

Galk-galk Dhelkunya

Forest Gardening Strategy
2022 - 2034



This artwork pays respects to the traditional owners and care takers of the Dja Dja wurrung land and greater Djaara Nation.

In the middle of the circles, you will see the 'U' shape as a traditional symbol for people.

The U shape around the middle circle is symbolic and represents a place of meeting and coming together. The circle is of significance as it means everyone is welcome, every person has a place and that everyone is treated equally.

The three concentric circles are campsites which are symbolizing the traditional values of looking after the land, being one with nature and showing that we all come from different families and different communities but that we are all connected.

The white around the concentric circles are to represent trees and the layers of many years of knowledge.

The dark green throughout the middle of the artwork with a slightly lighter green pattern is to signify the veins of our country, providing life for out people.

Daikota Nelson

Proud Dja Dja Wurrung woman & Artist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANK YOU

The Dja Dja Wurrung Group is indebted to the Dja Dja Wurrung Members who contributed their generous sharing of knowledge and cultural guidance to the project team in the development of Galk-galk Dhelkunya. Their passion and commitment to Culture, Djandak and Djaara is reflected in the content and murrun (spirit) of the document.

The project team also acknowledges the contribution of wood4good, in supporting the bridging of Djaara Culture, philosophy and practice and western practices.

DISCLAIMER

The Galk-galk Dhelkunya - Forest Gardening Strategy developed by DJAARA and the Dja Dja Wurrung member Wartaka, supported by Dja Dja Wurrung Group staff.

While the Strategy has an end date of 2034 to bring it inline with the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan, it is a living document which continues to be woven by Djaara and include the diversity of Djaara voice and experience across Country. This means that regular review of the Strategy will take place as important discussions continue to evolve about the Djaara philosophy and practice of Forest Gardening.

CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STATEMENT

Dja Dja Wurrung cultural integrity and authenticity is upheld in expressions of our living culture and connection to Country.

The laws, culture, and rights of all Dja Dja Wurrung People are significant values to be protected, strengthened, and promoted.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is a term used to express the tangible and intangible intellectual property which is held by individuals, families, kinships, and community. It is shared and continues to be passed down for generations. ICIP will be managed consistent with the Guide for the appropriate use of Dja Dja Wurrung Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

The Guidelines contain protocols for appropriate ways of engaging with Dja Dja Wurrung with respect to cultural expressions and knowledge. The Guidelines support and encourage ethical conduct, culturally respectful interactions and will strengthen cultural economy.





CONFIDENTIALITY

The Strategy is interspersed with direct quotes from Djaara participants contributed specifically throughout the process of developing the Galk-galk Dhelkunya – Forest Gardening Strategy. The quotes have been de-identified to ensure anonymity and are shared for the purpose of the Strategy only.

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Preface

“What we are doing is empowering everybody to be able to heal Country. While Djaara should be leading the way in terms of our ancient and contemporary relevant knowledge systems, everybody on Djandaki has a role to care for Country and work with Djaara to do this”

“In adapting our cultural values to all things that are on Country today, we are respecting all the gifts of Country and the old ways of keeping things in balance. Let’s eat Country healthy. When things are abundant – utilise them, this means eating the weeds and pests to remove them from Country and not waste them. Then we can replace them with natives to bring back the balance... When the ecosystem has not found balance yet, we can help it. If it is unwell, heal it first. If it is abundant, utilise it. If it needs to regenerate, let it. This is finding and keeping the balance”

“We no longer have to fight with organisations for recognition and a right to have a voice on healing Country, they are walking with us. We can’t do this as one Traditional Owner entity and small population of our Country. We really need everyone on board to get a place where Country is healthy again and something we are proud to hand over to the next generations of carers for Djaara Djandak”

“Sovereignty and self-determination for Dja Dja Wurrung must be central to any actions to heal Djandak.”

Excerpt from Dhelkunya Dja (Healthy Country) Country Plan 2014-2034

Caring for Country is the living essence that is shared between people and place. It is vital for maintaining our culture. The passing down of traditional knowledge is a seminal way in which we transmit Dja Dja Wurrung cultural heritage to the younger generations, and it is how we have maintained our cultural identity over the passage of time. This practice is the primary responsibility of Dja Dja Wurrung men and women.

But over the years, our lands have been exploited and misused, and our people driven off the land and away from their Country. Unsustainable development changed fire regimes and mining have changed the nature of our Country and caused it harm. We have a duty to care for our Country and feel ashamed and sad that it is currently suffering. When the Country suffers, we suffer.

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How to read this document

The Strategy is guided by Dja Dja Wurrung cultural Lore and obligations. Djaara's connection to Country, cultural rights and obligations have never ceased, nor was sovereignty ever ceded.

While Djaara's rights have been recognised by the State through the Recognition and Settlement Agreement and some of those rights conferred to DJAARA (the Corporation), the aspiration of Djaara is not limited to these rights.

The Strategy is a whole of Djandak approach to Djaara-led healing and Caring for Country. It is deliberately tenure and legislation blind and relates to all current land-use outside of land which has been developed for residential or industrial purposes. The terms 'forests' relate to all timbered Country and land where forests and woodlands were once present on Djandak.

The Strategy is structured in two parts. Firstly, the document outlines the framework of Galk-galk Dhelkunya as Djaara's philosophy and practice, including visionary descriptions of Forest Gardening examples. The document then outlines a strategic approach to implement our Forest Gardening aspirations, including how partners can work with us to fulfil our cultural responsibilities in caring for Country.

Dja dja wurrung djali

The repatriation of Dja Dja Wurrung Djali (tongue/language) is essential to the cultural foundation of Djaara and this document provides a continuation of this practice.

Language Term	Meaning
Barramul	Emu
Dhelkunya Dja	Healing/make good, land/Country
Djaara	The People of Dja Dja Wurrung Country
Dja Dja Wurrung	Yes, Yes speaking/lip/tongue
Djandak	Dja Dja Wurrung Country
Djandak Wi	Healing fire, Country fire, cultural burning
Gal Gal	Dingo
Galka	Tree
Galk-galk Dhelkunya	To care for/to heal, many trees
Gatjin	Water
Martinga Guli	Dja Dja Wurrung Ancestors
Murrup	Spirit
Nyernilang	Continually listening, hearing, understanding, knowing and acting
Nyerna	To hear, to listen, to understand, to know
Yung	Quoll
Murrun	Alive, or living spirit

Other key terms and definitions

Terms, acronyms and abbreviations	Meaning
Aboriginal Title	Jointly Managed Land granted to Dja Dja Wurrung through our Recognition and Settlement Agreement
Cultural landscape	Cultural landscapes are the combination of the tangible and intangible physical and spiritual, sacred components of Djandak. Cultural landscapes are DJAARA's preferred scale for planning. The concept of a cultural landscape is a bridging tool that aims to bridge the differences between Indigenous and 'western' world views, between Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Caring for Country
Cultural thinning	Cultural thinning as referred to in this document is a contemporary Djaara practice of thinning overgrown forests for cultural and ecological outcomes.
DJANDAK	Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises, the commercial arm of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group
Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation	Dja Dja Wurrung People are represented by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
Dja Dja Wurrung Group	The Dja Dja Wurrung Group comprises the Dja Dja Wurrung businesses of DJAARA, DJANDAK and DUMAWUL
DJAARA	Trading name for the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
EVC	Ecological Vegetation Class
Forest Gardening	The Djaara philosophy and practice of managing cultural landscapes
LUAA	Land Use Activity Agreement, as specified in our Recognition and Settlement Agreement
RSA	Recognition and Settlement Agreement between the State of Victoria and Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

Our Country

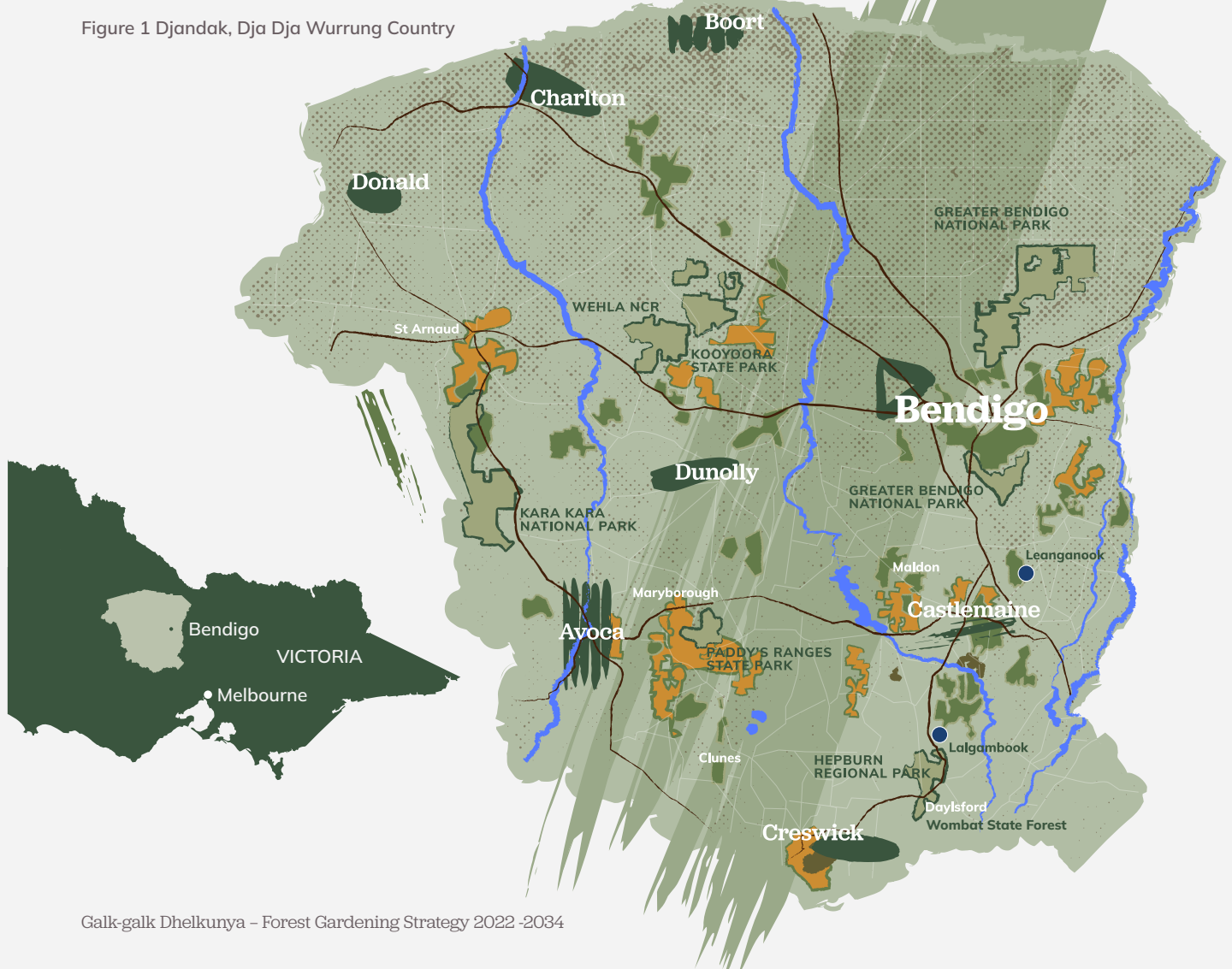
Our dreaming stories of Djandak explain the creation of our lands and how Dja Dja Wurrung People evolved. Bunjil is our creator and helps us to understand our connections to each other through his law. Mindi, the giant serpent, is his enforcer implementing the laws and ceremonies that ensure the continuation of life

Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Country Plan 2014-2034, pp. 17.

