

Gunaiikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan

Summary of the 2022 Annual Reflection Workshop

December 2022

This was the 3rd Reflection Workshop to be held for the Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan, and the last before the upcoming 5-year review

- The Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan (JMP) calls for a reflection workshop to be held every year, hosted by the **Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board** (GKTOLMB) and attended by the primary Joint Management (JM) partners – the **Gunaikurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation** (GLaWAC), the **Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning** (DELWP), and **Parks Victoria** (PV).
- The workshop in Traralgon on 7 December 2022 was the third to be held since the JMP was approved in September 2018. It was also the last to be held before the **5-year review** of the JMP, which will take place by September 2023, and which will be the first to be conducted for any joint management plan in Victoria.
- Given that context, JM partners used the workshop to collectively reflect not only on **all that has been achieved** in the past year, and on **what to improve practically** in the coming year, but also on **how to approach the upcoming 5-year review**.
- The reflections shared by the workshop participants are summarised in the following pages. We have done our best to preserve the integrity of what was voiced in the room, while synthesising and rewording actions shared by different groups in this summary. The results from the pre-workshop survey, presented during the workshop, are included as an appendix, along with a reminder of the theory of change for joint management from the JMP. Together, these will inform future JM implementation in **both the short- and longer term**.
- Participants included a range of people involved in Joint Management across each organisation, from operational personnel to middle management and executive representatives. There was also a guest from the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board.



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning



“What we are proud of in our Joint Management work this year”

Note: We have done our best to preserve the integrity of what was voiced in the room, while synthesising and rewording actions shared by different groups in this summary.

Working on **Country**, and working with family, every day

The increasingly **joint presence** of Gunaikurnai and PV rangers in our JM parks and reserves

The **leadership** being shown by our young rangers

The huge work in **cultural interpretation** being done at Buchan Caves

The **condition** of our parks and reserves e.g. Knob Reserve

Our collective ability to **relaunch** our JM projects following Covid lockdowns, and the recent fires and storms

GLaWAC and PV **jointly winning** the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Victoria Award of Excellence for Land Management and Regional Achievement Award for the Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) Camping and Access Strategy

The level of sharing and learning of JM experiences **across different Countries** – between TOLM boards and within agency organisations

Finalising the **new GKTOLMB strategic plan** – not only the content (returning care and leadership of Gunaikurnai Country to Gunaikurani people, and doing it as soon as possible), but importantly also the process of consultation that we took to get there

The tangible shift – for agency partners – from “ticking boxes” to **thinking deeply about enabling self-determination**

Being able to **work through obstacles** in a way that people feel comfortable

The quality of our relationships from **friendships** at the operational level to mature **partnerships** at the strategic level, and despite changes in personnel in each organisation



“What each of us can do today to improve our progress towards the changes we want to see in Joint Management” (1 of 2)

Note: Almost all of the actions proposed by participants corresponded to the 3 survey statements shown on these 2 pages. We have done our best to preserve the integrity of what was voiced in the room, while synthesising and rewording actions shared by different groups in this summary.

Joint management partners are supporting the development of Gunaikurnai leaders

Make our intention to support known, and **ask** what support Gunaikurnai partners actually want

Raise awareness by talking about JM and **handing over** to Gunaikurnai rangers when wider community come up to us in parks

Extend what we do in agencies for Gunaikurnai partners e.g. identifying skill gaps, developing training plans, participating in our training programs, networking groups, mentoring opportunities

Allocate more funding for capability development

Learn better to **ferociously follow** our Gunaikurnai partners

Joint management partners are learning together and getting better at what they do

Meet **face-to-face** more often, including informally, and on Country (“you can’t connect with Country if you’re sitting behind a desk”)

Swap roles for a day, or **work from each other’s offices** a day per week, to better understand where each other is coming from

Continue to **provide open and honest feedback** on what’s working well and what’s not (courageous conversations)

Increase cultural competency training sessions for agency staff

Celebrate JM successes to build advocacy and momentum for JM, supporting mindset shifts in agencies

Support new colleagues within each of our organisations as we progress into JM for 4 new parks

Keep listening with both ears open, asking respectful questions

“What each of us can do today to improve our progress towards the changes we want to see in Joint Management” (2 of 2)

Note: Almost all of the actions proposed by participants corresponded to the 3 survey statements shown on these 2 pages. We have done our best to preserve the integrity of what was voiced in the room, while synthesising and rewording actions shared by different groups in this summary.

