

Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan

Aboriginal management of land, rivers and coastal areas between the Robinson River (Northern Territory) and Massacre Inlet (Queensland) in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria

Prepared for and on behalf of the Gangalidda & Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation. December 2014





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Back cover photo: Robinson River, Garawa Country (Northern Territory) (© Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, 2014)

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Further information:

Copies of the Plan and further information about implementation of the Plan are available from:

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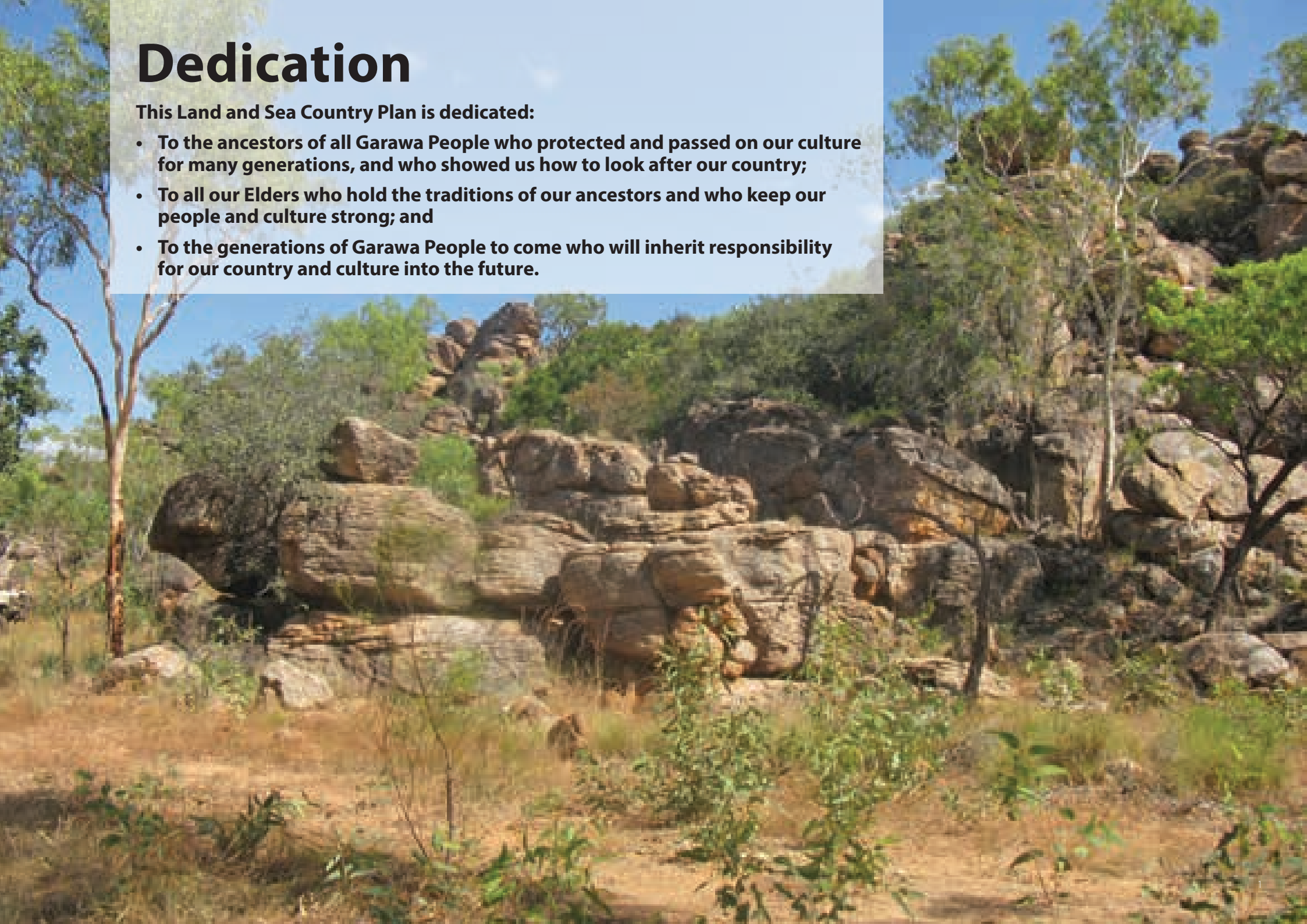
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Dedication

This Land and Sea Country Plan is dedicated:

- **To the ancestors of all Garawa People who protected and passed on our culture for many generations, and who showed us how to look after our country;**
- **To all our Elders who hold the traditions of our ancestors and who keep our people and culture strong; and**
- **To the generations of Garawa People to come who will inherit responsibility for our country and culture into the future.**



Vision for Garawa Land and Sea Country

Our interests and values in our ancestral lands are realised through the rights and responsibilities we have for caring for country.

Our vision for our country is to:

- Protect our land and sea because it is what sustains us;
- Continue to use our culture on country to help manage and care for country;
- Work with local industries and the wider community to sustainably manage country; and
- Pass on our knowledge to our children so that they can continue to look after country and their culture.

Robinson River, Garawa Country (Northern Territory).



1. Introduction

We, the Garawa People, have developed this Land and Sea Country Plan to:

- **Tell the story** of Garawa People and country;
- **Identify the important values, rights and interests** of Garawa People and country, and promote an understanding of the threats to those values, rights and interests;
- **Communicate our vision, aspirations and commitments** to sustainable use and manage Garawa land and sea country; and
- **Set out priority activities** to achieve our vision, aspirations and commitments in collaboration with government agencies, pastoralists, fishing organisations, research institutions and other partner organisations.

The Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan (the Plan) is a strategic document that provides a framework for our people and our partners to work together to care for all the natural and cultural values of our country, while providing a sustainable livelihood for our community and others with rights and interests in our land and sea country.

The strength of our Land and Sea Country Plan lies in our approach to planning for *all* of Garawa country. Today, the boundaries of Garawa country are as our Elders taught it to us and as we have lived within for generations. It encompasses the land, rivers, intertidal coastal region, and adjacent marine areas that are culturally and ecologically connected to our country and people.

We aim to work with our people, and others with rights and interests in our land and sea country, across both sides of the Northern Territory-Queensland border to develop sustainable approaches to land and sea management that support our values, interests and aspirations.

The development of the Plan was facilitated by the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) and assisted by a planning consultant in collaboration with the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group through the following processes:

- Initial discussions with Garawa Traditional Owners and rangers to present the country planning process and gain approval for the Plan (September 2014);
- Workshop with Garawa Traditional Owners to discuss the scope of country planning and possible partners and stakeholders;
- Initial consultations with Gangalidda and Garawa rangers regarding their current land and sea country management activities, and their concerns and aspirations for future management of country;
- Research and information collection on issues raised during initial discussions, and current land and sea management on Garawa country and stakeholders involved;
- Preparation of a preliminary summary poster of the Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan for presentation and discussion at the second meeting with Garawa Traditional Owners and rangers;

- Discussions and consultations with Garawa Traditional Owners and rangers to develop priority actions and discuss partners and stakeholders involved (October 2014);
- Preliminary communications with government agencies, and other relevant partners and stakeholders, regarding potential collaboration with Garawa Traditional Owners and rangers in future management of our land and sea country;
- Preparation of a Draft Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan for presentation at the final meeting with Garawa Traditional Owners and rangers;
- Review of the Draft Plan by Garawa Traditional Owners, and facilitated discussions between Traditional Owners, partners and stakeholders with interest in our land and sea country (November 2014);
- Finalisation of the Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan based on feedback from the November meeting;
- Launch of the Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan at the implementation workshop involving Traditional Owners, CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa Rangers, and invited representatives of our involved partners and stakeholders; and
- Five year review of the Garawa Land and Sea Country Plan.

The development of this Plan builds on existing initiatives by Garawa People to strengthen our connection to our land and sea country and to enhance our engagement in caring for our country and culture. These initiatives include:

- Following on from 2010 native title determinations for Gangalidda People in Queensland, the finalisation of Gangalidda and Garawa native title claims;
- Establishment of the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group in 2008;
- Management of the Waanyi Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust and Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust, supported by the Northern Land Council and their Waanyi Garawa and Garawa ranger groups;

- Declaration of the Ganalanga-Mindibirrinda Indigenous Protected Area and Plan of Management (2013-2018);
- Participation in the Redbank Mine Working Group established in 2013 to strengthen communication and decision-making for Redbank legacy mine issues on Garawa country; and
- CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project (2013-2017)

The rights and interests of all Garawa Traditional Owners are recognised in this Plan, as well as the relationship that

CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers and the CLCAC have with Garawa Traditional Owners, rangers, and country in the Northern Territory.

To support Garawa People across all of country, the Plan aims to identify the values and aspirations of Traditional Owners living on both sides of the Northern Territory-Queensland border and develop priority actions that support cross-border collaboration. How this is done is described in the rest of the Plan.



Garawa Traditional Owners at a ceremonial event. ©R. Amini-Yanner.

2. Garawa People and Country

This section describes:

- **Who we are as Garawa People;**
- **The extent of our country;**
- **Who are our neighbours; and**
- **A brief overview of the environments, resources and industries on country.**

For our ancestors, the generations that came before us, and our people today, Garawa country has existed as one country shared by our families and clans. Our boundaries are based on the Dreaming our ancestors created and the places our Elders lived on and used for their families and our culture. It extends beyond our native title claims and Aboriginal Land Trusts, and crosses over borders such as the Northern Territory-Queensland divide.

As Garawa People have done for thousands of years, our culture, customary laws, and relationship to land and sea are what identify country for us and keep us connected. Garawa people are the Traditional Owners of the land, rivers, coastline, and sea country in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria between Robinson River (Northern Territory) and Massacre Inlet (Queensland), reaching south on the western boundary along the Wearyan River, and on the eastern boundary down along Eight Mile Creek and meeting with Waanyi peoples in the south.

The borders of our ancestral lands are shared by our neighbours - the Yanyuwa People west of the Wearyan River; Gangalidda People east of Massacre Inlet; and Waanyi People in the south. Traditionally, we have strong ties with our neighbours. We are all related through ceremony, culture, land and marriage. To this day, we maintain our links with our neighbours through cultural, social and economic activities. This includes the governance of the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Northern Land Council, collaboration

between ranger groups in land and sea management, and participation in the pastoral industry.

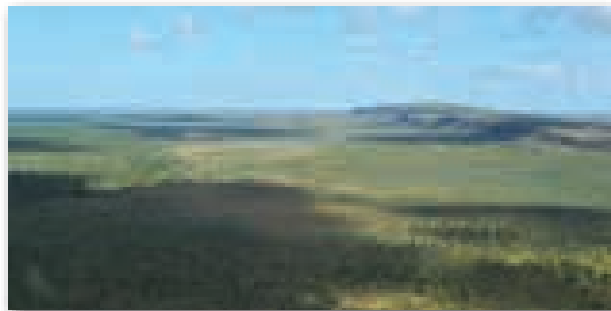
Our interests and values are realised through the rights and responsibilities we have for caring for country, and it is our culture and customary laws that determine these rights and responsibilities. All Garawa People have a role to play in looking after country, but it is our *Junggayi* (land 'manager') and *Minggirringi* (land 'owner' or 'boss') who ensure that our laws are followed when we make decisions about country. Our cultural and customary law systems are still practiced today and remain relevant for our people and our goals for sustainable livelihoods on Garawa country.

Garawa country contains many different environments and resources that sustained our people for thousands of years. Within the Gulf region, we share a wet-dry tropical climate, with the majority of the rainfall associated with the monsoonal trough occurring from November through to March. The dry season months (April to September) are accompanied by strong southeasterly trade winds while the wet season typically has lighter winds from the north. This region is prone to severe tropical cyclones during the wet season. We have lived

with these distinct weather patterns for a long time, and have the traditional knowledge to understand the impacts at a local and regional scale and ability manage them. Our fire management is just one way we protect what is important to us on country.

Our people take care of, and sustainably use, the natural resources on country – from the extensive woodlands, grasslands, escarpments and sandstone ranges, to the many rivers, salt pans, mangrove forests and rich marine environments. It is this combination of terrestrial, freshwater and saltwater resources that have provided such sustainable livelihoods for our people over countless generations.

The rich natural resources of our country have also attracted others to settle and develop cattle stations, commercial and recreational fishing, mining, and tourism over the last 150 years. While we accept that we must share our country with these new industries, we also expect people in these industries to acknowledge our need to maintain our culture and livelihoods from the country we now all share and must look after together. This Land and Sea Country Plan lays the foundation for how these mutually respectful partnerships can develop and flourish.





Part of Garawa country where we meet with our neighbours, the Gangalidda People; Garawa Traditional Owners together with Gangalidda Traditional Owners.



Attachment C

Amended QUD66/2005 (QC2005/003) Gangalidda and Garawa People 2

-  Amended QUD66/2005 Gangalidda and Garawa People 2 (QC2005/003)
-  Determination Areas

NOTE: To determine areas subject to claim within the external boundary, reference to the application description is necessary.

Map created by: Geospatial Services,
National Native Title Tribunal (29/10/2013)

Application boundary data compiled by NNTT or sourced from DNRM (Qld).

Cadastral data sourced from Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Qld (1 August 2013).

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NOTE: Topographic images should be used as a guide only.

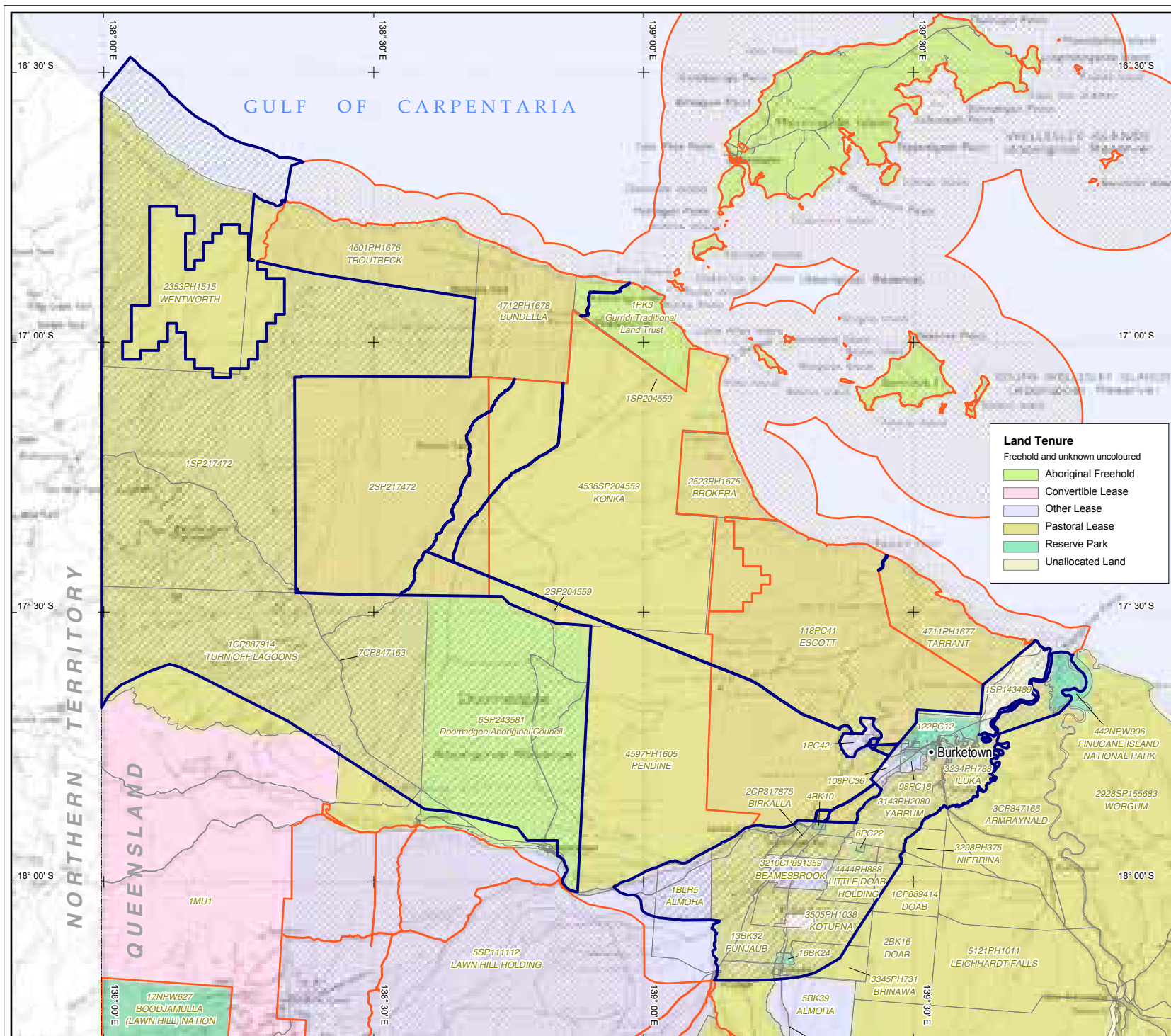
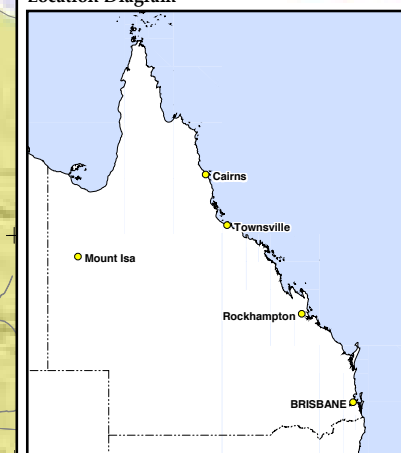
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Latitude and Longitude based on Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994
Non Projection

Location Diagram



3. Our Shared History

This section describes:

- **Summary of key historical events;**
- **The arrival of Europeans and the impacts of the colonial frontier;**
- **Our involvement in the cattle industry;**
- **Past and current life in settled areas; and**
- **Recent developments, including native title claims, establishing the ranger groups, and development of our Land and Sea Country Plan.**

Our history on Garawa country goes back at least 30,000 years and starts with our Dreamtime, *Wanggala*, when our culture and laws were made. Our people lived with what our ancestors created, and it is these stories and laws that we use today that connect us to our country and culture. For thousands of years, our clans have survived off the land and sea.

