



Explore how Indigenous Knowledges
and cultural land management can
shape a more sustainable future.

“ The land is the
source of the law,
land has us embedded in it,
land has thrown us up –
with the water we drink
we take the characteristics
of land up itself, genetically.

This is scientific,
not just spiritual.

We are genetically
bound up in country.”

AUNTY MARY GRAHAM

Kombumerri / Wakka Wakka

Adjunct Associate Professor, University of Queensland

Quote from Heritage, Indigenous Doing and Wellbeing: Voice of Country.
Edited by Norm Sheehan, David S. Jones, Josh Creighton and Sheldon Harrington.



Tracing the past, Shaping the future.

This exhibit contrasts the Bundjalung people's Country-centred worldview with today's Eurocentric approaches, examining changes in our physical environment from pre-colonial times to now. Through the lens of plant communities, we invite you to reflect on how we can learn from the past to guide our stewardship of the land moving forward.

Earlier this year, we asked the Lismore community about their vision for our town's future, gathering ideas through meetings, small group chats and many cups of tea. One of the most consistent themes across these discussions was the opportunity to shape our future through Indigenous Knowledges and culture.

This dovetailed with the NSW Government's commitment to ensuring that all built environment projects in the state are developed with a Country-centred approach, guided by Aboriginal people, who know that if we care for Country, Country will care for us.

But what does it really mean to work with Indigenous Knowledges?

What do people mean by cultural land management?

How can — and should — Indigenous custodianship integrate with European concepts of land ownership, planning and management systems?

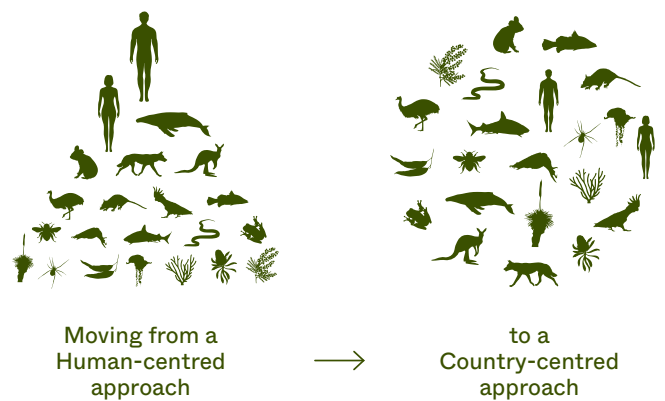
This exhibit explores these questions by examining how the physical environment has changed from pre-colonial times to the present day. We do this through the lens of plant communities, contrasting the environmental conditions shaped by the Country-centred worldview of the Bundjalung people with those shaped by the dominant Eurocentric, human-centred perspective of today.

Dan Etheridge
Engagement Director,
Living Lab Northern Rivers

Josh Creighton
Agency in Design

Human-centred or Country-centred

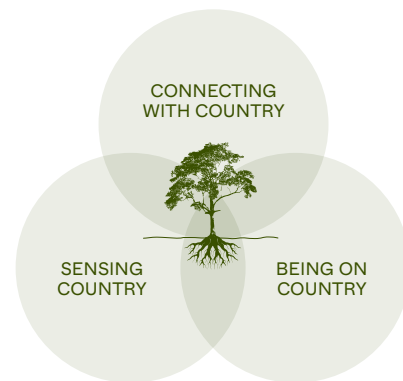
This diagram is a simple representation of a complex idea, illustrating the fundamental change in thinking that connecting with Country requires. A human-centred approach is illustrated by a hierarchy that prioritises humans over non-humans and Country, whereas a Country-centred approach is represented as a circular network of integrated relationships.



Source: Diagram adapted from German architect Steffen Lehmann's 'Eco v Ego' diagram, 2010

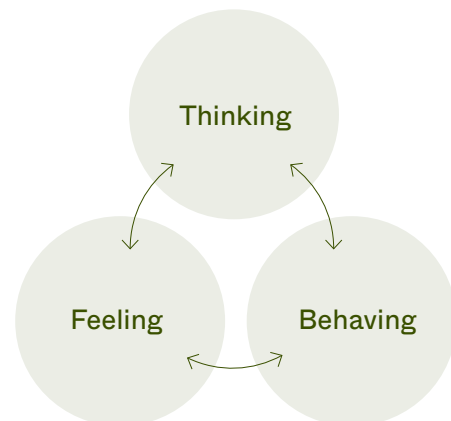
Cultural knowledge systems

Aboriginal knowledge is developed, experienced and shared through cultural practices of communing with Country, sensing Country, and being on Country. Each of these practices is interlinked, and each informs and deepens cultural knowledge.



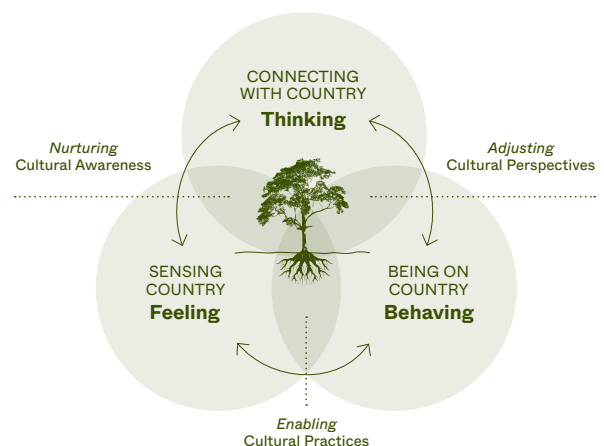
Behavioural change

Changing established ways of working is challenging. This diagram shows how our processes of thinking, feeling and behaving are interlinked.



