

# NARI NARI TRIBAL COUNCIL

RESPECT - PROTECT - CONNECT – ENHANCE

# TOOGIMBIE INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT 2018 - 2023

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this Plan may contain images or statements from those who have passed.

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**This Plan of Management illustrates our *respect* for our Country.**

**It will *guide us* into the future.**

**Our *Children* are our future too;**

**This is their Plan that we are laying down for them**

**This is *Our Country* and *Our Story*.**

# Vision Statement

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The Tribal Lands will be a Place of Pride for Aboriginal People.

The Land will be protected, and its Cultural and Natural values enhanced, creating a quality environment for present and future generations.

## Our Motto

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Respect. Protect. Connect. Enhance.



## Mission Statement

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To protect and enhance the local culture and history, while encouraging and protecting the natural environment and conserving biodiversity.

# IPA Project Background

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The purpose of this Plan is to assess and review the previous Plan of Management of Toogimbie Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), and to provide guidance to the community for the next five years.

This is the fourth Plan of Management for Toogimbie IPA; the initial plan was released in 2004, and carried onto the second plan, written in 2008. The third spanned 2013 to 2018, and is followed by this document.

These guiding documents are meant to be read in conjunction with this current plan, as they provide a documented history of management of the conservation area.

Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC) is a not-for-profit Indigenous organisation, with a members base incorporating First Nations people linked historically, geographically, by family or culturally to the Hay region.

NNTC took control of Toogimbie, Lorenzo and Glenhope Stations in February 2000, after purchase and divestment by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC). Before NNTC ownership, the lands had a pastoral history of stock and cropping, and, in the midst of a record breaking drought, the lands were severely degraded.

In March 2004, Toogimbie Indigenous Protected Area was formally declared at an event held On-Country, and attended by local, state and federal government representatives, Aboriginal leaders, neighbouring farmers and interested members of the wider community.

The entire land holding covers 11,300 hectares. Toogimbie covers approximately 7000 hectares, of which 5000 hectares is the declared IPA conservation area. The remaining lands are leased for agricultural purposes or used by the community for recreational and economic purposes. This irrigation land was already developed as has been used by NNTC to fund on-going operational expenses (rates, insurance, wages etc) for the lands.

Returning the lands to a more natural environment was, and remains, the highest priority for NNTC.

The skills required (for example propagation, revegetation, weed and pest control) have been covered in previous plans of management, and will not be covered in this plan.

In addition to past plans, NNTC has acquired a Wetlands Monitoring Plan as part of a project funded in 2012 Caring for Country. The Monitoring Plan should also be read in conjunction with this current Plan of Management.

The biggest developments for the IPA staff and Nari Nari community are the increase in stature among the wider community, as leaders in natural resource and cultural history management.

NNTC took part in the National Cultural Flows Research Project (NCFRP) undertaken by the Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), and was selected as the only watering trial area in the Basin.

The purpose of the project was to secure a future where First People's cultural water allocations are embedded within Australia's water planning and management regimes, to deliver cultural, spiritual and social benefits as well as environmental and economic benefits, to communities in the Murray-Darling Basin and beyond.

Researchers consulted extensively with the NNTC members to better understand the value of access to water for First Nation's people and organisations and begin to develop recommendations for presenting to Australia's legislators.

A partnership with various stakeholders has also seen the emerging involvement in the management of the vast Nimmie Caira area in the Low Bidgee enviro region, west of Hay.

The Nimmie-Caira project area covers 84,417 ha in the lower reaches of the Murrumbidgee River floodplain (the Lowbidgee) between Maude and Balranald. It is a vital component the Lowbidgee being the largest remaining area of wetlands in the Murrumbidgee Valley.

It is envisaged that NNTC will play some sort of role in the management of the Nimmie Caira, on the back of the success of the IPA project.

As work in the wetland areas grows NNTC will continue to expand to include expertise in ecology and wetland management, such as the Murray/Darling Wetland Working Group and others.



# Consultation

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The Toogimbie IPA project is guided by an advisory committee, which has evolved with the project, and with NNTC as an organisation. Current members include Ian Woods (Chair – NNTC), Tara Dixon (IPA Project Manager), Jamie Woods – (Toogimbie IPA Land Manager ), Irene Schneider –(Hay Local Aboriginal Land Council (Hay LALC) representative), Daniel Basham – (Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) Area Manager), Rene Woods, Mark Brettschneider and Krista Schade (Community representatives).