Our shared history, the history of Garawa country from when European settlers came, has changed the way we live on country dramatically in no more than 150 years. This part of our history is also important because it shows

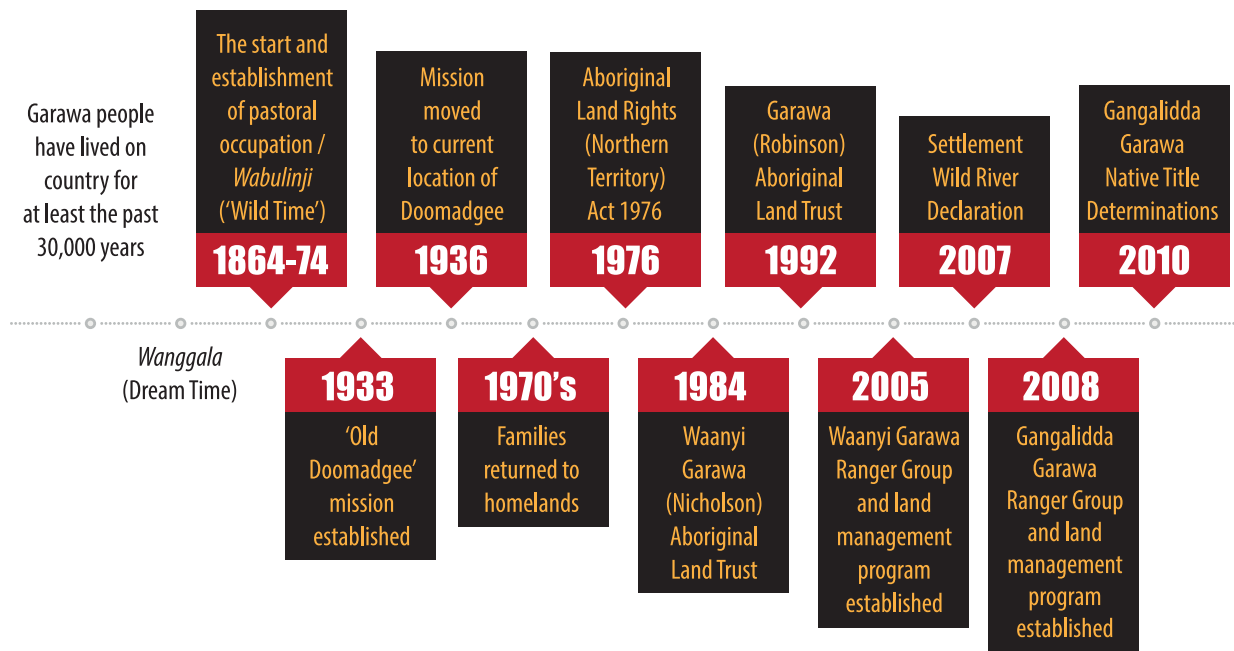
how our management and governance of country was impacted and what we have done to rebuild it for the future.

In the mid-1800s, European explorers, stockmen, drovers and pastoralists began to pass through our country using our tracks and rivers as stock routes. Our country was well suited to grazing cattle and by 1874 permanent pastoral occupation had been established. Much of their settlement on country was not done peacefully. As more settlers came it became harder for us to access the places we visited for food and water. Our Elders were chased away and even shot at and killed. We called this time is our history *Wabulinji* ('Wild Time') and is especially painful as our people struggled and died fighting to stay on country and keep their families alive.

After this violent period for our people came a time of 'quietening down' where many of us were forcibly brought to live on missions or camps near stations and towns. Some Garawa people were made to leave country and moved to missions like Old Doomadgee (*Dumaji*) and then present day Doomadgee.

As pastoralism grew in the region so did our people's connection to the industry as many went to work on stations for rations. Working on stations allowed our people to stay connected with our traditional lands as we were left free to hold important ceremonies and visit important places. This gave us strength in preserving our culture and language.

In the 1970's many of those families who had been forced to live in the missions and other places moved back onto country to try and make a living. They worked hard to



build cattle yards, roads and homes and began to hunt, fish and start gardens, which helped to support families. Health, education and housing services were also provided to support our lives on homelands. Many families living around Robinson River were able to stay, but for those of us around the Nicholson River service delivery decreased and families were again forced off their country to survive. Nevertheless, this was the beginning of a 'cultural revival' for us. We began to reconnect with our country and again recognise the traditional rights and responsibilities we hold.



Land rights meetings on Garawa country.



Community of Robinson River, Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust (Northern Territory).

Today we are spread throughout Garawa country and live in Borroloola, the community of Robinson River, on our outstations throughout the Waanyi Garawa and Garawa Aboriginal Land Trusts, and on privately owned Aboriginal pastoral land. Some of us live away from Garawa country, or right next door in the community of Doomadgee and township of Burketown, but we always go back to look after country and to teach our children where they are from.

Despite what has happened in the past, we still hold connection to our traditional culture, lands, rivers and sea country. We feel a strong responsibility to continue to look after it for our future generations. The development

of this Land and Sea Country Plan is the next important step on our journey to honour our cultural obligations and commitment to take care of Garawa country, people and culture and to help to guide the sustainable development of our people and country in collaboration with our government, community and industry partners.

"We are going to have to take on the role of responsibility. We need to get up and be a strong voice for our land and work together."

Donald Bob, Garawa man

4. Native Title Claim and Existing Tenures

This section provides a summary of:

- **Native title claim areas in both Queensland and the Northern Territory;**
- **Native Title rights and interests claimed in both Queensland and the Northern Territory; and a**
- **Description of Land Trusts and other tenures on Garawa country.**

GARAWA COUNTRY IN QUEENSLAND

The processes of native title recognition and land and sea country planning involve the same Garawa Traditional Owners and largely the same geographic area. However, where the native title claim is a legal process dictated by provisions of the Native Title Act, the development of the Plan is focusing on communicating Traditional Owners' values, concerns and aspirations for managing country and partnership building.

While the native title claim is fundamentally important in achieving recognition of our inherent legal rights to occupy, use and manage our country, the Land and Sea Country Plan provides guidance on how we will exercise those rights in collaboration with Government agencies and other partners. In particular, we are hopeful that recognition of our native title rights and interests over the extensive pastoral lands and the commercial fishing grounds in the river estuaries and intertidal areas will lead to greater mutual understanding and collaboration with participants in the pastoral and fishing industries.

Native Title

Together with our neighbours, the Gangalidda People, we are taking a staged approach to recognising our rights and interests through two native title claims, *Gangalidda and Garawa Peoples QUD84/04 (QC04/5)* and *Gangalidda and Garawa Peoples 2 QUD66/05 (QC05/3)*. On 23 June 2010, Gangalidda People gained exclusive and non-exclusive native title rights to land and waters within parts of the two claim areas. These rights are formally recognised in *Gangalidda and Garawa People v State of Queensland* [2010] FCA 646.

Native title rights and interests in the remaining parts, including Garawa Peoples' native title rights and interests, are currently registered on the Register of Native Title Claims and are expected to be determined in the near future.

Determined and registered native title areas are partly shown on the map on page 6. For Garawa people in particular, this extends:

- Five nautical miles seaward of the high-water mark in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and therefore includes extensive area of saline coastal flats, river estuaries, mangrove forest and marine resources;
- From the Northern Territory-Queensland border in the west to Massacre Inlet in the east; and
- Just over 100km inland.

The claimed native title rights and interests, as set out in our claim application, are as follows:

1. Over areas (The land and waters of that part of Troubeck Pastoral Holding (Lot 4601 on Plan PH1676) to the west of Massacre Inlet) where a claim to exclusive possession can be recognised, Garawa People claim the right to possess, occupy, use and enjoy the lands and waters of the application area to the exclusion of all others.
2. Over areas where a claim to exclusive possession cannot be recognised, the following non-exclusive rights and interests in accordance with our traditional laws and customs:
 - (a) The right to occupy and/or use the application area;
 - (b) The right to access and traverse the application area in accordance with and for the purposes allowed under their traditional laws and customs;
 - (c) The right to hunt and/or gather living and plant resources on the application area;
 - (d) The right to fish in the application area;
 - (e) The right to camp on the application area;
 - (f) The right to live on the land, to erect shelters and other structures on the application area;
 - (g) The right to light fires on the application area;
 - (h) The right to conduct burials on the application area;

- (j) The right to use natural resources in their entirety, other than minerals and petroleum;
 - (j) The right to: i. take water; ii. take fish; iii. take plants in their entirety and animals; iv. take ochre, clay and salt; v. take sand, gravel and rock; vi. take shells; and vii. take grass, resin and wood;
 - (k) The right to manufacture or produce traditional items from natural resources found on or in the application area;
 - (l) The right to carry out economic pursuits on the application area including the barter and/or exchange of natural resources, all parts of natural resources and the products of those resources;
 - (m) [not recognised]
 - (n) The right to enjoy the amenity of the application area;
 - (o) The right to protect the land and waters and the resources, including natural resources, of the land and waters by taking steps to prevent acts which are not carried out in exercise of statutory rights or any common law rights and which acts may cause damage, spoliation or destruction of the land and waters or the animals, plants or fish on or in the land and waters;
 - (p) An interest in the management and/or use of the application area and the natural resources in the application area;
 - (q) [not recognised]
 - (r) The right to protect the application area from physical damage;
 - (s) The right to maintain, protect and preserve the physical state of sites and areas within the application area that are of significance to the native title holders;
 - (t) The right to maintain, protect and preserve sites and areas within the application area that are of significance to the native title holders from inappropriate behaviour;
 - (u) The right to maintain, protect and conserve the natural values and resources of the application area; in the alternative an interest in the maintenance, protection and preservation of the natural values and resources of the application area;
 - (v) The right to protect and look after cultural artefacts from on and within the application area, including rock art;
 - (w) The right to conduct and take part in ceremonial activities on the application area;
 - (x) The right to maintain proper and appropriate custodianship of the application area and the special and sacred sites within and on it, including through ceremonies, to ensure the continued vitality of traditional law and culture; and
 - (y) The right to use minerals not wholly owned by the Crown
- Non-exclusive rights and interests seaward of the high-water mark and in relation to the use and enjoyment of water for personal, and domestic and non-commercial communal purposes have also been claimed and include:
- (a) The right to access the land and waters in accordance with and for the purposes allowed by and under their traditional laws and customs;
 - (b) The right to fish, hunt and gather living and plant resources, including the right to hunt and take turtle and dugong, for personal, domestic or non-commercial communal consumption in accordance with and for the purposes allowed by and under their traditional laws and customs;
 - (c) The right to take and consume fresh drinking water from fresh water springs in the inter-tidal zone in accordance with and for the purposes allowed by and under their traditional laws and customs;
 - (d) The right to access the land and waters in accordance with and for the purposes allowed under their traditional laws and customs for religious or spiritual purposes and to access sites of spiritual or religious significance in the land and waters within their respective traditional territory for the purposes of ritual or ceremony; and
 - (e) The right to visit and/or protect sites of significance.

Existing Aboriginal Tenures

In Queensland, we currently hold a beneficial interest (with the Gangalidda People) in the Troutbeck pastoral lease.

Other Tenures - Queensland

The major other land tenures on our country include pastoral leases as are shown on the map on page 6. These include Westmoreland, Wentworth, and Turn Off Lagoons Pastoral Holdings. Meetings are currently underway to authorise the registration of ILUAs over pastoral properties within the current registered claim.

GARAWA COUNTRY IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Native Title

Seven native title claims, including on behalf of the Garawa People, have been registered in the Northern Territory. These are the lands and waters in the localities of

- Pungalina (NTD6058/2001, DC2001/057; Registered on 24 October 2001);
- Wologorang (NTD6019/2000, DC2000/016; Registered on 4 January 2001);

- Wollongorang South (NTD6012/2002, DC2002/011; Registered on 19 July 2002);
- North Calvert Hills (NTD6032/2001, DC2001/032; Registered on 7 June 2001); and
- Calvert Hills (NTD6020/2001, DC2001/020; Registered on 3 April 2001).
- Borroloola Region (NTD5/2009, DC2009/001; Registered on 28 May 2009)
- Borroloola/Gulf Region (NTD6021/98, DC97/2; Registered 14 April 2008)

The claimed native title rights and interests, as set out in our claim applications, include¹:

- (a) to possess, occupy, use and enjoy the area claimed to the exclusion of all others;
- (b) to speak for and to make decisions about the use and enjoyment of the application area;
- (c) to reside upon and otherwise to have access to and within the application area;
- (d) to control the access of others to the application area;
- (e) to use and enjoy the resources of the application area;
- (f) to control the use and enjoyment of others of the resources of the application area;

- (g) to share, exchange and/or trade resources derived on and from the application area (Wollongorang South only);
- (h) to maintain and protect places of importance under traditional laws, customs and practices in the application area;
- (i) the right to share or exchange subsistence and other traditional resources obtained on or from those areas;
- (j) to determine and regulate membership of, and recruitment to, the landholding group; and
- (k) the right to conduct activities necessary to give effect to the rights referred to in (a) to (j) hereof.

In 2013, applications for registration of native title claims to the Native Title Registrar were made on behalf of Garawa People for the following pastoral leases:

- Greenbank Pastoral Lease (1,175 sq km; 370 km east of Daly Waters abutting the Gulf of Carpentaria)
- Manangoora Pastoral Lease (1,490 sq km; 340 km east of Daly Waters abutting the Gulf of Carpentaria)
- Pungalina Pastoral Lease (1,955 sq km; 400 km east of Daly Waters)
- Seven Emu Pastoral Lease (2,307 sq km; 400 km east of Daly Waters abutting the Gulf of Carpentaria)

- Spring Creek Pastoral Lease (2,353 sq km and is located about 300 km east of Daly Waters)
- Wollongorang Pastoral Lease (5,754 sq km; 450 km east of Daly Waters abutting the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Queensland/Northern Territory border)

Existing Aboriginal Tenures

Under the Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (ARLA) 1976*, we are the traditional owners of, and hold tenure over, the Waanyi Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust (12,000 sq km; the Nicholson block) and the Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust (8,000 sq km; the Robinson block).

Some of our families also hold an interest in pastoral leases at Greenbank, Pungalina and Seven Emu. Seven Emu is owned by Garawa Traditional Owners, but part of it is leased by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and is managed as a wildlife sanctuary.

Other Tenures – Northern Territory

The major other land tenures on our country include Indigenous and non-Indigenous owned pastoral leases. These include Calvert Hills, Manangoora, Spring Creek and Wollongorang pastoral leases.



Robinson River Land Claim hearings. © David Trigger.

¹Native title rights and interests listed are for all registered claims combined as listed above. However, some claims will not include all these rights and interests.



5. Why our Country is Important to Us

This section describes why our land and sea country is important to us:

- **Our identity;**
- **Our livelihoods;**
- **Our cultural knowledge and practices; and**
- **Our customary laws and responsibilities for country.**

Kunyinbar yari Kunyinbar murkur **(HEALTHY COUNTRY, HEALTHY PEOPLE)**

Garawa People and country are interconnected. The land and sea has supported our people for thousands of years. Our culture comes from the Dreaming that we can see and read in the landscapes and natural world. It is important for us to work to keep country healthy so that we can use and manage the land as our Elders did and children will. We see a healthy country as our right and responsibility in supporting our culture, people and the values and interests of this generation and the next.

We value all of the natural systems that support our country and acknowledge the interconnections between them. Some of the most important for us are the waterways – the freshwater waterholes, springs and rivers that flow through our country to meet with the saltwater estuaries, mangroves, and sea country. We have always had a close connection to waterways where we fish and camp as it provides us with our livelihood, such as fish and freshwater turtle. There are many water places that

are connected to certain Garawa families, and we also have many culturally important sites and tracks (dreaming and walking tracks) connected to water places that our ancestors have used and we continue to use. Our country and livelihoods are dependent on the health of our freshwater and saltwater country.

