



Gooniyandi

HEALTHY COUNTRY PLAN

Gooniyandi Healthy Country Plan

Warning: This plan may contain images, names and references to deceased Aboriginal people.

The Gooniyandi Healthy Country Plan was prepared for Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation by:

**Frank Weisenberger (KLC)
Gooniyandi Traditional Owners
Ewan Noakes (KLC)**

The information presented in all the maps and figures herein reflects Traditional Owner views.

Design and layout: Jane Lodge

Mapping: Ewan Noakes

Citation: *Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation / Kimberley Land Council (2015): Gooniyandi Healthy Country Plan.*

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Story of the plan



Sam Cox, Mervyn Street—Gooniyandi Native Title determination

Gooniyandi people have a strong and deep connection to their country and in 2001 our combined Native Title Claim was registered with the National Native Title Tribunal. Twelve years later the Gooniyandi consent Native Title determination was handed down by the federal court recognising our native title rights and interests. Map 1 shows the location of our Native Title Claim.



Map 1: Location of Gooniyandi Native Title claim

The Gooniyandi Healthy Country Plan explains how Gooniyandi people want to look after their country and culture. In the modern times it is important that we don't forget the vast knowledge of our ancestors and elders and bring it together with best-practice science to ensure that our country stays healthy and our knowledge and values are passed on to future generations.

Like many of our neighbouring groups we used the Healthy Country Planning (HCP) approach, which is based on the "Open Standards for the Conservation of Nature," a planning approach that has been successfully used in many parts of the world. This planning framework has been adapted in the North of Australia to create a planning tool that allows us to address natural and cultural values equally and that lets us find the balance between western scientific approaches and traditional knowledge and values. We wrote this plan so others can understand our aspirations for

Healthy Country Management and that our Rangers have guidance on how to look after country.

When we were going through the community consultation meetings we identified the most important things to look after, called “targets” in HCP-language, assessed their viability, called “health” in HCP language and connected them to threats that are affecting those values. We then workshopped the objectives and strategies that help us to look after our targets and reduce some of the threats.



TOs at Marnjoowa

This Healthy Country Plan is set out in different parts:

- ▶ Pages 2 to 5 give an introduction to our country and our people
- ▶ Pages 6 to 23 explain our vision for Gooniyandi country and describes the most important things we want to look after
- ▶ Pages 24 to 37 address the most important threats to our country
- ▶ Pages 38 to 47 consists of our objectives and strategies which will help us to keep Gooniyandi country healthy and addresses the threats of the future

Gavin Smith and Anthony Dawson find Bilby tracks



Gooniyandi people



Doris Doherty and Dora Cox

Gooniyandi people are bound together by their lore and customs and have a deep and unbroken connection to their country. The Gooniyandi language was instilled in the land and waters by the travels of ancestral beings during the time of creation called *Ngarranggarni*. We identify ourselves through our connection to *riwi* (tracts of land) and/or their *jariny jariny* – conception dreaming sites.

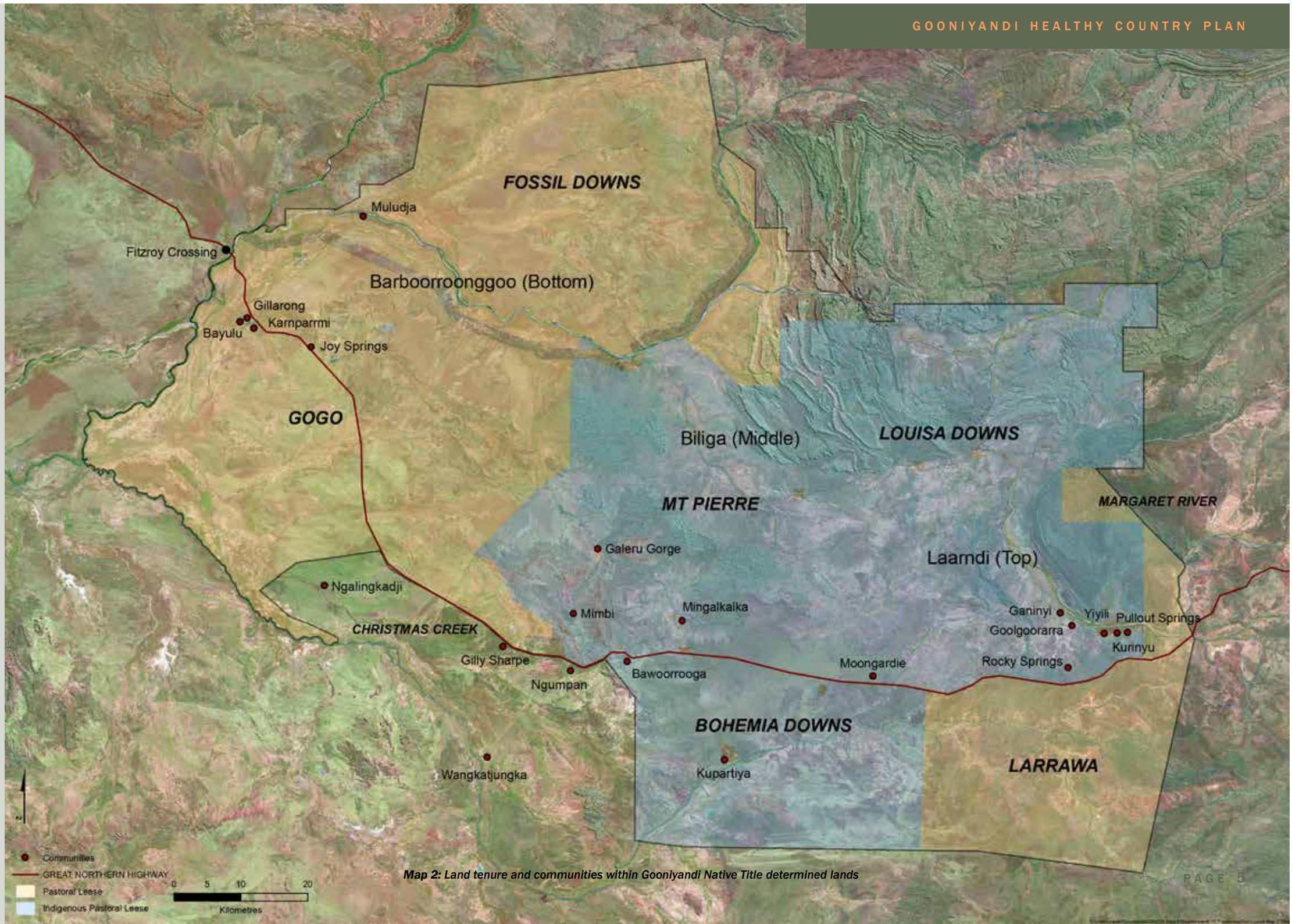
Gooniyandi country is located in the central Kimberley region of Western Australia and includes the mighty Fitzroy River and its tributaries which have been listed for its National Heritage Values. Our country covers 1.12 million

hectares of land and water and includes the Indigenous-owned pastoral stations of Bohemia Downs, Mt Pierre and Louisa Downs and portions of the non-Indigenous Christmas Creek, Gogo, Fossil Downs, Larrawa and Margaret River pastoral stations. Our country is roughly bounded in the North by the Margaret River, Christmas Creek and the Great Sandy Desert in the South, and the Fitzroy River to the west.

This land has been our home for many thousands of years. Gooniyandi Traditional Owners live in many communities east of Fitzroy Crossing. *Larrndi* (Top) Gooniyandi includes the communities of Yiyili, Ganinyi, Moongardie, Rocky Springs, Goolgoorarra and Goodinjin. Biligar (Middle) country with Mount Pierre Station consists of the communities of Bawoorrooga,

Kupartiya, Ngumpan, Ngalingkadji, Gillieshape, Mingalkalka, Mimbi, Galeru Gorge and Wangkatjungka. Located in *Barboordngoo* (bottom) Gooniyandi are Joy Springs, Karnparrmi, Gillaroong, Muludja and Bayulu communities. On the following page you can see on the map (*Map 2*) the land tenure and Gooniyandi communities within our Native Title determined lands.

