



Girtgan Kurtba Ngulmbiu Gway-un



Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Plan
2020–23

Acknowledgement of Country

Girtgan Kurtba Ngulmbiu Gway-un - all take first step (pronounced Girt-gen Kurt-ba Nul-in-by Way-un) is Gunaikurnai language for All Take First Step. Parks Victoria thanks the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners for providing their language in naming this Plan.



Victoria's network of parks and reserves form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge and activities of Aboriginal land managers. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and their ongoing role in caring for Country.

This Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Plan outlines how Parks Victoria will support Parks Victoria staff and Traditional Owner partners to Manage Country Together. It has been developed under the guidance of Parks Victoria's Conservation Cultural Heritage and Fire committee, and the Aboriginal Partnerships Committee, and with valuable input provided by Traditional Owner partners.

Copyright © State of Victoria, Parks Victoria 2022
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Published on parks.vic.gov.au

This publication may be of assistance to you but Parks Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Front cover image: Wilsons Promontory National Park Deadly in Gippsland Festival 2015 – Luke Johnson

Inside front cover image: Bunyip State Park

Contents

Purpose of this plan	2
Chief Executive Officer's Foreword	4
The current situation	6
Moving forward	10
Areas for action	14
Building effective partnerships	14
Improving the information base	16
Facilitating sustainable visitation	18
Complying with our legal responsibilities	20
Integrating cultural heritage management in planning	22
Pursuing culturally appropriate infrastructure	24
Protecting cultural heritage during emergencies	26
Priority Cultural Heritage Conservation Programs	29
Aboriginal Ancestral Remains	29
Rock Art	31
Strengthening our capability	33
Accountabilities	34
Tracking our progress	35
Key terms	36



Purpose of this plan

The Parks Victoria (PV) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Plan 2020-23 (Plan) is a key pillar of the Managing Country Together (MCT) Framework (Figure 1). It sets out what PV needs to do and deliver to meet its Aboriginal cultural heritage (cultural heritage) management obligations. PV is committed to

partnering with Traditional Owners to protect and conserve natural and cultural heritage, help guide the transition into a new park management future, enhance visitor experiences and economic opportunities and improve land and sea management outcomes across cultural landscapes.

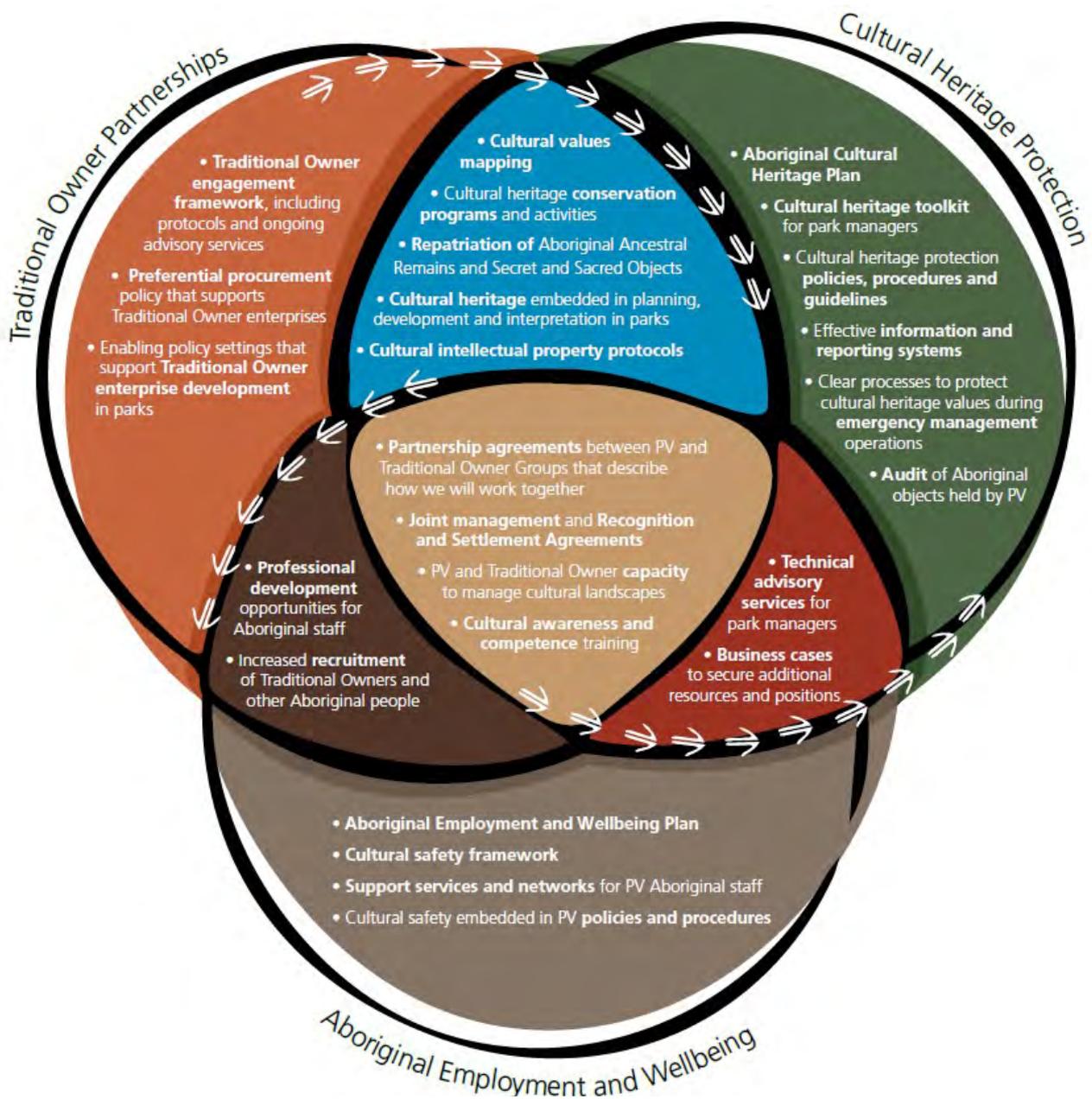


Figure 1: Managing Country Together Framework



"State appointed land managers have an inherent responsibility to ensure the interests and rights of Traditional Owners are acknowledged and protected in all activities undertaken on Country.

This plan provides a pathway for RAPs and other Traditional Owner groups to incorporate traditional land management practices into current practices undertaken by Parks Victoria and other land managers."

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

The purpose of the Plan is to:

- outline the case for change in PV's approach to managing cultural heritage
- set out the approach and key areas for action
- identify resource requirements for the Plan's implementation
- provide the strategic mandate for our priority programs
- establish a framework for monitoring our performance.

The Plan will help PV staff to better understand their roles and responsibilities in cultural heritage management and will inform a range of planning, policy and management processes in PV.

In developing the Plan, the MCT Directorate has consulted Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VAHC), portfolio partners including Aboriginal Victoria (AV) and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and broadly across the organisation, including the Environment and Science teams who work in partnership with Managing Country Together in caring for Country.

Plan implementation will be led by the MCT Directorate and involve other PV business areas as delivery partners. The MCT Directorates' delivery partner(s) are identified for each action in the Plan.

The Plan will also guide ongoing collaboration with RAPs and other Traditional Owner groups, the VAHC, AV and DELWP.



Chief Executive Officer's Foreword

The Managing Country Together Framework describes how our organisation understands the socio-cultural context of the Victorian landscapes we manage. This is summarised in the following passage from our Statement of Commitment:

Parks Victoria recognises that the world class network of parks and reserves under our management responsibility form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. These landscapes are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings – making them products of enduring economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. The widespread presence of tangible and intangible Aboriginal heritage is evidence of an ancient culture, which continues to live and offer deep insights into the defining characteristics and functioning of this Country.

Just as there is connectivity between all parts of natural ecosystems, we understand there is connectivity between cultural places – they are not merely “dots on a map” but facets of cultural landscapes. Further, the distinction between natural and Aboriginal cultural values is often a false one. The significant biodiversity values and ecological systems we manage are intrinsically linked with the ongoing cultural practices of Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community.

Parks Victoria is committed to implementing a holistic management framework which appropriately recognises Aboriginal cultural values and the rights of Traditional Owners to manage their heritage. This framework will see Aboriginal heritage management integrated with other aspects of conservation and land management so we can pursue our goal of sustainably managing, protecting and conserving Victoria's natural and cultural landscapes.

The *Parks Victoria Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Plan 2020-23* comes at an important moment in the development of our organisation as we transition to a new park management future in partnership with Victorian Traditional Owners. It is a key component of change in Parks Victoria that will enable our organisation to play a key role in safeguarding and conserving Aboriginal cultural values for future generations.



Matthew Jackson
Chief Executive Officer



Trentham Falls –
Djaara Country

The current situation

What is Aboriginal cultural heritage and why is it important?

