

CHAPTER 1.1

NGARRINDJERI NATION YARLUWAR-RUWE PLAN: CARING FOR NGARRINDJERI COUNTRY AND CULTURE: KUNGUN NGARRINDJERI YUNNAN (LISTEN TO NGARRINDJERI PEOPLE TALKING)

NGARRINDJERI NATION¹ WITH INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION
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INTRODUCTION

In 2009 the Ngarrindjeri Nation in South Australia (SA) negotiated a formal *Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan* Agreement (KNY — Listen to what Ngarrindjeri have to say) with the State Government that recognised traditional ownership of Ngarrindjeri lands and waters and established a process for negotiating and supporting Ngarrindjeri rights and responsibilities for Country (Rigney et al. 2015). The KNY strategy has provided the framework for the South Australian Government to support Ngarrindjeri to build their core capacity to engage in Caring for Country activities during initiatives such as the *Murray Futures* Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery Project and to become long-term contributors to regional Natural Resource Management (see Hemming et al. 2011; Chapter 4.5). Central to brokering progress in improved Ngarrindjeri engagement with government was the *Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan* ('the plan'), a foundational management planning document prepared by Ngarrindjeri leaders in 2007 on behalf of the Ngarrindjeri Nation to communicate the Ngarrindjeri vision for caring for their lands and waters (Ngarrindjeri Nation 2007). Prior to the plan, Ngarrindjeri had been effectively excluded from regional planning engagements, and their aspirations had been silent in management plans and the implementation of these plans. The plan's vision makes clear the essential link between the wellbeing of Ngarrindjeri individuals, families and communities and the interconnectivity with lands and waters. A key purpose of the plan was to better educate government and non-government agencies, researchers and the wider Australian public on Ngarrindjeri connection to Country and their associated rights and obligations to *Yarluwar-Ruwe*. In doing so, the plan clearly links Ngarrindjeri cultural, social and economic perspectives to the broad Caring for Country vision — which encapsulates *Ruwe/Ruwar* — and to goals, strategies and objectives for Ngarrindjeri *Yarluwar-Ruwe*. It is now officially recognised by both state and federal governments and continues to frame Ngarrindjeri negotiations impacting the health of Ngarrindjeri lands and waters. The following chapter reproduces a section from the plan.

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NGARRINDJERI CONCERN FOR COUNTRY

Our Lands, Our Waters, Our People, All Living Things are connected. We implore people to respect our *Ruwe* (Country) as it was created in the *Kaldowinyeri* (the Creation). We long for sparkling, clean waters, healthy land and people and all living things. We long for the *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (Sea Country) of our ancestors. Our vision is all people Caring, Sharing, Knowing and Respecting the lands, the waters and all living things.

Ngarrindjeri Vision for Country

Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan

(Listen to what Ngarrindjeri people have to say)

Our Goals Are:

For our people, children and descendants to be healthy and to enjoy our healthy lands and waters.

To see our lands and waters healthy and spiritually alive.

For all our people to benefit from our equity in our lands and waters.

To see our closest friends — our *Ngartjis* (special animals) — healthy and spiritually alive.

For our people to continue to occupy and benefit from our lands and waters.

To see all people respecting our laws and living in harmony with our lands and waters.

About the Ngarrindjeri Sea Country Plan

The *Ngarrindjeri Sea Country Plan* has been prepared by Ngarrindjeri people to help government agencies, natural resource managers, researchers, industry and the wider Australian community to better understand and recognise rights and responsibilities to our *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (Sea Country), including the lower Murray River, Lakes, Coorong and adjacent marine and land areas. Our vision for our Sea Country is based on the relationship between our people and our Sea Country which goes back to Creation. The river, lakes, wetlands/nurseries, Coorong estuary and sea have sustained us culturally and economically for tens of thousands of years.

Owing to the abuse and misuse of Ngarrindjeri lands and waters by non-Indigenous people, and the denial of Ngarrindjeri rights and interests, we now find that, as the Traditional Owners of our lands and waters and all living things, we must stand up and speak out to save our *Ruwe* (Country) before we reach the point of no return.

Part 1 of the *Sea Country Plan* introduces our people and culture and explains our relationship with our Sea Country. Over the last 200 years, there have been attempts to break that relationship with our *Yarluwar-Ruwe* and we continue to feel the pain of these onslaughts.

We have been witnessing the destruction of our precious lands and waters by newcomers who do not understand their new surroundings and who do not or will not respect our rights and obligations to Country.

Part 2 describes the background and processes that led to the development of this *Sea Country Plan*, and outlines the major issues that are addressed later in the document. It explains that this is the second *Sea Country Plan* to be funded by the Australian Government's National

BOX I.1.1

The Indigenous People of the Lower River Murray, Lakes and Coorong, known as the Ngarrindjeri, first flew and adopted this flag on 21 November 1999 on Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island).