For us, there is also value in *how* we live on country. Our customary laws work to protect areas that are culturally important, and our traditional knowledge supports how we manage country. They help to govern rights to access and use natural resources so that they are not overused

or damaged. Garawa *Jungaayi* (land ‘manager’) and *Minggiringi* (land ‘owner’ or ‘boss’) hold specific relationships to parts of country to make sure decisions are made based on what is important for our people and country. Our customary laws and governance are also naturally linked to Garawa country as *one* country. Despite the border that divides our country, we are one people and culture. The boundaries we have for Garawa country help to maintain our laws, traditions, culture, and gives us our identity. Our traditional borders are also what connect us to our neighbours, with whom we share strong relations.

***“Every waterhole has a story of how it was created. It got story that one.
Every lagoon, every waterhole, all the way down (the river) all that story, that one.
We know (the story). We show our children when we go there. We tell them.
This is the country that dreaming been say, he’s here somewhere,
something like that. We show them the right waterhole, the dreaming there.
Some places all right (to visit), when that dreaming been talk, he’s all right,
they still can fish or catch turtle. (When going to a waterhole we talk to
the dreaming) I’m here, I’m the boss for this country, you got to talk yourself.
You tell the old people (the ancestors), they belong to there,
they are there somewhere but you can’t see them.”²***

Les Hogan, Warramurra

² Excerpted from the Northern Territory Government’s 2009 Gulf Water Study: Robinson and Calvert Rivers (Report 18/2009D).



Garawa Traditional Owners at our 2010 native title determination.

Our traditional knowledge connects us to country and shows us how we use and manage country. Our Elders have taught us how to read the land so that we can use it properly and make sure it is healthy. Our bushtucker and bush medicine was and still is a strong part of our livelihoods. It grows in certain places, and we have a responsibility to look after these areas to make sure the right plants grow well and the animals are looked after.

Fire, and the way we use it, is connected to us spiritually. Our fire management is strongly based on what cultural, social, economic and natural values we can protect through burning. This includes fire management for biodiversity or weed control outcomes that support a healthy country. We also see it as our responsibility to burn country in a way that keeps it healthy for our people and others to use it for generations to come.



Some of the bush medicine and plants found in the area. © Northern Land Council.

It is important for us to manage our values and interests across all of our country. Our story places, dreaming and song lines are parts of our culture that we visit and look after, and exist not only on land but also in sea country. We not only want to protect our cultural sites and heritage, but also the places that are important for the next generation of Garawa people. We want to make sure country is sustainably managed so that it remains healthy for our people. This includes interests in areas such as environmental research, local and regional economic development, and commercial uses of natural resources.

Garawa rangers play a large part in our sustainable use of country through land and sea management programs. One of the purposes of this Plan is to show our partners and stakeholders our experience and understanding in land and sea management, so that our values and work can contribute further to wider decision-making and policy for country.



Country on Garawa (Robinson) ALT. © Northern Land Council.

6. Conservation Significance of Country

This section describes:

- **Why our country is important to the region, Queensland, the Northern Territory, Australia and the world; and**
- **The particular species, environments and areas on our land and sea country that have special conservation significance.**

Garawa People have always respected the conservation values of the diverse terrestrial, estuarine and marine ecosystems on Garawa country. The rugged sandstone country with its unique habitat pockets; woodland areas; and freshwater rivers and creeks flowing to meet estuarine areas, mangrove forest, rich wetlands, and saltpan-lined coastline all provide us with our livelihoods and support our culture that is interconnected with natural systems. We share many of the conservation

values that western science has identified in the animals, plants and ecosystems found on country. This is because both traditional knowledge and western science can recognise the significance they have in supporting biodiversity and natural processes.

These systems are not only important for our people but have regional, national and international conservation significance. They are also what support the region's main industries. The native pastures support the region's cattle grazing industry, and the estuarine wetlands and watersheds support the commercial and recreational fishing industries. Furthermore, it is important for us that our interests and values are intrinsic to conservation work on country so to encourage greater collaboration and avoid conservation agendas that do not support our rights.



Parts of Garawa country in Queensland.



Robinson River (Northern Territory).

BIOREGIONS

Garawa country lies within three different bioregions - the Gulf Plains, Gulf Fall and Uplands, and Gulf Coastal bioregions. They are classified by the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA), a national system used to identify land for conservation under Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System. Of the three, the Gulf Plains and Gulf Falls and Uplands are classified as underrepresented and have less than 10% protection.

Gulf Falls and Uplands Bioregion

The Gulf Falls and Uplands bioregion extends along the southern region of Garawa country, with most of this area located in the Northern Territory. It is typically characterised by woodland dominated by Darwin stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*) and variable-barked bloodwood (*C. dichromophloia*) with spinifex understorey; and woodland dominated by Northern Box (*Eucalyptus tectifica*) with tussock grass understorey. It is regionally significant for its remarkable gorge systems, waterholes, dissected sandstone plateaus, and perennial rivers.

Across the bioregion there are 10 species listed as threatened under Federal and State/Territory legislation, including the endangered Carpentarian rock-rat, Gouldian finch, purple-necked rock-wallaby, red goshawk, purple crowned fairy-wren, and orange leaf-nosed bat. There are also three plant species listed as threatened³, as well as three threatened regional ecosystems⁴. Environments most at risk include the limited areas of monsoon rainforest, riparian areas, and wetlands (particularly swamps, springs and soaks) found in the 5% of the bioregion covering Garawa country in Queensland.

³*Solanum carduilforme*, *Trachymene glandulosa*, and *Cycas brunnea*. ⁴1.10.6 (swamp bloodwood woodland in sandstone springs), 1.3.8. (river red gum riparian woodlands) and 1.3.5 (mixed eucalypt woodlands on sandy alluvial terraces).



Purple-crowned fairy wren (Malarus coronatus macgillivaryi) - Listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth EBPC Act 1999 and Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000 (NT) © A. Dudley.

Gulf Plains Bioregion

The Gulf Plains bioregion is dominated by extensive coastal areas, alluvial plains, and tropical savannah vegetation. Within the bioregion, Garawa country includes the Karumba Plains and Doomadgee Plains subregions. The Karumba Plains subregion covers the coastal region of Garawa country from Massacre Inlet to the Northern Territory-Queensland border. Major ecosystem types includes offshore tidal flats and seagrass communities; tidal river channels and mangrove communities; beach and dune habitats; and wetlands edging saline plains. These areas provide important nursery grounds for fish, breeding and feeding areas for waterbirds and waders, marine turtle nesting grounds; and have national and international significance for waders, dugong and marine turtles. The Doomadgee Plains subregions covers majority of Garawa country in Queensland. It includes permanent and seasonal wetlands, flood plains, and riparian and plains habitats. They provide habitats for significant waterbird breeding colonies, seasonal refugia for fauna and flora, and important habitats for aquatic fauna.

Cattle grazing on native pastures (within pastoral leases) covers approximately 93% of the Gulf Plains Bioregion, and also a large part of Garawa country. Grazing areas have a wide variety of soils, ranging from relatively infertile saline coastal plains to clays and alluvial soils from

the wide floodplains and channels of far-reaching alluvial plains and major rivers. The diversity of landscapes provides habitats for rich biodiversity, and also means that the diversity of fauna found on grazing properties is usually high.



Carpentarian rock rat (Zyzomys palatalis) – Listed as endangered under the Commonwealth EBPC Act 1999, critically endangered under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000 (NT), and critically endangered under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species © Territory Wildlife Park.

Wollogorang sandstone ranges

The southern reaches of Garawa country, where we meet with our neighbours (Waanyi peoples), is covered by rocky sandstone ranges featuring savannah woodland (eucalypt woodland with tussock-grass understorey) and remnant monsoon rainforest patches protected within sandstone escarpments and gorges. The unique landscape provides refuge from fire and a permanent source of water. These areas have become prime habitats for local flora and fauna, including the endemic and critically endangered Carpentarian rock-rat that is only known to exist in five sites on Wollogorang (and within a 35km radius).

Within the wider region of the sandstone ranges there are six threatened vertebrate species, including the Australian bustard, Carpentarian grasswren (endangered), emu (vulnerable), Gouldian finch (endangered), Carpentarian rock-rat, and Merten's water monitor.

Furthermore, the Carpentarian rock-rat, Sandstone antechinus and Alexandria toadlet found in the area are also endemic to the Northern Territory, as well as six plant species. A total of nine species recorded in the area are also listed under international conventions or bilateral agreements protecting migratory animals. Other important animals that are supported by the unique habitats of the sandstone ranges include the freshwater crocodile, fish species, rock ringtail possum, short-eared rock wallaby, and red-bellied short-necked turtle.

Bullet Creek Gorge, Twelve Mile Creek Thicket, Settlement Creek Jungle, Banyan Gorge, and the Nicholson Musselbrook Area are listed on the Register of the National Estate for their natural values.



Carpentarian Antechinus (Pseudantechinus mimulus) – Listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth EBPC Act 1999, and near threatened under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000 (NT). © A. Zimny.

Gulf Coastal Bioregion

Garawa country along the seaward area in the Northern Territory includes the mainland subregion of the Gulf Coastal bioregion. It is characterised by Stringybark woodlands, samphire shrublands and mangrove forests,

river systems, coastal swamps and undulating coastal plains. The bioregion includes 16 species listed as threatened at a Federal or Territory level. This includes six marine turtles, four of which have significant populations or nesting sites in the bioregion. The bioregion also has a moderate richness for eucalypt and acacia species, a high

number of bird species, and holds significant breeding sites for colonial seabirds and marine turtles. Due to its low pastoral potential, the bioregion has an increased potential for further conservation, sustainable tourism and recreation.

RIVERS AND ESTUARIES

There are three catchments within Garawa country that flow towards the Gulf of Carpentaria, supporting extensive freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and landscapes. From west to east, these are the Robinson and Calvert catchments, draining to the low-lying Garawa

country in the Northern Territory; and the Settlement catchment, draining to the open floodplains of country in Queensland. Many of the rivers and creeks that make up these catchment areas remain untouched by modern human development. They are what some call 'wild rivers'.



Freshwater sawfish (Pristis microdon) – Listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth EBPC Act 1999 and Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000 (NT), and critically endangered under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. © D. Wachenfeld.

These systems are an essential component of ecosystem function on Garawa country, without which our country would not be able to also support the many industries and communities that are dependent on them. The seasonally extreme rainfall over country means that runoff and groundwater recharge is highly variable and dependent on the wet season, when most rainfall occurs. As soon as the wet arrives, it refills dried out creeks and riverbeds, floods significant breeding areas for birds and fish, and flushes out the rivers to bring nutrients to replenish wetland systems and provide food for fish and other marine animals in the Gulf.

Of particular conservation significance are the freshwater sawfish and the freshwater whipray. The freshwater sawfish was once widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific region but is now virtually extinct in most of its range due to overfishing – especially for shark-fin soup and Chinese medicinal purposes. This species is now only found in rivers and estuaries across northern Australia, including the rivers in Garawa country. The freshwater whipray is a rare, recently described species of ray found in rivers and estuaries across northern Australia, including Garawa country, but its distribution and abundance is poorly known.

Where the freshwater and saltwater meet in the estuarine areas along Garawa coastline, mangrove forests thrive and are valuable nurseries for juvenile fish and other aquatic animals. Keeping these coastal ecosystems healthy is vital for sustaining Indigenous, commercial and recreational fisheries on country.

McArthur River Coastal Floodplain

Garawa country includes the eastern flank of the McArthur River coastal floodplain, located in the south-west Gulf along the coast of the Northern Territory and approximately 30km north-east of Borroloola. Its natural features are dominated by some of the most extensive intertidal mudflats in the Territory and south-west Gulf region, coastal dunes, extensive mangrove swamp, and coastal dry vine forest.

Within the wider region of the floodplains there are six threatened species, including the Australian bustard, Australian painted snipe, masked owl, flatback turtle, green turtle, and endangered loggerhead turtle.

The tidal flats also support large numbers of shorebirds and waterbirds. This includes 55 species of waterbirds, 26 of which are listed under international treaties (JAMBA, CAMBA, BONN). They also support internationally significant migratory birds such as the far eastern curlew, common greenshank, sharp-tailed sandpiper, grey-tailed tattler, black-tailed godwit and marsh sandpiper; and waterbird and seabird breeding rookeries. The area is a significant site for migratory shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway; and wetlands with high waterbird populations are likely to meet criteria for listing under the Ramsar Convention for wetlands of international importance.

Marine and estuarine habitats are also important for supporting at least 132 fish species and seagrass beds that provide breeding grounds for prawns and feeding areas for dugong.

Wentworth Aggregation

Extending from the junction of the Settlement and Branch Creeks, and reaching seawards to Massacre Inlet on the east and close to the Northern Territory-Queensland border on the west, the Wentworth Aggregation includes riverine systems, freshwater wetlands across alluvial plains, mangrove forests and scrub-shrub wetlands covering estuarine systems, and salt pans.

The wetland system is nationally important, and listed on the Directory of Important Wetlands (DIWA), because it provides a good example of alluvial and estuarine systems with a full range of wetland types; plays an important ecological role for the wider system; is an important habitat and refuge for species during adverse conditions; and supports 1% or more of national populations of certain native plants and animals. The area also supports significant fish habitats, and waterbird and wader habitat, along the coast.

MARINE ENVIRONMENTS

Sea country for Garawa people is very important. The Shark Dreaming runs through the water and connects us with our neighbours and sea country. Seagrass meadows in Garawa sea country are significant habitats for many aquatic species. They provide essential food sources for dugongs and several marine turtle species of high cultural and scientific significance. Their ecological functions include the provision of primary productivity in the marine environment, nursery habitat for key fisheries species, and provision of important indicators of the health of the broader intertidal and marine environments.

While Garawa people obtain most of their aquatic livelihood resources from our rivers and estuaries, dugongs and marine turtles are culturally significant animals to us, and it is our responsibility to ensure that the seagrasses and water quality in our saltwater country continue to remain healthy and clean to support dugongs and all marine turtle species. Surveys undertaken over the last decade indicate that the Gulf of Carpentaria is one of Australia's and the world's most significant environments for dugongs, supporting a total population of about 12,500 individuals. Furthermore, six of Australia's seven marine turtle species are found in the Gulf of Carpentaria, including a particularly significant population of green turtles. Genetic studies of green turtle populations have shown that green turtles found in the Gulf of Carpentaria only move between feeding grounds, mating areas and nesting beaches within the Gulf itself – they do not migrate long distances around the Australian coastline or internationally as other

Australian green turtle populations do. This means that all Traditional Owner groups around the Gulf have a special responsibility to collectively take care of the green turtle habitats on their saltwater country to ensure the survival of this most important species.

Climate and conservation

The wet-dry tropical climate on Garawa country follows the distinct weather patterns of the Gulf region and supports conservation values of local biodiversity, natural systems and landscapes. From May to October, the dry season creates a water-limited environment relying on groundwater from aquifers to support habitats and ecosystems. Parts of the Robinson and Calvert Rivers that flow all year round are critical for wetlands and the survival of seagrass beds and dugong populations. The average annual rainfall for the South-West Gulf region is 670mm. However, 95% of annual rainfall is produced during the monsoonal wet season from November to April, which replenishes dried out rivers that only flow during the few months of the wet and are vital for regenerating ecosystems.

The low vertical profile of the coastal area also means that wet periods impact greater areas of tidal habitats and ecosystems that are exposed to increased floods, tidal surges sea level changes. These areas provide critical habitats for fish nurseries and migratory shorebird and waterbird colonies. La Niña and El Niño weather patterns in the Gulf also impact marine production and biodiversity for species that are used by both Traditional Owners and major fishing industries.

Garawa country also lies within the Carpentaria tropical savannah ecoregion. It is recognized internationally⁵, and by Australia's National Reserve System, as a global ecoregion characterised by limited rainfall and high soil moisture variability throughout the year. Species in these savanna ecosystems have evolved to adapt to these conditions, which has resulted in rich and unique local biodiversity.

⁵ Conservation organisation, the World Wildlife Fund, has developed a global classification system for the 14 ecoregions found across the planet. Garawa country sits within the *Tropical and subtropical grasslands, savannahs and shrublands*. (<http://bit.ly/11kOpAh>).



Green sea turtle feeding on seagrass. © Seagrass Watch.

