Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed Princes Highway upgrade at Dignams Creek, NSW on the Aboriginal cultural landscape.

A report to the NSW Roads and Maritime Services.

FINAL REPORT PREPARED BY
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1 NOVEMBER 2013
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DISCLAIMER

Information contained in this report was understood by the author to be correct at the time of writing. The author apologise for any omissions or errors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NSW Roads and Maritime Services acknowledge the cultural and intellectual property rights of the Indigenous knowledge holders whose stories are featured in this report. Use and reference of this material is allowed for planning purposes provided that full and proper attribution is given to the individual Indigenous knowledge holder/s being referenced.

The consultant would like acknowledge the Aboriginal people who participated in this assessment and thank Dr Sue Feary for reviewing this assessment report and Sonia Bazzacco for developing the plant list.

WARNING: This report contains references to deceased people
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Executive Summary

The NSW Roads and Maritime Services [Roads and Maritime] are currently assessing the impacts of a proposed road project at Dignams Creek on the Princes Highway, 20km south of Narooma. Roads and Maritime recently released a Review of Environmental Factors [REF] detailing the environmental impacts of the proposed road project. The Roads and Maritime received a submission from the Gulaga National Park Board of Management asserting that the Roads and Maritime had not sufficiently considered the potential impacts of the proposed works on the cultural landscape surrounding Gulaga National park. This report aims to identify the values across the cultural landscape and examine the potential impacts from the Dignams Creek upgrade proposal, as outlined in the consultant’s brief.

The cornerstone features of the Aboriginal cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek are Gulaga [Mount Dromedary], Mumbulla Mountain, Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mountain] and Baranguba [Montague Island]. These four prominent geographical features are highly significant and define the north, east and south extent of the relevant Aboriginal cultural landscape, whilst the west is defined by ancient pathways which incorporate Murrabrine and Wandella Mountains. Dignams Creek is located in the central north of this geographical area. For the purposes of this assessment, the landscape is referred to here as the ‘Dignams Creek cultural landscape’.

The heritage significance of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape primarily relates to Aboriginal religion, ritual, mythology and customary practices. The Aboriginal belief system determines the relationship between all living things and saturates the landscape (including waterways) with non-physical, intangible attributes that shape how people move across the landscape. The cultural landscape is also filled with a multitude of other components; the archaeological record connects people to the past, natural resources are collected and memories are retained in relation to living, working, playing and coming into conflict with colonial structures across the area. The associative meaning given to the landscape in the Dignams Creek area by Aboriginal people is complex, multifaceted and gives rise to the inseparability of nature and culture, of people and places, of the past and the present. The area holds different levels of meaning for different people, depending on time, place and particular historical experiences.

Based on a number of national and international assessment tools, it is the consultant’s opinion that the components of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape with spiritual associations are highly significant on a local, regional, state and national scale. The components of the cultural landscape associated with living and camping are moderately significant on a local and regional scale and the components of the cultural landscape associated with working, in particular, the Dignams Creek Saw Mill, is moderately significant at the local level. Whilst isolated components of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape are formally acknowledged on government heritage registers, there is no official model for assessing the significance of broad scale Aboriginal landscapes, nor how a development may impact on one.

As is common amongst any cultural group, opinion varied amongst participants about how the proposed works might impact on the identified cultural values giving consideration to pre-existing disturbances, disturbances to be caused during the construction period, the enduring impact of the development and the difference between the actual construction footprint and the view of it from afar. Of primary concern to all Aboriginal participants was the potential impact on native fauna and culturally defined bush beings, on the water quality of Dignams Creek and Wallaga Lake and the need to ensure intangible cultural values are conveyed to the construction team by knowledgeable custodians. Of concern to some participants was the potential impact of works on cultural activities that take place on the top of Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains and the spiritual connectivity between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains.
Particular aspects of the proposed works likely to impact on the significance of individual components of the cultural landscape as well as overall broader complex include the removal of vegetation; the deep cutting into ridgelines; shifting material including rock and soil into and out of the local area; disturbance to water flow along Dignams Creek into Wallaga Lake; removal of forest habitat and culturally relevant flora and altering landscape in general. There is also concern about Roads and Maritime seeking heritage advice from Aboriginal people who do not identify with the cultural area.

Measures to mitigate the identified impacts are linked to individual components of the cultural landscape as well as to the overall values found across a wider area. Mitigation measures include strategically revegetating to minimise the visual impact of the major cutting into ‘Dignams Hill’ on long range views; use of local materials where possible; ensuring water quality controls are maintained during and after construction period; enabling community participation by ensuring male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the cultural landscape are integral to a cultural awareness program for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors prior to construction; maintaining a wildlife corridor during the construction period where possible; revegetating with species favoured by culturally significant fauna; favouring native bush food / medicine plants for revegetation purposes; improving the wildlife corridor across pasture between existing vegetation and new fauna underpass / drainage culvert ‘A’; acknowledging the significance of the landscape to Aboriginal people in an interpretive sign and giving the new bridge a name relevant to the Aboriginal community and or cultural landscape.

This report has assessed the significance of the cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek, the likely impacts the proposal would have on the cultural landscape, and provided a number of measures to mitigate these impacts. It was generally agreed by the Aboriginal participants that the proposal would not directly affect major, highly significant Aboriginal cultural sites. However, the proposed works would have some major localised impacts on the immediate environment within the construction footprint and impacts on the spiritual connectivity between Mumbulla and Gulaga Mountains would be moderate over the long term.

It is difficult to define development impacts on intangible cultural heritage values, given the lack of precedents to rely on and the different attachments formed to the broader cultural landscape. However, it is this consultant’s opinion that the mitigation measures recommended in the report would satisfactorily mitigate the impacts on cultural heritage values identified, if implemented in consultation with the Aboriginal community, and in particular with Aboriginal Owners, as identified by the Gulaga National Park Board of Management.

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1 A number of mitigation measures relevant to the Aboriginal cultural landscape were previously identified in the context of biodiversity, urban and landscape designing, historic and archeological assessments, as required by the REF.
Section one: Introduction

1.1 Background

The NSW Roads and Maritime Services [Roads and Maritime] are currently assessing the impacts of a proposed road project at Dignams Creek on the Princes Highway, 20km south of Narooma. Roads and Maritime has worked collaboratively with the Aboriginal community and with NSW Office of Environment and Heritage [OEH] for a number of years in relation to this development. Roads and Maritime recently released a Review of Environmental Factors [REF] that detailed and assessed the environmental impacts of the proposed road project.

On 26th August 2013 Susan Donaldson of Environmental and Cultural Services was advised by the Roads and Maritime that they had received a submission from the Gulaga National Park Board of Management [BOM] stating that the Roads and Maritime had not sufficiently considered the impacts of the proposed works on the cultural landscape surrounding Gulaga National park. Subsequently, Roads and Maritime requested Susan Donaldson undertake an assessment of the potential impacts of the Dignams Creek proposal on the Aboriginal cultural landscape in accordance with a specific consultancy brief. Donaldson’s assessment report will form part of the Roads and Maritime’s overall response to REF submissions, which may include a response on the matter of cultural offsets.

A number of the assessment reports required as part of the REF are of relevance to the assessment of impacts on the broader Aboriginal cultural landscape and have been considered here, for instance;

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment [2011] by NSW Archaeology. Identified Potential Archaeological Deposits [PADs] and determined that there are ‘no cultural or archaeological constraints to the proposed construction of the Dignams Creek upgrade and that ‘no impact mitigation is considered to be warranted in the proposed impact area’. Subsequently, an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) was issued (number 1131201) by OEH for the proposed construction footprint.

- Historic Heritage Assessment [2010] by NSW Archaeology. Identified two places also valued by the Aboriginal community, as a result of shared historical experience. The site of the Dignams Creek community hall/war memorial was determined to not hold heritage significance whilst the Dignams Creek Bridge was determined as having local heritage significance.

- Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment [2013] by Spackman, Mossop and Michaels. It was determined that some long-range views may require impact mitigation, specifically, views of the ridge line in the southern section from the lookout on Mount Dromedary. Localised treatments were suggested, including revegetation, to assist with mitigation of short and long range viewpoint impacts.

- Biodiversity Assessment [2013] by Sinclair Knight and Merz. Recognised the significance of the east-west corridor, which provides both broad landscape and fauna connectivity, and suggested

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3 See consultant’s brief in appendix one.
5 NSW Archeology 2011:5.
6 NSW Archeology 2010: 29, 30, 35, 36, 49.
7 Spackman, Mossop and Michaels 2013:2, 8, 30.
a number of fauna underpasses and an overpass. The assessment found no significant impacts to aquatic life within Dignams Creek and the nearby sanctuary zone within Wallaga Lake.

1.2 Description of proposed works

The Roads and Maritime Services (Roads and Maritime) propose to realign approximately 3.7 kilometres of the Princes Highway at Dignams Creek on the South Coast of New South Wales (NSW). The proposal is located between Narooma and Cobargo in the Eurobodalla and Bega Valley Local Government Areas (LGAs). The proposal includes the section of the Princes Highway starting about 1.5 kilometres north of the intersection of Dignams Creek Road and extending around 2.2 kilometres to the south of the intersection. The proposed works are described in detail in Roads and Maritime project documentation located on the Roads and Maritime web site.

The key design features of the project, as at 2013, include:

- Construct a new highway to current road design standards.
- Construct a new bridge over Dignams Creek replacing the existing bridge.
- Relocate the intersection of Dignams Creek Road with the Princes Highway
- Upgrade the existing southbound overtaking lane.
• Remove and revegetate disused sections of the existing Princes Highway.
• Wildlife corridors between Gulaga and Kooraban National parks would also be maintained with fauna crossings [over and under passes] installed as part of the road upgrade.

15 design options were discussed with the community, including 13 designed by Roads and Maritime and two options suggested by the community. The major differences between the displayed preferred option and previous proposals are:

- Alignment avoids Potential Archaeological Deposits (PADs).
- Earthworks volumes have been substantially reduced, from about 700,000m³, to now about 450,000m³.
- Bridge reduced from 30m, to 12m high.
- Fill reduced from 20m high, to 12m high.
- Previous alignment was east of the existing bridge, now west of the existing bridge.
- Was to acquire both Kooraban and Gulaga National Parks, now just Kooraban National Park.

Construction will involve:

- Installation of PERMANANT operational water quality controls including: Five bio filtration basins, a water quality basin, two constructed wetlands and bio filtration/vegetated swales.
- Installation of four retaining walls.
- TEMPORARY sedimentation basins, compound and stockpile sites, access tracks.
- Removal, rehabilitation and revegetation of 1.6 kilometres of the redundant sections of the Princes Highway.
- Revegetation of fill batters, and screens to block houses.
- Fauna fencing is proposed in all areas of bushland and national park in the southern part of the proposal. Fauna fencing is intended to guide fauna towards the wildlife crossing structures and prevent fauna accessing the road. Fauna fencing is not required at the tops of cut batters.
The proposal has been split into two stages in order to obtain construction funding for the proposal and to provide a plan for future works. Stage 2 is a long term plan and is unlikely to be constructed for some time. This report relates to both stages.

**Key features of stage one**

- Total 3.5km, 1.5km north + 2km south of Dignmans Creek Rd.
- Realigning about two kilometres starting 1.5 kilometres north of the Dignams Creek Road to about 600 metres south of the Dignams Creek Road.
- Removal of four tight bends along existing Princes Highway.
- Construction of a new single lane bridge over Dignams Creek about 91 metres in length, pylons into banks.
- Relocating the Princes Highway and Dignams Creek intersection about 100 metres north-west.
- 1.4 kilometres of road safety measures along the existing Princes Highway alignment at the southern end of the proposal [later to be superseded by stage 2 as long term plan].
- Building one fauna underpass at Dignams Ck and one combined drainage culvert/fauna underpass [nth Dignams Creek].
- Part of the existing Princes Highway alignment and Dignams Creek Bridge retained for private use.
- Major cuttings (greater than five metres deep) would be located at the northern end of the proposal from about chainage 94920 to 95380 (up to 16 metres deep) and 100 metres south of the proposed Dignams Creek and Princes Highway intersection from chainage 96240 to 96480 (up to 13 metres deep).
- The major fill locations (greater than five metres high) would be 50 metres south of the proposed access road on the western side of the Princes Highway intersection from chainage 95480 to 95740 (up to 13 metres high), at the northern abutment of the proposed Dignams Creek Bridge at about chainage 95840 (up to seven metres high), at the southern side of the proposed Dignams Creek Bridge from chainage 95920 to 96060 (up to nine metres high) and 350
metres south of the proposed Dignams Creek Road and Princes Highway intersection at about chainage 96500 to 96600 (up to 17 metres high).

Key features of stage two

- Realigning about 1.5 kilometres of single carriageway commencing about 600 metres south of Dignams Creek Road and extending to the southern end of the proposal.
- Removal of six bends along the existing Princes Highway.
- One dedicated fauna underpass, one combined drainage culvert/fauna underpass and one rope canopy bridge ['e'].
- Relocating access roads for Kooraban National Park and Gulaga National Park.
- Removal and revegetation of the existing Princes Highway between Dignams Creek Road and the access road to Gulaga National Park.
- Major cuttings (greater than five metres deep) would be located at the start of Stage 2 from about chainage 96420 to 96480 about (up to 13 metres deep), 80 metres south of fauna crossing D from about chainage 97120 to 97660 (up to 18 metres deep).
- The major fill locations (greater than five metres high) would be at the start of Stage 2 from about chainage 96500 to 96600 (up to 17 metres high), 220 metres south from fauna crossing C between chainage 96840 to 97080 (up to 21 metres high), 250 metres south of fauna crossing D between chainage 97280 to 97300 (up to six metres high) and at the southern end of Stage 2 at about chainage 97740 to 97900 (up to 14 metres high).
Typical cross section of a deep cutting. Source: Roads and Maritime REF 2013

Typical cross section of a deep fill. Source Roads and Maritime REF 2013
Cross section of the proposed Dignams Creek Bridge

Source: Roads and Maritime REF 2013
Section two: Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

2.1 What is an Aboriginal cultural landscape?

“...any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads” Meinig 1976

Although cultural landscapes have existed for millennium, the concept is a relatively new one in the field of heritage conservation and management. In 1992 the World Heritage Committee adopted a definition for cultural landscapes of outstanding universal value:

“Cultural landscapes represent the ‘combined works of nature and of man’ ...illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal” (UNESCO, 1996).

Following on from this, UNESCO adopted three categories of cultural landscapes, in relation to world heritage nominations and listings:\(^{11}\):

- Clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man.
- Organically evolved landscape.
- Associative cultural landscape.

It is the third category which is of relevance to assessing and understanding Australian Indigenous concepts of land and connectedness. The ‘associative cultural landscape’ encompasses the non-material values across a landscape and highlights the inseparability of cultural and natural values. Associative cultural landscapes may be defined as large or small contiguous or non-contiguous areas and itineraries, routes, or other linear landscapes - these may be physical entities or mental images embedded in a people’s spirituality, cultural tradition and practice. The attributes of associative cultural landscapes include the intangible, such as the acoustic, the kinetic and the olfactory, as well as the visual.

The range of natural features associated with cosmological, symbolic, sacred, and culturally significant landscapes may be very broad: mountains, caves, outcrops, coastal waters, rivers, lakes, pools, hillsides, uplands, plains, woods, groves, trees\(^{12}\). Importantly, associative cultural landscapes may be valued by multiple groups, who attach different values resulting in a concurrence of cultures and uses, all of which are recognised to have validity\(^{13}\).

Whilst theoretical understandings specific to Aboriginal concepts of cultural landscapes continue to develop it is acknowledged that Aboriginal cultural landscapes are places valued by an Aboriginal group (or groups) because of their long and complex relationship with that land, material remains of the association will often be minimal or absent\(^{14}\). From a temporal perspective, the relationship between

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\(^{11}\) To date, 82 properties on the World Heritage List have been included as cultural landscapes including Uluru-Kata Tjuta in Australia

\(^{12}\) International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) International Symposium 2004

\(^{13}\) US/ICOMOS, 1996.

\(^{14}\) Buggey 1999: 30
human activity and the natural environment is not always something of the past, nor does it relate to isolated locations, as noted by researchers at Australia’s Flinders University:

‘….a cultural landscape is more than just the sum of its physical places; it is equally concerned with the spaces between places and how these are given meaning, as well as the documentary and oral history stories that are woven around both. The deeply social nature of relationships to place has always mediated people’s understandings of their environment and their movements within it, and is a process which continues to inform the construction of people’s social identity today.’15.

The most relevant understanding of cultural landscapes, for the purposes of this assessment, is however that developed by Brown [2010] for the management of National Parks in NSW. For Brown, ‘the cultural landscape concept emphasises the landscape scale of history and the connectivity between people, places, and heritage items. It recognises the present landscape is the product of long term and complex relationships between people and the environment….’ 16

Brown highlights how the integration of people’s stories, memories and aspirations into management processes gives recognition to the link between the landscape and people’s experiences, without this, ‘an impression is created that the landscape is devoid of human history’. Moreover, respecting and acknowledging people’s attachments supports community identity and wellbeing17.

