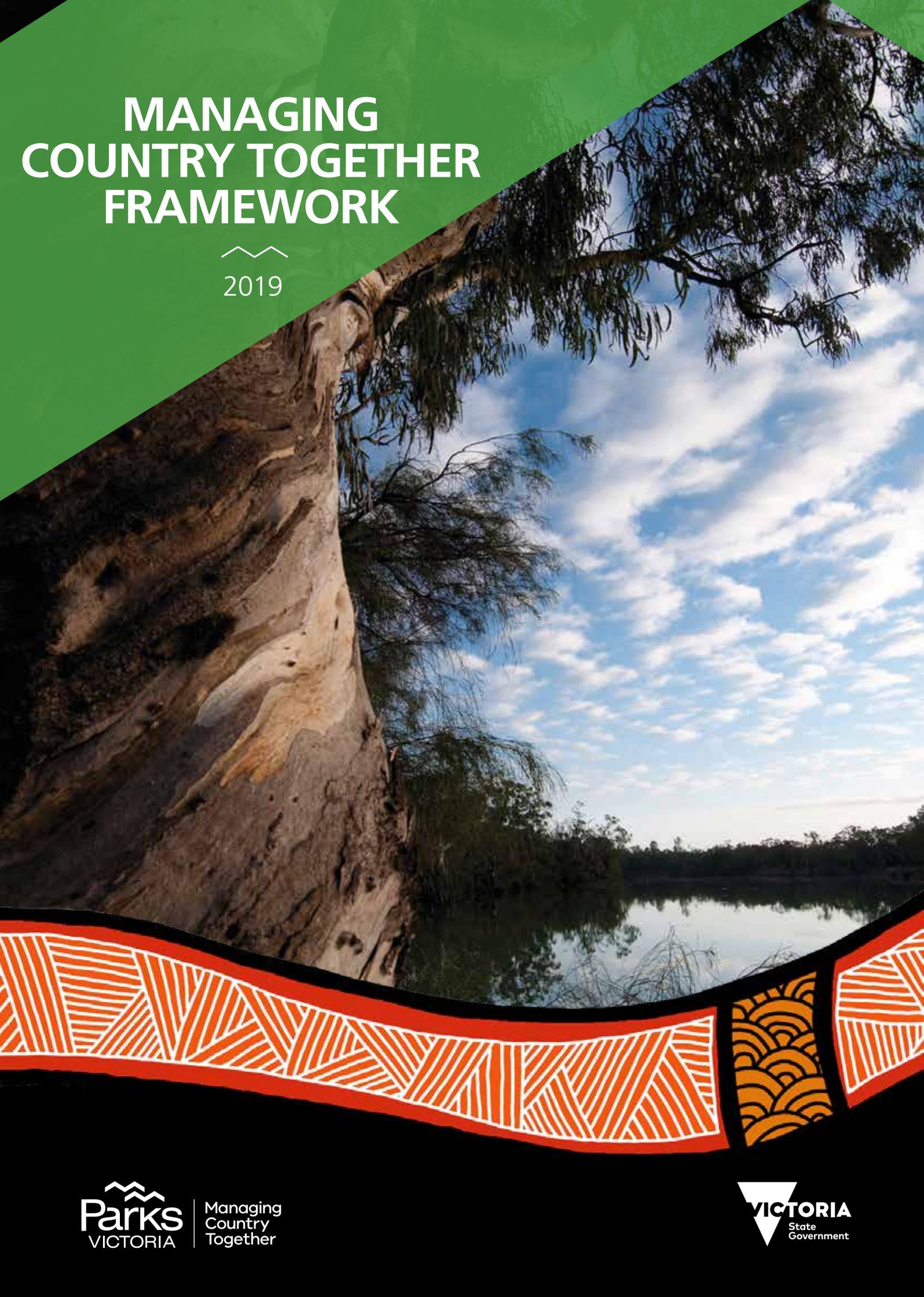
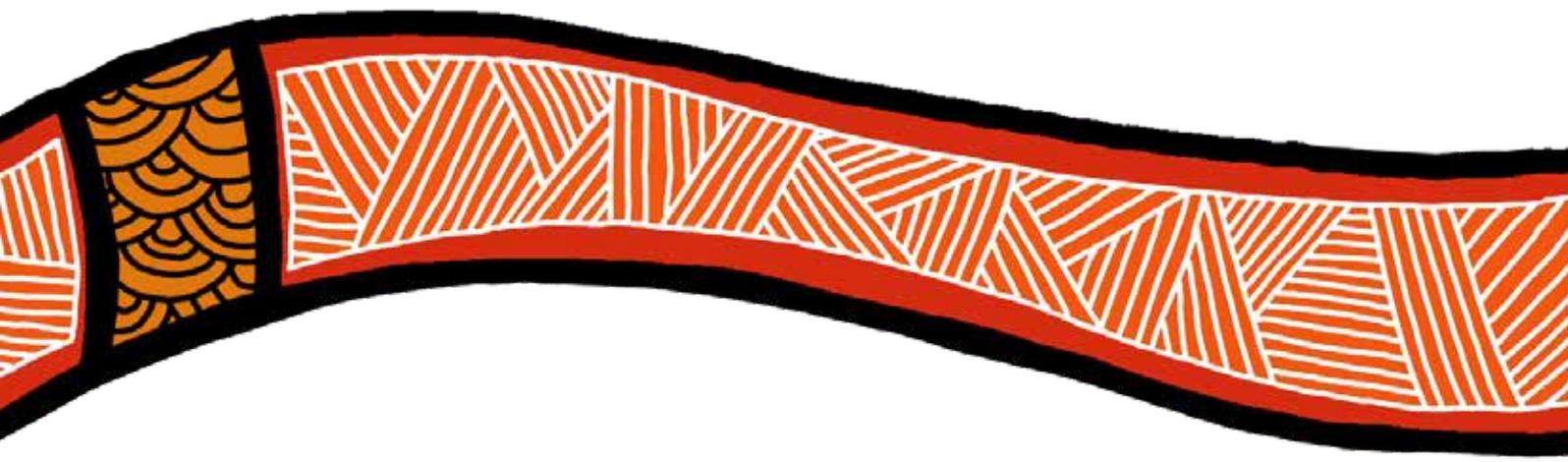