Combining knowledge systems

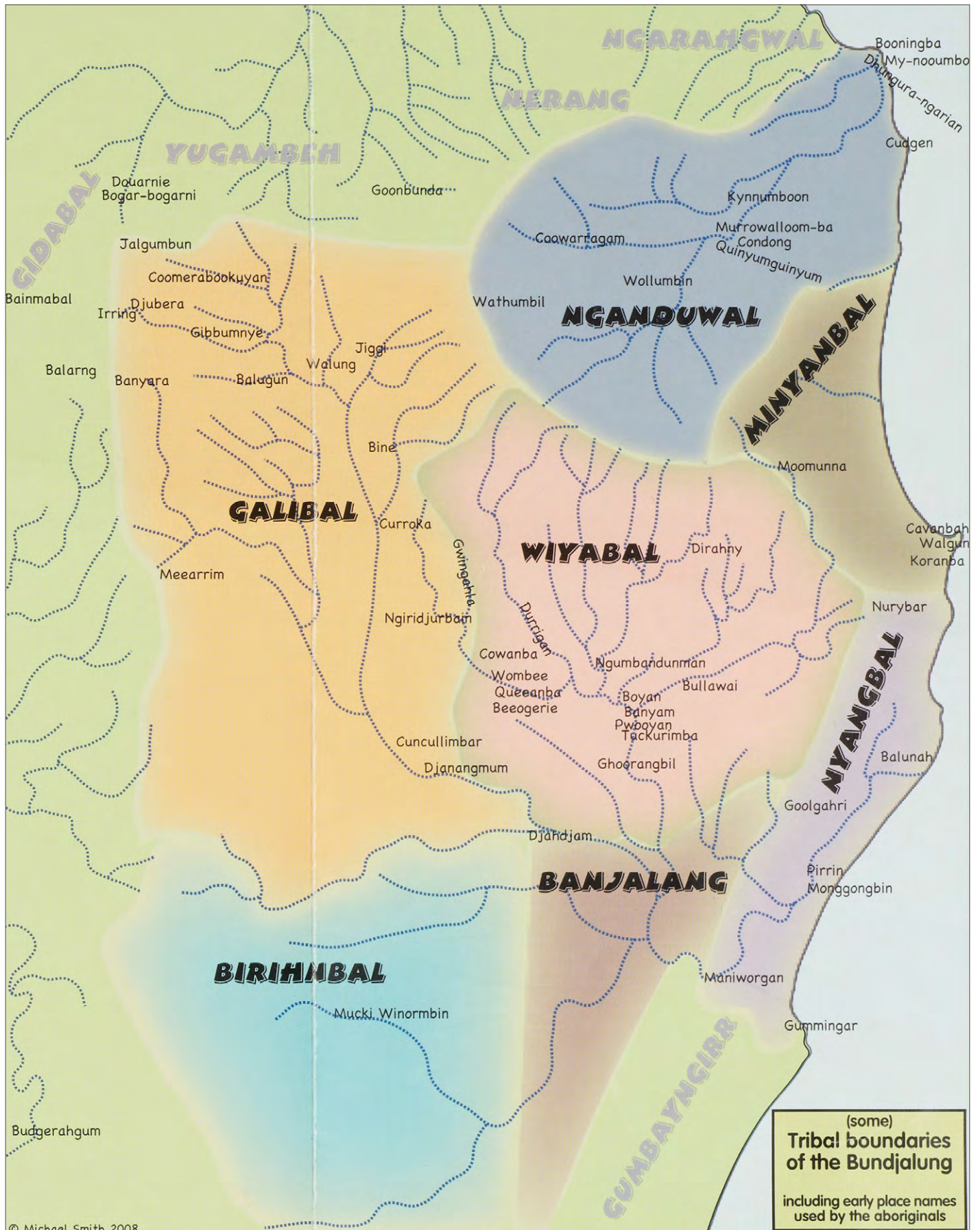
There are similarities between these systems of cultural practice and behavioural change. This diagram combines cultural practice and behavioural change systems.



All diagrams above feature in the 'Connecting with Country Framework'; used with permission from Government Architect NSW.

