



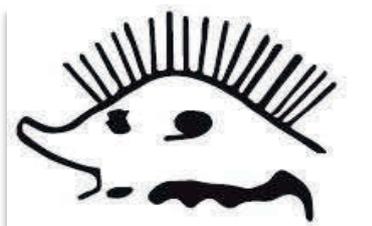
Natural
Resources
Commission

Forest Monitoring and
Improvement Program

Aboriginal cultural values and renewal assessment in NSW forests post-wildfires - Banbai Case Study Report



Banbai rangers & Dr Michelle McKemey

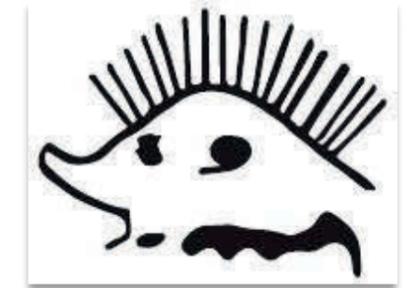


firesticks

MELALEUCA
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**Banbai
welcome
to Country**



Support

This study was funded under the NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program – a state-wide interagency program overseen by the Natural Resources Commission.

Banbai Community Ownership

The Banbai community asserts their ownership of any of their knowledge, data, information and materials as intellectual property or Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property, which have been shared in this report.

Suggested citation

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Cover photo

Banbai rangers hosted interagency workshop participants at Wattleridge Indigenous Protected Area, where they surveyed the cultural landscape, bushfire damage, and discussed the way forward (photographer: Louise Askew).

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Thainburra una burranyen ngaia nyam ngenda dunga nguralami

The members of the Banbai Nation would like to welcome you to learn about our Country. This land was walked upon, played upon & hunted upon by our ancestors. As an act of remembrance, honour and loyalty to our ancestors, we ask that you take a moment to remember them.

Our vision for our Country is that it is self-sustaining for future generations where our children learn cultural values (such as bush tucker and traditional practices) and understand what healthy country means. Our country is a meeting place for family and community gatherings where knowledge is shared and what we see now, generations will see in the future. Healthy country, healthy people and healthy waterways will make our country self-sustaining. Through this project we would like to expand the management of cultural values across all of Banbai Country using a cultural management framework, and advance how cultural values and knowledge are used to care for Country.



Executive Summary

The Banbai people envision that their Country is self-sustaining for future generations where their children learn cultural values and understand what healthy country means. Through this project the Banbai people investigated how to expand the management of cultural values across all of Banbai Country using a cultural management framework, and to advance how cultural values and knowledge are used to care for Country. This aspiration linked with the NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program which aimed to explore the cultural state-wide evaluation question, “To what extent are Aboriginal values, knowledge and people involved in forest management and decision making?” Through desktop research and a series of workshops, meetings and time ‘on Country’, the Banbai people worked with representatives from various government agencies, specialists and private landholders to explore these issues.

The Banbai rangers manage two Aboriginal-owned properties which are Indigenous Protected Areas where they can autonomously access, manage, protect, and share knowledge about their cultural values in a culturally safe environment. In contrast, for many generations, they have been denied access to private land where they are unable to access, manage, protect or share cultural values, and where knowledge related to these values may be deteriorating. In the middle of the spectrum, there is limited information about cultural values on public lands, inadequate policy and planning to manage these cultural values, and a number of partnerships in their infancy that have the potential to grow.

This project stimulated new initiatives, facilitated stronger partnerships, provided opportunities to learn from specialists and enabled on-Country discussions across various land tenures to assist Banbai people to increase their opportunities to manage cultural values throughout their Country. A notable breakthrough was improving relationships with private landholders and accessing cultural sites that were previously off limits. Another highlight of the project was viewing Country, as a group, through the lens of a cultural landscape, and sharing knowledge from various perspectives including those of the Traditional Owners, cultural heritage specialists, cultural scientists, archaeologists, ecologists and public servants. Many opportunities were identified and there is substantial potential for Banbai people to increase their involvement in management and decision-making in forested areas. As a result of this project, the following recommendations were made:

1. Develop a Whole of Banbai Country Plan
2. Government agencies should support Banbai people to manage their cultural values and monitor progress
3. Increase engagement
4. Take up opportunities
5. Continue a community of practice, mentoring and learning from Country
6. Central repository for information.

The Banbai people have indicated their willingness to continue to work with various stakeholders to implement these recommendations. Ongoing support from government partners will be crucial to achieving these outcomes.

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Aboriginal cultural values and renewal assessment in NSW forests post-wildfires – Banbai case study report

Introduction

Program background

The NSW Premier requested the Natural Resources Commission (the Commission) to independently oversee the design, implementation, review and continuous improvement of a State-wide Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program (the Program). The program incorporated requirements for the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement of forest management and environmental protection under the three NSW Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and four NSW Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (IFOA). The Commission established a Forest Monitoring Steering Committee, including Aboriginal Affairs NSW and representatives from relevant NSW agencies, Forestry Corporation of NSW and independent experts to oversight the design and implementation of Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program. The Steering Committee, via the Commission as independent chair, provided evidence-based recommendations on improvements NSW agencies responsible for forest management in NSW (NSW Forest Monitoring Steering Committee 2019). More information can be found at <https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/fmip>.

Aboriginal values, knowledge and people

The *NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program Framework 2019-2024* outlined a plan to improve the management of NSW forests through the provision of relevant and timely information to meet the needs of decision makers, stakeholders and the broader community. The Program explicitly linked these needs to monitoring, evaluation and research questions that cover ecological, cultural, social and economic outcomes. The cultural state-wide evaluation question for the Program was *“To what extent are Aboriginal values, knowledge and people involved in forest management and decision making?”*

A cultural working group under the Program provided leadership and guidance to ensure this question was answered in meaningful ways by Aboriginal people, with representation from NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Aboriginal staff from ForestCorp NSW and DPIE, independent experts and Aboriginal groups as required. The group worked jointly to guide a state-wide model of Aboriginal cultural values assessment in forests and identify key focus areas and on-ground, community-led projects to trial, help build and tailor the model. This scope of work addressed one of the immediate cultural focus areas – to undertake a cultural values and renewal assessment in NSW forests post-wildfires. The aim of the project was to trial and further develop the overarching model of cultural values assessment in NSW forests as part of a scalable state-wide approach across forest tenures, through Aboriginal-led, Country-based assessments, monitoring, and research.

Banbai case study

Several case studies led by local Aboriginal owned organisations undertook on-ground cultural assessments in their local areas through a community empowerment approach. This report describes the Banbai case study, in the Guyra Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) area in the New England Tablelands, NSW. The case study addressed the key questions:

1. What was the condition of cultural values prior to the fire (where known)?
2. How has the fire impacted each of those values and how does this vary across forest types?
3. Are there any gaps in knowledge about the condition of those values and why?
4. What risks to the values have changed because of the fires and are there any emerging risks?
5. What innovative tools, resources and processes can be developed to better address these risks in the future?

Banbai Country

Traditionally, the Banbai Aboriginal Nation covered a land area of 6000 km² and included Guyra, Ben Lomond, Glencoe, Marowan, Mount Mitchell, Kookabookra, Wollomombi and the catchment area of the Boyd and Mitchell River systems (Fig 1, MacPherson 1903; Mathews 1903; Tindale 1974; AIATSIS 2021). Most of the archaeological evidence discovered in the New England Tablelands region is relatively recent – dating from the last 9000 years – with most current archaeological dates within the last 5000 years. Eastern Australia was

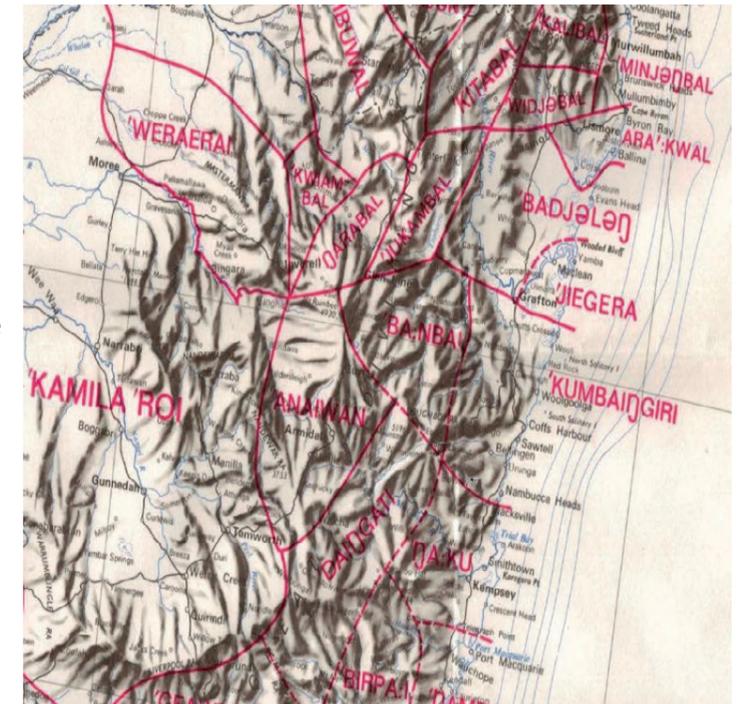


Fig. 1: Traditional territory of the Banbai Nation (Tindale 1974)

probably occupied much earlier but older sites have not yet been found in this region (Beck 2006). The archaeological consensus about the New England Tablelands is that prior to colonisation, Aboriginal occupation was sparse (Sonter 2018) and perhaps best summarised by Flood (1976: 47): ‘... in upland areas population decreases as the elevation increases and that population as a whole was lower than on the coast or inland plains’ of NSW. Clayton-Dixon (2019) suggested that the New England Aboriginal population was relatively small due to cold weather and lack of sea or major rivers with fish, and estimated the population to be up to 1100–1200 people at the time of European colonisation. Evidence also suggests that although the New England Tableland was cold in winter it was not abandoned by Aboriginal custodians (Oxley 1820: 288–90 in Beck *et al.* 2015; Godwin 1990). The inhabitation was patterned, not random. Activities in the landscape were focused at places where people lived and worked (quarries, camp sites and ceremonial sites), with a preference for locales with clustered resources, such as lagoons, and also along tracks and pathways between sites used for both ritual and secular purposes (Beck *et al.* 2015). Food and material resources were exploited according to their availability, and people moved for social purposes as well. Some ceremonial places (such as bora grounds) were visited repeatedly by large groups of people (Gardner 1854), being parts of the landscape imbued with meaning (Beck *et al.* 2015) (Fig 2).

