



Ngarrindjeri Partnerships Project

SNAPSHOT

Between 2007 and 2010, the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region experienced the worst drought in its history, pushing the region towards ecological disaster. A recovery project, jointly funded by the Australian and South Australian Governments, was undertaken by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) in partnership with the Ngarrindjeri, the Traditional Owners, to incorporate their values in the ongoing management of the region's natural resources.

Background

The Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert are a Ramsar-listed Wetland of International Importance, where the Murray River meets the sea. The Ngarrindjeri are the Traditional Owners and these lands and waters have sustained their culture and economy for thousands of generations. The Millennium Drought experienced in the early 2000s had a devastating impact on the region, reducing fresh water levels, affecting biodiversity and the wellbeing of the community. To support the South Australian Government's drought recovery response the Ngarrindjeri and the State entered into the Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement (KNYA). It established a negotiation framework and commitments to engage Ngarrindjeri in the development and implementation of the CLLMM Recovery Project.

The initiative

DEWNR worked with the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA) to co-design the CLLMM Ngarrindjeri Partnerships Project, building Ngarrindjeri organisational capacity to engage in natural resources management in the region and support the drought recovery process. Ngarrindjeri incorporated their values and objectives into key strategic plans and lay the foundation for future co-management of the region. Ngarrindjeri enterprises were also engaged in pest plant and animal control, plant propagation and planting, site preparation, reed translocation and Ruppia seed bank collection to bring the region's ecosystem back to life and support the long term priorities of the Ngarrindjeri. The Project also resulted in Ngarrindjeri brokering partnerships with the private sector that continue to deliver economic outcomes for the community.

PUBLIC VALUE FRAMEWORK



What outcome will be delivered?



Whose support is necessary?



How will the outcomes be delivered and who will be responsible?

EVALUATING FOR PUBLIC VALUE

Public value

Positive social and environmental impact: The effective and sustainable management of the region, through the incorporation of Ngarrindjeri cultural values contributed significantly to its recovery. As a result the NRA won the [Australian Riverprize in 2015](#), Australia's top award for river basin management. The project has also ensured that the knowledge and values of the Ngarrindjeri people will be a significant part of the ongoing management of the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

Increased economic opportunity: By employing Ngarrindjeri enterprises, the project delivered economic development opportunities to the community. As a result, Project Ngarrindjeri Ruwe Contracting secured a labour hire arrangement with Fulton Hogan, employing Ngarrindjeri to support the regional roll out of the National Broadband Network. Research and training initiatives were also supported to build skills and experience.

Increased governance and self-determination: DEWNR and NRA co-designed the project, which supported the NRA to employ its own staff to engage in regional natural resources management and build the capabilities of the NRA. This included support for the NRA's Yarlular-Ruwe Program, a governance forum for the NRA to coordinate its engagement with internal Ngarrindjeri stakeholders.

Legitimacy & support

Clear objectives: The project contributes to achieving the SA Strategic Plan target to improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal South Australians, the Economic Priority to make SA a destination of choice as well as the [goals of the NRA](#).

Political and cultural authority: The project was part of a commitment between the South Australian Government and the Ngarrindjeri through the KNYA. Ngarrindjeri cultural heritage assessments and associated reports were prepared for all ongoing initiatives to address any concerns and identify opportunities for Ngarrindjeri development.

Stakeholder & community support: Funding was made available to engage a Ngarrindjeri consultant in the development of feasibility assessments. Ngarrindjeri were engaged prior to the signing of the funding agreement between South Australia and

the Australian Government to ensure that their values and experience were incorporated within the project.

Operational capability

Structures and mechanisms: The project was co-designed and co-delivered and the commitment to engage with the Ngarrindjeri people was backed through appropriate resources and support to ensure that both sides were able to participate fully in the process. Engagement began early in the project and occurred at all levels, with the establishment of a KNYA Taskforce composed of representatives from DEWNR and NRA. This was supported by project level working groups with representatives from both State Government and Ngarrindjeri. The project also supported a framework for the NRA to engage with representatives from across the Ngarrindjeri community.

Resources: \$5.3m was provided to the NRA from 2010 to mid-2016. The department had staff dedicated to supporting early and ongoing engagement with the Ngarrindjeri community. A large component of the CLLMM Recovery Project Vegetation Program was also allocated to Ngarrindjeri specific activities to provide the resources needed to ensure Ngarrindjeri cultural perspective was central to the project.

Following the end of funding through the CLLMM Recovery Project, DEWNR and the NRA continue to work together on state funded projects in the region.

For more information:

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