Figure I.1.1 Ngarrindjeri Flag. (Designed by Matt Rigney)

The 18 dots represent the 18 Laklinyeris (tribes) that make up the Ngarrindjeri Nation. The spears represent the traditional fishing spears of the Ngarrindjeri. The boomerang is the Sacred Boomerang that, when thrown, circles the Laklinyeris, informing their clan leaders to attend a Nation Meeting called *Tendi* (which makes and interprets Ngarrindjeri Law). The blue represents the waters of Ngarrindjeri Country. The sun gives life. The ochre colour of the boomerang represents our mother — Mother Earth.

Oceans Office³ as part of the implementation of the *South-east Regional Marine Plan* that was released in 2004.

Part 3 outlines the issues, objectives, strategies and priority actions that we intend to address to realise our vision for the future of our Sea Country. While some of these strategies and actions may challenge existing management arrangements, they are all consistent with our human rights, cultural rights and cultural obligations, and they are laid out here in keeping with our values of caring and sharing that always has been the Ngarrindjeri way.

Part 4 explores opportunities for partnerships for implementing our *Sea Country Plan*. We review other major plans, policies and laws that have been developed for our Sea Country by government agencies and other organisations. We look for areas of common ground and explain how support for our *Sea Country Plan* can assist government agencies and others to

³ This office was part of the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

meet their own objectives and commitments, and work towards a more sustainable future for humankind and all living things of creation.

We invite you to read our *Sea Country Plan* carefully and commit yourself to working with us for the benefit of our shared future and for our land and waters upon which we all depend.

NGARINDJERI PEOPLE AND COUNTRY

Ngurunderi and The Creator

A long, long time ago Ngurunderi our Spiritual Ancestor chased *Pondi*, the giant Murray Cod, from the junction where the Darling and *Murrundi* (River Murray) meet. Back then, the River Murray was just a small stream and *Pondi* had nowhere to go (Fig. 1.1.2). As Ngurunderi chased him in his bark canoe he went ploughing and crashing through the land and his huge body and tail created the mighty River Murray. When Ngurunderi and his brother-in-law Nepele caught *Pondi* at the place where the fresh and salt water meet they cut him up into many pieces, which became the fresh and salt water fish for the Ngarrindjeri people. To the last piece Ngurunderi said, ‘You keep being a *Pondi* (Murray Cod)’.

As Ngurunderi travelled throughout our Country, he created landforms, waterways and life. He gave to his people the stories, meanings and laws associated with our lands and waters of his creation. He gave each *Lakalinyeri* (clan) our identity to our *Ruwe* (country) and our *Ngarrjtis* (animals, birds, fish and plants) — who are our friends. Ngurunderi taught us how to hunt and gather our foods from the lands and waters. He taught us, don’t be greedy, don’t take any more than what you need, and share with one another. Ngurunderi also warned us that if we don’t share we will be punished (see *Thukeri* story below).

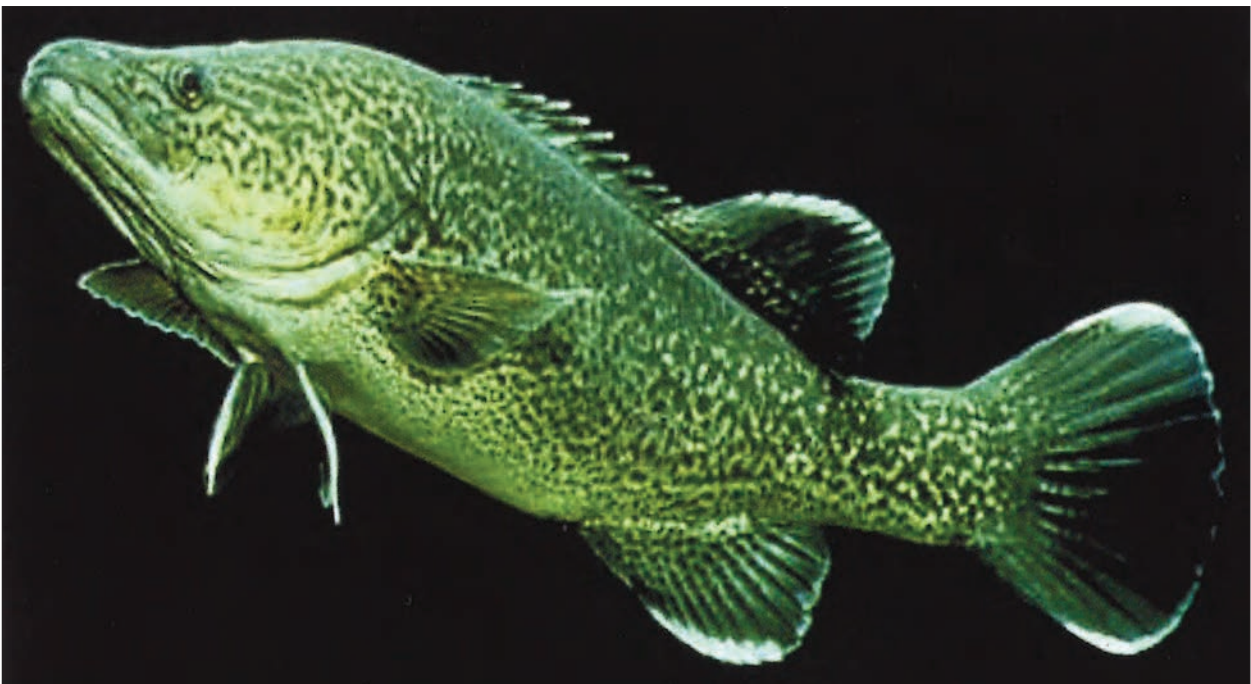


Figure 1.1.2 *Pondi* (Murray Cod). (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority)

