

## **FROM THE GROUND UP: DHIMURRU'S WAY OF CARING FOR COUNTRY**

Indigenous Protected Area  
Plan of Management  
**2024-2034**



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are advised that this document may contain images of deceased people.**

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

Abbreviation    Full form

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| BIITE | Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education |
| CDU   | Charles Darwin University                            |
| CEM   | Conservation and Ecosystem Management                |
| ESS   | Environmental Systems Solutions                      |
| GIS   | Geographic Information Systems                       |
| IPA   | Indigenous Protected Area                            |
| IT    | Information Technology                               |
| IUCN  | International Union for the Conservation of Nature   |
| LoC   | Learning on Country                                  |
| MERI  | Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement    |
| NCRM  | Natural and Cultural Resource Management             |
| NLC   | Northern Land Council                                |
| NTG   | Northern Territory Government                        |
| NTPWS | Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service        |

# NOTES ON YOLŲU ORTHOGRAPHY

The Plan of Management seeks to conform with the current YolŲu-matha (YolŲu language) orthography.

YolŲu words contain a number of letters and combinations that will be unfamiliar to many people reading this document.

This table is intended to assist newcomers in the correct pronunciation of these words.

| Abbreviation  | Full form   |
|---------------|---|
| ŋ             | Pronounced like the 'ng' in ring  |
| ng            | Pronounce the 'n' and 'g' separately  |
| th, nh, dh    | Don't pronounce the 'h' but place the tip of the tongue between the front teeth to pronounce the 'd', 't' or 'n'. |
| r, d, n, l, t | Pronounced with the tip of the tongue backwards toward the roof of the mouth                                      |
| rr            | Pronounced by rolling the 'r' or allowing the tongue to flap during pronunciation                                 |
| ny            | Don't pronounce the 'y', but place the tip of the tongue behind the bottom teeth to pronounce the 'n'             |
| dj, tj        | Don't pronounce the 'j', and pronounce the 'd' or 't' with the tongue in the same position as for 'ny' above      |
| ä             | (Long) pronounced like the 'a' in father  |
| a             | (Short) pronounced like the 'o' in mother   |
| e             | (Long) pronounced like the 'ee' in meet   |
| i             | (Short) pronounced like the 'l' in hit  |
| o             | (Long) pronounced like the 'aw' in dawn   |
| u             | E(Short) pronounced like the 'u' in put   |



# PREFACE

by Timmy Murrmurrŋa Djäwa Burarrwaŋa

We are so proud to be celebrating more than 30 years of Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation (Dhimurru) as we launch this new Plan of Management!

Dhimurru was established in 1992 as part of the vision of our Elders. Their hopes were for Yolŋu to continue to look after land and sea in our own way. We honour our Elders and past leaders and cherish their contributions to establishing and continuing to support Dhimurru to flourish. Our new Plan continues to honour our Elders' vision into the future by looking after our estates and songcycles and by understanding and addressing the changes that are happening on our Country.

Dhimurru is like a bush library, where you can learn. When you

burn a bush library it grows again and brings new shoots and life. This is the knowledge of our ancestors that is reborn in our new generations. It lives in our ceremonies, in the stories held in place, and in the way we do our work as wäŋawu djäkami – carers of Country.

We have always had our own Yolŋu Rom and systems of leadership, guided by the strength of our yothu-yindi (mother-child) and märi-gutharra (grandmother-grandchild) kinship lines. Our land is not lawless or unstructured – it is governed by deep cultural authority that has kept our Country strong since before time.



Our teams today – from Elders to young Rangers – are carrying this vision forward. Together, we are shaping the next 10 years through a Yolŋu-led approach grounded in law, kinship, seasonal knowledge, and respect for Country.

We are continuing the legacy of our ancestors while building new ways of working that reflect who we are.

This Plan of Management is our commitment to lead from the ground up, based on our values of **respect, responsibility, and balance**.

It reflects how Dhimurru Rangers walk together, work with purpose, and uphold the responsibilities passed down to us. It is not built

on outside frameworks. It is built on our Country, our law, and our collective leadership.

We invite our partners and supporters to walk alongside us, to listen deeply, and to support Dhimurru's vision for a healthy Country and strong Yolŋu future.



**Timmy Murrmurŋa Djäwa Burarrwaŋa**  
Managing Director, Dhimurru





# NATIONAL STANDARDS AND GLOBAL GOALS

Aligning Dhimurru's work with policy and practice

At Dhimurru, our commitment to caring for Country starts from the ground up.

This Plan of Management is the result of seven months of work led by Yolŋu Rangers, Traditional Owners and Dhimurru staff. It reflects our Law, our values and our ways of working – while also aligning with national policy standards and international targets for environmental and cultural sustainability.

The Australian Government's *Our Country Our Way* guidelines are used to assess whether Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) plans meet best practice in cultural governance. These guidelines focus on ensuring the right people speak for Country, that Traditional Owners lead decision-making, and that Indigenous ways of monitoring and evaluating are embedded in how we track success.

Dhimurru's Plan of Management has been developed in alignment with these principles – and goes beyond them. We've grounded this plan in Yolŋu governance, co-designed by Rangers and Elders, and build around lived practice, not external systems.

We also looked to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** – a global framework used to measure progress in areas like biodiversity protection, poverty reduction, gender equality and partnerships. Many of Dhimurru's everyday activities – such as sea and land management, cultural education, women's leadership and seasonal knowledge – are already delivering on these global goals.



# HOW THIS PLAN ALIGNS WITH NATIONAL AND GLOBAL GOALS

## What we've done:

- Made sure Traditional Owners and rangers led the plan from start to finish.
- Used Yolŋu indicators, stories, and knowledge to guide how we measure success.
- Built clear steps for partnerships through the Friends of Dhimurru model.
- Included seasonal calendars, kinship responsibilities, and moiety structures.
- Connected our goals to national IPA outcomes and the SDGs.

This alignment confirms that Dhimurru's Plan of Management is culturally strong, nationally aligned, and globally relevant – setting a high standard for Indigenous Protected Area planning in Australia.

| Dhimurru Plan of Management 2024–2034 |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Our Country Our Way Principle         | How Dhimurru Aligns  | Linked SDG(s)   |
| 1. Right People Speaking for Country  | Landowners (Wāŋa Wataŋu) lead decision-making through Rom and moiety governance. | SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions                                  |
| 2. Cultural Governance First          | Yolŋu Rom, not external systems, is the foundation of this plan.                 | SDG 11: Sustainable Communities; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions |
| 3. Two-Way Planning & Evaluation      | MERI includes Yolŋu indicators (season, story, feedback) and ranger tools.       | SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 15: Life on Land                                  |
| 4. Local Ownership and Leadership     | Rangers co-designed the plan. Plain language and practical for daily use.        | SDG 10: Reduced Inequality; SDG 8: Decent Work                                  |
| 5. Whole-of-Country Approach          | Sea, land, fire, ceremony, wellbeing, livelihoods — all connected.               | SDG 3: Good Health; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 14: Life Below Water            |
| 6. Strong and Sustained Partnerships  | Friends of Dhimurru model defines respectful, long-term relationships.           | SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals  |
| 7. Economic and Cultural Opportunity  | Supports Yolŋu livelihoods, tourism, fee-for-service, and enterprise.            | SDG 8: Decent Work; SDG 1: No Poverty   |
| 8. Adaptive Learning and Innovation   | Seasonal reviews, learning camps, intergenerational mentoring.                   | SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 9: Innovation                                     |
| 9. Reporting to Community First       | Rangers report to landowners and Elders first — not just funders.                | SDG 16: Strong Institutions; SDG 5: Gender Equality (women's roles)             |
| 10. National and Global Influence     | SDG alignment, best practice model, Indigenous-led governance.                   | SDG 13, 15, 17: Climate, Biodiversity, Partnerships                             |



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# BACKGROUND





# VISION STATEMENT

Dhimurru's vision statement honours the memory and wisdom of those Elders who inspired and developed Dhimurru. Dhimurru continues to be motivated by the commitment and passion of its Founders and Elders.

## Vision statement in Yolŋu Matha

by Roy Dadayŋa Marika M.B.E

From dhawuru dhanu naya yaka wāŋa ga hundred or more than one hundred years dhanu dhāruk narra dhāya wekarram. Mā nhān yaka narra yolŋuyu bāki, banhaya nanyi generation ga generation ga generation Nanyi yaka narra dhāya mā, dhanal narra nhāma banhaya nanyi banha yakan nhalpiyan dhanal nyenan nātjil dilak.

Ga nhalpiyan dhanal yakan gatjpu'yuwan nātili dilak.

Yo – Dhuwa Yirritja.

Yothu ga Yindi

Bukmak nanyi malanyinha yaka dhāya manikaymi, rommi, dhulanmi, dhāwu'mi, Banhalan nanyiŋa, dhanalingu uku djalkiri. Bitjan nhan yaka nanyiŋa, malanya dhāya ga nŋunha Land Rightsŋa dhāruk bilanya bili. Yo decision maker nhanbayi yana landowner.

Narra nhan narra, narrunam gonmurrum nhumalingurumurru. Conservation Commission or Rangerwurumurru Dhimurruwurumurru.

Bukmak nanyi malanyinha djākawu gonŋa Dhimurruwura. Yirritja ga Dhuwa narra warkthun dhanal further development bilanya bitjan Conservation ga dhal'yun narra protecting nhānuru developmentnuru.