2.2 Assessing significance

There is no officially accepted model for the assessment of the significance of an Aboriginal cultural landscape. The following assessment process is based on that developed by Brown [2010], giving consideration of the approaches developed by Buggey [1999], McCann [1994], Lennon and Mathews [1996], Howitt [2000] and Byrne [2004].

The cultural landscape approach advocated by Brown incorporates a ‘holistic’ and integrated heritage management model, incorporating both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal values18. A holistic model manages heritage objects, places and landscapes for their historical, social, spiritual, scientific and aesthetic values. The holistic model also recognises that physical landscape and social contexts are dynamic, encompassing:

- Tangible (material traces of history) and intangible (beliefs, stories, knowledge and language) heritage
- Aboriginal and settler Australian (including shared and diverse) heritage
- Pre- and post-contact heritage (i.e., pre- and post-1788)
- Natural and cultural heritage
- The past and present.

15 Leader-Elliott, Maltby and Burke 2004; see also Byrne 2004.
16 Brown 2010:4
17 Brown 2012: 108
18 Brown 2010:6
Define the landscape

The first step in assessing a cultural landscape is to define it. Defining a cultural landscape involves background research into the local and regional history to understand the important physical components of the landscape that influenced what is seen and valued today; reviewing previous ethnographic research to improve understandings of past cultural practises and how they relate to cultural heritage values held by people today; identifying any topographical, geological or other natural features which determined or relate to particular activities associated with the area; determining who values the landscape; and reviewing land use history eg history of logging, clearing for agriculture, road building, swamp drainage, to determine impacts on the landscapes.

Given Aboriginal cultural landscapes contain intangible values, it is worth considering the Commonwealth government’s definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, as applied to heritage significance assessments:

’….. As well as historically important, Indigenous heritage is of continuing significance, creating and maintaining continuous links with the people and the land. Places that hold great meaning and significance to Indigenous people include:

- places associated with Dreaming stories depicting the laws of the land and how people should behave
- places that are associated with their spirituality
- places where other cultures came into contact with Indigenous people
- Places that are significant for more contemporary uses….’

Defining the landscape also involves checking if there are any sites or features already identified or registered as containing heritage values. In NSW there are different types of statutory listings for local, state and national heritage items. A property is a heritage item if it is:

- listed in the heritage schedule of a local council's local environmental plan (LEP) or a regional environmental plan (REP);
- listed on the State Heritage Register, a register of places and items of particular importance to the people of NSW;
- listed on the National Heritage List established by the Australian Government to list places of outstanding heritage significance to Australia.

Background investigations were undertaken by the consultant between 26th August and 6th September 2013, prior to documenting the cultural landscape with Aboriginal Owners, in the field.

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20 Given there is no determination of Native Title in the region, the statutory concept of "Aboriginal Owners" has been relied on here. The term refers to persons named as having a cultural association to certain lands [eg Gulaga National Park] in the Register of Aboriginal Owners kept under Division 3 of Part 9 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983.
Document the landscape

Documenting the nature of the broader cultural landscape, including the components within it such as camp sites, dreaming routes, natural resource collection places, work places, and teaching places, involved recording:

Location – using GPS, topographical maps, areal images, photographs.

Description - features and characteristics including:

- Existing condition to ensure changes can be monitored. General descriptions of condition may include very poor, poor, fair, good or excellent, while stability may be described as degrading, stable or improving.

- Threats refer to any processes that if allowed to continue unchecked will over time degrade the values and condition of the landscape and its features. Threats may relate to a proposed development with the potential to adversely impact the significance of the landscape.

The scale of the landscape recorded determined the techniques used for documentation. Cultural values across the landscape were documented with use of local and regional maps and visitation to culturally significant places across the region. Two primary maps were used during the documentation process showing the proposed work area within the broader cultural landscape and the proposed work area in the local context.

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McCann1994:130-131
The consultant employed a triangulated participatory methodology to ensure documentation was balanced and reflective of cultural concerns. Aboriginal participation involved community members previously identified by the Roads and Maritime, those nominated by the Gulaga Board of Management and others that held deep cultural knowledge of the area, as identified by the consultant, which included members of the Biamanga National Park Board of Management. The consultant also liaised with the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council. Given attachments to the area have been formed as a result of both custodial [descent based] and historical [non descent based] connections, the consultant ensured that people with a broad range of connections were enabled to participate in the assessment22.

22 Aboriginal people with descent based connections to this area, in particular to Gulaga and Biamanga National Parks, are registered with the NSW Office of the Registrar as ‘Aboriginal Owners’. 
Aboriginal Owners and others participated in small focused group interviews and field surveys to document the associative values across the Aboriginal cultural landscape between the 19th and 30th August 2013. Follow up targeted consultations (phone calls and visitation) with key individuals also took place up until the 25th October 2013.23

23 See appendix two for details about the community consultation process.
Analyse the documented evidence

Analysing the documented evidence is required in order to determine which features and characteristics are associated with the various themes and historic periods identified, the relationships between the landscape and the features, and between the features themselves.

Analysing and interpreting field data involves relating features to local and wider historical themes, and ascribing features and evidence of themes to historic periods. It requires separating the complex range of documentary and physical evidence as it appears in the landscape into themes and historic periods identified. Consideration of the sequence of events and functional relationships i.e., which features are the most important in forming or defining the landscape, is also required.

Methods to assist in the process of analysis of the information include the following:\n
- Chronological ordering of the place's history, reflecting the sequence of human occupation and the way in which the landscape has evolved over time. This enables historical phases to be defined and linked to wider social and economic themes. It may be useful to set this out graphically in the form of an historical time line, or chart.

- Explanation of the spatial distribution of components, illustrating how clusters of individual features and sites interrelate within the broader landscape setting.

- Examination of networks: networks and connections link landscape components and human systems, forging an integrated, coherent setting with a distinct cultural landscape character. Network links may remain visible over time, or may become indistinct through regeneration of vegetation or erosion.

In analysing the data and drawing conclusions about the landscape, the following points are also considered:

- The relationship between the elements reveals the characteristics of the cultural landscape. How intact these relationships are, e.g. through the retention of linking and network features, or the persistence of 'keystone' features, helps determine the integrity of the landscape. Integrity is the extent to which the historic layers, meanings and relationships between elements remain intact and can be read in the landscape.

- All landscapes are dynamic. The visual changes in landscapes over time can be dramatic. For instance, old photos may be unrecognisable now or alternatively, there may be evidence of continuity: nineteenth century technology and land-use practices may still persist.

- A landscape or a feature may be associated with a number of different themes, activities and historic periods. The landscape or feature’s physical form may have been altered, or on the other hand, may have been left intact by these associations. In both these cases, a richer historic meaning remains, through this association adding historical depth and complexity to the landscape or feature.

24 McCann 1994: 134
Analysis requires comparing information from different sources: using only one source may result in misleading or inaccurate conclusions. Note aspects that remain unaddressed, queries or doubts.

Determine the significance of the landscape

In the Burra Charter cultural significance means ‘aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations’. Cultural significance is a concept which helps in estimating the value of places in terms of their:

- Aesthetic value: including aspects of sensory perception, measured by qualities such as form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric (i.e. the physical evidence of the landscape).

- Historic value: relating to how a place has influenced or been influenced by an historic figure, event, phase or activity, or whether it was the site of an important event. Historic significance is greater where evidence of the association is stronger, e.g. through survival of evidence in good condition.

- Scientific value: reflecting the importance of the data involved, its rarity, quality, or representativeness, and on the degree to which the place may contribute further substantial information.

- Social value: embracing the qualities for which a place has become a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment to a majority or minority group.

The State Heritage Register was established under Part 3A of the Heritage Act (as amended in 1998) for listing of items of environmental heritage which are of state heritage significance. State heritage significance can relate to a place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct, of significance to the State in terms of the historical, scientific cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic value. To be assessed for listing on the State Heritage Register an item will, in the opinion of the Heritage Council of NSW, meet one or more of the following criteria:

a) An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW’s cultural or natural history;

b) An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW’s cultural or natural history;

c) An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW;

d) An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

e) An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW’s cultural or natural history;

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25 Australia ICOMOS 1992:73
26 Heritage Act, 1977.section 4A(1).
f) An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW’s cultural or natural history;

g) An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW’s
- cultural or natural places; or
- cultural or natural environments.

Given the significance of a cultural landscape reflects both the sum of the individual parts, as well as the landscape as an integrated whole, an assessment of the significance of individual components within the landscape, as well as an assessment of the significance of the overall landscape, is required. The NSW criteria for assessing the significance of heritage items, as listed above, restricts a broad, holistic landscape assessment approach, although it can be applied to individual components. It is the nature of the relationship between features, and between features and the broader landscape setting, that is most important.

In determining the significance of the landscape, its features, and the relationships between them, consideration is also given to how well the themes and historic periods are represented and how the important characteristics of the cultural landscape compare with those of other places. The scale of the significance also needs to be determined, i.e. is the place of local, regional, state, national or international significance.

2.3 Identifying impacts

It is understood that lineal projects can have significantly different impacts, compared with site specific proposals because they usually traverse vast areas traversing a variety of landscape features and create new links between them. Aboriginal people in NSW and elsewhere have argued that lineal developments should be dealt with by governments in terms of the existing multicultural landscape and not planned as if it were being built through the empty spaces. In Aboriginal terms, the landscape is already imbued with meaning that needs to be considered when planning lineal development, in particular. The current proposal, although not extensive in length, does traverse both developed and undeveloped lands, each containing a variety of values to be considered.

Given a cultural landscape is made up of the individual features that occur within it, the relationship between these elements, and the relationship between the elements and the broader landscape, all of these components need to be considered when determining how a proposed development may impact on the identified significance of the landscape. In other words, impact assessment should address the effects of the development upon the significance of a place.

Impacts can be both positive and negative and may result in the need for management, whether broad acre landscape processes or smaller scale actions. If the existing condition of certain individual features is in poor condition, it may be the case that the proposed works will improve the situation, for instance, with revegetation measures or increased access. If the existing condition is determined as being good or excellent, the proposed works may adversely alter the state, for instance, removal of buildings.

27 Howitt and Jackson 2000:259
28 Howitt and Jackson 2000:260
Processes likely to degrade the values and condition of the landscape and its features also need to be identified. Threats include an increase in usage or the potential for siltation into waterways, for instance.

With the use of the above maps, the proposal was described in plain English to Aboriginal Owners based on Roads and Maritime documentation, as summarised above. Potential impacts to cultural values were identified giving consideration to the differences between the construction period and final form of development with use of maps, images and visitation to nearby commensurate developments. Two primary maps were used during the impact assessment process showing details of the bridge, wildlife underpasses and water control points and cut and fill locations, as detailed below.

Construction foot print including details of cut and fills areas. Source Roads and Maritime REF 2013.
Given the urgency of the assessment, the following points were clarified by the Roads and Maritime project manager, via phone and email during the course of fieldwork, in response to Aboriginal participants concerns:

Q - Will a wildlife corridor be maintained during the construction period a/ along Dignams Creek and b/ between the forested areas north and south of the construction corridor, between Gulaga and Kooraban NP?

The contractor will be required to develop a flora and fauna management plan as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan which includes:

- pre clearing surveys
- identifying and managing exclusion zones to avoid damage to vegetation and fauna habitat
- identifying nearby habitats for suitable release of fauna that may be encountered during pre-clearing surveys
- undertaking staged habitat removal

Wildlife corridors as such will not be specifically maintained during construction however fauna movement will be managed as above.

Q - What are the likely impacts of construction work on the water quality of Dignams Creek and into Wallaga Lake?

An erosion and sedimentation management report to deal with erosion and water quality issues during construction has been prepared. This has a number of recommendations for how to manage these issues during construction for example:
• constructing sediment basins
• vegetating, using geofabric covers and/or soil stabiliser on embankments as they are constructed to reduce erosion
• Separating clean and dirty water.

Following construction, water quality will be managed through a series of treatments which aim to reduce pollutant loads running off the road. Currently there are no water quality controls on the existing road so this should improve water quality into the future.

Q - How is the cutting work to be done, drilling, blasting?

Cutting work is likely to be done with a scraper (image attached). Rock is dug out by the scraper at the front and pushed back into the bucket at the rear and then dumped. If rock encountered is too hard to be excavated by the scraper, a ripper can be placed at the front to rip the material before scraping. As the rock in the area is reasonably soft, drilling and blasting are unlikely to be used. Alternatives to a scraper would be to use a bulldozer or excavator. Material is ripped and pushed into a pile then placed into a dump track and transported to a stockpile site within the construction footprint.

Q - How are the bridge pylons being constructed / placed, drilling, cutting?

There are two methods for placing the bridge pylons. The first is piling which involves, placing pre cast pylons and then essentially hammering them down into place or the alternative, cast in situ, where the holes are drilled, formwork is placed into the holes and the concrete is poured on site.
2.4 Identifying conservation / mitigation measures

Different components of the cultural landscape will almost certainly require different treatments or impact mitigation measures. A range of treatments can be indentified and applied to different components at different scales, perhaps at different points in time. Information to consider when identifying impact mitigation measures include:

- Requirements for the retention of significance should identify any requirements for the maintenance of the cultural significance of the site. For instance, the 'keystone' components of the place -that is, the components considered central to its meaning and significance -may be listed, and actions that are necessary to conserve them identified.

- Physical condition: Is a landscape feature degraded beyond redemption? Community expectations should also be considered and may include community sensitivities about the investigation and treatment of certain places.

A number of conservation measures are set out in the Burra Charter, for the conservation of places with cultural significance29. These also apply to the conservation of cultural landscapes and their features. Approaches include:

- No action: take no action to intervene -but make sure to thoroughly document the existing condition of the landscape or feature.

- Preservation: maintain the fabric (ie the physical material) of a place in its existing state, by taking action to retard further deterioration.

- Restoration: return the existing fabric of a place to a known pre-existing condition, without the introduction of new material.

- Reconstruction: return the place as nearly as possible to a known earlier state, with the introduction of new materials into the fabric.

- Adaptation: modify the place to enable a proposed compatible use to take place. 'Compatible use' refers to uses which involve no change to the culturally significant fabric; uses which involve changes which are substantially reversible, or uses in which changes involve only a minimal impact.

Where disturbance to a place is permitted, mitigation measures may be required as a condition of project approval. In cases of unacceptable impact, the proposal may need to be modified or abandoned. Questions to ask include30:

- Where the impact is likely to be adverse, are any alternatives to the proposal as it stands?

- Can the impact be minimised? Are there any conditions that should be part of an approval?

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29 Australia ICOMOS 1992:47-60; Burra Charter - conservation plan.
30 AHC 2011; note, these approaches were developed in relation to the built environment.
Section three: Dignams Creek and the Aboriginal cultural landscape

3.1 Historical context

Ethno historic and archaeological information for the region indicates that Aboriginal people utilised all parts of the landscape. Camp sites on the coast show an economic emphasis on maritime and estuarine resources including shellfish and fish, but also plant and animal foods from hinterland areas. Occupation of inland areas has been characterised as “small, short-stay camps” mostly situated along rivers and on ridge tops.

Ridge lines were commonly used as pathways through rugged mountainous areas and river valleys provided access to coastal areas. Travelling routes exist along the entire length of the south-east coastline, extending between the coast and inland ranges along creeks and ridge tops. Movement across the landscape took place for a number of reasons including food gathering, acquisition of raw materials, ceremonial and religious occasions, trade and exchange, warfare and fighting, and communications. Aboriginal guides led the first European to settle in the Cobargo district along one such pathway (Breakfast Creek-Woila Creek-Tuross River-Wandella Creek). Parts of this route now lie within Kooraban National Park.

Aboriginal people inhabiting the south coast region of New South Wales likely first encountered Europeans on the 18th March 1797 when the survivors of the Sydney Cove shipwreck (en route to Sydney) passed through the Twofold Bay area. From the written records it would appear that this interaction was friendly. William Clarke, one of the survivors describes the original inhabitants’ first face-to-face encounter with a foreign civilisation:

‘…..We this day fell in with a party of Natives, about fourteen, all of them entirely naked. The natives on this part of the coast appear strong and muscular. Their hair long and straight, they are daubed in blubber or shark oil, which is their principle article of food ...their ornaments consist chiefly of fish bones or kangaroo teeth fastened with gum or glue. A piece of reed or bone is worn through the septum or cartilage of the nose..........' William Clark March 1797

When the party reached Wallaga Lake they were well received:

‘....Met fourteen natives, who conducted us to their miserable abodes in the wood adjoining a large lagoon, and kindly treated us with mussels, for which unexpected civility we made them some presents. These people seem better acquainted with the laws of hospitality than any of their countrymen we have yet seen, for to their benevolent treat was added an invitation to remain with them for the night....’ William Clark March 1797

The next recorded encounter between south coast Aboriginal people and European’s occurred in December 1797 when George Bass charted the Bega River as far as Jellat Jellat. The Aboriginal people he met along the way were very friendly and provided him with fish and water. Ten months later in

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31 Byrne. 1984. 6
32 Byrne 1984:7
33 Kabaila 2005: 23
34 Korraban National Park Plan of Management 2011:15
October 1798, Matthew Flinders and George Bass moored their vessel in Twofold Bay, and were offered ‘a piece of gristly fat, probably of whale...’\textsuperscript{35}

By the 1840s, whaling markedly changed patterns of Aboriginal settlement, with large numbers of Aboriginal people living close to whaling stations. First contact, regardless of how it took place, is principally associated with the effects of introduced disease which compounded the population losses incurred through violence. By far the most prevalent disease amongst Aboriginal people on the south coast in the early contact years was venereal disease (likely a combination of gonorrhoea and syphilis). Moreover, as Byrne suggests, the 1829-31 small pox epidemic likely impacted on Aboriginal population numbers on the south coast, by “the 1830s as much as two-thirds of the Aboriginal population had already perished”.\textsuperscript{36}

Cameron found that during the very earliest days of settlement, there were periods when Europeans were dependant for survival upon food supplied by the Aborigines\textsuperscript{37}. George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines, travelled to Twofold Bay in 1844, observed how bark was used to build shelters and watercraft:

Their huts like the other Natives on the Coast are simple and rude being a mere sheet of Bark in a triangular shape with barely sufficient room to sit under. Their Canoes like the Gipps Land natives are folded at the Ends and though buoyant are very frail. The Natives occupy the kneeling position in their Mudjerre or canoes and many be seen like floating Specks off the Coast spearing Salmon; they are expert Fishers\textsuperscript{38}.