Our lives today are different to those of our Ancestors, but we remember where we come from and how to look after our country. We now walk in two worlds, the modern world and the world of our traditional culture. Gooniyandi people live mostly in the surrounding communities and Fitzroy Crossing and it is very important for us and our culture that we are living on our traditional lands.



Map 2: Land tenure and communities within Goonyandi Native Title determined lands

Vision



Women Rangers and TOs

The Gooniyandi Healthy Country Plan tells the story of how we want to look after our country. Our vision shows those goals we want to achieve over the next ten years in order to keep our culture and country healthy so that the next generation still can enjoy our traditional lands.

We, the Gooniyandi people are connected through our cultural identity—and our totems, songs, dances, paintings and stories are connected to our country and water;



Rock art at Ngululaya

Gooniyandi country is healthy and our animals, bushtucker plants and bush medicine are protected and plentiful for generations to come;



TOs fishing at Marnjoowa



Crishawn Malo

Our language and culture remains strong and is passed on to the next generation;



Billy Chestnut and family

We want to create economic opportunities to look after country in a sustainable way;



Edna Cherel and family

Visitors to Gooniyandi country must be respectful towards Gooniyandi culture and country.



Yiyili school children

Our young people can live a healthy lifestyle on country and gain an income from country;



Back to Country trip to Marnjoowa

We, the Gooniyandi people, make the final decisions for our country following our cultural protocols and governance;



Mervyn Street and Billy Chestnut

Gooniyandi targets



Thomas Dick

At our first meeting in Fitzroy Crossing, Gooniyandi people sat together and talked about those things on country that are important to us and that we want to look after. In HCP-language we call these things “targets”. When we listed all the values, we grouped them together under different headings. For example we group the Fitzroy River and all its tributaries, our springs, billabongs and rock-holes under the target “Freshwater Places,” then we include all animals that live in the water, like *Galwany* (freshwater sawfish) and *Balgá* (Barramundi) and plants like *gaddingaddi* (freshwater lilies).

Some of the animals on Gooniyandi country are rare or threatened elsewhere in the world. Those are included as nested targets in our list of most important things, because our Rangers are looking after those vulnerable animals when they are looking after other things on country. You will find a list of our nested targets in *Appendix 2* on page 50.



Russell Smith

The most important things (targets) on Gooniyandi country we choose to focus are:

- Gooniyandi lore and culture
- Cultural and heritage places
- Freshwater places
- Bushtucker and bush medicine plants
- Native animals and bush meats
- Traditional fire

A short story on each of these targets can be found on the next pages. The stories explain why the targets are so important to us.



Target 1: Gooniyandi language lore and culture



Our Gooniyandi lore and culture was instilled in the land and waters during creation time called *Ngarranggarni*. We identify ourselves through our connection to *riwi* (tracts of land) and our *jariny jariny* – conception dreaming sites.

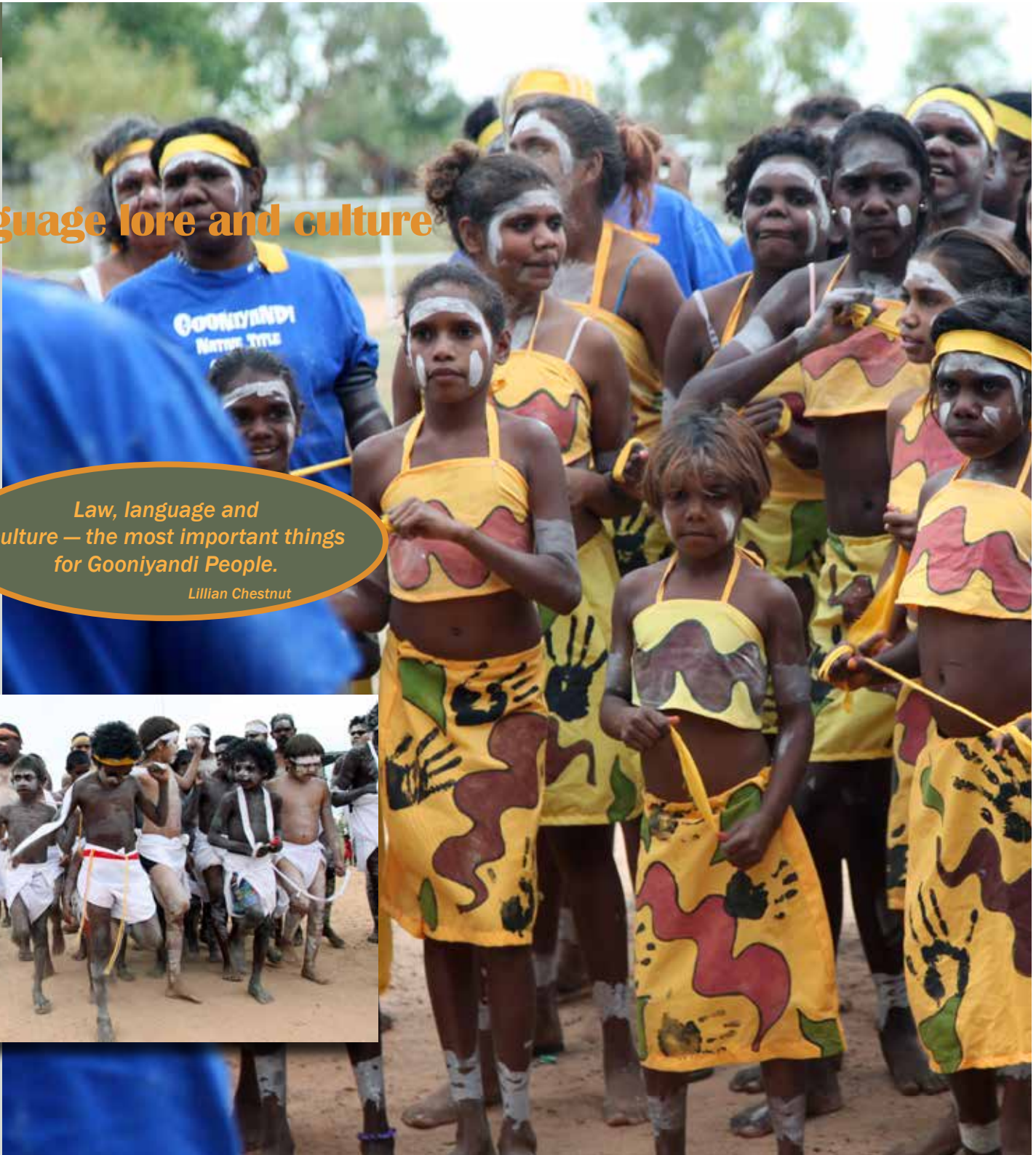
Our lore and culture is not written down on paper; we have to learn that from our old people and we have to teach our kids and grandkids;

When we talk in this plan about language, lore and culture, we are referring to all the different components of our culture. We include under this target our Dreaming stories that we find manifested in all parts of our country and the traditional

Law, language and culture – the most important things for Gooniyandi People.

Lillian Chestnut

Gooniyandi Native Title determination





ecological knowledge of our ancestors which tells us when to hunt, what plants to use and how to read country. We include under this target *joonba* (dance) – the stories we tell through our dances are passed on in our family groups to the next generation – how we dance and how we make our totems.

Our Gooniyandi language is woven tightly into our lore and culture. It is important that our language is kept strong and that the next generation is able to speak our language. Our

Our Gooniyandi country holds a lot of rich spiritual knowledge, that when we go out on country we feel our old people stand beside us and give us strength and we feel free from our worries.

Chantelle Murray

old people are interested in working together with community schools to make sure language is taught by Gooniyandi Traditional Owners. We have already developed our Gooniyandi language dictionary and want to use it more widely.