Joint management partners are working in an equitable partnership

Enable GLaWAC to have a say earlier in the budget process, e.g. develop a joint budget bid, strengthen connections between GLaWAC and finance/corporate sections of agencies

Reactivate the conversation between partners to build a shared understanding of what self-determination looks like, and to define the pathway towards sole management

Given resource constraints, **come to a shared understanding** of what equitable partnership means e.g. it may not be equal numbers of people in parks (creating “parallel bureaucracies”), but instead GLaWAC directing joint resources to meet their priorities

Increase awareness within agencies around resourcing equity e.g. Gunaikurnai staff having significant cultural responsibilities which can constrain their capacity for JM implementation work

Review memberships of working groups to ensure “balanced” representation

For agencies, **increase funding** to enable building of capacity and capability for Joint Management

Start small conversations in our teams about what equity means, what treaty means

Given the changes happening more broadly, **open a conversation to reset what equitable partnership looks like now** e.g. whole-of-country plan to incorporate new areas and marine environment, Gunaikurnai-PV agreement to now include DELWP



“What matters most for the 5-year review, and how we might measure it”

Note: We have done our best to preserve the integrity of what was voiced in the room, while synthesising and rewording actions shared by different groups in this summary.

What matters most...

- Strength of **our relationships**
e.g. accurate and honest feedback between all JM partners
- Understanding and support for JM from **Gunaikurnai and local communities**
- Actually implementing** what we planned to do
- Respect for Gunaikurnai culture** and lore in park management
- Equity of decision-making** between JM partners
- The **condition of Country**
- Adequacy and reliability of **ongoing funding**
- Aspirations of Gunaikurnai rangers** being met
- Development of GLaWAC** - in capacity, confidence, and capability
- For agencies, our ability to **let go of control** and to follow Gunaikurnai
- Reclaiming culture and connecting to Country**
- Contributing towards **broader goals**, such as people being connected to Country, kids being in school

...and how we might measure it

- Capturing how people feel through **surveys**
- Capturing how people feel through **yarning circles** (ideally on Country)
- Using **proxy measures** such as amount of funding, land/water being handed back, if necessary
- Number of Gunaikurnai rangers**
- Positive **case studies** (storytelling)
- Number of jobs and amount of income** for Gunaikurnai community and businesses
- Visitation rates** before and after JM

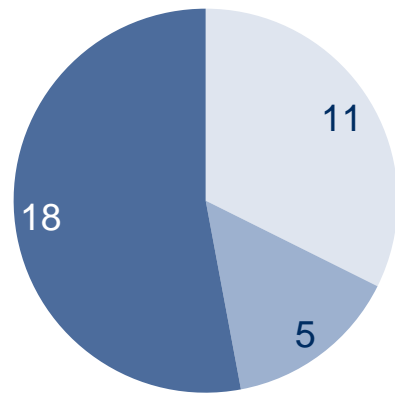


Appendix 1: Results from the pre-workshop survey



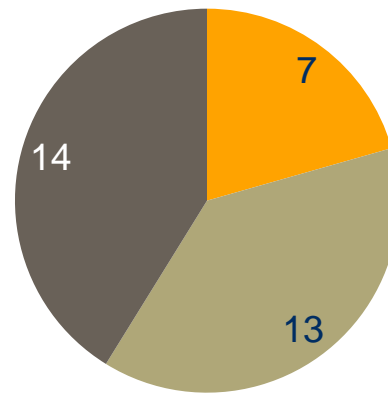
34 people completed the online survey between 15 November and 1 December 2022

How long have you been involved in joint management?