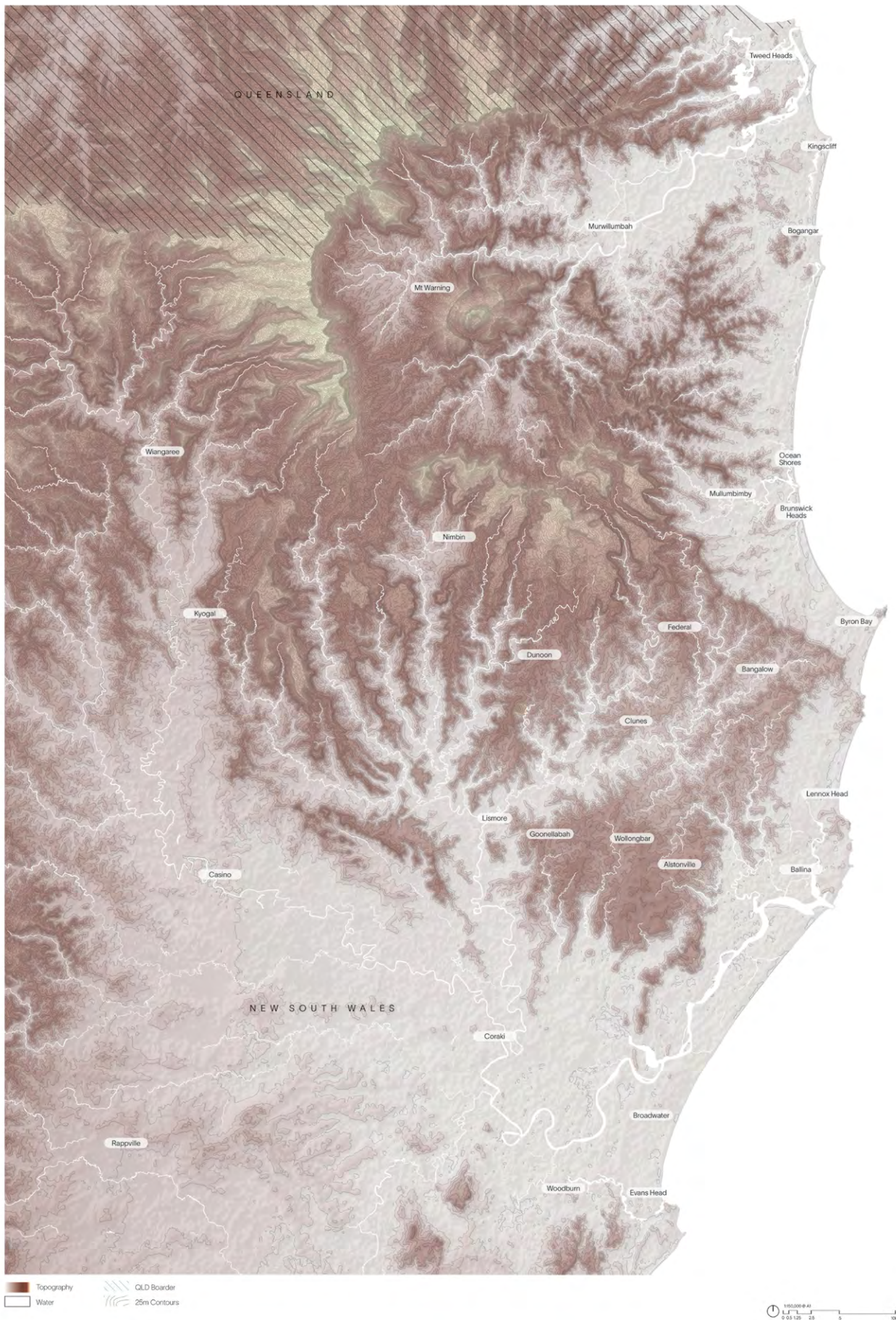
Language groups in Bundjalung Country

This map shows the distribution of language groups in Bundjalung Country. It includes place names used by Bundjalung people. We acknowledge that mapping in this format is challenging and that some First Nations people may not feel represented or agree with all of the information shared.



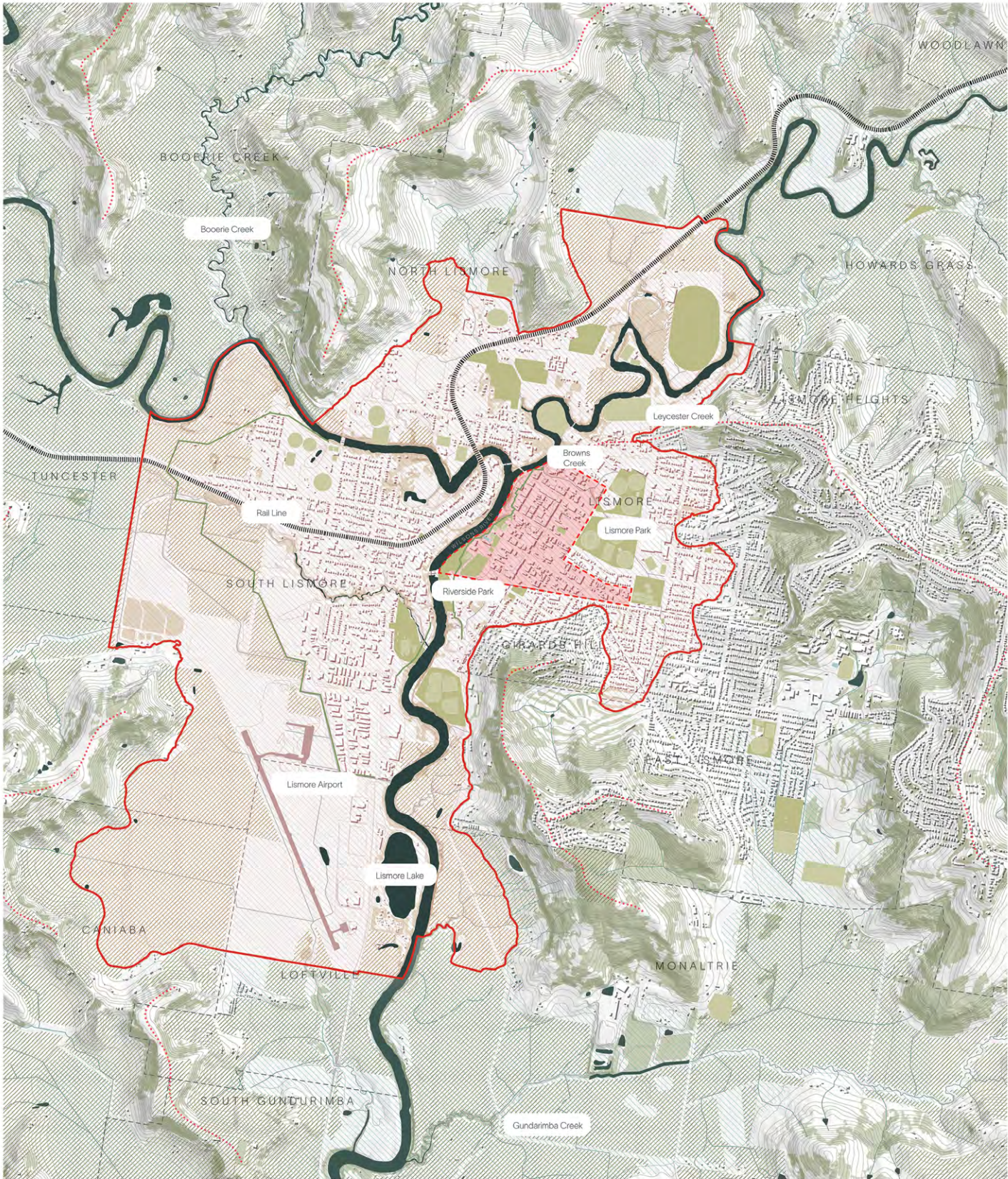
The Northern Rivers with Wollumbin at its centre

