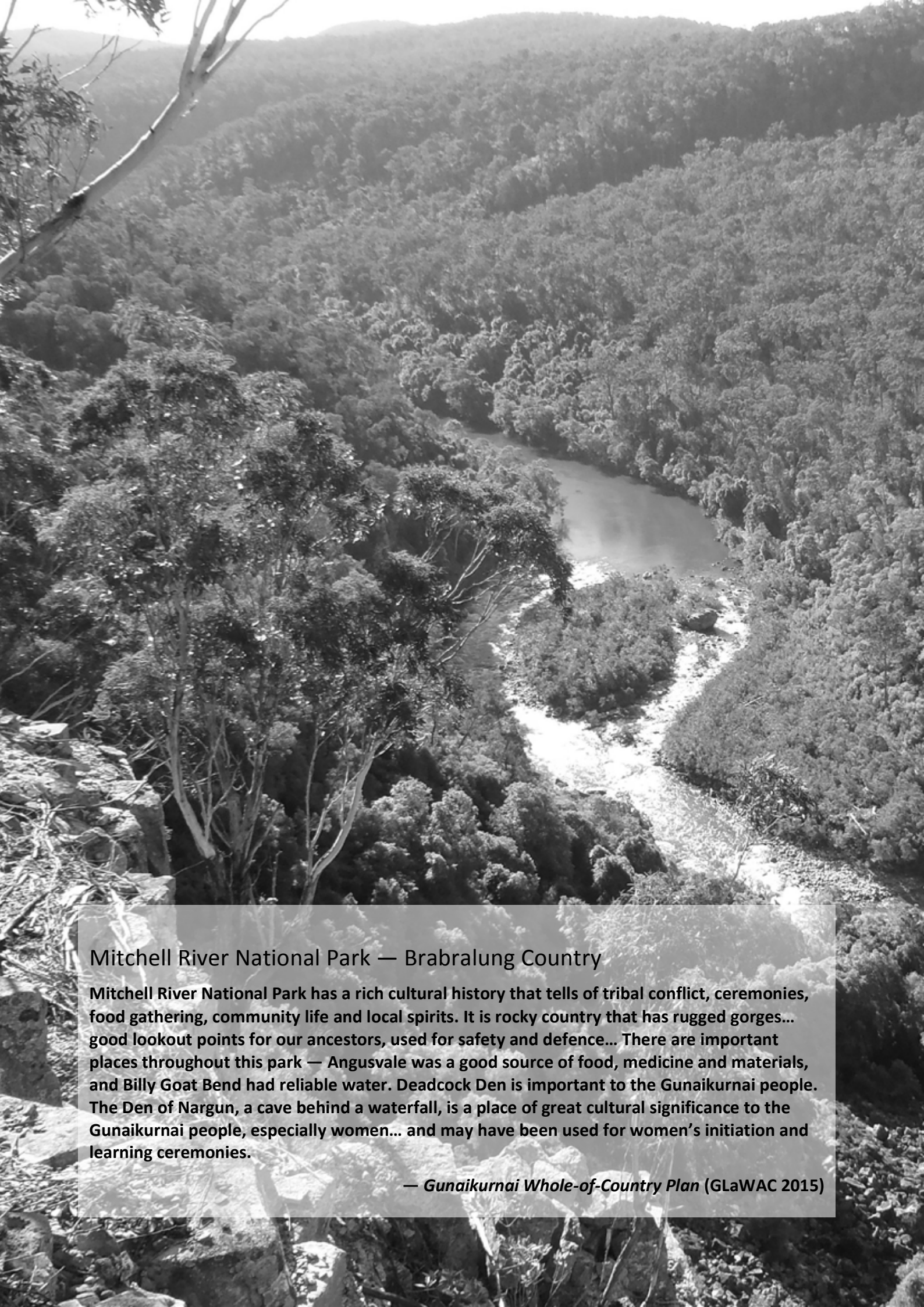


Map 3: Visitor sites and facilities, Lake Tyers State Park.

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

**MITCHELL RIVER NATIONAL PARK
— BRABRALUNG COUNTRY**





Mitchell River National Park — Brabralung Country

Mitchell River National Park has a rich cultural history that tells of tribal conflict, ceremonies, food gathering, community life and local spirits. It is rocky country that has rugged gorges... good lookout points for our ancestors, used for safety and defence... There are important places throughout this park — Angusvale was a good source of food, medicine and materials, and Billy Goat Bend had reliable water. Deadcock Den is important to the Gunaikurnai people. The Den of Nargun, a cave behind a waterfall, is a place of great cultural significance to the Gunaikurnai people, especially women... and may have been used for women's initiation and learning ceremonies.

— *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, Mitchell River National Park has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title by the Victorian Government and will be managed jointly 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 Mitchell River National Park, the land continues to be managed as a national park under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.).

This management plan for Mitchell River National Park has been 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 National Parks Act and the requirements of the regulations made under that Act. (Additional legislation and policies that have been considered in the preparation of the Management Plan are listed in Appendix 4 of the Strategic Plan.) This plan replaces the previous management plan for the park (Parks Victoria 1998).

Because Mitchell River National Park is within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the Recognition and Settlement Agreement, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to the park. Existing rights and interests in the park, 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) was established in accordance with the Recognition and Settlement Agreement between GLaWAC and the State of Victoria, with the statutory objective of enabling the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai to be recognised in the management of the 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including Mitchell River National Park. 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 management plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that Mitchell River National Park is well managed, its values and assets are protected and conserved, and the statutory requirements for park 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
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the park.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This Plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Mitchell River National Park. The following sections:

- describe values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the park, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values
- describe Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the park and their uses and activities, and the goals and strategies for managing and enhancing those connections and uses
- identify government and community relationships and partnerships that are key to managing the park
- state 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 Mitchell River National Park in this plan, the strategic Initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to Mitchell River National Park.

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 PARK

Mitchell River National Park covers 14 394 ha of land surrounding the Mitchell River Gorge. It was declared in 1986 under Schedule Two of the National Parks Act by amalgamating the former Glenaladale National Park with other areas of public land. Additions of 2350 ha were proclaimed in 2002, including land on the eastern side of the Mitchell River north of Hortons Track, and the purchased Mitchelldale property north of Angusvale. A further acquisition of 145 ha near Mitchelldale was incorporated into the park in 2012.

The park is listed in Category II (National Parks) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature protected area categories and the United Nations' List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves. Category II areas are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

The Mitchell River is protected as a Heritage River under the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992* (Vic.) in recognition of its high conservation value, the naturalness of its flows, the relative intactness of the entire river system, and its significance for the Gippsland Lakes. It is the largest free-flowing river in Victoria in terms of annual flow, and is free of water diversions and barriers that affect the movement of native fish. The Mitchell River is an important example of the large-scale river systems that were once widespread in south-eastern Australia (LCC 1991).

The park consists of rugged, moderately elevated terrain that is mostly forested. It occupies an intermediate position between the Victorian Alps and the Gippsland Lakes and coastal plains. Lowland Forest predominates in the southern part of the park and Shrubby Dry Forest covers most of the northern section.

The deeply incised Mitchell River Gorge is a spectacular landscape, and the topography includes narrow sheltered gullies supporting rare vegetation types such as dry rainforest, warm temperate rainforest and gallery rainforest.

The park and gorge was a stopping-off point for Gunaikurnai travelling to the high country. Today it provides an easily accessible entry into the fringes of the Victorian Alps and a sense of remoteness from the plains due to the enclosed gorge and valleys.

The park is used by outdoor education groups and tour operators for overnight rafting and walking through the Mitchell River Gorge. The open valleys in the north of the park provide excellent vehicle-based bush camping and are heavily used in peak periods. The lack of river crossing points in the park creates a geographical east–west divide that influences visitor access and usage patterns as well as park management operations.

2 MITCHELL RIVER NATIONAL PARK UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

Mitchell River National Park is on the Country of the Brabralung clan. The creation of the national park in 1986, and the designation of the Mitchell River as a Heritage River in 1992, formalised Government policy decisions to give the area greater protection, and ended periodic proposals to dam and regulate the river.

The park has been managed since 1998 in accordance with the previous management plan (Parks Victoria 1998). However, recovery from large-scale bushfires in the alpine area north of the park and in East Gippsland, and environmental pressures and recreational demands in the Gippsland Lakes, have influenced regional park management priorities and resourcing in the region over the last decade or more.

Joint management provides a new impetus to enhance the management of Mitchell River National Park. The concept of 'Caring for Country', by managing natural, cultural and social uses of the park in a more integrated way, provides the basis for this enhancement. The health and condition of the park is stable or improving following the incorporation of recent additions and inliers, but faces several threats, especially from Sambar Deer and the stresses of climate change.

Highly significant rainforest remnants are at risk. Cultural sites need to be mapped and defined to protect them and avoid impacts from visitors. Access and facilities for campers in the north of the park can be improved. Camping in the Mitchell River Gorge needs to be monitored, and management of waste, fires and other issues is needed in partnership with river users to protect water quality, vegetation and cultural sites.

The Gunaikurnai have a deep spiritual connection with the Mitchell River landscape through ceremony, songs and dreaming. For Gunaikurnai many spirits still live in the landscape, their signs in the rocky outcrops and other features. Rock art, rock shelters, canoe trees, surface scatters, men's and women's sites, camp sites, massacre sites, burials and many sacred places occur in the park. However, Gunaikurnai cultural values have not been systematically inventoried and were not incorporated in the zoning scheme of the previous park management plan. The zoning in this new management plan redresses that shortcoming. The *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan* (GLaWAC 2015) sets out the following management priorities for the park:

- restricting where camping can occur to protect significant cultural sites
- restricting four-wheel drive access in sensitive areas
- ensuring the Gunaikurnai are consulted on any new walking tracks or roads that are being built, to make sure cultural values are protected
- giving Gunaikurnai first preference for all future and renegotiated tourism operations in the National Park.

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

The Den of Nargun is one of the most conspicuous examples of Gunaikurnai cultural heritage in the parks and reserves in the RSA area. However, the cultural significance of the broader park has not been presented or promoted well to the wider community.

Overnight walking and rafting trips through the Mitchell River Gorge are among Victoria's best adventure recreation and environmental education experiences, but cultural heritage forms little or no part of that experience. There is an opportunity to add cultural education to those experiences, initially through better information and progressively through the active participation of Gunaikurnai interpreters and guides, both inside the park and during pre-visit phases.

In the northern valleys the historic homestead sites at Angusvale and Mitchelldale can be managed and presented to campers and others in a way that makes clearer the full richness of the occupation and settlement of the Mitchell River Country.

3 ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the park.

These zones will:

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

Two management zones apply to the park: a Conservation Zone, and a Conservation and Recreation zone.

The scheme includes four overlays. Zones describe the primary management priority for a designated part of the park. Overlays provide additional management direction where a specific value needs to be protected and conserved, or a variation is required to the activities that are allowed in the zone.

The description and purpose of each zone and overlay is given in Table 1 and the locations are shown on Map 1. The zones and overlays are similar to those applied by the previous 1998 management plan except that a Special Protection Overlay has been applied to areas of Dry Rainforest, Warm Temperate Rainforest and Gallery Rainforest in the Mitchell River Gorge and tributary gullies, and areas of old growth Grassy Woodland in the Mitchelldale area.

A future Cultural Values Overlay has also been proposed that will protect Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values. These values are in the process of being systematically surveyed and mapped and it is proposed that the location of the overlay will be amended in future to reflect the results of that mapping through a formal variation to this Plan. Implementation of this overlay may 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. Two historic heritage sites previously designated as special protection areas will be incorporated into the proposed overlay.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.), natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as hunting wildlife and game, fishing, and gathering flora and forest produce. No agreement over Mitchell River National Park is in place. A future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays.

Zone	Description and purpose
Conservation Zone	Areas of high natural value including land, water and ecological values. Recreation and nature-based tourism are allowed subject to close management to ensure minimal impact and disturbance of natural values. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; limited visitor facilities are provided, and are dispersed and small-scale.
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.
Heritage River Overlay	The area scheduled as the Mitchell River Heritage River Area under the Heritage Rivers Act. The aims of the overlay are to: • ensure that the significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic or cultural heritage attributes of the area are protected • provide opportunities for other recreational activities, landscape appreciation and education within the area • ensure that that part of the river which is in the area is maintained without further interference with its free-flowing state.
Special Protection Overlay	Areas, generally small in extent, of threatened or highly significant native vegetation or wildlife populations that require special protection. Access and activities by visitors and others are not allowed or subject to conditions. Management aims to control the introduction and spread of pest plants and animals, and pathogens, minimise human impacts and increase habitat resilience.
Hunting (Deer) Overlay	Area where the use of firearms for the purpose of seasonal deer hunting by stalking is authorised by the National Parks Act.
Cultural Values Overlay (future)	Areas where the extent, nature or significance of Gunaikurnai 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 area in and around the Mitchell River Gorge was a major stopping-off point for Gunaikurnai travelling between the high country and the lowlands. The rocky terrain, steep drop-offs and lookout points provided excellent vantage points for safety and defence. It was, at one time, proposed as the site of a mission but it was found to be too cold in winter so Lake Tyers was chosen instead.

Caves and shelters used by Gunaikurnai, and a known burial, occur within the park. The Den of Nargun on Woolshed Creek, a small tributary of the Mitchell River, is of great cultural significance and is known as a women's place. According to Gunaikurnai lore the Nargun is a large female creature who lives in a cave behind the waterfall. Stories were told around campfires about how the Nargun would abduct children who wandered off on their own. The Nargun could not be harmed with boomerangs or spears. These stories served the dual purpose of keeping children close to the campsite and ensuring that people stayed away from the sacred cave. It is a place of women's initiation and learning ceremonies, and traditionally Gunaikurnai men are not allowed to enter the area of the Den of Nargun and the Woolshed Creek valley.

The Den of Nargun is part of the Bataluk Cultural Trail, which follows significant traditional routes used by the Gunaikurnai for over 30 000 years. Deadcock Den, also on Woolshed Creek, is also culturally important as a place frequented only by Gunaikurnai women.

More than 50 Gunaikurnai cultural heritage sites, mostly artefact scatter sites, have been recorded in the park. Scarred trees and rock art sites have also been recorded.

Plants were important for their practical uses and cultural identity. A number of plant species are known to be culturally important for the Gunaikurnai in the region (Oates and Frood 2017). These include:

- Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) — moeyang; used for food, medicine, fibre and implements
- Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) – ballee, ballart; used for medicine and implements
- Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*)
- Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) – used for food and fibre
- Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii*).

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

The landscape of the park is shaped by the river, which is characterised by a network of valleys, steep cliffs and gorges that create a spectacular landscape.

The Mitchell River Gorge, Sandy Creek, and Tabberabbera are of state geological and geomorphological significance. Undisturbed forests and catchments of high conservation significance make up approximately 65% of the park.

The park contains a range of significant vegetation communities, many of which are rare, vulnerable or endangered including gallery rainforest, dry rainforest, warm temperate rainforest, plains grassy forest, dry grassy woodland, dry valley forest, and riverine escarpment scrub. The southernmost occurrence of endangered dry rainforest, dominated by Kurrajong, is on the rocky slopes of the Mitchell River Gorge. These stands are at the westernmost limit of their distribution in Victoria. Silvertop Ash dominates the open forest community on the broad, flat ridge tops, while gum and stringybark species are prevalent on sheltered slopes and drainage lines.

Giant Kanookas grow along the river banks amid a tangle of vines and ferns in the well-developed stands of warm temperate rainforest. Sweet Pittosporum, Lilly Pilly and Yellow-wood grow in the moist gullies of the park. A drier forest of wattle and eucalypt predominates on the ridges above the river.

Some of the land incorporated into the park in 2002 (known as the Trevertons, Sinnotts and Wentworth blocks) had been cleared for farming, but is being restored with native vegetation.

The standard categorisation of vegetation communities in Victoria is ecological vegetation classes (EVCs). The predominant EVCs in the park are Shrubby Dry Forest (43% of the park area), Lowland Forest (16%) and Shrubby Damp Forest (8%). Small areas of rare or endangered rainforest are a feature of the park. Table 2 describes significant ecological vegetation classes in the park.

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in Mitchell National Park.

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)	Description	Bioregional conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Gallery Rainforest (0.1% of park area)	Closed forest to 20 m tall on the fringes of substantial streams that periodically flood. The understorey is willowy shrubs that can withstand flooding. Mature woody vines are generally absent.	endangered	Lilly Pilly (<i>Acmena smithii</i>) Blackwood (<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.) Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)
Dry Rainforest (1.1% of park area)	Open to closed non-eucalypt forest to 15 m tall. Occurs in areas of relatively low rainfall (750–900 mm per annum) and primarily confined to topographic fire refuges with cliffs, gorges and rock screes on north and west aspects.	endangered	Blanket -leaf (<i>Bedfordia arborescens</i>) Banyalla (<i>Pittosporum bicolor</i>)	Spear Thistle
Plains Grassy Forest (0.2% of the park area)	Open forest to 20 m tall often above a heathy shrub layer and a diverse grassy, sedgy and herbaceous ground layer. Occurs on lowland plains and old river terraces made up of gravelly sandy clays.	endangered	Red Box (<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i>) Yellow Stringybark (<i>E. muelleriana</i>) Red Stringybark (<i>E. macrorhyncha</i>)	Cat's Ear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>)
Dry Valley Forest (1.0% of the park area)	Open eucalypt forest to 20 m tall occurring along minor gullies, ephemeral streams and river flats. The overstorey may contain a range of eucalypts typical of drier environments over an understorey of scattered shrubs and a notably mossy herb-rich ground cover.	vulnerable	Yellow Box (<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>) White Stringybark (<i>E. globoidea</i>) Yellow Stringybark (<i>E. muelleriana</i>) Red Box (<i>E. polyanthemos</i>)	Cat's Ear Common Mouse-ear Chickweed (<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i> s.l.)
Warm Temperate Rainforest (1.5% of park area)	Closed forest to 20 m tall occurring along small streams. Dominated by a range of non-eucalypt canopy species above an understorey of smaller trees and shrubs and usually visually dominated by ferns and climbers.	rare	Lilly Pilly (<i>Acmena smithii</i>) Numerous ferns and epiphytes	Variable
Blackthorn Scrub (4.4% of park area)	Only on north and west slopes. Small tree or tall shrub layer to 6 m tall is a dominant feature, often forming even-aged stands of uniform height. Ground layer generally sparse and species-poor due to low site quality and the density of the overstorey. Vines can be conspicuous in the understorey.	rare	Red Wattle (<i>Acacia silvestris</i>) Cherry Ballart (<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>)	Variable

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)	Description	Bioregional conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Valley Slopes Dry Forest (0.6% of park area)	Open eucalypt forest to 20 m tall on steep, eroding slopes in dry country above the Mitchell River. River fogs and river margins provide increased moisture and hence the understorey consists of a mix of species common to both drier and wetter sites that do not usually occur together.	rare	Red Box (<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i>) Yellow Box (<i>E. melliodora</i>) River Peppermint (<i>E. elata</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.)
Riverine Escarpment Scrub (7.1% of the park area)	Occurs on shallow colluvial soils along rocky cliffs and slopes associated with rivers and creeks and may extend onto alluvial terraces. Characterised by a small tree or large shrub layer to 10 m tall over a dense medium shrub layer and a ground layer, which can range from low to high diversity and consist of a variety of graminoids, grasses and herbs. Ferns can often be a major component of the ground stratum and emergent eucalypts may be present.	rare	Blackwood (<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>) Hazel Pomaderris (<i>Pomaderris aspera</i>) Kanooka (<i>Tristaniaopsis laurina</i>) Black Wattle (<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.) Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>) Yorkshire Fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>)
Riparian Shrubland (1.1% of the park area)	Diverse, medium to tall shrubland to 8 m tall occurring on rocky substrates of major streams and banks and channels of rocky creeks and along perennial streams in gorge tracts. Able to withstand frequent flooding or regenerate rapidly after such disturbance and often forming dense thickets along the stream's edge during long periods without flooding. Trees irregularly scattered but tend to be restricted to the banks of the rivers and creeks. Sedges and rushes dominate the understorey as well as an array of herbs and grasses including ephemeral species on bare sands or in rock crevice.	rare	Large-leaf Hickory-wattle (<i>Acacia falciformis</i>) Hazel Pomaderris (<i>Pomaderris aspera</i>) Black Wattle (<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.) Hemlock (<i>Conium maculatum</i>)

Rare or threatened species

Nineteen plant species and ten animal species in the park are listed as rare or threatened, including the endangered Spot-tailed Quoll and Lace Monitor. The park contains two known breeding sites for the Peregrine Falcon and supports populations of Swift Parrots, Grey Goshawks, White-bellied Sea-Eagles, Powerful Owls, Sooty Owls, Diamond Firetails, Spot-tailed Quolls and Eastern Pygmy-possums. The threatened Australian Grayling inhabits the rivers and streams of the park. The park also once supported Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies.

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

Table 3: Significant species of fauna in Mitchell River National Park.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Conservation Status	FFG Action Statement
<i>Dasyurus viverrinus</i>	Eastern Quoll	regionally extinct	14
<i>Dasyurus maculatus maculatus</i>	Spot-tailed Quoll	endangered	15
<i>Varanus varius</i>	Lace Monitor	endangered	—
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	Grey Goshawk	vulnerable	—
<i>Galaxias rostratus</i>	Flat-headed Galaxias	vulnerable	—
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	vulnerable	60
<i>Heleioporus australiacus</i>	Giant Burrowing Frog	vulnerable	61
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	vulnerable	92
<i>Prototroctes maraena</i>	Australian Grayling	vulnerable	257
<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	Sooty Owl	vulnerable	unnumbered
<i>Cercartetus nanus</i>	Eastern Pygmy-possum	near threatened	—
<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	Diamond Firetail	near threatened	—

Landscape and catchment context

Apart from small areas of cleared land immediately north of the park and along the Dargo and Wonnangatta Rivers, the catchment is predominantly forested public land and includes sections of the Alpine National Park.

The Mitchell River and its upper catchment area that is protected by the park are very important for the environment and land use of the Gippsland Lakes and surrounding plains. The Mitchell River is joined by the Wentworth River at Tabberabbera, north-west of the park, and enters the floodplain south of the park. Sediment deposits have made this a fertile area for intensive agriculture.

The Mitchell River has a long estuary reach which extends from the old barrier upstream from Bairnsdale township to where the river enters the Gippsland Lakes at Lake King via the internationally significant silt jetties. There are important wetlands on both sides of the river, including Macleod Morass, Jones Bay and the Lake King Wetlands at Eagle Point. These wetlands are part of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site, which is listed as internationally important under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

As a major tourist and recreational destination, the lakes play a vital role in supporting the regional economy.

The priority of the East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy for the Upper Mitchell River, including the park, is to improve condition through partnerships with landholders, stock exclusion, revegetation and invasive plant and animal programs of surveillance, monitoring and treatment (EGCMA 2013).

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

The English name for the Mitchell River dates from 1840 and commemorates Major Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales.

The park contains evidence of early European exploration, settlement, gold sluicing and farming. Grazing runs were established between 1845 and 1847, and in 1857 gold was discovered in alluvial fields along the Mitchell River and its tributaries.

Reef mining began in the area in the 1860s. From the 1870s until early this century the Mitchell River Gorge was spasmodically worked for gold. The water-race of the Mitchell River Sluicing Company, which operated near Angusvale, is still apparent.

Various four-wheel drive clubs assist with the volunteer maintenance of heritage assets including Mitchelldale Hut. The ruins of the Glenaladale Weir (old Mitchell River Weir), constructed in 1881, are located at the junction of Stony Creek and the Mitchell River.

The Glenaladale Weir was constructed with stone quarried from the western side of the river, and views of the ruins are the focus of a popular short walk. Between 1891 and 1894 the weir was substantially damaged by floods and was never repaired.

The Honey House, a stone relic of the Rising Sun Apiary (1923), is made from natural stone bonded with clay and pointed with mortar on the exterior. The chimney is unusual as the external wall of the chimney does not break the external line of the house.

The park is also notable for numerous plans in the 1970s to dam the river above and below the gorge and counter campaigns to maintain its free-flowing condition. These episodes typified a larger historical debate in Victoria about Victorian water resources policy and river conservation.

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

Invasive plants and animals

Weed invasion and pest animals pose a continuing threat to the condition of the park. The diversity and cover of ground flora has declined in the northern part of the park and pest plants are increasingly prevalent in the rainforest communities and riparian zones of the Mitchell River and streams in the park.

The primary weed threats are Blackberry, Blue Periwinkle, Wandering Creeper, Ragwort, Boxthorn and Cape Ivy, especially in the rainforest and riparian areas of the park, and Cape Broom in the Wentworth River area.

Areas of closed scrub are subject to encroachments of Burgan and Silver Wattle as a result of past clearing and bushfire. Significant numbers of foxes, wild dogs and feral cats occur in the park and a remnant population of feral cattle occupy the Mitchelldale–Angusvale area. There is a risk that goats, previously present in the park, may re-emerge as a threat to vegetation and soils.

Sambar deer are increasingly evident in the rainforest communities and riparian zones of the park, trampling ground vegetation, damaging bogs and soils, and browsing trees and shrubs, especially seedlings.

Fire management

The Great Divide bushfires of 2006–07 burned large areas of public land to the north and west but did not enter the park. Substantial parts of Cobbannah Creek catchment in the park were burned by bushfire in 1978, and smaller fires occurred in other parts of the park during the 1980s and 1990s.

Planned burns, mainly for fuel management, have been undertaken since 2009 in the western part of the park along the Mitchell Road and in the eastern part of the park around Calvi Track.

Some areas of the park, such as the rainforest communities, are highly sensitive to fire and are likely to have their essential composition and structure altered or fragmented if burnt, or become vulnerable to invasive plants and animals.

Other vegetation communities require periodic burning to maintain a diversity of vegetation growth stages and wildlife habitats or to suppress invasive plants. As a result of the recent bushfire and planned burn history, much of the park has not been burned for long periods, with potential effects on its ecological character and diversity.

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 Mitchell River National Park.

The 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 modified where necessary.

In broad terms the park requires fire management strategies that minimise the likelihood of fire entering fire-sensitive communities and culturally sensitive areas and provide adequate planned burning of areas that require fire at a particular interval to maintain or restore habitat structure and plant composition, and/or suppress invasive species.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and/or severity of extreme events, changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes. Changes such as vegetation alteration are likely to occur slowly, but more extreme events such as storms and floods can occur at any time. Rainforest areas are particularly vulnerable to progressive drying conditions and the increased frequency or severity of drought. Storm events increase the risk of inundation and threats to physical assets and public safety. Flooding is a natural phenomenon in the Mitchell River and its tributaries. Flash flooding poses a low-probability but high-consequence threat that needs to be considered in access and facility design and emergency preparedness.

Threats to cultural heritage

Extreme events including bushfire and floods pose a threat to cultural heritage and historic heritage across the park. More localised threats arise from disturbance of sites by human activity including visitor use, and management operations and development.

The park contains well-documented Gunaikurnai cultural heritage sites such as the Den of Nargun and Deadcock Den as well as large areas in which Gunaikurnai cultural values have not been systematically surveyed and recorded. Threats to the Den of Nargun and Deadcock Den include weed invasion, erosion caused by uncontrolled visitor access, and damage to the Den areas themselves by visitors, including graffiti.

The key conservation strategies for these locations are to:

- monitor condition of the sites
- control weeds in the area of the Dens
- monitor and manage visitor access through site design, education and enforcement.

The key conservation strategy for Gunaikurnai cultural values in the other areas of the park is to systematically survey, record and map values and sites in the park including intangible cultural heritage. GKTOLMB is undertaking this work across each of the 10 jointly managed parks and reserves. Once this work is completed, protection and conservation strategies need to be developed that are relevant to the values that are identified.

Historic sites in the park are relatively well known and mapped. They include sites with substantial structural remains, such as Mitchelldale Homestead, the Glenaladale Weir and Honey House, that need to be monitored and actively conserved.

For sites such as the Angusvale Hotel site that have little surviving structural remains, the key conservation strategy is to identify and protect the sites from erosion, visitor impacts and other localised disturbances.

Other threats

Illegal hunting (particularly deer hunting using hounds) occurs in the park, and is associated with off-road driving impacts and disturbance of wildlife.

The park soils are susceptible to tunnel erosion, particularly on slopes where vegetation cover has been lost.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

Table 4 describes the key land, water and heritage values and the relevant threats and conservation strategies to address them.

Land and water 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; for example, by 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 park, rather than throughout the EVC as a whole or for a single threatened species.

An intensive conservation action planning process is required to identify the most critical assets given the present condition of the park and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating within it.

The strategies in Table 4 should therefore be further evaluated through a conservation planning process that takes into account their feasibility, impact and priority in the broader landscape.

Management priorities for Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values are very dependent on completing current cultural mapping work to systematically identify the nature, extent and types of sites requiring protection and conservation.

Table 4: Land, water and cultural heritage conservation strategies.

Threat	Priorities	Strategy
Heritage River character and condition		
Impeded flows, riparian weed invasion, water contamination, visual impacts	Weed control and camper waste management	Minimise disturbance on banks and crossings. Work with CMA and landholders on upstream weed control. Control Blackberry and Willow. Monitor and minimise waste generated by rafting and walking groups.
Gallery Rainforest, Dry Rainforest and Warm Temperate Rainforest EVCs		
Bushfire	Minimisation of fire	Work with DELWP Forest Fire Management to ensure adequate risk reduction on surrounding areas using burning and other measures. Exclude fire from these EVCs. Prevent fires starting in the park through visitor education and regulatory enforcement.
Invasive plants and animals	Blackberry, Blue Periwinkle, Wandering Creeper, Sambar Deer, Feral Goats	Undertake intensive weed control. Increase control programs for Sambar Deer. Monitor Feral Goat numbers to ensure population does not re-establish. Implement relevant actions in FFG Action Statement No. 238.
Dry Valley Forest, Valley Slopes Dry Forest, Grassy Dry Forest, Grassy Woodland, Blackthorn Scrub EVCs		
Weed invasion, fire regime outside tolerable intervals/severity	Blue Periwinkle, Wandering Creeper, Ragwort, Cape Ivy, Cape Broom; fire regimes	Increase weed control. Undertake monitoring to assess growth stages/fire history of areas of EVC occurrence to determine any burning or restoration requirements. Implement required fire regime through DELWP fire planning process and undertake other restoration as needed.
Rare or threatened species		
Lack of knowledge of current condition and conservation requirements	To be determined	Implement relevant Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Action Statements. Determine priorities and undertake targeted research and monitoring with research partners, including updating of Victorian Biodiversity Atlas dataset.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values		
Cultural sites and intangible heritage have only been partially surveyed and recorded	Cultural survey and mapping	Complete the current GKTOLMB cultural mapping project for the ten Joint Managed Parks and Reserves. Determine required management actions including implementation of a Cultural Values Overlay.
Culturally important plants and animals		
Lack of knowledge of species conservation requirements	Cultural knowledge and current conservation status	Obtain knowledge through Joint Management Plan strategic Initiatives.
Historic heritage		
Deterioration of sites due to weather or vandalism.	Mitchelldale Homestead, Honey House and weir	Develop a conservation plan for historic sites identifying monitoring, required conservation works and interpretation opportunities.
All EVCs		
Predation of wildlife by invasive animals.	Moderate	Maintain fox and wild dog control programs.
Grazing and erosion caused by cattle, deer and rabbits.	High	Eradicate cattle from the park. Implement rabbit control programs. Increase targeted deer control programs.

5 PEOPLE IN THE PARK

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai. The park provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to country in an inspiring landscape, characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

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

Joint Management Rangers undertake conservation and maintenance works in the park in cooperation with Parks Victoria, and there is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program.

As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories, and will work with tour operators and the tourism industry to ensure that the promotion of the Gunaikurnai cultural heritage of the park to tourists and the public is accurate and rich.

In addition to taking a greater role in the management and conservation of the park, Gunaikurnai people will take opportunities to gather in the park, pass on lore and cultural knowledge between generations and undertake traditional practices. Areas such as Mitchelldale provide a suitable opportunity for this type of activity.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE PARK

The spectacular scenery and remote character of the park provide opportunities for self-reliant recreation. The park offers opportunities for picnicking, bushwalking, camping, rafting and canoeing, four-wheel driving, rock climbing and abseiling and bike riding. Commercial tour operators provide river rafting and canoeing trips for visitors. It is estimated that approximately 40 000 visits are made to the park each year.

The Den of Nargun and the associated Loop Walk is the most popular day visit site in the park. There are four camping areas: Angusvale and Billy Goat Bend, which are used by vehicle-based campers, and Rock Creek and Woolshed Creek, which are largely used by canoeists, rafters and bushwalkers. The section of the Mitchell River through the Gorge is considered one of the best white-water rafting and canoeing experiences in Victoria.

The Mitchell River Track provides a two-day walk of 18 kilometres one-way that is suitable for relatively inexperienced overnight walkers and is popular with school groups and outdoor education providers. Subject to investigation, there is an opportunity to extend the walking track to the southern end of the park to provide an iconic walking experience along more of the river. Roaring Mag Falls is a feature of significant interest in the eastern section of the park, but the only access is along footpads that have been created through informal use.

There are instances of inappropriate use of the park for vehicle access to freehold land where alternative on-title alignments exist.

The western and eastern boundaries abut public land, with links to roads and tracks in State forest. The northern and southern boundaries abut freehold land.

Mitchell River is one of several Victorian national parks where deer-stalking is permitted in part of the park. This activity is limited to the hunting of deer in the eastern area of the park, south of Hortons Track, between 15 February and 15 December.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

The strategies for managing visitor opportunities and activity focus on four main experience areas: the Den of Nargun and Billy Goat Bend, the Angusvale and Mitchelldale areas, the Mitchell River Gorge and the eastern area of the park used for seasonal deer stalking.

Walking, riding and driving on roads and tracks in the remainder of the park makes up a fifth area of visitor activity and experience. The goals and strategies for the management of visitor experiences in these areas are detailed in Table 5.

Four-wheel driving is popular in the park, particularly with people accessing the Angusvale area. The natural east–west barrier created by the Mitchell River Gorge limits the opportunity for circuit drives. The 1998 park management plan proposed the upgrading of the Mitchell Road to provide a circuit route on the western side of the park. However, a landslip closed this road, and substantial engineering works are needed to repair the road. The 1998 plan also identified the need to review public access to Rock Creek Track between Angusvale and Rock Creek camping area because of its susceptibility to flooding. As a result of flood damage in 2007, this track has been closed to the public since 2008 and is used only infrequently by management vehicles.