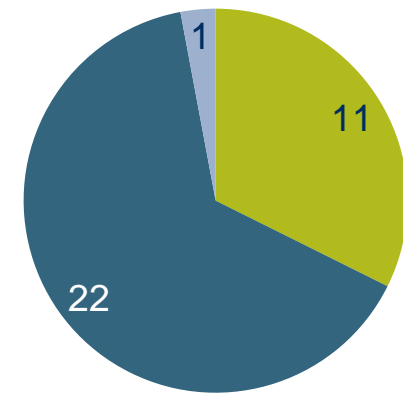
- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6+ years

What work do you do in joint management?



- Operations
- Management
- Executive

Do you identify as a Gunaikurnai or other First Nations person?



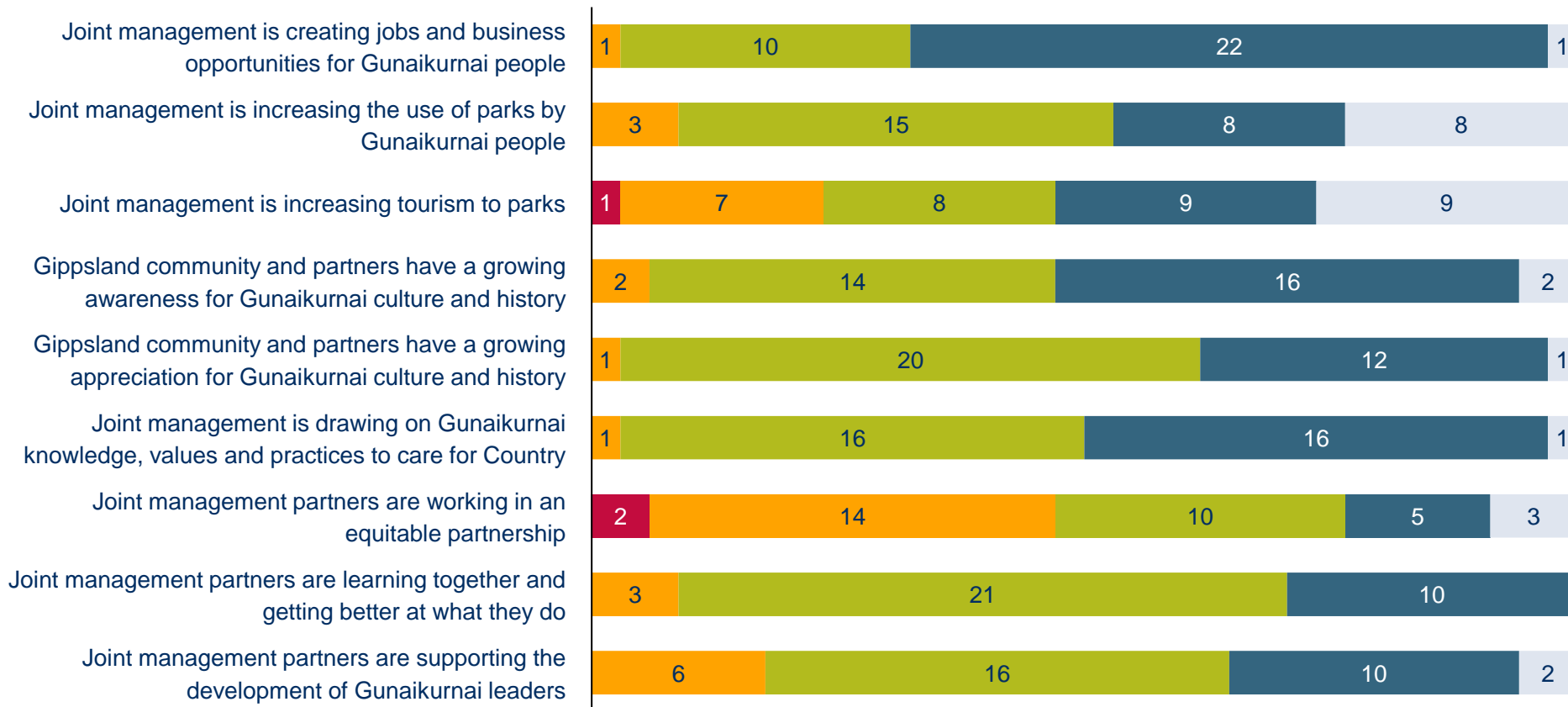
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say