Going forward, positions on the Advisory Committee will lie with organisational roles, rather than individuals. There will be representation from NNTC via the Chairperson, the IPA project and land managers, as well as representatives of Hay LALC, OEH, and the community.

This advisory committee meets throughout the year, and offers advice and expertise to the Land and Project Managers, in terms of project direction.

Community consultations were held with NNTC members. During these gatherings members were asked to envisage ‘Big Picture’ and ‘Best Case Scenarios’ to gauge the vision for lands, without the constraints of time or resources.

Water / wetlands / river featured heavily in the responses, as did the desire for more lands to protect.

A question was posed to participants during the consultation process; “If you were suddenly in charge, what would you do first?”

This question brought forward priorities which the community hadn’t previously considered, such as all-weather roads, more and larger scale machinery, 4x4 driving courses, more job and more people on ground, and the funding to employ them. The inclusion of an all Aboriginal workforce was important to those consulted.

During this process, members identified the desire to re-introduce traditional language and terms, starting with Nari Nari phrases and words to name trails and landmarks.

*“In the future the IPA and Nari need all Aboriginal workers” Tara Dixon.*

*“We need to create pathways for young people to stay On Country. Housing On Country is needed to re-connect to the land” Ian Woods.*



# This is My Plan

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Each member involved in the consultation process was invited to include why this Plan reflects them both as individuals and as custodians of lands and waters.

*“This is my Plan because of the love of my Country” Josie Goulding.*

*“This is my Plan because it’s a guide for me to understand and look after my country” Ian Woods.*

*“This is my Plan because it will help aid and continue the protection and preservation of our land and its cultural values that are important to me” Tara Dixon*

*“This is my Plan because it shows how to protect and enhance, and will guide my working On Country while working to the highest of standards culturally” Rene Woods.*

*Jamie- “This is my plan to help guide my actions whilst looking after my country. To respect it, protect it, and connect people to it and by doing this, enhancing it for future custodians of our land” Jamie Woods.*



# Governance

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NNTC is an incorporated organisation, which reports annually to NSW Fair Trading.

The organisation is comprised of members, who either reside in the Hay area, or have a traditional or family-based link to the Country.

Members meet regularly throughout the year, coming together to make supervisory decisions about employment, funding, purchasing and future aims. The annual meeting is held in January.

The Executive Committee comprises of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and four Board Members. The Chair has a casting vote.

The Landand Project Manager report to the Board, and oversee the day-to-day operation of the IPA and its projects.

Decisions are made taking into consideration the Cultural, social, economic and environmental needs of the Community and the Country.

The Policies and Procedures Manual addresses issues such as;

- Incident and Accidents
- Bush Fire Plan
- Contract Awarding
- Workplace Health & Safety
- Grants and Funding / Consultant Engagement
- Community Engagement
- Monitoring Policy
- Access to Information
- Neighbouring Lands
- Code of Conduct (Board)
- Plant and Equipment
- Succession Planning
- Confidentiality and Conflict Resolution
- Asset Management
- Flood Policy
- Chemicals and Dangerous Goods Handling
- Decision Making Policy

- Handling of Complaints
- Fraud and Whistle Blower Policy
- Policies relating to employment (travel and accommodation, overtime etc)

Consultation and promotion of NNTC and IPA achievements are distributed using social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), newsletters, the Nari website, and direct personal interaction.

## Key Partners

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NNTC has made an on-going commitment to a continual process of personal and Community development, and will use existing and future partnerships to assist with this.

The IPA Advisory Group will be utilised for expertise when required, and will act as a support for the NNTC core group of Executive and Staff.

Mawambul Co-Management Group will be involved in Community training and development, as well as inclusion of Community values in the management of Reserved Lands in the area.

Hay Local Aboriginal Land Council will continue to be an important partner for NNTC, in terms of resource and knowledge sharing, staff interaction, training and support.

NNTC will continue to work closely with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder in regards to access to flows for cultural and environmental purposes and to lobby for increased involvement in First Nation's water rights.

The partnership with the research team of the NCFRP will also continue as a conduit to increasing NNTCs involvement in regional, state and national projects.

The partnership with livestock enterprise Woodward Garrison will continue throughout the life of this plan, as a tool to reduce leaf litter and fire hazards by means of crash grazing. This involvement is contingent on best practise methods being used and by consistent and constant interaction between the livestock owners and NNTC.