Thukeri (Bony Bream) Story

A long time ago two Ngarrindjeri men went fishing in a bay near Lake Alexandrina to catch the *thukeri mami* (bream fish) (Fig. 1.1.3). They set off in their bark canoe to catch the big fat *thukeri*. They fished and fished until their canoe was over full and they said we have plenty of *thukeri* we will paddle to shore before we sink. As they paddled to shore they saw a stranger coming towards them so they covered up the *thukeri* with their woven mats they said this man might want some of our *thukeri*, when they approached the shore the stranger said to them hey brothers I'm hungry have you got any fish to share, but the two Ngarrindjeri men said no we haven't got many fish we only have enough to feed our families. So the stranger began to walk away then he turned and said you have plenty of fish and because you are greedy and don't want to share you will not enjoy the *thukeri* fish ever again. As the stranger walked away the two Ngarrindjeri men laughed at him. When the two Ngarrindjeri men unloaded the *thukeri* on to the banks to scale and clean them, they saw that their nice big fat *thukeri* were bony and they didn't know what had happened. The two Ngarrindjeri men went home to the campsite in shame and told the Elders what had happened. The Elders were angry and said the stranger was Ngurunderi our Spirit Ancestor and because you two were greedy and would not share with him he has put a curse on our *thukeri mami*. Now all the Ngarrindjeri people will be punished.

Ngarrindjeri respect the gifts of Creation that Ngurunderi passed down to our Spiritual Ancestors, our Elders and to us. Ngarrindjeri must follow the Traditional Laws; we must respect and honour the lands, waters and all living things. Ngurunderi taught us our *Miwi*, which is our inner spiritual connection to our lands, waters, each other and all living things, and which is passed down through our mothers since Creation.

Our Great Grandmothers, Grandmothers and mothers fought to protect our Spiritual waters from desecration when a bridge to *Kumarangk* (Hindmarsh Island) was to be built.

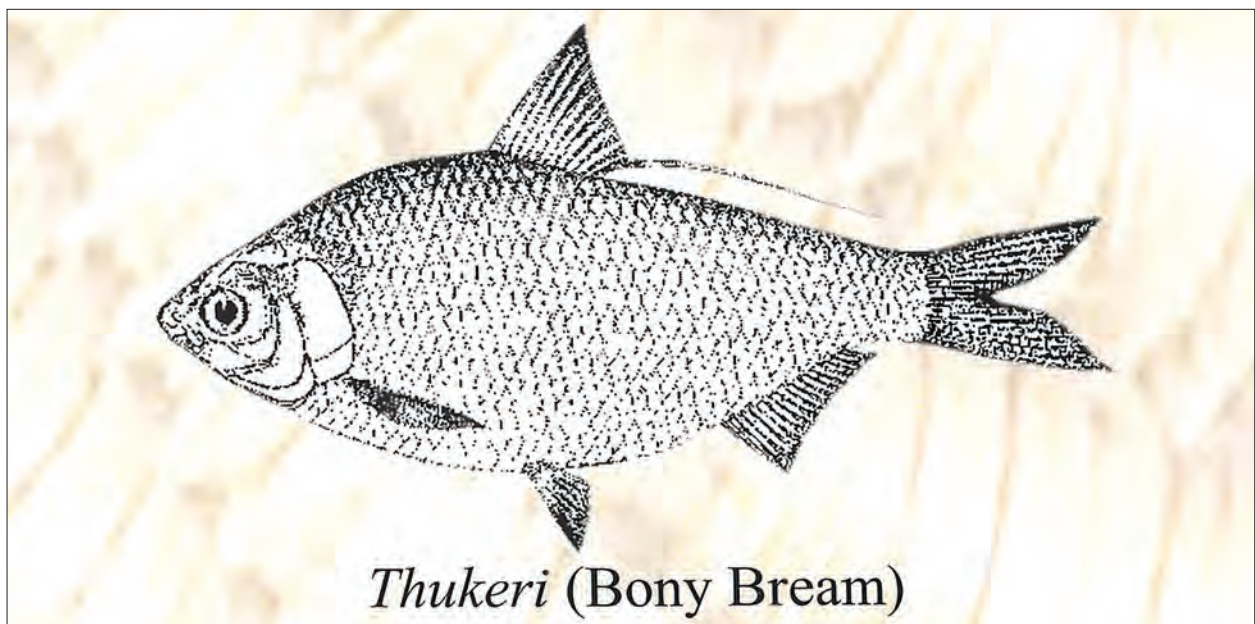


Figure 1.1.3 *Thukeri* (Bony Bream). (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority)

Now we fear a new proposal to build a twin lakes system in Lake Alexandrina which would further destroy the creation of our lands and waters (Fig. 1.1.4).

