



Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

# Caring for Country

## Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33

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### Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan

March 2024

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# Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure would like to acknowledge the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians, who care for the Cumberland Plain. Others, such as Darkinjung, Wiradjuri, Guringai and Yuin, maintain trade or other obligatory care relationships with the area. We extend that respect to the Deerubbin, Gandangara and Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Councils, who maintain responsibilities towards Country, community and culture.

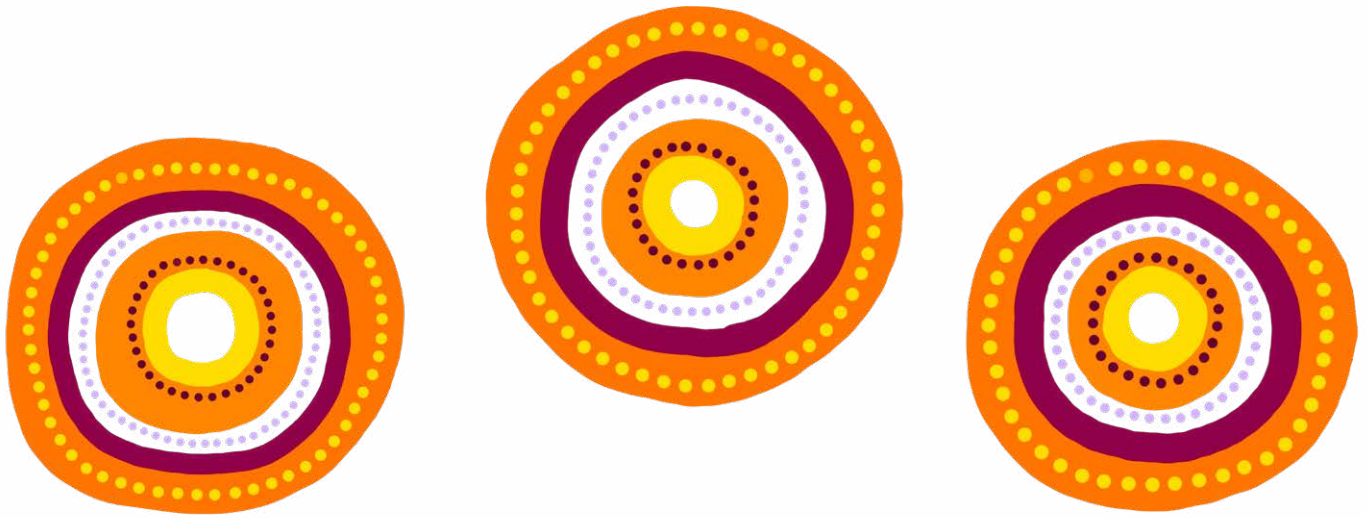
We acknowledge the many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Sydney who call the Cumberland Plain home. Although their lineage may also connect them to other Countries, we acknowledge their deep connection to this Country. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a relationship with the Cumberland Plain.

The development of the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan acknowledges the continuous Aboriginal connection to the land that makes up New South Wales.

This Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33 recognises that, as part of the world’s oldest living culture, Aboriginal people share a unique bond with Country. This significant connection to Country has played an important part in shaping this Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33.

We acknowledge that Country takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape – landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, food, medicine, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings and peoples: past, present, and future.

**Peter Ballard, Indigenous Community Engagement Consultant/GHD/Proud Birpai man with family connection to the Bundjalung people**



## Terminology

While we have worked hard to ensure this document is representative in recognising all who are connected to Country within the CPCP area, we are aware that terminology within this Strategy may not be the preferred choice for some.

For the purpose of this Strategy, we have used the name Aboriginal to recognise the Traditional Custodians of NSW and those with connection to Country within the CPCP area. We have used the names Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for actions that may be relevant for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with connections to the CPCP area.

Within the Strategy we have used the spelling Darug, Dharawal, and Gundungurra to represent the Traditional Custodians of the CPCP area, however, we are aware there are numerous accepted spellings of these names, as they have been passed on verbally for many generations and have been subject to different interpretations.

The spelling of Aboriginal people and other terms that the Aboriginal artist, key collaborators and consultation respondents use may differ from what the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has used throughout this document. The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has retained those spellings as they were submitted.

## Artist statement

This artwork represents the beauty and diversity of Country across Western Sydney and references the various formations on Country including the blue mountains, the waterways and the land. The artwork includes three large circles representing the Traditional Custodians of Country the Darug, Dharawal and Gundugarra communities with the four smaller circles representing the Wiradjuri, Yuin, Darkinjung and Guringgai communities who also have connection to this area.

In the artwork Aboriginal Peoples can be seen coming together to make up the diverse Western Sydney Aboriginal community. Various local plants and animals native to the area are also represented. Finally, the work also encapsulates the long journey ahead for the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33 to ensure that Country is preserved for future generations to come.

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## **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol application to this document**

Throughout the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024-2033 document and during the 10 year implementation period of this project, the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure is committed to applying Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property principles which establish an ethical and standard approach to give

effect to the rights of Aboriginal people's need to maintain, control, protect and develop their Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

Drafting of the Strategy has been in collaboration with numerous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and contributors who generously shared their knowledge, culture, and time. In applying Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property principles, the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure have acknowledged and included these contributions throughout the Strategy in accordance with contributors' wishes.

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has developed the Strategy incorporating the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol.<sup>1</sup>

## **Artwork Disclaimer**

The artworks used throughout this document were commissioned by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and are covered by a licence with the artist, Lua Pellegrini, for the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024-2033.

The images, symbols and other artistic designs in the artworks embody traditional knowledge of the Wiradjuri Community and also recognise a connection to Country within the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan. Dealing with any part of the artworks for any purpose that has not been authorised by the Artist is a serious breach of customary law and may also breach the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

For enquiries about permitted reproduction of the artworks and use of the traditional knowledge embodied in the work, please contact Lua Pellegrini at [lua\\_pellegrini@outlook.com](mailto:lua_pellegrini@outlook.com).

Please also refer to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol for further information about how the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure handles Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, [Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol](#), April 2023, accessed 1 August 2023.

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# Executive summary

We engaged with Western Sydney's Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians and the wider Aboriginal communities to develop the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan. Through this work, we heard a strong message that an Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy should be developed to support the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan's implementation. This Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 is a continuation of those early discussions.

We have engaged with a range of organisations, groups and members of Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to hear how the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) should contribute to the vision of healthy Country and thriving communities.

We have collated those ideas and thoughts into this Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033, under 4 themes and 18 actions. They stem from the aspirations and needs of communities, and we will continue discussions during implementation of the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033. We are keen to deliver the actions together in ongoing consultation and cooperation with Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians and the wider Aboriginal communities.

This Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 wouldn't be here without the numerous discussions with the communities. The organisations, groups and members of the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney have been generous with their time and advice. Their ecological and cultural knowledge has been crucial in drafting this Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 and will continue to be so through the implementation phase. The Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 has also hugely benefited from the contributions of several cultural advisers. Their input has been invaluable.

The implementation of this Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 aims to:

- improve the health and wellbeing of Country
- support the Aboriginal communities to maintain distinctive relationships with land and waters in Western Sydney
- promote Aboriginal culture and knowledge
- support economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

After the release of the draft Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 for public exhibition, we received feedback from key collaborators and Traditional Custodians that certain parts of this Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 may be overambitious. We are aware that the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 is an ambitious expression of the aspirations of the Aboriginal communities of the area and of the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (the department) desire to translate these aspirations into real outcomes.

The Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 forms a road map for a 9-year delivery time frame (2024–33). During this time, it will be refined and evolve as we continue to work alongside key collaborators and the Aboriginal communities of the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan region to ensure quality outcomes that are in line with expectations. We will regularly review the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033, and the department will release updates as the implementation progresses, ensuring that information on the performance of its initiatives is released and that ongoing consultation outcomes reflect the evolving aspirations of the Aboriginal communities of the area.



# Message from key collaborators

The valuable contributions from cultural advisers have made possible the drafting of this Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–2033 (The Strategy). In the following paragraphs, they share their thoughts on what they see as successful implementation of this Strategy.



There are examples of a balance that can be reached between biocultural knowledge and Western environmental knowledge in regional and remote areas of Australia. Why not metropolitan Western Sydney, too? It will look different to the bush; however, my hope is to see government empower Western Sydney Aboriginal communities to use this Strategy to move closer to this balance, and even beyond in some instances to reach self-determination. Aligning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander thinking will result in better outcomes for our Country, culture and communities.

**Peter Ballard, Indigenous Community Engagement Consultant/GHD/proud Birpai man with family connection to the Bundjalung people**



This Strategy supports exciting changes for Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney. In ensuring caring for Country is core to the delivery of the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP), Aboriginal communities will be empowered to access more opportunities to practise old ways and to protect and promote Aboriginal culture and heritage, fostering future generations that stay strong and proud of who they are and where they come from.

**Jessica Herder, Dunghutti woman, Manager First Nations Outcomes, Western Parkland City Authority**



Since the creation time, countless generations of Traditional Owners of Ngunnarr (Country) within the CPCP area and beyond cared for Ngunnarr, keeping it healthy, balanced and abundant. After over two centuries of major impacts, today we are faced with the serious need to conserve Ngunnarr for the future while caring for and healing what remains. This plan provides opportunities for leadership from Traditional Owners and First Nations people in continuing and reclaiming this age-old relationship, caring for Ngunnarr through traditional knowledge, culture and practice, ensuring that the values of Ngunnarr are nurtured and respected for many generations to come.

Healthy Ngunnarr, healthy people, healthy communities

**Brad Moore, Dharug malaa (man), Senior Land Services Officer, Greater Sydney Local Land Services**



## Artist: Lua Pellegrini

Lua Pellegrini is a proud Wiradjuri woman who grew up on Dharug Country passionate about exploring culture through art and uplifting community through her practice. Lua is in her final year at UNSW completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts/Arts Majoring in Indigenous Studies. Lua is an active member of the Western Sydney Aboriginal community sitting on the Blacktown Council Aboriginal Advisory Committee and as a Board member of Murray-Toola Damana Community Preschool in Mt Druitt. Lua was humbled to exhibit on the Reconciliation Wall at NSW Parliament House during 2020 and designed the 2022–2025 Sydney Swans Marn Grook guernsey Duguwaybul Yindyamangidyal (All together respectfully).

In 2022 Lua was a Finalist for the Jenny Birt Award, the longest running and most prestigious award for painting within the UNSW Art & Design academic calendar and in 2023 Lua was awarded Highly Commended. Beyond her passion for art, Lua has a great passion for community and young people with the wellbeing and health of Country integral to helping uplift not only mob but the wider Australian community. In 2021–2022 Lua undertook the role as Chairperson of the NSW Youth Advisory Council in order to help make tangible change for the lives of children and young people across NSW.

## Cultural safety

The department uses the widely used definition of ‘cultural safety’:

An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening<sup>2</sup>

The department is committed to cultural safety in its programs, services and settings, and any environment we are responsible for, and acknowledges that cultural safety is a human right, as well as a legislative requirement in the workplace.

We propose to ensure we fulfil our commitment to cultural safety by increasing our cultural understanding and competency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people culture, histories and expectation for cultural safety across our workplaces and the administration of programs for which we are responsible. We recognise that increasing cultural safety is an ongoing learning journey and continuum that can fluctuate during organisational change.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, R 2008, ‘Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice?’ *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23(2):213–214.





# Call for self-determination

During consultation and engagement to develop the Strategy, participants highlighted the importance of and need for self-determination for the Aboriginal people of the Western Sydney region.

The Aboriginal communities of this region hold inherited rights, values and interests in this Country due to their status as the First peoples of Australia. The department is committed to supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the Western Sydney region as they continue to progress towards self-determination.

We will strive to ensure that the Aboriginal communities of the Western Sydney region are closely involved in the development and implementation of policies and programs that impact them, so they can exercise meaningful control over their affairs.<sup>3</sup>

## Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC):

- Self-determination is an ‘on going process of choice’ to ensure that Indigenous communities are able to meet their social, cultural and economic needs. It is not about creating a separate Indigenous ‘state’.
- The right to self-determination is based on the simple acknowledgment that Indigenous peoples are Australia’s first people, as was recognised by law in the historic Mabo judgement.
- The loss of this right to live according to a set of common values and beliefs, and to have that right respected by others, is at the heart of the current disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.
- Without self-determination it is not possible for Indigenous Australians to fully overcome the legacy of colonisation and dispossession.<sup>4</sup>

Consultation also identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not currently have access to the ‘choices’ needed to be able to meet their social and economic needs and realise self-determination.

The right for Aboriginal people to access and care for Country in the Western Sydney region was identified in consultation feedback as key to the realisation of self-determination.

Commitment 21 of the CPCP is to partner with Aboriginal groups and communities to help maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters in Western Sydney. Consultation participants highlighted the importance of connecting to Country in these ways through meaningful activities that are informed by the deep cultural ecological knowledge that the Aboriginal communities of the region hold.

Consultation participants encouraged us to ask the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the CPCP region what their vision is for healthy Country, noting that this is the only way to truly create ownership of the Strategy with the Aboriginal people of the CPCP area.

Consultation respondents also generally emphasised that the process to reclaim holistic traditional land management practices requires a different approach than that provided by Western legislation or concepts of land tenure or maps.

Consultation respondents noted that Aboriginal Lore provides for traditional roles and a system for connecting with and protecting Country that Western legislation may not reflect.

For these traditional roles, there was overwhelming feedback from consultation participants that Traditional Custodians must be ensured a consistent voice in what happens to Country. The feedback highlighted the relevance of the voices of Traditional Custodians because of what was identified as an ever-increasing loss of healthy Country and changes to the landscape. These are occurring because of development, which may compound the act of dispossession and diminish identity.



<sup>3</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), [Right to Self Determination](#), 2003, accessed 29 May 2023.

<sup>4</sup> AHRC, ‘*Right to Self Determination*’.



### Consultation participant:\*

It is critical, however, that First Nations peoples, especially Traditional Custodians whose ancestors cared for and were part of this Country, whose families and communities bore the first and longest brunt of colonisation, which still continues to this day, have a seat at the table in deciding how their Country is managed, conserved and protected into the future, being critical to their ongoing connection, identity and sense of being. This also includes when Country is to be sacrificed in the name of development or 'progress' and recognition of the loss as well as approaches to lessen that blow.