Dhanu nanyi yolŋuwu yana. Yolŋuyu narra warkthun dhāruk nhanbayi Yolŋuyu yana. Djinaku nanyiwu narakawu, yaka Gapmandhu wo bilan yolthu waripunuyu nayinharrayu Yolŋuyu. Nhanbayi yana nanyi-watanuyu, rom-watanuyu, wanarr-watanuyu, gamanunngu-watanuyu wo madayin-watanuyu.

Narra dhārukma dhanu gunyanda bayikunŋ nalapalmiyu banha narrunŋan ga dhanu badak nyena yaka. Narra dhārukma dhanalingu ga gatjpum' badak wālŋa.

Djinaku Dhimurruwum self developmentkum, ga self-managementkum.



## **Vision statement in English**

“Dhimurru’s vision is guided by the wisdom of our Elders who founded Dhimurru. They have inspired us in our work. They exhorted us to look after the land for those who will follow, to protect and maintain it. In 1990 on behalf of the Elders Roy Dadayŋa Marika said,

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*“Be firm and strong for the land, and the strength of your solidarity will sustain you in your cause.”*

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“Our Country (land and sea) will exist forever. It must be protected so that it will remain the same, so that it can be seen in the same way that the Elders saw it in the past. Our vision and hope is that Yolŋu will continue to use our Country for all the generations to come.”

The Elders said, “We the old people hope that Dhuwa and Yirritja Country will continue to be looked after through the connection of yothu yindi.

“All our Country is Yirritja and Dhuwa. Our songs, our Law, our sacred art, our stories are embedded in our Country, which is the foundation of our knowledge. That’s how we see our Country; that is what our Land Rights Act says.

“The decision-makers are the landowners, the clans that are connected through Yothu Yindi and Märi-Gutharra kinship. They have placed certain areas of our land in the hands of the Dhimurru Committee, which authorises the Dhimurru Rangers to manage and preserve, maintain and protect the areas designated for recreation use.

“The landowners put the recreation areas in Dhimurru’s hands to manage. They envisage one committee, one voice, and one body under one umbrella, Dhimurru. Only Yolŋu will make decisions for this land, not government officials or any other person who is not a landowner.

“We envisage working together with the Parks and Wildlife Commission and other IPA collaborators; we need their help in making our vision a reality. With respect to the sea Country in the IPA, we are committed to work together with all relevant agencies to ensure that our sea Country remains healthy, our sites and their stories are protected, and our marine resources are used sustainably. But the only people who make decisions about the land are those who own the Law, the people who own the creation stories, the people whose lives are governed by Yolŋu Law and belief.”



## RECOGNISING THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE US

↗  
SDG  
ALIGNMENT  
11, 13, 14, 16



We pay homage to our ancestors and Elders who were already wāṇawu djākami before us. Who cared for our Country since time immemorial up until now.

They did this without the uniform Dhimurru is now recognised by. They protected our sacred places and our totems and acted on the authority deep in their bones and their paintings and clan symbols.

We acknowledge the Elders who incorporated Dhimurru and have led Dhimurru throughout the last three decades and we recognise the past and present Chairpersons, Board Members and Staff who have driven Dhimurru's achievements.

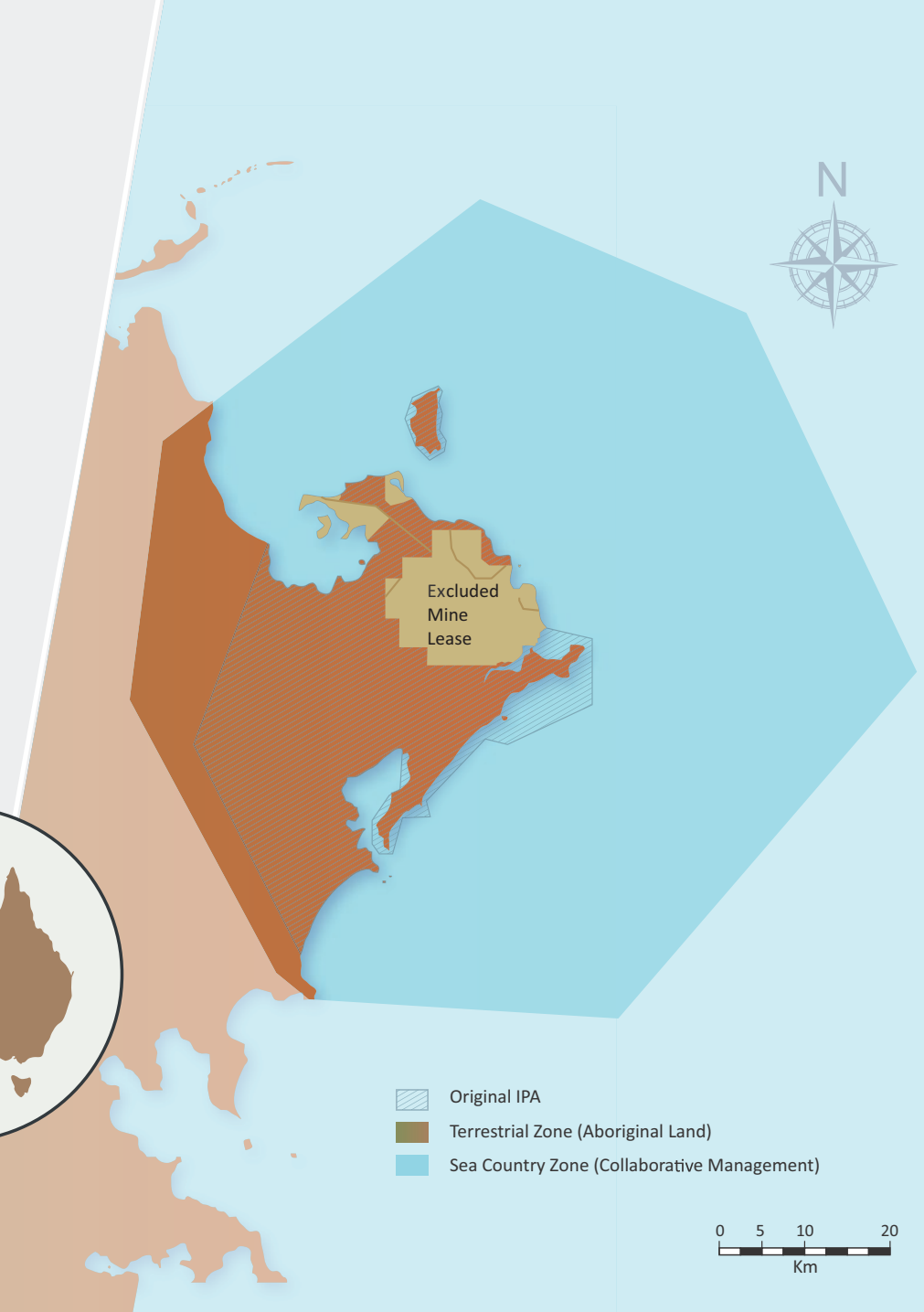
We especially honour the Elders and respect those people who have been a strong foundation for achieving our Land Rights and have provided guidance to Dhimurru that have now passed on.

# DHIMURRU INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA (IPA)

Yolŋu traditional owners declared the first phase of the Dhimurru IPA in 2000, and the second in 2013, bringing the total area of the land and sea to around 550,000 hectares. The area identified for management is shown here. The IPA includes islands but excludes mining and town lease areas and the areas of Yirrkala township and Marn Garr Community Council at Gunyaŋara.

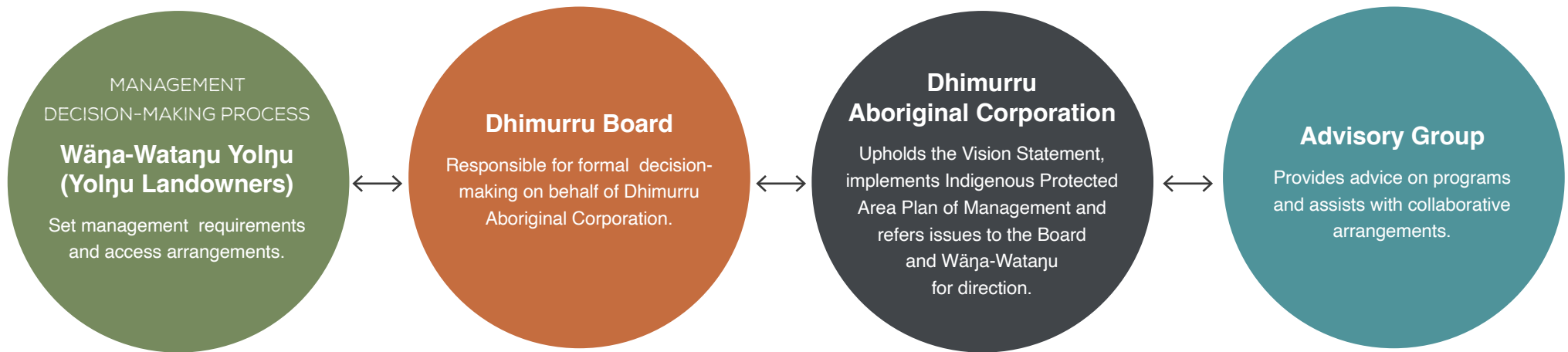
Yolŋu estates do not conform to Western geographical boundaries. We have responsibility for our estates regardless of where Balanda tenure has been superimposed. Yolŋu understand, however, the need for conventional Balanda

boundaries for the processes of the National Reserve System and the way this affects our management programs. It is for that purpose and on this basis that we have identified the IPA boundaries. Our IPA also aligns with the categories identified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as identified in Appendix A.





# GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Seventeen clans from northeast Arnhem Land are represented in the membership of Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation. Dhimurru is governed by an elected Board of up to 12 Directors who are Wāṇa Wataṇu Yolṇu (Traditional Owners) from these clans. The Board meets bi-monthly to make operational and administrative decisions on behalf of the members.