Victoria's special places have been and continue to be shaped by Aboriginal people who have lived throughout Victoria for tens of thousands of years. The landscape holds the knowledge of the many generations of Aboriginal people who have maintained complex societies, cared for Country and depended on the abundant resources it provides, just as contemporary Aboriginal people continue to do.

Cultural heritage is the legacy of Victoria's Aboriginal societies. It can include the physical evidence of past occupation and cultural practices, visible through places and objects like shell middens, rock markings, artefacts and culturally modified trees. Just as importantly, cultural heritage can be reflected in the intangible cultural values that have been passed from generation to generation – the practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that have been developed and refined over thousands of years that connect Aboriginal people to one another, their Ancestors and Country.

Cultural heritage is alive, linking the past, present and future, constantly changing and evolving. Cultural heritage is often expressed through living cultural traditions which have been reclaimed and revitalised in a contemporary setting.

Cultural heritage lives as part of the natural environment - native plants, animals and habitats, natural landscapes and seas. In this sense, from non-Aboriginal perspectives, cultural heritage is represented by biodiversity values and ecological systems. In Aboriginal knowledge, however, it is expressed in the notion of Country. *"Country is a place that gives and receives life... Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and will toward life."*¹

Protecting cultural heritage is not just fundamental for Aboriginal people's identity and wellbeing, it is also important to all Australians. It is a part of Victoria's heritage – our shared story of how we have grown and evolved as a society. It can help us understand the past so we can prepare for the future. Many of the answers to today's challenges lie in the experience of the past – experiences that Aboriginal people have learned from over many thousands of years.

How is Aboriginal cultural heritage protected in Victoria?

Legislation has been in place in Victoria to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage since 1972 when the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972 (Vic.)* was enacted. There were a number of limitations with this legislation, including the exclusion of Traditional Owners from decision-making processes and a narrow definition of cultural heritage limiting the description to physical objects and places. In 1987, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (Cth)* was amended, creating Part IIA, to address some of these limitations and to give Aboriginal people in Victoria greater control in heritage protection.

In 2006, the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic.)* (Act) was passed. The Act repealed the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* and was enacted following the repeal of the Part IIA amendment to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*. Importantly, the Act recognised the inherent rights of Traditional Owners to manage their heritage. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic.)* was another important step in the recognition of rights. Legislation was further strengthened in 2016 with amendments to the Act, and in 2018 with the adoption of the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 (Vic.)*.

1 Nourishing Terrains – Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness by Deborah Bird Rose pp 7, 9

Relevant objectives of the Act to land managers include —

- a) to provide for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage and Aboriginal intangible heritage in Victoria;
- b) to empower Traditional Owners as protectors of their cultural heritage on behalf of Aboriginal people and all other peoples;
- c) to strengthen the ongoing right to maintain the distinctive spiritual, cultural, material and economic relationship of Traditional Owners with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs;
- d) to promote respect for Aboriginal cultural heritage, contributing to its protection as part of the common heritage of all peoples and to the sustainable development and management of land and of the environment.

Under the Act it is an offence to harm cultural heritage. This protection applies regardless of whether the heritage is registered on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register or is rediscovered during an activity. Additional protection is also provided to Archaeological Sites by the *National Parks Regulations 2013 (Vic.)* which applies to most Aboriginal Places within National Parks and Reserves.

The legislation can inadvertently create barriers to cultural heritage management in the holistic frame of cultural landscapes. While plants, animals and ecological systems are integrated within an Aboriginal understanding of cultural heritage, they are not defined as cultural heritage in the Act. This Plan, which by necessity focusses primarily on cultural heritage as defined in the Act, will be complemented by strategies and actions in the *Parks Victoria Nature Conservation Strategy* for involving and sharing knowledge with Traditional Owner partners in the conservation and protection of natural values.

Aboriginal cultural heritage on the parks estate

The parks estate comprises over 3,200 parks and reserves across 4 million hectares or 18% of the state. These places represent the best of Victoria's nature, wildlife and natural and cultural landscapes. Because of the past uses of land now managed by PV, there

remains an especially high concentration of Aboriginal cultural heritage values (cultural values) on the parks estate. PV manages 72% of registered Aboriginal places on public land and is responsible for the management and preservation of 12,816 registered Aboriginal places or 31.8% of all registered Aboriginal places listed on the VAHR.² This number is likely to grow by a minimum of 300 places per annum. This total number of places is more than four times greater than for any other public land manager and yet only a small proportion of the land managed by PV has been surveyed to reveal cultural heritage. Where surveys have been conducted, more often than not cultural heritage has been rediscovered, confirming the extent of cultural values on the parks estate is much more significant than currently understood. It is also important to note that 90% of registered Aboriginal places managed by PV were recorded before the Act was enacted in 2007 when standards for recording cultural heritage were lower than standards under the Act.

Strengthening opportunities for Traditional Owners to manage their heritage across the parks estate

PV has both a responsibility and opportunity to work closely with Traditional Owners to protect, conserve and improve the management of cultural values across the state. While we have systems and processes to support effective management of cultural values, we have more work to do to fully embed best-practice cultural heritage management into our land management approaches. In our rapidly changing land management context, where cultural authority and responsibility to look after cultural heritage are Traditional Owner rights recognised by law, we have an opportunity to redefine how we work in partnership with Traditional Owners to better manage Victoria's cultural landscapes.

² Figures current as at June 2020.



We are committed to creating an enabling environment for Traditional Owners to make decisions about their heritage on the parks estate. While moving in this direction, we will ensure we meet our responsibility to protect the cultural heritage that is currently in our care. Delivering the actions set out in this Plan will strengthen partnership arrangements with Traditional Owners

ensuring appropriate Traditional Owner involvement and cultural heritage protection measures in all park planning and operational processes. This approach will build our shared capacity and a strong foundation to achieve sustainable and effective protection of cultural landscapes into the future.

The case for change

Key challenges	Why this matters	Our response (key action areas)
<p>1. Poor information base for cultural heritage management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a small proportion of the parks estate has been surveyed for cultural values; information systems are not up to date and data quality is often poor with 47% (11,633) of registered Aboriginal places recorded before 1990 and the advent of global positioning technology Lack of information about the threats to cultural heritage including the growing threat of climate change No standard intellectual property protocols are in place Values researched on the parks estate rarely include cultural values 	<p>Management effectiveness relies strongly on having a comprehensive understanding of all landscape values, including their location and condition and threats to their condition, and the management responses available to us. To date only 3% of the parks estate has been surveyed for cultural values. Furthermore poor data quality in statutory registers impedes preservation efforts.</p>	<p>Improving the information base</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the quality and extent of cultural information and knowledge Work with Traditional Owners to appropriately incorporate cultural values in park information
<p>2. Negative impacts of park access and use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant increases in permitted and illegal activities are causing harm to cultural values Lack of public awareness and appreciation of cultural values Inadequate resourcing for Traditional Owner groups to meet increasing demand for cultural tourism Legacy of infrastructure designed without consideration of cultural values Lack of resourcing and planning for Traditional Owner participation in planning and design processes New and emerging activities. 	<p>Tourism and population pressures are increasing all the time and we are fast approaching carrying capacity for many parks. Evidence is growing that a range of activities, and the infrastructure to support them, are now having a significant detrimental effect on cultural and other values.</p>	<p>Facilitate sustainable visitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Traditional Owners to participate in the visitor economy on the parks estate Work with Traditional Owners to ensure impacts of visitation on cultural values are appropriately managed <p>Pursue culturally appropriate infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure infrastructure development and maintenance do not harm cultural heritage Work with Traditional Owners to integrate cultural values in the design of new infrastructure

The case for change (continued)

Key challenges	Why this matters	Our response (key action areas)
<p>3. Ineffective management of cultural landscapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many stakeholders use or manage parks, often with conflicting expectations and preferences • Limited capacity to engage effectively and appropriately with Traditional Owners, in particular in areas without formal Traditional Owner recognition • Significant legacy of old plans that do not consider cultural values and challenges associated with climate change • Lack of strategic alignment with Traditional Owner Country and joint management plans • Variable approaches and standards across emergency management agencies • Insufficient funding allocated to cultural heritage management through the emergency management cycle (planning, response, recovery). 	<p>Traditional Owner settlements are driving the systematic handback of national parks and reserves into traditional ownership. Whole of Country plans take a landscape approach and complement joint management plans as implementation strategies.</p> <p>The hierarchy of values and management objectives will continue to strengthen around cultural heritage under joint management.</p> <p>While PV and DELWP retain accountabilities as delegated land managers, including for fire and emergency management, the context and policy frameworks we are working in are fundamentally changing.</p> <p>There are places on the parks estate that feature heritage of value to both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Opportunities should be considered for bringing Traditional Owners and other Victorians together to decide how these places should be protected and enhanced.</p>	<p>Build effective partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate new partnership arrangements with Traditional Owners • Work within the organisation and with portfolio partners to strengthen the enabling environment <p>Integrate cultural heritage management in planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed appropriate engagement with Traditional Owners in all park planning processes • Improve organisational systems to ensure cultural values are embedded in park planning <p>Protect cultural heritage during emergencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence change in emergency management systems • Strengthen our shared capacity to protect cultural heritage in emergency management
<p>4. Lack of agreed standards and variable performance in managing cultural heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational systems for monitoring and reporting that do not include appropriate compliance measures for cultural heritage protection • Lack of adequate resourcing through project and program budgets • Limited influence over third party approaches to cultural heritage protection. 	<p>Poor performance in meeting our obligations under the legislative and regulatory framework for cultural heritage protection will lead to significant legal/financial, partnership and reputational risks for the organisation. We are increasingly accountable to RAPS for the management of cultural heritage under the Act.</p>	<p>Comply with legal responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen systems and tools for protecting cultural heritage • Monitor and transparently report on our performance in cultural heritage protection