*\* While consultation participant has authorised the use of this quote, the participant preferred not to be identified.*



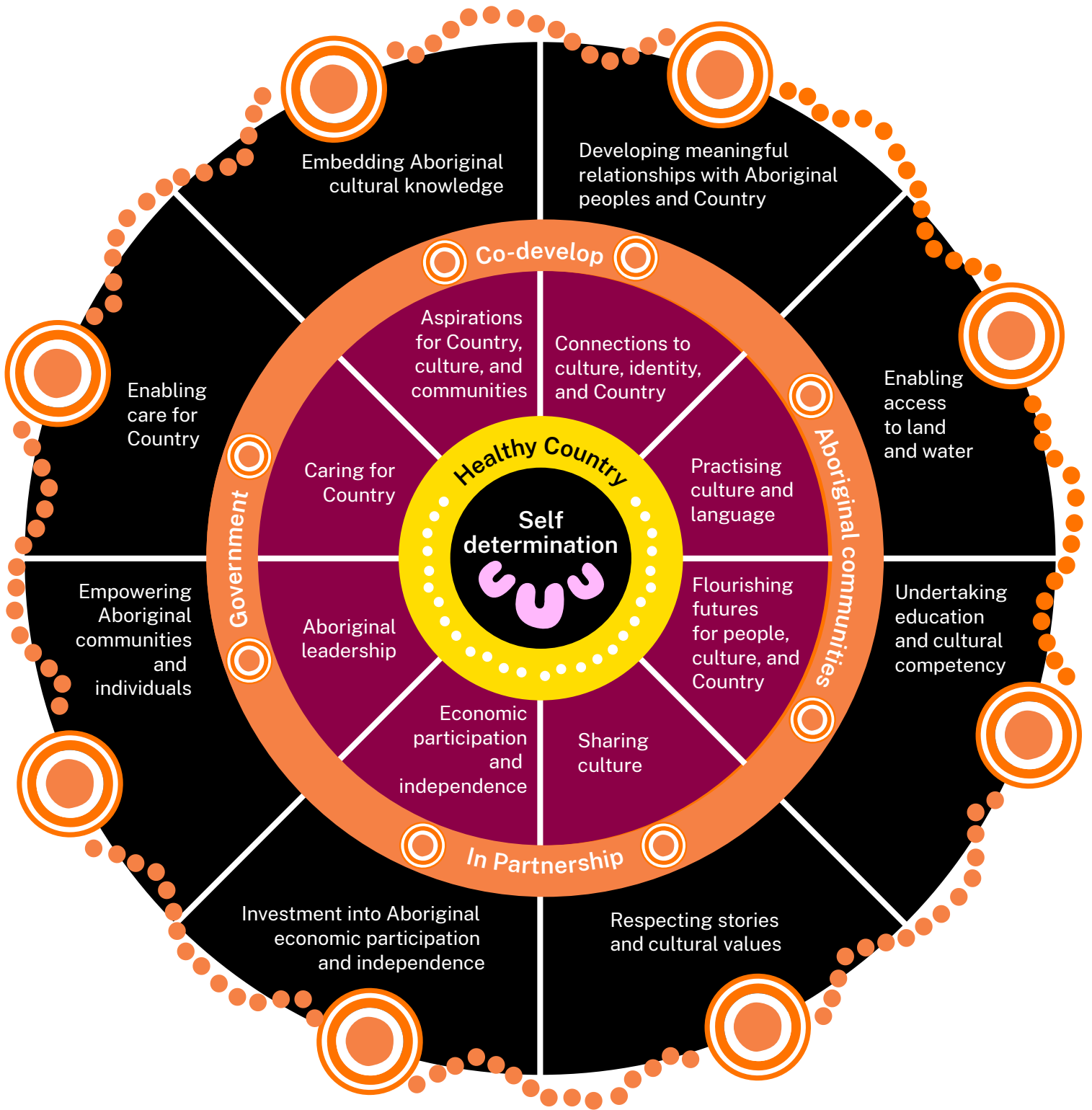
Another key area of feedback from engagement was the importance of involving Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities of the area in decision-making during the planning process, before development occurs. They need this involvement to adequately enable them to care for Country, including protecting and preserving the natural environment, biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage for future generations.

Consultation participants raised the importance of providing critical input during the planning process. Such input addresses preserving tree canopy, ancient trees and cohesive connecting corridors. This is to prevent the fragmentation of forests so they can grow and support native animals and threatened plant communities. They also highlighted the importance of improving the management of species that are culturally significant and important to biodiversity, as well as the health and rehabilitation of waterways.

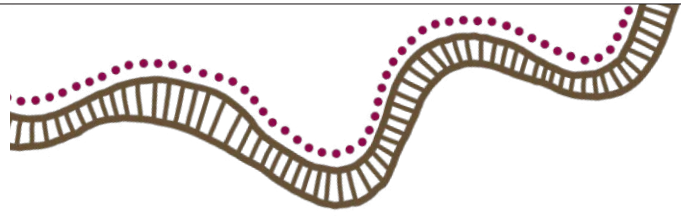
Consultation participants raised specific requests during consultation about leaving additional sites within the CPCP area intact for conservation. This is to address diminishing opportunities to practise culture and care for Country through loss of access to Country and damage to the landscape. Participant feedback requested that the full extent of the true Cumberland Plain Woodland area be identified for conservation and protection,<sup>5</sup> noting that transition zones are just as valuable as the rest of the woodland. The Cumberland Plain Woodland covers a large part of Western Sydney Country and holds important significance for the Aboriginal people of the area.

<sup>5</sup> This feedback noted that although other areas of Country within the CPCP are just as significant, these areas are often protected to a certain extent through existing conservation areas.

Figure 1. Cycle of healthy Country and self-determination



# Introduction



The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) provides biodiversity approvals to enable new housing, jobs and infrastructure in the Western Parkland City.<sup>6</sup> The CPCP will offset impacts to native vegetation from new development by protecting important biodiversity through a network of private and public conservation land across Western Sydney. Through these actions, the CPCP is preserving the health and wellbeing of Country.

The CPCP commits to 8 social, environmental and economic outcomes. One of these outcomes is to support economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; promote Aboriginal culture and knowledge; and help enable Aboriginal communities to maintain distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationships with land and waters in Western Sydney. To achieve this outcome, the department has co-developed the Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33 (the Strategy) for the CPCP with Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities.

The Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians are the recognised Aboriginal Nations of the CPCP area, and the Cumberland Plain is a significant part of Country for them and for other Aboriginal people that reside there. The 3 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) in the CPCP region are Deerubbin, Gandangara and Tharawal, who have important landholdings in the area. Western Sydney is home to one of the largest concentrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia, with many families originating from homelands in wider New South Wales and throughout Australia.

## What is the Strategy?

The decision to draft the Strategy came from discussions with Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities in 2019. The Strategy will help us continue to build meaningful partnerships in Western Sydney, these partnerships will ensure that Aboriginal people are at the forefront of implementing the CPCP and can benefit from the opportunities arising from its delivery.

This Strategy is built on the foundations of Our Place on Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2020–23 (Our Place on Country), which was developed by the Department of Planning and Environment and the Department of Regional NSW. This Strategy will deliver on Our Place on Country’s vision and principles. It also recognises that all of the work the department

conducts impacts on Country, Aboriginal people and communities.

The implementation of this Strategy helps deliver our goal to:

- improve the health and wellbeing of Country
- promote Aboriginal culture and knowledge
- support the Aboriginal communities to maintain distinctive relationships with land and waters in Western Sydney
- support economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Self-determination, co-design and partnerships are the underlying principles of this Strategy. The design of the actions and projects in this Strategy will be a joint effort of Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney and the department. We will create decision-making partnerships to plan, deliver and lead the projects with us.

Although self-determination is the aim, healthy Country, opportunities, and access to resources are stepping stones towards that goal (see Figure 1). We believe we can strengthen caring for Country; connections to culture, identity and Country; the practising and sharing of culture; Aboriginal leadership; and economic participation if we:

- develop meaningful relationships with Aboriginal people and Country
- enable better access to land and water for Aboriginal communities
- internally undertake education and cultural competency
- respect stories and cultural values
- invest in Aboriginal independence
- empower Aboriginal communities and individuals
- embed Aboriginal cultural knowledge and language.

<sup>6</sup> The Western Parkland City covers 8 local government areas, including the Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly.

To reach these stepping stones, the Strategy focuses on 4 themes that were prioritised during the engagements with the Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney:

- co-developing actions with Aboriginal communities through partnerships
- caring for Country
- honouring Aboriginal culture and heritage
- enhancing Aboriginal businesses, employment and training in the environmental sector.

The Strategy describes a series of actions within each theme to deliver outcomes that benefit Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities. Although the Strategy proposes ways to deliver the actions, implementing the actions will occur with ongoing consultation and engagement with Aboriginal communities on the most beneficial ways to realise them.

## The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan

Estimates project the population of Western Sydney to grow from 740,000 in 2016 to 1.1 million by 2036, and to well over 1.5 million by 2056. A thriving, green and liveable Western Sydney needs to include areas for the many native plants and animals in the region. It also needs publicly accessible, open and green spaces for local communities.

Strategic conservation planning is a landscape-scale approach to assessing and protecting biodiversity up-front in planning for large-scale development. This strategic approach allows for the streamlined delivery of housing and infrastructure while protecting regionally important land for conservation and publicly accessible green space. This approach has been used to develop the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP).

The CPCP is part of the NSW Government's commitment to delivering the Western Parkland City. The CPCP has been developed to meet requirements for strategic biodiversity certification under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW) (BC Act) and strategic assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act).

The CPCP's vision to support Western Sydney's biodiversity and growth will be achieved through a conservation program that includes 26 commitments and 131 actions that aim to improve ecological

resilience and protect biodiversity. Understanding and protecting the environment at a landscape scale will help safeguard Western Sydney's natural environment over the long term and in response to climate change. Considering the Cumberland Plain at a cultural landscape scale will support the health and wellbeing of Country during the changes predicted in the coming years. The CPCP's vision will also be achieved by enabling access to Country for Aboriginal people, as this is an intrinsic part of caring for Country.

The department has engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and a range of other groups since 2018 to develop the CPCP. These consultations have included Traditional Custodians; local councils; landholders; industry groups; environmental groups; Deerubbin, Gandangara and Tharawal LALCs; Aboriginal groups and organisations; and members of the communities.

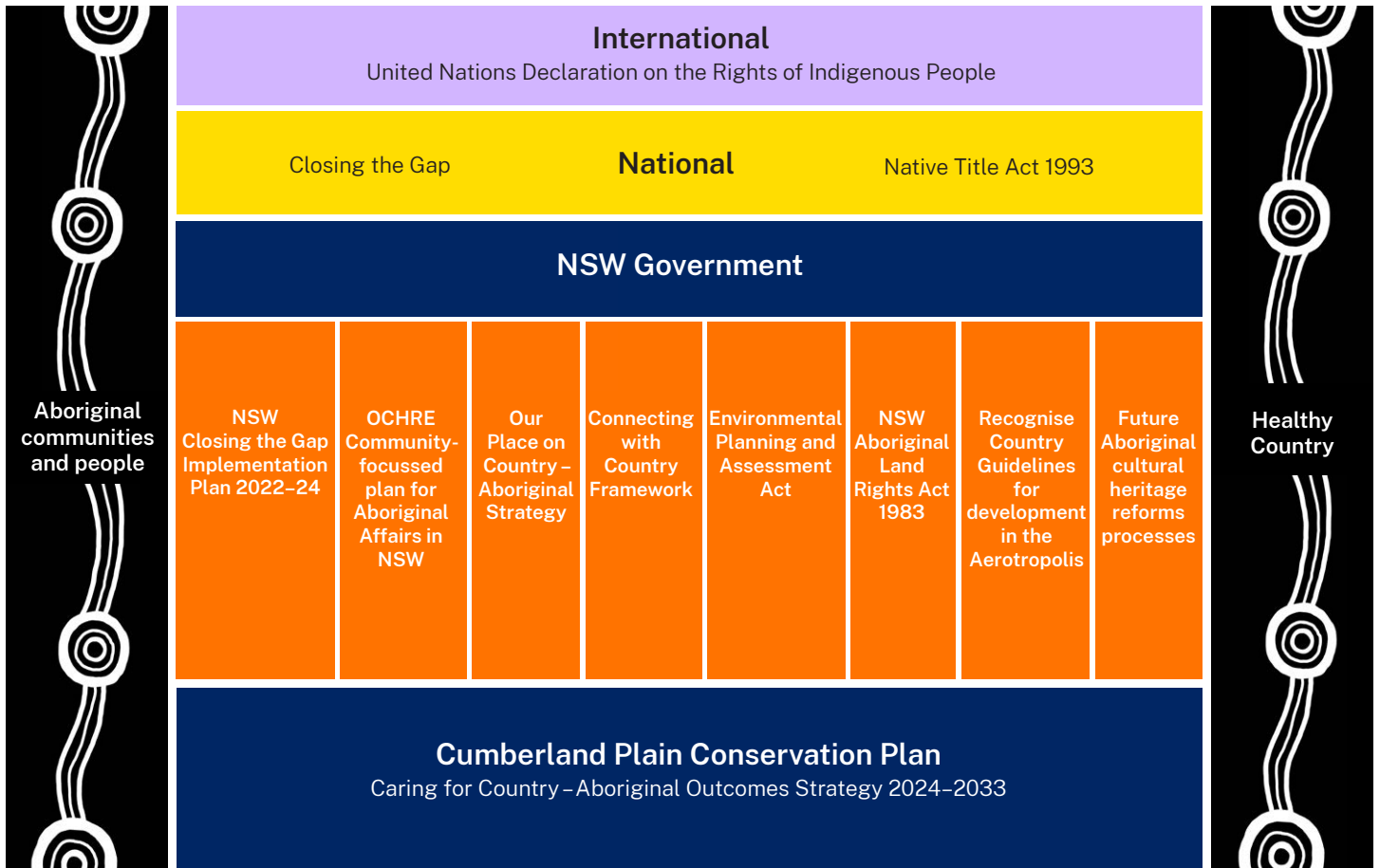
Throughout the engagement, Aboriginal communities have been broadly supportive of the aims of the draft CPCP, due to its alignment with Aboriginal culture and values, particularly regarding caring for Country.