How well respondents think Joint Management is achieving the changes we want to see for People, Culture, Country and Working Together

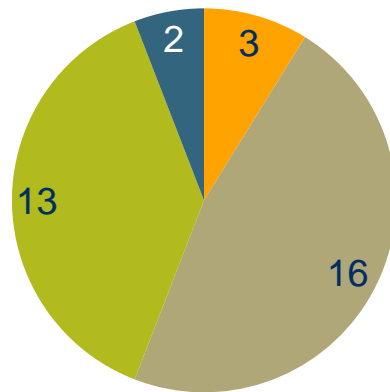
To what extent do you believe that:

Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely Don't know



How well respondents think we are doing on joint management and why

How well do you think we are doing on joint management?*



- Slightly well
- Moderately well
- Very well
- Extremely well

Why did you give this answer?***

It is a journey, and things are getting better as time goes on – we are gaining momentum, recognition and confidence

There is a lot more to learn in working better together

As the first JM arrangement in Victoria, what we have achieved is significant

We need a shared understanding of what self-determination actually means, then map out the steps to achieving it

JM has created important steps to self-determination that may not have happened without JM (employment, degree of management)

We need to enable Gunaikurnai people to take on more leadership and management roles (development, opportunities, funding)

There is genuine commitment and intent by most partners

There needs to be consistency between what senior leaders are committing to and what actually happens between partners on the ground

*Note that no respondents selected the category of “Not well at all”

**Note that the open-text responses were summarised and in some instances reworded in order to respect anonymity



What respondents think would make joint management better*

Capacity-building and training across all partner organisations (management, operations, cultural safety, self-determination principles)

More **Gunaikurnai representation** across Gunaikurnai Country (management offices and rangers)

Realistic funding – that is ongoing and untied – to actually implement the plan (additional capacity and capability-building in management and project delivery)

Increasingly open lines of **communication** between all partners (joint workshops, joint offices, joint branding, more frequent informal gatherings)

More **active addressing of issues** by senior managers, to support a culturally safer relationship

More **accountability** for the presentation and care of Country, and for putting Gunaikurnai culture at the centre of all JM park management

Creating more opportunities for **Gunaikurnai communities** to come together and connect on and with the parks & reserves

Aligning more closely with the **whole-of-country plan**

Starting a conversation on what **self-determination** actually looks like and what needs to happen to get there (beyond legislation)

*Note that the open-text responses were summarised and in some instances reworded in order to respect anonymity

Appendix 2: The theory of change for Joint Management



To achieve this future, we need to create...

Changes for **People**: in skills, training, employment, health, wellbeing education and reconciliation for Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai people

Changes for **Culture**: in heritage, identity, values, education, cultural practices and relationship with broader community