Dja Dja Wurrung land extends from Mount Franklin and the towns of Creswick and Daylesford in the southeast to Castlemaine, Maldon and Bendigo in the east, Boort in the north, Donald in the northwest, to Navarre Hill and Mount Avoca marking the southwest boundary. Our territory encompasses the Bendigo and Clunes goldfields and the Loddon and Avoca River watersheds.

Hundreds of years ago, our Country was mostly covered in open forests and woodlands, providing us with the plants and animals that we used for food, medicine, shelter and customary practices. Today, though our Country is vastly changed, it still holds many important values. (Dhelkunya Dja, pp. 8).

Figure 1 Djandak, Dja Dja Wurrung Country





Our rights and responsibilities

Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) are represented by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, trading as DJAARA. In 2013, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation entered an historic Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria on behalf of all past, current and future Dja Dja Wurrung People. Of relevance to Forest Gardening, a range of rights secured under the agreements include:

- Recognition as the Traditional Owners of our Country and acknowledgement of the part government has played in dispossessing and dispersing our people
- The right to practice and enjoy culture
- The right to maintain our spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and its resources
- The right to harvest agreed plant and animal species, water and forest produce for personal, domestic or non-commercial use
- The right to harvest certain flora and forest produce for commercial purposes
- Advisory, negotiation and veto rights, and community benefits for certain land use activities that occur on public land within our boundaries
- Guaranteed contracts to a specified amount for works on public lands
- Aboriginal title rights and joint management over six national parks and reserves, with the possibility of additional handbacks in the future
- The Corporation will be notified about, and, where it expresses an interest, given the opportunity to actively participate in the development and review of natural resource management policies and natural resource management regional strategic plans that affect the Agreement Area in whole or part
- The Corporation will be given the opportunity to actively participate in the development and implementation of State funded management and action plans within the Agreement Area
- Independent of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement; Djaara have inherent rights and cultural obligations to:
 - Care for and Heal Country (Dhelkunya Dja)
 - Return to Djandak to heal, restore and decolonise Country under the guidance of our Martinga Guli
 - Self-determination
 - Participate in decision-making in matters which would affect our rights
 - Conserve and protect the environment and the productive capacity of our lands and resources
 - Determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising our rights

With these rights come responsibilities:

- A responsibility to care for all of Country. Country is interconnected and cannot be separated from Djaara.
- Providing opportunities for participation in natural resource management and land use activities; and engaging with government and others about decisions related to our Country.
- Supporting the development of Djaara.

Responsibilities of those who share Djandak

In addition to the rights and responsibilities of Djaara as the Traditional Owners of Dja Dja Wurrung Country, those who we seek to partner with have obligations and responsibilities to support Djaara self-determination. Some of these responsibilities and obligations are detailed in the following:

Recognition and Settlement Agreement 2013

The Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) binds the State of Victoria and the Dja Dja Wurrung People to a meaningful partnership founded on mutual respect. It is a means by which Dja Dja Wurrung Culture and traditional practices and the unique relationship of Dja Dja Wurrung People to their traditional Country are recognised, strengthened, protected and promoted, for the benefit of all Victorians, now and into the future.

In addition to our range of rights secured through the RSA listed in the previous section, there are twenty-three schedules which provide specific detail. Of relevance to Galk-galk Dhelkunya as listed in Schedule 16 are:

- To notify the Corporation about, and, where it expresses an interest, given the opportunity to actively participate in the development and review of natural resource management policies and natural resource management regional strategic plans that affect the Agreement Area in whole or part.
- To give Corporation the opportunity to actively participate in the development and implementation of State funded management and action plans within the Agreement Area.

Meeting the obligations detailed in these and other Natural Resource Management Participation Strategies are critical to the successful implementation of Galk-galk Dhelkunya.

Other Schedules which enable implementation of Galk-galk Dhelkunya are:

- Schedule 15 Principles of Sustainability Provisions
- Schedule 17 Natural Resources Access and Use Provisions

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023

The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) commits government to advancing Aboriginal self-determination. The VAAF recognises that to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, government must enable self-determination through systemic and structural transformation.

Victorian Government Self-Determination Reform Framework

The Victorian Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Framework guides public service action to enable self-determination in line with government's commitments in the VAAF.

The responsibilities referenced above represent a minimum standard and should be considered inclusive of all parties who share responsibility for Djandak.

Preface to Galk-galk Dhelkunya - Forest Gardening

Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) Ancestors intimately interacted with and held customary and custodial responsibilities towards Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country). Djaara's knowledge of Djandak and cultural practice was accumulated and passed down over thousands of generations by being with and learning from Djandak. Many Djaara are not living on Country, but are strengthened and healed by knowing and feeling their cultural connections.

Djandak's landscapes are more than just tangible objects. They are imprinted with Djaara's dreaming stories, song lines, trade routes, law, Lore, totemic relationships and murrup (spirit) – the Gatjin (water), birds, plants, animals, rocks and mountains. They are cultural landscapes, the combination of the tangible and intangible physical and spiritual, sacred components of Djandak. Prior to colonisation, the physical composition and functions of Djandak's landscapes were the product of Djaara Martinga Guli (Ancestors') intimate, careful interactions with the environment, grounded in knowledge built over millennia. Djandak Wi (cultural burning), harvesting and the distribution of seeds for predictable food and fibre sustenance shaped our cultural landscapes.

Our Ancestors' interaction and sacred connection with Djandak was disrupted by colonisation. The intrusion of our homelands displaced and dispossessed our Martinga Guli. The newcomers' interaction with and understanding of the environment and non-human world was in stark contrast to the customary relationships and interactions Djaara have with Djandak. As a result, newcomers did not recognise Djandak's ecological functions and aesthetics as the carefully crafted products of the wisdom and practise of our Martinga Guli. The differences in values and understanding of the environment led to further changes to the cultural landscapes of Djandak.



The delicate, dynamic, ecological functions of Djandak, shaped over thousands of generations, began to deteriorate without Djaara's presence in the environment. Areas of Country began to be overgrown without harvesting and traditional fire regimes. Introduced and inappropriate land-use practices further fragmented our cultural landscapes. Pastoral grazing altered woodlands and grasslands as the soft, delicate soils were trampled and vegetation was removed.

Gold mining turned Djandak upside-down, cleared forests and polluted our waterways, with impacts still being felt today. Together the absence of Djaara's interaction with Djandak and these introduced land uses, has resulted in the decline in health of Djandak and that of Djaara. Our cultural landscapes became colonised.

Even now Djaara and Djandak continue to be colonised. Management philosophies restrict the ongoing, active human interaction and modification our Martinga Guli once applied to the environment and taught us to apply. Parks and reserves continue to be "protected" with minimal human involvement in landscape function.

Our Ancestors created the landscapes we are now trying to heal.

Fire prescribed to Djandak by government and its agencies is based on colonial objectives and often further fragments our cultural landscapes. Not only are these approaches unhealthy for Djandak's cultural landscapes, but they also continue to keep Djaara from Djandak and disempower us, as the knowledge holders and custodians of Central Victoria. The impact is not only on Djaara, but it also displaces and dispossesses Bunjil's creations from Djandak.

Djaara have an inherent right and command a return to Djandak to heal, restore and decolonise Country under the guidance of Djandak and our Martinga Guli. The following Galk-galk Dhelkunya - Forest Gardening Strategy articulates Djaara's contemporary expression and aspirations of interacting with and redressing harm to Country.

This is returning Djaara to Djandak. This is Forest Gardening. Galk-galk Dhelkunya.

*This is returning Djaara to Djandak.
This is Forest Gardening.
Galk-galk Dhelkunya.*





Introduction

Forest Gardening, Galk-galk Dhelkunya (to care, to heal trees, forests), is Djaara's contemporary philosophy and practice of managing Djandak's cultural landscapes. The term "Forest Gardening" is used to communicate how Djaara interact with the environment. Language is an important tool to connect worldviews. It connects us, as humans, to our different cultures and provides us meaning and understanding of the world around us, and as Dja Dja Wurrung People, allows us to give voice to Bunjil's creations who cannot speak for themselves.

This Strategy and Forest Gardening, as a concept, seek to bridge worldviews and present an approach to managing Country within a contemporary context.

Forest Gardening is a combination of familiar, sensible terms. Gardens evoke emotion, exhibit beauty, exist dynamically, and require humans' enduring interaction, adaptation, care and relationship. If one's garden is unwell, it's caretaker responds. Djandak, to Djaara, is our garden and we are its gardeners. Forests are familiar places: trees and varying canopy levels, woodlands, and understory diversity, soil, water, habitats and sustenance for plants and animals. Today, across Djandak, there are forested landscapes that are now used for different purposes. Forests are places to enjoy recreation and many people feel a sense of peace and solitude when spending time in forests and nature.

The concept of a cultural landscape is also a tool to bridge worldviews. Djandak is a combination of various cultural landscapes, each with their own characteristics.

Cultural landscapes span across tenures, public land categories, Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), townships and jurisdictions. For example, Leanganook (Mount Alexander), Yapenya (Mount Barker), the surrounding creeks and plains, the remnant grasslands and woodlands, towns, reservoirs and ecosystems may comprise a cultural landscape.

Within this cultural landscape today are

townships, private land and public land of all status and tenure. Our approach to managing these cultural landscapes holistically is to apply Forest Gardening as leaders, collaborators, partners and influencers, where appropriate.

Cultural landscapes are DJAARA's preferred scale of planning and Forest Gardening is the philosophy and practice of managing cultural landscapes.

This Galk-galk Dhelkunya - Forest Gardening Strategy (the Strategy) sets out Djaara's aspirations to return culturally safe land management practices to Djandak through Forest Gardening.

It commands our rights and obligations in a contemporary setting, allowing present Djaara and our future generations to care for Djandak as our Ancestors have before us.



“Forest gardening is about getting Djaara back into landscapes. It heals us and it heals Country, and we lead the healing on our terms.”

Why a Forest Gardening strategy?

The Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan includes actions to achieve the 9 goals and address the respective challenges. Galk-galk Dhelkunya specifically delivers against the strategic actions:

- Develop a strategy for healing our Country that specifically addresses remediation and restoration, in partnership with other land managers (Goal 6, Action 3).
- Actively work with those that have harmed the land to develop and implement land remediation strategies (Goal 6, Action 4).
- Explore and develop decision-making and prioritisation processes to help us make collective decisions about the work we do on Country and how we want Country to be managed by others (Goal 7, Action 1).

Our Vision as expressed in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan is:

‘For the health and wellbeing of our people to be strong and underpinned by our living culture. Our Vision is for our lands and waters to be in good condition and actively managed to protect our values and to promote the laws, culture, and rights of all Dja Dja Wurrung People. As this Country’s First People our vision includes being politically empowered with an established place in society and being capable of managing our own affairs from a strong and diverse economic base.’

Djaara have also described a sense of frustration that we are not sufficiently able to enact our rights and have an overwhelming sense of the scale of problems faced and a lack of culturally appropriate opportunities to care for and heal Country, as expressed by the following quotes.

(We’re) overwhelmed by all the problems out there on Country... we need to list the problems so that we can look at them and start to prioritise them.

(We) don’t have time to fix everything. The Strategy needs to provide clear guidance to land managers about the priorities and expectations of Djaara, consistent with our rights and responsibilities to care for Country



Table 1 provides specific challenges raised by Djaara and the opportunities to respond presented through Forest Gardening.

Challenges	Opportunities
Djaara have little input influence into the management of Djandak, even with our RSA in place. Influence is largely restricted to the 6 Joint Managed Parks	The Strategy provides clear guidance to land managers across all tenures about the priorities and expectations of Djaara, consistent with our rights and responsibilities to Care for Country
Due to mismanagement, the current state of Djandak causes shame in Djaara who have been unable to exercise our inherent right and cultural obligation to Care for and Heal Country (Dhelkunya Dja)	Forest Gardening has the scope to create (rehabilitate) places and spaces that Djaara are proud to visit, share and pass on knowledge and practice
Many Djaara are absent from or disconnected to Country. This impacts the health of Djaara and the health of Djandak	Implementation of Forest Gardening involves getting multiple generations back on Country to share culture, knowledge and practices leading to better opportunities and outcomes for young Djaara and future generations
Forest Gardening knowledge is known by few and practiced by even fewer	
Torrens title and modern Western approaches to land ownership are limited in their capacity to accommodate concepts of ecological restoration	Forest Gardening presents a holistic, cultural landscape approach to healing and caring for Djandak

Table 1 Challenges and opportunities for Djaara in caring for Country

Forest Gardening in a changing climate

We recognise climate change as a direct threat to Djaara, Djandak and to our values, goals and aspirations as outlined in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. Djaara, Djandak and climate have always been interlinked, with each influencing the other. With the unprecedented rates of climate change and increasing variability, this relationship is ever important to respond to the

impacts of colonisation and industrialisation. Forest Gardening is well placed to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate through the practice of sitting with Country and accessing contemporary information. This allows Djaara to hear, to listen, to understand, and to know what is required to heal Djandak in a changing climate.





Forest Gardening vision

Galk-galk Dhelkunya is Djaara's holistic cultural landscape management philosophy and practice. In implementing the Strategy, our vision is:

- Djandak's landscapes are healing through Forest Gardening, allowing for greater focus on interaction with Country in all its elements.
- People living on Djandak are inspired to walk with Djaara to heal Country together, guided by Djaara custodial knowledge and Galk-galk Dhelkunya principles.
- Djaara are empowered to practice and share culture with pride.
- Healing Djandak, healing Djaara.

The cycle of seasons dictates the movements of animals and inform our ceremonial practices. When there is abundance, Djaara can take and use consistent with such cultural practices and our lore. Forest Gardening establishes a balance to be able to interact with and manage Country as we once did. When Djandak is thriving, Djaara are thriving (see Fig. 2).

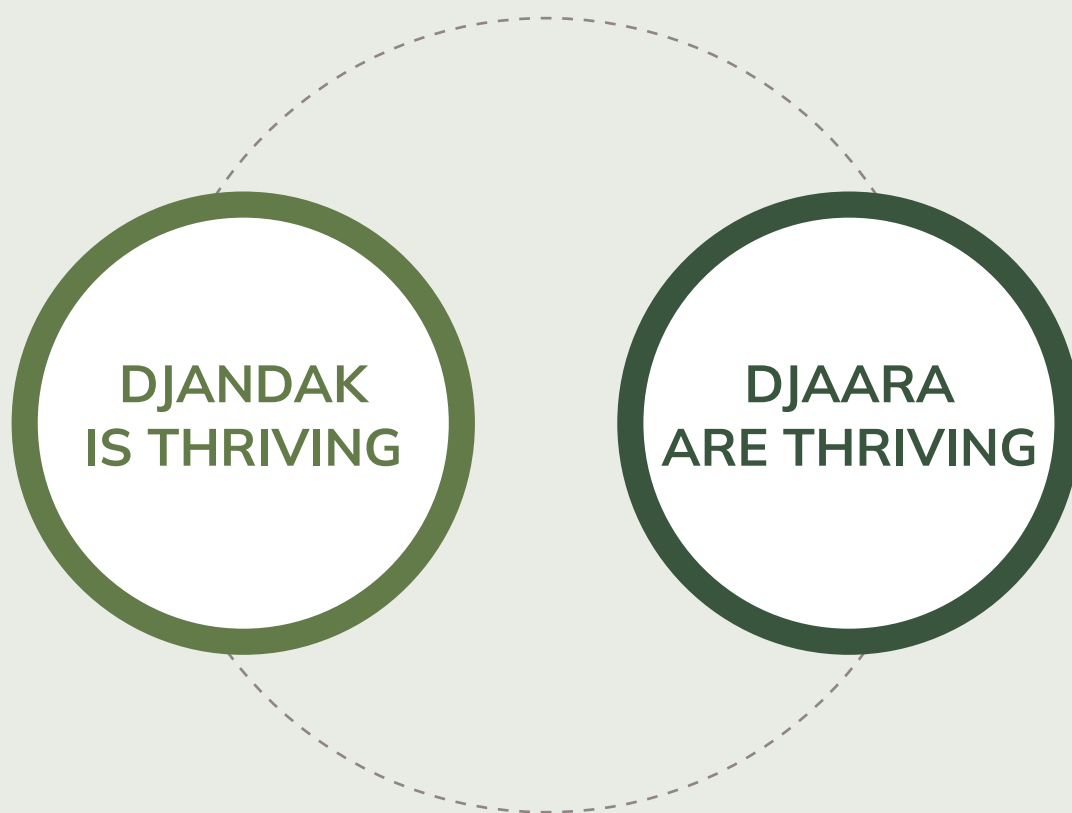


Figure 2 Djandak is thriving, Djaara are thriving

Key principles of Forest Gardening

The principles in Table 2 are drawn from conversations with Djaara, from the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy and share semblance to key principles from other documents such as the Returning Spirits Report and Right Plant Right Way. They define how we believe land and natural resources should be managed. The principles also guide how we work with others who share Djandak.

Table 2 Forest Gardening principles

Principle	Description
CULTURE	
Cultural processes	We will uphold our cultural obligations to look after Country for future generations, to practice and revitalise our Cultural traditions and customs and to develop the expression of these into the future.
Traditional knowledge and cultural intellectual property	We will maintain, control, protect and develop our traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. Djaara knowledge, practice and connection with Country will define a cultural approach to planning and management, governance, decision making rights and intellectual sovereignty as the foundation for leading management.
Cultural landscapes	Taking a cultural landscapes approach as the preferred scale of planning for Forest Gardening, will decolonise and regenerate the landscape.
COUNTRY	
Managing Country holistically	Djaara manage Djandak holistically to address multiple values and objectives, healing Country, Culture and Djaara. Partnership arrangements and management objectives are tailored to Country and each cultural landscape. This includes analysis of the tenure, regulatory and operational arrangements to support Forest Gardening practices, together with a process of learning to continuously improve planning, management, and action.

Managing Country is healing	There are substantial positive impacts to Djaara wellbeing and confidence through providing access and authority to practice on Country. We are committed to working with our Corporation and its members, Elders, young people, neighbours, agencies and the broader community in the effort to care for our Country. Where damage has been done through past activities, a sustained effort will be made to heal our Country.
Managing Country in a contemporary setting	We will use both our traditions and the tools and practices available to us as citizens of contemporary Australia to sustainably manage our natural resources, consistent with our cultural values.
LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION	
Djaara leading management	As the recognised Traditional Owners of Dja Dja Wurrung Country, Djaara lead the development and application of land and water management practices on Djandak. We will participate in the decisions that affect our rights and obligations. All governance structures are purposefully designed to enable Djaara to drive strategy direction and content. We will co-design projects and programs that meet our rights and interests.
Partnership	Partnership arrangements and management objectives are tailored to the context of each cultural landscape. All lands, waters and living resources on Djandak form traditional cultural landscapes and are maintained by a range of natural resource managers, including DJAARA. Our partners must be clear and transparent about their rights and responsibilities in this regard.

“Our people learn by doing and being with Country. Country speaks to us, and we listen and respond.”

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	
Resourcing	Dja Dja Wurrung Group are operating at the interface of Aboriginal and Western worldviews, governance systems and healing Country/ NRM programs. Resourcing through DDWG will be tailored and sufficient for self-determined outcomes. This will enable: • Partnerships to be effective and respectful of cultural governance. • developing co-capacity (including Dja Dja Wurrung Group systems, staffing and skills) to enable effective delivery of NRM programs. • funding models that reduce transaction costs associated with multiple project level reporting, prospectus development and partnering.
Economic development	We will exercise our right to freely pursue Djaara economic and social development, the benefits of which will be shared equitably amongst Dja Dja Wurrung People, other local Aboriginal people and the wider regional community, consistent with Schedule 15 Principles of Sustainability Provisions of the RSA.

By effectively implementing these principles, both through our own efforts and by supporting those of others, it is anticipated that:

- Health of Djaara and Djandak improve as we are increasingly recognised as the Traditional Owners of Dja Dja Wurrung Country with ongoing rights and obligations that we can meet.
- We are seen not only as traditional custodians but also as contemporary and future managers.
- We will have our intellectual and cultural property rights respected in all activities that relate to looking after Country
- Our partners and stakeholders will have a greater understanding and appreciation of our cultural values and responsibilities, and how support these to make a strong positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the broader community.

Framework – Forest Gardening in practice

Dja Dja Wurrung People are intimately connected to Djandak through our Martinga Guli, our Culture and Murrup. Gatjin (water) and Wi (fire) flow through cultural landscapes where Djaara and Djandak exist through interdependent relationships. Current management of Djandak from non-Djaara systems is predominantly driven by colonial and western approaches to natural resource management where people and Country are seen and managed as separate entities.

Forest Gardening is a landscape-scale interaction utilising a toolkit of cultural practices such as Djandak Wi, cultural thinning, revegetation, Gatjin management and others.

