

MUTAWINTJI LANDS

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

MUTAWINTJI NATIONAL PARK,
NATURE RESERVE AND HISTORIC SITE

Mutawintji Board of Management
and
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service



FRONT COVER: Photographs from top – left to right; Wana Karnu also known as Boomerang Rock; Guided tour of Historic Site main engraving area; Engraving of Emu at the main engraving area of the Historic Site; Visitors on mesh boardwalk at the Historic Site main engraving area; stencil art at the Historic site; Wangarru – yellow-footed rock-wallaby; Board in session in the Old Stone Barn next to the Homestead on the Lands.

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Mutawintji

Kaarukaya, yuna yuku ngaangkalaana kiirrinana,

Paliirramarri kiirra, kiirrayi.

Mutawintji, kakurru, ngukutja kiirra.

Wiimpatjuku ngarratja ngitjalypi,

Nguukinangka yurringkala,

Ngurtangurtina muurpinana Wiimpatja marri.

Wiimpatja yalthimarri warlina,

Wiimpatja warrawarra ngiinkatina.

Ngarrkangarrkamilatina,

Marimamilatina.

Wiimpatja kiirrinana thuupila.

**Elizabeth Hunter
Wiimpatja Nhuungku
December, 2006**

There is a place out in the west,
and it's the place that I love best.

Mutawintji, it's an oasis in the sun,
where Wiimpatja meet to be as one.

To share our culture with our friends,
and to teach our children our ways again.

So let us as a Board be strong,
so future Boards can get along.

Let us hug and shake hands
and respect each other,

For this is Wiimpatja Land.

Acknowledgements

This draft plan represents the product of the contributions, knowledge, hard work, persistence and patience of many people. Addressing the many and varied issues necessary in the plan's preparation has given all involved far greater insights into the evolving areas of joint management and Aboriginal perspectives on Country, conservation and co-operative heritage management.

Preparation of the plan was at times a stop-start process and there were many different views and challenging times during its development. Many difficult issues were addressed in writing the plan and required directions to be set by the Board. Discussions were passionate and views strongly held, as is appropriate for a place as special as Mutawintji. However the unwavering commitment of Aboriginal owners, board members, neighbouring property owners, as well as National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) staff – both to the Mutawintji Lands and to the principles of joint management – ensured that these problems were overcome and resolutions reached.

Of the many people who contributed to this plan special acknowledgement must go to the two board chairpersons under whose leadership it was prepared – Kim O'Donnell and William Bates – for their guidance, patience and understanding without which the plan could not have been completed. Sincere thanks also to NPWS Park Managers Brett Norman, Paul Burton and John Holcombe, for their assistance in pulling together considerable background information for the plan and for their own enthusiasm for the Lands and their protection. Thanks also to Terry Korn, Steve Millington, Mark Peacock, Pat Laughton, Cathy Vandermall and the many other NPWS staff members who have contributed to the plan's development. Thank you to Sarah Martin, Badger Bates and Mark Sutton for providing cultural significance information and history of the Mutawintji Lands. Maureen O'Donnell, Peter Thompson and Warlpa Thompson are recognised for giving generously of their detailed knowledge of Mutawintji and the Paakantji language.

Gondwana Consulting assisted the Board of Management preparing a draft plan of management.

Photo credits – Sky Kidd, Kim O'Donnell, Pat Laughton, Emily Ward, Adrian Davey, Andrew Ginns and Alan Ginns. Artwork (page 34, and background) by Elizabeth Hunter.



Parri Yaamari Mutawintjiri Kiirrari - Come this way to Mutawintji Land

This plan explains the history of Mutawintji, special features, its significance to Aboriginal owners and the joint management arrangement. Most importantly, it informs people of our actions towards better management that employs Wiimpatja and builds the relevant skills needed to look after the Lands. This plan has taken a long time to prepare because bridges were being built along the way, toward respectful working relationships between Wiimpatja owner families, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff, Mutawintji Land Council, board members and others with an interest in the Lands.

It is important that we acknowledge and resolve as best we can, issues from the past so we can move forward toward looking after Country and each other for the benefit of our children and their children's children.

Joint management takes joint effort and much learning from each other. Many lessons were learnt along the way. We will continue to work hard to ensure joint management works and that everyone is aware of how we plan to manage the Lands into the future and share our culture on our terms with the rest of the world. This plan will guide and keep us on track.

William Bates
Chairperson
Mutawintji Board of Management (2010)
Mutawintji Lands



The Plan Preparations

This Mutawintji Plan of Management (this plan) was prepared by the Mutawintji Board of Management (the Board), from 2003 to 2011, in collaboration and consultation with the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). An independent consultant was engaged to assist and facilitate the writing of this plan.

The previous plan of management prepared by NPWS for Mootwingee National Park, Nature Reserve and Historic site was adopted in 1989 and remained in force until this new plan was adopted.

A Wiimpatja owner described the Lands' first plan of management following Handback:

We believe that it is most important that this first plan is very much an Aboriginal plan and we wish to avoid being overwhelmed by technical planners in the process.

Accordingly this plan is unique to the Mutawintji Lands (the Lands) in format, in terms of the management areas it addresses (and those it omits) with emphasis on how issues may be addressed.

Initial work on this plan drew on the management issues that had been identified and information collected by an internal NPWS management planning committee that worked on this project during 2001 to 2003. From this preceding work a set of issues papers for board members' consideration and discussion was developed, together with draft priorities and objectives, on which to focus this first joint management plan. To progress discussion and involve Wiimpatja beyond the Board, the first board agreed to a series of group meetings with each of the Aboriginal owner family groups and the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council during 2004. Summary papers were prepared from the discussions, identifying issues families agreed on and issues families disagreed on. These issues were the focus of further discussions when the second board met, during 2005. Further work on the document was delegated to a sub-committee of the Board to progress development.

Workshops and board meetings during 2006 - 2010 provided further detail and progressed the plan to identify priority actions that were critical to achieving the stated objectives and successful implementation of the plan. Comments were invited from Aboriginal owners and other Aboriginal people with an interest in the Lands, as well as local NPWS staff, to provide comment on the advanced draft documents. Minor updates resulted in the draft for wider NPWS internal review and the plan was publicly exhibited for a period of three months during early 2011. These comments have been considered and incorporated where appropriate.

This final plan represents the culmination of all previous work on the draft plan.



A Note on Language used in this Plan

Two different languages belong to the Mutawintji area. One includes Pantjikali, Wanyuparlku and Wilyakali. The other includes Malyangapa.

Pantjikali, Wanyuparlku and Wilyakali are varieties of the same language. Other varieties of this language are Kurnu, Paaruntji, Nhaawuparlku, Thangkakali, Paakantji, Parrintji and Marrawarra. In the old days these names were the usual way people referred to their language and their country. Today, with less access to some of these countries, with several generations of living mainly in the river towns and with nearly everyone having at least one ancestor from the river, many people usually call the language Paakantji because Paaka is the Darling River. A more inclusive name for the language is Wiimpatja Parlku, meaning Aboriginal language. Both these names refer to the main Aboriginal language in use in the region today. Wiimpatja is the word for person in this language and is the most common word Aboriginal people in the region use for themselves today.

Malyangapa is a variety of the next language to the west. Other varieties of this language are Watikali and Yardliyawara. Yarli is the word for person in this language

Wiimpatja Parlku is the language used in this Plan. Spelling follows the spelling system used in the Wilcannia Paakantji community language program. To begin to understand the spelling of Wiimpatja Parlku sounds, remember that –

p can sound like English “p” or “b”,

t can sound like English “t” or “d”,

k can sound like English “k” or “g”,

i is like the vowel in English “pit”,

a is like the vowel in English “but”,

u is like the vowel in English “pull”, and

if the vowels are doubled they are the same sound made longer.

The spelling “Mutawintji” was adopted by the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council in 1985 to follow the spelling system of the Wilcannia community language program.



1. Mirrikana Yurripa - (Think Up-front) - Introduction

1.1 Our Vision

We will work, through joint management and this plan, to make the Mutawintji Lands –

“A great national park run by Wiimpatja”.

1.2 Our Priorities

- To effectively joint manage the Mutawintji Lands, supported by a Wiimpatja Employment Strategy.
- To establish a strong Wiimpatja presence on the Lands, supported by community development areas.
- To value our country and each other so we can promote, learn and teach Wiimpatja culture to our children and the rest of the world.

The Board will ensure these priorities underpin actions to be carried out to care for and manage the Lands as required by legislation and as our responsibility to the Land, to our people and to the wider community.

We have shaped this plan around these priorities with a chapter that explains what we will do and how we will achieve our objectives in each of these areas.

1.3 The Mutawintji Lands

The Mutawintji Lands consist of Mutawintji National Park (68,912 hectares), the Mutawintji Historic Site (486 hectares) and the Mutawintji Nature Reserve (6,688 hectares), known as the “Mutawintji Lands”, or the “Lands” and is located 130 kilometres north east of Broken Hill in far western New South Wales – as shown on Figure 1.

The Lands are held in inalienable Aboriginal freehold title and are held on behalf of the Aboriginal owners by the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council. These were the first national park and associated lands in NSW to be handed back to Aboriginal owners and subsequently leased to the NSW Government under a formal joint management arrangement.

The Aboriginal owners, via the Board, are joint managers of the Lands with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) which is part of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH).



Additional areas may be added to the Lands during the life of this plan, and will also be subject to the directions and management actions set out in this document.

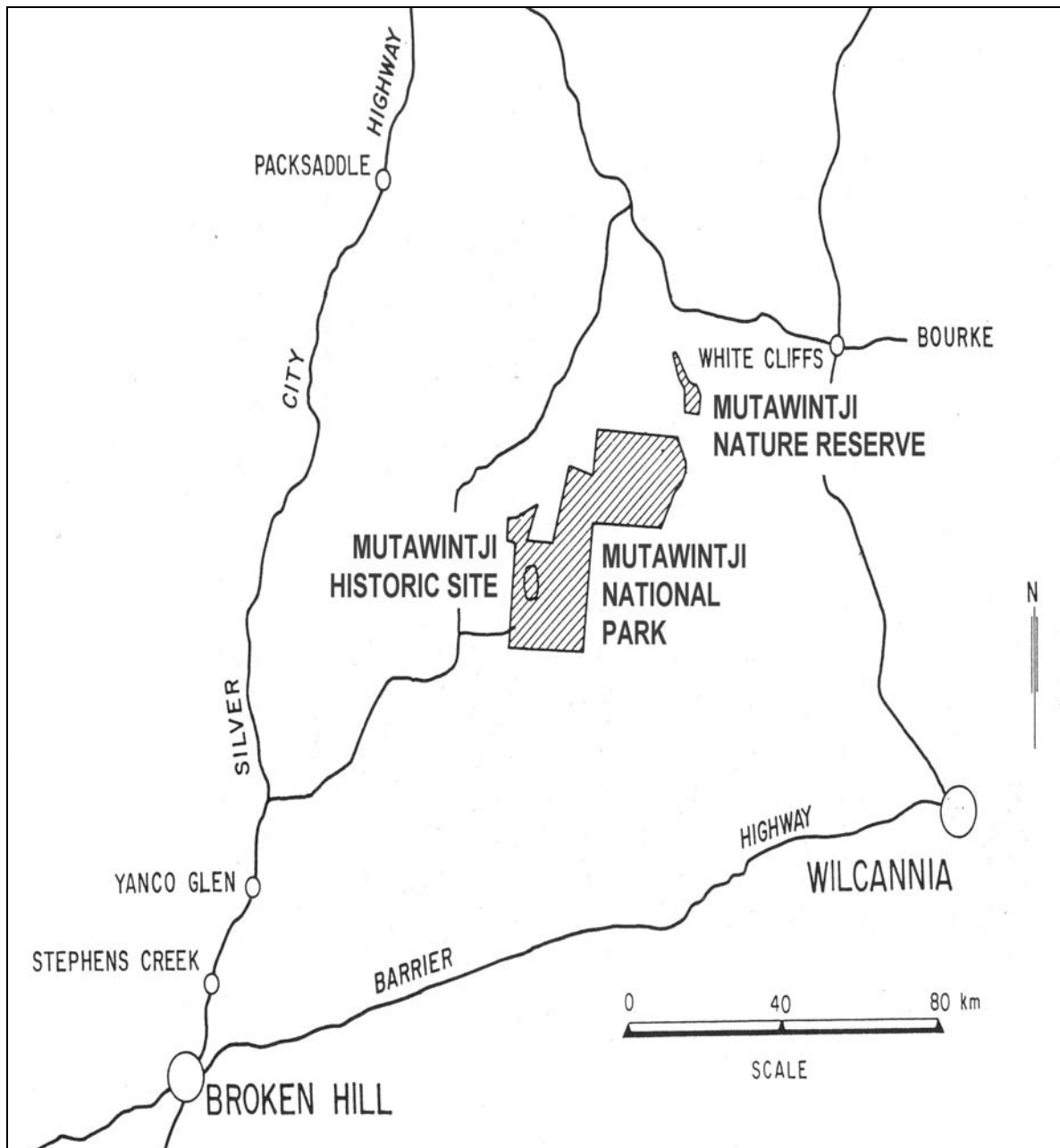


Figure 1 - Location of the Mutawintji Lands – Mutawintji Historic Site, Mutawintji National Park and Mutawintji Nature Reserve

2. The Importance of Mutawintji

2.1 Paliirramarri Kiirra - (Great Country) - The Cultural Value of Mutawintji

“We don’t own the land... the land owns us”

Wiimpatja Owner

For Aboriginal people ‘Country’ comprises many inter-related features – these include climate and weather, land and patterns on the land, waters, plants and animals, significant places and stories, historic and contemporary events and land uses and people and their interactions with each other and with places. So ‘Country’ is much more than what non-Aboriginal people call the landscape.

Within this web of inter-relationships, Aboriginal people have a special connection with the natural world, with their ‘Country’. Silas Roberts, first chairman of the Northern Land Council, described Aboriginal people’s continuing relationship to the natural world as follows:

Aboriginals have a special connection with everything that is natural. Aboriginals see themselves as part of nature. We see all things natural as part of us. All the things on Earth we see as part human. This is told through the ideas of dreaming. By dreaming we mean the belief that long ago, these creatures started human society. These creatures, these great creatures are just as much alive today as they were in the beginning. They are everlasting and will never die. They are always part of the land and nature as we are. Our connection to all things natural is spiritual.

While at Mutawintji in 1984, John A Quayle expressed these thoughts about his country:

We went from Homestead Gorge up to the rock quarry where our ancestors made stone tools. Standing up there and looking down the valleys and waterholes makes you think of the hardship our people must have went through. So you see, a place like this must not be destroyed by anyone. When you walk up the valleys you get a very strange feeling about the place as if you are coming home again after a long time away. It’s like the place is especially decorated for you, like a mother with open arms saying “welcome home”. The lookout is just like the dreamtime especially when the sun is coming up, it is as if the whole plains and the hills are waking up to another day and the whole countryside comes alive with birds of many colours. And when the sun goes down the colour goes out of the hills, the birds disappear again until another day. The rock holes and water holes in the hills meant water for many generations of our people. The story of our culture is told in the paintings and engravings that may be seen on the rocks and in the caves.

Mutawintji is highly important in relation to ongoing themes of Aboriginal culture – land, spiritual, kinship, economic, communication, historical, environmental and survival despite the invasion. It is one of the most significant sacred places in the far west of New South Wales. Mutawintji is a place for ceremonial business. Large gatherings were held there in the past, at which the people would have celebrated



and renewed their obligations to the land, traded items, settled disputes, formed alliances and put people through the various stages of gaining knowledge, responsibility and wisdom. The Lands' resources, especially the deep waterholes, also drew Aboriginal people to the area as a refuge.

Mutawintji has been a place where Aboriginal people have lived and gathered for many thousands of years. Large gatherings could only happen when the rock holes were full of water and there was an abundance of food due to good rainfall. Visitors acted respectfully to their hosts. It is also likely that they brought items to exchange such as ochre, tools and possum skin rugs. There are examples in the art at Mutawintji that suggest that visitors may have displayed other art styles from their own regions.

The Mutawintji area contains many Aboriginal art sites in the form of stencilled and painted art in rock overhangs and engravings on flat, exposed rock surfaces. Some are single figures and others are grouped as impressive galleries. Engravings and paintings show features of ceremonies and how people related to the land and its life. The engravings include lively pictures of people, animals and other beings, as well as many symbols such as tracks, circles and lines. The many hand stencils represent the association between people and their country.

There is abundant evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the form of cooking hearths, stone quarries and occupation sites throughout the Lands.

The oldest people we know who were born and lived in the Mutawintji area and who regarded it as their country are members of the Quayle, Dutton, Tyler-Barlow, Gibson and Bates families. These families have a long history with Mutawintji and with each other. The cultural association of these family groups with Mutawintji has been documented by Jeremy Beckett, Luise Hercus and Sarah Martin in a report that was published by the Office of the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 2008.

These are the people who used the group names Pantjikali, Wanyuparaku, Wilyakali, and Malyangapa for their languages and their countries. Although Pantjikali, Wanyuparaku and Wilyakali are Wiimpatja languages and Malyangapa is a Yarli language, continuing oral tradition tells us that these four groups always had close ties including through marriage. From the 1870s onwards they continued to live and work on the stations around Mutawintji. By the end of 19th century the brutality of the invasion seems to have caused the few survivors of these four named groups to have banded together for support. It is now difficult to draw boundaries between these four separate countries and between these groups of people.

Mutawintji is one of the most important parts of the country of these people and their descendants. The



*Stencil art at Ngalkirra
(the Amphitheatre)*

Mutawintji Aboriginal owners today are recognised as having a cultural association with Mutawintji and being descendants of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of that area. Their names are entered on the Register of Aboriginal owners for Mutawintji National Park.

Because Mutawintji was always such an important ceremonial centre, many people whose ancestral country is a bit further away are also acknowledged as having a long association and knowledge of Mutawintji. In this way people with ancestors from countries of the other Wiimpatja groups (Kurnu, Paaruntji, Nhaawuparlku, Thangkakali, Paakantji, Parrintji and Marrawarra) and people with ancestors from the countries of other Yarli groups (Watikali and Yardliyawarra) also have connections with Mutawintji. People from further afield including from Wangkumarra, Adnyamathanha and Ngilyampaa countries would have also visited and connected with Mutawintji over a long time.

The Mutawintji Lands, and the numerous sites of cultural significance they contain, are part of wider cultural connections across far-western NSW. Marriage has always been common between the different peoples of the region, so shared ancestry is one way that people have rights and duties to each other and to each other's country. These rights and duties relate to country, to kinship and to ceremony. Relationships between all these groups meant that the people who belonged to the Mutawintji area could in return make visits to ceremonies in other people's countries.

Land, kinship and ceremonial ties link groups who share a common language.



"Emu" rock engraving at the main engraving site within the Historic Site.

Similar ties can also link some groups with their neighbours who have a different language. For Mutawintji the strongest ties involve the people whose ancestors called themselves Pantjikali, Wanyuparlku, Wilyakali and Malyangapa even though both Wiimpatja and Yarli languages are involved. Today some of these people still use these names and some may often call themselves Paakantji. In the old days people identified themselves more by the name of their particular country. Since then, with less access to some of these countries, with

several generations of living mainly in the river towns and with nearly everyone having at least one ancestor from the river, it has become common for people to often call themselves Paakantji (Paaka is the Darling River). People are more likely to refer to the dialect names when talking about the particular country of their ancestors.

In relation to Mutawintji, what people call themselves is not as important as tracing their descent from the ancestors who lived in the Mutawintji area.

In the far west of New South Wales Wiimpatja is the most common word used today for Aboriginal person or Aboriginal people and Wiimpatja Parlku is the strongest Aboriginal language. Connections depend mainly on kinship ties and ceremonial ties, both of which give continuity to creation of the land.

One part of the kinship system that is similar over a large area of western and central NSW and western Queensland, is what Wiimpatja call their 'meat' (wanka) or totem inherited from their mother. The meats are grouped into two 'sides' called Makwarra (eaglehawk) and Kilparra (crow). The meats of just some of the people with associations with Mutawintji include, for the Makwarra side: karli (dingo) and pilyarra (eaglehawk – old name for wedge-tailed eagle); and for the Kilparra side: nhaampa (boney bream) and kalthi (emu). A person is supposed to marry a person from the opposite side. These mothers' meats are not restricted to one location, so that if a person travels to another region they will probably find people of the same meat and fit into the kinship system. Even when an Aboriginal person travels to other parts of Australia, the local people will find ways to fit the visitor into their kinship system by tracking connections across the land.

Ceremonial connections are often based on the creation of the landscape. Creators travelled and left behind waterholes, creeks, rivers, hills and other features. They established kinship and other laws. Creation events often cross the territories of several groups and extend beyond the region. Just some of the Muurra (creators and their tracks) that travel across the region and link Mutawintji with other culturally important places include:

- Kurlawirra - an important creator
- Wirtuwirtulinya - seven sisters
- Ngatji - two water snakes or rainbow serpents
- Murlarru - Marnbi of the Adnyamathanha people - bronzewing pigeon
- Makwarra and Kilparra - eagle and crow
- Tharlta and Yuururru - red kangaroo and euro

Other special places near Mutawintji include Nuntherungie, Gnalta, Yancannia, Cobham Lake, Koonenberry Mountain, Poolamacca and Mount Arrowsmith.

Other sites within the wider region that are considered by Wiimpatja to be of a similar level of significance to Mutawintji include Lake Mungo and the rock art galleries and ceremonial sites of the Gundabooka Range. Both these places are more than 250 kilometres distant from the Mutawintji Lands.



One of the large number of cooking hearths remaining within the Historic Site.

Today, Wiimpatja are seeking to strengthen our ways and enhance our association with our sacred lands. Wiimpatja culture continues and it is our wish that this should strongly influence the management and use of the Lands in their role as a protected landscape.

2.2 Some Recent History of the Mutawintji Lands

“Mutawintji is coming home ... my people are always here”

Mutawintji Board Member

British colonists began passing through the region in the 1830s. By the 1850s the Darling River was occupied by pastoralists and their sheep and cattle had begun to change the landscape. There was however resistance. During the gold rush years of the 1850s, many white stockmen deserted the Darling River pastoral runs allowing some reclaiming of Aboriginal land and often forcing the pastoralists to come to co-existence with the original owners. In 1861, Mutawintji was visited for water by the Burke and Wills expedition and soon after this, pastoralists occupied land in the area. By about 1880 the British occupation had extended to the far north-west corner of NSW.

Early pastoral lease holders at Mutawintji included Henry Raines and later the Raven family. They built the rock walls at the rock holes to increase their water supply. It is understood that when forced to relinquish his lease, Henry Raines released his herd of goats and they may be the founders of the current large feral goat population in the area. The Raven family built the Rockholes Hotel to service the horse-drawn coaches that travelled through Mutawintji delivering passengers, mail and supplies between Broken Hill and White Cliffs.

With the arrival of pastoralists, Aboriginal people were dispossessed and displaced. They could not control what the new-comers were doing at Mutawintji. Some people did continue to visit, while others stayed away, but they never stopped passing on knowledge about this sacred place.

Mutawintji has been a tourist attraction ever since European occupation of the far west of NSW in the 1860s. Most visitors were only interested in water for their stock but gradually local non-Aboriginal people began visiting to view the rock art and to appreciate the tranquillity of the place.

After lobbying by members of the Barrier Field Naturalists, in 1927 the NSW Government declared a main art and ceremonial area as a ‘Reserve for the Preservation of Caves, Flora and Fauna, and Aboriginal Carvings and Drawings’. In 1967 the newly created NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service assumed responsibility for the management of the 486 hectare area and it was declared the ‘Mootwingee Historic Site’.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the NPWS acquired former grazing lease lands to create a total of 76,086 ha of Mutawintji Lands. This included land to protect the Wangarru, the yellow-footed rock-wallaby. The only NSW population of this endangered species lives on the eastern side of the Lands.

When the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act commenced in 1983, Wiimpatja of far western NSW were already campaigning and organising for land claims, land purchases, involvement in protection of cultural places and rights of access to land



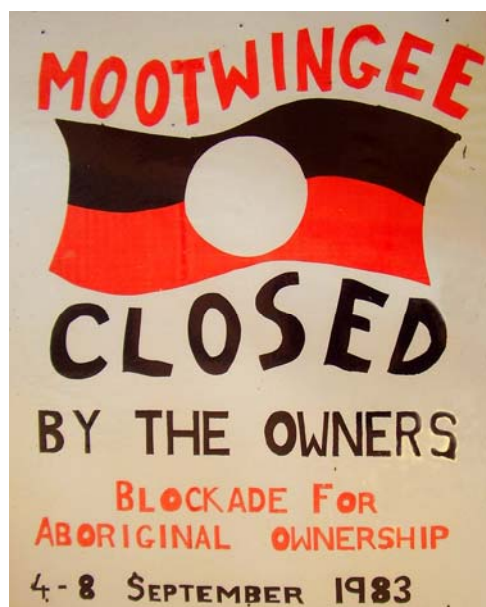
for hunting, fishing and food gathering. By this time Aboriginal people had gained enough rights in Australian society for the people connected to Mutawintji to feel they could protect and control this most precious place again.

In September 1983, about 100 people blockaded the entrance to the Mootwingee Historic Site for the week of the Broken Hill centenary celebrations. The site, then controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, was an important tourist attraction for Broken Hill, but was at that time managed without reference to a living culture. Restricted sacred sites were among the main tourist attractions. The local 'tribe' was declared 'extinct' in the signs and brochures and the site was subject to damage from vandalism and poor management.

With this blockade in 1983, the revival of assertion of Wiimpatja rights at Mutawintji signalled the end of the colonial era for these sacred lands. The Mutawintji community was reborn and has survived since then due to the determination and courage of the people. The foundations of the Mutawintji community are a sense of identity as a group and their traditional ownership, knowledge and responsibility to land. Gatherings are being held again at which people celebrate and renew their obligations to the land and gain knowledge, responsibility and wisdom.

Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council was established when the Land Rights Act started, especially to represent the land and cultural interests of the Wiimpatja of its area, even though there is no town with a resident Aboriginal population in the area. National parks cannot be claimed under the Land Rights Act. From the start, Mutawintji Land Council's main aims have been ownership of the national park, ownership of other ancestral lands, re-establishing Wiimpatja living in the area, and revitalising Wiimpatja culture in the area.

Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council kept campaigning for legislation to provide Aboriginal ownership of national parks in NSW. Mutawintji Land Council negotiated with NPWS for changes in the management of the Historic Site and national park to be respectful and to involve Wiimpatja. During the 1980s, Mutawintji Land Council also got involved in the preparation of the first plan of management.



In 1991, the first draft of Aboriginal ownership legislation was presented by the Minister for the Environment. It took five more years, a parliamentary enquiry and a change of government before the new law was passed.

In December 1996, the National Parks & Wildlife Amendment (Aboriginal ownership) Act was passed by the NSW Parliament. This law enables negotiations for Aboriginal ownership of a limited number of national park areas in NSW. The Mutawintji Land Council quickly took the initiative and negotiations took place over 18 months resulting in a 30 year lease which

began on 4th September 1998 when the land title passed back to the Aboriginal owners, to be held on their behalf by Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council. A celebration and official hand-back and lease ceremony was held at Mutawintji on 5th September 1998 and in September 2008, 10 years of joint management was celebrated.

The 1998 handback of the Mutawintji Lands was the culmination of 15 years of dedicated campaigning by local Wiimpatja and their supporters. With the return of their sacred lands, the Mutawintji community has changed from being landless and homeless, to being the local Aboriginal community with the largest land holding in NSW. The rights and obligations of Aboriginal owners are again at the centre of caring for Mutawintji and teaching visitors about its importance.



The board of management now has care, control and management of the Lands. The present board of management is the third board appointed by the Minister since the hand back of the Lands.

2.3 Regional Conservation

“Mutawintji should be an iconic cultural site like Uluru and Kakadu”

Mutawintji Board Member

The Mutawintji Lands form a very important part of the network of conservation areas in western New South Wales (see figure 2).