Moving forward

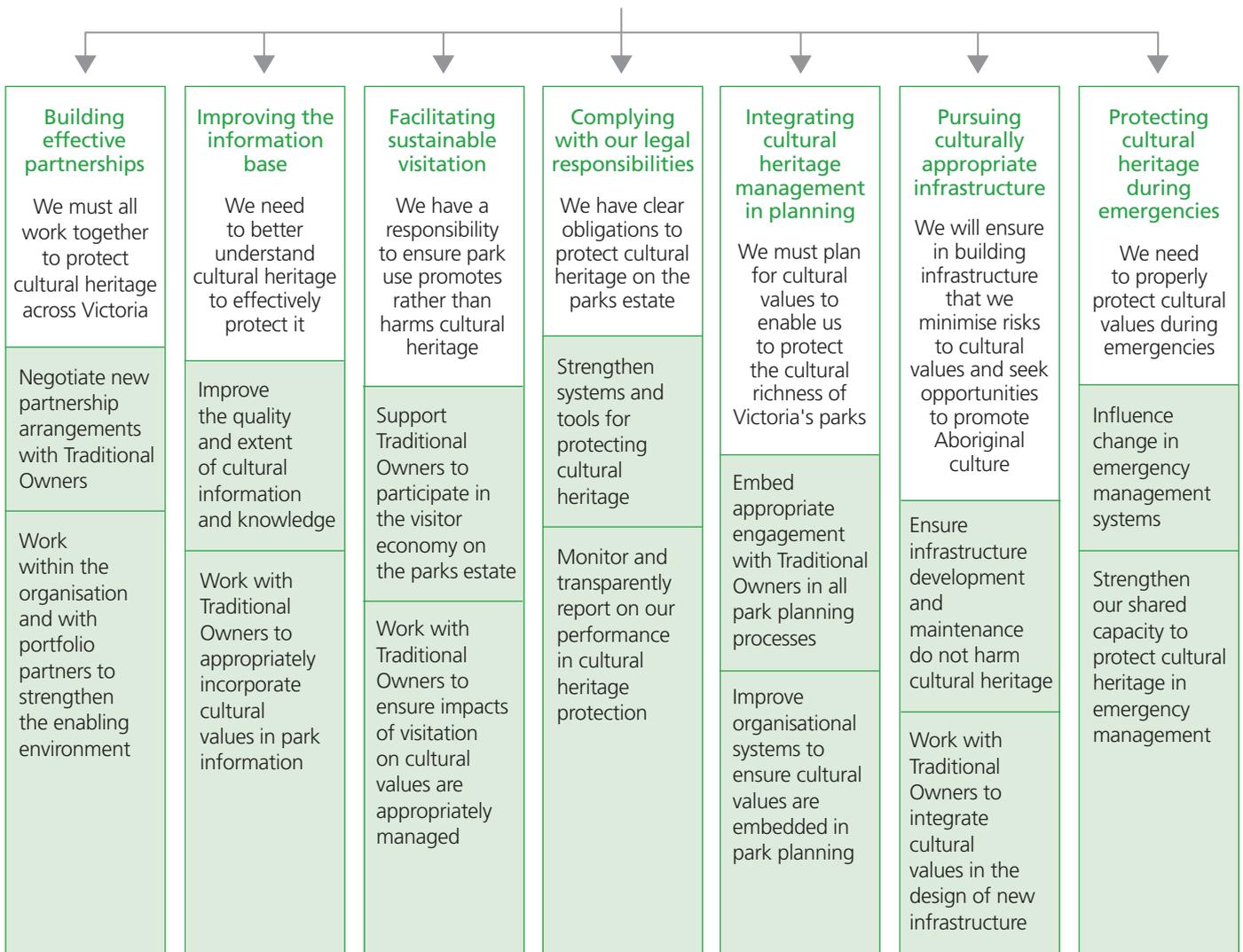
Parks Victoria's commitment to protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage

At its core, PV is responsible for ensuring the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural values of Victoria's parks and reserves. Best practice approaches to protecting cultural values on the parks estate rely on working effectively and respectfully with Traditional Owners.

Underpinning our commitment is a principle of valuing cultural heritage. Victorian parks evidence

the ingenuity of Aboriginal people and the manner in which they have managed this vast continent since time immemorial – Aboriginal objects, places and intangible cultural values that are of immense value to both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. We see these values as one of the great assets of our parks and an integral element in our decision-making.

As a land and water manager of diverse cultural landscapes, PV is in a unique position to support a cultural renaissance. We have an opportunity and obligation to protect and enhance cultural values through the way we manage the parks estate.





Murray Sunset National Park

Principles for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage

The following principles apply to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage, as reflected in PV's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Policy (POL-810). They are consistent with PV's MCT Framework principles.

- The diversity of Aboriginal cultural heritage in parks, including post contact places and intangible heritage, will be recognised, protected, conserved and interpreted where appropriate.
- All development and management activities in parks must avoid harm to Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, and secret or sacred objects.
- All development and management activities in parks must make all efforts to avoid harm to other Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Parks Victoria will support Traditional Owners to maintain and enhance their cultural connection to parks and reserves through customary practices.
- Traditional Owner engagement is a core component of park management. Appropriate engagement on all projects that may affect Aboriginal cultural heritage is required regardless of whether the land is jointly managed, co-managed or solely managed by Parks Victoria.
- While all Parks Victoria staff are involved in the management of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, only Victorian Traditional Owners through their representative organisations can speak for their own Country and cultural heritage.
- Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) must be appropriately consulted as Traditional Owner organisations that hold decision making responsibilities under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage within their appointed RAP area.

The Victorian Government has committed to self-determination as the guiding principle in Aboriginal Affairs. One of the four actions the government has outlined as an area of reform for advancing self-determination is 'strengthening Aboriginal cultural heritage management and protection including stronger protections, including for intangible cultural heritage such as stories, song and languages'.



Strategic Alignment

 Australian Government	Closing the Gap	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' land, water and cultural rights are realised
	<i>Native Title Act 1993</i>	National system for recognition and protection of native title (grant of title from government to Aboriginal people in recognition of their rights to land that come from traditional laws and customs) and for its co-existence with the national land management system
	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act 1984</i>	Protection of areas and objects of significance to Aboriginal people through declarations made by the Environment Minister
	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	Protection and management of nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places Governs the National Heritage listing process
 VICTORIA State Government	Victorian Constitution	Recognition of the unique status of Aboriginal people as descendants of Australia's first people, and their unique and irreplaceable contribution to identity and well-being of Victoria
	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>	Protect Aboriginal culture heritage and Aboriginal intangible heritage Empower Traditional Owners as protectors of their cultural heritage Strengthen Traditional Owner rights and promote respect for Aboriginal culture
	<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>	Protection of the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal peoples with respect to identity, culture, language, kinship ties and their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources
	<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>	Recognition of Aboriginal peoples' relationship with lands and the spiritual, political and economic impact of European arrival on First people Commitment to reconciliation and recognition of Traditional Owner rights
	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework	Increase the recognition and enjoyment of Aboriginal land, water and cultural heritage rights Support the preservation, promotion and practice of culture and languages
	Self Determination Reform Framework	Enable self-determination through actions to prioritise culture, address trauma and support healing, address racism and promote cultural safety; and transfer power and resources to communities
	Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change – Statement of Obligations	Sets out the obligations that Parks Victoria has in performing its functions and exercising its powers in relation to Parks Victoria managed land, including working effectively with Traditional Owners
 Parks VICTORIA	Parks Victoria Strategic Plan – Shaping our Future	Partner with Traditional Owners in caring for Country and protection of cultural places and landscapes Build an outcomes-focused workforce that is safe, diverse, skilled, flexible and reflects the community it serves
	Land Management Strategy	Sets long-term directions, strategies and priorities for the protection, management and use of Parks Victoria managed land
	Nature Conservation Strategy	Provides direction to Parks Victoria and its key stakeholders on priority conservation actions on the parks estate
	Historic Places Strategic Framework and Action Plan	Establishes priorities for recognising, conserving and promoting historic heritage values of Victoria's parks
	Managing Country Together Framework	Managing for cultural and natural values Respect for Aboriginal governance systems and self-determination Traditional Owner control of cultural heritage Recognition of traditional knowledge, language and history



Areas for action



Damian (Jacko) Jackson
and Uncle Tinawin

Building effective partnerships

Effectively protecting cultural heritage is a shared responsibility. It will require us to work with a broad range of partners to achieve the scale of conservation and protection outcomes we are committed to. We are also well-positioned to help broker relationships between Traditional Owners and other parties who have interests or responsibilities in the parks estate.