This map uses darker shading to show areas of higher elevation. This makes clear the extensive networks of streams and creeks which flow into rivers as rainwater, travelling across the catchments and into the ocean.



Focus area for Look Ahead: Community design for Lismore

This map shows the focus area for the Lismore planning work Living Lab Northern Rivers did this year. We focused on those areas most impacted by floodwaters in 2022.



An early example of a government generated map showing land use and land ownership in Lismore.



Vegetation mapping

Maps, like the ones you'll see in this exhibition, come from a particular way of seeing the world – a European perspective. But there are many different ways that different cultures understand and represent landscapes, and cartography (or map making) is just one of them. It's important to note that maps have often been used to justify the dispossession of land and erase peoples' ties to place. This has been especially true in Australia.

The two maps presented here (on the following pages) show the same area of land at different points in time. They are also designed to show only vegetation communities and they do not show any roads, buildings or other features of this landscape.

The first map shows the vegetation communities that research suggests were present prior to the arrival of European settlers around 1842. The second shows vegetation communities today in the same area.

What map shows a landscape that was culturally managed with a Country-centred approach?

What map shows a landscape changed by a human-centred approach?

Prior to 1842



The method uses on-ground surveys, aerial and satellite photograph interpretation and landscape models to map the most likely plant community types. While much of the map is regional-scale information, the maps overall spatial precision (line work) is about 5 metres. Spatial precision is facilitated by computer-generated feature recognition software. As the data is predictive and uses computer-generated features, it is not entirely accurate.

State Government of NSW and NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water 2022, NSW State Vegetation Type Map (Pre-Clearing), accessed from The Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data Portal [https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset/d585bcf5-9adb-444e-be36-69b3aa5a3cd8], date accessed 2024-09-26.

Vegetation in Lismore today



Vegetation Mapping

This map uses the SVMT data as a base and crops it using the Local Lismore Government Area (LGA) vegetation mapping. This data was collected using image analysis, air photo interpretation and field inspections.

Data sources:

State Government of NSW and NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water 2022, NSW State Vegetation Type Map (Pre-Clearing), accessed from The Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data Portal [<https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset/d585bcf5-9adb-444e-be36-69b3aa5a3cd8>], date accessed 2024-09-26. Stewart, B., McKinley, A., Murray, A., and Hall, P. 2011. Vegetation mapping for the Lismore Local Government Area. Unpublished report for Lismore City Council. Landmark Ecological Services Pty Ltd, Suffolk Park.



Sowing the future

Aboriginal and Western Knowledge systems have a lot in common: both rely on observation, experimentation, recognising patterns, testing ideas and drawing on creativity and intuition. Each way of knowing offers valuable insights into how we interpret and connect with landscapes.

In this exhibit, we've recreated sections of plant life as they might have existed in North Lismore before colonisation. By looking at these diverse plant communities, we invite you to reflect on how we value and connect with this place. It's a chance to explore different ways of seeing the land, while acknowledging the important cultural differences in how we understand and relate to Country.

An invitation

Elle Davidson, Balanggarra
Director, Zion Engagement and Planning
Aboriginal Planning Lecturer, University of Sydney

The different sections in this exhibit invite us to trace the past to help shape the future of North Lismore. By reflecting on history, we can envision a future where Bundjalung Knowledges lead the way in restoring Country.

By looking at the damage caused by past land use practices, we can see how European approaches to land management have often contributed to the extremity of natural disasters, with devastating outcomes for Country and the broader community.

While extreme weather events occurred long before colonisation, First Nations communities had a deep Knowledge of Country's natural cycles. This understanding helped them build resilience and adapt, moving away from areas likely to be impacted, thanks to the temporary nature of their built environment.

We invite you to imagine a future for North Lismore that prioritises natural systems, centres Indigenous Knowledges, and draws inspiration from the plant communities that can help heal Country.