It seeks to decolonise and restore Djandak as recognisable cultural landscapes that reflect an abundance of sustenance from the canopy to the soil.

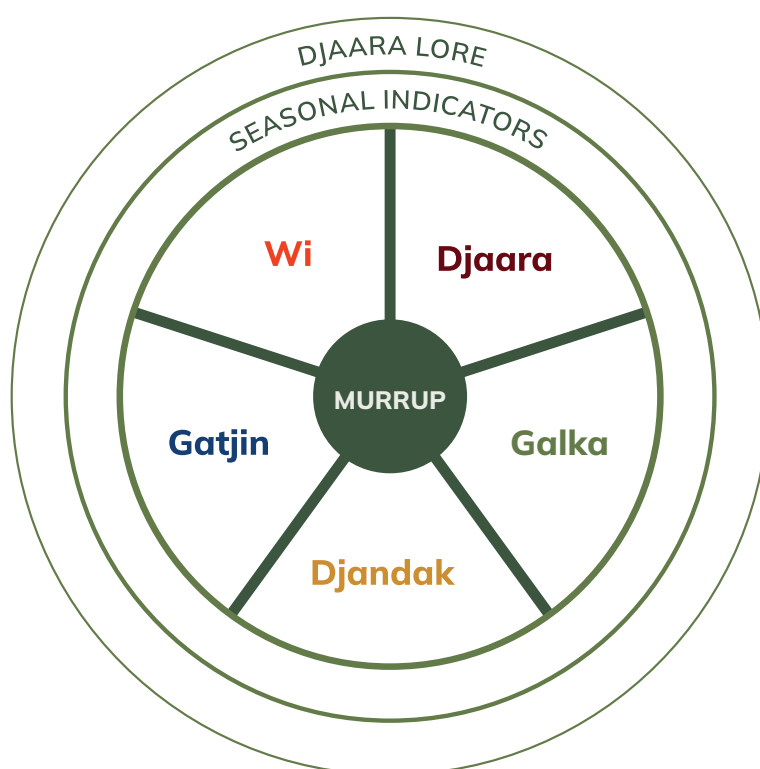


Figure 3 Forest Gardening in practice

“Everything is required for the lifecycle of the forest”

How do we talk about the flow of the landscape... the wind, the energy, to land. [We need] to demonstrate how Apical ancestors are connected to certain areas. That captures the real essence of listening to Country - utilising tools, such as Gatjin and Wi, but also respecting them as entities in their own right.

To represent that we sit with and listen to Country - the right time, the seasons, right plant, right way, right time, right season, right Country, right practice - all these things rely on sitting with and listening to Country. Listening to our Ancestors that are present in this landscape and what they are telling us Country needs. Country presents opportunities to us - it is the connection of listening to Country that makes us good managers; it is about reading and our relationship with the land, and the flow.

The quote above is a contribution from one of the Galk-galk Dhelkunya Wartaka members. It is eloquent and elegant in describing the essence of Forest Gardening. This is described in Dja Dja Wurrung language as Nyerna, to hear, to listen, to understand, to know.

*“We talk about partnerships with agencies,
but we have partnership with Country -
partnership is based on listening to
each other”*

Forest Gardening is a dialogue with Djandak. Its practice is defined by cultural outcomes and indicators Djandak provides to Djaara. Cultural indicators include the colours, smells, sounds, touch and feeling of Country. For instance, we consider what colours are visible and what are missing, what Country smells like, what sounds are present or absent and location of food and fibre. We consider how Djandak's energy

flows through the land, the flow of wind and water. Djandak's responses, or the presence or absence of these indicators, determine the Forest Gardening practices required to produce cultural and environmental outcomes. Cultural outcomes of Forest Gardening include abundant and predictable bush tucker, medicine and fibre as well as strong Djaara culture and wellbeing.

The miners cut down trees for firewood and building, diverted creeks and rivers and dug holes in the ground, pulling up large volumes of earth. Since that time, mining has been constant in Dja Dja Wurrung Country. This has left a legacy of soil erosion, salinity and toxicity from contaminants such as arsenic and mercury. The Country around the goldfields is very sick and a significant program of remediation is required.



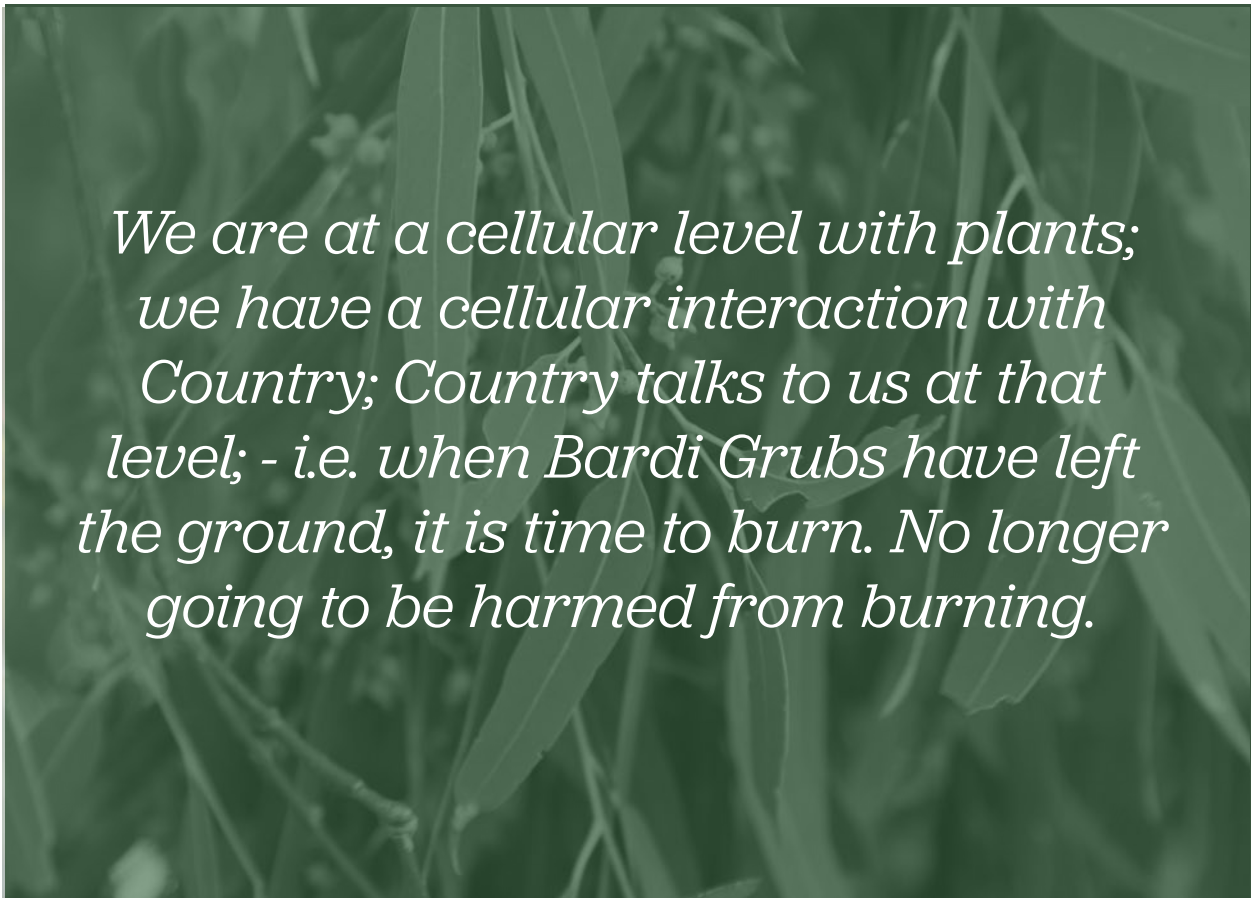


Djandak, its cultural landscapes and ecosystems are all dynamic and shift through time and space. Forest Gardening is an adaptive process responding to changing conditions. This is critical in the face of grand challenges and key threats to people and nature at both local and global scales, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and the state of “upside-down” Country.

Adaptive management, as an environmental management strategy, closely aligns with Forest Gardening. Adaptive management addresses change and uncertainty in landscapes and ecosystems through feedback learning or “iterative, learning-based decision making.” Similarly, Forest Gardening is a system of changing practice according to how Djandak responds to Djaara interaction and the needs of Country. More than ever, it is vital for us to adapt our practices to the current, upside-down state of Country such that we can continue to heal Country, generating ecological and community outcomes, while keeping our culture alive.

Across Djandak, our cultural landscapes will require different Forest Gardening practices, given the variety of land types, levels of degradation we have faced, climate change and current functions of land present on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

When implemented correctly, Forest Gardening delivers the right balance of cultural, ecological, community, and economic benefits for a cultural landscape. This balance feeds back into and uplifts Djandak and Djaara.



*We are at a cellular level with plants;
we have a cellular interaction with
Country; Country talks to us at that
level; - i.e. when Bardi Grubs have left
the ground, it is time to burn. No longer
going to be harmed from burning.*

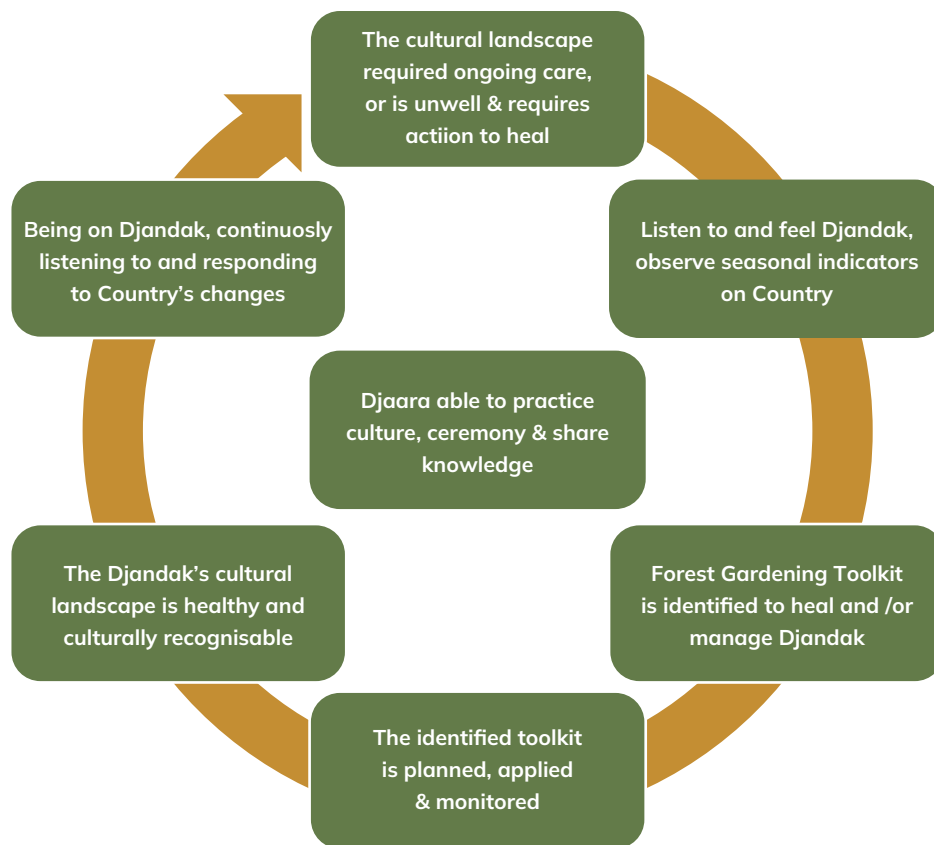


Figure 4 The Forest Gardening Cycle

The following section describes Forest Gardening practices and visionary applications. The examples are indicative and do not represent a specific cultural landscape of Djandak or a set method of application. Further, the examples focus on a key cultural tool or indicator. Forest Gardening is a holistic, ongoing, and evolving cultural landscape management approach. As described through the Forest Gardening cycle (Fig. 4), multiple practices are applied as integrated, interactive processes.