The high altitude tablelands and gorges were important places for ceremony where the Banbai mob would have hosted visitors during large gatherings and played a special role as guardians of important ceremonial places.

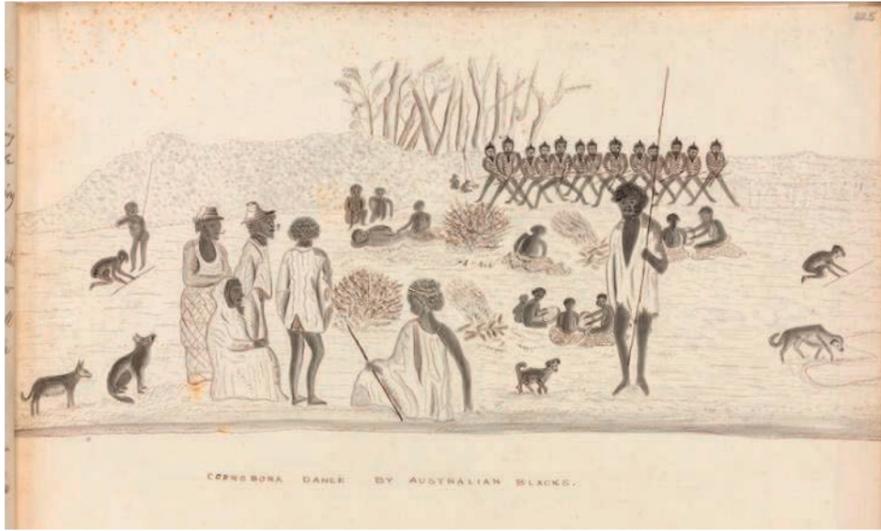


Fig. 2: Drawing, circa 1850, by William Gardner of a corroboree. Gardner lived on and around Banbai Country from 1853 to his death in 1860 (Sonter 2018).

Most analyses of ethno-historical records concluded that Aboriginal burning of the landscape was a regular practice in the New England Tableland during early settlement. Fire was noted as being a tool for hunting macropods and arboreal mammals, facilitating access, maintaining the landscape (e.g. as grasslands or yam fields) and manipulating resources (e.g. attracting prey animals to freshly burnt ground; Norton 1972; Godwin 1990; Benson and Ashby 2000; Sonter 2018). Banbai ranger, Tremane Patterson, explained: 'The old people never really lived in one spot for too long. Once their food source had run out they would move on. They would do a burn, let it all burn out, move somewhere else, once everything had grown back they would come back ... They walked through the land all the time, they lived off it, that's how they kept getting their food back, all their traditional foods and their bush medicines. It was a pretty unique tool for Aboriginal people to use.'

European occupation of the New England Tablelands occurred from the 1830s onwards and Sonter (2018: 31) suggested 'the rapid displacement of the Banbai people from their home lands during the 19th century and the advent of agriculture prevented traditional burning, hunting and gathering cultural practices.' Since colonisation, some transmission of traditional Banbai knowledge and cultural practice has been disrupted. As Banbai Elder and ranger Lesley Patterson explained: 'You passed on your culture, at your own risk. We were beaten for speaking our language ... Back in the day, my mother and her siblings spoke [Aboriginal] language. My grandmother and grandfather taught them language at a very young age. Others were never taught because by then my grandmother was a Christian and the missionaries told my grandmother that speaking and teaching language was the devil's word ... Blackfellas didn't have any rights so we had to assimilate to white man's way.' In recent decades, legislation and policies have changed, with support provided to enable Indigenous peoples to practice their culture. A paradigm change is beginning, from the prohibition of practicing culture, to supporting Aboriginal people to nurture their culture to thrive. Forests play an important role in this renewal, as places to practice cultural fire, look after heritage

and conserve Indigenous Protected Areas, but more importantly, forests are special areas which provide spiritual enrichment for Aboriginal people. They are home to important ceremony places and art sites. These are the places to be cared for, and renewed and sung again. Thus forests have a key cultural purpose within the bigger sphere of Banbai culture.

Currently, the Banbai Nation consists of one main family group of approximately 90 people, of whom 10 are recognised as Elders. Six Banbai people are employed as rangers through the Wattleridge (480 ha) and Tarriwa Kurrukun (930 ha) Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program. The Banbai people took ownership of Wattleridge property in 1998, and it was the first IPA declared in NSW, in 2001. Tarriwa Kurrukun was claimed in 1999, by Banbai Land Enterprises Limited under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, and declared an IPA in 2009 (Crew *et al.* 2009). Both IPAs host high natural and cultural values (Milledge 2016) and are managed for the conservation of biodiversity and Indigenous cultural heritage (Patterson and Hunt 2012; Banbai Nation 2021). Owning and managing two IPAs provides an ongoing opportunity for the Banbai people to reconnect to Country and revitalise their culture. For example, the Banbai rangers started to renew their cultural fire management from 2009, although, they felt that they weren't able to implement 'right-way' fire until they developed relationships with Indigenous fire mentors in 2014 and were able to 'learn from Country' (McKemey *et al.* 2019; Steffensen 2020; McKemey *et al.* 2021a). This process was also supported by networking with other Indigenous communities participating in cultural fire renewal through the Firesticks Project (Tamarind Planning 2017) and practical support from government agencies such as the NSW Rural Fire Service. The Banbai cultural fire program has now expanded to a point where they are mentoring other communities on renewing cultural burning. Lesley Patterson explained, 'We are trying to pass on our knowledge, now that we can actually do it we are going to pass it on and hopefully that is just going to go on for years and generations to come'. She noted that this contrasted with the past when 'your Elders weren't allowed to teach you about your culture' (McKemey 2020; McKemey *et al.* 2021c).

For the Banbai community and their supporters, the *Aboriginal cultural values and renewal assessment in NSW forests post-wildfires – Banbai case study* provided an opportunity to explore cultural values across various land tenures within Banbai Country, to consider how these values can be better protected into the future, to renew cultural practices, and to challenge the status quo to access and manage cultural values where they have previously been denied.



Photo: Banbai rangers set out to search for a Bora Ring on private land, where they have previously been denied access for many generations (Photographer: M. McKemey).

Methods

Research ethics and community ownership

At the outset of the project, an agreement was negotiated amongst the NRC, Guyra Local Aboriginal Land Council and Banbai Lands about research ethics, community ownership of the case study outputs and rights for the Commission to use those outputs (Appendix 1). The project was driven by the Banbai rangers, with the rangers directing the scope and focus of the cultural values explored. They identified the following aspirations related to cultural values:

- Explore opportunities to undertake sites work and on-Country training – e.g. sites surveys, AHIMS recording.
- Record known artefacts across Wattleridge and Tarriwa Kurrukun IPAs – revisit known sites, catalogue, photograph and manage.
- Increase access to private land and other tenures, work with landholders to protect known sites.
- Hold a community engagement event, inform local land holders of project aims, sites protection, importance of sites and culture.
- Map known sites.
- Expand management of cultural values across Banbai Country using a cultural management framework
- Incorporate cultural values and knowledge into how Country is cared for.

Areas of inquiry

This project sought to inform the cultural state-wide evaluation question for the Program and investigate the key questions. In order to do this, the study explored some core cultural elements, including:

- Review current cultural data and monitoring (what exists currently and where, who does it and who owns it, how is it captured, used and shared), and identify opportunities for how cultural data and monitoring can be improved.
- Assessment of tangible and intangible heritage and cultural values and practices, and identify opportunities to better assess and manage cultural values.
- Consider issues of cultural access, uses, rights and resources (including capacity and capability) in NSW forests, and identify opportunities to better support this.
- Include cultural safety principles for assessments, and identify opportunities to improve these principles across NSW forest tenures.
- Include outcomes for cultural health and well-being, and identify opportunities to improve these in NSW forests (including opportunities for cultural land management, ownership and enterprises).
- Include actions and processes to support cultural restoration and renewal, and identify opportunities to improve cultural renewal in NSW forests.