# MANAGING COUNTRY TOGETHER FRAMEWORK



2019

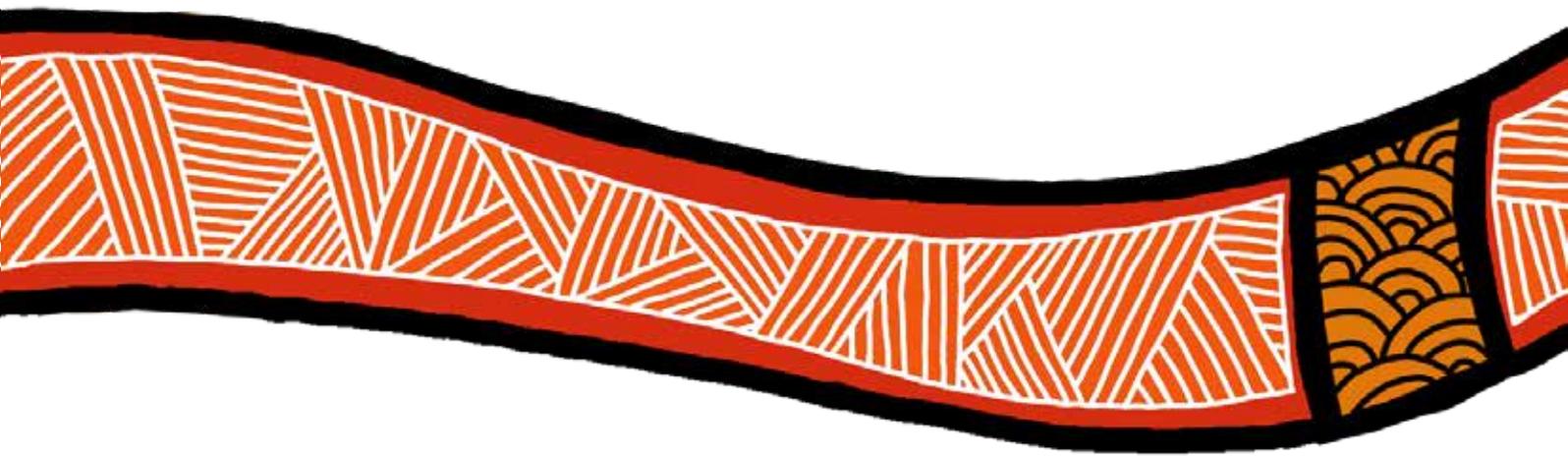




## Acknowledgements

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 ongoing role in caring for Country.

This Managing Country Together Framework outlines Parks Victoria's commitment to working in partnership with Traditional Owners to protect Victoria's cultural landscapes. It has been developed under the guidance of Parks Victoria's Aboriginal Engagement Committee, and with valuable input provided by Traditional Owner partners.



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# From the Chair

Being a world-class park management service means operating at the highest levels in all aspects of our work; with good governance, sound planning and effective management delivering high quality conservation outcomes for Victoria's natural and cultural heritage. It also means working in genuine partnership with Traditional Owners. The Managing Country Together Framework not only represents a clear commitment by Parks Victoria to implement government policy, but a philosophy to guide the continuous evolution of our organisation.

We are fortunate in Victoria to have a strong enabling environment for recognising Traditional Owner rights through the Government's commitment to self-determination for Aboriginal people. We have a recognition and land rights framework that is tailored to the needs and aspirations of Victoria's Traditional Owners, supported by the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, which provides a clear legal basis for recognising Aboriginal cultural rights. Along with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, these set the foundation for the Managing Country Together Framework.

The Framework will be a key input to the development and implementation of Victoria's first Land Management Strategy for the parks estate and will strengthen the delivery of the key themes in our Strategic Plan 'Shaping Our Future'.

**Connecting people and parks** by supporting Aboriginal people to be decision-makers and have an active role in the management of Country.

**Conserving Victoria's special places** including the unique tangible and intangible cultural values that exist across the parks estate.

**Providing benefits beyond park boundaries** through support for increased Aboriginal employment, wellbeing and the building of capacity in park management.

**Enhancing organisational excellence** by partnering effectively with Traditional Owners and operating with integrity and cultural competence.

Parks Victoria also has a responsibility for effectively engaging with the Victorian community to communicate what these developments mean and how they will create new opportunities and benefits for everyone. We are at an important juncture in the management of the Victorian parks estate, where the full range of values are being recognised and protected and Traditional Owner knowledge, management objectives and techniques hold the promise of achieving the outcomes we are all striving for.

We are committed to being global leaders in collaborative park management with First Nations, and we are committed to continuing to protect Victoria's cultural landscapes as Traditional Owners have done for thousands of years.

Jeff Floyd  
Chair

...we are committed to being global leaders  
in collaborative park management...

# From the Chief Executive Officer

Traditional Owner rights and responsibilities are increasingly being recognised over Crown land in Victoria, resulting in systematic changes to both tenure and governance arrangements.

Parks Victoria is at the forefront of this change. As managers of over four million hectares of Victoria's diverse cultural landscapes, we have an opportunity to embrace a new, collaborative park management future and lead the way in recognising and enabling Aboriginal cultural rights. We must reform the way we operate to share decision-making authority, support Aboriginal self-determination and partner directly with Traditional Owners.

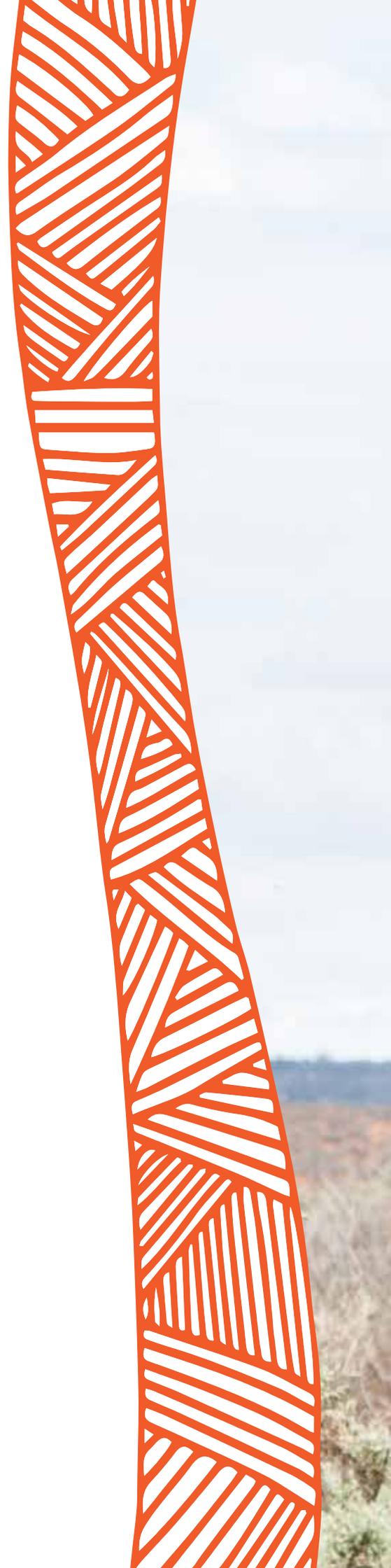
As an organisation we are committed to doing more than just meeting our responsibilities. While many of the initiatives outlined in the Managing Country Together Framework are ambitious, their effective implementation will demonstrate to others what meaningful partnerships with Traditional Owners can and should look like.

To be successful we will need to keep developing our own capacity. We will make sure the systems and processes we employ become more aligned and responsive to the rights, interests and capacities of Traditional Owner partners. We will develop innovative operational models and approaches that support the delivery of shared objectives, and we will commit to being a culturally safe and competent organisation that supports Aboriginal people to have fulfilling careers in park management.

These changes are a fundamental to the future of Parks Victoria – a future in which we will be effective land management partners, working with Traditional Owners to protect the natural and cultural values on the parks estate long into the future.

Managing Country Together is becoming our new business as usual.