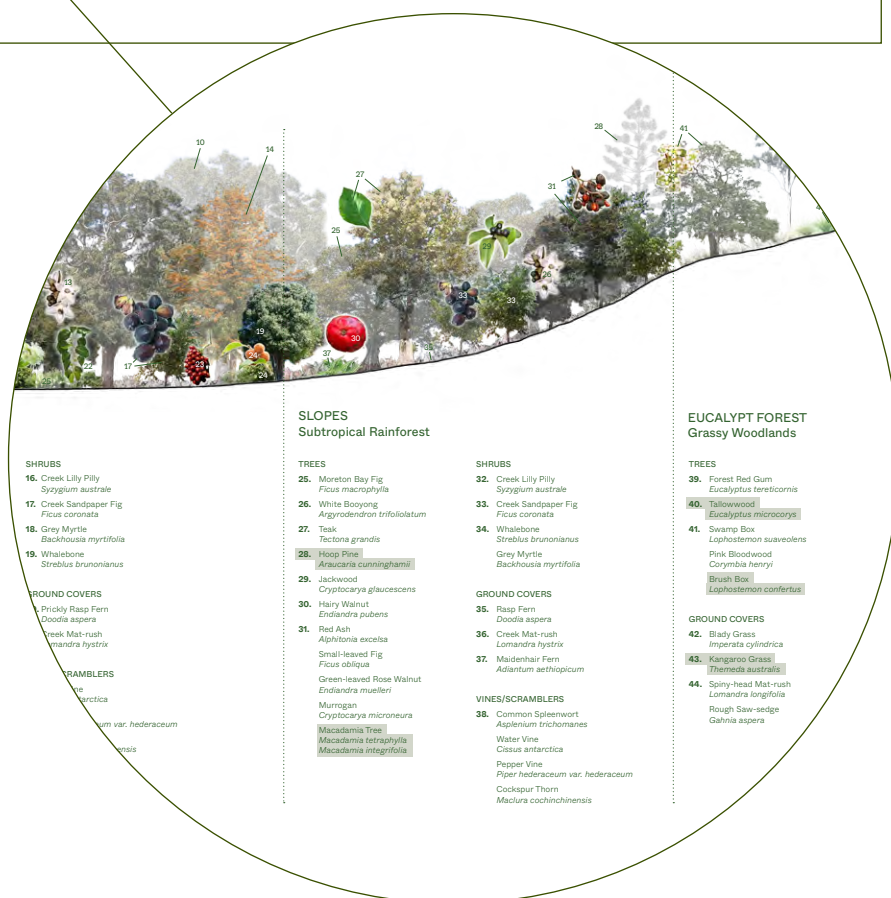
One landscape, two ways of seeing

Click below to download an A3 copy
of the plant species diagram.

[Download your copy](#)



Note: Contact us for a larger file size of the A3 poster.



Deep roots, enduring stories

Explore how these native plants shape Bundjalung Country’s past, present and future. From sustaining ecosystems to deepening cultural ties, each species tells a story of resilience, connection and renewal.

Images courtesy of Nan and Hugh Nicholson, and Silas Telford.
Bundjalung plant name source: bundjalung.dalang.com.au

1. GURAYIR / BRUSH BOX

Battle of the Brush Box

A prized shade tree, and valued over eucalyptus for rarely shedding limbs.

In 1979, the Brush Box found itself at the heart of the historic Terania Creek protests – Australia’s first forest blockade. The loggers primary target was the Brush Box (a hardwood rainforest tree), which stood as a boundary species, marking the delicate transition between rainforest and eucalypt forests.

Protesters recognised the importance of protecting these trees, understanding that the destruction of the Brush Box could lead to further degradation of the rainforest ecosystem. Defending them became symbolic of preserving the biodiversity and integrity of the entire forest.

The successful protection of these Brush Box trees at Terania Creek wasn’t just about saving a single species. It laid the groundwork for the creation of Nightcap National Park in 1983 and later recognition of the area as a World Heritage Gondwana Rainforest site – a legacy of conservation that still endures today.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Gurayir
SCIENTIFIC NAME: <i>Lophostemon confertus</i>
FAMILY: Myrtaceae
OTHER NAMES: Pink box, Scrub box
Found in rainforests, wet sclerophyll forests and moist open forests, from Port Stephens to Cooktown.

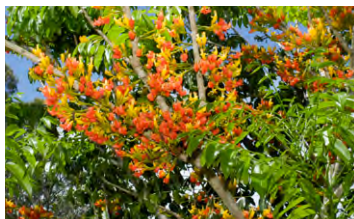
2. BUGAM / BLACK BEAN

A Black Bean for a boat

The Bugam tree, or Black Bean, has been an important food source for Indigenous people for over 2000 years. Its toxic seeds, when safely prepared, were used to make bush damper, sustaining Indigenous people on long journeys, especially during times of ceremony. The Bugam tree is deeply connected to waterways, with its canoe-shaped pod naturally travelling along rivers to disperse.

But Bugam didn't move only with water. Indigenous people carried the seeds along Dreaming tracks and Songlines, spreading them across the landscape from Cape York to northern NSW.

Today, every Bugam tree in NSW can be traced back to a common ancestor from the wet tropics of Queensland – evidence of the deep bond between culture and environment.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Bugam

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Castanospermum australe*

FAMILY: Leguminosae

OTHER NAMES: Moreton Bay Bean, Beantree, Moreton Bay Chestnut.

Found scattered through the rainforest regions from Lismore to Iron Range Cape York Peninsula.

3. BANBUN / KANGAROO GRASS

Guardians of the grassy islands

Often overlooked due to its common appearance, Kangaroo Grass has long been central to Aboriginal land management, thriving in grassy woodlands shaped by cultural fire practices. Across the landscapes of north-eastern NSW, grassy woodlands now exist as remnant "islands", surrounded by rainforest and wet forests. These ecosystems, like those at Dorrobee Grass Reserve, rely on regular fire to stay healthy.

Once used as gathering places and travel routes by Aboriginal people, these grassy pathways are home to rare and culturally significant species. The long-term health of Kangaroo Grass depends on cultural fire, reinforcing the deep connection between Country and traditional practices that have nurtured the land for thousands of years.

Kangaroo Grass it is extremely drought-tolerant, with roots extending over 1 metre deep.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Banbun

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Themeda triandra*

FAMILY: Poaceae

Found in grassy woodlands and native grasslands across Northern New South Wales and much of Australia.