To pass on our language, lore and culture we need to be in our country to practice and teach. Our Rangers take already family groups out to country to visit places, record the stories from our old people and give us the opportunity to teach our young generation.



Gooniyandi Native Title Determination

Target 2: Cultural and heritage places



Sharpening Spears at Paint Rock

Our country is a living, cultural landscape and many significant cultural and heritage places are located on Gooniyandi country. Many of those sites relate back to our ancestors or our creation stories; those places include rock-art sites, burial sites, sacred places, conception places and old people's camping spots.



Rock art at Painted Rock

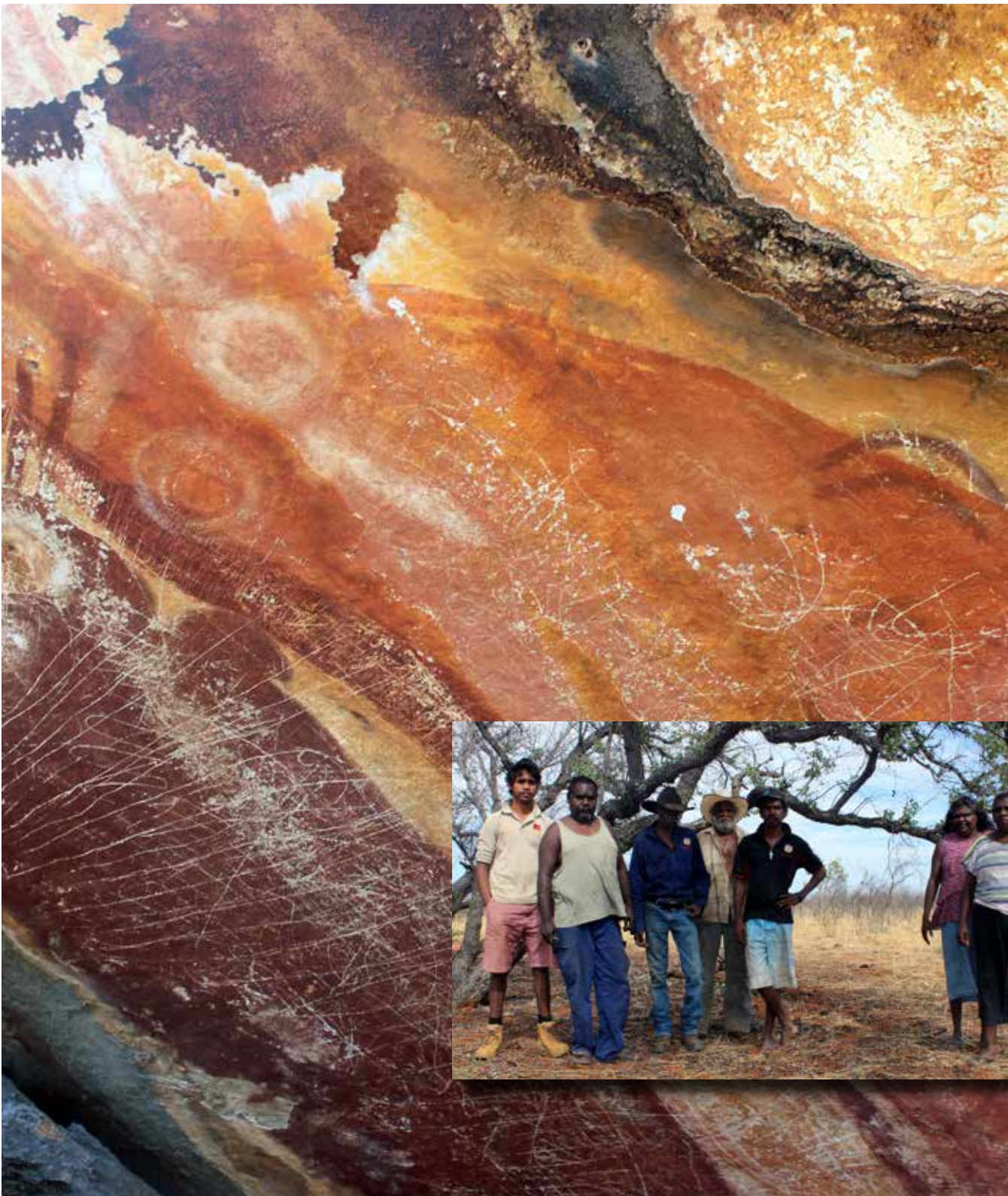
Those places are of great significance to us, they are places of our proud history and they help the young generation understand their cultural connections to their country. Our rock-art sites are like snapshots of the past — they show us what plants grew close by, harvested by our ancestors. Those places tell us the stories of the life of our ancestors.

Our lore and culture requires us to seek permission when we access other people's country. Nowadays people just come and go on our country without asking us or letting us know. It is important for us that visitors are accompanied by the right Traditional Owner as we are responsible for the safety of our visitors; and only the right Traditional Owner can tell the exact story for a place.



Rangers fencing at Marrjoowa





Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation is investigating a permit system for our Traditional Lands. A system that allows visitors to seek permission, helps us to find out which areas people are visiting and that gives us an opportunity to grow tourism ventures for our country. With “tag-along-tours” we can take visitors to our country and show them our sites, tell them our stories and make sure they travel safely. It gives our families an opportunity to make a living from their country while abiding by our traditional lore and culture. A cultural awareness program will help inform the local community and visitors alike about our customary lore and culture. This will help to ensure people respect country and respect Gooniyandi Traditional Owners.

Rangers and TOS at Snake Bore

Target 3: Freshwater places



Jillyardi

Large tracts of our country are dry savannah. Freshwater places have been important places to us from the days of our ancestors. The totems of many of our families are connected to freshwater places and their plants and animals.

Under the target “Freshwater Places” we lump together permanent water places, spring country, Billabongs and rock-holes and all the plants and animals that live in freshwater. For us, the rivers and waterholes are lifelines; special cultural sites with many stories and traditions.



Girrwarli

One special place, *Jillyardi*, is of high cultural and material significance. It is included in song cycles and Gooniyandi people perform corroborees there. The families who hold the story of *Jillyardi*, pass it on to their younger generations so that they will show respect and know how important it is.

Barndiwiri is the first rain storm of the wet season. It is associated with *Jangala* the snake and arrives from the north. People know that this storm makes the rivers run. This is a good time for fishing for *gooloomangarri* (catfish) and *jambinbaroo* (black bream). Marchflies arrive during *Moongoowarla* when all the fish are fat and when freshwater crocodiles lay their eggs — as the marchflies are said to protect the crocodiles at this time. This is also a particularly good time for *laari* (bony nream),



Balga

wilarrabi (longneck turtle) and *balga* (Barramundi).

Our ancestors and old people knew many things about the river and its plants and animals and we must pass this information on to our youngsters. For example, how we use *gooroo* (freshwater mangrove) as fish poison. The bark is crushed up and put into small waterholes where it stuns the fish by taking oxygen out of the water. The fish come to the surface and are easily caught.



Maxine Shandley and girls fishing

When I look at the river I think of my country. The river is important for me, my people and the old people. Today's native title determination means it will be protected. That river is who we are. We can't live without it.

Mervyn Street



Rangers and TOs at Kangaroo Hole

Target 4: Bushtucker/bush medicine plants



Ngooji

Bush tucker and medicine plants are important for Gooniyandi people. When our ancestors lived on country, there were no shops, supermarkets or pharmacies. Our old people gathered their food on country, used plants to make tools and implements and knew which plants helped during sickness. Gooniyandi Traditional Owners have collected a lot of knowledge over the years.

Seed collection is needed to revegetate bushtucker/ bush medicine plants around communities as they are hard to find near communities when they are needed.

Anthony Dawson

The country is like a calendar to Gooniyandi people. The changing seasons tell us when it is the right time to hunt or collect fruit. When *Joowooljidi* (*Bauhinia*) starts to flower, it tells us that the hot season is coming. The honey from the flower is very sweet and can be sucked out of the base of the flower. *Garn-gi* (*Bullwood*) flowers at the start of the wet season and during *Yidirla* (wet season when the river is running) *garn-gi* fruit is ready to be collected. You can find more information about the seasons on Gooniyandi country in our seasonal calendar on page 51.