\textsuperscript{35} Organ 1990: 18.
\textsuperscript{36} Byrne 1984: 23.
\textsuperscript{37} Cameron 1887 in Organ 1990
\textsuperscript{38} Robinson 31 August 1844 in Clark, I.D., (ed.) 2000: 178
\textsuperscript{39} nla.pic-vn4654465, from the Searle, E. W. (Edward William) collection.
As the bushland transformed into pastures for the dairy and cattle industries, and slopes cleared by the timber getters from the 1840s onwards, settlers were discovering the value in the alluvial gold. Gold was discovered in the creeks flowing from Mt Dromedary in 1852 and mining works quickly followed, first taking place along Dignams Creek on the western side of Gulaga, then extending along Dromedary, Little Dromedary, Tilba and Couria Creeks after 1860. At its peak in 1875, there were more than 150 men mining gold in Gulaga and Punkally Creeks with ‘settlements that nestle under the shadow of Cooligah, the big mountain of the black fellow’.

In 1858 a man by the name of ‘Biamanga’ was born at Bredbatoura and later became the Biambun or headman of his tribe. Biamanga had close cultural associations with Mumbulla Mountain, so much so that he was also known as Jack Mumbulla. Biamanga died in Sydney in 1919 seven years after he was given a breastplate, as seen in the picture below. The breastplate was inscribed with ‘Biamanga, King of Wallaga Lake and Bega district, born Bredbatoura’.

The term 'King', or 'Queen' was often bestowed along with a metal plaque known as a ‘gorget’, 'king', 'breast' or 'brass' plate in honour of Aboriginal people who were considered to be leaders by the non-Aboriginal population in Australia during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Today 'gorgets' represent both the effect of the European culture on the Australian Indigenous population, and a link to the land and history of specific Indigenous groups in Australia.

Biamanga (Jack Mumbulla (Mumbler) in 1905 wearing his breastplate inscribed with 'Biamanga, King of Wallaga Lake and Bega district, born Bredbatoura'.

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42 Anon Bega Standard 1879:2.
43 Wesson 2000
44 Troy 1993
45 William Henry Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection, National Library of Australia
The character of the land and waterways was dramatically altered after the passing of the Crown Lands Alienation Act 1861 which increased the use and availability of land in the region (Goulding 2006). This intense period of colonial occupation had devastating impacts on Aboriginal movement and self-reliance. In response to the broad scale marginalisation of Aboriginal people from their traditional country, the NSW Lands Department allocated portions of land across the state ‘for the use of Aborigines’. According to Goodall, ‘...reserves notified on the south coast were usually on coastal, sandy land, intended as a residential base from which to fish ...’

The introduction of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883 saw Aboriginal children across the continent taken from their families and placed in training homes. In 1891, 330 acres at Wallaga Lake was reserved ‘for the use of Aborigines’; this was the first station in NSW to be established by the Board and was located immediately to the south east of Gulaga, enabling cultural, social and economic connections to the surrounding landscape to be maintained. Life at the ‘mission’ was restricted by government protectionist policy, however fishing in Wallaga Lake and ‘rabbiting’ in the surrounding bush lands was popular. Records from the early 1900s document an Aboriginal camp belonging to the ‘Addygaddy’ [= Haddigaddy] family at the base of Gulaga; Haddigaddy descendants remain in the area today.

According to Goulding, by the late 1800s Aboriginal people were following seasonal work up and down the south coast of NSW and into Gippsland, Victoria. Picking crops such as beans, peas and corn, large numbers of people would follow a regular route, returning each year to properties that treated them well and, in most instances, permitted them to camp. The work was hard, people had to shift often and the bush camps they lived in had no running water or sanitation. Yet despite these difficulties, these days are often remembered fondly, when individuals were surrounded by large family networks. Two other Aboriginal reserves were gazetted in the area around this time; one on Snake Island in 1906 and another on Merrimans Island in 1909.

In 1915 the Aborigines Protection Act was amended to allow the Aborigines Protection Board full custody and control over the child of any Aboriginal. From this region hundreds of Aboriginal children were taken to Bomaderry Homes in Nowra, Kinchella Boys Home in Kempsey and Cootamundra Girls Home in western NSW. The practice of taking children away from their families lasted for over half a century. Oral histories reveal much sadness during this period; in the early 1900s when the police came to Wallaga Lake Reserve to take the children away to institutions, families ran away, and hid on Gulaga Mountain. During these times the Aboriginal people being chased knew where the old walking tracks were over Gulaga and took refuge there.

In the post-war era Aboriginal hardship was compounded by the absence of unemployment benefits and voting rights. Aboriginal people have had to rely heavily on their customary skills of living off the land and sea. As the land was slowly consumed and the communities were increasingly marginalised they turned increasingly to the sea for subsistence ...

With continued unequal wages, poor work conditions and institutionalised segregation the 1960s saw the Indigenous fight for political recognition take shape. The national referendum in 1967 granted citizenship rights to all Aboriginal people and paved the way for the abolition of the Welfare Board. The new laws had local ramifications for workers and their employers. As wages equalised, rural farmers could no longer employ and house Aboriginal workers.

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46 Goodall 1982:34
47 Goulding 2004:41
48 Donaldson 2006:114
49 Cane 1992:12–13
50 Castel & Hagan 1978
Around this time, logging began to have a devastating impact upon the integrity of sacred sites across the region. Protests began in objection to logging operations on Mumbulla Mountain sparking the Advisory Committee on South Coast Wood Chipping to recommend in 1977 that the Forestry Commission identify places containing Aboriginal sites across five areas of forestry activity. In 1978 the Yuin Tribal Council publicly stated that Mumbulla Mountain was culturally significant to them and sought an Interim Conservation Order over the area. This public action involved Aboriginal elders and was an expression of continued concern for sacred places and maintenance of important heritage values.

In 1980 the NSW Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Aborigines tabled its first report dealing with land rights and sacred and significant sites. The report recognised that in NSW the destruction and fragmentation of Aboriginal society had been so severe that the normal definition of traditional lands does not apply. Land rights are recommended on the basis of need and as compensation for land lost, as well as prior ownership and tradition. Following further political action and anthropological and archaeological research the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act was established in 1983 and in 1996 the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act was amended to allow Aboriginal ownership of national parks in NSW.

In 2001, Gulaga National Park was created out of the existing Wallaga Lake National Park, the Goura Nature Reserve and the Mt Dromedary Flora Reserve. In 2005 freehold title of Gulaga National Park was transferred to the Merrimans and Wagonga Local Aboriginal Land Councils [held on behalf of Aboriginal Owners] and leased back to the NSW Government for use as a National Park. Gulaga National Park is now jointly managed by Aboriginal Owners, environmental conservationists, local government, neighbours and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage [OEH].

3.2 Ethnographic record

A significant amount of ethnographic materials exist concerning Mumbulla Mountain, Gulaga Mountain and the surrounding cultural landscape. Below is a summary review of key ethnographers to demonstrate Aboriginal people’s cultural connections to the mountains and other features across the landscape.

Robinson 1844

Robinson first recorded the Aboriginal place name Mumbeller / Mombuller [= Mumbulla], Kolager / Koleger [=Gulaga] and other places across the area including Worndeller [=Wandella], Jungagita [Najanuka], Narira [=Narira Creek] in 1844.

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51 Rose 1990: 50
52 Egloff et al S 2001; DECCW 2005
Howitt 1904

Howitt recorded a number of intermarrying groups across the south coast and nearby rangelands in 1904\(^{54}\). Howitt found that the southeast coastal area of NSW was tribally affiliated with the Yuan (who he also calls Murring) people whose area extended from the Shoalhaven River in the north, to Cape Howe in the south and west to the Great Dividing Range. This region was subdivided by Howitt's informants into broad, ecologically based divisions: north and south, coast and forest (or east and west). He found that the Kudingal [Katungal] ‘live by the sea coast by catching fish’ and the Paiendra [paien = tomahawk] live in the forest and source food by climbing trees. The Paiendra were also called ‘waddymen’ by early settlers in reference to their practise of climbing trees in search of game for food\(^{55}\).

Between Cape Howe and the Shoalhaven he found people were called the Guyangal [guya = south] occupying the southern area between Mallacoota and the Moruya River, and the Kurrial [[kurru = north] who occupied the northern area between the Shoalhaven and the Moruya Rivers, including the Braidwood district\(^{56}\). Within the Guyangal group, three further divisions were identified; the Tauaira east of Mallacoota inlet, the Tadera in the Bega ‘district’ and the Bugelli in the Moruya ‘district’, these are the family based land-holding groups that Howitt calls ‘clans’.

Howitt’s description of a Yuin initiation ceremony is exceptional in the ethno-historical record for Southeast Australia in its detail. Through this account we learn much of how the 1883 Kuringal ceremony at Mt Mumbulla was initiated, organised and enacted and something of the symbolic, religious and magical system underpinning the ceremony. Howitt records Mumbulla Mountain as a location to undertake initiation ceremonies; he documented Gulaga as an initiation site as well as a mythological creation site.

Long ago Daramulan lived on the earth with his mother Ngalalba. Originally the earth was bare and ‘like the sky, as hard as a stone’, and the land extended far out where the sea is now. There were no men or women, but only animals, birds and reptiles. He placed trees on the earth. After Kaboka, the thrush, had caused a great flood on the earth, which covered all of the east coast country, there were no people left, except some who crawled out of the water onto Mount Dromedary. ‘then Daramulan went up to the sky, where he lives and watches the actions of men. It was he who first made the Kuringal and the bull-roarer, the sound of which represents his voice. He told the Yuin what to do, and he gave them the laws which the old people have handed down from father to son to this time.....’. Howitt 1904: 495

In regards to beliefs and burial practises, Howitt found that the term tulugal derives from tulu meaning a hole or grave, gal meaning belonging to; the term being applied to human ghosts and to beings who lived in trees, rocks, or caves in the mountains, and who were credited with stealing and eating children\(^{57}\). Almost fifty years prior to this, Horatio Hale recorded the ‘Tulugal’ story in the Moruya region in 1846.

Howitt also documented traditional beliefs across the southeast region associated with bujan or totems, a topic later taken up by Rose et al 2003 [see below]. Relevant totemic species recorded by Howitt include the kangaroo, bush rat, eagle hawk, lace lizard, brown snake, black duck, echidna, and bandicoot\(^{58}\). See listing in appendix 3.

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\(^{54}\) Howitt, A.W. [1904]
\(^{55}\) Howitt 1904: 82
\(^{56}\) Clark 2000
\(^{57}\) Howitt 1904: 462 – 63
\(^{58}\) Howitt 1904: 262
Mathews 1904

In 1904 Mathews recorded details about a broad range of Aboriginal peoples’ culture, lifestyle and religious beliefs across the southeast region of Australia. Mathews documented a belief in a bush dweller known as a ‘Wallanthagang’, said to reside across the south east coast of NSW, as described below:

‘…..Wallanthagang was a small man like creature, but very thick set and strong. He wore a lot of pretty feathers in his hair, and carried a large bundle of light spears. He obtained his food by catching parrots, which he speared in the feet, so that their bodies might not be damaged for eating. ....He had a bag slung over his body in which he carried these birds. Only one of these men has ever been seen at the same time, and his campfire has never been observed, nor any place where he has been camping or resting. The clever old black fellows can sometimes hear one of these animals calling out yau, yau, yauh.....’

Berndt 1974

Berndt’s 1974 analysis of 'Australian Aboriginal Religion' describes five very broad and general types of ‘religious pattern’. Berndt sees these as having much commonality, being mutually influenced and generally as having 'transitional types' of practice in the areas between them, as detailed in the map below.

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59 RH Mathews, 1904
60 Mathews 1904: 161
61 Berndt, R.M. [1974]
The distinguishing features of Aboriginal religion in South-East Australia, which he calls the ‘Magico-religious Bora Complex’, according to Berndt are 'the degree to which 'magical elements intrude on basic ritual, as expressed through the active participation of native doctors (or 'clever men'); and the appearance of super-natural beings who are conceived of as set apart from man. Within the context of both, a special relationship exists between man and the Sky World.'\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{Egloff 1979}

Following concerns raised by Aboriginal elders over logging operations on Mumbulla Mountain in 1977, an investigation into the anthropological and archaeological significance of Mumbulla Mountain was undertaken by Egloff in 1979\textsuperscript{63}. The investigation was commissioned by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and found that Mumbulla Mountain was significant because it was the location of Aboriginal initiations which utilised a complex of sacred Aboriginal sites and that any further alteration to the landscape in the vicinity of the sacred sites would impair the significance and value of the area to Aborigines\textsuperscript{64}.

Egloff found that Mumbulla Mountain contains a complex of important initiation sites, linked by pathways that are also very important, associated with a series of ritual practises linking Gulaga and Biamanga Mountains. Some ceremonies were attended by local people, others magnetised participants from as far away as Braidwood\textsuperscript{65}.

Egloff found the retention of traditional concepts by Aboriginal people of the south coast as being remarkably strong. Despite huge population decline, an unbroken chain of communication between generations has been demonstrated, ensuring a flow of traditional information between generations primarily as a result of being ‘pressed into small groups, face to face’ fostering intercommunication\textsuperscript{66}. Like cultural knowledge, he also found the cultural attachment people had to Mumbulla Mountain intact. He also found the expression ‘the Mountains call me back’ commonly used by local koori people, emphasising the sadness felt when away from Gulaga and Biamanga Mountains and the urge to be returned nearing death\textsuperscript{67}.

Interestingly, he found Mumbulla Creek to be a focus of Aboriginal activity; ‘archeologically, there is an exceptionally numerous distribution of sites within what one would consider an isolated creek valley’ and that the north slope of Mumbulla is associated with the bush track commonly used by the \textit{Doolagarl} hairy man when travelling from the inland range to the sea [Bunga Head]\textsuperscript{68}. In summary, Egloff identified the following relevant ethnographic sites across Mumbulla Mountain:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Initiation site 1 ‘near summit. Granite outcropping...impressive monumental features, which are reported to have been places where initiates were taught the rules’.
  \item Initiation site 2 ‘near summit. Granite outcropping...impressive monumental features, which are reported to have been places where initiates were taught the rules’.
  \item Goobai teaching place over looking Mumbulla Creek, granite outcropping...impressive monumental features, which are reported to have been places where initiates were taught the rules’.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{63} Egloff, B [1979]
\textsuperscript{64} Egloff 1979: 1.
\textsuperscript{65} Egloff 1979: 22.
\textsuperscript{66} Egloff 1979: 16
\textsuperscript{67} Egloff 1979: 14
\textsuperscript{68} Egloff 1979: 26, 36
- ‘Jack Mumblers’, ‘granite dome of Mumbulla …on crest of mountain, used as a place for lighting smoke signals to gather the tribe as well as a place for meditation. This site has been drilled and blasted apart’.

- Marker Stones, ‘on ridge above Mumbulla Creek, small cairn said to restrain individuals from proceeding further along the ridge’.

- Water hole, at Mumbulla Creek picnic spot ‘said to have been used for initiations’.

- Waterhole at junction of Mumbulla Creek and Murrah River ‘said to have been used for initiations’

- Cultural links with the surrounding landscape ie ceremonial grounds, travelling routes [Doolagarl and human routes].

Creamer 1983

NPWS anthropologist Creamer worked with a team of National Park and Wildlife Service [NPWS] researchers to survey Aboriginal sacred and significant sites across NSW between 1973 and 1983. The research team identified 471 sites across NSW, 60% of which were associated with religious significance and 40% related to economic pursuits. Creamer described the distinction between the two categories in the following way:

‘The traditional world of Aboriginal people is characterised by a division into two inter-dependent domains – spiritual and economic. Spiritual for the beliefs and practises of Aboriginal religion, so closely bound to the land; economic for the subsistence strategies and technology of a hunter gatherer people living from the land. This duality is reflected in the sacred and significant sites, which form the cultural landscape of Aborigines that has survived since first contact with Europeans. ...Many Aboriginal sites are the product of religious beliefs, others owe their existence to the everyday world of survival....shell middens, hearths, scoured trees........Aboriginal religion in south east Australia, with its emphasis on the holistic unity of humans, animals and plants, and the land as expressed in the concepts of totemism, provides one such framework for beliefs covering the creation of the world, the passage of individuals through life and the mystery of death. ... .......’