# Our Country

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The IPA area of Toogimbie encompasses several different landscapes;

River Country – the riparian zone

The Plains – the higher rises

The Wetlands and Rookery – the kidneys of the river

Box Country – higher, sandy ridges

## River Country – the riparian zone



Description; The narrow belt of vegetation that borders the Murrumbidgee River, of which Toogimbie IPA has 7km frontage, is known as the River Country. It supports the dominant species - river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) – as well as some river cooba (*Acacia stenophylla*). The red gum understorey is generally composed of herbaceous perennial, annual and post-flooding short-lived plant species that alter with climate and river heights.

Risks; Bushfire is the major risk in this zone, and the area is included in mosaic burning practises to reduce the leaf litter load. The rapid rising and falling levels of the regulated river system are out of the control of NNTC despite the documents threats to bank stability and increased sediment levels in the river. NNTC will continue to use its position within the natural resource management industry to lobby for a whole-of-Basin approach to water management.

Opportunities; Tourism is an opportunity for economic growth for the community. Possible activities or enterprises included primitive camp grounds, cabins or camp sites (community owned or third party lease), cultural tours, walking trails, 4WD driving tours and school excursions or corporate retreats.

Community priority; Medium – the river itself brings opportunity with every flow past Toogimbie, but the management of the zone itself is fairly straightforward. Some areas of bank stabilisation plantings are required, but the removal of stock has allowed natural regeneration to work well as a low cost option. Hazard reduction will continue, and weed control will be undertaken as part of the wider operations of the IPA.



## The Plains – the higher rises



Description; The area on the south of Toogimbie, immediately inside the front entrance, runs along the Sturt Highway, and is typographically typical of the infamous Hay Plains. Once denuded and eroded the area now has a solid cover of grasses, saltbush and Mariana species, which keeps the top soil firmly in place.

Opportunities; This area has historically been the zone where mosaic traditional burning trials have taken place, and the response by native grasses has meant the program is now used throughout the IPA area. This zone has the potential to be a demonstration site for the use of traditional practises in natural resource management.

Community priority; Medium – the zone is part of the overall annual works of NNTC across the IPA but has no special needs, as such. It is important as it is the first zone visitors experience when entering the lands, and is what can be seen from the highway. It is also an important example of the Hay Plains landscape.

## The Wetlands and Rookery – the kidneys of the river



Description; Toogimbie's floodplain wetland has become the showcase area of the IPA and the communities focus on returning the land to a natural state. Staff have undertaken earthworks to allow the manual manipulation of flows into the wetland, to compensate for the inability for a regulated river to properly fill wetlands, creeks and billabongs and the land has responded. The dominate species is lignum (*Muehlenbeckia cunninghamii*) and goosefoot (*Chenopodium nitariaceum*) alongside aquatic and reed varieties. When full the wetlands are awash with birds, animals, reptiles and amphibians, including the endangered Southern Bell Frog or Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*). The response by plants and native inhabitants has prompted NNTC to establish a rookery, or bird breeding site, on the eastern side of the wetlands. This area has been designed with shallow ponds and deeper channels as well as vegetation covered islands to provide year round access to water and breeding areas.

Opportunities; As farming continues to change the landscape across the Hay Plains, the Toogimbie Wetlands are quickly gaining a reputation as an example of how a natural floodplain once worked, and with that bring opportunities for tourism and scientific study.

Community priority; High – in each of the community consultations water and the wetlands were foremost in people minds. Involvement in the recent CFNRP has shown the community the national significance of the lands they manage.

*“The wetlands are to be cared and shared,” Josie Goulding.*

### Box Country – higher, sandy ridges



Description; On the outer perimeter of the floodplains is a band of remnant black box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*). These trees mark a change in soil type from the heavy grey clay of the wetland and riparian zones, to a lighter clay loam. The dominant understory is goosefoot (*Chenopodium nitrariaceum*), saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*) and grasses, and since stock has been removed and the land allowed to rest, hundreds of black box seedlings have emerged. Floods which crossed through Toogimbie in 2012 and 2016 have greatly assisted in the survival of this zone.

Clay seed balls containing seed mixtures have assisted the regeneration and will be continued as a low cost way to distribute seed.

Opportunities; This zone has little tourism attraction, apart for being part of the whole Toogimbie experience. The main opportunity for this zone is to be an example of how natural revegetation can achieve great outcomes in a relatively short period of time.