Our ancestors used country as a dispensary: If you have scabies or sores, seeds of *lambi-lambi* (*cockroach bush*) are boiled up and the liquid is used as a disinfectant. For head colds we collect the fruit of *Nganyjarli* (*bush tomato*) during *Barrangga* (the hot season).

It's a seasonal thing. Our important plants fruit in special seasons.

Wayne Wallaby

All the tools used by our old people came from the bush. The gum of *marndarra* (*wild gum*), a large tree up to 20m tall, is used as glue. We burn the gum, crush it and add water to make a paste, which is used to bind spearheads to the shaft. *Marrorra* (*Leichhardt pine*) is a tree which has many purposes: the fruit is good to eat and is ready when it turns orange and falls to the ground. Its wood is used to build *galwaya* (rafts) and the soft wood is often used to carve woomeras and other artefacts.

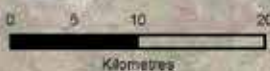
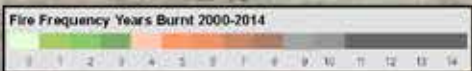


Goordida

- ★ Threatened Species
- ⊗ Cultural Areas
- Art Sites

Fitzroy Crossing ●

Bushtucker plants are still around, but not close to communities. We have to go a longer way to find our bushtucker.
Lillian Chestnut



Map 3: Threatened species, cultural areas and art sites against fire years burnt from 2000–2014.

Target 5: Native animals



Cherabin

When we talk about native animals as a conservation target in our Healthy Country Plan, we refer to all the different animals that have a cultural significance to Gooniyandi Traditional Owners. This includes animals that are totems or are part of stories and animals like *galamooda* (bush turkey), *garnanganyja* (emu), that our ancestors traditionally hunted.

When our Rangers look after the habitat of culturally important species, they are also looking after the habitat of threatened, vulnerable or endangered species.

In this Healthy Country Plan we have also included animals with significance to the wider Australian population as nested

targets. Appendix 2 on page 50 gives an overview of the conservation priorities from both the Commonwealth and the Western Australian governments' perspective.

Our ancestors were seasonal hunters, hunting for animals at the right time of the year. Our lore and culture tells us which parts of each animal we must share with family members. But our traditional knowledge is not only

about the seasons and how to share an animal, it also includes our ancestors' stories about the animals and how to use different parts of an animal for different purposes. For example, when our ancestors made spears, they used sinews from *thirrwoo* (kangaroo) to bind the spearhead to the shaft.

Thirrwoo is the main totem for Gooniyandi, as you can see on the Ranger's logo. There are several different species living across our



Galamooda



Thirrwoo

country. For example, *wanyjirri* (river kangaroo) lives around our waterways, while *bandangawoorroo* (plains kangaroo) occupies large tracts of our open woodlands.

There are different threats on different scales affecting the health of our native animals. Some of those threats can be fixed on Gooniyandi country, others are threats that we can only fix if everyone around the world works together.

Fire management is an important management tool to ensure that the habitat of our animals stays healthy.

The spread of weeds affects the habitat for some animals and our Rangers do important work managing invasive plant species.

Herbivorous and carnivorous invasive animals are another big threat to our local animals and we have to improve trapping and shooting of these animals as they cause havoc to our local animals.



Helen Malo cooking Blackheaded python



Roneill Skeen hunting goanna



Rock Art at Lerida Gorge

Target 6: Traditional fire



Fire management Mt Pierre and Louisa Downs

Gooniyandi people traditionally managed their country with fire. In the old days Gooniyandi ancestors walked the country along the creeks and rivers, lighting small-scale fires with *garn-gi* (bull wood) firesticks to create a mosaic of burned and unburned country.

Fire was used in the right season ensuring plants re-grew and that the fires didn't get too hot. Many culturally important plants, like *birla* (yam) or *Jirrirndi* (Hakea) — used to make boomerangs — are harder to find today because they are sensitive to late season fires.



*When we
burn country, we
need to look after the
small animals that can't
escape a big fire.*

Sam Cox

Fire was not only used to manage country. It was also used in a cultural/traditional context. Our ancestors used fires to signal other groups. If someone got into trouble out on country they knew they could light a fire and the smoke would act as a signal. Fire is also used in ceremonies to smoke visitors and new-borns.

When our Rangers carry out prescribed burning nowadays, they combine their traditional knowledge with western scientific knowledge and policies.

At the beginning of the year we have fire planning meetings with the Traditional Owners, other landowners and government agencies like DFES (Department of Fire and Emergency Services). For good fire-management it is important that everyone works together — Traditional Owners, pastoralists and government agencies.



Fire planning 2012

Apart from burning in the right season, other strategies in this plan will help to avoid fires breaking out in the wrong season.

A planned visitor permit system and awareness/educational programs will inform visitors about the risks of camp-fires that get out of hand. When we are doing cultural activities with our youngsters, we make sure that they don't get bored and do the wrong things by lighting fires as fire-bugs.

Health of our targets



Lerida Gorge

When we talk about the health of our targets we are talking about the viability of our conservation values. The table on the opposite page shows the health rating for all our targets. In the Healthy Country Planning process we look at the health of our targets in 4 different ways:

- **Landscape:** how the targets are affected by ecological processes on a landscape scale level;
- **Condition:** how healthy the composition and structure of our targets is;
- **Size:** health seen as a measure of area or abundance of our targets;
- **Cultural condition:** how healthy a target is in a cultural context.

As discussed earlier, the Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process has been amended to incorporate our cultural values in our Healthy Country Plan and to reflect our thinking that all natural occurrences on country have a cultural dimension to them — for example the stories of the rainbow serpent, our creator being, are closely linked to our target *Freshwater Places*. Our culture is not separate from our country.

The health ratings for each target are based on our knowledge, the knowledge of our partners and results from scientific surveys and research projects on Gooniyandi country. We are working closely with the KLC's Land and Sea Management Unit to make sure that research on our country benefits us and helps us to answer some of our questions.

The HCP process considers four “health” ranks:

- **Poor:** A “poor” health ranking means that we need to urgently focus many resources on this target. Without major effort this target will cease to exist in its current form. Fortunately none of our targets are ranked “poor.”
- **Fair:** Some of our targets are ranked as “fair.” This means we must put some effort into conservation of a target to make sure it is maintained on our country. This applies in particular to cultural values, showing us that we must ensure our Rangers support cultural work side by side with natural resource management.
- **Good:** Most of our biophysical indicators are ranked as “good.” This means that only a small amount of work is required to maintain them.
- **Very good**

In the future, we will strive to achieve improvements in target rankings from “fair” to “good” or “very good.”

Conservation Targets	Landscape	Condition	Culture	Size	Viability Rank
	Current Rating				
1 Gooniyandi language, lore and culture	-	-	Fair	-	Fair
2 Cultural and heritage places	Fair		Fair	Fair	Fair
3 Freshwater places			Fair		
4 Bushtucker / bush medicine plants	Fair		Fair	Fair	
5 Native animals	Fair		Fair	Fair	
6 Traditional fire	Fair		Fair	Fair	Fair
Project Health Rank					Fair



Goonanggi



Bush tobacco

The main threats



When we started thinking about the important things to look after on Gooniyandi country, we talked about the threats which make our country unhealthy. Some of these threats apply to all our targets, but others only apply to some targets — the Healthy Country Planning framework helps us link threats to targets and to see the difference between stresses and the source of those stresses. In times of limited funding and manpower and to be effective, strategic managers, it is important to address stress at its source. Otherwise the source of the stress remains and our people will have to repeat the same work year after year.

The table on the opposite page gives an overview of the main threats that occur on our country.