What we have achieved so far

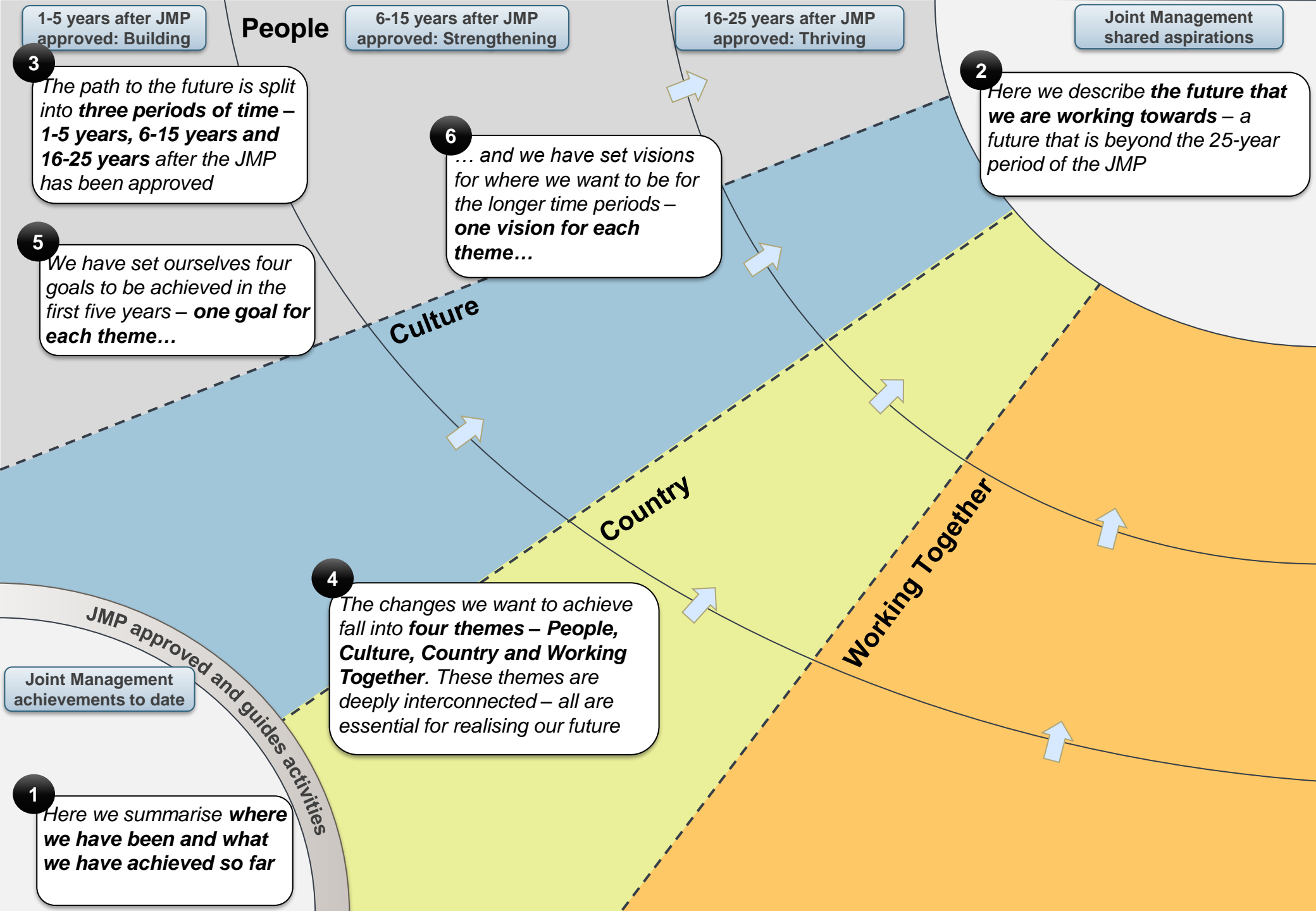
- State formally recognises Gunaikurnai dispossession and role of native title in supporting sovereignty and social justice
- GLaWAC and GKTOLMB founded
- Gunaikurnai rangers have led projects and managing land
- Strong partnership built between Gunaikurnai and State
- Committee of Management established for Knob Reserve
- Partners undertaken capacity building and training
- New signage installed recognising Gunaikurnai as traditional owners

Changes for **Country**: in sustainable land management practices, climate resilience and environmental outcomes

Changes in how we are **Working Together**: in the governance structure, legislation and equitable partnership underpinning joint management

The future we want to see

- Gunaikurnai are the delegated managers of all JM parks, with support from the State
- Gunaikurnai are healthier, happier and engaging with culture on country
- JM has contributed to reconciliation, social justice and sovereignty for Gunaikurnai people
- Wider community respects Gunaikurnai cultural heritage, connection to country and self-determination
- JM parks are healthier and more resilient as a result of sustainable land management
- JM parks are a landmark sustainable nature-based tourism for outdoor recreation, visitor experience and education in Victoria



1-5 years after JMP approved: Building

6-15 years after JMP approved: Strengthening

16-25 years after JMP approved: Thriving

Joint Management shared aspirations

People

Long-term visions

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

Long-term visions

Joint management is supporting improved outcomes for Gunaikurnai people, driving local economic growth, and improving access, use and enjoyment for all visitors

