DRAFT GUNAIKURNAI AND VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN

PART 2(f)

GIPPSLAND LAKES RESERVE AT RAYMOND ISLAND
TATUNGALUNG COUNTRY
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised this document may contain images, names, quotes and other references of deceased people.

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Your submission is invited on this plan

This draft Gunaikurnai-Victorian Government Joint Management Plan is now released for public comment. Interested individuals, community organisations, groups and agencies are invited to make written submissions by 15 December 2017.

Submissions can be:

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All submissions will be carefully considered and taken into account when the final joint management plan is being prepared for approval. The names of people and groups making submissions will be published in the final plan unless comments are marked as CONFIDENTIAL when submitted. After publication of the approved plan, copies of all submissions will be made available for public inspection, unless marked CONFIDENTIAL.

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Copies of this draft plan may be downloaded from the GKTOLMB website www.gunaikurnai.com.au or obtained from GKTOLMB, 574 Main Street, Bairnsdale.

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Author’s note

The authors of this document acknowledge that there are differing views about the meaning and spelling of some Gunaikurnai words, and recognise that these may change in the future. The same applies to the telling and meaning of Gunaikurnai mythological stories. Where Gunaikurnai language or stories are used in this plan, the spelling or story contained in the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation Whole of Country Plan (2015) has been adopted for the purpose of consistency.

Acknowledgements

This draft plan was prepared with assistance from Chris Halstead and Penny Spoelder of TRC Tourism, Simon Faivel and Jonathan Finighan of SVA Consulting, and Brian Doolan of Montane Planning, with input from GKTOLMB members and staff, and partner organisations Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

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The photos on the front and back cover of the draft JMP part 1 were kindly supplied by Ruth Fitz Clarence.
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GIPPSLAND LAKES RESERVE AT RAYMOND ISLAND
TATUNGALUNG COUNTRY

"Gunaikurnai camped on this Island, which they called Gragin ... it was particularly important for collecting swan eggs, and evidence of scar trees, burial sites and artefact scatters have been found in the area. It is in a strategic location in the lagoon system, providing a line of sight to many of the other important places on the water. Our old people would have used this place to keep an eye on what was going on in the surrounding area.

Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan, GLaWAC 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BASIS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In a 2010 Native Title Determination, the Federal Court recognised that the Gunaikurnai hold native title rights over much of Gippsland.

At the same time, the Victorian Government took additional steps to recognise Gunaikurnai peoples’ traditional rights and ownership and entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic) with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. The Recognition Statement from the RSA is reproduced in full in Part 1 of this plan.

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) is the ‘traditional owner group entity’ for the purposes of the RSA. GLaWAC is also the Prescribed Body Corporate for the purposes of the Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth) and the Registered Aboriginal Party for the area for the purposes of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

As part of the RSA, the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island and another nine parks and reserves have been, or are in the process of being, granted to the Gunaikurnai as ‘Aboriginal Title’ by the Victorian Government.

These Aboriginal Title areas are to be jointly managed by Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government. The Aboriginal Title grant is subject to the Gunaikurnai giving the State the right to occupy, use, control and manage the land for the same purpose as applied immediately before the grant. In the case of the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island, the land continues to be managed as a public purposes reserve for conservation, education and recreation under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act.

This draft management plan for the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is prepared under Section 82 of the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 (Vic) and the provisions of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement 2010. It is consistent with the objects and requirements of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 (Vic.) and the requirements of the regulations made under that Act.

As these Aboriginal Title areas are within the area covered by the 2010 Determination and the RSA, the rights of the Gunaikurnai to undertake traditional activities apply to the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island and the other nine Joint Management parks and reserves. Existing rights and interests in the park, held by others, are not affected by the Agreement, but remain subject to management policies and regulation.

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) has been established in accordance with the RSA between GLaWAC and the State with the statutory objective of enabling the knowledge and

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1 Additional legislation and policies which have been considered in the preparation of the Management Plan are listed in Appendix 4 of Part 1 of the JMP.
culture of the Gunaikurnai to be recognised in the management of the ten Aboriginal Title areas, including the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.

It is also responsible for preparing this management plan jointly with GLaWAC, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria as joint operational manager of the park.

There have been few opportunities in the past for Gunaikurnai to participate in the decision-making and management of public land. Through this management plan, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government seek to:

- ensure that the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is well-managed, its values and assets are protected and conserved, and the statutory requirements for park management are fulfilled, through an equitable partnership between the Victorian Government and GLAWAC;
- increase opportunities for Gunaikurnai people to connect with Country, foster employment and economic development opportunities and build their capacity and skills to take a central role in joint management with the other management partners;
- benefit the Gunaikurnai and the State, by recognising, valuing, promoting and incorporating Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge, skills and decision-making into the park.

The reserve is part of the 58,800 ha Gippsland Lakes Site of International Significance listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (known as the Ramsar Convention) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan provides direction for the site and is co-ordinated by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) on behalf of regional agency partners (West Gippsland CMA, DELWP, Parks Victoria, and GLaWAC).

The Victorian Government is committed to conserving habitats of birds listed in the Japan-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement 1974 (JAMBA), the China-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement 1987 (CAMBA), the Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement 2006 (ROKAMBA) and the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Several listed species under these agreements regularly use Lake King and Lake Victoria.