Ngurunderi taught us how to sustain our lives and our culture from what were our healthy lands and waters. Our lands and waters must be managed according to our Laws to make them healthy once again. As the Ngarrindjeri Nation we must maintain our inherent sovereign rights to our *Yarluwar-Ruwe*. Ngarrindjeri people have a sovereign right to make our living from the lands and waters in a respectful and sustainable way (Figs. 1.1.5-1.1.8).

We are asking non-Indigenous people to respect our traditions, our rights and our responsibilities according to Ngarrindjeri laws.

Ngarrindjeri have occupied, enjoyed, managed and used our inhabited lands and waters, since Creation.

We were here when the sea level began rising about 18 000 years ago, and our ancestors watched the sea flooding over our coastal plains (see Fig. 1.1.8). We were here when the sea



Figure 1.1.4 Ngurunderi's Creation Journey. (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority)

stabilised at its current level about 5 000 years ago. Our Creation stories record these dramatic changes. We were here when the European invaders began stealing our land and our resources; killing our people and our *Ngartjis*, such as *Kondoli* (whale) and *Paingal* (seal); polluting our rivers, lakes and Coorong; and draining our wetlands/nurseries. And we are still here!



Figure 1.1.5 Pellampellamwallah Ngarrindjeri woman wearing a rush and fibre cloak. She is carrying fire and a bundle of bulrushes — an important food and fibre source. (Artist G.F. Angas, courtesy of South Australian Museum)



Figure 1.1.6 A man of the Milmendura tribe wearing a seagrass cloak. (Artist G.F. Angas, courtesy of South Australian Museum)



Figure I.1.7 Ngori (pelicans). (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of David Sjoberg)

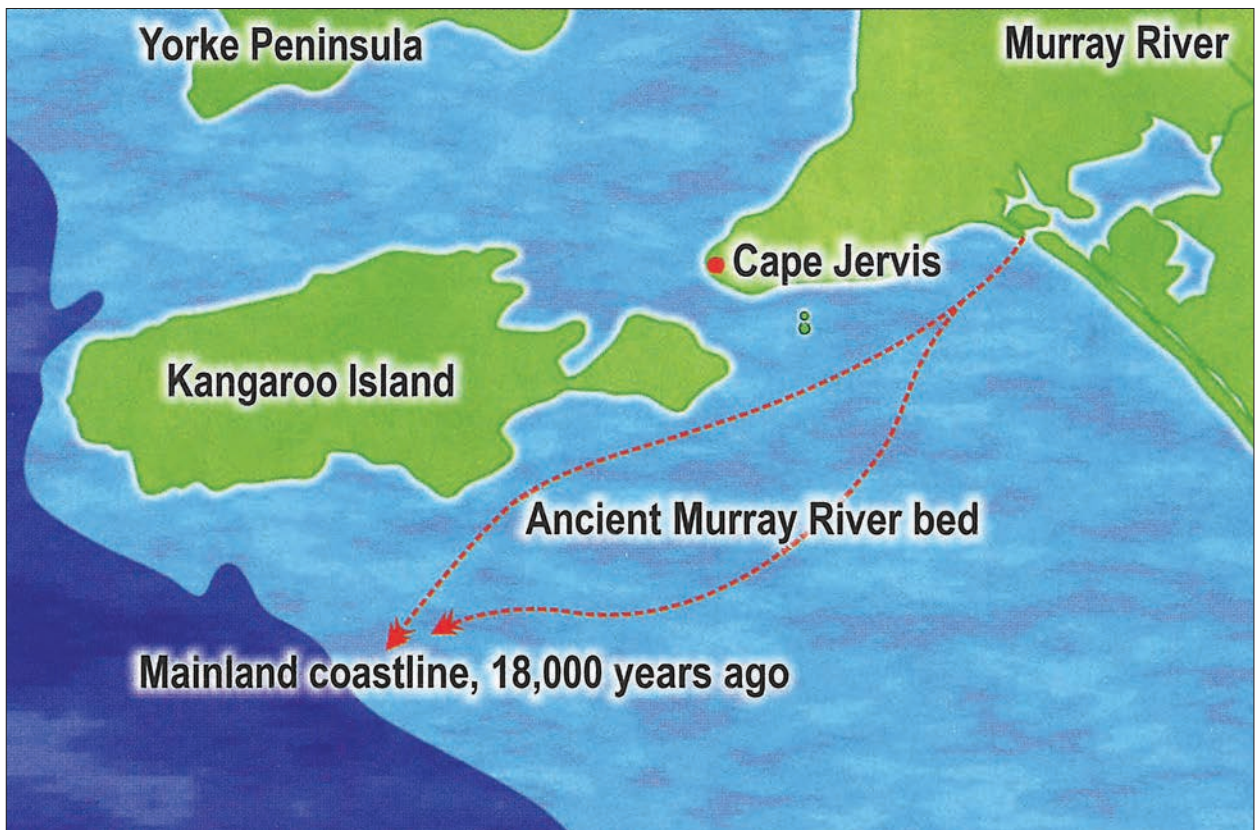


Figure I.1.8 Changing coastline over 18 000 years. (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority)