## Strategic context

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) principles of justice and equity will assist the department during the implementation of the Strategy to give voice to Aboriginal communities and will be guided by comprehensive and respectful approaches to work together with Aboriginal communities to build capacity and pathways for knowledge sharing to benefit Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

The Strategy is informed by and aligns with other strategies in NSW and Australia delivering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes (see Figure 2). These strategies include the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (the National Agreement), [NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022-24](#), [OCHRE](#) (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment) and [Our Place on Country](#).

Figure 2. Caring for Country Strategy in the strategic framework



The National Agreement is developed in partnership between Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations. The objective of the National Agreement is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome inequality and achieve life outcomes that are equal to all Australians.

The NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022–24 documents the approach New South Wales is taking to implement the National Agreement. The NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022–24 outlines the work, vision, purpose, methods, programs and policies for the implementation period.

OCHRE is the NSW Government’s community-focused plan for Aboriginal affairs in New South Wales. It has several aims. It aims to teach more language and culture to build peoples’ pride and identity. It also aims to support more students to stay at school and to find fulfilling and sustainable jobs. Finally, it aims to grow the capacity of local leaders and communities to drive their own solutions and to focus on creating opportunities for economic empowerment.

Our Place on Country aims to ensure that the aspirations of Aboriginal people of New South Wales are advanced through the work of the department and the Department of Regional NSW.

The Strategy is also guided by legislative directions by the NSW Government to give effect to the objectives of the [Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979](#) (EP&A Act) which states that Aboriginal culture and heritage are to be sustainably managed in the built environment. [The Native Title Act 1993](#) has established a framework for the recognition and protection of native title rights, including the rights of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people to access and use land based on their traditional ownership and occupation,<sup>7</sup> and the [NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983](#) (ALR Act) recognises the land rights of Aboriginal people in the state. While the ALR Act gives Aboriginal people legal rights to claim and control land, this is not always land that has been traditionally owned or used. The Act was passed primarily to help return land to Aboriginal people as compensation for historic dispossession.<sup>8</sup>

7 NSW Government and Government Architect New South Wales (GANSW), [Connecting with Country Framework](#), 2023 accessed 7 September 2023

8 GANSW, 'Connecting with Country Framework'



In addition to the strategic frameworks outlined above, other frameworks and guidelines are closely connected to this work. These include the [Connecting with Country Framework](#), which the Government Architect New South Wales (GANSW) has produced, and the [Recognise Country Guidelines for Development in the Aerotropolis](#).

The Connecting with Country Framework aims to develop connections with Country to inform the planning, design, and delivery of built environment projects in NSW.

The Recognise Country Guidelines for Development in the Aerotropolis has been prepared to support and guide proponents, landowners and assessment officers in implementing requirements relating to Country and Aboriginal culture in the [Western Sydney Aerotropolis Development Control Plan 2022](#).

These guidelines also aim to meet the overarching objective of the Western Sydney Aerotropolis Plan to 'Recognise Country'.

The ongoing work from the Recognise Country Guidelines for Development in the Aerotropolis will continue to inform the Strategy to achieve shared environmental, social and economic objectives.

Informed by the National Agreement, the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022–24, the Connecting with Country Framework, the department's [Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property \(ICIP\) Protocol](#) and Our Place on Country, the department's planning group has developed a Closing the Gap Strategy to help embed Country into the way we do business. It provides a road map across 4 key pillars. These pillars are engagement, partnership and delivery, cultural awareness, and employment pathways and procurement.

The Aboriginal cultural heritage reforms process is part of the NSW Government's commitment to ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal communities to better understand how Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW can be celebrated and protected. We will continue to follow the reforms that Aboriginal Affairs is preparing within the Premier's Department.

[The 2018 Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities](#) established a 40-year vision for a global metropolis of three cities incorporating land use planning, transport planning and infrastructure planning. It provides 10 overarching directions and 40 objectives for liveability, sustainability, productivity and infrastructure in Greater Sydney including in the Western Parkland City. Two core objectives, 26 and 27, address sustainability and provide planning direction and strategies that inform the CPCP.

The Greater Sydney Region Plan is supported by the Western Parkland District Plan which provides priorities and actions to implement the Region Plan objectives and strategies at the city level.

A Region Plan for the six city regions is currently being prepared alongside revisions to the Western Parkland City Plan.

The Strategy under the CPCP supports current and future directions of the Region Plan and the Western Parkland City Plan that aligns with the CPCP and Strategy objectives and actions specially in relation to the CPCP Commitment 21 that is to partner with Aboriginal groups and communities to help maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationships with their land and waters in Western Sydney.

Also, the [Western Sydney City Deal](#)<sup>9</sup> has a range of commitments for Aboriginal communities. The proposed actions in this Strategy align with many of the commitments of the Western Sydney City Deal. Some examples include the commitment to deliver an Aboriginal small business and skills package across the Western Parkland City and the commitment for an Aboriginal procurement target.

<sup>9</sup> The Western Sydney City Deal, signed in 2018, brings together the Australian and NSW governments and the 8 local councils in the Western Parkland City to deliver change to the region over the next 20 years. Under the deal, the NSW Government committed to delivering 185,000 new homes over the next 20 years, and the NSW and Australian governments committed to progress a strategic assessment under the EPBC Act to protect the environment and streamline environmental approvals for development. The CPCP supports that commitment and facilitates a streamlined environmental assessment process to reduce duplication between the NSW and Australian governments.

# Collaboration with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to develop the Strategy



The department recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's unique and valuable knowledge relating to Country and has been committed to empowering Aboriginal voices in creating and developing the Strategy and will continue to do so.

## Co-developing the draft Strategy with communities

The department consulted and engaged with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney in 2 stages: March 2021–June 2022 and November 2022–July 2023.

### Consultation and engagement March 2021–June 2022

The department engaged with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney from March to October 2021 to understand the priorities and opportunities for the Strategy. The engagement happened in collaboration with GHD and Zion Engagement and Planning (Zion). Previous engagement activities by the department informed the engagement approach and leveraged GHD's and Zion's networks across the CPCP area. This was also an opportunity to collaborate with community members that were not involved in the early engagement on the CPCP in 2019 and 2020.

To co-develop the actions, the department met with a range of Aboriginal communities, including:

- Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians
- Gandangara and Tharawal LALCs<sup>10</sup>
- local councils
- Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)
- local community members
- Aboriginal corporations, businesses and organisations
- Aboriginal service providers.

In total, the department had 32 meetings and contacted more than 250 community members. The department also engaged with Aboriginal communities by distributing a project newsletter and community survey. The survey went through the networks of key Aboriginal communities and received 23 responses.

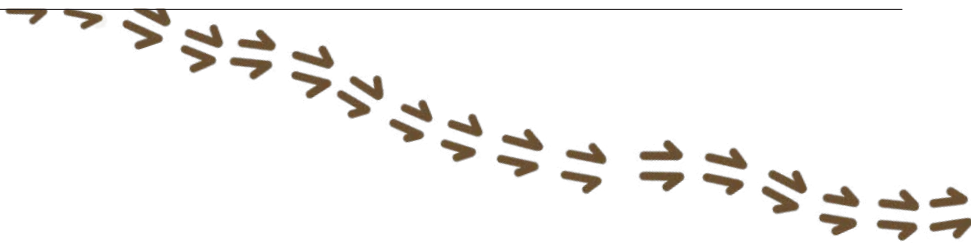
In May 2022, the department ran 'Close the loop' sessions to test the outcomes of engagement with participants. These sessions helped further refine and finalise the actions in the Strategy. Throughout these sessions, communities could align themselves or organisations with actions they wanted to participate in over the 10-year life span of the Strategy.

Following this consultation, GHD and Zion recommended that the department undertake ongoing engagement with Aboriginal communities of the area and continue to build relationships and identify opportunities for collaboration with projects in the sector and region. These recommendations were incorporated into the Strategy.

For more details on what we heard during the engagement, please refer to the [Caring for Country – Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy Consultation Outcomes Report November 2022](#).

<sup>10</sup> Deerubbin LALC chose not to participate in the Strategy engagement activities from 2022–23.





## Consultation and engagement November 2022–July 2023

The department conducted a second stage of engagement with Aboriginal communities from November 2022 to July 2023 before the release of the final Strategy. This engagement also happened in partnership with GHD.

The department released the draft Strategy for public exhibition in November 2022, leaving it open for public comment for 6 months. The engagement invited community members to submit their feedback through a range of formats, including phone and email, or at in-person meetings. The department also conducted targeted engagement activities, such as committee meeting presentations and workshops, and attended Aboriginal community events. The department offered a submission support service to interested community members.

During the public exhibition of the draft Strategy, the department had 12 community group meetings with 23 total attendees. The department also engaged with communities through an email distribution list of more

than 150 contacts; attended 3 Community events, from which it received approximately 135 inquiries; and organised a webinar. The department received 5 written submissions and 6 phone calls. The draft Strategy was advertised on Koori radio and newspaper in November 2022.

For more details on what we heard during this engagement, please refer to the [Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy What We Heard Report](#). This report summarises the outcomes from engagement with representatives of Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities during this exhibition period.

The department will continue to build its network with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney. It will support them to be involved in the ongoing consultation, engagement activities and opportunities for collaboration during the delivery of the Strategy.

Table 1 outlines a summary of what we heard from Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities throughout the engagements from 2021–23.

**Table 1. Engagement outcomes 2021–23**

Theme	What we heard
<b>Co-developing actions with Aboriginal communities through partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities to inform and provide feedback about the Strategy and the CPCP</li> <li>Young Aboriginal voices to inform and provide feedback about the Strategy and the CPCP</li> <li>High interest in involvement in the delivery of the Strategy from Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians.</li> </ul>
<b>Caring for Country</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of waterways, including access to and support for projects related to waterway rehabilitation</li> <li>Support for establishing biodiversity stewardship sites on Aboriginal-owned land</li> <li>Land claims process excludes Traditional Custodians</li> <li>Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians to be involved in and hold ranger positions</li> <li>Interest in involvement in traditional fire management on conservation lands</li> <li>Alternative joint partnership land management options to enable Traditional Custodians to care for Country and practise culture</li> </ul>

Theme	What we heard
<b>Honouring Aboriginal culture and heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to enhance knowledge about Aboriginal cultural values of sites and land across the Western Sydney area</li> <li>• Opportunities for cultural heritage recognition projects</li> <li>• Emphasis on the importance of cultural education and leveraging existing cultural education programs</li> <li>• Cultural tourism opportunities in Western Sydney</li> <li>• Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians interested to partner in and deliver research</li> </ul>
<b>Growing Aboriginal businesses, employment and training in the environmental sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for employment opportunities in the environmental sector under the CPCP</li> <li>• Partnerships with business and employment-support providers to streamline procurement processes</li> </ul>

## Collaboration with government agencies

The department engaged with several NSW Government agencies from July 2022 to April 2023 to discuss the draft Strategy, share the outcomes of community engagement and identify opportunities for collaboration and information sharing. Knowledge, experiences and feedback from other agencies have greatly benefited this Strategy.

During our engagements, the agencies made recommendations related to gaps in and opportunities for the Strategy, and we have incorporated those recommendations in the finalisation of the Strategy. During implementation of the Strategy, the department will continue active engagements with other agencies to align actions with work being done elsewhere and to build a comprehensive approach that will benefit the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney.

## Delivery of the Strategy with communities

The department has an ongoing commitment to work with Aboriginal communities of the Western Sydney region to ensure successful implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation and engagement model that the department will use to deliver the Strategy's initiatives and programs will occur in 4 stages every 2.5 years over 10 years from 2024–33. These stages will align with reporting cycles throughout the life of the Strategy. Figure 3 outlines the implementation and engagement stages.

**Figure 3. Caring for Country Strategy 2024–33 implementation engagement model**





Stage 1 of the implementation engagement model will involve delivering programs that have already started, as well as new initiatives from the actions that the department will pilot in 2024–26. These new initiatives were chosen from the priorities of Aboriginal communities during consultation.

Aboriginal communities will continue to be involved in decision-making about which programs and initiatives from the Strategy receive priority through each stage of its implementation.

The department will ensure visibility, accountability and continuous improvement during implementation of the Strategy. It will do so by providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with evaluation reporting about the Strategy and its initiatives during each stage to help determine whether it is achieving its desired outcomes.

The department will develop an evaluation model in consultation with the Aboriginal communities during the first year of the Strategy to determine successful outcomes, outputs and desired targets. The department will also review the Strategy and its initiatives every year and will share these evaluations with the Aboriginal communities.

During stage 2 of implementing the Strategy, there will be an opportunity to review annual and 2.5 yearly evaluation data and consolidate preferred Strategy initiatives based on programs with successful outcomes. At each stage of the Strategy's

implementation, there will be a revision process based on outcomes from the previous stage. The department will develop and release plans for a future long-term strategy to follow this Strategy to the public during stage 4.

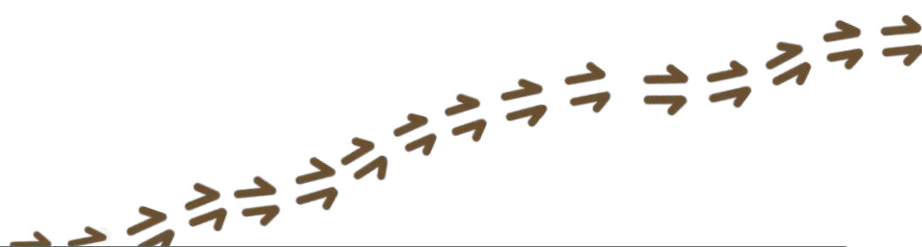
## Engagement

As the department delivers the Strategy and its initiatives, we will keep Aboriginal communities informed about what has been done to date, what is currently being worked on, and where the Strategy is heading next.

The department used different forms of engagement during the development of the Strategy. The department considered all forms of engagement and took into consideration engagement participant preferences. A lot of engagement occurred on Country, face-to-face and in small groups, at a time and place suitable to members of the Aboriginal communities.