1.2 HOW TO READ THE PLAN

This plan provides a description of joint management strategies and actions that are specific to Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island. The following sections provide:

- a description of values, uses and threats relating to the land, water and heritage of the reserve, and goals and strategies to protect and conserve those values;
- a description of Traditional Owner, visitor and community connections to the reserve and their uses and activities; and goals and strategies for managing and enhancing those connections and uses;
- identification of government and community relationships and partnerships that are key to managing the Reserve; and
- an integrated statement of the actions that will be undertaken over the next 10 years to achieve the goals and implement the strategies described in the plan.

In addition to the specific actions for Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island in this plan, the strategic initiatives described in Part 1 of the Joint Management Plan may include actions that relate to Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island.

1.3 THE RESERVE

The Gippsland Lakes Reserve covers 215 hectares of Raymond Island.

The island is known by Gunaikurnai as Gragin (meaning ‘quartz’) or Bunjil Baul (meaning ‘Mister Island’), a men’s initiation place.

The island is approximately 6.4 kilometres long and 1.8 kilometres at its widest point and is separated by a narrow channel from Paynesville.

The reserve makes up approximately one third of the Island’s area, located in the southern and eastern portion of the island and in a wetland area towards the north-east corner of the island.
Prior to the grant of Aboriginal Title, the reserve was set aside for public purposes comprising conservation, education and recreation. Around 540 people reside permanently in residential areas and farms on the Island.²

² ABS (2011) Census
2. THE GIPPSLAND LAKES RESERVE AT RAYMOND ISLAND UNDER JOINT MANAGEMENT

The Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is located on the Country of the Tatungalung clan.

The *Gunaikurnai Whole of country plan* sets out the following management priorities for the reserve:

- Looking into the possibility of establishing an Indigenous Protected Area to help maintain the reserve’s good condition
- Looking into buying strategic parcels of land to reconnect and bring back the forest, investigating opportunities with the Indigenous Land Corporation and other funding mechanisms
- Formally identifying and protecting burial sites
- Renaming streets with Gunaikurnai names and sharing information about our traditional past, to balance the settler perspective of history
- Undertaking more cultural surveys to get a better picture of what happened on the Island.

While recognising these priorities, this plan sets out actions that are consistent with and limited to the terms of the 2010 Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

Raymond Island has an active residential community which is very engaged in the management of the reserve and the island’s environment.

The land and water areas of much of the reserve are less accessible and prominent than the other jointly managed parks and reserves, but the presence of koalas attracts significant numbers of visitors including international tourists.

Under joint management there is an opportunity for the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community groups, local residents and other government organisations to work closely to maintain and enhance the important natural values of the reserve.

The proximity of the reserve and its small size presents an opportunity for Gunaikurnai to demonstrate their capacity as joint managers and develop a strong relationship with the local community and visitors to the reserve.

The popularity of the island presents opportunities to present an enhanced and broader tourism experience through the development of a formalised walking track network, guided koala-spotting walks and cultural activities.
3. ZONING

A zoning scheme has been developed to provide a geographic framework to manage the area.

These zones will:

- communicate to the community and stakeholders which management aims have priority in different parts of the area;
- indicate the types and levels of use allowed;
- assist in minimising conflicts between uses, or between those and the protection of conservation values;
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and use proposals.

Two management zones and one overlay apply to the reserve (Map 1). Zones describe the primary management priority for a designated part of the park.

Overlays provide additional management direction where a specified value needs to be protected and conserved, or a variation is required to the activities that are allowed in the zone. The description and purpose of each zone and overlay is given in Table 1 and the locations are shown on Map 1.

In summary, the northern shore of the Island and the small wetland complex at the north-eastern end of island are zoned as ‘Conservation Zone’. This provides for minimal disturbance in the significant vegetation classes and waterbird habitats in these areas including Coastal saltmarsh, Swamp scrub and Plains grassy woodland.

Remaining areas of the Island including the ‘Koala walk’ area near the residential zone, and the Gravelly Point visitor site, are zoned as ‘Conservation and Recreation zone’. The location of the zones largely reflects environmental and recreational values based on existing knowledge. Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values in the park are not well documented and need to be systematically surveyed and mapped. The zoning scheme includes provision for a future ‘Cultural Values Overlay’ which would be applied through a formal variation to the plan, incorporating the outcomes of the cultural mapping project when completed.

Implementation of this overlay may require amendment of the description or provisions of the zones, and integration with Aboriginal Heritage Act and Heritage Act provisions to ensure compatibility.

Under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Victoria)* natural resource agreements can authorise activities such as the hunting of wildlife and game, fishing, and the gathering of flora and forest produce. No agreement over the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island is currently in place but any future agreement may require variation to the zoning scheme and provisions of this management plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Description and purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Zone</td>
<td>Areas of high natural value including land, water and ecological values. Recreation and nature-based tourism are allowed subject to close management to ensure minimal impact and disturbance of natural values. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; limited visitor facilities are provided, and are dispersed and small-scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation and Recreation Zone</td>
<td>Areas where the management emphasis is on protection of land, water, ecological and cultural values while encouraging dispersed recreation and nature-based tourism. Low-impact recreation activities are allowed; dispersed, small-scale facilities are provided, without significant impact on natural processes and landscape character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Values Overlay (future)</td>
<td>Areas where the extent, nature or significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage and/or historic heritage is high. Specific protections and restrictions on use and activities may be applied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Management Zones and Overlays
4. CARING FOR COUNTRY

4.1 GUNAIKURNAI CULTURAL HERITAGE

Gunaikurnai lived and camped on Gragin, known as Raymond Island (also known as Bunjil Baul or ‘Mr Island’ as a men’s initiation place) for thousands of years.