6. GUDJIN / SMOOTH DAVIDSON PLUM

Rare fruit of the rainforest

Native to the coastal rainforests of northern New South Wales, the endangered Smooth Davidson Plum stands out with its glossy, toothed leaves and dense crown. Reaching heights of 5–12 metres, this slow-growing, slender tree is a striking figure in the forest landscape.

Though scattered from Queensland’s Tallebudgera and Numinbah Valleys to Tintenbar in NSW, the Smooth Davidson Plum thrives in rich, deep soils, mostly in regrowth forests. A few populations still manage to survive in the subtropical rainforests of remote areas like Nimbin and Terania Creek.

As habitat loss continues to threaten these ancient ecosystems, the scattered populations of this unique plum are a reminder of the delicate balance that sustains Australia’s rainforests.



BUNDJALUNG NAME:	Gudjin
SCIENTIFIC NAME:	<i>Davidsonia johnsonii</i>
FAMILY:	Cunoniaceae
OTHER NAMES:	Davo’s, Mullumbimby Plum
Found in subtropical rainforests or on the margin with wet sclerophyll forest, from Wardell, New South Wales to the Tallebudgera and Numinbah Valleys in South East Queensland.	

7. WANGAY / TALLOWWOOD TREE

The tall Tallowwood

Thriving on the fringes of rainforests and coastal forests in Northern NSW, the Tallowwood is one of Australia’s hardest hardwoods. Known for its natural greasiness, this versatile timber is highly resistant to termites and fire, making it prized for construction.

Growing up to 60 metres tall, Tallowwood provides more than just sturdy timber. It flowers from May to December, producing creamy white clusters that attract honeyeaters, lorikeets and flying foxes. The tree’s leaves are a primary food source for koalas, while its flowers help produce high-quality honey.

Shade-tolerant and resilient, Tallowwood plays a crucial role in supporting both wildlife and local ecosystems, all while offering a durable material for flooring, poles and decking.



BUNDJALUNG NAME:	Wangay
SCIENTIFIC NAME:	<i>Eucalyptus microcorys</i>
FAMILY:	Myrtaceae
Found in coastal wet sclerophyll forests from Newcastle, New South Wales to Maryborough and K’gari (formerly Fraser Island), Queensland.	

4. GUMBAR / MACADAMIA OR BUSH NUT

A bush nut, not a Hawaiian nut

Often mistaken as a Hawaiian nut, the Macadamia Tree is actually native to Bundjalung Country. It thrives in the subtropical rainforest of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland where both species – *Macadamia tetraphylla* and *integrifolia* – continue to grow.

Though macadamia nuts were first commercialised in Hawaii in the 1880s, Australia reclaimed its place as the world's largest producer of macadamias by the late 20th century. These native trees, rooted in Indigenous Knowledge, have not only shaped the region's ecosystem but have also become one of the world's most sought-after nuts.

Australia regained its spot as the top macadamia producer in the 20th century thanks to smarter cultivation and increased native plantings.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Gumbar

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Macadamia tetraphylla*,
Macadamia integrifolia.

FAMILY: Proteaceae

OTHER NAMES: Bush Nut, Hawaiian Nut, Queensland Nut, Maroochi Nut, Bauple Nut

Found in the rainforests of south eastern Queensland and north eastern New South Wales, scattered for 600 kms between Grafton and Maryborough.

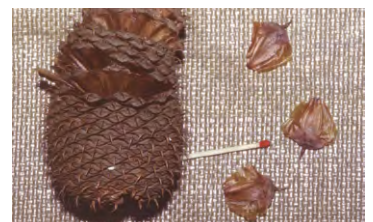
5. BUYEH OR JUNBAL / HOOP PINE

Ancient giants of the old world

The Hoop Pine has stood tall since Gondwana – the ancient supercontinent that once connected Australia with South America, Africa and Antarctica – its lineage stretching back millions of years. This towering tree plays a key role in Widiabul Wia-bul Bundjalung culture, forming part of Gabul, the vast rainforest that once blanketed much of the region.

Distinguished by its straight, cylindrical trunk, the hoop pine's bark evolves with age – smooth on young trees, rough and nearly black on older ones. Its name comes from the hoop-like rings revealed when the bark is stripped.

Though sacred to some Indigenous communities, settler Australians turned to Hoop Pine as a valuable timber resource for colonial homes and flooring.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Buyeh and Junbal

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Araucaria cunninghamii*

FAMILY: Araucariaceae

OTHER NAMES: Colonial Pine, Queensland Pine, Dorrigo Pine, Moreton Bay Pine and Richmond River Pine

Found from North East New South Wales to East Central Queensland, at 0–1000 metres elevation.

8. JAMBUL / BLUE QUANDONG

The Orange of the Forest

Towering over the forest canopy, the blue quandong stands tall – but it's the brilliant blue fruit that really shines. Packed with more vitamin C than oranges, this vibrant fruit has long been valued by Bundjalung people for its edible and medicinal properties.

Native to coastal regions from Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, the Blue Quandong's fruit is a vital food source for birds like fruit doves and cassowaries, as well as flying foxes and native rats, supporting rainforest biodiversity.

The Bundjalung people consumed the fruit raw, made it into a paste, or buried it in sand to sweeten it. The globular stones, holding the seeds, were even used for decorative necklaces, weaving the tree's cultural and ecological significance together.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Jambul

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Elaeocarpus grandis*

FAMILY: Elaeocarpaceae

OTHER NAMES: Blue Marble Tree, Blue Fig, Whit Quandong, Silver Quandong, Cooloon, Caloon, Brush Condong

Found along the east coast, from Nambucca River to Cooktown, as well as the Northern Territory.

