

# DJAARA Strategies

Applying a Dja Dja Wurrung approach  
to government policy on Djandak



**Wayaparrangu**  
We all meet

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## Far Foreword

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation trading as DJAARA offers a time-honoured recipe for health, prosperity, and success perfected over 60,000 years by our Ancestors. This recipe is about more than just preserving culture. It's about ensuring a sustainable future for communities living on Country. This recipe requires a vital ingredient: a strategic partnership with the government to reach its full potential.

For far too long, the essential role of Dja Dja Wurrung People (Djaara) in managing Djandak (our Country) has been overlooked, limiting the benefits that could extend to everyone living on Country. As environmental challenges intensify, the value of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is increasingly recognised. However, knowledge alone isn't enough. Djaara's voice must be at the table, leading the way in collaboration with government partners.

Our Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Plan is a 20-year blueprint for the sustainable development of Djandak, combining ancient wisdom with modern governance. Strategies like our Djandak Wi (Country Fire) Strategy demonstrate the power of traditional practices, such as controlled burns, to reduce wildfire risks and promote ecosystem health. This approach is both culturally sound and economically wise.

When DJAARA and government collaborate, the benefits ripple out across the wider community. Healthier landscapes, stronger communities, and a more resilient environment are just some outcomes. The Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA 2014) between DJAARA and the State of Victoria is not just a legal acknowledgement. It's a strategic tool that facilitates these benefits.



*“Our Strategies are deliberately written as empowering and enabling documents, they serve to introduce non-Indigenous land managers to a different and more holistic way of thinking.”*

- DJAARA CEO, RODNEY CARTER

Our successful partnership with Coliban Water exemplifies how working together can address critical issues like water security while enhancing the wellbeing of the wider community. Engaging with DJAARA isn't just the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do. By incorporating our strategies into state governance, you set up for long-term success, significantly reducing future costs and enhancing community relations.

We envision a future where Djandak is healthy, Djaara are empowered to lead, and government partners embrace our strategies. By joining forces, we can restore our land, empower communities, and secure a thriving future for generations to come. Let's work together to ensure a healthy, prosperous place for all.

This is a humble and gracious invitation from DJAARA to meet together in such a way that delivers benefits for Country, and for all who live, work, and play here.

*Dhelkup Murrupuk, we give good spirit.*

— DJAARA CEO, Rodney Carter



**Wayaparrangu**  
We all meet

**Wayaparrangu** is the collaborative process in which DJAARA and our partners come together to deliver a shared vision for Country.

**Meeting together**, we deliver our shared goals more effectively and efficiently.

Meeting together, we collaborate in good murrup (spirit) to create a better future for Djandak, and all who live on and visit Djandak.

## **Future focussed, sustainable outcomes for all**

### **Embrace forward thinking**

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) provides practical knowledge and essential insights for effective and sustainable land management. Beyond conventional education, our knowledge provides a solid foundation for decision-making that reduces financial risk and future interventions.

By integrating our strategies into your decision-making processes, you not only access 60,000 years of cultural wisdom but also embrace forward thinking, innovative solutions that benefit everyone living on Country.

### **Caring for Country**

First Nations intrinsically think 'Country First'. If we look after Country, it looks after us.

Our Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Plan is a living framework that blends ancient practices with modern governance, guiding the sustainable management of lands, waters, and communities.

A First Nations approach also brings a long-term vision, naturally extending beyond election cycles, with a focus on enduring care for Country. This perspective ensures that the health of the land and its people remains a priority for generations to come.

By embedding these insights into state governance and business practices, DJAARA fosters community-driven initiatives that support environmental stewardship and reduce reliance on government resources, ultimately benefiting all.

### **Future vision**

DJAARA's strategies are flexible and adaptable, designed to meet the specific needs of any project. By partnering with DJAARA from the outset, decisions are well-informed, financially sound, and optimised for long-term success.

Engaging DJAARA early in project planning ensures that cultural values are integrated seamlessly, helping to avoid potential issues down the road. This approach not only enhances project outcomes but also strengthens relationships between government, businesses, and local communities.

By partnering with DJAARA, you are preparing your projects for future success. This is not just a culturally respectful choice but smart investment in the future.

*Innovative  
solutions  
that benefit  
everyone.*

# Country Plan 2014 – 2034

## Dhelkunya Dja

A Framework for Sustainable Development

### Overview

The Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan forms the backbone of DJAARA's approach to land management. This 20-year vision combines traditional ecological knowledge with modern practices to restore and sustain landscapes.