They set the priorities for management for the region and in accordance with Dhimurru's vision statement and approved plans of management. Dhimurru refers directly to the Wāṇa Wataṇu regarding all decisions which may have a direct or lasting effect on their estates.

Supporting the operations of the organisation, Dhimurru has developed effective collaborative governance of the IPA. The Dhimurru IPA Advisory Committee supports Dhimurru's operations by providing advice and technical support in a range of areas. Membership may change depending on emerging issues and priorities.

This meeting is held jointly with Friends of Dhimurru to ensure that there is consistency in approach and outcomes. This collaborative approach is consistent with Traditional Owners' commitment to 'both ways management.'

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OPERATIONAL GOAL

Strengthen governance and ensure collaborative management.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of governance meetings held as planned.
- Number of participants completing governance training sessions.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Formalise the governance structure and update Advisory Group membership
- Establish joint annual sessions with Friends of Dhimurru for integrated management
- Hold bi-monthly Board meetings to align priorities.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

Develop governance training programs for Board members.

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

Continue bi-monthly Board meetings and strengthen governance practices.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Consistent governance aligned with the POM vision.
- Strengthened collaboration with partners.

↗  
SDG  
ALIGNMENT  
16, 17





# FROM THE GROUND UP

## Dhimurru Rangers' way of caring for Country

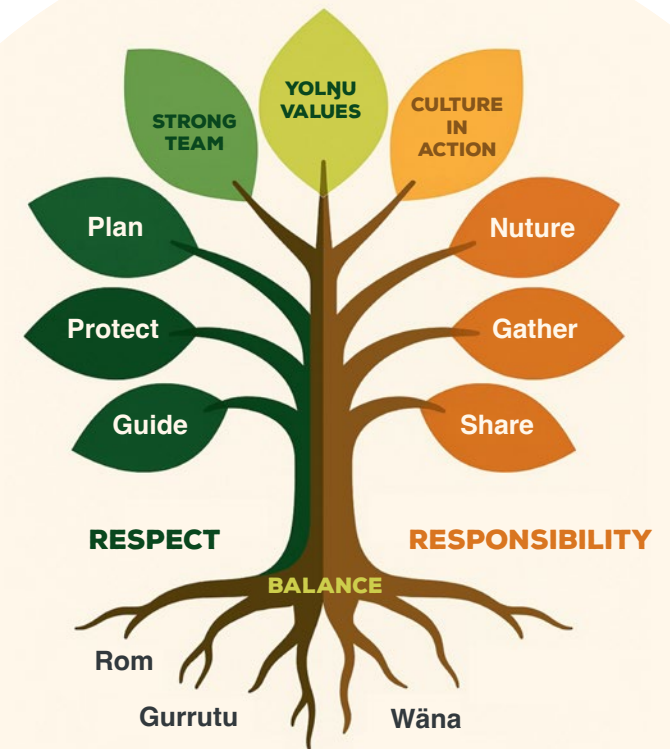
From the Ground Up is not just a way of working – it is who we are.

At Dhimurru, our foundation is the moiety system – Dhuwa and Yirritja – and the deep kinship ties that guide every decision we make. Like the roots of the trees that belong to each moiety, our values grow from Yolŋu law, ceremony, and relationship with wāṇa (Country). These roots keep us strong and balanced. They remind us of our place, our responsibilities, and our authority.

From the Ground Up is about building leadership from within. It's about strengthening Dhimurru Rangers to care for Country on their terms – not through outside agendas, but through Yolŋu ways of seeing, doing, and knowing.

It means making space for young rangers to learn through practice, guided by Elders, and supported by a team that holds respect, responsibility and balance at its core.

This is not a borrowed model. It's Dhimurru's own. Grown from Yolŋu values, grounded in Yolŋu leadership, and led by Yolŋu people – from the ground up.



**YIRRITJA AND DHUWA:  
TWO SIDES,  
ONE STRENGTH**

# OUR LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

## Right person, right place, right time

Leadership at Dhimurru is not something new. It comes from our ancestors. It is how Yolŋu people have always led – through law, kinship, and responsibility to Country.

In the past, leadership was not given by title or position. It was recognised by action. The right person would speak or lead at the right time, in the right place, with the right authority. Sometimes it was an Elder. Sometimes it was a younger person chosen by the old people to carry knowledge forward. What mattered was not age or role – it was whether you had the right connections, the trust of your people, and the cultural authority to act.

At Dhimurru, this is still our way. Our leadership practice today is grounded in that same Yolŋu principle: **right person, right place, right time.**

We don't force leadership – we grow it. Rangers are given responsibility when they are ready, and always supported by Elders, clan leaders and each other. Leadership can come through silence, observation, doing the hard work, or speaking up when it matters. It is flexible, responsive, and deeply rooted in gurruṯu and Rom.

This is the foundation of the Dhimurru Leadership Tree.



It reminds us that everyone has a role, and leadership must reflect the balance between kinship, cultural law, and the needs of Country. We honour our past by leading the same way today – with respect, responsibility, and the strength of Yolŋu decision-making.



## LEADERSHIP PRACTICE – FROM THE GROUND UP OPERATIONAL GOALS

- Strengthen Yolŋu decision-making based on the principle of **right person, right place, right time**.
- Empower Dhimurru Rangers to lead through **cultural authority, kinship, and law**.
- Grow leadership from within, guided by the **Dhimurru Leadership Tree** and supported by Elders, Country, and lived experience.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of decisions made directly by Yolŋu landowners or cultural leaders.
- Number of ranger-led activities that reflect cultural leadership (e.g. seasonal ceremonies, landowner-guided patrols, mentoring).

## TIMEFRAMES

### SHORT-TERM 1–2 years

- Establish landowner-led mentoring sessions for ranger leadership
- Use the Dhimurru Leadership Tree to guide team development, training, and cultural authority.

### MEDIUM-TERM 3–6 years

- Host seasonal leadership camps aligned with moiety and kinship roles.
- Develop emerging leaders to take on responsibility for cultural safety, ceremony, and team coordination.

### LONG-TERM 7–10 years

- Maintain an intergenerational leadership succession model.
- Ensure Dhimurru ranger teams reflect Yolŋu law and are fully equipped to lead cultural and conservation outcomes.

SDG  
ALIGNMENT  
4, 12, 13



## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Yolŋu landowners and rangers hold authority and lead decision-making.
- Dhimurru's leadership is grounded in **Rom, gurruṯu and wāṇa** — from the ground up.
- A strong, culturally empowered workforce that protects and uplifts Yolŋu values for generations to come.

# OUR WAY – BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP



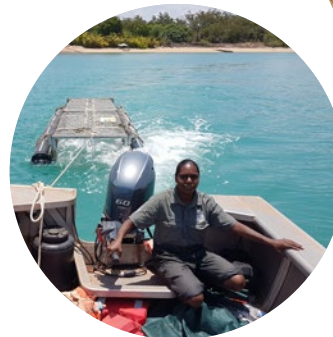


## WHAT GUIDES US

### Rom, kinship and connection to Country

Dhimurru Rangers are led by Yolŋu Rom (Law), the power of gurruṯu (kinship), and deep responsibility to wäṇa (Country). These three elements – Rom, Gurruṯu and Wäṇa – form the foundation of all decision-making, management, and daily ranger practice. Our governance is not written in policy first – it is held in relationship, ceremony, land, and leadership passed down by our Elders.

Yolŋu Rom connects the visible work of our rangers to the invisible cultural laws that protect sacred places and ensure respect. Gurruṯu shows us who we are responsible to and who walks with us. Wäṇa reminds us we are not just working on Country – we are part of it.





## HOW WE WORK

### Respect, responsibility and balance

Dhimurru Rangers work in a way that reflects our Yolŋu values – not just Western job titles or policies. Our three guiding values are:

- **Respect:** We respect each other, our Elders, our land, and our roles.
- **Responsibility:** We step up. We look after the things we are trusted with. We support the team.
- **Balance:** We know when to lead and when to support. We keep our heads and hearts aligned with Rom.

This is not just how we manage work. It is how we stay strong as a team, keep our culture alive, and protect Country the right way.

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*“The land also has Law and songcycles. It’s our old people’s Law. It is a firm foundation, the basis of caring for and living from the land.”* DJÄWA BURARRWAŊA

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# PLANNING WITH COUNTRY

## Seasonal knowledge and Ranger practice

At Dhimurru, we plan our work according to the Yolŋu seasonal cycle — not a Balanda calendar. Each season brings changes in weather, wildlife, and ceremony. It tells us what needs to be done, and when. Our rangers follow these signs to know the right time for action, rest, and renewal.