Governance

Throughout the project, a case study steering group guided the development of the project. This group included Aboriginal land managers, knowledge holders, specialists and local representatives from respective agencies involved in forest and data management across

different tenures, including National Parks (NPWS), Local Land Services (LLS), Rural Fire Service (RFS), ForestCorp NSW, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), as well as the Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation and the NRC (Table 1).

Table 1: Case Study Steering Group Members

Organisation	Representative
Guyra LALC	Kane Patterson
Banbai Enterprises Development Aboriginal Corporation	Tremane Patterson
Banbai Lands	Dominic Cutmore
Wattleridge & Tarriwa Kurrukun IPA & WOC	Sam Des Forges
Northern Tablelands LLS	Ivan Lackey
Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation	Rachael Cavanagh
NRC	Louise Askew
DPIE	Mal Ridges
NPWS	Koen Dijkstra
RFS	Angus McDowall
Heritage Consultant	Ian Fox
ForestCorp NSW	Robert Potter
Melaleuca Environmental Consultancy Services	Michelle McKemey

Location, forest type and fire impact

The scope of the project was limited to the area included in the Guyra LALC region. The project included land of various tenures of NSW forests, including Aboriginal-owned, National Parks, State Forest, Travelling Stock Routes, Crown and privately-owned land, all of which were impacted by bushfires, including the 2019-20 'Black Summer Bushfires' (Filkov *et al.* 2020).

Literature and data review

A literature review was undertaken of academic, historical & grey literature, cultural heritage plans, plans of management, relevant to Banbai cultural values and forest ecosystems. A data review was undertaken, focussing on spatial data including Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS), Aboriginal Sites Decision Support Tool, Fire Extent and Severity Mapping (FESM), Google Earth Engine Burnt Area Map (GEEBAM), various forests and land tenure maps.

Workshops

Two on-Country workshops in the Guyra LALC area were held over 19th and 20th May, and 7th and 8th October 2021. In total, 26 people were involved in the workshops, including members of the Case Study Steering Group, representatives from various organisations, specialists and private landholders (Appendix 2).

The workshops included presentations related to the project, and from specialists including cultural heritage experts (Ian Fox and Marcus Ferguson), a cultural scientist (Dr Mal Ridges) and archaeologist (Assoc. Prof. Wendy Beck, University of New England). Other participants and presenters (e.g. Prof. Mark Moore) expressed a desire to be involved, however covid-19 prevented their involvement during 2021. It is hoped that a third workshop in 2022 could provide an opportunity to involve these people.

The workshops visited a variety of land tenures including private properties (Urandangie, The Mountain), TSRs (Thunderbolt's cave, Jones Swamp burial site, Reedy Creek and One Mile Camp TSR), state forest (New Valley State Forest), an IPA (Wattleridge IPA) and a national park (Warra NP). During the process, many other sites were identified as important to visit, some of which were visited during the project (East Lynne) and others intended for investigation later (e.g. potentially during workshop 3, including Starr's Reserve TSR, Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve, Tarriwa Kurrukun IPA, Paddy's Land State Forest, Guy Fawkes River NP, and the Anaiwan stone quarry at the University of New England with Prof. Mark Moore to discuss stone technology).



Photo: Workshop 1 participants at private property 'Urandangie', surveying the cultural landscape from the highest vantage point in the area (photographer: M. McKemey).

Reporting

This report was co-authored by the Banbai rangers and Dr Michelle McKemey, using participatory action research methods and an iterative process of revisions to ensure that a collaborative, cross-cultural report was co-produced (Sarantakos 2012; Babbie 2013; Kearney *et al.* 2013; Woodward and Marrfurra McTaggart 2016).

Furthermore, a short and longer film were produced by Verso for the Program and agency partners. The films can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/643362153>

<https://vimeo.com/627048565/2f28c8f58e>



Photo: David Waugh of Verso filming Guyra LALC Chairperson Kane Patterson at New Valley State Forest (photographer: M. McKemey).

Results

Literature review

Searches of the internet, academic databases and institutional resources revealed numerous documents, including: plans of management for protected areas; Aboriginal cultural heritage reports for Little Llangothlin Lagoon, Guy Fawkes River NP, Wattleridge and Tarriwa Kurrukun IPAs; various literature on the cultural values of Banbai Country documented through scientific papers, historical records and archaeological studies; and the brief Banbai language booklet (Table 2). No information on Aboriginal cultural values were found for Travelling Stock Routes, private land or state forests.

Table 2: Results of literature review

Document	Author
Banbai Language Booklet	Guyra Local Aboriginal Land Council (1998)
Wattleridge/Kukra Hill Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment	Sonter (2018)
Inside information: Settlement and alliance in the late Holocene of northeastern New South Wales	Godwin (1990)
Records of times past : ethnohistorical essays on the culture and ecology of the New England tribes	McBryde (1978)
An Archaeological Survey of the New England Region, New South Wales	McBryde (1966)
Aboriginal food plants and economies in northeastern N.S.W.	Cubis (1977)
Surviving New England : a history of Aboriginal resistance & resilience through the first forty years of the colonial apocalypse	Clayton-Dixon (2019)
Aboriginal archaeological survey of Guy Fawkes River National Park	Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited (2000)
Little Llangothlin Lake Nature Reserve: Aboriginal Site Survey	Banbai Cultural Resource Officers (1995)
Tarriwa Kurrukun Plan of Management 2009-2013	Crew <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Banbai Healthy Country Plan: Plan of Management for looking after Banbai Country 2021 - 2025	Banbai Nation (2021)
Plans of Management for Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve, Mother of Ducks Lagoon Nature Reserve, Single National Park and Warra National Park	National Parks and Wildlife Service NSW, various dates
Northern Tablelands Region Cultural Heritage Management Strategy (draft)	Cultural Heritage Division (2003)
Sticks and Stones	Sonter and White (2012)
Co-producing a fire and seasons calendar to support renewed Indigenous cultural fire management	McKemey <i>et al.</i> (2021c)
Indigenous cultural burning had less impact than wildfire on the threatened Backwater grevillea (<i>Grevillea scortechinii</i> subsp. <i>sarmentosa</i>) while effectively decreasing fuel loads	McKemey <i>et al.</i> (2021a)
Cross-Cultural Monitoring of a Cultural Keystone Species Informs Revival of Indigenous Burning of Country in South-Eastern Australia	McKemey <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Developing cross-cultural knowledge ('right way' science) to support Indigenous cultural fire management	McKemey (2020)

Data review

Spatial data was received from various sources, including the NSW SEED Portal and via request (with permission granted from Guyra LALC) from the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS). A presentation was provided by Dr Mal Ridges on the development and use of the Aboriginal Sites Decision Support Tool (Ridges 2010). Various layers were used to create maps which were used to focus and direct on-Country exploration of cultural values, including:

- Fig 3: Burnt and unburnt forest areas within Guyra LALC, displays the Fire Extent and Severity Map of the 2019-20 Bushfires for the Guyra LALC area, and highlights key protected areas.
- Fig 4: Cultural values spatial data (ASDST) within Guyra LALC, displays the results of the survey priority identified through the Aboriginal Sites Decision Support Tool, defined as the likelihood, impact and reliability values combined in a single layer, where high values indicate high current likelihood, low impact and large data gap (Ridges 2010). Results of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System search have been removed due to sensitivity issues.

Banbai Rangers & McKemey (2021) Banbai Case Study, NRC NSW.