The name Gragin means quartz and is part of Tatungalung Country.

The Island is in a strategic position in the lagoon system and provided an important line of sight to many other important places on the water.

The waters of the Island were and remain important to Gunaikurnai for fishing, collecting mussels, catching eels, hunting animals, collecting swan eggs, and gathering of various plants for food and medicine.

The foreshore and forests are rich with materials for basket weaving and canoe manufacture and the island contains a number of archaeological sites.

The Gunaikurnai cultural values of the reserve have not been systematically surveyed and mapped but key values include:

- artefact scatters containing remains of weapons and tool-making activity
- scarred trees where bark was removed for use in the manufacture of canoes and shields
- burial sites

Protection of burial sites is particularly important to the Gunaikurnai. These sites, and the human remains they contain, are vulnerable to exposure by wind and coastal erosion and damage by works and visitor activities in the reserve. They need to be inventoried and mapped. Where necessary, rapid rehabilitation of burial sites is needed when they are exposed.

4.2 LAND AND WATER VALUES

There are large areas of native vegetation throughout the Island which provide habitat for a wide range of fauna, although the overall condition of these areas is poor.

Raymond Island is flat and little of the land rises higher than three to four metres above the surrounding lakes. Parts of the northern coast are prone to inundation.

The southern coast has several stretches of attractive narrow sandy beaches. Raymond Island is part of the Gippsland Plains Bioregion.

Much of the island has international recognition as a significant wetland under the Ramsar convention and intergovernmental migratory bird agreements.

The reserve contains Plains grassy woodland and Swamp scrub, which are endangered within the Gippsland Plains Bioregion due to land clearance.

Damp sands herb-rich woodland is listed as vulnerable. Active rehabilitation programs co-ordinated by Landcare have assisted with the revegetation in some areas of the reserve. Table 2 describes the significant vegetation classes in the reserve.
Coastal saltmarsh (2% of the reserve) | Restricted to flats on low energy coastlines subject to the influence of daily inundation and exposure to salt water and poor drainage. It is most extensively developed immediately inland from the major ocean beaches in the Gippsland Lakes area. Ranges from a low succulent herbland to shrubland to rushland and sedgeland. | EPBC listed | Beaded Glasswort (Sarcocornia quinqueflora) Australian Salt-grass (Distichlis distichophylla) Creeping Brookweed (Samolus repens) |

Plains grassy woodland (9% of the reserve) | An open, eucalypt woodland to 15 m tall occurring on a number of geologies and soil types. Occupies poorly drained, fertile soils on flat or gently undulating plains at low elevations. The understorey consists of a few sparse shrubs over a grassy and herbaceous ground layer. | Endangered | Gippsland Red-gum (Eucalyptus tereticornis ssp. Mediana) |

Swamp scrub (8% of the reserve) | Closed scrub to 8 m tall at low elevations on alluvial deposits along streams or on poorly drained sites with higher nutrient availability. The EVC is dominated by Melaleuca. Occasional emergent eucalypts may be present. Where light penetrates to ground level, a moss-lichen-liverwort or herbaceous ground cover is often present. Dry variants have a grassy/herbaceous ground layer. | Endangered | Swamp Paperbark (Melaleuca ericifolia) Woolly Tea-tree (Leptospermum lanigerum) |

Damp sands herb-rich woodland (62% of the reserve) | Woodland with a grassy, heathy or bracken-dominated understorey and a ground layer rich in herbs, grasses, and orchids. Occurs mainly on flat or undulating areas on moderately fertile, relatively well drained, deep sand or sandy loam. | Vulnerable | Coast Manna Gum (Eucalyptus viminalis subsp. Pryoriana) Shining Peppermint (Eucalyptus willists) |

Table 2 Significant Ecological Vegetation Classes in the Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island

Koalas were introduced to the Island in 1953 and the population grew significantly.

Koala densities soon became unsustainable, as the koalas’ source of food, largely Manna gums, became over-grazed.

This defoliation causes the trees to die, leading to mass starvation of the koala population. Since then, there has been active management of the population to protect the welfare of the koalas and their habitat.

Koalas are managed by DELWP with support from the other joint management delivery partners and in association with wildlife groups in accordance with Victoria’s Koala Management Strategy (DSE 2004).

Rare or threatened species

The natural environment of Raymond Island and the surrounding waters provide habitat for a wide range of fauna species.

Lake King, to the north, and Lake Victoria, to the south, are part of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site. The reserve is home to 66 flora species and 191 fauna species of which five are listed as rare, vulnerable, or endangered.