Our main threats are:

- Climate change
- Dams
- Lack of access to country
- Lack of resources for cultural and natural resource management
- Late dry season fires
- Overhunting / overfishing
- Uncontrolled visitor access
- Lack of traditional family education
- Lack of knowledge transfer opportunities
- Feral animals
- Invasive plant species

Threats are ranked as “low”, “medium”, “high” and “very high” depending on their contribution to the health of our targets, their severity and how widespread or localised the threats are. The righthand column displays the overall threat ranking across all targets.

Some threats make other threats worse and are have been linked to each other. For example, a hot, late dry season fire might destroy many of our important bush tucker plants and burn the habitat of our important animals. After a hot fire goes through and burns the native vegetation, weeds grow back faster than the native plants and take over the habitat.

With the right resources some threats can be fixed on Gooniyandi country. But other threats, like climate change, require everyone — in Australia and across the planet — to work together.



Rangers at Muludja nursery

Threats Across Targets		Language law and culture	Heritage & cultural places	Freshwater places	Bushtucker / bush medicine plants	Native animals	Traditional fire	Overall Threat Rank
Project-specific threats		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	Climate change			High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
2	Dams			High	Low			Medium
3	Lack of access to country	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
4	Lack of resources for cultural & natural resource management	Medium	Low		Low	Low	Medium	Medium
5	Late dry season fires		Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
6	Overhunting / overfishing			Medium		Medium		Medium
7	Uncontrolled visitor access		Medium	Medium				Medium
8	Lack of traditional family education	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
9	Lack of knowledge transfer opportunities	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
10	Feral animals – herbivores		Low	Medium	Low	Low		Low
11	Irrigated agriculture			Medium	Low			Low
12	Mining Developments			Medium	Low			Low
13	Feral animals – carnivores					Medium		Low
14	Littering		Medium					Low
15	Poisoning/1080					Medium		Low
16	Lack of cultural programs in mainstream education	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
17	Invasive plant species		Low	Low	Low	Low		Low
Threat status for targets and project		Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

Climate change



Lerida Gorge

Climate Change describes the changes that are happening to the weather because of the pollution people are putting into the air.

It is important to understand climate change, because it will impact all of us, particularly those of us who are living on the land.

Normally, the planet takes heat from the sun and traps some of it as a layer of gas in the atmosphere. This gas is called greenhouse gas and it causes warming of the atmosphere. Trapping the sun's heat to keep the planet at a good

temperature to support life is called "the greenhouse effect."

People are putting more greenhouse gases into the air by burning coal, driving cars, cutting trees down and letting big fires burn. These extra gases make a thick blanket around the earth, making it hotter than normal.

As the planet gets hotter, the weather changes.

On the land, we feel the impacts of climate change more. Scientists say that temperatures will increase 2–2.5 degrees over next 60 years in the Kimberley. They also say that there will be more rain than usual. Higher temperatures and higher rainfall will increase insect-borne diseases like dengue fever. There may also be an increase in extreme weather — like heatwaves and cyclones. All these changes

to weather patterns impact on how and where plants grow, how late, dry season fires affect country and the migratory patterns of animals.

There are two ways Gooniyandi people can help to fight these changes:

- By looking after the most important and vulnerable animals and plants to make them stronger. This is called "climate change adaption".
- By reducing the gases and smoke in the air—for example through traditional fire-management in conjunction with a carbon farming project. This is called "climate change mitigation".

Dams



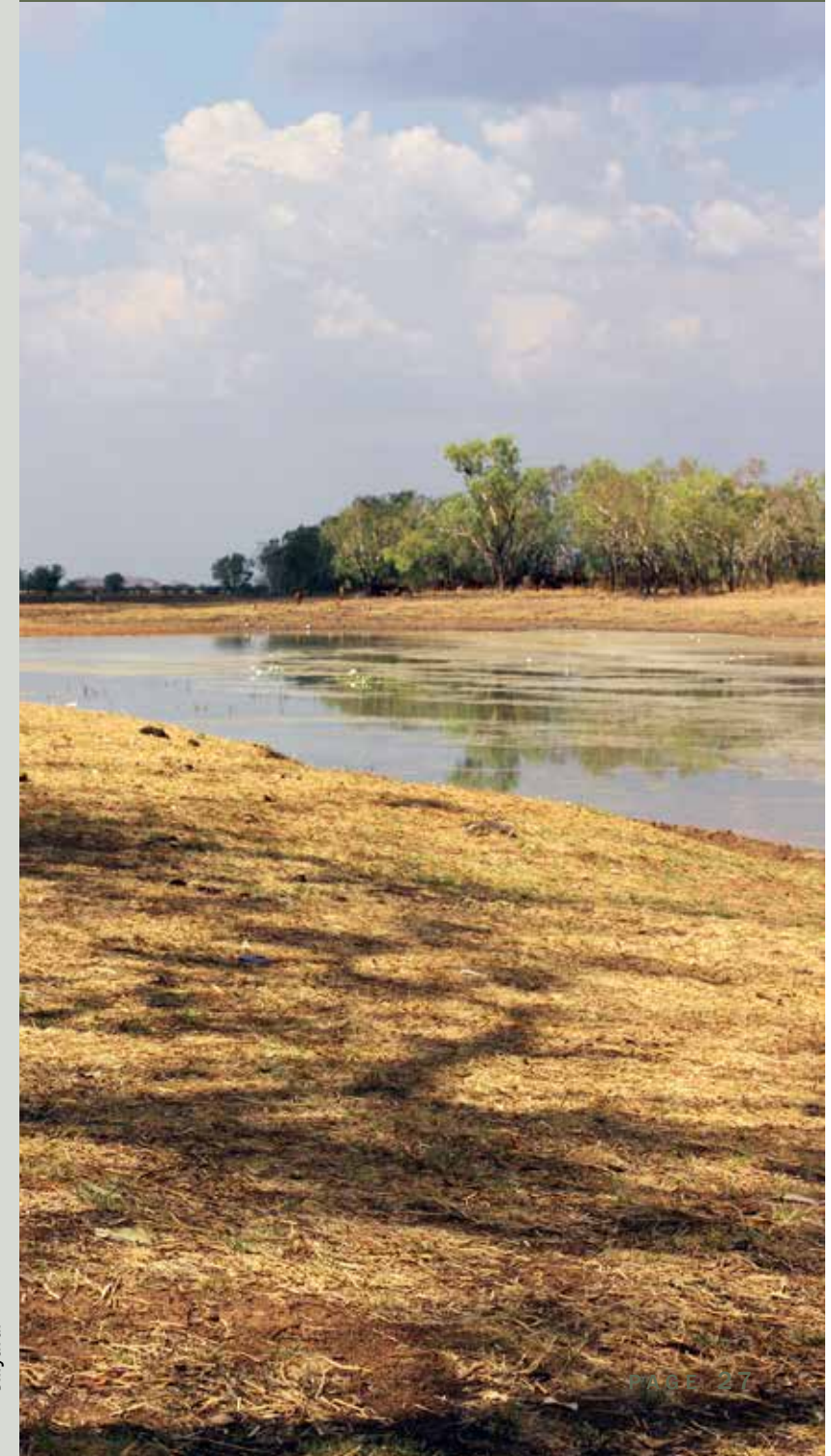
Marnjoowa

In the past we have often heard about damming the Fitzroy River. There have been plans around to build small to moderate size dams to support irrigated agriculture for many years, not just since the recent publication of the White Paper “Developing the North.”

When considering a dam, it is important to think about its potential impacts. In the wrong place, a dam can seriously affect the connectivity of our freshwater system. Fish and other animals will not be able to travel up and down rivers and streams if they are

dammed. More water for irrigated agriculture means that there will be less water downstream for important bushtucker and bush medicine plants growing on riverbanks.

Before making our minds up, it is important to look at other places with dams to see how that country has been affected. During the building phase of a dam and once the dam is operating, it is important that good environmental monitoring by Gooniyandi Rangers is in place, so that changes to country can be picked up early.