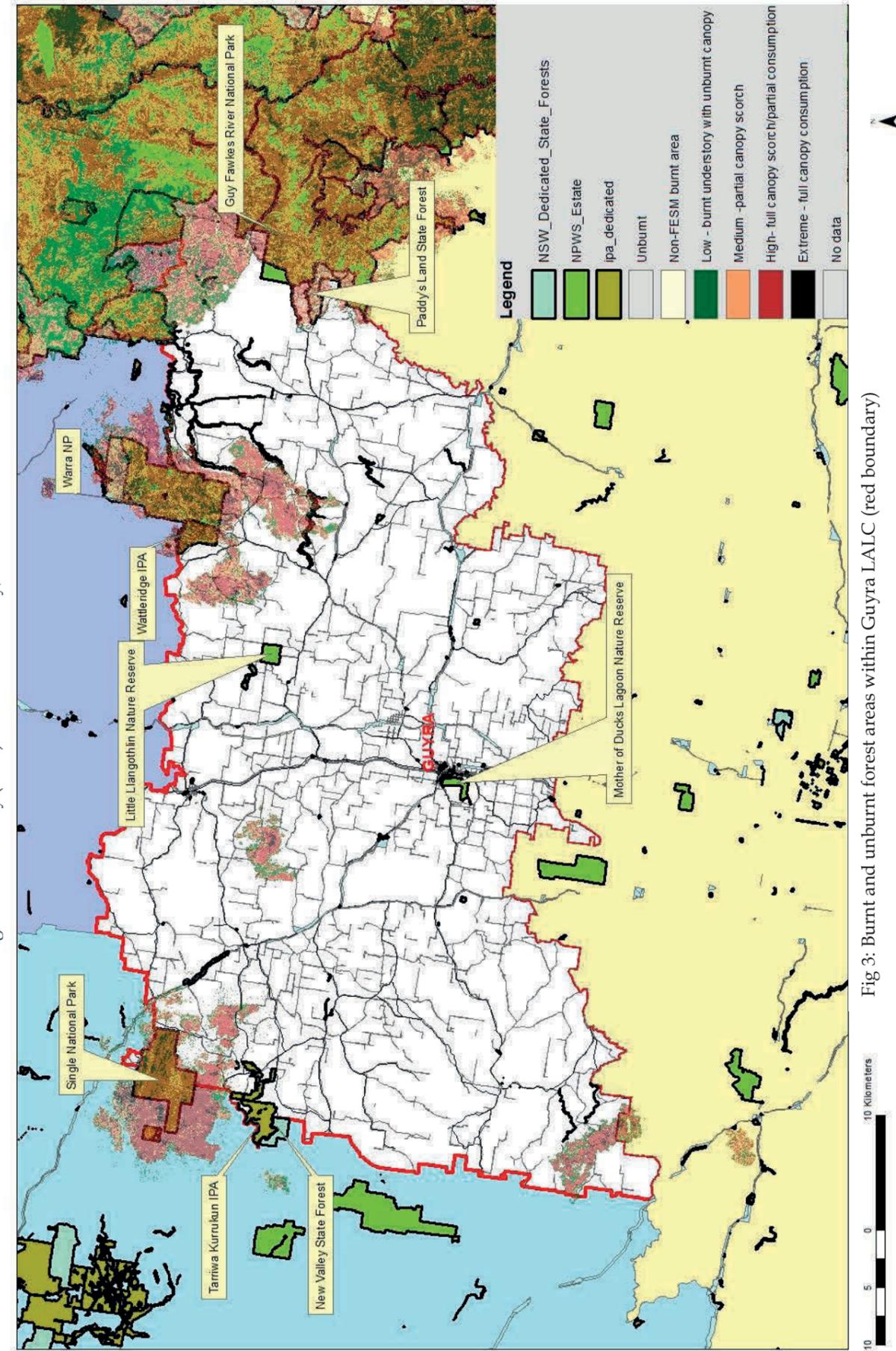


Fig 3: Burnt and unburnt forest areas within Guyra LALC (red boundary)

Banbai perspectives

Cultural values

Banbai ranger Tremane Patterson explained some of the tangible and intangible cultural values of Banbai Country, and how the rangers work to protect them:

'I'm a Banbai ranger and I work out on Wattlebridge and Tarriva Kurrukun IPAs. They are Indigenous Protected Areas, so one of our main jobs is to look after sites and artefacts and stories that we have out on Country, one of which is the art sites that we have out on there. We wanted to protect that, so previously we did a burn with Firesticks Alliance to watch over the art site. Also, we have grinding grooves that we are trying to look after, as one of our cultural values. And also the story of Biri Giber, which is out on the Knucklebone overlooking the land. So, it's looking at what we're looking to protect and what we're willing to do as rangers. And, also, custodians of our Country to look after our ancestral place and to be able to walk in their footsteps as well. Looking after Country: if it's cultural burning – whatever it is – practices, songs, dance; bringing all that culture back and then to be able to pass it down to our younger generations to keep that moving forward.'



Photo: Tremane Patterson standing next to a scar tree identified on a TSR during workshop 2 (photographer: M. McKemey).

Banbai ranger and Elder, Lesley Patterson, explained the importance of learning culture and language, and sharing it with future generations:

'Aboriginal people were on this land way before white man came, or any other nation came. So that we know our history we can learn, because a lot our people weren't allowed to talk language... The reason I want to learn all I can is, well, my grandmother couldn't pass anything on, my mother couldn't pass anything on. And what knowledge they did pass on, I want to pass it on, to keep that tradition going – it was stopped with my mother – I want to take it up for them. They lost a lot by not teaching: my grandma lost a lot because she couldn't teach her grandchildren, she couldn't teach her children. And I think that's my best way of moving forward and making sure my generation can teach the younger generation. And whether you're black, white, blue or green, as long as you have the knowledge, then you can understand the Country you live in and what makes you that person...'



Photo: Lesley Patterson and NPWS ranger Nerida Holznagel chatting during workshop 1 (photographer: M. McKemey).

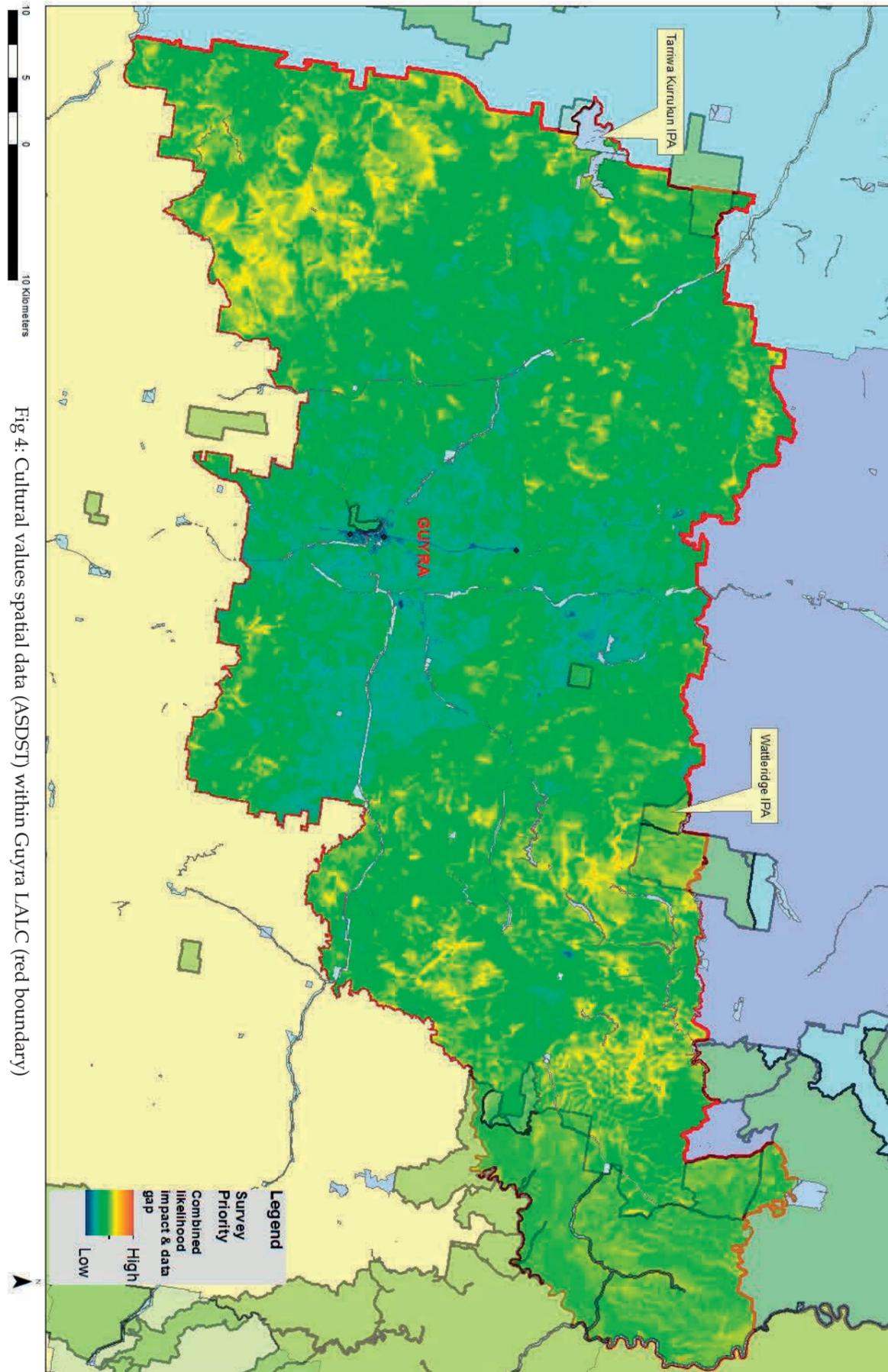


Fig 4: Cultural values spatial data (ASDST) within Guyra LALC (red boundary)

Banbai Rangers & McKemey (2021) Banbai Case Study, NRC NSW.

Cultural fire management

Lesley described the significance of reintroducing cultural fire management on Banbai Country: *'So that our generations to come know where they belong and what is their Country. And have the same enthusiasm about Country that I do. My ancestors' knowledge was passed down and relied on, but as soon as non-Aboriginal people come here, we had to stop that practice. And I reckon that's why a lot of country is sick: it didn't get that healing part of it. Cultural burning, we find that it's more of a gentle regime, considering a wildfire coming in and burning everything. Cultural burning, if you want to do bush tucker and medicine, the majority of the plants rely on fire, to regenerate. The smoke entices the eucalyptus to flower, or things like that. And it benefits everyone because, with cultural burning, you've got to do it the right way. And honestly, I'm not telling people to go out there and burn, burn, burn, but you've got to burn at the right time.'*



Photo: Banbai rangers facilitated a cultural burn with Moombahlene LALC at Tenterfield in 2020 (photographer: M. McKemey).