Mutawintji is located within the biogeographical region known as the Broken Hill Complex. This bioregion is characterised by outcrops of very ancient rocks with associated outwash areas and plains.

Only 2.2% of this bioregion is conserved in reserves and Mutawintji Lands accounts for almost all of this. They contribute to the protection of unique semi-arid vegetation both in western NSW and nationally, and include vegetation which is considered poorly conserved across the region.



Rocky outcrops, outwash areas and alluvial plains are characteristic of the Mutawintji Lands.

The nearest conservation area of any significant size is the recently established Paroo-Darling National Park to the east and north-east (see Figure 2). Sturt, Kinchega, Mallee Cliffs and Mungo National Parks are more distant. Located in different bioregions they protect different environments.



The Lands' relative isolation from other national parks, virtually positioning them as an "island" of conserved land surrounded by much more expansive tracts of pastoral activity and landscapes subject to on-going grazing and land use pressures, adds to their conservation importance.

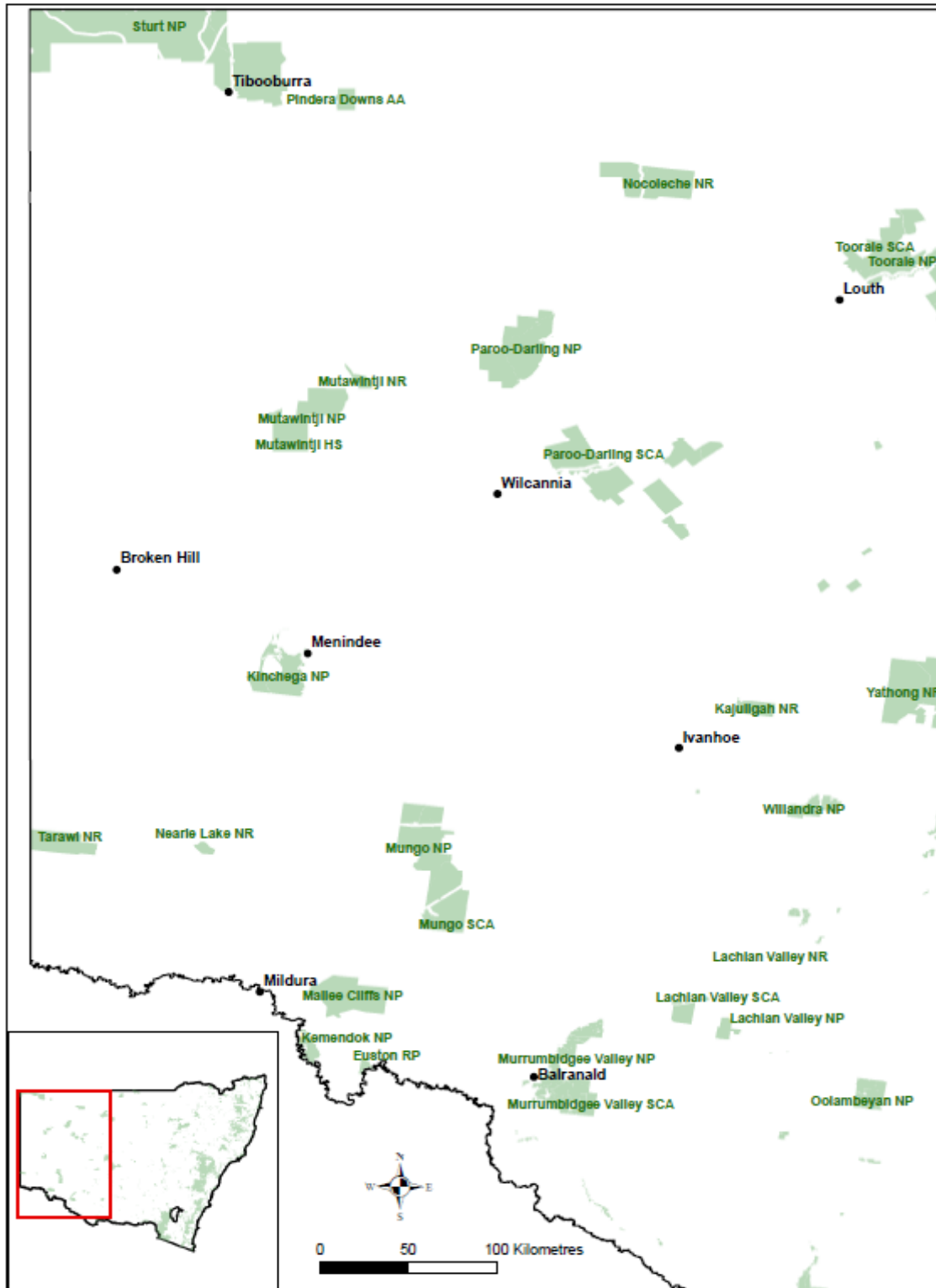


Figure 2 - National parks and other NPWS reserves in western NSW.

3. Wirtu Paraku - (Important Words) – The Legal Framework

3.1 Joint Management of National Parks in NSW

“Joint management takes joint effort by all people involved in the process.”
Mutawintji Chair

The *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Aboriginal Ownership) Act 1996* provided for Aboriginal ownership of protected areas and the development of co-operative management arrangements between Aboriginal owners and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. These amendments created the necessary legislative provisions required to facilitate the hand-back and lease-back of the Mutawintji Lands.

This legislation and subsequent lease agreement acknowledged the right of Aboriginal owners and other Wiimpatja to occupy the Lands. It vested the Lands as inalienable Aboriginal freehold land, held on behalf of the Aboriginal owners by the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council (Clause 1.3 of the lease). The Lands are leased back to the Minister of the Environment to remain part of the conservation estate of New South Wales (Clause 5.1). The care, control and management are however now the responsibility of the Board, with a Wiimpatja owner majority (Clauses 7.5 10.1, 10.3, 10.9).

Other models for Aboriginal involvement in national parks across New South Wales, in addition to this hand-back lease-back approach, have emerged since the Mutawintji Lease was finalised in 1998. These include co-management (guided by a memorandum of understanding) and other formal agreements such as Indigenous Land Use Agreements, informal agreements and advisory committee representation. The Mutawintji joint management model however is the strongest in terms of Aboriginal ownership of the lands. It is the view of the Mutawintji Board and the Mutawintji Land Council that Aboriginal ownership, lease back and the care, control and management by a board with a majority of Aboriginal owners is a genuine, empowering and appropriate form of partnership and Aboriginal involvement in national parks. The legislation provides a high level of secure contractual obligation between equal parties. This is much better than token or insecure arrangements that rely on the good will of government acting in an unequal power relationship with local Aboriginal peoples.

3.2 The Mutawintji Lease

The Mutawintji Lease incorporates those areas of land that were reserved or dedicated as Mootwingee National Park, Mootwingee Historic Site and Coturaundee Nature Reserve. The lease changed the names of these areas to Mutawintji National Park, Mutawintji Historic Site and Mutawintji Nature Reserve



respectively. These areas are collectively known as the Mutawintji Lands (the Lands) (Clause 1.2).

The Lands are leased for an initial period of 30 years to the Minister commencing on 4 September 1998 (Clause 5.2) and the lease is renewable (Clause 5.3).

The Lands remain part of the conservation estate of New South Wales (Clause 5.1) but are under the care, control and management of the Board.

The lease provides that a new plan of management for the Lands be prepared as a priority by the Board to reflect and enhance the joint management arrangement. The lease specifically requires that preparation of this plan must be commenced by December 1998 and this plan must:

- deal with the issue of the Nature Reserve and Historic Site becoming part of the National Park (Clause 1.4);
- state where and how new community facilities can be built (Clause 7.7). Clause 2.1 of the lease lists what are considered to be community facilities;
- deal with public right of access to the Lands including some areas of the Lands which may be permanently or temporarily zoned for Wiimpatja cultural and management purposes (Clause 12.2); and
- authorise the adoption and implementation of operational practices for a management issue which may be prepared from time to time as such issues arise. If such practices need an amendment to this plan they cannot be implemented until this plan has been changed (Clause 12.9).

The lease refers to this plan in other Clauses but generally says that management actions need to be consistent with this plan.

3.3 The Board of Management

“Discussions get heated at times but when we treat each other with respect, there is always resolution”

Wiimpatja Owner

Membership of board of managements is set out in Part 4A of the *NPW Act*, and detailed for Mutawintji in the Lease (Clause 9.13, 10.3, 10.4, 10.9).

The Mutawintji Board of Management comprises 13 members, as follows:

- Eight members are Aboriginal Owners, being two descendants from each of the four ancestral family groups identified in the lease - Dutton, Quayle, Tyler/Barlow and Gibson;
- one representative from the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- one representative from the Central Darling Shire Council;
- one representative from neighbouring pastoralists;
- one representative from the NSW Nature Conservation Council - representing conservation interests; and
- one representative from NPWS.



Under the Act the Board is the “park authority” and has responsibility for the care, control and management of the Lands (Clause 8.12, 10.1). The Board receives the annual park management funding, any capital works funding, the annual rent (compensation) monies and any other funding (Clause 6.1, 6.7, 9.6-9.9, and 10.19). The Board prepares annual work programs, develops or approves management activities and projects (Clause 10.5), recruits staff (in co-operation with OEH) (Clause 11.4) and decides on where and how rent (compensation) monies are used. The Board is subject to the control and direction of the Minister (Clause 8.7), except for decisions relating to the care, control and management of Aboriginal heritage and culture within the Lands (Clause 8.7), as long as these are consistent with the *NPW Act* and the approved plan of management.

As required by the lease, the preparation of a new plan of management for the Lands (Clause 12.21), to reflect and enhance the joint management arrangements has been a priority undertaking for the Board.

Members of the current board travel from throughout New South Wales to attend board of management meetings which are held, on average, four times each year. Special meetings or workshops are also held involving some or all board members, and other Aboriginal owners, such as the workshops held as part of this plan’s preparation.

Meetings are regularly held on the Lands to enable Members to understand and to learn from each other and the Land. Bringing Wiimpatja children back to Mutawintji and making them feel welcome has been an important part of the board’s functioning.

The Board has undergone governance training to assist members in understanding the Board’s role and responsibilities, how to work effectively within the Board and with others, where the Board sits in the “big picture” and how to stay focused on longer term goals or the vision for the Lands while addressing operational and management challenges.



The Board in session on the Lands (left), and after hours at the Shearers’ Quarters (right).

“It’s got a playground and stuff and beautiful food.”

Wiimpatja Child Member



3.4 The Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council

The Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) represents and works closely with Aboriginal owners. Under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act), the MLALC holds the Lands on behalf of the Aboriginal owners and it must lease these lands to the Minister. In relation to the lands, the MLALC may only act with the agreement of the Wiimpatja owner board members.

The lease allows cultural items to be transferred from NPWS to the MLALC to hold on behalf of the Aboriginal owners, provided they are managed by the Board.

The MLALC reviews the lease every 5 years, re-negotiates lease renewal every 30 years and signs the lease renewal.

3.5 State Government Laws and National Park Policies

The management of national parks in NSW is set within the context of a legal and policy framework. The main laws relevant to the management of the Lands are the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), particularly Part 4A of the NPW Act, the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) and the *Wilderness Act 1987*.

Section 72AA of the NPW Act lists the points that should be considered when preparing a plan of management. The most relevant for the Lands, include:

- the relevant management principles for the park/reserve type (see section 3.6);
- the conservation of biodiversity, including the maintenance of habitat, ecosystems and populations of threatened species;
- the protection and appreciation of objects, places and structures of cultural significance and tracts of land;
- the protection of landscape values and scenic features;
- the protection of geological and geomorphological features;
- the protection of wilderness values and the management of wilderness areas;
- the maintenance of natural processes;
- fire management;
- the potential for the area to be used by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes,
- the provision of opportunities for public understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of natural and cultural heritage values, including opportunities for sustainable visitor use;
- the adaptive reuse of buildings and structures;
- the appropriate (including culturally appropriate) and ecologically sustainable use of the reserved land, including use by lessees, licensees and occupiers of the land;
- the preservation of catchment values;
- the encouragement of appropriate research;
- the identification and mitigation of threatening processes;
- the regional, national and international context of the reserved land;
- benefits to local communities; and



- the social and economic context of the reserve and management co-ordination/co-operation across tenures.

These and others are addressed in the preparation of this plan.

The NSW NPWS also has a range of policies that direct the management of national parks and other protected areas. These policies were developed from information provided by relevant legislation, also internationally and nationally accepted principles of park management. The policies cover a range of matters such as nature conservation, recreation, Aboriginal and historic heritage conservation, commercial use, research and communication. NPWS policies have been applied or provided guidance for directions in this plan, and in some circumstances where existing policy is inadequate, a new Mutawintji policy has been developed under this plan.

This plan is a statutory document under the NPW Act. Once the Minister has adopted it, no operations may be undertaken within the planning area except in accordance with the plan. Amendments to a plan of management can be made, if required, through a process set out in the NPW Act.

This plan will also apply to any future additions to a park or reserve, with the relevant management guidelines coming into operation following the gazettal of these areas.

3.6 Management Principles for National Parks and Other Reserves

The NPW Act sets out management principles for the different types of parks and reserves that can be gazetted under this legislation. These principles provide directions to guide the preparation of plans of management as well as for shaping reserve management activities.

The management principles for national parks, historic sites and nature reserves (that make up the Mutawintji Lands) are set out below.

Principles for national parks are:

- the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and the maintenance of natural landscapes;
- the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value;
- the protection of the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations;
- the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values;
- provision for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values;
- provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values; and



- provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

Principles for historic sites are:

- the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value;
- the conservation of natural values;
- provision for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the historic site's natural and cultural values;
- provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the historic site's natural and cultural values;
- the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the historic site's natural and cultural values; and
- provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

Principles for nature reserves are:

- the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena;
- the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value;
- the promotion of public appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the nature reserve's natural and cultural values; and
- provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

For the approximately 63% of the Mutawintji Lands that is declared as wilderness, a declaration that sits "alongside" the gazettal of the Lands as a national park, the *Wilderness Act 1997* sets out the management principles for declared wilderness areas as follows:

- to restore (if applicable) and to protect the unmodified state of the area and its plant and animal communities;
- to preserve the capacity of the area to evolve in the absence of significant human interference; and
- to permit opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation.



4. Ngarratja Ngarrpalaana (Building Together)

Priority - To effectively joint manage the Mutawintji Lands, supported by a Wiimpatja Employment Strategy.

4.1 Wiimpatja Staffing and Training

“In five years, I’d like to see more family living and working in the Lands and more tourism.”

Wiimpatja Owner

Training and employment for Wiimpatja was an important concern during the blockade and negotiations for the Handback of the Mutawintji Lands to Aboriginal owners.

Management of the Lands by Wiimpatja – across all of the roles needed for the area’s protection, management and presentation – is vital if we are to achieve the vision of ‘a great national park run by Wiimpatja.’ Ultimately it would be desirable for the Lands’ entire on-site management team to be made up of Wiimpatja staff, although this may take a number of years to achieve.

Employing Wiimpatja in the management of Mutawintji will bring a wide range of benefits. It will allow them continued close contact with the Lands, to build and express Wiimpatja pride in Mutawintji, allow traditional knowledge to be applied and shared, develop the economic base and security of Wiimpatja families and grow people’s personal confidence and abilities.

The lease specifies a number of Aboriginal designated public service positions which includes the joint management coordinator, all field officer positions of any grade, ranger, trainee ranger and any administrative positions (Clause 11.3). The joint management coordinator will report to the Board and will assist the Board with making joint management of the Lands run smoothly by working cooperatively with NPWS (Clause 11.1). These positions will ideally be filled by Wiimpatja. Where not available for recruitment, the Aboriginal designated positions may be filled by non-Wiimpatja or at a lower grade/trainee basis by Wiimpatja with cultural association.

Sufficient staff positions and an appropriate mix of position types and skills must be dedicated to the Lands to allow for their effective and efficient management as well as for implementation of this plan.

It is desirable that increasing numbers of Wiimpatja are employed on the park and there remain a number of practical and administrative challenges to be addressed in increasing Wiimpatja employment at Mutawintji.



It is also important that visitors, our neighbours, other NPWS staff, and the wider community can see Wiimpatja running the Lands. For many visitors speaking with an Aboriginal person about a place or seeing them involved in caring for an area, can add greatly to their experience and appreciation of a park and its cultural importance. Broken Hill and Wilcannia residents and the wider community will benefit from seeing how Wiimpatja care for the Lands and take pride in their management. It is also valuable that Wiimpatja demonstrate their skill as land managers, both using their traditional knowledge as well as conventional or scientific techniques, to our neighbours and other national park managers.

There are currently five positions directly associated with the Mutawintji Lands, a park manager, a joint management coordinator, a ranger and two field officers. The park manager and joint management coordinator work from Broken Hill and the ranger and field officers are based at Mutawintji National Park.

Educational or training requirements to work with the NPWS, even in field roles, have become progressively more formal or restrictive. Some Wiimpatja have lamented that “gone are the days when knowledge of my own community, culture, land and languages got me a job in NPWS”. Traditional skills and knowledge should be given more recognition in both selecting Wiimpatja to work on the Lands and as an active part of the area’s management. Culturally appropriate training, both on the Lands and elsewhere, will be required to improve Wiimpatja skills, suitability and job competitiveness. Special employment provisions, possibly including new positions and responsibilities better tailored to the Lands and the circumstances of a joint management park may also be warranted. It is however very desirable that qualifications and experience gained at Mutawintji should also be recognised at other Aboriginal owned/managed national parks and across the OEH workforce generally – to allow Wiimpatja staff from Mutawintji to seek jobs elsewhere if they wish. On the other hand, it is important that Wiimpatja staff trained and working on Mutawintji are not transferred to other national parks against their will.

Fairness and transparency in the processes of choosing and employing Wiimpatja will be very important considerations, such as ensuring that all Wiimpatja people have equal access to employment opportunities and job prospects are available to both men and women.

Training for board members, in carrying out their roles and responsibilities as well as in conservation and natural/cultural heritage management, will be necessary to enhance peoples’ skills and improve the functioning of the Board and management of the Lands.



What the Lease Says

- *Aboriginal designated positions will be established across the range of NPWS positions required to manage the Lands (Clause 11.3).*
- *The board will be responsible for appointments to work on the Mutawintji Lands, but will have to follow the established public service recruitment rules (Clause 11.4).*
- *The NPWS Director-General and the board will review the jobs being done by NPWS employees looking after the Lands to see if the sort of work being done should be changed, this will happen for each job one year after someone is employed in it for the first time (Clause 11.7).*
- *The Minister agrees to promote Aboriginal training and employment within the NPWS including at the Mutawintji Lands (Clauses 8.1, 12.25).*
- *Mutawintji Lands will get fair treatment under the NPWS general Aboriginal employment plan and in addition to the new Aboriginal jobs created by the lease (Clause 8.1).*
- *NPWS staff on the Mutawintji Lands will have access to a fair share of the training programs within the normal NPWS training structure and board members can take part if there is room on these courses (Clause 12.25).*
- *NPWS staff working on the Mutawintji Lands will have to do Wiimpatja cultural awareness training (Clause 10.18).*

Objective

To ensure Wiimpatja employment has a central place in all aspects of the management of the Lands, and provision of adequate training and support to successfully fulfil roles and achieve career progression.

Actions

1. As a high priority we will prepare an appropriate employment strategy for the Lands. The strategy will be aimed at increasing the involvement of Wiimpatja in the management of the Lands through their direct participation in the area's workforce - increasing the number of Wiimpatja designated positions for the Lands. We will achieve this in steps over the life of this plan and beyond.

HIGH PRIORITY

2. The provision of training for Wiimpatja will be an important component of the employment strategy. We will source other funding opportunities and may use community development funds to assist Wiimpatja with training and qualifications to apply for jobs at Mutawintji or on other national parks.

3. In developing the strategy we will evaluate the number and type of positions required to implement this plan and the staff resources needed to move in stages from the present to the preferred management and staffing situation. The employment strategy will include staffing transition steps to help us move towards the goal of greater Wiimpatja employment on the Lands.

4. In preparing the employment strategy we will also think about:

- offering a less rigid category of employment which would help Wiimpatja into the Lands' workforce and give them greater experience across all aspects of the area's management;
- extra training needs for Wiimpatja and the importance of training assistance, volunteer experience and mentoring or other opportunities such as school holiday programs - even before formal employment where this can help;



- employment and training standards that ensure skills gained at Mutawintji are recognised and transferable to other parts of the NPWS (including OEH) and elsewhere, to enable Wiimpatja staff from Mutawintji to further their careers;
- equality and fairness in providing employment and training opportunities to Wiimpatja will be applied;
- gender equity;
- the potential for job sharing and part-time employment, and flexibility around cultural and social commitments; and
- building stronger working relationships with other service providers to source external funding opportunities to increase the number of Wiimpatja training or working on the Lands.

4.2 Management Infrastructure and Resources

“They put it [the old concrete dam] there, so we should leave it there.”

MLALC Member

A range of infrastructure and facilities have been developed on the Lands, mostly by the NPWS, since the first reservation of the Historic Site. A major phase of facilities development – for access, management and visitor infrastructure – occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. This pattern of development, built upon the area’s previous use and development as pastoral holdings and the initial focus on the cultural attractions of the Historic Site remains the pattern of development today.

The Lands’ administration and management centre is at the depot and old homestead area, about one kilometre south from the Homestead Creek day use area (and part of the original Mootwingee Homestead Complex).



Shearers’ Quarters - an accommodation, discussion and social area.



The depot includes a helipad to support management of the Lands.

The depot includes a large security-fenced area that contains a small office, large workshed and store, outdoor storage area

(including banded fuel-storage tanks and a back-up generator) and a helipad. A variety of large and small equipment, vehicles and machinery are stored at and around the depot. Some hazardous materials, including fuel and other dangerous substances are stored at the depot.

Two demountable accommodation blocks, comprising 10 units in total, are situated adjacent to the yard and are used for accommodation for visiting Wiimpatja, park staff, contractors and others.

The other features of this area are the Old Mootwingee Homestead buildings themselves – the ruins of the original stone homestead dating from the early 20th century, the “new” homestead building of stone and timber/iron, the stone and iron shed/storage and garage and the shearers’ quarters and adjoining toilet/shower building.

The new homestead building was used for staff accommodation until 23 May 2012 when it was accidentally destroyed by fire. The shearers’ quarters are regularly used for accommodation for resident and visiting park staff, contractors and members of the Board, other Aboriginal People and their families when the Board meets on the Lands. We want to also use this area as a meeting place for other business that needs all of us together.

Two above-ground “poly” water tanks are situated at the base of the hill behind the depot. These are supplied, mainly, from a bore located a short distance away beside Homestead Creek near where it emerges from the ranges. A large square ground tank is situated adjacent to the depot and behind the shearers’ quarters. It is fed in part, by a catch drain along the south-eastern edge of the depot enclosure. The tank is security fenced, along the top of the earth walls, but is generally in need of maintenance and repair.

A mud brick house was built by the MLALC south of the depot and old homestead. The house has, to-date, been used for staff accommodation. A small rubbish tip, above ground and pit, is also nearby. Additional accommodation is required on the Lands for Wiimpatja staff and other staff to live full-time on the Lands to look after the area and visitors.

The depot and old homestead buildings are easy to access for visitors walking across from the Homestead Creek camping area. This may mean there are security and safety issues that we need to consider if visitors start wandering into our workshop, the tip or go near the dam.

A Visitor Centre and park entry station is located adjacent to the main entry road approximately 5 kilometres from the Lands’ boundary and just before the entrance to Homestead Creek Valley. The facility has in the past contained a range of interpretive and informative displays in an open-air covered area. A small storage and office area is located at the rear, along with visitors’ toilets.

A Cultural Centre and staff house are situated inside the Historic Site, at the start of the guided walking tracks to the engraving and ochre art sites. Both are mainly timber structures.



The Cultural Centre includes storage areas for important cultural items and resource materials, as well as an audio-visual “performance” room and display spaces which are used during Wiimpatja-led or otherwise approved guided tours.

There is a sealed road within the Historic Site, via a locked gate and flanking stone walls, and this leads to a car park adjacent to the Cultural Centre.

The staff house includes a fenced yard and minor outbuildings as well as a large concrete water tank which is located underneath the Cultural Centre. The tank is connected to a large concrete dam, built in the 1960s but now heavily silted and largely unserviceable, which is located further eastward across the creek which passes through the Historic Site.

The entire Historic Site is enclosed by a low electric fence, intended mainly to exclude goats from this important area. The fence needs repair and requires continual maintenance.

An unsealed airstrip is situated immediately west of the Historic Site, aligned north-south in Homestead Creek Valley. The strip was previously used by visitors flying to Mutawintji to see the engraving and ochre art sites, as well as being used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) during emergencies, before and after the area was declared a Historic Site. It was also used by the NPWS for access and park management operations. At the time of writing this plan, the airstrip is not in use as it is too short to safely accommodate new RFDS aircraft. The strip is also eroded in places and the nearby ridges make aircraft approaches difficult in many circumstances. Nearby the airstrip on Tirlta Station is used for emergencies, however the 1-1.5 hour response time for RFDS call-outs, is approximately the same driving time from the Lands to Broken Hill. Nevertheless, upgrade of the emergency airstrip on the Lands is important.

The main entry road was sealed from the western entry, past the Visitor Centre and Homestead Creek camping ground, to the Homestead Creek day use area. Due to defects during construction however this sealed section of road became severely degraded – with the seal stripped, potholed and very substandard, especially the higher travel speed section west of the Visitor Centre. The road is damaged to the extent that it is a hazard for users in many places. Safety and sustainability issues on this sub-standard section of road needed to be addressed urgently and remediation works have been completed under the Board’s direction during the writing of this plan.

Most other roads within the Lands that are accessible (permissible) for visitor use – mostly in the Homestead Creek Valley to the Historic Site, Mutawintji Gorge, and Old Coach Road – are unsealed routes passable by two-wheel drive vehicles in dry weather. Drainage and other improvements – such as edge drains, spoon drains, dips, armoured creek crossings and gravel sheeting – occur along most of these routes to improve their trafficability, maintenance and sustainability. These roads can however become rough between routine grading and maintenance. The Lands’ network of management trails are mostly four-wheel drive routes on natural surface



materials. Several gravel borrow pits remain on the Lands in varying stages of revegetation or rehabilitation.

Electricity to the Lands is supplied from the regional grid, via an overhead high voltage power line (as a single wire on concrete poles) from the west which roughly parallels the main entry road to a point just across/east of Homestead Creek. From here it is reticulated underground to the various park management and accommodation sites in this area. The buildings in the Historic Site are not part of this reticulation network, but are supplied by a separate stand-alone hybrid solar power/diesel generator system. Electricity is not supplied to any visitor camping areas.

Telecommunications are available at the depot/Old Homestead Precinct, the buildings at the Historic Site and the Visitor Centre.

There are five operational ground tanks remaining on the Lands. Two Mile tank south of the main access road and new tank off the Old Coach Road between the car park and Split Rocks are the most accessible. Mt Wright tank, Mac's tank and Dick's tank are located in the more rugged area east and north-east of the Byngnano Range (in the Wilderness Area). Potable (drinking) water supplies are drawn from a bore near the Homestead Creek day use area. Dual poly pipe links the developments around the Homestead Creek and depot area with those in the Historic Site, allowing water supplies to be transferred (by gravity) between these locations.

The Lands are not entirely fenced, however strategic stock fencing, where necessary along a practical "give and take" boundary with our neighbours, is in place.

What the Lease says

- *The board will prepare a new plan of management that will say where and how new community facilities can be built (Clauses 7.7).*
- *The board will control planning and building approvals on the park, subject to legal requirements and the plan of management (Clause 12.8).*
- *The board has ownership and control of the tools, equipment, machinery and infrastructure located on the park and used in the area's management (Clause 13.13).*
- *Aboriginal people can't use any park equipment, tools or machinery that is not available to the general public unless the board agrees (Clause 12.15).*

Objective

To provide the necessary infrastructure, facilities and equipment to ensure the Lands are well managed and actions in this plan can be implemented.