Traditional Owners are PV's primary partner. They have cultural obligations to ensure that cultural heritage is managed and protected in an appropriate way. Where a Traditional Owner group is a RAP, it also has specific legal rights and responsibilities we support.

The **VAHC** is responsible for overseeing, monitoring, managing, reporting and returning Aboriginal Ancestral Remains (Ancestral Remains), advising the Minister on other cultural heritage related matters and appointing RAPs. We work with the VAHC to ensure our cultural heritage management practices are in keeping with relevant procedures and principles the VAHC maintains.

Traditional Owner bodies including the RAP forum and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations provide important input into policy and program directions for cultural heritage protection.

We work with a range of **government agencies** including AV, the regulator of the Act, and other land managers including DELWP.

Philanthropic foundations like People and Parks Foundation (PPF) are an important partner for mobilising resources and support for cultural heritage conservation programs.

We also work with a range of other partner and interest groups including **research institutions, local interest groups, international expert forums, commercial entities and education institutions** to achieve conservation outcomes and facilitate sustainable park use.

"Self-determination is a key focus area for GLaWAC and this plan aims to support Traditional Owner corporations in the protection and management of cultural heritage.

GLaWAC has a strong and close partnership with Parks Victoria in the region and the plan will guide our work together to get it right."

Roger Fenwick

Chief Executive Officer, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

1. Negotiate new partnership arrangements with Traditional Owners

Action	Delivery partner	When
1. Develop, implement and re-negotiate partnership agreements with Traditional Owner groups to formally document how we will work together and support the achievement of shared outcomes for cultural landscapes and continuing practice of culture	Regions	2020-2023
2. Investigate the use of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreements (ACHLMA) on the parks estate, through pilot projects, and document findings	Regions	2020-2021
3. Establish a central PV system (such as by adopting Park Connect) for documenting and tracking working relationships with Traditional Owners to ensure engagement responsibilities are followed and coordinated and messaging is consistent	Marketing Communications & Partnerships	2021-2022
4. Pilot a procedure that meets PV's procurement responsibilities to Traditional Owners	Procurement & Contracts, Regions	2020-2021
5. Establish and implement protocols for reporting to Traditional Owner partners on progress towards meeting objectives	All relevant business areas	2021-2022

2. Work within the organisation and with portfolio partners to strengthen the enabling environment

Action	Delivery partner	When
6. Develop tools and guidance to support PV staff to understand how to operate in accordance with the Act, Recognition and Settlement Agreements and the MCT Framework principles	All relevant business areas	2020-2023
7. Work with AV, other government agencies and the VAHC to identify how to engage effectively with Traditional Owners in areas without formal Traditional Owner recognition		2021-2022
8. Broker relationships between government, research and philanthropic partners to facilitate increased involvement of Traditional Owners in decision-making and management of cultural places and landscapes	CEO Office, Marketing Communications & Partnerships, Environment & Science	2020-2023
9. Develop a system for assessing research permits that ensures cultural heritage protection and timely Traditional Owner engagement are considered	Park Planning & Policy, Environment & Science	2020-2021
10. Work with DELWP to align policies for Traditional Owner engagement and cultural heritage protection in public land management to achieve "tenure blind" approaches		2021-2022





Midden

Improving the information base

As with all aspects of park management, protecting cultural heritage depends on good knowledge. With only 3% of the parks estate surveyed for cultural values, and 47% of registered Aboriginal places recorded before 1990 and the advent of global positioning technology, the quality and availability of information about cultural values is severely lacking. We need better baseline information about cultural values on the parks estate, including their location, condition and threats, and we need to better understand the way these values interact with other landscape values. Many of the threats to cultural values, such as land management and burrowing pests, have been historically recognised, while others, such as the impacts of climate change and recreation, represent newer and increasing challenges. In our effort to improve our information base, we need to engage with Traditional Owners to better understand their cultural heritage management priorities and aspirations so we can better target our efforts. We are committed to creating an enabling environment for Traditional Owners to make decisions about their heritage on the parks estate in accordance with MCT Framework principles.

Some information we gather ourselves through general or targeted research, surveys and community engagement. Other information is provided by partners – Traditional Owners, research institutions and community groups. We have a responsibility to store and use that information in an appropriate and culturally sensitive way. Appropriate use includes appropriate sharing of information about cultural heritage with visitors and the broader community.

3. Improve the quality and extent of cultural information and knowledge

Action	Delivery partner	When
11. Work with Traditional Owners to identify and design priority projects that align traditional land management practices with shared park management objectives, such as research into integration of traditional use of fire in public land management and approaches to managing the impacts of climate change	Environment & Science, Fire Emergency & Enforcement, Regions	2020-2023
12. Develop systems that improve accuracy of data and efficiency in data collection, collation and registration, including through the use of new technologies such as 3D cameras and LIDAR, while protecting Traditional Owner data sovereignty	Infrastructure & Information Technology, Environment & Science	2020-2023
13. Support Traditional Owners to document cultural heritage information through mapping and research partnerships	Environment & Science	2020-2023
14. Support Traditional Owner Country planning processes	Environment & Science, Park Planning & Policy	2020-2023
15. Support partnerships with educational institutions in relation to Traditional Owner led field schools, research and projects	Environment & Science, Regions, Marketing Communications & Partnerships	2020-2023

4. Work with Traditional Owners to appropriately incorporate cultural values in park information

Action	Delivery partner	When
16. Improve information sharing with Traditional Owners, including through investigating opportunities to establish Traditional Owner access to PV systems such as the Visitor Experience Framework and Parkview	Infrastructure & Information Technology, Park Planning & Policy	2020-2023
17. Develop protocols for collecting, using and storing cultural information and Aboriginal languages that protect Traditional Owner data sovereignty	Marketing Communications & Partnerships, Information Management	2021-2022
18. Support Traditional Owners seeking to name and rename cultural places on the parks estate with Aboriginal languages	Park Planning & Policy	2020-2023
19. Work with Traditional Owners to integrate traditional language and imagery and cultural knowledge, stories and artwork in park information including planning documents	Regions, Marketing Communications & Partnerships, Infrastructure & Information Technology, Environment & Science	2020-2023
20. Review the five-yearly State of the Parks Report process to ensure information about cultural heritage and Traditional Owner partnerships is appropriately captured	Environment & Science	2020-2022





Barmah National Park

Facilitating sustainable visitation

Every year PV welcomes 106 million visits to our parks. People from across Victoria, Australia and the world come to enjoy our unique and diverse cultural landscapes, experience nature and learn about new places and cultures.

The Victorian government is committed to growing the state's visitor economy, supporting jobs and investment in metropolitan and regional Victoria. The parks estate offers one of Victoria's strongest drawcards, providing a diverse range of opportunities for visitors to enjoy. We are activating new tourism initiatives that will advance the positioning of Victoria as a world leading nature-based tourism destination.

Through the management of our existing attractions and the development of these new initiatives, we have an opportunity to enhance visitor experiences by better reflecting cultural values and stories in park information. We also have a responsibility to ensure visitation and the infrastructure that supports it are sustainable and do not harm cultural values on the parks estate.

The cultural landscapes that make up the parks estate provide Traditional Owners with opportunity to exercise and demonstrate their cultural, social and economic rights, responsibilities and aspirations. We need to support Traditional Owners to have a greater say over how visitor experiences on their Country are developed and managed and allow opportunities for Traditional Owner groups to be integral contributors to the growing visitor economy.

5. Support Traditional Owners to participate in the visitor economy on the parks estate

Action	Delivery partner	When
21. Work with Traditional Owners to design and deliver cultural tourism opportunities prioritising joint management partners	Marketing Communications & Partnerships, Commercial Operations, Regions	2020-2023
22. Broker relationships between Traditional Owner groups and licensed tourism operators to ensure tourism opportunities are appropriately explored and considered	Regions, Marketing Communications & Partnerships, Commercial Operations	2020-2023
23. Ensure cultural values and Traditional Owner knowledge are appropriately reflected in the PV Visitor Experience Framework	Park Planning & Policy	2022-2023

6. Work with Traditional Owners to ensure impacts of visitation on cultural values are appropriately managed

Action	Delivery partner	When
24. Investigate the ongoing role of Traditional Owners in ensuring leases and licences for tourism operators are appropriate	Commercial Operations, Legal	2020-2021
25. Work with Traditional Owners to ensure public access to cultural places is addressed in PV policies, plans and agreements and managed appropriately	Regions, Park Planning & Policy	2020-2023
26. Provide advice about the impacts of visitation to cultural values on the parks estate	Regions, Park Planning & Policy, Environment & Science	2020-2023





Complying with our legal responsibilities

The Act is a key tool that supports the protection of cultural heritage in Victoria. PV has a responsibility to comply with the Act and support other agencies working on the parks estate to meet their obligations for protecting cultural heritage. Failure to comply with the Act can have significant repercussions for PV, including prosecution and large fines and damage to our relationships with Traditional Owner partners.

