

GUNDITJ MIRRORING
Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation
RNTBC

Glenelg Hopkins



CMA

Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Proposal



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In partnership, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (TOAC) and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (CMA) are proposing to deliver a 4-year, \$5 million project through the Environmental Restoration Fund and Regional Land Partnership (RLP) Program to maintain or improve the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage listed Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is located in the traditional Country of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal people in south-western Victoria. Gunditjmara have a cultural responsibility to protect what is one of the world's oldest freshwater aquaculture systems that is still in existence today; a system that was first constructed by their ancestors at least 6,600 years ago. On 6 July 2019, this Landscape was inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage List** - the first Australian landscape to be listed solely for its Indigenous cultural values.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is now recognised as a 'Matter of National Environmental Significance' and protected by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. With the support of both the Commonwealth and State governments, Gunditjmara Traditional Owners manage this 9,900-hectare landscape through Indigenous Protected Areas (3000ha) and the co-managed Budj Bim National Park (6,900). Glenelg Hopkins CMA works with Gunditj Mirring TOAC and surrounding landholders more broadly across the Budj Bim lava flow to enhance the integrity of soils, water and biodiversity. The Budj Bim lava flow is in a national biodiversity hotspot, contains nationally significant wetlands and occurs within the internationally signified Kanawinka Geopark.



There are several pressures identified in the World Heritage nomination and subsequent recommendations from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), that require management into the future. These include water quality and water flow, pest plant and animal species, the unauthorised access of cattle, the regrowth of trees within some of the aquaculture channels and the effects of climate change more broadly. This project will deliver on these key concerns.

Priorities for investment in this proposal align with the **Environment Restoration Fund** and the **RLP Program** (World Heritage Services) and include:

- **protecting threatened and migratory species and their habitat**
- **protecting Australia's waterways by improving water quality**
- **controlling pest animals and invasive weeds, and**
- **reducing unsustainable use of land within or surrounding the property, including nutrient management.**

These priorities are outlined in the management plan for the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape (*Ngootyoong Gunditj, Ngootyoong Mara South West Management Plan*), the Budj Bim IPA Plan of Management, and the Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment and Waterway Strategies.

Working Together

Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Gunditj Mirring TOAC have a longstanding working relationship, including a formalised Partnerships Statement to deliver regional outcomes through natural and cultural resource management.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA and its key partners have twenty years experience delivering a range of agriculture and environment services within the Glenelg Hopkins catchment, including Australian Government programs under Caring for Our Country, Green Army, Biodiversity Fund, National Landcare Program and Regional Land Partnerships. This involves engaging with and delivering on-ground actions in partnership with the Landcare community, Traditional Owner groups and agencies.

Gunditj Mirring TOAC ensures that the responsibilities and duties which arise under Gunditjmara law, custom and beliefs are carried out in relation to caring for country and the protection and continuation of Gunditjmara law and culture. On behalf of the Gunditjmara community, the corporation owns and manages 3000ha of culturally significant properties along the Budj Bim lava flow. Gunditj Mirring engages with other Aboriginal community organisations and the broader community through partnerships, collaborations and a variety of projects to ensure the protection of the natural and cultural values of the region, as well as initiatives that produce health and well-being and social outcomes.

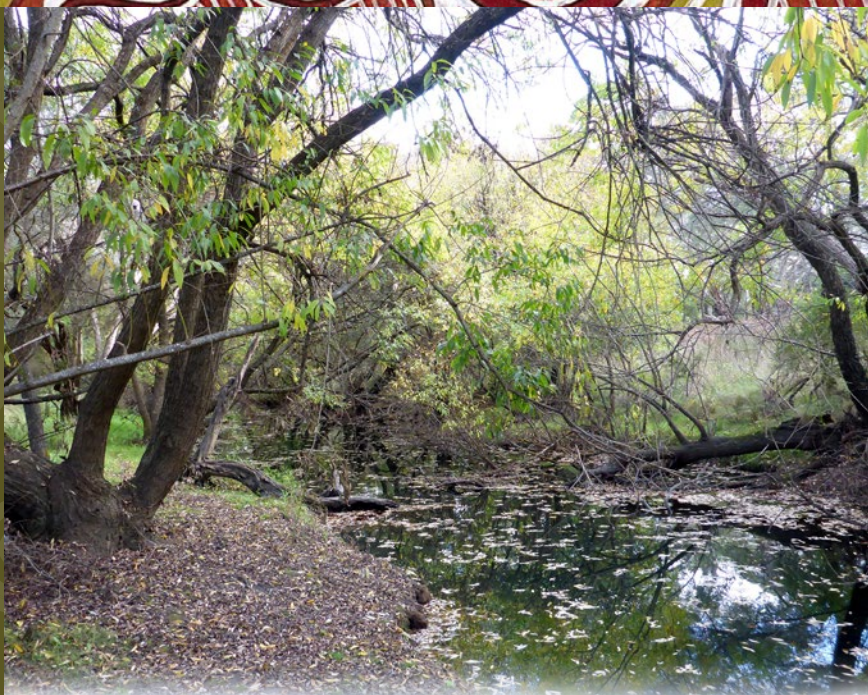
Potential project partners for this proposal include Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, Glenelg and Moyne Shires and Greening Australia.

