



Gariwerd Wimmera **RECONCILIATION NETWORK**

5 November 2024

Draft Dyurrite Cultural Landscape (Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park) Management Plan Update

Since the release of the Draft Management Plan for Dyurrite (Arapiles-Tooan) last night (Monday evening) we have received some questions which hopefully the information below will help to answer. Some questions we have received:

1. Why has GWRN been involved in the recreational use assessments at Dyurrite?

The Gariwerd Wimmera Reconciliation Network (GWRN) is a location-based reconciliation network with the following vision and purpose:

Vision:

The Gariwerd and Wimmera cultural landscapes, communities and visitors are strengthened by respectful and enduring relationships between Traditional Owners and non-indigenous people. We acknowledge our true history, celebrate Culture, Country and knowledge, and support Traditional Owners' self-determination, so we can proudly share a future together.

Purposes:

1. Build respectful and enduring relationships between members and Traditional Owners of the Gariwerd and Wimmera cultural landscapes.
2. Provide our members with opportunities to learn about reconciliation, and what Country and Culture means to Traditional Owners.
3. Engage with recreational user groups and other relevant stakeholders to promote reconciliation.
4. Respect and promote the cultural values and heritage of Traditional Owners and the laws that protect them.

In late 2020, GWRN was invited by Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC), as the Traditional Owners of Dyurrite, to provide factual information about rock climbing and bouldering activities at Dyurrite with the purpose of enabling BGLC to make



more informed decisions about the future management of their Cultural Heritage at Dyurrite.

GWRN was invited to participate in the assessments at Dyurrite as a trusted, reconciliation-focused resource, in recognition that our members' knowledge and experience allows us to bring information on climbing practices to the conversation.

GWRN's involvement also follows on from the recreational use assessment process at Gunigalg / Taipan Wall that was conducted in conjunction with the Gariwerd Traditional Owners. This process, the first of its kind, led to the partial re-opening of Taipan Wall to climbing in December 2022.

This piece of work is about supporting Traditional Owner self-determination, as outlined in our vision and sits comfortably under the purposes of GWRN and is a value that we respect.

2. What was involved in the recreational use assessments at Dyurrite?

BGLC asked GWRN to provide detailed, route by route, information on rock climbing and bouldering activities at certain / some areas at Dyurrite. Information provided included: who uses the area, how people access the base of the routes, undertake climbs (i.e., ascend and descend), move around the areas, the proximity of documented climbs / boulder problems to cultural values, and any scope to reduce the likelihood of impact on Cultural Values. The process occurred at individual climbing sites where cultural heritage values have been identified and where BGLC had requested information to assist decision making.

The purpose of the assessments was to help BGLC understand what activities occur, and where, and to support informed decisions about the best protection approaches and future management decisions that may allow recreational use to continue and co-exist with protection of cultural values.

Undertaking the recreational use assessments was a big task in terms of time and commitment from volunteer members. In early 2021 as part of our decision making to agree to this work we sought an indication of broader support for our involvement. We received broad support and therefore agreed to be part of the recreational use assessment process.

In undertaking the recreational use assessments, GWRN has not been involved in any decision making about access or involved in any discussion or decision about the draft Management Plan at Dyurrite – our role was to provide BGLC with information to inform their decision making and to act as a resource, regardless of any outcomes.

Check out our earlier comms and updates re this process on our website from [2020](#), [2021](#), and [2022](#)



3. What we didn't cover

During the recreational use assessments GWRN was not asked to, and therefore did not comment, on any environmental values, other recreational uses or infrastructure present at Dyurrite.

As outlined above, GWRN did not advocate for, or recommend outcomes for, particular areas or climbs. We only looked at those parts of Dyurrite that we were asked to and documented information, as detailed above, that is publicly available information in any climbing guidebook/document.

GWRN's work was at the request of, and has been designed to support BGLC in their decision making. We do not, and did not, provide information directly to Parks Victoria or make decisions with Parks Victoria - including any proposed changes to the Management Plan.

We did not act on behalf of the climbing community or claim to act as 'consultation' with the climbing community. We have always been clear that our relationship as a reconciliation network is with the Traditional Owners. Climbing Victoria is the peak body for outdoor climbing in Victoria.

4. Can we share the recreation use assessment?

The recreational use assessment report was provided to BGLC for their use, it contains information on cultural heritage values and it is the property of BGLC. This is not something that GWRN can or should share and we respect the trust shown by Traditional Owners in enabling this work to occur. This information can only rightfully be shared by the Traditional Owners.

5. Why did the cultural heritage assessments take place?

Dyurrite is a cultural landscape and a significant site for the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples. BGLC worked with Parks Victoria to undertake more detailed cultural heritage assessments at Dyurrite following on from rediscoveries in 2020. The rediscoveries of heritage values help build a clearer picture and a deeper understanding of how the Wotjobaluk peoples have interacted and connected with the landscape for thousands of years and of its ongoing cultural significance to the Wotjobaluk people.

The rediscoveries provide an opportunity for us all to learn of the past and ongoing significance of Dyurrite to Wotjobaluk peoples and to have a deeper understanding of this amazing place that is enjoyed by many.



Be respectful, be kind.

The process of cultural heritage assessments, closures, recreation use assessments and now proposed draft management plan changes at Dyurrite have taken many years and created considerable uncertainty, distress and pain for many. Please be mindful of your wellbeing, as well as that of others, support those around you and consider the perspectives of everyone in this shared space.

5 November 2024