PV conducts and authorises many activities that have the potential to harm cultural heritage. It is essential that these activities are assessed before they are started to ensure PV protects cultural values and legal requirements are met. Traditional Owner engagement is an important part of this process. Cultural heritage may only be harmed when authorised through a cultural heritage permit (CHP), mandatory or voluntary cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) or Aboriginal cultural heritage land management agreement. Where we obtain consent to harm through a CHP, CHMP or ACHLMA, we must ensure we meet any conditions placed upon us, and understand the potential for cumulative impact over time. Any non-PV persons or organisations conducting works on the parks estate must also comply with the requirements of the Act. PV has a procedure for assessing risks to cultural values and ensuring appropriate consents and protections are put in place. All PV staff are required to follow this procedure.

PV's obligations under the Act, following amendments to the Act in 2016, include transferring any secret or sacred object in its possession into the custody of the Council. To this end in 2018 PV conducted an audit of objects in its possession considered possible secret and sacred objects. PV will seek confirmation from Traditional Owners about their preferred measures for protecting and repatriating objects confirmed to be secret or sacred.

On an ongoing basis PV is likely to be approached by Traditional Owners wishing to repatriate Ancestral Remains to the parks estate. In these circumstances PV will work with Traditional Owners to reach an outcome. This process is not one regulated by the Act but relevant to requirements of the *National Parks Act 1975*. A procedure for repatriation of Ancestral Remains to the parks estate is required and will be addressed in the *Parks Victoria Aboriginal Ancestral Remains Protection Plan (under development)*.

PV is committed to protecting cultural heritage, and we are continuing to improve our tools and processes to meet this aim.

7. Strengthen systems and tools for protecting cultural heritage

Action	Delivery partner	When
27. Improve systems for reporting harm or potential harm	Legal	2020-2021
28. Update procedures to guide PV staff and third parties working on the parks estate to prevent harm to cultural heritage	Legal, Regions	2020-2021
29. Provide training and support to PV staff to ensure they are aware of their obligations for protecting cultural heritage	All relevant business areas	2020-2023
30. Include information about cultural heritage protection in induction for third parties working on the parks estate	Regions	2020-2023
31. Work with Traditional Owners to appropriately protect and repatriate cultural heritage objects held by PV where appropriate	Regions	2021-2022
32. Work with AV to continuously improve cultural heritage management systems for which AV is the responsible authority	Regions	2020-2023
33. Investigate the practicality of short-form recording with a focus on site extent and minimal recording of cultural values and maintaining the integrity of sites until further recording is necessary		2021-2022
34. Secure new resources for the MCT Directorate to lead the delivery of cultural heritage reforms	Board and CEO Office	2020-2021
35. Develop a guide for factoring cultural heritage management costs in budgets for works and projects including making provisions for continuing obligations under CHMPs and CHPs	Infrastructure & Information Technology, People & Finance	2021-2022
36. Provide advice in regards to regulatory requirements that apply to the parks estate that may compete with cultural heritage protection such as the requirement to light campfires in a 30 cm deep pit	Legal, Regions	2020-2023

8. Monitor and transparently report on our performance in cultural heritage protection

Action	Delivery partner	When
37. Develop and implement a system for assessing the condition of cultural heritage to better inform harm mitigation strategies	Regions	2020-2021
38. Develop internal systems to track and report on our compliance with the Act (including advice given, decisions made, actions taken) and monitor the effectiveness of our cultural heritage protection systems	Regions, Infrastructure & Information Technology	2020-2021





Integrating cultural heritage management in planning

PV's core function is to manage the parks estate for its full range of natural, cultural and visitor values. At times this involves dealing with competing interests. We use a cascading system of plans to ensure our park management approaches are evidence-based and holistic:

- The *Parks Victoria Strategic Plan – Shaping Our Future* is PV's overarching strategic plan. It is framed around four goals which provide the focus for all PV's activities. The goals include Caring for Country, Connecting people and nature, Contributing to healthy liveable communities, and Enhancing organisational excellence.
- The *Land Management Strategy* sets out PV's long-term directions, strategies and priorities for the protection, management and use of the parks estate.
- The *Parks Victoria Nature Conservation Strategy 2020-25*, which sits under the PV Land Management Strategy, provides direction to PV and its key stakeholders on priority conservation actions on the parks estate. It identifies pressures on nature and landscapes across the parks estate with particular reference to climate change.
- The *Historic Places Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2019-22* establishes priorities for recognising, conserving and promoting the historic heritage values of Victoria's parks.
- Management of individual parks, areas of a park or multi-park landscapes are guided by strategic plans, such as park management or precinct master plans, and informed by Conservation Action Plans. Where joint management is in place, a joint management plan, developed by a Traditional Owner Land Management Board, replaces any prior park management plan.
- Strategic plans are translated into practical actions and budget priorities from year to year through a system of operational and action planning.
- Theme plans, which provide a strategic and state-wide approach to managing a particular issue including impacts of specified park uses.
- Interpretation and education plans guide how we share the rich natural and cultural stories of the parks estate with the public, and also ensure practical safety information is easy to find.

We recognise that PV does not hold all the information necessary for effective planning, and that we have work to do to improve the extent to which cultural values, knowledge and priorities are reflected in our plans. We are increasingly partnering and engaging with Traditional Owners in the development of plans at all levels and reflecting the aspirations, rights and knowledge of Traditional Owner communities outlined in Country Plans. We also consult with the broader Victorian community during planning processes to ensure their expertise, values and preferences are considered in park management.

There are places on the parks estate which feature heritage of value to both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Examples include Buchan Caves Reserve and Tower Hill. Effective management of these places relies on a planning process involving relevant partners and stakeholders to identify and agree on values to be protected and how they should be protected.

Park management is adaptive to changing environmental, cultural, social and economic factors affecting the parks estate. One of the greatest challenges for PV is finding solutions to the impacts of climate change and working courageously with its partners and key stakeholders to determine and implement actions. PV recognises Victoria's Traditional Owners and DELWP as primary partners for this work. PV is committed to working with Traditional Owner partners to align Traditional Owner Country Plans with PV Conservation Action Plans for this purpose.

As more land is transferred to Aboriginal Title, we are increasingly managing the parks estate jointly with our Traditional Owner partners. Joint management plans are an obvious vehicle for incorporating Traditional Owner knowledge in park planning. This approach to planning should also be considered in areas under other management arrangements. This will have significant implications for park planning – it requires us to think more holistically about cultural landscapes and establish shared governance and decision-making with Traditional Owners.

9. Embed appropriate engagement with Traditional Owners in all park planning processes

Action	Delivery partner	When
39. Ensure planning procedures facilitate Traditional Owner engagement throughout planning processes and provide Traditional Owners with appropriate levels of influence over PV plans including Conservation Action Plans	Park Planning & Policy, Environment & Science	2021-2022
40. Work with Traditional Owners to align PV plans with Country Plans and ensure appropriate consideration of cultural values in PV decision-making	Park Planning & Policy, Environment & Science	2020-2023
41. Support Traditional Owners to protect cultural values through joint management planning processes	Park Planning & Policy Regions	2020-2023
42. Ensure partnership agreements establish processes for incorporating Traditional Owner input and priorities into operational planning and resource allocation	Regions	2020-2023

10. Improve organisational systems to ensure cultural values are embedded in park planning

Action	Delivery partner	When
43. Identify places on the parks estate with registered Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural values and assess opportunities to develop actions to address both sets of values	Marketing Communications & Partnerships	2020-2022
44. Reframe PV's approach to planning and management so that it strongly aligns with Traditional Owner views of cultural landscapes and better protects cultural heritage	Park Planning & Policy	2021-2022
45. Guide PV staff to better understand, protect and manage parks as cultural landscapes and understand and protect intangible cultural values as facets of cultural landscapes	Regions	2020-2023
46. Review PV management guidelines, including those for roading, rabbit management and cultural heritage repatriation, to ensure they align with MCT Framework principles	Regions	2020-2021





Big Drift – Wilsons Promontory National Park

Pursuing culturally appropriate infrastructure

PV is responsible for developing, authorising and managing a range of assets on the parks estate. From campsites, fences and toilets to tourist centres and accommodation, we have responsibility for ensuring visitors' experiences in parks are safe and informative. We also care for cultural assets, though these are not currently well-defined where Aboriginal heritage is concerned. As stated in the *PV Strategic Asset Management Plan June 2018*, our goal is for all assets under PV management to be safe, secure, sustainable, fit for purpose and value for money.