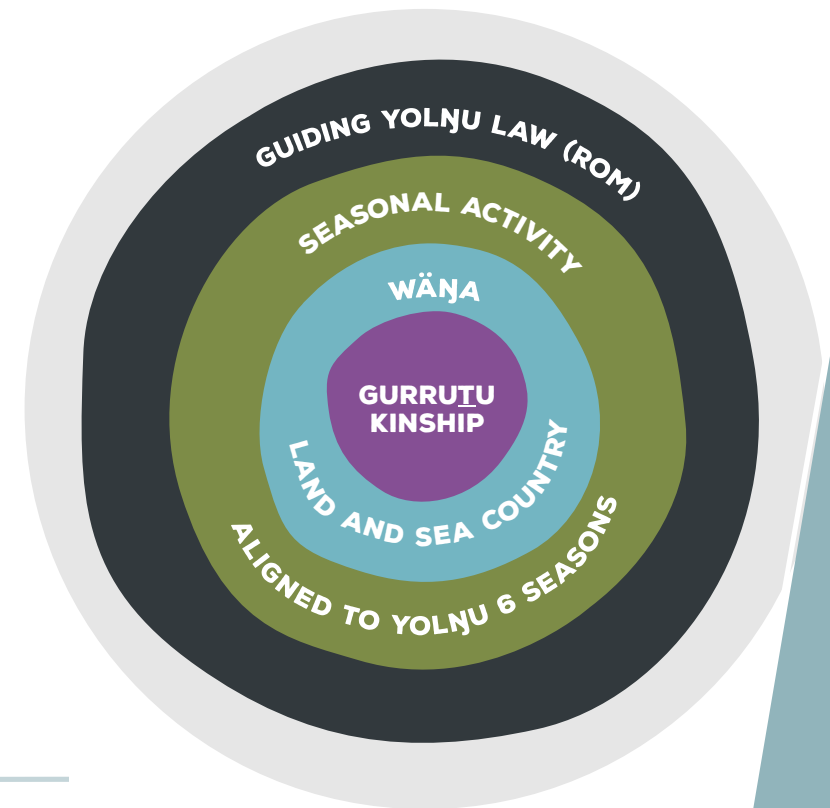
Here are the six seasons we follow:

- **Wulma** – *First rains*: Renewal and fresh growth; beginning of land access, ceremony preparation, and observation.
- **Mayaltha** – *Build-up*: Hot and humid; time to plan, reflect, and prepare for the wet season.
- **Rarranhdharr** – *Dry season*: Burning, clearing access tracks, hunting, and maintaining sacred places.

- **Dhuludur** – *Thunder forming*: Quiet time for patrolling, site monitoring, and preparing for storms.
- **Midawarr** – *Harvest season*: Fresh foods, cultural camps, mentoring, and knowledge exchange.
- **Dharratharramirri** – *Cold season*: Gathering, hunting, school visits, and strengthening ranger teams on Country.

These seasons guide our responsibilities. They help us decide when to burn, when to teach, when to repair tracks, and when to sit quietly with Elders. Our ranger work moves with Country – not against it.

*“The seasons tell us the right time to manage Country.”* RAKRAKPUY MARIKA



## THE RANGERS' LEADERSHIP TREE

How our knowledge guides conservation

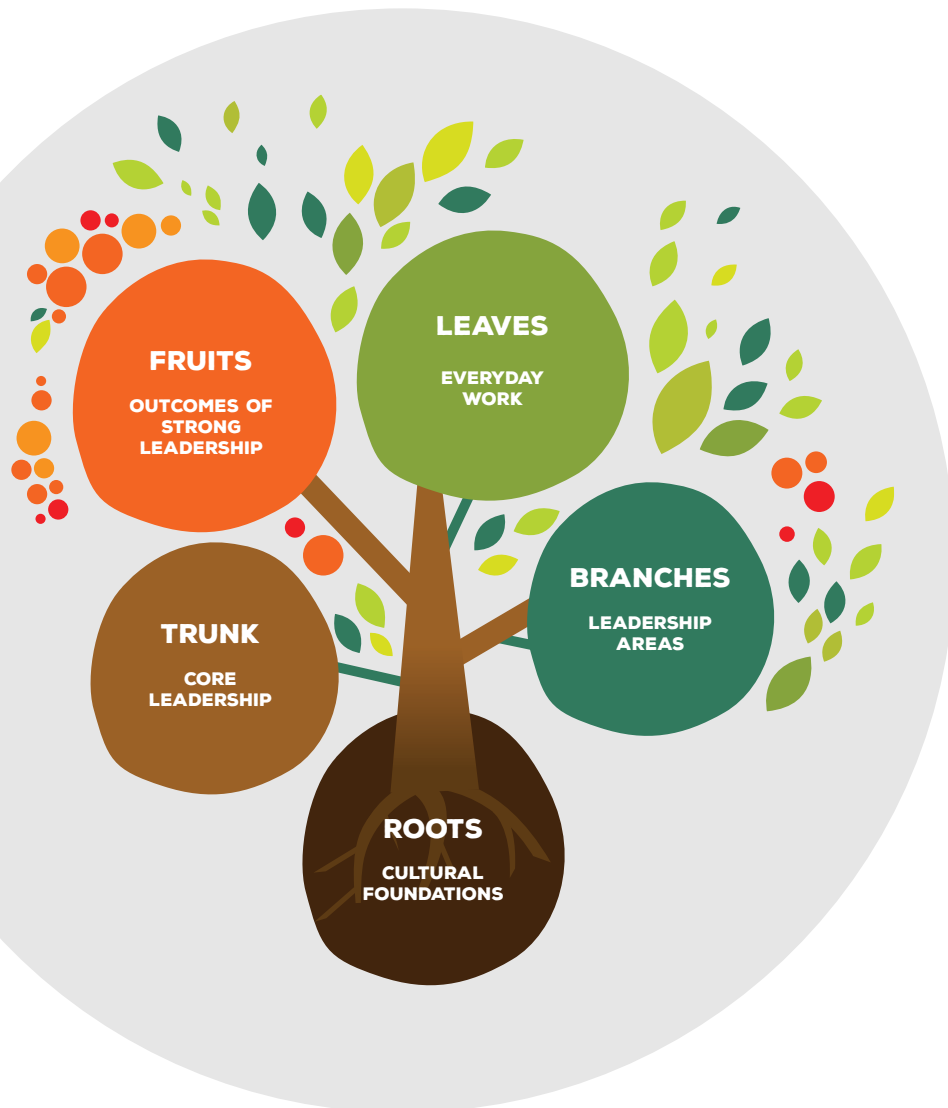
Our leadership model is not a hierarchy. It is a tree:

- **Roots:** Rom, Elders, kinship, Country
- **Trunk:** Respect, Responsibility, Balance
- **Branches:** Sea work, land work, threats, women's cultural responsibilities
- **Leaves:** The daily tasks we carry out: fencing, patrols, permits, weed control, education
- **Fruits:** Healthy Country, a strong team, empowered Yolŋu leadership

This tree reflects how we live and lead. The roots keep us grounded. The leaves grow from our effort. The fruits are what we give back to our people and land.

This is Dhimurru's way. It is not something borrowed or adapted – it is born from our land, our law, and our lived experience. It is how we walk together, grounded in our roots, guided by our Elders, and growing from the ground up.

*"Leadership comes from doing the work. We rangers learn by walking Country, by hunting, and by listening to the old people. That's how we know who we are, where we belong, and how to look after the land the right way."* WANGAWUY MUNUNGURRITJ





# MANAGING THE DHIMURRU INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA







## LEARNING FROM THE ROOTS

### How Rangers walk with Elders

Our way of learning doesn't come from books or training modules – it comes from being on Country, listening, and doing. Yolŋu knowledge is passed through practice, not theory. At Dhimurru, our Rangers learn by walking with Elders, through observation, ceremony, and being given responsibility in the right time and way.

This way of learning is part of our Leadership Tree. The roots of that tree are Rom, Gurruṯu, Wāṇa, and the guidance of our Elders. They ground us. They feed the values that hold us steady: Respect, Responsibility and Balance.

Elders do not deliver structured lessons. They guide through silence, gesture, correction, and story.

They teach through relationships and lived experience. When Rangers walk with Elders, they are not just learning tasks – they are learning how to read Country and how to hold responsibility.

Our younger Rangers become strong through trust, through example, and through being included in the right way. This kind of learning builds capacity from within.

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*“The rangers should have a Yolŋu program, it should have all the Yolŋu activities in it. They should know Yolŋu weather, seasons and everything. So Yolŋu rangers become real and be recognised. We want to see it all happening as old people before we go.”* DJAMBAWA MARAWILI, OAM

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## IPA CORE WORK AREAS

To support Dhimurru's ranger-led, values-based management approach, each core work area in the IPA includes operational objectives, key actions, and aligned MERI indicators to ensure culturally grounded and trackable outcomes.



### SEA COUNTRY

**Why it matters:** Sea Country connects Yolŋu to ceremony, kinship, food, and life.

**Seasonal practice:** Patrols, debris removal, turtle monitoring.

**Responsibility:** Sea Rangers, TOs, Elders.

**MERI:** Sighting logs, debris counts.

**2034 Goal:** A protected, Yolŋu-led saltwater zone.

**Key Actions:**

- Conduct quarterly ghost net and debris patrols
- Monitor turtle and marine species using ranger logs
- Support Elders to guide Sea Country decisions
- Maintain partner collaborations for marine protection

### FIRE AND LAND ACCESS

**Why it matters:** Healthy fire = healthy Country. Access = safe and informed work.

**Seasonal practice:** Cultural burning, clearing.

**Responsibility:** Fire Team, Elders.

**MERI:** Fire mapping, access reports.

**2034 Goal:** Seasonal burning and full access network in place.

**Key Actions:**

- Implement seasonal burning calendar
- Clear access tracks before and after wet season
- Document fire intensity and ecological effects
- Maintain roads and signage to key IPA sites

### THREATS AND INVASIVE SPECIES

**Why it matters:** Unchecked threats damage sacred sites and biodiversity.

**Seasonal practice:** Fencing, weeding, surveys.

**Responsibility:** Threats Team.

**MERI:** Maps, logs.

**2034 Goal:** Reduced invasive impact.

**Key Actions:**

- Survey and remove priority weed and feral species
- Map threats using GIS and ranger observations
- Maintain fencing to protect critical zones
- Work with scientists to monitor threat trends