7. Using and Managing Garawa Country

This section describes how Garawa country is used and managed today, including:

- **Garawa ranger groups;**
- **Fire management;**
- **Protected, or nationally important, areas;**
- **Customary Law;**
- **Cultural heritage management;**
- **Fishing – Indigenous, commercial and recreational;**
- **Pastoral industry;**
- **Mining;**
- **Tourism; and**
- **Water use.**

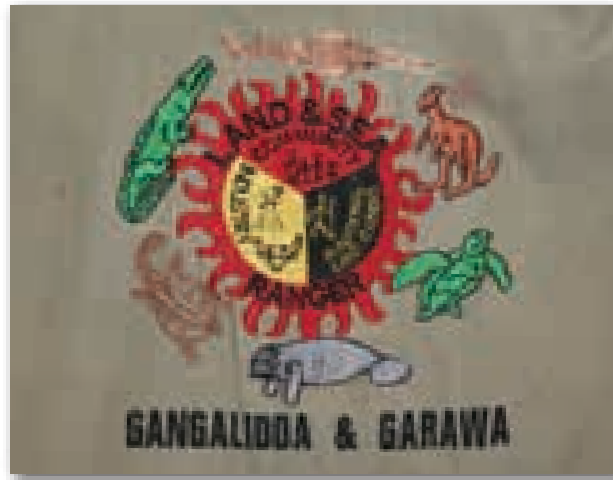
Garawa country supports Traditional Owners and a diverse population of people who live and work on country, and whose industries are dependent on the natural resources of the region. These industries include commercial and recreational fishing, mining, pastoralism, and tourism. Over the years, we have developed strong ties to many of these industries and value many of the opportunities they provide. Even so, Garawa people continue to rely on a healthy country for their livelihoods. We take great pride in managing our land and sea country, and hope that our work can provide the support and capacity for other industries to do the same so that we can all continue to use and manage country for generations to come.

Garawa Ranger Groups

The Garawa ranger groups who work across country are fundamental to land and sea management both on country and in the region. Their workforce, capacities and support have developed programs and partnerships that help to protect country's unique natural values and strengthen the sustainable use of natural resources for all land users. We are proud of the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group, and Northern Land Council (NLC) Waanyi Garawa and Garawa ranger groups – for what they have achieved and continue to work hard at for our country.

CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa Rangers

The CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group was formed in 2008, with rangers representing both Gangalidda people and Garawa people.



The rangers work on both Gangalidda and Garawa traditional country, stretching from the Northern Territory-Queensland border eastwards to the Leichhardt River. The ranger program was developed following the implementation of Queensland's Wild Rivers legislation and the need to implement local, Indigenous land and sea management within the Settlement and Gregory declared Wild River catchments. Today, the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers support an extensive range of land and sea based projects that deliver outcomes supporting Traditional Owner values and natural resource management for the wider community, industries and Gulf region.

Past and present activities of the rangers include fee-for-service activities for weed and feral animal control, biosecurity surveys, biodiversity monitoring and management, Traditional Knowledge camps, cultural heritage surveys, turtle and dugong surveys and monitoring, sea country and marine debris monitoring and management, strategic fire management and planning, water quality testing and management, Indigenous Protected Area management, ghostnet surveys and removal, migratory and waterbird breeding colony surveys, and research and partnership building with government and non-government organisations and universities.

The group has built their capacities through completing training in turtle and dugong monitoring, extensive fire training and management, coxswain training, biodiversity surveys, GPS/GIS, I-tracker, biosecurity surveys, chemical use, chainsaw use and maintenance, quad bike use, compliance and investigation, mapping and orienteering, time management, advanced chemical handling, weed

identification, tree felling, bird survey techniques, earthworks and erosion control, computer skills, boating and outboard maintenance, Traditional knowledge recording, and burial site restoration, and studies in Land Conservation Management (Certificate III), and Training and Assessment.

In 2009, the rangers were nominated for the Queensland Premiers Awards for Excellence (Green Category) and received a Highly Commended Award for their category. In 2014, together with the CLCAC Gkuthaarn, Kukatj and Kurtijar (Normanton) Rangers, the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers were winners of the Peabody Environment and Landcare Queensland Regional Achievement and Community Awards.

Current partnerships

In addition to the partnerships on Gangalidda country as part of the Nijinda Durlga (Gangalidda) IPA, the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers work with a variety of

partners in delivering land and sea projects and programs for Garawa country and Traditional Owners.

The rangers also develop and implement school programs involving school visits and presentations, and on country ranger activities, that help to develop an understanding about local natural resource management.

Furthermore, the group is contracted to provide services assisting Burke Shire Council's weed and pest management obligations under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*, and fire management activities around town areas.

Over time, the CLCAC and CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers have also developed a strong working relationship with pastoralists in the region through weed, feral animal, and fire management projects. All groups involved share the same concern for the impacts on natural systems. These partnerships have been a major achievement of the ranger group. Not only have they

resulted in more effective and valuable natural resource management outcomes, they have also increased access to traditional lands for Garawa Traditional Owners and delivered biodiversity and conservation outcomes valuable to both pastoralists and Traditional Owners.

A significant partnership is the working relationship our ranger groups provide to each other and to Traditional Owners. The best example is through the CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project, an unprecedented project that delivers fire and weed management, and biodiversity studies, across Garawa country and involves collaboration and support from the local pastoralists, the NLC's Waanyi Garawa and Garawa ranger groups, Queensland Rural Fire Service, Bushfires NT, Northern Territory Weeds, Biodiversity Queensland, Burke Shire Council, Southern Gulf Catchments, Northern Land Council, National Parks and the Gangalidda and Garawa Corporations. (see *Fire Management*, page 26)



CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger boat patrol.



Turtle monitoring training.



Seasonal calendar developed by the CLCAC.

CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa Rangers have also provided environmental monitoring and reporting services to Waanyi and Garawa Traditional Owners in response to the serious impacts on country from Redbank mine in the Northern Territory (see *Potential Threats on Country*, page 38).



Weed management work with NT Weeds.



Bat trapping for biodiversity survey work.

Future Development

In six years, the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group has grown from strength to strength to become an integral and recognised land and sea management group in the Gulf region. The rangers' community and visitor education work strengthens people's understanding of our cultural and natural values of country; and their hard work with pastoralists, Carpentaria Shire Council, government groups, researchers, and resource management groups shows our commitment to a healthy country for all.

They have developed the strong foundations needed to achieve long-term, self-sufficient and sustainable land management practices and partnerships. Their goals for future development include continued training, more service delivery for agencies, and working with other ranger groups.

NLC Waanyi Garawa and Garawa Rangers

The NLC Waanyi Garawa and Garawa ranger groups manage a total of 16,000 km² of country around the Waanyi Garawa (Nicholson) ALT and Garawa (Robinson) Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT).

Since the development of the Waanyi Garawa and Garawa ALTs, Traditional Owners have aspired to develop a planned approach to land and sea management on country and to support sustainable pastoral management, on-country employment, and biodiversity management on the land trusts. In 2005, land management planning meetings with Traditional Owners from both land trusts led to the development of a long-term vision for their collective land and sea country. The 2004 declared natural fire disaster area across country, and resulting assessment of fire scars over the past ten years, was also a significant push for the need to establish ranger groups and land management programs for both land trusts. Since then, both groups have

worked tirelessly to deliver fire management programs, invasive species control, marine debris and ghostnet management, environmental monitoring and compliance, road works for fire management, youth engagement programs, biodiversity monitoring, cultural support and traditional knowledge management, carbon-measuring research and analysis, and outstation maintenance.

One of the most successful programs delivered by the ranger groups is their fire management work that has produced outcomes supporting the needs of both Traditional Owners and other land users sharing country. Strong partnerships with the NLC, CLCAC, the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) Tropical Savannah CRC, Bushfires NT, and pastoralists helped to support the rangers in creating strategic fire breaks, establishing fire fuel monitoring sites, roadside burning, and early season burning protecting outstations and sacred sites. For us, it has also provided the opportunities for many Traditional Owners to be



CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger work with Burketown State School.



Garawa ranger working on biodiversity survey work.

employed and participate in fire work. It also means that we have a say in how fire is managed to protect parts of country that are important to us - important animal species, native grasses that are important habitats, and new growth that protects certain areas from erosion.

In 2011, the Waanyi Garawa rangers won a Northern Territory Indigenous Landcare Award for their fire work. Both ranger groups continue to implement strategic fire management. As part of the Southern Gulf Carbon Project, they are also developing capacities to be able to manage fire to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) and earn carbon credits through suitable biosquestration and savannah burning methodologies.

The Waanyi Garawa ranger group is also now responsible for the implementation and management of the Ganalanga-Mindiberrina IPA. Through the plan, their goals include:

- Increased ranger group capacity through better coordination, greater variety of work and more community involvement in the IPA;
- All ranger staff receive appropriate wages and work in a safe, friendly and supportive environment;
- All ranger staff have access to appropriate, accredited training;



Garawa rangers teaching local school children about bushtucker and bush medicines. © Northern Land Council.

- Rangers' tools, equipment and vehicles are safe, well serviced and well suited to their purpose; and
- Partnerships & funding arrangements are long-lasting and mutually beneficial.

The Garawa Ranger group is working closely with the school in the community of Robinson River to teach children about traditional knowledge of bushtucker and bush medicine. There are strong aspirations



Setting up pig traps for feral pig management. © Northern Land Council.

for this program to grow to support kids camps on country, a Junior Ranger program, and the cultivation of bush medicine.

The Waanyi Garawa and Garawa rangers have the determination and capacity to continue to support Traditional Owner aspirations for land and sea country. We are proud of our rangers and support all three ranger groups working together across country.



Kids camps on Garawa (Robinson) Aboriginal Land Trust. © Northern Land Council.



Local children at Robinson River community making clap sticks as part of the Garawa ranger education program. © Northern Land Council.



FIRE MANAGEMENT

Fire management is essential for a healthy country. It helps to control inappropriate fire regimes (wildfire and mismanaged fire) and stop the impacts of biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, invasive weeds, erosion, droughts and floods. It is also a strong part of our culture. We use best-practice science to manage fire around country to protect landscapes, biodiversity, and our cultural and spiritual needs. As Traditional Owners, our fire knowledge is also supported by decades of information and observations on the local environment, flora and fauna, pastoral production, ecology, climate, and natural landscapes. It is these skills that we use to develop management specifically designed to deliver outcomes for the health of our people and country.

Using the correct fire regime is vital for maintaining biodiversity in particular habitats and ecosystems. The CLCAC's *Gulf Savannah Fire Management Guidelines* were specifically developed to assist local land managers across the 13 unique landscape types in the Gulf Savannah plan hazard reduction burning and planned burns for improved production and conservation. These fire landscapes include mangroves, saltmarsh and saltwater couch, foreshore beach scrub, salt pans with islands of vegetation, permanent lakes billabongs and river lagoons, old dunes and grassland, tea tree woodlands, flood plains and wetlands, sand ridge, forest country, fringing riverine woodlands, sandstone ridges and escarpments, and downs country.

The CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers use these guidelines to support their fire management plans and implementation. The group is trained and equipped in fire management, and have developed strong working partnerships with local pastoralists and the Rural Fire Service to improve fire management across the region. The head ranger is also a trained and accredited fire warden who supports local Traditional Owners in controlled fire work.

Across country, we have always used fire in a controlled way to take care of country. With the creation of our three ranger groups, our fire management techniques have been implemented into programs that continue to support our needs as well as those of others who have vested interest in sustainable management of the region.

CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Project

The CLCAC's Indigenous Fire and Weed Project is a four year project, covering 68,000 km² of Gangalidda, Garawa and Waanyi country (see map on page 27) designed to be implemented through three main components:



Garawa Ranger working on early season fire burns.



CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Project team members, including Gangalidda and Garawa, Waanyi Garawa, and Garawa rangers, and the Queensland Rural Fire Service.

- Early prescribed burning and late season wildfire response to support biodiversity and landscape values important to Traditional Owners and other land users, and provide potential opportunities for entering the carbon market through reducing carbon emissions;
- Fire regimes maintaining the last line of defense against the spread of rubbervine across into the Northern Territory; and
- Studies to monitor and manage significant areas for habitat and biodiversity protection, and for areas that are significant to Traditional Owners.

The success of the project comes from our ranger groups working together in implementing the project across country; working with local pastoralists to support fire management on pastoral properties within country; annual training programs for new rangers; partnerships with the Rural Fire Service; and education programs for the wider community. Having a strategic plan will also help to monitor landscape changes, local weather, and biodiversity needs that could change due to more frequent and extreme weather patterns.

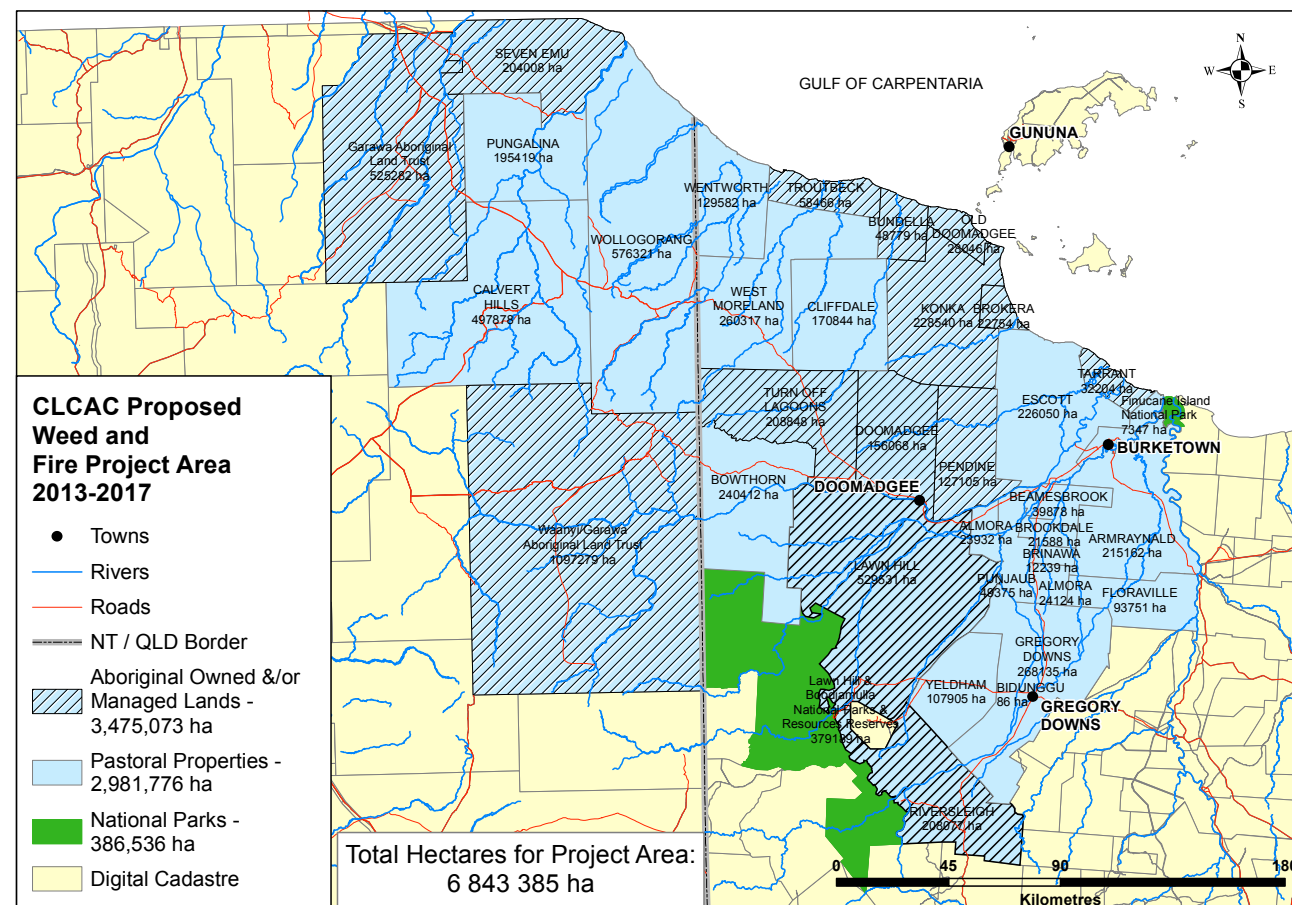
PROTECTED OR NATIONALLY IMPORTANT AREAS

Settlement Wild River Area

Under the *Wild Rivers Act (Qld.) 2005*, the Settlement Creek and its pristine tributaries, flowing over Garawa country into the Wentworth Wetland Aggregation, are included as high preservation area, floodplain management area, and preservation area as designated by the *Settlement Wild River Declaration 2007*. The Wild River Declaration protects the conservation values of the Settlement Creek drainage system, and all drainage systems on neighbouring Gangalidda country up to Moonlight Creek, from inappropriate activities and high impact developments occurring in the area.

Together with our neighbours, we support the conservation efforts the Act provides in the Gulf region. Following the Declaration, the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program (previously, the Wild Rivers Ranger Program) was created to support the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group and develop their land and sea programs to help manage the catchment area and promote its special values. For Garawa country, the

Declaration provides State protection of the rivers and creeks that our people depend on. However, our concerns go beyond the Wild River Declaration Area and the Queensland border, where Redbank mine is leaching pollution upstream of Settlement Creek and the impacts are flowing into the declared Wild River Area.



CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Project area .

Eight Mile Fish Habitat Area

The estuarine areas between Tully and Massacre Inlets (Queensland) are part of the declared Eight Mile Creek Fish Habitat Area (FHA). Habitat within the FHA includes fringing *Avicennia* mangrove forests along estuarine waterways, and widespread unvegetated sand flats. Overall, the protected area covers 39,870 hectares and provides protection from impacts to the critical and diverse fish habitats that sustain commercial, recreational and Indigenous fisheries in the region. In particular, prawn and fish nurseries and species including barramundi, blue salmon, grey mackerel, king salmon, queenfish, grunter, mud crabs, and catfish.

Under management by the Queensland Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (NPRS), it has been assigned a Management Level A, which protects key fish habitats and imposes stricter management measures; and holds a 'medium priority' status, due to its remoteness and the fact that it is fairly undisturbed and protected from development pressures. In 2010, the FHA was expanded to cover an additional 4km seaward into Gulf waters, protecting critical fish habitats.

The latest Assessment Report (2012) noted no current partnerships facilitating management and planning, and limited communication activities, for the Eight Mile Creek FHA. Considering their capacity, existing management work in the region, and shared responsibility for the FHA, the Gangalidda and Garawa rangers would welcome any opportunities to assist in the management of the area.

Wentworth Aggregation Wetlands

The Wentworth Aggregation is listed under the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA) as nationally important. As described by the DIWA the Wentworth Aggregation contains 15 marine, coastal and inland wetland types⁶.

The area has previously been subject to intensive grazing pressure, but destocking as has meant that there is currently a low level of grazing disturbance. Conservation areas within the wetlands include the Eight Mile Creek Fish Habitat Area. The area's remoteness also gives it a high wilderness value. However, it is still impacted by feral pigs and horses, and also used by fishermen.

Port McArthur River Coastal Floodplain

The Port McArthur River coastal floodplain is listed under the DIWA as nationally important. It includes seven marine, coastal and inland wetland types⁷.

Most of Garawa country within the coastal floodplains is under tenure by Manangoora and Greenbank pastoral leases. As well as pastoral grazing, country is used for conservation, and commercial and recreational fishing. Commercial fishing occurs in most of the estuarine areas, and there is also a significant mud crab fishery present.



⁶ As classified by DIWA, wetland types are A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10, A11, B1, B2, B4, B5, B9, B10, B13, B14. ⁷ Wetland types are A1, A2, A6, A7, A8, A9, and B5.

Major threats to the area include feral animals, weeds, ghost nets, extreme weather impacting susceptible low lying coastal areas, wild fires, overgrazing in sensitive areas, and impacts on rivers and wetlands from pollution and altered water flow conditions resulting from the nearby McArthur River Mine. Current management of the Port McArthur River coastal floodplains is run by the Li'Anthawirriyarra sea ranger group. The rangers regularly manage and monitor marine debris along the coast, and also carry out river and coastal patrols in the area. As we share part of this significant area, our ranger groups are keen to work with existing managers to support any land and sea programs.

Wollogorang Sandstone Ranges

The unique habitats and landscape of the sandstone ranges are particularly susceptible to frequent and hot fires in the late dry season, which have a significant impact on woodland communities and fire-sensitive rainforest species and habitats.

Land use consists of pastoral leases (Wollogorang, Calvert Hills and Nicholson River stations) over most of the sandstone ranges covering Garawa country. These stations are mostly managed privately, but good working relations with ranger groups has led to increasing fire and biodiversity management support from Traditional Owners. Garawa country is neighboured to the south by the Waanyi Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust, which is managed by the Waanyi Garawa ranger group (Northern Land Council) through the Ganalanga-Mindibirrindina Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) (further described below).

Fire management is a priority in the area, and is managed through the combination of preventative burning by pastoral lease managers and regional strategic fire management plans developed and implemented by

both Waanyi Garawa and CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger groups. Other management plans relevant for the area include the National Recovery Plan and monitoring programs for the Carpentaria rock-rat and Gouldian Finch.

Ganalanga-Mindibirrindina (Waanyi Garawa) Indigenous Protected Area

Whilst not specifically within the area of this Plan, the Ganalanga-Mindibirrindina (Waanyi Garawa) Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) is still important and strongly connected to our country through our relationship with Waanyi Garawa Traditional Owners.

The Ganalanga-Mindibirrindina IPA covers the Waanyi Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust and is managed through the Waanyi Garawa ranger group's land management programs.

We support the management work Waanyi and Garawa Traditional Owners are doing to manage the Ganalanga-Mindibirrindina IPA. There are strong relationships between our people, cultures and aspirations for country. In terms of management of country, the Waanyi Garawa and CLCAC Gangalidda Garawa ranger groups already have a close working relationship through joint fire management. We hope this relationship can continue to grow to support further land and sea management across all of Garawa country.

Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary

Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary covers over 306,000 hectares of Garawa country in the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria around the Calvert River (Northern Territory). Through the purchase of Pungalina Station and lease of 110,000 hectares of Seven-Emu Station (Indigenous pastoral land owned by Garawa Traditional

Owners), the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) created a conservation covenant over the area with the aims of establishing a wildlife sanctuary that implements practical land management through informed science.

The main aim of the wildlife sanctuary is to protect the unique conservation values of this part of country. This is done through a variety of management programs including fire management to reduce the impacts of wildfire; fence work to protect areas from feral cattle, horses and donkeys; a federally supported weed management program; feral cat and fox control; and biodiversity and ecological health monitoring.

Land and sea management implemented by the AWC on Pungalina-Seven Emu has contributed to significant conservation outcomes on Garawa country. We value the initiatives that created this type of land use, and would like to be more involved in land and sea work at Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary.

CUSTOMARY LAW

Our rights and responsibilities are reflected by the interests and values we have for caring for country.

Our contemporary governance structures are deeply embedded with the customary laws and responsibilities that have been passed down through the generations. It is these laws that govern our sustainable use of land and seas, and our roles in looking after country and people. For example, when to burn country and how, or how resources are shared and managed so that they are not exhausted.

It is our right to recognise and use our customary laws in all aspects of our lives, including decision-making for cultural, social, political, economical and environmental matters.⁸ It is especially important that there is a formal process to recognise these laws in the context of land and sea management. Garawa *Jungaayi* (land 'manager') and *Minggirringi* (land 'owner' or 'boss') hold specific

relationships to parts of country to make sure decisions are made based on what is important for our people and country.

We have shared borders with our neighbours for thousands of years, and we have a strong understanding of each other's laws and how they apply. Many

neighbours and partners we have today also recognise our customary laws and the processes that we go through for making decisions. It is our aim that all stakeholders have an understanding of how the use of our customary laws helps to strengthen our governance in land and sea management.



Garawa country (Queensland) close to the boundary with Gangalidda country.

⁸ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPS, 2008) – Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

It is important for us to acknowledge the paths our older generations made, and the sites that are important to our people and which keep our culture alive. We have a responsibility to look after our cultural heritage so that it can continue to be used for generations to come. Under the Queensland *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2003*, there is a duty of care that requires a person carrying out an activity to take all reasonable and practical measures to ensure the activity does not harm our cultural heritage. In the Northern Territory, Indigenous cultural heritage can be listed and protected under both the *Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* and *Heritage Act 2011*. We are supported in the management of our cultural heritage by the CLCAC and NLC.

FISHING – INDIGENOUS, RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL

Our ancestors have fished the waterholes, rivers, estuaries and coastal waters of our country since these coastal ecosystems became established at least 5,000 years ago, when the sea level settled at its current level after the 100 metre rise in sea level that began about 18,000 years ago. Most of our people now live close to rivers that provide the daily food source for many Garawa families. For us, fishing is an essential livelihood activity, just as it was for our ancestors. Most of us do not fish recreationally or commercially – we fish to feed our families; we fish to live.

The Queensland *Fisheries Act 1994* recognises Indigenous fishing as distinct and separate from commercial and recreational fishing. Section 26(1)(a) of the Act seeks to ensure the **“fair division of access to fisheries resources for commercial, recreational and indigenous use”**.

Until recently these provisions in the Act were developed further in the Gulf of Carpentaria Fin Fish Management Plan, which required that the fishery is managed to ensure “adequate access to fin fish under Aboriginal tradition”. The Management Plan also required the then Queensland Fisheries Management Authority to:



Culturally significant Garawa country in Queensland.

- Undertake surveys of Aboriginal participation in fishing and an agreed consultation process with Aboriginal fishers by 2002; and
- To review the Fin Fish Management Plan if a survey of participation in traditional or customary fishing shows a significant decline in catches or participation.

Regrettably, the promised surveys of Aboriginal participation did not take place and the Gulf Inshore Fin Fish Management Plan is no longer in effect. Despite the vital importance of fishing in our daily lives, the Indigenous fishery remains poorly understood, undervalued and generally neglected by the current fisheries management arrangements in the Gulf. We note that our rights to access our traditional fishery resources, and our bush tucker on land, are protected under the Convention of Biological Diversity and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for both of which Australia is a signatory nation.

In the Northern Territory, the *Indigenous Fisheries Development Strategy (2012-2014)* supports “...sustainable, culturally appropriate, business and employment opportunities for Aboriginal communities in fisheries management, research and development, training, industry participation and resource protection.”⁹ Strategic priorities include:

- Partnering with Aboriginal communities to deliver economic development;
- Provide technical advice and assist in training and skills development in the seafood industry;
- Support the employment of more Aboriginal Territorians in the seafood industry;
- Involve Aboriginal communities in fisheries management;
- Protect customary fishing rights;
- Recognise customary management of coastal and marine areas; and
- Support the NT’s Indigenous marine rangers.

⁹ NT Dept. of Primary Industry and Fisheries (2012) ‘Indigenous Fisheries Development Strategy (2012-2014), available online at <http://bit.ly/1vx7Djt>.



CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers on patrol.

The Northern Territory government has also worked with Indigenous communities in the territory to develop a consultative process in collaboration with other industry partners. After many years of developing and reviewing this process, there are currently three committees (Anindilyakwa Consultative Committee, Manbuyngaga Rrulyapa Consultative Committee and Maningrida Fisheries Committee) who are part of fisheries management informative workshops that help to support information sharing on fisheries management concerns, initiatives and economic development opportunities.

One of the most significant developments in recognising Traditional Owner fishing rights in the Northern Territory has come about from the 2008 High Court decision on the Blue Mud Bay case¹⁰. The case has set a precedent under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* for commercial and recreational fishing licences to be negotiated with Indigenous interests for intertidal zones in waters opposite Aboriginal land. This means that Traditional Owners, supported by land councils, will now have the rights to negotiate with commercial and recreational fishers who would like to access Aboriginal-owned waters. These changes have been welcomed by many other stakeholders and will support sustainable

use of fisheries for all, as well as economic opportunities and access to healthy fisheries for livelihoods of Traditional Owners.

Commercial Fishing

The rivers, estuaries and marine areas of Garawa country support a substantial commercial fishing industry. One of the most significant fisheries is the net-based Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish Fishery (GOCIFFF) that takes place in intertidal and coastal waters out to the Queensland extent of the Australian Fishing Zone (25 nautical miles) along the Gulf coast from the tip of Cape York Peninsula to the Queensland and Northern Territory border (see map below). The main fish species targeted include barramundi, grey mackerel, king threadfin, mangrove jack, blue threadfin and tropical sharks.



Fishing areas of the Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish Fishery.

¹⁰ Northern Territory of Australia v Arnhem Land Aboriginal Land Trust (2008) HCA 29.

Most of the harvest is taken from inshore waters, including from within rivers and creeks. However, some species, such as tropical sharks, rays and grey mackerel, are also taken in offshore waters. The total value of this fishery is about \$12 million per year, with most of the catch is sold in Queensland, except for shark fin, which is generally exported to Asian markets.

Commercial net fishing operations are restricted in a number of ways, including licensing, net length, mesh and drop, and open and closed seasons. There is an annual closed season to all Queensland managed commercial net fishing in the GOCIFFF in October, November, December and January. Fishing codes of practice also apply and the fishery has been accredited as an approved Wildlife Trade Operation under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Commercial crab fisheries also operate in the estuaries and coastal waters of Garawa country across the Northern Territory and Queensland. Mud crabs are widely distributed throughout coastal waters. Juveniles and adults generally occupy the same habitat within sheltered estuaries, tidal reaches of mangrove-lined rivers and streams, mangrove forests and mud flats.

In Queensland and the Northern Territory, a range of input and output controls are in place to manage the harvest of mud crabs by commercial and recreational fishers.

In the Northern Territory, the giant mud crab (*Scylla serrata*) makes up over 99% of the catch, with the orange mud crab (*S. olivacea*) making up the rest. The NT fishery is managed by the Mud Crab Fishery Management Plan (2012).

The Gulf of Carpentaria commercial crab harvest averages about 130 tonnes, which represents about 15% of the total Queensland mud crab fishery. At an average return of about \$16/kg, the total gross value of the Gulf of Carpentaria mud crab fishery is about \$2 million per year.

As part of the neighbouring Gangalidda IPA and Management Plan, Gangalidda peoples have aspirations to work with the Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fisherman's Association (GoCCFA) and the Northern Prawn Trawl Fishery to negotiate seasonal closures to sustainably manage feeding and breeding grounds; develop a 'Traditional Owner Friendly Fishery' symbol for commercial fishers that will support socially aware marketing; and cultural heritage training for commercial fishermen who operate in significant areas. These programs are supported by the GoCCFA and also have the potential to be developed over Garawa sea country for its sustainable management.

Recreational Fishing

Recreational fishing is popular in the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria due to its abundance of scalefish, elasmobranchs (sharks and rays), crustaceans, molluscs, and other taxa. Popular fishing spots include mangrove-lined rivers and creeks (especially in estuaries adjacent to towns and ports in the region), rocky and coral reef structures and foreshore gutters. Boat based fishers either anchor and fish at a suitable site or allow the vessel to drift by likely fish holding locations to which lures are cast and retrieved.

In Queensland, recreational and charter boat/fishing guide sectors target barramundi, king threadfin, blue threadfin and mud crabs along with other species that include mangrove jack, fingermark bream, grunter, black jewfish, jewel fish and triple tail cod. From statewide surveys completed in the early 2000's, 46% of anglers fishing in the northwest region of Queensland indicated they fished for a particular species of saltwater fish, which is a higher percentage than for any other saltwater fishery region in Queensland.

In the Northern Territory side of the Gulf, fish (scalefish and elasmobranchs) make up almost 90% of the total catch. The latest recreational fishing survey (2009-2010) reported that 77% of the effort was due to activities of residents from 'other coastal' areas; over 80% of total fishing effort was conducted primarily from boats; just

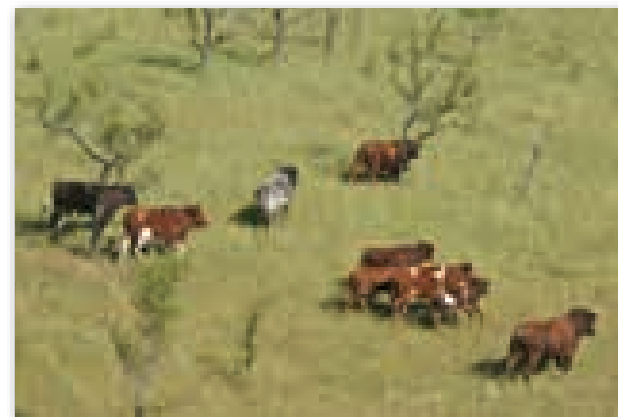
under half of the fishing effort occurred in estuarine waters, followed by inshore, offshore and freshwater rivers; and barramundi was the most significant catch species, followed by others such as grass emperor, mullet and saddletail/crimson snapper.

While the ecological impact of recreational fishers may not be significant with regard to the state or territory-wide populations of target species, there is a chance that it has an impact on local populations, which in turn is likely to impact on our traditional fishery.

CATTLE INDUSTRY

Our country's native pastures have been supporting the cattle industry for over 100 years. It is a very important part of our region's economy. Many of us also work, or have worked, in the industry and value the connections to country that it provides.

There is great potential for industry growth due to international demand, but this is hampered by a lack of port services, competition from other regions, damages to biodiversity and pasture due to unsustainable grazing practices and wildfire and unmanaged fire regimes. As Traditional Owners of country, we support sustainable grazing practices that will continue to look after landscape health and our communities.



Cattle on country.

Since much of country is already used for grazing, some intensively, there is all the more need to look after areas that are less damaged and can be managed to conserve landscapes and biodiversity that support the industry.

Our ranger groups have developed good relationships with some pastoral stations to help manage the threats of weeds and feral animals. This work not only leads to healthy country, but also supports sustainable pastoral management and local employment on country. Developing relationships with pastoralists also gives us the chance to show them why our country is important to us, how we look after it, and how important it is to visit certain sites.