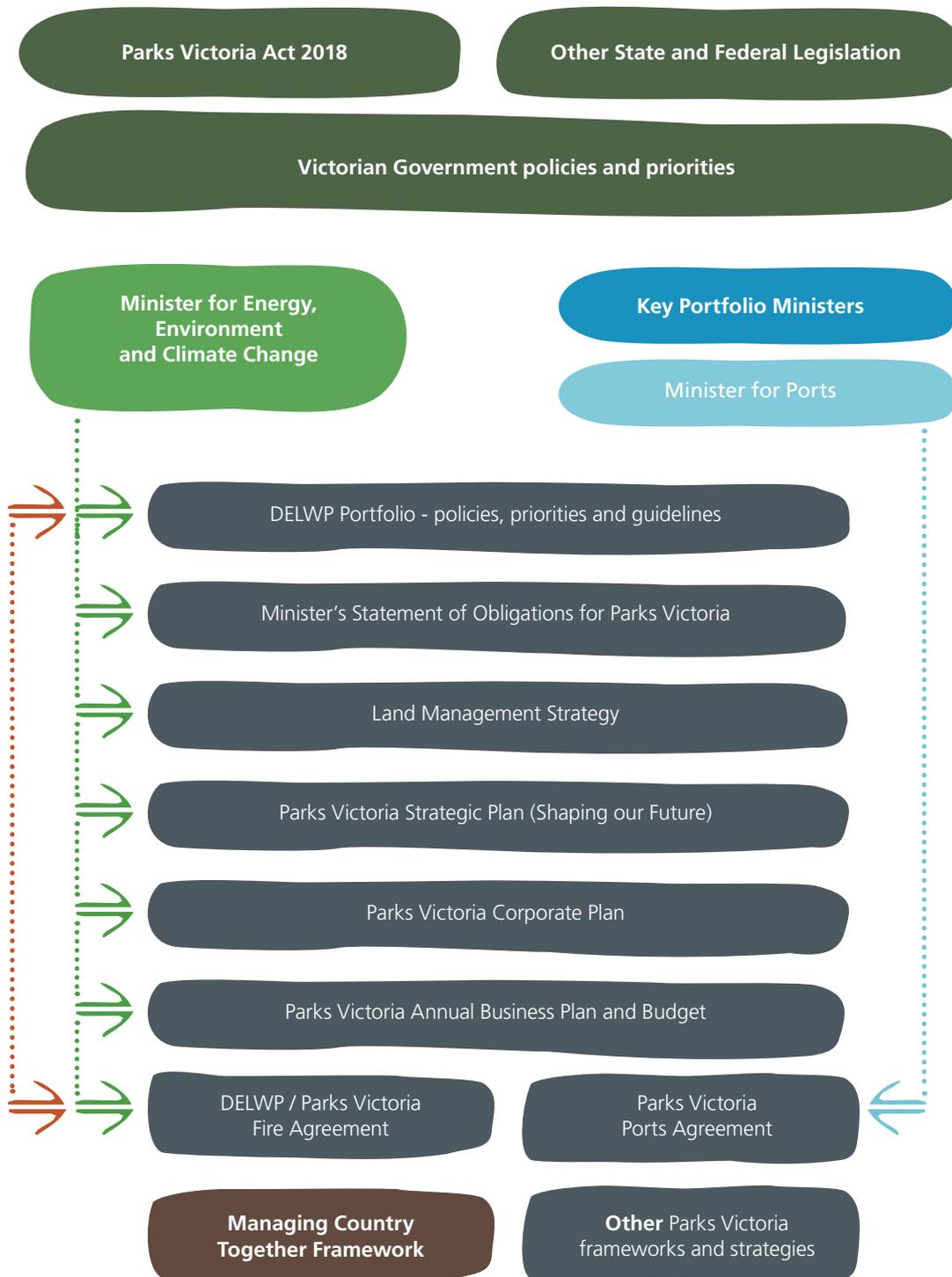
Matthew Jackson  
Chief Executive Officer



...Managing Country Together  
is becoming our new business as usual...



# Parks Victoria's Operating Environment





# About the Framework

The **Managing Country Together Framework** (the Framework) has been developed by Parks Victoria in response to important developments in the way the Victorian Government recognises and enables Traditional Owner rights and supports the self-determination of the Aboriginal community more broadly. It also recognises the growing capacity of the Traditional Owner community to engage directly in the planning, management and development of the parks estate.

The Framework represents a broad agenda that focusses on Traditional Owners as land owners and managers. It enables our organisation to become a better partner in park management and meet our obligations under the *Parks Victoria Act 2018*. The Framework will influence all parts of Parks Victoria's operations and help reinforce the new 'business as usual' approach for the organisation.

The audience for the Framework includes:

1. **Parks Victoria staff** – to increase understanding of the current drivers of change and rationale for action; to provide high level direction to enhance our engagement with Traditional Owners; and to communicate the strategic basis for our programs to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage, support Aboriginal employment and wellbeing and strengthen Traditional Owner partnerships.
2. **Victorian Traditional Owners** – to publicly convey our commitment to working together with Traditional Owners on all aspects of park management and supporting the aspirations of their communities.
3. **Victorian public** – to increase awareness of the opportunities and potential benefits that these developments and initiatives offer to the broader community.
4. **Government** – to demonstrate how Parks Victoria intends to meet its statutory obligations; contribute to the implementation of the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework and *Victorian Self-Determination Reform Agenda*; and provide leadership across the portfolio towards greater adoption of best practice standards in this vital area.

# Statement of Commitment

## Recognition

Parks Victoria recognises that Aboriginal people have lived throughout Victoria for more than a thousand generations, maintaining complex societies with many languages, kinship systems, laws, politics and spiritualities. Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants, or First Peoples, of this state. Land, along with water and natural resources, is central to Aboriginal existence and identity; it has always been subject to access and use rights – sustainably managed according to traditional laws and customs.

Parks Victoria recognises the devastation caused to these societies with the arrival of Europeans, including the loss of ancestral lands, separation of families and attempted suppression of culture. Aboriginal people were dispossessed and unable to assert their native title rights and interests. With successive governments expropriating and reallocating away their inherent rights to land, water and natural resources, Aboriginal people became the most disadvantaged in contemporary Australian society. Despite all of these systemic deprivations, Aboriginal communities, culture and underlying human rights continue to survive and persist.

Parks Victoria recognises that Aboriginal people make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the identity and wellbeing of this state, and that the people of Australia intend to rectify the consequences of past injustices. Both state and federal governments are increasingly acknowledging the special relationship that Aboriginal peoples have with their traditional lands through legal recognition and the hand back of Crown lands into traditional ownership.

Parks Victoria recognises that the world class network of parks and reserves under our management 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, physically and spiritually – making them products of enduring economic activity, material culture

and settlement patterns. These landscapes are tangible and intangible Aboriginal heritage - evidence of an ancient culture, which continues to live and offer deep insights into the defining characteristics of this Country.

Parks Victoria recognises that Traditional Owners have legal rights to practice their culture and interact with these landscapes as landowners and managers. The Victorian Government's progressive handback of these lands to Traditional Owners, together with the establishment of Traditional Owner Land Management Boards are one means of achieving practical reconciliation and land justice. Such developments are providing new opportunities for contemporary expression of Aboriginal culture and rights, which are becoming more broadly understood and celebrated throughout the Victorian community.

Parks Victoria recognises that under joint management, the parks estate will continue to provide valuable ecosystem services and products that benefit the whole community, as well as being an important platform for community and economic development for Traditional Owners, through job creation and potential commercial partnerships. The equitable sharing of benefits that derive from the use and management of the estate will be the subject of ongoing negotiations and innovative management practices.

## Commitment

Parks Victoria is responsible for maintaining a world class parks service that delivers on a range of government policies and legally binding agreements with Traditional Owner entities, on behalf of their communities. In line with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Victorian Public Service Code of Conduct, our organisation is committed to protecting and supporting the rights of Victorian Traditional Owners, including legal recognition, cultural freedoms and property rights.