Actions

5. As set out in Clause 10.5 of the lease, we will work with the NPWS each year to prepare annual budget proposals for the Lands' capital, recurrent, special allocation and other budget needs so that these can be considered as part of the overall NPWS budget proposals.

6. We will seek external funding for special projects as considered necessary.



7. We will consider providing seed funding to Wiimpatja community enterprises that will have direct benefit to the management of the Lands.
8. We will have tight control on the use of vehicles and equipment, to ensure that all resources are used for the ultimate benefit of the Lands and their management.
9. We will keep the roads on the Lands that are open for visitors to use in a safe and driveable condition. We will keep these roads at a standard that matches the Lands' natural landscape and location and ask visitors to travel at low-speeds. We will favour unsealed roads and low-impact road construction and maintenance techniques, but may also spot-seal or use other methods (such as sheeting or enzyme stabilisation) where necessary for health, safety, erosion control and maintenance.
10. We may temporarily close parts or all of a road at times for safety, management and cultural reasons.
11. The degraded and substandard section of sealing on the main entry road to the Lands will be upgraded to an appropriate standard. Sections of this road that have caused problems in the past may be sealed or realigned, or both, for safety or maintenance reasons. We will give preference if feasible to using suitably coloured gravels and seal to blend in with the area's landscape. The existing poor condition of the damaged sealed road requires completion as soon as possible in the life of this plan.

HIGH PRIORITY

12. Sections of major or more frequently used roads close to culturally important places, staff housing, more regularly occupied places or intensive visitor use areas (especially day use areas and campgrounds) may be sealed or treated by other techniques to improve safety and reduce dust damage/nuisance to protect or improve the appeal of these places. We will give preference if feasible to using suitably coloured gravels and seal to blend in with the area's landscape.
13. We will maintain existing management trails within the Lands to allow approved vehicle access for management and cultural purposes. These will mainly be unsealed four-wheel drive standard with a surface of natural on-site material, with appropriate improvements - such as drainage and surfacing works, creek crossings, "roll-over" erosion control features - to reduce erosion and other impacts and to help maintain them in a safe and useable condition. Visitors can access management trails on foot but will not be permitted to drive on management trails except in emergencies or as part of special tours or other approved activities. Vehicles, including commercial tours, will not be allowed on management trails in the Wilderness Area, except for Board authorised activities.
14. Existing management trails that may not be required for access or management purposes will only be closed and rehabilitated following the prior consideration and approval by the Board.



15. We will maintain effective boundary fencing around the Lands, as guided by the NPWS Neighbour Relations Policy, using strategic fencing where necessary and “give and take” boundary fencing in co-operation with our neighbours (see section 7.7 “Working with Our Neighbours”). The Lands’ boundary will also be identified with signage and boundary markers in those areas likely to be encountered by visitors and travellers.

16. We will make some general improvements to the appearance of the depot and workshop area and will consider fencing/screening vegetation.

17. The depot, workshop and Old Homestead buildings will be well presented to show we look after work areas.

18. An operating plan and hazard control procedures will be prepared to efficiently and safely manage the growth and use of the depot and workshop area.

19. Energy efficiency, waste reduction, recycling and sustainability issues will be addressed in the design and operation of all facilities and infrastructure within the Lands. Rainwater harvesting and reuse will be practised at all buildings and their surrounds as far as practicable.

20. We will improve the management of the tip to prevent rubbish from spreading and improve the existing waste reduction and recycling measures in place at the tip.

21. New housing and facilities will be built to meet the needs of staff, LALC and Aboriginal owners as the need arises. Housing design will be environmentally friendly and suitable for the climate. In locating staff housing we will balance the need to give staff privacy from visitors and other staff housing or work areas and keep the spread of buildings/infrastructure and their impacts on the area’s environment, landscape and appearance to a minimum.

HIGH PRIORITY

22. The existing staff house in the Historic Site will be planted with fast-growing local native vegetation, consistent with NPWS policies for ecological integrity. It will be landscaped to hide the buildings from visitors when they are at the stencil galleries and main engraving sites. This will help to give visitors a better experience of the Historic Site.

HIGH PRIORITY

23. The Board will negotiate with the MLALC regarding the ultimate return of the mud brick house in the intensive use zone to the land council’s use and management, when other adequate on-site accommodation is available to support the Lands’ management.

24. We will maintain signs to inform visitors about access restrictions to the depot, homestead buildings and staff housing, unless it is an emergency. The signs will be maintained on each of the roads that lead to these areas and also



installed in the bush between the Homestead Creek camping area and the old homestead buildings.

25. A “duty ranger system” will be established for visitor use so they can contact a ranger or other staff member if there is an after-hours emergency. Up-to-date information will be provided at the Visitor Centre and at the camping grounds.

26. We will take gravel supplies for use within the Lands from selected existing gravel pits remaining within the dispersed use zone when necessary.

27. The Board considers an emergency airstrip to service the Lands as important. During the life of this plan we will upgrade and maintain the existing airstrip within the Lands to a standard suitable for use by the RFDS, NPWS flight operations, commercial tours and a mail run, or investigate possible alternative locations for relocation of this airstrip outside the Homestead Creek Valley.

HIGH PRIORITY

28. Members of the public will not be permitted to use the airstrip except in emergencies or as part of special tours or other activities approved by the Board.



5. A Strong Wiimpatja Presence

Priority - *To establish a strong Wiimpatja presence on the Lands, supported by community development areas.*

5.1 Ngiinkaana Kiirrinana - Living on our Land

“Each time I travel to Mutawintji, I return feeling strong.”

Wiimpatja Owner Member

It is very important for Wiimpatja to live on the Lands when we wish, with an area for each family group to occupy and a place for elders to be comfortable on their Country. This was one of the key objectives of the Aboriginal owners involved in the handback negotiations.

Such living areas could be places where our children can stay during school holidays so they can spend their holidays on the Lands and learn about Country and our culture. A small playground for children to use, possibly located in the shared meeting place, is also something that most people wanted – and the Board has recently provided this.

Some people have indicated that a comfortable standard of housing that is suitable for being used now and then (rather than all the time) would be good. The housing should be low maintenance and in keeping with being “out bush” and in a national park. It should, importantly, be comfortable for elders and children and many people have stressed the need for good toilets. Other people have expressed a preference for simple shelters and “swag” campsites. Starting with simple facilities and buildings that can be improved and expanded as more people come to use the community development area, would be a cost-efficient and low-impact way to develop and use this place.

Most people would like a separate area set aside for a shared meeting place where all the families can get together and where board of management meetings and other group activities can be held.

The lease (Clause 2.1) allows for a wide definition of community development facilities or uses – possibly including housing (casual or permanent), camping sites, meeting places, administration facilities, tourism enterprises, recreation facilities, cultural facilities, a cemetery, essential services or infrastructure and other facilities to support Wiimpatja living, visiting or working on the Lands.



What the Lease Says

- *The board will prepare a new plan of management that will say where and how new community facilities can be built. The plan can include zoning and guidelines for community development purposes (Clause 7.7).*
- *The lease describes community development facilities or uses as possibly including housing (casual or permanent), camping sites, meeting places, administration, tourism enterprises, recreation facilities, cultural facilities, cemetery, essential services or infrastructure, and other facilities. These things may be developed by the land council, Aboriginal owners or the board for the use, but not necessarily the exclusive use, of Aboriginal owners (Clause 2.1).*
- *The board can spend rent money from the lease for community development projects (Clause 6.8).*
- *The board will control planning and building approvals on the park, subject to legal requirements and the plan of management (Clause 12.8).*
- *The land council can ask the Minister to sub-let any reasonable part of the park for community development purposes, and the Minister will not unreasonably refuse this when it is in accordance with the NPW Act and the plan of management (Clause 12.3).*

Objective

To enable Wiimpatja to live on the Lands to keep our cultural connection with the area while being involved in its protection, management and presentation to visitors.

Actions

29. A Community Development Area will be established within the intensive use zone, with “camps” for families associated with the Lands. This area is a good location because it is close to existing facilities (such as powerlines and water supplies) and other developments but has privacy. It also is a good spot that is close to existing roads, has a creek nearby and has an attractive outlook over the country.

HIGH PRIORITY

30. Each family’s living area will be separate from other families’ living areas. Each family’s living area will be clearly marked to show where it stops and starts.

31. A Yaparra (camp) Development Plan will be prepared to guide the establishment and use of the community development area and each family living area within it. The Yaparra Development Plan will show where each living area will be built, spell out the type of facilities to be built and when each one will be built. The family living areas may range from simple campsites to a collection of buildings, providing comfort for elders, according to the wishes of each family group. The Yaparra Development Plan will ensure things are done according to an overall agreed layout for this place and are built to a good standard, including compliance with the relevant codes, standards and planning processes.

HIGH PRIORITY

32. We will think carefully about energy efficiency and sustainability issues in preparation of the community development area, and in the building and management of the community development area overall, to reduce the area’s impact on the Lands and the wider landscape.

33. The Board has the ultimate management control over the community development area, and will direct the overall management and use of this area.
34. Access to the community development area, and to a particular living area, will only be allowed by invitation from a family or families. Each family will be responsible for the behaviour and conduct of all people within their living area.
35. Each family can declare their area “dry” if they wish.
36. Each family will be required to help with the upkeep of their family living area.
37. In preparing the Yaparra Development Plan we will work out what limits or guidelines will apply for keeping introduced animals and plants in the community development area, considering legal obligations, restrictions and NPWS policy.
38. Further low-key community development areas, but not as large or as developed with permanent structures/features as the community development area, may be established at other places in the dispersed use zone. These sites would only cater for small groups of people and would have limited facilities – such as a shelter, camping pad, water tank and pit toilet. They will require the Board’s approval before being established.
39. The members of approved family groups and their guests, as well as Wiimpatja with an association with the Lands and their dependants, can “bush camp” anywhere in the dispersed use and remote zones as long as they do not drive off existing management trails or have too great an impact at popular bush campsites. The Board will monitor impacts and regulate bush camping through a permit system on the Lands.
40. We will continue to use the depot and administration area as the preferred location for the board meetings and other business that requires us to meet as a group. Shared playground facilities and other equipment will be provided at a safe place near this area for our children to use during board meetings and other business (playground facility established at the time of writing this plan).
41. To enable Wiimpatja and members of their families to be buried on the Lands (if this is their wish) a thunka (cemetery) will be established on a low sand rise north of the entry road approximately one kilometre west of the Visitor Centre. This place is outside (west) of the Homestead Creek Valley and its main cultural areas. A site plan will be prepared by the Board to guide the development, management and appearance of the thunka and we may be guided by NPWS policy.

HIGH PRIORITY



5.2 Enterprise Opportunities on Mutawintji

“I love sitting around the fire at night listening to blackfella and whitefella stories.”

Wiimpatja Owner

Realising the economic potential of the Lands for Wiimpatja families was an important goal in the blockade and handback negotiations.

This may be through direct or indirect employment in the area’s management, tourism ventures, arts and crafts, appropriate resource harvesting, intellectual property rights and traditional knowledge, providing training and educational services, activity licensing and approvals, providing services to neighbouring landholders and a range of other activities agreed to by the Board.



Artwork is found in rock shelters such as this.

At present, beyond employment by the NPWS, Wiimpatja families are mainly involved in commercial activities on the Lands via Mutawintji heritage tours and goat control and other park management/ services contracts.

Mutawintji also features in the works of many of the Wiimpatja artists who draw their cultural and artistic inspirations from the place and its features. Arts and crafts include – among others – wood carvings, paintings, egg carvings and artefact production.

Enabling Wiimpatja to realise economic advantages from the Lands will have a similar range of benefits as identified for their direct employment in the area’s management – especially in allowing continued close contact with the Lands, building pride in the people, allowing knowledge to be shared, used and valued, developing the economic base and security of Wiimpatja families, growing people’s personal confidence and abilities and presenting positive messages to visitors, neighbours and the wider community.



Artwork by Elizabeth Hunter

What the Lease Says

- *The board can approve new commercial activities on the Lands, subject to certain procedural requirements regarding adequate notice to board members (Clause 12.24).*
- *The board has the authority to approve, with conditions, commercial tour operators visiting the Lands (Clauses 12.14, 13.11).*
- *The board can - where legally permitted - give preference to the land council when awarding contracts for works for the care, control or management of the Lands. Such activities include - but are not restricted to - feral animal control, fencing, weed control, rock art protection, road works, construction or maintenance of facilities, tour guiding, visitor services, and tourism activities (Clause 10.17).*
- *The board cannot permit any commercial or other culling of kangaroos if the Minister for the Environment opposes this (Clause 12.16).*
- *Cultural items of the Mutawintji Lands are vested in the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council. These items are then in the care, control and management of the board (Clause 12.1). The lease adopts a wide definition of cultural and intellectual property (well beyond art and traditional designs) – including human remains and tissues, all items of immovable and movable cultural property (including cultural significant/sensitive sites), literary or performing or artistic works (including songs, music, dances, stories, ceremonies, symbols, languages, words, symbols and designs) and traditional, scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge (including genes, tissues, cultigens, medicines pharmaceutical products, and the phenotypes of flora and fauna) (Clause 13.16).*
- *The lease allows the National Parks and Wildlife Service to use Wiimpatja cultural property free-of-charge, but under the board's supervision, to benefit or promote Mutawintji or the National Parks system or nature conservation generally (Clause 13.16).*

Objective

To provide enterprise opportunities, including employment and economic opportunities, for Wiimpatja to work on the Lands and be centrally and visibly involved in the management of the Lands and in the experience of visitors.

Actions

42. We will prepare and implement an employment strategy to increase the number and visibility of Wiimpatja working in the management and presentation of the Lands (see section 4.1 Wiimpatja Staffing and Training).

43. Wiimpatja will play a central role in guided tours and other face-to-face visitor activities as well as in the preparation of interpretive and informative material presenting the Lands to visitors (see sections 6.5 Helping Visitors Understand Mutawintji and Culture and 7.10 Helping People Experience Mutawintji).

44. We may investigate expanding the range of tours and other visitor facilities offered by Wiimpatja to people coming to the Lands including to the Wilderness Area.

45. An arts and craft facility will be added to, or established in the vicinity of, the existing Visitor Centre. This may include both indoor and outdoor space where visitors can see Wiimpatja creating art and craft items or other products that can be offered for sale here and elsewhere. As a public access venue this site would only be suitable for low-risk activities. Higher risk craftwork such as wood carving or power tool and hazardous material use would require a secure area either here or off-site at the existing depot complex.



46. As set out in Clause 10.17 of the Lease and to the extent permitted by law, the Board will give preference to the MLALC where appropriate in contracting for services associated with the care and management of the Lands. This will increase employment opportunities for Wiimpatja. The Board may also offer such contracts to Aboriginal owners, or to other associated Wiimpatja, if the Land Council is unable or does not wish to provide such contract services.

47. During the life of this plan we will undertake a detailed feasibility study (a study to identify possible commercial enterprises and opportunities and in particular their financial and operational viability, skill and management needs, and sustainability) of the full range of Wiimpatja enterprises and commercial opportunities that may be possible and viable on the Lands.

48. The Board will encourage the use of the Lands as a demonstration and teaching place for other people, from around Australia, to come and share knowledge and learn about cultural and natural resource management and joint management.

49. Commercial use of the Lands by non-Wiimpatja, for activities other than tours and visitor services, will be closely regulated (see sections 6.5 Helping Visitors Understand Mutawintji and Culture and 7.10 Helping People Experience Mutawintji). In deciding about suitable commercial use of the Lands we will be guided by existing NPWS policies and practices for use such as commercial filming/photography and licences or concessions. We will favour commercial uses that: acknowledge and support Aboriginal ownership and joint management of the Lands; are culturally appropriate; are sustainable and do not adversely impact the Lands' resources and values; provide opportunities for Wiimpatja employment or involvement and skills transfer; and are consistent with the priorities and directions of this plan.

50. We will investigate ways of protecting Wiimpatja intellectual property rights regarding traditional knowledge of the Lands' resources, their attributes, use and management. The Board will be guided by NPWS policy relating to Aboriginal intellectual property rights.

51. We will expand the use and recognition of the Mutawintji logo to assist in the marketing and promotion of the Lands and Wiimpatja enterprises. Use of the logo by non-Wiimpatja commercial activities will be tightly regulated – as an endorsement, quality control and revenue generation measure, in consultation with the MLALC.

6. Kirrkalaana (Teaching)

Priority - To value country and each other so we can promote, learn and teach Wiimpatja culture to our children and the rest of the world.

6.1 Looking After Important Places

“Sensational, stunning, an extremely special place.”

“Mutawintji is unique – its beauty, its past and in the way the place is managed.”

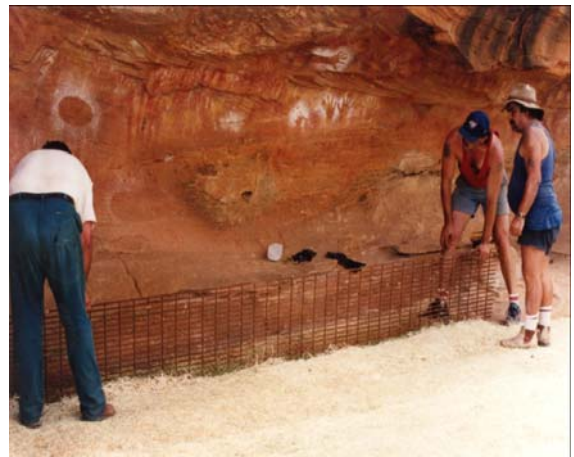
Visitors’ comments, 2002

Wiimpatja have been living on the Lands for generations. These Lands are of special significance to many Wiimpatja and contain a wide range of important features including creation places, rock engravings, paintings and evidence of occupation.

A large number of sites (over 300) have been recorded on the Lands, including art sites (both painted and engraved), camp sites consisting of hearths and artefact scatters, scarred trees, stone arrangements and quarries. Many of the recordings have however been opportunistic in nature rather than as the result of a systematic survey and it is very likely that there are many additional sites yet to be recorded.



Metal boardwalk, protecting the rock surfaces at the main engraving site.



Art site protection works underway at Ngalkirra (the Amphitheatre).

Perhaps the most comprehensive work on the Wiimpatja cultural heritage of the Lands was undertaken by Allan Fox and Associates in 1986 and involved a review of the recorded sites, an assessment of the condition of art sites and a discussion of Wiimpatja land use. The report drew some conclusions for archaeological sites recorded in the Lands and these are provided below.

6.1.1 Culturally significant or sensitive places

“When I come to Mutawintji I get to rest with the spirits of my people.”

Wiimpatja Owner

The Mutawintji Historic Site is an important cultural place and has many individual sites including engravings, paintings and occupation sites. This area is also the most well known site on the Lands. Boardwalks and information signs have been constructed to protect this place and visitors must be taken on guided tours by trained Wiimpatja or tour operators who have special permits. The Cultural Centre at the Historic Site tells the story of Mutawintji and tools, implements and other artefacts are displayed.

Ngalkirka (the Amphitheatre) is another part of the Lands where visitor access is restricted to Wiimpatja escorted tours.

There are many sites that are of great cultural importance for Wiimpatja and visitor access is not permitted or must be closely managed. There is Wiimpatja law about Wiimpatja who can access special places for cultural or spiritual reasons to care for particular sites. These rules are for Wiimpatja only and we will ensure they are maintained.

Staff helping Wiimpatja to look after the Lands, may sometimes be near special places.

6.1.2 Rock art sites – engravings and paintings

Two major styles of rock art occur in the Lands – engravings and paintings.



Engraving of Emu at the main engraving area of the Historic Site.



Stencil art at the Historic Site.

The type of engraving found in the Historic Site, Ngalkirrka (the Ampitheatre) and scattered sites elsewhere is known as the Panaramitee Style – a very widespread engraving style found throughout much of inland Australia.

The existing written records of the Lands’ rock art galleries are inadequate in their detail, with the exception of a few specific areas. Records are not representative of the distribution of art sites within the Lands. A systematic recording and analysis of the distribution of art sites and styles is needed to gain an understanding of the art sites, their relationship to each other and their connection with other art sites in the western NSW area and interstate.

6.1.3 Occupation sites

The number and level of detail recorded about occupation sites on the Lands is inadequate and is likely to not reflect their true abundance in the landscape or their significance in providing insights into Wiimpatja lifestyle.

6.1.4 Stone arrangements

The purpose of stone arrangements (which includes stone mounds) is not well understood. A number have been recorded within the Lands, however their abundance in the landscape is under represented in existing written records.

6.1.5 Managing important places

The management of Wiimpatja sites needs to take account of the cultural significance of each site – some sites are places where only Aboriginal people can go, others are places where males or females cannot go. Decisions to allow visitors to access these sites need to be in line with cultural rules about who is allowed to go to these places. Very important sites, such as Snakes Cave and Mushroom Rock, will need to remain closed or be closed to visitors.



Boardwalk, of “goat-mesh” at an art overhang in the Historic Site (above).

Metal on-ground mesh guides visitor movement and protects artefact scatters within the Historic Site (left).

Some sites may be a long way from roads and walking tracks and it is unlikely that visitors will go to these areas. In these places fences and signs may not be needed to stop visitors. Fences and signs protect sites but they can also attract tourists' attention or curiosity to explore places that are restricted.

Allowing visitors to access sites must be achieved in a very careful way to ensure that these fragile and important places are not damaged. There are different ways to ensure preservation of sites including only taking visitors to sites on guided tours, constructing special boardwalks and other tracks and informing people about the sites so they understand their importance to Wiimpatja and others with a connection to country.

What the Lease Says

- *The lease recognises that the park is of special cultural significance to Aboriginal people and contains a wide range of important features including creation places, rock engravings, paintings and evidence of past occupation (Clauses 4.1, 12.2).*
- *The board can restrict the access of park staff as Aboriginal people or the board think is needed (Clause 12.2).*
- *The park's special significance to Aboriginal people having a cultural association with the area was considered in negotiation of the lease (Clauses 4.1, 4.2).*
- *The board can use the plan of management to permanently or temporarily zone parts of the park for Aboriginal cultural and management purposes, and these areas will not generally be open to the public (Clause 12.2).*
- *The board can restrict public access to ceremonial places or other cultural sites, including different restrictions for male and female visitors, in order to protect these special places (Clause 12.2).*
- *The board must consent before the NPWS can carry out any actions, functions or powers that may impact the parks' special cultural significance for Aboriginal people (except in a few special cases, such as emergencies or mandatory functions under the Wilderness or Threatened Species Conservation Acts) (Clauses 8.14, 9.1).*

Objective

To protect the places of spiritual, ceremonial or cultural importance to Aboriginal owners and associated Wiimpatja, and to enable Wiimpatja to maintain close cultural associations and be actively involved in the safeguarding and management of these places.

To enable visitors to understand, appreciate and respect the importance of the Lands and their spiritual, ceremonial or cultural significance to Wiimpatja.

Actions

52. A staged program to document culturally important places and objects within the Lands will be undertaken and a regular monitoring program set up to stabilise and conserve sites or objects of significance that are being damaged or degraded. This will involve Wiimpatja participation and skills transfer.

HIGH PRIORITY

53. Culturally important objects that cannot be protected well-enough where they are now found on the Lands may be recorded and moved to a safe "keeping place", or used for study or display, but only with the approval of the Board and appropriate Wiimpatja knowledge holders.

54. The Cultural Centre will be repaired and renovated to provide information that explains aspects of Wiimpatja culture to visitors, background information on the Lands, the cultural significance of the Lands and its natural values.

HIGH PRIORITY

55. Early in the life of this plan we will investigate the construction of a “keeping place” at a location on the Lands to be determined in consultation with Wiimpatja owners, NPWS staff and the Board. This keeping place will be constructed to museum standard and guidelines.

HIGH PRIORITY

56. Early in the life of this plan we will prepare a list of all known cultural objects associated with the Lands that are held on the Lands, by the NPWS, by the MLALC, by Wiimpatja and by other known people or groups (as far as possible) so we can better protect, manage and present these objects.

HIGH PRIORITY

57. Research into the full range of Wiimpatja sites on the Lands will be encouraged. Any cultural research by NPWS or other agencies will be guided by Wiimpatja. Wiimpatja will be involved in any research activities on the Lands and these activities will be structured to include the transfer of skills and knowledge to the Aboriginal people participating.

58. Any development work to build new facilities and infrastructure will be preceded by a detailed study to document cultural sites in the area and identify ways to protect sites, where this has not already been done.

59. Wiimpatja will be directly involved in preparing all visitor information. Wiimpatja will explain in their own words why sites are important, about connection to Country and ways to protect these special places.

60. We will develop a set of rules to guide staff and contractors in working near special places.

61. The area of the present Mutawintji Historic Site will remain a place where visitors will be restricted to guided tours conducted by trained Wiimpatja or tour operators with special permission (see section 6.5 Helping Visitors Understand Mutawintji and Culture).

62. Ngalkirrka (the Amphitheatre area) will remain a restricted place for visitors and commercial tour operators, except when guided tours are conducted by trained MLALC guides. Improved fencing and protection will be installed at the closed access track and other possible entry points to better prevent unescorted visitor access to this area.



Artwork is found in shelters such as this one at Ngalkirrka – (Amphitheatre Gorge) area.

63. During the life of this plan we will reconsider allowing approved tour operators to access Ngalkirrka (Amphitheatre area), as was the case in the past.

HIGH PRIORITY

64. The Board can at our discretion cancel guided tours, by Wiimpatja or approved tour operators, to certain parts of the Lands to protect cultural sites or other important places. We may make these closures permanent or on a temporary basis with regular reviews.

65. Suitable protection may be provided at selected sites on the Lands to prevent damage to artwork in shelters and other susceptible sites. A priority location for this is the Ngalkirrka (Amphitheatre) area.

66. We will retain the large concrete dam dating from the 1960s within the present Historic Site as a back-up water supply for use on the Lands. This dam will be desilted, “cleaned-up” and maintained to an appropriate standard for ongoing use. It may be fenced to prevent access by goats and may be used as a goat trap.

67. We will work with NPWS, OEH, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and other agencies toward the return of cultural material that may have been removed from the area in the past and its repatriation to the Lands for safe-keeping, cultural, scientific or display purposes.

HIGH PRIORITY

68. The Board (with the involvement of Wiimpatja historical knowledge holders) may select and approve sites within the Lands for the repatriation of cultural materials associated with the Lands and Wiimpatja.

6.2 Managing and Respecting Cultural Information

“We live this life. White fellas way is to write it all down, we find it really hard to write things down, it’s really frustrating. Our culture is a talking one. It’s different ways you know.”

Wiimpatja Owner

The management of culturally sensitive information according to gender, age, law or other cultural factors is traditional and remains an important aspect of Wiimpatja culture.

Wiimpatja information about plant foods and medicines can also be economically valuable. It is important that the rights to and any benefits from this knowledge are retained by Wiimpatja, benefit Wiimpatja and protected by intellectual property laws.

Objectives

To ensure culturally sensitive information is appropriately respected, collected, stored, accessed and used.

To ensure non-Wiimpatja staff and contractors working on the Lands have an understanding and appreciation of Wiimpatja culture and the importance of the Mutawintji Lands.

Where appropriate, to provide visitors to the Lands with an understanding and appreciation of Wiimpatja culture and the importance of the Mutawintji Lands.

What the Lease Says

- NPWS staff and contractors (and board members), who are not Wiimpatja with a cultural association with the Lands, must undergo Wiimpatja cultural awareness training run or approved by the Land Council (Clause 10.18).
- Wiimpatja cultural property will be owned by the Aboriginal owners, through the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council (Clause 12.1). The lease adopts a wide definition of cultural and intellectual property (well beyond art and traditional designs) – including human remains and tissues, all items of immovable and movable cultural property (including cultural significant/sensitive sites), literary or performing or artistic works (including songs, music, dances, stories, ceremonies, symbols, languages, words, symbols and designs) and traditional, scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge (including genes, tissues, cultigens, medicines pharmaceutical products, and the phenotypes of flora and fauna (Clause 13.16)).
- The lease allows the NPWS to use Wiimpatja cultural property free-of-charge, but under the Board’s supervision, to benefit or promote Mutawintji or the national parks system or nature conservation generally (Clause 13.16).