Species for which previous records exist include the Green and Golden bell frog and Growling grass frog, however surveys undertaken in recently have not confirmed their presence. Significant orchid species including the rare Robust Spider Orchid (Caladenia valida) are also present in the reserve.
### Scientific Name | Common Name | Victorian Advisory List | Relevant Legislation | FFG Act Action Statement or Recovery Plan
---|---|---|---|---
*Caladenia valida* | Robust Spider-orchid | Endangered | FFG Act* |
*Anas rhynchos* | Australasian Shoveller | Vulnerable | FFG Act |
*Hydroprogne caspia* | Caspian Tern | Near threatened | FFG Act |
*Sterna striata* | White-fronted Tern | Near threatened | FFG Act |
*Haliaeetus leucogaster* | White-bellied Sea-Eagle | Vulnerable | FFG Act | No. 60 |
*Gallinago hardwickii* | Latham’s Snipe | Near threatened | FFG Act |
*Larus pacificus p.* | Pacific Gull | Near threatened | FFG Act |
*Nycticorax caledonicus hillii* | Nankeen Night Heron | Near threatened | FFG Act |

* Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act

Table 3 Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island - Rare or Threatened Species

### Landscape and Catchment Context

The catchment surrounding the reserve is one of the most complex natural landscapes in Victoria.

The Gippsland Lakes receive water from six major rivers, are subject to dynamic hydrological and tidal processes and are surrounded by a complex mix of land uses including agriculture, fisheries, urban development, and tourism.

Several key plans co-ordinate the natural resource management and development across land categories and agencies within the catchment including the *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy*, the *Gippsland Lakes Priorities Plan*, the *Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan* and the *Gippsland Lakes Sustainable Boating Plan 2016-2018*.

The Regional Catchment Strategy sets out the following objectives for the ‘Gippsland Lakes and Hinterland’ landscape which includes the reserve:

- targeted improvement of the condition, security, diversity and connectivity of native vegetation
- targeted improvement of the status of threatened species and communities
- targeted improvement of the water quality and freshwater flow regime of the Gippsland Lakes
- targeted provision of appropriate freshwater and salinity regimes for selected fringing wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes
- increased sustainability of land use, with development in appropriate nodes along the Gippsland Lakes coastline
- plan for adaptation of Gippsland Lakes communities to changing conditions along the coastline.

### 4.3 HISTORIC HERITAGE

The first pastoral lease on the island was taken up in 1856.

The first township subdivision occurred in 1884 and the vehicular ferry service commenced in 1888.

Some of the Island was settled as a Village Settlement Scheme during the 1890s depression.

Cattle leases, small holdings and fishing were the major land uses at the time. The produce from these enterprises was picked up by one of the steamers travelling back and forth daily between Sale and Lakes Entrance.

The island was re-discovered after World War II as a place for week-end shacks and holiday retreats.
4.4 THREATS TO COUNTRY AND HERITAGE

The most recent assessments of the reserve’s native vegetation have found that there has been significant impact from extensive dieback and overgrazing.

Bracken and Saw banksia are now dominant in previous areas of open grassy woodland and manna gum grassy woodland.

Extensive revegetation has been undertaken in partnership with Landcare and these programs significantly contribute to the restoration of the Island’s natural condition.

Foreshore erosion, pest plants and animals, unmanaged visitor access and inappropriate development have been identified as impacting on the large number of significant Gunaikurnai cultural locations in and around the reserve including sites which contain artefacts, and places of spiritual and or cultural significance.

Invasive plants and animals

Priority invasive plant and animal threats that have been identified for Raymond Island (Ethos 2015) include:

- the presence of highly invasive weed species including Dolichos pea and other garden escapes;
- the presence of Western Australian Bluebell creeper as a new and emerging species in the zone;
- threats posed by grassy weeds on margins and in residential areas (as a source), particularly to the threatened Gippsland red gum grassy woodland and associated native grassland;
- increased browsing pressure from overabundant native wildlife resulting in tree death;
- impacts of hog deer including pugging of wetlands and low-lying areas and browsing of coastal vegetation.

Weeds have the potential to affect the significant vegetation communities and some of the reserve’s important habitats, Bridal Creeper (Asparagus asparagoides), Dolichos Pea (Dipogon lignosus) and Myrtle-leaf Milkwort (Polygala myrtifolia) as well as garden escapees such as Agapanthus, Kangaroo paw (Anigozanthus spp.) and Bluebell creeper (Billardiera heterophylla) are displacing native vegetation species, reducing diversity of native wetland flora and reducing habitat for water birds such as nesting terns.

Austral bracken is a significant coloniser of areas where overstorey trees have died. The challenge is to maintain the relatively intact nature of the vegetation within the reserve and protect it from new introductions.

Goats, pigs and other livestock are farmed on the Island near the reserve so there is a continuing risk of stray animals becoming feral in the reserve. Hog deer are also present on the island.

Protection of the Robust spider orchid (Caladenia valida) by fencing out browsing native and feral herbivores has been undertaken in partnership with the Australian National Orchid Society.

Koala population

From the introduction of less than fifty koalas to Raymond Island in 1953, the numbers grew steadily, peaking in 2003 with 605 koalas.

The population size created browsing pressure on the limited area of Manna gum forest habitat.

Management strategies include sterilisation, manna gum revegetation, dog control, koala population monitoring, koala relocation to allow restoration of manna gum woodlands, habitat manipulation – protection of individual trees, health surveillance and community involvement.

Once populations are at sustainable levels ongoing management is needed to ensure that population sizes are maintained to manage overgrazing and disease.

There have been several translocations conducted by DELWP with animals moved to suitable areas north of Bairnsdale where food supplies are available.