The department will use a similar approach as it delivers the Strategy. Aboriginal communities will lead this approach, which will provide flexibility and easier access for communities to participate in the consultation and delivery of the Strategy and its programs in a culturally safe way.

We will continue to refine this implementation engagement model with the Aboriginal communities so that it reflects what they identify as the right fit for two-way communication.





# The actions

The Strategy focuses on 4 themes and 18 actions. The following sections detail steps for each proposed action that could be taken to realise intended outcomes. Although these proposals are based on the engagements with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney, delivery of the actions will require further co-development with the communities.



Figure 4. Themes and actions of the Strategy

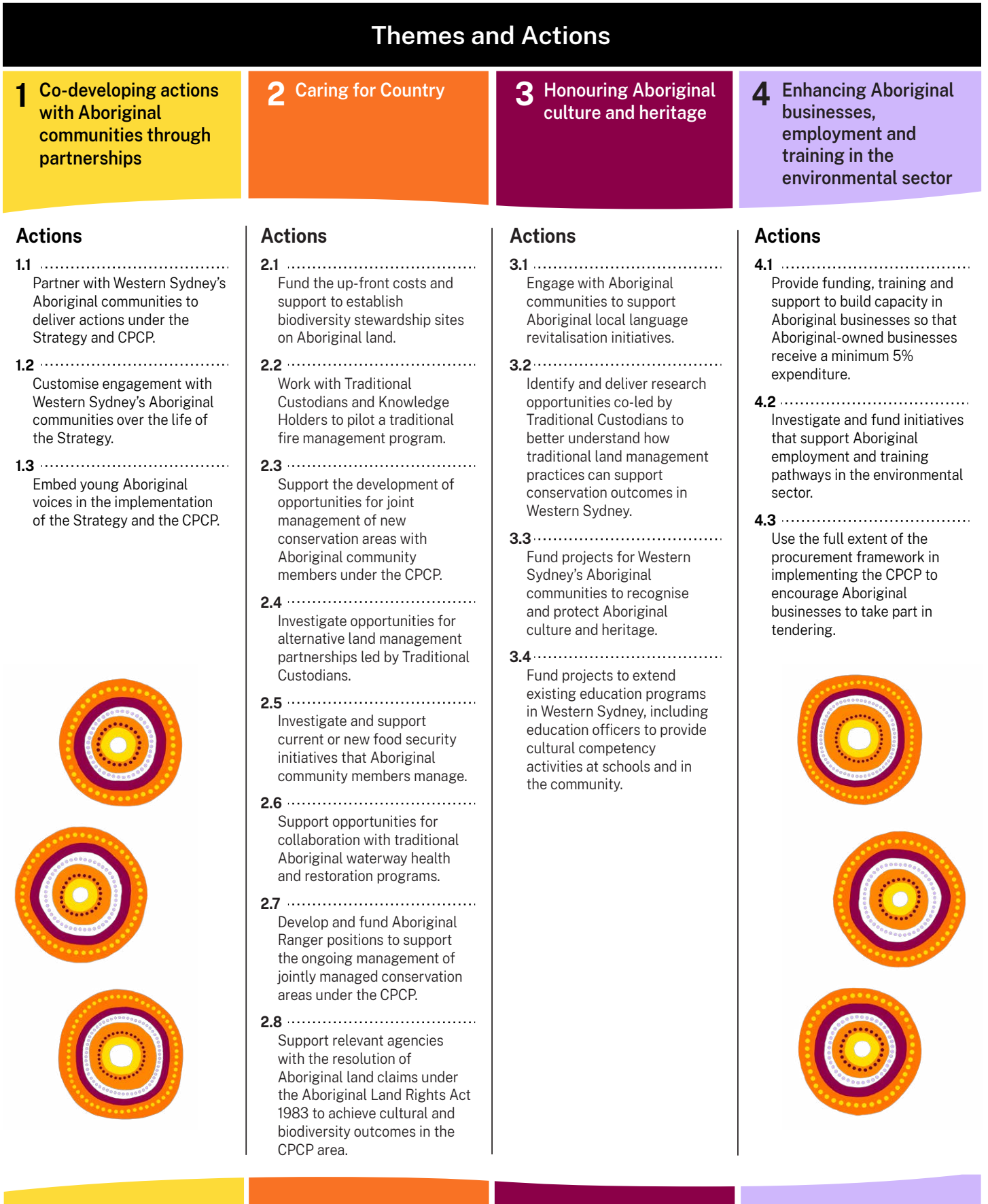
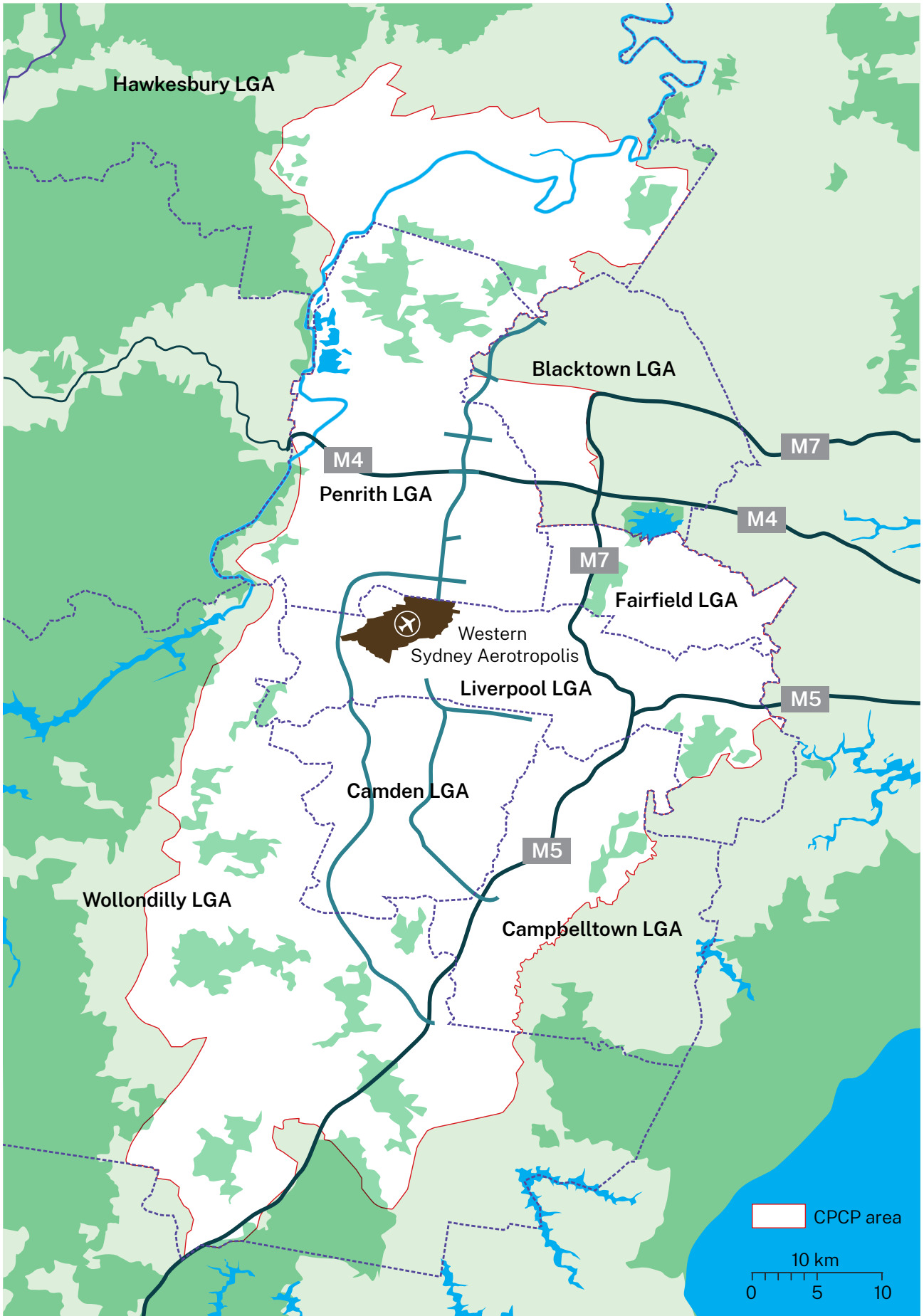


Figure 5. Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan Area and scope





1. Co-developing actions with Aboriginal communities through partnerships

## Actions in this theme:

1.1 Partner with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to deliver actions under the Strategy and CPCP

1.2 Customise engagement with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities over the life of the Strategy

1.3 Embed young Aboriginal voices in the implementation of the Strategy and the CPCP.

The department acknowledges the unique relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to the land, waters and sky. The development of this Strategy aims to reflect this in its approach as well as in the way we will deliver it in partnership with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney.

The department has engaged with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities early in the development of the Strategy to enable us to embed valuable cultural knowledge in the outcomes and ensure the actions reflect the aspirations of Aboriginal people and groups. Meaningful engagement forms the foundation of long-lasting relationships and partnerships, leading to better informed decisions for the Strategy and more broadly for the delivery of the CPCP.

The department is committed to continuing to work with the Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Knowledge Holders, LALCs, Aboriginal organisations and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We will co-develop actions in the Strategy and deliver them through collaboration and partnerships.

The Aboriginal communities were very passionate about the ability to continue ongoing input into the actions over the life of the CPCP. By enabling this, we can solidify a long-term collaborative working relationship with Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people communities and ensure Aboriginal people have a voice to help support the delivery of the CPCP and the Strategy.

We want to continue learning from Aboriginal communities, cultural experts and colleagues in the industry to better understand Aboriginal cultures, knowledge, needs and aspirations. Also, we want to be able to effectively facilitate a flexible, culturally safe and transparent space for Aboriginal communities to have a voice.

## Action 1.1 Partner with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to deliver actions under the Strategy and CPCP

### Description of action

We will partner with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to deliver the Strategy based on the principles of genuine partnership and co-design. Continuing to co-develop the actions together with Aboriginal communities and organisations in Western Sydney is essential for understanding cultural obligations and the current needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

During the engagements, Aboriginal people advised of their desire to be the key decision-makers in their communities. Equal partnerships would enable the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; Elders and Knowledge Holders; LALCs; and relevant community organisations to provide input and advice that supports decision-making towards the delivery of the Strategy and the CPCP.



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We also want to partner more broadly with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to deliver the CPCP's conservation program, which comprises 26 commitments and 131 actions. This could include partnerships for improving management of culturally significant species and restoring culturally important places.

Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people communities could help contribute to the department's broader role in shaping Western Sydney for current and future generations. They can advise the department on strategic planning matters, such as planning proposals and infrastructure projects within the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas, the Western Sydney Aerotropolis and the Greater Penrith to Eastern Creek Investigation Area.

Ongoing consultation with Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will support the delivery of the CPCP and the Strategy by:

- community mapping to identify specific partnerships with the Aboriginal communities and other people and groups in Western Sydney to support the delivery of the CPCP and the Strategy
- reflecting the aspirations, ideas and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Sydney in the delivery of the CPCP and the Strategy
- informing decisions about the delivery of the CPCP and the Strategy to the Executive Implementation Committee of the CPCP
- informing the protection of Aboriginal sites in development areas and conservation areas in collaboration with the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians and other groups
- supporting the ongoing evaluation of the actions of the Strategy and proposing changes when needed to meet intended outcomes
- providing guidance relating to caring for Country actions for the health and wellbeing of Country, including lands, waters and air.

## Proposed delivery

The department will develop partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations in Western Sydney to build steps towards the desired outcomes, as defined by communities, while also delivering the actions. The department will also continue to strengthen our cultural training so that the teams delivering the CPCP can properly engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

Aboriginal groups and organisations have networks and proven models of working with their communities of Western Sydney. These are crucial for realising the Strategy and its actions. Partnerships can also prevent overlaps with existing programs. The relationships formed through partnerships can also help with the delivery of other programs and initiatives under the CPCP and provide valuable input into decision-making of the CPCP.

The department will also continue to collaborate with partner agencies that have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects and initiatives in Western Sydney. Some of these agencies have already established or are in the process of establishing cultural knowledge panels. The intent of this collaboration is to:

- share experiences and best practices and identify gaps and opportunities
- avoid consultation and engagement fatigue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- minimise duplication and waste of government resources
- contribute to strengthened collaboration between agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- strengthen cultural awareness
- influence future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects and initiatives within the department and other agencies.

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## Action 1.2 Customise engagement with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities over the life of the Strategy

### Description of action

We will deliver customised engagement with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities, including activities with individuals or small groups and walks on Country. In response to consultation feedback, the implementation engagement model will reflect a more flexible, individualised approach that allows access for all those wishing to participate. Our approach will recognise the diversity within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Western Sydney and will prevent people from having to compete to have their say.

The Strategy will focus on how to elevate Aboriginal voices at the highest level of decision-making. It will also allow consultation participants to align with their areas of greatest interest and not become overwhelmed with the enormity of possible areas of participation within the Strategy. It will also focus on recognising collaborators and crediting them for their contributions while always protecting their intellectual property rights.

Engagement activities will include all genders, ages and people with a disability. ICIP will be protected, and cultural protocols will be respected. Engagement activities will also ensure that all Aboriginal people connected with the CPCP region have the opportunity to be heard and be part of the delivery of the Strategy.

## Proposed delivery

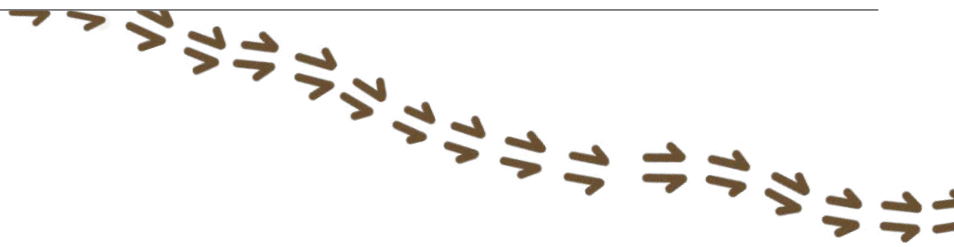
Figure 6 illustrates this more individualised approach to engagement activities.