Actions

69. Wiimpatja board members will consult with Wiimpatja historical knowledge holders regarding Wiimpatja sensitive information and its management.

70. Sensitive information will only be available to approved people. This will include the documentation and availability of gender-specific information. The Board will be guided by Wiimpatja historical knowledge holders and the MLALC in the management of sensitive information.

71. As set out in Clause 10.18 of the Lease, staff will undertake a short cultural awareness training course to ensure an understanding and appreciation of Wiimpatja culture and ways to work effectively with Wiimpatja.

72. The Board may also require contractors and researchers working on the Lands to complete similar cultural awareness training courses, where their activities are likely to affect Wiimpatja or important sites.

6.3 Understanding Mutawintji and Culture – What we know

“Joint management is good because you get to learn about other people and their stories.”

Mutawintji Board Member



Many Wiimpatja have always had an intimate knowledge of their Lands, the special places and useful resources on the Lands and how to care for country. Much of this knowledge is still held today, even though it may be scattered across different people or groups and may be expressed in different ways or less regularly than it was in the past. Unfortunately some knowledge has been lost due to the impacts of disease, dispossession and displacement following colonisation. Some information can however be re-found from the accounts of early explorers, anthropologists and written ethnohistoric records. Wiimpatja oral histories and Aboriginal Peoples' biographies, such as *Memoirs from the Corner Country* by Harold Hunt, have also helped keep knowledge and stories about the Lands alive. Sharing and passing on stories and knowledge about the Lands, especially to the next generation, remains a priority among Wiimpatja.

Jeremy Beckett, Luise Hercus and Sarah Martin prepared a report on the cultural association and some of the values of Mutawintji. This report, which was edited by Claire Colyer and published by the Office of the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 2008, is the best available cultural information on Mutawintji.

Non Aboriginal understanding of the Lands has been written from a number of sources - from the generations of understanding of the Lands by surrounding pastoral families; the work of early naturalists (such as the Barrier Field Naturalists Club); the observations of past rangers and other park staff; and the recent more structured research by academics or the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Today Indigenous and western knowledge streams are starting to come together.

In 1986, Peter Thompson compiled previously recorded stories and contemporary knowledge of the Lands to support the 1986 plan of management. At the same time, Sarah Martin prepared information sheets to assist local people who were starting to guide tourists.

Various subject-specific records or brief reports were prepared by park staff over the course of the Lands' management by the NPWS into areas such as bird sightings, visitor statistics and native plant lists. A variety of park brochures, visitor information sheets and walking track notes were produced during the NPWS management and contain useful information about the Lands. Several include culturally sensitive information or relate to locations that are now restricted to visitor use and subject to traditional access constraints. These park brochures must not be circulated.

Several archaeological studies have been completed for specific parts of the Lands. These studies have usually covered small areas associated with proposed development sites. An overall comprehensive archaeological assessment or landscape sensitivity analysis has not been carried out to date.

The Board commissioned a comprehensive vegetation survey of the Lands, which was completed in 2003 and approved the preparation of a geological history of Mutawintji National Park with an accompanying brochure and map (Sharp 2004). A *Draft Recovery Plan for the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby* (Wangarru) was also prepared (NSW NPWS 2003). A comprehensive fauna survey of the Lands was also organised, but was delayed due to the prevailing dry conditions of the time.



The Board receives regular requests from educational institutions and individual researchers or students to undertake research projects and investigations into and on the Lands. Approvals for such requests are considered in the light of their potential benefits to Wiimpatja and culture, the Lands and their management, the involvement and skill transfer to Wiimpatja and commercial potential.

What the Lease Says

- *The Minister and the Director-General have the power to issue scientific licences and other licences and permits relating to research and studies carried out on the Lands, but they will only do so with the approval of the Board (Clause 13.11).*
- *Wiimpatja intellectual property rights are protected in regard to any scientific, technical and ecological knowledge gained on the Lands involving Aboriginal people (Clause 13.16).*
- *The Lease allows the NPWS to use Wiimpatja cultural property free-of-charge, but under the board's supervision, to benefit or promote Mutawintji or the national parks system or nature conservation generally (Clause 13.16).*

Objective

To improve knowledge of the Lands, both from a Wiimpatja and non-Wiimpatja perspective and apply this combined knowledge for the better management of the Lands.

Actions

73. We will undertake a variety of research and monitoring programs as described throughout this plan.

74. Research and monitoring programs undertaken on the Lands by external agencies, including research by the NPWS and other sections of the OEH will require the prior approval of the Board. We will approve and support external research and monitoring programs within the Lands where such activities offer potential benefit for the area's management or benefits to Wiimpatja culture and public understanding. Such programs must also meet appropriate best practice and ethical research guidelines. All external research and monitoring projects must involve Wiimpatja, as employees where possible, including measures for the transfer of knowledge and skills to Wiimpatja participants and acknowledge Wiimpatja involvement and knowledge where appropriate.

75. It will be a condition of the Board's approval of research proposals that all research papers, theses, articles etcetera, that result from approved research on the Lands must be lodged with the Board and the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Council, so that accumulated knowledge about the lands is shared, recorded and readily available.

76. We will prepare a prioritised list of research needs or subject areas to guide external agencies seeking appropriate research or monitoring opportunities on the Lands.

77. The Board will support and encourage oral history and other projects to record more Wiimpatja stories and experiences and histories of the Mutawintji Lands



generally. We will also support on-site teaching camps, trips or other activities aimed at passing on Wiimpatja knowledge.

HIGH PRIORITY

78. The Board will support study trips by staff where these will have a direct benefit for management of the Lands or the recognition of the Mutawintji Lands. Policies will be developed to guide the Board in the decision-making process when approving study trips, culture camps and other cultural development opportunities to ensure a fair and open process.

79. The Board will arrange or support a variety of events or activities to promote Wiimpatja to share, strengthen and celebrate culture and the Mutawintji Lands. These will be held on the Lands, as far as possible and may include events such as culture camps, art camps, art/music/drama, research skills, language programs, operational and management of Mutawintji programs, exhibitions, performances and celebrations.

6.4 Bush Foods, Medicines and Materials

The natural resources of the Mutawintji Lands have sustained Wiimpatja for generations. Wiimpatja have hunted and gathered on the Lands for thousands of years, maintaining sustainable populations through practices that are passed on to the next generation. Land use over the last 200 years has changed this ecological balance, limiting the populations and the way that Wiimpatja gather bush foods, medicines and materials.

We need to continue using the Lands as a place to collect bush foods, medicines and other materials. This is the way knowledge, connection to country and the transfer of new knowledge is passed on to future generations. This will enable Wiimpatja to use these resources in new ways, such as innovative enterprise opportunities.

Many Wiimpatja family owners are satisfied with the firearm system in place. Each family group can have two shooters who are licensed and authorised by the Board that can hunt food in the Lands.

Section 71AD and section 71AO of the NPW Act and clauses 12.3, 12.6 and 12.7 of the Mutawintji Lease provide the legal basis for Aboriginal hunting, fishing and gathering on the Lands. These provisions state:

Aboriginal owners and other Aboriginal people with the consent of the Aboriginal owner board members may enter and use the Lands for hunting, fishing or gathering of traditional foods for domestic purposes and for ceremonial and cultural purposes to the extent that these activities are in accordance with the tradition of the Aboriginal owners. Such activities must also be consistent with the NPW Act, any other Act and this plan.

The Board has the function of considering proposals for Aboriginal owners to carry out cultural activities within the Lands. The Board, in consultation with the MLALC,



will develop a Mutawintji Land specific policy that will consider requirements under the NPW Act, the NPW Regulations and this plan.

The NPWS also has policies on the use of firearms on national parks, as well as hunting and gathering and resource harvesting in conservation areas by Aboriginal people. These policies warrant consideration in developing special rules and procedures for managing hunting and gathering on the Lands.

What the Lease Says

- *Aboriginal people can hunt and gather food on the park for domestic use and for ceremonial and cultural reasons (Clause 12.6).*
- *The board will set the rules for Aboriginal people hunting and gathering on the park (Clause 12.7), thinking about things such as health, safety or privacy (Clause 12.3).*
- *Laws and rules for the protection of animals, plants and vegetation apply to the board and the Land Council and anyone working for them (Clause 10.2).*
- *The board can develop kangaroo management plans for the park but cannot allow any commercial or other culling if the Minister says that this should not happen (Clause 12.16).*
- *Some people are already licensed to hunt kangaroos and emus in the park for food or domestic purposes, or for ceremonial and cultural purposes (Clause 13.10).*

Objective

To enable Wiimpatja to continue important hunting and gathering practices while making sure that these activities can be sustained without causing significant harm to the Lands' environment or placing anyone in danger.

Actions

80. As set out in Clauses 12.3, 12.6 and 12.7 of the Lease and as consistent with Sections 71AD and 71AO of the NPW Act, Aboriginal owners and other Wiimpatja approved by Aboriginal owner board members can hunt and gather food on the Lands for domestic purposes. The continuation of hunting and gathering on the lands will be for domestic and educational purposes. We will limit the number of named Aboriginal owners and MLALC shooters, with both shooters' licences and section 120 licences under the NPW Act, to hunt for food in the Lands.

81. These hunting and resource gathering activities will be managed to ensure sustainability without causing significant damage to the Lands' environment or present dangers for anyone living, visiting or working on the Lands. This can include managing the number of approvals, the type of uses approved and species/materials to be harvested, appropriate methods, protecting species or places of conservation or cultural importance, the location and timing or duration of activities, monitoring and reporting obligations, public safety precautions and other factors.

82. A new Mutawintji Lands specific policy will be developed to guide the management of hunting and gathering activities on the Lands. The policy will aim to minimise the risks of hunting and gathering activities to people, places and species of concern and consider geographic location and seasonal restrictions to achieve this.

HIGH PRIORITY



83. Each shooter will be trained in safe shooting practices and abide by these practices when hunting in the Lands. The Board in conjunction with NPWS and MLALC will provide assistance for the training necessary for authorised Aboriginal owners to obtain a shooter's licence as well as safety training and ensure everyone understands their responsibility as a safe shooter.

84. The Board, in conjunction with the MLALC, will assess the suitability of people who want to be approved shooters on the Lands. The Board will develop appropriate procedures to ensure that all shooting is authorised, is consistent with NPWS policy, that only approved species are shot and that the safety of both shooters and other people is looked after.

HIGH PRIORITY

85. As part of these guidelines, shooters' vehicles must not be taken off existing management trails anywhere in the Lands.

86. The picking or hunting of threatened species (listed under the TSC Act or the EPBC Act) will not be allowed.

87. We will record the numbers of plants and animals taken from the Lands. We will continue to limit the numbers of plants and animals taken from the Lands so our activities do not adversely impact on those species.

88. We will investigate a system that we can put in place to know when visitors are in the Wilderness Area or other remote parts of the Lands, or when contractors are working in the Lands, when we are hunting to ensure they are not put in danger.

89. Interpretation signs or guided tours will be used to explain hunting and gathering activities to visitors and their importance to Wiimpatja.

6.5 Helping Visitors Understand Mutawintji and Culture

“Mutawintji is a place where all people can learn about Wiimpatja ways.”

Mutawintji Board Member

A number of NPWS brochures are available to visitors prior to their visit to the Mutawintji Lands. These provide general information about the reserves, their cultural significance, Aboriginal ownership and joint management arrangement and the type of attractions and visitor facilities that are provided. These brochures are available from NPWS offices and other tourism information venues across western NSW and beyond. The Lands are also promoted by displays in the NPWS Office in Broken Hill and a large art/information presentation at the Broken Hill Visitor Information Centre.

The NPWS website also has some background information about the national park and Historic Site to inform people about these reserves, activities available and equipment needed. Visitors are advised to check road conditions with local authorities after rain as closures may occur.



The main information points now on the Lands are the Visitor Centre off the main access road, the Cultural Centre in the Historic Site, and the information panels installed at the major visitor use sites. There are a various types of information available.

The Visitor Centre is open-air and covered. Display areas previously offered visitors background information on the Lands, their cultural significance, natural values, attractions and facilities however these displays became out-dated and were removed. They have been replaced by a variety of temporary and less comprehensive information. The Board envisages this building as a welcoming place for people to the Lands and as a meeting place for visitors taking tours and other activities.

The Cultural Centre in the Historic Site contains information to explain aspects of Wiimpatja culture to visitors – this includes an audio-visual performance room. There are artefacts, tools and hunting equipment displays. This centre is used to provide a starting point, or sometimes an end point, for guided tours to the engraving and ochre art sites.

There are a range of signs around the Lands that provide directions to key places and attractions. There are information and interpretation signs provided at key destinations – such as at Homestead Creek Camping Area, Homestead Creek Day Use Area, the Old Coach Road Day Use Area, and the car park at the start of the Mutawintji Gorge Walk. There are also signs at the engraving and ochre art sites in the Historic Site and along the Thaakalatjika Mingkana Walk in Homestead Creek. A small sign also gives visitors information about the ruins of the Rockhole Hotel.

Mutawintji National Park is regularly included in the NPWS Discovery Program and special interpretive walks and talks and other activities are held on the Lands during peak visitor times, particularly school holidays. These activities give visitors face-to-face contact with ranger and Discovery Program staff.



Interpretive, environmental protection and safety sign at the start of the Mutawintji Gorge Walk, on the edge of the Wilderness Area.

The Mutawintji Lands currently do not have an interpretation plan that guides Wiimpatja in the explanation of our culture and connection to country, in terms of the information given at each visitor destination.

6.5.1 Guided Tours

“Great tour. Would love to go on separate men’s and women’s tours as well.”

Visitor, 2004

There are a number of commercial tours in the Lands and the majority of tours focus on the art and engraving sites at the Historic Site.

From 1983 Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council began to organise guided tours of the cultural sites as a way of presenting their view to the public. Under the guidance of Badger Bates and other senior people, many land council members and others did voluntary and casual work to build up the guided tours. Training was organised, and both the land council and NPWS contributed resources. The school holiday Discovery Programs were a central part of developing these commercial tours.

By the mid 1990s a tour guide handbook was produced and guide training schools formalised. By 1994 the land council was managing a small enterprise called Mutawintji Heritage Tours which continues to operate today despite some resourcing problems.

Providing a guaranteed and reliable tour guide service within the Historic Site has proven problematic in the last few years – due to the sporadic nature of tour bookings, the difficulties in attracting and retaining adequately trained staff and logistics of operating in a semi-remote location. Guided tours are a way for the Lands to make more money, but it can also be difficult to decide who should have licences to take commercial tours in the Lands or different areas within them. It is also difficult for Wiimpatja to always know that the tour operators are giving the right information to visitors and only going to designated areas.

The Lands may also be able to provide cross cultural and educational tours and activities, for example sharing Wiimpatja culture and learning from other cultures’ land management and joint management strategies that may be applicable to Mutawintji.

What the Lease Says

- *Part of how the park is managed will be to improve visitor awareness, understanding and appreciation of the cultural significance of the Lands to Wiimpatja and the nature conservation values of the Lands (Clause 12.2).*
- *The board will control the operation of authorised commercial tour operators on the park, and will think about how the NPWS manages tour operators when doing this (Clause 12.14).*
- *Some people or companies are licensed to conduct commercial tours on the park at present (Clause 13.10).*
- *The board may sub-lease parts of the park (but not in the Wilderness Area) for uses that are in keeping with NPW Act, including accommodation and providing other visitor facilities, where this is set out in the plan of management (Clause 12.3, 13.11).*



Objectives

To present Mutawintji to visitors as a great Wiimpatja owned and jointly managed national park and ensure that Wiimpatja culture flows through all aspects of the Lands' presentation and experience by visitors.

To increase visitors' awareness, understanding and appreciation of the cultural significance and nature conservation values of the Lands.

Actions

90. Wiimpatja will play a central role in guided tours and other face-to-face visitor activities as well as in the preparation of interpretive and information material.

91. An Interpretation and Signage Plan will be prepared to set out what and how information is given at different places in or about the Lands. These include the Visitor Centre, Cultural Centre, guided tours, directional signs, other information signs at visitor use sites, brochures, NPWS guides, NPWS website and other NPWS visitor information sources.

HIGH PRIORITY

92. The Interpretation and Signage Plan will also look at how the Lands are promoted and what and how information is available to visitors before they arrive, so they know what to expect and what to bring.

93. In preparing the Interpretation and Signage Plan we will give priority to the messages and information that Wiimpatja wish to present to visitors about the cultural importance of the Mutawintji Lands, joint management, biodiversity and other themes as identified by Aboriginal owners and other associated Wiimpatja. We will also draw on the assistance and expertise of NPWS specialists and other OEH staff and guidelines such as the Charter of Best Practice for Interpreting Aboriginal Culture and Country (IAA 2003), published in 2003 by the Interpretation Australia Association (IAA), in identifying the best ways to present this information to visitors.

HIGH PRIORITY

94. The existing Cultural Centre will be refurbished, especially the now disused display space, to provide a major presentation for visitors of the Lands. The displays and messages presented will be discussed widely among Wiimpatja and other specialists as required.

95. Appropriate language names, terms and other words will be used in all the interpretive and promotional materials prepared for the Lands, including both on-site and pre-visit or off-site information. Wiimpatja names will be used wherever possible for locations and features on the Lands, with the dual-naming of existing named places implemented to introduce visitors to language. The Board will make any necessary decisions about place/feature names within the Lands, taking advice from Wiimpatja knowledge holders and other specialists as required.

HIGH PRIORITY

96. During the life of this plan we will research other types of commercial tours we can provide on the Lands, such as cross-cultural tours and joint management or



land/park management experience tours for other Aboriginal People and the wider community. These tours may be of varying durations from short one or two hour walks to overnight trips to more secluded parts of the Lands.

97. We will continue to take tours to the Historic Site and ensure there are enough tours for every visitor to see the Historic Site if they wish (see section 7.10). Guided tours will continue to be organised by the MLALC through an agreement negotiated with the Board and led by Aboriginal owners or other associated Wiimpatja or other approved Aboriginal People. This agreement will include a back-up plan if the land council is not able to conduct these tours. In this case, the Board, working with the NPWS and MLALC, can make alternative arrangements to provide this important visitor service. We will make sure that an organised, scheduled and reliable guided tour program operates when most visitors come to the Mutawintji Lands. Tours, especially in quieter times with fewer visitors, may also be led by approved commercial tour operators or suitably trained staff (preferably Wiimpatja or other approved Aboriginal staff).

98. We will investigate expanding the range and location of guided tours offered on the Lands – by MLALC, NPWS and/or approved commercial operators – such as in the Ngalkirrka (Amphitheatre) area or other places.

99. We will make sure that the Lands continue to be involved in the NPWS Discovery Program and are part of the wider NPWS visitor information system.

100. We will continue to support and assist educational use of the Lands by local and visiting schools, educational, special interest and community groups.

101. Different tour and guide training requirements may apply to different parts of the Lands, depending on the cultural significance or sensitivity of certain areas or other factors. Tours and tour locations may be differentiated or segregated by gender or age, where this is culturally appropriate.

102. We will put together a list of rules that will help us to choose commercial operators that are allowed to take tours into the Lands, or certain places such as the Historic Site, and how to manage them during their licence agreement. We will work closely with commercial operators to ensure tours are conducted respectfully and information about Wiimpatja culture and the joint management arrangements are correct.

103. We will continue to run tour guide schools, to train all tour operators and guides about the importance of the Lands' rules they will need to follow when tours are conducted on the Lands. Different training may be provided to Wiimpatja tour guides, NPWS staff and commercial tour guides. This training will be part of commercial operators' licence training and must be complete before they are accredited to bring visitors into the Lands. The licence agreements for culturally significant or sensitive parts of the Lands will include the right for the Board to check, "unannounced" or without prior disclosure advice that an operator and their guides are complying with the licence requirements.

HIGH PRIORITY

104. Where possible, tour operators will be encouraged to engage the services of a trained Wiimpatja guide for tours on the Lands.

105. We will monitor information about the Lands produced by tourism agencies, businesses, media, magazines, scientific journals, authors and others to ensure accurate information and an appreciation of Wiimpatja aspirations and joint management efforts is presented. We will liaise with these agencies and individuals as needed.

106. During the life of this plan we will investigate other opportunities, locations and ways to present aspects of Wiimpatja culture and the Lands' significant values and features to visitors. This will include opportunities for people with mobility difficulties to access or experience some of the Lands' sites and features.



7. Marima Kiirra (Care for Country)

Priority - To ensure actions are carried out to manage and care for the Mutawintji Lands, our people and the wider community.

7.1 Managing the Landscape

“It’s sacred land, the land itself.”

Mutawintji Board Member

Wiimpatja believe Kurlawirra, a creation being, made the Lands’ ranges and waterholes. These deeds are recorded at a number of the more sacred and access controlled art sites in the area. The Mutawintji landscape is predominantly the eroded remnants of a 400 million year old seabed, although some parts of the Lands date to more than 650 million years old.

To scientists the geology of the Lands tell a story of volcanic eruptions, intrusions of molten magma, the deposition of marine and alluvial sediments, periods of mountain building and eons of erosion and weathering – all over hundreds of millions of years of geologic time (Sharp 2004). These events, and the different rock types they created, have combined to create the area’s present landscape. Land systems provide a useful way of categorising, and describing in summary, largely similar landscape areas with discernable patterns or characteristics in terms of geology, landforms, soils, drainage and vegetation. They can also provide a useful tool in targeting land management practices to specific, similar, land areas. Land systems were mapped and described for western NSW by the Soil Conservation Service (Walker 1991).



Rugged rocky landscape along the top of the Byngnano Ranges, from the Rockholes Walking Track.

The Byngnano Ranges and the western parts of the Lands are an area of roughly north-south trending dipping ridges of sandstones and conglomerate rocks interspersed with layers of shale (Byngnano and Faraway Land Systems). These form ridges with steep cliff faces. Local relief is up to 100 metres in places, with gentle back slopes and incised drainage often forming deep gullies. Mutawintji Gorge is an example of this.

Some of the highest parts of the Lands, up to 375 metres above sea level (ASL), occur along the eastern ridges of the Byngnano Range. Strike ridges and overhangs, producing the rock shelters as well as boulder scree slopes and outwash plains, such as the Homestead Creek Valley, are typical of this part of the Lands.

To the west, along the Lands' western boundary, this range and hill country meets the lower-lying wind-blown sand plains and low rises (180-200 metres ASL) of the Nucha Land System.

These hill and range landforms gradually change to the east to become the lower rolling stony downs terrain of the Yurmtaana Area (Mt Wright), part of the Nuntherungerie Land System with elevations from 220 to 240 metres ASL. Yurmtaana, on the south-east boundary of the Lands, rises to 319 metres ASL. Further to the north-east this landscape in turn gives way to the more elevated sandstone tablelands of the Amphitheatre Creek and Gap Range area, which are part of the Kara Hills and Ravendale Land Systems which average 260 to 300 metres ASL.



Yurmtaana (Mt Wright)

The Coturaundee Range is an area of resistant sandstone strike ridges and high ranges with steep strike faces and cliffs to over 100 metres high. The highest points in the Lands (over 420 metres ASL) occur along the main north-western ridge of this outlying area (Byngnano and Faraway Land Systems).

Beyond the immediate vicinity of the clustered buildings and other developments in parts of Homestead Creek Valley, the Lands appear as a largely unmodified, natural landscape. This is despite changes to the cultural landscape, alterations to the vegetation cover and fauna populations, likely altered fire regimes and a limited road network – some of which would not be obvious to most visitors. The Lands' natural character is valued by both Wiimpatja and park visitors alike.

The Lands are also important, in geological/scientific terms, as one of the few Devonian and Cambrian fossil localities in NSW (Sharp 2004).

The soils of the Lands' more elevated and rugged areas are generally thin skeletal or remnant soils (lithosols) with red earths, desert loams and sandy earths found on the less rugged areas and red sands along the western boundaries and lower drainage lines. The Lands' soils and landscapes are very susceptible to erosion, mainly water sheeting and gullying and there are many active or stabilising areas of erosion evident. Soil erosion will be an important consideration in the siting and design of all developments, as well as in the management/maintenance of existing facilities. Roads and management trails are particular problem areas for causing or exacerbating soil erosion. Goats graze and browse a range of plant species which,

together with trampling by hooves, lowers soil stability and contributes to increased erosion (Scientific Committee 2004).

All drainage lines in the Lands are ephemeral. Rockholes however occur in the gorges and more sheltered locations of the hills and ranges. Most are semi-permanent although some, such as the rockhole at the head of Mutawintji Gorge, are reputed to have never been dry in recorded history. In the dry years of 2003-2004 however this rockhole was exceptionally low.

The Lands' groundwater resources have not been comprehensively investigated. Groundwater reserves are known to occur along Homestead Creek and these are currently used to supply potable water from a bore near to where this creek emerges from the ranges. The implications for the creek's fringing River Red Gum community and other biophysical systems, of drawing down this aquifer remain unclear.

Ground tanks, wells and a large concrete dam remain on the Lands from past land uses. The NPWS has progressively filled in, or deliberately not maintained, many of the ground tanks (especially in the Wilderness Area) as part of controlling goat populations and for other wildlife management reasons. Water points can however serve as trap-yards for use in goat management.



Rockhole at the head of Mutawintji Gorge.

At present five of the Lands' ground tanks remain serviceable – Two Mile, New Tank, Wrights Tank, Macs and Dicks Tanks. Amphitheatre Well, remaining in the Lands' far north-east still contains water but is not in use. A well also occurs next to Wrights Tank. Banana bore is located on the Lands' northern boundary and is shared with two of our neighbours and physically excluded from the area by "give and take" fencing. Wertago bore is situated just inside the Lands' northern boundary, but is also excluded from the area's management by "give and take" fencing by agreement with the neighbour.

Wiimpatja recognise water resources as a critical issue requiring careful, and equitable, management within the Lands.

What the Lease Says

- *The park's special nature conservation values were considered in negotiation of the lease, and that for Aboriginal people associated with the area such natural values are a central part of the park's cultural values (Clause 4.2).*
- *Laws and rules for the protection of animals, plants and vegetation apply to the Board and the Land Council and anyone working for them (Clause 10.2).*

Objective

To protect and restore the Lands' natural landforms, landscapes and waters in recognition of their cultural importance to Wiimpatja and their nature conservation values.

Actions

107. We will keep most of the Lands as a cultural landscape without roads, buildings and other developments. We will take great care in the location, design and management of developments within the Lands to keep most of the area in a natural or undeveloped condition. We will identify management zones to help control development and use of the Lands (see section 7.8 Zoning).

108. Off-road driving will not be permitted in the Lands, except by authorised persons and during emergencies. Approved Wiimpatja who are hunting and gathering on the Lands must always remain on existing management trails (see section 6.4 Bush Foods, Medicines and Materials).

109. We will carefully consider the possible impacts on soils and erosion, water flows, landscape values and appearance and other environmental effects in the planning, siting and construction of all new facilities and infrastructure within the Lands.

110. The Board acknowledges that the watering points have a long-standing use by people on the park and have impacted on the surrounding lands, plants and animals. We will retain and maintain the five currently working ground tanks – Two Mile, New Tank, Wrights Tank, Macs Tank and Dicks Tank. Watering points may be fenced where necessary to help control goats and other introduced animals and may be used as traps.

111. We will undertake erosion control, rehabilitation and revegetation works as needed where serious unnatural soil erosion and land degradation is threatening the Lands' values and significant locations, visitor safety, infrastructure and assets or is detracting from the Lands' appearance.

7.2 Managing Native Plants and Animals

“It has the birds and animals of arid Australia and that makes it a special place.”

Mutawintji Board Member

The Lands contain a selection of native vegetation communities, plants and animals that have sustained Wiimpatja for generations. They are typical of the plants and animals found across the semi-arid and arid western parts of NSW. However the Lands also hold several vegetation communities, plants and animals of special cultural and conservation significance. The Priorities Action Statement (PAS) currently guides the management of threatened species in NSW.

The Wangarru, or yellow-footed rock-wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus*) is a particularly culturally important animal. Plants such as the quandong (*Sanatolum acuminatum*), wild lime trees (*Citrus glauca*) and Barrier Range wattle (*Acacia beckleri*) are considered very important by Wiimpatja.