Benefits

This proposal will deliver on the Australian Government investment priorities and key recommendations from the World Heritage site evaluation. It will contribute to enhanced natural and cultural resource outcomes in the region including improved habitat and waterway health, threatened species protection, pest plant and animal control and cultural heritage protection.

Implementing this proposal will help strengthen our commitment to Closing the Gap outcomes by providing capacity building and employment for **Traditional Owners and Indigenous Rangers**, a key outcome of the CMA and Gunditj Mirring Partnership Statement and National Landcare Program investment process.

The World Heritage status of this site is also likely to see a significant increase in regional tourism and a subsequent boost to the economy. Implementing actions from this proposal will help facilitate this by improving waterways and landscape health and amenity; restoring significant cultural sites such as fish traps through hydrological reinstatement for cultural tourism; and supporting infrastructure development to promote and support visitor access.



Project - Protecting threatened and migratory species and their habitat

The Budj Bim landscape supports a mix of ecological communities including areas of woodlands, wetlands and waterways - important habitat for a suite of rare and threatened plant and animal species including the priority nationally listed Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Australasian Bittern, which are outlined in the Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy. The restoration of waterways and improved flow, connectivity and water quality across the landscape will benefit these, and many other species, which are at increasing risk from climate change and habitat degradation.

The project will improve the quality and availability of habitat for threatened species in the Budj Bim landscape by improving ecosystem function including fish and eel movement, restoring the health and diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitat through revegetation and remnant protection, monitoring key threatened species populations, recovery and movement through the landscape and developing new approaches to secure appropriate management of additional areas that are important for hydrological and ecological function.

\$1M over
4 years



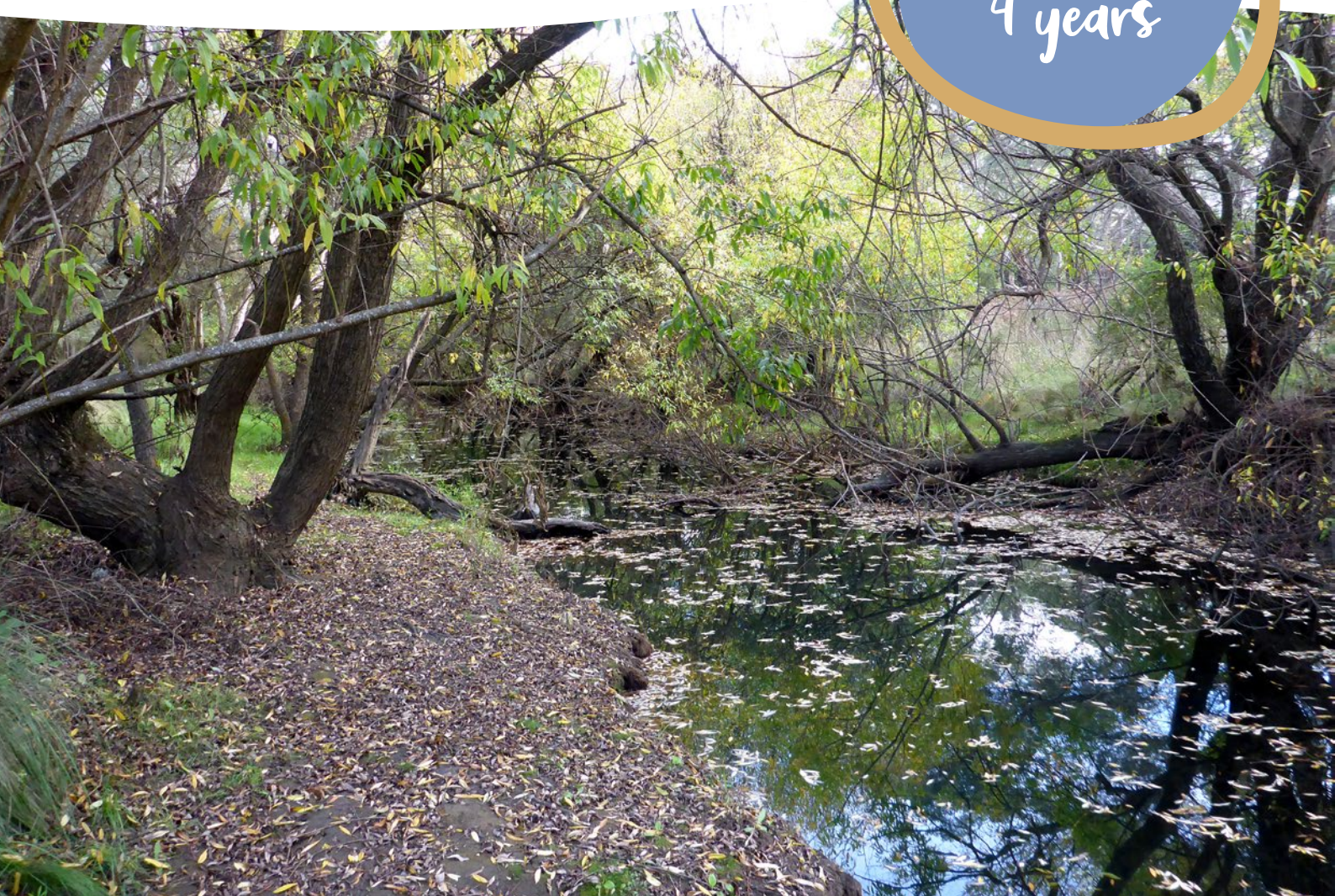
Project - Improving water quality and flow