Parks Victoria recognises that change needs to start from within, with a strong focus on building our own organisational capability and cultural competency to work in effective partnerships with Traditional Owners. Parks Victoria also recognises that we have an important role to play in supporting our Traditional Owner partners to achieve their aspirations, and to help ensure that the intended benefits of Recognition and Settlement Agreements are realised.

Park Victoria is committed to continuing to take action to build strong foundations of respect and collaboration with Traditional Owners; to improve land and sea management outcomes in Victoria's cultural landscapes; to help guide the transition into a new park management future; and to enhance visitor experiences and economic opportunities across the parks estate.

# Principles for engaging with the Victorian Traditional Owner community

The following ten principles are grounded in international best practice approaches for respecting and enabling the rights of Indigenous peoples and managing conservation lands.

Collectively, they describe how Parks Victoria endeavours to conduct its business with Victorian Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community in all aspects of park management. These principles support and align with the underpinning principles of the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework.

Principle 1

## Managing for cultural and natural values

Parks Victoria will consider Aboriginal cultural and natural values at least of equal importance in the management of the parks estate.



While Victoria's parks and reserves form core parts of our cultural landscapes, many are valued and managed only for their natural and recreational values. Aboriginal cultural heritage provides another lens through which to understand, appreciate and interact with these places. Better understanding and emphasising Aboriginal cultural values and objectives will help enable the right to practice culture, provide new visitor experience opportunities and improve management outcomes through a more holistic approach.

Principle 2

## Honouring formal recognition processes

Parks Victoria will work within existing legal frameworks and agreements, and respect the rights and authority of Traditional Owners.



Victoria is a cultural landscape which has been actively managed for thousands of years by groups of Aboriginal people with their own system of rights and recognition. The nature of post-colonisation history led to significant movement of Aboriginal people and, as a result, traditional ownership of some parts of Country is no longer clear. There are processes currently underway, developed in partnership between government and Traditional Owners, to clarify who has the right to speak for, access, use and be responsible for Country.

Principle 3

## Recognition of Traditional Owner priorities and aspirations

Parks Victoria will align with the priorities and goals of Traditional Owners in park management planning.



For many thousands of years, Traditional Owners have held cultural responsibilities to care for their Country, yet they are often excluded from the process of deciding how land and waters should be managed. Better aligning park planning processes with the priorities and goals of Traditional Owners will help to recognise the legitimacy, primacy and decision-making authority of Traditional Owners on their Country, while providing better park management outcomes and a stronger basis for Traditional Owners to engage in cultural activities.

Principle 4

## Effective collaboration and partnerships

Parks Victoria will negotiate partnership arrangements that are mutually beneficial and empowering for Traditional Owners, and appropriate to the context and capacity of partners.



There is a systematic handback of parks and reserves into traditional ownership underway across Victoria. As Traditional Owner property rights (and other rights) continue to be formalised, Parks Victoria will increasingly operate under joint management arrangements. There are also opportunities outside of formal agreements for Parks Victoria to enhance both public land outcomes and Traditional Owner development goals through different types of partnerships.

Principle 5

**Respect for Aboriginal governance systems and self-determination**

Parks Victoria will seek to understand, respect and appropriately engage with the decision-making structures and processes of Traditional Owner organisations.



Traditional Owners have an inherent right to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development and to govern themselves according to their own rules. Groups often have different governance protocols and approaches, which can be subject to change. The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework is strongly focussed on the principle of self-determination to create a new relationship between government and the Aboriginal community to achieve long-term generational change and improved outcomes.

Principle 6

**Appropriate engagement**

Parks Victoria will ensure that Traditional Owners are provided with adequate support and information to make informed decisions about issues that affect their lands, waters, natural resources and livelihoods.



Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is the underpinning requirement for respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples to participate fully and collectively in decision-making. It should apply to both legal and customary rights. Critical to FPIC is the design of engagement processes that respect traditional decision-making and facilitate broad participation.

**Free** without coercion, intimidation or manipulation

**Prior** before decisions have been made, with adequate time for deliberation according to local protocols

**Informed** ensuring that information is provided in a language and form that is easily understood, and the community understands the full implications of the decision

**Consent** a genuine right for the community to give or withhold consent.

Principle 7

**Locally-tailored approaches**

Parks Victoria will tailor the design of its engagement and partnership approaches to recognise unique social and landscape contexts, and characteristics of Traditional Owners communities.



There is great diversity among Victoria's Traditional Owners, and approaches that meet the needs of one group may not be suitable for others. Each Traditional Owner group has their own social protocols and operate in places that have their own pressures and needs. Parks Victoria recognises and respects that groups differ in their capacity to engage or deliver programs, and each group has its own priorities and preferences.

Principle 8

**Support for cultural expression**

Parks Victoria will enable Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community to access and use the estate for cultural purposes.



Aboriginal culture has developed over tens of thousands of years and continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary society and landscape change. Parks Victoria respects the right for Traditional Owners to maintain, practice and revitalise all aspects of their cultural and spiritual traditions – recognising that this requires continued use of, and access to, Country and traditional resources.

Principle 9

**Traditional Owner control of cultural heritage**

Parks Victoria will work directly with Registered Aboriginal Parties to ensure our compliance obligations are met and cultural heritage values are protected.



Traditional Owners have an inherent right to maintain, control and protect their cultural heritage values. Land management agencies have strict obligations under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* for how Aboriginal cultural heritage values are protected and managed. Traditional Owner organisations with Registered Aboriginal Party status have regulatory powers under the Act.

Principle 10

**Recognition of traditional knowledge, language and history**

Parks Victoria will work with Traditional Owners to appropriately incorporate their knowledge, information, language and historical experiences into park planning, interpretation and management.



Traditional Owners' connection to Country is embodied in a broad range of cultural elements – including language, stories and songlines; historical events; and ecological knowledge and land management practices. The sharing of knowledge and experience between generations is critical to the continuation of Aboriginal culture. Parks Victoria delivers education and interpretive programs and tours to nearly 200,000 people each year, and provides information through signage and brochures to many thousands more. Parks Victoria has a responsibility to ensure this information is accurate and respectful of Traditional Owners – which may celebrate their rich culture or acknowledge devastating historical events such as massacres. There is an opportunity to participate in truth-telling about our colonial past and how this intersects with the parks estate.