### SACRED SITES AND CEREMONY

**Why it matters:** Ceremony maintains law. Sacred sites protect ancestral power.

**Seasonal practice:** Site care, ceremony prep.

**Responsibility:** Elders, Rangers.

**MERI:** Reflections, assessments.

**2034 Goal:** All sites respected and strong.

**Key Actions:**

- Maintain signage and boundaries around sacred areas
- Support seasonal ceremony access and resourcing
- Ensure all ranger activities respect site protocols
- Conduct regular cultural review with Elders

## IPA CORE WORK AREAS

*continued...*

### WOMEN'S WORK

**Why it matters:** Women hold knowledge, health, and ceremony.

**Seasonal practice:** Food, healing, camps.

**Responsibility:** Senior Women, Rangers.

**MERI:** Camp logs, feedback.

**2034 Goal:** Resourced and respected women-led programs.

**Key Actions:**

- Run bush camps for Yolŋu girls and women
- Support cultural food, health and healing practices
- Partner with local services for wellbeing
- Record seasonal women's activities and stories

### VISITORS AND PERMITS

**Why it matters:** Visitors must follow Yolŋu rules.

**Seasonal practice:** Patrols, permits, signage.

**Responsibility:** Rangers, Office, TOs

**MERI:** Logs, incidents.

**2034 Goal:** Safe, self-sustaining visitor program.

**Key Actions:**

- Review and manage permit system each season
- Patrol campsites and access points during dry season
- Respond to incidents and educate visitors
- Maintain culturally respectful signage and maps

### EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

**Why it matters:** Teaching secures our future.

**Seasonal practice:** Mentoring, camps, schools.

**Responsibility:** Rangers, Elders, Educators.

**MERI:** Participation and reflection logs.

**2034 Goal:** Intergenerational strength.

**Key Actions:**

- Deliver ranger-led school visits and talks
- Host youth camps and learning days with Elders
- Develop teaching tools using stories and gurruṯu
- Track and reflect on learning outcomes annually



### FUNDING NOTE

Core activities under these goals are currently supported through IPA or IRP funding.

**Co-investment is welcomed for expansion, infrastructure, or new seasonal projects.**





## CULTURAL BURNING

### Burning Country the right way

Fire and its Law was handed to us by our creation ancestors and passed to us from our old people. Our Elders continue to hold and pass on this knowledge and Yolŋu fire protocols. Fire has deep meaning to us, it renews life, it brings us together, it feeds us and nourishes us and our Country physically and spiritually. Our ancestors the Djulpan sisters are the first to burn the Country, sometimes we see the smoke rising from the fire they started in other Country – and then we know it's the right time for us to burn.

We follow the indicators in our Country, like they taught to us, and the directions provided from our Elders about when, where and why

to burn. This is Yolŋu work – this is more than just fire management – this is the Yolŋu way of burning. Yolŋu djäkami are embracing new technologies and adding new approaches to complement our way of burning, to place fire in our lonely Country again, protect our homelands and support Yolŋu fire practice in a changing climate.

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*“The fire belongs to seven Djulpan sisters, it is their story.”* BALUPALU YUNUPIŊU

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We are supporting our Elders to pass down their knowledge of work to us and younger generations. We retain control of when we burn and why and are carefully balancing these new ways so we never lose sight of our way of burning our Country.



## CULTURAL BURNING: BURNING COUNTRY THE RIGHT WAY OPERATIONAL GOALS

Support healthy ecosystems by practicing fire management through Yolŋu law, seasonal indicators, and leadership from the ground up. Preserve and pass down Yolŋu burning knowledge through ranger practice, landowner guidance, and Elder authority.

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### KEY ACTIONS

- Walk and plan with Yolŋu landowners to identify when, where and why to burn, following traditional indicators.
- Support Elders to lead cultural burning on their own estates as part of a broader seasonal care strategy — including ceremony, harvesting, patrolling, and healing.
- Maintain controlled burns to protect sacred places, infrastructure, and important biodiversity zones.
- Review and adapt Dhimurru's fire strategy using seasonal reflection and community feedback.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of burns conducted in line with Yolŋu seasonal knowledge and landowner authority.
- Area (hectares) of Country returned to cultural fire practice.
- Number of rangers mentored in cultural fire knowledge by Elders or landowners.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM 1–2 years

- Identify priority burn areas with Traditional Owners.
- Develop and trial a seasonal burning calendar based on Yolŋu indicators.
- Begin ranger–Elder joint burns across selected estates.

#### MEDIUM-TERM 3–6 years

- Integrate GIS and modern tools to complement cultural indicators.
- Conduct reflection camps after each burn season with Elders, rangers and landowners.
- Document and map cultural fire zones and protocols with permission.

#### LONG-TERM 7–10 years

- Establish a strong seasonal burning rhythm grounded in Yolŋu practice.
- Use cultural burns to train new generations and strengthen ceremony, language and land connection.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Uncontrolled wildfires reduced through proactive, culturally informed burning.
- Dhimurru Rangers and Yolŋu landowners lead fire management from the ground up.
- Yolŋu fire knowledge is respected, practiced, and passed on through generations.





## MANAGING SEA COUNTRY

### Looking after our waters the Yolŋu way

At Dhimurru, we don't just work on land – we belong to the sea too. Our sea Country holds our totems, our stories, our food, and our Law. For Yolŋu, the sea is part of who we are.

Rangers care for the sea with the same responsibility and commitment we show on land. We follow the signs – tides, currents, wind, and the knowledge passed down by Elders and clan leaders. When we go on patrol, we're not just checking – we're protecting sacred sites, sea life, and the places where our ancestors travelled.

Sea Country includes open water, islands, reefs, beaches, rocky places, and sandbars. Some of our most important creation stories begin here. Many sacred sites are under the water – but they are still alive.

To look after sea Country properly, we need to be out there more. We need stronger voice in sea policies, and we need people to

respect that Yolŋu have been looking after these waters for thousands of years – and still do.

We are building up our sea rangers to lead, to monitor the health of our waters, and to make decisions about what happens out there. This is Yolŋu leadership – from the ground up, and out into the sea.

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*“When we're out on the water, we're not just doing a job — we're protecting our stories, our food, and our future. Sea Country is part of us.”*

MICAH PASCOE

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## MANAGING SEA COUNTRY OPERATIONAL GOAL

Strengthen Yolŋu leadership and control over Sea Country through patrols, partnerships, and cultural authority — guided by seasonal signs and landowner direction.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Work with Yolŋu landowners and Elders to plan and lead sea patrols that protect sacred sites, storylines, and marine species.
- Build partnerships that support Dhimurru's values – not outside agendas. Focus on Yolŋu-led monitoring, cultural knowledge sharing, and protecting places of significance.
- Respond to sea changes – like shifting tides, climate impacts, and marine developments – using Yolŋu observation, ranger experience, and appropriate tools.
- Ensure all sea Country work is decided and led from the ground up, with Yolŋu knowledge at the centre.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of Yolŋu-led sea patrols conducted each year.
- Number of species, habitats or cultural sites monitored and recorded.
- Ranger involvement in sea management partnerships or decision-making processes.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM 1–2 years

- Strengthen partnerships that support Yolŋu-led patrols.
- Begin monitoring key species, sites and intertidal zones.
- Train rangers in compliance, marine protocols and cultural safety.

#### MEDIUM-TERM 3–6 years

- Map Yolŋu place names, sacred zones and use areas across Sea Country.
- Support ranger leadership in monitoring, enforcement, and community education.
- Host learning trips on sea for Elders, rangers, and young people.

#### LONG-TERM 7–10 years

- Conduct regular reviews of sea work with landowners and rangers.
- Establish Dhimurru-led Sea Country protocols for partners and agencies.
- Maintain a strong Yolŋu ranger presence across Dhimurru's Sea Country.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Healthier sea ecosystems protected through Yolŋu authority.
- Cultural knowledge and marine care passed on to the next generation.
- Dhimurru rangers confidently managing Sea Country in their own way – from the ground up and out to sea.

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## **WOMEN AND CARING AS COUNTRY**

At Dhimurru, we know that women are leaders too. Yolŋu women hold strong knowledge for looking after Country. They teach, heal, gather, burn, and keep culture strong. That's why we say: *Country is not just land – it is women too.*

Women help our young ones grow the right way, like bitpit (seedlings).



They know the names of places, the stories of Country, and the right way to burn, fish, and walk. They pass on this knowledge through teaching, singing, crying (milkarri), and ceremony.

Women also know plants for food and medicine. They are the ones who care for people as well as places. They sit with us when things are hard and guide us when things need to be done properly. As rangers, we follow their lead. We want more Yolŋu women involved in decisions, patrols, planning, and ceremony. This is part of building strong leadership from the ground up – not just for now, but for our daughters and granddaughters too.



*“We learn our responsibilities on Country through ceremony – it shows us where we belong and what we must protect.”*

SHENITA YUNUPINGU



## WOMEN AND CARING FOR COUNTRY OPERATIONAL GOAL

Support Yolŋu women to grow as leaders in ranger work, decision-making, and caring for Country.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Make sure women have strong roles in ranger teams and leadership.
- Support older women to share their knowledge and guide younger ones.
- Provide training for women in things like milkarri (songlines), cultural fire, and land/sea care.
- Respect avoidance rules (mirriri and rumaru) and make the workplace safe and comfortable for everyone.
- Update ranger team policies so they support women's roles and voices.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of Yolŋu women leading or coordinating ranger work.
- Number of women taking part in environmental or cultural activities.
- Stories, knowledge, and practices recorded or passed on through women's programs.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Create leadership and mentoring roles for Yolŋu women in ranger teams.
- Start learning programs focused on women's practices and responsibilities.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

- Update policies and workplace structures to support gender balance.
- Build women's leadership into seasonal planning and ranger operations.