Community priority; low – the zone is able to be treated for weeds and pests and included in the cultural burning regime, but requires no intensive care.

# Climate and seasons

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Hay has a semi-arid climate with warm to hot summers and cool winters. Temperature extremes are quite variable and present land management challenges.

The average maximum temperature in January is 33.0 °C and the average minimum temperature in July is 3.5 °C. In 2013 Hay recorded 47.7 °C on January 5; on August 3, 2014 the lowest recorded temperature was reached -3.8 °C. Both recordings are very close in time, showing the extremes NNTC staff are faced with.

The average annual rainfall is 368.3 millimetres.

During the consultation process NNTC staff developed a season chart, which relates times of the year to natural events, rather than days marked on a calendar.

This approach means staff are becoming more attuned to the next of the land and its native inhabitants – flora and fauna – rather than conforming tasks to a set schedule. The approach is different to the rural farm industry but in the case of the IPA project it is showing much success.

For example, weed control is conducted after a rain event, when weed seeds have emerged; this allows for fewer chemicals to be applied, as the weeds are treated in infancy. It is, however, difficult to define when weed control works may be carried out; it depends on the rain, the sun and the plants.

Traditional burning is similar; the conditions in relation to wind speed and direction, temperature and humidity levels must be within a narrow set of figures, before burning commences, to ensure it is conducted safely and to achieve the results NNTC is after, in terms of the response of native grasses.

With that in mind, staff developed the chart as a tool to show what natural events occur when, and to define the differing seasons. It is a visual tool that will be used among the community, again to re-establish a connection to the natural cycle of Toogimbie.