# Managing Country Together Framework

Our Managing Country Together Framework combines three key areas:

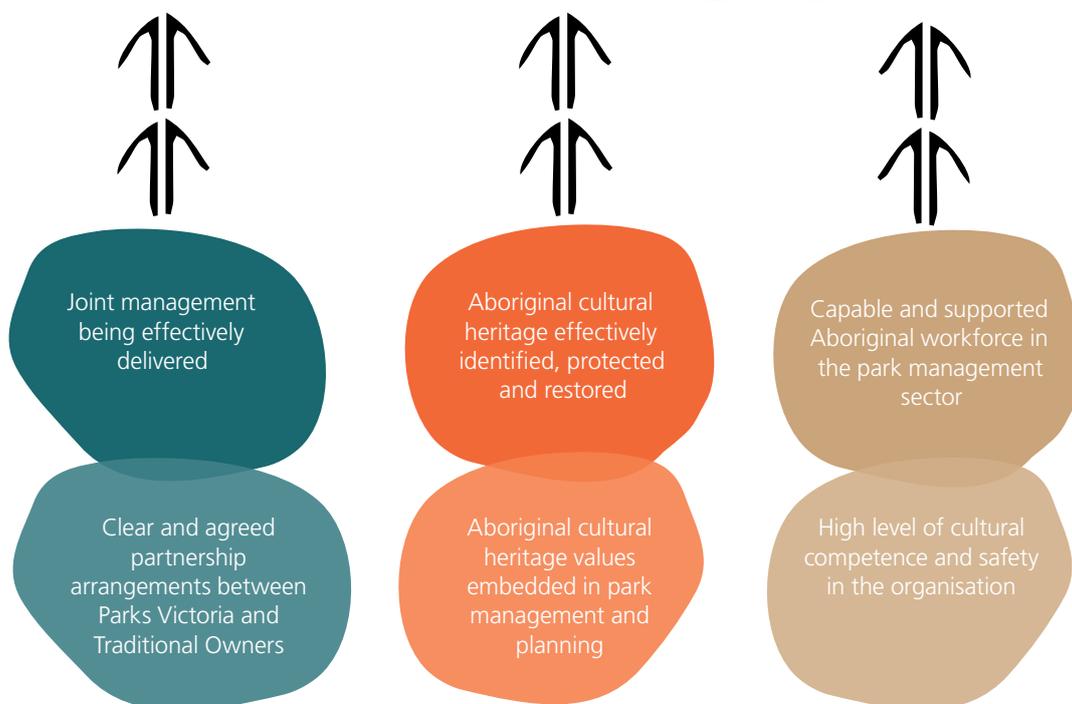
- strengthening partnerships between Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners
- better protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage values across the parks estate
- supporting Aboriginal people to work and thrive in the park management sector.

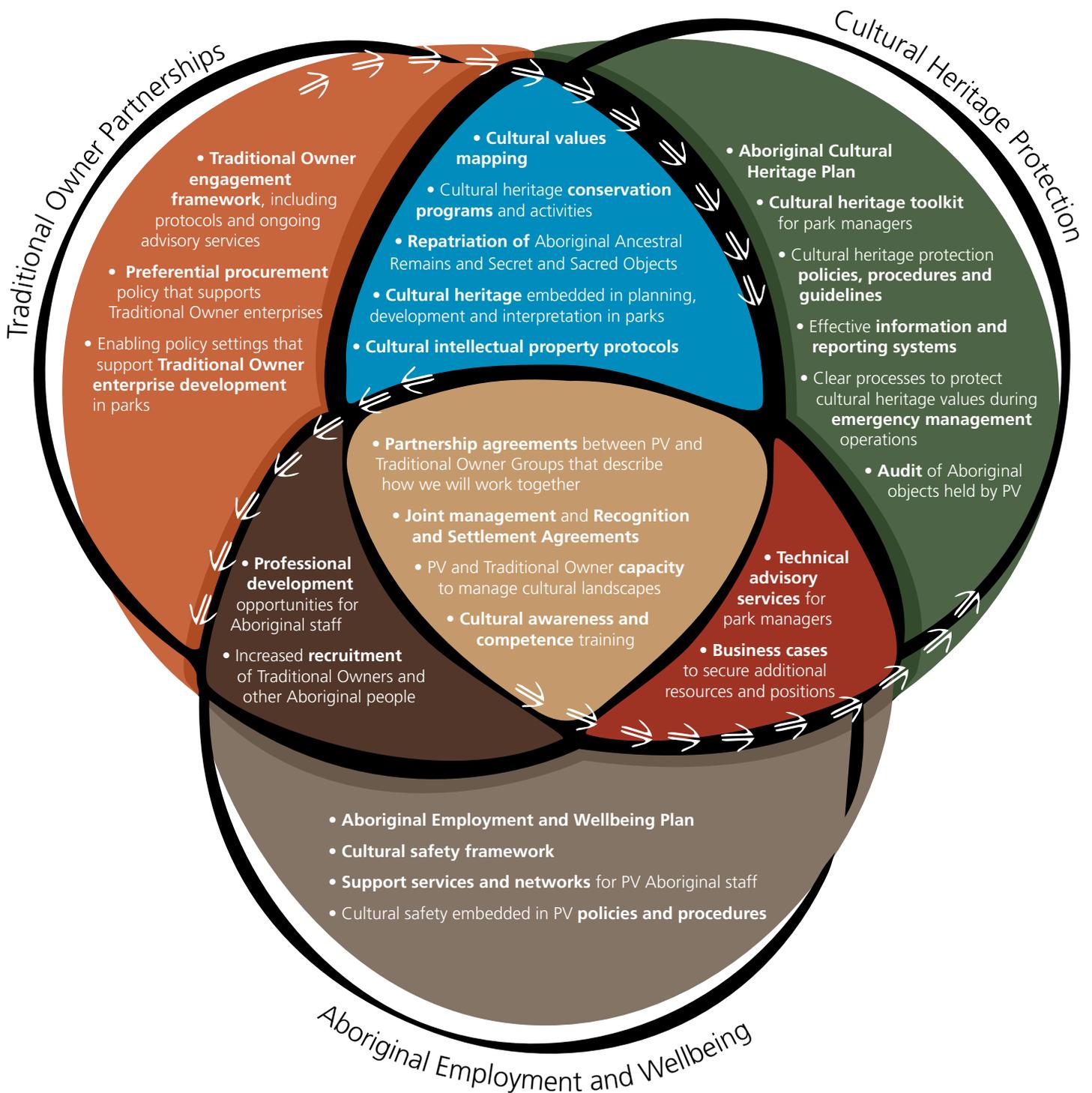
We have a long-term vision for park management in which we are working effectively in partnership with Traditional Owners to care for healthy cultural landscapes.

Our ten-year organisational outcomes align with the three Framework areas, and illustrate the future that we are working towards as an organisation. These six outcomes will become embedded in our ongoing business as usual.

## Healthy cultural landscapes managed in partnership with Traditional Owners

Supporting land, water, biodiversity and cultural heritage outcomes  
Promoting community health and wellbeing  
Providing appropriate and sustainable use of parks





The three areas of the Managing Country Together Framework are inherently linked – the success of each depends on the others and we will work on all of them in parallel. We have identified a range of practical areas for action that will help us deliver on our objectives for Managing Country Together and put our principles into

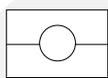
practice. Progressing these action areas will be supported by a change management plan, communications plan and evaluation plan that all parts of Parks Victoria share responsibility for implementing. All initiatives under this Framework will be subject to resourcing and prioritisation under Parks Victoria’s Corporate Plan.

# Self-determination and organisational reform

The Victorian Government is committed to acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal culture, values and practices and ensuring government operations and services meet the specific needs of Aboriginal Victorians.