9. MAMILGAH OR WUDJEH / RED CEDAR

Red Gold

The Red Cedar known to the Bundjalung people as Mamilgah or Wudjeh, is one of Australia's few native deciduous trees. Thriving in rainforest ecosystems, it played a crucial role in maintaining balance and supporting biodiversity.

For settlers, however, red cedar was quickly transformed into "Red Gold." Its soft, termite-resistant wood was highly sought after for making furniture, railway carriages and coffins, and red cedar became a symbol of wealth, and the growing "civilisation" of Australia, leading to widespread logging that caused significant environmental destruction. By the early 20th century, the species had been cut to commercial extinction.

Today, protected areas along the east coast of Australia are among the few places where these majestic trees can still be found.



BUNDJALUNG NAME: Mamilgah, Wudjeh, Wudje

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Toona ciliata*, syn. *T. australis*

FAMILY: Meliaceae

Found in rainforests along the east coast, mainly between Ulladulla and Gympie, as well as Eungella Range west of Mackay and the Atherton Tablelands.

Case Studies



CASE STUDY 01

Image on right:
By using cultural burning as a contemporary weed control technique, we foreground the knowledge and wisdom of our elders.
Photo by Liz Barker.



NAMABUNDA FARM

Reviving tradition and healing the land

BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY / NORTHERN RIVERS, NSW

Once a commercial lychee farm, Namabunda lies on what used to be part of the vast Big Scrub subtropical rainforest. Decades of decline left it degraded, but now, under the care of the Bundjalung Tribal Society, it has become a “living” cultural center. This transformation is not just about rehabilitating the land; it’s about reconnecting people to Country, reviving cultural practices and building a sustainable future.

The farm is now home to bush tucker and medicinal plants, reviving traditional food sources and healing practices disrupted by colonisation. Bundjalung language and ecological wisdom are shared through signs installed on the property, preserving knowledge for future generations.

Cultural workshops and community events bring people together, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity. Here, young Bundjalung people connect with Elders, learning skills that strengthen cultural continuity. The farm also welcomes non-Indigenous people, creating a space for collaboration, cross-cultural understanding and respect.

Ongoing efforts to rehabilitate Youngman Creek reflect traditional stewardship practices, integrating cultural values with environmental restoration - and bringing the community together to care for the land. As one participant noted, “The thing we are most proud of is the deeper engagement between Bundjalung people and non-Indigenous people.” Namabunda now stands as a model for climate adaptation, demonstrating how traditional knowledge can guide modern, sustainable solutions.

Photos from left to right:

Uncle Phil has been involved at Namabunda since his father Pastor Frank Roberts established Bundjalung Tribal Society (BTS) in 1975. Here (on the right) he is inspecting the planting of Lomandra in the riparian zone of Youngman Creek.
Photo by Tommy Dick.

Young Bundjalung people working at Namabunda get the chance to learn about water quality testing with scientific experts.
Photo by Tommy Dick.

BTS and Namabunda staff caring for country in the bush tucker food forest. As young Alex Williams (pictured third from left) says, “Healing country is healing myself”.
Photo by Flavia Assuncao.

How can traditional knowledge inspire new ways to care for the land in our communities?



CASE STUDY 02

Image on right:
Workshop participants weaving baskets or creating nurri (string) from stripped Dinaagaa (cottonwood) bark, while also sharing connections.
Photo by A Lush Media.



STORIES BEHIND THE FISHING NET

A journey of yarning and sharing

BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY / NORTHERN RIVERS, NSW

Around 15 years ago, traditional knowledge-holders in Bundjalung Country took action to revitalise an essential cultural practice – weaving. This practice represented not just a skill but an enduring connection to cultural traditions, Country, and sustainable ways of living.

In response, Bundjalung Elders, including the late Aunty Gwen Williams and Aunty Jacqui Williams, launched the ‘Stories Behind the Fishing Net’ project to restore and strengthen these traditions through traditional fish net weaving, a cultural practice once central to life on the rivers.

At the core of the project was the recreation of a traditional fishing net from cottonwood fibres. Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants gathered for net-making workshops led by Aunty Jacqui Williams and the SCU researchers.

A key part of these workshops was the inclusion of yarning circles where participants could reflect on and share their experiences, where cultural stories were exchanged, connections to Country were renewed and sustainable practices and community ties were strengthened.

More than a net-making initiative, the project offered a model for cultural and ecological restoration. By being part of the larger Guung Butherun (water stories) initiative, the project reinforced cultural governance in the Richmond River Catchment and showed how restoring traditions can inspire environmental stewardship. This revived knowledge not only connected participants to Country, but also promoted sustainable solutions that will benefit future generations.

Photos from left to right:

Bundjalung men from Jagun Alliance and Namatjira Haven weaving together the cottonwood string into a fishing net at Namabunda Farm.
Photo by Michelle Lockwood.

Many hands make light work: with Uncle Phil Roberts, Chairperson of the Namatjira Haven board of directors.
Photo by Michelle Lockwood.

‘Weaving and yarning: Stories behind the fishing net’, a workshop centred on bringing people together to yarn and share.
Photo by A Lush Media.

How can reviving traditional practices help us reconnect with our waterways and the land around us?



Image on right:
Coastal dunes are being
restored as part of
regeneration efforts.