# Nari Nari Tribal Council

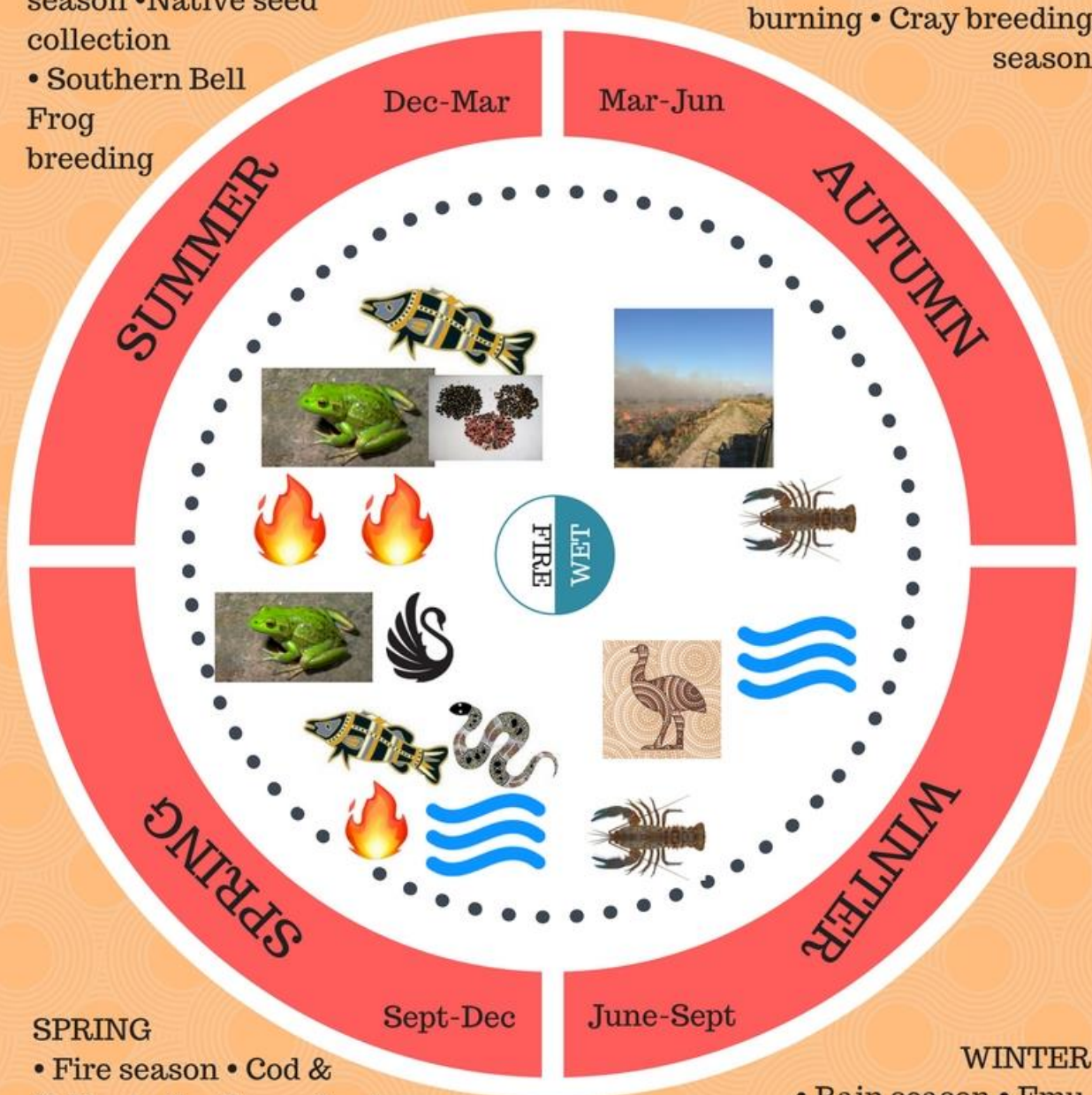
## SEASON CALENDAR

### SUMMER

- Fire season • Cod open season • Native seed collection
- Southern Bell Frog breeding

### AUTUMN

- Wet season • Cultural burning • Cray breeding season



### SPRING

- Fire season • Cod & Yellowbelly, Swan, Snake and Southern Bell Frog breeding season
- Watering season

### WINTER

- Rain season • Emu breeding season • Cray Season • Watering season



# Looking after Country. Looking after Community.

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During consultations, the Community developed five areas of priority, for the concepts uncovered during the process.

- **Looking after Community**
- **Cultural Landscape Management**
- **Wetland Custodianship**
- **Knowledge Sharing and Showcasing**
- **IPA Enhancement**

The targets NNTC wish to achieve, and the path towards the ‘Big Picture’ can all be categorised into one of the areas above.

As mentioned one of the outcomes of the consultation process was the desire to incorporate Language and Lore into the management of the lands, therefore each category shall be known as “MURRUGAY”.

The word murrugay means ‘first’ in the Nari Nari and Wiradjuri language, and is a fitting descriptive title; for the purposes of this plan it will be used to replace terms such as ‘key performance area’ or ‘priority area’.

The actions identified for each murrugay will be co-ordinated by the IPA Project Co-ordinator; they will carry out tasks, involving those within the community (eg staff, members, Elders) or by sourcing contractors, experts or tradespeople outside of NNTC.

# Murragay 1 - Looking after Community

Issue	Action/s
More On Country staff needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- seek funding for short and long term labour projects, with a focus on training outcomes and career enhancing opportunities.</li> <li>- Prioritise budget allocations to allow additional labour when needed (eg weed control, revegetation works etc).</li> </ul>
Community and staff eager to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- include members and Elders in training, where possible and appropriate.</li> <li>- conduct a skills audit.</li> <li>- depending on the findings of the audit, subsidise training for staff and/or members (both short course and longer study).</li> <li>- support those undertaking study (eg provision of transport, study leave, use of equipment).</li> </ul>
Community needs to reconnect with Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- organise regular On Country events (eg BBQ lunches, wetland visits, canoe days, tree planting days, NAIDOC or Aboriginal Children's Week events).</li> <li>- provide areas and resources (eg transport, camping gear, opportunity) for members to stay On Country.</li> <li>- investigate housing for community to live On Country.</li> <li>- create all weather access.</li> </ul>
Our children need to be taught to respect the Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- include children and carers in activities, visits and events .</li> <li>- conduct an annual membership drive, and encourage young people to join their Elders and become involved.</li> <li>- host school groups and educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children at the same time.</li> </ul>
Members need to feel included and connected to the IPA Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use social media to keep members and the wider community involved in the Toogimbie story.</li> <li>- distribute regular newsletters and website updates.</li> <li>- encourage 'drop-ins' to the IPA office, especially for those disconnected from society.</li> </ul>