Tremaine pointed out the role of cultural fire management in reducing the impact of bushfires: *'It's up to us, as rangers, to take on this cultural role as fire practitioners. It's our job to prevent damage from bushfires happening again'.*

The authors of this report also published several papers demonstrating the important role of cultural burning:

'Many decades after being displaced from their ancestral lands, the Banbai people have, for the first time, been empowered to reintroduce cultural burning at Wattleridge IPA. Banbai rangers expressed their purposes for undertaking cultural burning: to relearn an ancient cultural practice, develop and pass on knowledge to future generations, connect to Country, make Country healthy, protect habitat, manage fire safely, and monitor and conserve the echidna [their totem]...

Similar to other examples of reinstatement of Indigenous burning practice globally, while the core practice is fire management, the application of cultural burning has far broader implications: allowing Indigenous

groups to re-establish access to and connect with Country, rebuild cultural knowledge, and protect animals and ecosystems that are important to them. We have described a process whereby an Indigenous group was able to relearn and reconnect to an ancient cultural practice in a contemporary environment, which could have applications globally for Indigenous groups who have been dispossessed or disconnected from their land or cultural practices' (McKemey et al. 2019).

'From this research, our experience and that of others, it is evident that cultural burning is more than just a technique to manage bushfire. The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy (The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Knowledge Group 2019) describes fire as a tool to manage Country holistically. It is part of a suite of knowledges and practices that Traditional Owners are seeking to once again implement on Country to fulfill their cultural obligations to ensure the health of Country and people. For Indigenous people, cultural fire is about who makes decisions and how they are made (Weir and Freeman 2019; Neale et al. 2020). Through this research we found that the reintroduction of cultural burning by Banbai rangers at Wattleridge IPA enabled cultural revitalisation, use of a threatened Indigenous language, intergenerational knowledge transfer, ecological restoration, hazard reduction and asset protection (including physical and cultural assets), responsible and appropriate fire management, community engagement and reconciliation. In light of recommendations from the 2020 bushfire inquiries (Binskin et al. 2020; Owens and O'Kane 2020), our case study illustrates how it is possible to gain a rich understanding of Indigenous fire culture and practice in southeast Australia, and could provide a practical 'how to' guide for future work in this area. The process of co-production of knowledge for cultural fire management described in this study could also be used by other communities, including those in settler colonial nations countries, such as the Americas and Africa (Christianson 2014; Eriksen and Hankins 2014; Moura et al. 2019; Thomassin et al. 2019)' (McKemey et al. 2021d).



Photo: Meeting at New Valley State Forest with Forestry Corporation Aboriginal Partnerships Liaison Officer Robert Potter, forest lessee Chris Nadolny and IPA Operations Manager Sam Des Forges (photographer: M. McKemey).

Partnerships & private land

Through this project, Banbai rangers expressed a strong desire to work across various land tenures and form partnerships with an array of land managers. Lesley expressed:

'At the moment we're in a partnership with NRC: it's opened up a new way of communicating with property owners – a different way. Like I keep saying, there's people out there with the mentality of 'we're going to take your land'; we don't want that, we only want you to protect what's there.'

Banbai ranger and Guyra LALC Chairman Kane Patterson explained:

'It'd help if we had other partnerships with National Parks and Forestry and Local Land Services that get out here and get programs happening out on Country with kids and community members.'

Accessing key cultural sites on private land is a priority for Banbai people, as described by Kane: *'At this stage, we are not able to access cultural sites on private lands. If you can't get in there and get a management plan around them, you can't protect these sites for the future generations.'*



Photo: Kane Patterson presenting at Wattlebridge IPA during workshop 1 (photographer: M. McKemey).

Following workshop 2 and a visit to a cultural site on private land, Lesley reflected: *'We came over to Dan McKemey's place [private property] and just being there, I learnt a lot. About how the rocks were formed into a snake-like pattern, where there could've been a lookout, a camping area, a singing area... And honestly I'd like to thank the non-Aboriginal people for giving us this chance. As I said before, it's not only my generation, it's generations to come: we're learning about our Country and how to look after our Country.'*

Tremane felt that raising the profile of the work of the Banbai rangers led to benefits:

'One of the best things, the opportunity we have now, is that a lot of people are willing to work with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations to be able to better see fit how we can get out on Country and start cultural burning, talking stories, dance and all that. But to be able to have a lot of people in different organisations to be a part of it: I think that's something that is really going to push this country forward.'

Lesley implored the broader community to work together to protect cultural values:



Photo: Banbai rangers examining a stone artefact found on private property during workshop 2 (photographer: M. McKemey).

'Save it and protect it for, even, for your generations to come. That might even generate cultural tourism to the area: if you've got, say, bora rings and scar trees, let the locals know and we'll work with you. If it needs protecting, we can ask the NRC, or any other government agency, to help us with you, the landholder, to protect it; if that means put in a fence, we'll put in a fence. But, like I keep saying, it comes back to every Australian to look after Australia – it's the only country we've got and there's no plan B.'

Key questions

Impact of bushfires

Substantial forested areas throughout the Guyra LALC area were impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires (Fig 3) and land tenures were impacted to various extents (Fig 5). Across most of these areas, the cultural values were not well recorded, managed or monitored and therefore the impact of the

bushfires could not be assessed (Table 4). For example, important rock art at Kukra on Wattlebridge IPA was saved from bushfire damage (through cultural burning and fire mitigation measures) while rock art on private land (near Bundarra, outside of the Guyra LALC area) was severely damaged

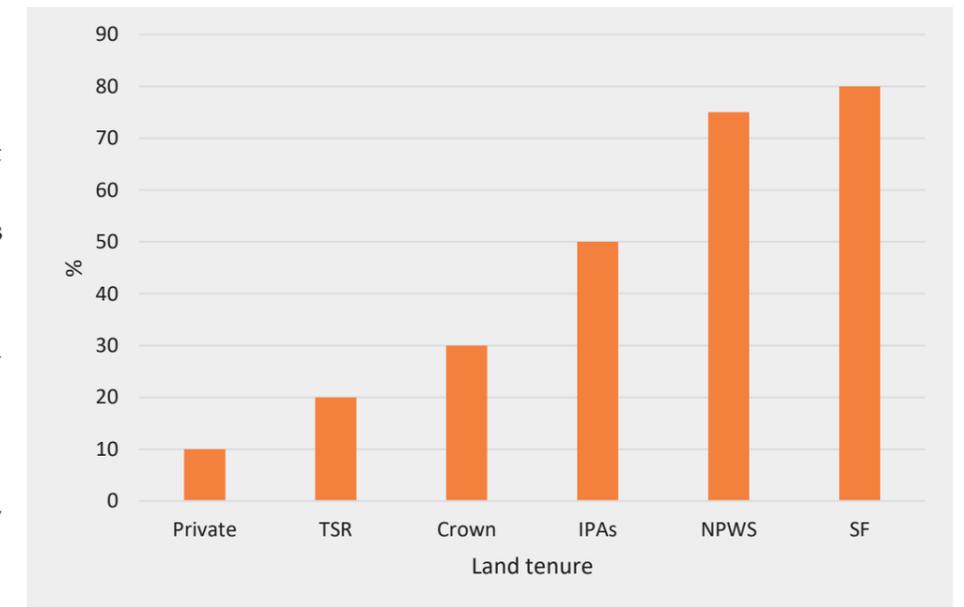


Fig. 5: Estimated percentage area burnt by bushfires 2019-20 in Guyra RFS during the 2019-20 bushfires.

Cultural values condition, risks and management across land tenures

Table 3 presents a summary of the level of information related to cultural values that is available across the various land tenures in the Guyra LALC area, and the ability of Traditional Owners to manage these cultural values. Table 4 outlines some of the Banbai people's cultural practices and the impact of bushfires on these practices. Table 5 presents a summary, across various land tenures, of the impact of bushfire on cultural values, knowledge gaps, risks, and tools, resources and processes to address these risks.

There are inadequate plans and policies related to the management and monitoring of cultural values across all forested land tenures, except for the IPAs. Traditional Owners have a good understanding of, and can autonomously manage, land parcels that they own, that are voluntarily managed as Indigenous Protected Areas, with support from the Australian Government. In contrast, cultural values information for protected areas tends to be brief and generic. Management plans for national parks and nature reserves are limited and outdated, and



Photos (clockwise from top left): 1. Kukra shelter after the 2019 bushfire; 2. Tremane Patterson surveys the rock art that was saved through the efforts of the Banbai rangers 3. examining rock art on private property near Bundarra that was severely damaged during the 2019 bushfires, 4. bushfire impact on surrounding area (photographer: M. McKemey).