We have an asset management information system that helps us plan our asset management priorities, address risks and report on our compliance with legislative requirements. We also have an asset design and standards manual that helps us ensure the right assets are in the right place and are appropriately maintained.

Built assets on the parks estate offer both a risk and an opportunity to Traditional Owners. We are legislatively required to avoid harm to both tangible and intangible cultural values through the decisions we make about infrastructure. This extends beyond the direct disturbance that may occur if cultural heritage procedures are not followed and requires us to ensure park users do not impact culturally sensitive landscapes. We also have obligations to ensure that new planned assets do not impact the native title rights of Traditional Owners.

As we increasingly participate in the management of cultural landscapes in partnership with Traditional Owners, we have an opportunity to improve our infrastructure by considering cultural values and Traditional Owner priorities in design and decision-making processes. By reflecting cultural values more visibly across the parks estate in accordance with the wishes of Traditional Owners, we will not only be demonstrating our commitment to Traditional Owner partnerships but enriching the experience of the broad range of visitors who use and enjoy the parks estate.

11. Ensure infrastructure development and maintenance do not harm cultural heritage

Action	Delivery partner	When
47. Provide training and support to PV staff to help them adopt PV procedures for avoiding risks to cultural heritage and protecting cultural heritage	Regions, Infrastructure & Information Technology	2020-2022
48. Investigate how to appropriately reflect cultural heritage as an asset in PV's approach to asset management planning	Infrastructure & Information Technology	2021-2022

12. Work with Traditional Owners to integrate cultural values in the design of new infrastructure

Action	Delivery partner	When
49. Ensure that for all capital projects, sufficient resources and time are budgeted for engaging Traditional Owners from the beginning of the planning process to the delivery of new infrastructure to ensure infrastructure appropriately promotes local Aboriginal culture and has minimal impact on cultural landscapes	Infrastructure & Information Technology, Park Planning & Policy	2020-2023





Protecting cultural heritage during emergencies

Emergency management on the parks estate occurs in three phases: preparation, emergency and recovery. There is high risk to cultural heritage in each phase if it is not appropriately considered. PV has varying roles in each of these stages and is not the lead agency. There is also a **transitional stage** between the emergency and recovery stages that has been identified as the highest risk to cultural heritage during emergency management. This is primarily due to the often unclear delineation between the end of the response stage (the emergency event) and the beginning of the recovery stage, and the fact that the Act allows harm to cultural heritage where it is the result of doing an act that is necessary because of an emergency.

Preparedness – Before

PV is committed to understanding the nature and extent of cultural heritage on public land in Victoria. This involves identifying new cultural places and updating the VAHR to ensure the accuracy of information that will be relied on in the event of emergency.

Integral to preparedness is emergency **prevention**.

Taking the example of bushfire management in Victoria, reducing bushfire risk is a key prevention activity. DELWP is the control agency for all bushfire management activity on public land in Victoria, including the parks estate, and PV works in partnership with DELWP under the banner of Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) to support this work on public land across the state. Fuel management (planned burning and non-burn fuel treatments) is one strategy within a broad approach used to manage bushfire risk in Victoria. Fuel management on public land is led by DELWP in partnership with FFMVic partners, including PV, the Country Fire Authority and Traditional Owners, under the Joint Fuel Management Program (JFMP). DELWP staff are responsible for completing due diligence assessments for cultural heritage prior to undertaking fuel management works listed in the JFMP. In the past this has sometimes involved PV Aboriginal Heritage Coordinators.

PV works in partnership with DELWP and Traditional Owners to enable Traditional Owner led fire practice (or Traditional Owner burning) on public land in Victoria. The *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy* helps to provide the overarching principles, framework and policy direction for land and fire agencies to support Traditional Owners in undertaking cultural burning to care for Country. Traditional Owner burning is increasingly being practiced in Victoria under this enabling framework. PV will continue to work collaboratively with DELWP and Traditional Owners to better enable this practice and support Traditional Owner leadership of cultural fire practices at the time, pace and scale that each Traditional Owner group determines.

Park planning to position access and infrastructure away from areas of cultural significance and sensitivity is another critical measure for preventing harm to cultural values in emergency management.

Response – During

In emergency response on the parks estate, PV is a support agency that supports the control agency. The management of emergency events in Victoria, including on the parks estate, is coordinated by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and supported by multiple agencies. EMV is the coordinating agency that brings relevant partners together.

Early involvement of Traditional Owners in identifying and assessing cultural heritage and protecting cultural heritage in the transitional stage between response and recovery is critical to cultural heritage recovery in the final phase of emergency management. This opportunity is lost where effective communication and coordination of responsibilities between PV and DELWP is lacking.

In the example of fire, early identification and assessment of cultural heritage, including heritage normally obscured by vegetation, avoids damage to cultural heritage from:

- stabilisation and remediation work which typically occur before cultural heritage recovery formally begins
- the effects of fire suppression activities, weathering and erosion
- vandalism and looting as unknown cultural places are rediscovered.

In the 2019-2020 fire season, PV introduced the Parks Victoria Transfer of Control Form as PV's mechanism for gaining assurances of ability to safely fulfil obligations as a Land Manager before assuming management control of the Parks Estate for emergency recovery. Parks Victoria Transfer of Control Forms are approved by the relevant PV Regional Director and Incident Controller after consultation with relevant PV business areas including the MCT Directorate.

Recovery – After

Recovery on the parks estate is managed by PV and should occur in partnership with Traditional Owners. There are three purposes to cultural heritage recovery: appropriate management of cultural heritage during asset recovery in accordance with the Act, rehabilitation of cultural values after the event, and opportunistic surveying of the landscape after the event.

Integrating cultural heritage protection in emergency management

While there are multiple agencies responsible for different aspects of emergency management, there is no single protocol for cultural heritage protection in emergency management. A single protocol is required that, amongst other things:

- defines the response and recovery stages in emergency management and highlights requirements in the transitional stage to ensure effective cultural heritage management
- identifies the roles and responsibilities of emergency management partners including communication responsibilities to each other
- defines roles for Traditional Owners in emergency management.

The capacity of PV and Traditional Owners to effectively participate in cultural heritage protection as part of emergency management is another critical aspect of emergency management requiring attention. PV has an ongoing responsibility to maintain:

- a work force adequately skilled and available to work with Traditional Owners to protect cultural heritage at risk of damage due to emergency events
- a quality cultural heritage information base.



13. Influence change in emergency management systems

Action	Delivery partner	When
50. Work with DELWP and other response agencies to ensure emergency management systems facilitate Traditional Owners participation and consideration of cultural values during all phases of emergency management including during stabilisation and remediation works that occur prior to the formal commencement of emergency recovery	Fire Emergency & Enforcement	2020-2022
51. Work with DELWP to implement the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy including integrating it in emergency management where relevant	Fire Emergency & Enforcement, Environment & Science	2020-2023
52. Provide advice on cultural heritage management to EMV, principally through participation on its State-wide Working Group	Fire Emergency & Enforcement	2020-2023

14. Strengthen our shared capacity to protect cultural heritage in emergency management

Action	Delivery partner	When
53. Identify opportunities to build capacity in Traditional Owner organisations that will enable their involvement in all phases of emergency management	Fire Emergency & Enforcement	2020-2023
54. Work with our emergency management partners and Traditional Owners to ensure technical advice is available through all phases of emergencies including during stabilisation and remediation works that occur prior to the formal commencement of emergency recovery	Fire Emergency & Enforcement, Regions	2020-2023
55. Identify opportunities for staff with specialist cultural heritage knowledge and skills to assume leadership roles in emergency management that influence decisions affecting cultural values	Fire Emergency & Enforcement	2020-2023
56. Provide training and support on identification and management of cultural heritage to PV staff undertaking fire and emergency operations	Fire Emergency & Enforcement, Regions	2020-2023
57. Investigate opportunities to improve information available to emergency management partners including through Emergency Management Plans, cultural values mapping and enhancing risk assessments	Fire Emergency & Enforcement Regions	2020-2023

Priority Cultural Heritage Conservation Programs

Aboriginal Ancestral Remains

Ancestral Remains are extremely significant to Traditional Owners and represent a direct link to their ancestors and Country. Aboriginal burial places comprising Ancestral Remains, as distinguished from contemporary burials and cemeteries, occur in many places and landforms across Victoria, and are particularly widespread in the ancient landscapes of north-western Victoria. They are often found close to water and in sandy lunettes, coastal dunes, Aboriginal mounds, middens and bushland. Burials may also be marked by or found in trees or found in rock shelters. Due to cremation rituals traditionally practiced by some Aboriginal communities, Ancestral Remains may be present but not easily identifiable in the landscape.

Aboriginal people were often buried with important social, spiritual, ceremonial and cultural items, such as stone tools, ochre, shells or, in recent history, coins and clay pipes; these items are to be treated with the same respect as the Remains themselves. Aboriginal burial places may be small, or they may be spread over vast landscapes and contain many thousands of burials. Massacre sites and battle places are places with Ancestral Remains. It is of great importance that Ancestral Remains are left undisturbed.