Within these overarching domains, the team sorted the sites into the following categories:

- Traditional [pre contact],
- Historical [post contact] and
- Contemporary [very recent],

Within these categories the following subcategories were also designated:

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69 According to Egloff the site is by its very nature a site that could have been recently fabricated; however, there is no evidence pointing in that direction nor can it be determined if the cairn is a mining claim or boundary marker.

70 Creamer, H 1984

71 Creamer 1984: 6.5

72 Creamer 1984: 2.1
- Secret [knowledge of site restricted to a specific group within Aboriginal society e.g. initiated men or women],
- Sacred [associated with religious mythological beliefs eg Dreamtime creator and practises e.g. initiation ceremonies] and
- Significant [every day places of economic or historical importance eg missions, camping places, resource collection sites].

A number of sites around Wallaga Lake, Mumbulla and Gulaga were identified through this process. These typologies are useful in helping us to understand Aboriginal connections with the cultural landscape, today and in the past.

Rose 1990

In 1990 anthropologist Rose was asked by the NSW Forestry Commission and NPWS to establish the cultural significance of Mt Dromedary to Aboriginal people, with particular reference to Aboriginal women. The request arose from logging activity on the upper slopes, and resulted in a ‘stop work’ being issued by NPWS.

Rose found that Gulaga Mountain is ‘a place of outstanding significance to Aboriginal people of the far south coast of NSW’, particularly for those who live in sight of it or who grew up at Wallaga Lake. Rose found that the cultural significance of the mountain incorporates ecological, social, historical and spiritual elements and depends on group / shared meanings, as distinct from individual / personal ones73. She found that the mountain was significant for many reasons, including:

- as the place of origin for local Koori people74;
- as the abode of local ancestors,
- as a living presence related to Koori people,
- due to its association with Koori women’s cultural information,
- as a teaching site for women and men,
- as the home of spiritual or supernatural beings which require a particular undisturbed habitat that the mountain provides,
- as the source of a variety of natural resources used for cultural purposes,
- as the source of water for the area,
- as a historic site associated with local activities,
- as part of a social and cultural complex which includes Wambara [Merriman’s Island], Najanuka [Little Dromedary], Baranguba [Monatgue Island] and is related to Mumbulla [Biamanga] Mountain and Balgan [Pigeon House Mountain]75.

Gulaga is identified as a women’s mountain with particular areas important for men. In contrast Biamanga [Mumbulla Mountain] is seen as having primary significance to men, although particular areas are important for women. Both mountains were utilised for Bunun ceremonies. Initiation is the process by which a person’s status is altered from child to young adult76. Both boys and girls were [separately] transformed into adults; the process involved intense education and involved men and women at various stages77.

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73 Rose 1990: 7
74 Koori = Aboriginal people across the south east of Australia.
75 Rose 1990: 1
76 Howitt 1904: 746
Montague Island and Little Dromedary Mountain are culturally linked to Gulaga. Gulaga, the mother had two sons who left her to travel east. When they got to the ocean, she called the younger one back. The elder son is Baranguba [Montague Island], the younger son Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mountain]. People understand these two mountains as belonging together in accordance with the mythological connection, and should thus be managed together.

Rose highlights the relationship between a person and species of animal, plant or other natural phenomenon. Wallaga Lake people identify themselves as ‘Black Duck people’, having both social and spiritual associations. Merrimans Island within Wallaga Lake is the shape of a duck and associated with King Merriman, an original inhabitant of Wallaga Lake whose name was also Umbarra. Merrimans Island can be seen from Gulaga Mountain – indicating a spiritual interrelationship between all three [ie the people, the island and the mountain] 78, the wellbeing of the three intertwined as the Black Ducks warn people of possible dangers.

Natural features of the mountain are divided along gender lines, rocky outcrops and trees in particular79. Gulaga is linked to water, through rain, creeks and ground water sources. When the clouds come over the top of Gulaga, described as her possum fur skin cloak, the rain will come. Underground features in the area are also culturally important, but not for public discussion.

Gulaga is surrounded by Guardians, boulders representing caretakers. The guardians take care of the mountain, so if the guardians are looked after, the mountain will be too. If the guardians are damaged [eg through excavation or soil erosion], they may suffer and so too may the mountain. The power within these boulders is both beneficial and dangerous, in association with bunan ceremonial activity. People’s custodial obligations are intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of these boulders; if the boulders are damaged, people can become sick.

To damage the mountain is to damage koori people. To disrespect the mountain is showing disrespect to koori people. Whilst the landscape and society surrounding Gulaga has been dramatically altered over the past two centuries, the mountain itself remains relatively intact, providing a clear link between the past and the present.

The Yuin expressed that the mountain and the sites are one and the same thing, and everything that grows on the mountain is part of the mountain and part of the sites. It is all sacred to them – the rocks, the ferns and the trees. The trees are the clothing around the sites. The mountain visually dominates the surrounding landscape and is part of local residence daily experience.

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78 Rose 1990: 12
79Rose 1990: 53-5
Egloff, Peterson, Wesson 2001

The focus of this research was to identify descendants of the apical ancestors of Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks as part of a process to install joint management over the national parks. The heritage significance of these areas to those people was also explored to a limited extent\(^{80}\).

Egloff et al use a concept called a 'cultural area', to determine the area from which a list of early traditional owners might be drawn. The cultural area they settle upon approximately corresponds to the area they understand to have been occupied by the Yuin people\(^{81}\). Egloff et al then analyse various ethno-historical sources concerning named groups, language and marriage networks, as well as more recent historical associations and events, to arrive at a list of twenty-five 'apical ancestors', known from early records to be associated with the culture area\(^{82}\). The descendants of whom, it is recommended, the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act NSW can be recognised as Aboriginal Owners and may be selected for a board of management.

Figure of the Yuin cultural area as defined by river drainage lines between Towamba and Shoalhaven River systems [source Wesson 2000].

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\(^{81}\) Egloff et al 2001:32 to 37

\(^{82}\) That is, the earliest known ancestor, from whom descent is traced. Egloff et al 2001: 77 to 87
The report mentions other places of Aboriginal significance in the vicinity of Mumbulla and Gulaga including Umbarra's Island (or Merriman Island), in association with the totem, Black Duck.

Wesson 2002

By detailing the movement history of Aborigines in eastern Victoria and far southeastern NSW, Wesson’s PhD thesis outlines the ways in which Aboriginal people’s customary attachments to country changed with the coming of Europeans in the period 1830 to 1910. Wesson found that seasonal movement across the region continued and indeed broadened as European Occupation increased.

‘...There were migrations by extended families and communities in response to mission closure, for marriage and to avoid disease or harsh mission management practices. So while some communities lost the connections with their home countries altogether, others managed to maintain strong ties to country despite migrating hundreds of kilometers...’ Wesson xii 2003

By synthesising a mass of data, Wesson was able to define specific language regions across the south east, finding that the present study area is associated with the Dhurga [Thoorga / Durga] language which extends between Wallaga Lake, Braidwood and Lake Conjola / Jervis Bay and the Djirringanj language which extends to the south.

In the process of her investigation Wesson collated an extraordinary amount of data relating to Aboriginal people’s movement across the region in the early 19th Century, when cultural practices continued in a more or less traditional manner. She isolated the relationship between movement and the establishment of Aboriginal Reservations and the relationship over time and place between people and the southeast region. Based on early ethno-historical sources, Wesson concluded that the Mumbulla area was home to a group called Murrah, whilst the Gulaga area was home to the Wonderral and Windilla people.

Rose, James and Watson 2003

Rose, James and Watson investigated the relationship between Aboriginal people and totems across NSW, as a NPWS research project and found that:

“…… Totemism is a dynamic system set within a broader context of respect and care. The two sacred mountains are central to this broader context; they are sites of origin, of connection, and of teaching. Here, mutual caring between human and non – human kin, and between land and living things is a dynamic reality...’

The term ‘totem’ is used to describe the complex inter-relationship between people and the natural world, the two providing mutual benefits to each other through a spiritual, yet tangible inter-dependency. Although the term ‘totem’ is not widely used across Aboriginal Australia or by Yuin people, the cultural practise exists across Australia [see Elkin 1938], including in parts of New South Wales [see Rose, James and Watson 2003]. A type of totemism called 'budjan' was documented for the Yuin region by Howitt. These totems were inherited from one’s father and men would also be given another after initiation.

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83 Wesson S C 2002
84 Wesson 2002: 133.
85 Rose D, James D and Watson C 2003
86 Howitt 1904: 133
One’s Budjan can stand for or represent an aspect of the natural world, and provide kinship links between the people or group who identify with a particular totem, as well as kinship links to the natural world. Accordingly, budjan species become part of an Aboriginal person’s extended family.

Rose et al identified three primary aspects to cultural forms of mutual caring. Firstly, totemic connections are expressed as a general worldview or cosmological framework in which ‘dreamtime’ ancestral creator beings made totems. Secondly, the connections between humans, plants, animals, birds and fish are evident at a variety of personal and social grouping levels including family, tribal and ceremonial. Thirdly, the relationship developed between a person or group and a totemic species allows for mutual protection and assistance through ongoing environmental interactions.

Overarching each of these facets is the need to teach each generation the value of respect and obligation in relation to totems. Accordingly, cultural teaching places are integral components to the cultural landscape in relation to totem species and their habitat. There are a number of different forms or categories of totems including personal totems, gender totems, family or clan totems, tribal totems and totems relating to the specialised powers of ‘clever people’. Some totems span each of these categories, for instance the Pacific Black Duck, Umbarra, as described below.

Umbarra was the personal totem belonging to the late King Merriman’s as well as being a tribal totem for all Yuin people. It has also become a symbol of the Wallaga Lake community and it’s resistance against further land loss. From this perspective we can see how the Black Duck has become an important element in the formation of an identity for contemporary Yuin people, who as a result of restrictive protectionist and assimilation policies of the past, may not have been informed of their personal or family totem.

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87 Rose et al 2003: 3.
89 Rose et al 2003: 3
91 Rose et al 2003: 43.
Blay 2005

Blay researched and mapped old pathways and trails across the Bega Valley Shire with the use of old parish maps, journals, logs and early colonial writings; the memory of old residents; the memory of traditional owners, elders and Aboriginal people. Blay also located traces and evidence on ground. 93

Blay’s concept of ‘ways’ are also known as ‘pathways, migration routes, trade routes, cultural routes, song lines, dreaming or dreamtime tracks, kadjawallung, pathways, trails, roads, tracks, mountain passes, transmigration corridors and so forth……’ . Of the twenty-one interlinked pathways identified

92 nla.pic-an2489729/ PIC TT541 Corkhill, William Henry, 1846-1936. ca. 1900
93 Blay J 2005
94 Blay 2005: 8
during the mapping project, six specifically connect Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains with each other and to the surrounding landscape, as listed below [see accompanying map]95;

_Wadbilliga_ - From Yowrie up the New England to a ridge north of the present Razorback Fire Trail, then joining the Trail on top. A less-used alternative went over Murrabrine. This was a favoured way to the Upper Tuross and Kybean region. It is the only East West way through the coastal ranges for a very long distance [15].

_Mumbulla Pathway_ – From Bermagui district to Bega district by the most direct line following ridges west of the Murrah and east of the Mountain. This way makes the important cultural connection between Gulaga and Mumbulla [16]

_Cobargo – Bermagui_ – Essentially follows ridge tops after crossing Narira Ck. This route was adopted for the old Cobargo Road [17]

_Euronbene-Waoulie Pass_ - This was the favoured access in the early days from the Monaro via the Big Badja saddle and Braidwood area via Krawarree and Jinden, going down beside Big Badja to Belowra, across Barren Jumbo and on to Yowrie and Cobargo. This was the way, Tarlinton used in 1828 when first coming to explore before settling near Cobargo. He was shown the way by three Aboriginal guides [18].

_Eurobodalla-Bega via Brogo Pass_ – west of Gulaga probably via Morts Folly Rd, then beside Dignams Ck, through Cobargo to the Pass, and by Bega and eventually through Candelo to the pass at Myrtle Mountain and on to Burrageate. This was the quickest way to go parallel to the coast. Followed by the settlers’ main roads [19].

_Special Culture Way_ – from Bunga, by Mumbulla, across Murrabrine to Gulaga. A track of high traditional significance [20].

The ongoing cultural significance of these routes today and in the past rests in the way they connect a vast amount of people together. Some of the routes are being reused for cultural purposes and the ones that are not, as a result of private property restrictions, remain valuable aspect of Aboriginal cultural heritage across the region.

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95 Blay 2005: 11.
Historic Map showing Aboriginal pathways [source Blay 2005: 37]
3.3 Aboriginal oral histories

Oral histories collected over the years allow us to gain an understanding of how Aboriginal people view the world without the interpretation or misinterpretation of others. The main sources of oral history relevant to this assessment are those recorded by Janet Mathews, Louis Hercus, Lee Chittick and Brian Egloff in the period between 1963 and 1992. The consultant collected oral histories in 2006 for the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Heritage Study and in 2009 for the Bega Valley Shire Heritage Study. Further oral histories were also collected during the current assessment process, as detailed in the next section.

Below are some excerpts from previous oral history recordings, arranged according to cultural heritage themes rather than by the recorder, interviewer, or date of recording.

Religious / spiritual significance

According to Merv Penrith, Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mt] is a sacred mountain. Merv himself has never been up the mountain; he has shown respect for the mountain by staying away from it. Merv was always told not to go there. He recalls other boys sneaking up onto the mountain to collect bird’s eggs; they would get a hiding when they returned to Wallaga Lake [Merv Penrith 11.4.2006].

Najanuka is associated with the ‘finch men’, as described by Percy Mumbler and Jeff Tungiay. During the last century men would collect pigeon eggs from the mountain [Anne Thomas and Michael Darcey: Chris Griffiths 16.3.2006].

Harriett has not been to the top of Najanuka as she was too scared. She has however collected raspberries and Lilli Pillis from the lower slopes of the mountain. People collected birds from nests located in the sides of the mountains [Harriett Walker 11.4.2006].

‘Gulaga is the sort of place you can stand on the top and look around and see where you been and where you coming from and where you’re going and it’s not only that, it is the feeling of the calmness of it, it’s beautiful…….’ Mary Duroux 2008

‘I am comforted by the fact that Mountain is there. I remembered it all the time I was taken away. I always thought about Mumbulla, Gulaga and Brown Mountain, Bega and the bean paddocks…….’ Cecil Hoskins 2010

‘……I’ve got that connection out there with Mumbulla, but Bega’s my big connection. Bega’s my big connection. I was taken up Mumbulla as a kid by old folk to get the gurrara sticks to make spears. We still do go up Mumbulla when we get the chance. I take these fellas here, when they were little, they can take their own kids now, you know. Its just, its there and you know, once you’re told something, you never forget it, but I’m forgetting a lot of things lately, but that’s probably where his spirit is, I don’t know. That was a special place. I’d take the kids. And if I don’t go, the boys could take their own kids up to Mumbulla now, James has taken his little gang up to Mumbulla. But she said to me ‘we’d move over here and you can sit and look at the mountain all day’. I’m an owner of that, see, registered owner . . . its important to see that place, cos what is there, and the feeling I get from it, when I just sit there and look from it. I get the feeling from just looking out my window . . . why did God send me here, why did we move here, you know, there was a reason, and the reason was the children and I didn’t know we were going to come here and I can just look out the window here and there’s my mountain just there. Its a
spiritual side of it, I feel like I was drawn here, where I can see that mountain. . . yeah I won't leave here, I'll die here. …’ Jim Scott 9.2.2010

According to Faith Aldridge:

‘…..We have a spiritual connection to Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains. As kids we didn’t really go up Mumbulla, but now, we go up and we know it’s ok. If we felt it was bad, if it felt bad, we’d leave. But it’s ok for us to be there; women don’t usually swim there. We take notice of what the birds tell us, like if they are jumping around going mad, we watch and take notice, a bird a little bird with an orange chest once told me not to go up Gulaga…Different birds tell us different messages. …’ Faith Aldridge 21.10.2009 recorded by Susan Dale Donaldson for the Bega Valley Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.

According to Harold Harrison:

‘…..I was drawn back to Wallaga Lake; the mountains drew me back. You can’t leave the place for too long, you get home sick. Gulaga and Mumbulla. When Biamanga sat there on the rocks, on Mumbulla, that’s Biamanga really; he would watch the clans coming in from Mallacoota in Victoria, Mt Coolangatta at the Shoalhaven River there, Braidwood, Queanbeyan, Mt Keira. …from all around, including Mt Kosciusko…’ Harold Harrison 15.9.2009 recorded by Susan Dale Donaldson for the Bega Valley Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.

According to Warren Foster:

“ the trees are as important as the rocks, you can’t have one without the other…..you need stones to get to the trees….the trees and stones are an important resource, but they also have spiritual value…..’ Warren Foster 16.11.2011.