Milton Park Lane (also known as Old Weir Track No. 2) provides access to the significant Glenaladale Weir site. The road is in poor condition and is currently a ‘management vehicle only’ track, although often used illegally by visitors in vehicles. Although structurally difficult to repair, its upgrading and opening to the public would improve visitor access to that part of the park.

The plan does not make any change to the area available for recreational deer stalking. Recreational hunting can contribute to the removal of deer but needs to be part of systematic management control programs to achieve effective control overall (State of Victoria 2017). Supervised deer control operations are conducted by park managers in collaboration with deer hunting groups as part of revegetation programs in the extension areas, to prevent browsing of seedlings. These programs will increase (see Table 4). The contribution of recreational hunting to overall deer control would be improved by encouraging hunters to be less selective in terms of the individual animals they target (e.g. mature stags). The current controls only allow hunting of Sambar Deer, although other deer species are known to be present. Expanding the range of species that can be hunted would improve the recreational opportunity for hunters and may assist with deer control in general.

Horse riding is permitted in the park on roads and vehicle tracks open to the public. The 1998 park management plan identified the opportunity to develop a horse riders’ camp at Angusvale. The demand for overnight horse camping does not appear to warrant specific facility provision.

Table 5: Visitor experience goals and strategies.

Den of Nargun loop walk area and Billy Goat Bend

Goal

Provide accessible day visit and overnight camping experiences (Billy Goat Bend) consisting of short walks, Gorge lookouts, cultural interpretation, picnicking and sightseeing.

Strategies

Strengthen cultural interpretation of the park; improve walking track condition. Protect the cultural values, control weeds, and restore the land and water environment of the Den of Nargun area, seek and promote visitor respect for Gunaikurnai access traditions.

Angusvale and Mitchelldale

Goal

Provide for remote mountain valley camping experiences.

Strategies

Define and improve the layout of camping locations, shade, vehicle circulation, and interpretation; improve visitor facilities; provide a greater range of activities such as short to half day walks and short canoeing/rafting opportunities. Manage Mitchelldale homestead area for bookable access by Gunaikurnai and recreation groups for camping, and ensure conservation and protection of cultural values and restoration of land and water values. Investigate opportunity to develop walking track access between Angusvale and Mitchelldale, considering permit arrangements for camping.

Mitchell River Gorge

Goal

Provide for iconic overnight rafting, canoeing and bushwalking experiences, with opportunities for cultural and environmental education and interpretation.

Strategies

Broaden the canoeing, rafting and bushwalking experience of the Mitchell River Gorge to become a recognised cultural heritage experience as well as a recreation and environmental education experience. Ensure visitor impacts on the land, water quality and cultural values at Rock Creek and Woolshed Creek camping areas and elsewhere in the Gorge are minimised through monitoring and collaboration with river users. Investigate re-instatement of toilet at Woolshed Creek considering constraints and servicing capacity. Consider need for designated camping areas in the Gorge. Investigate development of an iconic multi-day walk by extending the Mitchell River Walking Track, including extension north in the Angusvale area, and to Findlay-Alexanders Road at the southern end of the park.

Wentworth River – Trevertons Area

Goal

Provide for low-impact access and recreation.

Strategies

Progressively re-establish native vegetation on cleared areas previously used for farming. Use grazing as an interim management measure but investigate Traditional burning as an option. Consider the need for any additional vehicle access or walking tracks.

Dispersed recreational activity areas

Goals

Continue to provide opportunities for seasonal deer hunting in the park east of Mitchell River and south of Hortons Track (see Hunting (Deer) Overlay in 'Zoning'). Allow hunting of a wider range of deer species in this area.

Maintain provision for recreational vehicle use, walking and horse riding on roads, vehicle tracks and walking tracks open to the public.

Strategies

Undertake compliance and enforcement actions to minimise illegal hunting especially with hounds. Maintain provision for walkers to use walking tracks and management vehicle only tracks except where specifically closed for safety, conservation or other reasons. Improve access to the Glenaladale Weir Site and control off-road impacts. Investigate and if feasible, formalise walking track access to Roaring Mag Falls viewing point.

Specific recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 6. This table 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 Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay	Hunting (Deer) Overlay
Abseiling and rock climbing	No	Yes (at sites adjacent to Angusvale and Hutchings Tracks)	No	N/A
Boating – rafting, canoeing, kayaking	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Camping — designated sites	No	Yes (at Angusvale, Rock Creek, Billy Goat Bend and Woolshed Creek at least 20 metres from any stream, and at Mitchelldale by permit)	No	Yes
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	Yes (not within 200 metres of designated camping or picnic areas, or 20 metres of waterways or waterbodies)	Yes (not within 200 metres of designated camping or picnic areas, or 20 metres of waterways or waterbodies)	No	Yes
Camping — dispersed other	Yes (not within 200 metres of designated camping or picnic areas, or 20 metres of waterways or waterbodies)	Yes (not within 200 metres of designated camping or picnic areas, or 20 metres of waterways or waterbodies)	No	Yes

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay	Hunting (Deer) Overlay
Campfires — solid fuel	Yes (except in Special Protection Overlay areas; must be in designated campfires if provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	Yes (except in Special Protection Overlay areas; must be in designated campfires if provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	No	Yes,
Campfires – liquid or gas-fuel stoves	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Competitive recreational events	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)	No (except on open public roads and MVO tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	N/A
Cycling	Yes (on open public roads and MVO tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and MVO tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and MVO tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	N/A
Dogs	No	No	No	No
Firearms	No (except in transit for the purposes of deer stalking during open season in Hunting (Deer) Overlay area)	No (except in transit for the purposes of deer stalking during open season in Hunting (Deer) Overlay area)	No	Yes (for deer stalking for authorised species during open season)
Firewood collection	Yes Collection from the ground by visitors for use within areas of the park where campfires are allowed. Not allowed for commercial or domestic use.	Yes Collection from the ground by visitors for use within areas of the park where campfires are allowed. Not allowed for commercial or domestic use.	No	Yes Collection from the ground by visitors for use within areas of the park where campfires are allowed. Not allowed for commercial or domestic use.
Fishing	Yes (subject to regulations)	Yes (subject to regulations)	No	Yes (subject to regulations)
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	No	

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay	Hunting (Deer) Overlay
Guided activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (subject to permit)	Yes
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Horse riding	Yes (on open public roads and MVO tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and MVO tracks)	No	Yes (on open public roads and MVO tracks)
Hunting – deer stalking	No	No	No	Yes (deer stalking for authorised species during open season)
Hunting — deer hunting with the aid of gun dogs or scent-trailing hounds	No	No	No	No
Hunting — species other than deer	No	No	No	No
Orienteering or rogaining	Yes, with permit	Yes, with permit	No	Yes
Rafting, canoeing and kayaking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vehicle use (including two-wheel driving, four-wheel driving 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)	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 — GLaWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The park is assigned to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Bairnsdale.

Regional and state-wide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the park from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne.

Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in Mitchell River National Park, and other jointly managed areas, that has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land and provides legislative and policy support to the GKTOLMB and Parks Victoria.

The GLaWAC ranger team has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP 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 operate in multiple directions with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC. The GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic park management directions for the partnerships through this plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

There are a number of private landholders adjacent to the park who have a direct interest and influence on park operations and values.

Deer hunting groups have a very significant interest in the park. The Sporting Shooters Association Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs. Schools and outdoor education/tour operators are frequent users of the park with an important stake in access to, and the sustainability of, the park.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the park. The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic co-ordination of catchment restoration investment. It also provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.

Much of the land surrounding the park is State forest managed by DELWP. VicForests manages logging in some areas of State forest including current harvesting operations near the eastern boundary of the park.

The park is in the Shire of East Gippsland, which is responsible for local planning regulation, road maintenance and traffic management around the park, as well as other municipal responsibilities.

The Destination Gippsland tourism region covers the park, and Destination Gippsland is an important partner in marketing of the park and its location on regional tourism routes.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

A number of licensed tour operators operate in the park. A trigonometric station on Calvi Hill is occasionally used by the Office of the Surveyor-General, and sight lines to other peaks are regularly cleared of regrowth.

East Gippsland Water operates a pumping station at the southern end of the park. This station diverts water from the Mitchell River for urban water supply.

An overhead power line supplying electricity to Dargo and the surrounding area runs along the western boundary of the park.

The park is used regularly by the Australian Defence Force for field training.

6.4 PARK BOUNDARIES

The park boundaries have been largely regularised by acquisitions and additions over the last decade. However, there are still some areas where park access track alignments and practical access to private land are affected by the position of the park boundary. Opportunities to create more effective boundaries or to negotiate improved access through acquisitions or agreements with landholders should be evaluated as they arise.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with the goals and strategic initiatives set out in the Strategic Plan for the Joint Management Area a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural heritage of Mitchell River National Park are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action

MR1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
MR2	Protect and restore the park by implementing the land and water conservation strategies detailed in Table 4.
MR3	Implement relevant Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act action statements for threatened and endangered species in the park as detailed in Table 3.
MR4	Work with DELWP to protect the park, assets and communities from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect the rainforest communities and other fire-sensitive values.
MR5	Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for park ecosystems and habitats and seek burns to be programmed and implemented as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.
MR6	Seek opportunities to implement traditional cultural burning practices as part of planned burning through liaison and partnership with DELWP fire managers.
MR7	Increase compliance and enforcement activity to deal with illegal hunting and off-road vehicle use.
MR8	Work with East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to control pest plants and animals consistent with the East Gippsland Invasive Plants and Animals Plan.
MR9	Develop a comprehensive conservation action plan for the park aligned to the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan and broader East Gippsland park landscape.
MR10	Maintain revegetation programs and deer control in the areas added to the park north of Hortons Track.
MR11	Undertake revegetation and soil stabilisation in other cleared areas of the park, especially where there is a risk of tunnel erosion.
MR12	Work with adjoining property owners to ensure adequate fencing and other measures to prevent entry of stock into the park. Eradicate the feral cattle population in the park.

Cultural heritage

MR13	Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the park through <i>Welcome to Country</i> and other appropriate signage, based on the Brabralung clan at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the park.
MR14	Rename places in the park such as picnic grounds and walking tracks in traditional language.
MR15	Implement the cultural heritage conservation strategies in Table 4 including mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values and sites in the park. Build

	knowledge and undertake surveys and mapping of plants and animals in the park of cultural importance to the Gunaikurnai. Implement a Cultural Values Overlay based on the outcomes of cultural mapping.
MR16	Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the park and undertaking community cultural activities and events.
MR17	Increase the level of cultural heritage interpretation and education provided to outdoor education groups and other visitors using the park and the Mitchell River Gorge through provision of visitor information and face-to-face interaction and interpretation with visitors by Gunaikurnai rangers and community members (see People in the Park).
MR18	Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors and others working in the park.
MR19	Implement cultural heritage management procedures for the park as agreed between the partners, including incorporation of Aboriginal Heritage Act provisions and any Natural Resource Agreement that may be established for the park under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act.
MR20	Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the park in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
MR21	Implement the existing provisions of the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the park.
MR22	Implement the historic heritage conservation strategies in Table 4 including the development of a plan for monitoring, conservation and interpretation of historic sites in the park.

People in the Park

Goals

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

Visitor and community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the park are enhanced by joint management.

No.	Actions
MR23	Manage visitor experiences in the park consistent with the goals and strategies in Table 5 with priority given to improving camping and recreational experiences at Angusvale and Mitchelldale, minimising the impacts of river users and walkers in the Gorge, and enhancing visitor appreciation and respect for cultural values at the Den of Nargun.
MR24	Manage recreational activities in accordance with Table 6. Generally, maintain existing regulatory settings for activities and uses in the park, apart from changes set out in this plan (including approved variations) or changes arising from statutory requirements.
MR25	Broaden promotion of the park to education groups and tour operators as a cultural education destination as well as an adventure and environmental education destination. Increase the level of cultural heritage interpretation and education provided in visitor information and face-to-face interaction with education and tour groups by Gunaikurnai rangers and community members. Pursue opportunities to link educational visits to the park with cultural hubs in the region.
MR26	Maintain the existing access arrangements for the park's road and track network including: • maintaining the closure of Rock Creek Track to public vehicles due to its susceptibility to flooding • maintaining the Mitchelldale Track as 'management vehicles only' except for access by permit • upgrading the safe trafficability of Hortons Track crossing on the Mitchell River without impairing river flow.

Investigate the upgrading and opening to the public of Milton Park Lane/Old Weir Track No. 2. Liaise with the Shire of East Gippsland and DELWP on the management of roads through and adjacent to the park.

Relocate vehicle access to freehold land from informal alignments in the park to on-title alignments as development applications are made, or in response to changes in park facilities or requirements.

- MR27 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.
- MR28 Establish Gunaikurnai interpretative information for visitors along park tracks about culturally important plants, animals and features.
- MR29 Develop access arrangements for group camping and use of Mitchelldale by Gunaikurnai and others.
- MR30 Develop programs through which Gunaikurnai female rangers working with Elders can take a principal role in the management of the park and in particular the Den of Nargun and other women's places.

Working Together

Goals

Joint management of Mitchell River National Park operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community and stakeholders support and contribute to the care and management of the park.

No.	Actions
MR31	Promote the opportunities for the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria rangers, tour operators and community groups to share knowledge about the park and its management.
MR32	Increase participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP fire management programs in and around the park.
MR33	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the park to interact with other parks and partners in the Settlement Area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
MR34	Maintain close collaboration with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the park landscape.
MR35	Regularly liaise with community and stakeholder groups with an interest in the park including neighbours, bushwalking, conservation, tourism and historical groups and develop opportunities for volunteer programs and events.
MR36	Collaborate with Destination Gippsland and the tourism industry to promote the park to visitors, particularly in broadening the current adventure and outdoor recreation position of the park.
MR37	Initiate discussions with school groups in Greater Gippsland to offer a program of cultural awareness and guided activities.
MR38	Establish a Gunaikurnai junior ranger program in the park for schools in the Gippsland area.
MR39	Pursue opportunities to create more effective boundaries and relocate vehicle access to freehold land from informal alignments on the park to on-title alignments, as development applications are made.

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	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. • the actions described in this management plan for Mitchell River National Park.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

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.

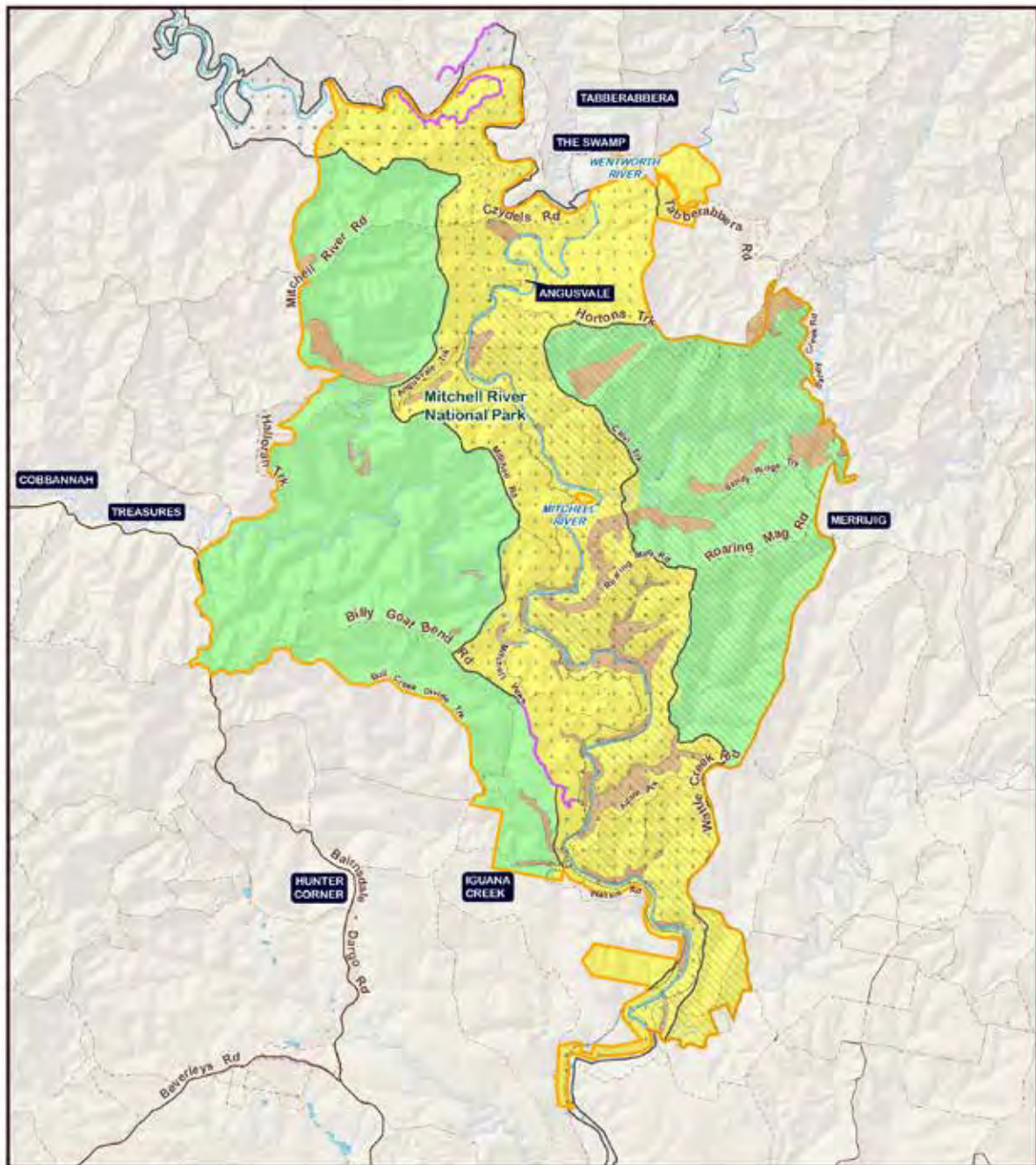
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the change be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff on parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other 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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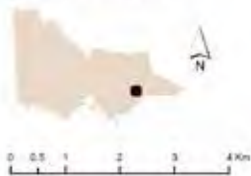


Mitchell River National Park Joint Management Plan

23/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID94

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only

- Joint Management
- Park and Reserve

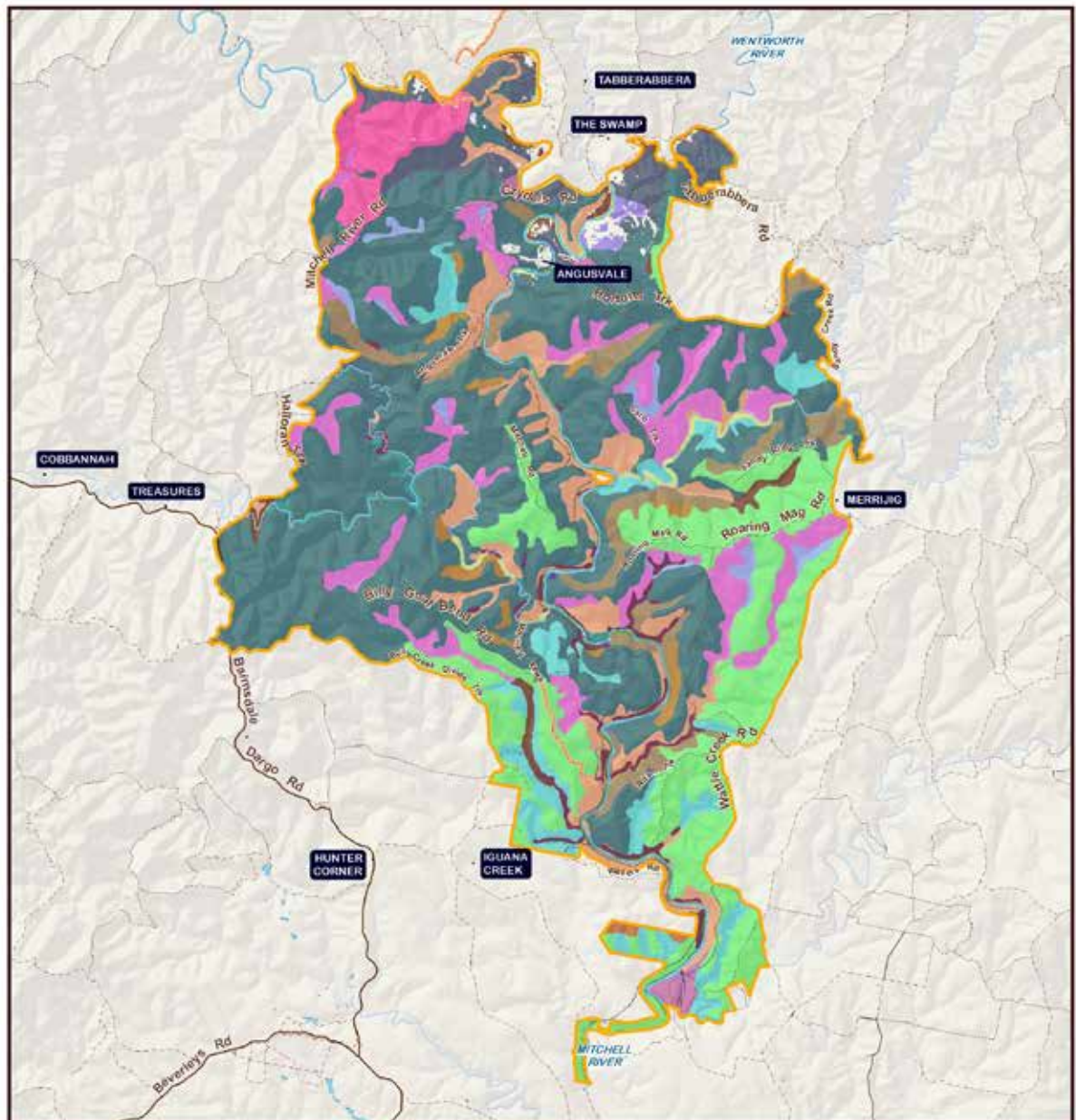
Management Zones and Overlays

- Conservation Zone
- Conservation & Recreation Zone
- Special Protection Overlay
- Heritage River Overlay
- Hunting (Deer) Overlay

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Map 1: Management zones and overlays, Mitchell River National Park.

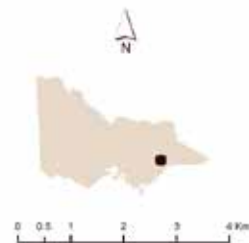


Mitchell River National Park

Joint Management Plan

28/09/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRD94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only
- Joint Management

Ecological Vegetation Classes

Dry Rainforest - Warm Temperate Rainforest - Gallery	Grassy Dry Forest	Riverine Escarpment Scrub
Riparian Shrubland - Riverine	Grassy Woodland	Rocky Outcrop Shrubland - Rocky Outcrop Heathland Mosaic
Escarpment Scrub - Blackthorn Scrub Complex	Heathy Dry Forest	Shrubby Damp Forest
Blackthorn Scrub	Lowland Forest	Shrubby Dry Forest
Damp Forest	Lowland Herb-rich Forest	Valley Slopes Dry Forest
Dry Rainforest	Prairie Grassy Forest	Warm Temperate Rainforest
Dry Valley Forest	Riparian Forest	
Gallery Rainforest	Riparian Shrubland	

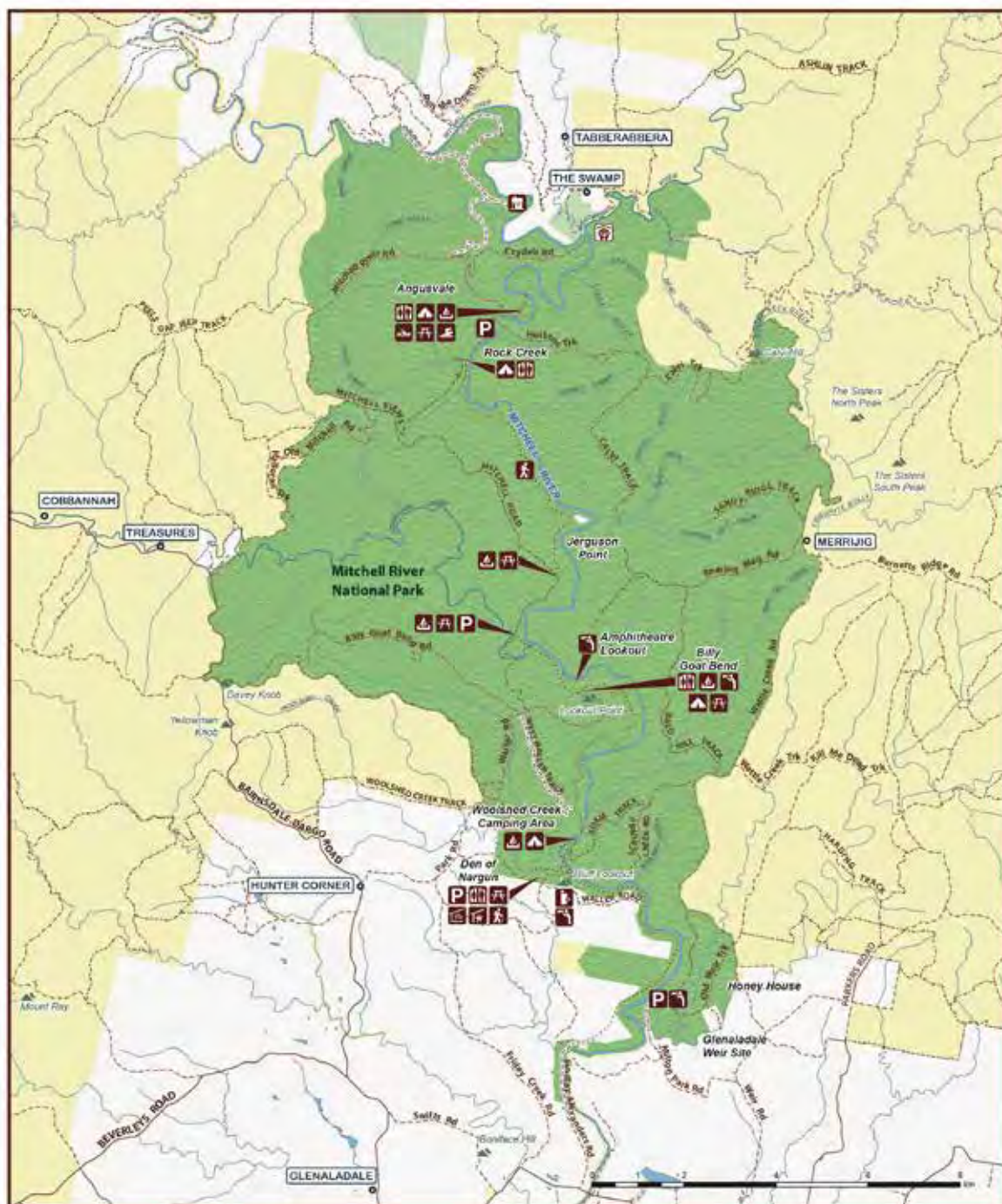
Disclaimer: Parks Victoria retains ownership of this data and does not warrant its accuracy. Users should verify the data before using it for any purpose. The State of Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Mitchell River National Park.



Mitchell River National Park

Joint Management Plan

30/4/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGR094
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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

Visitor Sites & Facilities

P Gravel Carpark	Sheltered BBQ	Historic Hut
Fireplace	Natural Lookout	Shearing Shed
Picnic area	Swimming	
Sheltered Picnic Area	Abseiling Rock	
Toilet	Trail	
Camping	Canoeing	

Disclaimer: This document is a joint management plan for Mitchell River National Park and is not a legal document. It is intended to provide information and guidance to visitors and is not a substitute for the relevant legislation and regulations. The Victorian Government and the Commonwealth Government are the joint managers of the park.

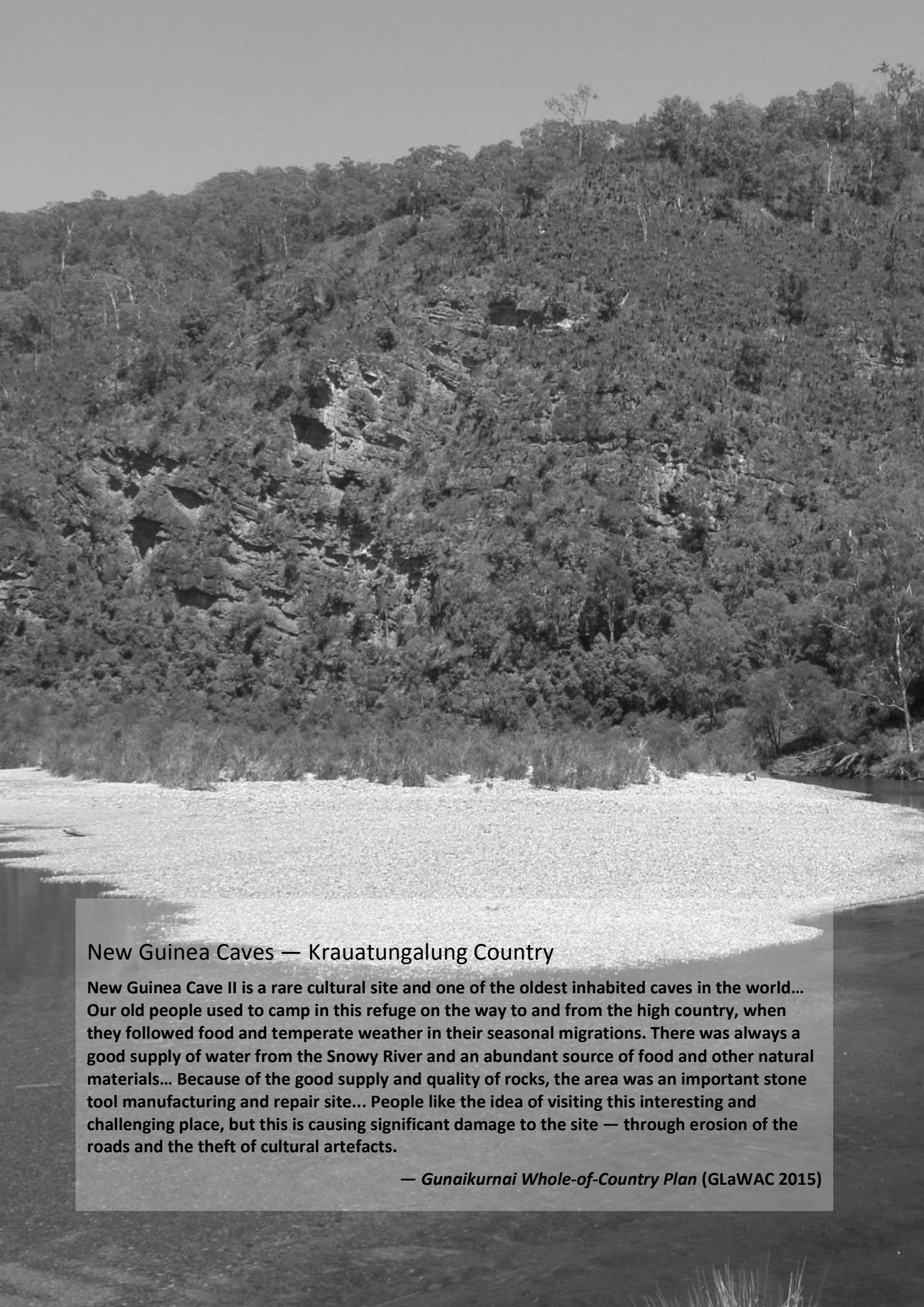


Map 3: Visitor sites and facilities, Mitchell River National Park.

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

NEW GUINEA CAVES
— KRAUATUNGALUNG COUNTRY





New Guinea Caves — Krauatungalung Country

New Guinea Cave II is a rare cultural site and one of the oldest inhabited caves in the world... Our old people used to camp in this refuge on the way to and from the high country, when they followed food and temperate weather in their seasonal migrations. There was always a good supply of water from the Snowy River and an abundant source of food and other natural materials... Because of the good supply and quality of rocks, the area was an important stone tool manufacturing and repair site... People like the idea of visiting this interesting and challenging place, but this is causing significant damage to the site — through erosion of the roads and the theft of cultural artefacts.

— *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 New Guinea Caves area has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title by the Victorian Government and will be managed jointly 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 New Guinea Caves area, the land continues to be managed as part of the Snowy River National Park under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.).

This management plan for the New Guinea Caves area of the Snowy River National Park 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 *National Parks Act 1975* and the requirements of 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.)

This plan sets out directions for the management of the New Guinea Caves area held under Aboriginal Title. The Greater Alpine National Parks Management Plan sets out the directions for management of the surrounding areas of the Snowy River National Park. Its provisions relating to the New Guinea Caves area are replaced by this plan. The Greater Alpine National Parks Plan will be amended following approval of this 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 New Guinea Caves area and the other nine Joint Management parks and reserves. Existing rights and interests in the New Guinea Caves area, 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 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including the New Guinea Caves area. 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 management plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that the nationally significant cultural heritage, geological and geomorphological values of the New Guinea Caves area are protected and conserved and the statutory requirements for park management are fulfilled through an equitable partnership between the State and the 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
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the area; and
- increase the role of Gunaikurnai people in determining future management of the area, conservation of the Caves and management of the cultural material associated with the occupation of the Caves.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to the New Guinea Caves area. The following sections provide:

- a description of values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the area, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values
- a description of Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the area 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 area
- 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 New Guinea Caves area in this plan, the strategic initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to New Guinea Caves.

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 NEW GUINEA CAVES AREA

The New Guinea Caves area covers 1153 hectares of land in the Snowy River National Park, north-east of Buchan.

The area consists of steep, forested ridges on the western side of the Snowy River Valley, with small pockets of woodland and rainforest.

The origin of the 'New Guinea' name for the area is unclear. An account of modern cave exploration suggests it may derive from the appearance of the area with its rugged terrain and relict rainforest patches (Frank & Davey 1976).

It includes six known caves located on the New Guinea Ridge. Of these, New Guinea Cave 2 is the most significant. The limestone cave and overhanging rock provided shelter for Gunaikurnai people during migration to and from the high country and was used intermittently by hunters.