Fertility control has also been used to slow down the population growth and to move the management of the koalas away from translocation to controlling the numbers on the island. The sustainable long-term koala population is considered to be between 100 and two hundred animals.
Visitor and public impacts

Managing vehicle access throughout the reserve and around the lake foreshore, particularly on the southern area of the island will be an ongoing challenge to ensure protection of vegetation and prevent erosion.

Fire breaks are used by unauthorised vehicles to access parts of the island creating soil disturbance, dust and other issues

The network of tracks and trails across the island and the unmarked boundaries of the reserve result in unmanaged access to the Island and potential disturbance to sensitive sites.

A number of landholders have cleared native vegetation on foreshore sections of the reserve adjacent to their properties in order to gain better views or water access.

This illegal activity needs to be controlled through enforcement of vegetation clearing regulations.

Climate change

Climate change is a potential intensifier of existing and new threats.

These include changes to hydrology, increased frequency and/or severity of extreme events, changes in vegetation arising from rainfall and evaporation changes.

Climate change and severe weather such as drought and storms can alter freshwater inflows, create shoreline erosion, and impact on cultural sites.

Extensive climate modelling and impact assessments have indicated a likely increase in sea level coupled with an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms in Gippsland Lakes (EGCMA 2015).

Changes such as sea-level rise are likely to be ‘slow-onset’ changes while more extreme events such as storms, floods and bushfires can occur at any time. Potential impacts include physical damage to shorelines, vegetation and assets; as well as increased inundation.

Storm events increase the risk of inundation and physical damage, which can affect native vegetation diversity, threatened species habitat and waterbird feeding.

Shoreline erosion affects the habitat for several threatened species including wading birds. The shoreline contains stabilising plants that protect the shoreline from erosion and contribute to important fish breeding and nursery areas.

Fire management

There have been no bushfires in the reserve since the 1990s when a fire burned approximately 20 hectares of the reserve northeast of Eleventh Parade in 1992.

Several planned burns were undertaken in 2009 and 2011 in the western section of the reserve, closest to the main residential area of the island. Fire management on the Island is a matter of active debate within the local community.

The Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land (DEPI 2012) provides the framework for public land fire management across the State. Fire management on public land in non-urban areas is the responsibility of DELWP.

The Alpine-Greater Gippsland Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (DELWP 2015) sets the direction for fire management in the Reserve areas of Raymond Island.

The reserve is zoned ‘Landscape management zone’. Within this zone, planned burning is used for three broad aims: bushfire protection outcomes by reducing the overall fuel and bushfire hazard in the landscape; ecological resilience through appropriate fire regimes; management of the land for particular values including forest regeneration and protection of water catchments at a landscape level. Other fuel reduction methods will be used within this zone as appropriate.

The detailed treatment of fuel risks and ecological fire requirements are considered in DELWP’s Fire operations plan process.
The natural, cultural, and recreational values identified and prioritised in this plan need to inform the Fire operations plan process so that burning and other fuel treatments are prioritised or modified where necessary.

In particular, the planned burning strategy for the reserve needs to be focused on identifying areas of country that require burning and working with DELWP fire management to prioritise burning in these locations.

**Changes to hydrology**

At the time of European settlement, the Gippsland Lakes were linked to the sea by an intermittent entrance.

Sand deposition closed the entrance during low river-flow until high river-flow raised the level of the Lakes and breached the sand barrier.

An artificial entrance was opened in 1889, near Lakes Entrance, to improve boat access into and out of the lakes system. This resulted in reduced fluctuations and a general lowering of the Lakes’ levels, thereby changing the flooding regime of the bordering swamps.

The salinity of the water in the lakes also increased, causing extensive dieback of common reed beds along the shorelines. Without the protection of the reed beds, shoreline erosion became extensive and widespread.

A significant amount of management focus and action is now directed towards dealing with shoreline erosion. Groynes have been established on some sections of shoreline in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and there are calls to construct more groynes in areas where private land is eroding.

The construction of groynes is expensive and may create consequential erosion or other effects elsewhere along a shore. Decisions regarding groynes or other shoreline infrastructure generally involve Parks Victoria, East Gippsland Shire Council and the EGCMA as well as affected landholders.

**4.5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THREATS**

Conservation strategies to deal with the key land and water values are described in Table 4.

Values are identified primarily at the level of EVCs and threatened species, using statewide datasets.

It is more practical and effective however, to take conservation action by targeting assets at an intermediate level. For example, controlling weeds or undertaking planned burning to improve the health of an assemblage of ground-cover plants in a particular EVC or part of the area, rather than the EVC as a whole or a single threatened plant species.

An intensive conservation action planning process is required to identify the most critical assets given the present condition of the area and the ecological processes, such as predation or weed invasion, that are operating within it.