Healthy Country = Healthy People frames all decisions. The health of the land and the people are intertwined, so caring for Country ensures the wellbeing of the community. Every action in the Dhelkunya Dja Plan aims to restore and sustain both, balancing cultural integrity with practical outcomes.

### Strategic approach

Integrating traditional knowledge with sustainable practices will help safeguard the natural environment for future generations, while deepening the connection to Country and reinforcing Djaara's cultural identity.

This approach is safeguarding the natural environment for future generations, while deepening the connection to Country and reinforcing Djaara's cultural identity. The long-term impact is clear: thriving ecosystems, stronger communities, and a legacy of sustainability for the land and its people.

### Impact

As a result of the Country Plan, the restoration of ecosystems on Dja Dja Wurrung Country has supported biodiversity and improved land health. Prioritising native species regeneration has revitalised the environment, promoting ecological balance and resilience. By implementing sustainable practices, DJAARA has reduced environmental management costs while ensuring long-term benefits for the land and its biodiversity. This work has also fostered stronger communities, reconnecting people to their cultural heritage and reinforcing their role as custodians of the land.

### Success

The ongoing implementation of the Plan has already begun to show positive results in restoring land health and improving environmental outcomes.



**Dhelkunya Dja  
Dja Dja Wurrung  
Country Plan 2014-2034**

*Balancing cultural  
integrity with  
practical outcomes.*





## Water Strategy

### Dhelkunyangu Gatjin: Working Together to Heal Water

#### Overview

Our Water Strategy focusses on securing, protecting, and restoring the water supply. It involves financially smart and sustainable water management practices that ensure the health and security of rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

A core cultural obligation is ensuring we do not pass 'sick water' onto downstream communities. This concept resonates deeply within our community and serves as a reminder of our responsibility to the interconnectedness of ecosystems and communities along the watercourse.

#### Strategic approach

This strategy takes an integrated approach to water management by prioritising the protection of cultural water sites and restoring natural flows. This concept resonates deeply within our community, reminding us of our responsibility to maintain the interconnected balance between ecosystems and communities along the watercourse. Ultimately, this approach aims to secure better water supplies, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient future.

#### Impact

By implementing this strategy, healthier waterways will emerge, supporting diverse ecosystems and improving long-term water security. Sustainable practices will reduce costs and mitigate environmental risks, ensuring a balanced approach to water management. The resulting impact will benefit both the environment and communities living on Djandak.

#### Success

Our Wanyarram Dhelk project successfully restored the environmental and cultural values of Bendigo Creek while delivering significant benefits, including improved water quality, appreciating local land value, the reintroduction of culturally significant plants and wildlife, and the reduction of costly future interventions. This integration of traditional ecological knowledge with modern waterway management has significantly benefited the community and the economy.



Dhelkunyangu Gatjin  
“working together to  
heal water” Strategy



# Country Fire Strategy

## Djandak Wi

### Revitalising Traditional Fire Management

#### Overview

The Country Fire Strategy reintroduces Djandak Wi, the cultural practice of applying fire to Country, which has been refined over thousands of years by Djaara. While today this method provides benefits in managing vegetation and reducing the risk of catastrophic bushfires, it is foremost a cultural tool used to heal and care for Country.

This strategy honours the traditional knowledge of fire use that promotes the regeneration of native species, enhances biodiversity, and restores the health of the land.

#### Strategic approach

By integrating Djandak Wi into bushfire management, government agencies can achieve more effective fire prevention and cost savings.

This approach promotes community safety and strengthens environmental and ecosystem resilience, meeting the government's need for comprehensive risk management in bushfire prevention and recovery.

#### Impact

Reduced bushfire risks have been achieved through controlled burns, effectively mitigating the threat of large-scale bushfires. These carefully managed burns have also contributed to improved ecosystem health, creating conditions that promote the regeneration of native species and enhancing biodiversity on Country.

#### Success

The Djandak Wi project is now a vital part of the government's fire management strategy, enhancing land resilience, reducing weeds, and returning native species through the "Right Fire, Right Time" approach. Funded by the Victorian Government's Cultural Fire Grants program, it has also increased employment and training opportunities, particularly for women, and strengthened partnerships with government agencies.