Lack of access to country



Billy Chestnut and Rangers visit Ngululaya

Our ancestral beings gave us our lore and responsibility to look after our country during *Ngarranggarni* (creation time). Some parts of our country is very rugged and other parts are difficult to access because pastoral leases operate on them. This threat is about lack of access to country – lack of access because of physical barriers to get back to country and lack of access because access is restricted by a landholder.

Since the arrival of Europeans in Australia we have been removed from our lands step by step.

We need to be out on country to look after it and to pass on our traditional knowledge to the next generation. It is important that our kids go out on country with our elders to learn their stories and dances and absorb all the knowledge and wisdom about how the old people used bushtucker plants and hunted for native animals. In our culture you don't sit in a classroom and study everything from a book.

It is difficult for our elders to pass on traditional knowledge when they are away from their country. People must go out on country to see the country with their own eyes and listen to the stories about all the different places. This can happen

We need Rangers here! (in Yiyili) to record stories, build bough sheds and BBQ areas, as many old people are sick.

Francis Dawson

through back-to-country trips, trips with community schools and during holiday activities.

Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation and our Rangers work closely with some of the pastoralists in the region and we are looking forward to engage in the future more to make sure that we work together effectively to look after our country.

When our Rangers carry out the work in our plan, they have a chance to look after many things at the same time. For example, on a back-to-country trip, we can record the location of and stories about important cultural sites, pass on knowledge to the next generation and do some weed work at the same time.

Lack of resources for cultural and natural resource management



In 2009 the Gooniyandi Ranger Program commenced as a CDEP project. Our Rangers were called Gooniyandi-Bayulu Rangers. Since then, we have come a long way — from casual employment to full-time Rangers with Working on Country funding and some casual women Rangers. It is important to maintain momentum with our women Rangers and increase the activities carried out by our Gooniyandi Women to make sure all the work in this Healthy Country Plan is done.

Our Rangers look after country both ways. The traditional way, as our ancestors told us and the modern, western way. For Gooniyandi Rangers to be able to do all the work in this plan, they need resources, the right training and funding.

Lack of resources and lack of knowledge transfer opportunities are closely linked. In order to get out on country often enough, pass on knowledge and do all the work, we need reliable vehicles, equipment and more Rangers. The capacity of Gooniyandi Rangers is often stretched because there is always more work than Rangers available to do the job.

In the past, our Rangers completed a major portion of their certificates

in Land Management and have been able to access other training for Indigenous Ranger Groups in the Kimberley. It is important to maintain training so that more young people coming through are trained up to help out.

We must have a secure future. Funding for Healthy Country Management must be recurrent so we know we can continue to fulfil our cultural obligations to look after country like our ancestors did.

Mervyn Street digging a soak



Late dry season fires



Aerial burning—Mt Pierre

Fire at the wrong time can have a serious impact on the health of our country. In the late dry-season when the grasses have dried out, fires can be particularly bad with strong winds and hot weather making it burn through the night and spread further. A wildfire can wipe out important shrubs and trees on our country. If it burns across a large area it can destroy the habitat of some of our smaller animals that can't escape fast enough. Other animals, like *wanyjirri* (river kangaroo) or *Galamooda* (bush turkey) might not find enough food anymore.

A late dry season fire can start by accident, for example, a camp-fire that isn't put out properly or from

lightning. We need to be careful that fires from mustering and on pastoral stations are lit carefully and don't get out of hand.

Late dry season fires can be minimised by burning country early in the dry season with a combination of traditional knowledge and western science. By reducing fuel loads and creating fire breaks, late dry season fires can't travel so far anymore.

To manage fire properly throughout the year the Gooniyandi Rangers work together with the KLC to improve fire-management on Gooniyandi Country. Our Rangers carry out ground burning to create fire-breaks around assets like communities. The Gooniyandi Rangers try to implement more aerial prescribed burning to achieve a good burning outcomes on a larger scale. The Gooniyandi Rangers look forward to working with partners like station owners and organisations like DFES (Department of Fire and Emergency Services) to improve fire management on Gooniyandi country and to reduce the risk of late dry season fires.



Overhunting and overfishing



Our seasonal calendar tells us when it is the right time to fish or to hunt. If you take an animal at the wrong time of the year it can have a negative impact on the overall population. Our ancestors taught us how much to take and how we share our food with our families.

Nowadays there are more people living in Fitzroy and many people, Gooniyandi Traditional Owners and other community members alike, enjoy going fishing. They often go to same fishing spots and we have observed that sometimes people put nets through part of our rivers to catch every fish and take more

Kaye and Dora Cox

than they need. Other times people leave fish behind and let it go to waste.

It is important that we are not greedy out bush and let nature replenish itself. We need to put signs up at popular fishing spots to advise people not to net the river. When our Rangers are working on country, they can keep an eye out for people who are fishing or hunting too much. By passing on our traditional ecological knowledge about the seasons and the animals, we teach our younger generation to respect country and look after its creatures.

People
are going to our
freshwater places without
Traditional Owners or us
knowing. We don't know how
much fish they are taking.

Delaney Cox



Uncontrolled visitor access



Our lore and our culture teaches us the protocols of how we access country. In the old times our ancestors sang out to the Traditional Owners of country and sought permission to enter.

Nowadays visitors just come and go without seeking permission. A visitor is anyone who is not a Gooniyandi Traditional Owner of this land. Visitors may be tourists, locals or Traditional Owners of other country.

We are responsible for the safety of visitors to our country and bear the consequences of accidents and disturbances to our important places. When visitors come to country it is important that they

*Everybody welcome,
but we need to make sure
they do the right thing and don't
get hurt .*

Roneil Skeen

are in company of the correct Traditional Owner for that part of the country.

We want to establish a visitor permit system so that we know how many people visit different sites and to make sure that appropriate permission is given to visitors. Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation has ideas to establish Tag-along-tours for interstate travellers as well. Most visitors stay at the same place in town and it is hard for them to visit our country and see our sights and hear the right story for the right place.

We are happy for visitors to come to Gooniyandi country if it is done in a culturally appropriate way.



Rock Art Lerida Gorge

More family education



Our ancestors lived on country with their families and clans. Nowadays Gooniyandi people need to walk in both worlds — the traditional world in accordance with lore and culture and the western world. This means our kids are often brought up in town and young parents struggle to get back out on country with their children. Without being on country it is hard to pass on our cultural knowledge.

Our children are taught a western curriculum in our community schools. With the flexibility it provides we need to make sure that

our cultural knowledge is included in every day school activities. This can mean that our elders come to school to teach language, or that our Rangers attend classes to show our children what is involved in their work.

We already developed a *Gooniyandi Bush Tucker and Bush Medicine* booklet, but we need to publish more resources. Our *Gooniyandi Dictionary* is nearly complete and we would like to work on a Gooniyandi animal book to capture our traditional knowledge and language names.

Teaching our younger generation involves working with partners as well. There are many organisations in Fitzroy Crossing that provide support to young parents and their families. In the future we want to work more closely with these organisations so that together we achieve outcomes and make sure that young Gooniyandi parents are well supported.

Mervyn Street making a head-dress with Fitzroy school children



Sharing of knowledge transfer opportunities



Stone axe

Part of the responsibilities of cultural custodians is to ensure that our traditional lore, culture and language is passed on to the next generation. A threat to this is the lack of opportunities to pass on knowledge.

It has been difficult to pass on language or knowledge through schools, as the curriculum gives us limited opportunities to include language learning in a culturally appropriate way and now less and less kids speak Gooniyandi.

We can't transmit a lot of knowledge in a school environment. We have to be on



Rock art at Painted Rock

country to learn about country. We have to feel and breathe the country. We can't sit in a classroom and talk about country, passing on knowledge without seeing it.

It is difficult for Gooniyandi families to go for a drive on country. They usually have to rely on others to organise trips to go to remoter parts of our country. When our young people are stuck in town they are distracted by modern influences such as television, social media or other non-traditional culture.

It is vital that our stories and language are recorded for the benefit for future generations and that Gooniyandi youth and young families visit country and important sites as often as possible.