The strategies in Table 4 should therefore be further evaluated through a conservation planning process that takes into account their feasibility, impact and priority in the broader landscape.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land/Water/Heritage Values</th>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waterbirds and critical breeding habitat – coastal saltmarsh, shorelines, Swamp scrub</td>
<td>Predation by foxes, cats, and dogs; pig and deer disturbance and browsing; shoreline and Island erosion</td>
<td>Pelicans, Musk duck, Little tern, Fairy tern, White-bellied sea eagle, Black swan</td>
<td>Control predators, feral herbivores and invasive plants. Ensure compliance by visitor with access, navigation, and activity restrictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koala population</td>
<td>Overabundance leading to decline or death of Coastal manna gum forest</td>
<td>Koala numbers, genetic diversity, and health. Condition of Manna gum habitat.</td>
<td>Maintain the koala program, through a collaboration between DELWP and partners, due to the impact on the health of the Island’s vegetation. Monitor numbers and genetic diversity, undertake periodic koala health checks. Seek to reduce population size to a sustainable level through fertility control, relocation and management of diseased animals. Keep the community informed of population status and engage in relation to proposed management actions and maintain opportunities for koala viewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All EVCs</td>
<td>Invasive plants</td>
<td>Dolichos pea and bluebell creeper</td>
<td>Seek to eradicate this species prior to the expansion of the populations during favourable conditions. Control invasive climbers in areas within or adjoining the reserve. Engage with local community members and the East Gippsland Shire Council to encourage residents not to plant invasive species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plains grassy woodland EVC</td>
<td>Predominant EVC, extending over approximately three-quarters of the reserve’s area. Characteristic component of broader community listed as threatened under the FFG Act and endangered under EPBC Act</td>
<td>Grazing by rabbits, weed invasion, firewood collection, overgrowth of shrubs and trees</td>
<td>Maintain extent and enhance condition. Control grazing by rabbits and high impact weeds. Protect hollow-bearing trees and coarse woody debris. Restrict perennial grasses and shrub invasion to promote ground-layer vegetation. Consider targeted low-intensity burning to promote ground-layer species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare or threatened species</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>White-bellied sea eagle, Robust spider orchid</td>
<td>Implement relevant parts of Action statements No. 60, Guidelines and Recovery plans. Investigate the feasibility of re-storing depleted species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunaikurnai cultural heritage values</td>
<td>Cultural sites and intangible heritage have only been partially surveyed and recorded</td>
<td>Cultural survey and mapping</td>
<td>Complete the current GKTOLMB cultural mapping project for the ten jointly managed parks and reserves. Determine required management actions including implementation of a Cultural values overlay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Land, Water and Heritage Conservation Strategies
5. PEOPLE IN THE RESERVE

5.1 TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

Cultural values and practices in the present, as well as the past, are fundamental to Gunaikurnai.

The area provides opportunities for the Gunaikurnai to increase and strengthen their connection to country in an inspiring landscape, characteristic of Country in its original and traditional condition.

Joint management provides a renewed opportunity for Gunaikurnai to hold community gatherings on country, share lore, pass cultural skills and knowledge between generations, and meet cultural obligations to care for country through conservation and restoration work in the area. As far as possible the Gunaikurnai should be the tellers of their own cultural stories.

GLaWAC Joint management ranger team members undertake conservation and maintenance works in the area, co-operatively with Parks Victoria, including koala management and weed control. There is great scope to build capacity and expertise through this program.

In addition to taking a greater role in the management and conservation of the area, Gunaikurnai are seeking opportunities to gather in the area, pass on lore and cultural knowledge between generations and undertake traditional practices.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE RESERVE

The reserve is an important area for recreation by Raymond Island residents who walk, ride and picnic in the reserve.

The Reserve has a network of roads and vehicle tracks that have developed historically with little planning. Recreational boats on Lake Victoria and Lake King pull on to the shoreline and jetties fringing the reserve. The only designated visitor site is at Gravelly Point which has toilets and a picnic area.

Visitors including international tourists are attracted for the opportunity to see koalas and several tour operators include the location in their itineraries. A walking route using existing roads and tracks in the southwestern area of the reserve has become known as the Koala walk.

The Raymond Island Community Association has undertaken volunteer work to recently upgrade signs and information for visitors along the walk.

Several short four-wheel drive tracks in this area have been closed to public access to reduce disturbance of the koalas and improve the walking and viewing experience. A ‘tuk tuk’ operation provides transport for visitors and this needs to be formalised.

There is a significant opportunity to broaden the experience beyond wildlife to take in indigenous culture and the interpretation of the wider values of Gunaikurnai country, particularly for international visitors. These experiences are likely to continue to be small-scale due to the access constraints of the island and its limited capacity for visitors.

The relatively sheltered waters around the island are very well suited to kayaking or canoeing and there is scope to broaden tour services for these activities. The island is also well suited to easy cycling, and cycles are transported on the ferry at no charge.

There are potential commercial tourism opportunities for Gunaikurnai within these activities. Services provided by East Gippsland Shire Council are integral to visitor use and enjoyment of the island including responsibility for the ferry service, toilets at the ferry landing and responsibility for the first section of the Koala walk.

Management of visitor experiences in the reserve will be based on the goal and strategies in Table 5.
Visitor experiences across the reserve

Goal:
Provide bushland and coastal day visits for a wide range of visitors based on quiet enjoyment and experience of the natural and cultural values of the Reserve supported by low-key facilities and services.

Strategies:
Develop better experiences and services for domestic and international visitors, focused on koala-watching with interpretation and guiding that provide broader Gunaikurnai cultural tourism experiences.

Manage the Reserve’s road and track network to provide practical public access while reducing impacts on natural and cultural values, especially in the Conservation Zone and any future Cultural Values Overlay areas.

Table 5 Visitor Experiences Goal and Strategies

Recreational activities and uses will be managed in accordance with Table 6.