The site is highly significant because of its rock art, stone tools and other artefacts. New Guinea Cave 2 is included on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register and is identified as an area of cultural sensitivity under the provisions of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.¹

The surrounding Snowy River National Park covers more than 114 600 hectares and was initially proclaimed in 1979. The area containing the New Guinea Caves was added in 1987.

¹ Registration VAHR 8523-0012.

The Snowy River and a corridor of adjacent land is protected under the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992* (Vic.) in recognition of its high geomorphological, botanical and faunal values, its cultural heritage including the New Guinea Caves, and recreational and scenic values (LCC 1991).

The area is remote but is visited by rafters and canoeists as well as cavers. Several steep four-wheel-drive tracks, which are seasonally closed, descend the ridges from the Tulloch Ard State Forest to the west.

2 NEW GUINEA CAVES UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

The New Guinea Caves area is on the Country of the Krauatungalung clan. Since the 1990s the area has been managed under a conservation and recreation zoning, with a Special Protection Zone applied to the cave sites and their immediate surrounds.

Vehicular access tracks have been seasonally closed, and public access to New Guinea Cave 2 was physically barred. The effectiveness of this management regime to protect the Caves from illegal entry and suspected removal of cultural artefacts needs to be carefully monitored.

The Gunaikurnai *Whole of Country Plan* sets out the following management priorities for the New Guinea Caves area:

- preventing public access and establishing an effective enforcement regime
- clean up and removal of debris from past floods
- putting strategies in place that minimise damage from future floods
- looking at options for sole management of New Guinea Cave 2, including adequate resourcing.

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.

Under this joint management plan the primary objective will be the protection and conservation of the nationally significant cultural values of New Guinea Cave 2 and the other caves, and their associated natural values.

Increased protection measures will be implemented at New Guinea Cave 2 to stabilise the geological formation, prevent illegal entry, control public safety risks and remove rubbish from previous archaeological work.

Powers to protect the cave will be strengthened by seeking the relevant protection declaration under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic.).

Vehicular access on Betts Creek Track will be restricted year-round, and subject to access by permit for purposes consistent with the management objective including Gunaikurnai cultural access, access by recognised groups for research, speleology, outdoor education, rafting entry and exit from the Snowy River, and other purposes.

Information and interpretation for visitors to the area will be improved at Ash Saddle and New Guinea Gap, and vehicular access to the area will be restricted by means of a permit system.

3 ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the area. These zones will:

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

Previous zoning

The 1995 management plan for the Snowy River National Park (National Parks Service 1995) zoned most of the New Guinea Caves area as 'Conservation and Recreation' with a special protection zoning applied to the caves and their immediate surrounds.

The entrance to New Guinea Cave 2 was barred and locked, and entry was subject to permit from the former Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (now Aboriginal Victoria).

Vehicle access on Betts Track has been seasonally closed from approximately 1 June to 1 December, in line with the closure of other tracks in the area for safety and environmental impact reasons and to prevent disturbance of the Common Bent-wing Bat population that occupies the Cave during winter.

The 2016 Greater Alpine National Parks Management Plan (Parks Victoria 2016) provisionally zoned most of the Aboriginal Title area as 'Conservation' and a small area at the river end of Betts Track as 'Conservation and Recreation', subject to the preparation of this Joint Management Plan.

Both the 2016 plan and the 1995 plan zoning schemes recognised the inclusion of a small part of the New Guinea Caves area in the Snowy River Wilderness Zone, and the whole of the area as part of the Snowy River Heritage River.

Zoning applied in this plan

Most of the New Guinea Caves area is designated as Conservation Zone. Part of the Conservation Zone is covered by a Special Protection Overlay, under which stricter controls on public access will be applied to protect New Guinea Cave 2 and its surrounds. In addition to the zoning an Ongoing Protection Declaration under Section 103 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* will be sought for New Guinea Cave 2 in order to strengthen the statutory powers available for protection and enforcement.

A Conservation and Recreation Zone covers an area of land adjacent to the river end of Betts Creek Track to provide for recreational access to and from the river for rafting and kayaking. Low-impact recreational access and use are allowed within the Conservation and Recreation Zone. Betts Creek Track and New Guinea Track will continue to be open for public access, except during the seasonal road closure period in winter and spring. Visitors to the New Guinea Caves area will be informed by pre-visit information, signs and other means of the access restrictions to the Special Protection Overlay.

The zoning in this plan incorporates the legislated Wilderness Zone and Heritage River Overlay (Table 1 and Map 1).

The zoning scheme may be reviewed as a result of cultural mapping of the New Guinea Caves area currently being undertaken by GKTOLMB. The area covered by the Special Protection Overlay and retention of track access arrangements will be subject to regular monitoring and review in light of any sign of damage or heightened risk to cultural values, or increased risk to public safety, in which case a variation to the plan may be sought.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic.) natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as hunting wildlife and game, fishing, and gathering flora and forest produce.

No agreement over the New Guinea Caves area is currently in place. Any future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this plan.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays.

Zone	Description and purpose
Conservation Zone	Areas of high natural value including land, water and ecological values. Recreation and nature-based tourism are allowed subject to close management to ensure minimal impact and disturbance of natural values. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; limited visitor facilities are provided, and are dispersed and small-scale.
Conservation and Recreation Zone	Areas where the management emphasis is on protection of land, water, ecological and cultural values while encouraging recreation and nature-based tourism. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; designated camping and small-scale facilities are provided.
Wilderness Zone	The area scheduled under Part 15 of Schedule 5 of the National Parks Act as the Snowy River Wilderness Zone. The zone provides for self-reliant recreation and solitude in the absence of facilities, structures and public roads, the development of which is prohibited. The use of any form of motorised or mechanical transport, and the use of non-indigenous animals is prohibited, except where essential for the responsible management of the zone.
Special Protection Overlay	Area in which special controls apply, additional to the underlying Conservation Zone provisions, to protect caves and their surrounds.
Heritage River Overlay	The area scheduled as the Snowy River Heritage River Area under the Heritage Rivers Act. The aims of the overlay are to: • ensure that the significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic or cultural heritage attributes of the area are protected; • provide opportunities for other recreational activities, landscape appreciation and education within the area; • ensure that that part of the river which is in the area is maintained without further interference with its free-flowing state.

4 CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

Six caves have been identified on the New Guinea Ridge. Three of these caves are substantial, and New Guinea Cave 2 has extensive evidence of cultural heritage and artefacts.

Archaeological investigations of Cave 2 between 1980 and 1985 by several Victorian archaeological institutions identified and recorded a number of stone artefacts and cultural material, as well as rock art in the cave (Ossa et al. 1995). These investigations established a date of occupation extending back almost 21 000 years to the Pleistocene epoch. Significantly, the investigation found bone artefacts including skeletal remains of Tasmanian Tigers, Tasmanian Devils, quolls and other species.

Large pits dug during the 1980s excavations in New Guinea Cave 2 created major impacts in the cave and were not re-instated. Some cultural material was removed for archaeological analysis of the assemblage.

Steel barriers and gates installed at the entry points to Cave 2 have been only partially successful in securing the caves from unauthorised entry, and have a negative impact on the sense of place and cultural integrity of the site.

Cultural mapping, three-dimensional cave modelling and geotechnical assessments of New Guinea Cave 2 will further clarify the extent of cultural heritage. The cultural mapping project will consider the potential repatriation of previously excavated cultural material.

The cultural importance of the New Guinea Caves area for the Gunaikurnai is not limited to the physical cave structures and artefacts; it also resides in the significance of the surrounding land as a place of resort and shelter during travels and movements along the Snowy River Valley.

4.2 HISTORIC HERITAGE

The New Guinea Caves area was leased to farmers by the Crown for grazing in the early 20th century. Graffiti in New Guinea Cave 1 includes dates between 1906 and 1920 (Frank & Davey 1976). There is a brief but significant history associated with the exploration and mapping of New Guinea Cave 2 and the other five caves in the area by speleological groups, commencing in the 1960s.

4.3 LAND AND WATER VALUES

In addition to their cultural values the caves are nationally significant geological and geomorphological sites (Rosengren et al. 1981).

The caves are also an important shelter for the Eastern Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus megaphyllus*), the Common Bent-wing Bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii*), and potentially other species. New Guinea Cave 2 is regarded as one of the few caves in the area used by pregnant female bats for acclimatisation prior to the birth season (Hamilton-Smith 1965). As a bat habitat, the cave and its immediate surrounds are very sensitive to flood and fire impacts.

The area consists of rugged, timbered country with some warm temperate rainforest. Stands of grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea* spp.) are also present. Table 2 describes significant ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) — the standard categorisation of vegetation communities in Victoria — in the area. Their distributions are shown in Map 2.

The predominant EVCs are Shrubby Dry Forest (54% of the area), Damp Forest (23%) and Grassy Woodland (8%). There are also small areas of rare Warm Temperate Rainforest and Riparian Shrubland.

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in the New Guinea Caves area.

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)	Description	Bioregional conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Warm Temperate Rainforest (1.0% of area)	Closed forest to 20 m tall occurring along small streams. Dominated by a range of non-eucalypt canopy species above an understorey of smaller trees and shrubs and usually visually dominated by ferns and climbers.	rare	Lilly Pilly (<i>Acmena smithii</i>)	various
Riparian Shrubland (1.1% of area)	Diverse, medium to tall shrubland to 8 m tall occurring on rocky substrates of major streams and banks and channels of rocky creeks and along perennial streams in gorge tracts. Sedges and rushes common to riparian environments dominate the understorey as well as an array of herbs and grasses.	rare	Black Wattle (<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>) Large-leaf Hickory-wattle (<i>Acacia falciformis</i>) Hazel Pomaderris (<i>Pomaderris aspera</i>)	various
Valley Grassy Forest (4.8% of area)	Open forest to 25 m tall may carry a variety of eucalypts, usually species which prefer moister or more fertile conditions over a sparse shrub cover. In season, a rich array of herbs, lilies, grasses and sedges dominate the ground layer.	depleted	Manna Gum (<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>) Red Box (<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i>) White Stringybark (<i>Eucalyptus globoidea</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.) Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)

Rare or threatened species

The caves are an important winter shelter for the Common Bent-wing Bat, which is listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic). Several significant plants occur in the area (Table 3). There are no published action statements or recovery plans for these species.

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

Table 3: Significant species in the New Guinea Caves Area.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status
<i>Acacia subtilinervis</i>	Net-veined Wattle	vulnerable
<i>Rhinolophus megaphyllus</i>	Eastern Horseshoe Bat	vulnerable
<i>Brachyscome riparia</i>	Snowy River Daisy	rare
<i>Gahnia microstachya</i>	Slender Saw-sedge	rare
<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>	Common Bent-wing Bat	rare
<i>Prostanthera walteri</i>	Monkey Mint-bush	rare

Landscape and catchment context

The New Guinea Caves area lies within the Far East Catchments landscape program of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. This program is focused on maintaining the condition of the significant and relatively undisturbed landscape of these catchments, with their large and continuous extent of natural ecosystems, from the mountains to the coast.

The Regional Catchment Strategy (EGCMA 2013) identifies the broad landscape objective for public land as:

- maintenance and targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and integrity of natural ecosystems and the status of threatened species and communities
- maintenance of soil condition and stability on public land.

4.4 THREATS TO LAND AND WATER

Invasive plants and animals

The primary weed threat is blackberry, especially in rainforest and riparian areas. Goats occupy rocky and open areas of the Snowy River Valley and adjacent gullies, but their numbers have been reduced by control programs in recent years. Pigs are present in the upstream section of the Snowy River valley, and there is a risk of potential movement into the caves area.

Fire management

Much of the New Guinea Caves area was burnt by bushfire in 2014. Planned burning was previously undertaken in 1990 in the area and in 2001 on the ridges on the eastern side of the Snowy River, immediately adjacent to the caves area.

A helipad at the end of New Guinea Track is important for fire suppression and needs to be maintained. The small area of rainforest in the area is highly sensitive to fire. If burnt it is likely to have its essential composition and structure altered or fragmented, and would be vulnerable to invasive plants and animals.

Other vegetation communities require periodic burning to maintain a diversity of vegetation growth stages and wildlife habitats or to suppress invasive plants. Vigorous regrowth after the 2014 bushfire is threatening the significant grass-tree community of the area. The *Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land* (DEPI 2012) provides the framework for public land fire management across Victoria. 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 New Guinea Caves area. Treatment of fuel risks and ecological fire requirements are considered in DELWP's fire operations plan process.

The cultural, natural 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.

The extremely high cultural importance of the New Guinea Caves to the Gunaikurnai resides in the overall integrity and health of the place and is not limited to the physical cave structures and artefacts. Fire management and other land management activities need to be undertaken in ways that use sensitive, low-impact risk reduction measures.

In broad terms, the area requires fire management strategies that control risks through careful fuel management, minimise the likelihood of bushfire around the caves and their culturally sensitive areas, and provide adequate planned burning of areas that require fire at a particular interval to maintain or restore the health of Country, including its habitat structure and plant composition, and to suppress invasive species.

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, and changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes. Changes such as vegetation alteration are likely to occur slowly, while extreme events such as storms and floods could occur at any time. Storms increase the risk of inundation, and the threats to physical assets and public safety. Flooding is a natural phenomenon in the Snowy River and its tributaries. However, high flood levels could threaten New Guinea Cave 2 and damage cultural heritage and artefacts.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

Management measures and procedures are needed to ensure that operations, works and visitor use of the New Guinea Caves area do not cause significant disturbance or damage.

Active programs to maintain or restore land and water values, such as invasive plant and animal control programs, need to be undertaken within the broader directions and programs for the surrounding Snowy River National Park in order to be efficient and effective. Conservation strategies to deal with the key land, water and heritage values identified above are shown 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 values at an intermediate level, for example by 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 area, rather than the EVC as a whole or a single threatened plant species.

Intensive conservation action planning is required to identify the most critical values, because of the present condition of the area and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating within it. The strategies in Table 4 should therefore be evaluated further through a conservation planning process that takes into account the broader landscape.

Table 4: Land, water and heritage conservation strategies.

Threat	Priorities	Strategy
Caves		
Damage from illegal activity and visitor disturbance	Preventing unauthorised access	Complete the current cave protection project and implement actions.
Flooding		
Heritage river character and condition		
Impeded flows, riparian weed invasion, water contamination, view shed impacts	Weed control and camper waste management	Minimise disturbance on banks and crossings. Control Blackberry, Willow and other weeds. Monitor and minimise waste generated by rafting groups and other users.
Warm Temperate Rainforest EVC		
Bushfire	Minimisation of fire	Work with DELWP Forest Fire Management to ensure adequate risk reduction on surrounding areas using burning and other measures. Minimise burning in EVCs. Prevent fires starting inside the area through visitor education and regulatory enforcement.
Invasive plants and animals	Blackberry, Sambar Deer, Feral Goats	Undertake intensive weed control. Maintain Feral Goat control. Maintain Feral Pig control upstream of the area. Implement relevant actions in FFG Action Statement No. 238 (DSE 2009).
Rare or threatened species		
Lack of knowledge of current condition and conservation requirements	Common Bent-wing Bat	Minimise disturbance to the caves and prevent entry during winter when bats are in occupation.
Culturally important plants and animals		
Lack of knowledge of species and conservation requirements	Cultural knowledge and current status	Obtain knowledge through Joint Management Plan strategic initiatives.

5 PEOPLE IN THE AREA

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai people. The area provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to country in an inspiring landscape that is characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai People to hold community gatherings on country, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for country through conservation and restoration work in the area.

GLaWAC joint management rangers undertake conservation and maintenance works in the area, in cooperation with Parks Victoria, and there is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories.

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

5.2 VISITORS TO THE AREA

The area is difficult to reach by road because of the steep terrain. Vehicular access is via Betts Creek Track, which ends next to the Snowy River. New Guinea Track ends a short distance above the river near a helipad and is therefore not critical for rafting access, but it is used by cavers. Both tracks are suitable only for four-wheel drive vehicles in dry weather and are seasonally closed during winter and early spring for safety and environment impact reasons.

Rafters and canoeists pull in or camp on the river at the eastern end of Betts Track and regularly use this as an exit point from the River, below Tulloch Ard Gorge.

The significant cultural importance of New Guinea Cave 2 makes it unsuitable for general public visitor access because of the risk of damage to the cave formation and cultural artefacts.

The entrance to New Guinea Cave 2 is gated and locked, and has been damaged by people cutting the lock to access the cave. Unstable rocks above the cave entrance and archaeological excavation pits inside the cave, dating from the 1980s, pose a risk to visitor safety.

Organised speleological groups, with authorised access, have explored and mapped the known caves in the area and provide knowledge about the structure and values of the caves that is important for management and conservation.

Some unofficial sources of caving information that promote recreational caving opportunities give little recognition to the cultural and natural values and their sensitivity. Parks Victoria is currently developing a state-wide cave access procedure to manage access to caves and human impacts.

Although the New Guinea Caves area is important as an access point for recreational river users and for cavers, the primary management priority is the protection of the caves from further damage. Illegal access and damage is likely to be reduced if vehicle access is better controlled so that legitimate recreational and educational users can access the river but informal access is restricted.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

Visitor access, experiences and activities will be managed in accordance with the goals and strategies set out in Table 5.

Table 5: Visitor experience and management goal and strategies.

Goals
Increase protection for the caves by managing vehicle access while providing for legitimate recreational and educational use.
Interpret the important cultural values of the New Guinea Caves for visitors.
Strategies
Maintain public vehicle access on Betts Creek Track and New Guinea Track.
Seasonally close Betts Creek Track and New Guinea Tracks to all vehicular use during winter and spring (approximately June to November).
Regularly monitor and review the Special Protection Overlay area and retention of track access arrangements in light of any sign of damage or heightened risk to cultural values, or increased risk to public safety, in which case a variation to the plan may be sought.
Investigate options for relocating the camping area on the southwest end of Betts Creek Track to the Conservation and Recreation Zone.
Allow for non-vehicular access to the Conservation and Recreation Zone by the general public for day visit and camping use.
Work with recognised speleological, education and recreation bodies to achieve responsible access and use.
Establish and implement a Caves Access Procedure for public access to caves in the area, with access to New Guinea Cave 2 limited to management and research purposes only.
Provide Gunaikurnai-approved visitor information and interpretation of the caves, their significance and joint management at Ash Saddle.
Ensure vehicular access and any facility development does not occur in the Wilderness Zone.

Specific recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 6. This table 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 Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay	Wilderness Zone
Abseiling and rock climbing	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Boating — rafting, canoeing, kayaking	N/A	Yes	No	Yes
Camping — designated areas	No	Yes	No	No
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	N/A	No	No	No
Camping — dispersed other	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Special Protection Overlay	Wilderness Zone
Caving	Yes (1 December – 30 May by recognised speleological and caving organisations under permit)	Yes (1 December – 30 May by recognised speleological and caving organisations under permit)	No (except as part of authorised management or research programs)	Yes (1 December – 30 May by recognised speleological and caving organisations under permit)
Competitive recreational events	No	No	No	No
Cycling	No	Yes (on open public roads.; not permitted on walking tracks)	No	No
Dogs	No	No	No	No
Education activities	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Campfires — solid fuel	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	No	Yes (subject to regulations including fire bans)
Campfires — liquid or gas fuel stoves	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Firewood collection	Yes (for visitor use in the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use)	Yes (for visitor use in the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use)	No	Yes (for visitor use in the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use)
Fishing	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	No	No
Guided activities	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Horseriding	No	No	No	No
Hunting	No	No	No	No
Orienteering and rogaining	No	No	No	No
Vehicle use (two wheel drives, four wheel drives and trail bikes)	N/A	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on MVO roads)	Yes (on open public roads; not allowed on MVO roads)	No
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS – GLAWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The area is assigned to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Buchan and Bairnsdale, and regional and state-wide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the area from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne.

Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in the New Guinea Caves area, and other jointly managed areas, that has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land and provides legislative and policy support to the GKTOLMB and Parks Victoria. The GLaWAC ranger team has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP 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 park and public land management by Parks Victoria 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 management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

A number of private landholders adjacent to the area have a direct interest and influence on park operations and values.

Schools, outdoor education providers and tour operators are frequent users of the area and have an important stake in access and the sustainability of the area.

The owners of Karoonda Park (a farm property) at Gelantipy conduct a large outdoor education program, including rafting and other activities that currently use Betts Track to access the river.

The Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association Inc. (ACKMA) is a professional association for those responsible for, or interested in, planning and management of limestone landscapes and caves in the Australasian region.

The Victorian Speleological Association is an organisation of caving enthusiasts that explores and maps caves, promotes cave conservation and ethical caving, and organises caving trips and activities.

The Sporting Shooters Association Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs in the joint managed parks and reserves.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the New Guinea Caves area. Aboriginal Victoria is the primary Government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council has a central role in the protection and management of Aboriginal heritage. The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic co-ordination of catchment restoration investment. It also provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.

Land to the west of the caves area is State forest managed by DELWP. VicForests manages logging in some areas of State forest. The area is within the Shire of East Gippsland, which is responsible or

local planning regulation, road maintenance and traffic management around the area, as well as other municipal responsibilities.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

Licensed tour operators and educational providers use the area to camp and to access and exit the Snowy River for rafting, canoeing and kayaking.

6.4 AREA BOUNDARIES

The area boundaries are clear and no clarifications or boundary amendments are required.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with goals and strategic initiatives for the Joint management area as a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The cultural heritage, land and water of the New Guinea Caves area are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Cultural heritage

No.	Action
NG1	Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the area through Welcome to country and other appropriate signage, based on the Krauatungalung clan at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider renaming the area with a Gunaikurnai place name.
NG2	Undertake mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the caves, particularly New Guinea Cave 2, including 3D modelling.
NG3	Assess the threat to New Guinea Cave 2 posed by direct or indirect flooding and determine what practical risk controls can be implemented.
NG4	Seek an ongoing protection declaration under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 for New Guinea Cave 2 to provide adequate powers to protect and conserve the cave.
NG5	Support and assist GLaWAC and Gunaikurnai Elders in determining the need for repatriation of archaeological material when cultural survey of New Guinea Cave 2 is completed.
NG6	Build knowledge and undertake surveys and mapping of plants and animals in the area, of cultural importance to the Gunaikurnai.
NG7	Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the area and undertaking community cultural activities.
NG8	Increase the level of cultural heritage information and interpretation provided to visitors at Ash Saddle.
NG9	Implement cultural heritage management procedures for the area as agreed between the partners, including incorporation of Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 provisions and any Natural Resource Agreement that may be established for the area under the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987.
NG10	Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of applications to undertake research in the area in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.
NG11	Implement the entitlements or obligations under the Native Title Act 1993, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the area.

Land and water

- NG12 Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
- NG13 Regularly monitor and review the coverage of the Special Protection Overlay and retention of track access arrangements in light of any sign of damage or heightened risk to cultural values. Consider whether a variation to the plan may be appropriate.
- NG14 Protect and restore the area by implementing the land and water conservation strategies detailed in Table 4.
- NG15 Implement strategies for threatened and endangered species in the area as detailed in Table 3.
- NG16 Work with DELWP to protect the area from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect the caves, rainforest and other fire-sensitive values. Maintain the helipad at the river end of New Guinea Track.
- NG17 Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for park ecosystems and habitats and seek burns to be programmed and implemented as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.
- NG18 Seek opportunities to implement traditional cultural burning practices as part of planned burning through liaison and partnership with DELWP fire managers.
- NG19 Increase compliance and enforcement activity to ensure that access and activity provisions and restrictions are observed.
- NG20 Work with East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to control pest plants and animals consistent with the East Gippsland Invasive Plants and Animals Plan.
- NG21 Include the area in the development of a comprehensive conservation action plan for the Snowy River National Park aligned to the Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan and broader East Gippsland park landscape conservation.
-

People in the Area

Goals

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

Visitors understand and appreciate the important cultural values of the New Guinea Caves and visit the area respectfully and sustainably.

No.	Actions
NG22	Manage visitor access and activities in the area consistent with the goal and strategy in tables 5 and 6.
NG23	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.
NG24	Establish Gunaikurnai interpretative information for visitors along park tracks about culturally important plants, animals and features.
-

Working Together

Goals

Joint management of the New Guinea Caves area operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the area.

No.	Actions
NG25	Amend the Greater Alpine National Parks management plan to reflect the provisions of the approved Joint Management Plan for the New Guinea Caves area.
NG26	Promote the opportunities for the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria Rangers, the Australian Caves and Karst Management Association, and speleological groups to share knowledge about the area and its management.
NG27	Liaise with speleological and caving groups to achieve compliance with cave access procedures, and accurate and respectful public information about the caves and their values.
NG28	Increase participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP's fire management programs in and around the area.
NG29	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the area to interact with other parks and partners in the Settlement Area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
NG30	Maintain close collaboration with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the area landscape.

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	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. • the actions described in this management plan for New Guinea Caves.	Tracking the activities outlined in the Introduction and Strategic Plan will be based on the project management tools that the partners use to guide implementation. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

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.

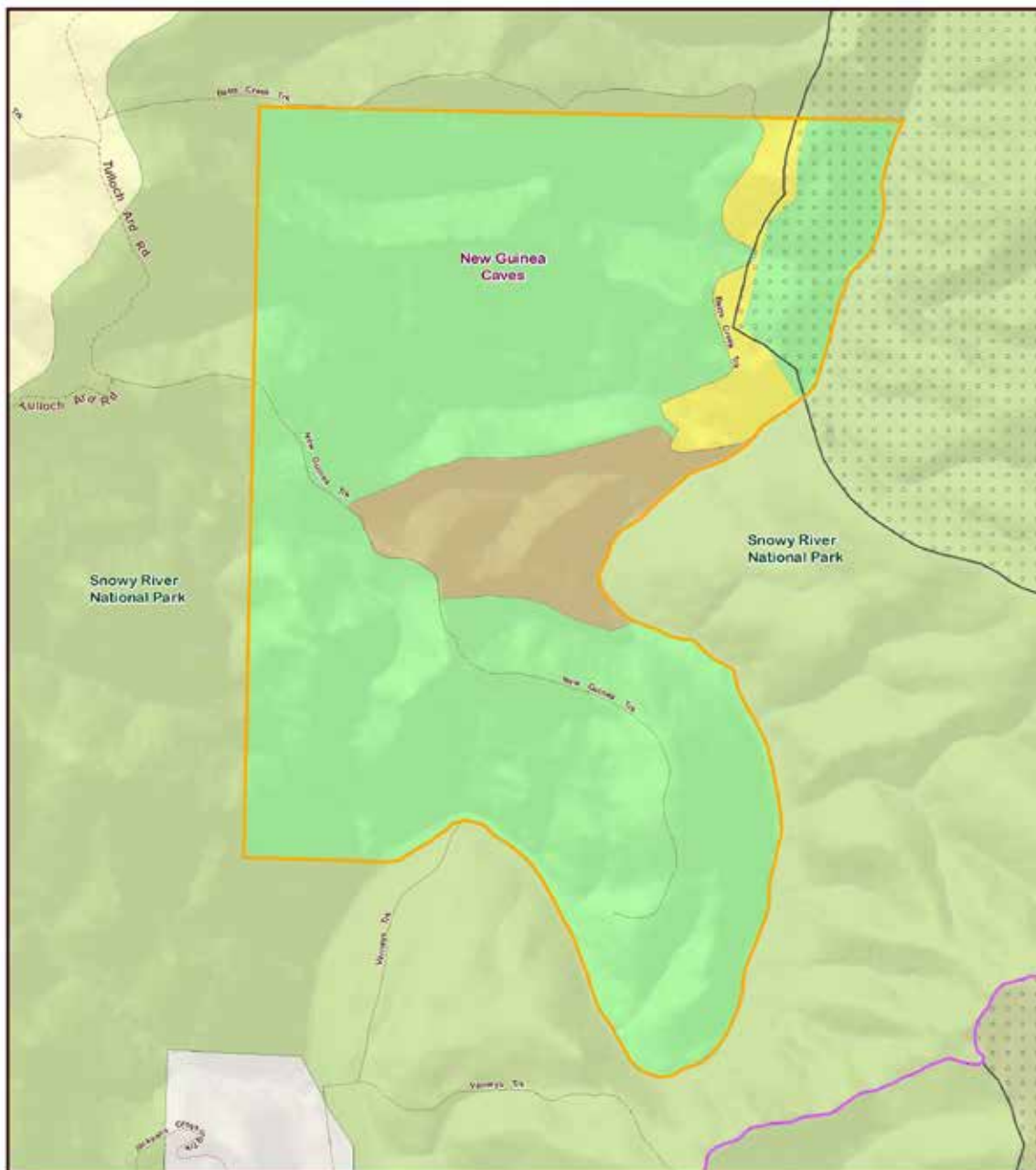
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the change be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff on parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other 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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New Guinea Caves Joint Management Plan

24/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGAD94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Management Vehicles Only

- Joint Management - New Guinea Caves
- Public Land
- Park and Reserve

Note: Heritage River Overlay applies to whole of Joint Management Area.

Management Zones and Overlays

- Conservation & Recreation Zone
- Conservation Zone
- Special Protection Overlay
- Natural Catchment Area
- Wilderness Zone

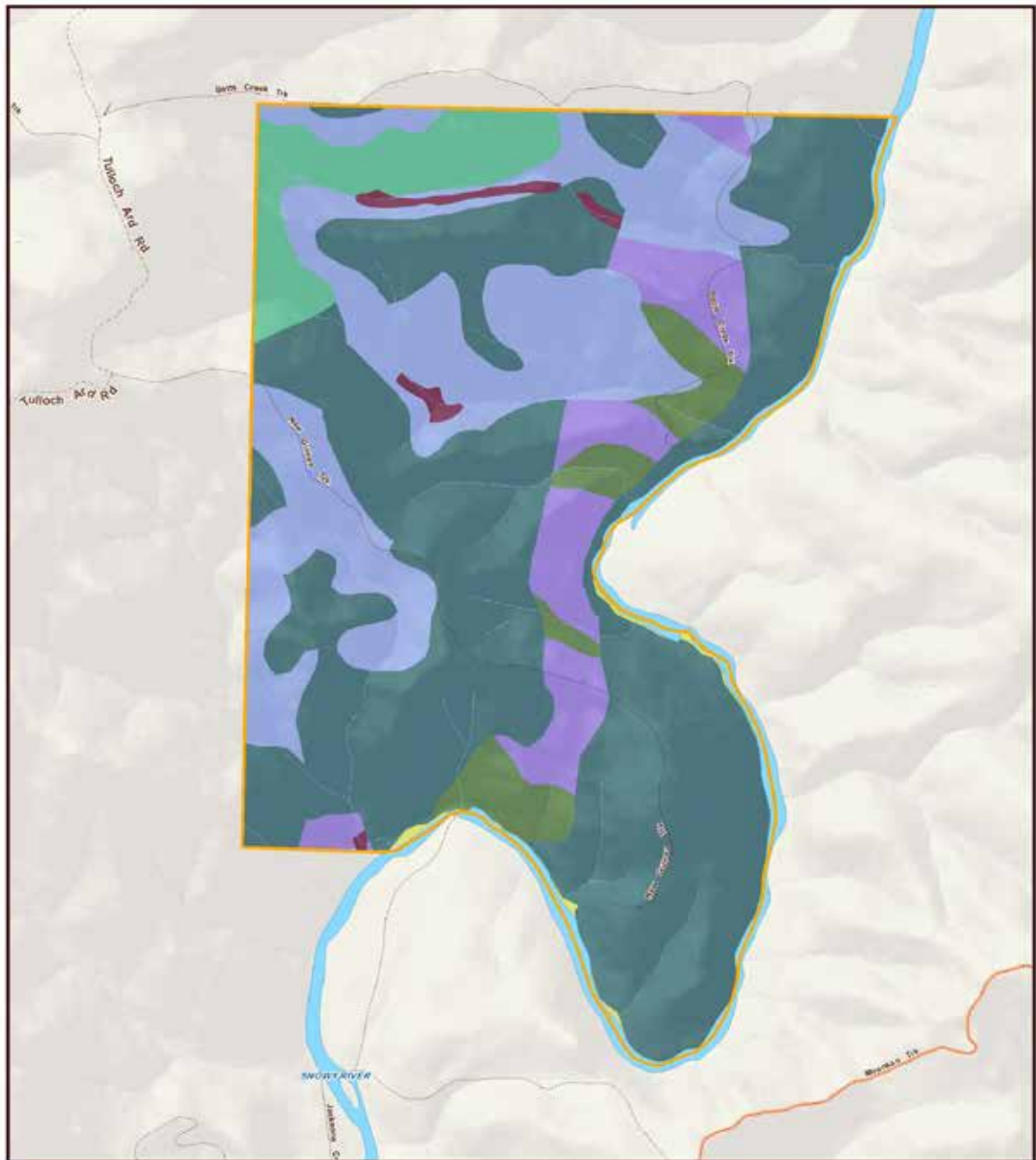
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Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 1: Management zones and overlays, New Guinea Caves.