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

- Review women's involvement each year and keep growing leadership pathways.
- Keep strong intergenerational sharing of knowledge between senior women and younger rangers.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- More Yolŋu women making decisions and leading ranger work.
- Women's cultural knowledge protected and passed on.
- Stronger ranger teams that reflect Yolŋu law and balance.

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# EDUCATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

## Passing on knowledge

We keep our culture strong by teaching our young people the right way – on Country, through doing, watching, and listening.

Our Elders, families, and landowners have the knowledge. They show us how to care for Country through stories, songs, kinship, ceremony, and law. These teachings help us know where we belong and how to live properly with each other and the land.

At Dhimurru, we believe learning doesn't only happen in schools. It happens when we take kids out bush, sit around the fire, tell stories, and show them how to look after places. That's how we pass knowledge from one generation to the next.

As rangers, we support Learning on Country programs that connect school kids to Elders and Country. We use both Yolŋu knowledge and ranger tools to teach them how to hunt, burn, track, map and care for sacred places.

We also need new skills – like using maps, tools, tech, and language – to keep up with changes and protect our land from new threats like weeds, rubbish and climate change. But we always start with Yolŋu knowledge first. Everything grows from the ground up.

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*“We take the children out through Learning on Country and teach them about their land – and later they will come back to that place when they have grown up. They and their children will be able to care for that place when the old people have all passed away.”* DJANGAL MUNUNGURRITJ

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## EDUCATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER OPERATIONAL GOAL

Support Yolŋu youth to learn from Elders and Rangers on Country, so knowledge can be passed on the right way.



### KEY ACTIONS

#### Learning on Country

- Keep running Learning on Country (LoC) programs so kids learn from Rangers, Elders, and the land.
- Use ranger-led Galtha workshops to teach about seasons, places, stories, and law.
- Make space for Elders and young people to sit together, walk together, and work together on Country.

#### Workforce and Mentoring

- Help Yolŋu youth become rangers by creating clear pathways from school into ranger jobs.
- Run mentoring camps and workshops where young people learn through practice — not just classroom lessons.

- Work with schools and universities to offer accredited courses that use Yolŋu knowledge and ranger skills.
- Make sure all new staff learn about Yolŋu kinship, language, and law as part of their induction.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of young people involved in ranger and cultural activities.
- Number of stories, names, or traditional practices passed on or recorded.
- Number of youth transitioning into work, study or community roles through ranger mentoring.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Expand Learning on Country programs and youth ranger activities.
- Start building partnerships with universities for Yolŋu-led training.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

- Run annual mentoring camps and youth leadership workshops.
- Support young people to grow into ranger, facilitator, or leadership roles.

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

- Keep intergenerational learning strong through regular ranger–Elder–youth programs.
- Maintain cultural knowledge sharing as a core part of Dhimurru's work.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- More Yolŋu youth learning, leading and working on Country.
- Knowledge passed down from Elders to the next generation.
- Stronger community-led future, grounded in Yolŋu law, identity, and pride.



# THREATS TO OUR COUNTRY AND CULTURE

## Keeping Country safe

As rangers, we are seeing more threats on our Country than ever before. Some come from outside — like people entering without permission or dumping rubbish. Some are natural changes – like new weather patterns, stronger tides, and the sea getting closer to our sacred places.

We also face big problems like:

- Feral animals (buffalo, pigs, cats, cane toads)
- Illegal access to sacred areas
- Salt water creeping into freshwater
- Marine debris and pollution
- Climate change and extreme weather
- Weeds and sick plants
- Biosecurity risks

These threats damage our wetlands, hunting grounds, waterholes, beaches, and bush foods. They also hurt our stories, our sacred places, and our ability to pass on knowledge the right way.

We manage these threats by using Yolŋu knowledge first — then combining it with ranger tools, science, and partnerships if needed.

Everything starts from what the Elders have taught us. That's how we make our plans and decisions – from the ground up.

We want outsiders to respect Yolŋu law and only come to Country with the right permission. This is our land, and we know how to care for it.

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*“Our job as rangers is to protect everything – not just for now, but for our children. The land is talking to us through the changes. We have to listen properly.”*

KIM WUNUNG MURRA

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## RESPONDING TO RISK AND CLIMATE CHANGE PROTECTION

Our Country is changing. Yolŋu Rangers and landowners are observing stronger tides, unpredictable seasons, saltwater intrusion, and shifts in species patterns. These are signs of climate stress and risk. Our response must reflect Yolŋu ways of reading and adapting with Country.

Dhimurru will strengthen adaptive planning by:

- Incorporating seasonal reflection into team reviews
- Supporting intergenerational observation camps focused on environmental shifts
- Recording Yolŋu indicators of climate change (tides, birds, flowering cycles)
- Building partnerships that respect Yolŋu leadership in climate response

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**This approach aligns with SDG 13: Climate Action, and strengthens Dhimurru's role as a national leader in Indigenous-led environmental resilience.**

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## THREATS TO OUR COUNTRY AND CULTURE OPERATIONAL GOAL

Protect Country by managing threats the Yolŋu way – starting with landowner knowledge and ranger leadership.



### KEY ACTIONS

#### Access management

- Rangers lead patrols to stop people entering without permission.
- Work with NLC, Police, and other partners to enforce rules and keep Country safe.
- Help the community understand why permits matter and what cultural safety means.

#### Feral Animals and Weeds

- Control buffalo, pigs, cane toads, cats and weeds where they're doing the most damage.

- Visit affected sites with landowners to plan the right response.
- Get support from partners to help manage big or ongoing problems.

#### Marine Debris and Ghost Nets

- Clean up rubbish and nets from beaches and sea areas that are important to Yolŋu.
- Focus on places where the damage is harming sacred sites, turtle nesting areas, or food sources.

- Work with regional partners but make sure Dhimurru rangers lead on our land and sea.

#### Climate change

- Listen to Yolŋu landowners who are seeing big changes in the weather, seasons, and sea.
- Document these changes with Elders and rangers.
- Work with researchers to learn more, but always follow Yolŋu priorities first.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- How many patrols we run, and how many places we protect.
- How many pigs, buffalo or weeds we've managed.
- How much rubbish and marine debris we've cleaned up.
- What Yolŋu say about climate change, and what we do in response.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Start patrols, clean-ups, and weed/feral control at priority sites.
- Raise awareness in community about permit rules and cultural safety.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

- Build stronger partnerships to support rangers.
- Do more training and improve how we monitor threats

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

- Reduce long-term threats to Country.
- Keep adapting how we respond based on Yolŋu knowledge and what we learn over time.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **Stronger Yolŋu authority** over who comes and goes.
- **Healthier Country** with fewer weeds and feral animals.
- **Cleaner beaches and sea** for future generations.
- **Stronger climate knowledge** and response – from the ground up.



## WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS – BECOMING A FRIEND OF DHIMURRU

Supporting Yolŋu leadership and walking together the right way

This is Yolŋu Country. Our ancestors gave us the Law, the land, and the responsibility to care for it.

At Dhimurru, we welcome people and organisations who want to work with us – the right way.

We've built many partnerships over the years, and we've learned that the best ones are based on trust, respect, and walking side by side. That's what it means to become a Friend of Dhimurru.

**Friends of Dhimurru** support Yolŋu leadership and follow our protocols. They don't speak for us or direct the work – they back us with the right support, resources, and tools, when we ask for it.

They understand that Yolŋu make decisions for our Country and that our values and processes must come first.

Through our Work Protocols, we show people how to work with us in a culturally safe and respectful way. Whether it's joining us on patrol, helping behind the scenes, or supporting ranger development, Friends of Dhimurru listen, learn, and stand with us – not over us.

### What it means to be a Friend of Dhimurru:

- Respect Yolŋu law, land, and leadership
- Follow Dhimurru's way of working and protocols
- Support local solutions – not top-down decisions
- Walk with us for the long term
- Help us grow strong from the ground up

*“Yolŋu already know how to close the gap – we've always known. We just need our friends to stand with us and back us the right way.”* RRAWUN MAYMURU





## WORKING WITH PARTNERS – BECOMING FRIENDS OF DHIMURRU OPERATIONAL GOAL

Grow strong partnerships that follow Yolŋu leadership and support Dhimurru's goals through shared action, trust, and respect.

### KEY ACTIONS

#### Supporting Yolŋu Leadership Through Collaboration

- Build respectful relationships with people and organisations who want to walk beside us – not lead for us.
- Create mentoring and support networks that grow Yolŋu leadership across ranger work, governance and planning.
- Use the IPA Advisory Committee to make sure agencies follow Yolŋu management priorities and protocols.

- Invite partners to become **Friends of Dhimurru** by showing long-term commitment to cultural safety, resource sharing, and two-way learning.
- Work on shared goals where Yolŋu decision-making comes first – and support follows

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of projects co-designed and led by Dhimurru with partner support.
- Number of knowledge-sharing meetings, camps or workshops hosted by Dhimurru.
- Number of formal **Friends of Dhimurru** relationships established and maintained.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Identify and welcome partners ready to become Friends of Dhimurru.
- Start cultural safety conversations and shared learning around Yolŋu ways of working.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

- Hold regular partnership meetings and workshops led by Yolŋu.
- Launch projects that reflect Yolŋu priorities and are supported by **Friends of Dhimurru**.