MINING

Redbank Mine

Redbank mine sits within Wollogorang Station on Garawa country, about 40km from the NT-Queensland border close to Redbank and Settlement Creeks. It is currently owned by Redbank Copper Limited, who purchased the intermittently operating copper mine in 1990 to develop its Sandy Flat ore deposit. Operations ceased two years later, but the leaching of unsecure pits continue to contaminate nearby waterways.

As a result of the mine's legacy issues and serious environmental impacts on country, a landmark meeting was held onsite in 2013 where the Minister for Mines and

Energy (NT) announced the formation of a Mining Legacy Unit that will work to address all legacy mines in the Territory. A Redbank Mine Working Group was also created to include all stakeholders in continued discussions and information sharing.

We have *Jungaayi* (land 'manager') and *Minggiringi* (land 'owner' or 'boss') as representatives on the working group, who ensure that our values and aspirations are included in mine rehabilitation and management. We are particularly concerned about the long-standing environmental impacts the legacy mine have on our country and waterways, and support immediate and sufficient rehabilitation before any further development or use of the mine.



Meeting between Redbank Copper Ltd. and Garawa Traditional Owners, Jungalina 2010 (NT).



Redbank Mine site.

McArthur River Mine

McArthur River mine lies about 70km from Borroloola and is one of the world's largest producers of zinc, lead and silver. In 1992, Mount Isa Mines purchased three large cattle stations around the deposit and announced its plan to go ahead with mine development. The environmental and social impacts the mine could have on the McArthur River and community of Borroloola were a strong concern for Yanyuwa people, Traditional Owners of the land and sea around the mouth of the river and Pellew Islands; and the Gurdanji people, Traditional Owners of the McArthur River mine site. Part of the McArthur River's catchment falls within Garawa country, and so our people also have a vested interest in the health of the river, and the environmental and social impacts caused by mine operations and affecting our people and neighbours.

In 2002, it was announced that open cut mining would commence at the McArthur River mine. With both Commonwealth and Territory governments having environmental responsibility for parts of the development, a Bilateral Agreement under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* was created to support environmental assessment of the project by the Northern Territory Environment Protection Agency (TEPA). In October 2006, approval was granted for the mine to operate as an open cut mine. With serious concerns for damage to environmentally and culturally significant areas, the Yanyuwa, Gurdanji, Garawa and Mara people took on and won both Supreme and Federal Court cases against the Northern Territory and Federal Government approval for the proposed open cut mine operations. Just as work on the open cut mine ceased, approval for the open cut proposal was again granted by the Federal Minister for Environment and Heritage.

The mine is now owned and operated by Swiss company, Glencore. Yanyuwa, Gurdanji, Garawa and Mara peoples, Traditional Owners of areas impacted by the mine, continue to challenge Glencore for best practice environmental management and stronger partnership in decision-making that will support the values and interests of local communities and environmentally sustainable mine operations.

TOURISM

Tourism is a growing industry in the Gulf region. This is mostly because of the region's rich recreational fisheries and the many tourists that travel through country along the Savannah Way. We support the sustainable development of tourism in the region and on country, and would like to be more involved to ensure our culture on country is acknowledged by all who visit our region.

Our country has a rich natural beauty that we are proud to share with locals and tourists. Our main concern is that tourism does not damage what we have for future generations. One of the biggest aims is to ensure that the future of fishing is sustainable for all fisheries – commercial, recreational and Indigenous. It is also important to us that people visiting respect the land as we respect it, and make sure that only footprints are left behind. There are also many cultural sites that are heavily impacted by tourism. Providing information about these sites and our culture is important for us because it lets us tell our story of country to people who come. We would like to continue working to see these areas protected for the benefit of all visitors.

It is our cultural knowledge and skills that will support the sustainable development of tourism on country. We understand the seasonal changes and natural diversity that support tourism in the region. We would like to increase Indigenous owned businesses and employment in the local tourism industry.

The CLCAC's economic development plan, Indigenous Economic and Business Development in the Gulf of Carpentaria, identifies some of our aspirations and provides recommendations for opportunities and pathways to further develop tourism on country.

WATER USE

Water is part of our livelihood and supports all communities as well as the fishing, cattle and tourism industries in the region. Our country is at the end of three catchments and stretches out to the waters of the Gulf. These rivers contain many cultural heritage sites of significance and we need to have a voice in how these waterways are utilised to ensure their protection and the continued enjoyment of these rivers into the future.

Water usage in the region is low, with groundwater, rainwater, natural waterholes and rivers supplying water for domestic use and the pastoral industry. Domestic use is sourced from groundwater bores, but often suffers from low yields or poor water quality. Outstations and cattle stations both use a mix of bores, rainwater and river water for domestic use. Water use for cattle comes from bores, dams, river water, springs and waterholes, and often suffers water shortages after months of no rain and high evaporation rates during the dry season.



Robinson River, Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust.

8. Potential Threats to Country

This section describes activities and changes that may be damaging to the cultural and natural values of our country and its resources, including:

- **Impact of commercial and recreational fishing;**
- **Pest animals and plants;**
- **Impacts of mining;**
- **Unmanaged fire;**
- **Damage to cultural sites;**
- **Coastal management and marine pollution;**
- **Impacts on landscapes and natural systems;**
- **Loss of support for outstations; and**
- **Lack of recognition of customary laws and country boundaries.**

IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING

We understand the need to share the fish resources of Garawa country, but it is important for our livelihoods, our culture and our country that these resources are shared equitably and sustainably.

Current threats from commercial and recreational fishing result from:

- Poor level of information about the impacts of local fisheries (overfishing, bycatch), especially in feeding and breeding grounds;
- Lack of information about the needs, practices and trends within the Indigenous fishing sector;

- Fisheries management arrangements that do not provide an adequate local voice for the Indigenous sector in resource allocation, monitoring, decision-making – i.e. fisheries governance; and
- Lack of monitoring and regulation in remote areas along the coastline and rivers resulting in unmanaged fisheries

In Queensland, although the Gulf Fin Fish Fishery and the Mud Crab Fishery are regarded as sustainable from the perspective of state fish populations and economic return to commercial fishers, these fisheries cannot be regarded as culturally sustainable and equitable until the issues raised above are addressed.

PEST ANIMALS

Garawa country is threatened by impacts from pest (non-native) animals including feral horses, pigs, cattle and cats, as well as cane toads. A recent survey over shoreline, salt flats, river flood plains and sand dunes in Garawa country on the Queensland side showed high numbers of feral horses having significant impact on wetland areas due to their hard hooves causing excessive erosion. Ground damage by feral animals also promotes the growth of grasses that are more susceptible to wildfire and allows weeds to infest disturbed areas.

Pigs are identified as the most significant threat to country. Feral pigs impact pastoral properties as they damage pastoral production by grazing and rooting, damage fences and watering facilities, and transport and creating conditions for weed growth and establishment. One of the main ecological impacts feral pigs have is through soil disturbance, which can disrupt nutrient and



Feral pig on country.

water cycles, change soil micro-organism and invertebrate populations, change plant succession and species composition patterns, cause erosion, and spread plant and animal species and plant diseases. Feral pigs also threaten our country's wetland ecosystems and their significant waterbird breeding colonies; and are capable of carrying infectious diseases and parasites that are both endemic and still exotic to Australia.

Although feral pigs are a resource, we have long been concerned at the impacts feral pigs are having on country - especially for wetlands, river systems and coastal habitats. The region is home to a handful of vulnerable and threatened species that are impacted by feral pigs. Many traditional food species are also becoming scarce as a result of their impacts, such as freshwater turtles and their eggs. There is strong concern that with more extreme drought and flooding cycles expected under climate change models, and after a

number of very wet years, we will see unsustainable growth of pig populations that could cause a lot of damage on important wetland areas when the weather goes into a very dry cycle.

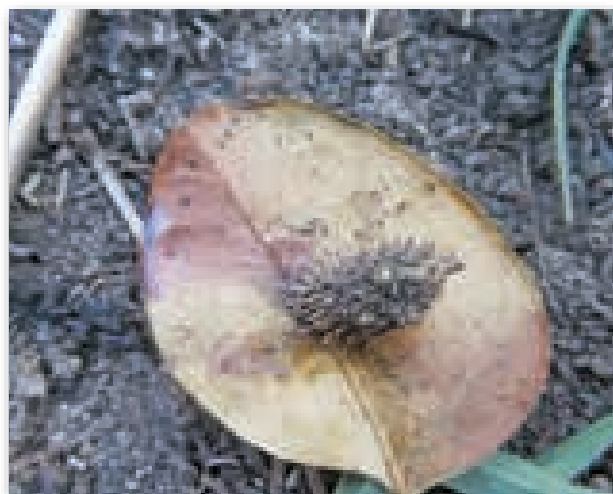
PEST PLANTS

Weeds can threaten the biodiversity of native plants and animals. Where weeds crowd out native plants, they impact animal habitats and waterways, and how fires burn. Especially in areas disturbed by feral animals, weeds can quickly invade areas preventing the growth of native plants. The following weeds have been identified within the three bioregions occurring on Garawa country:

- African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)
- Athel pine (*Tamarix aphylla*)
- Barleria (*Barleria prionitis*)
- Bellyache bush (*Jatropha gossypifolia*)
- Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*)
- Burr grass or Mossman River grass (*Cenchrus echinatus*)
- Calotrope (*Calotropis procera*)
- Candle bush (*Senna alata*)
- Chinee apple (*Ziziphus mauritiana*)
- Creeping lantana (*Lantana montevidensis*)
- Giant rat's tail grass (*Sporobolus natalensis* and *S. pyramidalis*)
- Grader grass (*Themeda quadrivalvis*)
- Hyptis (*Hyptis suaveolens*)
- Mint weed or Horehound (*Hyptis suaveolens*)
- Mesquite (*Prosopis spp.*)
- Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*)
- Mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*)
- Mission grass (*Pennisetum polystachion*)
- Neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*)
- Noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*)
- Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeate*)
- Parthenium weed (*Parthenium hysterophorus*)

- Prickly acacia (*Acacia nilotica*)
- Rubber vine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*)
- Salvinia molesta (*Salvinia molesta*)
- Sicklepod (*Senna obtusifolia* and *S. tora*)
- Sida spp. (*Sida spp.*)
- Snake weed (*Stachylarpheta spp.*)
- Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)

CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger weed management focuses on stopping the spread of weeds of national significance, including rubbervine, prickly acacia, calotrope and parkinsonia. They continue to maintain a control line for rubbervine to stop it from spreading across the border into the Northern Territory. All ranger groups working on Garawa country work to manage weeds of National significance (WoNS), control the spread of weeds into culturally and naturally significant areas (eg. waterways), monitor the spread of new and existing weeds on country, and use fire to control and eradicate weed populations. Traditional Owners have also shown strong interest in further working to identify and manage the wide variety of weeds on country.



Noogoora Burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) © Northern Land Council.

IMPACTS OF MINING

Redbank Mine

Sadly, we know too well the negative impacts of mining on country. The poor management of the Redbank mine has been its legacy for country. Located on Wollongorang Station, and within Garawa country, the mine has been leaching heavy contaminants into our natural waterways for two decades now. The biggest problem came after mine operations temporarily ended in 1996, and 54,000 tonnes of partially treated and potentially acid forming material remained untreated and contained in unstable tailings dams. Exacerbated by the monsoonal rains each wet season, pollutants are slowly leaching out of the stockpile and entering natural waterways.

Over the past decade, nothing has been done to remediate the affected waterways. It is likely that conditions are getting worse because of continued leaching and conditions stopping biological systems to regenerate. From assessments made in the Settlement Creek area, surface water systems downstream of the mine have carried contaminants into the area and caused significant leaching and damage to aquatic ecosystems,



A painting of Redbank Mine by Garawa senior, Jack Green, depicts the mine's environmental and social impacts on country. © J. Green.

including tributaries extending into Queensland's Settlement Creek Wild River area, and likely affecting the Wentworth Aggregate Wetlands and Gulf of Carpentaria. Qualitative observations made by the Gangalidda and Garawa rangers make note of heavy leaching and a significant absence of biology in waterways. The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) also shows that water quality testing of Settlement creek close to the Northern Territory-Queensland border had copper concentration levels 10 times higher than the national guideline's trigger value for 80% of aquatic ecosystem species to remain protected. The degradation and pollution of waterways also has a risk of impacting threatened species in the wetlands downstream, such as the freshwater sawfish, Gulf snapping turtle, the Australian painted snipe, marine turtles and dugong.

Our people have been seriously concerned about the impacts of Redbank for a long time now. In 2013, there was a meeting on site to discuss what should be done. Garawa people, our rangers, CLCAC staff and directors, NLC staff and directors, the Northern Territory Minister for Mines and Energy, the Northern Territory Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment, the director of Redbank Mine, and other interested parties all attended. At the meeting, the Mines and Energy Minister gave a commitment to make legacy mines, especially Redbank mine, a priority. A committee of stakeholders was put together, including Garawa Junggayi and Minggirringi, to strengthen communication and participation in mine rehabilitation and operations.

As part of the *Mining Management Amendment Bill 2013*, the Department of Mines and Energy has also committed to support the remediation of environmental legacy issues at Redbank Mine through their Legacy Mining Fund and Legacy Mines Unit.

The mine is now owned and managed by Redbank Copper Ltd. At the end of 2013, the Northern Territory Government issued a two year Waste Discharge Licence to allow Redbank Copper Ltd. to discharge waste into Hanrahan's Creek, which flows into Settlement Creek. There is little action being made to rehabilitate existing and future impacts.

As Traditional Owners of this country, we are deeply concerned about the continuing neglect on our land and waterways.



Copper sulphide pollution is leaching from Redbank Mine into waterways within the Settlement Wild River declared area in Queensland.

McArthur River Mine

For a long time now, Garawa people have had serious concerns for the environmental, social, and economic impacts of McArthur River mine operations. We share the McArthur River catchment with our neighbours, the Yanyuwa, Gurdanji and Mara peoples, and all depend on it for our livelihoods and culture.



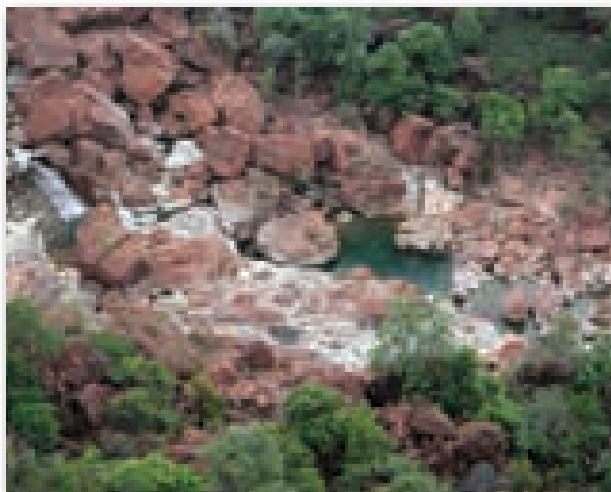
Aerial view of tailings dams at Redbank Mine.



Signs and evidence showing pollutants leaching into local waterways around Redbank Mine.

One of the most dramatic impacts has been the development of an open cut mine and resulting diversion of the river. Not only has this damaged culturally important areas, but the approved low standards of environmental protection assessments have been below industry best practice and do not support principles of ecologically sustainable development. Furthermore, the profits generated from the mine, and subsidies received from the government, are significantly more than what is invested into supporting local economic development.

Most recently, at the end of 2013, volatile pyrite iron sulphide was dumped onto a waste rock pile at the mine and caused spontaneous combustion. The waste rock pile continues to burn, sending toxic smoke into the air and contaminating the water systems. An independent environmental report assessing data from Glencore and the NT Department of Mines has reported on a number of serious issues. These included high levels of lead in nine out of ten fish caught in nearby Barney Creek; an increase in dust levels around the site; and the potential for waste rock pollutants to spill into nearby water systems, including seeping of sulphuric acids. Glencore has been asked to carry out an Environmental Impact



Statement to respond to the problem, but this may take up to two years to complete. For people living in Borroloola, fishing is their livelihood and the McArthur River is the lifeblood of the community. We continue to support our people and neighbours in pushing for Glencore to be transparent and accountable for the impacts caused by current pollution.

WILDFIRE AND MISMANAGED FIRE

As Traditional Owners, we know the significance that fire has for our country. A carefully lit and managed fire will help to remove weeds, promote the growth of native vegetation, protect areas that are high in biodiversity, create fire breaks to protect culturally and economically important places, and keep parts of country healthy that are important to us. Wildfires and inappropriate fire regimes can erase all of our hard fire management work.

Wildfires usually occur on country during the late dry season, and are more frequent after a good wet season produces more growth and a higher fuel load. For many years it was hard for us to visit country and light fires that protected certain areas and controlled fuel loads. Many wildfires would travel across country from Queensland and into the Northern Territory, going through and damaging pastoral stations, our outstations and other important areas for us. In 2004, wildfires were so bad that the region was declared a natural fire disaster area.

Many wildfires are started because we are no longer living in certain areas, or have access to places and resources, to light fires to manage country. Around Robinson River, it was that there were fires being burnt too often, which was preventing regrowth that supported local animals such as emu.