The “toolkit” is determined by continually listening and responding (nyernilang) to Djandak and its seasonal indicators, according to our seasonal calendar.

For example, cultural thinning may be applied to a cultural landscape followed by Djandak Wi to further heal the forest structure and understory.

Seed dispersal may then follow with ongoing monitoring and reapplication of Djandak Wi. Each example below will highlight potential applications depending on Djandak’s needs.

*Where Country is healthy, it's a light touch, don't want to change too much...
The Country is respected and acknowledged for it is doing and being. Where Country is sick, the extent and type of intervention might need to be greater until Country heals*



Stage 1

DENSE BOX-IRONBARK FOREST Varying stem diameters.

Selected trees to thin based on cultural indicators of visibility, size, prioritizing the presence of old galka and mixed age class of galka



Stage 2

THINNED FOREST RESULT

Firewood biproduct.



Cultural burning to commence after collection.

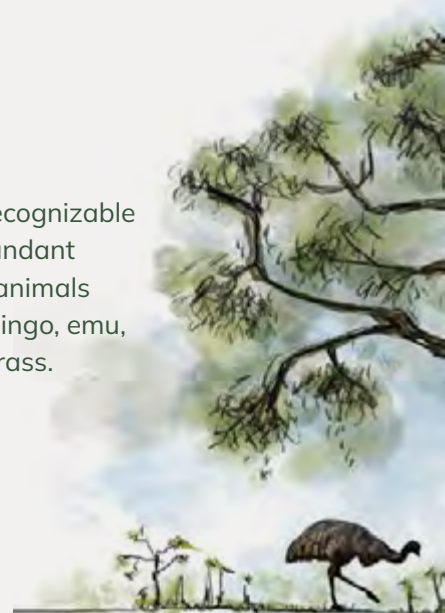


Regrowth and revegetation.

Stage 3

RESTORED

Culturally recognizable forests. Abundant plants and animals kangaroo, dingo, emu, kangaroo grass.



Forest gardening toolkit

It is envisaged that over time, there will be many tools and techniques included here. For this foundational Strategy, focus has been given to the following approaches for inclusion in the Forest Gardening Toolkit:

- Cultural thinning
- Revegetation and rehabilitation
- Regenerative practice
- Djandak Wi (cultural burning)
- Gatjin (water)

Cultural thinning

Galka (trees) are a critical component of Djandak's health. In the current Box-Ironbark forests on Djandak, for example, galka provide various cultural indicators, including poor visibility through forests or levels of varying species in the landscape. Cultural thinning is a method to respond to these indicators to restore the health of galka and the surrounding cultural landscape.

Cultural thinning is a contemporary practice of thinning overgrown forests for cultural and ecological outcomes. "Thinning" is a well-established silviculture technique to manage forests by selectively removing trees to reduce stocking density and increase tree growth-rates and future timber availability. "Ecological thinning" is a concept of applying thinning to create ecological outcomes for landscapes by selectively removing trees to

improve ecosystem function, forest structure and habitat diversity. Similarly, cultural thinning is a method of selectively removing galka in overly dense spaces, reaping cultural outcomes such as increased space for older galka to thrive, utilisation of thinned product for tools and artefacts and to create conditions for an abundance of various plants, animals and birds to thrive in the understory, while also yielding the ecological and community benefits seen from Western techniques.

In combination with other Forest Gardening practices, restoring culturally recognisable structures to forests will also create ecologically and culturally safe conditions to return totemic animals to Djandak such as Gal Gal (dingo), Yung (quoll) and Barramul (emu).

Additional benefits of cultural thinning may be increased habitat diversity and ecosystem



"[We] need to include importance of animals and their role in forest gardening; apex predators; bettongs who turn the soils and seeds over"

"Can't always think that it is human interaction that improves things – animals have their role to play – Emu's eating Quandong and spreading the seed; (we) need to support Barramul to return to Country to play its role in Forest Gardening and managing Country"

function and firewood availability. Importantly, the process defining when, where and how cultural thinning is applied is based on Dja Dja Wurrung seasonal indicators, and how the land

and people will benefit. Benefits range from better ecological health of Djandak, habitat restoration, and opportunities to teach Dja Dja Wurrung People cultural practices on Country.

Caring for Country means a lot. We are not Caring for Country; we are rehabilitating Country that has been annihilated using the wrong farming techniques. We are fixing up the damage that has been done since colonisation

Revegetation and rehabilitation

While it may be necessary to thin overly dense parts of Djandak, there are also parts of Country that require revegetation of trees, grasses, or other food and fibre plants.

This is a process of putting care that has been removed through colonisation back into Djandak. An important element of healing Country through revegetation and rehabilitation is the presence of people on Country, across the landscapes, that fosters a deeper connection with Country, in such a way that heals Country and people together.

Our purpose for revegetation will also vary greatly based on the cultural landscape, including creating habitat for animals that in colonial times have been forced to find shelter in invasive plants, improved soil health, improved water retention, or enhanced biodiversity and variation of plants within our cultural landscapes.

The prioritised plants to revegetate are determined based on the ecology of the landscape, what was on Djandak prior to colonisation, and, depending on the health of the cultural landscape, what plants will heal Country best. For example, restoration of native species such as kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) can restore soil structure, health, carbon storage, water retention and slow desertification.

Rehabilitation priorities may also be tailored to the landscape through a process of communication and engagement with Djaara, considering our traditional knowledge of the landscape and the cultural importance of species.

Where Forest Gardening is being applied on our Jointly Managed Parks, the seven priority plants of our Joint Management Plan should be considered.

Regenerative practice and partnerships

Much of Djandak is currently utilised as private agricultural land and these areas often form part of broader cultural landscapes. It is the vision of Galk-galk Dhelkunya to holistically connect landscapes and tenures for the benefit

of Djaara, Djandak, private landholders and the wider community. Djaara seek to establish partnerships with private landholders, to take collective action to care for Djandak.

We wish to see genuine willingness to work with Djaara, with an understanding of the harm colonial practices have caused to Djandak”

Our use and management of medicinal and edible plants and animals remains a key element of our subsistence and development. They provide valuable opportunities for the Dja Dja Wurrung community, including, employment, education, and knowledge sharing and teaching Djaara youth our practises. Akin to farm forestry practice, regenerative partnerships between DJAARA and landowners offer opportunities to

have more trees and food and fibre plants on Country with multiple benefits.

Benefits include increased tree cover and improved habitat for plants and animals, improved water quality and reduced erosion. Broader benefits may also include intergenerational, shared commercial assets (timber) between DJAARA and private landholders and their families.

“Forest gardening is it is about decolonising the landscape. Quality over quantity. That we get bigger habitat trees. It is about our cultural practice; it will be different in all different habitats. It is about our cultural practice... it will be different in all different

Regenerative Practice and creating Forest Gardening partnerships with DJAARA also invites the community to experience the benefits of healing Country together. For Djaara, being on Djandak, listening to and feeling Djandak heals us also. As Traditional Owners, caring for our land, connecting us to our Ancestors and culture, builds our sense of self, calms us, and empowers us. Being on and connecting to Country fosters our health and wellbeing. This cultural and spiritual connection to connect with the feeling of listening to and caring for the land that we are a part of is fundamental to Djaara, and we hope that through connecting with and being guided by Galk-galk Dhelkunya, our community

who live on Djandak feel empowered to protect and nurture the history and murrup of Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

People who are more connected with nature are also more likely to be active in looking after the environment. There is strong evidence that a healthy natural environment is good for us – for individuals and for society. People who spend time in nature – be it native, introduced, cultivated or wild – are more likely to recognise its importance to their own wellbeing and to society, and therefore to behave in ways that help to protect and sustain the natural environment.

Djandak Wi

Djandak Wi is the Dja Dja Wurrung term for 'Country fire'. It is a key cultural tool in Djaara Forest Gardening. Djandak Wi holds great importance to Djaara for both its ceremonial and landscape management purposes. It is a healing and empowering practice for Djaara and reciprocates the care Djandak gives to us. In practice, it is often applied as a low, cool fire applied in a carefully considered mosaic pattern. It is a complex and integrated approach to seasonally burning the land and careful stewardship over time. Following the principle of 'Right Fire, Right Time', fire is applied to specific places at times of the year to heal Country. It often accompanies other cultural tools mentioned above or may be utilised as a principal technique of landscape intervention and healing. Djandak Wi is a process of Djaara decolonising the landscape and improving the health of the forests' grassy understories and canopies.

It fills us with pride to pass on the knowledge of Djandak Wi throughout generations.

The central Victorian environment was shaped by Djaara Ancestors' application of Djandak Wi. Since colonisation, Djaara and Djandak Wi have been removed and Djandak's cultural landscapes have become increasingly prone to bad fire (bushfire). Returning Djandak Wi to landscapes as part of Forest Gardening will continue to heal Djaara and Djandak together and protect all Victorians through its biproducts of fuel reduction, increased carbon capture and storage and increased forest productivity, creating resilient Country that is less prone to catastrophic fire. It is Djaara's vision, right and obligation to return Djandak Wi to Country.

Gatjin

It is important to acknowledge gatjin (water) in Forest Gardening. As part of Djandak, gatjin holds our culture through creation stories, trade routes, songlines, and connects us to much of our cultural heritage. Gatjin provides nutrients and is a vital aspect of habitat to many of Bunjil's creations. It has also been an important part of land management for Djaara throughout time, with seasonal flooding in the right places strengthening species, and acting as a seed dispersal technique. Colonisation has seen our songlines disrupted, water diverted and contaminated, damaging Djandak and degrading water's murrup.

Djaara wish to see gatjin respected and flowing with health through Djandak as it once did. It is our collective responsibility to look at the history of the land, and our waterways, to understand how water once flowed, and to also use the technology available to us to see water safely restored in the landscape.