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

- Maintain strong regional relationships built on Yolŋu governance.
- Grow long-term alliances that support Dhimurru's leadership across the IPA and beyond.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Stronger partnerships grounded in Yolŋu values and Dhimurru protocols.
- Projects that reflect what Yolŋu want — not outside agendas.
- A network of **Friends of Dhimurru** who support, respect, and walk with us for the long term.



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## STRONG FUTURES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Creating opportunities from the ground up

Dhimurru has always welcomed people to enjoy our Country – but only with respect for Yolŋu leadership, law, and landowner authority.

We've been managing recreation areas in our IPA for over 30 years. It's a role we take seriously, not just for visitors, but for our future generations. We want to grow new opportunities for Yolŋu families by supporting local businesses, ranger-led tourism, and other activities that benefit both Country and community.

Our goal is to build a strong future – by making sure any economic growth is guided by Yolŋu priorities and supports the work we already do.

This includes fee-for-service, guided experiences, cultural education, and partnerships with Friends of Dhimurru who share our values and walk beside us, not in front.

All of this must happen in a way that protects our land, our stories, and our control.



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*“Yolŋu have the knowledge and the vision. We know what's needed for our future. What we need are true Friends of Dhimurru — partners who walk with us, not ahead of us, and support our businesses to grow on our own Country.”* DJAWA BURARRWANJA

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION**

All economic development must support Yolŋu values and cultural authority. Dhimurru commits to ensuring that Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is protected in all partnerships, tourism, and enterprise initiatives.

This means:

- No commercial use of cultural knowledge without explicit consent
- Prioritising revenue models that return benefits to Yolŋu families
- Aligning all economic activity with Dhimurru's vision and governance

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**This is particularly important as Dhimurru explores carbon projects, fee-for-service expansion, and visitor experiences.**

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## STRONG FUTURES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONAL GOAL

Support Yolŋu livelihoods and grow economic opportunities that protect Country and culture from the ground up.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Make sure Dhimurru is involved early in any plans for development in the IPA.
- Support Yolŋu businesses and local job pathways that connect to Country.
- Work with Friends of Dhimurru to grow respectful tourism and cultural learning opportunities.
- Identify fee-for-service activities that keep Dhimurru sustainable (e.g. land, sea and compliance work).
- Create new directions for managing recreation areas that include local employment and long-term benefit for Yolŋu landowners.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of Yolŋu employed in local businesses and ranger-supported enterprises.
- Number of Dhimurru-supported economic initiatives started or grown.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Identify tourism and enterprise opportunities on Country.
- Begin planning with landowners and local families.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

- Support Yolŋu-led businesses with training and fee-for-service models.
- Expand cultural tourism with ranger and Elder involvement.

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

- Launch new Yolŋu-owned ventures that reflect community priorities and protect Country.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- More income flowing to Yolŋu landowners and families.
- Sustainable growth that supports Dhimurru's work and protects culture.
- Strong partnerships with Friends of Dhimurru who back our leadership and vision.

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## TRACKING OUR WORK

### Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI)

Our MERI approach follows Yolŋu ways of working – grounded in Rom, shaped by our seasonal knowledge, and led by our Rangers. We track our progress not just by numbers or Western indicators, but by asking if we are living our values: *Are we showing respect? Are we taking responsibility? Are we keeping balance with each other and with Country?*

We use a four-step method that reflects both Yolŋu and mainstream planning models:

- **PLAN (Rock):** We sit, we talk, we decide – based on cultural law and seasonal timing.
- **ACT (Throw):** We carry out our work – fire, fencing, patrols, education, cultural protection.
- **CHECK (Splash):** We look at the outcomes – what worked, what needs support, what changed.
- **LEARN (Ripple):** We reflect as a team – with Elders, Coordinators, Rangers – and make changes for the next cycle.

*“We designed our way of monitoring by how to interact with Country.”* GRACE WUNUNG MURRA

APPENDIX C  
MERI  
INDICATOR  
TABLE



Each work area in our Plan of Management has indicators based on this rhythm. We also align our reporting with Dhimurru's Strategic Priorities and MERI Framework 2024-2034:

- Cultural Protection and Celebration
- Integrated Land and Sea Management
- Community-Led Innovation
- Climate and Threat Resilience
- Wellbeing and Livelihoods
- Global Influence and Partnerships

This is not just a compliance tool. It is how we stay accountable – to our Elders, our Board, our funders, and most of all, to our Country. It reflects Dhimurru's way of walking together, learning over time, and adapting without losing who we are.

## ICIP AND DATA GOVERNANCE PROTOCOL

Dhimurru's data is more than information – it is knowledge governed by Yolŋu Law. All data collected by Rangers, including maps, stories, names, and images, is owned and protected by Yolŋu.

Dhimurru follows a strict ICIP and Data Governance Policy to ensure:

- Cultural knowledge is not shared or published without permission
- Data systems respect gurruyu relationships and clan boundaries
- Research partners are required to follow Dhimurru's protocol and approval process

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**For more detail, see Dhimurru's ICIP & Data Governance Policy (2024).**

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## TRACKING OUR WORK (MERI) OPERATIONAL GOAL

Make sure our plans are working by tracking what we do, listening to Yolŋu voices, and improving as we go.

### KEY ACTIONS

- **Start with Yolŋu voices** – Talk with landowners, Elders and rangers to decide how we measure success.
- **Collect the right data** – Record what we're doing on Country (burning, patrols, plants, animals, access etc.) in ways that make sense for us.
- **Use both Yolŋu and mainstream tools** – Combine cultural indicators with maps, photos, databases, and ranger logs.
- **Keep it useful** – Data must help us reflect, improve, and plan the next steps, not just tick boxes.
- **Feed back to community** – Share what's working and what's not in plain language.
- **Review together** – Regularly sit with rangers and landowners to check in, make changes, and update plans.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of community and landowner check-ins held.
- Number of improvements made based on feedback.
- Whether our work is matching seasonal and cultural indicators of success.

### TIMEFRAMES

#### SHORT-TERM

1–2 years

- Agree on what success looks like from a Yolŋu perspective.
- Start recording ranger work using tools that everyone understands.

#### MEDIUM-TERM

3–6 years

- Host quarterly reflection sessions with landowners and rangers.
- Report changes and track progress clearly with visuals and stories.

#### LONG-TERM

7–10 years

- Review the whole Plan together and adapt it to stay strong.
- Make sure Dhimurru's way of working is reflected in every update.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Clear Yolŋu-led tracking of success.
- Continuous improvement of our ranger work and IPA goals.
- Community voices guiding how we grow from the ground up.





# APPENDICES









## APPENDIX A Allocation of the Dhimurru IPA to IUCN Protected Area Category V (Protected Landscape/Seascape)

| IUCN Category 5          |   | Dhimurru IPA  |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Description</b>       | Areas where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value; and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.  | Dhimurru IPA is a geographical space of land, sea and sky created by the Ancestral Spirit Beings of the Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties. The journeys of these ancestral creators crisscrossed the land and seascape breathing life into the animals and plants inhabiting these environments and creating sacred currents. From these ancestral journeys, and the network of important sites created across the land and sea, we gain our names, our identity and our way of life.   |
| <b>Primary objective</b> | To protect and sustain important landscapes/seascapes and the associated nature conservation and other values created by interactions with humans through traditional management practices.   | To protect and sustain our landscapes/seascapes, including biodiversity, ecosystems and our associated ceremonies, cultural sites, and other cultural values and practices that we have nurtured for thousands of years.  |
| <b>Other objectives</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain a balanced interaction of nature and culture through the protection of landscape and/or seascape and associated traditional management approaches, societies, cultures and spiritual values;</li> <li>• To contribute to broad-scale conservation by maintaining species associated with cultural landscapes and/or by providing conservation opportunities in heavily used landscapes;</li> <li>• To provide opportunities for enjoyment, well-being and socioeconomic activity through recreation and tourism;</li> <li>• To provide natural products and environmental services;</li> <li>• To provide a framework to underpin active involvement by the community in the management of valued landscapes or seascapes and the natural and cultural heritage that they contain;</li> <li>• To encourage the conservation of aquatic biodiversity;</li> <li>• To act as models of sustainability so that lessons can be learnt for wider application.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain a balance between the cultural, economic, and recreational values and the cultural, social and spiritual values associated with Dhimurru IPA;</li> <li>• To ensure ecological sustainability of cultural, economic and recreational use of land and sea resources within the IPA;</li> <li>• To provide opportunities for enjoyment, well-being, and socioeconomic activity through recreation and tourism;</li> <li>• To maintain environmental services provided by land and sea country within the IPA;</li> <li>• To provide a collaborative framework for the governance and management of the IPA that respects the rights and obligations of Traditional Owners and Custodians, government management agencies, commercial fishers, recreational fishers, tourism operators, and local residents;</li> <li>• To act as a model for Traditional Owner led collaborative management of an integrated land/sea Indigenous Protected Area.</li> </ul> |