Lack of information and management increases the vulnerability of cultural sites to damage caused by threats such as inappropriate fire, grazing, vegetation clearing, erosion, firewood collection, deliberate damage and neglect. Lack of access prevents Traditional Owners spending time on Country which is fundamental to maintaining and transmitting cultural knowledge and practice, and providing space for Aboriginal people to fulfil their obligations to Country. Various policies and guidelines have made access to sites and cultural practice difficult (such as, in a nature reserve in the region, Aboriginal custodians were prevented from cutting coolamons due to a perceived risk of tree disease). In many situations, there is often a 'vacuum' or no legislation around cultural practices (Smith *et al.* 2021). Aboriginal people are expected to fit into an agency's framework, and policy either does not exist, or is not Indigenous-led. A paradigm shift is needed to allow Aboriginal custodians to lead policy development in a culturally appropriate way, and derived from a cultural framework, as has been demonstrated in IPAs (McKemey *et al.* 2021a).

require contemporary surveys and updates. Whole reserves need to be walked and surveyed, cultural heritage assessments undertaken and a cultural values management plans developed. Aboriginal cultural heritage values should be as well understood and managed as natural values. Recently, in NPWS-managed parks and reserves, the Banbai rangers are increasingly accessing cultural values and spending time on-Country through contract work and field days. Banbai rangers have been engaged to undertake cultural surveys at St Ives (part of Warra NP), with more surveys needed. It is hoped that these partnerships will continue to grow. There is potential for Banbai to assist with surveys to address NSW NPWS knowledge gaps and link to key agency documents such as 'State of the parks' reporting, possibly through Parks Partnership funding led by Danielle Flakeler.

For Travelling Stock Reserves and State Forests, very little engagement has occurred to date, however this project has stimulated opportunities for joint projects and dialogue between the Banbai rangers and relevant agencies. In contrast to the active management of cultural values in the IPAs, the forest in New Valley State Forest might be considered to be biologically diverse, but culturally barren. This could provide a good case study for exploring how cultural practice can be restored in a forest. For private land, Banbai custodians have been denied access in the past and, in some cases, deliberate destruction of cultural heritage has occurred. Due to the potentially important sites found on private land, the Banbai rangers are particularly interested to build relationships with landholders and seek to manage cultural values on private property.

Land tenure	Type of cultural values <i>intangible heritage and cultural values and practices</i>	ACH plan	Site surveys done	AHIMS data	ASDST data	Local cultural knowledge	Access for TOs <i>cultural access, uses, rights and resources</i>	Management by TOs	Cultural safety?
Wattleidge IPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tarrinya Kurrukun IPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Warra NP	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	?	✓	✗	?
Guy Fawkes NP- e.g. Devil's Chimney	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	?	✗	✗	?
TSRs - e.g. Thunderbolt's Cave	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	?	✓	✗	?
State Forest- e.g. New Valley	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	?	✗	✗	?
Private land	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

Table 3: Summary of land tenure and cultural values (within Guyra LALC boundary)

Banbai Rangers & McKemey (2021) Banbai Case Study, NRC NSW.

Banbai Rangers & McKemey (2021) Banbai Case Study, NRC NSW.

Table 4: Cultural practices and impacts of bushfire

Cultural practice	Bushfire impact
Collecting bush tucker and medicines	Burnt everything, all bush tucker gone for 6 to 12 months. No birds or animals around.
Making didgeridoos, boomerangs, coolamons and wooden tools	Trees, bark, logs and ground material, burnt and damaged.
Knapping and creating stone tools	More access to find stone artefacts. Boulders and rocks damaged.
Yarning circle and place to teach kids, share culture	Access trails damaged and hazardous to visitors- makes it hard to teach kids. Can't access important sites to share culture. Rangers have to focus on bushfire recovery, can't host visitors at the IPAs, or run as many cultural activities.
Weaving	Would like to do this in future. Could do it at a site by river and collect materials. Weaving materials burnt and unable to be used.
Cultural fire	Burnt out everything, need to let country recover. Small unburnt refugia need to be protected. Bushfires 'reset' ecosystems back to early succession so that cultural fire management can be used to manage ecosystems into future.
Men's and women's activities	Focus redirected to bushfire recovery rather than cultural activities. Important places impacted by fire.
Tracking and hunting	Impact of bushfire on fauna but easier to track animals after bushfires.
Ceremony, smoking ceremonies	Burnt canopies goes against Lore. Trauma associated with bushfire smoke. No leaves to do smoking ceremony.
Using language	N/A. Need to find a linguist to try to help with learning language.
Connecting to country- being out there and listening, healing	Two years after bushfires, still focussing on recovery.
Looking after totems and cultural responsibilities	Bushfires impacted ecosystems, made some cultural responsibilities harder to undertake, went into healing country phase.
Swimming and visiting waterways.	Quality of waterways declined, animals killed. Impact on bush tucker, fish. Erosion downstream, potential impact on special places.
Looking after rock art	Special effort made to protect rock art during fires, good example of using cultural burning to save important places.

Tools

As demonstrated through this study, Banbai rangers are able to manage their IPAs but have had limited opportunities to manage cultural values across other land tenures. NPWS, Forestry Corporation and Local Land Services have all expressed a willingness to grow partnerships with Banbai. On private land, an incremental process of approaching landholders and seeking permission to access and manage cultural sites may be the best approach.

Various tools exist to support Banbai people to increase their understanding, management and monitoring of cultural values, such as:

- The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Handbook* provides information on how to identify whether Aboriginal objects are, or are likely to be, present in an area and if a proposed activity is likely to harm Aboriginal objects (Local Land Services 2020). An education or awareness campaign could assist to correct misconceptions about Aboriginal cultural heritage on private land.
- Increased use of spatial tools (AHIMS and ASDST data) could be used to prepare maps to prioritise areas for surveys.
- Ian Fox and Marcus Ferguson shared methods for cultural landscape mapping, including: collaborating with TO's, LALCS, and Aboriginal agencies; sharing oral histories and cultural stories; recording known, destroyed, and contemporary sites; and developing predictive mapping based on probability and ten key criteria for finding sites.
- Mal Ridges shared the VIP cultural planning methodology, an approach for Aboriginal communities to apply information to achieve an outcome for Country, Culture and Community in a planning process. It is informed by cultural knowledge, but it is focused on the application of derived information that informs how Aboriginal people contribute to and negotiate in a planning process. To do this, the VIP method is comprised of three concepts / stages:
 1. Values: this represents the cultural knowledge and values of a community
 2. Interests: this represents the vision of what the community want as an outcome in a process
 3. Priorities: this represents the decision making framework used for negotiating in a process

The intent of the VIP approach is to generate information that drives an outcome based on a vision.

- Cultural burning.
- Site protection.
- Cultural activities on Country.

Actions and processes to support cultural restoration and renewal

Private land

Currently, there is limited information and access to manage cultural values on private land. There seems to be a prevailing perception from landholders that land will be taken away from them if cultural values are identified. New approaches and perspectives are needed. Growing a positive public profile for the Banbai rangers is an important first step. This is currently being demonstrated through media coverage of the rangers' work and their involvement in significant

Banbai Rangers & McKemey (2021) Banbai Case Study, NRC NSW.
Table 5: Summary of cultural values management (within Guyra LALC boundary)

Land tenure	% burnt by bushfire	Condition of values prior to fire	Impact of fire	Knowledge gaps	Risks (inc. fire & emerging)	Tools, resources and processes to address risks
IPAs	50%	Good	Severe but priority values protected	Small	Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of IPAs driven by cultural management framework • Cultural burning • More cultural surveys • Increase opportunities for community involvement
NPWS	75%	?	?	Large	Fire, damage and neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of cultural values (e.g. surveys) • Increase access to existing funding and lobby for more funding • Resources to undertake cultural heritage works • Access to protected areas for intangible cultural values • Potential for eco & cultural tourism enterprises
TSR	20%	?	?	Large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire • Grazing, clearing, firewood collection • Deliberate damage • Neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of cultural values (e.g. surveys) • Resources to undertake cultural heritage works • Access to TSRs for intangible cultural values
SF	80%	?	?	Large	Fire, damage and neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources to undertake cultural heritage works • Access to TSRs for intangible cultural values
Crown	30%	?	?	Large	Fire, damage and neglect	
Private	10%	?	?	Large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire • Grazing, clearing, firewood collection • Deliberate damage • Neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing relationships with key landholders • Offering support to protect cultural heritage. • Raising profile of work of Banbai rangers. • Support from government.

projects such as the Indigenous Protected Areas program, research through the University of New England and various partnerships with government organisations. A potential awareness campaign through an agency such as Local Land Services could provide information on the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage on private land, and dispel some misconceptions. Furthermore, an informal approach using someone within the community who is known and respected as a 'champion' for the issue to make initial contact with priority landholders, and also using connections through LLS, Voluntary Conservation Agreements, and local Landcare groups.

Initially, it is a good idea to 'make a start', build relationships and goodwill with landholders, and gradually work towards looking after cultural values on private land. This approach would start from a small 'node', demonstrate a positive outcome, share the story, hope that neighbours will talk and encourage each other to get involved. Support from government organisations could facilitate this process. For example, LLS could identify the name of a landholder and contact them, explain the regulations related to cultural heritage and answer their questions, try to win over the farmer and build relationships, and provide a fact sheet on cultural values on private land. An organisation such as the NRC could provide a letter from Premier's Department on this project to provide encouragement.

Relationships between Banbai people and landholders could also be initiated through other projects (such as bushfire recovery projects which focus on natural values) and then expanded into cultural values projects. Some examples of successful projects elsewhere include:

- Sustaining Willandra video: <https://youtu.be/6bMMWJz-ZTM>
- The Boman axe quarry and management on private property in ACT: <https://www.abc.net.au/landline/axe-quarry:-farmers-embrace-conservation-and/11285624>

Since the beginning of this project, this approach has been trialled on a small scale. The Banbai rangers expressed a strong desire to access 'East Lynne' where a Bora Ground was known to occur and which had been recorded in AHIMS. The previous landholder had vehemently opposed Aboriginal people accessing this site. Following an intergenerational land transfer, his son was more open-minded and, through a phone call with a non-Indigenous 'champion', provided conditional permission for Banbai people to visit. During the first visit, there was no sign found of the Bora Ground, or any other objects to suggest past occupation of the site.