New Guinea Caves Joint Management Plan

23/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID94

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- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- MVO

Joint Management

Ecological Vegetation Classes

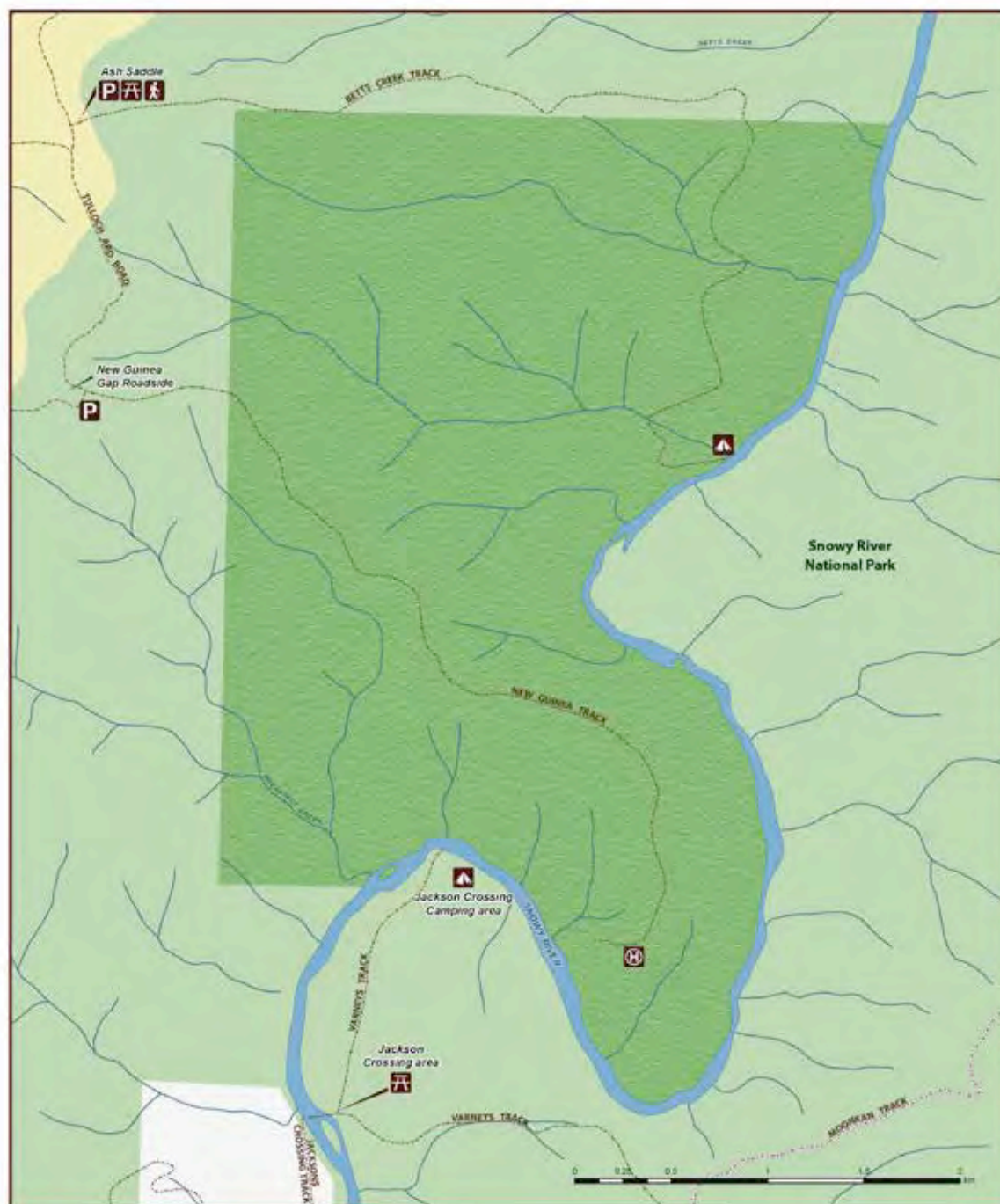
- Damp Forest
- Grassy Woodland
- Riparian Shrubland
- Shrubby Dry Forest
- Valley Grassy Forest
- Warm Temperate Rainforest
- Wet Forest



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, New Guinea Caves.



New Guinea Caves Joint Management Plan

23/5/2018
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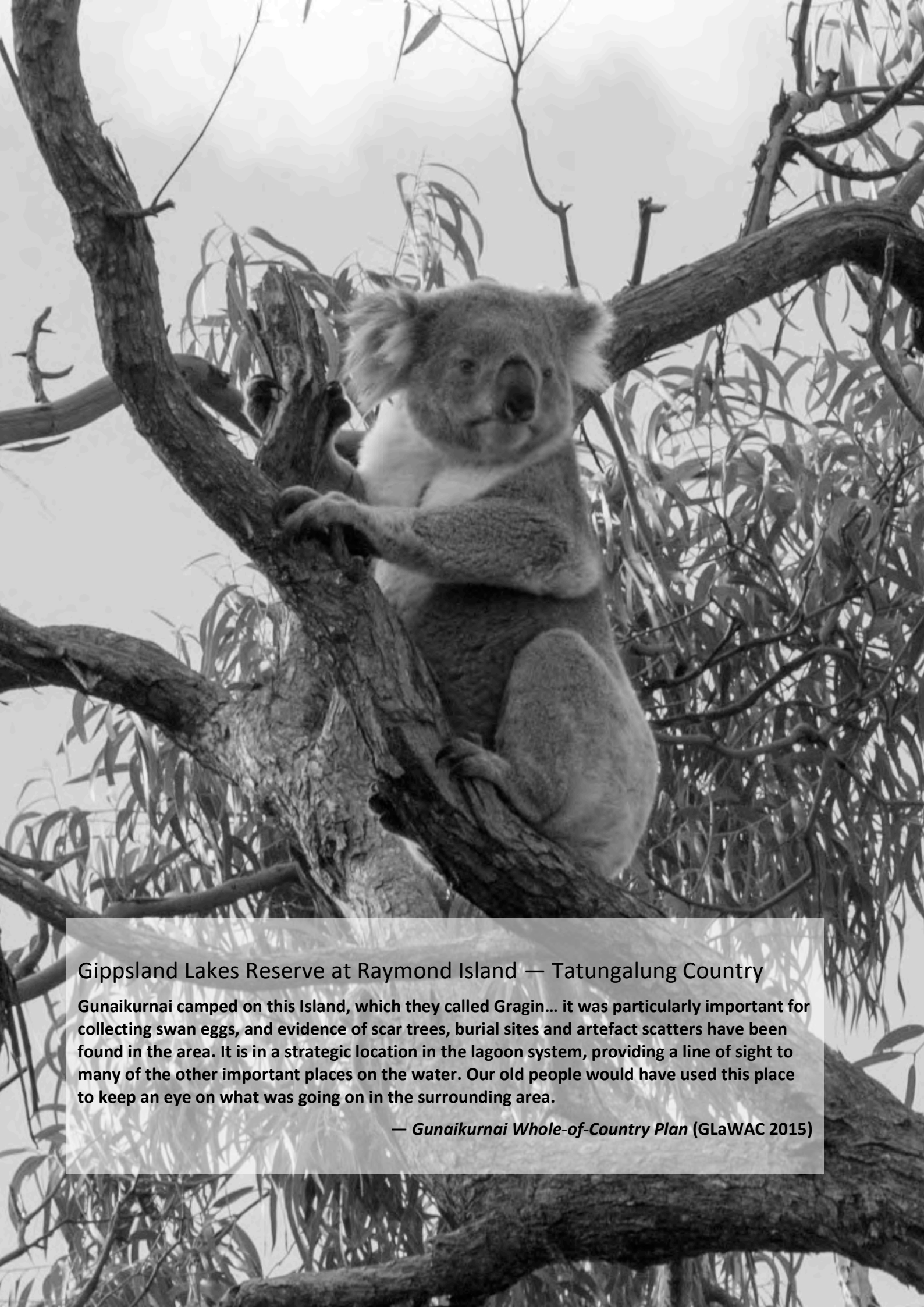


Map 3: Visitor Sites and Facilities, New Guinea Caves.

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

**GIPPSLAND LAKES RESERVE
AT RAYMOND ISLAND
— TATUNGALUNG COUNTRY**





Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island — Tatungalung Country

Gunaikurnai camped on this Island, which they called Gragin... it was particularly important for collecting swan eggs, and evidence of scar trees, burial sites and artefact scatters have been found in the area. It is in a strategic location in the lagoon system, providing a line of sight to many of the other important places on the water. Our old people would have used this place to keep an eye on what was going on in the surrounding area.

— *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, Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island has been granted to the Gunaikurnai as Aboriginal Title by the Victorian Government and will be managed jointly 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 Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island, the land continues to be managed as a reserve for public purposes and the protection of natural features, under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.).

This management plan for the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island has been 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.)

Because Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the RSA, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to the reserve. Existing rights and interests in the reserve that are held by others are not affected by the RSA, but remain subject to management policies and regulation.

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) was established in accordance with the RSA between GLaWAC and the State of Victoria, with the statutory objective of enabling the knowledge and culture of the Gunaikurnai to be recognised in the management of the 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island. 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 management plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island 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
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the reserve.

The reserve is part of the 58 800 ha Gippsland Lakes Site of International Significance listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention).

The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan (EGCMA 2015) provides direction for the site and is coordinated by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) on behalf of regional agency partners (West Gippsland CMA, DELWP, Parks Victoria and GLaWAC).

The Victorian Government is committed to conserving habitats of birds listed in the Japan–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement 1974 (JAMBA), the China–Australia Migratory Birds Agreement 1987 (CAMBA), the Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement 2006 (ROKAMBA) and the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Several listed species under these agreements regularly use Lake King and Lake Victoria.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island. The following sections provide:

- describe values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the reserve, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values
- describe Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the reserve and their uses and activities, and the goals and strategies for managing and enhancing those connections and uses
- identify government and community relationships and partnerships that are key to managing the reserve
- state 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 Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island in this plan, the strategic initiatives described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.

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

Raymond Island is approximately 6.4 kilometres long and 1.8 kilometres at its widest point, and is separated by a narrow channel from Paynesville. About 550 people live permanently in residential areas and farms on the Island. The island is known by Gunaikurnai as *Gragin* (meaning ‘quartz’) or *Bunjil Baul* (meaning ‘Mister Island’), a men’s initiation place.

The Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island covers 215 hectares (about one third of the island’s area) in the southern and eastern portion of the island and in a wetland area towards the north-east corner.

Prior to the grant of Aboriginal Title the reserve was set aside for public purposes, consisting of conservation, education and recreation.

2 THE GIPPSLAND LAKES RESERVE AT RAYMOND ISLAND UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

The Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is on the Country of the Tatungalung clan. The Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (GLaWAC 2015) sets out the following management priorities for the reserve:

- looking into the possibility of establishing an Indigenous Protected Area to help maintain the reserve's good condition
- looking into buying strategic parcels of land to reconnect and bring back the forest, investigating opportunities with the Indigenous Land Corporation and other funding mechanisms
- formally identifying and protecting burial sites
- renaming streets with Gunaikurnai names and sharing information about our traditional past, to balance the settler perspective of history
- undertaking more cultural surveys to get a better picture of what happened on the Island.

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.

Raymond Island has an active residential community which is very engaged in the management of the reserve and the island's environment.

The land and water areas of much of the reserve are less accessible and prominent than the other jointly managed parks and reserves, but the presence of Koalas attracts significant numbers of visitors including international tourists.

Under joint management there is an opportunity for the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community groups, local residents and other government organisations to work closely to maintain and enhance the important natural values of the reserve.

The proximity of the reserve and its small size presents an opportunity for the Gunaikurnai to demonstrate their capacity as joint managers and develop a strong relationship with the local community and visitors to the reserve.

The popularity of the island presents opportunities to present an enhanced and broader tourism experience through the development of a formalised walking track network, guided Koala-spotting walks and cultural activities.

3 ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the reserve. 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;
- assist in minimising conflicts between uses, or between those and the protection of conservation values;
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and use proposals.

Two management zones and one overlay apply to the reserve (Map 1). Zones describe the primary management priority for a designated part of the 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. The description and purpose of each zone and overlay is given in Table 1 and the locations are shown on Map 1.

In summary, the northern shore of the Island and the small wetland complex at the north-eastern end of island are zoned Conservation. This provides for minimal disturbance in the significant ecological vegetation classes and waterbird habitats in these areas including Coastal Saltmarsh, Swamp Scrub and Plains Grassy Woodland.

The remaining areas of the reserve, including the 'Koala walk' area near the residential zone and the Gravelly Point visitor site, are zoned Conservation and Recreation. The location of the zones largely reflects environmental and recreational values based on existing knowledge. Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values in the reserve are not well documented and need to be systematically surveyed and mapped. The zoning scheme includes provision for a future Cultural Values Overlay that would be applied through a formal variation to the plan, incorporating the outcomes of the cultural mapping project when completed.

Implementing this overlay may require an amendment of the description or provisions of the zones, and integration with Aboriginal Heritage Act and *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) provisions to ensure compatibility.

Under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as the hunting of wildlife and game, fishing, and the gathering of flora and forest produce. No agreement over the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is currently in place, but any future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

Table: 1 Management zones and overlays.

Zone	Description and purpose
Conservation Zone	Areas of high natural value including land, water and ecological values. Recreation and nature-based tourism are allowed subject to close management to ensure minimal impact and disturbance of natural values. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; limited visitor facilities are provided, and are dispersed and small-scale.
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.
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

Gunaikurnai have lived and camped on *Gragin* (meaning 'quartz') for thousands of years. The island is part of Tatungalung Country and is also known as *Bunjil Baul* or 'Mister Island', referring to its use as a men's initiation place.

The island is in a strategic position in the lagoon system and provided an important line of sight to many other important places on the water.

The waters of the island remain important to Gunaikurnai for fishing, collecting mussels, catching eels, hunting animals, collecting swan eggs, and gathering various plants for food and medicine. Raymond Island offers an important opportunity within the joint managed parks to interpret Gunaikurnai cultural interactions with the marine and coastal landscape.

The foreshore and forests are rich with materials for activities such as weaving baskets and making canoes, and the island contains a number of archaeological sites.

The Gunaikurnai cultural values of the reserve have not been systematically surveyed and mapped, but key values include:

- artefact scatters containing remains of weapons and evidence of tool-making activity
- scarred trees where bark was removed to make canoes and shields
- burial sites.

Protecting burial sites is particularly important to the Gunaikurnai. These sites, and the human remains they contain, are vulnerable to exposure by wind and coastal erosion and damage by works and visitor activities in the reserve. They need to be inventoried and mapped. Where necessary, rapid rehabilitation of burial sites is needed when they are exposed.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

Large areas of native vegetation throughout the reserve provide habitat for a wide range of fauna, although the overall condition of these areas is poor.

Raymond Island is part of the Gippsland Plains Bioregion. Little of its land rises higher than three to four metres above the surrounding lakes, and parts of the northern coast are prone to inundation. The southern coast has several stretches of attractive narrow, sandy beaches.

Much of the island has international recognition as a significant wetland under the Ramsar convention and intergovernmental migratory bird agreements.

The reserve supports Plains Grassy Woodland and Swamp Scrub EVCs, which are endangered within the Gippsland Plains Bioregion because of land clearance.

Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland is listed as vulnerable. Active rehabilitation programs coordinated by Landcare have assisted with the revegetation in some areas of the reserve. Table 2 describes the significant vegetation classes in the reserve.

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

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.

Land and water values	Description	Conservation status	Character species
Coastal Saltmarsh (2% of the reserve)	Restricted to flats on low energy coastlines subject to the influence of daily inundation and exposure to salt water and poor drainage. It is most extensively developed immediately inland from the major ocean beaches in the Gippsland Lakes area. Ranges from a low succulent herbland and shrubland to rushland and sedgeland.	EPBC listed	Beaded Glasswort (<i>Sarcocornia quinqueflora</i>) Australian Salt-grass (<i>Distichlis distichophylla</i>) Creeping Brookweed (<i>Samolus repens</i>)
Plains Grassy Woodland (9% of the reserve)	An open, eucalypt woodland to 15 m tall occurring on a number of geologies and soil types. Occupies poorly drained, fertile soils on flat or gently undulating plains at low elevations. The understorey consists of a few sparse shrubs over a grassy and herbaceous ground layer.	Endangered	Gippsland Red Gum (<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> subsp. <i>mediana</i>)
Swamp Scrub (8% of the reserve)	Closed scrub to 8 m tall at low elevations on alluvial deposits along streams or on poorly drained sites with higher nutrient availability. The EVC is dominated by paperbarks. Occasional emergent eucalypts may be present. Where light penetrates to ground level, a lichen–bryophyte or herbaceous ground cover is often present. Dry variants have a grassy or herbaceous ground layer.	Endangered	Swamp Paperbark (<i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i>) Woolly Tea-tree (<i>Leptospermum lanigerum</i>)
Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland (62% of the reserve)	Woodland with a grassy, heathy or bracken-dominated understorey and a ground layer rich in herbs, grasses, and orchids. Occurs mainly on flat or undulating areas on moderately fertile, relatively well drained, deep sand or sandy loam.	Vulnerable	Coast Manna Gum (<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i> subsp. <i>pyroriana</i>) Shining Peppermint (<i>Eucalyptus willisii</i>)

Koalas were introduced to the Island in 1953, and the population grew significantly. Their densities soon became unsustainable as their source of food, mainly Manna Gums, became defoliated and died, leading to mass starvation of the Koala population. Since then there has been active management of the population to protect the Koalas and their habitat.

Koalas are managed by DELWP with support from the other joint management delivery partners and in association with wildlife groups in accordance with Victoria's *Koala Management Strategy* (DSE 2004).

Rare or threatened species

The natural environment of Raymond Island and the surrounding waters provides habitat for a wide range of fauna species. Lake King (to the north) and Lake Victoria (to the south) are part of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site. The reserve is home to 66 flora species and 191 fauna species, of which five are listed as rare, vulnerable, or endangered.

Green and Golden Bell Frog and Growling Grass Frog have been reported from the reserve, but recent surveys have not confirmed their presence. Significant orchid species including the rare Robust Spider-orchid (*Caladenia valida*) are also present in the reserve.

Table 3: Significant Species, Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status	Relevant legislation	FFG Action Statement
<i>Caladenia valida</i>	Robust Spider-orchid	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Anas rhynchos</i>	Australasian Shoveler	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	vulnerable	FFG	60
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Latham's Snipe	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Larus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Nycticorax caledonicus hillii</i>	Nankeen Night Heron	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Sterna striata</i>	White-fronted Tern	near threatened	FFG	—

Landscape and catchment context

The catchment surrounding the reserve is one of the most complex natural landscapes in Victoria. The Gippsland Lakes receive water from six major rivers, are subject to dynamic hydrological and tidal processes and are surrounded by a complex mix of land uses including agriculture, fisheries, urban development and tourism.

Several key plans coordinate the natural resource management and development across land categories and agencies within the catchment, including the *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy*, the *Gippsland Lakes Priorities Plan*, the *Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan* and the *Gippsland Lakes Sustainable Boating Plan 2016–2018*.

The Regional Catchment Strategy sets out the following objectives for the Gippsland Lakes and Hinterland landscape, which includes the reserve:

- targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and connectivity of native vegetation
- targeted improvement of the status of threatened species and communities
- targeted improvement of the water quality and freshwater flow regime of the Gippsland Lakes
- targeted provision of appropriate freshwater and salinity regimes for selected fringing wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes
- increased sustainability of land use, with development in appropriate nodes along the Gippsland Lakes coastline
- plan for adaptation of Gippsland Lakes communities to changing conditions along the coastline.

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

The first pastoral lease on the island was taken up in 1856. The first township subdivision occurred in 1884, and the vehicular ferry service commenced in 1888. Some of the island was settled under the Village Settlement Scheme during the economic depression in the 1890s. Cattle leases, small holdings and fishing were the major land uses at the time. The produce from these enterprises was picked up by one of the steamers travelling back and forth daily between Sale and Lakes Entrance.

The island was rediscovered after World War 2 as a place for weekend shacks and holiday retreats.

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

A recent assessment of the reserve's native vegetation found that there has been significant impact from extensive dieback and overgrazing. Bracken and Saw Banksia are now dominant in areas that were Open Grassy Woodland and Manna Gum Grassy Woodland.

Parts of the reserve are fragmented by numerous tracks, especially in the western area around Koala Walk, and in the central section of the reserve. Extensive revegetation has been undertaken in partnership with Landcare, and these programs have contributed significantly to the restoration of the reserve's natural condition.

Foreshore erosion, pest plants and animals, unmanaged visitor access and inappropriate development are adversely affecting the large number of significant Gunaikurnai cultural locations in and around the reserve, including sites containing artefacts and places of spiritual and or cultural significance.

Invasive plants and animals

Priority invasive plant and animal threats that have been identified on Raymond Island (Ethos 2015) include:

- the presence of highly invasive weed species, including Dolichos Pea (*Dipogon lignosus*) and other garden escapes
- the presence of Bluebell Creeper (*Billardiera heterophylla*) as a new and emerging species
- threats posed by grassy weeds on margins and in residential areas (as a source), particularly to the threatened Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodland and associated native grassland
- increased browsing pressure from over-abundant native wildlife, resulting in tree death
- impacts of Hog Deer, including pugging of wetlands and low-lying areas and browsing of coastal vegetation.

Weeds could affect the significant vegetation communities and some of the reserve's important habitats, Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), Dolichos Pea and Myrtle-leaf Milkwort (*Polygala myrtifolia*) as well as garden escapees such as Agapanthus, kangaroo-paws (*Anigozanthus* spp.) and Bluebell Creeper are displacing native vegetation species, reducing diversity of native wetland flora and reducing habitat for water birds such as nesting terns.

Austral Bracken is a significant coloniser of areas where over-storey trees have died. The challenge is to maintain the relatively intact nature of the vegetation within the reserve and protect it from new introductions.

Goats, pigs and other livestock are farmed on the Island near the reserve, so there is a continual risk of stray animals becoming feral in the reserve. Hog Deer are also present on the island.

Protection of the Robust Spider-orchid by fencing out browsing native and feral herbivores has been undertaken in partnership with the Bairnsdale and District Field Naturalists Club.

Overabundant native animal populations

Koalas

From the introduction of fewer than 50 to Raymond Island in 1953, the Koala population grew steadily, peaking in 2003 at 605. The growing population created browsing pressure on the limited

area of Manna Gum forest habitat. Management strategies include sterilisation, Manna Gum revegetation, dog control, Koala population monitoring, Koala relocation to allow restoration of Manna Gum woodlands, habitat manipulation, protection of individual trees, and Koala health surveillance.

Once the population is at a sustainable level, ongoing management will be needed to ensure that population sizes are maintained to manage overgrazing and disease. DELWP has conducted several translocations, moving animals to suitable areas north of Bairnsdale where food supplies are available.

Fertility control has also been used to slow the population growth and move the management of the Koalas away from translocation to controlling the numbers on the island. The sustainable long-term Koala population is considered to be between 100 and 200 animals.

Kangaroos

The island has a significant population of Eastern Grey Kangaroos. The size of this population and the resulting grazing pressure on native vegetation is not currently posing problems, but needs to be monitored to determine the need for management action in the future.

Visitor and public impacts

Managing vehicle access throughout the reserve and around the lake foreshore, particularly in the southern area, will be an ongoing challenge to protect vegetation and prevent erosion. Firebreaks are often used illegally for vehicle access, creating soil disturbance, dust and other issues.

The network of tracks and trails across the island and the unmarked boundaries of the reserve result in unmanaged access within the reserve and potential disturbance to sensitive sites.

A number of landholders have cleared native vegetation on foreshore sections of the reserve adjacent to their properties in order to gain better views or water access. This illegal activity needs to be controlled through enforcement of vegetation clearing regulations.

Climate change

Climate change may intensify existing and new threats, including changes to hydrology, increased frequency and severity of extreme events, and changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes.

Climate change and severe weather such as drought and storms can alter freshwater inflows, create shoreline erosion, and impact on cultural sites. Extensive climate modelling and impact assessments have indicated a likely increase in sea level coupled with an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms in Gippsland Lakes (EGCMA 2015).

Changes such as sea-level rise are likely to occur slowly, but more extreme events such as storms, floods and bushfires can occur at any time. Potential impacts include physical damage to shorelines, vegetation and assets, and increased inundation, which can affect native vegetation diversity, cultural heritage sites, threatened species habitat and waterbird feeding.

Shoreline erosion may affect the habitat of several threatened species, including wading birds. The shoreline contains stabilising plants that protect the shoreline from erosion and contribute to important fish breeding and nursery areas.

Fire management

There have been no bushfires in the reserve since 1992, when a fire burned approximately 20 ha of the reserve north-east of Eleventh Parade. Several planned burns were undertaken in 2009 and 2011 in the western section of the reserve, near the main residential area of the island. Fire management on the island is a matter of debate within the local community.

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 the Reserve areas of Raymond Island.

The detailed 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. In particular, the planned burning strategy for the reserve needs to be focused on identifying areas of country that require burning and working with DELWP fire management to prioritise burning in these locations.

Changes to hydrology

At the time of European settlement, the Gippsland Lakes were linked to the sea by an intermittent entrance. Sand deposition closed the entrance during low river flows until a high flow raised the level of the lakes and breached the sand barrier.

An artificial entrance was opened in 1889, near Lakes Entrance, to improve boat access into and out of the lakes system. This resulted in reduced fluctuations and a general lowering of the Lakes' levels, thereby changing the flooding regime of the bordering swamps. The salinity of the water in the lakes also increased, causing extensive dieback of common reed beds along the shorelines.

Without the protection of the reed beds, shoreline erosion became extensive and widespread. Several important ecological vegetation classes on Raymond Island are vulnerable to changes in the Gippsland Lakes hydrology including coastal saltmarsh and shorelines.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

Conservation strategies to deal with the key land and water values are described in Table 4. Values are identified primarily at the level of EVCs and threatened species, using state-wide datasets.

However, it is more practical and effective to take conservation action by targeting assets at an intermediate level. For example, 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 area, rather than the EVC as a whole or a single threatened plant species.

An intensive conservation action planning process is required to identify the most critical assets given the present condition of the area and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating within it.

The strategies in Table 4 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: Land, water and heritage conservation strategies.

Threats	Priorities	Strategy
Waterbirds and critical breeding habitat — coastal saltmarsh, shorelines, swamp scrub		
Predation by foxes, cats, and dogs; deer disturbance and browsing; shoreline and Island erosion	Australian Pelican, Musk Duck, Little Tern, Fairy Tern, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Black Swan	Control predators, feral herbivores and invasive plants. Ensure compliance by visitors with access, navigation, and activity restrictions.
Native animal populations		
Overabundance leading to decline or death of Coastal Manna Gum forest	Koala numbers, genetic diversity, and health.	Maintain the Koala program, through collaboration between DELWP and partners, due to the impact on the health of the Island's vegetation.
Overabundance leading to grazing pressure on ground vegetation	Condition of Manna Gum habitat. Kangaroo numbers	Monitor numbers and genetic diversity, undertake periodic Koala health checks. Seek to reduce population size to a sustainable level through fertility control, relocation and management of diseased animals. Keep the community informed of population status and engage in relation to proposed management actions and maintain opportunities for Koala viewing. Monitor population size and grazing pressure, and determine any required control action.
All EVCs		
Invasive plants	Dolichos Pea and Bluebell Creeper	Seek to eradicate these species prior to the expansion of the populations during favourable conditions. Control invasive climbers in areas within or adjoining the reserve. Engage with local community members and the East Gippsland Shire Council to encourage residents not to plant invasive species.
Plains Grassy Woodland EVC		
Predominant EVC, extending over approximately three-quarters of the reserve's area. Characteristic component of broader community listed as threatened under the FFG Act and endangered under EPBC Act	Grazing by rabbits, weed invasion, firewood collection, overgrowth of shrubs and trees	Maintain extent and enhance condition. Control grazing by rabbits and high impact weeds. Protect hollow-bearing trees and coarse woody debris. Restrict perennial grasses and shrub invasion to promote ground-layer vegetation. Consider targeted low-intensity burning to promote ground-layer species.
Rare or threatened species		
Various	White-bellied Sea-eagle, Robust Spider-orchid	Implement relevant parts of FFG Action Statement No. 60, guidelines, and recovery plans. Investigate the feasibility of restoring depleted species.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values		
Cultural sites and intangible heritage have only been partially surveyed and recorded	Cultural survey and mapping	Complete the current GKTOLMB cultural mapping project for the ten jointly managed parks and reserves. Determine required management actions including implementation of a Cultural values overlay.

5 PEOPLE IN THE RESERVE

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai.

The reserve provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to country in an inspiring landscape, characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai to hold community gatherings on country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for country through conservation and restoration work in the area. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories.

GLaWAC Joint management ranger team members undertake conservation and maintenance works in the reserve, co-operatively with Parks Victoria, including Koala management and weed control. There is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program.

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

5.2 VISITORS TO THE RESERVE

The reserve is an important recreation area for Raymond Island residents, who walk, ride and picnic in the reserve. A network of roads and vehicle tracks has developed in the past, with little planning. There are instances of inappropriate use of the reserve for vehicle access to freehold land where there are alternative on-title alignments. Recreational boats on Lake Victoria and Lake King pull on to the shoreline and jetties fringing the reserve. The only designated visitor site is at Gravelly Point which has toilets and a picnic area.

Visitors including international tourists are attracted by the opportunity to see Koalas and several tour operators include the location in their itineraries. A walking route using existing roads and tracks in the south-western area of the reserve has become known as the Koala walk.

The Raymond Island Community Association has upgraded signs and information for visitors along the walk. Several short four-wheel-drive tracks in this area have been closed to vehicles to reduce the disturbance of the Koalas and improve the walking and viewing experience. A 'tuk tuk' operation that provides transport for visitors needs to be formalised.

There is a significant opportunity to broaden the experience beyond wildlife to take in Gunaikurnai culture and the interpretation of the wider values of Gunaikurnai Country, particularly for international visitors. These experiences are likely to continue to be small-scale because of the island's ferry-only access and the limited capacity for visitors.

The relatively sheltered waters around the island are very well suited to kayaking and canoeing, and there is scope to broaden tour services for these activities. The island is also well suited to easy cycling, and cycles are transported on the ferry at no charge.

There are potential commercial tourism opportunities for Gunaikurnai within these activities. Services provided by East Gippsland Shire Council are integral to visitor use and enjoyment of the island including responsibility for the ferry service, toilets at the ferry landing and responsibility for the first section of the Koala walk.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

The management of visitor experiences in the reserve will be based on the goal and strategies in Table 5.

Table 5: Visitor experiences goal and strategies.

Goal

Provide bushland and coastal day visits for a wide range of visitors based on quiet enjoyment and experience of the natural and cultural values of the Reserve supported by low-key facilities and services

Strategies

Develop better experiences and services for domestic and international visitors, focused on Koala-watching with interpretation and guiding that provide broader Gunaikurnai cultural tourism experiences.

Manage the Reserve's road and track network to provide practical public access while reducing impacts on natural and cultural values, especially in the Conservation Zone and any future Cultural Values Overlay.

Recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 6. This table does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

At the time of writing, regulations for the reserve under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act had lapsed and had not been renewed. This limits Park Victoria's capacity to regulate inappropriate activity by visitors and the general public. Regulations under other legislation provide some continuing enforcement powers in relation to dogs, firearms, off-road driving and other activities.

Table 6: Recreational activities allowed in management zones.

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone
Boating — motorised, sailing	Yes	Yes
Boating — rafting, canoeing, kayaking	Yes	Yes
Camping — designated areas	No	No
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	No	No
Camping — dispersed other	No	No
Campfires — solid fuel	No	No
Campfires — liquid or gas fuel stove	Yes	Yes
Competitive events	No	Yes (with permit, if activity type is allowed)
Cycling	Yes (on open public roads and MVO roads and tracks. Not allowed on walking tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and MVO roads and tracks. Not allowed on walking tracks)

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone
Dogs	No	Yes (only on lead)
Education activities	Yes	Yes
Firearms	No	No
Firewood collection	No	No.
Fishing	Yes	Yes
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)
Guided activities	Yes	Yes
Horseriding	No	No
Hunting	No	No
Orienteering and rogaining	No	Yes (subject to permit)
Picnicking	Yes	Yes
Swimming	Yes	Yes
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes
Vehicle use (two-wheel and four-wheel drive, and trail bikes)	Yes (on open public roads – not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads and tracks)	Yes (on open public roads – not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads and tracks)

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS — GLaWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP, GKTOLMB

The reserve is assigned to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Bairnsdale. Regional and state-wide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the area from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne. Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in the reserve and other jointly managed areas, which has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for Koala management and public land fire management on the Island. The GLaWAC Joint Management Ranger Team has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program. The Country Fire Authority is responsible for fire management on private land on the Island.

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP 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 operate in several directions, with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC.

GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

The Raymond Island residential community is a critical partner in successfully managing the reserve. The Raymond Island Community Association coordinates community and volunteer projects, and liaison with government agencies. The Raymond Island Landcare group is active in undertaking revegetation and weed control projects on the Island. The Raymond Island History group promotes the collection and preservation of historical knowledge about the Island, and a wildlife carer's network provides support for injured and displaced wildlife.

The Sporting Shooters Association Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs in the joint managed parks and reserves.

There is strong debate and differing views within the community about certain aspects of reserve management. In the absence of a management plan for the reserve, planning debates have sometimes developed during the implementation of operational programs by ranger staff. This should be addressed by facilitated engagement with the community in advance of operational programs.

The Friends of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves aims to promote the values of parks and reserves and to provide an avenue for the community to participate in their management.

The Bairnsdale and District Field Naturalists Club and the Gippsland Environment Group are both active in surveying and monitoring the natural values and condition of the parks and reserves in the region.

The Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club, based at Paynesville, uses the waters around the reserve.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the reserve. Aboriginal Victoria is the primary Government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic co-ordination of catchment restoration

investment. It provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB. The EGCMA is also responsible for implementing the *Victorian Coastal Strategy* (VCC 2014) in East Gippsland to achieve integrated management, conservation, and sustainable use of the coastal zone.

Raymond Island is within the Shire of East Gippsland. The Shire manages the ferry service to the island and is responsible for local road and traffic management, planning regulation and other municipal functions.

The management of ports and public facilities in the Gippsland Lakes (including public jetties, moorings, navigational aids, dredging, rock walling and beach renourishment) is the responsibility of Gippsland Ports.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

A number of jetties are located on the shoreline of the reserve. These are managed by Gippsland Ports and East Gippsland Shire Council.

Several tour operators are licensed to visit the reserve, primarily for wildlife tours.

A Uniting Care school camp that operates on private land adjacent to the reserve uses the reserve for bushwalking and bird-watching by agreement.

6.4 RESERVE BOUNDARIES

Opportunities to create more effective boundaries or to negotiate improved access through acquisitions or landholder agreements should be evaluated.

There is a small patch of endangered Plains Grassy Woodland in the north-western section of the reserve, and some also on neighbouring private land. Opportunities to acquire the areas on private land, or to bring them under conservation management by agreement, should be pursued if they arise.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with goals and strategic initiatives for the joint management area as a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural values of the Gippsland Lakes Reserve on Raymond Island are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action
RI1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
RI2	Protect and conserve the reserve by implementing the land and water conservation strategies detailed in Table 4.
RI3	Increase control of emerging threats including deer, Bridal creeper, Bluebell creeper, Dolichos Pea, Polygala, Agapanthus, and Kangaroo paw.
RI4	Work with the local government, EGCMA and affected landholders to control shoreline erosion.
RI5	Work with DELWP to protect the area, assets and communities from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect migratory bird habitat and other fire-sensitive values.
RI6	Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for reserve ecosystems and habitats, and seek to program and implement burns as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.
RI7	Include the area in the development of a comprehensive conservation action plan aligned to the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan and broader Gippsland Park Landscape conservation.