## APPENDIX B Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Alignment and Integration

|  | ISDG Alignment  | Integration  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Vision Statement and Core Values</b><br>page 12<br>                  | <p><b>SDG 13 (Climate Action):</b> Commitment to resilience and environmental stewardship in response to climate change.</p> <p><b>SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land):</b> Preservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems.</p> <p><b>SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities):</b> Safeguarding cultural heritage and fostering sustainable community growth.</p> <p><b>SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions):</b> Ensuring inclusive and accountable governance for the IPA.</p> | <p>Our vision integrates the global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring our land, sea, and cultural heritage are managed for the well-being of all generations while promoting biodiversity, cultural integrity, and climate resilience.</p>                     |
| <b>Governance Structure</b><br>page 15<br>                              | <p><b>SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions):</b> Transparent and participatory governance.</p> <p><b>SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals):</b> Strengthened collaborations with stakeholders.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance decision-making processes to reflect equitable and inclusive governance, with clear alignment to SDG 16.</li> <li>• Leverage partnerships with governments, NGOs, and communities for capacity-building under SDG 17.</li> </ul>      |
| <b>Yolŋu Knowledge Framework</b><br>page 19<br>                         | <p><b>SDG 4 (Quality Education):</b> Intergenerational transfer of knowledge.</p> <p><b>SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production):</b> Sustainable cultural and environmental practices.</p> <p><b>SDG 13 (Climate Action):</b> Indigenous knowledge in climate adaptation.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the Yolŋu Knowledge Framework as a model for achieving SDGs in cultural heritage preservation, education, and sustainability.</li> <li>• Create educational materials to connect traditional practices with SDG principles.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Managing the Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area</b><br>page 27<br> | <p><b>SDG 13 (Climate Action):</b> Climate-resilient land and sea management.</p> <p><b>SDG 14 (Life Below Water):</b> Conservation of marine biodiversity.</p> <p><b>SDG 15 (Life on Land):</b> Combatting invasive species and land degradation.</p>  | <p>Develop actionable goals to ensure land and sea management practices directly support SDG targets, including biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use</p>   |
| <b>Burning Country the Right Way</b><br>page 29<br>                   | <p><b>SDG 13 (Climate Action):</b> Using fire management to reduce emissions and enhance climate resilience.</p> <p><b>SDG 15 (Life on Land):</b> Ecosystem restoration and sustainable use of natural resources.</p>   | <p>Promote fire management as a best practice for achieving SDG 13 and SDG 15, balancing traditional knowledge with modern tools.</p>  |

|   | ISDG Alignment  | Integration   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Managing Sea Country</b><br>page 31<br>                               | <b>SDG 14 (Life Below Water):</b> Sustainable use of marine resources and protection of ecosystems.<br><b>SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals):</b> Collaborative marine conservation.   | Incorporate SDG targets into sea management programs, including habitat monitoring, marine biodiversity conservation, and sustainable fisheries.                  |
| <b>Women and Caring as Country</b><br>page 33<br>                        | <b>SDG 5 (Gender Equality):</b> Empowering women in decision-making.<br><b>SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):</b> Inclusive cultural practices.   | Increase women's leadership roles and participation in cultural and conservation activities, aligned with SDG 5 and 10.   |
| <b>Education and Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer</b><br>page 35<br> | <b>SDG 4 (Quality Education):</b> Indigenous curriculum development.<br><b>SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):</b> Training and employment opportunities.<br><b>SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities):</b> Preserving cultural and natural heritage. | Strengthen the Learning on Country programs to incorporate SDG principles, ensuring the next generation is equipped to sustain cultural and environmental values. |
| <b>Threats to Country and Culture</b><br>page 37<br>                     | <b>SDG 13 (Climate Action):</b> Addressing climate-induced threats.<br><b>SDG 15 (Life on Land):</b> Combatting invasive species.<br><b>SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions):</b> Managing unauthorised access and enforcing land rights.           | Develop monitoring systems that incorporate SDG metrics to address threats such as invasive species, climate change, and unauthorised access.                     |
| <b>Collaboration with Partners and Stakeholders</b><br>page 40<br>      | <b>SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals):</b> Strengthening collaborations to support conservation and cultural programs.   | Co-design partnerships that deliver mutual benefits aligned with SDG principles and ensure resource-sharing supports conservation goals.                          |
| <b>Strong Futures and Economic Development</b><br>page 42<br>          | <b>SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):</b> Creating sustainable economic opportunities.<br><b>SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production):</b> Promoting sustainable tourism and resource use.   | Encourage Yolŋu-owned businesses in tourism and natural resource management, ensuring alignment with SDG 8 and 12.  |
| <b>Reporting Back</b><br>page 44<br>                                   | <b>SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production):</b> Transparent reporting of conservation and sustainability metrics.<br><b>SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions):</b> Accountability and participatory feedback mechanisms.                     | Include SDG-aligned indicators in monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes to assess progress and adapt strategies.  |

## APPENDIX C MERI Plan Indicators Table\*

This revised table outlines how Dhimurru tracks its progress based on Yolŋu-led priorities, aligned with our Strategic Plan and grounded in our seasonal and values-based leadership practice.

| Strategic Priority                  | Indicator (Yolŋu-led)   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Cultural Protection and Celebration | Number of sites protected; cultural protocols upheld in all activities                          |
| Integrated Land and Sea Management  | Seasonal plans completed; marine and land patrol data collected and reviewed                    |
| Community-Led Innovation            | New initiatives led by Rangers or Yolŋu partners; examples of knowledge-sharing sessions        |
| Climate and Threat Resilience       | Fire cycles implemented based on seasons; invasive species managed by threat level              |
| Wellbeing and Livelihoods           | Number of Rangers in active roles; mentoring sessions held; wellbeing reflections logged        |
| Global Influence and Partnerships   | Cross-cultural partnerships maintained; Dhimurru presentations at national/international forums |

\* The full Indicator Matrix Table can be viewed in the Yolŋu MERI Plan



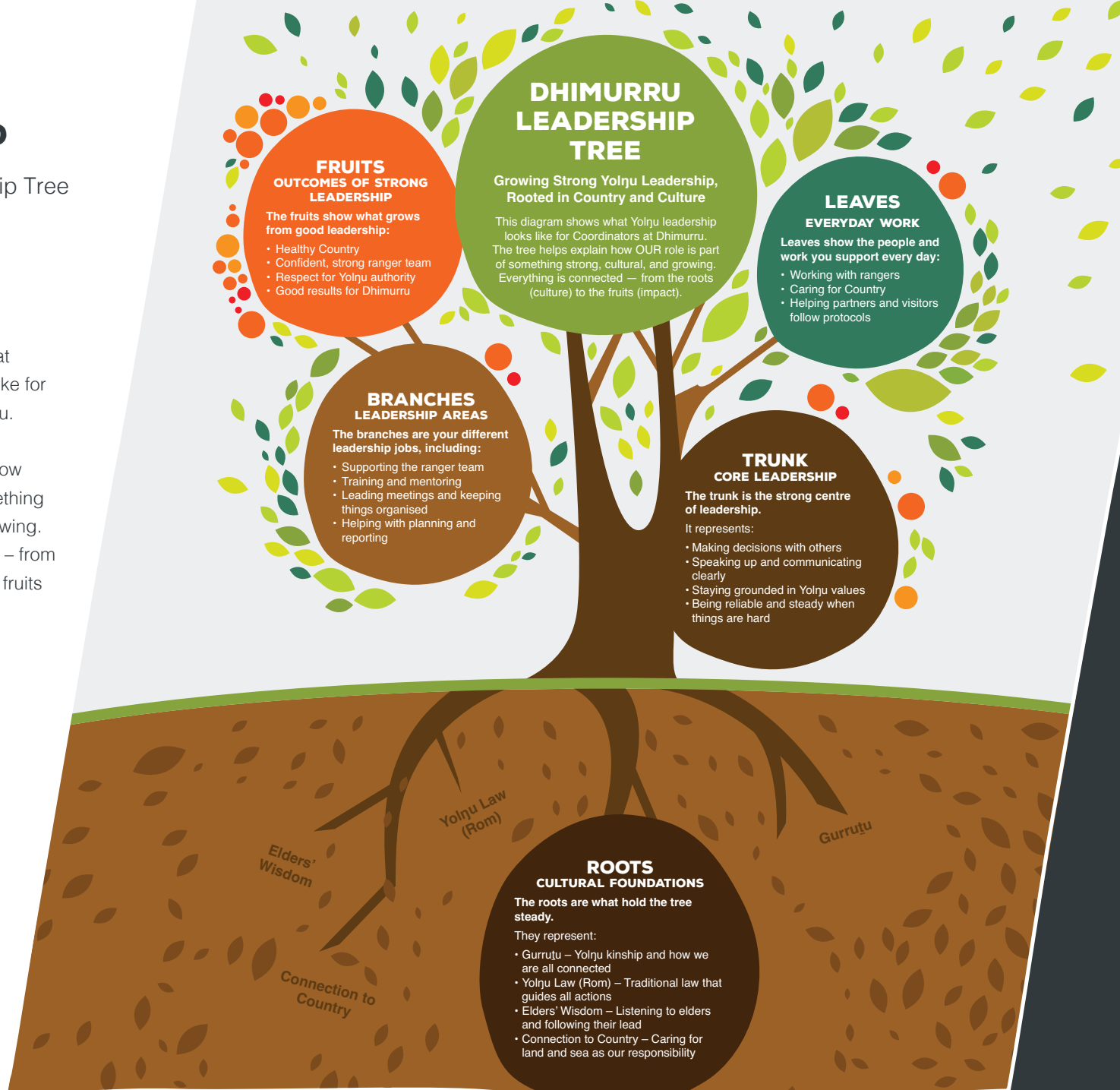
## APPENDIX D

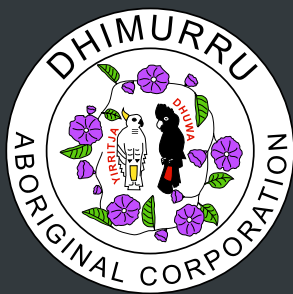
### Dhimurru Leadership Tree

#### Growing Strong Yolŋu Leadership, Rooted in Country and Culture

This diagram shows what Yolŋu leadership looks like for Coordinators at Dhimurru.

The tree helps explain how OUR role is part of something strong, cultural, and growing. Everything is connected – from the roots (culture) to the fruits (impact).





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