Climate change has been listed as a key threatening process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (TSC Act). Projections of future changes in climate for NSW include higher temperatures, elevated CO₂, more intense but possibly reduced annual average rainfall, increased temperature extremes and higher evaporation. These changes may significantly affect biodiversity by changing population size and distribution of species, modifying species composition, and altering the geographical extent of habitats and ecosystems. The potential impact of climate change is difficult to assess since it depends on the compounding effects of other pressures, particularly barriers to migration and pressure from feral animals. Species most at risk are those unable to migrate or adapt, particularly those with small population sizes or with slow growth rates. It is important to maintain maximum natural diversity of vegetation and landscapes in large continuous areas of suitable habitat, protected from threats, to allow native species the best chance to adapt to climate change.

7.2.1 Vegetation Communities

The Lands' vegetation communities are nationally considered to be excellent examples of some of the most threatened and poorly conserved vegetation types in Australia. These include Inland Acacia and Casuarina Shrublands and Woodlands, Chenopod Shrublands, and Inland Riparian Communities.

Regionally these vegetation associations are classed as poorly conserved. The Lands' Mulga Shrublands are also one of the largest continuous areas of this vegetation type now protected in the state. The species-diverse examples of Chenopod Shrublands growing on the Lands are of conservation importance. The Lands' deep rocky gorges and moister sheltered areas are a refuge for plant species, such as ferns and aquatic plants that are more commonly associated with wetter habitats further east.



Hairy-pod cress (Harmsiodoxa blennioides) and mulga (Acacia aneura) near Mutawintji Gorge

The present distribution of the semi-arid and arid vegetation found on the Lands is determined by the physical landscape (geology, geomorphology, soils and drainage), fire history and seasonal variations – which combine to influence the critical determining factors of soil moisture and fertility.

Grazing pressures have for the Lands and most of the region, been perhaps the single greatest influence on vegetation and landscape. There is abundant evidence that the present state of the Lands' vegetation is the result of long-term effects of grazing and land use over decades in good and poor seasons. Stock have also historically compacted the underlying soils and exacerbated erosion, as well as aiding weed introduction and spread. Goat populations continue these grazing pressures today, despite the area's change in land use first to conservation areas and then to a Joint Management Park.

Seasonal variability influences vegetation composition, especially ground cover and shorter-lived species. Over the years the Lands have been severely impacted by extremely dry conditions, with an absence of ground cover and considerable drought stress with dieback, leaf drop and minimal regeneration apparent. Fire is also believed to significantly influence vegetation structure and species composition. Much of the Lands has not been burnt for some time however, suggesting that fire may not be a major vegetation determinant (at least in the short-term), but the fire ecology of many species found on the Lands remains poorly known.

The principal vegetation communities occurring on the Lands - in order of their occurrence across the Lands are:

- Mulga Shrublands – the largest and most widespread community on the Lands occurring on the rugged terrain of the Byngnano, Gap and Coturaundee Ranges and the elevated rocky country of Amphitheatre Creek in the north-east;
- Chenopod (Saltbush/Bluebush) Shrublands – mainly found in the rolling stony downs terrain of the Yurntaana (Mt Wright) area across the central section of the Lands;
- Arid Woodlands – mainly occurring in a large band along the eastern edge of the Byngnano Range and scattered elsewhere across the Lands in smaller patches;
- Woody Shrublands – chiefly found across the sand plains and low rises along the Lands' western margin, and sandier lower drainage line areas; and
- River Red Gum Riparian Woodlands – occurring in corridors along the major drainage lines and floodouts, with rocky gorge and sandplain creekline sub-groups throughout the Lands.

These communities frequently merge into each other and form composite or mixed communities in many places.

The Lands' vegetation communities are, overall, in fair condition when compared with surrounding properties and similar sites across the region.

7.2.2 Significant Vegetation Communities and Plant Species

One endangered ecological community, listed under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, occurs on the Lands – *Acacia loderi* (Nelia) Shrublands. This community is recorded irregularly in western NSW, populations being mostly old and dying with little regeneration and it is rarely conserved in the national park system. Several small aging groves of this endangered community occur on the Lands, mostly as very old individual trees in degraded Chenopod Shrublands or open woody Shrublands where their survival is severely threatened by goats and rabbits.

Four species of threatened plants have been recorded on the Lands since 1980. Two of these, the rare and relatively unknown indigo (*Indigofera helmsii*) and



Sauropus ramosissimus, were recorded from the Lands for the first time during the recent vegetation survey. However this survey also failed to find any trace of the other two significant species, the greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis cobarensis*) and slender Darling pea (*Swainsona murrayana*), both of which are classed as vulnerable. These two species are classed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act.

Records from before 1980 also show that two endangered plants had been found on the Lands – climbing caustic (*Euphorbia sarcostemmoides*) and creeping Darling pea (*Swainsona viridis*). Neither were found again during the most recent vegetation survey.

Several plants known from the Lands are considered to be regionally significant – including Gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*), clammy daisy bush (*Olearia decurrens*), binung (*Christella dentata*), *Sauropus rigens* and climbing purple-star (*Rhyncharrhena linearis*).

Strategies and priority actions currently exist under the Priorities Action Statement (PAS) for *Indigofora helmsii*, greenhood orchid, slender Darling pea, climbing caustic and creeping Darling pea.

The Lands' major vegetation communities - Inland Acacia and Casuarina Shrublands and Woodlands, Chenopod Shrublands and Inland Riparian Communities – while not considered threatened at present (or in the foreseeable future) are nevertheless considered of conservation importance given the continuing pressures on these vegetation types across the region's pastoral land uses.

7.2.3 Animals

The Lands support a range of native animal species representative of the semi-arid and arid regions of western NSW.

Its importance for native animals is enhanced by the reliability of its water supplies, in contrast with surrounding drier sandplains. These serve as important drought refuges for larger terrestrial wildlife as well as resident and migratory waterbirds.

No comprehensive fauna survey of the Lands has yet been carried out. The Board has approved a broad-area fauna survey to be undertaken, but this had been delayed due to prevailing dry conditions.

More than 150 species of birds are found on the Lands. A total of 49 varieties of reptiles (38 lizards and 11 snake species) have been recorded from two surveys, and as recorded in the NPWS and Australian Museum fauna databases. Species recorded are very comparable to the suite of reptiles known from other arid zone national parks across western NSW. Five species of frogs occur on the Lands, including the water holding frog (*Cyclorana platycephala*).

Almost half the Lands' 17 recorded mammal species are bats (eight species) as well as five kangaroos/wallabies, the echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) and three smaller nocturnal mammal species.



Species diversity and densities are greatest around waterholes and drainage lines, cliffs and scree/boulder fields, rocky overhangs and caves and woodland areas. Native fauna populations have been adversely impacted by changes to the Lands' vegetation communities due to past land uses, predation by introduced animals and the continuing grazing pressures exerted by goats and rabbits.

7.2.4 Threatened / Significant Animal Species

Since 1980 a total of 26 species of threatened animals have been recorded in the Lands. Six of these species are considered to be endangered and 20 have been declared vulnerable under the NSW TSC Act. These include 13 birds, four mammals and nine reptiles (as listed in Table 1).

Table 1 Threatened animal species recorded on the Lands since 1980

Common Name	Species Name	TSC Status	EPBC Status
Mammals			
Stripe-faced dunnart	<i>Sminthopsis macroura</i>	V	
Yellow-bellied sheath-tail-bat	<i>Saccolaimus flaviventris</i>	V	
Yellow-footed rock-wallaby/ Wangarru	<i>Petrogale xanthopus</i>	E	V
Little pied bat	<i>Chalinolobus picatus</i>	V	
Birds			
Black-breasted buzzard	<i>Hamirosta melanosternon</i>	V	
Square-tailed kite	<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	V	
Pink cockatoo	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	V	
Diamond firetail	<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	V	
Chestnut quail-thrush	<i>Cinclosoma castanotus</i>	V	
Grey falcon	<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	V	
Pied honeyeater	<i>Certhionyx variegates</i>	V	
Australian bustard	<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	E	
Hooded robin	<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	V	
Hall's babbler	<i>Pomatostomus halli</i>	V	
Barking owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	V	
Freckled duck	<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>	V	
Reptiles			
Tawny-crevice dragon	<i>Ctenophorus decresii</i>	E	
Stimsons python	<i>Liasis stimsoni</i>	V	
Narrow-banded snake	<i>Simoselaps fasciolatus</i>	V	
Fat-tailed gecko	<i>Diplodactylus conspiciatulus</i>	E	
Crowned gecko	<i>Diplodactylus stenodactylus</i>	V	
Wedgesnout centrotus	<i>Ctenotus brooksi</i>	V	
White's skink	<i>Egernia whitii</i>	EP	
Yellow-tailed plain slider	<i>Lerista xanthura</i>	V	
Interior Blind Snake	<i>Ramphotyphlops endoterus</i>	E	

E= Endangered, V= Vulnerable, EP = Endangered Population

Source: DEC Atlas of NSW Wildlife, 2007 and local observations/records, DEH, 2008



Numerous other threatened animals were recorded on the Lands before 1980, but have not been seen there since. These include six threatened bird species, including one endangered bird -the bush stone-curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*) and 13 additional threatened mammal species, ten of which are classed as endangered. All these previously recorded endangered mammals are small to medium sized animals such as native mice, rats and bandicoots such as the greater stick-nest rat (*Leporillus conditor*), long-tailed hopping mouse (*Notomys longicaudatus*), Gould's mouse (*Pseudomys gouldii*), sandy inland mouse (*Pseudomys hermannsburgensis*) and golden bandicoot (*Isoodon auratus auratus*).

The greater stick-nest rat and golden bandicoot are also listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act, while the long-tailed hopping mouse and Gould's mouse are listed under the EPBC Act as extinct.

The disappearance of these small to medium sized mammals is in line with observations elsewhere in the Australian arid zone – with the loss of mammal species in this size range attributed to a combination of altered fire regimes, grazing pressures and land degradation and the effects of introduced species. Some of these animals may still occur on the Lands, however (as noted) a comprehensive broad-area survey of the Lands' animal population has yet to be undertaken.

Strategies and priority actions currently exist under the Priority Action Statement (PAS) for the bush stone-curlew, sandy inland mouse and all species in Table 1 above.

7.2.5 Wangarru – the yellow-footed rock-wallaby

Wangarru is of great cultural importance for Wiimpatja. In acknowledgement of this significance and the species' close associations with the Mutawintji Lands, the species was chosen by the MLALC for inclusion as a prominent part of the Lands' logo.



Wangarru

In scientific and conservation terms the Lands harbour the only known wild population of this endangered species in New South Wales – one sub-population in the outlying Coturaundee Range and another in the Gap Range in the Lands' far north-east. The original gazettal of the Coturaundee Nature Reserve was specifically to protect the Wangarru colonies at this site.

The colonies typically occupy cliffs, rocky slopes and rockfalls on or adjacent to this range country with these features providing their refuge and shelter. Population numbers have been closely monitored since 1980 and active conservation measures implemented (notably fox and goat control). After an initial expansion in size, these colonies were adversely affected by persistently dry conditions, particularly between 2001 and 2009. By the end of this period the total population estimate dropped to less than 200 individuals.

With a succession favourable years, the population has responded well, with more than double the number of Wangarru counted in 2010 having been observed in 2012.

A draft Recovery Plan for the species was prepared by the then Department of Environment and Conservation in 2003 but is yet to be exhibited for public comment, following comments and approval for exhibition by the Board. Some of the draft plan's objectives are: to involve Wiimpatja in its implementation; reduce the impacts of predators and competitors; expand sympathetically managed habitat areas; and "increase the number of sub-populations from 2 to 3 within the Mutawintji Lands". Government agencies, including OEH, must not take actions that are inconsistent with a Recovery Plan.

Wangarru is also listed as a priority threatened species for European fox control in the 2001 *Predation by the Red Fox Threat Abatement Plan*.

What the Lease Says

- *The park's special nature conservation values were considered in negotiation of the lease, and that for Aboriginal people associated with the area such natural values are a central part of the park's cultural values (Clause 4.2).*
- *The special significance of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby for Aboriginal people associated with the park and surrounding area is recognised by the Land Council, Minister and NPWS (Clause 12.18).*
- *Laws and rules for the protection of animals, plants and vegetation apply to the Board and the Land Council and anyone working for them (Clause 10.2).*
- *The Board must be consulted before the Minister or NPWS carry out any mandatory powers, actions or functions under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (Clause 12.17).*
- *The Board must consent before the Minister or NPWS can carry out any non-mandatory actions, functions or powers under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (Clause 12.17).*
- *The Board can agree with park neighbours about co-operative weed control Programs and other land management matters that are on and off park (Clause 9.14).*
- *The Board can develop kangaroo management plans for the park but cannot allow any commercial or other culling if the Minister says that this should not happen (Clause 12.16).*
- *To the extent permitted by law, the Board can favour the Land Council in awarding contracts for the control of feral animals and weeds (Clause 10.17).*
- *The Minister and NPWS will consult with the Board when preparing any draft recovery plan or threat abatement plan for the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby in or near the park (Clause 12.18).*
- *The Minister and NPWS will not permit the removal of any Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby from the park or nearby areas without the consent of the Land Council and the Board, except in an emergency, but the Land Council and the Board must also be reasonable about this (Clause 12.18).*

Objective

To protect and restore the Lands' biodiversity, ecosystems and natural landscapes in recognition of their nature conservation value and cultural importance to Wiimpatja.

To protect threatened or significant plants, ecological communities and animals found on the Lands.

Actions

112. The traditional and contemporary knowledge of Wiimpatja (where cultural matters are considered and knowledge is transferred and respected) will be



combined with scientific information to ensure plants and animals are cared for in the best way possible.

113. We will give special attention to looking after all plants, particularly quandong, wild lime trees and Barrier Range wattle and all animals, especially the Wangarru. Vegetation or ecological communities, plant species and animal species occurring on the Lands that are classified as important for conservation reasons will also be given special management attention. We will regularly monitor the location, abundance and condition of populations of these important plants and animals and take the necessary management actions to ensure they continue to occur in the Lands. Strategies and priority actions exist under the PAS which apply to threatened species found on the Lands will be implemented wherever possible.

114. Culturally important plant species may be collected on the Lands (as seeds, cuttings or other propagation materials) to be specially grown on the Lands, for use in replanting, revegetation programs and other cultural use with the Board's approval. These activities will be guided by NPWS policy on environmental integrity.

HIGH PRIORITY

115. We will investigate the reintroduction of plant species previously known to occur on the Lands, using appropriate sources from the local area, as guided by the NPWS policy on environmental integrity.

HIGH PRIORITY

116. Special protection measures will be put in place for the Wangarru. The draft Recovery Plan will be implemented including actions such as:

- continuing research and survey work;
- maintaining natural water holes in areas occupied by Wangarru;
- continuing fox, rabbit and goat control programs; and
- undertaking annual population surveys.



Split Rocks, the site proposed for establishment of a third Wangarru sub-population.

117. We will establish a third Wangarru sub-population at Split Rocks during the life of this plan, but only if the drought breaks and the population numbers recover sufficiently and only in accordance with the Recovery Plan.

HIGH PRIORITY

118. The Board will encourage and support NPWS in the preparation and implementation of Recovery Plans for other threatened species that occur on or around the Lands.

119. We will regularly monitor the location, abundance and condition of other threatened animals, plants and vegetation communities known to occur on the Lands. We will take suitable management actions to protect these species and communities. These special protection measures may include fencing (to exclude introduced animals and visitors, as or where needed), signage and information, introduced animal and weed control efforts, the use and management of fire, preventing soil erosion and degradation, rehabilitation and revegetation measures, drainage/flooding regimes and catchment management, co-operation with neighbours and research efforts. The control of goats is especially important for the continued health and survival of the Lands' vegetation communities (see section 7.3 Controlling Pests and Problem Species).

120. Further survey and research work on plant communities and species will be encouraged and guided by the 2003 Vegetation Survey of the Mutawintji Lands (Porteners 2003). When monitoring the Lands' vegetation we will use, among others, the sites already looked at in the 2003 vegetation survey to make sure monitoring is carried out over the long term, as well as monitoring at different times of the year and under different conditions.

121. Carry out a wide-ranging native animal (vertebrate fauna) survey across the Lands, subject to environmental conditions.

HIGH PRIORITY

122. We will encourage further survey work of the plants and animals of the Lands. Some areas we will investigate may include:

- studies of vegetation communities to determine the regeneration needs of key plant species;
- establishment of exclusion plots in various vegetation communities where goats and rabbits are kept out and the recovery of plant species and communities can be studied;
- surveys of all plant communities in the Lands including unusual habitats such as deep gorges, waterholes and the tablelands; and
- targeted surveys of rare and threatened plants and animals that we know occur, or think might occur, in the Lands.

123. We will encourage the recording of Wiimpatja knowledge and use of the Lands' native and introduced plants and animals to serve as a cultural, land management and interpretive resource.

7.3 Controlling Pests and Problem Species

“An oasis of colours and silence, except for the goats at the rock hole.”

Visitor, 2006

Many species of introduced plants and seven species of introduced animals occur on the Lands. Of these feral goats (*Capra hircus*) are the greatest problem species.



The NPWS *Far West Region Pest Management Strategy* provides an overview, priorities and broad direction for the management of introduced plants and animals on the Lands – in the context of other NPWS reserves within the region.

7.3.1 Weeds

Many introduced plant species occur on the Lands, of which a relatively small number are serious invasive species. One species found on the Lands, African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), is a declared noxious weed in the Central Darling Shire and Unincorporated Area.

Weeds and non-local native species are largely a legacy of past disturbance and land use. The weediest areas on the Lands are generally creeklines, around ground tanks, roadsides and trails, scalded sites, alluvial plains, run-on areas and boundaries. The mapping of major weed species across the Lands has previously been carried out by the NPWS.

The main weed species of concern on the Lands include: African boxthorn, which is widespread on scalded plains; Bathurst burr (*Xanthium spinosum*) and noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) which are found along ephemeral creeklines and being dispersed into drier areas - mainly by goats; and saffron thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*) on drier disturbed areas. Fierce thornapple (*Datura ferox*), which can be toxic to people, is an emerging problem in the Yuruntaana (Mt Wright) area. Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*) occurs in small numbers on parts of the Lands, mainly in disturbed situations on alluvial flats and along ephemeral creeklines. Paddy melon (*Cucumis myriocarpus*), smooth catsear (*Hypochaeris glabra*), common sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) and cat-head (*Tribulus terrestris*) occur in low abundance across all vegetation communities. Seasonal weeds such as Paterson's curse (*Echium plantagineum*), onion weed (*Asphodelus fistulosus*) and ruby dock (*Acetosa vesicaria*) occur in abundance on degraded sites after rains. Introduced grasses and groundcovers have the potential to totally replace native groundcovers and are encroaching from adjacent pastures along many parts of the Lands' boundary.

The Mutawintji Board of Management will continue to apply the NPWS Far West Region Pest Management Strategy. The 2008-2011 strategy identifies African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), Paterson's curse (*Echium plantagineum*), Bathurst burr (*Xanthium spinosum*), noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*), thornapple (*Datura ferox*), onion weed (*Asphodelus fistulosa*) and Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*) as high priority weeds species for control on the Mutawintji Lands.

“Woody shrub” regrowth is an issue in many parts of the Lands especially sandplain areas as the vegetation responds to past and continuing selective grazing pressures and less frequent fires. There is to date however, little evidence that this has serious biodiversity implications. Researchers have recommended careful assessment of the need for and type of, any control measures for this phenomenon in light of the key role woody shrubland communities play in contributing to the Lands' vegetation values.



7.3.2 Pest Animals

Eight species of introduced animals are known to occur on the Lands – feral goat, feral cat (*Felis catus*), European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), feral pig (*Sus scrofa*), European fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), donkey (*Equus asinus*), horse (*Equus caballus*) and the house mouse (*Mus musculus*). Of these goats and foxes are the most serious problems with foxes particularly problematic due to their impact preying on Wangarru, and goats as they are the most abundant and cause a range serious problems.

Goats continue to damage art sites within the Lands. They shelter in the rock overhangs where much of the painted art is situated and damage sites by rubbing or scratching against art surfaces. Damage also occurs through the effects of oil and dirt on the pigments and art surface and possibly by chemical deterioration arising from pigments and rock surfaces reacting with their waste products over time.

The Historic Site has been totally enclosed by an electric fence in an attempt to exclude goats from this area. This method has had mixed success and has high maintenance demands. Individual art shelters have also been fenced and goat-mesh included in the design of boardwalks and viewing platforms to further limit goat entry to major accessible art sites. Goat-mesh deters goat entry by having gaps the size of hooves.

The continued control of feral goats is considered critical for the survival and health of the Lands' vegetation. Grazing pressures from goats have negative effects on the distribution, abundance, condition, regeneration and weed invasion susceptibility of vegetation communities. These changes to habitat impact on the Lands' native animals. Goats also compete with Wangarru for feed and contribute both directly (by trampling) and indirectly (by vegetation removal) to soil erosion.

An intensive goat control program has been undertaken on the Lands over many years, beginning in the mid 1980s, which originally included helicopter shooting, but this ceased following inadvertent damage to art sites. Due to previous negligence, aerial shooting does not have the approval of the Board. Feral pigs were also targeted by aerial shooting.

Goats are now mainly removed from the Lands by contractors using trap-yard or mustering techniques (on foot, with dogs when necessary). Additionally, all ground tanks and bores are now used as trap yards. Over 8,000 goats were removed from the Lands in 2006-07. Due to the area's rugged terrain and high goat populations however the numbers of this pest species remain relatively high and reinvasion from surrounding areas is regularly observed, suggesting that a broad-area approach to goat control is required in co-operation with the Lands' neighbours.

Fox control programs, mainly aimed at protecting Wangarru colonies from fox predation, routinely occur on the Lands. Wangarru numbers in the Coturaundee Range showed a six-fold increase during a period of intensive fox control from 1995 to 1999. A Threat Abatement Plan is in place to manage fox predation state-



wide and this identifies the Lands' Wangarru population as a priority threatened species for fox control efforts.

Rabbit control, mainly warren ripping, has occurred on the Lands as a regular management program since the mid 1980s.

The Mutawintji Board of Management will continue to apply the NPWS Far West Region Pest Management Strategy. The 2008-2011 strategy identifies the European fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), feral goat (*Capra hircus*), feral cat (*Felis catus*) and feral donkey (*Equus asinus*) as high priority pest animal species for control on the Mutawintji Lands.

What the Lease Says

- *The Board can make special plans (operational plans or practices) for the control of feral goats and other pest/introduced animals when it needs or wants to (Clause 12.9).*
- *The Board can agree with park neighbours about co-operative pest control programs which are on and off park (Clause 9.14).*
- *The Board can favour the Land Council in awarding contracts for the control of feral animals and weeds (Clause 10.17).*
- *Some people are licensed to hunt feral goats in the park for food or domestic purposes, or for ceremonial and cultural purposes (Clauses 12.6, 13.10).*
- *Some people are licensed to muster and remove feral goats from the park (Clause 13.10).*
- *The Board can decide whether domestic animals such as dogs, cats and horses can be kept on the park and on rules for this, with agreement of the NPWS Director-General who can't be unreasonable about it (Clause 12.20).*

Objective

To limit the impacts of introduced plants and animals on native animals and plants and natural habitats in the Lands, and land use.

Actions

124. We will work with our neighbours in the control of introduced plants and animals for the benefit of the Mutawintji Lands and our neighbours.

125. Wiimpatja will continue to be permitted to hunt goats, rabbits and other pests as part of the feral animal control strategy for the Lands.

126. Threat abatement plans, as prepared under the TSC Act, will be considered when preparing the pest management plan and implemented as appropriate within the Lands for known pests.

127. A pest management plan will be prepared for the Lands to identify known pest plants and animals, describe the threat they pose to the area's cultural values and natural systems and to spell out ways to control each pest plant or animal.

128. While the Pest Management Plan is being prepared, we will continue existing control programs for high priority species – as identified in the NPWS Far West Region Pest Management Strategy (which prioritises pest animals as feral goats, European foxes and feral cats and pest plants as thornapple, Paterson's curse, Bathurst burr, noogoora burr, onion weed, African boxthorn and Mexican

poppy) and as required by local populations or infestations and new outbreaks or incursions. We will work with our neighbours in preparing the plan.

129. We will continue to give a high priority to the control of goats on the Lands in recognition of the serious impacts these animals have on cultural sites (especially art shelters), vegetation communities, habitats, waterholes and native animals. We will maintain the existing fencing around the Historic Site in order to exclude, as far as practical, goats from this important area.

HIGH PRIORITY

130. Any dogs that are used by goat contractors for board authorised goat control operations and other pest animal management activities, are to be used only for that purpose and are to be controlled by the authorised contractor.

131. We will continue to control rabbit populations on the Lands.

132. Wherever practical and effective, pest animal control methods that have the lowest impact on cultural values and the environment will be used.

133. For pest control contracts that do not need to go to tender or require more than one quote, expressions of interest will be sought from the MLALC in the first instance. If the Land Council does not take the contract up in this manner, the Board may offer such contracts to Wiimpatja owner families, then to other associated Wiimpatja, then to neighbouring landholders, before being advertised. The process for awarding tenders and contracts will follow NPWS policy and NSW government guidelines.

134. We will prepare a policy on bringing and keeping domestic animals and plants on the Lands.

135. Any stock that are found in the Lands will be removed as soon as possible.

7.4 Managing Fire

Aboriginal People were skilled in the use of fire to manipulate and manage their environment – to encourage new vegetation growth, for hunting, to make movement and travel easier, and as part of “caring for Country”. Unfortunately the traditional use of fire by Wiimpatja has been poorly recorded and the role of Wiimpatja fire management practices in shaping the Lands’ present environment is not well understood. Further research, including oral history projects, would be useful in exploring Wiimpatja fire management within the Lands.

Some scientists think that fire may not have been a significant factor in shaping the type and distribution of the Lands’ vegetation communities. Some of the area’s native plants require fire to assist their germination, while others can be killed and regeneration hampered by too frequent fires. It is also generally agreed that altered fire regimes and especially the lack of regular or occasional fires (due mainly to reduced biomass, or fuel, as a result of grazing pressures) is a factor in the growth

of woody weed species – as is occurring across parts of the Lands’ sandplain areas.

The control and use of fire is an important aspect of conservation area management. NPWS policies give priority to the protection of life and property, both within a park and the surrounding areas. The controlled use of fire is used to protect park assets, reduce wildfire risks and aid in wildfire management and for biodiversity conservation and habitat management purposes.

The *Mutawintji National Park Reserve Fire Management Strategy* (DECC 2009) follows the guidelines for fire planning as set down by NPWS.

What the Lease Says

- *The park’s special nature conservation values were considered in negotiation of the lease, and that for Aboriginal people associated with the area such natural values are a central part of the park’s cultural values (Clause 4.2).*
- *Laws and rules for the protection of animals, plants and vegetation apply to the Board and the Land Council and anyone working for them (Clause 10.2).*
- *The Board can agree with park neighbours about co-operative land management matters that are on and off park (Clause 9.14).*

Objectives

To manage fire within and around the Lands – including both intentionally lit fires and bushfires – to protect people, cultural and natural heritage values and assets.

To employ traditional Wiimpatja fire management techniques wherever possible.

Actions

136. We will carry out continued research into Wiimpatja fire management practices. Trial applications of these practices will be undertaken in the Lands and the results will be recorded. If regarded as successful such practices will be extended more widely in the Lands and will become part of the Reserve Fire Management Strategy.

137. Wiimpatja knowledge will be combined with scientific information to ensure fire is managed in the best possible way, that cultural matters are considered and that knowledge is transferred and respected.

138. We will review and update the current Reserve Fire Management Strategy written by the NPWS. Once endorsed by the Board, this strategy will be implemented to protect life, property and assets and to use fire for habitat, ecological and landscape management purposes.

HIGH PRIORITY

139. We will modify and expand the Fire Management Strategy to detail how fire will be managed within the Lands and acknowledge Wiimpatja ways of using fire to manage and care for country.