**Figure 6. Caring for Country Strategy 2024–33 implementation engagement stage 1 activities 2024**

Traditional Custodians	Walks on Country, small group and individual meetings
Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)	Meetings and workshops
Aboriginal communities and members	Email updates, meetings, community events
Aboriginal corporations, businesses and organisations	Meetings and Workshops
Aboriginal service providers	Meetings and Workshops
Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)	Meetings and email updates
Local Councils	Meetings and email updates
Government agencies	Collaborative engagement with colleagues in related projects, strategic planning initiatives and legislative initiatives to embed Aboriginal voices

The Strategy’s implementation engagement model (Figure 3) describes a 4-stage approach to delivering the Strategy. The first stage will include current and ongoing initiatives such as the Caring for Country Business Development Grant Program, as well as a range of programs from the Strategy’s actions that participants highlighted as priorities during engagement. These programs may cover engagement, traditional cultural burning, biodiversity stewardship and caring for Country opportunities, including land and waterway restoration, depending on further engagement outcomes.

At each of the 4 stages of this model, the Aboriginal communities will be able to select both their preferences for continuing these programs and new initiatives. This model provides the flexibility to adjust to communities’ needs as they evolve over time.



## Action 1.3 Embed young Aboriginal voices in the implementation of the Strategy and the CPCP

### Description of action

We will embed the knowledge and ideas of young Aboriginal people into the delivery of the Strategy and CPCP. Western Sydney's Aboriginal youth have a unique voice and perspective. It is important that we invest in these voices and build their capacity to ensure they are heard and to facilitate their participation in the opportunities that the Strategy and the CPCP will provide.

During public exhibition of the Strategy, consultation participants provided feedback about the department's proposal to establish a youth panel. This panel would have links to other consultation committees to better embed young people's voices into the Strategy's ongoing engagement model.

The department received a range of responses about this proposal, and we note that additional work and more targeted advice is necessary from each of Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities about their preferred mode of engagement with their youth before proceeding with an overall model. We will continue to consult these communities about their preferred engagement mode to enhance and activate youth engagement and participation in the delivery of the Strategy and the CPCP.

### Proposed delivery

Consultation feedback about youth engagement expressed a preference for the following considerations:

- to provide mentorship and opportunities for Western Sydney's Aboriginal youth to connect with Traditional Custodians about the cultural protocols to protect Country
- to provide opportunities for youth to build governance skills, including linking up with other mentoring programs
- to provide opportunities for youth to be involved with communities and groups in the delivery of Strategy programs and initiatives
- to provide opportunities for youth to feed into caring for Country actions for the health and wellbeing of Country
- to connect with youth forums and interagency panels operated by service providers, local councils, and other state and federal government organisations in Western Sydney
- to establish the right settings for respect within groups of youth participants and with actions towards Aboriginal communities
- to provide cultural safety in youth engagement and to protect ICIP





## 2. Caring for Country

### Actions in this theme:

- 2.1 Fund the up-front costs and support to establish biodiversity stewardship sites on Aboriginal land
- 2.2 Work with Traditional Custodians and Knowledge Holders to pilot a traditional fire management program
- 2.3 Support the development of opportunities for joint management of new conservation areas with Aboriginal community members under the CPCP
- 2.4 Investigate opportunities for alternative land management partnerships led by Traditional Custodians
- 2.5 Investigate and support current or new food security initiatives that Aboriginal community members manage
- 2.6 Support opportunities for collaboration with traditional Aboriginal waterway health and restoration programs
- 2.7 Develop and fund Aboriginal ranger positions to support the ongoing management of jointly managed conservation areas under the CPCP
- 2.8 Support relevant agencies with the resolution of Aboriginal land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* to achieve cultural and biodiversity outcomes in the CPCP area.

Caring for Country refers to the holistic practices that Aboriginal people use to care for Country. The department acknowledges that Aboriginal people have managed, cultivated and cared for Country for thousands of generations and that they hold profound knowledge of, understanding of, obligation to and custodianship of the landscape and waterways, often referred to as 'Connection to Country'.

The CPCP aims to protect threatened ecological communities, species and their habitats by establishing conservation land in priority strategic locations to enhance long-term resilience and ecological function. We will protect biodiversity in perpetuity with new or additional national parks, nature reserves, local council or community-based biodiversity reserves and biodiversity stewardship sites on public or private land.

The Strategy will support the CPCP by working with Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal communities, organisations and LALC's in Western Sydney to protect and restore Aboriginal-owned land, jointly manage new reserves and provide other opportunities to practise culture and care for Country. These actions aim to unlock the land use potential of Aboriginal land and respond to the aspirations of the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney.

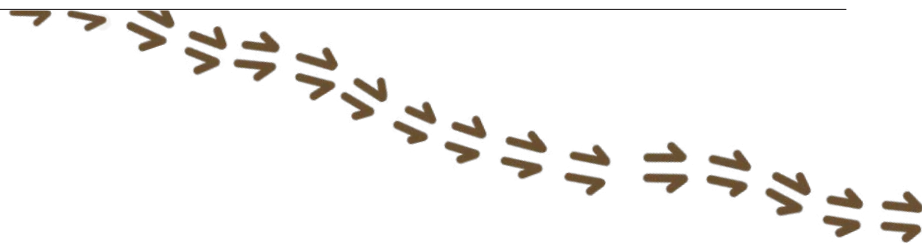
Culture is embedded in caring for Country practices. The proposed actions in this Strategy strive to find ways to support people in cultural practices connecting with Country and caring for it. Although many of the proposed actions will facilitate continuation and reintroduction of cultural practices, we will continue to work in collaboration with cultural advisers and in partnership with Aboriginal communities to further support ongoing cultural practices. By doing this, the Strategy can support realisation of healthy Country for the community.

## Action 2.1 Fund the up-front costs and support to establish biodiversity stewardship sites on Aboriginal land

### Description of action

LALC's are large landholders in Western Sydney, and some of the land they own or areas under claim have important biodiversity and cultural values.

The department wants to develop a program to support LALC's and other Aboriginal landholders, if interested, in establishing biodiversity stewardship sites. A stewardship site can provide an ongoing funding source for LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders to protect biodiversity values through weed and pest management, fencing and ecological restoration. Biodiversity stewardship agreements can also provide a profit for LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders depending on the type of native vegetation under protection.



High up-front costs are often barriers to landholders setting up a biodiversity stewardship agreement. The department seeks to fund the up-front costs and support to encourage LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders to establish biodiversity stewardship agreements on their land. The department would also buy the credits of any new biodiversity stewardship agreement that would contribute to the CPCP's target to protect conservation land.

## Proposed delivery

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) is the NSW Government agency that leads the CPCP biodiversity stewardship program.

The BCT and the department will co-develop and deliver the program by collaborating with LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders in Western Sydney on opportunities to establish biodiversity stewardship sites. The program will explore options to:

- support and guide LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders to better understand the opportunity for biodiversity stewardship agreements across their entire landholdings
- set up information sessions to help LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders understand the benefits of and process for establishing biodiversity stewardship sites
- pay for the up-front costs for property assessments and business cases to assess the viability and profitability of establishing biodiversity stewardship sites
- prepare culturally appropriate case studies for successfully established biodiversity stewardship sites to demonstrate the benefits and learnings of the projects to encourage LALCs and other Aboriginal landholders in Western Sydney and New South Wales to establish biodiversity stewardship sites.

## Case study 1: NSW Aboriginal Land Council Grants Program

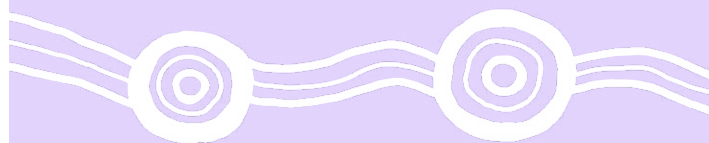
In 2020, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) and the department partnered to establish the \$1 million NSWALC Cumberland Plain Grant Program. The decision to establish the grants program was in response to feedback from LALCs in Western Sydney during the early development of the CPCP.

The department co-developed the grants program with NSWALC, which is delivering the program. NSWALC worked closely with the 3 Western Sydney LALCs to gain insight into their interests when developing and designing the program. This co-design approach was successful, as it ensured the program met the needs and interests of each of the LALCs that were eligible for funding.

The program launched in late 2020 to the 3 LALCs within the CPCP area: Deerubbin, Tharawal and Gandangara. It aims to support LALCs to assess and manage biodiversity, culture, and heritage on Aboriginal-owned lands; empower LALCs to deliver cultural and conservation outcomes on their land; and build capacity within the LALCs to deliver natural resource management services.

The program is fully funded under the CPCP and is one of the early implementation actions happening under the CPCP in the first 5 years.

The provided grants and outcomes of the program, including those related to Caring for Country and employment, will be reported publicly to ensure transparency in partnerships.



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## Action 2.2 Work with Traditional Custodians and Knowledge Holders to pilot a traditional fire management program

### Description of action

Throughout the engagements in 2021, Aboriginal communities highlighted the importance of traditional fire management and expressed interest in reviving this tool to care for Country. When used properly, traditional fire management protects and renews cultural connections and the health of Country.

Traditional fire management can include burning or prevention of burning of Country for the health of plants and animals, threatened species and biodiversity in general. It may involve patch burning to create different fire intervals across the landscape.

The NSW Government Bushfire Inquiry 2020 recommended that the NSW Government commits to pursuing greater application of Aboriginal land management, including traditional fire management, through a program coordinated between Aboriginal Affairs and the department and working in partnership with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney. The proposed delivery of this action would complement work being delivered under this commitment.

The department seeks to partner with the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; Aboriginal organisations; and government agencies to develop a traditional fire management program to support the delivery of the CPCP. The program would provide employment, training and mentoring opportunities for Aboriginal people in Western Sydney and opportunities to care for Country.

### Proposed delivery

The department partners with the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; Aboriginal Knowledge Holders; Aboriginal organisations; and government agencies to develop a traditional fire management program to facilitate cultural burning on public and private conservation lands established under the CPCP. We will also explore opportunities on broader lands within the CPCP.

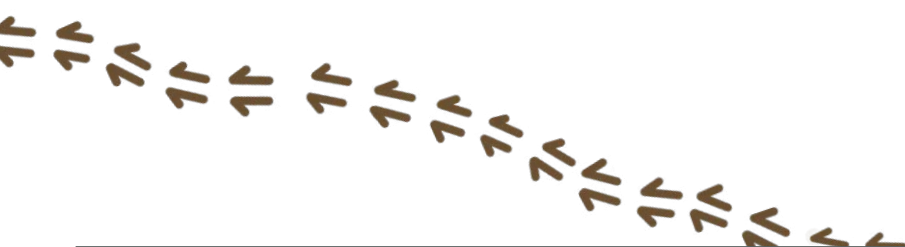
The department will explore learnings from existing pilot programs and initiatives when planning the delivery of the program and to avoid duplicating existing initiatives. The department will also consider supporting or collaborating with these where practicable. The department will investigate the need to streamline planning approval pathways for traditional fire management, challenges around the approval processes being some of the key considerations.

The department is looking to fund community-led initiatives to deliver the program. However, these initiatives would still leverage and build on any existing traditional fire management programs run by government organisations such as the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Local Land Services.

Depending on the aspirations of the communities, the department can explore the following themes for inclusion in the program:

- funding a training initiative to mentor and grow the number of traditional fire management experts in Western Sydney working across public and private land
- supporting knowledge exchange between the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; and land managers such as NPWS to develop Aboriginal-led land management approaches for the area
- piloting traditional fire management experts to undertake traditional fire management on private properties with biodiversity stewardship agreements.

Throughout the process, it is important to acknowledge that the traditional ecological knowledge that supports cultural burning is intellectual property of the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney and that Aboriginal people need to lead cultural burns.



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## Action 2.3 Support the development of opportunities for joint management of new conservation areas with Aboriginal community members under the CPCP

### Description of action

The CPCP commits to establishing new conservation reserves in Western Sydney. It is expected that the NPWS will manage the larger reserves, such as the Georges River Koala Reserve.

Joint management is a partnership arrangement that recognises local Aboriginal people's cultural association with a park or reserve and ensures their involvement in its management. It is established through a written agreement between the NPWS and Aboriginal communities. Each agreement requires the two parties to work together and share responsibility for managing a particular park or reserve.

Where new conservation reserves are gazetted under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, the Strategy could support Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians to establish joint management arrangements with the NPWS if that is their desire.

Reserves such as national parks are part of Aboriginal people's Country and are places Aboriginal people can care for and access their Country. Aboriginal communities can obtain cultural, social, health and economic benefits through involvement in park and reserve management.

### Proposed delivery

The NPWS announced in July 2022 that it will develop a new model for Aboriginal joint management of national parks through consultation with Aboriginal people and other national park interested parties over the next 18 months. The new model will aim to provide for the potential handing back of title to all NSW national parks over a 15- to 20-year period. This would be subject to the land being leased back to the NSW Government for its continued use and management as a national park. See further information on the [NPWS webpage](#).

Once the NPWS has developed the new model, we could support the NPWS and Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities in developing opportunities for joint management of conservation land established

under the CPCP using the new model. This could include support for training, capacity building and joint ventures as the CPCP reserves are established.

Expanding Aboriginal joint management across the national park estate will deliver economic benefits for Aboriginal communities by increasing employment and creating additional opportunities for Aboriginal businesses. It will also strengthen the role of Aboriginal communities in national park decision-making and enhance the protection of cultural heritage.

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## Action 2.4 Investigate opportunities for alternative land management partnerships led by Traditional Custodians

### Description of action

The department seeks to understand possible alternative types of partnership for traditional and contemporary Aboriginal land management across different land ownership and tenures, including with local councils and other government agencies. These other types of joint management arrangements may offer alternatives to the co-management arrangements discussed in Action 2.3 and could take place on conservation areas established under the CPCP.

Engagement feedback emphasised a strong desire to protect and manage sites of ongoing connection and cultural importance to the Aboriginal communities of the area in accordance with traditional cultural protocols. We will investigate partnerships and pathways for Traditional Custodians and Knowledge Holders to conduct ongoing land management activities using traditional ecological knowledge to protect and conserve land, maintain health of Country and honour the Aboriginal cultural heritage of spaces.

These investigations may yield new partnerships that allow traditional voices to have an ongoing connection to Country.

### Proposed delivery

In the first stage of delivery of the Strategy, we will investigate and identify any potential new partnerships for joint land management led by Traditional Custodians.