Where wildfires occur they degrade the soils, damage habitats and sources of food for native animals, burn out foraging areas and nest sites for birds, damage wetland areas, and burn some plants so frequently that it prevents regeneration of seeds and fruits. Wildfire and unmanaged fires can also burn and damage areas that are important for bushtucker and bush medicine. The

impact it has on the landscape also means that significant loss of vegetation cover causes erosion and increased siltation of waterways.

Managing fire the right way has been a great success due to Traditional Owners working alongside the rangers groups, other landowners and partners in strategic fire projects. Supporting the Gangalidda and Garawa, Waanyi Garawa, and Garawa groups in their fire programs is vital if we want to keep the occurrence of wildfires to a minimum. Educating the wider community who use country is also important so that they also understand the difference between managed and unmanaged fire.

DAMAGE TO CULTURAL SITES

For us, culture is a living thing part of our natural and spiritual landscape, and has many places that we visit and look after to keep it alive. Garawa people work hard to take care of country and its sacred areas. As long as we continue to take care of them, our generations to come will have a connection to their culture and know who they are. Feral animals, weeds, wildfires, and inappropriate fire regimes, are some of the main threats to culturally important parts of Garawa country.

We are proud to share the beauty of our country with locals and tourists, but a lack of cultural awareness and lack of information about what tourists are doing on country are a threat to the protection of our cultural sites and values. We recognise that we have a responsibility to help manage tourism so that it does not damage country and our cultural sites. Our concern is that if people continue to visit cultural areas they do not know about then they will not understand the importance of protecting them. There are also many sacred sites non-Traditional Owners cannot visit by themselves.

COASTAL MANAGEMENT AND MARINE POLLUTION

Our sea country and coastlines are impacted by many common threats occurring across the Gulf. Our coastlines and intertidal areas receive marine debris and ghostnets brought in by the currents. This type of pollution is

especially threatening to juvenile turtles and hatchlings. Turtle and dugong populations are also present along sea country. The impacts of fishing, pollution, boat strike and habitat degradation are unknown, but previous monitoring has shown results of a decrease in populations. Significant seagrass communities are also at risk due to increased turbidity and siltation of coastal waters.

The degree of these impacts, and any possible new threats, are relatively unknown because of the lack of monitoring and management of the coastlines and sea country. Whilst our ranger groups conduct monitoring and management of marine debris and ghostnets along sea country, there is a great deal more they can work on through support from partners and stakeholders.

IMPACTS ON LANDSCAPES AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

During our lifetime we have witnessed significant changes in our landscape. One of the main concerns we have is the impact of increased erosion on our waterways and sea country habitats. Overgrazing, wildfire, inappropriate fire regimes, weeds, and feral animals all contribute to increased erosion and siltation of rivers, creeks and intertidal areas. We are already starting to see the impacts through poor water quality, a loss of native vegetation, sediment build up in rivers, and decreasing populations of aquatic species. Rangers currently do not receive funding to work on projects that directly address erosion, but our Gangalidda and Garawa rangers do have training and skills in erosion mitigation methodologies and restoration works.

We are also aware that we need to prepare for likely changes to climate, including rising temperatures, extreme rainfall events, increased occurrence of wildfire, and more severe tidal intrusions and flooding due to the low lying nature of our country's landscape. With increasing extreme weather events, we can expect threats, such as saltwater intrusion due to seas level rise, and increased erosion and estuarine outwelling due to flooding and extreme rainfall.

Across country, we have also noticed that bushtucker is growing differently across the landscape. In the old days, we managed bushtucker just like farmers manage their crops. Today, with more wildfires, inappropriate fire regimes, weeds, feral animals, and erosion, there are many places that are no longer rich in bushtucker. Our livelihoods once depended on the many native plants and animals that were a source of food, and we want to continue to harvest them as our Elders did and children should be able to.

LOSS OF SUPPORT FOR OUTSTATIONS

Our outstations throughout country provide us with a direct connection to our culture. We go there to practice culture, ceremony, storytelling, song, hunting, fishing, and burning country. Most importantly, we go there with our children to teach them about who they are and where they are from. Our rangers also use them as bases for working on country. A few decades ago, our outstations were well serviced and we could live healthy lives there whilst receiving the same services that towns had – electricity, water, stores, and even schools. Today, in some outstations those services are minimal and it makes it hard for us to use them for ranger work and as a permanent home for all our families.

LACK OF RECOGNITION OF CUSTOMARY LAWS AND COUNTRY BOUNDARIES

Our customary laws define who we are as Garawa people and our responsibilities to Garawa country. It is important for us that our neighbours and partners understand some of these laws as they relate to our governance structures and decision-making processes for land and sea management.

It is these laws that have drawn the boundaries of Garawa country, and which our neighbouring tribes and ourselves govern country with. For us, the border marking the divide between the Northern Territory and Queensland is incompatible with the way our country should be governed and managed. It has divided our country in two. Our people have been restricted in their right to participate and make decisions for country because they live in a different jurisdiction (State of Queensland or the Northern Territory).



Early season controlled burning on country.

9. Priority Actions

This section outlines our priority actions we propose to take to manage our land and sea country in collaboration with our government, community and industry partners:¹¹

- **Continued support of land and sea management initiatives**
 - Fire, weed, feral animal, biosecurity, and biodiversity management
- **Managing for *all* of Garawa Country**
 - Meeting between NLC and CLCAC
 - Strengthening Garawa governance
 - Recognise and promote Traditional Owner consultation
 - Implementation Workshop
- **Garawa ranger groups**
 - Collaborations between our ranger groups
 - Collaborations between Garawa and other ranger groups
 - Expand and better resource the ranger programs
 - Junior Ranger program and camps on country
- **Sea Country Management**
- **Research and monitoring on country**
- **Economic development**
 - Employment opportunities in natural resource management through the ranger programs
 - Ranger groups operating as service providers in the region
 - Carbon Farming

- **Legacy, operational and future mines**
- **Protected and Nationally Important areas**
 - Monitor Fish Habitat Areas
 - Managing conservation sanctuaries
 - Consider Indigenous Protected Area
- **Fisheries management**
- **Cultural heritage management**
- **Outstations**

CONTINUED LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT

Biodiversity, fire, feral animal, and weed management are key features of the work undertaken by rangers working on Garawa country. As well as improving the health of country, this work has developed the skills of rangers to perform as professional land and sea managers supporting Traditional Owners' interests. These activities have seen significant outcomes for the health of country over the past decade. For example, their coordinated fire management work has helped to reinstate healthy fire regimes for country that support Traditional Owner values on country, biodiversity richness, the control of weeds of National significance, protection of infrastructure on pastoral stations and outstations, and healthy habitats and ecosystems.

Continuing to educate the wider community on land and sea programs managed by the Garawa ranger groups is very important in improving awareness of our capacities as Traditional Owners to manage country, strengthening partnerships, and also teaching younger generations about the significance of our work for a healthy country for all.

It is important to continue to support the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) and Northern Land Council (NLC) Land and Sea Programs, while also strengthening cultural and natural resource management capacity through the following priority actions. These priority actions focus on supporting Traditional Owners' *strategic* aspirations for country and culture, including sustainable livelihoods from country.

MANAGING FOR ALL OF GARAWA COUNTRY

One of the main goals of our Land and Sea Country Plan is to establish land and sea management across all of country, as it has been done for generations before us.

In doing this, we would like to continue to work with new and existing partners in looking after country for the benefit of all who use it. Creating stronger collaboration between our partners and ourselves will also give us a better understanding of the needs of other land users, and to also show our values, concerns and aspirations for country. A mutual understanding of each other, and a joint approach, will support our work in the long-term sustainable use of our land and sea country.

- Continue to identify and use our customary laws and governance structure in decision-making for land and sea management, and ensure these cultural values and rights are recognised by our partners;
- Recognise and promote Traditional Owner consultation on any and all issues and activities on Garawa country;

¹¹ Priority actions are in no particular order.

- Organise a meeting between our representative bodies, the CLCAC and NLC to discuss a collaborative approach to land and sea management across all of Garawa country; and
- Organise an Implementation Workshop bringing together representatives of Traditional Owners, the CLCAC, NLC, Garawa rangers groups and partners to develop agreed pathways to implement this Plan.

GARAWA RANGER GROUPS

Managing Garawa land and sea country is not possible without the efforts of the CLCAC and NLC Garawa ranger groups. They have achieved a great deal for country, and our families. Their expertise, and success in developing partnerships, shows that there is great potential to support future plans for country. With increasing opportunities in land and sea management, the groups need a strategic approach that will support Traditional Owner aspirations, the ongoing development of the group, and a strong education program that passes our knowledge onto the next generation so that they can continue to look after country and their culture.

- Continue to bring together our Garawa ranger groups to work together across country and support each other in training and capacity building;
- Work with our neighbouring ranger groups in joint management of areas where we share common concerns and values;
- Expand and better resource the ranger program on Garawa country, including employing more female rangers and creating more flexible positions (eg. casual, part time and permanent positions);
- Expand the ranger base in Robinson;
- Develop a junior ranger program and more opportunities for camps on country with children and families; and
- Develop capacity to monitor and manage our resources through training and qualifications for our rangers in fisheries compliance monitoring, crocodile monitoring and water quality testing.

SEA COUNTRY MANAGEMENT

Much of our sea country is relatively unmanaged, especially parts along the coastal areas of country. We would like to develop relationships with neighbouring ranger groups, government agencies, and other land users to strengthen sea country management for many of the impacts that currently go unnoticed. Our ranger groups have the capacities and experience to support existing programs and develop new ones involving Traditional Owners working on country.

- Continued training and development of our ranger groups to undertake sea management along Garawa coastlines and sea country;
- Build partnerships with government agencies and other landowners to develop sea country management programs that involve our ranger groups and Traditional Owners; and
- Work with the Li'Anthawirriyarra sea ranger group in joint management of areas where we share common concerns and values.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING ON COUNTRY

There are many natural processes, conservation values, and impacts on country that we have only begun to scratch the surface on in terms of monitoring and research. Research on the environments, natural resources, cultural heritage and impacts of climate change on our country is as important to us as it is to the researchers that undertake the work. Our goal is to have the opportunity to work with researchers engaged in activities on our country. Our involvement in this research will be mutually beneficial to us and to the researchers. Training and qualifying our ranger groups, and other Traditional Owners, in scientific monitoring will also allow us to monitor and manage our own resources better. Skills and qualifications in fisheries compliance monitoring and water quality testing is a priority because of the many threats facing our rivers and coastal areas.

Furthermore, our intellectual and physical property rights are fundamental in any research and monitoring activities, and any property collected should be managed so that it is kept on country and in culturally appropriate

way. To facilitate this we would like to establish a Cultural Keeping Place on country that would house physical property.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We aim to identify, promote and negotiate opportunities for investment, resource development and other commercial projects to benefit our people and country. For Garawa people, the current economic development opportunities are to:

- Continue to find employment options in natural resource management through the ranger programs;
- Support the role of ranger groups operating as service providers in the region;
- Continue to research carbon farming methodologies that are feasible and suitable for country;
- Investigate opportunities, economic and other, for permit systems on land trusts and exclusive native title determines areas; and
- Aim to buy pastoral leases back from the Indigenous Land Corporation to support ownership of our country.

LEGACY, OPERATIONAL AND FUTURE MINES

Redbank Mine

We will continue to participate in the Redbank Mine Working Group to make sure that existing environmental damages are remediated; mine rehabilitation and operations are properly regulated and are transparent; the government plays a stronger role in regulating the impacts of the mine; and for Traditional Owners to be more involved in mine operations.

Importantly, we will continue to participate in decision-making processes to ensure that Traditional Owner concerns, interests and aspirations are supported by future mine rehabilitation and development. We will also continue to put pressure on the government to take responsibility for cleaning up the environmental pollution caused by Redbank Mine.

McArthur River Mine

We will continue to support our people and neighbours in pushing for Glencore to be transparent and accountable for the social, cultural and environmental impacts caused by McArthur River mine. We will also continue to push for an Environmental Impact Statement to be produced as a result of current pollution from the waste rock pile; mine operations to be properly regulated and transparent, and follow best practice principles for ecologically sustainable development; fairer distribution of profits from, and investment in, the mine to the local community and Traditional Owners; and for stronger involvement of the local community and Traditional Owners in mine operations, including through employment opportunities.

Mining Exploration

Our country continues to receive interest in mineral and gas exploration, and the extraction of these natural resources through new mining operations. As Traditional Owners, it is our responsibility to country and our future generations that we sustainably manage such natural resources for a healthy country. Our involvement at both operational and decision-making levels is fundamental if potential partners want to prove their operations and standards are best practice. In any new mineral and gas exploration on country we will push for transparent and accountable Environmental Impact Statements; that cultural heritage surveyors and monitors be used at all times; and that exploration or mining companies employ Garawa people to support local economic development.

PROTECTED OR NATIONALLY IMPORTANT AREAS

Monitor Fish Habitat Areas

In developing partnerships with local groups to enhance a more regionalised approach, there is an opportunity for the Queensland Government to work with Traditional Owners and the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers and negotiate a role to monitor and manage Eight Mile Creek Fish Habitat Area. We will seek to establish such a role for the CLCAC Gangalidda Garawa Rangers through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing.

Managing conservation sanctuaries

Garawa Traditional Owners share similar conservation goals to those used in Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary's land management programs. Some of these programs already work collaboratively with Garawa Traditional Owners. We would like to strengthen these partnerships so that our ranger groups and Traditional Owners are more involved in land and sea management within the sanctuary.

- Continue to work with Pungalina-Seven Emu sanctuary managers in land and sea programs;
- Engage Garawa ranger groups in land and sea management programs; and
- Ensure that Garawa interests are recognised in land and sea management.

Indigenous Protected Areas

Garawa people share responsibility and management for the Ganalanga-Mindibirrina (Waanyi Garawa) Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) covering the Waanyi Garawa (Nicholson) Aboriginal Land Trust. During the implementation of this Plan we wish to explore whether it would be feasible and beneficial to dedicate other parts of Garawa country as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA).

An IPA is an area dedicated by its Traditional Owners as a protected area for the protection and sustainable use of its environmental and cultural values, in collaboration with appropriate government agencies, tenure holders and others with rights and interests in the area. IPAs are recognised by the Queensland, Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments, and by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as part of Australia's National Reserve System (NRS) of Protected Areas.

There are currently over 60 IPAs throughout Australia (*see map on page 46*), creating a total area of 48 million hectares and amounting to almost 40% of the NRS. Since their inception in 1998, the planning and management of IPAs has been supported by funding from the Commonwealth Government's IPA Program, other government agencies, conservation organisations, research institutions and other partners.

IPAs are similar to national parks or conservation reserves, except they are made (dedicated) by Traditional Owners,

rather than by governments, and are managed through a diversity of legal and other effective mechanisms, rather than by separate legislation. Traditional activities, such as sustainable hunting and fishing and other IPA compatible enterprises, can continue once country is dedicated as an IPA.

Most IPAs are situated on Aboriginal-owned land, but in more recent years IPAs have been established on multiple tenures, including sea country, in collaboration with agencies, organisations and groups with authority, resource rights (e.g. commercial fishermen) or tenure holders (e.g. pastoralists).