140. We will encourage research into the ecological effects of fire in the Lands, particularly the responses of significant plant species, vegetation communities and animal species.



7.5 Historic Heritage

The Lands' "contact history" or written past commenced in 1845 when the explorer Charles Sturt passed close by, to the north, along Nuntherungie Creek. In October 1860 the Burke and Wills Expedition passed through the Byngnano Range. It is probable however that pastoralists from the south (such as William Wright from Kinchega Station) had earlier visited the range in the late 1850s. Wright returned in 1861, leading a supply party for the Burke and Wills Expedition. Ernest Giles, while working on Kinchega Station, visited Mutawintji in search of grazing lands in 1861 and again in 1863 (when he carved a horses head and list of dates in rocks near the main engraving site).

Henry Raines took up the first pastoral lease, Mootwingee, on the Lands in the 1870s and grazing of the area (by introduced stock) commenced in 1874. Raines built stone walls across the area's rockholes to supply his homestead with water, delivering this via ceramic pipes. The stone Mootwingee Homestead building, the ruined walls and remains of which are still there today, was constructed in the early 1900s.

Opal mining at White Cliffs circa 1889 saw a mail route and supply road established from Broken Hill to these new fields. This route passed through the Lands, along the alignment now known as the Old Coach Road, which prompted construction of the original Rockholes Hotel in 1905 by the Raven family from the adjacent Ravendale Station. The second Rockholes Hotel was built in 1916 before being delicensed 2 years later. Only the foundations and sub-surface features of the hotel remain today, just north of the airstrip.

Interest in the "Aboriginal art", rockholes and flora and fauna of the Mutawintji area dates from the early decades of the 1900s. The Barrier Field Naturalist Club, established in 1920, was instrumental in having the immediate "Mootwingee" area reserved for the *Preservation of Native Flora and Fauna, Caves and Aboriginal Carvings and Drawings* in 1927. The reserve was managed by a local trust.

Pastoral land uses such as ground tanks, management trails and fencing continued across the Lands throughout the 20th Century, despite the impacts of successive dry periods. The second Mootwingee homestead building was constructed and added to from around 1910. The Shearers' Quarters were built later.

The Lands were included in the first aerial survey of kangaroo numbers in New South Wales in 1966 and the population of Wangarru was first reported by scientists in that year. The Mootwingee Historic Site was permanently reserved in 1967, following establishment of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and an initial period of park development commenced. This culminated in the opening of the Visitor Centre, now known as the Cultural Centre, in the Historic Site in 1970.



Coturaundee Nature Reserve was established in 1979, primarily to protect the population of Wangarru in this area.

Mootwingee National Park was created in 1983, comprising the original Mootwingee Station purchased by NPWS in 1982, plus part of the adjoining expired lease of Gnalta Station. Establishment of the national park and nature reserve brought to a head the inappropriate management and lack of recognition of the Lands' values for Wiimpatja and triggered the blockade of the Historic Site in September 1983. The blockade site itself is now an area of historic significance to both Wiimpatja and the wider community. Similarly the site of the hand back ceremony in 1998, on the low hillslope opposite the Homestead Creek Camping Area, is now also a historically significant location.

The area's nearly 170 years of contact history has left a legacy of heritage sites and locations across the Lands. These include:

- the route of the Old Coach Road;
- remains of the Rockhole Hotel and a nearby grave;
- remains of the successive Mootwingee Homestead buildings;
- campsites, engravings and other sites associated with early explorers and pastoralists – including an 1863 survey mark on Yurntaana (Mt Wright) and nearby stone cairn and early European artwork in Homestead Gorge;
- evidence of copper mining near Yurntaana (Mt Wright) and in the Coturaundee Range;
- remains from the early pastoral period – including the ruins of the 1880/90 Mt Wright well, the Amphitheatre well and tanks and adjacent stone “shepherd’s” hut known as the Amphitheatre Hut, the Mootwingee well remains beside Homestead Creek and early ground tanks; and
- examples from the later pastoral development period – including good examples of ground tank construction such as Wrights Tank, which was constructed at the turn of the century using pick and shovel. New Tank is known to be constructed in the 1950s, and Macs Tank possibly earlier.

Sites and structures from the Lands' early management as a conservation area are now also taking on heritage interest – notably the first Visitor Centre (the present Cultural Centre).

The Blockade Site and site of the handback ceremony are places of historic heritage importance to both Wiimpatja and other people who supported the blockade in 1983.

The *Far West Region Cultural Heritage Management Strategy 2003 – 2010* identified the Mootwingee Homestead ruins and wider Old Homestead Complex, as having local heritage value and warranting management.

More recently the Board commissioned the preparation of the Homestead Precinct, Mutawintji National Park Conservation Management Plan (Mc Dougall and Vines 2006). This plan has been reviewed and endorsed by the Board. This plan has concluded that the main buildings – the original homestead ruins, “new” homestead buildings, the stone shed and store and shearers' quarters – are all of the regional



heritage significance. The plan acknowledges a number of options for the future protection, management and use of these buildings.

What the Lease Says

- *The Board can make special plans (such as heritage conservation management plans) when it needs or wants to (Clause 12.9).*
- *The Board will control planning and building approvals on the park, subject to legal requirements and the Plan of Management (Clause 12.8).*

Objective

To present the area's history for visitors' appreciation and understanding by protecting the Historic Sites and resources remaining on the Lands.

Actions

141. We will prepare a conservation management plan or plans for other major historic heritage sites in the Lands, particularly the ruins of the Rock Hole Hotel and Amphitheatre Hut and precinct.

142. The historic heritage sites will be stabilised, maintained or otherwise managed consistent with the recommendations of these Conservation Management Plans.

143. The Old Homestead buildings will continue to be used for staff accommodation and a meeting place for management related business, such as board of management meetings.

144. We will attempt to identify mine shafts which may be a risk to visitors, staff or contractors in the Yurntaana (Mt Wright) and Coturaundee Range areas. Any shafts which are risky will be identified on a map provided to staff, contractors and visitors to the areas and if appropriate, some visual identification or barrier will be considered.

7.6 Expanding the Mutawintji Lands

Wiimpatja expressed their strong desire to expand the Mutawintji Lands – for cultural, environmental and economic reasons – throughout the Handback negotiations. These desires are recognised in the lease and the Board allocates a substantial proportion of the rent (compensation) monies to a Land Acquisition Fund.

The lease also explicitly allows for the issue of whether the Nature Reserve and/or the Historic Site should become part of the national park to be addressed via this plan. A range of land classifications are now available under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, or other legislation that could be applied to the existing Lands or any possible additions.

Expansion of the Lands can achieve important cultural objectives – in terms of bringing other important places under Aboriginal ownership and protective management, as well as securing other areas for productive land use and



economic security. Given the poor sampling of regional environments within conservation areas, expansion of the Lands could also achieve important conservation and biodiversity objectives.

The existing shape of the Lands, with an extended boundary that often does not acknowledge landscape features or logical on-ground alignments, presents a range of management issues. The Lands' shape, with a substantial boundary-to-area ratio (especially in the case of the Nature Reserve), also exposes a significant percentage of the area to impacts from adjacent land use and other boundary pressures. This can detract from conservation values and increase management demands. Rationalisation of the Lands' shape and boundaries, including possible connection of the Nature Reserve with the main expanse of the Lands, is desirable.

The Board recognises that it is important and more productive to expand the Lands or adjust the area's boundaries co-operatively with neighbours.

What the Lease Says

- *The Board can, with the consent of the Minister, spend rent monies on the acquisition of land for addition to the Lands where this complies with certain provisions of the NPW Act and with the Plan of Management (Clause 6.8).*
- *The Plan of Management will set out if the Nature Reserve, or the Historic Site, or both should become part of the National Park (Clause 1.4).*

Objectives

To expand the Mutawintji Lands to include additional areas of cultural significance or conservation importance.

To expand the national park, or create other reserved or legally protected areas, to include a greater range of the types of local environments so that plant and animal populations are more likely to survive over the long term or to better achieve cultural, community or economic objectives.

To achieve logical and manageable boundaries for the Mutawintji Lands.

Actions

145. Expansion of the Mutawintji Lands is an important goal and is provided for under Clause 1.6 of the Lease. Early in the life of this Plan we will prepare an Acquisition Strategy (which we may choose to keep confidential to the Board and MLALC). This strategy will consider:

- rationalising the boundary of the Mutawintji Lands and simplifying the shape of the Lands to achieve a better boundary to area ratio;
- linking the present National Park and Nature Reserve areas;
- protecting a greater sample of landform types, cultural values and habitats;
- improving management effectiveness and convenience; and
- achieving community or economic objectives.

HIGH PRIORITY

146. Expansion of the Mutawintji Lands will be undertaken by voluntary acquisition and co-operation with neighbours and others. The Board will work to

develop good relationships with neighbours to improve the chances of acquisition should neighbours decide to sell their properties.

147. The Board will work co-operatively with the MLALC and the Minister to expand the Lands and seek to use the maximum flexibility in land dealings and gazettal as available to the Minister. This may include the acquisition of land, or the de-gazettal and disposal of land, before final decisions are made regarding the gazettal of certain areas as additions to the Lands.

148. The Board will seek to fund expansion of the Mutawintji Lands from the NSW Government, the National Reserve System funding and other sources as well as funds that the Board has set aside for this purpose from the rent (compensation payments).

149. Soon after this plan is in place, in accordance with Clause 1.4 of the Lease, the Board will work co-operatively with the MLALC to review the classification of the three existing reserves that make up the Mutawintji Lands and may seek to change the Lease so we can use different classifications available under the NPW Act to cover the Mutawintji Lands and any new areas that are acquired. New land classifications may be sought under the NPW Act or other relevant legislation, to apply to all or parts of the Lands. If so, the Board will request the Minister to seek the necessary approvals from Parliament.

HIGH PRIORITY

7.7 Working with Our Neighbours

The Lands are entirely surrounded by pastoral stations (western leasehold lands).

Ravendale Station borders the Lands in the west and part of the north, Cymbric Vale Station (in 2 blocks) sits in the Lands' northern boundary as well as bordering much of the south-east margin, Wertago Station adjoins the Lands' north-east and also sits between the main expanse of the Lands and the Nature Reserve, Cootawundi Station adjoins the Lands' north-east, Waterbag Station adjoins the southern boundary. The outlying Nature Reserve has Wertago Station to the west, Nuntherungie Station to the north and north-east, a small shared boundary with Morambie Station to the east and joins Cootawundi Station in the east and south. All are broad area pastoral land use, running either cattle or sheep and these land uses can impact along the Lands' boundary.

The NPWS had previously negotiated a variety of co-operative management agreements with neighbouring landholders. These mainly relate to give-and-take fencing, acknowledging local geography and management convenience as well as access to bores and water points on or close to these boundaries. Co-operative programs have been routinely undertaken with the Lands' neighbours – mainly in relation to pest animal and weed control but also at times for access management, fire management and soil erosion actions.

The owners of Cymbric Vale Station have had a long-standing agreement with the NPWS, based on prior usage to occasionally use the management trail from



Gnalta to Cymbric Vale north-east of Mount Wright Creek across the narrow central section of the Lands – known as the “Cymbric Vale track” – to move stock between the two blocks of the Cymbric Vale holding on opposite sides of the Lands. This practice pre-dates the declaration of this part of the Lands as a Wilderness Area.

What the Lease Says

- *The Board can make arrangements or agreements with neighbours about fencing, pest animal or weed control, and other land management activities (Clause 9.14).*
- *The Board must work out how it wants to deal with fences with park neighbours, and should think about what the NPWS does about fences with neighbours when it is doing this (Clause 13.8).*

Objective

To work with neighbouring landholders to address shared management issues for mutual benefit.

Actions

150. The Board will communicate and work co-operatively with neighbouring landholders on activities that both benefit the good management of the Lands and support neighbours in their land management efforts.

151. The location of existing “give and take” boundary fencing to the Lands will be reviewed and new fencing alignments negotiated and documented, by agreement, with neighbours to effect more protection and management of the Lands. We will acknowledge prior agreements and existing arrangements in this process and be guided by the NPWS Boundary Fencing Policy. Possible boundary changes and agreements may include providing piped watering points at a good distance outside the Lands’ fenceline where previously accessible existing water points within the Lands are no longer available to our neighbours.

152. The use of the ‘Cymbric Vale Track’ will continue to be at the discretion of the Board. It is the Board’s preference that the track be excised from the Wilderness Area (see section 7.9 The Wilderness Area).

153. The Board will contribute to and work with regional land/resource management groups (such as the Western Catchment Management Authority and local landcare groups) and other regional organisations (such as tourism associations) where appropriate to participate in relevant regional programs that may benefit the Lands and neighbours as well as to promote the Lands and the concept of Joint Management. This involvement may be through the NPWS or OEH or independently, as best suits the group and issues in question.

7.8 Zoning

Zoning is a way of broadly identifying and describing parts of a park where differing management priorities, permissible actions or activities and appropriate types of development will apply. Zoning can be especially useful in identifying different access rules and arrangements, identifying acceptable activities and separating possibly conflicting uses in different parts of the park – especially for significant or



sensitive sites, Community Development Area(s) and the Wilderness Area. It is a very useful as a development control tool.

Zoning also offers a simple and easily understood way of describing or summarising the different management priorities and directions for different parts of the Lands. Zones can also be a useful way of quickly describing the desired character for different parts of the Lands. Identifying too many zones can however be confusing and risk losing the benefits and effectiveness of zoning. Zones have been used widely in plans of management for other national parks around Australia, including Aboriginal owned and managed parks.

The Lands' landscape, accessibility and existing patterns of use and development already divide the area into recognisable "like" areas that are similar to zones.

Zoning was recognised by Wiimpatja during the Handback negotiations as a desirable approach to protecting cultural interests, arranging rules for access and activity restrictions and resolving conflicting use. The Lease recognises and allows for the possibility of zoning parts of the Lands (either permanently or temporarily) for Wiimpatja cultural and management purposes and restricting public access to these areas (Clauses 7.7, 12.2).

The Lands are not zoned at present and zones have not been identified in previous plans of management.

What the Lease Says

- *The Board can use the Plan of Management to permanently or temporarily zone parts of the park for Aboriginal cultural and management purposes, and these areas will not generally be open to public access (Clause 12.2).*
- *The Board can restrict public access to ceremonial places or other cultural sites, by zoning or other methods and including different restrictions for male and female visitors, in order to protect these special places (Clause 12.2).*
- *The Plan of Management can include zoning and guidelines for community development purposes (Clause 7.7).*

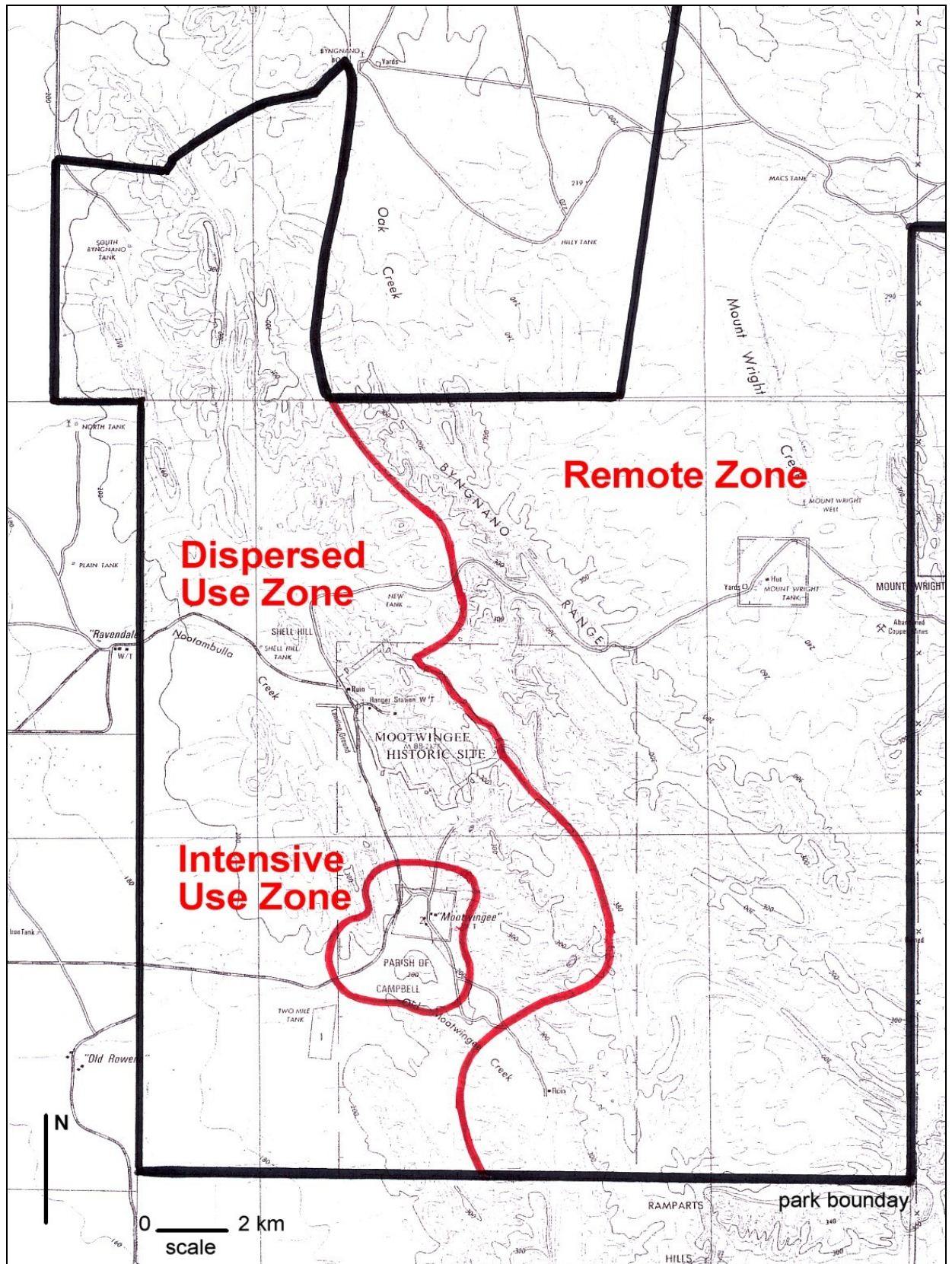


Figure 3 - Management zones (shown in the west of the Lands)

Objective

To identify a number of different management zones as a way of summarising the management directions, priorities and character for the Mutawintji Lands as a whole.

Actions

154. The Lands will be divided into three management zones, as shown in Figure 3, that give a snapshot of the management of the Lands, especially planned sites for development and places where different activities can occur. The type and intensity of use and development that are acceptable are different for each zone. These zones will also be used to guide the Board in their decisions about issues that may not be covered in this plan or when dealing with issues that have not yet been raised in the management of the Lands. The Lands will be divided into:

- an Intensive Use Zone;
- a Dispersed Use Zone; and
- a Remote Zone.

155. The Intensive Use Zone will be the location for most buildings, visitor activities, and other developments and facilities. It is a relatively small part of the Lands centred on the existing depot and staff housing, Homestead Creek visitor sites, the planned Community Development Area and the Visitor Centre.

156. The Intensive Use Zone has many existing roads and management trails and much of it has been disturbed by a variety of past land use prior to the Lands becoming a national park. The existing visitor and management facilities are already concentrated here and it is where most of the additional visitor and management facilities will be located. Many visitors, staff and Wiimpatja staying overnight in the Lands will do so in this zone.

157. While most of the Intensive Use Zone will be managed as a natural area it will seem “busier”, or more crowded and developed, because of the number of different places, infrastructure and activities that are clustered in this smaller part of the Lands. The protection of significant sites will remain important in this zone; however it is where the Board may concentrate those developments and activities which will need more management attention.

158. The Dispersed Use Zone will be dominated by the management of cultural sites and biodiversity values with roads and management trails, facilities and activities widely scattered in this predominantly natural landscape. Visitor access and use of parts of this zone may be closely controlled to protect significant places.

159. The Dispersed Use Zone covers most of the western side of the Lands, including almost all of the area west of the Byngnano Range as well as the existing Historic Site and Ngalkirrka (the Amphitheatre) area. Only a few developments occur in this zone at present, mostly in and around the existing Historic Site and airstrip, where most of the management and visitor activities are focused. The few other visitor facility sites are low-key – such as carparks and walking tracks. Visitor use is managed by guided tour access within the present Historic Site or independent activities spread within the natural landscape.



160. The Board will continue to manage the Dispersed Use Zone as it is at present. Priority will be given to the protection of cultural, historic, natural and landscape values and visitor facilities will be smaller, dispersed and low-key. Smaller low-key individual community development areas may be located throughout this zone with the Board's approval. Major management facilities at the existing Historic Site may be redeveloped and landscaped to better present and protect this special place, however elsewhere management infrastructure will also be low-key. The existing Historic Site and to a lesser extent Ngalkirrka (the Amphitheatre) will be more intensively managed. Dispersed low-impact use and management activities will be preferred across most of this zone to retain the area as a cultural and natural landscape.

161. The Remote Zone will be managed as a limited access and minimal development area where roads/management trails, facilities and activities are extremely limited and are found within a natural setting that is mostly inaccessible. It covers the eastern three-quarters of the existing National Park and all of the existing Nature Reserve. Only a few management trails occur in this area at present along with remnants from the area's pastoral history as well as one roughly marked walking track (to Mutawintji Gorge) and some recommended walking routes.

162. The Remote Zone will be mostly inaccessible where natural processes dominate. It will offer opportunities for cultural activities and experiences that may not be found in the more developed and busier parts of the Lands, as well as serving an important biodiversity and landscape conservation role. Developments in this zone will be restricted to those required for major management purposes only or low-key works for cultural management purposes. Visitors will not generally be permitted to drive into this zone and will need to register and be largely self-reliant when experiencing this area.

163. The above zones may be changed by an amendment to the plan of management by the Board.

7.9 The Wilderness Area

The greater part of the National Park (47,600 ha) – extending east from approximately the centre of the Byngnano Range – is a declared Wilderness Area, as shown on Figure 4.

Homestead Creek Valley, the Historic Site, the immediate area around Split Rocks, and most of Ngalkirrka (the Ampitheatre) and Homestead Creek Gorge are outside the Wilderness Area. Mutawintji Gorge in the south is within the declared wilderness.

This area was declared as wilderness in March 1992, without consultation with Wiimpatja. It remains the only declared wilderness in western NSW.

The term “wilderness” has a special meaning under the *Wilderness Act 1987*. Under this law it refers to a large area of land which, along with its native plant and animal communities and the ecosystems of which they are a part, is in an essentially natural state. The NPWS considers wilderness areas as lands that have been least modified by modern technological society and are the most intact and undisturbed expanses remaining of the natural landscape. Only four or five per cent of NSW could still be called wilderness under this definition, but less than half of this has been declared as wilderness. Nearly all of this is within national parks and nature reserves.

Wiimpatja have a different view of this area and the idea of “wilderness”. All areas of the Mutawintji Lands were and continue to be actively used and managed by Wiimpatja. Today this large area of the Lands is used for hunting and gathering and other cultural purposes and owner families want to continue doing this into the future.

A small number of visitors also use the Wilderness Area for self-reliant walking and overnight camping. A registration system is used to know when people are going into the area and when they are expected to return.

What the Lease Says

- *The park’s wilderness values were considered in negotiation of the lease, and that for Aboriginal people associated with the area such natural values are a central part of the park’s cultural values (Clause 4.2).*
- *The Board must be consulted before the Minister or NPWS (for any mandatory requirements) can carry out any powers, actions or functions under the Wilderness Act (Clause 12.11).*
- *The Board must consent before the NPWS can carry out any non-mandatory actions, functions or powers under the Wilderness Act (Clause 12.11).*
- *No more of the park will be declared as wilderness without the consent of both the Land Council and the Board (Clause 12.11).*
- *Methods of public access (particularly by vehicles or horses) can be limited or restricted to protect wilderness values (Clause 12.2).*
- *The Board will manage self-reliant bushwalking to help make it safe for visitors and to protect culturally sensitive sites and nature conservation values (Clause 12.2).*

Objective

To protect the special values of the Wilderness Area, while acknowledging the continuing connection of Wiimpatja to the area and including special access and use arrangements.

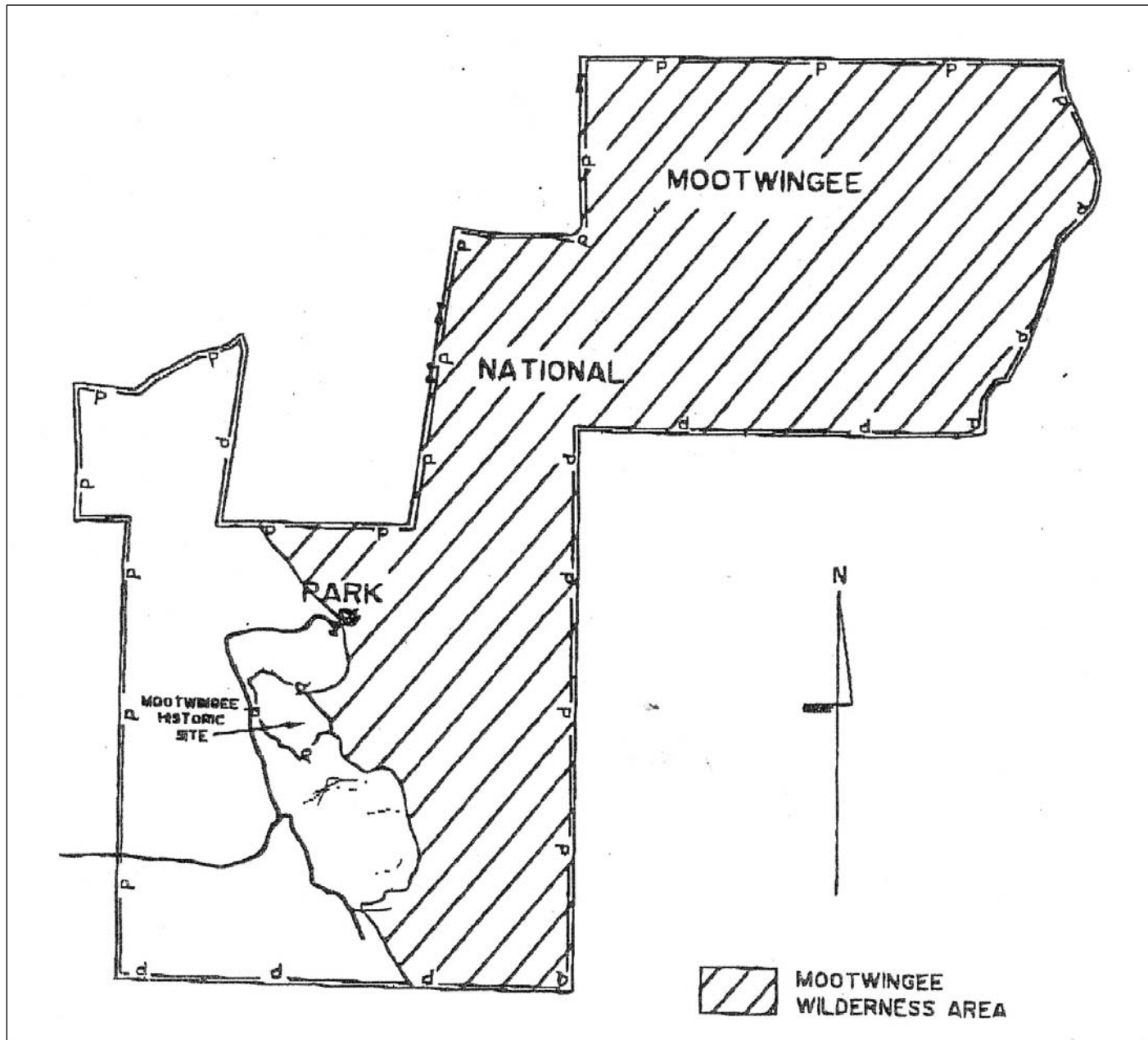


Figure 4 - The declared "wilderness" area as gazetted 6 March 1992.

