



Budj Bim

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

DENIS ROSE GUNDITJ MIRRING TRADITIONAL OWNER ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

ON FRIDAY, 20 JANUARY 2017, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visited Tae Rak (Lake Condah) where he announced the Commonwealth Government has added the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape to Australia's tentative list for World Heritage nomination. The announcement was made in co-operation with the Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews and the Minister for the Environment and Energy, Josh Frydenberg.

The Prime Minister said 'All of us have been deeply moved to see such ancient structures of engineering. 7,000 years old, showing the ingenuity, the understanding of the natural environment by your ancestors - the Gunditjmara people, here on this lake, working with the landscape, understanding the country and building those remarkable structures, which are surely worthy of being on the World Heritage List'.

He added, 'If successful, and we anticipate it will be, the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape will become the first Australian place to become World Heritage Listed exclusively for its

Aboriginal cultural values. You've all been tireless advocates for this. You all understand its global significance. It was the first place to be listed on Australia's National Heritage List back in 2004. A world Heritage listing would be very appropriate recognition of its significance and its heritage values'.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, located in south-west Victoria, includes evidence of one of the world's largest and oldest aquaculture systems, dating to about 6600 years ago. Gunditjmara people constructed an extensive and technologically sophisticated aquaculture system on the Budj Bim lava flow and were able to sustainably harvest and farm large quantities of the migrating Kooyang (short finned eel) by manipulating seasonal flooding through the creation of stone channels.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape also includes evidence of permanent or semi-permanent settlement with one property having more than 140 recorded stone house sites. These stone structures consist of C-shaped features, usually 3–4 metres in diameter with 3–5 tiers of stones forming low walls.

On 30 March 2007, the Federal Court of Australia delivered a consent determination over almost 140,000 hectares across the southwest of Victoria, recognising the Gunditjmara People's native title rights over the majority of the area, which included the Budj Bim lava flow.

'The Gunditjmara were able to prove their strong and unrelenting connection to this area where their ancestors farmed eels for food and trade at the time of European settlement and back



Top and above: Aquaculture systems, South-Western Vic.
Credit: Tyson Lovett-Murray.



Josh Frydenburg, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Aunty June Gill, Aunty Laura Bell, local State member Roma Britnell, Aunty Sandra Onus and member for Wannan and Minister for Veteran Affairs Dan Tehan.
Credit: Don Turnney.

through millennia' (Justice North at the Gunditjmara Native Title consent determination).

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation was established in 2005 by Gunditjmara traditional owners to progress their rights and interests in native title, cultural heritage and caring for country.

Gunditjmara currently own and manage approximately 3,000 hectares of land along the Budj Bim lava flow and most of these properties are declared and managed as Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs). There is also a co-operative management agreement for the Budj Bim (Mount Eccles) National Park where Gunditjmara have the majority on the management board.

Currently, a team of nine Budj Bim rangers manage, conserve, and protect the natural and cultural values of these properties. They work on a variety of jobs in the Budj Bim IPA, including the protection of cultural heritage sites, construction and maintenance of visitor facilities, weed and feral animal control, fencing, environmental monitoring, and delivering education programs for students on country.

The Victorian Government is strongly supportive of World Heritage listing for the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape and have committed \$8 million for the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation to implement stages one and two of the Budj Bim (Tourism) Master Plan. This Plan aims to support tourism infrastructure

projects, provide economic opportunities for the Traditional Owners, and strengthen their bid for World Heritage listing. The Budj Bim Master Plan presents a staged approach to developing the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, to improve its protection and management and establish it as a sustainable, world-class tourism destination.

Now that Budj Bim is on the Tentative List the Gunditj Mirring traditional owners Aboriginal Corporation are preparing a comprehensive World Heritage nomination to be submitted to the World Heritage Committee by 1 February 2018.

For further information about Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation, please see *the Gunditjmara Land Justice Story* and the Gunditj Mirring website.



Above: Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Rangers on the lava flow.
Credit: Michael Bell Jnr.