Because of the richness of our natural resources and our sustainable use and management of them, our Sea Country supported among the highest density of Aboriginal population anywhere in Australia prior to European invasion. Our population at that time has been estimated to be about 6 000 people.

Our culture and economy have always depended on the resources of our *Yarluwar-Ruwe*. We used and continue to use the resources of the land, but it was the saltwater and freshwater environments that provided us with most of our needs. Such was the wealth of sea and marine life such as fish, shellfish, eels, waterbirds and water plants that we have always lived a settled lifestyle. Our knowledge of our Sea Country will continue to underpin our survival and our economy. *Tendi*, our formal governing council, ensured and will continue to ensure our stable and sustainable society, which maintains our obligations to Sea Country.

Our creation stories and oral traditions have been passed down from generation to generation and with them a detailed knowledge of our *Yarluwar-Ruwe*. We developed many tools and other equipment to harvest and process our Sea Country resources, including fish nets, fishing weirs, spears, lines, snare traps, decoys, bark canoes, reed rafts, large floating fishing platforms and woven baskets (Fig. 1.1.9). Our capacity for storing food enabled us to organise large gatherings of Ngarrindjeri people to engage in trade, ceremonies and other social activities with neighbouring nations.

Ngarrindjeri people speak a common Ngarrindjeri language. We comprise several peoples, each with particular knowledge about areas of Ngarrindjeri Sea Country. We are all linked through creation stories, creation trails and sites, ceremonies and sacred places. Central to Ngarrindjeri shared culture is the creator ancestor Ngurunderi whose travels and actions created the River Murray, the Lakes, the Coorong and coastal Hummocks, our lands, waters, fish and resources.

Towards the end of his journey Ngurunderi placed his *Yuke* (canoe) into the dark night sky where it became *Warriewar* (the Milky Way). Like other creation stories, Ngurunderi's journey ended at Kangaroo Island from where he ascended into the sky and became the bright star in *Warriewar*. Ngurunderi's story also refers to the role of ancestral women (in this case Ngurunderi's two wives) in creating the Country we know today.

Both men and women hold special cultural and environmental knowledge and both men and women have always been involved, and continue to be involved, in passing down our knowledge between generations and in decision-making about Ngarrindjeri affairs, land waters and resources (Fig. 1.1.10). Ngarrindjeri people hold cultural and spiritual connections to particular places, to particular species of animals and plants, and all elements of the environment are part of our kinship system. Particular animal and plant species are the *Ngartji* (totem or special friend) of Ngarrindjeri people, who have special responsibility to care for their *Ngartji*. To care for *Ngartji* is to care for country.

The waters of the seas, the waters of the *Kurangk* (Coorong), the waters of the rivers and the lakes are all spiritual waters. The Creation ancestors taught us how to respect and understand the connections between the lands, the waters and the sky. The place where the fresh and salt waters mix is a place of creation where our *Ngartjis* breed. Our women fought to protect these spiritual waters by objecting to the building of the bridge to *Kumarangk* (Hindmarsh Island). Any future plans affecting these waters must respect our cultural traditions and beliefs.



Figure I.1.9 Making a fishing net at Encounter Bay in 1844. The seated woman is softening the bulrush-root fibre by chewing it; the man is rolling the fibre to make cord for a net like the one on the roof of the whale-bone hut. (Artist G.F. Angas, courtesy of South Australian Museum)

We implore non-Indigenous people to respect the *Yarluwar-Ruwe* as it was created in the *Kaldowinyeri* (the Creation).

Our Old People have rejoiced the return to Ngarrindjeri *Yarluwar-Ruwe* of *Kondoli* our whale ancestors. Some of our *Ngartjis* have not returned to our lands and waters. We mourn the loss of our closest friends. We fear for the animals, fish, birds and all living things in our seas and waterways. We hope that the growing awareness of non-Indigenous people will not be too late. We know that many of our *Ngartjis* travel to other countries during certain times of the year and therefore we have a cultural responsibility to care for each other's *Ngartji*, and to care for each other's lands and waters. We have always recognised our responsibilities and connections to other parts of Australia and to distant lands. In recent times we have learned that our *Ngartjis* travel to places such as Great Turtle Island (North America) and various other countries.

Our Ngarrindjeri Vision for Our Sea Country must remain strong, for the health and survival of our brothers and sisters in distant lands that rely on our *Ngartjis* — birds, fish and other animals — that are nourished by our *Yarluwar-Ruwe* and travel over long distances.