Following a discussion with someone who had worked on the property, it was ascertained that the Bora Ground had probably been ploughed several times, however some remnants of it might be visible if closely inspected in the correct area. A second visit to the property identified an area where the Bora Ring may once have been. Therefore this case resulted in mixed outcomes: disappointment for the Banbai rangers that the Bora Ground was no longer in its



Photo: Potential Bora Ground on private property (photographer: M. McKemey).

original condition, but also hope that landholders might change their mind about allowing Aboriginal people to access cultural sites on their land, that community members might provide information to help Banbai people locate these sites, and that other sites might still be able to be found on other land. There was also hope that the spirit and purpose of the Bora Ground could be renewed and recharged through dancing and rebuilding the site.

Other landholders have welcomed Banbai people onto their land and have been curious to learn more about cultural sites. An expansion of this approach could yield more outcomes in terms of managing cultural values in forested areas across the Guyra LALC area. If cultural sites are found on private land, support from government agencies to protect and maintain these sites may be needed. An awareness campaign could also be launched with support from government agencies such as the NRC and LLS, including tools such as another film as part of the series already produced on this project already.



Photo: Stone artefact found during visit to private property (photographer: M. McKemey).

Travelling Stock Reserves

There are over 350 TSRs in the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services area, and these often small, disjointed portions of land are difficult to manage due to being generally open to public access and located on roadsides. Some TSRs are locked and contracted under permit to reserve users. Despite potentially high cultural values, such as being traditional pathways used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years (Spooner and Firman 2010), there are limited records of cultural heritage on TSRs, which are mostly derived from AHIMS. Local Land Services indicated an intention to work with Aboriginal groups. During workshops, participants discussed some of the opportunities for identification of cultural values, sites protection, management and monitoring across TSRs, joint applications for Environmental Trust Grants and other funding that may be available. There is potential to develop a policy and system to protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on TSRs by including an obligation to protect these values through the written conditions of a permit. A portion of the permit funds could contribute to protecting cultural values. LLS is considering using a QR code on entry gates to provide info on the values of TSRs. However, it was noted that it is sometimes better not to draw attention to cultural values as this could place them at risk of deliberate damage.

National Parks and Nature Reserves

Banbai and NPWS are keen to work together and develop partnerships further. Initially, they need to prioritise projects to start on, such as undertaking surveys and contributing to policy and State of the Parks reports. They could develop a cultural safety plan for Aboriginal places such as Devil's chimney in Guy Fawkes River NP. In the circumstance where policy does not cover

relevant issues, often 'asking to do something' triggers policy development. In the future, working towards co-management of protected areas on Banbai Country is an aspiration for the Banbai people.

State Forests

During workshop 2, the team visited New Valley State Forest (which is on the border of Guyra and Anaiwan LALCs). New Valley State Forest was impacted by a severe fire in December 2018 - January 2019. The forest currently has no commercial forestry value, high natural values and no recorded AHIMS or cultural heritage data. During the field visit several potential opportunities for the Banbai people were discussed, including:

- A cultural survey needs to be undertaken for New Valley State Forest, and there is potential for involvement in State Forest cultural heritage management plans.
- Aboriginal partnership opportunities across state forests, for example: cultural camps, sites surveys, yarning circle, signage.
- MOU's and agreements for access to state forests for workshops and events.
- Potential for cultural tourism (funding opportunities, in-kind, grant based etc.).
- Option to develop a MoU between Banbai rangers and Forestry Corporation to manage New Valley State Forest like an extension of Tarriva Kurrukun IPA. This would require the agreement of the lessee and also Anaiwan LALC. Some priority management activities could include cultural burning, pest & weed control, management for the threatened Bell's Turtle, habitat augmentation, ecological and cultural surveys and monitoring.
- Logging is not likely to occur at New Valley State Forest but if this does occur, then a Harvesting plan is to be prepared with 12-18 months' notice. If it is harvested, the appropriate contacts are western forests, through Simon Schuman Inverell and Greg Livermore Anaiwan LALC
- Paddy's Land State Forest is the only State Forest found in Guyra LALC. There is an option to visit this forest at the proposed workshop 3 to discuss opportunities there.



Photo: Visit to New Valley State Forest during workshop 2 (photographer: M. McKemey).

Engagement

Pro-actively engaging in strategic processes and groups could assist Banbai people to increase awareness, resources and programs to support their management of cultural values. For example, engagement with the local RFS Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) could facilitate

discussions on values, share mapping, and work collaboratively to incorporate sites into management strategies. A Land Council representative can sit on this committee and contribute to the development of the Plan of Operations and Bush Fire Risk Management Plan for their area. Banbai people could also participate in, and have a voice, on NPWS regional committees and through Landcare groups, which could help to build relationships with landholders.

Key partner organisations often have high staff turnover and relationship management is an important process to transition through changes. Where Banbai people have worked with a staff member and they indicate their intention to leave, it is important that previous groundwork is not lost. Therefore Banbai representatives should speak to key staff members before they leave to ensure that project and policy work maintains momentum even through staff changes. For high level policy issues, Banbai also have the option to seek change and provide feedback through corresponding with appropriate members of parliament.

Cultural monitoring

Cultural monitoring is often overlooked and undervalued by various organisations. Further discussion into the link between healthy country and healthy culture is needed to explore its meaning and definition, i.e. how do we define healthy, culturally? Which methods of monitoring would be of benefit, to the Banbai rangers, Elders and community?



Photo: Learning together with professor of archaeology Wendy Beck (photographer: M. McKemey).

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is poorly understood, implemented and monitored. It is possible to add a category for cultural safety to existing or future monitoring programs, for example: Are cultural safety procedures being implemented and followed, e.g., is cultural safety increasing over time? If a cultural value is mapped, what are the issues associated with it? How will any activities impact this value? For example, during bushfires some landmarks or indicators for Country were destroyed - so how do Aboriginal people teach their children without these important values?

Whole of Banbai Country Plan

In order to address many of the issues raised through this project, Banbai people could consider developing a *Whole of Banbai Country Plan* which takes an holistic approach for all of Banbai country. This plan could cover issues such as relationship mapping with agencies and landholders across various land tenures, desired outcomes across tenures, and address the way in which Banbai want to do business with others and how agencies might partner with them. Tenure blind mapping could be used to prepare a plan, with the IPAs as the base. Developing such a plan could potentially receive funding from a Protecting our Places grant through the Environmental Trust, or from the next round of the Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program. Local Land Services could support the development of this plan, which could lay out a ten year plan for cultural

projects that LLS might invest in. This Plan would assist Banbai people to pro-actively share their aspirations and desired outcomes, and link to opportunities across the region. It would be a living document that could be continually updated. Other Indigenous organisations have prepared similar plans such as the Eden LALC's *Land & Sea Country Plan* (Donaldson *et al.* 2010), in Western Australia the *Wunambal Gaambera Healthy Country Plan - Wunambal Gaambera Country 2010 -2020* (Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation 2010), or in Aotearoa the *TAI TUMU, TAI PARI, TAI AO: Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan* (Waikato-Tainui Te Kauhanganui Incorporated 2013). Suitable methodologies for developing such as plan are outlined in the CSIRO report *Healthy Country, Healthy People: Supporting Indigenous Engagement in the Sustainable Management of Northern Territory Land and Seas: A Strategic Framework* (Putnis *et al.* 2007) and could assist the Banbai to develop their own plan.



Photo: Observing the cultural landscape from Wattlebridge IPA during workshop 1 (photographer: L. Askew).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Natural Resources Commission was interested to explore the cultural state-wide evaluation question *“To what extent are Aboriginal values, knowledge and people involved in forest management and decision making?”* Through this case study with the Banbai people, we have provided some insight into the extent that Banbai values, knowledge and people are involved in forest management and decision making in the Guyra LALC area. The Banbai rangers manage two Aboriginal-owned properties which are Indigenous Protected Areas where they can autonomously access, manage, protect, and share knowledge about their cultural values in a culturally safe environment. In contrast, for many generations, they have been denied access to private land where they are unable to access, manage, protect or share cultural values, and where knowledge related to these values may be deteriorating. In the middle of the spectrum, there is limited information about cultural values on public lands, inadequate policy and planning to manage these cultural values, and a number of partnerships in their infancy that have the potential to grow.

This project stimulated new initiatives, facilitated stronger partnerships, provided opportunities to learn from specialists and enabled on-Country discussions across various land tenures to assist Banbai people to increase their opportunities to manage cultural values throughout their Country. A notable breakthrough was improving relationships with private landholders and accessing cultural sites that were previously off limits. Another highlight of the project was viewing Country, as a group, through the lens of a cultural landscape, and sharing knowledge from various perspectives including those of the Traditional Owners, cultural heritage specialists, cultural scientists, archaeologists, ecologists and public servants.