“Water is degraded every days when it is denied from all Bunjil's creations”

Stage 1

Cleared agricultural, grazing land adjacent to public forest or reserve on one side and a creek on the other.



Stage 2

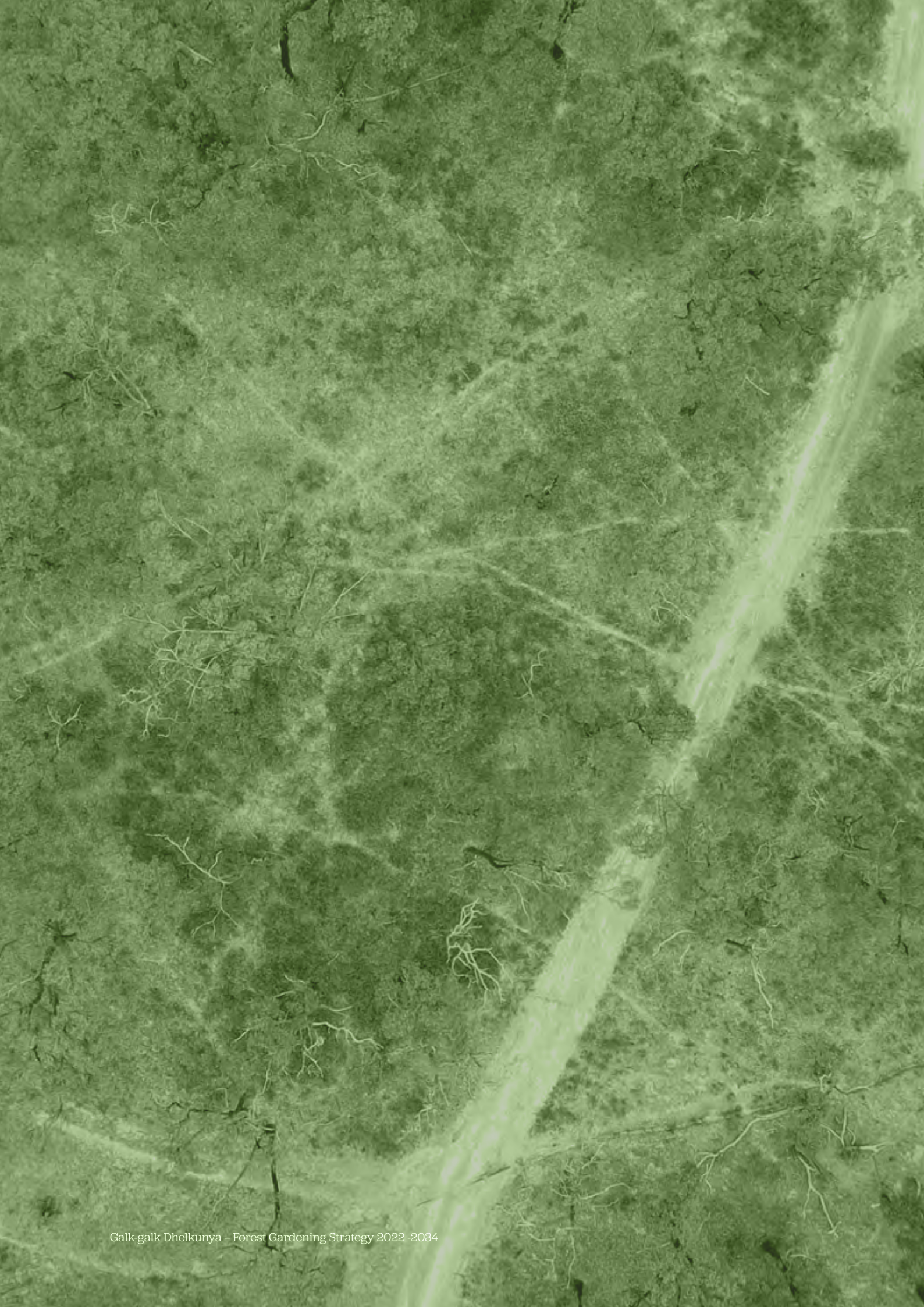
Tree planting near public forest and seed planting and revegetation near creek catchment.



Stage 3

Healthy catchment, improved outcomes for stock amongst trees – diverse age class of trees. Some harvested for firewood, wood products.





Indicators of success

Forest Gardening can be considered successful in the context of considering what Country is currently missing. For instance, success may be the ability to perform ceremony of abundance once again in the cultural landscape where the practice has been removed due to colonisation removing abundance. Where unhealthy Djandak has been remediated through Forest Gardening practices, success for Djaara may be the ability to gather on Country and feel that it is once again healthy.

It is also important to note that the health of Country is unlikely to a universally agreed, binary assessment. Djaara are connected with Djandak, through being present on Country - physically, culturally, spiritually, and able to discuss the health of Country, and what is required to heal or maintain health. Each person brings their own knowledge, history, story, connection and interpretation of Country. While the indicators of success are important, the most important indicator is the extent to which Djaara are on Country and leading decision making.

Throughout the process of implementing and practising Forest Gardening, specific outcomes of success will be shaped by the needs of the cultural landscape, with priorities based on the contextual attributes present. A range of indicators across different landscape values of cultural practice, biodiversity, forest productivity, agricultural productivity and community use will be balanced.

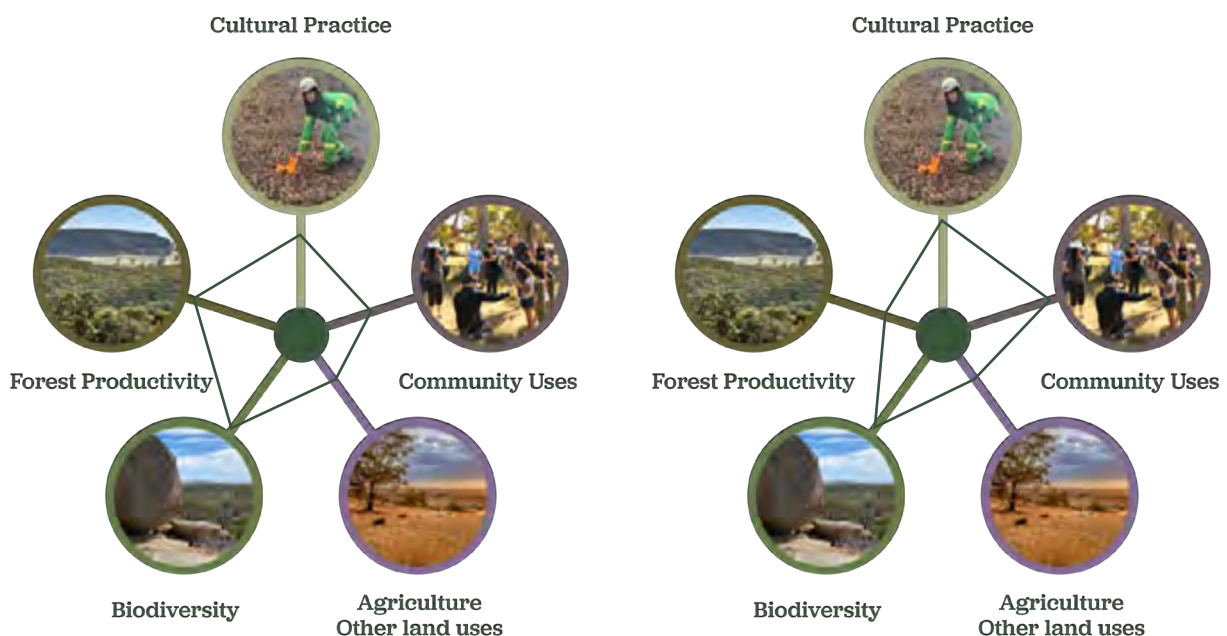


Figure 5 Indicators of success

As demonstrated in Figure 5, indicators of success can be different for each Cultural Landscape due to the specific outcomes sought and the underpinning values. For demonstrative purposes only, the figure on the left depicts a landscape where forest productivity, biodiversity and cultural practices are the leading values. The figure on the right depicts a landscape where cultural practice and community uses are the leading values.

The ultimate indicators of success will be set and determined by Djaara. Through the development of this Strategy, and other related work, success will be measured against the

goals of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and indicators suggested by Djaara for the specific purpose of Galk-galk Dhelkunya. The following statements guide the objectives and actions suggested for implementation in the Galk-galk Dhelkunya Strategic Approach and specify the related objectives from our Country Plan (goals listed in brackets). Organised into the themes Djaara Leadership, Djaara Partnerships, Djaara Knowledge and Capacity, and Djaara Economic Empowerment, progression towards the following Strategic Approach indicates successful practicing of Forest Gardening.

Djaara leadership

Guided by Forest Gardening, DJAARA are actively leading the protection and management of our cultural landscapes on Djandak. DJAARA leading and guiding decisions for land management delivers benefits to all who live on and visit Dja Dja Wurrung Country. DJAARA leadership is transparent and open for the learning and benefit of land managers.

- Djaara rights and interests are legally recognised and reflected in the legislation and policies of government (Goal 1: Djaara)
- The right and means to effectively protect and manage cultural landscapes and sites are secured (Goal 3: Cultural Heritage)

- Djaara lead the way in active restoration interventions to restore and protect biodiversity, with a particular focus on our Aboriginal Title lands (Goal 4: Bushtucker and Medicine)
- Djaara lead design and implementation of remediation works and restoration initiatives in upside-down Country (Goal 6: Land)
- Involvement in determining and delivering projects to manage land, water and other natural and cultural resources on our Country that reflect and support our aspirations and interests in managing Country (Goal 9: Joint Management)

Djaara partnerships

Djaara walking together with meaningfully committed partners and stakeholders to implement Forest Gardening and create benefits for Djaara and the wider community.

- Djaara meaningfully involved as a partner in managing Dja Dja Wurrung Country, and take the lead in managing Country where Dja Dja Wurrung People hold freehold and Aboriginal title (Goal 7: Self Determination)

- Involvement in planning and strategic decision-making about management of land, water and other natural and cultural resources on our Country, with our vision and aspirations for managing Country as set out in this plan used to inform and guide activities in this area (Goal 9: Joint Management)

Djaara knowledge and capacity

Djaara's knowledge system is restored, and our organisations and community are capable, empowered and leading Forest Gardening.

- Djaara cultural knowledge is taught to our young ones (Goal 1: Djaara)
- Traditional knowledge is consolidated, protected and used to guide cultural practices and the way Djandak is managed (Goal 2: Cultural Practices and Customs)
- Traditional ecological based burning regimes and practices are reintroduced across Country and work with land managers to carry out our role in fire management to support restoration of biodiversity, including species

Djaara economic empowerment

DJAARA delivers and the Dja Dja Wurrung community benefit from economic outcomes, through delivery of Forest Gardening services, employment and through diversification of enterprise and industry opportunities.