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF), released in 2018, commits government to advancing Aboriginal self-determination through systemic and structural reform. It describes four self-determination enablers that direct how government should transform its systems and structures over the next five years:

## Self-determination enable



Prioritise culture



Address trauma and support healing



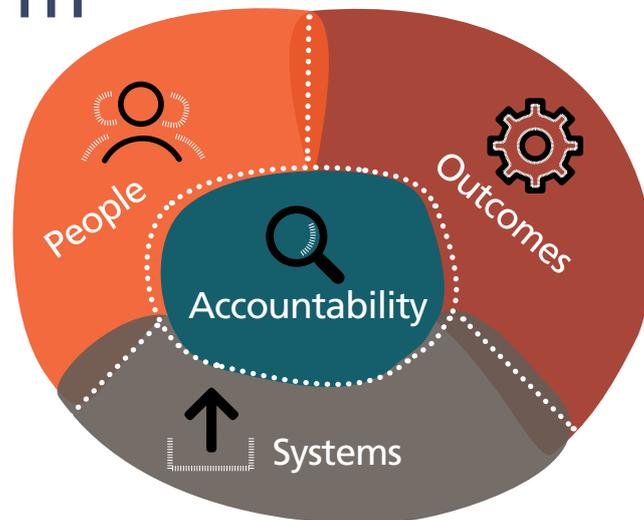
Address racism and promote cultural safety



Transfer power and resources to communities

Government actions to enable self-determination acknowledge that Aboriginal Victorians hold the knowledge about what is best for them, their families and their communities. While Aboriginal people drive self-determination, government is responsible for many of the systems and structures that can enable or hinder it.

The Victorian Government's 2019 Self-determination Reform Framework provides guidance to government departments and agencies on how to implement the VAAF. The Reform Framework builds on and updates the 2011 Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework, and the previous requirement of departments to develop Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans has been replaced by an architecture that consists of four domains: People, Systems, Outcomes and Accountability.



**People** – Building a culturally safe public service workforce that understands and has the capacity to enable Aboriginal self-determination in all policies and programs.

**Outcomes** – Adopting an outcomes-focused approach that will enable flexibility and Aboriginal leadership in government's efforts to embed the self-determination enablers.

**Systems** – Transforming government systems and structures to enable Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and strategic service provision by embedding the self-determination enablers.

**Accountability** – Establishing transparent, Aboriginal-led accountability of government and government-funded organisations to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to Aboriginal needs, priorities and aspirations, and that government action in Aboriginal affairs is consistent with the self-determination enablers and guiding principles.

The Managing Country Together Framework is a comprehensive framework that outlines Parks Victoria's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, and describes our systemic process for implementing the principles and directions outlined in the VAAF. The programs, initiatives and directions in Managing Country Together reflect Parks Victoria's organisational change agenda, as well as our contribution to whole-of-government outcomes. It includes actions in each of the four domains - these will form the basis for how we report annually into the Self-determination Reform Framework.

People are at the centre of effective management of Victoria's cultural landscapes. We recognise the importance of supporting more Aboriginal people to work in the park management sector – both within Parks Victoria and in Traditional Owner partner organisations. Underpinning this is the need to ensure we have a culturally competent and safe organisation. Through implementation of our Aboriginal Employment and Wellbeing Plan, we will:

- Deliver tools and training to increase cultural awareness across Parks Victoria and clarify expectations for working in effective partnerships with Traditional Owners.
- Develop an agency cultural safety framework that includes practical guidance to help us provide a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace.
- Work with Traditional Owner organisations to strengthen recruitment and career development opportunities to provide rewarding career pathways for Aboriginal people to work in the park management sector.

## People



Enabling self-determination is more than just talking the talk. We need to keep a firm eye on what we are trying to achieve, and make sure that the aspirations and preferences of Traditional Owners are front and centre. To ensure we are taking practical steps to secure real outcomes for First Nations, we will:

- Participate in Traditional-Owner led governance processes enable the effective delivery of joint management.
- Support Traditional Owners to strengthen the gathering, sharing and protection of cultural information in a way that is culturally appropriate and facilitates the protection of cultural values on the parks estate.
- Ensure Traditional Owner priorities and values are embedded in planning and budgeting processes that guide park management operations.



## Outcomes

## Systems



Putting our principles into practice means embedding them in the way we do our everyday business. Ensuring our systems, procedures and business practices are designed to support self-determination will put us on a strong footing to work towards our Managing Country Together objectives. To achieve this, we will:

- Negotiate direct partnership agreements with Traditional Owner partners to better support Aboriginal decision-making and ensure Traditional Owner aspirations and priorities are embedded in Parks Victoria business.
- Review our internal policies and procedures to ensure they support the delivery of Managing Country Together and Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework principles.
- Update Parks Victoria's Social Procurement Framework to facilitate preferential procurement for services delivered by Traditional Owners, in line with whole-of-government procurement policies.
- Develop engagement protocols to ensure all business areas of Parks Victoria are equipped to work respectfully and appropriately with Traditional Owners.



## Accountability

Working in true partnership with Traditional Owners means we need to be transparent about what we are doing and open to doing things differently. Our commitment to Managing Country Together is not static, it will be a continual evolution of how we work with Traditional Owners to manage cultural landscapes, informed by regular partner conversations. With partnership agreements at the core, we will:

- Develop an annual Managing Country Together report that outlines our progress against our objective and principles, and provide this information to Traditional Owner partners
- Proactively share information with Registered Aboriginal Parties about matters related to Aboriginal cultural heritage on their Country.
- Work with our joint management partners to align our evaluation frameworks, ensuring we are able to effectively track the impacts of our shared efforts.

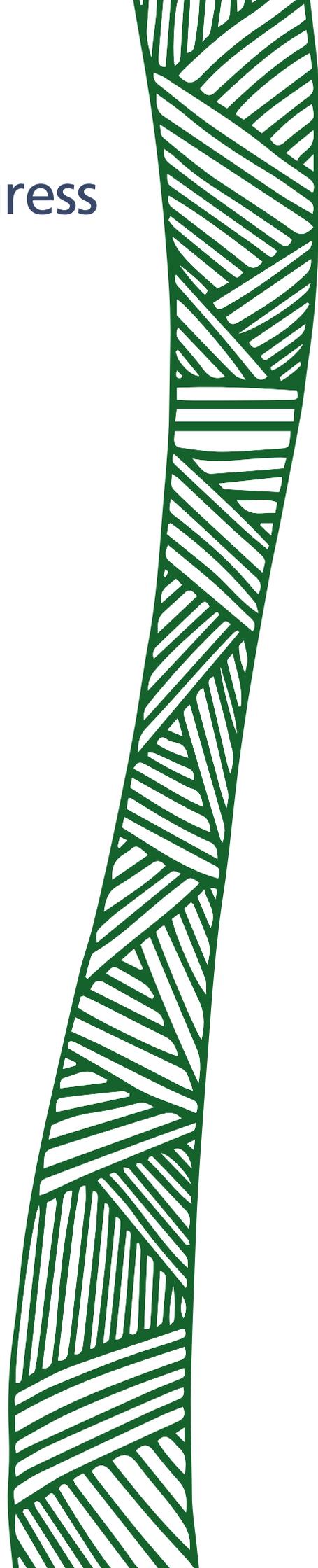
# Monitoring our progress

Our approach to Managing Country Together draws from global best practice standards for the management of protected areas, and delivers directly on the Victorian Government's commitments to support self-determination for Aboriginal people.

