

# Yorta Yorta and Goulburn Broken CMA cultural heritage programs



The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is coordinating natural resource management in the region and is focused on environmental protection and enhanced biodiversity conservation. The Goulburn Broken CMA needs and values indigenous partnership and participation in engaging the community in natural resource management planning and implementation.

Over the last twelve months the Goulburn Broken CMA has undertaken several joint projects with the Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC), including developing a Cultural Heritage Support Program, supporting the Yorta Yorta language program and developing a Working on Country works program focusing on weed control.

## Cultural Heritage

Under the Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* all areas within 200 metres of a waterway are defined as areas of cultural heritage sensitivity and have specific requirements that must be addressed where proposed works have potential to impact Aboriginal heritage sites.

The Goulburn Broken CMA has developed a Cultural Heritage Support Program to assist partner agencies in addressing their obligations under the Act and to ensure the protection of Aboriginal heritage within the Catchment.

High-impact works on waterways usually require agencies to develop a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) to ensure the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The development of a CHMP involves close liaison with Traditional

owners of the particular area throughout the entire plan process.

The main aim of the plan is to identify the location and extent of any Aboriginal cultural heritage in the works activity area, and to develop recommendations and contingency measures to ensure the protection of any identified sites throughout the works activity.

Gaye Sutherland acts as a cultural heritage advisor for the Goulburn Broken CMA and partner agencies in the development of CHMP's for works on waterways. These have included a Tunnel Erosion site on the Murray River Echuca Regional Park for Parks Vic, and the Yarna Gurtji shared pathway Goulburn River for Greater Shepparton City Council.



*Tunnel erosion site on Murray River Echuca*

## Language program

In 2009 the Yorta Yorta language program commenced with the purchase of a language database program called Miromaa. The program was developed to assist Traditional owners in

recording and retention of language and traditional knowledge.

The language program provides part-time employment for two young Yorta Yorta women who add language to the database as well as interview and record information from Yorta Yorta elders and the wider community.

The benefit of the program is that it allows for audio and video recordings to be included in the database, providing a holistic approach to data retention of the Yorta Yorta language and Traditional knowledge in one central location.

The information contained in Miromaa can be used by Yorta Yorta to teach language and pass traditional knowledge on to younger generations. The program has the capacity to be used to create publications as learning aids and will ensure that Traditional knowledge of country is not lost through time.

Yorta Yorta will continue to work on their language program into the future and also has plans to introduce cultural awareness workshops into schools in the region to enhance the wider communities understanding of the importance of Traditional knowledge to Yorta Yorta people and to our environment.



*Neville Atkinson presenting cultural awareness at a local Primary School.*

### **Working on Country**

Under the Federal Government Caring for Our Country (CfOC) initiative, the GB CMA and the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation developed a Yorta Yorta works program to deliver weed control to sensitive Ramsar sites of Barmah and Yielima on the Murray River.

The program run in conjunction with Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE successfully showcased the benefits of engaging Traditional owners in Natural Resource Management.

For Yorta Yorta people it has provided employment opportunities for long-term unemployed and has given the Yorta Yorta students valuable experience in a practical work situation.

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE students also benefited by applying knowledge and skills learnt in the classroom to a practical application out in the Barmah and Yielima wetlands.

The Yorta Yorta students worked closely with contractors and Parks Victoria staff, including Indigenous Rangers highly skilled in cultural heritage identification. This provided students with an insight into the working of a major State natural resource management (NRM) agency and also developed their skills in identifying and interpreting their own heritage in the landscape.

For the NRM agencies involved, (including Parks Victoria and the Goulburn Broken CMA) the program has successfully contributed to the required outputs for Weeds of National Significance (WONS) weed control in Barmah and Yielima-Ramsar sites, whilst supporting another important CfOC target of engaging Traditional Owners in natural resource management.

The Goulburn Broken CMA is very proud of its partnership with Traditional Owners in natural resource management.



For further information please contact Gaye Sutherland or Neville Atkinson at the Goulburn Broken CMA office on 03 5820 1100.