RESTORING FLOOD RESILIENCE

Māori knowledge
and modern science

KUKU, AOTEAROA / NEW ZEALAND

The Māori coastal farming communities of Kuku in Aotearoa/New Zealand have long lived in harmony with the land. However, drained wetlands, cleared lowland forests and the spread of dairy monocultures have led to significant biodiversity loss, increasing the community’s vulnerability to coastal flooding. Isolated and rural, Kuku’s community found it difficult to access government support to address these challenges.

In response, Māori leaders partnered with scientists and landscape architects to blend traditional knowledge with modern science. Together, they developed a series of climate indicators to monitor changes in the environment and guide adaptive actions.

These included regenerating wetlands to restore natural flood buffers, adopting sustainable farming practices to reduce further ecological damage, and, if necessary, shifting to higher ground as conditions worsened. This slow, careful process allowed the community to work with natural rhythms, respecting the land’s needs while building resilience.

Over time, the Kuku community has taken ownership of these ecological challenges, fostering long-term economic sustainability in the process. By codesigning their strategies, they have found a way to honour their cultural values and strengthen their connection to the environment. The project demonstrates how integrating Indigenous Knowledge with modern methods can create adaptive, site-responsive strategies for climate resilience.

Photos from left to right:

The coastal farm at Kuku was once heavily forested, but the land was cleared and drained for dairy farming in the late 19th century.

Toolbox strategies:

- 1. Protect coastal dunes
- 2. Protect wetlands
- 3. Protect most arable land
- 4. Protect habitat and biodiversity
- 5. Make room for water
- 6. Diversify farming practices
- 7. Develop adaptive infrastructure
- 8. Prepare and settle the high ground

Māori communities engaged with scientists and landscape architects.

What climate indicators can we use to guide our community’s response to environmental challenges?



Image on right:
Santa Clara Canyon.
Photo by Andres Leighton.



HEALING WATERS

Restoring
Santa Clara Creek

SANTA CLARA PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO / USA

The Santa Clara Creek in New Mexico has long been a sacred source of life for the Tewa tribes, who have cared for its lands and waters for millennia. When forest fires from neighbouring farms swept through in 2011, resulting in 80 per cent deforestation, the ground became vulnerable to erosion. Subsequent floods between 2012 and 2014 caused immense ecological and cultural damage to the area.

In response, the Santa Clara Pueblo adopted a ‘stream-first’ approach rooted in Indigenous Knowledge, focusing on the creek’s health as a pathway to restoration. This conflicted with federal disaster recovery programs, which prioritised a cost-benefit analysis over cultural and ecological considerations. Tensions arose, but after years of persistent dialogue and relationship-building,

the tribe succeeded in instituting a recovery framework that aligned with their values. Between 2015 and 2018, they planted over 200,000 trees and constructed 5,300 small structures by hand using natural materials to stabilise the riverbanks, incorporating woody debris in the streams’ design to support habitat complexity for fish, and increasing surface roughness to slow flows.

The land now shows significant signs of recovery, even if some areas of cultural significance remain off-limits due to the fragility of the landscape. By codesigning restoration efforts with federal agencies and honouring both cultural values and ecological health, the project shows how Indigenous Knowledge and modern practices can work together.

What steps can we take to restore the health of the waterways in our community?

Photos from left to right:

Santa Clara Creek Canyon watershed post fire.
Photo by Albuquerque District.

Seedlings for forest restoration post bushfire.
Photo by Andres Leighton.

Tewa people of Kha’p’o Owingeh processing corn, a traditional crop.
Photo by Andres Leighton.



Widjabul Wia-bal Country

The Wilsons River is the lifeblood of Widjabul Wia-bal Country supporting ecosystems that have evolved over thousands of years.

For many generations, Australians have believed a narrative that First Nations people were wandering aimlessly amongst the landscape with no purpose or order.

Understanding the cultural landscape is an important step in broadening our appreciation of Country. This map demonstrates the complexity and intention that Widjabul Wia-bal people used to live in harmony with Country.



Connecting with Country Framework

The Connecting with Country framework is a guide for good practice to help people respond to Country when they plan, design and deliver built environment projects. Developed by Aboriginal communities and the NSW Department of Planning in 2020, the framework encourages collaboration with Aboriginal people to ensure their cultural knowledge and values are at the heart of decision-making.

It's based on the understanding that Country isn't just land—it's a living, interconnected system that includes the people, plants, animals, water and sky. By drawing on both Aboriginal and Western knowledge systems, the framework provides a pathway for creating spaces that honour the cultural, ecological and spiritual significance of Country, while also supporting sustainability and community well-being.

Integrated Knowledge System (IKS)

To properly protect Country, we need to draw on all the available resources at our disposal—from traditional knowledge to modern tools. The Integrated Knowledge System (IKS) has been developed to bring together Indigenous Knowledges and biodiversity data, allowing both to be visualised in a way that respects cultural protocols and preferences.

Built by Conservation Futures, a collaboration between academic institutions, conservation organisations and First Nations communities, the IKS safeguards cultural knowledge and shares it according to the guidance of First Nations knowledge holders. This approach emphasises the importance of integrating Indigenous Knowledge into natural resource management, fostering a deeper connection to Country and sustainable practices.



Thanks

Our collaborators and supporters helped this project take root. The exhibition couldn't have grown without them.

Jagun Alliance:

Oliver Costello
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Rachelle Blake
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Dr Kylie Day and Aimee Andersen, Southern Cross University
Tommy Dick, Namabunda Farm
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Suzie Fawcett
Michelle Guthrie, NSW Reconstruction Authority
Chris Harrigan
Meg Louis
Hugh and Nan Nicholson
Michael Paden
Mackenzie Saddler
Wilsons River Experience Walk

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