The land and waters are a living body. We the Ngarrindjeri people are a part of its existence. The land and waters must be healthy for the Ngarrindjeri people to be healthy. We say that if *Yarluwar-Ruwe* dies, the waters die, our *Ngartjis* die, then the Ngarrindjeri will surely die.



Figure I.I.10 Ngarrindjeri rafts with windbreaks and fires (1840). (Artist A.C. Kelly, courtesy of State Library of South Australia)



Figure I.I.11 Ellen Trevorrow: Ngarrindjeri Basket Weaver. (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of Vespa Tjukonai)

We ask non-Indigenous people to respect and understand our traditions, our rights and our responsibilities according to Ngarrindjeri laws and to realise that what affects us, will eventually affect them (Fig 1.1.11).

IMPACT OF EUROPEAN INVASION AND SETTLEMENT

Since European arrival, terrible crimes have been committed against the lands, the waters and all living things, and against the Ngarrindjeri People. Ngarrindjeri are living with the pain and suffering from the acts of terror and violence that were inflicted upon our Old People. This pain has been passed down to us through the generations. Our lands and waters were stolen, our children were stolen and our Old People's bodies were stolen from our burial grounds.

The first Europeans to arrive on our Country were supposed to make Treaties with Ngarrindjeri for the use, purchase and occupation of our lands and waters. The *Letters Patent of 1836* (Fig. 1.1.12) that authorised the British colonisation of the 'Province of South Australia' expressly sought to protect our traditional rights to land and resources in the following words:

... Provided Always that nothing in those our Letters Patent contained shall affect or be construed to affect the rights of any Aboriginal Natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or enjoyment in their own Persons or in the Persons of their Descendants of any Lands therein now actually occupied or enjoyed by such Natives.

These provisions of the *Letters Patent* were the foundation on which the Ngarrindjeri vision for Sea Country could have been built, but sadly the South Australian Company ignored the written orders from King William IV of England.

In 2003, based on provisions of the *Letters Patent* and similar protections provided in legislation relating to the establishment of the Colony of South Australia, we petitioned the South Australian Government to transfer title of Crown land to Ngarrindjeri people and to negotiate a Treaty with us. So far there has been no response to our genuine request as Traditional Owners of our lands and waters for a Treaty and just settlement (Fig. 1.1.14).

Our contact with Europeans began in about 1810, when sealers operating from Kangaroo Island kidnapped Ngarrindjeri women and introduced venereal diseases. Soon after, other introduced diseases such as smallpox took a heavy toll on our people.

The stealing of our land by the South Australian authorities was illegal according to the instructions of the British Crown. Farmers and other settlers began occupying these stolen lands in about 1840. This was swiftly followed by destructive changes to our environment, the effects of which continue to impact on us today.

In 1840 a party of non-Indigenous survivors from a wrecked brig, the *Maria*, made their way along the *Kurangk* (Coorong) from near present-day Kingston. A year or so earlier another ship wrecked party was safely escorted along the *Kurangk* coast back to Adelaide. Ngarrindjeri stories tell of laws being broken by some members of the *Maria* party and violence occurring leading to the killings of the survivors. In response to the reported killings of the *Maria* survivors, a punitive expedition was sent from Adelaide to the area. Under the leadership of



Figure 1.1.12 Letters Patent of 1836 establishing the Province of South Australia. (From State Records South Australia — GRG2/64, courtesy of Government of South Australia).

Major O’Halloran, Ngarrindjeri were shot and several men were summarily hanged. No trial was held and even at the time this was recognised as a serious breach of British justice.

Since the 1860s successive South Australian governments have supported the construction of a huge network of agricultural drains in the south-east of our Country. Water that once brought life to a vast expanse of wetlands was drained into the sea, and the Coorong and



Figure I.1.13 A large Ngarrindjeri *ngowanthe* (hut) on the hill overlooking Raukkan (Point McLeay Mission) on the shores of Lake Alexandrina in about 1880. The hut is a solid construction, with a timber frame and a windbreak extension. Fishing nets and spears can be seen. (Photographer S. Sweet, courtesy of South Australian Museum)



Figure I.1.14 Presenting the Ngarrindjeri Petition to the South Australian Governor, Marjorie Nelson-Jackson, in 2003. (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of David Sjöberg)

other inland wetlands have been denied their major source of freshwater. As a result of this destructive land management, the Coorong, for thousands of years a major focus of our culture and economy, began to deteriorate and is rapidly dying today. According to recent scientific studies two thirds of the Coorong is irreparably damaged.

From 1935 to 1940 the South Australian Government funded the construction of five barrages at the southern end of Lake Alexandrina for the purpose of preventing the flow of saltwater into Lake Alexandrina and the Murray River (Fig. 1.1.15). Until that time, saltwater mixed with fresh water and sometimes travelled great distances up the river and the ecosystems of the lakes and the river had depended on the mixing of saltwater and freshwater.