Cultural heritage

RI8	Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the area through Welcome to Country and other appropriate signage, based on the Tatungalung clan at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the reserve. Promote and interpret Gunaikurnai cultural interactions with the marine and coastal landscape of Raymond Island.
RI9	Undertake surveys and mapping of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the reserve, and consider implementing a cultural values overlay as part of the reserve zoning.
RI10	Explore opportunities with the tourism industry and local community for Gunaikurnai to provide information, interpretation and guiding, particularly to interpret the cultural context of Koalas and the broader natural and cultural values of the reserve to local, interstate and international visitors.
RI11	Seek to rename places in the reserve using traditional Gunaikurnai names, through the Office of Geographic Names.
RI12	Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection by visiting the reserve and undertaking community cultural activities.

- RI13 Ensure tour operators undertake cultural awareness training conducted by Gunaikurnai, to enhance knowledge and protection of cultural heritage and to improve the interpretation of cultural heritage to visitors.
Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors and others working in the reserve.
- RI14 Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the Reserve in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
- RI15 Implement relevant entitlements or obligations under the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases, and comment on lower-impact authorisations in the reserve.
- RI16 Implement cultural heritage management procedures for the reserve as agreed between the partners, including incorporation of Aboriginal Heritage Act provisions and any Natural Resource Agreement that may be established for the reserve under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act.

People in the Reserve

Goals

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

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

No.	Actions
RI17	Manage visitor experiences in the reserve in accordance with the goal and strategy in Table 5.
RI18	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.
RI19	Develop an access plan for the reserve in collaboration with the Shire of East Gippsland, local community and tour operators that provides opportunities for Koala viewing, walking, cycling and vehicles, and sightseeing and interpretation of the Reserve's natural and cultural values. Relocate vehicle access to freehold land from informal alignments in the reserve to on-title alignments as development applications are made, or in response to changes in reserve facilities or requirements.
RI20	Encourage the development of new reserve regulations under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act. Maintain education and enforcement of relevant regulations under other Acts to ensure compliance with vegetation clearance, waste and other regulations.
RI21	Explore the opportunity for increased tour experiences in the reserve and around the coast including canoe and kayak tours.

Working Together

Goals

Joint management of the reserve operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community and stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the reserve.

No.	Actions
RI22	Build consensus among the joint management partners and the Raymond Island community about management strategies for the reserve, using independent facilitation where necessary.
RI23	Collaborate with Destination Gippsland and other tourism and community groups to promote the reserve and improve tourism services for visitors.
RI24	Continue the participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP-led Koala management programs, and increase participation in fire management programs on the Island.
RI25	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the area to interact with other parks and partners in the RSA area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
RI26	Maintain close collaboration with the EGCMA and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the wider landscape.
RI27	Pursue opportunities to add areas of significant adjacent native vegetation to the reserve and create more effective boundaries through acquisitions or landholder agreements.

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	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. • the actions described in this management plan for Raymond Island.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

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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Raymond Island - Gippsland Lakes Reserve

Joint Management Plan

21/03/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID94

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only

- Joint Management
- Public Land

Management Zones

- Conservation Zone
- Conservation & Recreation Zone

Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without error or that it is free from liability, which may arise from use of this information. Parks Victoria is not responsible for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information.



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 1: Management zones and overlays, Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.



Raymond Island - Gippsland Lakes Reserve

Joint Management Plan

28/01/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICCRD84

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only
- Joint Management

Ecological Vegetation Classes

- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland
- Plains Grassy Woodland
- Swamp Scrub
- Water Body - Fresh

This map is a representation of the data as of the date of publication. It is not intended to be used for legal purposes. The map is not a guarantee of accuracy. The map is not a guarantee of accuracy. The map is not a guarantee of accuracy.



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.



Raymond Island - Gippsland Lakes Reserve

Joint Management Plan

29/3/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID84
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

- Picnic Area
- Toilets

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Map 3: Visitor Sites and Facilities, Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

**TARRA-BULGA NATIONAL PARK
— BRATAUALUNG COUNTRY —**





Tarra–Bulga National Park — Brataualung Country

Tarra–Bulga National Park is a stronghold of virgin bushland in an otherwise cleared landscape. It is one of the last refuges of natural forest in the area and home to mountain ash trees, lyrebirds and wallabies as well as several species that have now largely disappeared from the rest of the region. The significant remnants of old growth forest are characteristic of a period when only Gunaikurnai were present on the land, and is therefore an important reminder to us of what our Country was like in the time of our ancestors.

— *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, Tarra–Bulga National Park 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 Tarra–Bulga National Park, the land continues to be managed as a national park under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.).

This management plan for Tarra–Bulga National Park 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 National Parks Act and the requirements of 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.) It replaces the previous management plan for Tarra–Bulga National Park (Parks Victoria 1996), which ceases to have effect on approval of this 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 Tarra–Bulga National Park and the other nine Joint Management parks and reserves. Existing rights and interests in the park, 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) was established in accordance with the RSA between GLaWAC and the State of Victoria, 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 Tarra–Bulga National Park. 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 Tarra–Bulga National Park is well managed, its values and assets are protected and conserved, and the statutory requirements for park 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
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the park.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This Plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Tarra–Bulga National Park. The following sections provide:

- a description of values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the park, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values;
- a description of Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the park 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 park; 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 Tarra–Bulga National Park in this plan, the strategic initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to this park.

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 PARK

Tarra–Bulga National Park is one of several parks and reserves located in the ‘forest and mountain country’ of the Gunaikurnai RSA area.

The park covers 2022 hectares of Mountain Ash forest and cool temperate rainforest in the eastern part of the Strzelecki Ranges of South Gippsland. It was proclaimed on 17 June 1986 under Schedule Two of the National Parks Act. It is recognised by Gunaikurnai as a traditional place of gathering due to its topography as a high point of the ranges.

The Alberton Shire Council initially reserved a small area of forest near Balook in 1904 to protect its fern gullies, and a larger area in the Tarra Valley in 1909. The former was named Bulga—an Aboriginal word meaning mountain—while the latter was named after Charlie Tarra, an Aboriginal man who guided Paul Strzelecki and his party through Gippsland in 1840.

Various additions to these reserves were subsequently made. The decision to protect the two reserves as one National Park was based on Land Conservation Council recommendations to the Victorian Government for the South Gippsland Area, District 2 (LCC 1982).

Following a land exchange between APM Forests Pty Ltd and the Crown, an area of land linking the Tarra Valley and Bulga sections was added to the park in 1991, with a further addition in 2004.

The park is listed in Category II (National Parks) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature protected area categories and the United Nations’ List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves.

Category II areas are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

2 TARRA–BULGA NATIONAL PARK UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

The park is located on the Country of the Brataualung clan of the Gunaikurnai. It lies on a central part of the Gunaikurnai creation storyline where Borun, carrying his canoe, travelled from the mountains in the north to the place called Tarra Warackel on the coast south of the park, now called Port Albert (GLaWAC 2015).

The forest provided resources, and the stream waters that flow from Tarra–Bulga would have been important, particularly in times of drought, as they are to the present-day communities of South Gippsland.

The cool temperate rainforest areas of the park are botanically rich and ecologically very significant due to their depletion in the broader landscape by land clearance, timber harvesting and large-scale bushfires in the region and other parts of eastern Victoria.

They are now vulnerable to the drying and warming impacts of climate change, requiring conservation action not just inside the park but outside its boundaries, to buffer the park from severe bushfires and invasive plants and animals.

The *Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan* sets out the following management priorities for the park:

- preventing the park from being isolated by logging
- maintaining roads and tourist infrastructure to minimise the impact of heavy traffic
- reclassifying and managing unreserved areas in the middle of the park
- ensuring that the visitor centre actively promotes Gunaikurnai cultural values and involves Gunaikurnai people in the design of displays and audio-visual material
- undertaking focused cultural mapping.

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.

The original reservation of the park and the conservation priorities prior to joint management have focused on the role of the park as a surviving remnant of the wet forests and rainforest that once covered much of South Gippsland. The history of timber-cutting, the efforts to clear and establish farms around the park, and the campaigns of conservation activists to reserve the park have all been prominent stories in the protection and interpretation of the park for visitors.

The importance of Tarra–Bulga for Gunaikurnai people—over thousands of years and to this day—has been much less visible in park management and visitor information. Under joint management, the timeless connection of the Gunaikurnai people to the park will be made more visible and they will bring their traditional knowledge and present-day practices and use rights into an active collaboration with land management agencies and community groups to protect and interpret all the features and stories of this magnificent place.

The park provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to Country in a landscape characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition. Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to hold community gatherings on Country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for Country through conservation and restoration work.

Tarra–Bulga National Park gives all who come to it an inspiring experience of giant trees, towering forest, lush fern gullies, rich wildlife and crystal-clear mountain streams. Joint management brings the Gunaikurnai people into an active conservation and management collaboration with Parks Victoria, the community, scientists and neighbouring landholders, who all value the park in their own way.

3 ZONING

A park management zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the park. These zones will:

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

Three management zones and one overlay apply to the park, with provision for a Cultural Values Overlay in future (Table 1). Zones describe the primary management priority and land-use for a designated part of the park, whereas 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. The location of each zone and overlay is shown on Map 1.

The location of the zones largely reflects environmental and recreational values based on existing knowledge. Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the park are not well documented, and are being systematically surveyed and mapped. The zoning scheme includes provision for a Cultural Values Overlay that would be applied through a formal variation to the plan, incorporating the outcomes of the cultural mapping project when completed. Implementation of this overlay may require amendment of the description or provisions of other zones and overlays, and integration with the Aboriginal Heritage Act and the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) to ensure compatibility.

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 over Tarra–Bulga National Park is in place. A future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays.

Zone	Description and purpose
Conservation Zone	Areas of high natural value including land, water and ecological values. Recreation and nature-based tourism are allowed subject to close management to ensure minimal impact and disturbance of natural values. Limited visitor facilities are provided, and are dispersed and small-scale.
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.
Reference Area Zone	Areas proclaimed under the <i>Reference Areas Act 1978</i> (Vic.) where all human interference is kept to the essential minimum so that, as far as practicable, the only long-term change results from natural processes. No access is allowed except that associated with protecting natural processes, emergency operations and approved research. Reference Areas may be used for comparative studies against other areas to show the effects of natural and human processes.
Special Protection Overlay	Areas, generally small in extent, of threatened or highly significant native vegetation or wildlife populations that require special protection. Access and activities by visitors and others are not allowed or are subject to conditions.
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

Tarra–Bulga National Park is a central part of the Gunaikurnai creation storyline where *Borun* the pelican travelled, carrying his canoe, from the mountains in the north to the place called Tarra Warackel on the coast south of the park, now called Port Albert, where he married *Tuk* the musk duck and together they founded the five Gunaikurnai clans (*Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country plan*).

The extent of Gunaikurnai occupation and use of the park has not been mapped, partly due to the priorities of earlier management as well as the difficulties of surveying the steep and heavily forested terrain.

Experience from surveys of other forested parks in the Victorian Alps and Gippsland, conducted after large-scale bushfires, suggests that evidence of Gunaikurnai occupation may prove to be more extensive than the paucity of existing records indicates (DSE and Parks Victoria, 2005), especially on ridges and streamlines that provided preferred travel routes.

A number of plant species are known to be culturally important for the Gunaikurnai (Oates and Frood 2017b) including:

- Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) — *moeyang*; used for food, medicine, fibre and implements
- Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) — *ballee*, *ballart*; used for medicine and implements
- Drooping Mistletoe (*Amyema pendula*) — used for food and medicine
- Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*)
- Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum aviculare*) — *gunyang*, *koonyang*; used for food, medicine, fibre and implements.

Plants were important both for their practical uses and for cultural identity. For example, *moeyang* was traditionally an important species for making spear throwers, bathing rheumatic joints with the soaked bark, and making fishing lines from the inner fibres, and it was also prized for shields which were important for clan identity (GLaWAC 2015).

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai people. The park provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to Country in an inspiring landscape, characteristic of *wurruk* in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to hold community gatherings on Country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for Country through conservation and restoration work in the park.

GLaWAC Joint Management Rangers undertake conservation and maintenance works in the park, co-operatively with Parks Victoria and there is great 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, students and by working with tour operators and the tourism industry to ensure that the promotion of the cultural heritage of the park to tourists and the public is accurate and rich.

The Native Title Determination and Recognition and Settlement Agreement of 2010 recognise the legal right of the Gunaikurnai to camp in the park as a traditional activity, consistent with law and regulation.

Camping by general visitors has not previously been permitted in the park due to the sensitivity of the vegetation and soils, and the opportunities for camping outside the park. The identification of a camping area for Gunaikurnai use should be informed by the proposed assessment of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the park.

The designation of a camping area or areas should then be considered and the basis of use and access determined.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

The park contains three Ecological Vegetation Communities (EVCs), the standard unit for classifying native vegetation types in Victoria, as well as some previously logged areas and former cleared farmland. The characteristics and conservation status of these are described in Table 2 and their location is shown in Map 2.

The topography of the park is characterised by enclosed valleys formed by narrow steep slopes with waterfalls and rapids along the watercourses.

The base rocks are fine-grained Cretaceous sandstones with interbedded softer sands and siltstone. They contain a diverse and abundant fossil flora in the rocky outcrops with impressions of *Taeniopteris* and *Sphenopteris* fossil ferns and liverworts. These types of outcrops are rare and of State geological significance (Rosengren et al. 1981). Small areas of Tertiary basalts and conglomerates also occur. The steepness of the land led to some of the area being excluded from selection for farming prior to the creation of the park.

The endangered Cool temperate rainforest EVC is particularly significant. It is found in the wettest, most climatically fire-protected niches and is almost entirely restricted to deeply dissected foothills, gully systems of mountain ranges and montane plateaus.

These are primarily along south facing gullies, creeks and on south-east facing slopes, where insolation is low. It can occur on river flats where rainfall is at its maximum.

Cool temperate rainforest requires a high to very high annual rainfall of 1200–2000 mm and is largely restricted to environments where severe fire occurs at intervals greater than 400 years. This community has undergone a gross geographical decline, particularly in the Otways and Strzeleckis as a result of land clearing and the effects of fire and timber harvesting.

It is threatened by fires of high intensity and frequency which eliminate *Nothofagus* and other over-storey species, allowing light-dependent sclerophyll species to colonise, and if there are repeated fires, to replace the rainforest species.

Approximately two hundred species of vascular plants have been identified in the park (Ashwell 1988; Beauglehole 1972) including 41 species of ferns of which four are significant, being the slender tree-fern—listed as vulnerable under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.)—Skirted tree-fern, Sticky wattle and Fairy lanterns.

Two hundred and eighty-nine different kinds of fungi and non-vascular plants such as mosses and liverworts have also been recorded. Although the park's cultural values have not been systematically surveyed, it is known from assessments elsewhere in the joint management area that numerous plant species have cultural importance.

A total of 115 vertebrate fauna species have been recorded in the park of which nine are rare or threatened, including the South Gippsland spiny crayfish, the Strzelecki burrowing crayfish and the barking owl, all of which are endangered.¹

The park contains a substantial assemblage of bird and mammal species. The Superb Lyrebird, Powerful Owl, Pilotbird, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Eastern Whipbird, Laughing Kookaburra, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Yellow Robin and Pied Currawongs are other birds occurring in the park.

The Common Wombat, Swamp Wallaby, Greater Glider, Sugar Glider, Common and Mountain Brushtail Possums, Short-beaked Echidna, Agile and Dusky Antechinus, Long-nosed Bandicoot, Platypus, and Common Ringtail Possum also inhabit the park.

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

¹ DELWP (2018) *Victorian Biodiversity Atlas*

Table 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Tarra–Bulga National Park.

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)	Description	Bioregional conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Wet Forest (87.1% of park area)	Characterised by a tall eucalypt over-storey to 30 m with scattered understorey trees over a tall broad-leaved shrubby understorey and a moist, shaded, fern-rich ground layer that is usually dominated by tree-ferns.	depleted	Mountain Ash (<i>Eucalyptus regnans</i>) Blue Gum (<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> s.l.) Messmate Stringybark (<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.) Tutsan (<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>) Sycamore Maple (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)
Cool Temperate Rainforest (10.4% of park area)	Closed non-eucalypt forest to 25 m tall with occasional eucalypt emergents. Occurs in high rainfall areas protected from fire within Wet Forest. The understorey characterised by tree ferns and a rich epiphytic flora. The ground layer is dominated by a diversity of ground ferns.	endangered	Myrtle Beech (<i>Nothofagus cunninghamii</i>) Southern Sassafras (<i>Atherosperma moschatum</i>) Blackwood (<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>)	Various
Damp Forest (2.5% of park area)	Dominated by a tall eucalypt tree layer to 30 m over a medium to tall dense shrub layer of broad-leaved species typical of Wet forest mixed with elements from dry forest types. The ground layer includes herbs and grasses as well as a variety of moisture-dependent ferns.	endangered	Messmate Stringybark (<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>) Eurabbie (<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> subsp. <i>bicostata</i>) Mountain Grey Gum (<i>Eucalyptus cypellocarpa</i>)	Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> spp. agg.) Spear thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>) Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>) Cat's Ear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>) Self-heal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>)

Table 3: Significant species, Tarra Bulga National Park.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status	FFG Action Statement
<i>Euastacus neodiversus</i>	South Gippsland Spiny Crayfish	endangered	176
<i>Engaeus rostrigaleatus</i>	Strzelecki Burrowing Crayfish	endangered	173
<i>Ninox connivens</i>	Barking Owl	endangered	116
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	vulnerable	92
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	Grey Goshawk	vulnerable	—
<i>Cyathea cunninghamii</i>	Slender Tree-fern	vulnerable	238
<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	Sooty Owl	vulnerable	unnumbered

Landscape and catchment context

The park is in the Strzelecki Ranges, which is identified as a landscape priority area in the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (WGCMA 2013).

This priority area incorporates the water catchment area for the Tarra River, which supplies the townships of Alberton, Devon North, Port Albert and Yarram. The Upper Tarra River is in good condition, with excellent streamside vegetation and aquatic life (DEPI 2013).

The natural landscape of the Strzelecki Ranges has been fragmented by clearing for intensive agriculture, as well as by timber production. The area around the park has been heavily logged, and the cleared hills are visible from the park.

Tarra–Bulga National Park is a very important regional remnant of intact native vegetation. There is moderate to high connectivity between remnants in the ranges, which needs to be maintained and extended.

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

From the 1860s, settlers occupied the land in the area for dairy farming, extensively clearing and burning the countryside to establish and maintain cultivation, leaving only a few scattered areas of forest. Settlers' cottages were dotted about the ridges of the Strzelecki Ranges from the 1890s once the rugged and steep slopes were opened for selection, and the township of Balook was established.

Several nearby timber mills took out the remaining commercial timber, and by the 1930s most of the forests had been cleared. Many farms were abandoned or became neglected because of the harsh nature of the land.

There are numerous sites with historic heritage value, including sites of early timber-cutting and agriculture and some interesting early structures, but many of these have been obscured or obliterated by exposure and regrowth (Parks Victoria 1996). Notable sites are Corrigan Suspension Bridge, Moorfields Dairy Site, Wills Homestead, Wills Track, Cooks Mill, and Logging Winch.

A notable aspect of the park's history is that its caretaker in the early 1950s, Karamoana Healey, was the first woman appointed as a caretaker of a national park in Victoria; in effect she was Victoria's first female ranger.

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

Key threats to the natural values of the park were recognised in the previous management plan (Parks Victoria 1996) and are the focus of ongoing programs and management operations.

Invasive plants and animals

The park's flora and fauna includes a range of introduced plant and animal species, including blackberry, deer, rabbits, foxes, cats and dogs. Wild seedlings of pines and plantation eucalypts become established in the park from seeds blown in from adjacent areas.

Broad-scale control programs in and around the park have focused on foxes and blackberries, with occasional targeted controls of weeds such as Tutsan, Sycamore Maple and Ivy. Deer are an emerging threat on public and private land across much of eastern Victoria.

Pathogens

Although the park is generally in good ecological condition, climate change and the threat of pathogens, in particular Myrtle Wilt, could have a considerable impact.

Myrtle Wilt is a fatal disease of *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (Myrtle Beech) caused by the fungal pathogen *Chalara australis*. It has been listed as a potentially threatening process under the Flora

and Fauna Guarantee Act, and an action statement has been prepared to guide actions to limit the threat (DSE 2009).

The disease develops initially through the infection of stem or root wounds via air or water dispersal of fungal spores. Human activity is likely to elevate disease incidence rates above the natural background levels in undisturbed forest.

The actions required by park managers include training staff in detection, prevention, and control, minimising disturbance (especially during road and track construction and facility development) and monitoring rainforest communities to detect outbreaks.

Fire management

Wet forest is vulnerable to severe fires when extreme weather coincides with drought or long dry periods that reduce fuel moisture levels in the forest.

The fire history on Victoria's public land has been systematically recorded only in the last decade, and the fire history of the park is poorly known. Major bushfires occurred in South Gippsland in 1898 and 1944 and the park is known to have been burnt in the massive 1939 fires.

The Calignee Bushfire, which was part of the devastating Black Saturday complex of fires in 2009, burnt the northern area of the park, and other spot fires burnt areas of the park.

The *Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land* (DEPI 2012) provides the framework for public land fire management throughout Victoria. Fire management on public land in non-urban areas, including national parks, is the responsibility of DELWP.

The *East Central Strategic Bushfire Management Plan* (DELWP 2015) sets the direction for fire management in and around the park. The park lies on the extreme south-eastern boundary of the East Central bushfire landscape, contiguous with the Alpine – Greater Gippsland bushfire landscape.

The 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 that process, so that burning and fuel treatments are modified where necessary.

Parks Victoria provides a significant portion of DELWP's overall fire management capability and contributes advice on the development and implementation of fire management strategies affecting parks. Initial actions to train and facilitate GLaWAC personnel to participate in and contribute to the public land fire management network have commenced.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and severity of extreme events such as bushfires and storms, changes in vegetation caused by rainfall and evaporation changes, and invasive plants and animals.

Changes such as vegetation alteration are likely to occur slowly, whereas more extreme events can occur at any time. The progressively warmer, drier conditions that are likely to occur under climate change pose a major threat to the rainforest areas of the park, which depend on cool, humid conditions and the absence of severe fires. The stress of warming and drying conditions will also increase the susceptibility of the rainforest areas to pathogens and invasive plants. Storm events with high winds increase the risk of damage to tall trees in old growth areas of the park, and the threats to public safety.

Threats to cultural heritage

Extreme events such as bushfires and floods pose a threat to cultural heritage and historic heritage across the park. More localised threats arise from the disturbance of sites by human activity.

Historic sites in the park are relatively well-known and mapped. Most of these sites are old logging and timber milling sites where few structural remains exist.

For these sites the key conservation strategy is to monitor and protect the sites from erosion, visitor impacts and other localised disturbances through works, education and enforcement.

There has been very little survey, recording or mapping of Gunaikurnai cultural heritage sites. The key conservation strategy for is to systematically survey, record and map values and sites in the park, including both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. GTOLMB is undertaking this work in the park. Once it is completed, protection and conservation strategies that are relevant to the identified values need to be developed.

Other threats

Tree harvesting that took place in parts of the park before their inclusion is still evident in a depleted overstorey and stands of wattle that colonised the former eucalypt stands and are now senescing. The lack of canopy affects the structural integrity of the forest and its natural ecological functions. The major roads through the park are potential entry points for invasive plants and animals. They also fragment the park and are likely to affect wildlife movement and other processes.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

Table 4 describes the key land and water values in the park and the strategies to control threats to those values. Comprehensive conservation of the natural values in the park needs to be based on systematically set objectives and measurable actions to achieve those objectives, using a conservation action planning process or equivalent methodology. That process should consider the broader regional landscape so that interventions such as invasive animal control are undertaken cooperatively with neighbouring land managers.

Land and water 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; for example, 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 park, rather than the EVC as a whole or a single threatened plant species.

An intensive conservation action planning process is required to identify the most critical assets, given the present condition of the park and the ecological processes (such as predation or weed invasion) that are operating within it. The strategies in Table 4 should therefore be further evaluated through conservation planning that takes into account their feasibility, impact and priority in the broader landscape.

Table 4: Land, water and heritage values, threats and conservation strategies.

Threat	Priorities	Goals and strategies
Wet Forest, Damp Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest EVCs		
Bushfire	Extreme fire events	Maintain existing extent and condition. Work with DELWP to ensure there is adequate risk reduction on surrounding public and private land via burning and other measures. Manage fuel loads without burning in Cool Temperate Rainforest EVC. Prevent fires starting inside the park through visitor education and regulatory enforcement.
Myrtle beech/Cool temperate rainforest		
Pathogens introduced by human activity Emerging weeds	Myrtle Wilt	Implement relevant actions under FFG Action statement No. 238 (DSE 2009). Monitor and control emerging invasive plants under warming, drying conditions.
Wet forest and damp forest		
Invasive plants degrading forest structure	Blackberry, Tutsan, Ivy and Sycamore MAPLE. Depleted and senescing canopy	Contain current extent of infestations. Implement targeted invasive plant control programs. Control invasive plants and animals and to facilitate natural canopy regeneration. Maintain park-wide fire protection strategies to buffer areas from severe fire.
All EVCs		
Predation of wildlife by foxes, cats and wild dogs	High	Apply landscape-scale predator control using baiting and other techniques.
Grazing and erosion caused by deer and rabbits	Moderate	Implement targeted culling and control programs. Monitor Sambar deer population and impacts and review feasible control options.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage		
Lack of documented recording and mapping of cultural sites and intangible heritage Culturally important plants and animals	Cultural survey and mapping	Complete the current GKTOLMB cultural mapping project for the ten Jointly managed parks and reserves. Determine required management actions including implementation of a Cultural values overlay.
Lack of knowledge of species conservation requirements	Cultural knowledge and current conservation status	Obtain knowledge through Joint Management Plan strategic initiatives.
Historic heritage		
Deterioration of sites due to weather or vandalism	Corrigans suspension bridge, timber milling sites	Monitoring bridge as part of regular park asset assessments. Informally monitor milling sites as appropriate.

5 PEOPLE IN THE PARK

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

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

Unlike many of the other parks and reserves in the settlement area, the landscape of Tarra–Bulga is steep, rugged and densely forested, making it difficult to access and move through beyond the small picnic areas and walking tracks.

Although camping has not been permitted in the park, there is an opportunity under joint management to designate an area or areas for Gunaikurnai gathering and camping, particularly once cultural mapping is completed and areas of prior use and occupation are known.

There is also an opportunity for Gunaikurnai rangers and others to progressively provide visitors with information and interpretation about the park and to tell their own cultural stories.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE PARK

Because of its proximity to large towns the park is a popular destination for day visitors, particularly in the warmer months. Each of the four road access routes through the park are highly scenic and are suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicles.

The Visitor Centre at Balook is a focus for information and interpretation. It has a theatrette and display area, including panels explaining the natural and cultural history of the park. There are picnic areas at the Visitor Information Centre, Tarra Valley and Bulga (Map 3).

There are seven short walks of varying length, including a 1.2 km walk that crosses the impressive Corrigan Suspension Bridge stretching through the rainforest canopy, as well as five longer walks, some of which extend outside the park. These short and long walks, together with short stays in the picnic areas, provide the primary experience of the park for most visitors. Diaper Track provides access between the Bulga and Tarra Valley sections of the park, traversing plantation land outside the park for a short section.

The Grand Strzelecki Track hiking route runs through the park and connects it to Morwell National Park. The walk was established by community groups, local government and land managers. It extends from Jeeralang Junction near Morwell National Park to Macks Creek, east of the park, with loops focused on Tarra–Bulga National Park and plantation areas around Mt Tassie. The complete walk takes approximately four days, but many hikers walk the loop in stages, making Tarra–Bulga an important start–finish point and focal area.

The three visitor sites at Balook, Bulga and Tarra Valley make up what can be regarded as a single visitor experience area. The area offers picnicking, walks, road cycling and scenic driving through tall Mountain Ash forest, luxuriant rainforest and fern gullies. The towering trees, clear streams and prominent bird life provide an iconic and inspirational Victorian mountain forest experience, characteristic of the time of the Gunaikurnai ancestors when only Aboriginal people were present on the land.

The substantial visitor centre at Balook provides an excellent base for interpretation and education about the natural and cultural features of the park. High-standard facilities for picnicking at Balook and Tarra Valley and a network of walking tracks through the park make the area very accessible and suitable for a relatively wide range of abilities.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

The strategy for visitor experiences in the park is to provide highly accessible opportunities, services and facilities for picnicking, scenic driving, short walks and education for a wide range of visitor segments and abilities to appreciate and learn about the rainforest/Ash forest ecosystem and cultural heritage; and to control visitor impacts on the park's natural and cultural values.

The existing road and track network and public access arrangements meet park management and visitor needs and do not require any change. Higher impact recreation activity is not appropriate due to erodible soils and pathogen risks.

The park is traversed by several major roads which provide scenic touring routes but are winding and narrow. The roads carry significant traffic by log-trucks and regional transport, as well visitor traffic. Parks Victoria manages the road leading to Bulga picnic area. All other public roads are managed by VicRoads, local government or Hancock Victorian Plantations.

The range of visitor and public activities allowed in the park is shown in Table 5. This table does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

Camping has not been permitted in the park because of the sensitivity of the vegetation and soils, and because there are opportunities for camping outside the park. The 2010 Native Title Determination and Recognition and Settlement Agreement recognised the legal right of the Gunaikurnai to camp in the park as a traditional activity, provided it is consistent with laws and regulations.

Following an assessment of Aboriginal cultural values in the park, the designation of a camping area or areas will be considered and the basis of access and use will be determined.

Table 5: Recreational activities allowed in management zones.

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Reference Area Zone	Special Protection Overlay
Camping — designated areas*	No	No	No	No
Camping — dispersed vehicle-based	No	No	No	No
Camping — dispersed other	No	No	No	No
Competitive events	Yes (subject to permit, if activity type is allowed)	Yes (subject to permit, if activity type is allowed)	No	No
Cycling	Yes (on open public roads and MVO roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	Yes (on open public roads and MVO roads and tracks; not allowed on walking tracks)	No	No
Dogs	No	No	No	No
Education activities	Yes	Yes	No	No

* A camping area may be designated following the completion of cultural values mapping.

Activity	Conservation Zone	Conservation and Recreation Zone	Reference Area Zone	Special Protection Overlay
Fires	No	No	No	No
Firewood collection	No	No	No	No
Fishing	No	No	No	No
Fossicking and prospecting	No	No	No	No
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	No	No
Guided activities	Yes	Yes	No	No
Horseriding	No	Yes (only on Diaper Tk and Old Yarram—Balook Rd)	No	No
Hunting	No	No	No	No
Orienteering and rogaining	No	Yes, subject to permit	No	No
Picnicking	Yes	Yes	No	No
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Vehicle use, including two-wheel-drives, four-wheel-drives and trail bikes		Yes (on open public roads – not allowed on MVO only roads and tracks)	No (except for essential management and emergency operations, or approved research)	No

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DELIVERY PARTNERS – GKTOLMB, PARKS VICTORIA, GLaWAC, DELWP

The park is managed by Parks Victoria as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Traralgon and the Balook Visitor Centre in the park. Regional and state-wide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the park from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne.

Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in Tarra–Bulga National Park and other jointly managed parks and reserves, which has been operating since 2013.

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

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP 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 operate in multiple directions with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC. The GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic park management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

The Friends of Tarra–Bulga is an active volunteer group which supports conservation and education in the park. It makes an important contribution to the operation of the park by staffing the Balook visitor centre and providing information. The group conducts surveys and monitoring of the park's flora and fauna, undertakes restoration and maintenance works, provides information to visitors at the Balook Visitor Centre and offers guided walks. It also maintains a website which provides detailed information about the park's values and history and promotes volunteer work in the park.

The Balook and District Residents Association has a long-established interest in the park, having advocated for its creation and expansion, and continues to hold community gatherings in the park.

An incorporated body of volunteers, Grand Strzelecki Track Inc., initiated the establishment of the Grand Strzelecki Track concept and coordinates its promotion and operation.

The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs in the joint managed parks.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the park. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority 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.

Hancock Victorian Plantations is a major landholder around the park. The park is situated within the Shire of Wellington which is responsible for local planning regulation, road maintenance and traffic management around the park, as well as other municipal responsibilities.

Destination Gippsland is an important partner in the marketing of the park and its location on regional tourism routes such as the Grand Ridge Road.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

Several government and commercial agencies maintain facilities within the park. They include Telstra (underground cables), SP Ausnet (power lines) and South Gippsland Water (a stream gauging station on Middle Creek). These utilities present few maintenance problems and access is readily available to both sites.

Telstra's underground cables are located beneath unused road reserves to the west of the Bulga Picnic Area. An SP Ausnet 22 kV overhead transmission line runs along an easement near the northern boundary of the APM Forests land exchange corridor.

SP Ausnet maintains a cleared easement 60 metres wide along its transmission line, which has a significant visual impact. However, the easement passes through an area that is being reforested, which will decrease the visual impact of the transmission line. Consent under the National Parks Act is required for maintenance works on the powerline and easement.

Access to the stream gauging station on Middle Creek is by a track through private property. The use of this station by South Gippsland Water is minimal and causes little conflict with the natural values of the park.

A number of tour operators undertake activities in the park, which are managed under licences.

6.4 PARK BOUNDARIES

The park boundary is highly irregular, reflecting the history of incremental reservation. Significant private land inliers and public land plantation inliers exist within the park. Opportunities to rationalise the boundaries by acquiring additional land or redesignating other public land should be investigated.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with the goals and strategic initiatives set out in the Strategic Plan document.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural heritage of Tarra–Bulga National Park are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action
TB1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
TB2	Protect and restore the park's natural environment by implementing the land and water priorities and strategies detailed in Table 4.
TB3	Implement relevant Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act action statements for threatened and endangered species in the park as detailed in Table 3.
TB4	Work with DELWP to protect the park from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect the Cool Temperate Rainforest EVC and other values.
TB5	Build knowledge and undertake surveys and mapping of plants and animals in the park including those of cultural importance to the Gunaikurnai.
TB6	Work with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to control pest plants and animals consistent with the <i>West Gippsland Invasive Plants and Animals Plan</i> .
TB7	Develop a comprehensive conservation plan for the park aligned with the <i>Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan</i> and broader Gippsland Plains and Strzeleckis Park Landscape.
TB8	Undertake environmental projects and engage with partners to address soil erosion and to rehabilitate areas of significance.
TB9	Work with DELWP, community groups and private landholders through the Cores and Links program to create ecologically functional biolinks between patches of native vegetation of high conservation value around the park.
TB10	Investigate boundary adjustments to the park to rationalise irregularities and make logical inclusions of areas of high conservation importance.