Gunaikurnai culture underpins joint management

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

- Gunaikurnai maintain a strong connection to country and culture, are proud, happy and healthy
- JM has contributed to reconciliation, social justice and self-determination for Gunaikurnai people
- Wider community respects Gunaikurnai cultural heritage, connection to country and self-determination
- JM parks are healthier and more resilient as a result of sustainable land management
- JM parks are a landmark destination for outdoor recreation, nature-based tourism and cultural and environmental education

Five-year goals

Joint management is creating jobs and business opportunities for Gunaikurnai, supporting education and increasing park use

Culture

Cultural knowledge and heritage is incorporated into joint management practices and how partners work with the community

The Gippsland community and partners have a growing awareness and appreciation for Gunaikurnai culture and history

Partners have learned from each other and embedded Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices into sustainable land management

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

Country

Joint management incorporates Gunaikurnai knowledge, values and practices into a sustainable land management regime

Gunaikurnai are increasingly playing a lead role in JM through appropriate mentoring and support

Working Together

Partners are working in an equitable partnership, jointly building their capacity and supporting Gunaikurnai leadership development

Joint Management achievements to date

- State formally recognised Gunaikurnai dispossession and role of native title in supporting self-determination and social justice
- GLaWAC and GKTOLMB founded
- Gunaikurnai rangers have led projects and managing land
- Partnership built between Gunaikurnai and State
- Committee of Management established for Knob Reserve
- Partners completed capacity building and training
- New park signage recognises Gunaikurnai as traditional owners

JMP approved and guides activities

1-5 years after JMP approved: Building

People

6-15 years after JMP approved: Strengthening

16-25 years after JMP approved: Thriving

Joint Management shared aspirations

Visitor numbers increase

Outdoor education and cultural recreation programs for GK community implemented

Partners are delivering education programs with local educational institutions

More GK people are working as rangers, management staff and through associated services

More visitors see, engage with and learn from GK and non-GK workers in parks

Partners are delivering education programs with local educational institutions

Major barriers that prevent GK from accessing JM parks have been addressed

Gippsland community is supportive of GK role in JM

JM parks are making an increasing contribution to local economic growth

Greater number and diversity of GK businesses and people are earning an income from JM parks

Cultural heritage education is embedded in local education institutions

GK cultural knowledge and values is embedded into joint management practices

JM has demonstrated contribution to improved health, education and wellbeing outcomes for GK people

JM parks are known as a premier destination in Australia for visitor experience and cultural education

The incorporation of cultural knowledge and values into JM is the norm

- Gunaikurnai maintain a strong connection to country and culture, are proud, happy and healthy
- JM has contributed to reconciliation, social justice and self-determination for Gunaikurnai people
- Wider community respects Gunaikurnai cultural heritage, connection to country and self-determination
- JM parks are healthier and more resilient as a result of sustainable land management
- JM parks are a landmark destination for outdoor recreation, nature-based tourism and cultural and environmental education

Culture

Protections are in place for all identified cultural sites

The wider community understand, respect and celebrate GK people and heritage

Greater GK cultural presence in JM parks

GK people have greater pride in their identity and cultural heritage

GK cultural knowledge and values are documented, mapped and interpreted

GK people have exclusive access to specific sites in parks to gather and conduct ceremonies

GK traditional management practices identified and incorporated into sustainable management of parks

GK have reached agreement on traditional practices to be developed and implemented through JM

Country under JM has expanded

Country is healthier and more resilient to environmental threats and climate change

Value of integrated management practices demonstrated and recognised

Partners have piloted GK traditional management practices

Work of GK and partners is recognised nationally and overseas as an exemplary case of JM

GK are taking the lead role in all JM parks

Country

- Joint Management achievements to date**
- State formally recognised Gunaikurnai dispossession and role of native title in supporting self-determination and social justice
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Rangers and management staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to implement sustainable and integrated land management practices