Some of the ongoing activities of this traditional land management would involve cultural and natural resource management. This could include:

- establishing gathering and yarning areas
- planting traditional seeds and plants
- nurturing soil and promoting its fertility
- propagating native trees and bees
- cultural burning.

Written agreements under new partnerships would ensure that traditional ecological knowledge that supports traditional land management is protected as intellectual property of the participating Aboriginal community members and Traditional Custodians.

Funding for projects to recognise and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage (see Action 3.3) could be used to support Traditional Custodians' participation in these new alternative partnership arrangements for joint traditional land management. The department will also investigate alternative sources of funding to support new partnership arrangements.

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## Action 2.5 Investigate and support current or new food security initiatives that Aboriginal community members manage

The department is looking to explore ways to support current and new community gardens and traditional food, medicine, fibre growing and tool development programs that members of the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney will manage. These programs can increase regular access to fresh fruit and vegetables while increasing skills, capacity building and community ownership.<sup>11</sup>

If expanded into cultivating bush foods and medicines, these programs could offer the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney the support, knowledge sharing, training and skills to produce traditional foods while reinvigorating and creating a healthier Country.

Initiatives such as these also offer the potential to enhance education and cultural tourism opportunities, including guided tours to educate the public on the cultural importance of food, its provenance and how Aboriginal communities work with and care for Country to support healthy growth.

The implication of the past on Aboriginal people resulted in a disconnection within communities to traditional cultural food and medicine sources, resources used in cultural practices and activities, and food security.<sup>12</sup>

The imposed loss of sovereignty and knowledge caused by colonisation has had a severe impact on personal agency for Indigenous Australians to engage with their traditional food system and their right to self-determination.<sup>13</sup>

Food security and sovereignty, including the need to hunt and fish, are key reasons for Aboriginal people to access their inherited rights to Country.

Indigenous food provisioning across the ancestral lands and waters of Indigenous peoples through hunting, fishing and foraging is at the heart of Indigenous food sovereignty.<sup>14</sup>

Today, food insecurity is a considerable issue for Aboriginal people:

In a recent study it was found that more than 26% of Indigenous households ran out of food at least once in 2019 and were unable to buy more due to high prices.<sup>15</sup>

Lack of access to and consumption of healthy foods can result in increased risk of chronic conditions, including diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, along with mental health concerns, such as anxiety and depression.<sup>16</sup>

Food insecurity contributes to the disproportionately high burden of disease that persists in the Indigenous Australian population.<sup>17</sup>

Aboriginal people also experience food insecurity at a disproportionate rate.<sup>18</sup> The issue of food security has been linked to priority objectives in the Closing the

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11 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Food Security and Indigenous Mental Health](#), produced for the *Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse*, Catalogue number IMH 12, AIHW, Australian Government, 2022, accessed 12 June 2023.

12 AIHW, *'Food Security and Indigenous Mental Health'*.

13 AIHW, *'Food Security and Indigenous Mental Health'*.

14 Markham F and Kerins S, Policy responses to food insecurity in remote Indigenous communities: Social security, store pricing and Indigenous food sovereignty, Working paper no. 4/2020, *Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR)*, Australian National University, 2020.

15 The Borgen Project, [How Food Insecurity Harms Indigenous Australians](#), accessed 12 June 2023.

16 McKay F, [Interventions to address food insecurity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a rapid review](#), October 2021, accessed 6 June 2023.

17 AIHW, *'Food Security and Indigenous Mental Health'*.

18 The Borgen Project, *'How Food Insecurity Harms Indigenous Australians'*.

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Gap targets.<sup>19</sup> This is important to consider with the knowledge that “life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is 8–9 years lower than for non-Aboriginal and non-Torres Strait Islander Australians”.<sup>20</sup>

## Proposed delivery

In stage 1 of delivery of the Strategy, we will investigate and support suitable current food security initiatives that Aboriginal community members manage. The department will also consider supporting new initiatives. These could also be established within potential new partnerships for joint land management across different land ownership and tenures (see Action 2.4).

We will investigate collaborating with the ongoing work from the Recognise Country Guidelines for Development in the Aerotropolis. Of particular interest are potential Indigenous food hub and seedling greenhouse initiatives, which would be investigated for ongoing collaboration and support.

Funding for projects to recognise and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage (see Action 3.3) could support current or new food security initiatives that Aboriginal community members manage.

Traditional ecological knowledge used in developing this initiative will be protected as intellectual property of the Traditional Custodians or the participating Aboriginal community members.

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## Action 2.6 Support opportunities for collaboration with traditional Aboriginal waterway health and restoration programs

The department acknowledges that Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities need to fulfil their cultural obligation to connect and care for waterways. We will create partnerships to support programs that improve and maintain the health of waterways for the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a connection to the CPCP region.

We understand the importance of healthy waterways and riparian corridors as part of an interconnected holistic landscape for Aboriginal people nationally. Without water, there is no life. Keeping waterways healthy is connected to the flow of songlines, stories, knowledge, culture and connections.

Waterways are also significant in traditional Aboriginal practices and ceremonies, with ceremonies connected to different areas of the water system. Water provides benefits to everyone and is essential for health and living, growing food and fishing, recreation and gatherings.

Programs for water restoration may use the following strategies to revitalise water:

- minimise impact of development on waterways
- help reduce stress on the water system
- minimise impact of droughts and floods on communities
- encourage water re-use
- plant trees and vegetation near waterways
- remove rubbish from waterways and surrounding banks
- identify connections between waterways and through water corridors.

This initiative will also link to research outcomes related to waterway management that may come from the partnership with Western Sydney University to develop a research Strategy (see Action 3.2).

## Proposed delivery

The department will fund a mapping exercise to determine what current Aboriginal-informed water health programs exist across government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the Western Sydney area. This exercise will determine where there are potential gaps or links to complement existing programs that activate waterway health.

Funding for projects to recognise and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage (see Action 3.3) or the Caring for Country Business Development Grant Program (see Action 4.1 and Case Study 3) could be used to support water health collaborations.

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<sup>19</sup> AIHW, *‘Food Security and Indigenous Mental Health’*.

<sup>20</sup> Holland C, *A ten-year review: the closing the gap strategy and recommendations for reset*. Australian Human Rights Commission, the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality, Sydney, NSW, 2018.

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## Action 2.7 Develop and fund Aboriginal Ranger positions to support the ongoing management of new jointly managed conservation areas under the CPCP

### Description of action

Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities wish to fulfil their cultural obligation to connect and care for Country. Aboriginal Rangers can apply traditional Aboriginal knowledge, such as fire practices, care for waterways, Aboriginal biocultural knowledge, and Western land practices.

The department will fund an Aboriginal Ranger Program and develop it in collaboration with the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney. The program will aim to provide Aboriginal people an opportunity to use their knowledge and connections to Country to contribute to managing and restoring new conservation reserves established under the CPCP.

The Aboriginal Ranger Program will fund training and on-the-job experience in a culturally safe environment. We will explore possibilities for long-term career pathways for Rangers. The program will also investigate possibilities to support mentoring between new and more experienced Rangers.

### Proposed delivery

The department will engage with Aboriginal communities, including the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; Knowledge Holders; and LALCs to consider and determine the best way to deliver an Aboriginal Ranger Program in Western Sydney. There are several options for program delivery.

The NPWS could deliver the Aboriginal Ranger Program in connection with any joint management arrangements established for new conservation reserves under the CPCP. The NPWS has successfully run a pilot Ranger Program on the South Coast.<sup>21</sup> It has also appointed an Aboriginal Ranger organisation as honorary NPWS rangers.

Alternatively, the Aboriginal Ranger Program could also be community-led through Traditional Custodian groups and organisations or LALCs (see Case Study 2 for the Darrunda Wajaarr Rangers). The Rangers could work across multiple tenures in Western Sydney, including Aboriginal land and conservation reserves established under the CPCP, or through other joint land management partnerships across differing land tenures, such as those explored in Action 2.4. The consultation feedback strongly supported the option of allowing the knowledge of Elders to lead programs that care for Country in this way.

### Case study 2: The Darrunda Wajaarr Rangers

The Darrunda Wajaarr Rangers are an environmental management team operating in the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area. The team's core business is to manage and increase the conservation values through traditional knowledge and practices along with Western practices.

The team has been operating since 2006 and has worked within various land tenures supported by NPWS through on-the-ground supervision and training. The team has also worked closely with Local Land Services, Coffs Harbour and District LALC and the NSW Environmental Trust.

In 2019, the rangers carried out extensive bush regeneration, weed management and pest management to boost the number of koalas. Much of the work took place on Aboriginal land in Mylestom, next to Bongil Bongil National Park. This area supports an important koala population.

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<sup>21</sup> For this program, the rangers are set up to work with the Biamanga Board of Management, the Gulaga Board of Management in Narooma and National Parks in Merimbula.

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## Action 2.8 Support relevant agencies with the resolution of Aboriginal land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* to achieve cultural and biodiversity outcomes in the CPCP area

### Description of action

The department acknowledges the unique relationship that Aboriginal people have to the land and recognises that LALCs are large landholders in Western Sydney. Some of the land they own or is under claim holds important biodiversity and cultural values.

Quicker resolution of the land claims would allow land to be returned to LALCs to support economic and cultural outcomes. LALCs could use this opportunity to protect biodiversity and cultural values by establishing biodiversity stewardship agreements on this land (see Action 2.1). Establishing new conservation reserves under the CPCP will also require resolution of land claims before reserves are gazetted to support their joint management (see Action 2.3).

### Proposed delivery

Crown Lands is responsible for considering land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (ALRA). We will support Crown Lands to identify and discuss the resolution of these Aboriginal Crown lands claims in collaboration with LALCs. This aligns with the existing prioritisation process for land claims that Crown Lands is undertaking.

In the first year of delivery of the Strategy, in consultation with LALCs, NSWALC, Crown Lands, other relevant agencies and other areas of the department, we will advocate for and support the resolution of high-priority land claims. Some of these high-priority areas include:

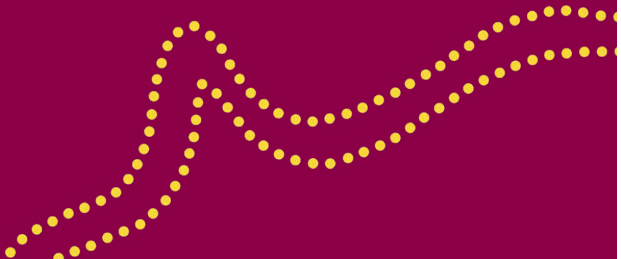
- land claims where LALCs are interested in establishing biodiversity stewardship agreements
- land claims in the Georges River Koala Reserve
- other land claims in proposed public reserves under the CPCP.

LALCs could also be supported with resources and tools such as geographic information system (GIS) applications to help them to strengthen their capability for natural and cultural resource management services and to understand existing and future claimable areas under ALRA.

Crown Lands has different mechanisms for quicker processing of land claims that could be considered, such as Aboriginal Land Agreements (ALAs). ALAs provide a flexible mechanism to guide voluntary negotiations between the NSW Government and Aboriginal Land Councils that explores the divestment of Crown land to LALCs.

### Land claims process

The role of determining land claims sits with the minister administering the Crown Land Management Act 2016 with the following process:

- LALC, or NSWALC on behalf of an LALC, may make claims over Crown land that is not needed for an essential public purpose or legally used and/or occupied.
  - Land claims are lodged with the Registrar of the ALRA and referred to the minister administering the Crown Land Management Act 2016 for investigation and determination.
  - Once the minister administering the Crown Land Management Act 2016 is satisfied that either whole or part of the land is claimable or not, the land claim is either granted or refused, wholly or partly.
  - Granted land is then transferred to the relevant LALC as freehold title.
  - LALCs in New South Wales are not required to establish cultural association with lands when making land claims. Land claims can be made as compensation for historic dispossession of land and to support Aboriginal communities' social and economic development.
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### 3. Honouring Aboriginal culture and heritage

## Actions in this theme:

- 3.1 Engage with Aboriginal communities to support Aboriginal local language revitalisation initiatives
- 3.2 Identify and deliver research opportunities co-led by Traditional Custodians to better understand how traditional land management practices can support conservation outcomes in Western Sydney
- 3.3 Fund projects for Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities to recognise and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage
- 3.4 Fund projects to extend existing education programs in Western Sydney, including education officers to provide cultural competency activities at schools and in the community

We recognise that Aboriginal culture and heritage centres on caring for Country. This includes engaging with more contemporary practices of caring for Country.

During engagement, participants emphasised the cultural importance of the environment to Aboriginal people. They also stressed the need to incorporate traditional land management practices into conservation actions and the protection of sacred Aboriginal sites.

Participants also highlighted the importance of investing in co-led research, engagement and partnerships. They highlighted the importance of the ability of Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians to inform decisions about their Country at the highest level.

The engagement identified the need to increase the broader public's cultural competence around Aboriginal cultures and the traditional practices that contribute to maintaining biodiversity and the health of Country.

The actions within this theme strive to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and values and support the continuance of Aboriginal living culture in Western Sydney. Increased opportunities to practise and celebrate culture will help inform the wider community of what culture is and its value.

## Action 3.1 Engage with Aboriginal communities to support Aboriginal local language revitalisation initiatives

### Description of action

Aboriginal place naming is central to language revitalisation and cultural recognition. It helps reawaken, preserve and grow Aboriginal languages. It strengthens connection with culture and identity by restoring the true names of Country that have been used since the beginning of time. Aboriginal place naming encompasses both the use of Aboriginal languages in naming and the recognition of original Aboriginal place names<sup>22</sup> for geographical features.

Consultation with local Aboriginal communities, in particular the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; and those with local language knowledge, is important to ensure a culturally appropriate name is chosen. The word comes from the local language group, the story and meaning behind the word is captured, and the community supports the use of the name for the feature or place.

<sup>22</sup> Recognising the traditional Aboriginal name of a feature is about acknowledging that geographical features already had traditional names used by local Aboriginal communities before European settlement. These names were given to geographical features and do not apply to post-settlement administrative features, such as suburbs. Traditional names can be officially recognised and recorded for a feature that enables the story and culture of the local Aboriginal communities to be shared. Source: Geographical Names Board Aboriginal place naming factsheet.