Feral animals



Since the arrival of Europeans in Australia there have been different animals introduced to our country. Some of them you can readily see, others are harder to spot. We distinguish feral animals by their eating habits. There are herbivorous animals like cattle, camel, donkey and horse whose diet is focussed on plants. The other group of feral animals are carnivorous animals like cats, foxes and dogs — who eat other animals for food.

Gooniyandi country is station country. Cattle has a big impact on sensitive vegetation and important sites. Cattle and other hooved animals cause damage by

One of the bad things is the overstocking with cattle. All the cattle is causing erosion along the river and it silts up. No more water there after that.

Wayne Wallaby

trampling on our riparian vegetation and they rub themselves against art sites. Our Rangers put a significant amount of time in managing cattle and keeping fences intact. Around *Marnjoowa*, the Rangers fenced off 1.5ha around the river bank to stop cattle from trampling the vegetation and spreading more weeds. Over time we have seen many plants come back and the riverbank now looks a lot healthier. Our biodiversity surveys show that native animals are coming back in bigger numbers.

Cats, foxes and dogs have a significant impact on small animals on our country. In particular on the small population of those vulnerable and threatened species (please refer to Appendix 2) that live on our country like the Greater Bilby or Northern Quoll. Our Rangers undertake biodiversity surveys to

gather more information about the numbers and distribution of Bilbies and other threatened species on Gooniyandi country. When the Gooniyandi Rangers do their survey transects, they often find tracks and scats from feral cats and dogs.



Invasive plant species



Johanan Nuggett

An invasive plant or a weed is a plant that has been introduced from other countries or other parts of Australia, and which doesn't belong in the local bush.

These foreign plants often grow and spread quicker and easier than native species. They often dominate and change the plant composition.

Because much of our country is Station country, there are a few weed species present on our country, in particular Buffel Grass, Bellyache Bush and Parkinsonia. Our Rangers do weed-work annually and have treated different areas for weeds like the introduced passion fruit vine, rubber bush and snake weed.

Weeds spread easily across country. The seeds are spread in rivers, on the wind, on graders or in muddy tyres. They even travel in the hair and guts of animals like cows and kangaroos. It is important that we work with other landholders, agencies and neighbours to find out which weeds are around and which ones may become a serious threat to healthy country.

Weeds can cause damage to our country in many ways:

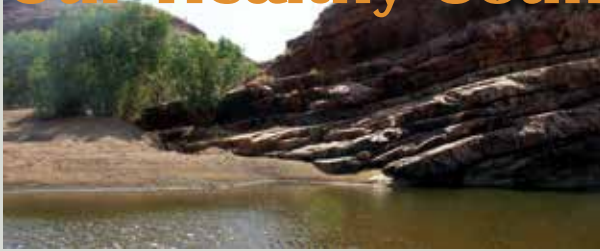
- They take over areas where native plants normally grow, pushing out important food and medicine plants.

- Vine weeds grow over trees and shrubs, strangling them and blocking out the sun. When they dry out they can lead to much hotter fires which often kill our native plants.
- Grass weeds often grow much taller and thicker than native plants. They dry out at different times in the year, fuelling hotter fires at the wrong time.
- Some weeds put chemicals in the soil that stop other plants from growing.
- Waterweeds may mess up billabongs and rivers by growing all over the surface and stopping the water from flowing the way it normally does.

To make sure weeds are not impacting our country in the future, we must keep an eye out for new weeds and train Rangers and community members so they are able to recognise and kill off the weeds.



Our Healthy Country Objectives



Our vision statement shows the goals Gooniyandi Traditional Owners want to achieve over the next 10 years in order to keep culture and country healthy so that generations to come still can enjoy our traditional culture and country.

In the last sections we have set out the most important values we want to protect on our country and linked these targets with the threats that affect them. To reach our vision we need to keep our targets healthy and mitigate the biggest threats.

Our objectives are larger topics that help us keep on track with Healthy Country Management. Each objective addresses one or more targets or threats. The more targets or threats a strategy affects, the higher the impact of this strategy. We focus our time and effort on these strategies and objectives first.

To find the right objectives and strategies we looked at the attributes and health of our targets, the threat ranking and how many threats affect each target. We workshopped the stresses and sources of stresses so that we are certain we understand the origin of the problem. Our objectives aim to fix the sources of a threat, not just the stressor.



Jai ready for junba

Objectives



Rock Art—dancing crocodile

1	By 2017 visitor access to Gooniyandi country is managed in a culturally appropriate way
2	By 2018 (and on-going) development projects on Gooniyandi NT lands are not functionally degrading habitat of priority species
3	By 2018 a traditional fire management project is implemented on Gooniyandi Native Title lands to protect natural and cultural values
4	By 2018 Gooniyandi Rangers have the operational capacity to look after natural and cultural values using traditional and western scientific knowledge
5	By 2020 a cultural learning program is in place to engage Gooniyandi youth and young parents
6	By 2020 Gooniyandi people have opportunities to find meaningful employment on Gooniyandi Native Title lands
7	By 2020 Gooniyandi priorities are understood and supported by stakeholders and the Fitzroy community
8	By 2025 feral animals don't functionally degrade habitat of priority species on Gooniyandi Native Title lands
9	By 2025 invasive plant species don't functionally degrade habitat of priority species on Gooniyandi Native Title lands

Our healthy country strategies



Each objective has multiple strategies. A strategy outlines what we must do to keep our targets healthy and our threats low. Some strategies help to achieve more than one objective and we call them “high impact strategies.”

We grouped the different strategies into three categories:

- **Healthy Country Management strategies** are keeping our natural targets healthy;
- **Lore and culture strategies** are about keeping our cultural targets health;
- **Operational capacity strategies** are about increasing our resources and capacity to manage our Native Title lands.

Healthy country management strategies	Objectives								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Implement a prescribed burning program with all stakeholders to protect natural and cultural values			✓						
Actively liaise with/seek opportunities to collaborate with pastoralists on Gooniyandi NT lands to undertake CNRM management			✓				✓		
Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation program to measure effectiveness of strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Actively liaise with / seek opportunities to collaborate with pastoralists on Gooniyandi NT lands to undertake CNRM management		✓				✓		✓	
Undertake targeted biodiversity to identify range and resilience of threatened and culturally important species to human induced threats		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Develop a feral animal strategy for Gooniyandi NT lands in partnership with stakeholders/land-owners								✓	
Fence off priority cultural sites from feral animal damage								✓	
Develop and implement a Gooniyandi Invasive Plant strategy									✓



Mirimbi caves

Lore and culture strategies	Objectives								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Develop a Gooniyandi visitor management strategy with stakeholders	✓								
Implement a visitor education program to raise awareness about natural and cultural sensitivities	✓				✓				
Implement a community engagement/ cultural awareness program for community members and stakeholders for Gooniyandi people					✓		✓		
Liaise and collaborate with Fitzroy-based organisations to ensure programs meet Gooniyandi needs				✓	✓	✓			
Develop Gooniyandi language, cultural, TEK resources					✓				
Develop and implement in partnership with community schools a Gooniyandi language project					✓				
Undertake back-to-country trips with community schools and during school holidays					✓				
Gooniyandi Rangers attend community schools regularly to raise awareness					✓				
Seek repatriation of Gooniyandi cultural information from stakeholders/ partners					✓				
Develop and publish a Gooniyandi Plant and Animal book to capture TEK					✓				
Map and record cultural site information across Gooniyandi country with relevant family groups					✓				
With partners develop leadership courses on Gooniyandi NT lands to engage young people					✓	✓			
Develop and operate a cultural centre within the Gooniyandi PBC complex in Bayulu					✓				