The barrages were built at the request of European landowners and without the consent of Ngarrindjeri people. For the last 65 years we have witnessed the decline in the health, wildlife and other resources of the lakes and the river, made worse by the deliberate introduction of exotic species, such as the European Carp and destructive farming practices such as dairy farming, irrigation, land clearing and cattle and sheep grazing.

In 1859 a Christian Mission was established by the Aborigines' Friends Association at Point McLeay (now Raukkan Community), which provided a refuge for some Ngarrindjeri people who had been forced from their lands. However, missionaries such as George Taplin believed that the only way for Ngarrindjeri people to survive was to adopt European traditions and to become Christians. This meant that our language, traditional belief systems, culture and heritage was not valued by the South Australian government and the majority of the non-Indigenous community, and was undermined by the missionaries. We know that in 1836 the British Crown recognised our human rights through the *Letters Patent* and our equitable rights as British subjects. We also recognise that some South Australians have long supported, and continue to support, our human rights.

Threats to our traditional beliefs and sacred places have continued into recent times. The proposal to build a bridge to *Kumarangk* (Hindmarsh Island) during the 1990s directly threatened Ngarrindjeri women's and men's cultural beliefs and cultural sites. The majority of Ngarrindjeri people rejected the unjust outcome of the 1995 Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission. In 2001, a Federal Court decision by Justice Von Doussa completely contradicted the findings of the Royal Commission, but by then the bridge had been built, our beliefs desecrated and our sites destroyed.

Although Ngarrindjeri have watched the continuing destruction of our lands and waters we will always respect Our Laws of Sharing, Caring and Respect. Because of our knowledge, our inherent rights to our lands and waters, and our Cultural Spiritual responsibility we must be recognised as equal partners in caring and sharing for Country. Until our rights and responsibilities are acknowledged and respected this pain, suffering and continued denial of our inherited rights will be passed down to our children and their children's children.

We seek a just settlement of the past, recognition of our inherent rights in our *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (Our Country), an apology for the pain and suffering inflicted upon us, and compensation that will provide us with the resources to build a healthy future for our children and our grandchildren.