Many opportunities have been identified and there is substantial potential for Banbai people to increase their involvement in management and decision-making in forested areas. In order to do this, we propose the following actions. The Banbai people have indicated their willingness to continue to work with various stakeholders to implement these recommendations. Ongoing support from government partners will be crucial to achieving these outcomes.

Recommendation 1: Develop a *Whole of Banbai Country Plan*

Sufficient support and resources should be provided to facilitate Banbai people to develop an holistic *Whole of Banbai Country Plan* that pro-actively addresses Banbai people's aspirations to manage their cultural values and determines how they do business with partners, in a tenure-blind manner. As part of this process, Banbai could partner with others to view Country, as a group, through the lens of a cultural landscape and the varying perspectives of knowledge holders, community, experts and others. This overarching document would inform and direct the way in which Banbai people have a voice, interact with partners, and share their values and knowledge across their Country. The plan could link to opportunities to manage cultural values and develop a program to monitor cultural values and safety from the Banbai perspective. It could be used as a ten year investment plan for stakeholders wishing to support relevant projects.

Recommendation 2: Government agencies should support Banbai people to manage their cultural values and monitor progress

This review has identified that plans, policies and documents developed by government agencies (in the Guyra LALC area) which relate to the involvement of Aboriginal people, values and knowledge in management and decision-making, are inadequate and outdated. Government

organisations, through high level policy such as Reconciliation Action Plans, have a responsibility to 'deliver services that support Aboriginal people to care for Country and share traditional land management knowledge' (Local Land Services 2021) and 'invite greater involvement of Aboriginal communities in the management of all areas under NPWS control' (Department of Planning 2011). As outlined in the *Principles for enhanced collaboration between land and emergency management agencies and Indigenous peoples – green paper* (McKemey et al. 2021b), government organisations must acknowledge Indigenous peoples' rights to Country. They should actively seek to partner with and enable Indigenous peoples to make decisions about their Country by embedding those rights in policies and processes so that their facilitation is mandatory and appropriately resource Indigenous peoples to exercise those rights. Government organisations should provide adequate, dedicated resources to enable meaningful partnerships with Banbai people so that they can fulfil their obligations to look after Country. Furthermore, these organisations should establish, improve, and report appropriate and effective measures of their success in partnership initiatives with Banbai people. These indicators should be developed in collaboration with Banbai and improved periodically as organisations and Banbai representatives deem appropriate.

Recommendation 3: Increase engagement

Various opportunities exist for Banbai people to engage with, and provide expertise to, groups such as the RFS Bush Fire Management Committee, NPWS regional committee and Landcare and Local Land Services Boards. It is recommended that time is allowed for Banbai rangers and Guyra LALC members to attend these meetings and ensure that their interests are represented. The *Whole of Banbai Country Plan* could be shared with these groups, to clearly articulate the aspirations of Banbai people and clarify the role of Banbai people in working with partner organisations.

Recommendation 4: Take up opportunities

This project has stimulated discussion of various opportunities for Banbai to engage with agencies to identify, access and manage cultural values. It is recommended that Banbai and their partners harness this momentum to ensure that these opportunities come to fruition, and continue to grow. Looking to the future, work is needed to build the agreements and processes for long-term relationships – not just around specific funding projects.

Recommendation 5: Continue a community of practice, mentoring and learning from Country

This project provided numerous opportunities for participants to learn from each other, build a community of practice, access mentoring and learn from Country. Most participants gained a greater understanding from attending the workshops and indicated an enthusiasm to continue this learning. It is recommended that the on Country learning with key stakeholders continue into the future. If possible, sharing findings with other groups involved in similar case studies could provide insight and assistance.

Recommendation 6: Central repository for information

Improved facilities are needed to store and organise electronic and physical resources related to cultural values. For example, this project collated electronic resources such as spatial data and electronic documents, as well as hard copy resources such as books and reports. A central organisation such as the Guyra LALC needs support to store these resources in perpetuity, as well as training to use and interpret resources such as spatial data.

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Appendix 1: COME Agreement

Community Ownership and Research Ethics Agreement

Aboriginal cultural values and renewal assessment in NSW forests post-wildfires project

The following AGREEMENT is made between:

Guyra Local Aboriginal Land Council and Banbai Lands

AND

NSW Natural Resource Commission

Community Ownership and Research Ethics Agreement

Purpose

To establish a Community Ownership and Research Ethics Agreement for the protection, management and use of confidential information, intellectual property, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property¹, moral rights, knowledge, data and research material in relation to the case study activities and outputs for the 'Aboriginal cultural values and renewal assessment in NSW forests post-wildfires' (the Project) under the NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program.

Terms

This a voluntary agreement between the parties engaged in the Project funded by the NSW Natural Resource Commission under the NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program.

The parties agree:

- 1. the community will maintain ownership to any of their knowledge, data, information and materials as intellectual property or Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property.
2. to only use intellectual property, Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and research knowledge, data, information and materials that has free, prior and informed consent and abide

¹ Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property or ICIP refers to the rights that Aboriginal people have in relation to all aspects of their heritage, knowledge and cultural expressions, including:
• traditional knowledge (scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge, ritual knowledge),
• modern and emerging knowledges that have been developed by Aboriginal people based on history and culture,
• traditional cultural expression (stories, designs and symbols, literature and language),
• performances (ceremonies, dance and song),
• cultural objects (including, but not limited to arts, crafts, ceramics, jewellery, weapons, tools, visual arts, photographs, textiles, contemporary art practices),
• human remains and tissues,
• the secret and sacred material and information (including sacred/historically significant sites and burial grounds), and
• documentation of Aboriginal peoples' heritage in all forms of media such as films, photographs, artistic works, books, reports and records taken by others, sound recordings and digital databases (See: Aboriginal Affairs NSW (2019) Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol)

- by any agreed use and attribution terms and condition provided by the community owner/s or other sources.
3. to ensure confidentiality of any information provided as confidential or to ensure any agreed terms for the use of confidential information are undertaken by the responsible party.
4. to ensure any sensitive knowledge, data, information and materials, confidential information, intellectual property, Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and research be withheld or de-identified where appropriate or to ensure any agreed terms for the use of sensitive information are undertaken by the responsible party.
5. to ensure Aboriginal individuals, family groups and/or traditional custodians are appropriately attributed where agreed for their contributions or use of their Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property by the responsible party.
6. to ensure moral rights of any employees, contractors, volunteers and community members are upheld by the responsible party.
7. any information will only be used for the purpose of the case studies and reporting, unless otherwise agreed.
8. the case study reports will only include information that is suitable for public use under the terms set out above.

SIGNED for and on behalf of Guyra Local Aboriginal Land Council

[Redacted signature]

Print name: Kane Patterson
Date: 28-9-21

In the presence of:

[Redacted signature]

Signature of witness
Print name: Michelle McKemey
Date: 24-9-2021

SIGNED for and on behalf of Banbai Lands

[Redacted signature]

Print name: Tremaine Patterson
Date: 24-9-2021

In the presence of:

[Redacted signature]

Signature of witness
Print name: Michelle McKemey
Date: 24-9-2021

SIGNED for and on behalf of NSW Natural Resource Commission

[Redacted signature]

Date: 29/09/21

Todd Maher - Director, Programs Natural Resources Commission

In the presence of:

[Redacted signature]

Signature of witness
Print name: Maree Leonard
Director Corporate Services

Date: 29/09/2021

Appendix 2: Workshop participants

Workshop 1

Koen Dijkstra- NSW NPWS	Marty Dillon- NT LLS
Louise Askew- NRC	Nerida Holznagel- NSW NPWS
Sam Des Forges- TLALC, IPA & WOC	Michelle Mckemey- Melaleuca Environmental
Ian Fox- Ian Fox and Associates	Helen Ward- NT LLS
Marcus Ferguson- Consultant, IPA Advisory	Mal Ridges- DPIE, Cultural Sciences
Antoni Patterson- Banbai Ranger	Lesley Patterson- Banbai Ranger
Tremane Patterson- Banbai Ranger Supervisor	Mervyn Torrens- Banbai Ranger
Peter Ahoy- Banbai Ranger	Tamika Patterson- Banbai Ranger
Wendy Beck - UNE	Kane Patterson- Ranger
Apologies: Pauline Patterson	

Workshop 2

Koen Dijkstra- NSW NPWS	Michelle Mckemey- Melaleuca Environmental
Louise Askew- NRC	Helen Ward- NT LLS
Sam Des Forges- TLALC, IPA & WOC	Mal Ridges- DPIE, Cultural Sciences
Ian Fox- Ian Fox and Associates	Lesley Patterson- Banbai Ranger
Marcus Ferguson- Consultant, IPA Advisory	Mervyn Torrens- Banbai Ranger
Antoni Patterson- Banbai Ranger	Ivan Lackay
Tremane Patterson- Banbai Ranger Supervisor	Rachel Cavanagh - Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation (Snr Leadership team)
Peter Ahoy- Banbai Ranger	Robert Potter - NSW Forestry Aboriginal Liaison Officer
Kane Patterson- Ranger	Brenda Landsborough - Guyra LALC, Banbai Elder
Chris Nadolny- private landholder	David Waugh - film maker
Apologies: Pauline Patterson, Koen Dijkstra and Nerida Holznagel - NSW NPWS, Dominic Cutmore - Banbai Ranger, Banbai Lands Delegate	David McKemey - private landholder