Actions

164. The Board may review the current extent of declared wilderness within the Lands and possibly seek to vary in accordance with the legal procedures set out in the Wilderness Act 1987 and National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974. Any changes to the boundaries of the Wilderness will be subject to an amendment to this plan by the Board.

HIGH PRIORITY

165. Authorised Wiimpatja will continue to have vehicle access along existing management trails within the Wilderness Area for cultural purposes and must not drive off these trails.

166. As part of explaining cultural connection with the Lands the Board will explain to visitors prior and continuing association with areas now declared as wilderness and explain their view of the concept of “wilderness”. The Board will talk with people about: Wiimpatja occupation; use and management of the “wilderness”; and why such places are important and Wiimpatja’s role in caring for and protecting this large part of the Lands.

167. The Board will maintain management trails in the Wilderness Area that are required for cultural purposes or management and scientific research (such as weed, pest animals and fire management). Existing management trails in the Wilderness Area that are not required for these purposes will be closed and rehabilitated.

168. In principle the neighbour use of the Cymbric Vale track is inconsistent with the Wilderness Act, therefore the Board will seek variation to the boundaries of the Wilderness Area to exclude Cymbric Vale track.

169. We will continue to allow backpack walking and registered camping in the Wilderness Area.

170. We will retain the existing very low-key Mutawintji Gorge and Split Rocks walking track markers to ensure people visiting these areas do not get lost. These tracks and their markers will be maintained in their present condition because they are partially in the Wilderness Area (especially the last section of the Mutawintji Gorge Track).



7.10 Parri Yaamari. Kulpalaana Kiirrantu (Come this Way. Talking About the Country) - Helping People Experience Mutawintji

“Thank you NPWS and local management group in keeping this special place. Very hot, lots of flies, just as many stars, fantastic. Thank you again.”

Visitor, 2003

Approximately 7,000-8,000 visitors come to the Lands each year, mainly during the cooler months. Almost all visitors come to the National Park and the Historic Site, with few if any visitors going to the Nature Reserve. A 2001 study by the NPWS determined that three major national parks in the Far Western Region – the Mutawintji Lands, Sturt and Kinchega National Parks – generated a total of \$5.5 M in Gross Regional Product. This included the economic benefits of tourism, direct and indirect employment and NPWS capital works expenditure. This economic contribution represented a 1.3% share of the Far Western Region’s total economy (as represented in Gross Regional Product terms). The same study estimated that visitors to Mutawintji National Park contributed \$1.15 M to the local economy each year.

For most visitors, access to the Lands is by vehicle using the White Cliffs Road from Broken Hill and involves a drive of approximately 130 kilometres. The road is generally of two wheel, dry weather gravel standard.

The park access road leads visitors to the western edge of the Byngnango Range and the Homestead Valley, where the majority of visitor attractions and facilities are found including the well-known Mutawintji Historic Site. Restricted access with an accompanying guide is permitted to the Historic Site. The present range of visitor destinations and facilities is summarised on Figure 5. A description of the key visitor destinations and facilities as well as significant related management issues is provided below.

In keeping with Wiimpatja ways, the owner families feel responsible for the safety and well-being of people visiting the Lands, therefore the safety of visitors will always be an utmost concern in the management of the Lands.

7.10.1 Visitor Centre

An open-air un-staffed Visitor Centre is located inside the Lands and adjacent to the park access road approximately five kilometres from the entrance. The Visitor Centre includes toilets and limited picnic facilities nearby. The building previously contained a range of background information providing a general introduction to the Lands. In recent times these displays became out-dated and have been replaced by less comprehensive information. The Centre can be a more interactive, welcoming place where visitors can meet for guided tours of the Historic Site and other planned activities.

7.10.2 Mutawintji Historic Site

Mutawintji Historic Site is an important cultural place and has many individual sites including engravings, paintings and occupation sites. The site is one of the key visitor destinations in the Lands and has been the main focus of visitor use and facilities. A number of built structures including the Cultural Centre and a staff house occur here. A locked gate approximately one kilometre from the Cultural Centre restricts access to the site and visitors are only permitted on a guided tour with either a Wiimpatja guide or a specially authorised tour operator. A road and car park next to the Cultural Centre provide vehicle access to the site.

The Cultural Centre has displays that explain Wiimpatja culture to visitors. It provides a starting point for the guided tours to the sites.

To protect the art, engravings and occupation sites, boardwalks, barriers and information signs have been erected. Some of the tracks and barriers in the Historic Site are older works and in need of an upgrade to provide a better experience for visitors and to demonstrate that the Historic Site is being protected.

The Staff House, Cultural Centre and associated infrastructure such as the road and car park are easy to see from the art sites and detract from the Wiimpatja cultural experience that the site offers.



Older style metal boardwalk across the main engravings area (accessible by visitors on guided tours) within the Historic Site.



Homestead Creek Camping Ground.

7.10.3 Homestead Creek Camping Ground

A large camping ground in amongst tall river red gums beside Homestead Creek provides basic level camping facilities, fireplaces, showers and water.

The camping area is highly visible from the main park access road and is exposed with little shade or screening vegetation. It is also the only camping area in the Lands and must be used by different types of campers. The

possibility of flash floods and river red gums dropping limbs are potential visitor safety risks at the site. Visitors continue to collect firewood, even though this is not permitted and the camping area is becoming very bare.

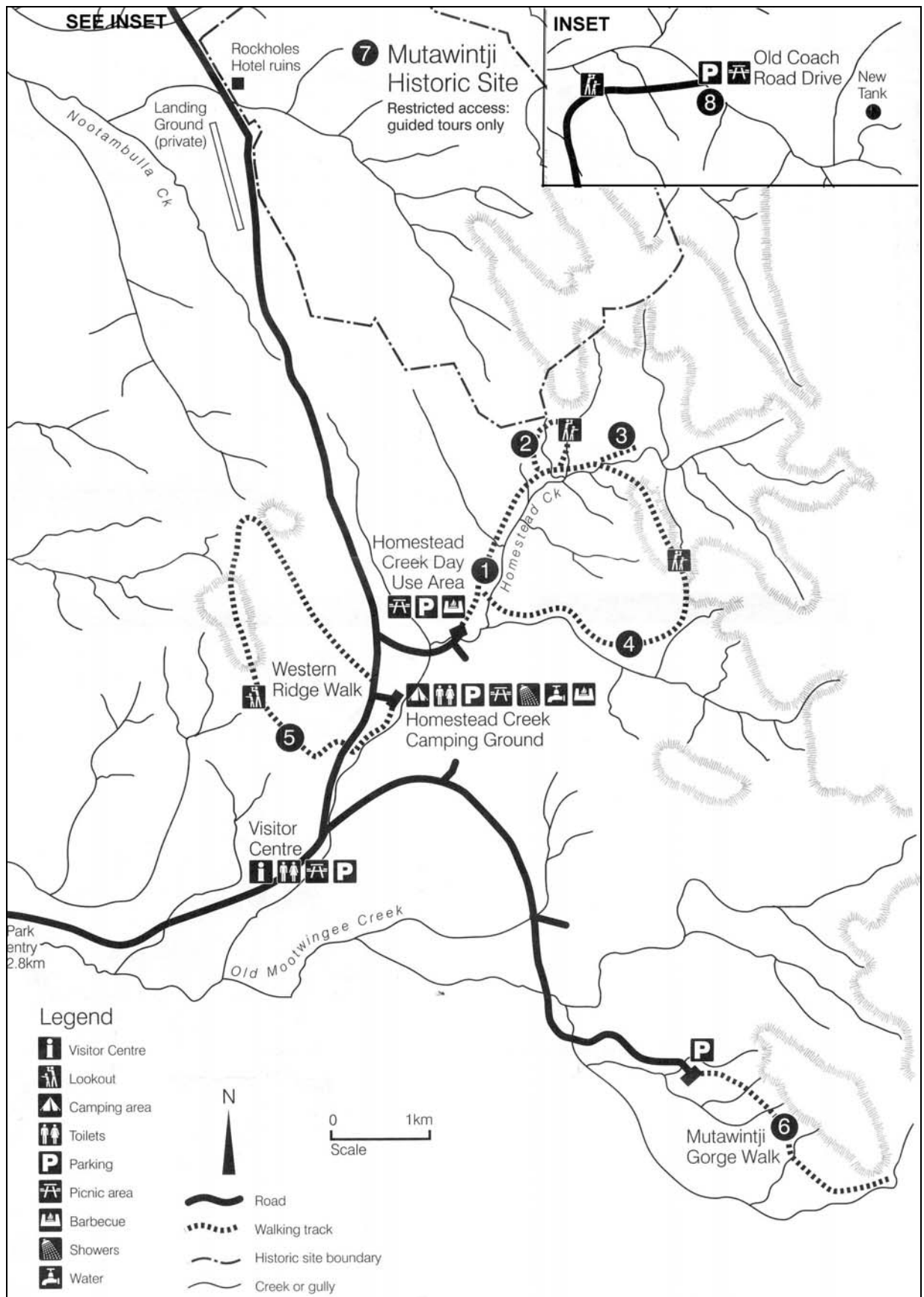


Figure 5 - Existing visitor facilities and main visitor use destinations (source: NPWS Visitor Guide).

7.10.4 Homestead Creek Day Use Area

The day use area is located just over a kilometre from the Campground and provides a picnic site beside Homestead Creek. The day use area provides a starting point for four walks of varying lengths and standards. The most popular is the Thaakalatjika Mingkana Walk (short high standard) that takes visitors to Thaakalatjika (Wright's Cave) where examples of Wiimpatja and European paintings, stencils and engravings may be viewed. The track includes a number of boardwalks to provide visitors easy access to the paintings and engravings without further damage. The three other walks take visitors further along Homestead Creek Gorge with an option to visit rock holes or take a return loop along the Byngnano Range.



Thaakalatjika Mingkana Walk is a short high standard path taking visitors up Homestead Creek to Thaakalatjika (Wright's Cave)

7.10.5 Mutawintji Gorge

This site is accessed by a gravel road leading south-east from the main park access road. A small car park lies at the end of the road just after a small creek crossing and an easy six kilometre walk leads visitors to the gorge and rockhole. Mutawintji Gorge itself lies within the Wilderness Area, which restricts the number of visitors to the site and the type of visitor facilities that can be provided.



Scenic creekside walk and semi-permanent rockholes leading into Mutawintji Gorge

7.10.6 Old Coach Road Drive and Split Rocks

This drive follows part of the old Broken Hill to White Cliffs Coach Run and takes visitors past the ruins of the Rockhole Hotel and a number of interesting rock formations such as Boomerang Rock (Wana Karnu). A small picnic area with views over the northern end of the Byngnano Range is provided at the end of this 10 kilometre drive. More adventurous visitors have the opportunity to walk the three kilometres to Split Rocks although there is no marked track. Wana Karnu lies within the Wilderness Area and this restricts the number of visitors to the site and the type of visitor facilities that can be provided.



7.10.7 Walking Tracks

“Having done a walk, I now know what Mutawintji is all about.”

Mutawintji Board Member

The Lands contain numerous marked walking tracks of differing lengths and standards that provide a range of experiences for the visitor. There are no formal tracks that provide for walks of more than four hours duration. There are six formal walking tracks, all of which lie on the western edge of the Byngnano Range, as detailed below.

- Homestead Creek Day Use Tracks – There are four tracks in this area as described above in the discussion of Homestead Creek Day Use Area and include Wiimpatja and European paintings, stencils and engravings, Homestead Creek Gorge and the ridge of the Byngnano Range. These tracks are of varying standards (AS Class 1 to AS Class 4) and range from 20 minutes to four hours in duration.
- Western Ridge Track – This track provides visitors with views over the adjoining desert plains and also of the Byngnano Range. The track is steep in places. It is AS Class 4 and takes approximately three hours.
- Mutawintji Gorge Walk – This walk takes visitors across typical rangeland country before heading into the picturesque Mutawintji Gorge and finishing at Mutawintji Rockhole. The track is of AS Class 3 and takes about three hours. Although the track lies within the Wilderness Area, marker pegs are used to indicate the route.



Day walkers on the Mutawintji Gorge Track.

The Wilderness Area offers opportunities for self-reliant walking in remote places where no facilities are provided, although very few visitors currently go there (see section 7.9 The Wilderness Area).

What the Lease Says

- *The public has a general right of access to the park, in keeping with the NPW Act and the Plan of Management. However, the Board can also restrict the access of visitors as Aboriginal people or the Board think is needed (Clause 12.2).*
- *The Board will manage public access to the park within the guidelines of promoting and enhancing appropriate use; understanding and enjoyment of the area (especially of the park's cultural significance to Aboriginal people and its nature conservation values); ecological sustainability; equity; and regional planning (Clause 12.2).*
- *The Board can favour the Land Council in awarding park facility development or maintenance contracts or for tour guiding (Clause 10.17).*
- *Some people or companies are licensed to conduct commercial tours on the park at present (Clause 13.10).*
- *The Board will control the operation of authorised commercial tour operators on the park, and will think about how the NPWS manages tour operators when doing this (Clause 12.14).*
- *In managing the park the Board will take part in relevant state wide NPWS visitor use programs – such as the monitoring of visitor numbers, the Annual Pass Program, and NPWS park promotion activities (but with the NPWS to consult the Board about any major new publicity for the park) (Clauses 9.12, 12.12, 12.13, 12.19).*
- *Tourism enterprise facilities can be included in any community development area (Clause 2.1).*
- *The Board may sub-lease parts of the park (but not in the Wilderness Area) for uses that are in keeping with NPW Act, including accommodation and providing other visitor facilities, where this is set out in the Plan of Management (Clauses 2.1, 12.3, 13.11).*
- *The Board will control planning and building approvals on the park, subject to legal requirements and the Plan of Management (Clause 12.8).*
- *The NPWS remains responsible for public liability insurance on the park (Clause 13.14).*
- *When reviewing the rent for the park in the future, one thing that will be considered is any change in the number of visitors coming to the park (Clause 6.11).*

Objectives

To provide for sustainable management of the expected increase in visitor numbers to the Lands, in a manner that is in keeping with the cultural and natural significance in accordance with Wiimpatja values and the wishes of the Board.

To increase visitors' awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Lands' cultural significance to Wiimpatja and their historic and nature conservation values.

To enable visitors to access selected significant places to better understand and appreciate the importance of these places to Wiimpatja.

Actions

171. In the life of this plan, the Board will focus on improving the existing visitor destinations and facilities and creating two new camping sites. The Board would prefer not to greatly increase the number of visitors coming to the Lands much beyond existing levels. During this time we will manage the existing visitor use places to sustainably deal with the expected increase in visitor numbers in keeping with the natural and cultural significance of the Lands, in accordance with Wiimpatja values and the wishes of the Board as described below.

HIGH PRIORITY

172. The Visitor Centre on the entry road will be retained as the first contact and information point for visitors arriving at the Lands. The displays will be upgraded to

provide a welcome to Mutawintji Lands and clearly explain the Joint Management arrangement in place. Other themes to address include:

- explaining the importance of the Lands;
- messages about respecting Wiimpatja cultural sites and appropriate behaviour; and
- providing orientation information (what to see and do, where to camp, tour times, visitor safety information and so on).

173. The Visitor Centre will also serve as a meeting place for guided tours through the Lands and will also contain a registration system for visitors going into the Wilderness Area. A machine to collect fees may also be placed at the Visitor Centre. A place to demonstrate the creation of arts and crafts and to sell these and other items will be developed at the Visitor Centre site (see section 5.2 Enterprise Opportunities on Mutawintji).

174. The existing Mutawintji Historic Site will continue to be an area where visitors can go as part of a guided tour led by Wiimpatja or an approved commercial operator. We will work with tour operators to ensure enough tours are being offered to cater for visitors who wish to see this site. When visitor numbers increase, Wiimpatja guides will take tours more often or allow more commercial operators to take tours into the Historic Site. If more tours are led by Wiimpatja, training will be available and tour guide opportunities will be shared fairly among the associated family groups.

175. The Board will work with approved commercial operators to ensure: tours are not being taken (without agreement) through the Historic Site at the same time as Wiimpatja led tours; that tours stay on marked walking tracks; and the correct information is given.

176. Wiimpatja will be involved in preparing new or upgraded visitor information about the Historic Site, the Cultural Centre, the Visitor Centre and elsewhere. Wherever possible this information will be presented by Wiimpatja in plain language.

177. The Board will investigate the walking tracks and barriers and upgrade if necessary, to assist visitors to appreciate and respect the spiritual value of the Historic Site for Wiimpatja.

178. The Board will keep up-to-date about the best ways to manage visitors at various sites. For example there may be better ways to take visitors to the engravings site or ways to modify the viewing platform so it doesn't dominate the area. Alternatives for providing shade for visitors to the main engraving site during the hotter months will also be investigated.

179. The existing Cultural Centre will be retained and improved to provide more effective presentations of the Historic Site and its importance to Wiimpatja.

180. The Board will ensure some native vegetation is planted and landscaping works near the Cultural Centre are carried out to help hide these buildings from visitors when they are at the overhang and engraving sites.

181. The Board will ensure the Historic Site is visited by staff or tour guides on a regular basis to ensure access and this area is protected and well presented.

182. A new “heavy camping area” for caravans, buses, large groups of campers, and people camping near their cars with lots of gear will be built just north of the Visitor Centre - and outside of the more culturally sensitive Homestead Valley area. It will be designed so that people can camp close to their vehicles if they wish and in a way so that car-based campers, caravans and bus groups can use different parts of the area.

183. A new “light camping area” for people using swags or small tents and with less gear, will be built in the small valley to the north-west of existing Homestead Creek Camping Area. This area will be designed so that people can spread out and not have to camp too close to each other. Some facilities, such as picnic tables and barbecues, will be located away from the access road and car parking spaces to encourage visitors to walk-in to camping spots in the surrounding bush. The new campground will also give people in the existing Homestead Creek Camping Area somewhere to camp, or escape to, if Homestead Creek floods. The site of the Hand Back Ceremony, immediately west of the existing shower block will not be part of this development.

184. The existing Homestead Creek Camping and Picnic Area will be modified and its capacity reduced. The area will be rehabilitated with screening vegetation planted so it reduces visibility from the main access road.

185. Sustainable design, development and management of these camping areas to reduce their impact on the Lands and wider environment will be considered.

186. Each camping area will have its own toilets and showers that are low flush or composting toilets and showers that use very little water and have automatic cut off to prevent water being wasted if taps are left running. Gas barbecues will be placed in each camping area for visitors to share. The Board recognises the impact of fire wood collection both on and off the Lands and will explore solutions that minimise the environmental impact. A small amount of firewood will be provided for people to use in communal fire pits. Electricity will not be available for individual camping spots or visitor’s private use.

187. Camping areas will be kept clean and well maintained for visitor’s enjoyment. One or more camping areas or parts of a camping area (if there are not many visitors) will be closed at certain times of the year. This will give these areas a rest and time to regenerate and reduce the maintenance workload.

188. Homestead Creek Day Use Area will be managed as a picnic area and starting point for walks into Homestead Creek Gorge.



189. The Mutawintji Gorge area will continue to be managed for visitors as a place to go on longer half-day to full-day walks, sightseeing and bush picnics.

190. Interpretative signs will be provided on Old Coach Road Drive and at Wana Karnu car park to explain some of the heritage and natural features along this drive – including the ruins of the Rockhole Hotel and interesting rock formations such as Wana Karnu. The small picnic area at the car park will be maintained at its current standard.

191. The location and condition of existing walking tracks will be reviewed to ensure they are in the best place to minimise environmental impacts and to identify any repair works that may be needed. One additional short walk to Wana Karnu may be developed within the Dispersed Use Zone.



*Wana Karnu (Boomerang Rock),
the possible destination for a new
short walking track.*

192. Providing walks that take a full day or more will be investigated, for example connecting the Mutawintji Gorge Walk and the Byngnano Range Walk at Homestead Creek and a loop walk from the Old Coach Road Day Use Area north toward South Byngnano Tank. A walk through this area may need to be an escorted walk with a Wiimpatja guide.

193. Registration for backpack walking and camping in the wilderness area will continue so we know when people are in the Wilderness Area and when they expect to leave.

194. Providing opportunities for four-wheel drive tours in the area between the Old Coach Road Day Use Area and the South Byngnano Tank will be investigated. This is an interesting area with small gorges, shady vegetation and some painted, stencilled and engraved art sites. We will decide whether visitors can go to these places and it may be possible for a number of bush camping areas to be identified where no facilities are provided and visitors camp “rough”. Access could be on a “tag along tour” or a commercial bush trip where visitors book seats.

195. An impressive western entrance to the Lands at the main entrance grid will be provided to give visitors a sense of arrival into a special place that is jointly managed with the Aboriginal owners.

196. Before a decision is made on the exact place for visitor facilities, a careful planning process will be implemented. The process will identify: any limitations from the location of culturally sensitive or significant sites; accessibility; environmental limitations; and sustainability and management issues.

197. Management will check the condition of existing visitor facilities and will maintain and upgrade these to ensure they are attractive and pleasant for visitor's use. This check will be regularly carried out to ensure the Lands are well presented to visitors.

198. Visitors will be encouraged to take their rubbish with them when they leave. Central rubbish collection points with recycling facilities will continue to be provided as part of the larger visitor use areas.

199. The Board will prepare and promote respectful behaviour guidelines for on-site and intending visitors. All Wiimpatja will lead by example and abide by these standards.

200. Visitors will be discouraged from swimming in the rock holes, waterholes and tanks found across the Lands during periods when water quality can be expected to be poor and for safety reasons. Impacts from visitor use of the Lands will be regularly monitored to ensure cultural and natural values are not being unacceptably damaged and that Wiimpatja living on or using the Lands are not being disturbed. If a place is being damaged we will explore how we can better manage visitors use.

201. We will keep track of the number of visitors and areas visited. Bi-annual objective visitor surveys will be conducted and this information will help us to better manage visitors' use of the Lands

8. Ngaarrpili (Make Now) – Priorities

“Well done blockaders. It’s great you got your land back. It’s a fantastic place. Thanks for sharing it with us.”

Visitor, 2003

Most of the management actions required to adequately protect, care for and present the Mutawintji Lands are described in the preceding sections of the plan and are routine day-to-day management operations that are very similar to those normally carried out on other national parks and conservation areas across western New South Wales.

As a Joint Management Park however, the Mutawintji Lands also have an additional set of management directions and actions that are central to working towards the vision of “a great national park run by Wiimpatja”.

The Board has identified a number of **High Priority Management Actions**, as the key actions to pursue and by which to assess progress. These high priority management actions are listed below as the first part of a **Priority Management Program**. In addition, other management actions that are not identified as high priority in the preceding sections are listed together as the second part of the Priority Management Program. The Priority Management Program is structured according to the four identified priority areas and related sections of this plan:

- Effective Joint Management and Wiimpatja Employment;
- A Strong Wiimpatja Presence;
- Valuing, Promoting, Learning and Teaching Wiimpatja Culture; and
- Looking after Country.

The Board recognises that management and development of the Lands will ultimately be dependant on, and largely determined by, the funds and resources available to the Board. It should also be recognised that it is not possible for a plan of management to foresee – and provide guidelines for – all the circumstances, pressures or changing conditions that may arise during the management of an area.

Under the NPW Act the term of this plan is 10 years from when it is adopted. A new plan must be started before this plan expires.

The Board will undertake an annual review of progress in implementing this plan, especially the **High Priority Management Actions** and conduct a full review of the plan’s continued effectiveness as a guiding document for management of the Mutawintji Lands approximately 5 years after its commencement.



8.1 Priority Management Program – part 1

We will pursue the following key actions to achieve the four priority areas identified in this plan.

HIGH PRIORITY ACTIONS

Effective Joint Management and Wiimpatja Employment

Wiimpatja Staffing and Training

Action

Prepare an Employment Strategy aimed at increasing involvement of Wiimpatja in the Lands through direct participation in the area's workforce. 1

Management Infrastructure and Resources

Upgrade the degraded and substandard sealed section of the main entry road to an appropriate standard as soon as possible, by sealing and/or realignment. Preference will be given to suitably coloured gravels and seal. 11

New housing and facilities will be built to meet the needs of staff, LALC and Aboriginal owners as the need arises, using careful siting and design principles. 21

Screen existing staff house in the Historic Site with native plants and landscaping. 22

Investigate upgrading the existing airstrip to a standard suitable for RFDS use. Alternatively, other airstrip locations will be examined. 27

A Strong Wiimpatja Presence

Ngiinkaana Kirrinana – Living on our Land

Establish a Community Development Area with “camps” for families associated with the Lands. 29

Prepare a Yaparra (camp) Development Plan to guide establishment and use of the Community Development Area and its family living areas. 31

Establish a thunka (cemetery), with a guiding site plan, outside (west) of Homestead Creek Valley and main cultural areas. 41



Valuing, Promoting, Learning and Teaching Wiimpatja Culture

Looking After Important Places

Undertake a staged program to document culturally important places and objects within the Lands and establish a regular monitoring program to stabilise and conserve sites or objects of significance being damaged or degraded. 52

The Cultural Centre will be repaired and renovated. 54

We will investigate the construction of a secure museum standard “keeping place” at a suitable location on the Lands, for culturally significant objects associated with the Lands. 55

Prepare a list of all known cultural objects associated with the Lands to allow their better protection, management and presentation. 56

Reconsider allowing approved tour operators to access Ngalkirrka (the Amphitheatre area), as was the case in the past. 63

Work with relevant government agencies towards repatriation of cultural material removed from the area. 67

Understanding Mutawintji and Culture

The Board will support and encourage oral history and other projects to record more Wiimpatja stories and experiences and histories of the Mutawintji Lands generally. 77

Bush Foods, Medicines and Materials

A new Mutawintji Lands specific policy to guide the management of hunting and gathering activities on the Lands will be developed. 82

The Board, in conjunction with the Land Council, will assess the suitability of people who want to be approved shooters on the Lands. 84

Helping Visitors Understand Mutawintji and Culture

Prepare an Interpretation and Signage Plan to guide visitor information. 91

In preparing the Interpretation and Signage Plan we will give priority to the messages and information that Wiimpatja wish to present to visitors about the cultural importance of the Mutawintji Lands, joint management, biodiversity and other themes as identified by 93



Aboriginal owners and other associated Wiimpatja. We will also draw on the assistance and expertise of NPWS specialists and other OEH staff and guidelines such as the Charter of Best Practice for Interpreting Aboriginal Culture and Country published in 2003 by the Interpretation Australia Association (IAA), in identifying the best ways to present this information to visitors.