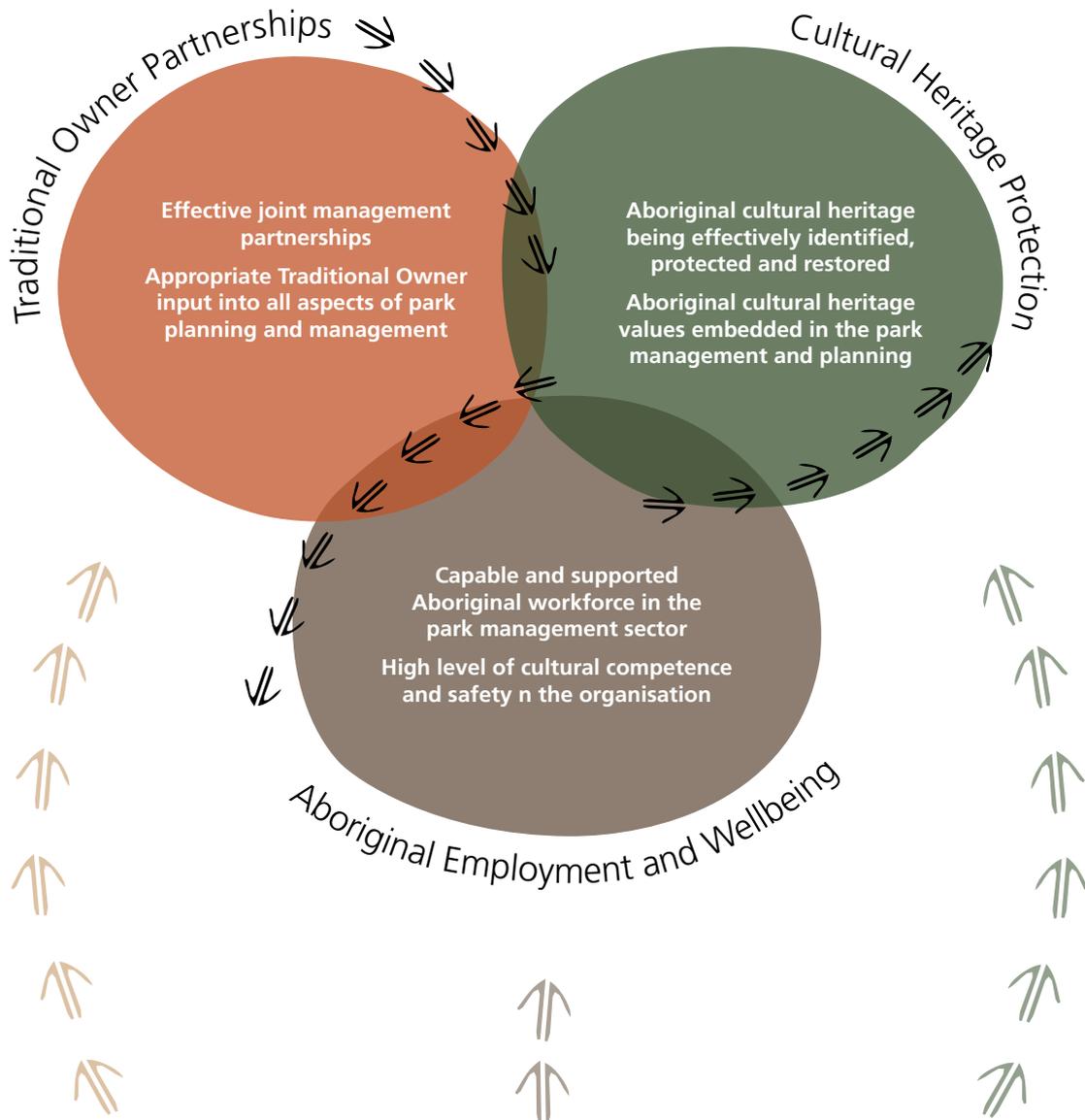
A selection of headline indicators will provide a high-level picture of progress towards our ten-year organisational outcomes. These will be monitored by the Board, through the regular reporting against the Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan & Budget, together with an annual Managing Country Together Report. We will first focus on benchmarking these indicators, to enable us to set meaningful targets that will help guide our future activities.

More detailed program indicators that reflect both the progress and effectiveness of implementation of different elements of the Managing Country Together framework will be monitored by the relevant Board Committee, the Executive Team or the relevant business area.

We will continue to report to Traditional Owner partners on shared commitments, and to the Victorian Government where Parks Victoria contributes to whole-of-government strategies and targets. We will also actively seek to share our experiences, perspectives and successes throughout our national and international networks, to support the broader park management sector to continually improve in cultural landscape protection approaches.



## Program Indicators



## Headline Indicators

Satisfaction of joint management partners

Percentage of actions in joint management operations plans implemented

Parks Victoria's cultural competence continuum rating

Average employment grade of Aboriginal staff at PV

Positions in Traditional Owner corporations and other partner organisations that have been supported or facilitated by PV

Incidences of harm and near misses to cultural heritage on the parks estate

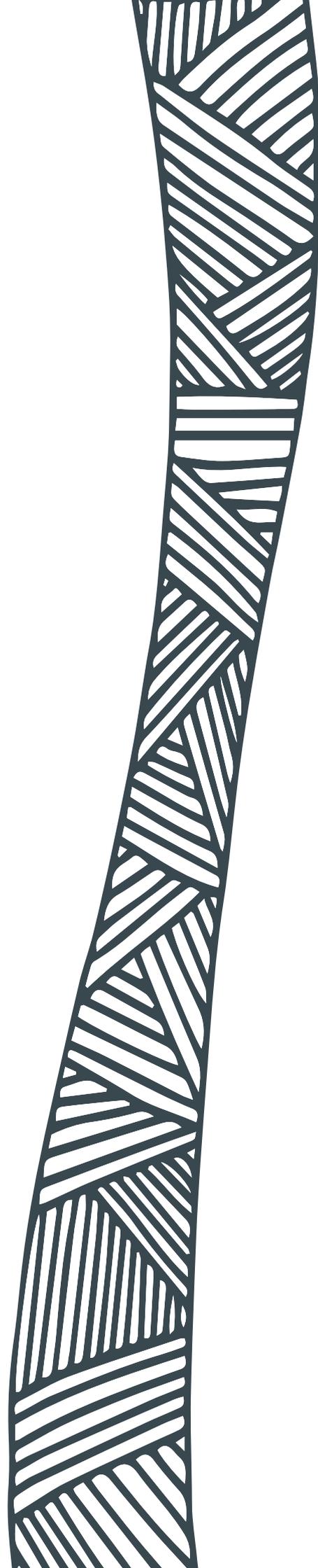
Percentage of the parks estate surveyed for cultural heritage values

Actions in Parks Victoria management plans that are related to Aboriginal cultural heritage