According to Colleen Dixon:

‘…..this area was used for certain reasons, now we come here for peacefulness, reconnect, teach the stories. This area is special compared with other places, because our tribal people were here camping along the creek doing ceremonies and all that. It is still special today. We still live around the area and still have that strong spiritual connection with the spirits. The spirits are here, the spirits of our old ancestors, they are all around here. We can feel it ‘cause we have a strong spiritual connection. Only a few people get to see them. Once you’ve seen one, it becomes a special part of your life and after that, they have the story to tell their family. Even up at Brogo Pass, you wouldn’t want to break down. People have seen the goonge there. .….’ Colleen Dixon 16.11.2011

Mythological significance

‘..The mountains are important. The mountains tell me a story; plenty of stories, there are different stories coming through that place. You got to believe in what you see around you. The mountains speak to me. I can tell the story of what the mountain is saying. You can see it all from Wallaga Lake; it’s all connected. We connect everything together. It wouldn’t be a story, we wouldn’t talk about it if it weren’t connected..’ Mervyn Penrith 2009

Cheryl Davison shares a mythological story about Gulaga, as part of the ANU’s living knowledge project, completed in 2008.
This story’s about Gulaga, Gulaga Mountain which is on the South Coast. It’s a very significant Aboriginal site. This is a story that was told to me by my family and my grandfather, Reggie Walker. My grandfather was a fisherman, he’d row his boat right out to sea and he’d tell us “When you’re out there it just looks like a lady, lying down.”

The story goes that Gulaga was walking east collecting bush tuckers with her two sons, Najanuga and Barranguba. Barranguba said to his mother, “I want to move away and set up my own camp.” She said “Well you can just move out there into the ocean with the fish and the whales and the dolphins, not too far away you can set up your camp because I still need to keep an eye on you”. And so he went out into the ocean and lay down and turned into the island.

When Najanuga saw this he said “Well I want to move away and have my own camp as well.” But she said “No, you’re too young, you just stay here at my feet so you’re within arms’ reach of me and I can look after you.” So he just sits there at her feet and she’s the mountain, and she’s pregnant, having a baby.

Now the landscape itself of the mountain, around this area which is the Central Tilba, Tilba Tilba area, that’s traditionally all birthing place for the South Coast women.

The possum cloud there is actually her possum skin cloak, and when it’s cold the cloud comes over Gulaga like a big possum skin cloak, so I always put the possum in that painting. This is where I’m from.

These stories are from my ancestors, and they’re probably thousands of years old. They’ve just been handed down from generation to generation, and I’m pretty lucky to know the story and be able to pass it on to my daughter, Tamsin, and hopefully my grandkids.

According to Mervyn Penrith:

‘……Mumbulla and Doctor George Mountain - they are all one; they are the same place. You can’t get to one without going to the other. It’s all connected. If you’re koori, its gotta be connected. We connect everything together. It wouldn’t be a story; we wouldn’t talk about it if it weren’t connected. ….’ Mervyn Penrith 17.11.2009 recorded by Susan Dale Donaldson for the Bega Valley Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.

Ritual significance

‘…..It is a sacred mountain and initiation ground, and we look across at it from our settlement at Wallaga Lake. It has the same name as one of our last tribal elders [Jack Mumbler / Biamanga] who initiated some of our tribal elders up there and his dreaming place is also the mountain……’ Ted Thomas 25.7.1978 to Heritage Council of NSW.

‘….I knew about this place, Mumbulla. My brother Rocky was here working dad and Percy Mumbler and Jacko Campbell. They reckon they wanted it protected ’cause Percy Mumbler was initiated up here, so it was important then and it still is. They use to walk from Wallaga to here, they had no cars. They stayed close to the sea, they knew they’d had a feed if they stayed close to the sea. By the sea side, when the tide went out they knew they’d get a feed….’ Clifford Thomas 16.11.2011

96 http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/kooricoast/10_gulaga_story.htmDavison
‘……From Wallaga Lake, in the early hours of the morning, before the sun has risen, you can see the lights of the spiritual ancestors walking up the side of Gulaga mountain. These are the spirits of the men who were walking up Gulaga to get ready for a ceremony; they had lights, firelights to show them the way…..it is like a ceremonial walking track…….’ [John Mumbler 24.5.2006].

Harriett Walker believes that, in accordance with traditional Aboriginal lore, camping is not permitted on Gulaga. Harriett knows that Gulaga has a men’s ridge and a women’s ridge [Harriett Walker 11.4.2006].

A walking track links Gulaga to the Shoalhaven, via Nerrigundah and Wandella. This route also has links to Bodalla [Tuross River] and Mt Kosciuszko via Cooma [John Mumbler 25.11.2005].

Conflict

The Police use to chase Aboriginal people with guns, as a sport; the Aboriginal people being chased knew where the old walking tracks were over Gulaga and took refuge there. In wintertime, Aboriginal people from Cooma would avoid the snow by travelling over Gulaga to the coast, and return in springtime when it warmed up [Beryl Brierley 19.12.2005].

In the early 1900s when the police came to Wallaga Lake to take the children away to institutions, families ran away, and hid on Gulaga Mountain [Georgina Parsons 31.5.2006]

Working / living

In 1955 George Parsons worked at the Dignams Creek Sawmill. The Andy and Parsons families built a new house out of wood from the mill timber. They lived close to the sawmill along Dignams Creek. Around the same time, the family worked picking at a farm at Dignams Creek. Norton, the manager of Wallaga Lake Mission, would transport the Aboriginal workers from Wallaga Lake to the farm at Dignams Creek seasonally. [Georgina Parsons 14.12.2005].

Alex Walker worked on spot mills including one at Dignams Creek in the 1970s [Alex Walker 11.4.2006].

William Chapman, Georgina’s maternal grandfather lived on Snake Island in 1914 [Georgina Parsons 6.6.2006].

Mervyn Penrith’s mother, Ruby Penrith was born on Mosquito Point, Wallaga Lake. Ruby Penrith’s father, Bert Penrith, was born on the banks of Dignams Creek [Mervyn Penrith 11.4.2006]

Customs

Merrimans Island is a good place to find oysters and mussels. King Merriman once lived on the island, giving the island its name or alternatively giving the man the name of the island he was living on. King Merriman’s totem was the Black Duck, *umbarra*. Pam Flanders acknowledges that there are different totems for different families, and that the Wallaga Lake Community ‘adopted’ Umbarra as its local community totem because Merrimans Island is close by [Pam Flanders and Albert Solomon 11.4.2006].

King Merriman’s totem was the Black Duck. Lionel is not permitted, under traditional Aboriginal lore to eat the black duck as that is his totem also. The same rule is applied to his sons and daughters [Lionel Mongta 2.1.2006].
Eileen Morgan describes the taboo relating to not eating one’s totem, in the following way:

“…..People from the south coast, mainly, as far as I know around Wallaga Lake, they never eat a black duck because that’s their sacred bird. It’s just been the symbol of tribal people and as each generation has been handed down, you just don’t eat a black duck because that is your totem. They can eat many other animals and birds they see. I’ve never known an Aboriginal person, especially around this area, to eat black duck…..’. Eileen Morgan 1993

‘…..The black duck, when you go onto Gulaga Mountain, you look over to the lake near Wallaga, you can see the shape of the duck, that is where they got that duck from, from the shape of the island…..’ Georgina Parsons 2012.

‘…. Down at Wallaga, they got the Black Duck for that area, up here around Moruya we got the Black Swan, we call it Gunyung, it is our totem for this area, Moruya and all around, Mogo as well. It is not about where people live it is who they are related to; ‘cause people are coming and going all the time. The Shire has taken on the swan as a full town totem; there is nothing wrong with that. They got the right bird anyways…..’. Tom Butler 2012.

‘…..I know people at Wreck Bay who have the sea eagle as their totem, a bit like the Black Duck at Wallaga…… it is a tribal totem, but some people like me also have it as their personal totem…..’ Georgina Parsons 2012.

‘……most Aboriginal people got a totem, but don’t know they have ‘em. See the totem chooses you, we don’t choose it, for personal totems that is, others get handed down the family line and you got no choice with that either. It is real, and they will know it once they become aware of their connection. It is a spiritual connection and through that spiritual connection, they become family. You need to show respect to that animal by not eating it, so that they will be your friend and warn you when things are happening. See it is like eating a member of your family, ‘cause they are, they become part of your family……’ Warren Foster 2012.

‘…..My personal totem is the lyre bird [bellet bellet], I see it around, it comes in times of need, if stuffs happening at the ‘mish’, they will come and see me. I call it moojingarl, mooji means ‘friend’, gaal means ‘my’. Some people have a budjarn [bird] as their totem, so they call it their budjarn, but it is still their mudj. I also have a ceremonial one that I don’t talk about…..’. Warren Foster 2012.

A belief in the Doolagarl and Wallanthagang continues across the region today. The ‘doolagarl’ story appeared in Roland Robinson’s 1958 collection of stories, as described to him by Percy Mumbler97:

‘ A doolagarl is a man like a gorilla, he has long spindly legs. He has a big chest and long swinging arms. His forehead goes back from his eyebrows. His head goes into his shoulders. He has no neck. A doolagarl makes you weak and tired. You can’t walk. Your mate gets weak. You have to bustle about, make a fire, you don’t want to let that fire go out. If the fire goes out, you go to sleep and the doolagarl comes. He lifts up your blanket. He tickles you. If you laugh and wake up he grabs you, puts you under his arm and walks off with you. He tears off your arms, tears you to pieces. He bashes you against a tree and eats you. ……

An injured man in the bush near Tathra, was watched by a doolagarl and not injured, although he died from injuries anyway. The doolagarl came over to where the old man lay behind the log. The old man was clever and called out and spoke to the doolagarl. That hairy man stayed and looked after the old fellow all night. When daylight was coming, the hairy man left. A hairy man can't talk. He sings out ‘coo o oo ee’...because he wanted to say 'well I am going to leave now'....Dick Thomas provided extensive anecdotes about the doolagarl, said to live on Mumbulla Mt and elsewhere in the region. One anecdote concerned a friend who had encountered the doolagarl when he slept for a night on top of Mumbulla Mt and several others concerned the doolagarl scaring people at other locations.

‘.......I heard a bird singing out ‘gook gook’. See the old Doolagarl, he can act like a bird, he makes people think he's a bird. It does not worry me, they are around here. They change sounds. At night they sing out; they might call out a daytime bird noise in the night-time. We know what it is. The Dooligal needs the bush to survive; they walk around at night-time. They walk of a nighttime they do. We have a fire all night and that keeps us safe. They protect the bush and go as far as the seawater. They leave footprints but they are very careful. They got quite a long foot, some people hear them at night breaking branches and stomping around. They live in the bush around the mountain, this mountain and the rangeland around here. They play games they move your things. They turn things over, move tools, no one much speaks about it. .....’ Clifford Thomas 16.11.2011

‘.....I never actually seen a Doolagarl, but I seen his eyes. I knew it wasn't a cow, it wasn't a fox, it wasn't a Wallaby, then it peeped over the bonnet of my car....I knew what it was......that was at Tanja, not far from here. They wonder through the bushlands all through here......they roam through the bush. We been told about them when we were kids. They look after the place. They eat what ever they can get, probably fruit, sometimes fish from the sea....they never hurt anyone, they sing out, but never hurt anyone......’ Clifford Thomas 16.11.2011.

Mt Dromedary was traditionally known as Doolagarl, people then started to call it Gulaga. In the early 1900s when the police came to Wallaga Lake to take the children away to institutions, families ran away and hid on Gulaga Mountain [Georgina Parsons 31.5.2006].

Maintaining the cultural significance / protecting country

According to Mervyn Penrith:

“Gulaga and Mumbulla, they are the only two mountains I recognise, they are important to me. It is good that we own them mountains now. I have been involved in a lot of things for Wallaga. We went to Canberra, Sydney. We made them listen. They weren’t gonna listen, but we made them take notice of us. We protested against that Japanese company logging on Mumbulla. The company was blowing up sacred rocks and knocking down sacred trees. We took a petition to the Japanese Embassy in Canberra. They finally listened and the logging stopped. We got both them mountains handed back after that. We own them two mountains now, Mumbulla and Gulaga and that’s a good thing...” Mervyn Penrith 17.11.2009 recorded by Susan Dale Donaldson for the Bega Valley Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.
According to Mervyn Penrith:

“..We have to look after these places, cause they tell a story, it tells us about the country. It is very important to tell the kids a bit about the places. Mumbulla, that’s an old Aboriginal name. It would be better if they left the trees there as far as I’m concerned - it is part of where we are coming from. It is not really ok that the trees are gone, but I can still tell the story. So long as the mountain is still there, but really everything is important for that story to be told, they’ve cleared enough now. You can tell the story from anywhere. All the mountains are important if they have got a story. If some areas got stories behind them, you got to tell the story for them places. I do any way...’ Mervyn Penrith 17.11.2009 recorded by Susan Dale Donaldson for the Bega Valley Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.

According to Jim Scott:

‘........I've taken all my kids all around, I've got my sons, I've got to give it to them. James, he's the shortest fella he's got 4 boys and one girl, and they love their fishin. . . if we lose it they got nothing. See I took James and them when they were that high, and if she allowed me to take them, I'd take them out to where you can fish, to learn them how to fish and that, get mutton fish. . . taught them how to make spears and spear fish. . . there was one time when we were out there spearing, and James put the spear in his foot, and I had to put my foot on his to pull it out, and I nearly fainted. . . down along Jilla flats and that there, from Tathra, right out around there. The spear material comes from the mountain. I showed them how to make spears, how they're made, how to cut the, how to flatten them out and sharpen them, take the bark and that off them. ....’ Jim Scott 9.2.2010 recorded by Susan Dale Donaldson for the Bega Valley Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study.

Bush resources

Pam remembers day trips in a wooden rowboat with her sister Harriett and mother and father across Wallaga Lake into Dignams Creek. The family would catch bream, flathead, mullet, black fish, oysters, bimbullas and black mussels. If their father intended on spearing fish, they would camp overnight along Dignams Creek to enable him to begin spearing at 4 am. The bigger bream was always easier to catch at that time of the day [Pam Flanders 11.4.2006].

Snake Island or ‘Garlic Island’ marks the point where Wallaga Lake turns into Dignams Creek. Pam and Harriett recall collecting garlic off the island, using it to flavour steamed fish caught in Dignams Creek [Pam Flanders and Harriett Walker 11.4.2006].

Beryl recalls fishing along Dignams Creek. Her father had a spear and would always find Bream, mullet, flathead and black fish. They usually went on day trips from Wallaga Lake, hiring a rowboat. When they did camp along Dignams Creek, they would take the boat right up the creek [but not as far as the Creek / Highway crossing]. They had a special camping place, where they felt comfortable to camp. “.....Other places did not feel right, the land will ‘stone’ you if you camp in the wrong place, places where there might be a burial or something bad happened there....... “ [Beryl Brierley 12.5.2006].

Percy Mumbler and Jeff Tungai collected eels from the fresh water creeks running off Gulaga. Jeff Tungai’s wife Martha [nee Andy] was born on Gulaga [Chris Griffiths’ consultation 16.3.2006].

In 1939 Mary Duroux lived at Mosquito Point, above Wallaga Lake. She went fishing with her Aunt Emma off Mosquito Point. She also went fishing with her Uncle Charlie on the mission boat. They rowed
from one end of Wallaga Lake to the other and they took plenty of fish home to feed the family. Uncle Charlie had a flower and vegetable garden. The Manager’s wife brought people to the garden [Mary Duroux 6.2.2006].

Ernest Robert Andy ‘Bob’ and Val Solomon permanently camped on the outskirts of the Wallaga Lake Mission in a tent. Bob would hunt rabbits by setting traps all around the community. Throughout her life Valerie Andy has fished in and around Wallaga Lake. With her father and Aunty Liz Davis, she recalls fishing in a boat close to the bridge, they stayed in the boat. They cooked the fish according to ‘old black ways’ on the Lake’s edge in the hot coals [Valerie Andy 20.12.2005].

3.4 Review of heritage registers and inventories

In 1996 the NSW State Government formally acknowledged the cultural significance of Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains to Aboriginal people through the return of Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks to Aboriginal Owners. As signatory to the lease agreement for the two parks, the Minister for the Environment also acknowledged that Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks form a single cultural landscape containing cultural values associated with landforms, flora, fauna and minerals.

The cultural landscape encompassing Gulaga and Mumbulla mountains is further defined in the draft Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks Plan of Management in the following terms:

‘....The Landscape between and around Gulaga and Biamanga whose meaning and significance derives from associations with cultural beliefs and which reflect cultural processes and beliefs which are still active. .... Mythologically these lands are interconnected and are viewed as a single cultural landscape. There are many sacred places on land within and surrounding the mountains. To us they are one.....’.

Both Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains are registered on the Australian Heritage Places Inventory as a result of their cultural heritage significance to Aboriginal people, as detailed below:

Mount Dromedary Flora Reserve; Identifier: 993; Location: Tilba Tilba Trk, Central Tilba; Local Government: Eurobodalla Shire; State: NSW; Country: Australia.