Use Wiimpatja names for dual-naming sites/features on the Lands, and include suitable language terms/words in all interpretive and promotional materials. 95

Run training schools for tour operators and guides about the Lands, their cultural importance and rules for licensed commercial tours. 103

Looking After Country

Managing Native Plants and Animals

Undertake propagation, replanting or revegetation programs for culturally important plant species. 114

Investigate the reintroduction of plant species previously known to occur on the Lands, using appropriate sources from the local area, as guided by the NPWS policy on environmental integrity. 115

Establish a third Wangarru sub-population at Split Rocks if population numbers recover sufficiently and in accordance with recovery plan. 117

Controlling pests and problem species

High priority will be given to the control of goats in recognition of the serious impacts these animals have on art shelters, vegetation, habitats, waterholes and native animals. The existing fencing around the Historic Site will be maintained to exclude goats from this important area. 129

Managing Fire

The Mutawintji Fire Management Strategy will be reviewed and updated. Once approved by the Board it will be implemented to protect life, property and assets from fire and to use fire for habitat, ecological and landscape management. 138

Expanding the Mutawintji Lands

Prepare an acquisition strategy for expansion of the Mutawintji Lands early in the life of this plan. 145



Review classification of the three existing reserves, including the wilderness declaration and seek different classifications for the existing Lands and any additions where appropriate. 149

The Wilderness Area

Review extent of declared Wilderness Area and possibly seek to vary in accordance with relevant legal procedures. 164

Parri Yaamari. Kulpalaana Kiirrantu

Focus on improving existing visitor destinations and facilities, and create a small number of new sites, but do not encourage greatly increased visitor numbers. 171



8.2 Priority Management Program – part 2

Effective Joint Management and Wiimpatja Employment **Action No.**

Wiimpatja Staffing and Training

The provision of training for Wiimpatja will be an important component of the Employment Strategy. 2

Evaluation of the number and type of positions required to implement this plan. 3

In preparing the Employment Strategy the Board will take into consideration a number of factors. These factors are listed in action 4. 4

Management Infrastructure and Resources

As set out in Clause 10.5 of the Lease, the Board will prepare annual budget proposals. 5

Seek external funding for special projects as considered necessary. 6

Consider providing seed funding to Wiimpatja community enterprises. 7

Have tight control on the use of vehicles and equipment. 8

Keep the roads on the Lands that are open for visitors to use in a safe and driveable condition. 9

The Board may temporarily close parts or all of a road at times for safety, management, cultural or other reasons. 10

Sections of major or more frequently used roads may be sealed or treated. 12

Maintain existing management trails within the Lands. Vehicles will not be allowed on management trails in the Wilderness Area except for Board authorised activities. 13

Existing management trails that may not be required for access or management purposes will only be closed and rehabilitated following the prior consideration and approval by the Board. 14

Maintain effective boundary fencing around the Lands. 15

Make some general improvements to the appearance of the depot and workshop area and consider fencing/screening vegetation. 16



The depot, workshop and Old Homestead Buildings will be well presented at all times.	17
An operating plan and hazard control procedures will be prepared and implemented for the depot and workshop.	18
Energy efficiency, waste reduction, recycling and sustainability issues will be addressed in the design and operation of all facilities and infrastructure within the Lands.	19
Improve the management of the tip to prevent rubbish from spreading. We will improve the existing waste reduction and recycling measures in place at the tip.	20
The Board will negotiate with the MLALC regarding the ultimate return of the mud brick house.	23
Maintain signs to inform visitors about access restrictions to the depot, homestead buildings and staff housing.	24
A “duty ranger system” will be established for visitors’ use so they can contact a ranger or other staff member if there is an after-hours emergency.	25
Take minor gravel supplies for use within the Lands from selected existing gravel pits.	26
Members of the public will not be permitted to use the airstrip except in emergencies or as part of special tours or other activities approved by the Board.	28

A Strong Wiimpatja Presence

Ngiinkaana Kiirrinana – Living on our Land

Each family’s living area will be separate from other families’ living areas.	30
The Yaparra Development Plan will consider energy efficiency and sustainability issues.	32
The Board has the ultimate management control over the Community Development Area and will direct the overall management and use of this area.	33
Access to the Yaparra (Community Development) Area will only be allowed by invitation from a family or families.	34
Each family can declare their area “dry” if they wish.	35
Each family will be required to help with the upkeep of their living area.	36



The Yaparra Development Plan will consider introduced animals and plants in the Yaparra.	37
Further low-key community development areas may be established at other places in the Dispersed Use Zone.	38
The members of approved family groups and their guests, as well as Wiimpatja with an association with the Lands and their dependants, can “bush camp” in the Dispersed Use and Remote Zones.	39
Continue to use the depot and administration area as the preferred location for Board of Management meetings.	40
Enterprise Opportunities on Mutawintji	
An Employment Strategy will be prepared to increase the number and visibility of Wiimpatja working in the management and presentation of the Lands.	42
Wiimpatja will play a central role in guided tours and other face-to-face visitor activities.	43
Investigate expanding the range of tours and other visitor services offered by Wiimpatja to people coming to the Lands.	44
An arts and craft facility will be added to, or established in the vicinity of, the existing Visitor Centre.	45
The Board will give preference to the MLALC where appropriate in contracting for services associated with the care and management of the Lands.	46
Undertake a detailed feasibility study of the full range of Wiimpatja enterprises and commercial opportunities that may be possible and viable on the Lands.	47
The Board will encourage the use of the Lands as a demonstration and teaching place to share knowledge and learn about the Lands and history.	48
Commercial use of the Lands by non-Wiimpatja, for activities other than tours and visitor services, will be closely regulated.	49
Investigate ways of protecting Wiimpatja intellectual property rights.	50
Expand the use and recognition of the Mutawintji logo.	51



Valuing, Promoting, Learning and Teaching Wiimpatja Culture

Looking After Important Places

- Culturally important objects may be recorded and moved to a safe “keeping place”. 53
- Research into the full range of Wiimpatja sites on the Mutawintji Lands will be guided and encouraged. 57
- Any development work to build new facilities and infrastructure will be preceded by a detailed study to document any cultural sites in the area and identify ways to protect them, where this has not already been done. 58
- Wiimpatja will be directly involved in preparing all visitor information. 59
- Develop a set of rules to guide staff and contractors in working near special places. 60
- The area of the present Mutawintji Historic Site will remain a place where visitors will be restricted to guided tours. 61
- Ngalkirrka (the Amphitheatre area) will remain restricted to guided tours conducted by Wiimpatja. 62
- The Board can at their discretion cancel guided tours, by Wiimpatja or approved tour operators, to certain parts of the Lands to protect cultural sites or other important places. 64
- Suitable protection may be provided at selected sites on the Mutawintji Lands to prevent damage to artwork. 65
- Retain the large concrete dam dating from the 1960s within the present Historic Site. 66
- The Board may select and approve sites within the Lands for the repatriation of cultural materials associated with the Lands and Wiimpatja. 68

Managing and Respecting Cultural Information

- Wiimpatja Board Members will consult with Wiimpatja knowledge holders regarding Wiimpatja culturally sensitive information and its management. 69
- Sensitive information will only be available to culturally appropriate or approved people. 70
- As set out in Clause 10.18 of the Lease, staff will undertake a short cultural 71



awareness training course.

The Board may also require contractors and researchers working on the Lands to complete similar cultural awareness training courses. 72

Understanding Mutawintji and Culture

Undertake a variety of research and monitoring programs as described throughout this plan. 73

Research and monitoring programs undertaken on the Lands will require the prior approval of the Board. 74

All research papers, theses, articles etcetera, that result from approved research on the Lands must be lodged with the Board and the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Council. 75

Prepare a prioritised list of research needs or subject areas to guide external agencies seeking appropriate research or monitoring opportunities on the Lands. 76

The Board will support study trips by staff, where these will have a direct benefit for management of the Lands or the recognition of the Mutawintji Lands. 78

The Board will arrange or support a variety of events or activities to promote Wiimpatja to share, strengthen and celebrate culture and the Mutawintji Lands. 79

Bush Foods, Medicines and Materials

Aboriginal owners and other Wiimpatja approved by Wiimpatja owner Board members can hunt and gather food on the Lands for domestic purposes. 80

These hunting and resource gathering activities will be managed to ensure sustainability without causing significant damage to the Lands' environment or present any dangers. 81

Each shooter will be trained in safe shooting practices and abide by these practices when hunting in the Lands. 83

As part of these guidelines, shooters' vehicles must not be taken off existing management trails anywhere in the Lands. 85

The picking or hunting of threatened species (listed under the TSC Act or the EPBC Act) will not be allowed. 86

Record and actively manage the numbers of plants and animals taken from the Lands. 87



Investigate a system to know when visitors are in the Wilderness Area or other remote parts of the Lands, or when contractors are working in the Lands, when hunting to ensure they are not put in danger.	88
Interpretation signs or guided tours will be used to explain hunting and gathering activities to visitors and their importance to Wiimpatja.	89
Helping Visitors Understand Mutawintji and Culture	
Wiimpatja will play a central role in guided tours and other face-to-face visitor activities as well as in the preparation of interpretive and information material.	90
The Interpretation and Signage Plan will also look at how the Lands are promoted, and what and how information is available to visitors before they arrive, so they know what to expect and what to bring.	92
The existing Cultural Centre will be refurbished, especially the now disused display space, to provide a major presentation about the Lands to visitors.	94
During the life of this plan, the Board will research other types of commercial tours we can provide on the Lands.	96
Continue to take tours to the Historic Site and ensure there are enough tours for every visitor to see the Historic Site.	97
Investigate expanding the range and location of guided tours offered on the Lands.	98
Ensure the Lands continue to be involved in the NPWS Discovery Program and are part of the wider NPWS visitor information system.	99
Continue to support and assist educational use of the Lands by local and visiting schools, educational, special interest and community groups.	100
Different tour and guide training requirements may apply to different parts of the Lands, depending on the cultural significance or sensitivity of certain areas.	101
Criteria will be developed to select commercial operators that can take tours into the Lands, or certain places such as the Historic Site and ways to work together during their licence agreement.	102
Where possible, tour operators will be encouraged to engage the services of a trained Wiimpatja guide.	104
Information about the Lands produced by tourism agencies, businesses, media, magazines, scientific journals, authors and others will be monitored to ensure accurate information and an appreciation of Wiimpatja aspirations and joint management efforts is presented.	105



During the life of this plan we will investigate other opportunities, locations and ways to present aspects of Wiimpatja culture and the Lands' significant values and features to visitors. This will include opportunities for people with mobility difficulties to access or experience some of the Lands' sites and features. 106

Looking after Country

Managing the Landscape

We will keep most of the Lands as a cultural landscape and identify management zones to help us control development and use of the Lands. 107

Off-road driving will not be permitted in the Lands, except by authorised persons and during emergencies. Approved Wiimpatja who are hunting and gathering on the Lands must always remain on existing management trails. 108

We will carefully consider the possible impacts on soils and erosion, water flows, landscape values and appearance and other environmental effects in the planning, siting and construction of all new facilities and infrastructure within the Lands. 109

We will retain and maintain the five currently working ground tanks and utilise watering points as goat traps where necessary. 110

We will undertake erosion control, rehabilitation and revegetation works as needed. 111

Managing Native Plants and Animals

The traditional and contemporary knowledge of Wiimpatja will be combined with scientific information to ensure plants and animals are cared for in the best way possible. 112

We will give special attention to looking after all plants and all animals. Vegetation or ecological communities, plant species and animal species occurring on the Lands will also be given special management attention. 114

Special protection measures will be put in place for the Wangarru. The draft Recovery Plan will be implemented. 116

The Board will encourage and support NPWS in the preparation and implementation of recovery plans for other threatened species that occur on or around the Lands. 118

We will regularly monitor the location, abundance and condition of other threatened animals, plants and vegetation communities known to occur on the Lands. We will take suitable management actions to protect these species and communities. 119



Further survey and research work on plant communities and species will be encouraged and guided by the 2003 Vegetation Survey of the Mutawintji Lands (Porteners 2003). 120

Carrying out a wide-ranging native animal (vertebrate fauna) survey across the Lands will be high priority as soon as environmental conditions permit a comprehensive and effective survey to be undertaken. 121

We will encourage further survey work of the plants and animals of the Lands. 122

We will encourage the recording of Wiimpatja knowledge and use of the Lands' native and introduced plants and animals to serve as a cultural, land management and interpretive resource. 123

Controlling Pests and Problem Species

We will work with our neighbours in the control of introduced plants and animals for the benefit of the Mutawintji Lands and our neighbours. 124

Wiimpatja will continue to be permitted to hunt goats, rabbits and other pests as part of the feral animal control strategy for the Lands. 125

Threat abatement plans, as prepared under the TSC Act, will be considered when preparing the pest management plan and implemented as appropriate within the Lands. 126

A pest management plan will be prepared for the Lands to identify known pest plants and animals, describe the threat they pose to the area's cultural values and natural systems, and to spell out ways to control each pest plant or animal. 127

While the pest management plan is being prepared, we will continue existing control programs for high priority species. We will work with our neighbours in preparing the plan. 128

Any dogs that are used by goat contractors for board authorised goat control operations, and other pest animal management activities, are to be used only for that purpose and are to be controlled by the authorised contractor. 130

We will continue to control rabbit populations on the Lands. 131

Wherever practical and effective, pest animal control methods that have the lowest impact on cultural values and the environment will be used. 132

Expressions of interest for some pest control contacts will be sought from the MLALC in the first instance, then to Wiimpatja owner families, then to other associated Wiimpatja, then to neighbouring landholders, before being advertised. 133

We will prepare a policy on bringing and keeping domestic animals and plants 134



on the Lands.

Any stock that are found in the Lands will be removed as soon as possible. 135

Managing Fire

We will carry out continued research into Wiimpatja fire management practices. 136

Wiimpatja knowledge will be combined with scientific information to ensure fire is managed in the best possible way, that cultural matters are considered and that knowledge is transferred and respected. 137

We will modify and expand the fire management strategy to better detail how fire will be managed within the Lands and acknowledge Wiimpatja ways of using fire to manage and care for country. 139

We will encourage research into the ecological effects of fire in the Lands, particularly the responses of significant plant species, vegetation communities and animal species. 140

Historic Heritage

We will prepare a conservation management plan or plans for other major historic heritage sites in the Lands, particularly the ruins of the Rock Hole Hotel and Amphitheatre Hut and precinct. 141

The historic heritage sites will be stabilised, maintained or otherwise managed consistent with the recommendations of these conservation management plans. 142

The Old Homestead buildings will continue to be used for staff accommodation and a meeting place for management related business, such as board of management meetings. 143

We will attempt to identify mine shafts which may be a risk to visitors, staff or contractors in the Yurntaana (Mt Wright) and Coturaundee Range areas. 144

Expanding the Mutawintji Lands

Expansion of the Mutawintji Lands will be undertaken by voluntary acquisition and co-operation with our neighbours and others. 146

We will work co-operatively with the MLALC and the Minister to expand the Lands. 147

We will seek to fund expansion of the Mutawintji Lands from the NSW Government, the National Reserve System funding and other sources as well as funds that the Board has set aside for this purpose from the rent (compensation payments). 148



Working with Our Neighbours

- We will communicate and work co-operatively with neighbouring landholders on activities that both benefit the good management of the Lands and support our neighbours in their land management efforts. 150
- The location of existing “give and take” boundary fencing to the Lands will be reviewed and new fencing alignments negotiated and documented, by agreement, with our neighbours where this helps the more effective protection and management of the Lands. 151
- We will put special arrangements in place for managing our neighbour’s use of the “Cymbric Vale track”. 152
- We will contribute to and work with regional land/resource management groups (such as the Western Catchment Management Authority and local landcare groups) and other regional organisations (such as tourism associations) to participate in relevant regional programs that benefit the Lands. 153

Zoning

- The Lands will be divided into three management zones. An intensive use zone; a dispersed use zone; and a remote zone. 154
- The Intensive Use Zone will be the location for most buildings, visitor activities, and other developments and facilities. It is a relatively small part of the Lands centred on the existing depot and staff housing, Homestead Creek visitor sites, the Community Development Area and the Visitor Centre. 155
- The Intensive Use Zone has many existing roads and management trails and much of it has been disturbed by a variety of past land use. Most additional visitor and management facilities will be located here. 156
- Most of the Intensive Use Zone will be managed as a natural area; the protection of significant sites will still be important in this zone; however this is where the Board will concentrate activities which will need more management attention. 157
- The Dispersed Use Zone will be dominated by the management of cultural sites and biodiversity values with roads and management trails, facilities, and activities widely scattered in this predominantly natural landscape. Visitor access and use of parts of this zone may be closely controlled to protect significant places. 158
- The Dispersed Use Zone covers most of the western side of the Lands, including almost all of the area west of the Byngnano Range as well as the existing Historic Site and Ngalkirka (the Amphitheatre). 159



We will continue to manage the Dispersed Use Zone as it is at present.	160
The Remote Zone will be managed as a limited access and minimal development area where roads/management trails, facilities and activities are extremely limited and are found within a natural setting that is mostly inaccessible.	161
The Remote Zone will be mostly inaccessible where natural processes dominate. Developments in this zone will be restricted to those required for major management purposes only or low-key works for cultural management purposes.	162
The above zones may be changed by an amendment to the plan of management.	163

The Wilderness Area

Authorised Wiimpatja will continue to have vehicle use along existing management trails within the Wilderness Area for cultural purposes and will not be permitted to drive off these trails.	165
As part of explaining cultural connection with the Lands we will explain to visitors our prior and continuing association with those areas now declared as wilderness and explain our view of the concept of “wilderness”.	166
The Board will maintain management trails in the Wilderness Area that are required for cultural purposes or management and scientific research. Existing management trails in the Wilderness Area that are not required for these purposes will be closed and rehabilitated.	167
In principle, the neighbour use of Cymbric Vale track is inconsistent with the Wilderness Act, therefore the Board will seek variation to the boundaries of the Wilderness Area to exclude Cymbric Vale track.	168
We will continue to allow backpack walking and registered camping in the Wilderness Area.	169
We will retain the existing very low-key Mutawintji Gorge and Split Rocks walking track markers to ensure people visiting these areas do not get lost.	170

Parri Yaamari. Kulpalaana Kiirrantu

The Visitor Centre on the entry road will be retained as the first contact and information point for visitors arriving at the Lands. The displays will be upgraded to provide a welcome to Mutawintji Lands and clearly explain the joint management arrangement in place. Other themes will also be addressed.	172
The Visitor Centre will also serve as a meeting place for guided tours through the Lands and will also contain a registration system for visitors going into the Wilderness Area.	173



The existing Mutawintji Historic Site will continue to be an area where visitors can go as part of a guided tour.	174
We will work with any approved commercial operators to ensure: tours are not being taken, without agreement, through the Historic Site at the same time as Wiimpatja led tours; that tours stay on the walking tracks; and the correct information is given.	175
Wiimpatja will be involved in preparing any new or upgraded visitor information about the Historic Site and the Cultural Centre, as well as visitor information presented at the Visitor Centre and elsewhere.	176
We will investigate the walking tracks and barriers and upgrade if necessary, to assist visitors appreciate and respect the spiritual value of the Historic Site for Wiimpatja.	177
The Board will keep up-to-date about the best ways to manage visitors at various sites.	178
The existing Cultural Centre will be retained and improved so it is more effective in presenting the values of the Historic Site and its importance to Wiimpatja.	179
The Board will ensure some native vegetation is planted and landscaping near the Cultural Centre is carried out to help hide these buildings from visitors when they are at the overhang and engraving sites.	180
The Board will ensure the Historic Site is visited by staff or tour guides on a regular basis to ensure access and this area is protected and well presented.	181
A new “heavy camping area” for caravans, buses, large groups of campers, and people camping near their cars with lots of gear will be built just north of the Visitor Centre - and outside of the more culturally sensitive Homestead Valley area.	182
A new “light camping area” for people using swags or small tents, and with less gear, will be built in the small valley to the north-west of existing Homestead Creek Camping Area.	183
The existing Homestead Creek Camping and Picnic Area will be modified and its capacity reduced. The area will rehabilitated with screening vegetation planted so it reduces visibility from the main access road.	184
Sustainable design, development and management of these camping areas to reduce their impact on the Lands and the wider environment will be considered.	185



Each camping area will have its own low water use toilets and showers. Gas barbecues will be placed in each camping area for visitors to share. A small amount of firewood will be provided for people to use in communal fire pits. Electricity will not be available for individual camping spots or visitor's private use.	186
Camping areas will be kept clean and well maintained for visitor's enjoyment. Camping areas or parts of camping areas may be closed to give these areas time to regenerate and reduce the maintenance workload.	186
Homestead Creek Day Use Area will be managed as a picnic area and starting point for walks into Homestead Creek Gorge.	188
The Mutawintji Gorge area will continue to be managed for visitors as a place to go on longer half-day to full-day walks, sightseeing and bush picnics.	189
We will provide interpretative signs on Old Coach Road Drive and at Wana Karnu car park.	190
We will review the siting and condition of existing walking tracks. One additional short walk to Wana Karnu may be developed within the Dispersed Use Zone.	191
During the life of this plan we will investigate providing walks that take a full day or more.	192
Registration for backpack walking and camping in the Wilderness Area will continue so we know when people are in the Wilderness Area and when they expect to leave.	193
Providing opportunities for four-wheel drive tours in the area between the Old Coach Road Day Use Area and the South Byngnano Tank will be investigated.	194
An impressive western entrance to the Lands at the main entrance grid will be provided to give visitors a sense of arrival into a special place that is jointly managed with the Aboriginal owners.	195
Before a decision is made on the exact place for visitor facilities, a careful planning process will be implemented.	196
Management will check the condition of existing visitor facilities and maintain and upgrade these to ensure they are attractive and pleasant for visitor's use.	197
Visitors will be encouraged to, take their rubbish with them when they leave. Central rubbish collection points, with recycling facilities, will continue to be provided as part of the larger visitor use areas.	198



The Board will prepare and promote respectful behaviour guidelines for on-site and intending visitors. All Wiimpatja will lead by example and abide by these standards.	199
Visitors will be discouraged from swimming in the rock holes, waterholes and tanks found across the Lands during periods when water quality can be expected to be poor and for safety reasons.	200
We will keep track of the number of visitor and areas visited. Bi-annual objective visitor surveys will be conducted.	206



9. Glossary and Definitions

Aboriginal owners – all those persons, from time to time, listed on the Register of Aboriginal owners of the Lands (pursuant to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* and held by the Office of the Registrar) because of their cultural association with the cultural area and their descent from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the cultural area.

Aboriginal cultural item – means "Aboriginal object" as defined in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Biodiversity – the number and variety of ecosystems, plants, animals and other organisms (including the genes they contain) living within a particular geographical area.

Bioregions – relatively large land areas characterised by broad landscape-scale natural features and environmental processes that influence the functions of entire ecosystems, capturing the large-scale biophysical patterns at a national scale.

Board – the Mutawintji Board of Management.

Bush camps – simple undeveloped temporary camping places, with no facilities and generally only big enough for two or three families, located in the Dispersed Use Zone and Remote Zones that may be used (with the Board's approval) from time-to-time by members of approved family groups and their guests, as well as Wiimpatja with an association with the Lands and their dependants.

Colonisation - a process by which a different system of government is established by one nation over another group of peoples; the establishment of colonies; "the British colonisation of Australia".

Community Development Area – an area set aside for the provision of community and associated facilities for use by families associated with the Lands and their guests.

Compensation - the rent amount negotiated by the parties to the lease that is paid to the Board to compensate the Land Council for the fact that the Land Council does not have the full use and enjoyment of the Lands.

Conservation area – those lands managed for the purpose of protecting natural and cultural values and managed under the auspices of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1979*. Examples include national parks, historic sites, nature reserves and state conservation areas.



Conservation areas may also include those private lands containing important natural or cultural values which are subject to a conservation agreement made with the Minister responsible for the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and which result in a conservation covenant being registered on the title of those lands in perpetuity.

Country - homeland, not necessarily referring to a geographical place. It is all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations and ancestry associated with that area and its features.

Cultural association – an association with the Lands derived from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal occupants of the Lands.

Cultural area – an area determined to be associated with the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal occupants of the Lands.

Cultural landscape – the location, linkages and patterns of important places and connections within a geographic area (such as across far western NSW).

Culture – the beliefs, values and rules for living that is distinctive to a particular human group. Culture is passed down the generations in the complex of relationships, knowledges, languages, social organisations and life experiences that bind diverse individuals and groups together. Culture is a living process. It changes over time to reflect the changed environments and social interactions of people living together (Atkinson 2002).

Director-General – Director-General or other Chief Executive of the agency that includes the National Parks and Wildlife Service or any person acting in that position or exercising, pursuant to delegation, from time to time, any of the powers authorities duties or functions of the Director-General.

EPBC Act - Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Gazettal – the way an area of land is legally identified and set aside as a national park or other protected area, including by way of a conservation agreement.

Goat-mesh – an expanded mesh that deters goat entry due to its grid size relative to goats' hooves.

Homestead Precinct – the general area of the Lands around the site of the previous Mootwingee Homesteads and adjacent creek, now including the depot complex, Homestead Creek Camping Area, Homestead Creek Day Use Area, staff housing and supporting facilities.

IAA - Interpretation Australia Association, a not-for profit national membership-based organization dedicated to the advancement of the profession of cultural and natural heritage interpretation.



Interpretation – the ways of telling people about the features and values of a place which help them understand more about their environment, cultures and themselves – usually done by guides, displays, on-site signs, brochures, electronic media, performances, publications and so on.

Land Council – Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Land Rights Act or **Aboriginal Land Rights Act** – the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

Land System – largely similar landscape areas with discernable patterns or characteristic geology, landforms, soils, drainage and vegetation. Described across western NSW (Walker 1991).

Lands or **The Lands** – Mutawintji National Park, Mutawintji Historic Site and the Mutawintji Nature Reserve or any lands subsequently acquired by the Minister and/or the Land Council in association with the Board.

Lease – the Lease from the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council to the Minister for the Environment, signed on 4 September 1998.

Minister – the Minister responsible for administration of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

MLALC – Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Mutawintji Heritage Tours – a business established by Wiimpatja, under the auspices of the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council, to offer guided tours and other cultural services to visitors to the Lands.

Mutawintji Lands or **Mutawintji** – Mutawintji National Park, Mutawintji Historic Site and the Mutawintji Nature Reserve or any lands subsequently acquired by the Minister and/or the Land Council in association with the Board - as per *Lands* above).

Ngalkirrka – the Ampitheatre (this is referred to in the document i.e. written as Ngalkirrka (Ampitheatre)).

NPW Act - *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

NPW Regulation – *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009*.

NPWS – the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, part of the OEH.

Other associated Wiimpatja – an Aboriginal person, usually from a neighbouring culturally associated group, who has come to be acknowledged by the Aboriginal owners (and recognised by the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council) as having an association with the Lands because of their individual knowledge, association and responsibility (often inherited from previous generations) for the area and its



owners, but who is not descended from the original Aboriginal occupants of the cultural area.

OEH – Office of Environment and Heritage. Formerly DECC, DECCW and encompasses NPWS.

Other Aboriginal people – Aboriginal people who are not directly or closely associated with the Mutawintji Lands or owners.

Paakantji - the collective name often used for the language and dialects of a large area of far-western NSW. Also known as Wiimpatja Parlku. This is the Aboriginal language used in this plan of management.

PAS - the Priorities Action Statement introduced in 2007 under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* to provide strategies and priority actions for the recovery of threatened species of plants and animals and manage the threats they face.

Plan or This Plan – the Mutawintji Lands Plan of Management.

Recovery plan – a document outlining the management, research and other actions needed to stop the decline and support the recovery of threatened flora or fauna species.

Rent – an amount paid annually to the Board by the Minister, being the amount negotiated by the parties to the lease that is calculated to compensate the Land Council for the fact that the Land Council does not have the full use and enjoyment of the Lands.

Repatriation – returning cultural material, including artefacts and human remains, to Country or the custodianship of appropriate Aboriginal People.

Sustainability – the ability for something to be carried on (sustained) without damaging the long-term health and integrity of natural and cultural environments while providing for present and future cultural, social and/or economic well-being.

Threat Abatement Plan – a document that examines the impacts of a threat, or threatening process, on plants, animals and natural systems and sets out the management actions necessary to reduce (or abate) these threats.

Threatened Species – a plant or animal species listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1997*, as either endangered (schedule 1) or vulnerable (schedule 2).

Thunka – cemetery.

TSC Act – NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

Unincorporated Area – that area of far western NSW not covered by a local government authority.



Wana Karnu – Boomerang Rock.

Wangarru – yellow-footed rock-wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus*).

We – the Mutawintji Board of Management.

Wiimpatja – Aboriginal; an Aboriginal person; Aboriginal people.

Wiimpatja intellectual property rights – Aboriginal people's rights to the knowledge, cultural practices and systems that have been developed, nurtured refined and passed on by Aboriginal people as part of expressing and maintaining their cultural identity. Including their right to benefit – commercially, personally and as a community from these.

Wilderness – a non-Aboriginal idea that an area of Australia was not occupied, used or managed by human beings and has been least modified by modern technological society and now remains in an essentially natural state (most Wiimpatja do not agree with the idea of wilderness).

Wilderness Area – an area declared to be a wilderness area pursuant to the NPW Act or pursuant to the provisions of the *Wilderness Act 1987*.

Yaparra – a camp or camping area.

Yurntaana – Mt Wright. This name was told in 1957 by Walter Newton to Jeremy Beckett who transcribed it as junda-ano. It seems to be the Malyangapa or Watikali word for stomach with a pronoun suffix added. The Wiimpatja Parlku equivalent would be Kuntuana (his guts).

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