GK have greater access to key environmental resources in parks

Partners demonstrate commitment to JM model even in difficult times

Partners have established a funding model to sustain JM

Joint management decision-making processes have been embedded

GK are able to enforce compliance with regulations in JM parks

Alignment and coordination across whole of government to support JM

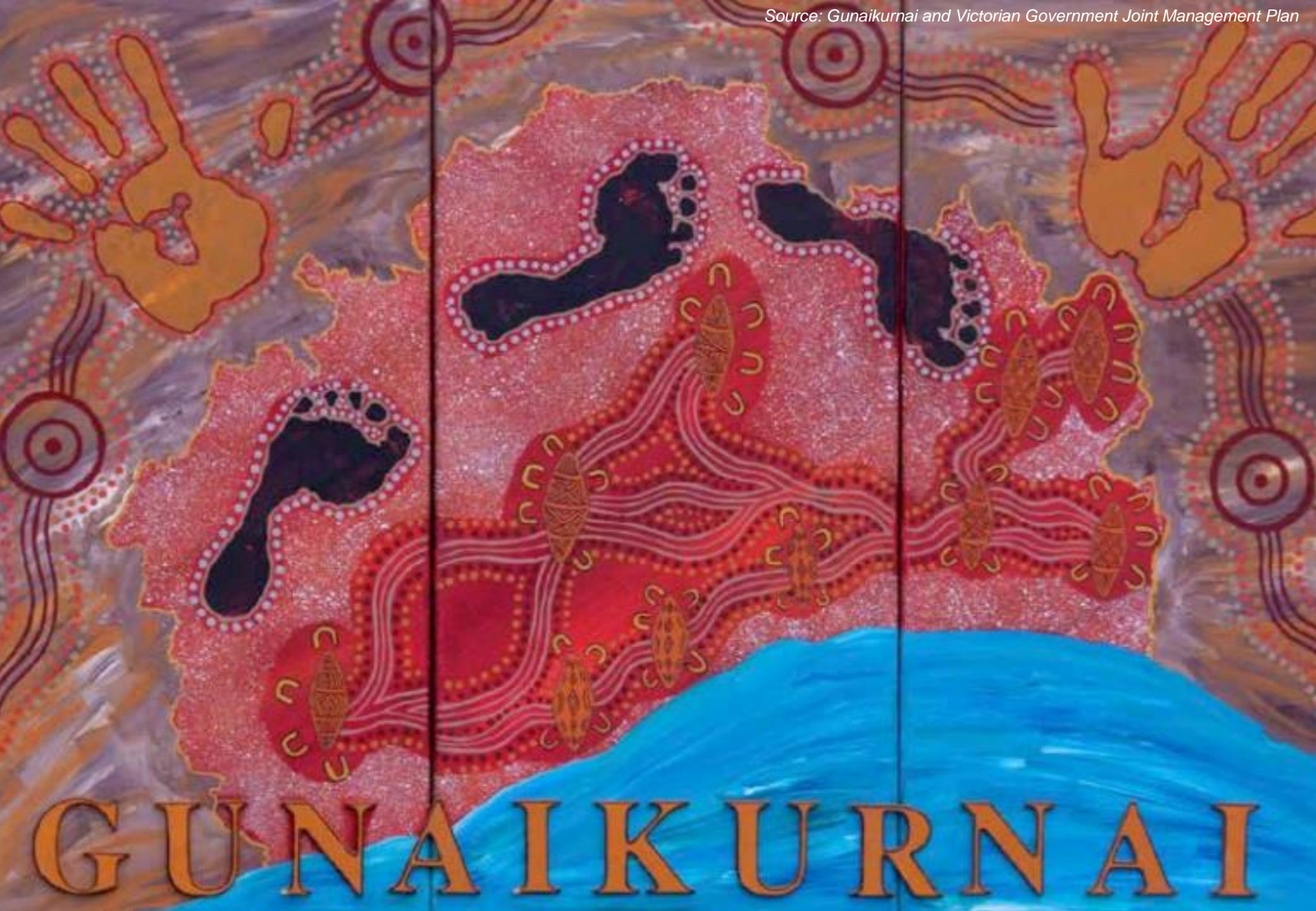
Outcome management has been implemented to support continuous improvement

Working Together

Sharing of knowledge and skills between partners has been formalised and implemented

GK community have opportunity to influence JM

JMP approved and guides activities



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