Djandak Wi  
(Country Fire)  
Strategy 2024-2034

*Reduce the risk of  
catastrophic bushfires  
and promote recovery.*



# Forest Gardening Strategy

## Galk-galk Dhelkunya

Restoring and Sustaining Native Forests

### Overview

The things in our forests that people value and seek to protect today are not there by chance. They exist due to the active caring for Country by Djaara and other Traditional Owners for millennia. Forest Gardening continues this legacy, restoring and maintaining the forests through traditional practices that emphasise sustainability, healing Country, and creating vibrant ecosystems.

The strategy focusses on restoring and maintaining native forests using traditional forest gardening techniques. These practices involve carefully selecting and planting native species, fostering biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable and productive land use. This approach is crucial for preserving ecological balance and cultural heritage.

### Strategic approach

Providing practical tools for reforestation and creating resilient ecosystems that support biodiversity and ecological health, this is a blueprint for urban planners to design green spaces that deliver on sustainable development goals and contribute to long-term environmental stability whilst enhancing ecological and cultural values.

### Impact

The Galk-galk Dhelkunya strategy restores healthy, diverse forests, contributing to ecosystem stability and the wellbeing of all people living on Djandak. It addresses the critical challenges of land degradation and biodiversity loss, ensuring that forests remain vibrant and productive for future generations.

This strategy also meets the urgent need for a sustainable timber industry and the restoration of degraded lands, offering environmentally and economically viable solutions.



Galk-galk Dhelkunya  
Forest Gardening  
Strategy 2022-2034

*Fostering  
biodiversity,  
and ensuring  
sustainable  
and productive  
land use.*



# Renewable Energy and Climate Change Strategies

## Nyauwi Mutjeka: To Keep the Sun and Turning ‘Wrong Way’ Climate ‘Right Way’

### Overview

Our Renewable Energy and Climate Change Strategies combine traditional ecological knowledge with modern science to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability.

DJAARA’s vision for a resilient future is aligned with Victoria’s climate goals, ensuring cultural integrity is upheld while addressing pressing environmental issues.

### Strategic approach

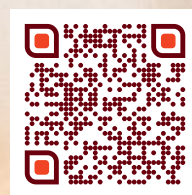
Together they provide a framework for implementing renewable energy and climate adaptation projects that respect cultural sites and traditional land uses. They offer economic opportunities through job creation and sustainable development, and for policymakers, they align renewable energy and climate goals with cultural heritage protection. This ensures that projects contribute positively to environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

### Impact

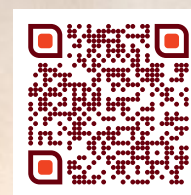
The implementation of these strategies will reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy security, strengthen communities, and increase climate resilience. DJAARA strategic actions are practical, sustainable, and culturally appropriate.

### Success

These strategies address critical needs, providing tools and frameworks that policymakers and institutions cannot afford to overlook. They offer a smart, innovative and clear path to helping Victoria to achieve its renewable energy targets and effective climate action, with the added and essential benefit of respecting and incorporating traditional knowledge.



**Nyauwi Mutjeka**  
**“To keep the sun”**  
**Renewable Energy**  
**Strategy**



**Turning ‘wrong way’**  
**climate ‘right way’**  
**Climate Change**  
**Strategy 2023-2034**



*Reduces project delays, lost time and financial risks, and ensures cultural and legal compliance.*

## Working together

Supporting our partners with essential guidelines and tools to deliver positive, successful, and impactful projects.

## Cultural Integrity Guidelines

### Overview

DJAARA's Cultural Integrity Guidelines are designed to help government employees and organisations navigate the cultural and legal requirements for engaging with Dja Dja Wurrung People. These guidelines ensure that cultural heritage is preserved and respected in all aspects of land management and project planning, providing clear pathways for compliance and best practices.

### Strategic approach

The guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for conducting cultural site assessments, developing cultural heritage management plans, and creating culturally accurate educational materials.

For developers, planners, and educators, adhering to these guidelines reduces financial risks, saves time by streamlining processes, and ensures compliance with cultural and legal standards. This protects cultural heritage and mitigates potential project delays and legal challenges, making it a valuable tool for both environmental and government sectors.