- Djaara are working on Country and in stable employment (Goal 1: Djaara)
- Leverage significant human, financial and information resources leveraged through the development of strategic partnerships and joint ventures (Goal 8: Traditional Owner Economy)
- Grow our asset base and use it wisely and sustainably to generate economic benefit for Dja Dja Wurrung People (Goal 8: Traditional Owner Economy)

and ecosystems of cultural and customary importance (Goal 4: Bushtucker and Medicine)

- Djaara understand what plants and animals now exist on Country, and what condition they are in, so we can better define appropriate management regimes including an appropriate 'cultural take' (Goal 4: Bushtucker and Medicine)
- Re-build the capacity of our community to care for Dja Dja Wurrung Country and the knowledge of our community of our Country and our species and ecosystems (Goal 4: Bushtucker and Medicine)

Objectives and actions from the Strategic Approach will be prioritised, and subsequent monitoring and evaluation fit to Forest Gardening will be specified in subsequent implementation planning.



Strategic approach

Djaara Leadership

Forest Gardening Objective	Action
Increase DJAARA involvement and leadership in forest and fire management planning, policy and delivery on Djandak	Provide leadership and input into the development of, but not limited to: • Forest Management Plans • Bushfire Management Strategy • Regional Bushfire Strategies • Joint Fuel Management Program • State of the Forests report
	Partner with appropriate stakeholders to deliver outcomes for Djaara aligned with the Victorian Forestry Plan
DJAARA engaged as partners in legislative and regulatory reform processes that relate to Djandak	Provide leadership and guidance into public land legislation reform.
DJAARA at the forefront of decision making and input into forest codes of conduct/practice, land management procedures	Provide leadership and input in developing and delivering Timber Utilisation Plans
	DJAARA are involved in implementing the Western Victoria Regional Forest Agreement within its intersection with Djandak
	DJAARA have greater input into the authorisation of general licences for activity on Country
	Provide Djaara leadership and input into the Code of Practice for Bushfire Management

DJAARA to be the first consideration when it comes to land management decisions on Country	Djaara represented in decision making about forest management within the RSA agreement area
	Explore and develop decision-making and prioritisation processes to help us make collective decisions about the work we do on Country and how we want Country to be managed by others
Increase the application of Forest Gardening across Djaara-owned freehold land and Dja Dja Wurrung Parks on Aboriginal title lands	Develop, implement and pilot Forest Gardening activities on Dja Dja Wurrung-owned freehold land in partnership, where appropriate, with relevant stakeholders
	Investigate the feasibility to establish forestry assets on Dja Dja Wurrung-owned land to heal Country and provide commercial opportunity
	Incorporate Forest Gardening practices into Joint Management plans and management of the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks
Increase the availability of food and fibre plants across Djandak and increase the seed production and dispersal of those plants	Deliver seed dispersal programs in conjunction with cultural thinning and Djandak Wi
	Implement revegetation of food and fibre plants across cultural landscapes
	Utilise Forest Gardening to support the actions identified in Right Plant Right Way
	Conduct soil testing on Djandak to assist prioritisation of food and fibre plants and feasibility of other Forest Gardening activities

Increase the delivery of cultural thinning across Djandak	Establish and implement a cultural thinning methodology across multiple landscapes, public land categories and private land
	Establish DJAARA-led cultural thinning programs
	Establish DJAARA-led firewood coupes from thinned sites
	Create opportunity for Djaara to utilise timber from cultural thinning for traditional customs and artefact creation
Forest Gardening concepts and practices are understood and embraced by those living and working on Dja Dja Wurrung Country	Hold a forum or yarning circle inviting central thinkers and practitioners to discuss indigenous and two-way approaches to healing Country and biodiversity
	Leverage Djaara-controlled projects to demonstrate Forest Gardening outcomes and benefits
	Develop a reference guide for reestablishment of food and fibre plants
DJAARA prioritise cultural landscapes and sites for application of Forest Gardening	Organise and prioritise areas of Country to heal
	Identify and prioritise Forest Gardening activities in State Forests
	Identify specific sites for Galk-galk Dhelkunya implementation by DJANDAK, or where we can influence implementation by others
Indicators of success are developed and reviewed	As per Clause B of the Western Victoria Regional Forest Agreement, actively participate in the review its Sustainability Indicators by 2023, ensuring adequate regard to Traditional Owner Knowledge and Forest Gardening
	Review and update indicators of success

Djaara partnerships

Forest Gardening Objective	Action
DJAARA's partners have a high level of cultural competency	DJAARA to work with project partners to build capacity and capability in understanding application of Forest Gardening principles and practice
Land managers (and others) are aware of and understand Forest Gardening as an approach, and their implementation roles and responsibility	Develop Forest Gardening fact sheets
	Engage stakeholders in understanding Djaara vision and expectations for Forest Gardening in the context of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement
	Meet with partners and stakeholders to incorporate Forest Gardening in their policy, procedures and associated decision making and processes
	Hold information sessions with landowners and community groups about benefits of healing Country through Galk-galk Dhelkunya
	Establish arrangements to support secondments, exchanges, shared resources to support two-way learning and embedding Djaara practices into day-to-day work of our partners
Partner with public land managers to implement DJAARA-led Forest Gardening	Prioritise areas within jointly managed parks and other areas of public land to implement Forest Gardening activities
	Continue to increase DDWG involvement in regional governance arrangements for fire and biodiversity management
	Partner in the regional Threatened Species and Communities prioritisation process led by the Victorian Government, for strategic partnership opportunities be identified and pursued

*“Need to provide opportunities for young
Djaara people to learn at the biggest
University in the world (Country)”*

Support and partner with private landholders to heal and manage Country on their private land	Engage with private landholders to investigate opportunities to partner and implement regenerative practices on Country
Increase the number of research partnerships to restore knowledge and build capacity	Develop a statement of Dja Dja Wurrung research priorities and explore opportunities to partner with researchers and research institutes to further these
	Partner with research institutions to address Djaara-defined knowledge gaps and objectives to understand Djandak's health, impacts and threats
	Invite research institutions to engage in two-way research partnerships that value Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge equally and emphasise knowledge exchange
	With other stakeholders, conduct scientific or ecological studies to obtain evidence for the effects and outcomes from Forest Gardening
Influence the broader community to care for and heal Djandak and be involved in and appreciate Forest Gardening	Partner with local government to develop programs for the community to raise awareness of Forest Gardening and how to implement it alongside DJAARA
	Investigate developing an annual Forest Gardening event to involve community in Forest Gardening activities such as planting and revegetation
	Promote the outcomes of our Forest Gardening activities and events through media and events
	Create targeted communication and engagement program to support implementation of Galk-galk Dhelkunya within the broader community

“... being able to put young people in jobs... economic benefit is uplifting and supporting self-determination. [There are] places and safe spaces to teach culture”

Increase engagement with community-based environmental organisations	Develop opportunities to partner with community organisations to implement Forest Gardening activities and heal Country
	Djaara creates demonstration sites with willing partners and uses these to demonstrate the outcomes of the methods
	Partner with other groups to restore the full extent of species important to Djaara livelihoods
Our partners understand and empower us to maintain Cultural Integrity during all stages of engagement	Develop an ethical code of conduct for Forest Gardening partnerships
	Djaara defined process for maintaining cultural integrity before, during and after emergency disaster relief
Emergency response and recovery practices on Djandak are informed by Forest Gardening principles and practices	Work with emergency response and recovery agencies to incorporate Forest Gardening principles into emergency mitigation, response and recovery activities
Build partnerships with existing Crown Land Committees of Management	Undertake a process with Crown Land managers to determine agreed priorities for working together on the respective areas of Crown Land
Ensure that Galk-galk Dhelkunya principles and associated rights for Dja Dja Wurrung are embedded in legislative frameworks	DJAARA to partner with the State in the review and reform of legislation. Opportunities include, but are not limited to: • Review of fuel management legislative framework • Review of legislation to identify any measures required to better enable Traditional Owners to carry out cultural fire • Comprehensive review of the Code of Practice for Bushfire Management
Established DJAARA compliance/educators program	Dja Dja Wurrung Group field staff are accredited as authorised officers for illegal activities, incident reporting or passive surveillance, water compliance etc

Djaara knowledge and capacity

Forest Gardening Objective	Action
Build organisational systems and capability to operationalise Forest Gardening	Develop and trial a cultural landscape planning methodology including Forest Gardening planning and delivery
	Develop a methodology for re-identifying cultural landscapes.
	Develop Dja Dja Wurrung specific monitoring, evaluation and reporting frameworks for Forest Gardening
	Integrate Djandak Wi planning into Forest Gardening and cultural landscape management systems
	Develop and implement a GIS system specific to Forest Gardening/cultural landscape management to integrate with LUAA and Cultural Heritage systems and requirements.
	Incorporate Forest Gardening vision and principles into advice provided through the LUAA
	Utilise maps for cultural 'hotspots' such as landforms during the implementation of Forest Gardening

“We need to get Djaara businesses in the landscape”

Restore Djaara's biocultural and land management knowledge system	Develop a reference guide for Forest Gardening implementation including species selection, site response principles and ongoing management approaches
	Investigate, in collaboration with other land managers and researchers, the feasibility and impacts of reintroducing culturally significant apex predator species such as dingoes back into the landscape
	Develop methods for documenting, storing and managing Djaara biocultural knowledge including Reading Country Programs
	Utilise Galk-galk Dhelkunya to support the delivery of Aboriginal Water Assessments
Develop and implement DJAARA-led monitoring and evaluation for Forest Gardening	Create culturally sensitive approaches to define, measure and adapt to Forest Gardening and align these with existing concepts of silvicultural management
	Ensure matters of significance to Djaara are included in monitoring programs of the State and its agencies.
Transfer knowledge throughout the Dja Dja Wurrung community	Create opportunities and safe spaces for Dja Dja Wurrung People to share their knowledge of our bush foods and medicines, and the traditional purposes of plants to younger generations
	Establish programs of taking Dja Dja Wurrung People out on Country with a focus on learning and knowledge sharing
DJAARA understand the conditions expressed in local government planning policy and/or planning scheme as they relate to the implementation of Forest Gardening	DJAARA to meet with respective local government planning and approvals sections to determine constraints and opportunities for Forest Gardening implementation in each local government area
DJAARA lead strategic plans for Djandak	As our knowledge and capacity increases, develop Djaara-led plans and processes

Djaara economic empowerment

Forest Gardening Objective	Action
DDWG are engaged to manage Country	Work with DUMAWUL to identify business opportunities arising through Forest Gardening
	Develop training and plant/equipment acquisition plan
	Produce a Dja Dja Wurrung Group Forest Gardening capability statement and circulate to relevant stakeholders
DJAARA are engaged to advise on Forest Gardening priorities	Employ a Dja Dja Wurrung Group Forest Officer who can get out on Country, and advocate for Galk-galk Dhelkunya
	Support Djaara to be consistently present on Country, to advise on and monitor implementation of Forest Gardening practices
	Dja Dja Wurrung People are employed in NRM, both at DDWE and through employment in government including Parks Victoria and DELWP
Forest Gardening practices strengthen the DDWG economic base to feed back into Caring for Country and community	Improved resourcing to implement Forest Gardening activities
	Continue to develop our plant propagation business activities, with the aim of reintroducing culturally important and threatened species into the environment to support population recovery

Djaara can leverage their take and use rights for commercial purposes	Provide scholarships and partnering research project opportunities for Djaara to study natural resource management, ecosystems science, public land policy, forestry etc.
Increase number of Djaara working on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and in stable employment	Investigate and develop training opportunities for Djaara people in forestry (silviculture) and Forest Gardening activities
	Establish a cultural mentoring program
	Develop a Forest Gardening employment pathway, including graduate programs and secondment opportunities.
	Include provisions for Djaara employment and capability development in heads of agreements with the State and other partners
	Explore feasibility of employment pathways programs such as Djaara seasonal field staff or youth employment



Understanding and influencing our current and future partners

To achieve the rights of Djaara and achieve the goals and aspirations of Galk-galk Dhelkunya, it is imperative that we create and maintain meaningful partnerships across all government agencies, community organisations, the private sector and members of the community who live on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and enjoy all that Djandak provides to us. We will strive to share our knowledge and culture as we see appropriate, guided by our Culture, our Country Plan and Galk-galk Dhelkunya principles.