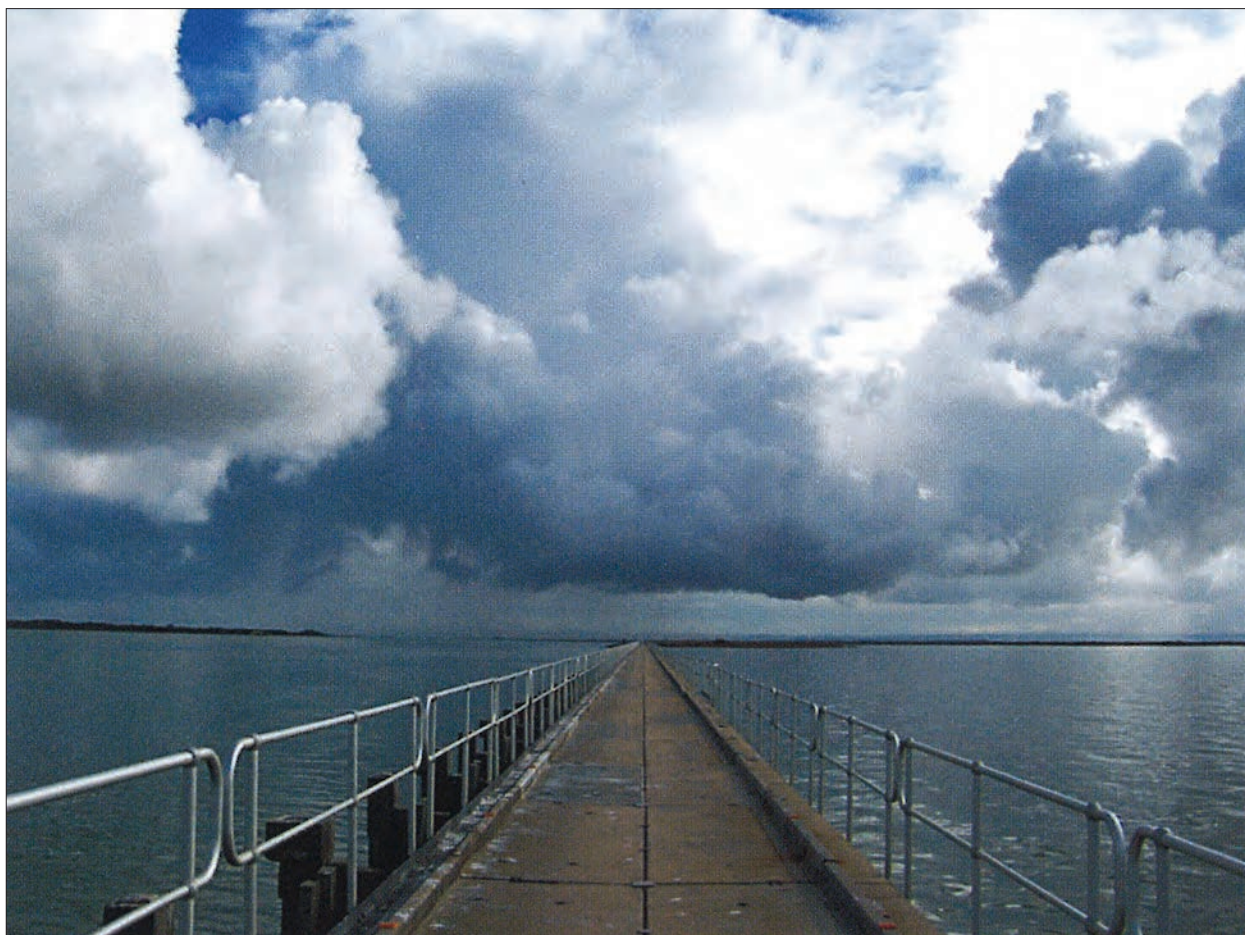


Figure 1.1.15 Tauwitchere Barrage near the Murray River mouth. (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of David Sjoberg)

We want to build partnerships, through *Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan* Agreements, on foundations of trust and respect — this is the path our leaders have chosen. We congratulate the vision of the Alexandrina Council in signing the first ever *Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement* with the Ngarrindjeri Nation which includes a ‘sincere expression of sorrow and apology to the Ngarrindjeri people’.

We have long understood that for our rights, culture and heritage to be respected we must actively help the wider community to understand our history, our traditions, our beliefs and way of life. For more than 20 years we have operated a unique residential cross-cultural awareness and education facility at Camp Coorong, near Meningie (Fig. 1.1.16). Many thousands of Australians of all ages and backgrounds have attended courses and workshops at Camp Coorong and we have been encouraged by their willingness to listen to our side of the story and to reassess their own understanding of Australia’s history and peoples. To counter ongoing challenges and threats to our cultural beliefs, special places and traditional practices, we will continue to engage in cross-cultural awareness teaching and we look forward to sharing our knowledge of culture and Country with many more Australians and international groups in the years ahead.

Our Old People taught us to Share with others. We invite all who respect us to join with us in our responsibility and duty to Care for Country. Let us walk together to build a healthy future for our children, our grandchildren and all generations to come.

Climate change

Ngarrindjeri have long experience with climate change and sea-level changes. *Kaldowinyeri* stories provide important teachings about the flooding of Ngarrindjeri lands and the changes to rivers and coast lines. Our Old People have watched the impacts of the degradation of their lands and waters since European invasion. Ngarrindjeri today recognise the huge impacts of global warming on their lands and waters and all living things.

In recent years we have observed changes in the local environment that indicates climate change is a reality. We see that the breeding behaviour of birds is changing, and the fruiting and flowering of certain Ngarrindjeri bush foods is changing. We have watched fresh water holes dry up or turn salty and coastal camping places and middens washed away by rising sea levels. When we lose such places we lose not only part of our cultural heritage, but we also lose an irreplaceable record of Ngarrindjeri adaptation to climate change in the past.

We have also noticed that some of their animal and plant species have declined in size and abundance, and some species have disappeared altogether.

We support the Kyoto Protocol, and the Ngarrindjeri Nation is willing to work with all levels of governments to reverse the damage done by industrialisation, bad farming practices and unsustainable lifestyles.



Figure 1.1.16 Tom Trevorow (Deceased), Ngarrindjeri Elder, teaching Ngarrindjeri traditions on Ruwe. (From Ngarrindjeri Nation (2007), courtesy of David Sjoberg)

CONCLUSION

The Ngarrindjeri worldview has gained high-level acceptance in the non-Indigenous context through official State Government recognition of the *Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan* (2007) and the KNY agreement-making strategy. The plan and its vision, which encapsulate the Ngarrindjeri philosophy of being (*Ruwel Ruwar*), have been at the centre of recent Ngarrindjeri interventions in Natural Resource Management, including the successful translation of the plans, goals and objectives into the *Murray Futures* project. The *Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan* is a clear example of Ngarrindjeri speaking as Country (*Yannarumi*) — the right and responsibility to speak as Country. It carries with it reference to Ngarrindjeri law, a Ngarrindjeri assessment of what constitutes wellbeing and guidance on the changes required to achieve Ngarrindjeri the vision for Country. In keeping with this vision, and working within the original intent of the KNY Agreement, Ngarrindjeri have recently further developed the KNY framework to include Speaking as Country agreements, which acknowledge that Ngarrindjeri speak for, control and care for their Country. In signing these agreements, parties commit to listening to Ngarrindjeri ‘Speaking as Country’ (Rigney et al. 2015). The Ngarrindjeri strategic approach, based on formal agreements and processes, careful planning and funded programs, continues to implement the *Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan* with its long-term vision of securing improved wellbeing for community, family, individuals and lands and waters within the Coorong, Lakes and Lower River Murray Region in South Australia.

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