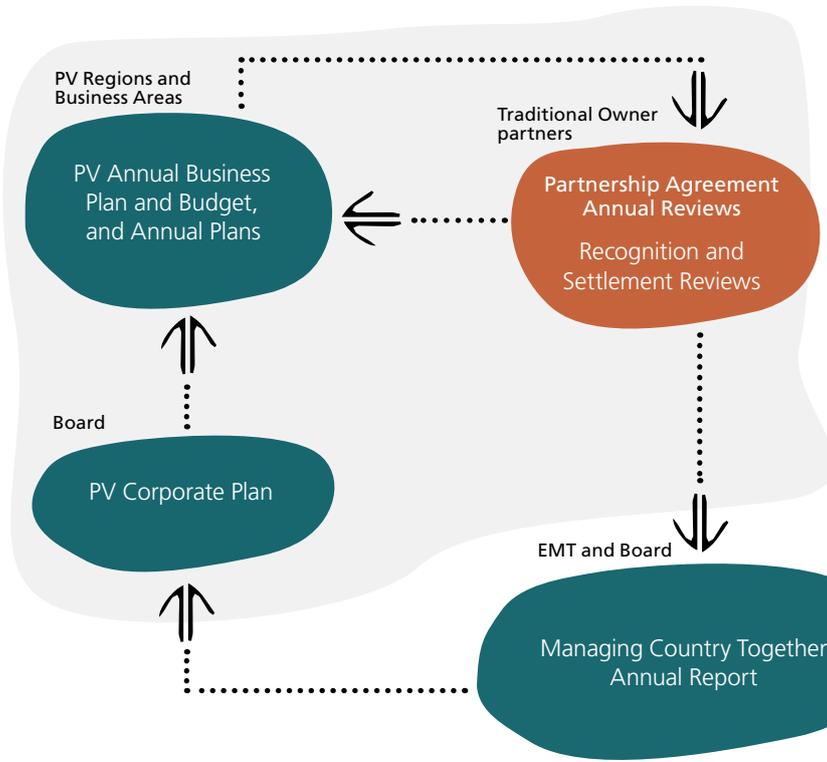
# Keeping ourselves accountable

Our efforts to monitor delivery and achievements of our Managing Country Together framework will feed into a broad range of reporting pathways, which will allow us to:

- ensure we are accountable for delivering on our promises
- enable us to continually improve and adapt our approaches
- quantify our contribution to broader government goals
- contribute to national and international policy dialogue about best practice approaches to protecting cultural landscapes.



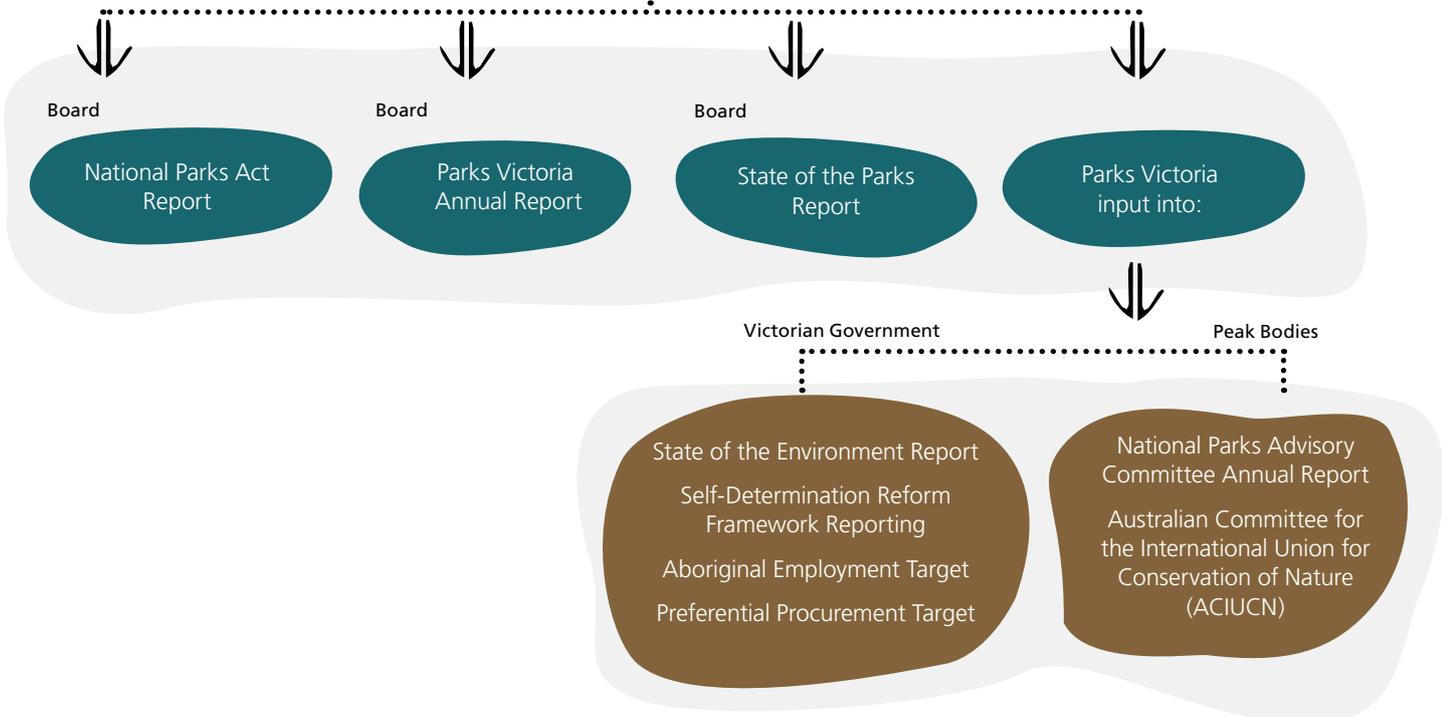
## Partnership planning cycle



## Reporting inputs



## Reporting outputs



# 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 cultural heritage** is living and includes:

- tangible values such as places, objects, landscapes, archaeological sites, past land-uses and industries, and built structures; and
- intangible values like song-lines, music, drama, skills, crafts, cultural practices and the other parts of culture that can be recorded but cannot be touched; that are of aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

**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 can support each other.

**Cultural competence** is more than just awareness of cultural differences, it is a set of behaviours, attitudes and policies that enable the organisation to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Individuals and organisations can be culturally competent when they:

- value diversity
- have the capacity for cultural self-assessment
- are conscious of the dynamics that occur when cultures interact and are aware of how personal values and biases can impact others
- have knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, customs and circumstances
- adapt how they operate to act in a culturally appropriate way.

**Cultural safety** – The term ‘cultural safety’ was first defined by the Maori nursing fraternity in New Zealand and is expressed as “an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need.” In the context of Aboriginal people working in Parks Victoria, and as partners in Joint Management, cultural safety refers to the environment, relationships and systems that enable individuals to feel safe, valued and able to participate in and express their culture, spiritual and belief systems, free from racism and discrimination. Parks Victoria aims to be a culturally safe place for all diverse groups represented in the organisation.

**Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)** – 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.

**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.

**Wellbeing** encompasses social, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual factors – all aspects of an individual’s life. In broad terms, social and emotional wellbeing is the foundation for physical and mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is a holistic concept which results from a network of relationships between individuals, family, kin and community. It also recognises the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry, and how these affect the individual.



### Meereeng

This artwork tells the story of the many communities in the hundreds of landscapes around the state who work with Parks Victoria to protect and manage Country.

The earth coloured bands depict the extensive mountain ranges that have provided shelter and food for Aboriginal people for thousands of generations. They criss-cross with the white striped band that represents the waterways that flow from these mountains across the landscapes.

The blue and green areas inside the bands show the borders between Traditional Lands that thrive on the waterways and mountain ranges that have been managed by our ancestors for thousands of years.

In the middle you will see two gum leaves - a symbol of good health. The veins in the leaves represent the the blood that runs through our People and their good health that depends on Country that is healthy.

Managing Country Together is the future of park management in Victoria. It is our way of recognising the inherent cultural rights of Victoria's Traditional Owners and the unique relationship that First Nations have with Country.

Managing Country Together is our commitment to working in partnership with Traditional Owners to heal and protect the cultural landscapes across the state, and ensure all people from Victoria and beyond can enjoy and appreciate the natural and cultural heritage values that make up the parks estate.

Artist: Gary Walker