Cultural heritage

TB11	Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the park through <i>Welcome to Wurruk</i> and other appropriate signage relevant to the Brataualung clan at entry points and visitor nodes.
TB12	Implement the heritage conservation strategies in Table 4 including mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values and sites, in addition to the broader social values in the park. Implement a cultural values overlay based on the outcomes of cultural mapping.
TB13	Establish a plant and animal emblem for the park with totemic significance for Gunaikurnai.
TB14	Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the park and undertaking community cultural activities and events.

TB15	Consider establishing a designated camping area following survey and mapping of cultural values, and determine access and use arrangements.
TB16	Implement Gunaikurnai knowledge-sharing and understanding of culture through Elders and Gunaikurnai ranger-led activities.
TB17	Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors in the park.
TB18	Implement cultural resource management procedures for the park as agreed between the partners.
TB19	Implement the provisions of any Natural Resource Agreement that may be established for the park under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act.

People in the Park

Goals

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

Visitor and community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the park are enhanced by joint management.

No.	Action
TB20	Manage the Tarra–Bulga visitor experience to provide highly accessible opportunities, services and facilities for picnicking, scenic driving, short walks and education for a wide range of visitor segments and abilities to appreciate and learn about <i>wurruk</i> and culture; and to control visitor impacts on the park's natural and cultural values. Manage recreational activities in accordance with Table 5. Generally, maintain existing regulatory settings for activities and uses in the park, apart from changes set out in this plan (including approved variations) or changes arising from statutory requirements.
TB21	Significantly increase the interpretation of Gunaikurnai culture in the park through signs, displays and online or printed information to present a more comprehensive story of the park and its natural and cultural heritage.
TB22	Seek investment to undertake a substantial renovation of the Balook visitor centre to enhance interpretation of the park, Gunaikurnai culture and practices in mountain forest, and to provide an improved operations base for joint management rangers, volunteers, educators and others working in the park.
TB23	Rename places in the park such as picnic grounds and walking tracks in traditional language.
TB24	Establish Gunaikurnai interpretative information for visitors along park tracks about culturally important plants, animals and features.
TB25	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.
TB26	Liaise with and assist Grand Strzeleckis Track Inc. to incorporate increased information about Gunaikurnai cultural heritage and joint management in their communications, and promote the loop section of the track centred on the park.
TB27	Maintain the existing road and track network and public access arrangements in the park, and collaborate with VicRoads and the Wellington Shire Council on the management of roads through the park for which they are responsible.
TB28	Investigate, with local tourism bodies and Destination Gippsland, the potential to increase the attractiveness of the park for visitors travelling on the Grand Ridge Road and the Princes

Highway based on improved cultural interpretation in the Balook visitor centre and through the park.

- TB29 Explore possible eco-accommodation development on inliers or land adjacent to the park, incorporating possible business development opportunities for Gunaikurnai.
- TB30 Initiate discussions with school groups in South Gippsland and the wider Gippsland region to offer a program of cultural awareness and guided activities.
- TB31 Establish a Gunaikurnai junior ranger program in the park for schools in the Gippsland area.

Working Together

Goals

Joint management of Tarra–Bulga National Park operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community groups and stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the management of the park.

No.	Action
TB32	Implement a staged plan for Gunaikurnai to take a more active role in the operation of the visitor centre.
TB33	Promote the opportunities for the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria rangers, Friends of Tarra–Bulga and other community groups to share knowledge about the park and its management.
TB34	Increase the participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP fire management programs in and around the park.
TB35	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the park to interact with other parks and partners in the RSA area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
TB36	Maintain close collaboration with the West Gippsland CMA and DELWP biodiversity staff in relation to catchment connectivity and pest plant and animal programs in and around the park landscape.
TB37	Work with the Wellington Shire Council and the timber industry to reduce the impacts of traffic on park roads and ensure adequate maintenance.
TB38	Regularly liaise with community and stakeholder groups with an interest in the park including neighbours, and bushwalking, conservation, tourism and historical groups, and develop opportunities for volunteer programs and events.
TB39	Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the park in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
TB40	Implement relevant entitlements or obligations under the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the park.
TB41	Where appropriate promote Gunaikurnai cultural sites by developing a series of site specific policies which will outline the level of public access, infrastructure requirements and culturally appropriate interpretive themes.

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 6 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 6: Data used to track progress in implementing the Joint Management Plan.

Data type	Description	Data source and method
Activities	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. • the actions described in this management plan for Tarra–Bulga National Park.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

Table 7 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 7: Excerpt of outcomes framework from the Strategic Plan.

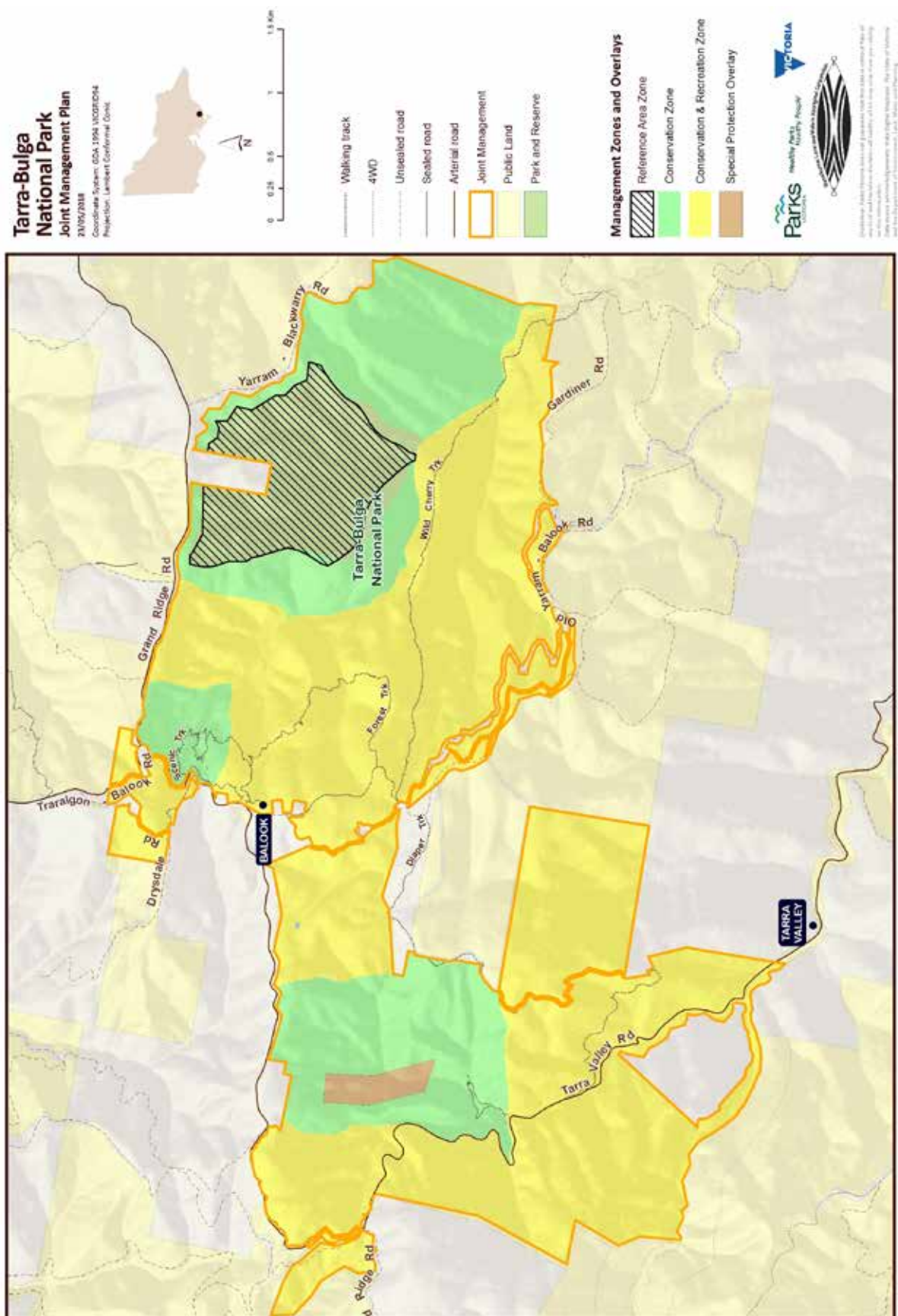
Theme	Example of outcome <i>The desired change</i>	Description <i>Further detail</i>	Indicators and frequency <i>How will the change be assessed?</i>
People	More visitors see, engage with, and learn from Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai staff on parks.	Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai rangers and other 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.

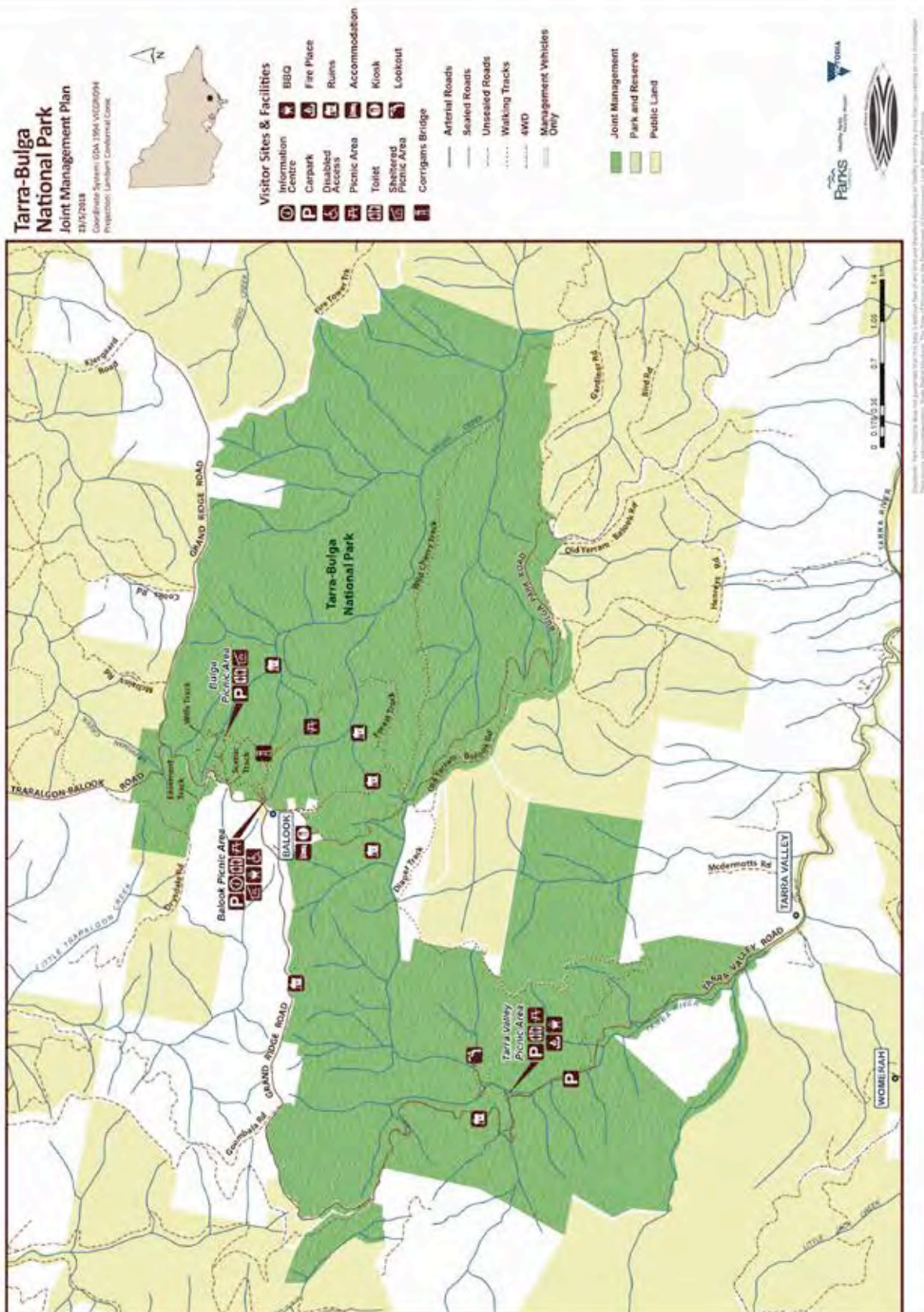
This management plan has effect for 10 years and will be formally reviewed and renewed at the end of that period. After the five-year review of the Strategic Plan, any consequential variations to this management plan will be made at that time through a consultative process.

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Map 1: Management zones and overlays, Tarra–Bulga National Park.

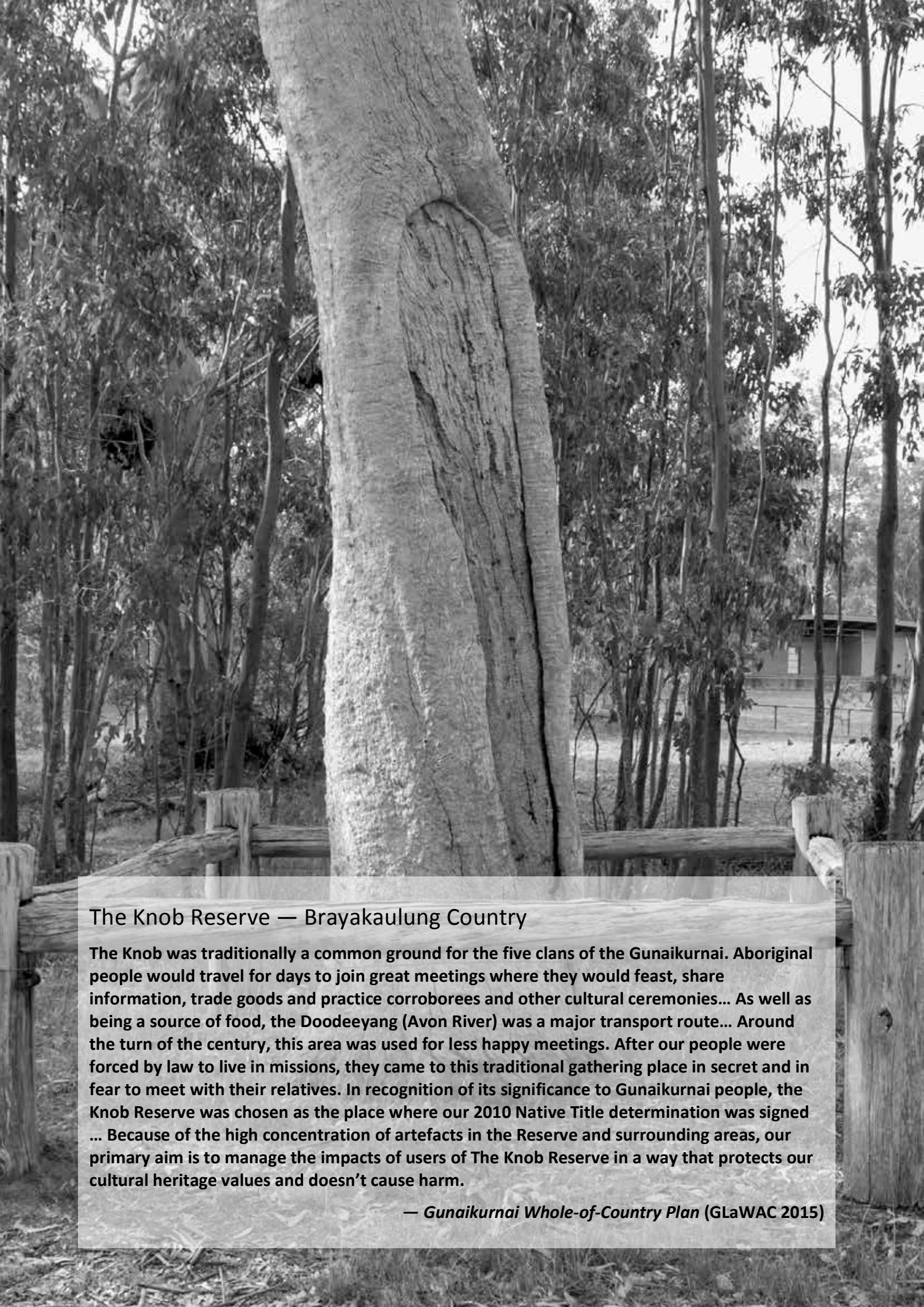


Map 3: Visitor sites and facilities, Tarra-Bulga National Park.

GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

THE KNOB RESERVE
— BRAYAKAULUNG COUNTRY





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 GKTOLMB 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 Frood (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 Frood 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).
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- 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	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. the actions described in this management plan for The Knob Reserve.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

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

23/05/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID04

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not warrant the accuracy of the information provided in this map. The information is provided for general information only and should not be used for any other purpose. Parks Victoria is not responsible for any loss or damage arising from the use of this map.

Walking track

Unsealed road

Sealed road

Joint Management

Public Land

Management Zones and Overlays

Conservation & Recreation Zone

Recreation Development Zone

Special Protection Overlay



Healthy Parks
Healthy People



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



The Knob Reserve Joint Management Plan

28/03/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICCRD94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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

Ecological Vegetation Classes

Avon River channel	Plains Grassy Woodland
Aquatic Sedgeland	Riverine Escarpment Scrub
Creekline Scrubby Woodland	Riparian Shrubland
Escarpment Woodland	Swamp Scrub
Floodplain Riparian Woodland	Tall Marsh

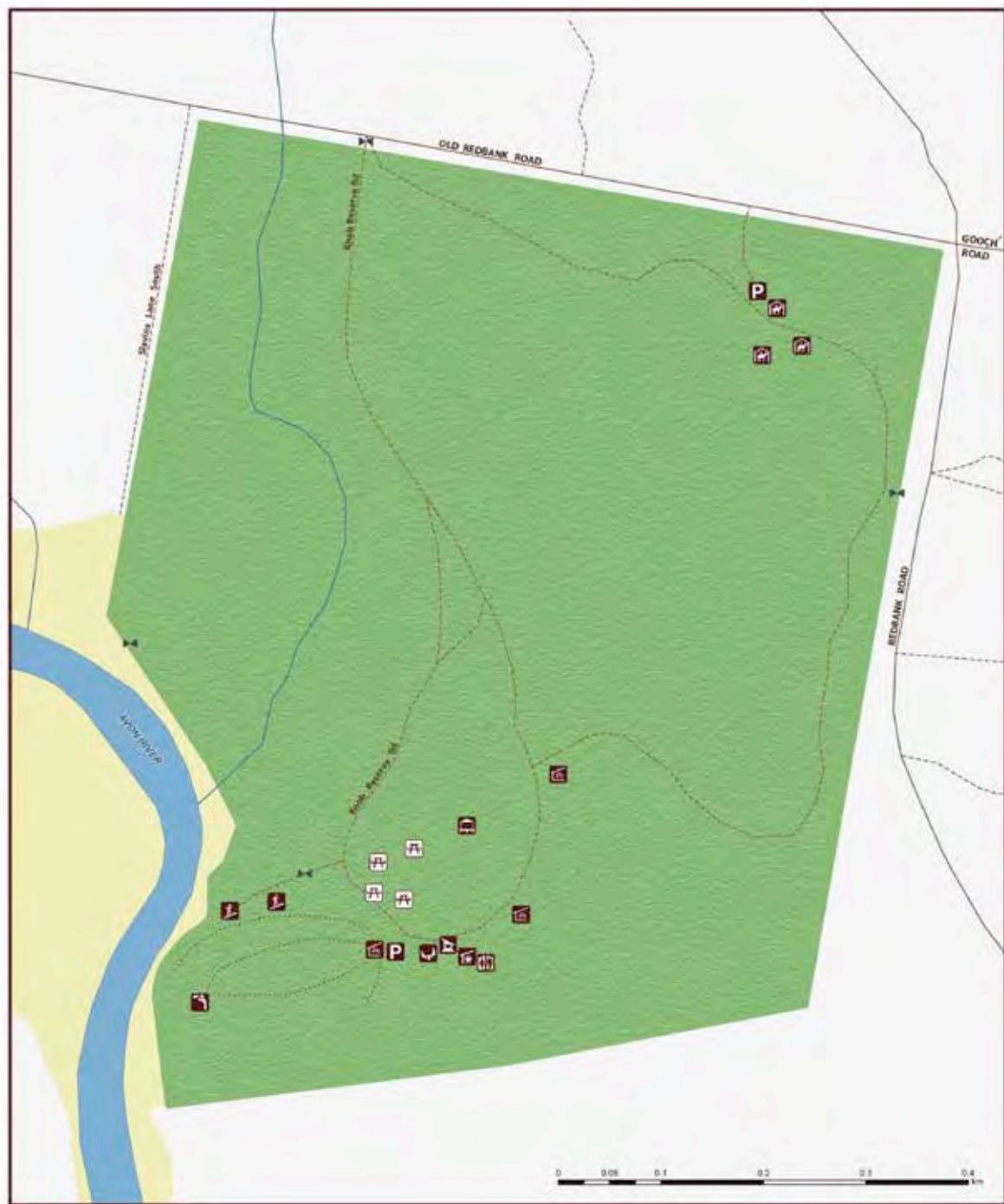
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Healthy Parks
Healthy People



Map 2: Ecological Vegetation Classes, The Knob Reserve.



The Knob Reserve Joint Management Plan

21/5/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGTR054
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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

Visitor Sites & Facilities

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

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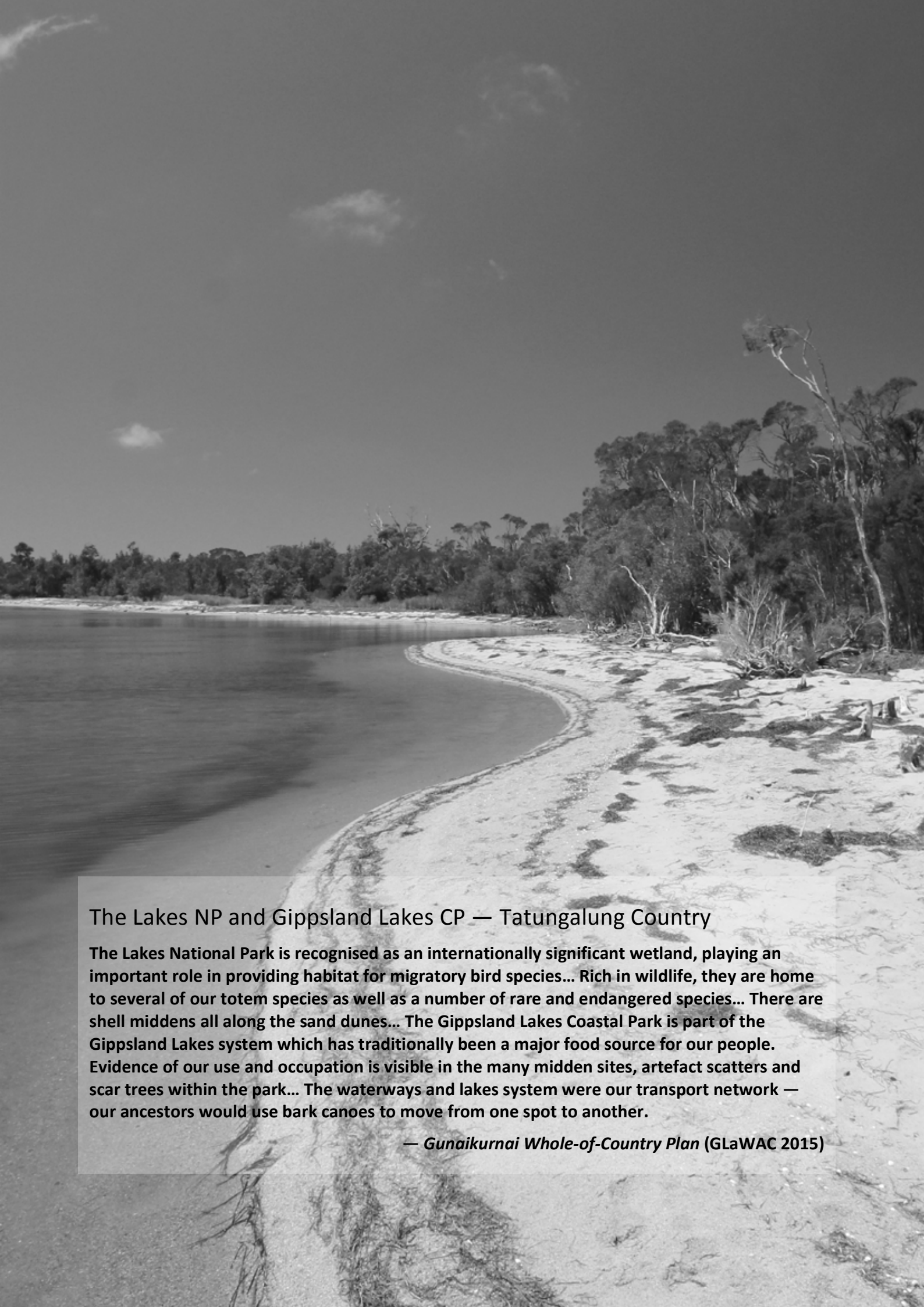
Map 3: Visitor sites and facilities, The Knob Reserve.



GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

THE LAKES NATIONAL PARK & GIPPSLAND LAKES COASTAL PARK — TATUNGALUNG COUNTRY





The Lakes NP and Gippsland Lakes CP — Tatungalung Country

The Lakes National Park is recognised as an internationally significant wetland, playing an important role in providing habitat for migratory bird species... Rich in wildlife, they are home to several of our totem species as well as a number of rare and endangered species... There are shell middens all along the sand dunes... The Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park is part of the Gippsland Lakes system which has traditionally been a major food source for our people. Evidence of our use and occupation is visible in the many midden sites, artefact scatters and scar trees within the park... The waterways and lakes system were our transport network — our ancestors would use bark canoes to move from one spot to another.

— *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 Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park have 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 Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, the land continues to be managed respectively as a National Park and a Coastal Park under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic).

This management plan for The Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park 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 *National Parks Act 1975* and the requirements of 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.) This plan replaces the previous management plan for the two parks (Parks Victoria 1998), which ceases to have effect on approval of this 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 Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and the other eight Joint Management parks and reserves. Existing rights and interests in the parks, 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 10 Aboriginal Title areas, including The Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. 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 Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park are well managed, their values and assets are protected and conserved, and the statutory requirements for park 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
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the parks.

The Lakes National Park and the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park are part of the 58,800 ha Gippsland Lakes Site of International Significance, listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (known as the Ramsar Convention) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan provides direction for the site and is co-ordinated by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) on behalf of regional agency partners (West Gippsland CMA, DELWP, Parks Victoria and GLaWAC).

The Victorian Government is committed to conserving habitats of birds listed in the Japan-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement 1974 (JAMBA), the China-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement 1987 (CAMBA), the Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement 2006 (ROKAMBA) and the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Several listed species under these agreements regularly use Lake Reeve.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This Plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to The Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. The following sections provide:

- a description of values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the parks, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values
- a description of Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the parks 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 parks
- 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 Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park in this plan, the Strategic Initiatives for joint management described in the Strategic Plan may include actions that relate to The Lakes National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

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 PARKS

The Lakes National Park covers 2389 hectares and is located on the Gippsland Lakes, 63 km east of Sale. The park is bounded by Lake Victoria, Lake Reeve and the township of Loch Sport. It contains large areas of diverse and relatively undisturbed flora and fauna communities that are representative of the inner barrier of the Gippsland Lakes System.

Sperm Whale Head Peninsula, Rotamah Island and Little Rotamah Island are within the national park. Sperm Whale Head National Park (1451 ha) was first declared in 1927 and subsequently scheduled under the *National Parks Act 1956* (Vic.) as The Lakes National Park. Rotamah and Little Rotamah Islands were added to the park area in 1978 because of their coastal geomorphological significance.

The 17 688 hectare Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park stretches 90 kilometres along a narrow strip of coastline from Seaspray to Lakes Entrance. It was proclaimed in 1979 with additions in 1997, 2001, 2010 and 2012, and takes in extensive coastal dune systems, woodlands and heathlands.

The coastal park also includes a significant area of water, described in the plan as Waters of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, including Lake Reeve and Bunga Arm. Lake Reeve is a narrow, shallow waterbody adjacent to the coastal dune barrier, and often dries out. It has been listed under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance for its waterfowl habitat.

Large parts of waters and shorelines of the Gippsland Lakes lie outside the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and The Lakes National Park, and are managed under various other land tenures and ownership.

2 THE LAKES NATIONAL PARK & GIPPSLAND LAKES COASTAL PARK UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

The Lakes National Park and the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park are on the Country of the Tatungalung clan.

The core of The Lakes National Park around Sperm Whale Head is one of the earliest areas established as a national park in Victoria and has therefore been managed as a conservation landscape for many years. The Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park was proclaimed more recently and had a previous land-use history of farming, grazing, oil exploration and many other activities that have left their mark on the land.

Parks Victoria and its predecessor park management organisations have worked systematically over several decades to restore the park's natural environment and to establish sustainable recreational use by large numbers of land and water users.

Joint management brings a continuing emphasis on nature conservation and recreation, but an increased focus on cultural values and site protection. The *Gunaikurnai Whole of country plan* sets out the following management priorities for The Lakes National Park and the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park:

- limiting further development and undertaking stabilisation works to protect the sensitive dunes
- looking at re-aligning the boundary of the park or management area to include cultural sites along the coast and out to sea
- strengthening our understanding of the area – researching and telling storylines and undertaking surveys
- research that looks into wildlife deaths in the area
- educating park users about significant places and culturally sensitive park use and ensuring tour operators and park workers undertake Gunaikurnai-run cultural awareness training
- establishment of a sea ranger program, including boats for monitoring and compliance
- restoration of middens and other significant sites
- building more boardwalks to protect the dunes from erosion and preserve cultural sites, and monitoring visitor compliance.

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.

The rich food resources of the Gippsland Lakes—fish, shellfish, birds and plants—and the transport routes on the sheltered lake waters led to intensive occupation of the two parks by Gunaikurnai people over many generations.

As a result, there are Gunaikurnai cultural sites throughout both parks. These sites are subject to disturbance from natural processes such as storms and wind erosion, as well as damage from development and recreational activity.

Future park operations under joint management will give much greater and earlier priority to cultural site protection and restoration in recognition of the change in land status arising from the grant of Aboriginal Title.

Historically State and regional land management policy for the Gippsland Lakes, including these two parks, has focused predominantly on environmental management including weed and pest control and water quality, and the substantial levels of recreation and visitor use have brought demands for visitor services and management of visitor pressures.

Investments in environmental and visitor management will continue in the future, under an approach that ensures that conservation of cultural values in the parks is an equally high priority.

Significant improvement in the condition of land and water in and around the Gippsland Lakes has been achieved over recent times.

The pattern of visitor use in The Lakes National Park and the area of Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park east of Loch Sport is generally sustainable and underpins the important tourism industry and educational operations of the Gippsland Lakes.

The western section of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, along the Ninety Mile Beach, is subject to very heavy visitor use in peak periods leading to unsustainable impacts on vegetation and cultural sites in the narrow dune strip around campgrounds.

Elsewhere the condition of the parks has improved in many respects but invasive animals, in particular, remain a major threat to the signature waterbird populations and habitats of the parks, especially on the Boole Poole Peninsula and along the Bunga Arm.

Joint management brings the additional knowledge of Gunaikurnai people together with the existing expertise and capability of Parks Victoria, DELWP, the West Gippsland CMA and others to the challenge of managing one of the most important landscapes in Victoria.

3 ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the parks. These zones will:

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

The location of the zones is shown on Map 1 and their purpose is described in Table 1.

This plan maintains a similar zoning scheme to the previous 1998 park management plan, with several exceptions.

The Special Management Overlay is extended in this plan over the area of Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park between Barrier Landing and First Blowhole, to bring the whole of the Bunga Arm under this one overlay.

This change is made to enable this very exposed and fragile area of the park, and its natural and cultural heritage values, to be better protected, if impacts become apparent.

Visitor access and allowable activities within the zone remain the same. The change simplifies the zoning over the Bunga Arm for managers and the public, and signals that management action may be taken to control visitor impacts where necessary.

The former 'Land Use Designation – Hunting' is renamed 'Hunting (Designated species) Overlay' and continues to apply to the same areas of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

Table 1: Management zones and overlays.

Zone	Description and purpose
Conservation Zone	Areas of high natural value including land, water and ecological values. Recreation and nature-based tourism are allowed subject to close management to ensure minimal impact and disturbance of natural values. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; limited visitor facilities are provided, and are dispersed and small-scale.
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	Relatively small areas with a high level of recreation or visitor use. Larger-scale visitor facilities are located in this zone, which is applied to the Rotamah Island homestead and adjacent area.
Special Management Overlay – Bunga Arm	Areas on the Bunga Arm with important recreational values where sensitive land, water and cultural heritage values also occur. Management may impose special controls on activities and uses to protect natural and cultural values and visitor experience. The area between Ocean Grange and The Entrance is included in this zone.
Hunting (Designated species) Overlay	Areas in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park where Hog Deer, Duck and/or Quail hunting may be allowed subject to restrictions or conditions.
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.

Cultural heritage and cultural values in the parks need to be systematically surveyed and mapped. The zoning scheme therefore includes provision for a future 'Cultural Values Overlay' to be applied in the event that cultural values locations requiring conservation do not correspond to the conservation related-zones.

This overlay would be activated by means of a future amendment to the management plan. Implementation of this overlay may require amendment of the description or provisions of other zones and overlays, and integration with Aboriginal Heritage Act and the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic.) provisions to ensure compatibility.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as the hunting of wildlife and game, fishing, and the gathering of flora and forest produce. No agreement over either of the two parks is currently in place but any future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this plan.

4 CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Gunaikurnai have a deep, longstanding connection with both parks and the adjacent waters. The lake waters in particular were abundant in food sources and in resources. Fishing, camping, hunting and gathering were daily activities of the Gunaikurnai. Bark canoes were used on the lakes system. People travelled to the open ocean from this area harvesting food and materials, and moving up and down the coast.