"Every time we go to those burial grounds we get very upset because we feel helpless seeing them laying open and exposed and deteriorating. As Aboriginal people that makes us feel very sad that we can't help our own people – we feel helpless. With you giving us a hand, helping us do what we have to do there on Country and rebury our Ancestors makes us feel very proud and you should feel very proud for helping us too."

Uncle Norm "Tinawin" Wilson

Chair, First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation

In the past, Ancestral Remains were stolen from burial sites by people who considered themselves to be 'collectors' and researchers. Aboriginal people in Victoria and across Australia are working tirelessly with museums, universities and government organisations around the world to ensure that the Remains of their ancestors are returned to Country for burial in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner. The process of repatriation can be long and have a huge emotional toll for all involved.



Ancestral Remains Protection Team
(left to right) Karl Kirby, Damien 'Jacko' Jackson, Jason Bowden and Darren Brown



Current condition and management

Across Victoria, ancient Aboriginal burial grounds are succumbing to the impacts of recreation, land management, climate change, wind and water erosion and invasive burrowing pests, leaving Ancestral Remains exposed and often destroyed. We need to take great care and diligence when doing any management activity in these highly sensitive cultural landscapes and consider how to minimise the risk of disturbance to burial places. It is critical that individuals conducting these highly sensitive responsibilities are supported to ensure their cultural, spiritual, emotional and mental wellbeing and safety.

The VAHC is the central coordinating body responsible for Ancestral Remains in Victoria. The VAHC aims to strengthen the protection of Aboriginal burial places and deliver better support for Traditional Owners returning Ancestors to Country.

The protection of Aboriginal burial places has many challenges, some of which are outlined below:

- Due to the extensive scale and distribution of Ancestral Remains in many parts of the landscape, only a fraction of them have been recorded and registered on the VAHR.
- The legacy of past land use, including extensive land clearing and the introduction of invasive species like rabbits, goats, pigs and horses, has led to erosion in parts of the landscape.
- Contemporary threats including alteration of river flows, lack of integrated land and water management at a landscape scale, and visitor activities like off-road driving are continuing to destroy culturally significant places.
- In some cases, addressing threats to Aboriginal burials such as rabbits can pose as much risk of harm as the threat itself.
- Government land managers have tended to be strongly focused on completing environmental management works in timeframes that do not align with Traditional Owner priorities or capacity.
- Processes of erosion or natural movement of dunes can reveal or conceal burial places. An area can initially appear to be absent of such sensitive places, however ground disturbance may quickly reveal the burial places of Aboriginal Ancestors.

- In the past, little attention has been paid to the impact of pest animals on cultural values. As a result, culturally significant land management practices are not always understood and potentially harmful practices can be prescribed as control methods.
- Traditional Owner engagement and heritage advisor costs are not often factored in project or program planning or budgeting.
- The spiritual and emotional toll on Aboriginal people working on protection of Ancestral Remains is very high.
- There is no consistent repatriation process across organisations or guidelines for best practice.

Strategic direction

Protecting Ancestral Remains on the parks estate is a long-term commitment for PV, and one we will honour in close partnership with Traditional Owners. The Parks Victoria *Aboriginal Ancestral Remains Protection Plan (under development)* represents the first phase of PV's commitment to achieving a strategic and coordinated approach to protecting Ancestral Remains on the parks estate at a state-wide scale. It includes a range of actions from burial place protection works to improving our information base and streamlining procedures to strengthen our capacity to effectively protect Ancestral Remains in partnership with Traditional Owners.



Rock Art conservation –
Black Range State Park

Rock Art

"People don't recognise the values we have here, some of this art; all of this art, has stories attached, and they're not just paintings on the wall, they're more like libraries and places of exchange where people had conversations and told stories, laws were made, kids were inducted in their education through this type of medium and that value isn't recognised for what it is by most visitors, it's pretty sad, it's disappointing."

John Clarke

General Manager Cultural Landscapes,
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

PV responsibilities for rock art are critical to its continued care and preservation for future generations. At June 2020, 92% of the known rock art in Victoria was found on the parks estate. This included 160 rock art shelters registered on the VAHR and 6 sites requiring formal inspection and registration. Over 40 rock art shelters were

rediscovered between 2014 and early 2020, and hundreds of other motifs have been rediscovered at registered sites with the use of new technologies. There is a high potential for many more places to be rediscovered with further surveying.

Rock art can be found right across the parks estate. It can consist of a single motif at a shelter, to hundreds of motifs built up over countless generations, including white, yellow and red ochre images, and carved petroglyphs. The majority of Victorian rock art is located in Gariwerd (Grampians National Park), with over 125 rock art shelters known to exist in the park at June 2020. Gariwerd is on the National Heritage List and is on the list because of its *national heritage significance for its Indigenous rock art sites*.

A substantial proportion of registered rock art shelters on the parks estate are located in areas where Traditional Owners have been formally recognised in the state. In other areas, Traditional Owner groups without formal recognition maintain interests and a right to be engaged in rock art protection.



Current condition and management

Most rock art shelters managed by PV have not been formally inspected since the 1970s and have no management plan. At a state-wide level, the condition of rock art, and potential threats to it, are largely unknown.

In early 2018 PV initiated a rock art monitoring program. To date, 116 rock art shelters have been inspected and recorded. The greatest threats to rock art shelters identified through condition assessments include graffiti, rock climbing, goats and natural processes including algae proliferation, exfoliation and salt decay. Climate change and increased visitation to the parks estate are also understood to be potentially significant threats to rock art shelters in the future. Significant damage to several rock art shelters identified through the monitoring program has led to the use of special protection measures including buffers set around rock art locations.

Rock art condition assessments will be the basis of a priority works plans and site-specific management plans developed in partnership with Traditional Owners. Individual management plans which identify the tourism potential of each place and management responsibilities concerning interpretation, compliance, research and monitoring.

The enormous significance of rock art is poorly understood in the broader community. This may be one of the reasons it does not attract the attention it deserves. Currently, there are no funding programs to support the protection of these deeply important places. Many rock art shelters located outside of Gariwerd are in non-priority parks, rarely visited by PV staff. We need to build understanding of rock art as well as expertise in rock art management in PV. We also need to embed formal linkage to researchers, peak bodies and other managers at state, national and international levels.

Strategic direction

Rock art shelters are incredibly significant to Traditional Owners, as well as the entire Victorian community. A review of activities and environmental threats that have the potential to harm rock art is required to identify and mitigate the risks they pose. Of equal necessity is greater public awareness of the importance of rock art and the consequences for defacing it. These priorities and others will be set out in the *Parks Victoria Rock Art Action Plan* currently under development.



Strengthening our capability

The range of actions included in this Plan reflects PV's commitment to:

- partnering with Traditional Owners in caring for Country and protecting cultural places and landscapes
- improving our understanding about cultural heritage including where it is located, its condition and threats to it
- developing systems and processes that reflect our recognition of Traditional Owner rights, interests and capacities
- working with Traditional Owners to ensure cultural values are appropriately integrated and promoted in park information and infrastructure
- guiding and supporting PV staff to better understand their roles and responsibilities in cultural heritage management
- improving alignment between different cultural heritage management procedures used across government
- ensuring PV operations are compliant with the Act.

These commitments represent a shift that is occurring in park management to place Traditional Owner partnership at the centre of cultural heritage management and incorporate cultural heritage protection measures in park planning and operational procedures. They also reflect PV's understanding that its responsibilities for cultural heritage management go beyond ensuring land use activities comply with the Act and include working with Traditional Owners to address threats to cultural heritage caused by environmental and human factors, including emergency events and park visitation. Other responsibilities include promoting cultural heritage and enhancing awareness and appreciation of cultural values amongst PV staff, visitors to the parks estate and third parties operating on the parks estate.

Recent initiatives by PV to build capacity for protecting cultural heritage include the PPF Resting Places project and the *Aboriginal Employment and Wellbeing Plan 2018-23*.

The purpose of the Resting Places project is the protection of Aboriginal Ancestral burial grounds in north-western Victoria (between Mildura and South Australian border) over two years (2019-21). One of the project's objectives is the development of a business case for an ongoing Ancestral Remains protection program in north-western Victoria.

The *Aboriginal Employment and Wellbeing Plan 2018-23* outlines how PV aims to support Traditional Owner partners to strengthen their capacity in cultural landscape management. Suitable approaches are to be determined with each Traditional Owner group through partnership agreements tailored to the specific goals and interests of the group. Fulfilling this objective will rely on extra investment in Traditional Owner partnerships.

The 2021-22 PV budget build represents the next most important opportunity for PV to build its capacity to meet Plan commitments. The MCT budget bid for 2021-22 will primarily focus on creating new positions and securing ongoing positions for fixed term staff responsible for cultural heritage assessments associated with proposed land management activities, Traditional Owners engagement in relation to the delivery of plans, agreements and permits required under the Act, and providing expert advice on managing rock art and Aboriginal burial places.