# Murrabay 2 - Cultural Landscape Management

Issue	Action/s
Sites and culturally important areas need protecting for our children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- record all sites across the IPA and other NNTC lands onto AHMS</li> <li>- establish protocols for the marking, recording and protecting newly discovered sites.</li> <li>- ensure all staff and visitors to Toogimbie know where sensitive areas are, and what to do if a site is discovered.</li> <li>- include site information in open days, as a way of explaining connection to Country.</li> </ul>
Weed and pest control is an ongoing priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- implement annual schedule of works in IPA scope for chemical and mechanical control measures.</li> <li>- actively encourage native species (plants and animals) to compete with weeds and pests.</li> <li>- conduct annual inspection of equipment and ensure staff qualifications are up to date.</li> </ul>
Revegetation of native species to create habitat is an ongoing priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- exclude wandering stock and pests from IPA area.</li> <li>- use clay seed balls as main revegetation tool (low cost, less labour intensive and has a proven high success rate at Toogimbie).</li> <li>- use burning as a way to regenerate lands.</li> <li>- use crash grazing as a weed management and hazard reduction tool.</li> </ul>
Bush tucker and bush medicine are important to us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- important medicinal plants need to be identified and monitored, so community has access to them when needed.</li> <li>- IPA project works (pest control, wetland inundation etc) should include the needs of food and medicine plants.</li> <li>- the use of plants and animals should be incorporated into events and activities and the knowledge shared with others, especially young people.</li> </ul>
Cultural burning is an important land management tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- create an annual burning target across all land types.</li> <li>- keep records so areas aren't repeatedly burned.</li> <li>- monitor outcomes and plant responses.</li> <li>- involve members and other groups, as a way to include them, and increase connection to Country.</li> </ul>

# Murrabay 3 - Wetland Custodianship

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Issue	Action/s
Wetlands need to be wet (and dry); Continue inundation practises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- apply for Cultural Access licence water when available.</li><li>- keep infrastructure in good working order.</li><li>- investigate upgrading open channels to closed pipes.</li><li>-</li></ul>
We need to know more about wetlands; we need to share what we know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- continue monitoring works.</li><li>- continue involvement in lobby and research activities.</li><li>-</li></ul>
The Wetland and Rookery need habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- revegetate, focussing on the Rookery</li><li>- carry out weed and pest control works</li><li>- monitor breeding seasons and exclude non-native predators</li></ul>
Water is vital; we have to fight for it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- continue working with Government and other non-Government agencies.</li><li>- be involved in discussions regarding water rights at every opportunity.</li><li>- use Toogimbie, the wetlands, CFNRP trial findings and IPA project as illustration of the importance of First Peoples involvement in water and its uses.</li></ul>



# Murrabay 4 - Knowledge Sharing and Showcasing

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Issue	Action/s
We need to teach <i>our</i> people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- carry out all the actions in murrabay 1.</li><li>- encourage reconnection to Country at every opportunity.</li></ul>
We need to teach <i>other</i> people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- host events and tours which give the wider community the opportunity to learn at Toogimbie.</li><li>- use social media and local / regional media to keep wider community informed of successes at Toogimbie, within NNTC and the IPA project.</li><li>- involve researchers, schools and universities where possible.</li><li>- attend and/or present at conferences, forums or other gatherings, where NNTC staff and executive can network with other land managers.</li><li>- visit the IPA section where appropriate to connect with those working on the IPA Project from the Government's side.</li></ul>

# Murragay 5 - IPA Enhancement

Issue	Action/s
We need to re-introduce traditional language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- research Nari Nari / Wiradjuri names for landscape features, roads, wetlands, plants and incorporate in everyday language.</li> <li>- share knowledge via social media and members newsletters.</li> <li>- provide brochures and lists of phrases and words to visitors and groups; teach them pronunciation.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
We need to incorporate solar and wind power on Toogimbie and reduce our carbon footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- investigate solar and wind turbine requirements and seek costings.</li> <li>- source funding and/or include in annual IPA budget.</li> <li>- install across the IPA .</li> </ul>
We need to ensure our assets are well looked after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conduct annual inspection of buildings / machinery.</li> <li>- prioritise maintenance and diarise servicing and repairs requirements.</li> <li>- ensure qualified tradespeople or technicians carry out works.</li> <li>- keep records of repairs, hazards, threats or assets replacement for WHS requirements.</li> <li>- set in place an asset replacement protocol and procedure for staff to follow.</li> </ul>
We need to present ourselves to a high standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- upgrade roads to allow all-weather access.</li> <li>- install interpretative signage that marks significant place or spaces and increases visitor enjoyment.</li> <li>- set in place a waste management system that encompasses all items brought onto the IPA; aim for 50% recycling.</li> </ul>