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The department will investigate and support projects that the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians are leading that work to revitalise Aboriginal local language. The grants program outlined in Action 3.3 will fund this.

During ongoing consultation as part of the Strategy implementation, we will seek the preferences of the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians for potential options to rename the Strategy or elements of its programs using culturally appropriate Aboriginal local language from within the CPCP boundary.

The department will also engage with the Aboriginal communities of the CPCP area to consider culturally appropriate names for conservation lands established under the CPCP. This includes the names of national parks, conservations areas and physical features associated with these areas.

### Proposed delivery

The department will investigate establishing a Cultural Reference Group that will engage with Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities, especially Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians, when naming a conservation land or feature using Aboriginal languages or an original Aboriginal name. If necessary, the department will conduct research wherever possible, especially in cases where names are no longer known.

Once the Cultural Reference Group has identified an appropriate name, it will be proposed to the Geographical Names Board (GNB) of NSW. Any name would need to comply with the GNB Place Naming Policy and should have the endorsement of the local council or the government department that administers the area where the feature is located.

Under this Strategy, the department is committed to pursuing opportunities in collaboration with Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodian communities to consider culturally appropriate names for new conservation lands created under the CPCP. The department, however, recognises that councils might have their own processes and consultations for considering culturally appropriate names. The department also recognises that under the *Roads Act 1993*, local government councils and Transport for NSW are the authorities responsible for naming roads in New South Wales. The department will investigate

opportunities to assist or complement these processes. The department will also investigate how the planning framework could better support the consideration and recognition of Aboriginal names in green sites and surrounding areas.

ICIP principles are core to this process. The department acknowledges that place names significantly contribute to the identity of place and may reflect heritage and cultural knowledge.

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## Action 3.2 Identify and deliver research opportunities co-led by Traditional Custodians to better understand how traditional land management practices can support conservation outcomes in Western Sydney

### Description of action

The Strategy recognises the need to position local Aboriginal knowledge as an integral part of the way to meet sustainability and resilience objectives and how to focus the research. Multiple initiatives in the Strategy support efforts to enhance the use of cultural and traditional ecological knowledge in land management practices.

The department has partnered with Western Sydney University to develop a Research Strategy under the CPCP and has committed \$1.8 million for it in the first 4 years.

This Research Strategy has 4 themes. Theme 1, 'Supporting Aboriginal connections', will ensure that Traditional Custodian knowledge and experiences underpin conservation outcomes sought under the CPCP and the delivery of the Strategy. The department and Western Sydney University's engagement on the Strategy has identified some potential subthemes and knowledge gaps for this theme. The subthemes include:

- improving management of culturally significant species and places
- maintaining and providing for Country
- reviving language and culture
- managing cultural waterways.

CPCP research initiatives will benefit from the input of Aboriginal people to better understand how traditional land management practices could support conservation outcomes in Western Sydney. The projects could help create more biodiversity corridors from cultural knowledge. They could also generate more appreciation for native plants, animals, communities and culture and thereby improve biodiversity outcomes, resulting in the health and wellbeing of Country.

[The Research Strategy](#) is released simultaneously with this Strategy.

## Proposed delivery

The department will fund new research through the Western Sydney University partnership or other partnership opportunities. We could fund Aboriginal Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidates or research positions to deliver research priorities for the supporting Aboriginal connections theme.

We also want Dharawal, Darug and Gundungurra, Traditional Custodians and other interested Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to co-lead this research and to respond to feedback from our engagement. By doing this, we will ensure traditional knowledge will inform conservation outcomes in Western Sydney, such as ecological restoration activities and the management and preservation of culturally significant species and places.

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## Action 3.3 Fund projects for Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities to recognise and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage

### Description of action

The department seeks to fund projects for Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities to recognise and promote Aboriginal culture and heritage. Communities often lack funding for such projects, and delivery of these activities is important for the successful implementation of the CPCP.

The department recognises that Aboriginal culture, heritage and connection to Country shape identity and are fundamental to the wellbeing of communities and Country through connectedness across generations. Where possible, we are committed to supporting and enabling the continuation and reintroduction of traditional Aboriginal cultural practices for the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney.

This action will empower Western Sydney’s Aboriginal communities to deliver cultural and conservation outcomes that support the implementation of the CPCP.

## Proposed delivery

The department will fund a competitive grants program delivered in partnership with an Aboriginal organisation or organisations. We will seek expressions of interest from organisations when planning the delivery of the action. The department will co-develop the program with the organisations delivering the program and key members of Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney so that its objectives meet the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal groups and organisations.

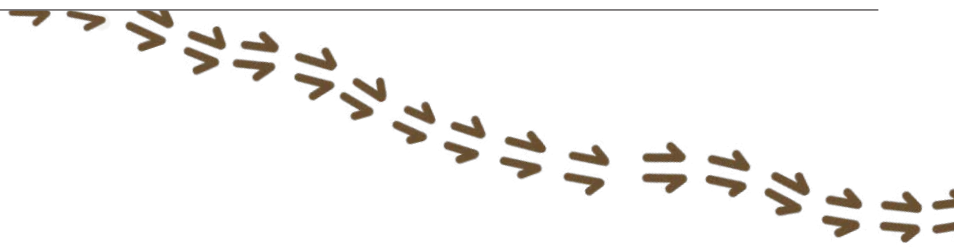
Grant funding would be available to Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians; LALCs; and other Aboriginal organisations and groups in Greater Western Sydney.

Types of projects would include:

- protection of important sites on Country, including waterways
- protection, enhancement and promotion of biodiversity or cultural values
- cultural mapping and planning of Country to support outcomes for holistic cultural landscapes
- cultural tourism opportunities
- public art and signage
- language and other cultural programs.

In addition to this program, the department will also investigate how the planning framework could better protect important Aboriginal sites.





## Action 3.4 Fund projects to extend existing education programs in Western Sydney, including education officers to provide cultural competency activities at schools and in the community

### Description of action

The department seeks to fund projects to extend existing education programs in Western Sydney, including education and engagement officers to strengthen cultural competency. Building cultural competency is about strengthening the ability to understand, respect and interact with Aboriginal people. It can take the form of various activities and include a range of topics.

The activities would take place at reserves, schools and other organisations. They would include topics such as Aboriginal history and culture, truth-telling and languages, caring for Country practices and Aboriginal biocultural knowledge.

The programs will educate the broader public on Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history as well as strengthen the connection to Country and culture for Aboriginal people.

### Proposed delivery

During the engagement sessions, participants spoke of the need to have education and engagement officers in settings that would continue the work that has already taken place over many years.

The department will fund education and engagement officers to identify gaps in knowledge and existing activities. They will help bring cultural knowledge and experience to the forefront of work within schools, organisations and community groups.

In addition to education and engagement officers, the department could also fund the extension of existing education programs to reach broader groups of people. The department recognises that several education programs exist, and the delivery of this program will build on the learnings of those programs and cooperate with them. We will co-develop this action with Aboriginal education organisations and providers as well as other key community organisations and groups.

The areas that the department will explore for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal culture and history training for organisations, including government agencies
- guided tours to educate the public on the role that traditional caring for Country practices have in maintaining biodiversity
- school excursions to national parks and conservation areas within the CPCP area to educate students on Aboriginal biocultural knowledge
- Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodian-led outreach programs that host community events where Knowledge Holders will speak.

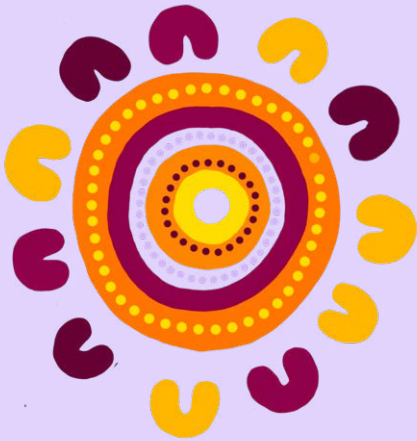




#### 4. Enhancing Aboriginal businesses, employment and training in the environmental sector

### Actions in this theme:

- 4.1 Provide funding, training and support to build capacity in Aboriginal businesses so that Aboriginal-owned businesses receive a minimum 5% expenditure
- 4.2 Investigate and fund initiatives that support Aboriginal employment and training pathways in the environmental sector.
- 4.3 Use the full extent of the procurement framework in implementing the CPCP to encourage Aboriginal businesses to take part in tendering.



The CPCP will require substantial investment in planning for Country and services, such as ecological restoration, land management, weed and pest management, fencing to protect wildlife and heritage assessments over the next 30 years.

A key focus of this Strategy is to create opportunities for economic empowerment and self-determination, where Aboriginal people have support to lead and make decisions that impact them, their families and their wider communities in Western Sydney. This was one of the key themes during the engagement in developing the CPCP. Some of the opportunities highlighted in the community feedback on the Strategy in 2021 were employment, procurement, education and upskilling, and business and revenue-generating opportunities.

Economic participation is essential for improving social outcomes for individuals and is a key factor in creating resilient and sustainable communities. The actions in this theme aim to support Aboriginal businesses and people to overcome barriers to reach better economic outcomes and ensure they will benefit from the economic opportunities arising from implementing the CPCP.

Although the department will look closely at procurement numbers, as the following actions outline, the focus will be on meaningful economic participation and viability of Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney as a measure of success.

Support available to overcome barriers to employment varies. It is widely recognised that there is a need for improved coordination and collaboration to support better economic outcomes for Aboriginal people. The design of the proposed actions in this theme will consider existing support mechanisms and coordinate and collaborate with Aboriginal and government organisations to create added value.

## Action 4.1 Provide funding, training and support to build capacity in Aboriginal businesses so that Aboriginal-owned businesses receive a minimum 5% of expenditure

### Description of action

The department recognises the role it must play in broadening economic opportunities for Aboriginal businesses and people. This Strategy commits to awarding a minimum of 5% of expenditure for services necessary to implement the CPCP to Aboriginal-owned businesses. This is 2% above the current quota under the [NSW Government's Aboriginal Procurement Policy](#) for Aboriginal-owned businesses.

The department will provide funding, training and support to build capacity in Aboriginal businesses to ensure the minimum 5% expenditure target for Aboriginal business.

The support will aim to help Aboriginal businesses overcome some of the most pressing challenges to their success. The support will gear up Aboriginal businesses in professional practices so they will be ready for tendering opportunities arising from the CPCP implementation. This could include developing and publishing a dedicated written resource that aims to build professional capacity within businesses.

We will develop a program to help existing Aboriginal-owned businesses expand and to get new Aboriginal businesses off the ground in the environmental sector. The support intends to benefit businesses and their growth so they can hire more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and benefit not only the businesses but also broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes.

## Proposed delivery

The delivery of this will encompass both business grants and capacity building. The program will:

- support businesses in strengthening business and technical skills
- upskill businesses to be more effective in government tendering processes
- finance the upgrade of equipment and non-material assets that are crucial to reinforcing the capability of businesses to be competitive.

We are piloting this action with a grant and capacity building program that we will deliver in partnership with YARPA NSW Indigenous Business and Employment Hub (see Case Study 3).

Several organisations and programs are providing employment and business support to Aboriginal businesses in Western Sydney, such as:

- LALC programs such as NSWALC's LALC Business Enterprise Fund
- YARPA NSW Indigenous Business and Employment Hub
- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce Inc
- the Aboriginal Business Advisory Initiative.

The department will seek expressions of interest from relevant organisations with which to partner to deliver this action. We will also draw on networks and lessons learned from previous programs, such as the pilot program with YARPA, when designing and developing the action.

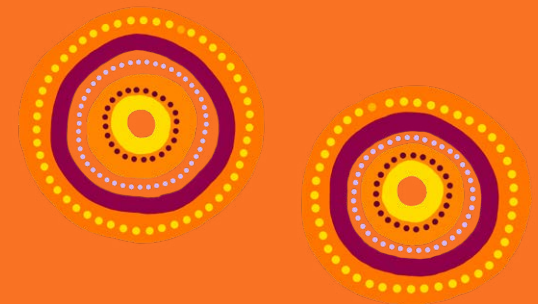
## Case study 3: Caring for Country Business Development Grant Program

In 2023, the department partnered with YARPA Indigenous Business and Employment Hub to support new and existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses by delivering a Caring for Country Business Development Grant Program. The program has been co-developed with YARPA and has an overall budget of \$700,000 to distribute grants to eligible businesses.

The objectives of the Caring for Country Business Development Grants Program are:

- to build capacity and gear up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses for the opportunities arising from the early implementation phase of the CPCP and over the next 3 decades
- to enhance the readiness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses to compete for future tenders under the CPCP.

The program will aim to tackle some of the most common challenges to the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. This pilot program and partnership are first steps to ensuring a minimum of 5% of expenditure for goods and services necessary for implementing the CPCP are provided to First Nations businesses.



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## Action 4.2 Investigate and fund initiatives that support Aboriginal employment and training pathways in the environmental sector

### Description of action

During engagement with Aboriginal communities, we heard about some of the ongoing barriers for Aboriginal people in employment and training. These include insufficient access to relevant training that leads to meaningful employment pathways, a lack of supportive workplaces, few long-term job opportunities or opportunities for career progression into management roles. The department will fund initiatives that support Aboriginal businesses and provide employment and training pathways in the environmental sector.

This could include supporting Aboriginal people and workplaces by providing information and support that increases understanding about how different cultural backgrounds can impact the communication of expectations in the workplace.

Employment and career opportunities in Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities will improve social outcomes for individuals and are key factors in creating resilient and sustainable communities. Supporting employment opportunities in the environmental sector is also a way to support greater connection to Country, support the implementation of the CPCP and enhance the health and wellbeing of Country and people.

### Proposed delivery

Several training and employment service providers in Western Sydney are already delivering these types of services and programs to support Aboriginal employment, such as:

- Kimberwalli
- OCHRE Opportunity Hubs
- New Careers for Aboriginal People (NCAP)
- YARPA NSW Indigenous Business and Employment Hub
- TAFE
- Western Sydney University.

We will work with training and employment service providers to investigate and fund initiatives that support Aboriginal employment and training pathways to support conservation and Aboriginal employment outcomes of the CPCP. We will seek expressions of interest from organisations and service providers to deliver the action in partnership with the department.