The towns of Lakes Entrance, Metung, Swan Reach and Paynesville were developed on the camping grounds of the Gunaikurnai ancestors (GLaWAC 2015). Talking Dog Rock (now known as Legend Rock) in Bancroft Bay adjacent to the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park is an important part of Gunaikurnai mythology. The story of the three fishermen turned to stone by the women as punishment for not sharing their fish, serves as a reminder of the laws of the land, and gathering and sharing.

Gunaikurnai people travelled between sites that are within The Lakes National Park. Evidence of use and occupation is visible in many locations throughout both parks. A number of currently used place names for this general area originate or are derived from traditional Gunaikurnai place names, such as Boole Poole, Bunga Arm and Nyerimilang.

The Gippsland Lakes were once part of a larger bay open to the sea. Sperm Whale Head, Little Rotamah Island, the Ninety Mile Beach, Boole Poole Peninsula and Rotamah Island were formed by sands deposited by the seas over thousands of years. These landforms now enclose the waters, some of the barriers being up to thirty-eight metres high.

The Gunaikurnai cultural values of the parks have not been systematically surveyed and mapped but key values are well-known. These include:

- a large number of middens in dune areas, containing the remains of shellfish and other food and resource material
- artefact scatters containing remains of weapons and tool-making activity
- fish and eel traps
- scarred trees where bark was removed for use in the manufacture of canoes and shields
- burial sites
- battle and massacre sites, a tragic but important element of Gunaikurnai history.

Protection of burial sites is particularly important to the Gunaikurnai. These sites, and the human remains they contain, are vulnerable to exposure by wind and coastal erosion and damage by works and visitor activities in the parks. They need to be inventoried and mapped. Where necessary, rapid rehabilitation of burial sites is needed when they become exposed. Redesign and relocation of visitor facilities may be required to pro-actively avoid damage.

A number of scarred trees in The Lakes National Park appear to be dying prematurely due to rises in the saline water table.

The area of Lake Reeve between The Lakes National Park and Bunga Arm (in the waters of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park) is very shallow and periodically dries out. The Gunaikurnai believe this area was traditionally used and occupied especially during drier climatic periods. It should be included in cultural mapping of the two parks.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

The parks contain sites of national, State and regional geological and geomorphological significance, mainly associated with the evolution of the sandy barrier system and the coastal lagoons that make up the Gippsland Lakes. These formations include Lake Reeve, Sperm Whale Head, Boole Poole Peninsula, Bunga Arm, the Outer Barrier and Ninety Mile Beach.

At the time of European settlement, the Gippsland Lakes were linked to the sea by an intermittent entrance. Sand deposition closed the entrance during low river flow until high river flow raised the level of the Lakes and breached the sand barrier.

An artificial entrance was opened in 1889 to improve boat access into and out of the Lakes system. This resulted in reduced fluctuations and a general lowering of the Lakes' levels, thereby changing the flooding regime of the bordering swamps. The salinity of the Lakes' water also increased, causing extensive dieback of Common reed beds along the shorelines. Without the protection of the reed beds, shoreline erosion became extensive and widespread.

Both parks support valuable examples of undisturbed and remnant vegetation communities that are representative of the inner barrier of the Gippsland Lakes system including Coast banksia woodland, Coastal saltmarsh, Estuarine wetland, Coastal dune scrub complex, Damp sands herb-rich woodland, Heath tea-tree heathland and Hairy spinifex grassland. Patches of littoral rainforest also occur in The Lakes National Park and near Entrance Bay in the Coastal Park.

Saltmarsh communities are the dominant vegetation community in the long shallow coastal lagoon of Lake Reeve. Dominant species include Samphire, and Chaffy saw-sedge. Other significant remnant vegetation includes Shining peppermints and Saw banksia in open woodland areas, Manna gum in the forests, and Succulent glasswort along the shoreline.

The Lakes National Park and the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park are part of the 58,800 ha Gippsland Lakes Site of International Significance, listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (known as the Ramsar Convention) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The listing recognises the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of the wetlands and their importance as habitat, particularly for migratory birds and other wildlife. The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan sets out specific actions for management. There is a need to ensure co-ordination of the directions and implementation of the Ramsar Site Plan and this management plan for the parks. Eastern Boole Poole contains land of conservation and cultural significance that is currently in private ownership including private land that surrounds Hidden Lake which is part of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

Table 2 describes significant land and water assets in the park in the park.

Table 2: Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in The Lakes NP and Gippsland Lakes CP.

EVC	Description	Conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland	Woodland with a grassy, heathy or bracken-dominated understorey and a ground layer rich in herbs, grasses, and orchids. Occurs mainly on flat or undulating areas on moderately fertile, relatively well drained, deep sand or sandy loam. Extensive in The Lakes NP.	vulnerable	Coast Manna Gum (<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i> subsp. <i>pryoriana</i>) Shining Peppermint (<i>Eucalyptus willisii</i>) Narrow-leaf Peppermint (<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>)	Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)
Coastal Saltmarsh and Shorelines	Restricted to flats on low energy coastlines subject to the influence of daily inundation and exposure to salt water and poor drainage. It is most extensively developed immediately inland from the major ocean beaches in the Gippsland Lakes area. Ranges from a low succulent herbland to shrubland to rushland and sedgeland.	EPBC-listed	Beaded Glasswort (<i>Sarcocornia quinqueflora</i>) Australian Salt-grass (<i>Distichlis distichophylla</i>) Creeping Brookweed (<i>Samolus repens</i>)	African Boxthorn Boneseed

EVC	Description	Conservation status	Character species	High-impact weed species
Swamp Scrub (6% of GLCP, 2.5% of TLNP)	Closed scrub to 8 metres tall at low elevations on alluvial deposits along streams or on poorly drained sites with higher nutrient availability. The EVC is dominated by <i>Melaleuca</i> species. Occasional emergent eucalypts may be present. Where light penetrates to ground level, a moss-lichen-liverwort or herbaceous ground cover is often present. Dry variants have a grassy/herbaceous ground layer. A significant remnant occurs in GLCP west of Seacombe.	endangered	Swamp Paperbark (<i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i>) Woolly Tea-tree (<i>Leptospermum lanigerum</i>)	Yorkshire Fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>)
Littoral Rainforest (>0.1% of the 2 parks combined area)	A complex of rainforest and coastal vine thickets. Typically, occurs within two kilometres of the coast or adjacent to a large salt water body, such as an estuary and, thus, is influenced by the sea. Canopy species are well adapted to coastal exposure, and protect less tolerant species and subsequent cohorts in the understorey. The canopy height varies with the degree of exposure to extreme or persistent coastal conditions, ranging from < 1 m to 25 m high. Small occurrence on Bunga Arm near The Entrance.	EPBC-listed critically endangered nationally	Coast Banksia (<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>) Common Boobialla (<i>Myoporum insulare</i>) Seaberry Saltbush (<i>Rhagodia candolleana</i>) Bower Spinach (<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>) Coast Beard-heath (<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>)	Scrambling, climbing and ground cover weed species including Lantana (<i>Lantana camara</i>) Bridal Creeper (<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>) Cape Ivy (<i>Delairea odorata</i>)
Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic	Includes the vegetation succession from grasses and halophytes of the fore dune to the closed scrub on the secondary dunes behind ocean beaches.	depleted	Coast Tea-tree (<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>) Coast Wattle (<i>Acacia longifolia</i>) Long-hair Plume-grass (<i>Dichelachne crinite</i>)	Sea Spurge (<i>Euphorbia paralias</i>) Bridal Creeper (<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>) Dolichos Pea (<i>Dipogon lignosus</i>) Spiny Rush (<i>Juncus acutus</i>)

Rare or threatened species

The parks contain a diversity of habitats and a large array of significant plant and animal species (Tables 3 and 4).

More than 190 species of birds have been recorded including the endangered Little Tern, the rare White-bellied Sea-Eagle and egrets. Twenty-six species of native mammals, 17 species of reptiles and 11 species of amphibians have been recorded.

Crescent Island, at the entrance to Bunga Arm, is an environmentally and culturally important breeding site within the Gippsland Lakes area for Pelicans, Little Terns and Fairy Terns and it

requires intervention to protect the breeding areas from erosion. Rigby Island and Pelican Island are also important bird breeding sites.

The saltmarsh and salt flats around Lake Reeve attract the largest concentration of migratory waders in East Gippsland and are one of the five most important areas for waders in Victoria such as the Little Tern, Fairy Tern and Hooded Plover.

The Gippsland Lakes and surrounding wetlands are an important drought refuge for many species of waterbirds in south-eastern Australia. Coastal Saltmarsh is relatively common within the Gippsland Plains Bioregion of Victoria due to its occurrences in South Gippsland but it is listed as a nationally vulnerable community under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth).

Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park is considered one of the most important sites in Victoria for the endangered New Holland Mouse. Fauna in the parks include rare shorebirds as well as Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Black Wallabies and the Common Brush-tailed and Ring-tailed Possums.

The waters of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park contain Bottlenose Dolphins. Small inshore populations of Bottlenose Dolphins in bays and estuaries are known to be genetically distinct and at risk of extinction. The Gippsland Lakes and Port Phillip populations have been proposed as a new dolphin species (Charlton-Robb et al. 2011), Burrunan (*Tursiops australis*), and were listed as endangered under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998* in 2014. Several instances of dolphin and wildlife deaths in Bunga Arm and The Entrance were recorded in recent years but there is no evidence of an ongoing problem.

Hog deer, an introduced species, defined as protected wildlife under the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Vic.), are valued for recreational hunting in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

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

Table 3: Significant species, The Lakes National Park.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status	Relevant legislation	FFG Action Statement or Recovery Plan
<i>Anthochaera phrygia</i>	Regent Honeyeater	critically endangered	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Commersonia prostrata</i>	Dwarf Kerrawang	endangered	FFG, EPBC	144
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Swift Parrot	endangered	FFG, EPBC	169
<i>Sternula nereis</i>	Fairy Tern	endangered	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Caladenia tessellata</i>	Thick-lip Spider-orchid	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	National Recovery Plan (DSE 2010)
<i>Litoria aurea</i>	Green and Golden Bell Frog	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	Grey-headed Flying-fox	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	Shy Albatross	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	—

Table 4: Significant species, Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

Scientific name	Common name	Conservation status	Relevant legislation	FFG Action Statement or Recovery Plan
<i>Ardea intermedia</i>	Intermediate Egret	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Commersonia prostrata</i>	Dwarf Kerrawang	endangered	FFG	144
<i>Egretta garzetta nigripes</i>	Little Egret	endangered	FFG	120
<i>Litoria raniformis</i>	Growling Grass Frog	endangered	FFG, EPBC	EPBC Policy Statement 3.14
<i>Pezoporus wallicus</i>	Ground Parrot	endangered	FFG	89
<i>Prasophyllum frenchii</i>	Maroon Leek-orchid	endangered	FFG	154
<i>Sternula nereis</i>	Fairy Tern	endangered	FFG, EPBC	51
<i>Thelymitra epipactoides</i>	Metallic Sun-orchid	endangered	FFG	156
<i>Tursiops australis</i>	Burrunan Dolphin	endangered	FFG	—
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	Grey Goshawk	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	Eastern Great Egret	vulnerable	FFG	120
<i>Calamanthus pyrrhopygius</i>	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	vulnerable	FFG	60
<i>Korthalsella rubra</i>	Jointed Mistletoe	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Lissolepis coventryi</i>	Swamp Skink	vulnerable	FFG	—
<i>Litoria aurea</i>	Green and Golden Bell Frog	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>	Fairy Prion	vulnerable	EPBC	—
<i>Pseudomys novaehollandiae</i>	New Holland Mouse	vulnerable	FFG	74
<i>Sternula albifrons sinensis</i>	Little Tern	vulnerable	FFG	51
<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	Shy Albatross	vulnerable	FFG, EPBC	—
<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>	Hooded Plover	vulnerable	FFG	9
<i>Cercartetus nanus</i>	Eastern Pygmy-possum	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	Hooded Robin	near threatened	FFG	—
<i>Lachnagrostis punicea subsp. filifolia</i>	Purple Blown-grass	rare		—
<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>	Common Bent-wing Bat			—
<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	Light-mantled Sooty Albatross		FFG	—

Landscape and catchment context

The catchment surrounding the parks is one of the most complex natural landscapes in Victoria.

The Gippsland Lakes receive water from six major rivers, are subject to dynamic hydrological and tidal processes and are surrounded by a complex mix of land use including agriculture, fisheries, urban development and tourism.

Several key plans co-ordinate the natural resource management and development across land categories and agencies within the catchment including the *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy*, the *West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy*, the *Gippsland Lakes Priorities Plan*, the *Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan* and the *Gippsland Lakes Sustainable Boating Plan 2016–2018*.

The *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy* sets out the following objectives for the ‘Gippsland Lakes and Hinterland’ landscape:

- targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and connectivity of native vegetation
- targeted improvement of the status of threatened species and communities
- targeted improvement of the water quality and freshwater flow regime of the Gippsland Lakes
- targeted provision of appropriate freshwater and salinity regimes for selected fringing wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes
- increased sustainability of land use, with development in appropriate nodes along the Gippsland Lakes coastline
- plan for adaptation of Gippsland Lakes communities to changing conditions along the coastline.

4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

The first European records of the Gippsland Lakes were by Angus McMillan in 1840, and of the seaward entrance to the Lakes by John Reeve in 1842. By 1845 pastoral occupation was well established around the Lakes (Billis and Kenyon 1932) and much of the area now covered by the Parks was cleared and grazed from this period.

A permanent entrance through the outer barrier, opposite Jemmeys Point, was opened in 1889 (Lennon 1975). From this time changes took place around the shores of the Lakes, including increasing numbers of agricultural selections, fishing establishments such as Paynesville, and holiday settlements such as Cunninghame (present day Lakes Entrance).

The recreational use of the Lakes was quickly promoted; opportunities for fishing and shooting were major attractions. Steamboat cruises were also popular for day tours and Ocean Grange became a popular destination.

Historic sites in the parks include the ‘Honeymoon Cottage’ on Boole Poole Peninsula, the homestead on Rotamah Island, a homestead site at Point Wilson, the blowhole sites on the outer barrier adjacent to Bunga Arm, the site of construction of the artificial entrance to the sea, and eel farming ponds near McLennan Strait. Pretty Jane Wreck at Stockyard Hill was recorded in 2009. Remains of more recent activity include survey lines and sealed bores left from petroleum exploration.

The New Works complex at Lakes Entrance is of scientific/technical significance as the site of a major engineering feat of the nineteenth century, and one of the biggest public works undertaken in the colony of Victoria until that time.

The remains of equipment and buildings used in the construction of the permanent entrance include steel rails on timber sleepers, a jetty, remains of a pier, the two buildings at Entrance Bay, and a three-legged crane. These are part of the New Works Historic Complex listed on the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the Heritage Act.

Similar relics are found on the eastern side of the entrance outside the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park that are managed by the Shire of East Gippsland. A World War II fighter plane crashed into Lake Reeve during a training flight in 1945. The wreck of a ship, the *Trinculo*, which was beached in

1858, is still evident west of Delray Beach. The historic Snapper Cottage situated on the eastern end of Boole Poole Peninsula is run down, unoccupied and contains asbestos.

4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

A range of environmental and human factors pose threats to Country and heritage values of the parks. The most recent assessments of the parks' environmental condition indicate that the parks are recovering from grazing and past land use. A range of government and volunteer agencies are focused on actively managing invasive plants and animals, foreshore erosion, salinity and recreational access in the Gippsland Lakes area.

Invasive plants and animals

The *Gippsland Lakes Invasive Species Strategy* sets out target threats, objectives and priorities for management of invasive plants and animals (Ethos NRM 2015).

Browsing and soil disturbance from introduced herbivores, particularly pigs and deer in the east of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and goats in the western part of the park, have a significant impact.

Hog deer are well established on the Boole Poole Peninsula. Sambar Deer have moved into the parks in relatively recent times and represent an emerging threat to its biodiversity. Pigs have been established for decades and are a particular threat to the biologically important coastal salt marsh communities on the Boole Poole Peninsula and Lake Reeve where they create significant soil disturbance whilst feeding.

The saltmarsh communities on Lake Reeve are particularly sensitive, and introduced mammals have an impact on sand dune vegetation, including Coast Wattle, Beach Spinifex and the introduced sand stabiliser Marram Grass on the Boole Poole Peninsula.

Rabbits occur in dune scrub in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and in parts of The Lakes National Park, particularly at Rotamah Island, Emu Bight and Point Wilson, hampering revegetation programs and reducing food availability to native herbivores.

Nesting, feeding and roosting water birds as well as small and medium mammals are at risk from foxes and cats. This predation is a critical threat to the function of the parks as internationally significant waterbird breeding sites.

Weeds have the potential to affect the significant vegetation communities and some of the parks important habitats. Bridal creeper (all areas), African boxthorn (Boole Poole Peninsula, Bunga Arm and The Lakes NP), Wheel cactus (Bunga Arm and Boole Poole), Sea spurge (ocean dunes), Dolichos pea and a number of garden escapees are displacing native vegetation species, reducing diversity of native wetland flora and reducing habitat for water birds such as nesting terns.

The Northern Pacific sea star, recently recorded near Lakes Entrance, is a significant threat to the whole lake system as it is a voracious predator that eats a wide range of native animals and has the potential to rapidly establish large populations in new areas. It can have a major impact on populations of native shellfish, which are important components of the marine food chain.

European wasps are a significant pest for visitors at Rotamah Island, Point Wilson and other sites, and may also be displacing native species.

Visitor impacts

Visitors seek recreational experience on or around the water and bush camping sites and facilities. The shoreline is also the most popular area within the parks where visitors go to fish, tie up boats/canoes/kayaks and camp.

Camping in some areas has resulted in problems such as destruction of vegetation, soil and bank erosion, and rubbish. Campfires can also pose a fire risk, and the collection of wood for campfires

can impact on the vegetation communities. Intertidal zones dominated by Sea Rush and other salt tolerant plant species are subjected to disturbance by visitors travelling by boat.

The action of berthing and the subsequent disembarking of passengers by large numbers of boats contribute to shoreline erosion at popular day visitor sites and adjacent to the Bunga Arm campsites which are at capacity during holiday periods.

The installation of mooring poles has reduced damage from tying up to trees. Camping on the primary dune along Shoreline Drive is a significant issue due to the sensitivity of the dune to erosion and the cultural significance of the area. Boat operators are required to empty sewage at designated pump-out facilities.

Some duck and quail hunters build hides in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park during hunting season. The impact of this is dependent on whether fallen or cut vegetation is used. Cutting of standing vegetation needs to be eliminated through hunter education in partnership with recreational hunting organisations, and enforcement.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats. These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and/or severity of extreme events, changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes. Climate change and severe weather such as drought and storms can alter freshwater inflows, create shoreline erosion, dune breaches and impact on cultural sites.

Extensive climate modelling and impact assessments have indicated a likely increase in sea level coupled with an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms in the Gippsland Lakes (EGCMA 2015). Changes such as sea-level rise are likely to be 'slow-onset' while more extreme events such as storms, floods and bushfires can occur at any time.

Potential impacts include physical damage to shorelines, vegetation and assets; as well as increased inundation. Studies indicate that there is a risk of increased inundation for Lake Reeve and potential erosion of the shoreline. Shoreline erosion affects the habitat for a number of threatened species including wading birds and important fish breeding and nursery areas.

Fire management

There have been relatively few bushfires in the Parks in the last two decades.

In 2013 substantial areas of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park near Spoon Bay and in the core of The Lakes National Park were burnt. A smaller bushfire burned an area of the Bunga Arm near Rotamah Island in 2014.

Bushfires burned parts of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park around Dutson Downs a number of times during the 1980s and 1990s. Planned burns have been undertaken on approximately half of the area of The Lakes National Park over the last twenty years. A substantial planned burn was carried out on the eastern end of the Boole Poole Peninsula in 2010. Much of this area of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park has not been burnt by either bushfire or planned burns for more than thirty years.

As a result, the vegetation composition and structure of parts of the Peninsula are changing, including areas that are senescing. Planned burning is logistically difficult on the Peninsula and much of the Bunga Arm, making it difficult to take advantage of suitable weather and fuel conditions.

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 parks. These directions reflect the mix of assets

and values around the parks, including towns and residential areas, and the Bass Strait Gas Pipeline.

The detailed 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. In particular, the planned burning strategy for the parks needs to be focused on identifying areas of Country that require burning and working with DELWP Forest Fire Management to prioritise burning in these locations.

Resourcing actions for the Gunaikurnai rangers are important in this strategy (see discussion of boat capability in '6. Working Together'). Increased planned burning on Boole Poole Peninsula will have implications for deer hunting (see '5. People in the parks').

Changes to hydrology

At the time of European settlement, the Gippsland Lakes were linked to the sea by an intermittent entrance. Sand deposition closed the entrance during low river-flow until high river-flow raised the level of the Lakes and breached the sand barrier.

An artificial entrance was opened in 1889, near Lakes Entrance, to improve boat access into and out of the Lakes system. This resulted in reduced fluctuations and a general lowering of the Lakes' levels, thereby changing the flooding regime of the bordering swamps. Algal blooms occur periodically in the Lakes system and have the potential to affect the natural and recreational values of the parks.

The salinity of the water in the lakes also increased, causing extensive dieback of Common reed beds along the shorelines. Without the protection of the reed beds, shoreline erosion became extensive and widespread.

A significant amount of management focus and action is now directed towards dealing with shoreline erosion. Substantial infrastructure has been established west of the entrance to transport sand for dumping offshore, and is maintained by Gippsland Ports (see 'Authorised uses').

Both Pelican and Crescent Islands experienced a loss in low-level beach areas over more than a decade. Sand from routine dredging of the Ocean Grange and Steamer Landing channels was used to renourish the islands in 2015 and 2016, increasing the habitable areas of the islands for pelican, black swan and fairy tern colonies.

Groynes have been established on some sections of shoreline to stabilise erosion and there are calls to construct more groynes in areas such as The Entrance where private land is eroding. The construction of groynes in the parks is expensive and may create consequential erosion or other effects elsewhere along a shore. Decisions regarding groynes or other shoreline infrastructure generally involve Parks Victoria, East Gippsland Shire Council, and the EGCMA as well as affected landholders.

The mouth of Merriman Creek at Seaspray was modified in 1987 to minimise flooding of the township arising from natural closure of the mouth by a sandbar. The modifications have altered flows of water from the creek into Lake Reeve.

Other threats

Illegal activity threatens land and water values of the area, primarily through vehicle entry when tracks are closed during the seasonal closure period.

4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS

The key land, water and heritage values are identified in Tables 2–4. Conservation strategies for these values are detailed in Table 5.

Land and water values are identified primarily at the level of EVCs and threatened species, using state-wide datasets. However, often it is more practical and effective to take conservation action by targeting assets at an intermediate level, for example 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 area, rather than the EVC as a whole or a single threatened plant species.

An intensive conservation action planning process is required to identify the most critical assets given the present condition of the area and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating within it. The strategies in Table 5 should therefore be further evaluated through a conservation planning process that takes into account their feasibility, impact and priority in the broader landscape.

Management priorities for Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values are very dependent on completing current cultural mapping work to systematically identify the nature, extent and types of sites requiring protection and conservation.

Table 5: Land, water and heritage conservation strategies.

Threats	Priorities	Strategy
Waterbirds and critical habitat — low islands, shorelines, coastal marshes, and intermittent waters of Lake Reeve		
Predation by foxes, cats, and dogs; pig and deer disturbance and browsing; shoreline and island erosion; invasive plants	Australian Pelicans, Musk Duck, Little Tern, Fairy Tern, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Black Swan, pig and predator control (Ethos NRM 2015)	Control predators. Control pigs and deer, and invasive plants. Renourish breeding islands and sites with sand as required. Ensure compliance by visitors with access, navigation and activity restrictions.
Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic and Swamp Scrub EVCs		
Invasive animals; fire regime (Boole Poole) Camping and visitor encroachments (Honeysuckles to Paradise Beach) Emerging weeds (Bunga Arm) Climate-driven storm surges	Feral Pigs, Hog Deer and Sambar Deer; encroachments around Camps 1 to 19; Bridal Creeper, Dolichos Pea, Wheel Cactus and other garden escape weeds (Ethos NRM 2015) Stabilising dune vegetation	Targeted pig control program on Boole Poole with aim of eradication; increased Sambar Deer control program with hunting groups. Planned burning on Boole Poole Peninsula. Campsite redesign and other strategies (see Section 5) along 90 Mile Beach. Targeted weed control. Maintain and restore native vegetation on vulnerable dunes
Littoral Rainforest		
Bushfire	Exclude fire	Work with DELWP Forest Fire Management to ensure adequate risk reduction on surrounding areas using burning and other measures. Exclude fire in EVCs that are fire sensitive. Prevent fires starting inside the parks through visitor education and regulatory enforcement.
Invasive plants and animals	Scrambling, climbing and ground cover weeds. Sambar Deer, Hog Deer.	Undertake intensive weed control. Increase control. Implement relevant actions (Ethos NRM 2015)

Threats	Priorities	Strategy
Rare or threatened species		
Various	New Holland Mouse, Hooded Plover, Little Tern, Fairy Tern, Orchids and others (Tables 3, 4)	Implement Action Statements, Guidelines and Recover Plans listed in Tables 3 and 4.
Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values		
Cultural sites and intangible heritage have only been partially surveyed and recorded Known sites exposed to disturbance or erosion	Cultural survey and mapping Protection and/or rehabilitation	Complete the current GKTOLMB cultural mapping project for the ten Joint Managed Parks and Reserves. Determine required management actions including implementation of a Cultural Values Overlay. Undertake protection and rehabilitation works on sites known to be at risk of damage
Culturally important plants and animals		
Lack of knowledge of species conservation requirements	Cultural knowledge and current conservation status	Obtain knowledge through Joint Management Plan Strategic Initiatives.
Historic heritage		
Deterioration of sites due to weather or vandalism.	New Works area, Honeymoon Cottage Rotamah Island homestead	Monitoring and required conservation works as appropriate. Work with lessee to improve condition of site and buildings.

5 PEOPLE IN THE PARKS

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai people. The parks provide opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to country in an inspiring landscape, characteristic of country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai people to hold community gatherings on country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for country through conservation and restoration work in the parks. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories. GLaWAC Joint management ranger team members undertake conservation and maintenance works, co-operatively with Parks Victoria and there is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program.

Operational management of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and The Lakes National Park is logistically difficult. There is no public road access to many areas due to private landholdings and some areas require boat access - especially the Boole Poole Peninsula, Bunga Arm and Rotamah Island. Parks Victoria has several water craft and a small number of certified coxswains. The GLaWAC ranger team does not currently have any boats or coxswains. An adequate boating capability is essential for operation such as planned burning where numerous staff and prolonged patrols are required. Acquisition of boats and training of coxswains is a high priority.

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

5.2 VISITORS TO THE PARKS

The parks are the largest, relatively natural areas of public land on the Gippsland Lakes, providing for a range of activities such as camping, fishing, boating, swimming and walking in natural settings on the beach and lake shores.

Facilities available throughout the parks include picnic areas, toilets, and car parks and boat jetties. The eastern end of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park is an outstanding boating destination whilst the western end of the park provides road access for recreational use. Boating, fishing and beach recreation on the Lakes and in the parks is a mainstay of tourism in the East Gippsland region.

Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park has a large number of campsites with basic (unpowered) facilities and a natural setting close to beach and lake shores. The Lakes National Park caters mostly for day visitors. Camping is permitted only at Emu Bight on the shore of Lake Victoria. Both parks provide a variety of bushwalking opportunities, and limited opportunities for cycling due to sandy tracks. Horse-riding is only permitted on public vehicle tracks within the Coastal Park, west of Loch Sport near Spoon Bay and Red Bluff. Horse riding has not been permitted in The Lakes National Park in order to protect the sensitive coastal vegetation.

The Gippsland Lakes are one of the State's most popular locations for water-based recreation including motor boating, sailing, kayaking and fishing from boats and canoes. Most of this activity takes place outside the parks but some boating occurs within Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park primarily in Bunga Arm. Boating is the only method of access to some areas of the Coastal Park. It is also popular on sandy shorelines around Point Wilson and Rotamah Island where there are jetties, and around Trouser Point and Emu Bight where shallow draught boats can be safely beached.

Water-skiing is allowed on Bunga Arm between Steamer Landing and First Blowhole. The impact of this activity on breeding sites of waterbirds needs to be monitored. Local and private boat owners undertake boating activity as well as a substantial boat hire and charter industry operating from

Metung, Paynesville and other locations around the Gippsland Lakes, and licensed tour operator craft.

Hunting in Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park is permitted in designated areas for certain game animals. Species of proclaimed game (Hog Deer, Stubble Quail, and some duck species) may currently be hunted in season in that part of the Park west of Beacon Swamp Track, Track 10 Causeway and west of a line from the south end of the causeway to Long Point on Ninety Mile Beach and parts of Boole Poole Peninsula.

Dogs are allowed for the flushing or retrieval of game ducks during the duck season and for pointing, flushing, or retrieval of quail during quail season, subject to regulations. Cutting of vegetation for building hides needs to be controlled through education and enforcement (see Section 4 'Visitor Impacts'). Pest animals and other species may not be hunted in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. No hunting of any kind is permitted in The Lakes National Park. Hunters are currently permitted to hunt in the woodland areas of the Boole Poole Peninsula, west of Bunga Arm Track, but are not permitted to hunt east of Bunga Arm Track.

Planned burning on the Boole Poole Peninsula (see 'Fire Management' above) is likely to temporarily affect the areas that can be accessed by Hog deer hunters under the annual ballot system. Deer are highly abundant and cause environmental damage outside the current ballot area. Planned burning for ecological and other objectives was carried out in the eastern area in 2010; burning in the area west of Bunga Arm Track is needed in the short- to medium-term for similar objectives.

To focus hunting on areas of deer abundance and damage, and to enable burning to be undertaken without major impacts on hunting access, the balloted area should be moved as needed within the area of woodland both west and east of Bunga Arm Track. Sambar Deer are not currently allowed to be hunted but the emerging population of this species and its impacts need to be monitored with a view to potentially allowing hunting in future if required as part of overall management control efforts.

Easy road access to Ninety Mile Beach enables many day visitors and campers to enjoy the long stretch of beach within the Coastal Park between Paradise Beach and Seaspray. This area is subject to very heavy visitor use in peak periods leading to unsustainable impacts on vegetation and cultural sites in the narrow dune strip around campgrounds. Camping in the park campgrounds west of Loch Sport has historically been free of charge. In 2013, camper registration and fees were introduced briefly before being removed under a state-wide change of government policy. During the fee-charging period, Parks Victoria staff and the Golden Beach community reported an observable improvement in camper behaviour and reduced impacts, with less enforcement problems for Rangers.

The south-western end of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park is accessible by two-wheel drive vehicles via sealed roads and tracks. The Boole Poole Peninsula area (eastern end of the park) is only accessible by boat, and access to the park near Loch Sport is limited by almost continuous freehold land along the outer barrier. Access by car within The Lakes National Park is provided by both the Lake Victoria Track (4WD only and subject to seasonal closure) and Lake Reeve Track.

There is no land access for management purposes to some key areas of the parks east of Ocean Grange. There are freehold blocks within Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park to which the only formed vehicle access is through the park and/or third party freehold land. There are also some private land inliers where access is limited to pedestrian paths through the park, such as at Ocean Grange, Boole Poole Peninsula, Barrier Landing and the New Works West area. Bitumen roads providing access to the Parks such as Shoreline Drive, Golden Beach Road, Seacombe-Loch Sport Road, Stockyard Hill Causeway and Paradise Beach Road, are maintained by the Wellington Shire Council.

The boundaries between the park and private residences are unclear in some areas, such as Ocean Grange, making it difficult for park visitors to be certain about which areas and tracks they can access. There are also a number of freehold properties adjoining Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park separated from Ninety Mile Beach by the park.

The Overstrand homestead at Rotamah Island has operated as an environmental education facility for some years, primarily for bird observing. The homestead and the nearby 'Wardens cottage' are leased to a community organisation (see 'Authorised uses'), however the level of public use of this facility is relatively low. The homestead and its surrounds are in a deteriorating condition. Maintenance and repair is required under the lease conditions.

There are a number of private residences at Entrance Bay dating from the period of the construction of the artificial entrance to the Lakes and is part of the New Works Historic Area. Parks Victoria is required to maintain an emergency beach access point at Barrier Landing in a clear and accessible condition under the municipal emergency management plan.

5.3 VISITOR STRATEGIES

Visitor access, activities and facilities in the parks will be managed in accordance with the goals and strategies detailed in Table 6 for each of the broadly defined visitor experience areas in the two parks. Specific recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 7. This table does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

Table 6: Visitor experience goals and strategies.

Honeysuckles to Paradise Beach Visitor Experience Area – Gippsland Lakes CP

(Includes Shoreline Drive Beach Camps 1 to 19 and Paradise Beach Campground)

Goal

Provide accessible, sustainable beach camping experiences including fishing and beach walks.

Strategy

Improve visitor amenity through the provision of well-designed low-key facilities, prioritising Golden Beach and Delray Beach. Eliminate impacts on cultural and natural values by defining and controlling vehicle access and campsites. Increase information and interpretation of joint management and values of the park. Improve visitor compliance with regulations and low-impact camping behaviours through tools including camper registration/fees, education and enforcement. Progressively renew toilets and other facilities.

Loch Sport Visitor Experience Area — Gippsland Lakes CP

(Includes Spoon Bay and Red Bluff Campgrounds, and Stockyard Hill)

Goal

Provide vehicle-accessible lakeside bush camping and day visit experiences including kayaking/canoeing, fishing, swimming, horse-riding and bird observation.

Strategy

Maintain settings with simple low-key facilities. Ensure compliance with park regulations especially those relating to campfires, waste and dogs.

The Lakes NP Visitor Experience Area

(Includes Point Wilson, Emu Bight, Dolomite and other sites)

Goal

Provide highly natural day visit and overnight camping experiences consisting of short walks, picnicking cultural and environmental interpretation, bird observing, and fishing.

