

GUNAIKURNAI

Traditional Owner Land Management Board

MEDIA RELEASE

15 October 2015

Parks plan being developed

Important changes in the way 10 Gippsland parks and reserves will be managed are currently under discussion across the region. Gunaikurnai community members, along with Parks Victoria, visitors to the parks and other recreational users, are being asked for their input into the Draft Joint Management Plan.

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) and the State are working with a project team to develop the plan, which will define the shared management of the parks between the State Government and Gunaikurnai people. It will be available for public review in 2016.

The plan focuses on the 10 parks and reserves over which the Gunaikurnai were granted Aboriginal title in October 2010: Tarra Bulga National Park, Lake Tyers State Park, Mitchell River National Park, Buchan Caves Reserve, Lakes National Park, Gippsland Lakes Reserve at Raymond Island, Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, Corringale Foreshore Reserve, The Knob Reserve and New Guinea Cave (a small area within the Snowy River National Park).

The plan will encourage mutual respect, combining Gunaikurnai knowledge and culture with the expertise of existing State land, coastal, forest and marine management agencies. The intention is for Gunaikurnai people to have a greater say in the conservation of natural values in the parks.

Joint management will create opportunities for Gunaikurnai employment in the parks, supporting the development of skills to broaden economic and social outcomes. The parks will still be managed according to the purposes for which they were reserved, with the same level of public access.

Gunaikurnai TOLMB Chair, Grattan Mullett said that, as Gippsland and the Gunaikurnai people were the first in Victoria to begin the planning for transition to joint management, the project brings both a huge responsibility and an opportunity to guide policy for future land agreements in other areas across the state.

“Joint management is a process: arrangements need to be flexible and collaborative, fit with local circumstances, and allow for the ongoing capacity-building of both Traditional Owner and Government parties, and for changes in aspirations over time,” Mr Mullett said.

“It is as much about people, power and relationships as it is about formal structures, management and corporate technicalities.”



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Joint management acknowledges the need to build capacity and skills within the Gunaikurnai community so that, over time, they can become more involved in the conservation and natural resource management of the parks.

Mr Mullett said that joint management would bring together different philosophies and practices for managing Country, including the linking of Aboriginal cultural and natural resource rights to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

“We need to strengthen the links between our social and emotional well-being, access to Traditional Country, Closing the Gap policies and the activities of joint management,” he said.

He said there would be a need to develop new funding models that support joint management into the future, based on a mix of public and private investments in areas such as education, tourism and carbon farming.

The plan will be released for comment and review during early 2016 by Lisa Neville, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

There will be opportunities to provide input into the plan, both at consultation events and online. The project team is calling for wider input into the draft, particularly from any Gunaikurnai community members and interested parties who have yet to be involved. Those interested can find out more information on www.gunaikurnai.com.au and by emailing info@gunaikurnai.com.au.



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