Statement of Significance: Gulaga, Mount Dromedary, is a mythological site sacred to the Yuin Aboriginal people of the south coast of New South Wales. Gulaga was a locale of initiations where the headmen used to meet. Gulaga also plays a key role in the Yuin creation myth. The mountain also has botanical and geological significance.

Description: Mount Dromedary is an igneous intrusion of Upper Cretaceous age. The overlying Ordovician sediments have eroded, subsequently exposing what is now the mountain..... Aboriginal site types in locality include a quarry, open campsite, rock shelter, grinding grooves, and shell middens.

Mumbulla Mountain (Biamanga); Identifier: 1030; Location: Fieldbuckers Forrest Rd, Quaama
Local Government: Bega Valley Shire; State: NSW; Country: Australia

98 Gulaga National Park Lease Agreement 2004: 11, 64.
Statement of Significance: The Bega Valley contains evidence relating to the ceremonial life of the Aborigines of the far south coast of New South Wales. Mumbulla Mountain is a dominating feature of the valley, and was the centre of initiation ceremonies and other activities, some of which were described in 1883 by Howitt. Mumbulla Mountain retains its importance for the Yuin tribe of the area, who still remember tribal elders who were initiated on the mountain, and who have had traditional information about the sites passed onto them.

Mumbulla Mountain is a dominating feature of the Bega Valley, and was in the past a centre of ceremonial activities. The mountain contains a number of initiation sites which are sacred to the Yuin tribe. The mountain itself is also sacred to the Aborigines of the south coast of New South Wales.

Five sacred sites have been located on Mumbulla Mountain they are: Jack Mumbler’s Dreaming place, initiation sites 1 and 2, Goobai teaching place, and the marker stones. There is also a waterhole and swimming hole used on the traditional walkabout from Wallaga Lake to Bega.

In accordance with the Commonwealth Government’s obligations under the World Heritage Convention, there is a requirement to identify and assess World Heritage values. In the case of forested areas, such as those across the south east of Australia, this obligation is being undertaken as part of the Regional Forest Agreement process. In identifying places of outstanding universal value relevant to forests, the World Heritage Expert Panel determined that:

‘Amongst the best-known and documented examples of dreaming sites in New South Wales are Biamanga (Mumbulla) and Gulluga-Najanuga (Mt Dromedary-Little Dromedary) mountains, in the south coast region. These sites manifest little or no evidence of physical structures or modification. They are well documented as dreaming sites of profound significance to Aboriginal people. Their sacred traditional associations derive from the mythological significance of the sites, and because ceremonies were held at the sites until relatively recent times. The dreaming track of Gullaga, via Nadjanuga, extends off-shore to Montague Island...’

Although identified, this cultural complex of mythological sites encompassing Gulaga, Mumbulla, Najanuka and Baranguba has not been registered to date. Likewise, the Australian Heritage Council has determined that Wallaga Lake National Park holds Indigenous values of National Estate significance and is currently consulting with relevant Indigenous communities about the registration. The former Register of the National Estate documented Mount Dromedary and Surrounds (Mount Gulaga, Gooliga) for registration; however the process remains incomplete.

In recognition of the cultural significance of Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mt] and the need ensure its protection, the Eurobodalla Shire recently scheduled the site in the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan [2013] as a Heritage Conservation Area. Scheduling the site provides the defined locality, as detailed in the map below, with local heritage significance status and certain protection measures.

101 Wallaga Lake National Park; Heritage Identifier: 1026; Location: Princes Hwy, Bermagui; Local Government: Bega Valley Shire; State: NSW; Country: Australia.
102 Mount Dromedary and Surrounds (Mount Gulaga, Gooliga), Database No: 017409, Places of significance to Aboriginal people
The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) maintains the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) which includes information about Aboriginal objects [archaeological] and information about Aboriginal Places which have been declared by the Minister for the Environment to have special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture.

There are three Declared Aboriginal Places of relevance to the proposed work area and the cultural landscape being discussed:

- **Merrimans Island 1977**

Description: Merrimans Island is associated with *Umbarra* the black duck totem of the Yuin people, and a story about King Merriman, who was a Yuin Elder. Merriman Island is shaped like *Umbarra* the black duck, which is the totem of the Yuin people of the south coast of NSW. King Merriman, a Yuin Elder who died in 1904, had a special relationship with the black duck, who would warn him of danger by flapping its wings, diving down into the water and splashing.
Biamanga (Mumbulla Mountain) 1984

Biamanga (Mumbulla Mountain) is the central feature of Biamanga Aboriginal Place, which is part of a large ceremonial and cultural pathway on the south coast that includes Gulaga (Mt Dromedary), Umbarra (Merriman Island), Barungba (Montague Island), and Ditinh (Pigeon House Mountain).

Biamanga can be seen from across all of the Bega Valley and draws Aboriginal people back to the area. The highest peak on Biamanga is the Dreaming place of the Yuin leader King Jack Mumbulla. He used to sit and meditate on the top of the mountain and send smoke signals to his people in the valley below.

The Yuin people of the south coast held initiation ceremonies at a number of sacred sites on the mountain. The last initiation ceremony was held there in 1918. Some Yuin people remember tribal Elders who were initiated on the mountain, and who passed traditional information about the mountain’s sacred sites on to them. Initiated men would go to sacred sites on the mountain to meditate and communicate with the spirits. The late Ted Thomas compared the sacred sites on Biamanga to western cathedrals when explaining their significance to the Aborigines Select Committee in 1980. Ted Thomas said: ‘This is a place that the Aboriginals really regard as sacred...It has been handed down from the old people and they have said, never let it die, keep it going and tell your children and your children’s children so it will never be lost. We do not want to lose our culture. That is what we are doing. We are trying to restore all our sacred sites. We want to retain where we worship.’

In the 1970s, the late Ted Thomas led protests against logging, which had destroyed sacred sites on Biamanga. Both Ted Thomas and Percy Mumbler, told the NSW Select Committee on Aborigines in 1979 and 1980 that Mumbulla Mountain was a sacred site that needed to be protected from logging. The battle to protect sacred sites from logging revitalised cultural knowledge in the local Aboriginal community. The Yuin Tribal Council chose to name the place after the deceased elder, Jack Mumbler whose 'tribal' name was Biamanga.

• Bermagui Waterhole 2007

Bermagui Waterhole is an Aboriginal camping place, part of a traditional walking track, and a source of fresh water and food. The local Yuin people have camped at Bermagui Waterhole since before 1788; they continued to camp here regularly until the 1920s.

Bermagui Waterhole was a popular camping spot because it was a permanent source of fresh water, and there were plenty of fish and shell fish nearby. Although the waterhole is on Yuin traditional land, many other Aboriginal people used it as a camping place too. They would camp for a few weeks and then move on making sure they left behind enough food for others.

Bermagui Waterhole is also part of a traditional walking track used for travelling along the coast and to Yuin ceremonial and spiritual sites. Aboriginal people stopped off at Bermagui Waterhole as they followed the track to Biamanga (Mumbulla Mountain), a sacred site to the south, or to Gulaga (Mt. Dromedary), a ceremonial site to the north, which formed part of the ceremonial and initiation circuit of the Yuin people.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) also contains hundreds of recorded archaeological sites across the study area, as shown on the map below.

AHIMS data. Source OEH 2013

3.5 Definition of the cultural landscape

A cultural landscape marginally encompassing Dignams Creek was defined in the Eurobodalla Shire Council Aboriginal Heritage Study [Donaldson and Barry 2008] as the ‘Gulaga Aboriginal Culturally Sensitive Landscape’ [ACSL] with a focus on Gulaga and only in relation to land within the Eurobodalla Shire [the southern boundary being Dignams Creek], as detailed in the map below.

The defining components of the Gulaga ACSL related to Aboriginal spirituality / religious values, but also included resource collection, camping places, teaching places, travelling routes, working places,
recreation places, Government Reservations and themes associated with self-determination and conflict. Specific localities defining the area were Gulaga Mountain, Wallaga Lake, Montague Island, Dignams Creek, Little Dromedary Mountain, coastal camps and a number of extensive pathways linked to places across the region.

More recently the Bega Valley Shire Council Aboriginal Heritage Study [Donaldson 2010] defined the Mumbulla Mountain - Biamanga / Dr George ACSL, which included parts of Biamanga National Park, Mumbulla State Forest, Kooraban National Park and other portions of freehold land associated with Aboriginal travelling routes.

The defining components of the Aboriginal Culturally Sensitive Landscape surrounding Mumbulla Mt, relate primarily to Aboriginal spirituality / religion, as well as resource collection, travelling routes, teaching / education, working, self-determination and conflict. Specific localities defining the area were Mumbulla Mountain, Wallaga Lake, Dignams Creek, Merrimans Island, Dr George Mountain, coastal camps and a number of extensive pathways linked to places across the region, including those identified within Kooraban National linking the coast with the tablelands104.

Given the cultural interconnections between Mumbulla and Gulaga [traversing two LGAs], it was further recommended that the Mumbulla Aboriginal Culturally Sensitive Landscape and the Gulaga Aboriginal Culturally Sensitive Landscape be linked and cooperatively managed as a way to acknowledge the cultural connections between the them. Dignams Creek marks the boundary between the two areas; with Dignams Creek’s primary water catchment being the south eastern slopes of Gulaga.

104 Korraban National Park Plan of Management 2011:3
For the purpose of this assessment, giving consideration to the information summarised above, the Aboriginal cultural landscape within which Dignams Creek is situated can be defined as follows:

The cornerstone features of the Aboriginal cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek are Gulaga [Mount Dromedary], Mumbulla Mountain, Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mountain] and Baranguba [Montague Island]. These four prominent geographical features define the north, east and south extent of the relevant Aboriginal cultural landscape, whilst the west is defined by ancient pathways which incorporate Murrabrine and Wandella Mountains.

The key themes defining the Dignams Creek cultural landscape relate to Aboriginal religion, ritual, mythology and associated customs. The Aboriginal belief system determines the relationship between all living things saturating the landscape with non-physical, intangible attributes that shape how people move across the landscape and give cultural meaning to features within the landscape, including watercourses. The space is also filled with a multitude of other components; the archaeological record connects people to the past, natural resources are collected and memories are retained in relation to living, working, playing and coming into conflict with colonial obstacles across the area.

In summary the defining components of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape, as elicited from the background research, are:

- Religion [origin of humans and law, teaching laws]
- Ritual [ceremonial activity and pathways between Gulaga and Mumbulla]
- Mythology [maintain respect and retelling stories associated with Gulaga, Mumbulla, Merrimans Island, Najanuka, Baranguba and the water courses flowing from Gulaga into Wallaga Lake including Dignams Creek]
- Customs [caring for totem species, habitat for supernatural beings and country]
- Archaeological [middens and burials around Wallaga Lake and Beach]
- Resource collection [sides of Gulaga, in and along Dignams Creek]
- Living / camping [along Dignams Creek banks, at saw mill, at Wallaga]
- Working [seasonal picking on farms along Dignams Ck/ Dignams Creek saw mill]
- Recreation [swimming in Dignams Creek, events at Dignams Creek Hall]
- Government Reservation [Snake Island and Wallaga Lake]
- Conflict [people hiding from welfare on Gulaga]
3.5 Documenting the cultural landscape

The following components combine to form the basis of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape [arranged according to heritage themes].

Religion

The religious connection between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains relates to the origin of the human species and the establishment of traditional laws and customs governing society. Cultural protocols concerning tribal boundaries, traditional ownership and knowledge transmission determine how the local landscape is considered and managed; specific groups of people hold religious knowledge and are considered to be the Aboriginal custodians of the knowledge and land associated with it.\(^{105}\)

Participants confirmed the significance of Gulaga in relation to the origin of human kind. They also confirmed that underlying significance of Mumbulla related to the formation of Aboriginal law and that both Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains contained religious teaching sites. These two geographical features are integral to Yuin people’s religious belief system and the maintenance of Aboriginal law.

Locations

- Gulaga –Mt Dromedary
- Mumbulla Mt

\(^{105}\) Aboriginal people with descent based connections to an area are referred to as Traditional Owners [NT], or Aboriginal Owners [NSW], as distinct from people with historical [non descent based connections] to an area.
Current condition/threats

Much of the existing forested area has been disturbed by logging and mining operations in the past. Whilst the valleys have been cleared and remain cleared for agriculture, some of the previously disturbed areas, for instance, across the mountain slopes and certain private lands have revegetated. In the most part Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains are protected within the national park system, where forest cover has been maintained and rock formations are intact [with the exception of one complex on Mumbulla]. The potential for logging persists on the western slopes of Gulaga within Bodalla State Forest and across the eastern slopes of Mumbulla within Mumbulla State Forest. Further major development across the region could have a negative impact on the cultural connection between the two mountains, particularly if forested areas are further diminished, if any rock blasting occurs, or if primary sacred locations are directly impacted. Important sacred features on both mountains are currently intact and being managed in accordance with Aboriginal people’s aspirations.
Pastures within the Dignam Creek Valley. Source Donaldson 2013.

Existing road and forested areas. Source Donaldson 2013.
Mythology

Participants confirmed their belief that the topographical features known as Gulaga and Mumbulla are imbued with mythological meaning which originated in a past era [known in English as the ‘Dreamtime’]. These mythologies are maintained through the retelling of the stories, the revisiting of sites and the performance of rituals re-enacting the past. Although key mythological or ‘sacred’ sites are located towards the top of both Mumbulla and Gulaga Mountains [eg rocky out crop known as The Torres located near the Gulaga saddle, the guardian boulders on the eastern face of Gulaga or the Mumbulla Creek Falls] and are not within the construction footprint, mythological meaning is also attributed to the broader topographical features and the life they sustain including the forest and waterways. The mountains have a living presence situated in a broader mythological and cultural context. Cultural connections to Gulaga and Mumbulla and the associated mythologies are maintained by visiting specific places on the mountains or by viewing the mountains from afar; the latter is more common now and in the past.

The cultural relevance of Merrimans Island, Baranguba = Montague Island and Najanuka = Little Dromedary Mt were also emphasised. The significance of Dignams Creek and Wallaga Lake were documented as having mythological connections to Gulaga in that the waterways were also created in a past mythological era, and inter related to the origins of the human species and the Gulaga mythology. The water system is valued as an integral component of Aboriginal religious beliefs in the local area.

Aboriginal people continue to maintain a respect for key geographical features associated with localised mythologies and retell stories to the next generation. Even though only some mythological stories have obvious physical attributes, Aboriginal people are responsible for ensuring places associated with stories remain intact so that the place and the story can be passed onto the next generation in same condition it was received. And so the cycle keeps going.

Locations

- Gulaga
- Najanuka
- Baranguba
- Merrimans Island
- Wallaga Lake
- Dignams Creek
**Current condition/threats**

Gulaga is in good condition in that the mountain is well forested and particular sacred locations are intact and being managed in accordance with Aboriginal people’s aspirations.

The majority of Najanuka is forested; the lower slopes are used for grazing. Over all, the site is in good condition and is privately owned [one block by Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council] with a heritage conservation order over the forested sections to protect Aboriginal values.

Although the water courses have remained unaltered, of ongoing concern is the water quality of Dignams Creek and Wallaga Lake, which ranges from moderate to poor.

Baranguba is managed as Montague Island Nature Reserve according to environmental and cultural obligations.

Merrimans Island – located within Wallaga Lake, managed as an Aboriginal Place. It is in good condition.

From a broader landscape perspective, further development across the region will likely impact on the connection between the sites, particularly if forested areas are further diminished and waterways polluted.
Gulaga from Dignams Creek. Source Donaldson 2013.

Mumbulla Mt from Upper Brogo. Source Smith 2012.
Ritual

Travelling routes were traditionally used for ritual, economic and social purposes. Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains were used to teach young Aboriginal people about tribal lore, custom and ritual. Male initiation ceremonies involved Gulaga, Mumbulla and pathways between the two. Participants confirmed the significance of key sites on Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains and pathways or walking tracks between them. Although a number of routes across the cultural landscape are no longer used for the traditional purposes due to private property laws and changes in people’s patterns of movement and ritual, they continue to be valued as an element of this important Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Some say that specific routes were taken along ridgelines; others understand that any course was taken, so long as the people partaking in the ritual made the journey from Gulaga to Mumbulla. Accordingly, although general, it can be said that the land between Gulaga and Mumbulla mountains has associative significance in relation to past ritual activities.

Locations

- Gulaga –Mt Dromedary; key sites on Gulaga associated with ritual practise are towards the top of the mountain.
- Mumbulla Mt - key sites on Mumbulla associated with ritual practise.
- Pathways between Gulaga and Mumbulla, connecting the two areas including tracks through Wandella, Murrabrine, Coolagolite, Wallaga, Narira and Dignams Creek.

Current condition/threats

The land between Gulaga and Mumbulla mountains is affected by a number of developments including agricultural, telecommunications, road and residential. Although these developments have had a negative impact on these values, private property laws and fencing have had a greater impact. Sections
of the relevant land are well forested and accessible to the public. Gulaga and Mumbulla are linked by sections of Gulaga National Park, Biamanga National Park, Bodalla State Forest, Murrah State Forest, Mumbulla State Forest, Bermagui Nature Reserve, Mimosa Rock National Parks and Bermagui State Forest.

**Customs**

As determined by Aboriginal law, it is customary for certain Aboriginal people to be responsible for certain species and important sacred sites including all living things associated with them. Participants confirmed the continued custom associated with totemism, supernatural beings and caring for the habitat that sustains them, including the watercourses, the rocks, the fauna and flora. Densely forested areas linking Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains with each other and with the coast are particularly valued in relation to customary practise associated with supernatural beings.

Most native fauna and flora species are viewed as important in the cycle of life and are thus respected.

**Locations / elements**

- All native flora
- All native fauna
- Watercourses
- Rocky outcrops

**Current condition/threats**

Further developments across the region will likely impact on the connection between the sites, particularly if forested areas are further diminished.

**Resource collection**

Participants confirmed the significance of natural resources as a valued food source, as well as for medicines and other cultural items such as spears and traps. Resource collection takes place to a far lesser extent today compared with the past for many reasons including change in diet and lifestyles, government regulations, pollution, access and capacity in general.

Day trips from Wallaga up Dignams Creek, or across the lower slopes of Gulaga were common through the 1900s. Amongst other places, residents of Wallaga Lake Village and others continue to collect aquatic foods in and around Wallaga Lake, Snake Island, Wallaga Beach, Narira Creek and Dignams Creek. Bush foods and resources are also collected across these areas, but to a limited extent due to private property laws.

**Key locations relevant to this theme include**

- Wallaga Lake
- Dignams Creek
- Narira Creek
- Wallaga Beach
Current condition/threats

Further developments across the region will likely impact on the availability of resources particularly if publically accessible forested areas are further diminished and water ways polluted.

Living / Working

Living and working along Dignams Creek, at the Dignams Creek saw mill and at seasonal farms was common throughout the 1900s. Changes in work patterns reduced the potential for this to occur. Traditional camping places continued to be accessed throughout the 1900s, particularly if situated on public lands. A camp once existed on the banks of Dignams Creek and became the birthplace for a number of Aboriginal people including members of the Penrith and Morgan families [late 1800s].

Aboriginal people have particularly strong attachments to the now disused sawmill. The mill was previously located on the southern side of Dignams Creek west of Blind Creek and operated until 1965 with a predominantly Aboriginal labour force that either lived at the mill, in huts on the banks of Dignams Creek or walked to work daily from Wallaga Lake, along Dignams Creek Rd. Work commitments and the process of searching for work also encouraged people to move frequently across the landscape, including using Dignams Creek Road to access work in the Dignams Creek area and further afield towards Nerrigundah.
With the exception of Wallaga Lake Reserve, now Aboriginal freehold land, each of these locations only contain associative values given they were utilised in a past era and are now inaccessible due to private property laws.

**Key locations relevant to this theme include**

- Various farms along Dignams Creek, including Pretty’s property;
- Dignams Creek saw mill [Lot 2 DP 716687/ 482 Dignams Creek Road].
- Wallaga Lake Reserve
- Wallaga Beach [Cricketting Ground], Akolele
- Lower slopes of Gulaga, Tilba
- Forested slopes north of Dignams Creek
- Use of Dignams Creek Rd to travel to Nerrigundah
- Banks of Dignams Creek

**Current condition/threats**

Further developments will alter the landscape, impacting on people’s ability to remember past experiences and historical attachments to the area. Although Aboriginal people travel past the area, seldom do they drive up Dignams Creek road to reconnect with the past.

Present day entrance to Dignams Creek sawmill. Source Donaldson 2013.
Recreation

This theme relates specifically to swimming in Dignams Creek, particularly around the deep pools near the bridge and adjacent to farms where people would swim in their lunch break or after a hard day’s work picking seasonal crops. The War Memorial Hall, as recorded by Dibden [2010], also held significance to participants.

Key locations relevant to this theme include

- Dignams Creek
- Dignams Creek Hall

Each of these locations only contain associative values given they were utilised in a past era. The hall has been removed and the creek no longer has enough water to form pools for swimming.

Current condition/threats

Further developments will alter the landscape, impacting on people’s ability to remember past experiences and historical attachments to the area. Although Aboriginal people travel past the area, seldom do they drive up Dignams Creek road to reconnect with the past.

Government Reservation

Within the cultural landscape being discussed, there were three Government Reserves: Snake Island Reserve [1904 – 1954], Wallaga Lake Reserve [1891 – (1984 transfer in part to Aboriginal community)], and Merrimans Island Reserve [1909 – 1931]. During this era people also camped in traditional camping places, particularly behind Wallaga Beach and at Mystery Bay. Additionally, these times were also remembered in relation to conflict as people took refuge on the lower slopes of Gulaga to avoid welfare. With the exception of a large portion of the original Wallaga Lake Reserve, all reserves were gradually revoked between 1886 and 1969, and reverted to vacant Crown land. Some were sold to become private land, which was subsequently subdivided, while other land parcels remained as Crown reserves.
for public use. Of the original 330 acres making up Wallaga Lake Reserve, 21 acres was revoked on the 22/11/1963 whilst the remaining 309 acres was transferred to Aboriginal Ownership in 1984 under the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act and is today owned by Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Key locations relevant to this theme include

- Snake Island
- Wallaga Lake
- Merrimans Island

![Map showing Former Aboriginal Reserves marked in red; left to right - Snake Island, Merrimans Island and Wallaga Lake](source)

Current condition/threats

The values associated with this theme were recently acknowledged in a publication coordinated by the Eurobodalla Shire Council [Feary and Donaldson 2012].

Archaeological values

Archaeological sites remind people about how their ancestors used the land. Archaeological sites are important to people today as an integral part of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Custodial duties relate to the protection of archaeological items, particularly burials [no burials are recorded within construction footprint]. Cultural protocols concerning burial rites determine how skeletal remains are managed. Each community has protocols which may differ between tribes and regions.

Key locations relevant to this theme include

- Wallaga Lake shores
- Wallaga Beach dunes
- Shores of Narira Creeks
- Evidence of pathways along ridges and valley floors
3.6 Analysis of documented evidence

In terms of the sequence of the identified components of the cultural landscape, the religious and mythological significance of Gulaga, Mumbulla, Merrimans Island, Njanuka, Baranguba, Wallaga Lake, Dignams Creek underlies all other elements. The forever present essence imbued in the landscape overarches all and continually offers meaning to Aboriginal people in different ways today.

The ritual meaning associated with Mumbulla Mountain, Gulaga Mountain and the pathway between the two features strongly in Aboriginal people’s cultural identity even though this particular ritual is no longer practised in the traditional form. The identified value continues to hold meaning for Aboriginal people today, as part of their cultural heritage, even though it is grounded in a past era.

In accordance with Aboriginal customs Aboriginal people are required to look after specific culturally significant fauna [totems, mythological characters and supernatural beings for instance] as part of their ongoing role to pass ‘country’ onto the next generation intact. Most native fauna species are viewed as important in the cycle of life and are thus respected. This practise has been taking place since traditional times and continues where opportunities arise [eg Gulaga and Biamanga National Parks, various land management projects, on Aboriginal owned and public land].

Apart from the mythological, ritual and religious conceptualisations of the landscape, the inherent economic value of the area is evident in the archaeological record, throughout the early contact period and the 1900s and continues to be significant today. Restrictive access rules impacted on the collection of terrestrial resources. This was counteracted to some degree by involvement in the seasonal farming and saw mill industries which enabled people to maintain links with the land. Aquatic resources have been an important component of Aboriginal people’s economic independence and cultural identity throughout recorded history. These values continue today.

Aboriginal people’s participation in the local economy not only enabled families to stay close to important cultural sites, it bonded families and forged links between local farmers and their workers. These relationships continue to be valued today; people are proud of their self-determined efforts in the pre welfare era. Work commitments and the process of searching for work also encouraged people to move frequently across the landscape, including using Dignams Creek Road to access work in the Dignams Creek area and further afield towards Nerrigundah.

In terms of the spatial distribution of components identified, we see how the cornerstone geographical features associated with mythology determine the extent of the cultural landscape, whilst impacting on the experiences within it. People’s memories of saw milling at Dignams Creek are intertwined with their experience associated with Gulaga. People’s recollections about living at Wallaga Lake or camping along Dignams Creek are interspersed with stories about Gulaga and Merrimans Island. A story about one component is always related to a story about another, creating interconnected meanings across the cultural landscape. Clusters of individual features and sites interrelate within the broader landscape within a mythological framework, usually with reference to Gulaga as the mother mountain, the allusiveness of the Doolagarl or the symbolism of Umbarra, the Black Duck.
3.7 Significance assessment

The significance of the cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek is based on its social value in terms of its focus for spiritual and cultural sentiment to a minority group, in a local and regional context. Elements of the landscape also contain historical significance to the local Aboriginal people who worked and lived in the area. Some of the historical values are also shared by local non Aboriginal people.

Gulaga, Mumbulla, Merrimans Island, Najanuka, Baranguba, Wallaga Lake, Dignams Creek and the pathways between these places combine to hold special association with a particular cultural group in NSW for spiritual reasons. These places are also important in that they demonstrate the principal characteristics of a class of NSW’s cultural places [ie concerning mythology and religion]. Political actions at Mumbulla are also important in the course of NSW’s history [ie led to legislation];

- The components of the cultural landscape with spiritual associations meet the criteria of being highly significant on a local, regional, state and national scale.

The complex of gazetted reserves at Snake Island, Wallaga Lake and Merrimans Island, and the array of formal and informal living and camping areas such as those along Dignams Creek and behind Wallaga Beach have strong association with a particular cultural group in NSW for social and cultural reasons;

- The components of the cultural landscape associated with living and camping are moderately to highly significant on a local and regional scale.

The Dignams Creek saw mill and nearby farms have potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the region’s economic history;

- The components of the cultural landscape associated with working, in particular, the Dignams Creek Saw Mill, is moderately significant at the local level.

When combining all the components of the cultural landscape, including Aboriginal people’s customary responsibility towards certain species and important sacred sites; the customs associated with totemism, supernatural beings and caring for the habitat that sustains them, including the watercourses, the rocks, the fauna and flora and their ongoing cultural use of natural resources, it can be seen how the area has special association with a particular cultural group in NSW for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. Not all of these significant features can be assessed according to state criteria.
3.7.1 The Dignams Creek cultural landscape - statement of significance

The cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek is moderate to highly significant to Aboriginal people for social, cultural, economic and spiritual reasons. The dominating theme here is that of spirituality; Gulaga [Mount Dromedary], Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mountain], in the Tilba area, Baranguba [Montague Island] to the northeast off the coast at Narooma and Mumbulla to the south, remain deeply precious to the Aboriginal community across the south east coastal region.

These sacred, mythological places offer a link between the Dreamtime past and people’s spirituality today. They are places on which personal and group identities are based and provide a place to take refuge, rest and reflect.

Specific travelling routes and mythological stories define the cultural links between Mumbulla Mountain, Gulaga Mountain and other important ritual sites. A number of traditional religious beliefs continue to be relevant to Aboriginal people across the region, including a belief in totems, the Doolagarl and other bush dwelling beings.

The complex of gazetted reserves at Snake Island, Wallaga Lake and Merrimans Island, and the array of formal and informal living and camping areas such as those along Dignams Creek and behind Wallaga Beach were frequented at various times, whilst the Dignams Creek saw mill and nearby farms attracted a predominantly Aboriginal workforce who greatly contributed to the region’s economic development. These new institutions and structures allowed Aboriginal custodians to maintain cultural associations with their traditional lands and paved the way for Aboriginal people from other cultural areas to develop historical attachments to the landscape.

The array of ecological zones, including Dignams Creek (riverine), Wallaga Lake (coastal lakes), Wallaga Beach (marine) and the surrounding bushlands, have supplied a diversity of natural resources to Aboriginal people for thousands of years. Throughout the 1800s and 1900s to today, Aboriginal Owners, the residents of Wallaga Lake community and itinerant workers enjoy collecting natural resources for cultural purposes, including food for sustenance and wood for objects such as boats and spears, across the broader cultural landscape.

Few archaeological sites are recorded, perhaps reflecting the lack systematic survey and the spiritual, rather than utilitarian values of the landscape to Aboriginal people. Recorded middens are concentrated around the shores of Wallaga Lake and its tributaries. The archaeological record remains an important way to connect Aboriginal people to their past.

The cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek is associated with a complex and multifaceted array of heritage components which hold a diversity of meanings to Aboriginal people, reflecting the range of historical experiences and the different ways a story can be shared over time. Conversely, the shared way Aboriginal people experienced places and events across the landscape has resulted in the area being high significant today, gives rise to collective and valued memories and fosters the continuation of respect.
Section four: Identifying and mitigating potential impacts

The impacts of the proposed work on specific heritage themes and places within each theme are dealt with separately.\textsuperscript{106}

4.1 Impacts and mitigation measures

Religious connection between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains

Possible impact of development: Aboriginal people are frequently asked to work in ‘country’ other than their own. When the work relates to non heritage matters, this movement often goes unnoticed and is of little concern to the custodians of the land in question. Having non-custodians working on cultural heritage issues can however have ongoing negative repercussions, particularly in an area strongly associated with intangible heritage values, because non-custodians don’t hold the relevant knowledge. The disenfranchised custodians may worry about the sacred sites they are entitled to look after, they may get sick if sacred sites are damaged and ill feelings may develop between community members.

Mitigating the impact:

- Enabling community participation in matters concerning the land and waterways is an important means of acknowledging many of the intangible values identified. Male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the religious connection across the landscape to be integral in a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction. Any such program could involve a visit to Dignams Creek with Aboriginal Owners.

- Acknowledge the intangible cultural values across the broad landscape through interpretive signage.

Ritual, social and economic connection between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains

Possible impact of development: Although the proposed works will increase the scale of the road, bridge and associated infrastructure, it is not thought that the works will impact on the values associated with the travelling routes any more or less than the present road and other existing infrastructure across the region. If people were to reuse the traditional travelling routes, as is the case a little further to the south, it is thought that the proposed works would ensure a safer passage through the Dignams Creek area. The works are likely to have an adverse impact on the long range views from ritual sites located on Gulaga and Mumbulla Mts.

Mitigating the impact:

- Enabling community participation in matters concerning the land and waterways is an important means of acknowledging many of the intangible values identified. Male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the ritual pathways across the landscape to be integral in a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction.

\textsuperscript{106} Note, the consultant was not asked to consider or incorporate negotiations between RMS and OEH pertaining to ‘off-setting’, be they environmental or cultural in nature. The consultant was advised by RMS that negotiations concerning offsetting be undertaken separate to this assessment.
• Strategically revegetate to minimise the visual impact of the major cutting into ‘Dignams Hill’ on long range views. This cutting is located on a high point within Kooraban NP, between approx. chainages 97400 and 97700.

• Consider the development of an interpretive sign explaining the value of the travelling routes, as relevant to Dignams Creek, if approved by knowledge holders, with their input into text development.

Mythological connections between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains and the broader landscape

Possible impact of development: the mythological essence in the landscape, particularly in relation to Gulaga, will be disturbed during the construction period as a result of removing trees, shifting soil and rock, introducing foreign materials and increasing the presence in an otherwise peaceful environment. It was generally agreed by Aboriginal participants that given the major, highly significant sacred sites were not within the construction footprint, nor were they going to be effected by vibration caused by blasting [not an aspect of construction work] that the proposed works would have some major localised impacts but the impacts across the broader cultural landscape including the connectivity between Mumbulla and Gulaga Mountains over the long term would be moderate.

Over the long term, concerns have been raised about the impact of tree removal and the cutting into Dignams Hill [between approx. chainages 97400 and 97700] on the view south from Gulaga and the view north from Mumbulla. The Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment [2013] by Spackman, Mossop and Michaels determined that some long-range views may require impact mitigation, specifically, views of the ridge line in the southern section from the lookout on Mount Dromedary. Localised treatments, including revegetation, would assist with mitigation of short and long range viewpoint impacts.  

Topography of the proposed study area. Source Spackman, Mossop and Michaels 2013.

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107 Spackman, Mossop and Michaels 2013:2, 8, 30.
Mitigating the impact:

- Strategically revegetate to minimise the visual impact of the major cutting into ‘Dignams Hill’ on long range views. This cutting is located on a high point within Kooraban NP, between approx. chainages 97400 and 97700;

- Use local materials where possible, rather than bringing in fill from other places or taking materials away;

- Rehabilitate the existing Dignams Hill gravel pit;

- Discard all waste during the construction period;

- Enable community participation in matters concerning the land and waterways is an important means of acknowledging many of the intangible values identified. Male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the mythological links across the landscape to be integral to a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction.
Mythological significance of Dignams Creek and Wallaga Lake

Possible impact of development: Aboriginal people worry that the construction works will alter the flow of water along Dignams creek and or add further siltation build up to Wallaga Lake. It is understood that the proposed works will not require a realignment of Dignams Creek and that the bridge pylons are not located within the creek itself.

Mitigating the impact:

- Ensure water flow is maintained during and after construction period;
- Ensure water quality controls are maintained during and after construction period;
- Acknowledge the intangible cultural values across the broad landscape through interpretive signage. Enable community participation in matters concerning the land and waterways is an important means of acknowledging many of the intangible values identified. Male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the mythological links across the landscape to be integral in a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction.

Remembering the past through archaeological artefacts

Possible impact of development: The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment [2011] by NSW Archaeology identified a number of Potential Archaeological Deposits across the proposed work area and determined that there are ‘no cultural or archaeological constraints to the proposed construction of the Dignams Creek upgrade and that ‘no impact mitigation is considered to be warranted in the proposed impact area’108. Subsequently, an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) was issued (number 1131201) by OEH for the proposed construction footprint. In accordance with statutory requirements, this permit addresses potential impact to archaeological sites, although the Aboriginal community favour having site monitors on site even when the probability of subsurface cultural material has been determined as low.

Although the proposed work has been determined to not be constrained by archaeological values, Aboriginal people worry that ground disturbing works will damage unknown burials and unrecorded sites [eg middens, stone artefacts] between Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks. Moreover, the current paucity of knowledge concerning the location of surviving Aboriginal sites and features in Kooraban National Park raises the possibility that they may also be inadvertently destroyed or damaged 109

Mitigating the impact:

- Adhere to ‘unexpected finds’ procedure as outlined in AHIP and the Roads and Maritime policy.
- Be aware of local protocols concerning unexpected burial finds.
- Roads and Maritime to engage with Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the cultural landscape prior to construction [ie at cultural awareness training].

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108 NSW Archeology 2011:5.
Caring for culturally significant fauna

Possible impact of development: Aboriginal people worry that fauna may be adversely impacted upon by development works as a result of ground disturbance and most importantly the removal of habitat. The Biodiversity Assessment [2013] by Sinclair Knight and Merz recognised the significance of the east-west corridor connecting the two national parks, which provides both broad landscape and fauna connectivity. A number of fauna underpasses and an overpass have been incorporated into project design. The assessment found no potential impacts to aquatic life within Dignams Creek and nearby sanctuary zone within Wallaga Lake.110

Mitigating the impact:

• Where possible, ensure a vegetated corridor is maintained during the construction period;
• Revegetate with flora species favoured by culturally significant fauna eg koalas > Forest red gum [Eucalyptus tereticornis];
• Improve vegetation coverage across deforested pastures purchased by the Roads and Maritime, in order to link existing vegetated corridors and new fauna underpass// drainage culvert ‘A’.

Exploitation of natural resources in and around Dignams Creek, Snake Island and Wallaga Lake

Possible impact of development: Pollution / siltation of water courses, removal of culturally valued food and medicine resources.

Mitigating the impact:

• Ensure water quality controls are maintained during and after construction period;
• Favour native bush food / medicine plants for revegetation purposes.111

Historical attachments to Dignams Creek and the broader landscape;

Historical attachments include camping, working, travelling through, engaging in recreational activities, being born, and frequenting ‘hiding places’. The Historic Heritage Assessment [2010] by NSW Archaeology identified two of the places valued by the Aboriginal community, as a result of shared historical experience. 1) the site of the Dignams Creek community hall/war memorial which was determined to not hold heritage significance and 2) the Dignams Creek Bridge which was determined as having local heritage significance.112

Possible impact of development: The exact location of all the camps and birth places is not certain, therefore there are no identified impacts. The alterations to the landscape in the Dignams Creek area will indirectly effect people’s capacity to recall memories of important events relating to the area. The Dignams Creek Rd will change and the view across the creek will change. The site of the old mill is not directly impacted by the proposed works, nor has it been visited for many years due to private property laws.

110 Sinclair Knight and Merz: 2013: x, 129.
111 See listing in appendix four.
112 NSW Archeology 2010: 29, 30, 35, 36, 49.
Mitigating the impact:

- It may be possible to acknowledge these values in an interpretive sign which could include old photos [of the bridge, mill and hall].

- The Roads and Maritime should approach the landowner in an attempt to facilitate a one off visit to the historical Dignams Creek Sawmill, for elders with historical associations to the site. Given the site is located on private property, [Lot 2 DP 716687; 482 Dignams Creek Road]; access would be dependent upon permission from the landowner\(^{113}\).

**Losing loved ones**

Possible impact of development: The development will improve the safety of the road and hence reduce the risk of injury and death.

Opportunity for further improvement: Give the new bridge a name relevant to the Aboriginal community and or cultural landscape. Two ideas have been suggested thus far:

1/ Name the bridge in memory of ‘Rex Edward Morgan’. On the 25\(^{th}\) June 1955 Rex, a local Aboriginal boy, was 13 when he died in a school bus accident on the sharp bend north of the bridge. He was the only one who died in the crash, but reminds people of all those that have died in the area, on the road. The Morgan family continue to reside in the area today\(^{114}\).

2/ Name the bridge ‘Merrimans’ after an elder with strong ties to the area whose totem was ‘Umbara’ the black duck.

The latter suggestion contains exceptional cultural relevance for the entire community, whilst the former suggestion is highly significant to a family group. Bridge naming guidelines to be adhered to which includes a consultation process.

\(^{113}\) The consultant has a list of potential participants.

\(^{114}\) Morgan: 1994: 105 - 106
## Section five: Assessment summary

**NSW Roads and Maritime Services**  
**DIGNAMS CREEK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of cultural landscape</th>
<th>Possible impact of development</th>
<th>Mitigating the impact</th>
<th>How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 Religious connection between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains;  
  ➢ Tribal boundaries and ownership protocols. | Disregarding ownership protocols offends Aboriginal Owners and can lead to community conflict. | A / Male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the religious connections across the landscape to be integral in a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction. Any such program could involve a visit to Dignams Creek with Aboriginal Owners. | Roads and Maritime to seek direction from the Gulaga BOM. |
| 2 Ritual connection between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains;  
  ➢ Ritual sites on the mountains | The works may have an adverse impact on the long range views from ritual sites located on Gulaga and Mumbulla Mts. | A/ strategically revegetate to minimise the visual impact of the major cutting into ‘Dignams Hill’ on long range views. This cutting is located on a high point within Kooraban NP, between approx. chainages 97400 and 97700. | Species to accord with RTA biodiversity guidelines [2011] and Environmental safeguards outlined in REF [2013]. See Visual Impact Assessment Report [Appendix C REF: 40] ‘deep cut batters potentially visible from long range view points’. |
### Pathway between ritual sites.

The works will not greatly impact on the ritual pathway between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mts any more than existing private property laws, the present road and other existing infrastructure.

### Mythological connections between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains

#### Intangible story places

Proposed works [construction period and enduring development] will adversely impact this value. Impacts range from being temporary [increased presence, noise], whilst some are more permanent [tree removal, reshaping landscape].

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A/</td>
<td>strategically revegetate to minimise the visual impact of the major cutting into ‘Dignams Hill’ on long range views. This cutting is located on a high point within Kooraban NP, the between approx. chainages 97400 and 97700.</td>
<td>Species to accord with RTA biodiversity guidelines [2011] and Environmental safeguards outlined in REF [2013]. See Visual Impact Assessment Report [Appendix C REF: 40] ‘deep cut batters potentially visible from long range view points’.</td>
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<td>B/</td>
<td>rehabilitate the existing Dignams Hill gravel pit;</td>
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<td>C/</td>
<td>use local rather than foreign materials and minimise exporting local material.</td>
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<td>D/</td>
<td>discard all waste during the construction period.</td>
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<td>E/</td>
<td>acknowledge the intangible cultural values across the broad landscape through interpretive signage.</td>
<td>Roads and Maritime to seek direction from the Gulaga BOM.</td>
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<td>F/</td>
<td>Male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of mythological significance across the landscape to be integral in a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction. Any such program could involve a visit to Dignams Creek with Aboriginal Owners.</td>
<td>Roads and Maritime to seek direction from the Gulaga BOM.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mythological significance of Dignams Creek and Wallaga Lake</td>
<td>The proposed works are not altering the course of Dignams Creek or altering the flow of water along the creek into Wallaga Lake. Proposed works could add further siltation build up to water system.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Intangible story places</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Remembering the past through archaeological artefacts.</td>
<td>Although the proposed work has been determined to not be constrained by archaeological values, Aboriginal people are concerned that the proposed major earth works will disturb unknown burials and other unknown archaeological items.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unknown / unrecorded archaeological items including burials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caring for culturally significant fauna [including totems and supernatural beings];</td>
<td>This value will be impacted upon by the disturbance and removal of natural habitat.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Exploitation of natural resources in and around Dignams Creek, Snake Island and Wallaga Lake;</td>
<td>Proposed works could add further siltation build up to water system and create localised pollution [rubbish / litter].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Terrestrial and aquatic foods, medicines etc</td>
<td>Potential loss of culturally valued food and medicine resources.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Historical attachments to Dignams Creek and the broader landscape;</td>
<td>Alterations to the landscape will indirectly affect people’s capacity to recall memories of historical events tied to the area. The exact location of the camps and birth place is unknown.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Many places have not been visited for many years due to private property laws.</td>
<td>B/ The Roads and Maritime could also facilitate a one off visit to the abandoned Dignams Creek Sawmill, for elders with historical associations to the site. Given the site is located on private property, [Lot 2 DP 716687; 482 Dignams Creek Road]; access would be dependent upon permission from the landowner.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Losing loved ones; sad memories of family members who have been injured or killed as a result of a traffic accident.</td>
<td>The development will improve the safety of the road and hence reduce the risk of injury and death. Opportunity to acknowledge deaths.</td>
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Section six: Conclusion

This report has assessed the significance of the cultural landscape surrounding Dignams Creek, NSW, the likely impacts proposed road upgrades would have on the cultural landscape, and provided a number of measures to mitigate these impacts. The heritage significance of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape primarily relates to Aboriginal religion, ritual, mythology and customary practices. The Aboriginal belief system determines the relationship between all living things and saturates the landscape (including waterways) with non-physical, intangible attributes that shape how people move across the landscape. The associative meaning given to the landscape in the Dignams Creek area by Aboriginal people is complex, multifaceted and gives rise to the inseparability of nature and culture, of people and places, of the past and the present.

The components of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape with spiritual associations are highly significant on a local, regional, state and national scale whilst components associated with living, working and camping are moderately significant. Whilst isolated components of the Dignams Creek cultural landscape are formally acknowledged on government heritage registers, there is no official model for assessing the significance of broad scale Aboriginal landscapes, nor how a development may impact on one.

In determining how the proposed works might impact on the identified cultural values, the consultant has given consideration to pre-existing disturbances, disturbances to be caused during the construction period, the enduring impact of the development and the difference between the actual construction footprint and the view of it from afar. Of primary concern to all Aboriginal participants was the potential impact on native fauna and culturally defined bush beings, on the water quality of Dignams Creek and Wallaga Lake and the need to ensure intangible cultural values are conveyed to the construction team by knowledgeable custodians. Of concern to some participants was the potential impact of works on cultural activities that take place on the top of Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains and the spiritual connectivity between Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains.

Particular aspects of the proposed works likely to impact on the significance of individual components of the cultural landscape as well as overall broader complex include the removal of vegetation; the deep cutting into ridgelines; shifting material including rock and soil into and out of the local area; disturbance to water flow along Dignams Creek into Wallaga Lake; removal of forest habitat and culturally relevant flora and altering landscape in general. There is also concern about Roads and Maritime seeking heritage advice from Aboriginal people who do not identify with the cultural area.

Impact mitigation measures include strategically revegetating to minimise the visual impact of the major cutting into ‘Dignams Hill’ on long range views; use of local materials where possible; ensuring water quality controls are maintained during and after construction period; enabling community participation by ensuring male and female Aboriginal Owners with knowledge of the cultural landscape are integral to a cultural awareness program [for relevant Roads and Maritime staff and contractors] prior to construction; maintaining a wildlife corridor during the construction period where possible; revegetating with species favoured by culturally significant fauna; favouring native bush food / medicine plants for revegetation purposes; improving the wildlife corridor across pasture between existing vegetation and new fauna underpass / drainage culvert ‘A’; acknowledging the significance of the landscape to Aboriginal people in an interpretive sign and giving the new bridge a name relevant to the Aboriginal community and or cultural landscape.

It was generally agreed by the Aboriginal participants that the proposal would not directly affect major, highly significant cultural sites. However, the proposed works would have some major localised impacts
and that the impacts across the broader cultural landscape including to the spiritual connectivity between Mumbulla and Gulaga Mountains would be moderate over the long term.

It is difficult to define the level which a development might impact on broad, intangible, cultural heritage values, especially given the lack of precedents to rely on. However, it is this consultant’s opinion that the mitigation measures recommended in this report would satisfactorily mitigate the impacts identified on cultural heritage values within the construction footprint and across the cultural landscape, if implemented in consultation with the Aboriginal community, and in particular with Aboriginal Owners, as identified by the Gulaga National Park Board of Management.
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UNESCO, 1996. World Heritage Convention, Operational Guidelines


APPENDIX ONE: Consultant’s brief

In order to more fully assess the impacts on the cultural landscape values Roads and Maritime needs to undertake a supplementary study to be undertaken by an anthropologist with suitable experience in this area to specifically examine the potential impacts from the Dignams Creek Upgrade proposal. The assessment involves conducting interviews with previously identified and any new knowledge holders identified by the Gulaga National Park Board of Management. The following is required to be prepared prior to the interviews:

- Prepare draft participant documentation as per current practice, for Roads and Maritime review—e.g. standard letter of introduction, informed consent.
- Contact each of the individuals and invite them to participate further in the study. Provide copies of Roads and Maritime community information materials [to be supplied by Roads and Maritime].
- Undertake a literature review of the available literature on the cultural landscape of the area.
- Arrange interviews as required. Site inspections of the proposed route are to be offered. Roads and Maritime will arrange site visits and access.

With each interviewee the anthropologist is required to:

- Describe the proposed project and its construction process and final form [Roads and Maritime staff will assist in providing descriptions].
- Identify if there are any specific cultural values associated with the project area, document what these are and how they reflect the broader landscape significance.
- Identify what effects the construction process / final form of the road will have on any cultural values in the project area, or more generally within the broader cultural landscape.
- If there are impacts identify their severity on the cultural values, e.g. if these are permanent or transient, how they affect the cultural values, and whether there is any remediation / mitigation measures that could be adopted, and what effect these would have.
- Understanding values and impacts, and ideas for mitigation, may be an iterative process. These should, as far as confidentiality allows, be referred back to Roads and Maritime allow them to suggest any possible alternatives or, if considered appropriate, engage directly with Roads and Maritime.

It was requested that a draft assessment report be completed by 27th September 2013. The Roads and Maritime will review the report prior to it being sent out for community comments. Roads and Maritime will liaise with the consultant in regards to any matters of concern to them and then send electronic and hard copies of the draft report to community participants and organisations by Wednesday 2nd October. The comment period will extend across two weeks between the 2nd and 16th October. The consultant is to finalise the report by Wednesday 23rd October 2013.

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115 This time frame does not factor in presenting a draft report to the Gulaga Board. If this is required, the comment period and time frame for finalisation of assessment will have to align with the Gulaga Board meeting schedule.
## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION RECORD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
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<td>Anne Greenaway [MLALC]</td>
<td>26.08.13, 09.09.13</td>
<td>Via telephone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Randal Mumbler</td>
<td>09.09.13</td>
<td>Dignams Creek and surrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren Foster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Micheal Darcey</td>
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<td>Harriett Walker</td>
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<td>Lorraine Naylor</td>
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<td>Yuin Kelly</td>
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<td>Lyn Thomas</td>
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<td>Vivienne Mason</td>
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<td>Lionel Mongta</td>
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<td>Trisha Ellis</td>
<td>17.09.13</td>
<td>Moruya</td>
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<td>Iris White</td>
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<td>Deanna Davison</td>
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<td>Dan Morgan</td>
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<td>Ossie Crusie</td>
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<td>Anne Greenaway</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Stewart</td>
<td>02.10.13</td>
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People who were briefed about proposed works but were unavailable or uninterested in participating in the assessment.

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<td>Eric Naylor</td>
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## APPENDIX THREE: Totem species of the far south coast

### SOME TOTEM SPECIES OF THE FAR SOUTH COAST REGION, NSW

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON NAME</th>
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<th>DHURGA NAME</th>
<th>REFERENCE / SOURCE OF INFORMATION</th>
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<td>Eastern Whipbird</td>
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<td>Duduwa</td>
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<td>Magpie Lark [Pee Wee]</td>
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<td>Lyre Bird</td>
<td><em>Menura novaehollandiae</em></td>
<td>Bellet Bellet</td>
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<td>Grey Magpie</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Bilinga</td>
<td>Howitt 1904: 133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Swan</td>
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<td>Gunyung</td>
<td>Donaldson 2006 and 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laughing Kookaburra</td>
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<td>Gugara</td>
<td>Donaldson 2006, Cruse, Stewart and Norman 2005</td>
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<td>COMMON NAME</td>
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<tr>
<td>A small owl</td>
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<td>Tiska</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tawny Frog Mouth</td>
<td><em>Pogargus strigoides</em></td>
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<td><em>Calyptorhynchus funereus</em></td>
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<td>Bream</td>
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<td>Burimi</td>
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<td>Whale</td>
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<td>Murumbul</td>
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References cited for plant list