Strategy

Improve visitor amenity through the provision of well-designed low-key facilities, prioritising Point Wilson and Emu Bight. Develop Point Wilson as a major interpretive hub for Gunaikurnai values and cultural heritage, and joint management. Eliminate impacts on cultural and natural values by defining and controlling vehicle access and campsites, and preventing disturbance. Increase information and interpretation of joint management and values of the park. Improve visitor compliance with regulations and low-impact camping.

Bunga Arm and Rotamah Visitor Experience Area — Gippsland Lakes CP and The Lakes NP

(Includes sites between Ocean Grange and Second Blowhole, Barrier Landing, Entrance Bay, Rotamah Island)

Goal

Provide opportunities for secluded bush camping and day visits accessible by boat only while ensuring fragile natural and cultural values are protected.

Strategy

Maintain low-key facilities consistent with fee-based camping. Increase joint management and natural and cultural values information at western sites including Ocean Grange and Steamer Landing. Protect water quality by ensuring toilets are functional and well-maintained. Monitor vegetation and shoreline condition around sites and control high impact activities as necessary. Implement site design and activity controls if park impacts become apparent. Monitor water skiing activity in relation to disturbance of waterbird breeding sites.

Boole Poole Visitor Experience Area - Gippsland Lakes CP

(Area available for Hog Deer hunting.)

Goal

Provide for restricted recreational hunting of Hog Deer under annual ballot.

Strategy

Review the arrangements for Hog deer hunting, with the aim of providing an annual hunting area equal in extent to the existing balloted area, rotated within a larger area of the park extending east of Bunga Arm Track. Engage agency and park stakeholders and neighbours in the review.

Table 7: Recreational activities allowed in Management Zones.

Activity	Recreation Development Zone	Conservation & Recreation Zone	Conservation Zone	Special Management Overlay — Bunga Arm	Hunting (Designated Species) Overlay
Boating — motorised, sailing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boating — rafting, canoeing, kayaking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boating — waterskiing	N/A	Yes, subject to Marine Act regulations	Yes, subject to Marine Act regulations	N/A	N/A
Camping — designated areas	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, during declared hunting season, subject to limits on duration and location specified by the park manager
Camping — dispersed vehicle based	No	No, except in 'Special Use Overlay-Hunting' area	No	No	Yes, during declared hunting season, subject to limits on duration and location specified by the park manager

Activity	Recreation Development Zone	Conservation & Recreation Zone	Conservation Zone	Special Management Overlay — Bunga Arm	Hunting (Designated Species) Overlay
Camping — dispersed other	No	No (except in Special Use Overlay — Hunting area)	No	No	Yes (during declared hunting season, subject to limits on duration and location specified by the park manager)
Campfires — solid fuel	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans)	Yes (only in designated campfires where provided and subject to regulations including fire bans. Not permitted on 90 Mile Beach)			Yes (during declared hunting season)
Campfires — liquid or gas fuel stoves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Competitive events	Yes, with permit, if activity type is allowed		No	No	N/A
Cycling	Yes, on open public roads and Vehicle Only tracks. Not permitted on walking tracks		Management	No	N/A
Dogs	No, except on lead at: The Honeysuckles; Flamingo Beach; Paradise Beach Camping Area; Golden Beach Campgrounds 1 to 6 along Shoreline Drive; Ocean Grange within 100 metres of the private residential land; Barrier Landing no more than 300 metres east of the private land boundary.			No, including on boats in the Bunga Arm.	In designated duck and quail hunting areas, dogs used for the flushing or retrieval of game birds are allowed during and 48 hours prior to the commencement of the declared hunting season.
Education Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Firearms	No	No	No, except in the Special Use Overlay — Hunting area	No	Yes, during declared hunting season for Hog Deer, some Duck species and Quail depending on area and subject to restrictions and conditions
Firewood collection	Yes — for visitor use within the area where fires are allowed; not allowed for commercial or domestic use.				

Activity	Recreation Development Zone	Conservation & Recreation Zone	Conservation Zone	Special Management Overlay — Bunga Arm	Hunting (Designated Species) Overlay
Fishing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geocaching	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	Yes (no excavation allowed)	N/A
Guided activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Horseriding	No	Yes (only in the Gippsland Lakes CP on public vehicle roads west of Loch Sport)	No	No	N/A
Hunting	No	No	No	No	Yes (during declared hunting season for Hog Deer, some Duck species and Quail depending on area and subject to restrictions and conditions)
Orienteering and rogaining	Yes — subject to permit - except within The Lakes NP and Bunga Arm				N/A
Swimming	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Vehicle use (two-wheel drive, four-wheel drive, and trail bikes)	Yes — on open public roads; not allowed on MVO roads and tracks or on walking tracks				
Walking and hiking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

6 WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PARTNERS – GLaWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP AND GKTOLMB

The parks are managed by Parks Victoria as part of Victoria's parks and conservation reserves system. Parks Victoria rangers operate from Loch Sport and Bairnsdale. Regional and state-wide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the area from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne. Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in the two parks, and other jointly managed areas, which has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for fire management on non-urban public land and provides legislative and policy support to the GKTOLMB and Parks Victoria. The GLaWAC Joint management ranger team has recently commenced participation in DELWP's fire management program.

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP 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 operate in multiple directions with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC. The GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

The communities of Seaspray, Golden Beach, Loch Sport, Paynesville, Metung, Ocean Grange, Lakes Entrance and Barrier Landing are very engaged in the management of the parks.

The Friends of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves aims to promote the values of the parks and to provide an avenue for the community to participate in the management of the parks.

The Gippsland Lakes User Group represents the interests of school camps and other camps on the Banksia Peninsula which frequently use The Lakes National Park and the Coastal Park for recreational and educational activities.

The Bairnsdale and District Field Naturalists Club and the Gippsland Environment Group are both active in surveying and monitoring the natural values and condition of the parks. The Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club based at Paynesville is an active user of the waters of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

The Field and Game Association represents a large proportion of the hunters who hunt in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. The Blond Bay Hog Deer Association administers the ballot for Hog deer permits on Boole Poole Peninsula. The Sporting Shooters Association Australia and the Australian Deer Association provide volunteers to assist with deer and invasive animal control programs in the joint managed parks.

The Golden Beach Ratepayers and Residents Association represents the interests of residents in the Golden Beach area in relation to park management. The Friends of Metung promotes Metung and its environs.

The parks have a substantial number of neighbours in the private landholdings around Seaspray, Glomar Beach, Golden Beach, Paradise Beach, Loch Sport, Ocean Grange, Barrier Landing, the New Works area. The interface between these areas and the parks needs to be managed in conjunction with landholders to ensure property boundaries and public/private access is clearly defined and encroachments are minimised.

The Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative—which provides health, family and cultural services to its clients—owns substantial land on Boole Poole Peninsula adjacent to the Coastal Park. A number of hunting lodges operate on private land on the Boole Poole Peninsula, servicing Hog deer hunters.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the parks. Aboriginal Victoria is the primary Government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic co-ordination of catchment restoration investment. It is also responsible for implementing the *Victorian Coastal Strategy* in the West Gippsland region to achieve integrated management, conservation and sustainable use of the coastal zone.

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority manages and regulates recreational fishing and fisheries stocks in the Gippsland Lakes.

The Lakes National Park, except for Rotamah Island and Little Rotamah Island, is located within the Shire of Wellington. The section of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park west of Rotamah Island is also located within the Shire of Wellington. The Shire maintains bitumen roads providing access to the parks, such as Shoreline Drive, Golden Beach Road, Seacombe-Loch Sport Road, Stockyard Hill Causeway and Paradise Beach Road.

The section of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park comprising Rotamah Island and areas to the East, including Bunga Arm and Boole Poole Peninsula, is located within the Shire of East Gippsland. Both Shires are responsible for local planning regulation and other municipal responsibilities.

The management of ports and public facilities in the Gippsland Lakes (including public jetties, moorings, navigational aids, dredging, rock walling and beach renourishment) is the responsibility of Gippsland Ports. This includes navigation aids in the waters of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and jetties and landings on the shoreline of the parks including jetties at Sperm Whale Head, Rotamah Island, Ocean Grange, Steamer Landing, Barrier Landing, Drews Jetty and Silver Shot Landing. Gippsland Ports operates a sewage pump-out barge in the waters of Bunga Arm over summer, in addition to standing pump-out facilities in township locations around the Lakes.

The Game Management Authority is the Victorian Government authority responsible for regulation of game hunting. Parks Victoria and the Authority collaborate in the on-ground management of hunting in the Coastal Park and regulatory enforcement.

Emergency management in the parks involves a significant range of agencies due to the potential for both land and water emergencies including bushfire, search and rescue, navigation accidents, oil spills and whale/dolphin strandings. Agencies include Victoria Police, DELWP, Parks Victoria, Country Fire Authority, the Coastguard, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Gippsland Ports and the Shires.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

A large number of licensed tour operators conduct activities in the parks including scenic cruises around the Gippsland Lakes, dolphin watching, bird observing, fishing, canoeing and kayaking, and vehicle-based tours.

Rotamah Island Bird Observatory Inc. occupies the Overstrand homestead on Rotamah Island under a Crown lease. The lease applies to most of the homestead, the Wardens cottage, workshop and generator shed on the island. The lease over the Wardens cottage expires in several years and the lease over the remaining area continues for a longer period. The properties are deteriorating and require increasing maintenance, and the surrounding bushland is in poor condition.

There are a number of other residences at Entrance Bay dating from the period of the construction of the artificial entrance to the Lakes which are part of the New Works Historic Area. Ten licences

have been issued for apiary sites in Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. The park is a relatively minor source of honey for apiarists, although some of the vegetation in the area can be important at times to apiarists.

Gippsland Ports has complex infrastructure in the New Works Area of Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, to transport sand dredged and pumped from channels in and around The Entrance. An underground sand pipeline runs approximately one kilometre through dunes in the park from The Entrance and then seaward to the offshore 'Western Outfall' of the system. Gippsland Ports requires ongoing maintenance access to the pipeline and its inspection pits. Gippsland Ports is responsible for vegetation slashing, weed control and erosion management along the pipeline track.

There are a number of utilities located in the parks such as Gippsland oil and gas pipelines servicing the Bass Strait oil/gas fields cross the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park that are maintained by private companies.

6.4 PARK BOUNDARIES

There is no land access for management purposes to some key areas of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park east of Ocean Grange.

There are also freehold blocks surrounded by the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park to which the only formed access is through the park. Bitumen roads providing access to the Parks such as Shoreline Drive, Golden Beach Road, Seacombe-Loch Sport Road, Stockyard Hill Causeway and Paradise Beach Road, are maintained by Wellington Shire Council.

The *Gunaikurnai Whole of country plan* proposes that cultural sites along the coast and out to sea should be included in expanded park boundaries. This should be considered once cultural mapping is completed.

There are also a number of freehold properties adjoining Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park separated from Ninety Mile Beach by the Park. Opportunities to create more effective boundaries or to negotiate improved access, through acquisitions or landholder agreements, should be evaluated as they arise.

7 GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with goals and strategic initiatives for the joint management area as a whole.

Caring for Country

Goal

The land, water and cultural values of the parks are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

Land and water

No.	Action
LGL1	Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.
LGL2	Protect and restore the area by implementing the land and water conservation strategies detailed in Table 5 including the implementation of relevant parts of action statements and recovery plans for threatened and endangered species in the area, ensuring integration with the implementation of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Plan.
LGL3	Work with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) to control pest plants and animals consistent with the East Gippsland Invasive Plants and Animals Plan including fox, cat and domestic dog threats to native birds and in particular Little Tern nesting sites, Hooded Plover and New Holland Mouse. Increase control of emerging threats including pigs and Sambar Deer, and priority weeds including Bridal Creeper, Box Thorn, Sea Spurge, Dolichos Pea and Wheel Cactus.
LGL4	Undertake stabilisation and restoration of marsh and dune areas affected by erosion, and renourish islands critical to water bird habitat as required.
LGL6	Work with the local government, WGCMA and affected landholders to control shoreline erosion in The Lakes National Park and the eastern Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park around private land while minimising the use of groynes and other infrastructure that may disrupt natural coastal processes elsewhere along the shoreline except where necessary.
LGL7	Work with DELWP to protect the area, assets and communities from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect migratory bird habitat and other fire-sensitive values.
LGL7	Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for park ecosystems and habitats and seek burns to be programmed and implemented as part of DELWP's fire operations planning process.
LGL8	Investigate means by which inflows of water from Merriman Creek can be restored to Lake Reeve, subject to preventing flooding risks to the Seaspray township.
LGL9	Include the parks in the development of a comprehensive conservation action plan aligned to the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan and broader Gippsland park landscape conservation.

Cultural heritage

LGL10	Increase the priority given to protection and restoration of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and values in the parks, investing comparable focus and resourcing to that applied to environmental and visitor management.

- LGL11 Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the parks through *Welcome to Country* and other appropriate signage, based on the Tatungalung clan at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the parks.
- LGL12 Undertake mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the parks, and consider the scanning of the intermittent areas of Lake Reeve near The Lakes National Park. Consider the need for any boundary amendments, and implementation of a park zoning Cultural Values Overlay, in light of mapping and survey outcomes.
- LGL13 Seek to rename places in the park using traditional Gunaikurnai names through the Naming Rules of the Office of Geographic Names.
- LGL14 Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the parks, and undertaking community cultural activities, including partnering with tour operators, and development of Point Wilson as a hub of cultural information and activity for the community and visitors
- LGL15 Investigate use of Rotamah Island as a cultural education operation (see LGL26).
- LGL16 Explore opportunities with the Gippsland Lakes User Group for Gunaikurnai to provide education and guiding services to schools and camps based on Banksia Peninsula.
- LGL17 Seek opportunities to implement traditional cultural burning practices as part of planned burning programs through liaison and partnership with DELWP fire managers.
- LGL18 Upgrade the presentation of cultural information, joint management and other park information at the Parks Victoria Loch Sport Office.
- LGL19 Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors and others working in the area.
- LGL20 Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the area in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act.
- LGL21 Implement relevant entitlements or obligations under the *Native Title Act 1993*, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the parks.

People in the Parks

Goals

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

Visitor and community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the parks are enhanced by joint management

-
No.	Action
LGL21	Manage visitor experiences in the parks in accordance with the goals and strategy in Table 6 or each of the broadly defined visitor experience areas of the two parks.
LGL22	Manage visitor activities in accordance with Table 7. Generally, maintain existing regulatory settings for activities and uses in the parks, apart from changes set out in this plan (including approved variations) or changes arising from statutory requirements.

- LGL23 Continue current public access arrangements on roads and tracks in both parks.
- LGL24 Maintain education and enforcement to ensure that access, visitor activity, campfires, waste and other regulations are complied with, giving priority to hunting areas during hunting season, and the Bunga Arm Special Management Area. Work with hunting groups to eliminate cutting of standing vegetation for hides, through education and enforcement.
- LGL25 Seek policy approval to re-introduce camping registration and fees in areas between the Honeysuckles and Paradise Beach.
- LGL26 Explore the opportunity for Gunaikurnai-operated education and visitor services at the Rotamah Island Homestead as part of the current lease arrangements or at the end of the lease terms.
- LGL27 Control risks to visitor safety especially in relation to campfires, surf fishing and safe boating. Maintain emergency beach access point at Barrier Landing.
- LGL28 Extend the arrangements for Hog Deer hunting on Boole Poole Peninsula. Provide an annual hunting area equal in extent to the existing balloted area, rotated within a larger area of the Coastal Park extending east of Bunga Arm Track. Undertake further engagement with agency and park stakeholders and neighbours regarding detailed planning and implementation.
- LGL29 Improve the definition and signage of park walking tracks around Ocean Grange and other residential areas abutting the Coastal Park to clarify the public-private boundary for park visitors.
- LGL30 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

Goal

Joint management of the parks operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.

Community stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the parks.

No.	Action
LGL31	Maintain close collaboration with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the parks. Ensure co-ordinated management of the parks and the broader Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site.
LGL32	Increase participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP fire management programs in and around the parks.
LGL33	Work with Gippsland Ports to: ensure safe and sustainable boating access to the parks; provide maintenance access to the Barrier Landing sand pipeline and minimise effects on the Coastal Park and visitors of maintenance operations; retain provision of a sewage pump-out barge in the Bunga Arm.
LGL34	Collaborate with Destination Gippsland to market and promote the parks as part of regional tourism experiences and attractions.
LGL35	Work with local tourism, business and community groups to promote the parks and provide complementary services to visitors.

LGL36	Collaborate with Victorian Fisheries Authority and recreational fishing groups to ensure the sustainability of fish populations in the waters of the parks, and to manage shoreline impacts.
LGL37	Work with recreational hunting groups to achieve responsible hunting practices and expand existing volunteer partnerships to control feral animals, especially pigs and Sambar Deer.
LGL38	Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the area to interact with other parks and partners in the Settlement Area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.
LGL39	Pursue opportunities to create more effective boundaries or to negotiate improved access to the parks through acquisitions or landholder agreements as they arise.
LGL40	Improve the on-water operational capability of the Gunaikurnai joint management ranger team through provision/access to watercraft and the necessary boat-handling training and certifications.

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 8 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 8: Data used to track progress in implementing the Joint Management Plan.

Data type	Description	Data source and method
Activities	Activities are the things we are doing under joint management. Tracking activities is important for understanding whether the planned projects and activities are being implemented successfully. They include: • the activities of each of the strategic initiatives documented in Table 5 in Section 4 of the Strategic Plan. • the actions described in this management plan for The Lake National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.	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. 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.
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of what is being done. 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.	Some outcomes identified for the five-year goals can be tracked using existing project management tools, while others will require additional data collection. Appendix 2 of the Strategic Plan specifies potential indicators and timings for outcomes.

Table 9 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 9: 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 Lakes National Park

Joint Management Plan

7/10/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICCRD94

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not warrant the accuracy of the data or the results of the analysis. The data is provided for information only and should not be used for any other purpose. The data is provided for information only and should not be used for any other purpose.

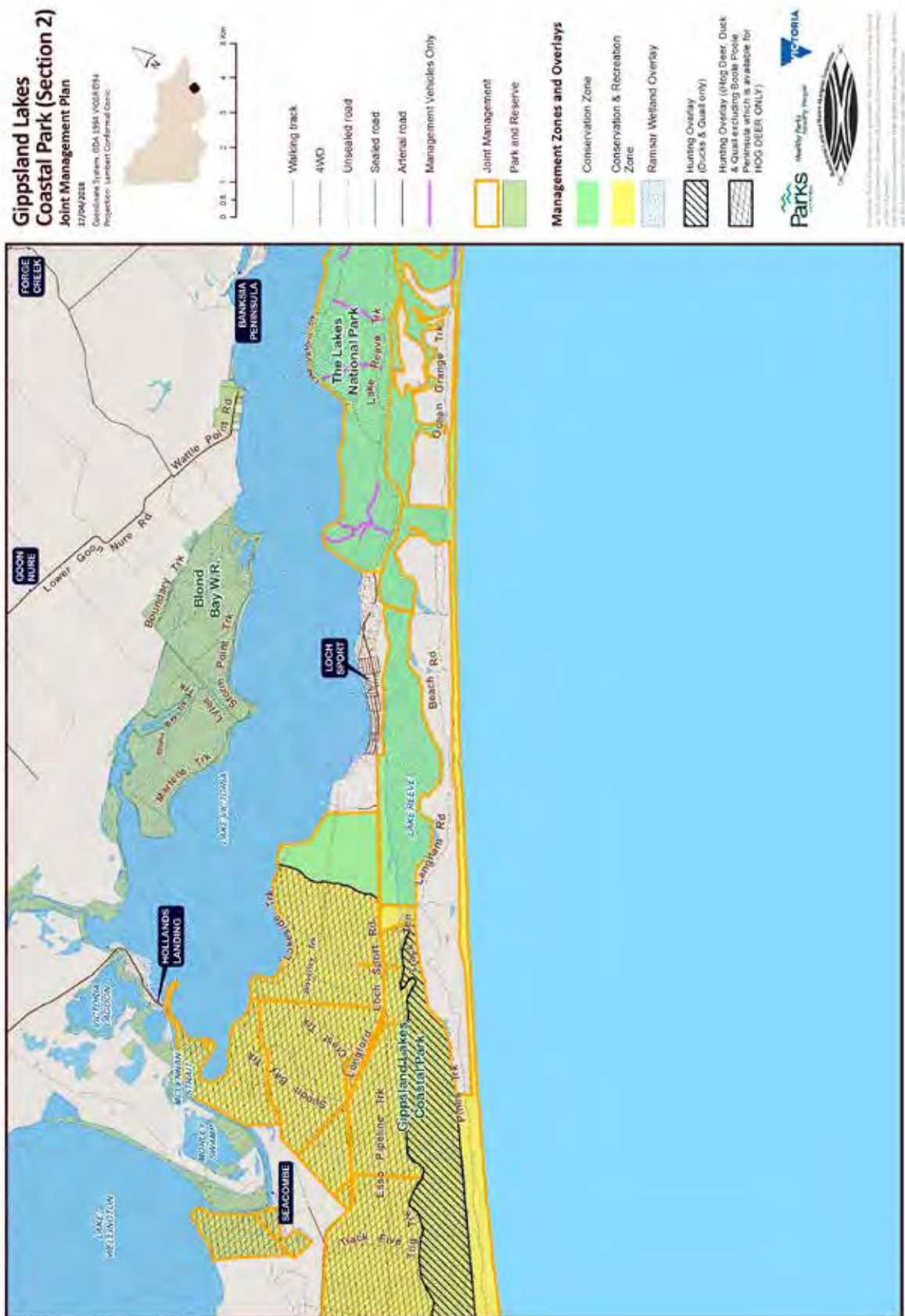
- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only
- Joint Management
- Public Land
- Park and Reserve

Management Zones and Overlays

- Conservation Zone
- Conservation & Recreation Zone
- Recreation Development Zone
- Special Management Overlay
- Ramsar Wetland

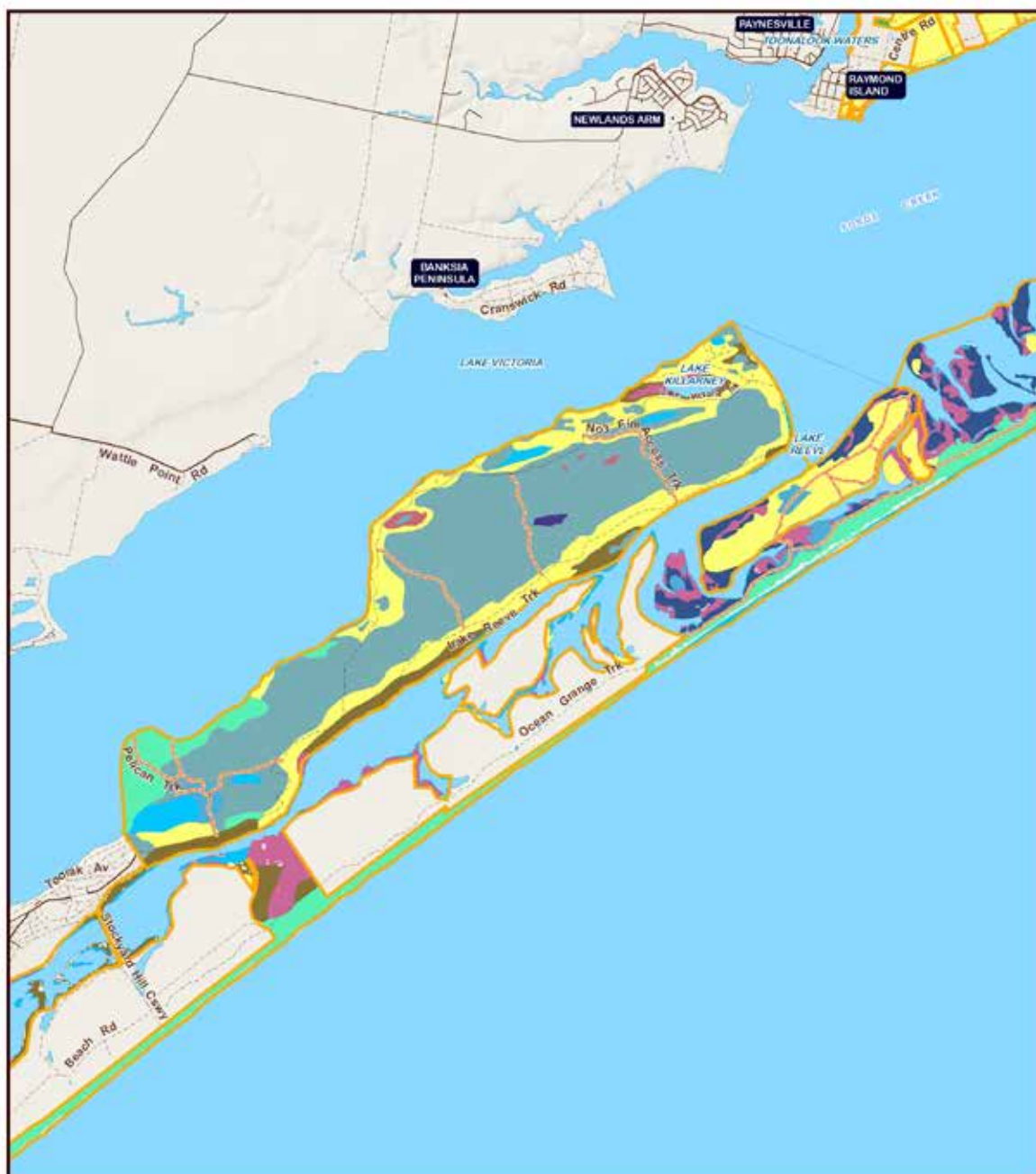


Map 1: Management zones and overlays, The Lakes National Park.



Map 3: Management zones and overlays, Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park (Section 2).

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The Lakes National Park

Joint Management Plan

23/06/2018

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICGRID94

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



Distances are approximate and should not be used for navigation. The map is for information only and should not be used for navigation. The map is for information only and should not be used for navigation.

- Walking track
- 4WD
- Unsealed road
- Sealed road
- Arterial road
- Management Vehicles Only
- Joint Management

Ecological Vegetation Classes

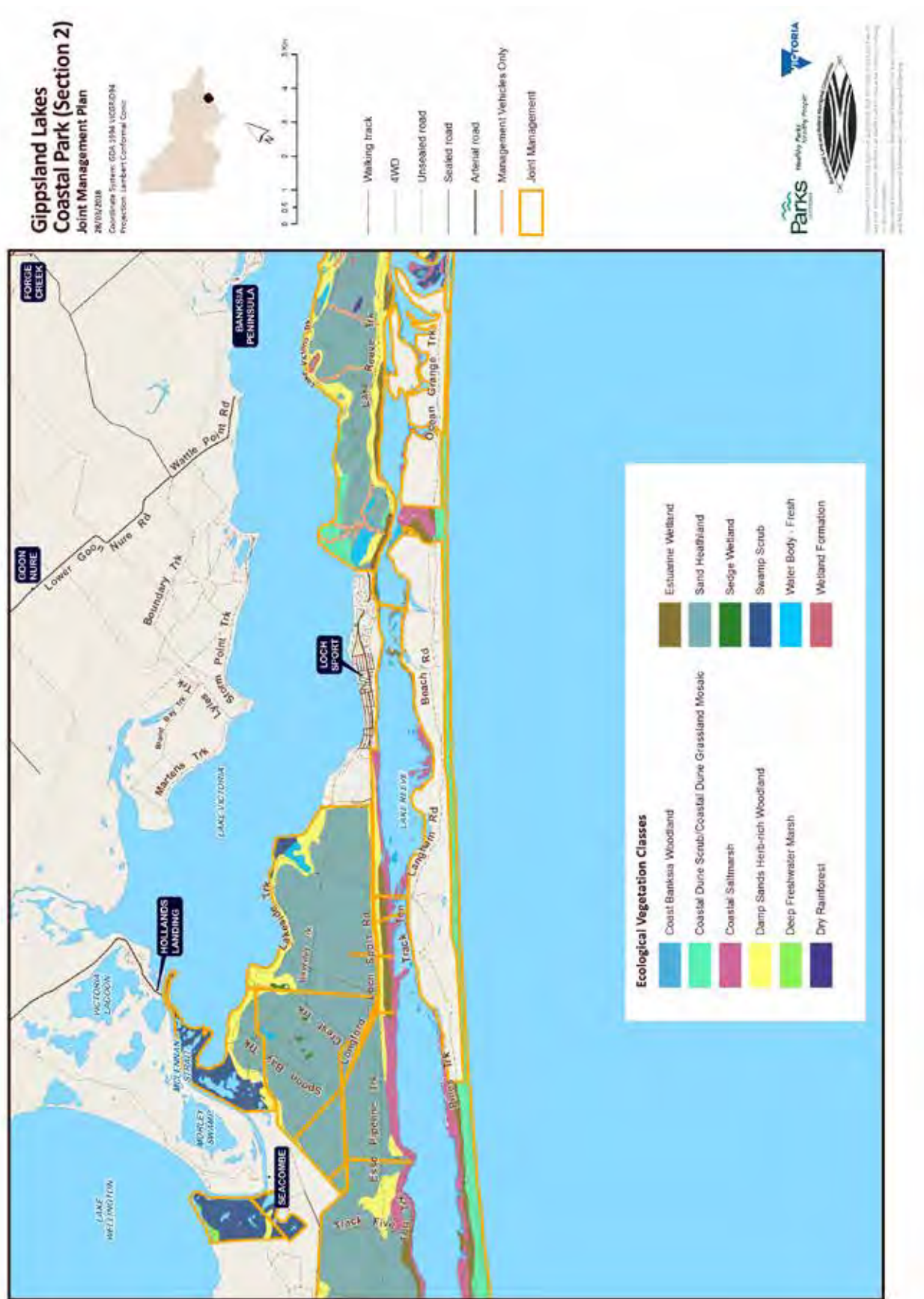
Coast Banksia Woodland	Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland	Sand Heathland
Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic	Dry Rainforest	Swamp Scrub
Coastal Saltmarsh	Estuarine Wetland	Water Body - Fresh
	Plains Grassy Woodland	Wetland Formation



Map 5: Ecological Vegetation Classes, The Lakes National Park.



Map 6: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park (Section 1).



Map 7: Ecological Vegetation Classes, Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park (Section 2).

28/03/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 VICCRD34
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



Walking track

Shared path

4M4

Unsealed road

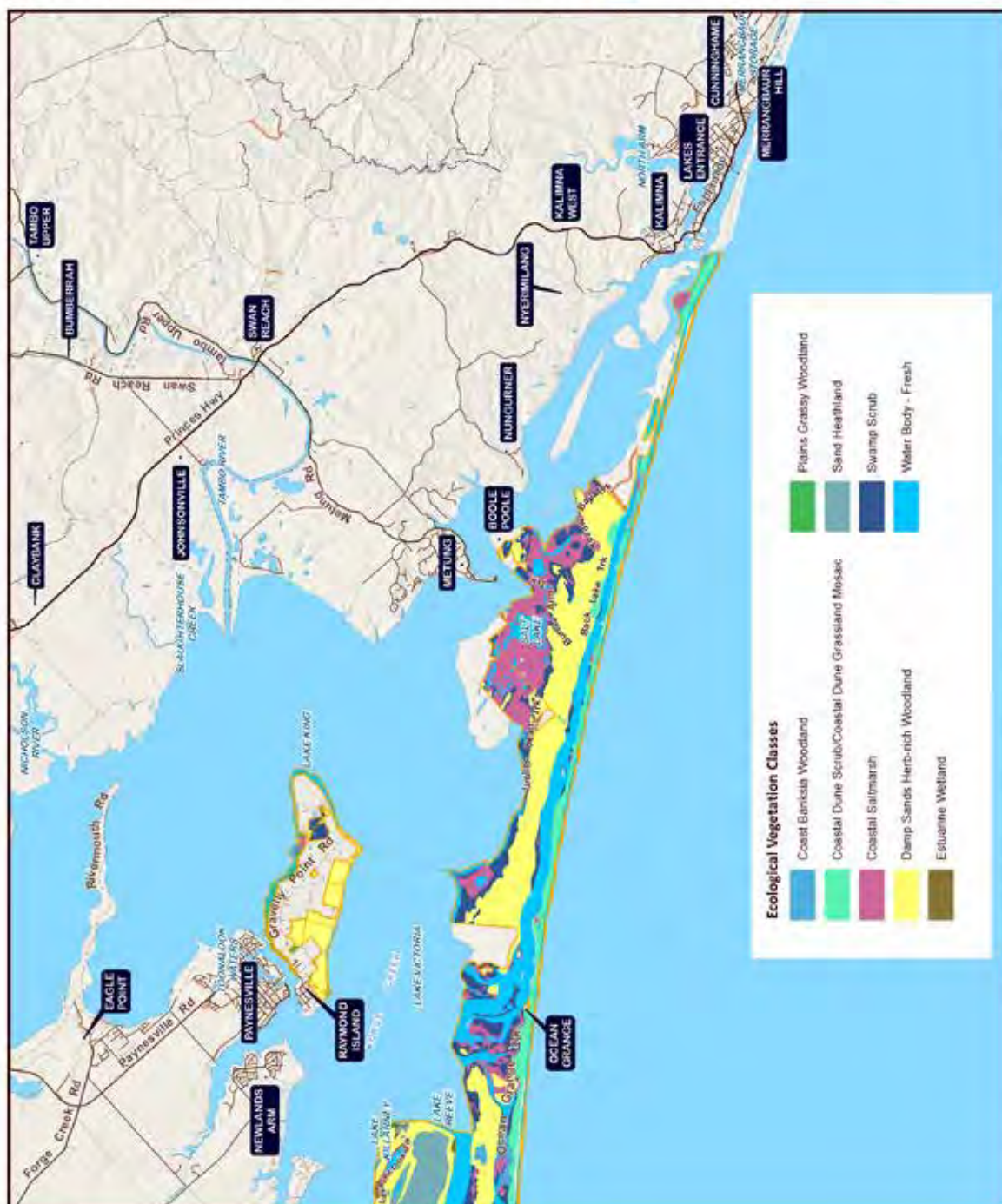
Sealed road

— Arterial road

Highway

Management Vehicles Only

Joint Management



THE LAKES NATIONAL PARK & GIPPSLAND LAKES COASTAL PARK — TATUNGALUNG COUNTRY 343

29/07/2018
Coordinate System: GDA 1984 (MGRS)94
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



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GUNAIKURNAI
Traditional Owner Land Management Board