DJAARA acknowledge our vision for seeing Djandak healed holistically will require working with a range of partners and creating approaches that are respectful of modern tenure, regulations, interests and opinions. In developing targeted approaches to Forest Gardening, specific to the cultural landscape, we will practice identifying all relevant stakeholders

and communicate our interest and intentions to them and create space for hearing their interests in Caring for Country also. Where DJAARA does not have agency, we wish to share our Galk-galk Dhelkunya principles and create opportunity for two-way knowledge exchanges.





Navigating tenure and licencing

While Djaara's vision of Country is integrated, under colonial law, it is divided across a range of different tenure types. Each of those tenure types has different laws, power structures and different individuals and entities holding different interests and opinions.

Across Djandak there are broadly four main classifications of legal title and tenure that will shape the approach to achieving Galk-galk Dhelkunya with these various categories of land. There are:

- Crown Land under Joint Management
- Other Crown Land
- Dja Dja Wurrung-owned freehold
- Privately-owned freehold

Where our agency and access to Country is established, we will prioritise Forest Gardening.

Where DJAARA seek opportunities for growth through Forest Gardening, we will further establish partnerships.

DJAARA are conscious of the social licence components to statutory and regulatory reform in the context of enabling Traditional Owner rights. Developing relationships and partnerships with local communities, environmental groups and others that seek to influence forest management and Dja Dja Wurrung more broadly is important to us in achieving the fullest aims of Djaara as expressed through Galk-galk Dhelkunya and our Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan.

Ultimately, we will organise our priorities for Forest Gardening based on a balance of Djaara aspiration, access and capacity.

Implementing Galk-galk Dhelkunya

Galk-galk Dhelkunya is the leading strategic document for Forest Gardening across Djandak. Detailed application will be applied through the Galk-galk Dhelkunya Implementation Plan which will be developed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders and updated regularly to incorporate new knowledge, information and opportunities.

Policy context

This Strategy directly aligns with DDWG developed strategic documents such as the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board Joint Management Plan. In addition, the Strategy strongly aligns with and contributes to the implementation of various government policies and strategies. Key strategies and policies are outlined below.

Dja Dja Wurrung group documents

The Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Country Plan 2014 -2034 articulates Djaara's vision to improve the health and wellbeing of our People and our Country. Forest Gardening significantly contributes to the plan in each of the nine goals.

The Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board Joint Management Plan outlines goals and outcomes for Dja Dja Wurrung's six jointly managed parks under our Recognition and Settlement Agreement, with the purpose of empowering Djaara to heal Country and sustainably manage our parks for the benefit of Djaara and the wider community.

Undertaking Forest Gardening in our parks relates to numerous goals and actions in the Joint Management Plan, such as "incorporate [Djaara's] cultural values and support cultural knowledge sharing in eco-thinning" and "restore and maintain plants and animals that are useful for [Djaara]...".

First Nations led documents

As resulting from the State's Biodiversity 2037, the Restoring Spirit on Country Report, developed with several Traditional Owner Groups to create pathways for returning the culturally significant species, Yung (quoll) and Gal Gal (Dingo). Dja Dja Wurrung also participated in the Right Plant Right Way Report alongside other Traditional Owner Groups to review First Nation aspirations in the revegetation sector.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (CLS) aims to "support Traditional Owner rights and interests in managing Country." The CLS strongly aligns with the Forest Gardening Strategy. Particular areas of alignment are several of the enabling principles such as Principle 4 – Embedding Traditional Owner Knowledge and Practice. Other areas of interest include engaging in research programs to record the positive effects of Djaara land management, developing systems and reading country programs for understanding the health of Country to (apply land management techniques and developing two-way capacity between DJAARA and external

partners to practice forest gardening within the current institutional boundaries placed on us.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy articulates the aspirations of Traditional Owners to practise cultural burning and ensure knowledge about fire is sustained through generations. The strategy will help provide policy direction and a framework across Victoria's fire and land management agencies to support Traditional Owners to undertake cultural burning for the range of cultural values entailed in caring for Country.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy was developed to support Traditional Owners asserting their rights regarding the provenance, market, and practice in the native foods industry through the guiding principles of culture, Country, community and commercial. Forest Gardening provides various opportunities to deliver this Strategy such as the increased abundance of native plants and associated biproducts.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy articulates Traditional Owner values and interests in "hunting, game and wildlife management" in partnership with the State. Game management forms part of the integrated process of Forest Gardening.

State Documents

The Victorian Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037 (Biodiversity 2037) sets out priorities for DELWP to work with Traditional Owners for the purposes of biodiversity protection. It outlines DELWP's intent to work with Traditional Owners to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into planning, support employment and economic opportunities and assist Traditional Owners to increase capacity in the biodiversity sector. Biodiversity 2037 provides DJAARA with several opportunities to implement Forest Gardening on Country. This includes revegetation to increase the biodiversity of Djandak's forests and support and improve our people's knowledge and skills in the biodiversity sector.

The Parks Victoria Nature Conservation Strategy 2021-2031 suggests that Traditional Owner knowledge and practices can be used to protect the health of Country, their goal being to protect nature within parks "through intensified action with partners, new techniques and increased community collaboration". Parks Victoria further details openness towards adaptive management, use of active intervention techniques such as ecological thinning and note the need for more research into the role that fire has in landscape management.

The West Victorian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) between the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth of Australia includes southern Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Section 50B of the RFA describes the State's commitment to engage with Traditional Owners in a review of sustainability indicators by 2023 and provides DJAARA the opportunity to assert our rights to practice Forest Gardening within the RFA.

The Victorian Forestry Plan (the Plan) outlines strategies to assist Victoria to transition away from native forest harvesting. The Plan provides strategic alignment with Djaara forest gardening and our objectives to increase Djaara agroforestry and farm forestry. Timber supply will be transitioned in the Plan and plantation operations provide opportunities to heal Country, increase commercial assets and form partnerships on Djandak.

Victoria's Forest Management Plans (FMPs) establish the State's objectives in forest management. Forest gardening's strategic approach aligns strongly with renewed Forest Management Plans that sit across Djandak. We seek direct involvement in the development of the FMPs and a leadership position in delivering and implementing the FMPs.

The North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) the overarching strategy for all involved in managing land, water and biodiversity in the North Central Catchment Management Authority region. The North Central Catchment Management Authority is responsible for the RCS development and plays a role in directing public and private investment in natural resource management. The RCS sets a vision for integrated management and identifies priorities and targets, providing a framework to coordinate effort.

Local Government

In 2022, the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy replaced the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan. The Strategy's main aim is to help local councils recognise and enable Aboriginal self-determination.

Recognition and Settlement Agreement Schedule 6 Local Government Engagement Strategy (Clause 2.6) states that Local governments have the potential to offer significant on-ground and practical means by which to improve the economic and social standing of Aboriginal people and communities. Schedule 6 includes actions which relate to implementation of Galk-galk Dhelkunya, specifically:

- Action C - Engagement by local government with the Corporation in relation to the management of parks and reserves for which relevant councils are the land manager
- Action E - Contracting by local government of the Corporation and/or its subsidiaries to perform natural resources management or other work for which the Corporation and/or its subsidiaries have relevant expertise

DJAARA has an interest to increase engagement with local governments. As local governments review, develop and implement environment, biodiversity, sustainability and/or climate change action plans and strategies, Dja Dja Wurrung Group seeks to be involved to implement Forest Gardening and other priorities, consistent with outcomes stated in the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy and the Obligations in the Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

Forest Gardening provides a range of opportunities to manage public spaces in collaboration with local government. Many parks, reserves and conservation areas are managed by local government and are areas where implementation of Forest Gardening can benefit the community.

Other

The United Nations (UN) has declared 2021-2030 as the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, only years after the release of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Goals and declarations also sit alongside the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP was signed by Australia and calls for recognising and enabling Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the right to practice land management as their Ancestors have before them.

Forest gardening is Djaara's inherent right and is recognised by UNDRIP and contributes to the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.

UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation's view of Sustainable Forest Management, and the IPCC's consideration of the role in forest management in the context of climate change (e.g. see B.5 in <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers/>)'

Business Case

To initiate implementation of Galk-galk Dhelkunya, DJAARA has developed a business case for the management of forested Crown Land on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. The business case comes with a simple request: let us lead. Let us lead the work that needs to be done to heal our Country.

This business case has been prepared on behalf of Djaara, for consideration by the Victorian Government and non-government organisations supporting Djaara self-determination. Through this business case, DJAARA seek funding support over five years to assert their rights and responsibilities to care for and heal Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

This business case sets out a five year plan for management, starting with the critical recovery of the forests following the devastating storms during 2021. The storm damage has highlighted a range of issues that are all indicators that our Country is sick, and needs healing.

As much as this business case represents an effective first response to that devastation, it also responds to the opportunity Djaara have sought for a couple of centuries: to resume active management of our forest Country, a relationship with Country that has stood strong for tens of thousands of years. The State of Victoria has acknowledged this relationship under a Recognition and Settlement Agreement, formally recognising the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners for part of Central Victoria

This business case presents an investment and partnering opportunity that will empower Djaara to assert their rights, and develop long term capabilities for active forest management, that will enable long term work towards Healing Country.

APPENDIX 1 – REFERENCES AND COMPLEMENTARY READING

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (2014).
Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Country Plan 2014-2034, Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board (2018) Joint Management Plan:
Strategy, Dja Dja Wurrung Country

Environment Conservation Council (2001). Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation,
available at <https://www.veac.vic.gov.au/investigations-assessments/previous-investigations/investigation/box-ironbark-forests-woodlands-investigation-ecc-2001>

Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (2021)
Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy





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