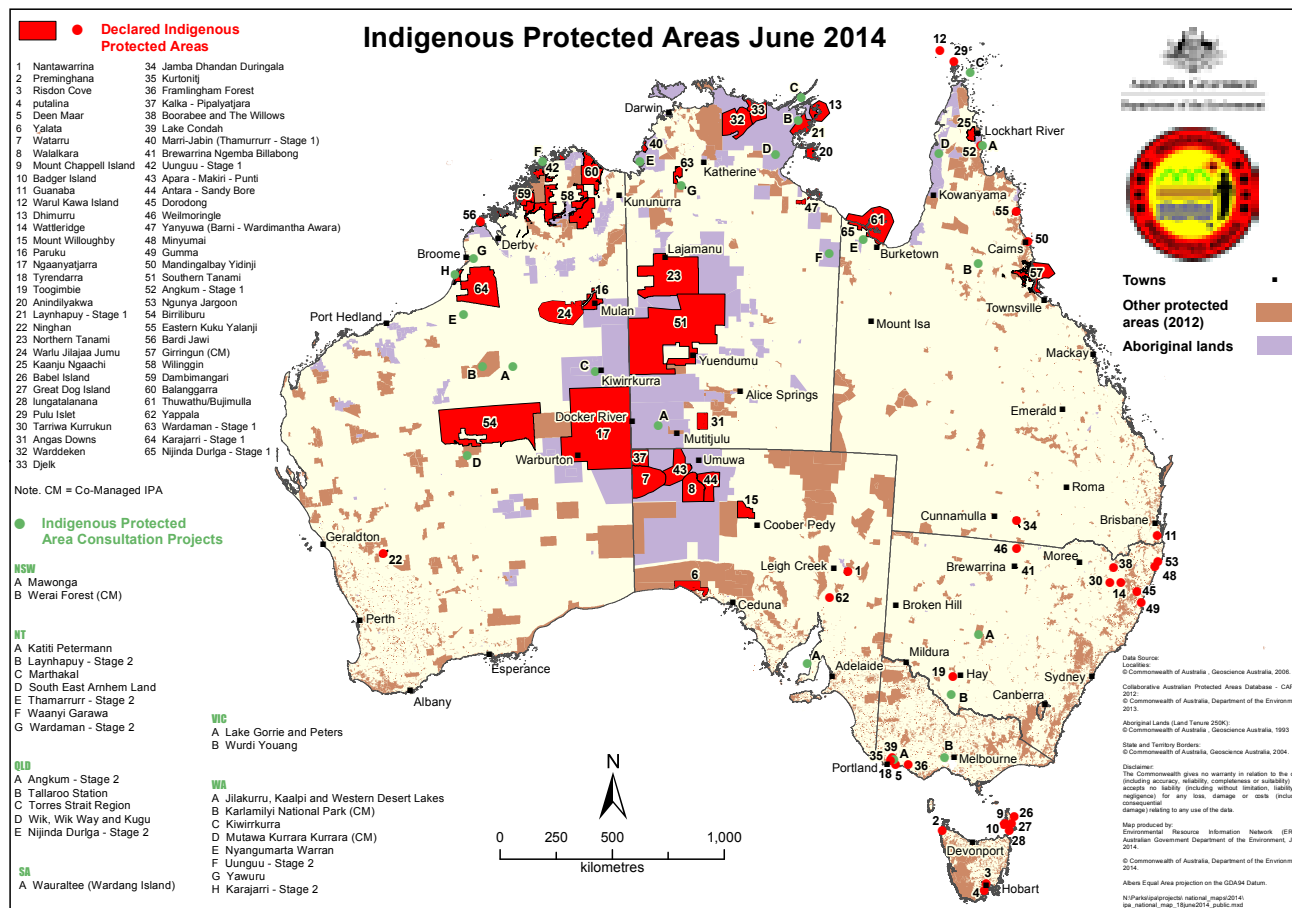
IPAs are therefore a mechanism for Traditional Owners to "put country back together" after it has been divided up into different tenures over time, often with different management authorities responsible for different tenures. Because IPAs are not established under legislation they do not restrict the legal authority or rights of existing tenure-holders or rights-holders, but they are proving very effective in promoting collaborative, whole of landscape and seascape management that achieves the protection of environmental and cultural values of importance to Traditional Owners and with the consent of other interested parties.

Through the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation we will seek funding from the IPA Program, and/or other sources, to enable Traditional Owners to consider the IPA option and, if authorised by them, to proceed to develop an IPA Management Plan for selected parts of our country in collaboration with appropriate partners.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Through the implementation of this Plan we are committed to achieving Indigenous, recreational and commercial fisheries that are equitable to all sectors as well as ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable. To achieve this objective we will seek to:

- Build partnerships with Fisheries Queensland, the NT Dept. of Primary Industry and Fisheries, recreational fishers and commercial fishers in the research, monitoring and management of fish resources on Garawa country;
- Reduce impacts of recreational and commercial fishing where necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for the Indigenous fishing sector; and



- Continue to visit parts of country that are important to us for fishing, ceremonies, hunting, and taking care of country;
- Develop a tourism strategy that will help to protect and manage cultural heritage;
- Continue to protect culturally significant sites from unmanaged or wildfire fire and damage from animals; and
- Support the growth of education and women's programs that help to pass on our culture to our children.

OUTSTATIONS

Supporting the use and management of our outstations is fundamental in looking after a healthy country and people. We will continue to live and work on our outstations, and ensure this is sustainable through supporting the management of outstations on Garawa country as outlined in the Ganalang-Mindibirr IPA Management Plan; and through land management, social and economic activities that will support our people and rangers living and working on country.

"Let us stand up strong. Let's plan beyond the hill. What I can see from here now is that it's going to be a great future for our next generation."

Richard Dickson, Garawa man

- Collect information on Indigenous fishing to support recognition of the Indigenous fishery in fisheries management and resource sharing.

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

We will continue to sustainably manage what is culturally important for us and develop programs that support Traditional Owner led management of cultural heritage. Some of our priority actions will be to:

- Access country for cultural heritage surveying and mapping, so that we have a record of country and its condition for future cultural and natural resource management;



Garawa Traditional Owners with partners at a land and sea country planning meeting.

10. Partnerships and Implementation

This section describes how our Land and Sea Country Plan will be implemented in collaboration with our government, community and industry partners, including through:

- **Publication and distribution of the Plan and a poster summarising key aspects of the Plan;**
- **Identification of partners and their potential roles in implementation;**
- **An Implementation Workshop bringing together representatives of Traditional Owners, Gangalidda and Garawa rangers, and partners to develop agreed pathways to implement this Plan; and**
- **A process for monitoring and evaluating and reviewing the implementation of this Plan.**

OUR COLLABORATION PARTNERS

We recognise that many of the priority actions identified in this Plan can only be achieved in collaboration with government agencies, community groups, industry bodies, landholders, research institutions and other partners with rights, interests, resources and expertise that can assist us to look after our country.

The following organisations have been identified as existing or potential collaboration partners, with suggestions on how they can assist us to implement our Plan.

INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) is the Native Title Service Body coordinating the Garawa People's native title claim, and land and sea management, in Queensland.

- Coordinate production and distribution of the Plan and poster;
- Administer the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers, supported by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and Commonwealth Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- Facilitate collaboration with partner agencies and organisations in implementing the Plan;
- Facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the plan, including a formal plan review after five years;
- Coordinate the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan;
- Meet with the Northern Land Council to discuss a collaborative approach to land and sea management across all of Garawa country; and
- Assist in ensuring Garawa interests are recognised in deliberations for Redbank mine rehabilitation and development.



Gangalidda and Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation

The Gangalidda and Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (GGNTAC) is the registered native title body corporation that holds native title on our behalf. The corporation supports the economic, environmental and community development aspirations of the Gangalidda and Garawa People.



- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan; and
- Continue to support and help protect native title rights and interests.

Northern Land Council

The Northern Land Council (NLC) is the Native Title Representative Body coordinating the Garawa People's native title claims, and land and sea management, in the Northern Territory.



- Meet with the CLCAC to discuss a collaborative approach to land and sea management across all of Garawa country;

- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan;
- Administer the Waanyi Garawa and Garawa rangers, and support their engagement in collaborative work with the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa ranger group; and
- Continue to support Garawa Traditional Owner involvement in the Redbank Mine Working Group, and assist in ensuring Garawa interests are recognised in deliberations for Redbank mine rehabilitation and development.

Li'Anthawirriyarra Sea Ranger Group

The Li'Anthawirriyarra sea ranger group manages the Yanyuwa Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), which includes the Sir Edward Pellew Islands, and riverine and coastal areas around McArthur River in the southwest Gulf.

- Work with Garawa ranger groups in joint management of areas where we share common concerns and values; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Mabunji Resource Centre

Mabunji Resource Centre services Yanyuwa, Garawa, Mara and Gurdanji People and their homelands in the Borrooloola region. They also support the Li'Anthawirriyarra sea ranger group.



- Support the development of joint management and training opportunities between Garawa and Li'Anthawirriyarra rangers; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation

Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation provides municipal and administrative services, operates the CDEP work programme, helps to develop local enterprises that create economic development, and supports other community-based programs for the community of Robinson River and the Garawa Aboriginal Land Trust.



- Continue to support Garawa rangers working on the land trust; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Burke Shire Council

Burke Shire Council is the local government authority responsible for the Gulf region, within Queensland, in which Garawa country is located.



- Manage contracts for fire, weed and pest management undertaken by CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers on Council land and under Council management of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002;
- Continue to support Garawa rangers in implementation of the CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project;
- Collaborate with Gangalidda and Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Roper Gulf Regional Council

Roper Gulf Regional Council is the local government authority responsible for the council's South West Gulf Ward, in which Garawa country is located.



- Collaborate with Waanyi Garawa and Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

Fisheries Queensland (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)

Fisheries Queensland is responsible for fisheries management, monitoring and research throughout Queensland.



- Collaborate with CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate;
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan; and
- Negotiate a memorandum of understanding for the extension of the fish ladder program to alleviate fish movement impediment resulting from the construction of causeways on Garawa waterways.

Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport, and Racing

The Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport, and Racing (NPRSR) is responsible for planning and managing protected areas throughout Queensland, including national parks, conservation reserves and fish habitat areas.

- Negotiate a MoU with Traditional Owners and CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers regarding the monitoring and management of Eight Mile Creek Fish Habitat Area;
- Collaborate with CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) is the agency responsible for protecting and managing species, environments and cultural heritage throughout Queensland.

- Continue collaboration with the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers through Qld. Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program;
- Collaborate with the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting the implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

The Cultural Heritage Unit of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA) is responsible for providing recognition, protection and conservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, administered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2003*.

- Support Garawa Traditional Owner management of cultural heritage, and recognise Traditional Owners' key role in cultural heritage matters relating to Garawa people and country; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting the implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Department of Community Safety (Queensland Fire and Rescue Service)

Under the broader division of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) is the arm responsible for management of regional offices throughout the state and of the rural fire brigade volunteers.

- Continue to support Garawa rangers in the implementation of the CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project;
- Collaborate with Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and capacity building, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries

The Fisheries Division of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (DPIF) is responsible for conserving and sustainably managing fish and aquatic resources for Indigenous, recreational and commercial



fisheries in the Territory. They are also responsible for implementing the Indigenous Fisheries Development Strategy, supporting the Aboriginal Fisheries Consultative Committees and Indigenous Community Marine Ranger Program, and the management of Customary Fisheries and Aboriginal coastal licences.

- Collaborate with Garawa Traditional Owners in sustainable, culturally appropriate, business and employment opportunities in fisheries management, research and development, training, industry participation and resource protection;
- Collaborate with Garawa rangers on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate;
- Support Garawa rangers in new collaborative efforts to monitor and manage sea country; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Department of Land Resource Management - NT Weeds, NT Bushfires

The Department of Land Resource Management (DLRM) includes the government agencies responsible for rural fire management and weed management in the Northern Territory.

NT Bushfire's role includes the prevention, mitigation, control and management of bushfires in the Gulf regional

area of the Territory. This includes supporting volunteers and volunteer bush fire brigades, assisting landowners prepare for bushfires, developing management and response plans, and taking part in joint firework and training programs.

- Continue to support Garawa ranger groups in the implementation of the CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project;
- Collaborate with Garawa ranger groups on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and capacity building, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

The Weed Management Branch works to prevent the introduction and spread of weeds in the territory; including work with landholders in promoting integrated weed control, survey and mapping of weeds, and weed management planning.

- Continue to support Garawa ranger groups in the implementation of the CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project;
- Collaborate with Garawa ranger groups on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and capacity building, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Department of Mines and Energy

The Department of Mines and Energy has committed to support the remediation of environmental legacy issues at Redbank mine through their Legacy Mining Fund and Legacy Mines Unit as part of the *Mining Management Amendment Bill 2013*.

- Continue to communicate and engage with Traditional Owners through the Redbank Mine Working Group;
- Involve Traditional Owners in current field work programs that will assist in developing an understanding of hydrological conditions at Redbank mine;
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan; and
- Support Garawa Traditional Owners' participation in decision-making and consultative processes for existing mines on country and any new exploration projects.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Environmental Programs Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for implementing the Indigenous Protected Area Program and the Working on Country Program.



- Continue to support the CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers through projects continuing on from the Working on Country program;
- Support Garawa People, through the CLCAC and NLC, to explore the option of dedicating appropriate portions of Garawa country as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA);
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan; and
- Organise for the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs to visit Robinson.

Department of the Environment

The Department of the Environment (DoE) is responsible for administering the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, including overseeing the National Reserve System of Protected Areas and undertaking ecological sustainability assessments of export fisheries.

- If requested by Traditional Owners, support the process of planning, dedicating and managing a possible Garawa IPA, through information sharing, technical support and recognition of the IPA as part of the National Reserve System of Protected Areas;
- Take into account Garawa Peoples' rights and interests with respect to our traditional fishery when undertaking an ecological assessment of export fisheries sourced from our country under the Environment Protected and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is responsible for delivering biosecurity programs across northern Australia through the North Australia Quarantine Strategy (formerly delivered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)).

- Continue to collaborate with and support the Garawa rangers in their quarantine monitoring activities in coastal areas, including autopsies of culled pigs and monitoring for invasive organisms in marine debris; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

NON-GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Southern Gulf Catchments Ltd

Southern Gulf Catchments Ltd is a community-based organisation working through partnerships to care for natural and cultural resources in the southern Gulf region, including Garawa country.



- Continue collaboration with Gangalidda and Garawa rangers, including investment in identified land management projects (eg. CLCAC Indigenous Fire and Weed Management Project), to achieve outcomes on Garawa country that are consistent with both our Land and Sea Country Plan and the Southern Gulf NRM Plan;
- Collaborate with all Garawa ranger groups on mutually beneficial opportunities for joint training and resource sharing, where appropriate; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting the implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fishermen's Association

Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fishermen's Association (GoCCFA) represents the interests of licenced commercial fishers in the Gulf of Carpentaria and promotes sustainable fisheries practices in the region.

- In line with partnerships through the Nijinda Durlga (Gangalidda) IPA Management Plan, continue to work with Garawa people, the CLCAC and CLCAC Gangalidda and Garawa rangers to develop and implement a 'Traditional Owner Friendly' accreditation scheme for Gulf commercial fishermen; and

- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Pastoral Industry

Many owners and managers of pastoral stations on country are currently developing relationships with Traditional Owners that are co-beneficial, and support sustainable pastoral management.

- Further develop relationships with Traditional Owners to create mutually beneficial land and sea management on country;
- Support access to country for Traditional Owners for sustainable management of cultural heritage; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

Established under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, the Aboriginal



Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) is the independent statutory authority responsible for the oversight and protection of Aboriginal sacred sites on land and sea in the Northern Territory.

- Explore potential assistance to establish a Cultural Keeping Place on Garawa country;
- Support Garawa Traditional Owners management of cultural heritage, and recognise Traditional Owners' key role in cultural heritage matters relating to Garawa people and country; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting the implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Australian Wildlife Conservancy (Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary)

The Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) is the largest landowner of private land used for conservation in Australia. Pungalina-Seven Emu Wildlife Sanctuary is a conservation refuge purchased and leased by the AWC to protect the conservation significance of the Gulf region. The sanctuary is managed by AWC staff, who implement practical land management.



- Ensure Traditional Owner access to Pungalina-Seven Emu;
- Further develop relationships with Traditional Owners to create mutually beneficial land and sea management on country;
- Work with Garawa ranger groups in joint management of areas where we share common concerns and values; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

Redbank Copper Ltd.

Redbank Copper Ltd. are the owners of 5,167km of tenements within the McArthur Basin region, including Redbank mine.

- Continue to communicate and engage with Traditional Owners through the Redbank Mine Working Group;
- Involve Traditional Owners in any rehabilitation and development work at Redbank mine;
- Involve Traditional Owners in decision-making processes to ensure that Traditional Owner concerns, interests and aspirations are supported by future mine rehabilitation and development; and
- Participate in the proposed Implementation Workshop to explore additional opportunities for supporting implementation of our Land and Sea Country Plan.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE PLAN

Copies of our Land and Sea Country Plan will be made available to all Garawa People and distributed to all our partner agencies and organisations. A wall poster that summarises the main features of the Plan will also be circulated and made available to community organisations in the region, such as primary schools, secondary schools and local government offices. The Plan and poster will also be available for download from the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation website.

IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP

The CLCAC will convene an Implementation Workshop within three months of completing this Plan to bring together Garawa Traditional Owners, Garawa ranger groups and our collaboration partners (listed above) to confirm existing commitments and to map out a pathway to implement our agreed Priority Actions.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Implementation Workshop will develop an agreed timeline for achieving the Priority Actions identified in this Plan. The timeline and agreed steps to achieve milestones for each Priority Action will form the basis for monitoring the implementation of this Plan.

Progress on the implementation of the Plan will be documented in the Annual Report of CLCAC and the Plan will be reviewed after a period of five years.

References and Further Reading

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West, L. D., Lyle, J. M., Matthews, S. R., Stark, K. E. and Steffe, A. S. (2012) Survey of Recreational Fishing in the Northern Territory, 2009-10. Northern Territory Government, Australia. Fishery Report No. 109.

The following reports and documents provide further information about land and sea management on Garawa country.

- Ganalanga-Mindibirrindina Indigenous Protected Area Plan of Management (2013-2018)
- Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation Gulf Savannah Fire Management Guidelines
- Northern Land Council Submission to the Northern Territory Government's Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry (June 2014)
- Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation Indigenous Economic and Business Development in the Gulf of Carpentaria