The MCT Directorate predicts demands on cultural heritage assessment and advisory services will be considerably greater in the future following announcements by the State Government in November 2020 of significant new investment in capital projects on the parks estate. The costs of these services and Traditional Owner partnerships will be provided for in relevant PV business cases and implementation plans.

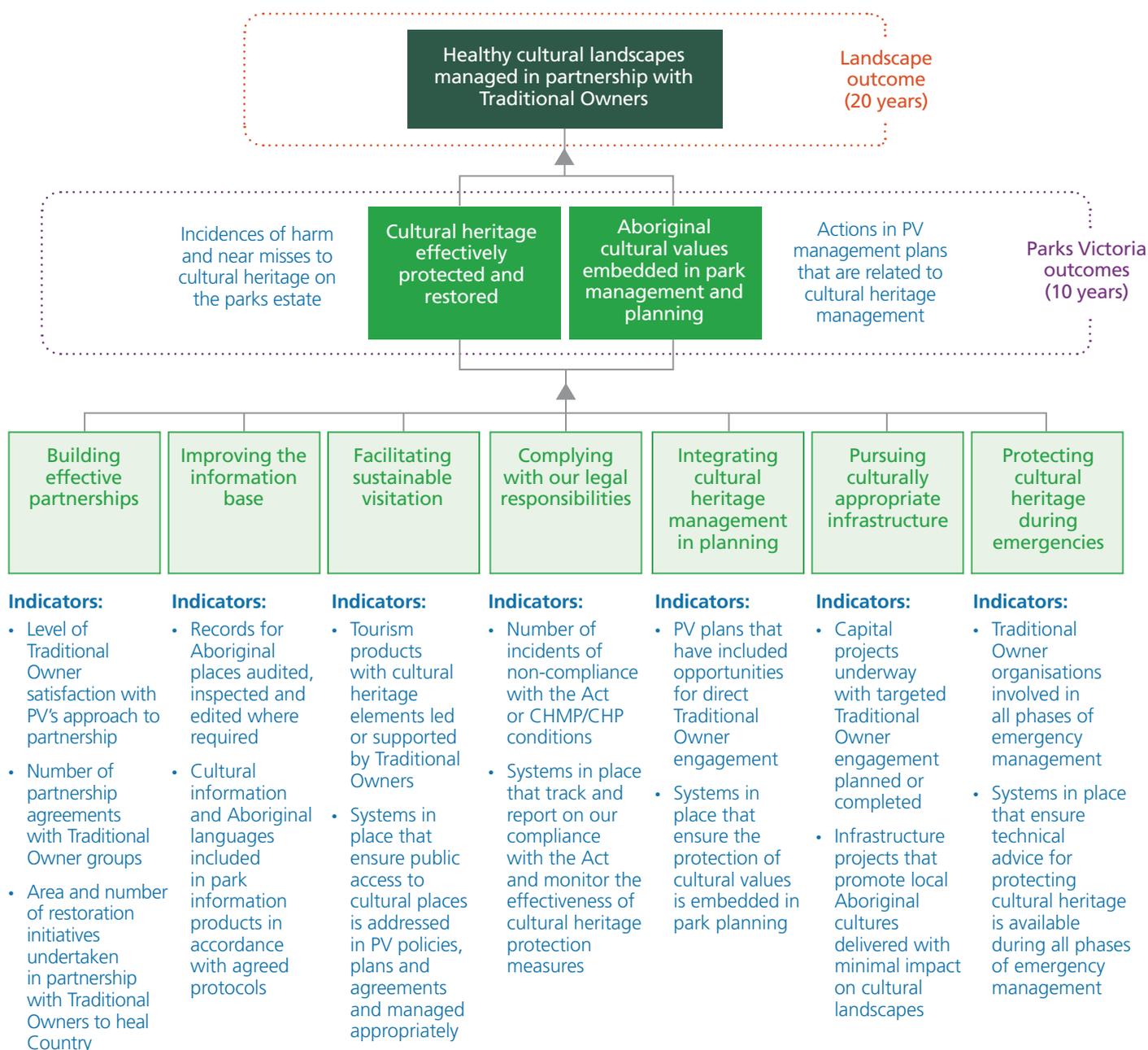
Accountabilities

The following accountability framework highlights the key responsibilities of each part of the organisation:

Role	Accountabilities
Parks Victoria Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting of organisational direction • oversight of risk profile and management
Aboriginal Engagement Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversight of the delivery of Plan commitments • advice to MCT Directorate, Executive Management Team and Parks Victoria Board on cultural heritage management matters
Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversight of strategic relationships with Traditional Owner and government stakeholders • agreement making
Executive Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creation of an enabling environment for Plan implementation • management of organisational risk • strategic planning and resource allocation • oversight of strategic relationships with Traditional Owner and government stakeholders • approval of key policies and procedures
Regional Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversight of regional engagement • development of strategic partnerships and agreements • regional planning in alignment with Traditional Owner priorities • regional resource allocation
District Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational planning • development of district budgets and resource allocation • development of stakeholder relationships and partnership projects
Managing Country Together Directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of policies, tools and procedures • support, advice and services to other PV business areas • coordination of partnership projects
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commitment to understand roles and responsibilities in cultural heritage management and other relevant actions in the Plan, and applying that understanding • adherence to PV policies and procedures

Tracking our progress

To track how effectively we are progressing towards our cultural heritage objectives, we will monitor a small number of indicators aligned to each priority action area, and also evaluate our long-term progress against the ten-year organisational outcomes.



These indicators will provide the MCT Directorate with measures for assessing progress towards achieving its ultimate objectives. They will be overseen by PV's Executive Management Team and monitored by the appropriate PV Board committee which will receive a regular implementation scorecard tracking delivery of commitments in this Plan.

Key terms

Aboriginal – The term Aboriginal is used in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Victoria. Throughout this document the term 'Aboriginal' is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the term 'Indigenous', 'Koori' and 'Koorie' are retained in the names of programs, initiatives and publication titles and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. Parks Victoria acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal people living in Victoria from across Australia. We also acknowledge Torres Strait Islander community members and colleagues.

Aboriginal Ancestral Remains – The whole or part of the bodily remains of an Aboriginal person, with some exceptions outlined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

Aboriginal cultural heritage – Aboriginal places, Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal Ancestral Remains.

Aboriginal intangible heritage – Any knowledge of, or expression of Aboriginal tradition, other than Aboriginal cultural heritage, and includes oral traditions, performing arts, stories, rituals, festivals, social practices, craft, visual arts, and environmental and ecological knowledge, but under the Act does not include anything that is widely known to the public.

Aboriginal objects and places – Objects or areas in Victoria (or the coastal waters of Victoria) that are of cultural heritage significance to Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person – A person who has Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent and identifies as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. They may have connections within and/or outside of Victoria.

Capacity building is a continuing process of building on existing strengths and opportunities to improve the ability to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, and understand and deal with changing needs. We focus capacity building at an organisational rather than individual level, recognising that Aboriginal and other staff at Parks Victoria and Traditional Owner organisations take a team approach in implementing the work program.

Emergency refers to an incident defined under the *Emergency Management Act 2003* which endangers or threatens to endanger people, property or the environment. Emergencies include storms, floods, fire, accidents, epidemics, terrorism, among others.

Harm - In relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage, harm includes damaging, defacing, desecrating, destroying, disturbing, injuring or interfering with.

Partnership agreement – An agreement between Parks Victoria and a Registered Aboriginal Party/Traditional Owner Group Entity that describes the nature of the relationship and commitments of both parties to meet a range of obligations and pursue common interests.

Registered Aboriginal Party – An organisation that has been appointed by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council to hold decision-making responsibilities under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area.

Third party operators – Persons authorised to conduct activities on the parks estate who are not employed by or on behalf of Parks Victoria. Third party operators may include entities conducting activities under their statutory obligations that do not require Parks Victoria authorisation, Parks Victoria project partners, lessees, permit and licence holders, volunteer groups, Friends Groups, researchers.



Hattah-Kulkyne
National Park

Key terms (continued)

Traditional Owner – Parks Victoria recognises Traditional Owners as Aboriginal people who have traditional connections to an identified geographical area of Country. Where those connections have been formally recognised through a determination under the *Native Title Act 1993*, appointment as a Registered Aboriginal Party under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* or through a Recognition and Settlement Agreement or threshold acceptance under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, Traditional Owners have specific rights and interests that Parks Victoria recognises.

Traditional Owner Corporation – an incorporated group that represents the interests of Traditional Owners in a particular area. They may hold rights under the *Native Title Act 1993*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and/or the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* on behalf of the Traditional Owners they represent, or they may have no formal agreements in place.

Traditional Owner Group Entity – an incorporated group that represents the interests of Traditional Owners in a particular area, who have or are seeking recognition under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* on behalf of the Traditional Owners they represent. Parks Victoria jointly manages Aboriginal Title land with Traditional Owner Group Entities.