This table does not limit the operation or exercising of Native Title or Traditional Owner rights held by the Gunaikurnai people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Conservation Zone</th>
<th>Conservation and Recreation Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boating – motorised, sailing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating – rafting, canoeing, kayaking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping – designated areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping – dispersed vehicle-based</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping – dispersed other</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campfires – solid fuel</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campfires – liquid or gas fuel stove</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive events</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes with permit, if activity type is allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>Yes, on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks. Not allowed on walking tracks.</td>
<td>Yes, on open public roads and Management Vehicle Only roads and tracks. Not allowed on walking tracks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, on lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Activities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firewood collection</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geocaching</td>
<td>Yes, no excavation allowed.</td>
<td>Yes, no excavation allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Activities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseriding</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orienteering/rogaining</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, subject to permit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnicking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking/hiking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle use (2-wheel and 4-wheel drive, and trail bikes)</td>
<td>Yes, on open public roads – not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads and tracks.</td>
<td>Yes, on open public roads – not allowed on Management Vehicle only roads and tracks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Allowable Recreational Activities by Management Zone

Previous regulations for the reserve under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act lapsed some time ago and have not been renewed by the Victorian Government.
This limits Park Victoria’s capacity to regulate inappropriate activity by visitors and the general public. Regulations under other legislation provide some continuing enforcement powers in relation to dogs, firearms, off-road driving and other activities.
6. WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PARTNERS – GLaWAC, PARKS VICTORIA, DELWP AND GKTOLMB

The area is assigned to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Victoria’s parks and conservation reserves system.

Parks Victoria rangers operate from Bairnsdale. Regional and statewide technical specialist staff provide environmental, cultural and visitor expertise and services to manage the area from other locations in eastern Victoria and Melbourne. Parks Victoria and GLaWAC have an agreement for GLaWAC to undertake works in the reserve, and other jointly managed areas, which has been operating since 2013.

DELWP is responsible for koala management and public land fire management on the Island. The GLaWAC Joint management ranger Team has recently commenced participation in DELWP’s fire management program. The Country Fire Authority is responsible for fire management on private land on the Island.

The GKTOLMB, Parks Victoria, GLaWAC and DELWP have identified the potential for these partnerships to expand and evolve significantly over time through mentoring, training, information sharing and employment and contractual opportunities.

This process should operate in multiple directions with expertise and knowledge of park and public land management being shared by Parks Victoria and DELWP, and cultural and local knowledge and expertise being shared by GLaWAC. The GKTOLMB provides a central forum for coordinating these partnerships, and provides the strategic management directions for the partnerships through this joint management plan.

Other agency partners are important in the management of the reserve. Aboriginal Victoria is the primary Government agency responsible for policy and regulation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority provides significant funding for conservation works on public land in the region and provides strategic co-ordination of catchment restoration investment. It also provides executive personnel and support to the GKTOLMB.

The Gippsland Coastal Board is responsible for implementing the Victorian Coastal Strategy in the Gippsland region to achieve integrated management, conservation, and sustainable use of the coastal zone.

Raymond Island is located within the Shire of East Gippsland. The Shire manages the ferry service to the island and is responsible for local road and traffic management, planning regulation and other municipal functions.

The management of ports and public facilities in the Gippsland Lakes (including public jetties, moorings, navigational aids, dredging, rock walling and beach renourishment) is the responsibility of Gippsland Ports.

6.2 COMMUNITY AND OTHER PARTNERS

The Raymond Island residential community is a critical partner in successfully managing the reserve.

The Raymond Island Community Association co-ordinates community and volunteer projects, and liaison with government agencies.

The Raymond Island Landcare group is active in undertaking revegetation and weed control projects on the Island.

The Raymond Island History group promotes the collection and preservation of historical knowledge about the Island, while a Wildlife carers network provides support for injured and displaced wildlife.

There is strong debate and differing views within the community about certain aspects of reserve management.

In the absence of a management plan for the reserve, planning debates have sometimes developed during the implementation of operational programs by ranger staff.

This should be addressed by facilitated engagement with the community in advance of operational programs.
The Friends of the Gippsland Lakes Parks and Reserves aims to promote the values of parks and reserves and to provide an avenue for the community to participate in their management.

The Bairnsdale and District Field Naturalists Club and the Gippsland Environment Group are both active in surveying and monitoring the natural values and condition of the parks and reserves in the region.

The Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club based at Paynesville is an active user of the waters around the reserve.

6.3 AUTHORISED USES

A number of jetties are located on the shoreline of the reserve.

These are managed variously by Gippsland Ports and East Gippsland Shire Council.

Several tour operators are licensed to visit the reserve, primarily for wildlife tours.

A Uniting Care school camp operates on private land adjacent to the reserve and uses it for bushwalking and birdwatching by agreement.

6.4 RESERVE BOUNDARIES

Opportunities to create more effective boundaries or to negotiate improved access through acquisitions or landholder agreements should be pursued as they arise.

A small patch of endangered Plains grassy woodland is contained within the north-western section of the reserve.

There are areas of Plains grassy woodland on neighbouring private land. Opportunities to acquire this land, or to bring it under conservation management by agreement, should be pursued if they arise.
7. GOALS AND ACTIONS

The following goals and actions should be read in conjunction with goals and strategic initiatives for the joint management area as a whole.