Gooniyandi Native Title determination

Operational capacity strategies	Objectives								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Participate in NAIDOC week activities to raise awareness				✓			✓		
Raise awareness amongst Stakeholders and Partners for the Goonyandi Healthy Country Plan.					✓		✓		
Implement a CNRM development strategy to map out a pathway for capacity increase/sustainable funding of Goonyandi Rangers				✓		✓			
Develop and maintain a nursery on Goonyandi country to supply plants for revegetation and commercial sale				✓		✓			
Engage with funding partners to secure funding for CNRM priorities				✓		✓			
Liaise and collaborate with Fitzroy-based organisations to ensure programs meet Goonyandi needs					✓		✓		
Participate in the savannah burning economy to support fire management on Goonyandi NT lands;			✓	✓		✓			
Undertake a feasibility study and register a carbon business for GAC;			✓			✓			
With partners develop leadership courses on Goonyandi NT lands to engage young people					✓				
Work with partners/stakeholders in Fitzroy Crossing to increase opportunities for work-readiness/small business development						✓			
Gooniyandi PBC to investigate financial viability for business opportunities (horticulture, landscaping, nursery, tag-along tours)						✓			
Gooniyandi PBC to engage with pastoralists to create employment opportunities through irrigated agriculture/pastoralism						✓			
Work closely with the KRN to access training and FFS/government funding opportunities				✓					
Through active participation and negotiations ensure that development proposals consider cultural and environmental values		✓							
Gooniyandi PBC to investigate financial viability for business opportunities (horticulture, landscaping, nursery, tag-along tours)	✓								



Adaptive management—monitoring and evaluation



When we talk about Adaptive Management and Monitoring and Evaluation, we are looking at monitoring on three levels:

- **Implementation monitoring** — are we using the Healthy Country Plan?
- **Effectiveness monitoring** — are the strategies working the way we expect?
- **Status monitoring** — are our targets improving?

Implementation monitoring is very similar to an annual report. Our Rangers check each activity for where and when it was undertaken. Under **Effectiveness monitoring** we look at our strategies to find

out whether they are achieving their intended outcomes. Some **Effectiveness** measures are linked to **Status monitoring** as well. **Status monitoring** is undertaken during the review of the Healthy Country Plan to find out whether the plan has been used to guide management decisions and whether the plan's vision is achieved by the work we are doing.

When we monitor and evaluate we also check whether any threats to our targets have changed over time. For example, new invasive plants or animal species may come into our country. This means that over the next ten years some identified threats may grow and become worse.

Our monitoring and evaluation is based on best-practice methodologies developed particularly for Northern Australia. Monitoring and evaluation techniques must be strong and reliable, and at the same time, they must be practical to use,

requiring little external help, so that our Rangers can easily continue monitoring over time.

We use different technologies for our monitoring and evaluation. We use remote sensing data to monitor the extent of wildfires and our rangers use, amongst other things, *Cybertracker* technology to record information on country. Our Rangers continuously learn to record and manage data. The information is uploaded into the Gooniyandi database so that we can report back to our community and to funding bodies.

Ten years from now we will look at the plan again and make an updated version that reflects the state of Gooniyandi country at that time. In ten years' time, hopefully, some of our targets will be in good health. Then we can get to work on other things. This approach — making a plan, doing the work, checking that the work is on track — is called “adaptive management.”



Governance and implementation



Thomas Dick and Don Gilligan

It is important to have good governance in place when we develop our work-plans or do our monitoring work. Our Gooniyandi Rangers are part of the Kimberley Ranger Network. We have established a Healthy Country Advisory Committee made up of 20 Traditional Owners representing the different parts of Gooniyandi country. The Healthy Country Advisory Committee (HCAC) was central to the development of this Gooniyandi Healthy Country Plan. The Ranger Group reports back to this Committee and receives advice from the HCAC.

The Healthy Country Advisory Committee sits under the Gooniyandi PBC and has different roles and responsibilities in regards to the Gooniyandi Rangers. The Gooniyandi PBC holds our Native Title Rights on behalf of Gooniyandi Traditional Owners and is the overarching organisation that makes decisions for Gooniyandi country.

Through our involvement in the Kimberley Ranger Network we have access to additional specialists and experts for particular parts of our Healthy Country Plan. We

work with experts from the KLC on our Fire and Threatened Species management. Our Rangers partner with other organisations like Environs Kimberley and WWF Australia and with research organisations like the University of Western Australia to gain access to additional resources and scientific capacity. As part of the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, we have access to these specialists. They help us check our strategies are achieving expected outcomes.





Gooniyandi dancers at Palm Spring

References and abbreviations

CAP	Conservation Action Planning
CDEP	Community Development Employment Project
CNRM	Cultural and Natural Resource Management
DFES	Department of Fire and Emergency Services
FFS	Fee for Service
GAC	Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation
HCAC	Healthy Country Advisory Committee
HCP	Healthy Country Plan
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
KRN	Kimberley Ranger Network
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



Appendix 1: Glossary of Gooniyandi words

Gooniyandi	English
<i>Balga</i>	Barramundi
<i>Barboordngoo</i>	Bottom
<i>Bandangawoorroo</i>	Plain Kangaroo
<i>Barranggu</i>	Hot season
<i>Biligar</i>	Middle
<i>Birla</i>	Yam
<i>Gaddingaddi</i>	Water Lilies
<i>Galamooda</i>	Bush Turkey
<i>Galwanyi</i>	Freshwater Sawfish
<i>Galwaya</i>	Raft
<i>Garn-Gi</i>	Bullwood
<i>Girndi</i>	Black Plum
<i>Gooloomangarri</i>	Catfish
<i>Gooroo</i>	Freshwater Mangrove
<i>Jambinbaroo</i>	Black Bream
<i>Joowooljidi</i>	Bauhinia
<i>Laari</i>	Bony Bream
<i>Larrndi</i>	Top
<i>Lambi</i>	Cockroach bush
<i>Marndarra</i>	Wild Gum
<i>Maroorra</i>	Leichardt Pine
<i>Ngarranggarni</i>	Creation Time
<i>Thirrwoo</i>	Kangaroo (gen.)
<i>Wanyjirri</i>	River Kangaroo
<i>Wilarrabi</i>	Longneck turtle
<i>Yidirla</i>	Wet season



Gooniyandi Native Title determination

Appendix 2: Nested targets – matters of national significance/threatened species

EPBC listed species

Vulnerable/Endangered

Red Goshawk	V
Gouldian Finch	E
Crested Shrike Tit	V
Purple Crowned Fairy Wren	V
Australian Painted Snipe.....	E
Masked Owl.....	V
Northern Quoll.....	E
Greater Bilby.....	V
Northern Marsupial Mole	E
Mountain White Gum.....	V
Great Desert Skink.....	V
Freshwater Sawfish	V

V = Vulnerable; E = Endangered;

Migratory

Fork tailed swift
Saltwater crocodile
Rainbow bee-eater
Great egret
Cattle egret
Oriental plover
Oriental pratincole
Eastern osprey
Magpie goose
Osprey

Wildlife Conservation Act listed species

Water Rat.....	P4
Spectacled Hare Wallaby	P3
Grey Falcon.....	Rare
Australian Bustard.....	P4
Bush Stone Curlew	P4
Star Finch.....	P4
Flock Bronzwing.....	P4
Black Bittern.....	P3
Peregrine Falcon.....	P4

- P1 Poorly-known on threatened lands
- P2 Poorly-known on conservation lands
- P3 Poorly-known some on conservation lands
- P4 Rare, near-threatened and other species in need of monitoring

GOOROO is the freshwater mangrove (*Barringtonia acutangula*), whose bark is used as a poison to stun fish in small pools. A group will surround a pool and hit the trunk of Gooroo with a stick making bark fall into the water, turning it red. If someone present is the *Dawa* for that place, they will spear the first fish.

Nyaadi is a bulb like a big onion. During flooding time, certain people will collect and crush *Nyaadi* before throwing it into the river and billabongs. This ensures that the fish will grow fat all year round.

Mingayoorroo – Manyi Waramngbiri Yarranngi!

Moongowaria – cold weather time

Ngamari is female cold weather (cold days, cold nights)

which turns to Girringgowa – male cold weather time (mild)

Barrangga is the season of very hot weather – hot days, hot nights

Western AUSTRALIA





KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL