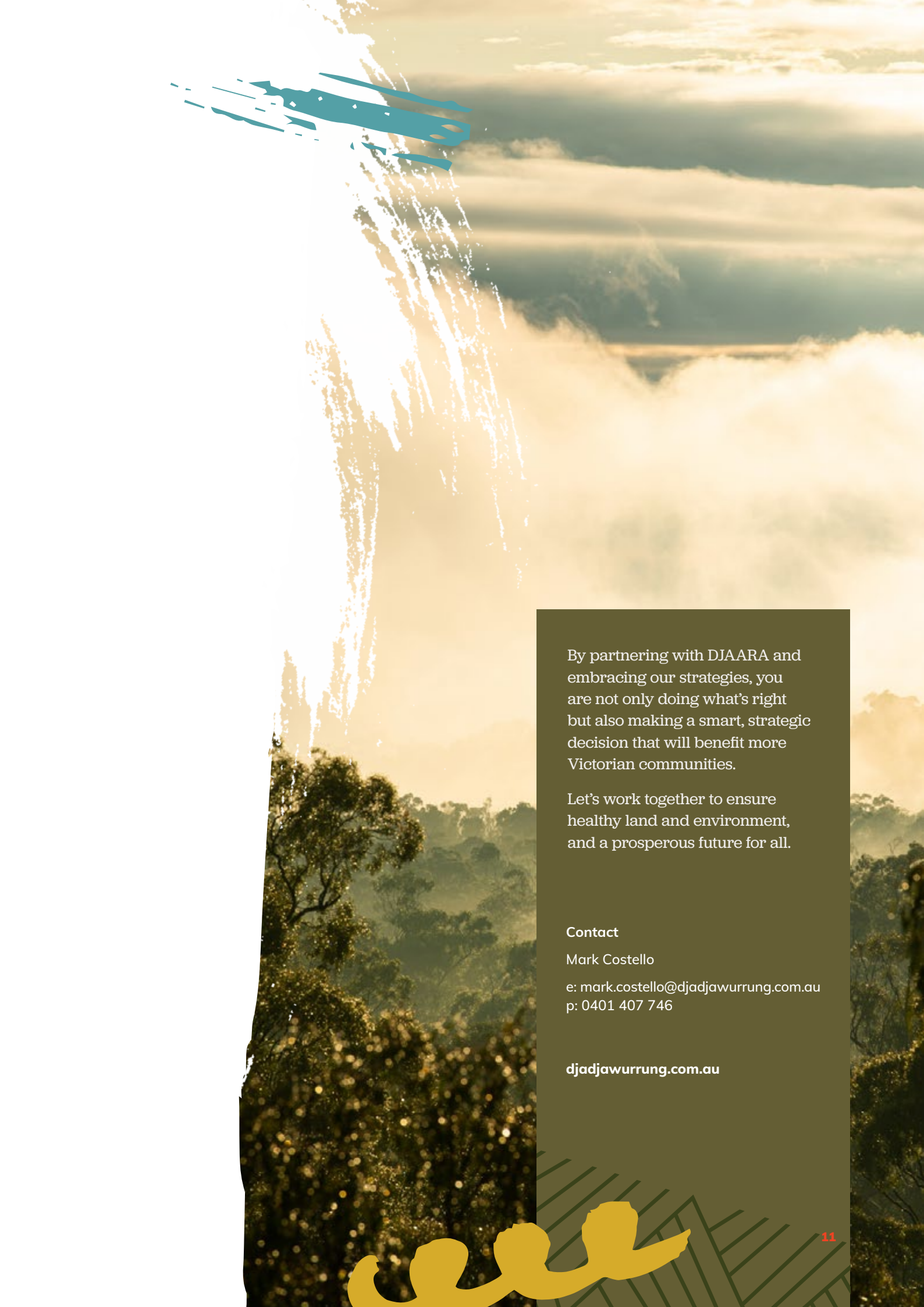
### Impact

Implementing and adhering to DJAARA's Cultural Integrity Guidelines reduces project delays, lost time and financial risks, and ensures cultural and legal compliance; each leading to smoother, more efficient outcomes that benefit all stakeholders.



**Cultural Integrity Guidelines**  
- A guide for the appropriate use of  
Dja Dja Wurrung Indigenous Cultural  
and Intellectual Property





By partnering with DJAARA and embracing our strategies, you are not only doing what's right but also making a smart, strategic decision that will benefit more Victorian communities.

Let's work together to ensure healthy land and environment, and a prosperous future for all.

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