### CARING FOR COUNTRY

**Goal**
The land, water and cultural values of the Gippsland Lakes Reserve on Raymond Island are protected and cared for using the combined values, knowledge and skills of the Gunaikurnai, Parks Victoria, community and partners.

#### LAND AND WATER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI1</td>
<td>Apply the zoning set out in Table 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI2</td>
<td>Protect and conserve the reserve by implementing the land and water conservation strategies detailed in Table 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI3</td>
<td>Increase control of emerging threats including pigs and deer, Bridal creeper, Bluebell creeper, Dolichos pea, Polygala, Agapanthus, and Kangaroo paw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI4</td>
<td>Work with the local government, EGCMA and affected landholders to control shoreline erosion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI5</td>
<td>Work with DELWP to protect the area, assets and communities from bushfire through fuel management strategies that do not adversely affect migratory bird habitat and other fire-sensitive values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI6</td>
<td>Identify areas where planned burning is required to achieve conservation objectives for reserve ecosystems and habitats and seek burns to be programmed and implemented as part of DELWP’s fire operations planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI7</td>
<td>Include the area in the development of a comprehensive conservation action plan aligned to the Gunaikurnai Whole of Country plan and broader Gippsland park landscape conservation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### CULTURAL HERITAGE

| RI8 | Increase the visibility of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the area through Welcome to Country and other appropriate signage, based on the Tatungalung clan at entry points and visitor nodes. Consider establishing a totemic plant or animal emblem for the Reserve. |
| RI9 | Undertake mapping and survey of Gunaikurnai cultural values in the Reserve. |
| RI10 | Explore opportunities with the tourism industry and local community for Gunaikurnai to provide information, interpretation and guiding, particularly to interpret the cultural context of Koalas and the broader natural and cultural values of the Reserve to local, interstate and international visitors. |
| RI11 | Seek to rename places in the Reserve using traditional Gunaikurnai names through the Office of Geographic Name’s Naming Rules. |
| RI12 | Create opportunities for greater Gunaikurnai connection through visiting the Reserve and undertaking community cultural activities |
| RI13 | Incorporate cultural values information into induction processes for contractors and others working in the reserve. |
| RI14 | Ensure Gunaikurnai are included in the assessment and approval of research applications in the Reserve in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. |
| RI15 | Implement the existing provisions of the Native Title Act, and any future Land Use Activity Agreement that is established under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act, relating to Gunaikurnai rights to negotiate long-term and high-impact leases and comment on lower impact authorisations in the park. |
| RI16 | Implement cultural heritage management procedures for the park as agreed between the partners, including incorporation of Aboriginal Heritage Act provisions and any Natural Resource Agreement that may be established for the park under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*. |
## PEOPLE IN THE RESERVE

### Goals

*Gunaikurnai increase their connection with the reserve through management, operations and the opportunity to undertake cultural practices.*

*Visitor & community enjoyment, experience and understanding of the reserve are enhanced by joint management*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI17</td>
<td>Manage visitor experiences in the reserve in accordance with the goal and strategy in Table 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI18</td>
<td>Manage visitor activities in accordance with Table 6. Generally, maintain existing regulatory settings for activities and uses in the reserve, apart from changes set out in this plan (including approved variations) or changes arising from statutory requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI19</td>
<td>Develop an access plan for the reserve in collaboration with the Shire of East Gippsland, local community and tour operators that provides opportunities for koala viewing, walking, cycling and vehicles, and sightseeing and interpretation of the Reserve’s natural and cultural values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI20</td>
<td>Seek to have Crown Land (Reserve) Act regulations for the reserve renewed by the Victorian Government. Maintain education and enforcement of relevant regulations under other Acts to ensure that vegetation clearance, waste and other regulations are complied with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI21</td>
<td>Explore the opportunity for increased tour experiences in the reserve and around the coast including canoe and kayak tours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## WORKING TOGETHER

### Goal

*Joint management of the reserve operates as an effective partnership in which Gunaikurnai build their capacity to play a central role.*

*Community stakeholders support and contribute to the protection and conservation of the reserve.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI22</td>
<td>Build consensus among the joint management partners and the Raymond Island community about management strategies for the reserve, using independent facilitation where necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI23</td>
<td>Collaborate with Destination Gippsland and other tourism and community groups to promote the reserve and improve tourism services for visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI24</td>
<td>Continue the participation and input of Gunaikurnai in DELWP-led koala management programs and increase participation in fire management programs on the Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI25</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for Parks Victoria rangers in the area to interact with other parks and partners in the RSA area to develop their understanding and knowledge of joint management approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI26</td>
<td>Maintain close collaboration with the EGCMA and DELWP biodiversity and fire staff in relation to management programs and priorities in and around the area landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI27</td>
<td>Pursue opportunities to add areas of significant adjacent native vegetation to the reserve, create more effective boundaries or negotiate improved access through acquisitions or landholder agreements as they arise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. PLAN MONITORING AND REVIEW

This plan has effect for 10 years.

It will be formally reviewed and renewed at the end of that period.

The review of part 1 of the plan to be undertaken after five years will be considered and any consequential variations to this plan that are necessary will be made at that time through a consultative process.

Progress in implementing this plan will be tracked and reported using the methods and data described in Section 5 of Part 1 of the Joint Management Plan.
Map 1 Management Zones and Overlays - Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island
Map 2 Ecological Vegetation Classes - Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island
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