We will co-develop the implementation of this action with training and employment service providers. This will entail mapping opportunities and gaps, identifying ways to strengthen and broaden ongoing initiatives, and building a road map to prioritise areas where additional support will bring the biggest benefits for the Aboriginal communities in the CPCP area.


The program will fund courses and degrees to support employment in areas such as biodiversity assessment method (BAM), environmental and cultural signage, heritage assessment, natural resource management, hazard reduction, traditional fire management, GIS and water care. Where possible, this program will also support training courses and tertiary education that equips participants with skills to start and manage their own businesses.

Although training courses already exist, the department recognises that employment opportunities do not always follow. So, the program will have another stream to support Aboriginal businesses, including small businesses, and provide workforce training, coaching, mentoring, internships and secondment opportunities. These can be effective ways of enhancing positive long-term employment opportunities.

Through this initiative, the department will foster growth in employment opportunities that are inclusive of the range of diverse Aboriginal-identified applicants from the CPCP. We will ensure that we will widely advertise any opportunities arising from this initiative and that they will have a transparent selection process.

The department will also conduct or fund a partner to conduct a mapping exercise to determine the number of and type of employment opportunities that could potentially come from the CPCP over the duration of the Strategy from 2024 to 2033. Further exercises could also involve looking at retention of Aboriginal employees hired from employment opportunities created through the CPCP. We will share the outcome of this exercise with service providers involved in this initiative. The results will inform the employment and training initiatives the department supports.

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## Action 4.3 Use the full extent of the procurement framework in implementing the CPCP to encourage Aboriginal businesses to take part in tendering

### Description of action

The department recognises that government tendering processes could be improved to support Aboriginal businesses. Currently, some tender requests might be designed in a way that hinders Aboriginal businesses from taking part.

When planning and designing CPCP tendering processes, we will use the full extent of the procurement framework of the NSW Government and the department to encourage and support Aboriginal businesses to take part. We have developed an internal CPCP Aboriginal Procurement Policy to help ensure we can do this.

### Proposed delivery

The department will collaboratively engage organisations supporting Aboriginal businesses to investigate the challenges in detail and develop options to overcome them. To deliver the action, the department is exploring setting procurement targets for involving Aboriginal businesses and people in works conducted as part of the CPCP. The aim is that the targets will increase over time as the capacity of Western Sydney's Aboriginal businesses strengthens. We recommend a review of the targets in August 2027.

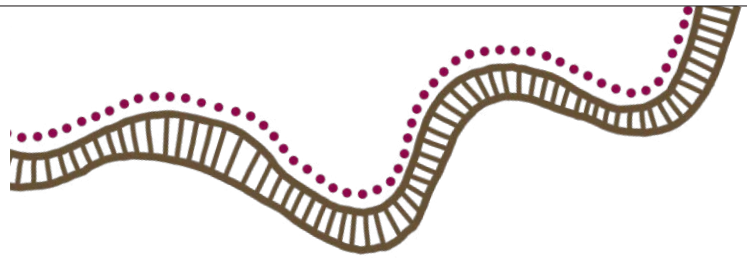
The targets are:

- at least 5% of CPCP total expenditure on services procured by August 2027 is spent with Aboriginal businesses and that there is an increasing trend annually
- at least 5% of the number of businesses procured to provide services by August 2027 under the CPCP are Aboriginal businesses
- 100% of contracts meet at least 3% Aboriginal participation in procurements valued at \$680,000 and higher
- 100% of services are procured in line with the Aboriginal Procurement Policy.

We are committed to:

- designing the tendering process to maximise Aboriginal involvement, including considering ICIP and cultural safety
- providing constructive feedback to all tenderers on their tender responses. As stated by the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, we should provide this feedback with a view to building the capability of Aboriginal businesses to apply successfully for future opportunities. The department will also seek confidential feedback from tenderers on their experience of the procurement process so we can continuously improve
- ensuring that people designing requests for tenders for the CPCP are aware of all the possibilities the procurement framework has to offer, that they have read and understand the department's ICIP Protocol and that no educational gaps exist in the procuring teams
- ensuring that we consider procurement more holistically, with procurement teams operating with a better awareness of the constraints on Aboriginal businesses.

# Delivering the Strategy



The department is committed to delivering ongoing meaningful engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Sydney throughout the delivery of the Strategy. Understanding Aboriginal perspectives and empowering Western Sydney's Aboriginal communities are key to successful delivery of the Strategy.

## How we will engage and partner to deliver the Strategy

### Key partners

The department is looking to continue collaborating and building partnerships with several partners to shape the delivery of a Strategy that will benefit Aboriginal communities and respond to their needs. These partners include:

- Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra Traditional Custodians
- Aboriginal Land Councils – NSWALC, Deerubbin LALC, Tharawal LALC and Gandangarra LALC
- RAPs
- Aboriginal corporations and businesses
- Aboriginal peak bodies and groups
- Aboriginal service providers
- Aboriginal communities
- local councils
- government agencies
- educational and training institutions
- any other relevant collaborators identified through developing and implementing the Strategy.

### Engagement principles

Engagement principles we will consider when delivering the Strategy include:

- **Recognise the importance of engaging with Country** – The department knows that the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people relies on the health and wellbeing of Country. To achieve healthy Country, the department will actively support engagement with and access to Country for Aboriginal communities.

- **Empower Aboriginal voices and perspectives** – The department recognises the importance of the perspectives and voices of Aboriginal people being heard and empowers the community to influence decisions through engagement processes.
- **Promote Aboriginal voices and perspectives** – The department will elevate and magnify the perspectives and voices of Aboriginal people in engaging on the Strategy during its delivery.
- **Promote respect and cultural safety** – The department recognises that engagement needs to be conducted with an understanding of the context of Country, communities and cultures in the area and promotes a culturally safe environment.
- **Respect ICIP** – The department respects the rights that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to protect their traditional arts and culture.
- **Build relationships** – The department recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are firmly founded in relationships. The department will establish and maintain meaningful ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- **Enable access to information** – The department will provide access to up-to-date information on the Strategy and use multiple communication tools to aid communities' understanding and knowledge.
- **Be accountable and transparent** – The department will act with transparency in its work to be accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- **Prioritise responsiveness and continuous improvement** – The department will provide regular updates to participants during the engagement process and proactively seek and respond to feedback.

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## Evaluation and continuous improvement

The CPCP has a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the realisation of the commitments, actions and outcomes. The framework will inform the use of adaptive management as well as the reporting needs to the government and community.

The CPCP's evaluation program tracks progress of the conservation program over the life of the CPCP. It collects and monitors data to consistently evaluate the impact of actions and to ensure the success of the CPCP.

The actions under this Strategy contribute to the overall outcomes of the CPCP. The department will collaborate with Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney to co-develop an evaluation and monitoring plan that will help assess the progress of the intended Aboriginal outcomes. Developing an evaluation and monitoring plan can help to reach the following goals:

- Aboriginal people and others that the Strategy affects are engaged early on evaluation questions, approaches, methods and how results will be interpreted and distributed
- the right information is collected from the start of implementing the Strategy
- the Strategy and its approach can be adjusted based on a comprehensive evidence base
- risks are managed efficiently, and implementation practices are continuously improved.

## Reporting

The department is committed to assurance reporting, including annual progress updates on the Strategy's outputs, outcomes and objectives. The department will also collate finer scale reporting for each action of this Strategy from relevant delivery partners to support implementation decisions and adaptive management.

We will prepare a comprehensive internal review of the status of the Strategy, its implementation and interim outcomes every 2.5 years.

We will make the progress updates as well as other relevant data and information, publicly available on the department's website and published in accordance with the NSW Government's accessibility requirements.

The 2.5-yearly reporting will coincide with the time frames for the stages of the Strategy's implementation engagement model. This will provide useful information that can be used to evaluate the outcomes and outputs of the initiatives and programs that are in place during each stage of the Strategy.

## Governance and funding

The department is the agency responsible for implementing the Strategy and the CPCP. The department's responsibilities include central coordination and management of implementation, including reporting requirements to ensure consistency with the monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework; contract and grant management; preparation of reports for publication; and management of potential compliance breaches.

### Governance

The department has established an Executive Implementation Committee with executive-level representatives from key government agencies. This committee will ensure the CPCP's commitments are fulfilled and its outcomes delivered by overseeing the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and adaptive management processes. The committee will be the key decision-making authority to determine appropriate actions on matters raised and whether issues need to be escalated for ministerial attention. The Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney will be empowered through consultation and engagement, as we have outlined here, to inform the Executive Implementation Committee to ensure the successful delivery of the Strategy and the CPCP more broadly.

The department will engage with and work alongside the Aboriginal communities of Western Sydney to advocate for and elevate their voices within the department at the highest level of decision-making in the delivery of the Strategy and the CPCP. We will also collaborate with delivery partners and other agencies to achieve this outcome.

### Funding

CPCP funding will fund the Strategy and its actions.

The department is responsible for implementing the CPCP over its life to 2056. This includes ensuring that funding is available to implement the conservation program and that the department tracks, reports, and accounts for the CPCP's actions. The government is providing up-front funding to support the CPCP's priority actions, and program costs will be recovered over time through contributions from residential, commercial and industrial developers in the 4 Western Sydney nominated areas.

The department will regularly review the CPCP's resourcing requirements to ensure it can adapt to changing circumstances and ensure the CPCP succeeds in delivering its conservation program over the long term.



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# Find out more

You can find more information about the Strategy and delivery of its key initiatives on the [department's website](#).

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## Glossary



### **Aboriginal Land Agreements (ALAs)**

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 allows the NSW Government and Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) to enter into voluntary and legally binding agreements to resolve land claims, reducing the need for costly and lengthy land claim determinations. These are called Aboriginal Land Agreements (ALAs).

### **Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ALRA)**

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ALRA) provides land rights for Aboriginal people in NSW. Aboriginal Land Councils constituted under the ALRA in NSW can claim land as compensation for historic dispossession of land and to support Aboriginal communities' social and economic development.

### **Aboriginal Procurement Policy (APP)**

The Aboriginal Procurement Policy (APP) will contribute to the NSW Government's strategic economic policy of growing NSW's first economy. The APP supports the NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal Affairs, OCHRE, and is a key deliverable under the Aboriginal Economic Development framework.

### **Biodiversity stewardship agreement (BSA)**

A biodiversity stewardship agreement (BSA) is a cooperative agreement between a landholder and the NSW Government. The landholder voluntarily enters into the agreement and manages the biodiversity stewardship site in accordance with an agreed management plan. A BSA is registered on the title of the property and protects the site's biodiversity values in perpetuity with a secure, ongoing funding source. The agreement doesn't have to cover all land within a property.

### **Biodiversity stewardship program**

The biodiversity stewardship program is a key component of the CPCP that will contribute to in-protecting habitat for threatened species and ecological communities in perpetuity. The CPCP's biodiversity stewardship program will provide up-front funding for business cases and biodiversity assessments to support landholders entering into biodiversity stewardship agreements, where this investment can be recouped through the later sale of biodiversity credits to the department.

### **Co-design**

The creation of an equal-voice, shared ownership of outcomes and reciprocal relationship between participants, enabling the design and usually the delivery of a service, outcome or product in partnership with each other.

### **Conservation land**

Conservation land comprises sites of high biodiversity value that the CPCP will protect or establish to offset impacts to biodiversity from development. Conservation land will protect biodiversity in perpetuity and will include reserves or biodiversity stewardship sites, including locations where ecological restoration may occur.

### **Conservation program**

The conservation program will establish an enhanced network of conservation land in the CPCP area to improve ecological resilience and function at a landscape scale and in perpetuity. The conservation program will deliver commitments to protect threatened ecological communities, species and their habitats. It will also improve overall ecological resilience and provide an enduring conservation legacy for the people of Western Sydney. The conservation program seeks to meet legislative requirements under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW) (BC Act) and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act).



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## Country

Country includes earth, waters and sky. It encompasses tangible and intangible aspects, knowledge and cultural practices, belonging and identity, wellbeing and relationships. People are part of Country.<sup>23</sup>

## Cultural safety

An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.<sup>24</sup>

## Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP)

The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) provides biodiversity approvals to enable new housing, jobs and infrastructure in the Western Parkland City. The CPCP will offset impacts to native vegetation from new development by protecting important biodiversity through a network of private and public conservation land across Western Sydney.

## Aboriginal business

An Aboriginal business is a business that has at least 50% Aboriginal ownership.

## Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP)

Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) incorporates both tangible and intangible elements – the object or material and the knowledge incorporated within it as well as the artwork, iconography and cultural practice embedded within it. This heritage is living and evolving, handed down from generation to generation, inextricably connected to Country, and will continue to evolve for generations to come.

ICIP, and the roles and responsibilities to look after culture and pass it on, come from Country. They come from particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and their lands or waters. Many generations may contribute to the development of ICIP. In this way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage is communally owned. Current Australian legislation often does not recognise the communal nature of this ownership, demonstrating the need to articulate the department's commitment to protecting ICIP legally and morally through the development of an ICIP Protocol.

The Department of Planning and Environment developed an ICIP Protocol in April 2023. This resource has been developed to inform all programs across the department.

## Partnership

An informal or formal arrangement between any type of individual or organisation where parties agree to transparency and cooperation to advance their mutual interests.

## Traditional Custodians

A Traditional Custodian (sometimes called a Traditional Owner, though the terms have different legal implications, with some communities having specific preferences about which to use) is an Aboriginal person or group of Aboriginal people who have ongoing traditional and cultural connections to specific geographical areas or Country. They have a cultural association with that Country, which derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area. Traditional Custodians may opt to represent themselves as individuals or as part of a representative group.

Traditional Custodians hold profound custodial responsibility and cultural obligations in relation to their Country, including their singular cultural right to speak for that Country inherited from their ancestors.

## Western Parkland City

The Western Parkland City covers 8 local government areas including Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly.

## Western Sydney City Deal

The Western Sydney City Deal is a partnership between the Australian Government, the NSW Government and the 8 local councils of the Western Parkland City (Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly). The Western Sydney City Deal includes 38 commitments.

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<sup>23</sup> Dr Danièle Hromek developed this definition, which was also used as the definition for Country in the [Connecting with Country Framework](#), Government Architect NSW, Issue no. 02 – 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, R. 'Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice?'