Water flow is a key attribute carrying the Outstanding Universal Value for the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape. *Tungatt Mirring* (Stone Country) is a landscape that includes a suite of wetlands, swamps and sinkholes that provide ideal habitat and conditions for *kooyang* (eel) and a range of fish and aquatic plant species. The system is dependent on the natural and culturally modified water flows, of which *Tae Rak* and *Killara* (Darlots Creek) are the most significant components. The nature of the lava flow ensures a continual underground drainage that feeds sinkholes and springs. Within and adjoining the Budj Bim lava flow are extensive wetlands consisting of permanent and seasonal swamps.

This project aims to improve our understanding of this regions natural hydrology to protect and enhance the outstanding values for which the landscape is World Heritage listed. It will also contribute to an enhanced understanding of the operation of recognised and mapped traditional fish trap systems and help to rediscover other cultural systems in the Budj Bim Landscape.

The project will include investigating, documenting and reviewing ecological and cultural knowledge to inform the development of hydrological, hydraulic and hydrogeological models, management strategies and monitoring programs. It will also support on-ground restoration actions that will maintain or restore flows to the landscapes waterway and eel trap systems, which are of significant cultural, ecological and social value.

\$1.5M over
4 years



Project - Controlling pest plants and animals

The uncontrolled spread of invasive pest plants and animals poses a significant threat to the values of the Budj Bim landscape by out-competing native vegetation, reducing biodiversity values and access to the river, reducing the abundance of culturally important species and damaging significant cultural features such as channels, weirs, dams and ponds. This includes high threat Weeds of National Significance (WONS) such as **willows** (*Salix* sp), **blackberry** (*Rubus fruticosus*), **gorse** (*Ulex europaeus*) and **boneseed** (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*). Current priority and emerging pest animal species include **cats, foxes, rabbits, pigs and deer**.

This project will support a prioritised and strategic, cross tenure pest plant and animal control program, along with undertaking specialised post treatment remediation works including indigenous revegetation plantings. Combined, these works will significantly reduce the impact of pest species and contribute to the protection and enhancement of the cultural, environmental and socio-economic values of the World Heritage listed Budj Bim landscape.

\$2M over
4 years

Project - Reducing unsustainable use of land within or surrounding the property

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is the setting for visitor experiences of the rich Gunditjmara cultural heritage and the spiritual, historical and cultural stories. With World Heritage listing, the threats and pressures that may arise from expected increased visitation include: damage to cultural heritage sites and features, damage to infrastructure, illegal access to Gunditjmara owned lands, compromise of intellectual property rights, misuse of cultural knowledge, health, safety and legal liability, and ongoing ability to provide effective training for and employment of Gunditjmara tour guides and tourism administrators.

In line with the 2014 Budj Bim (Tourism) Master Plan (which presents a vision for the conservation and sustainable use of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape for cultural, tourism and community purposes) this project will support improvements in visitor access/use and management through fencing, gating and signposting. It will also support sustainable land management practices through improved fencing for livestock management which, if not managed appropriately can result in damage to cultural sites as well as increased nutrient loads in the wetland and waterway systems.

\$500K over
4 years





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